

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2023

Editor: Mary Staffurth
Tel: 01732 462931 / Email: marystaffurth@yahoo.com
Branch website: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>



Get Ready for the Honey Show

If you are not yet preparing your entries for next month's branch honey show then now is the time to begin. It will take place on Saturday 7th October at St John's Church Centre, Foxbush, Hildenborough. There is a whole range of classes from beeswax candles and honey to cakes and useful beekeeping items. The full schedule was emailed with last month's newsletter. It is always worth reading the rules very carefully because it is so easy to be caught out by entering an item that is the wrong size. This year for the first time the show is being held alongside a craft fair.

Entries need to be staged at the hall between 9.30am and 10.30am. Judging then takes place behind closed doors before the honey show and craft fair open to the public at 2pm. There will be refreshments, flowers, children's craft activity, wax based toiletries and gifts, candles, bat and bird boxes for the garden, bee themed art and gifts and a raffle. There will also be a branch stand with general beekeeping information.

If you can help on the day please contact Sue Knights: soozbeez@gmail.com

Action on Asian Hornets

The yellow-legged Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, is proving to be a common visitor to the UK this year. All Kent Beekeepers Association Members received a mailing from the General Secretary and Membership Secretary of KBKA in early July asking everyone to help with the efforts to monitor and be vigilant for the Asian hornet and to take action locally.



The National Bee Unit (NBU) is asking for monitoring traps to be put up wherever possible, to try to keep on top of the incursion of the Asian hornets and it is asking members to report the location of these traps, so they can keep an eye on where there may be gaps in coverage. If you are able to install a monitoring trap and report its location this will be valuable to the NBU.

Information on commercially available and home-made DIY monitoring traps, along with how to use them etc. is available here:

https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_01_Asian_Hornet_Monitoring.pdf

Our branch has six Asian Hornet Team Members (AHAT) and our location and contact details are on the BBKA AHAT Map found here: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-action-team-map>

Asian hornets can only reproduce in autumn when the nest begins to produce males and future queens (gynes). This means that if nests are found and destroyed by the NBU early on then no reproductive individuals will have escaped the nest and therefore population growth is contained. If mated gynes escape the nest, they can overwinter and start a new nest next year so it is important to identify existing nests and have them destroyed before reproductive hornets are produced.

Please help if you can.

Vanessa Jones, Branch Asian Hornet Co-ordinator: 07799 383996 vanessajones@btinternet.com

Healthy Colonies

Our first indoor talk of the season is on Tuesday September 19th at Weald Memorial Hall. Clive de Bruyn will speak about Keeping Bees Healthy. Clive started beekeeping in the 1960s and has worked for the National Bee Unit, for a bee farming enterprise and is the author of a number of beekeeping books and papers.

Bees in the Pump House



Bethany School at Goudhurst was all set to demolish the swimming pool pump house until the discovery of a colony of behind the wooden panelling.

John Farrow and Sarah Rapley went to the rescue, using a crowbar to lever off the wooden boarding to reveal the colony size. The comb was cut out and placed on frames in a poly nucleus with about half of the bees.

This nucleus is modified to convert to a Bee-Vac which they then used to mop up the remaining bees that were still occupying this cavity.

Telling Tales of Bees

I had originally been invited to talk to the residents at Emily Jackson Care Home in Sevenoaks about beekeeping to coincide with World Bee Day (*writes Liz Birchenough*). Unfortunately I was already attending another event, so this month was the next convenient date. The activity coordinator at the home has the difficult task of inviting a range of speakers from the local community to provide new interest for the residents, hopefully to encourage them to start discussions or trigger memories.

The remit was fairly simple, a short and friendly talk about becoming a beekeeper. My first approach was to ask if anyone had previous beekeeping experience. This can be a double-edged sword, a very experienced retired beekeeper in the audience can either be a great way to start the conversation or a reminder you still have a lot to learn. As it happened, no-one had kept bees before, although one or two residents had encountered swarms, another opportunity to get the conversation flowing. I had to go a bit off-piste at this point and jump straight into "how to catch a swarm". I did point out that bees can be very fickle and uncooperative, and will not always decide to take up residence in the nice box you have so carefully provided for them.

All in all, it was quite a challenging afternoon, but the staff were satisfied that the residents did respond and show interest, and hopefully some of the staff will come along to the honey show in October.

Honey Harvest

Many beekeepers have experienced a disappointing honey harvest this year and this includes the club apiaries at Barrwood and Hilbert Road. If you are looking to buy local honey, members will be selling their produce at the branch honey show.

Apiary Meetings

September's Apiary meetings will concentrate on a health check, queen selection and uniting colonies

Barrwood Apiary on Saturday September 2 at 2pm with Cliff Hayward, Barrwood Apiary Manager

Hilbert Road Apiary Sunday September 3 at 11am with Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Barrwood Apiary on Saturday September 23 at 2pm with Cliff Hayward, Barrwood Apiary Manager

Hilbert Road Apiary Sunday September 24 at 11am with Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Send photos or articles for the newsletter to marystaffurth@yahoo.com

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