

A Guide to Getting Started.

The challenges brought about by new pests and diseases means that all beekeepers including experienced ones need to carry on learning, probably for as long as they keep bees. As a beginner you will want to learn the basics as quickly as possible. Later there will be plenty of opportunities to learn more about the biology, social life and behaviour of the amazing honey bee.

Local Beekeeping Groups.

It is worthwhile joining your local group of beekeepers before you start buying equipment. In these groups you will find enthusiastic and friendly people, some with a lot of experience, and a growing number of beginners too.

You can join our branch as a friend in the first instance, which gives you access to our newsletter, training and publications. When you are ready to get your first colony, we recommend you upgrade your membership to Registered Member. This gives you important insurance cover, and support through the beekeeping community.

We provide all new members with an information sheet which includes important basic health and safety advice, and the directions to our branch apiaries.

The programme of meetings arranged by the Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells Branch of KBKA includes winter talks and summer demonstrations held at our two Apiary Sites:

Barrwood Apiary, Hildenborough Road.

Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.

During the spring and summer you will be able to see if you are comfortable handling bees before you spend any money. We have spare bee suits you can borrow, but you might like to think about getting your own suit when you are sure you want to learn more about beekeeping. Please read the new members information sheet about on site facilities before coming along.



Barrwood Apiary – Preparing Equipment before Inspecting the Hives.

In our branch we have members with a wide range of experience, some who are beginners and our President and Vice Chairman who have 50+ years of experience!! So when you finally decide to go ahead and start with bees you will be able to learn from this pool of expertise.

You are welcome to attend any of our meetings before you join the Branch and before you finally decide to go ahead with keeping bees.

Watch a video taken at Barrwood Apiary for some of the meetings in 2012. Download: ['BarrWood2012'](#) [30 mins]

Or watch this short video [9.25 mins.] to see an inspection of our hives in 2009 at Barrwood Apiary by clicking on: ['BarrWood2009'](#).



Inspecting Bees at our Hilbert Road Apiary.

Beginners' Courses.

We are running a one day “taster” course in March 2019, which is aimed at absolute beginners. It is a rough guide to beekeeping, aimed at novice beekeepers, and those wanting to find out more before committing to beekeeping. There are a number of beekeeping courses for beginners in the Kent area. During the winter, courses are usually classroom based covering the basic syllabus of the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) in eight to ten weekly two hourly sessions.

During the spring and summer there are courses covering the practical aspects usually based in a training apiary.

Practical Training.

During the spring and summer our two apiaries hold meetings where beginners are encouraged to handle bees and some of our members also hold meetings at their apiaries and we encourage beginners to try some hands on beekeeping. They will open a hive and handle bees under the guidance of experienced beekeepers. Many have found this extremely useful particularly as they prepare to start with their own bees in a nucleus (a starter colony) or a swarm.

Home Study.

If you are unable to find a suitable course nearby or at a time when you can attend, you can enrol with the BBKA Correspondence Course. These are a form of distance learning enabling you to study beekeeping while working at your own pace. An arrangement will be made with a qualified tutor for you to send your written answers to set questions that are designed to take you through the syllabus.

Books.

There are plenty of books about bees and beekeeping and many are aimed at beginners. Our Branch library includes some of the following books for beginners, so you can look at them before you chose one to buy.

Click:

<http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Library-Books.pdf> for the latest books.

<http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Bee-Library-Book-Master-List-1811-1.pdf> for the complete list.

These are looked after by Sarah Rapley: she can be contacted on: 07 970 484 232

By email: stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.or.uk or she may bring them along to our winter meetings.

Websites.

Click: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/web-watch/> for some of the better sites on the internet.