

# Gravesend Beeline

The newsletter  
of the  
Gravesend Branch  
of KBKA  
April  
2015



[www.kentbee.com/  
kbka/branches/  
gravesend](http://www.kentbee.com/kbka/branches/gravesend)

*Hi everyone,*

The recent warm weather has given us an opportunity to open the hives and take a closer look at the colonies which are now building up rapidly. It will soon be time to start weekly inspections in order to take suitable swarm prevention measures. With that in mind, the topic for discussion at last Sunday's meeting at Cobham Hall was swarm control.

Once again the meeting was very well attended and the speaker was Bob Smith, who spent 6 years as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Kent and now runs beekeeping courses based in Chatham Dockyard.



For more information about Bob's courses visit [ksrcbees.org.uk](http://ksrcbees.org.uk)

Bob explained that the key to managing swarming was to understand why and how bees follow this natural instinct. The aim of the beekeeper should be to avoid the triggers which lead a colony to start building queen cells and preparing to swarm.

Making sure that the brood box has plenty of room for the queen to lay in is one priority – as Bob said: 'the brood box is for brood'. If it is congested with pollen or old stores from winter, then the colony will think it needs to split. Another way of reducing the risk of swarming is to keep young queens (one or two years old) which produce lots of pheromone and thus keep the colony from departing.

Finally, a good knowledge of the honey bee lifecycle is essential when deciding what action to take - especially the number of days that it takes queens and workers to develop from eggs to larvae to hatching. Bob emphasised the need for weekly inspections to spot the signs of swarm preparations, and briefly outlined the various methods for preventing the colony swarming.

## An inspector calls

For the May meeting we have managed to arrange a visit by the local Seasonal Bee Inspector, Brian McCallum. Brian has attended our meetings in the past and is the person most likely to come and visit your colonies if you think you might have a disease issue.

Brian will be looking through the hives in the club apiary and all members are welcome to come along with their bee suits and watch him in action. This is an opportunity to see how the professionals carry out a hive inspection and to ask any questions you may have about the role of bee inspectors. They look at many different hives from all around the area, and so this will be a golden opportunity to find out what is happening locally from someone with an overview of beekeeping in our area. This is a meeting not to be missed.

**Sunday 17 May, 2.30pm**

**Cobham Hall apiary**

Let me know if you need directions. [01474 702666; [lesleyfancote@msn.com](mailto:lesleyfancote@msn.com)]

## Inspection rota

The weekly inspection rota has been finalised and those involved have been sent a copy of the schedule. Please let Michelle know if you do not have a copy but would like one. ([mellidrang@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mellidrang@blueyonder.co.uk))

Inspections will take place every Sunday during May, June and July, at either 11am or 2pm (check the schedule for timings for each week). Each inspection is managed by two of the more experienced club members who have volunteered, but all members are welcome to come along, watch and help out.

*Lesley*

See p2 for the latest member profile



## Personal Profile



### Frank Stanley

Frank started his first colony using a national hive in his garden last summer. Coming from an IT background, he realised bees had an orderly life style which he found fascinating and wanted to explore in more detail. He believes that we all need to be kind to nature and keeping bees is his small contribution to helping out.

“I had always talked about wanting to keep bees and about three years ago my daughters bought me a taster course run by Yalding and District Beekeepers. Throughout the cold and snowy winter of 2013 I spent every other Wednesday travelling to Yalding to learn the basics. My daughters did not realise at the time that there was a Gravesend club.

“I started watching hours of YouTube video, reading books and searching eBay for hives. After joining the Gravesend branch, I first checked the most common hive used by club members and adopted the same. I have one national hive with double brood boxes. Fortunately having a large garden I was able to set aside a suitable area to site my apiary away from the house.

“Eventually I got my first colony from Roy, another member of Gravesend club, and started on the road from theory to hands-on experience. Roy was very helpful, allowing me to accompany him for a day inspecting all his hives. This

was invaluable in gaining confidence to take the leap into handling my own bees.

“I find the club and members very supportive. As a newbie, I am not afraid of asking beginner type questions. Michelle, Lesley and many others are always at hand to answer my queries. The different guest speakers at our Sunday meetings are very interesting and knowledgeable, expanding my knowledge of beekeeping. The club’s hive inspection sessions at the Cobham Hall apiary are also very useful for learning with more experienced members. I have not extracted any honey to date and am looking forward to this year. Taking the advice from the two ladies, I am now feel more prepared ready to expand up to 3 hives.



“So far, my colony seems to have come through the Winter OK, although it seems to have reduced down in size consequently at some stage in the Spring I will be asking for advice to check if I am doing things correctly.

“Just sitting and observing the bees at work has given me great deal of satisfaction. I didn’t expect to find keeping bees so relaxing and a switch off from my day job.”