

# SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2023

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## It's Showtime!

Our honey show takes place this month and will be combined with a craft show for the first time. If you are entering any of the classes make sure to be at the hall between 9.30am and 10.30am to stage your entries. Judging will take place behind closed doors in the morning. If you are not entering then come in the afternoon, from 2pm, to see the winning products and browse the craft stalls. The show is on Saturday 7th October at St John's Church Centre, Foxbush, Hildenborough.

## October Talk

Our next evening meeting, due to take place on Tuesday October 17th, has been cancelled. The plan was to discuss the existential threat posed by the Asian Hornet. However, the neighbouring Orpington branch is planning a similar event which will be open to all KBKA members. It is due to take place towards the end of the month. Details will be sent to all members by email.

## Stress Free Bees

We were very lucky that Clive de Bruyn was able to deliver his lecture on healthy bees at our September meeting and we invited neighbouring branches to enable other beekeepers to benefit from Clive's experience. We pretty much had a full house to hear a clear and energetic presentation. Clive was very much of the opinion that stress is no better for bees than it is for beekeepers and, in some cases, beekeepers can be a major cause of stress. Clive said that, in his opinion, all pollinators were equally important to our ecosystems. In some ways he felt the honey bee had gained undue prominence thanks to celebrity endorsement to the detriment of many other insects, so we need to make our outdoor spaces a good place throughout the year for all pollinators.



*Photo by Paul Abbott*

As with any animal, health depends on nutrition, which for bees means pollen proteins and not just nectar. Clive is an advocate of a rich diversity of planting and emphasised the importance of a multitude of plants through the seasons with simple, accessible sources of pollen and nectar. He is also a fan of no-mow gardening to encourage native wild flower growth. On a personal note, I tried no-mow May this year, which morphed into no-mow June and July. The results were fascinating and the garden fared much better than expected during the hot dry spell with long grass.

In early spring when the queen starts laying, bees need considerable amounts of pollen to feed the developing brood. In suburban areas there are often sufficient spring bulbs to provide the pollen but, if your bees are on agricultural land with monoculture crops, you may need to provide a supplementary feed of pollen. When to feed is a function of your local environment so your knowledge of local weather patterns, farming practices and so on is key to correctly supporting the colonies through the spring.

One common hazard, however, is insecticide use. In suburban areas, you have absolutely no control over what, when and how your neighbours spray their gardens. As a general rule - don't spray, and try to have a grown up conversation with your neighbours about less invasive gardening techniques.

The living conditions of our bees are paramount to reducing stress levels, so Clive reminded us about looking properly during inspections: cool smoke, sufficient space, signs of a laying queen, signs of infections, signs of imminent swarming. Clive was clear that many beekeepers are their own worst enemies during inspections. He made the point that smooth, gentle handling of frames was essential, as was good apiary hygiene. Clive regularly cycles frames, he uses the queen year colours to mark the year a new frame has been inserted. When the foundation can no longer be used, the wax is removed and the frames sterilised by heating in a soda solution. On the subject of disease, Clive does not advocate a particular method of varroa control, but said you must monitor infestation levels and treat when needed.

So what was my take home message? I think what impressed me the most was that even with Clive's decades of experience he was still actively learning and allowing his techniques to evolve to meet the changing and challenging environment in which we live.

*Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer*

## A Summer of Swarms



We had a total of 29 Swarm requests from branch members this year and 26 of those were satisfied by our swarm collectors. Our thanks go to our five collectors covering the Sevenoaks area and our two Tunbridge Wells collectors. Next year it would be great to have some more volunteers for the Tunbridge Wells area. If you are interested email: [stweditor@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:stweditor@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk)

*John Farrow, Swarm Co-ordinator*

## European Foulbrood Warning

There was a confirmed case of EFB close to our Barrwood apiary in the Hildenborough/Shipbourne area in September. If you think you have European Foulbrood in your colonies you should contact the National Bee Unit as soon as possible: [nbu@apha.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@apha.gov.uk)

You can also contact the regional bee inspector Thomas Bickerdike: 07775 119464  
[Thomas.Bickerdike@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Thomas.Bickerdike@apha.gov.uk)

## Asian Hornets on the Bus

The British Beekeepers Association is running a public awareness campaign in Kent. Asian Hornet information banners are being displayed on the backs of buses. If you see any of these posters please let me know the town/route so that I can feed the information back to BBKA. Also let me know if you don't see any of the publicity. The campaign is running in the counties most affected by the Asian Hornet from September 25 for four weeks.

*Liz Birchenough: [membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk)*

## Apiary Meetings

October's branch apiary meetings will concentrate on preparations for winter  
**Hilbert Road Apiary on Sunday October 15th at 2pm** with Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager  
**Barrwood Apiary on Saturday October 21st at 2pm** with Cliff Hayward, Barrwood Apiary Manager

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

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