

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JUNE 2024

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Drawing the Crowds

The Sevenoaks Climate Fair was held at The Vine at the beginning of May. This was the second time we had attended as representatives of the beekeeping community. Thankfully, the rain and wind had stopped, so we were hoping for a good turnout and were not disappointed.



On our stand, we were publicising the Asian Hornet situation and distributing monitoring kits, along with instructions on how to spot Asian Hornets. We also had an observation hive which drew a mixed crowd of parents and children, giving an opportunity to talk about responsible beekeeping and gardening to support pollinators in general.

We had some bee-themed crafts for the very youngest children and, as the weather was quite warm, the candle rolling was a great success. We were selling wooden bee hotels and bat boxes, plus honey supplied by branch members. We managed to recruit a couple of new friend members, and were honoured with a visit from the Mayor of Sevenoaks, Councillor Claire Shea, who was present in her official capacity, escorted by the Town Crier (*pictured*

with his jar of honey).

We were approached by a representative of Tunbridge Wells Council, who was investigating the possibility of a similar event; we will let you know how this develops.

Liz Birchenough

Apiary Site in Sevenoaks

I manage Connections Business Park, Vestry Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 5DF, and I have identified three peaceful locations on site, behind warehouse units, which may be suitable to locate beehives. These areas have the benefit of ease of close access on level ground and we are surrounded by hedgerows, gardens and fields.

We would like to offer one or two of these locations on a goodwill basis to help our biodiversity and to help beekeepers if they are looking for a local site.

Contact: Roger Field, Facilities Manager. Tel: 07587552591 Email: roger.field@bellrockgroup.co.uk

Honey Extractor Hire

The branch has two nine-frame mechanical extractors available to branch members. They cost £15 each for up to three days. The user is responsible for collection and return. The extractors are quite bulky, so you may need another person to help lift one in and out of your car. You will be given instructions on use and cleaning. Please make sure the extractor is clean and dry on return.

To hire an extractor contact Sarah Rapley stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk if you are in the Sevenoaks area, or Liz Birchenough: membershp@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk if you are in Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells area.

Building up at Hilbert Road



In May, our two colonies became four, and then six. A second brood box was deployed a couple of weeks ago on both poly hives to reduce the risk of swarming and, with brood in all stages in the two colonies we divided them. We ensured both boxes had eggs and therefore had no need to find the queen. We returned two days later to find that one of the boxes in each split had queen cells.

The queen right colonies were marked and the queen cells removed from the others. This was done because the bees were likely to have gone into emergency mode and used older larvae to build the new queens. The best queens are reared from eggs rather than larvae.

The following Sunday the colonies were checked for capped queen cells: there were a number. It would have been a shame to take them all down so we decided to set up a couple of nucs with the spares. It's now a waiting game while these four colonies are on 'maternity leave' for four weeks. Let's hope the weather allows for productive mating flights.

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager



Wax workshop

The wax workshop has always been popular with family members, and this year was no exception. At the start of the meeting, while the wax pots were melting, Cliff Hayward gave a brief introduction about the range of uses for wax debris from your hives, accompanied by some wonderful images for wax modelling and sculpture. Sue Knights then gave a demonstration of the process for cleaning and filtering used wax, explaining why it was important to rinse away honey remains with soft water rather than tap water. She also reminded everyone that wax was flammable, explaining what precautions should be taken during the melting process.

Once the wax was ready, the participants were let loose on the practical activities. Cliff was demonstrating the process for making dipped candles. Pauline Hayward was showing people how to make rolled candles and moulded candles. Martin Barrett was in charge of making new sheets of foundation and I was making wax wraps in the kitchen.

Everyone went home with a goodie bag containing their samples, and we do hope that we will have inspired more people to enter the wax classes in our honey show in October.

Liz Birchenough

A Slow Start at Barwood

The weather meant that we got off to a poor start to the season this year. It has been decidedly cold and wet almost the whole of spring, making it a difficult time for the bees. With a large amount of brood to be fed, stores that were brought in on brief periods of fine weather were quickly exhausted. One could normally expect to have added at least one super by the beginning of May. Instead, bees were in danger of starvation as they had not had sufficient flying days to collect enough nectar to feed the increasing brood. There was also a possibility that confinement to the hive would encourage swarming.

In April, inspections at Barwood were limited to a quick look under the brood box for signs of swarm cells. Although the beekeeping has been limited, we have continued to clean up stored equipment. We have also now have a new long hive at Barwood. The purpose of this hive is that it saves all the lifting of heavy boxes.

Cliff Hayward

Hives For Sale

Two complete National hives, plus extra supers, stands etc., and about 50 brood and super frames with foundation all ready to be used. Most parts of the hives/frames are brand new. I'm happy to sell at very reasonable prices. Contact Tara Norman: tara@oldburyhouse.com

Extractor For Sale

Used three frame stainless steel tangential manual honey extractor with removable legs. Will take all frames, apart from 14" x 12". Excellent condition. Comes with a 20 litre bucket with valve, triple plastic strainer, uncapping knife and uncapping fork. All for **£150**. Call Leon on 07530737103.

European Foul Brood

The NBU has issued a warning of a confirmed case of European Foul Brood within 3km of our branch apiary at Barrwood. Please be vigilant when undertaking inspections, and be rigorous with hygiene especially with your tools and gloves. If you require additional information, there is a leaflet on the BeeBase website: www.nationalbeeunit.com

If you have moved colonies in or out of this area recently, please inform the local seasonal bee inspector, Danyal Conn. Tel: 07584 202700 or email: Danyal.Conn@apha.gov.uk

Bees and the Law

Advice from Peter Hutton on rules and regulations for beekeepers

There are laws governing pests and diseases affecting bees, such as European foulbrood. It is useful for all beekeepers to be familiar with the rules. There are also regulations about the import of honey bees.

Register your hive locations on Bee Base so that, in the event of disease and poisoning within flying distance of your apiaries, you will be notified by bee inspectors. Both European foulbrood and American foulbrood are notifiable diseases and you must, if you suspect either, report them to the NBU.

I organised a visit some 40 years ago with the bee inspectorate for an exhibition of actual samples in a sealed encasement at the Detling Show Ground. The 25 beekeepers who attended were able to identify the diseases for other beekeepers. I also arranged for inspectors to visit a block of beekeepers so that we could learn and the inspector could save time. One member had EFB in all ten colonies. He said that directly he lifted the roof of a hive there was the stink of secondary infection.

There is also legislation governing the composition and labelling of honey for sale, which you need to become familiar with, in particular if you sell your honey, wholesale or retail.

This link to the National Bee Unit will take you to details of all the relevant legislation: <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/bees-and-the-law/>

A good book to have is *Bees-at-Law* by Noël Sweeney, available from Northern Bee Books.

The BBKA has published an advisory leaflet: *Bees, Neighbours and Siting an Apiary*: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8effceac-8e8f-4c81-9784-2a98bfbdc7b4>

Apiary Meetings

Sunday 9 June at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.

Saturday 15 June at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.

Sunday 23 June at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.

Saturday 29 June at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.

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/>