

# SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

October 2019

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## Honey Show - The Best Ever!



The annual honey show on 21st September turned out to be our best show ever with 96 entries! The show was judged by John Chapman, from Chatham, who is very experienced and has judged for us several times in the past. This year we moved to a new venue: St John's Church Hall in Hildenborough, as Otford Hall is scheduled for major refurbishment. The hall was a good size in a modern building with ample free parking and a comfortable foyer where visitors could sit for a chat. We had a number of visitors from the local community, some of whom purchased honey and expressed an interest in attending some of our events. We also welcomed old friends who had retired from beekeeping themselves but still wanted to see how we were getting along.

The judge was very pleased to see that less experienced beekeepers were actively participating in the show. He also commented that the overall quality of entries was up to our usual high standard. There were so many entries in the cake and cup cake classes that we had to find an extra table!

The new class for a decorative or artistic item with a bee related theme was a great success, and drew out some hidden talent. This challenged the judge as there was no judging criteria. There was one entry that was outstanding, and a clear winner. Pauline Hayward made an exquisite wax rose in a perfect shade of honey gold, presented in a crystal vase. The judge said it was absolutely beautiful. He also admired the other diverse and attractive entries. Second prize went to Sue Knights with a collage of a bee made from dried leaves, third prize went to Liz Birchenough for a pair of hand knitted mittens in bee colours, complete with embroidered wings and eyes, and fourth prize to Margaret Everest for a decorated gift box for honey.

A huge thank you to everyone who participated, and we hope you will all come along next year.

*Liz Birchenough*



*Pauline Hayward's prize-winning wax rose*

### **Top tips from the judge:**

- \*Jars and lids, including the rims of the jars, must be absolutely spotless, and matching (same supplier).
- \*Jars must be properly filled: when the lid is closed there should be no clear gap between the honey surface and the bottom of the lid.
- \*Set honey should have a dry surface and not move when the jar is tilted. Soft set honey should have the consistency of thick cream, it should just move when the jar is tilted.
- \*Clear honey should be carefully filtered with no signs of crystals forming, which can give a cloudy appearance. Keeping the jars warm before the show can help disperse any crystal formation or air bubbles.
- \*For the wax products, the surface needs to be flawless, no flecks or scratches. The wax is also checked for scent, so be really careful that there is no contamination from polishing cloths or from the mould, especially if you use a releasing agent.

For more honey show pictures go to our website:

<http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Honey-Show-2019-in-pictures.pdf>

### **The main prize-winners:**

Liz Birchenough won first prize for 2 jars light honey (clear) // John Farrow won first prize and the Captain Turner Cup for 2 jars medium honey (clear)  
Liz Birchenough won first prize and the Inglis Mason Cup for 2 jars set honey (naturally granulated) // Liz Birchenough won first prize for 2 jars soft set honey  
Sarah Rapley won first prize and the Wilby Cup for 1 cake plain moulded wax // Paul Abbott won first prize and the Bradbury Cup for 1 bottle sweet mead  
Vanessa Jones won first prize and the Jenner Rose Bowl for 1 honey cake // Liz Birchenough won first prize for 6 cup cakes  
Steven Archbold won first prize and the Carter Cup for 2 jars clear honey (novice class)  
Gary Muskett won first prize and the Hart Cup for 2 jars naturally granulated or soft set honey (novice class)  
Margaret Everest won first prize for 6 jars clear honey labelled for sale // Vanessa Jones won first prize for 6 jars set honey labelled for sale  
Paul Abbott won first prize for Honey label of your own design // Tim Johnston won first prize for 1 frame of comb for extraction  
Sarah Rapley won first prize for 6 x 1oz wax blocks // John Farrow won first prize for Useful item  
Paul Abbott won first prize and the Crowther Shield for Mounted photograph // Cliff and Pauline Hayward won first prize for 2 containers cut comb  
Cliff and Pauline Hayward won first prize for 2 candles, moulded // Pauline Hayward won first prize for Decorative item  
Tim Johnston won the Sloane Challenge Cup for being the overall points winner with a total of 36 points.

