

# SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JULY 2023

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## Working Wonders with Wax

All beekeepers accumulate wax from their hives during the season, which is a valuable resource, not waste material. Providing you do not have a wax moth infestation, or disease in the comb, your wax can be recycled.



This activity was led by Cliff and Sue, assisted by Pauline, Martin, and me.

The attendees were divided up into groups so everyone could practise the range of skills on show. During the introduction, Cliff emphasised important safety points regarding the fire risk from overheating wax, and talked through the basic equipment that is needed for wax preparation.

Sue started by demonstrating cleaning and sterilising techniques using a proprietary wax kettle, showing how the prepared wax could be formed into blocks for later use. Sue also had a really neat trick to form wax into small granules, which makes subsequent melting far easier.

Cliff demonstrated the techniques of making dipped candles, including keeping the wick straight and central. Pauline (*pictured*) demonstrated making moulded candles and rolled candles - very popular and achievable for younger children.

Martin had a go at making foundation in a mould embossed with cell shapes. This was remarkably successful. The final activity was making wax food wraps using Sue's granulated wax.

Everyone went home with their samples and, hopefully, a few ideas for entries in the forthcoming honey show.

*Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer*

## Praise Bee! Plans for a Churchyard Apiary

We recently received a request from St Paul's Church, Rusthall, for advice regarding the possibility of starting a small apiary in the churchyard. I met one of the church wardens and a member of the PCC to talk through the practicalities, costs, and time commitment. I also advised that the prospective beekeepers should join the branch and get some hands-on experience before making a final decision.

The Church Youth Council has expressed an interest in the project and is keen to be involved. I was invited to meet the Youth Council and talk through my personal experiences of beekeeping. The meeting was well attended by Youth Council members, the Vicar and Youth Council leaders. During the talk, I tried to ensure everyone understood that beekeeping was fascinating and frustrating, as well as a long-term commitment, and that the bees would work to their own agenda depending on the conditions. Although the church is not in the middle of a built-up area, it is still a public space with local residents attending services or wishing to visit family graves in the churchyard. This prompted a serious discussion about locating an apiary, and the careful management of swarming. It was really encouraging that these young people were enthusiastic but realistic about what beekeeping might entail.

I am sure they will make a carefully considered decision, and I wish them well.

*Liz Birchenough*

## Spreading the Word at Edenbridge

Edenbridge Craft Fair usually takes place around Easter, but this year was postponed while repairs were completed at Rickards Hall. The delay and a short burst of rain did not seem to dampen the spirits of visitors. A range of local craft producers, including ourselves, were installed in the courtyard of Rickards Hall on Saturday 17 June, along with a live folk band and beer tent.

Events such as these are primarily to promote public awareness about beekeeping in general. We had information relating to pollinator-friendly planting and Asian Hornets. I was pleasantly surprised at how well-informed people were about Asian Hornets, and how many people took a copy of the information leaflet with the emergency contact details for potential sightings.

Several people were interested in the possibility of either keeping bees or providing out-apiary space for beekeepers without their own facilities. All of these enquires will be addressed on a case-by-case basis with the emphasis, as always, on very careful planning and advice.

*Liz Birchenough*

### Extractors For Hire

The branch has two hand-powered extractors available for hire by members. They both have stainless steel drums, capable of taking nine national super frames at a time. The hire charge is £15 for three days; you will have to arrange collection and return. Payments should preferably be made directly into the branch account, using the same details as for paying your subs, otherwise by cheque or cash.

Please note the extractors are quite bulky, so you may need a friend to help lift one in and out of your car. You will be given instructions about the use and cleaning of the extractors.

If you are north of Tonbridge contact Sarah Rapley: [stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk)

For those of you in Tonbridge and further south contact Liz Birchenough:

[membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.co.uk)

### A Prime Swarm



*Photo by John Farrow*

## Apiary Meetings

Club apiary meetings in July will focus on bee health and include a thorough comb inspection to look for disease.

**Hilbert Road Apiary on Sunday 2 July at 11am** with Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

**Barrwood Apiary on Saturday 8 July at 2pm** with Cliff Hayward, Barrwood Apiary Manager

**Hilbert Road Apiary on Sunday 16 July at 11am** with Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

**Barrwood Apiary on Saturday 22 July at 2pm** with Cliff Hayward, Barrwood Apiary Manager

*Send photos or articles for the newsletter to [marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)*

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