

***KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION
SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS
BRANCH NEWSLETTER***

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

Volunteers Needed for Apiary Clear-up



The 50 mile-an-hour winds in the middle of January blew down a tree from the Barrwood apiary site. The trunk fell across the access road, blocking the way. One of the residents called a tree surgeon who cut up the trunk and moved it out of the way. John Farrow has been to Barrwood to assess the damage. All the hives were still standing but John collected a lot of fallen debris and put it in a pile to dry out. There is still more clearing to do so an extra meeting will take place at **10.30 am on February 24**. The aim is to clear all the branches lying around the apiary and burn them on a bonfire. Brambles also need to be cleared because they form a trip hazard wherever you look. If you want to bring tools then secateurs, loppers or shears would be useful. Remember to bring strong gloves too.

If it looks like heavy rain on the day then contact John Farrow before setting off to check the meeting is on: dynesbarn@gmail.com
01732 764248

For those unfamiliar with the location, **Barrwood Apiary** is in the triangular wooded area on this satellite location from Google Maps: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@51.2419635,0.2564158,787m/dat a=!3m1!1e3?hl=en-GB&authuser=0> If you click in this area it gives you the nearest postcode and map reference. Park in Hildenborough Road and the apiary is two minutes down the tarmac drive with many traffic cones on either side. The entrance is through a five-bar metal gate on the right-hand side.

Could You Host an Apiary Meeting?

We are indebted to Robin Troop for continuing in his unofficial role of 'acting assistant apiary manager' in ensuring that we can continue to run Hilbert road as a Branch apiary. It does however need your support. We are hopeful that some more experienced members will volunteer to supervise one or two of the Hilbert road meetings, so if you feel you could help, please phone Richard Rose (01892 653863) who has offered to co-ordinate this.

Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman.

Diary Dates

Tuesday February 20 at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall: Dr Mark Brown will talk about his studies into the effect of neonicotinoids on bumble bees and how the findings relate to honeybees.

Saturday February 24 at 10.30am at Barrwood: Working party to clear up the site.

Saturday March 10 at 2pm at Barrwood: It is likely to be too cold for an inspection so the meeting will concentrate on changing the hive floors, removing mouse and woodpecker guards and checking stores.

Saturday March 17 at 2pm at Hilbert Road: Preparing for the beekeeping season with Richard Rose.

Tuesday March 20: Bee Health Check – see below for details.

Bee Health Check



All the beekeepers from our branch are being invited to take part in a free one-day workshop to assess their bees for acarine and nosema. The event is being organised by the Tunbridge Wells-based and Heritage Lottery-funded Cross Pollination Project (<http://www.cross-pollination.uk>), which aims to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators. One of our members, Ellen Montelius, who is involved in the project, explains what will happen:

The workshop will take place at the Grosvenor and Hilbert Park Hub in Tunbridge Wells on **Tuesday 20th March from 9-3pm**. John Hendrie will give a talk about the bee diseases that the group will be assessing.

The morning session (9-12pm) will involve beekeepers doing a practical microscopy workshop and in the afternoon session (1-3pm) the public will be invited to see why and how we use microscopy in beekeeping.

Please note: We will have two microscopes, tools and accessories available. It would be more manageable if we had more equipment so if you are able to bring a compound and/or dissection microscope (plus tools and accessories) to share with other beekeepers, it would be appreciated. Beekeepers will need to book in advance as places are limited. Email: ellen@montelius.me.uk

Urban Bees

Can you imagine sitting for hours in front of a screen trying to decode filmed footage of bees doing a waggle dance? That is exactly what Ash Samuelson is doing as part of her study into urban bees. She first gave a talk to the branch about her research two years ago and returned in January with an update. The waggle dance footage was recorded in rural and urban hives with the aim of finding out where the bees were foraging and what differences there were between urban and rural locations. The footage was recorded with a time stamp so that the researchers were aware of the angle of sun at the time of the dance in order work out the location being described.

Other tests involved taking pollen and nectar samples from bees returning to their hives in both rural and urban areas. Interestingly, the nectar was taken by gently pressing the abdomens of the bees so that they regurgitated a drop of nectar. Among the hives surveyed for the research were those belonging to Sarah Rapley, at Seal Chart, and to Somerhill School in Tonbridge. A camera drone was used to take pictures around both apiaries and showed that oilseed rape was growing extensively nearby. Surprisingly, the researchers found that the Somerhill bees were using the oilseed rape, though not exclusively, and the Seal Chart foragers were not going to the oilseed rape at all.

Ash is still working on her research into honeybee colonies, but final results of tests on buff-tailed bumble bees found their colonies were stronger in urban than in rural settings. Her conclusion was that urbanisation had a positive effect on bumblebee colony success. She said this suggested that there was no need to be too worried about the spread of urban bees and their ability to survive and thrive. Ash also said the importance of gardens had been underlined because the bees foraged close to home where possible, so there were clear benefits to planting bee-friendly plants near hives.

Mary Staffurth

Programme correction: Please note that Paul Vagg is coming to talk at Weald Village Hall on 16th October (not 17th) and our AGM is 20th, not 21st November. The corrected programme is on the website. www.kentbee.com/stw/

If you have an item for the newsletter please contact Mary Staffurth: 01732 462931; marystaffurth@yahoo.com