

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION
SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS
BRANCH NEWSLETTER

November 2017

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

Annual Meeting and Prize-Giving

The AGM will be held on Tuesday November 21 at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall. This is an opportunity for all members to hear what has happened in the branch during the year. There will be reports on the state of our finances, our membership and our two apiaries. It is also a chance for individuals to have their say and to ask questions of the committee. Anyone interested in taking a more active role in the branch will be able to do so. Cups and certificates awarded at the honey show will be presented.

Following the formal meeting, John Hendrie will give a short talk on a beekeeping topic.

Winning Ways with Wax and Honey

October's indoor meeting was in danger of being adjourned to the pub when a good number of people turned up but no-one knew the code to the padlock on the door of the hall. A quick internet search and a phone call to the hall caretaker solved the problem and the meeting started just a few minutes late.

Peter Bashford gave a fascinating insight into the amount of time and care you must spend on your wax and honey if you want to win classes at the highest levels: he regularly wins at the National Honey Show.

The first piece of advice when entering a show is to be sure to check the schedule carefully. The rules can change each year so you should not assume that they will be the same as last time. Preparing both wax and honey for shows begins as soon as you take your supers from the hive. Peter sorts his honey into different colours immediately because once the honey is mixed you will lose any very light or dark shades. He also tastes it to ensure he is entering the honey with the best flavour. He always prepares 3lbs of honey, filtering it through a 100-micron cloth, then if there are any problems with one of the prepared jars he has a back-up jar. Peter brought with him some very dark honey which his bees first collected many seasons ago. Over the years he has blended it with other dark honey from his hives. We tried a sample, which was lovely; the judge at this year's National Honey Show was obviously impressed too because Peter's dark honey was given first place.

If you are planning to show a frame for extraction, it must be a lovely white frame with no bee prints and no propolis. A good tip is to keep it in the freezer so that any wax moth is killed. If you are buying a new display box for the frame then do not be tempted to paint or varnish it because the honey will absorb the smell.

To prepare the wax, Peter collects the cappings and drains off the honey. Then he puts the cappings inside a pillow case and holds it under a running tap to washing off any remaining honey. If the wax can be dried in the sun this will improve the colour. Peter then puts his wax through a colander so that it ends up looking like fine sawdust. This is then melted down. The judges are looking for a primrose-colour and a good aroma. When you are preparing a block of wax it can be very difficult to get it right and Peter had plenty of tips. He smears the dish with washing-up liquid and he uses thermometers to make sure the temperatures are just right. He uses a bain-marie system: the outer bowl contains water at 66 degrees Celsius and the wax, heated to 71 degrees Celsius, sits in the inner bowl. The water level needs to come up slightly higher than the wax mark. It is very important for all the equipment to be heated to the same level, so the bowls and the lid must all go in the oven first. Once the lid is on Peter covers the lot in towels, to keep the heat in, and then leaves it all day or all night.

If you think you must make a new wax block each year, then you are mistaken. You can keep a good block, wrapped in a plastic bag, and show it again. If it has lost its aroma then open the bag a little and put it into a container with some good-smelling wax and the old block will absorb the aroma.

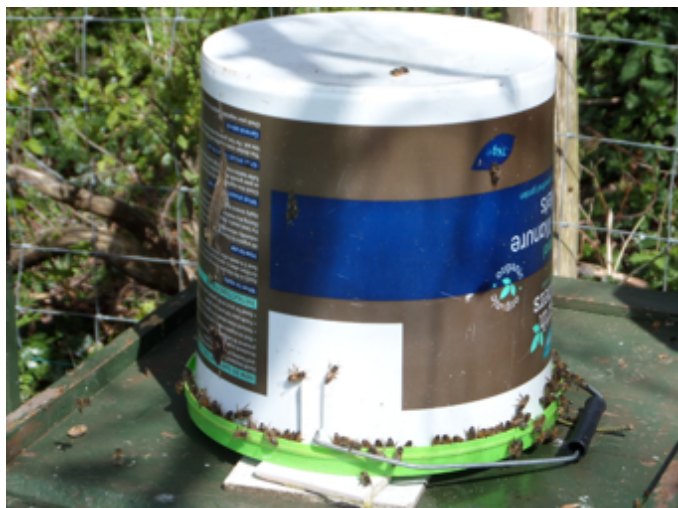
Whatever you do, do not overheat your wax or it will go brown.

Mary Staffurth

Help at Hilbert Road

I would like to make a second plea for a volunteer to take on the role of Apiary manager at Hilbert Road (*writes Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman*). If you are hoping that someone else may offer if you hold back, then I am afraid I haven't been overwhelmed with applicants. It would be a real shame if we have to close the apiary, so if you feel you could help, please get in touch. 01732 750885 or pbhayward9@hotmail.com

Winter Feeds



Autumn 50/50 water/sugar solution.

This 7 litre upturned lidded plastic drum has 15 x 4mm holes drilled below the lip. A spirit level is essential to prevent the liquid in the lip overflowing at the lowest edge.

After a feeding frenzy, these bees [+ some wasps] emptied this 7 litre container in several days in mid October.



At colder temperatures but when the bees are still active.

A queen excluder is placed on top of the brood box to give a bee space below. A sheet of newspaper covers 3/4 of it with an eke on top.

The 15 lb of dry sugar is placed on top of the paper and the surface of the sugar is dampened to stop the house bees carrying it all outside the hive entrance.

Follow this link to our website for more on Autumn feeding. You will also find plenty of other interesting topics and information:

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~doc/autumn--winter-feeds-1610.pdf>

Items or articles for the newsletter are always welcome.

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