

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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See our website: www.kentbee.com/stw/

First Bee Extraction of the Year from a Sevenoaks Chimney



This picture is of Sarah Rapley, clearly enjoying herself, on top of a roof, starting the sticky process of removing a colony of bees that had been occupying the chimney stack in a 19th century property. We met up at noon on Sunday the 5th of March when the temperatures were hovering around seven degrees Celsius, which is not ideal when disturbing bees. We were called in by the owner because the roofing contractors had discovered the bees when they were about to re-point the chimney.

We spent an interesting two hours removing the colony from the chimney. The bees had clearly been there for many years, judging by the length of honeycomb that stretched deep into the length of this stack.

Click on the pdf below to see the excellent pictures taken by Louise Bayne; she came along to witness what was involved, as she has offered to deputise for Sarah when swarms need to be collected on weekdays.

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~doc/11-quarry-cottages-chimney-bee-removal.pdf>

You can also look under 'NOTICE BOARD' on our website to see how the Sevenoaks team spent a quiet Sunday afternoon.

John Farrow

A Strong Start for Hilbert Road



On Saturday the 11th of March, it was a very warm and sunny spring day and eleven members attended. Our highest record of participants since I started as manager of the local apiary. We tidied the grounds raking the autumn leaves in piles. We all needed to wear our bee suits because of the busy bee activity. We opened up one of the hives. It was a small colony from a bait hive, nearly six frames with eggs, larvae and capped brood. Since it came from a bait hive the width of the frames/beeswax were uneven and we will correct it by encouraging the bees to draw out frames using the bailey comb change method when we have the next meeting. The queen was also seen. We didn't have any marking equipment with us but will try to mark her next time. The bait hive was constructed by Robin last June and placed on the apiary's beehaus. Robin has also repaired the solar wax melter, which can be used immediately. Thank you Robin! The apiary now has a portable incinerator and it will be used for burning old frames and other detritus. This will reduce the risk of spreading diseases and contamination of equipment.

The best thing that happens at these beekeeper meetings is the opportunity to share information and discuss all bee related topics with each other. We discussed swarming techniques, feeding and marking queens. Finally, we finished with hot drinks and muffins. The next meeting will be on Saturday the 8th of April. Hope the weather will be as good.

Ellen Montelius

Room to Expand at Barrwood

Ten members attended the meeting on the 18th of March. They ranged from our two most experienced beekeepers, who have well over 100 years of beekeeping between them, to three new members who have yet to start beekeeping.

As seems to be the pattern for Barrwood meetings, a spell of fine weather ended with Saturday being rather cool. Although full inspections were not to be advised, we did take the opportunity to change the floors. John Hendrie brought along the supers that we had extracted honey from at the end of last season, so these were returned to the hives, giving the colonies plenty of room to expand.

Of particular interest at this meeting was a Flow Hive, which a member brought along for us to study. It will be interesting to hear about the progress of this very different hive.

At our next meeting, on the 1st of April, we hope, weather permitting, to carry out the first full inspections of our hives.

Cliff Hayward

Do You Want a Swarm?

We already have more than 10 members on this year's swarm list, so if you would like to be added to it because you have lost your bees this winter, send your **Name, Address, Land Line & Mobile No.** by email to John Farrow at: dynesbarn@gmail.com. We make a nominal charge of between £10 and £20 depending on distance and difficulty involved in their collection.

Visit to the Apiary at Chartwell

Did Churchill keep bees? In about 1934 Winston Churchill and his wife Clementine became very interested in beekeeping at Chartwell. Clemmie had been a member of the Kent Beekeepers' Association for several years and it was she, apparently, who dived in with the greater enthusiasm. If you want to learn more we are going to visit the apiary at Chartwell on Saturday the 20th of May. The plan is to divide the group into two; one half will inspect the three hives while the other half has a guided tour of the gardens and then the groups will swap round. Entry is of course free to National Trust members but there will be a £6.70 charge for non-members. We are limited to 40 people so it will be on a first come, first served basis. If you are interested please email me at dynesbarn@gmail.com I will give more detail in my confirmation email to you.

