

MID-KENT BRANCH
KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
March 2011



**"I wonder if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun
And crocus fires are kindling one by one:
Sing robin, sing:
I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring."
- Christina Rossetti**



Dreich Scottish vernacular, adjective. Damp, dreary, overcast, drizzling, looks like it will stay like this for weeks...

The Met Office forecast is for a period of unsettled weather and rain to mid March. Temperatures will remain below average. Irrespective of this, I find it cheering that the early mornings are lighter and everywhere you look nature is beginning to stir. Bees have been active on very few occasions during February as the temperature has been persistently low. Watch out for pollen being brought in, as this triggers brood rearing with a vengeance. March is a dangerous time not only for Roman Emperors, but also for bees when food for young larvae and no nectar being brought in means that stores are rapidly depleted and starvation is a real possibility: fondant is cheaper than a nucleus of bees!

Members often ask what plants are recommended to attract bees and provide much needed forage at various times of the year. Go to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for a comprehensive list that includes shrubs, vegetables and trees. <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Learning/Research/biodiversity/plantsforbees.htm> (S.A 2010) *A familiar story so far this month: let's hope the temperature is on the increase to keep pace with the cost of living!*

Questionnaire

With the newsletter this month is a questionnaire for branch members. What would you like from the branch? Where do you think it should concentrate its energies? There is a massive resurgence across a whole spectrum of activities such as 'grow your own', beekeeping and keeping poultry. Your views really count in ensuring that the branch responds to expectations and meets your needs. What will the branch offer aspiring future members? Bring the completed form to the next branch meeting or e-mail.

This Summer's Programme

The committee has thought carefully about the meetings and ensuring that there are different activities that reflect the different level of skills and abilities of the branch members. In April at the first outdoor meeting there will be a beginners group with emphasis on frame handling technique. Even though some of the beginners don't yet have their own bees, we want to give them the opportunity to handle frames with bees. The knowledge and experience of our branch members that have kept bees for many years is one of our most precious assets.

Next Meeting
Tuesday March 15th @7.30 p.m. at the East Malling Research Centre.

'Crop protection in fruit crops and its risks to bees.'
Professor Jerry Cross
East Malling Research

Please try to attend for the final indoor meeting of 2010/2011 -

Committee Meeting Minutes

If you would like a hard copy of the committee minutes please ask David Wood or Barbara Harris. The minutes will also be made available via the Mid Kent Beekeepers website. www.kentbee.com/midkent

Medway Annual Lecture

Lecture on “Update on Bee Research” by Norman Carreck NDB. Secretary of the NDB Board and Researcher at Sussex University working for Professor Ratnieks. Norman is also technical adviser for the British Beekeepers Association.

Starts 2:00 pm on Saturday 19th March at Cliffe Village Hall.

Location: The Hall is situated opposite St Helens Primary School on the B200 (Church Street). Look out for the yellow Medway Beekeepers signs. There is no admission charge, Refreshments will be provided and Everyone is welcome!

Just buy a few raffle tickets to help defray costs Further details – contact Alex Barker on 01634 406360. Rhonda Barker Events Secretary Medway B Association on 01634 406360 rhonda@alexbarkeonline.com

Swarm Policy

The point to note is that the Branch does not have any financial interest in the collecting and selling of swarms. Our sole concern is that swarms are captured properly and then allocated to those who need them, on a fair basis with preference given to those members who have no bees.

Bees Needs

Do remember that if you received your bees last year, then you must be prepared to deal with your colony in the event that it decides to swarm. You need to ensure that you have a second hive complete with frames and foundation together with a rapid feeder since you will need to have a minimum of two colonies if you are to cope with the unexpected.

Notes from the Chair

The move to EMR from Hunton is well underway. The committee spent a Sunday morning in February clearing the shed and caravan and have temporarily stored equipment at the new site. The actual date for the shed move is 28th February it will then be a matter of setting it up again ready for late March.

We have had excellent response to the third basic beeping course that started in February. 15 members for the past 6 weeks have been able to learn and hone their skills in beekeeping. They are all looking forward to putting their knowledge into action in April at the apiary. I take this opportunity of wishing those of you who are taking the Basic Exam in April all the best and keep studying.

The February indoor meeting was well supported to hear Dr Michelle Fountain provide an informative talk on Pollination of Blackcurrants and beekeeping in New Zealand. – Thank you Michelle.

I hope that you will all complete the attached Questionnaire, it's important to your committee to know what you would like from the Branch so please take a few minutes to complete the form and return it to any of the committee or directly to Barbara Harris as below.

Dick Cullen Chairman

Future Meetings

15th March (Tues) – Crop protection and it's threat to Bees last indoor meeting.
10th Apr (Sun) – Spring Inspection: this meeting will also be targeted at those on the Basic Course,
8th May (Sun) – Basic Day Prep and Swarm Control
5th June (Sun) – Honey Extraction
24th July (Sun) – Peter Allen's Apiary Visit
August – Holidays, nothing planned.
11th Sept (Sun) – Winter Preparation/Varroa Control

Editor: David Wood (david.wood63@tiscali.co.uk), Distribution: David Wood, John Wood
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**KENT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
MID KENT BRANCH**

Working for the beekeepers in Mid Kent.

We would like your feedback and views on how the branch is serving you and how we can do better. In order to do this we are asking you to complete the following questionnaire and return to Barbara Harris

barbara.harris@btopenworld.com

BRANCH MEETINGS

	Yes	No
Do you attend branch meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are they on a convenient day for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are they at a convenient time for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are they held at a convenient place for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you find the subject matter relevant to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you find meeting other beekeepers helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What topics would you like us to cover?.....		
Do you regularly receive the newsletter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you regularly read the newsletter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you find it informative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like to see any additional information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporated into the newsletter on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you attended the Christmas Meal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like to have more family events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like to have different events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Buddy System

The Branch is in the process of setting up a buddy system. Putting together new beekeepers with those with a little bit more experience that live near them.

Would you be willing to help a new beekeeper?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need a buddy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you be willing to allow your telephone/email address to be passed on to a person in your area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name.....

E-Mail Address.....

Telephone No.....

HAVE YOUR SAY

Please use this space to make comments, or put forward suggestions

Please return the completed form to Barbara.harris9@btopenworld.com or post to Greenhills, Greenway Forstal Hollingbourne, ME17 1QA