

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Mary Staffurth

Tel: 01732 462931 or e-mail: marystaffurth@yahoo.com

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

The Honey Show

We had an excellent honey show in Otford in September with a good number of people producing high quality entries. In all, there were sixteen prize-winners, and many of those won multiple prizes. The cup for the highest number of points will go to Paul Abbott, the runners-up were Cliff and Pauline Hayward. One of the new entrants this year was Ashley McCulloch, who decided to follow his father, Bret, into beekeeping as part of his activities for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Ashley won two first places for six 1oz blocks of wax and for two moulded candles. His honey also won prizes in the novice and two other classes. Paul Abbott took five firsts, including a clean sweep in the two mead classes. Richard Rose got four firsts in the honey classes, including for a frame of comb honey ready for extraction. Cliff and Pauline Hayward managed three firsts in cake and candle classes. Philip Runacres won firsts in two honey classes. Lucy Wigley was this year's prize honey cake baker; Anthony Brothers won the item of beekeeping paraphernalia class and well done to Margaret Everest, who walked away with a first for her honey in the novice class.

Mary Staffurth



Liz Birchenough writes: Well done to everyone who entered the honey show. These are a few observations from the honey show judge this year, which may be useful for your next entry.

1. Jars and lids must be absolutely spotless. If you wash your jars in a dishwasher, make sure you dry them carefully as you can get residues on the glass. If you use metal lids make sure the thin rubber seal on the inside is clean and not coming loose. There is a danger you could dislodge particles from the seal, which will end up on the surface of your honey. Don't overtighten the lids.
2. Several entries in the clear honey classes had started to crystallise, you can warm the honey gently before the show to disperse the crystals.

3. Set honey must be properly solid, the judge will tip the jar, no slumping allowed!
4. Make sure you have been scrupulous about filtering your honey, you will be marked down for specks in your honey.
5. Check the colour of your honey to make sure you are entering the right class, the organiser has a set of coloured slides you can use to confirm your honey colour.
6. For classes where labels are required, the labels need to be firmly stuck down in all corners, and undamaged. You do not have to include anti tamper strips.



7. Check the weight of your wax exhibits. Also check for any damage to the edges of the blocks. When you set the wax, make sure it cools very slowly, this will minimise the ripple effect on the exposed surface.
8. Honey cake is tricky, the honey can darken very quickly, so the cake can look cooked, but may still be slightly under-baked. Make sure you use muscovado sugar, as this really affects the colour of the cake.
9. Using a muffin tin, or similar, to hold the cupcakes as they cook ensures the cakes are all perfectly circular. Don't overfill the cupcake cases as they are likely to overflow during cooking, which can cause the cakes to sink a bit as they cool. Don't forget the cupcake recipe contains lemon zest which is different to the large cake recipe.

The judge, John Chapman, also said that he found our honey show to be very friendly. He particularly enjoyed the wax classes, which he found difficult to judge, especially the 1oz wax blocks, which were of a high quality.

Good luck next year!

For more pictures from the honey show go to our website:

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~doc/honey-show-2018-in-pictures-with-descriptions-.pdf>

There is also a full list of results on the website:

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~doc/honey-show-results.pdf>

Honey Bee Senses to the Rescue

Our first indoor talk after the beekeeping season was meant to be about plants for bees. Unfortunately, the speaker failed to appear. Luckily John Hendrie was in the audience, and had a couple of memory sticks in his pocket. After dispatching some of the local members to get a laptop for him to borrow he stepped in with a talk on bee senses.

There were many fascinating facts, but I will mention just some of them. Bees have five eyes, two compound eyes on each side and three ocelli on top. The ocelli detect rapid changes in light intensity to see you if you flap your arms at them. The ocelli are used to help with navigation and orientation. The drone has the biggest eyes, to make it easier to spot the Queen on a mating flight. The Queen herself has the smallest eyes. When the waggle dance takes place, the bees do not learn the best source of nectar by watching the movements, rather their legs respond to the vibrations they feel.

Workers also have antennae called pit organs which allow them to sense the temperature so that they can keep the temperature in a nest at 34 degrees Celsius. These organs also allow them to detect levels of carbon dioxide and to monitor the relative humidity.

Bees fly typically at 15mph and they have a mechanism that tells them how fast they are going.

Mary Staffurth

Honey Extraction at Hilbert Road

Beekeeper members met at the Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Hub venue on 30 August to extract honey from the apiary. At the meeting, we talked about processing honey, honey jar labelling and selling honey. For members who may like to sell their honey in shops, it's recommended acquiring a Food Safety in Catering Certificate and having a visit from the Environmental Health Officer. They can provide you with a Food Hygiene Rating certificate. For further information, members can contact their local EHO. Another good reference resource for honey production is found on the Shires Vineyard & Apiary website, (<https://shiresvineyard.co.uk/haccp-plan-for-honey-production/>). They have written out a sample HACCP plan for guidance to identify any risks in the production of honey. From the three hives, we only harvested 12 jars of honey. One of the colonies is a late swarm arrival and the other two colonies didn't bring in much surplus nectar for honey harvest. As usual, I have left a super full of stores on each brood box to provide them with winter stores instead of sugar syrup.

Varroa treatment: Apiguard is the varroa treatment being used at Hilbert apiary for the three colonies. We treated them on 26 August and carried on with a second treatment two weeks later.

Robin has arranged to have the bee house roof repaired at a cost of £300.

Ellen Montelius, Apiary Manager

Ending the Season at Barrwood

At the meeting on 8th September, we placed the second dose of Apiguard in the hives. The newly extracted supers were returned and the bees quickly cleared them out. So, two weeks later, we removed the Apiguard trays, and placed feeders over the crown board, giving a strong syrup solution. The meeting also gave us an opportunity to burn old combs that had been taken from the hives during the year, preventing them from just being incubation chambers for wax moth. Although there are no more formal meetings at the apiary this year, the feeders will be topped up, and chicken wire wrapped around the hives to prevent possible damage by woodpeckers.

Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman

Could You be our Apiary Manager?

I want to say a big thank you to Ellen Montelius, who has made many improvements to the apiary at Hilbert road since she took on the role of Apiary Manager over five years ago. No longer do we have colonies that want to follow you home after the meeting. The old equipment has been gradually updated and the apiary is in a far healthier state. Most noticeably, she has negotiated with the café in the local park to use their private meetings room, for a warm and convivial place to gather after the meetings.

Due to so many other commitments, Ellen has decided that she can no longer dedicate specific time to run the apiary, and so from next year we are looking for a replacement Apiary Manager. If you are interested but feel you are too far from Tunbridge wells, then we are still looking for a manager for Barrwood.

If you do not feel you have the experience to take on an apiary, we would welcome you to the committee. We meet about 5 times a year, to ensure the branch, with all its activities, continues to function. We would welcome new input and ideas.

Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman

Asian Hornet Warning

The National Bee Unit has confirmed a sighting of the Asian Hornet at an apiary near Woolacombe in Devon. Work to identify, destroy and remove any nests is already underway. The BBKA is asking all beekeepers to be vigilant. In the case of a suspected sighting, please contact alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Diary Dates

Saturday October 7 at 2pm at Hilbert Road: Feeding colonies and setting up for winter with the apiary manager, Ellen Montelius.

Tuesday October 17 at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall: Peter Bashford will give a talk on the preparation of honey for sale and the show bench.