

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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Carry on Camping

A strange thing happened at Hilbert Road.

If you remember, last month the ladies in the hive know as Polly's nuc decided it was a bit too warm with the varroa board in place and decided to cool off underneath the floor. We removed the wild comb and persuaded the ladies to return to the hive with a gentle smoking.

This month things have progressed and not only had they gone out to cool off but they were actively 'camping' underneath the floor. The queen was with them and they set up camp building lots of comb, bringing in stores and, by the time we inspected, there was lots of brood in all stages. There were very few bees in the hive so it was obviously a conscious decision to move out.



We treated it like a 'cut out' placing the drawn comb with brood and stores in frames held in place with elastic bands and placed them in the hive.



We spotted the queen and were able to ensure that she was safely returned to the brood box.

There appears to be no reason behind this behaviour. Initially it could have been too hot and maybe the queen went outside with the workers; she might not have liked the comb in the hive and preferred to build her own; the foundation used might have been too old. I have not ordered any fresh foundation this year as there was a good stock in the apiary, I have no way of knowing how old it is so next season I intend to swap it for some fresh stuff.

As always, thank you to the team at Hilbert Road, the learning goes on!

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manger



What Price Honey?

Thoughts from Robin Toop

You can see a huge range in the retail price of honey and I think that some beekeepers are in danger of selling the honey from their hives too cheaply. This year our branch is selling 1lb jars for £7.50, which I think is a good price, although I am still selling my honey at the door at last year's rate of £6.50.

The best wholesale price I have received per lb is £4.80 but I think a minimum of £5 would be fairer. There are, to my mind, foolish beekeepers selling wholesale at £4.50 per lb. In the shops in Tunbridge Wells I have seen honey retailing for as much as £9 per 1lb jar. Unless we make a united stand I feel we are in danger of being ripped off by some retailers.

Branch Honey For Sale



Our branch honey is available at £7.50 for a 1lb jar, and £6 for a 12oz jar. If you are buying this for family or friends, please remember the honey is not pasteurised, and therefore not suitable for infants under 12 months or expectant mothers.

Available from Liz at membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Under the Microscope

The microscopy workshop covered two basic areas: microscopy as a diagnostic tool for disease, led by Cliff Hayward and identification of pollen, led by Vanessa Jones.

Cliff opened the workshop with a basic introduction to the different types of microscope available. The stereo or dissecting microscope has a magnification typically x10 or x20. The compound microscope has magnification x10 in the eyepiece with three additional objective lenses, usually x4, x10 and x40. This is the microscope needed for viewing bacteria or pollen. Cliff talked us through the setting up process for the microscopes and then it was back to school science for practical dissection.



Cliff had collected bee samples for the workshop. The bees were mature foragers collected from the hive entrance. A small jar or plastic bag is often easier to use than the traditional matchbox. The common infections diagnosed by microscopy are Nosema - a bacterial infection of the gut, and Acarine, a mite that lodges in the breathing tubes of bees.

To prepare the samples, first the wings, legs and hairy thorax were removed with a scalpel and forceps. This reduces the amount of external debris contaminating the sample. The abdomens were then crushed in distilled water and allowed to stand for a few minutes so solid waste could sink to the bottom of the mortar. A drop of the remaining liquid was placed on a slide, with a cover slip

so we could examine the contents. Although this sounds fairly straightforward, the manual dexterity required does need practice.

Vanessa had brought a number of flowers from her garden, an object lesson itself in which flowers have easily accessible pollen. Vanessa used a small portable hot plate to dry the slides, which had been cleaned with a solution of isopropyl alcohol (IPA). Pollen tends to be greasy so once the pollen had been transferred to the slide, Vanessa rinsed them again in IPA. She then used a tiny drop of tinted glycerine to stain the pollen before placing the cover slip. Vanessa suggested making a library of pollen from your garden for reference. The slides can be sealed with clear nail varnish and retained for future reference. Don't forget to label your slides! You can check the pollen in your honey, but this requires dissolving the honey in water and then using a centrifuge to collect the grains.



It was interesting to note that the cost of microscopes and tools was not as great as I thought. You do not need a full laboratory standard microscope and everything is generally available on the internet.

Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer

Ightham Mote Craft Fair

The branch had been invited to participate in the Ightham Mote Craft Fair this year (*writes Liz Birchenough*). The planned dates were 17th-18th September, the weekend before the Queen's funeral, so the organisers took the decision to postpone the event until the spring. As soon as we get the new dates we will let you know.

Apiary Site

One of our retired members, Richard Olley, is planting a wildflower meadow on his property, which is very close to our Barrwood apiary. Richard would be delighted to offer space for up to four hives to one of our members who cannot keep bees at home.

Contact Richard on 07973 226727 or by email richard.olley@mail.com

For Sale

Jane Tamlyn has recently moved to Tunbridge Wells and is giving up beekeeping. She is selling all her equipment, including six nationals. Two have deep broods, which she thinks are new, five new varroa floors, and all have hive stands. There are extra coverboards and queen excluders, frames, wax, smoker and supers, deep and shallow roofs and a box of jars, lids, a honey container and sieve.

She is suggesting 1/3 or 1/2 retail price depending on condition but is happy to receive fair offers.

Contact Jane on **01892 752172**

Diary Dates

Sunday October 2: Final winter preparations at 11am at Hilbert Road Apiary

Saturday October 8: Final winter preparations at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary

Tuesday October 18: Pam Hunter will give a talk at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall, Sevenoaks Weald.

Pam has been keeping bees for more than 25 years and is a Master Beekeeper. She is also a member of BIBBA and the Central Association of Bee-Keepers. Her background is in biological sciences.

Go to our website for all the latest beekeeping news: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Send pictures or items for the newsletter to marystaffurth@yahoo.com