John Farrow

Getting the Best from your Bees

March has gone, so now the bees will increase breeding space (*writes Peter Hutton*). The pussy willow (*Salix caprea*) has produced pollen and nectar during some fine weather; sloes, damsons and plums will add to the bounty. Cherries and pears are not far off flowering.

What next? Directly there is a warm day and you can inspect each of your colonies, then do so. Do not split the brood yet, but do work any old or damaged combs to the outside of the expanding brood nest ready to be changed at the next inspection for new wax in clean frames. Remember the queen's increased egg-laying is proportional to the royal jelly being fed to her, which in turn is proportional to the incoming nectar. She must have enough space in which to lay the ever-increasing number of eggs. There is a brake, it can be obvious or invisible, it is the space or lack of it for her to lay eggs, as well as the number of young bees that may not be fully employed and therefore creating congestion. Add a super or two if there is plenty of nectar being stored.

At the next inspection place one frame of foundation between the outer frame of brood and the frame containing pollen: this will create a vacuum where the wax-building bees then convert nectar to wax production, giving the queen a complete frame for egg laying. The more eggs she lays, the more she produces queen pheromone, which stops both swarming and superseding.

Be prepared for swarming, differentiate between queen cups and queen cells: cups look like acorn cups without acorns. Leave these where you find them but stick a coloured drawing pin onto the top of the frame, you will then immediately know where to look at the next inspection to see if there are eggs or larvae therein. When these cells are idle, they are about 10mm diameter, when they are to be used the workers reduce the diameter of a worker cell. At this point you might prevent swarming by giving the queen more room for egg laying.

If the cups have larvae in them you must try to prevent swarming if you want a honey crop. By the way, at this precise moment I predict a drought this Summer.

Photographing Bee Related Topics



Paul Abbott gave the talk at our March meeting. He started beekeeping and experienced getting stung nearly 50 years ago, when he attended Judd School, Tonbridge. Beekeeping clothing was very rudimentary then, with just a veil, allowing the guard bees to attack areas of deficiency. At London University Paul carried on with beekeeping, and developed his interest in photography. He described the five styles of camera that he uses; from equipment costing £2,500 plus lenses of £1,000 down to the more realistically priced cameras, such as the Olympus Tough Camera (target price £299), designed for underwater use, which allows easy cleaning of propolis, wax etc., and a basic Canon camera bought for £120 with a telephoto lens. Even the mobile phone will take reasonable photographs. A tripod is rarely needed. All these cameras will take video action shots, with sound recording, plus macro capability. There is no need to be an expert photographer, since auto settings on modern digital cameras usually produce decent results.

Paul uses the waterproof Olympus camera routinely whilst carrying out inspections, both outside and inside the hive. This augments the written record card. Much can be learnt about the health and status of the colony by observations at the hive entrance. Pictures taken of drone rejection, dysentery, slugs gaining access, deformed wings due to varroa infestation were projected.

Photos of three nocturnal visiting badgers destroying hives and devouring combs of honey, pollen and brood were also displayed.

John Farrow

This photograph shows six prints on a display board of photomicrographs taken using a microscope at a magnification x30. Left to right from top to bottom: (a) Head of worker bee. (b) Close-up of mouthparts. (c) Antenna of worker. (d) Enlargement of worker mouthparts, including mandibles, maxillae, labial palpus, glossa and labellum. (e) hind leg of worker, including the bee's knees. (f) Hind wing of worker bee, with its distinctive vein pattern.

For more details and photographs go to the article on our website:

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~ doc/paul-abbott-talk-1703.pdf>

Diary Dates

Saturday April 1 at 2pm at Barrwood: Routine inspection and add foundation as required with the Branch Chairman, Cliff Hayward.

Saturday April 8 at 2pm at Hilbert Road: Clean apiary, renew floor and super as necessary with the Apiary Manager, Ellen Montelius.

Saturday April 29 at 2pm at Barrwood: Routine inspection and swarm control techniques with the Branch Chairman, Cliff Hayward.

Bee Equipment Sale

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is holding a Bee Market and Auction at Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus in Pulborough, West Sussex on **Saturday 22nd April 2017**. Details on their website: www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/auction.html