

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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New Website

John Farrow, Sarah Rapley and Liz Birchenough have been working hard to rebuild the branch website after it was suddenly closed down. They are planning to put a selection of photos on the new site. If you have any that you would be happy to share then please send them to John. He will attribute all the pictures. Email: dynesbarn@gmail.com

Healthy Hives at Barrwood



One of the Barrwood meetings in June

photo by Pauline Hayward

7th July: This visit to Barrwood and the second visit in July were meant to be looking at the general health of all the colonies. As England were playing their quarter final against Sweden in the World Cup, numbers were down. However, Sue Knights, Chris Stewart and Bret McCulloch and his son dragged themselves away from the TV. Because of the lower numbers, it was decided to spend the afternoon looking through the supers to make sure they were all in a good state ready for extraction in early August. A surprising amount of honey had generally been stored over the previous fortnight and Sue was able to remove one of the supers from the colony she rents and take it home for extraction. I have subsequently heard that a good deal of the honey was granulated and probably came from the field of rape close by. This could mean that other colonies will suffer the same problem.

As Cliff and Pauline were also there, building frames for the future, an excellent cup of tea or coffee together with biscuits was enjoyed by all. I managed to get home to see most of the second half which resulted in a 2-0 win for England. Shame about the semi-final.

21st July: No more football, so eight newish beekeepers (Clare Norman, Nina Mills, Chris Stewart, Malcolm and Betty Pankhurst, June Stewart, Jonathan Goodman and David Turner) together with experienced beekeeper Garry Muskett, who I called Gareth all afternoon, turned up. We also had a visit from Peter Hutton whose experience is always welcome. We began with a brief chat about general hygiene in the apiary and then moved on to examine the colonies, specifically looking for the health of the brood and varroa infestation. I had placed boards under three of the colonies on Wednesday and we were all able to see varroa mites on these boards when they were removed. I think the maximum on any board was no more than three, which would indicate a reasonable balance. The rest of the colonies all had excellent brood patterns without any signs of disease. We agreed that the colonies were generally healthy. As Cliff and Pauline were on holiday I supplied tea and coffee, but forgot the biscuits, the milk and a spoon, but a mug of black coffee was sort of enjoyed by all.

Colin Ellis

Beeswax Sales Hit Their Target

Several branch members joined colleagues from other Kent branches to represent KBKA at the County Show at Detling in early July. The KBKA display included a range of public information about protecting and enhancing the environment for honey bees and other pollinators. There was also information about recent research into bumble bees. The displays included a range of hives and skeps, plus a number of frames and an observation hive, complete with beekeepers on hand to explain what it was all about.

There was also a display of the winning entries in the Kent Honey Show, and a general sales counter, selling honey and wax products submitted by branch members. The most interesting purchase was a man wanting beeswax blocks for his longbow strings!

The numbers of visitors did seem to be slightly down on previous years, possibly due to the football and tennis, and the extreme hot weather. However, there was a good response from the general public.

Liz Birchenough

Missing Queens at Hilbert Road

Five members attended our first July meeting, including some new faces. We added two supers. At the following meeting there were only two members, who reported that the top bar hive had collapsed perhaps due to the heat and/or the loss of the queen. There were 18 top bars in place and a fair bit of honey. They found the deep brood national had stores but no queen.

I have noticed that the bee hut can get damp and I wonder what has happened to the bee suits we once had, they are nowhere to be seen.

I believe that bee numbers are down by about a quarter this year and in the dry weather honey is in short supply. My advice is: do not sell your honey too cheaply.

It is not widely known that Stephanie M gave the branch three books which I have yet to pass on to the library. They are - Keeping Bees: Looking After an Apiary by Vivian Head; Guide to Bees and Honey by Ted Hooper; The Beekeeper's Problem Solver by James E Tew.

Robin Toop

Ready Steady Show

If you have not yet started thinking about the branch honey show on September 15 then now is the time to prepare. Keep some of your best honey to one side for entry into the honey classes. The preparation of wax is always a time-consuming business so it is best to start as soon as possible rather than leaving it to the last minute and finding your wax blocks are flawed and it is too late to start again. With candles, make sure the wick is right in the centre or you will be marked down. There is still plenty of time to get creative with your camera for the photograph class. If you have made any useful items during the year then consider entering those in the useful paraphernalia section. There is time, too, to get in a bit of practice for the cake competition. Whatever class you do decide to enter, make sure you read the rules very carefully because if you make a mistake in the presentation or size you will be penalised. Most of all, though, have fun with the honey and wax that you have waited for all season. (The rules and schedule were attached to the email with last month's newsletter.)

Mary Staffurth

Sarah Rapley photographed these old bricked up bee boles in Ightham



Diary Dates

Saturday July 28 at 2pm at Hilbert Road Apiary.

Saturday August 4 at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary.

Saturday August 11 at 2pm at Hilbert Road Apiary.

Saturday September 1 at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary.

Saturday September 8 at 2pm at Hilbert Road Apiary.

Saturday September 15: Branch Honey Show.

Send any photos or articles for inclusion in the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: marystaffurth@yahoo.com