

MID-KENT BRANCH
KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
March 2010



**"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 to 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 the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for a comprehensive list that includes shrubs, vegetables and trees as well. <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Learning/Research/biodiversity/plantsforbees.htm>

Questionnaire

With the newsletter this month is a questionnaire for branch members. What do you want 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.

Beginners Course – How's it going?

We have had another excellent response to the second basic beeping course that started in February and is both a great encouragement for the future of the branch and provokes serious thought about the best strategy for its future. From the experience of last year when numbers proved that the venue was not appropriate, we decided to change location which meant that numbers had to be limited to 15 and several were disappointed as there was no room for them on the course.

Last Month

The February Meeting was well attended and Peter Schmoeger provided a very informative talk on a 'flying start' to beekeeping during the approaching spring. The emphasis remains on hygiene and spare equipment so that bees are kept in optimum condition. A member brought a brood box from a failed colony to the meeting. Despite sufficient food store it was assessed that the colony did not have sufficient numbers, possibly due to a weak, late queen that could have been poorly mated.

This Summer's Programme

In next month's newsletter the full summer programme will be published. The committee has thought carefully about the meetings and ensuring that there are different activities at some meetings that reflect the different level of skills and abilities of the branch members. On April 25th 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.

Committee Meeting Minutes

If you would like a copy of the committee minutes – let David, Simon or Brian know. We'll be happy to provide them.

Branch Apiary Maintenance

During the Easter week in April (Easter Monday is 5th April), on a dry and preferably sunny day, we aim to have a maintenance day at the apiary – cut the grass, trim hedges etc. Any helping hands are welcome. Please register your interest at the next branch meeting or send us an e-mail.

Elementary my dear Watson!

Medway Beekeepers Annual Lecture

Saturday 13th March 2010 at 2.00p.m.

Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas will speak on 'Pollen in Forensic Science' at Wainscott Memorial Hall, Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG

Dr Keith-Lucas will show how pollen can be used in solving a wide variety of crimes, from honey fraud, theft of plants, firearms and other terrorist offences, rape and murder plus a few bits of botanical evidence such as fibres, wood, fungal spores and plant DNA. He will also include his most recent case at the Old Bailey. Michael is an excellent speaker and his subject is truly fascinating.

Please let Rhonda know by **this Friday** if you wish to attend

Rhonda Barker Events Secretary Medway B Association on 01634 406360
rhonda@alexbarkeonline.com

Swarm Policy

For the coming spring and summer we are providing a written swarm policy. This is part of next month's newsletter. We think it's important because it provides transparency on the way we deal with this. 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.

Next Meeting

Thursday March 18th @7.30 p.m. at the Bull, East Farleigh.

Norman and Adrian from Blue Bell Hill Apiaries have kindly offered to give a presentation on start up equipment best practice, and the common mistakes that people make. This is a very interesting perspective from a supplier. They will also be discussing the new products that Maisemore are introducing to the market this year. Blue Bell Hill Apiaries are a Kent business selling Maisemore equipment, one of the UK main manufacturers.

- Please try to attend for the final indoor meeting of 2009/2010 -

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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"/>
Have you attended the Petanque + BBQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you enjoy them?	<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