*The full list of results is on our website: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Honey-Show-Results-2019-1.pdf>*

## **Should You Switch to Double Brood?**

When Bob Smith learned that the double brood method of beekeeping was popular in Scandinavia he thought he would give a go himself. Bob had a career as an analytical chemist before spending the first six years of his retirement as a seasonal bee inspector. He told us at our September meeting that he liked to experiment with his colonies. The Scandinavian system involves overwintering the bees on a single brood, then adding a second brood chamber in Spring. The new chamber is placed below the existing one so that the bees have entirely new comb at the bottom. Supers are then added as necessary. Bob tried the system on two of his colonies using 14"x12" frames. In the first year, he harvested more than 130lbs from each hive. The second year he put all his hives on double brood and the high honey yield continued. In 2017, he extracted an average of 155lbs per colony. However, the system was not without problems. The height of the hives made it difficult to lift off the top supers. A queen excluder is put between the two brood boxes towards the end of the season and honey is extracted from the second brood box but the frames are heavy and it can be difficult to extract the honey.

The best thing about this system, Bob said, was that all his colonies went into the winter on new wax. Unfortunately, the honey yield halved in 2018 and this year was a disaster with only 150lbs in total. The weather was very dry, there was a lot of swarming and mating was poor with a number of colonies going queenless. Bob said he had enjoyed his experiment but he would not be using double brood next season.

*Mary Staffurth*

## **Swarm Control for Warre Hives**

Anyone who uses Warre Hives and has been struggling with swarm control will be interested in an article that has been posted on our website. Peter Aldridge, who gave a talk at one of our meetings earlier this year, passed on the information. You can find it under 'INFORMATION SWARMS' if you follow the link: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Warre-Hives-making-new-splits.pdf>

## **Wild Bees**

Peter Hutton will be the speaker at our meeting on Tuesday 15 October at 7.30pm in Weald Memorial Hall. His talk will be on 'The consequences of feral honeybees on novices and experienced bee keepers.'

## **September Barrwood Apiary meeting**

Gary Muskett led the last official Barrwood Apiary meeting of the year on 13th September. The main tasks were the second application of apiguard, fixing mouse guards to the hives and giving a health assessment of each colony as the bees go into winter. It was previously discovered that a swarm of bees was hanging from the underside of one of the hives. This had been hived so the meeting gave the first opportunity to assess the swarm on the comb. As expected, it seemed queenless. Rather than unite the colony, Gary detected evidence of K-wing. This was possibly due to starvation, so the colony was given some stores to see it would recover. The adjacent nuc was definitely queenless as there were egg-laying workers. These were thrown out into the woods to either be accepted by another colony or perish.

There is a stack of old hives at the far side of the apiary and each year we put a nucleus box on top to try to attract a swarm. This year it was unsuccessful and the nuc was removed in August. However, we discovered that a swarm had moved into the stack of old boxes so they were given a new floor, as the old one was filled with mouse bedding; as much debris as possible was scraped from the frames. Next year we will begin the interesting task of getting the bees off their wild comb onto movable frames. This means a demonstration of the 'shook swarm' technique will definitely be on the calendar for next year. What had begun as a fairly routine inspection had, thanks to the unpredictability of bees, turned out quite differently. Thanks to Gary for running this meeting, and to everyone who has attended the apiary over the year.

*Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman*

## **Branch Apiary Honey For Sale**

Branch honey is for sale and Liz Birchenough will have supplies at October's meeting. Barrwood honey was bottled into 12oz jars, selling for £5. Hilbert road honey was bottled into 1lb jars for £6.50. Particular thanks must go to Robin Toop, Peter Hutton and Richard Rose, who did all the extraction of the Hilbert road honey. Barrwood honey was extracted by a large team, although particular thanks go to Phillip Runacres and Tim Johnston for the filtering and bottling stage.

*Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman*

## **Renewing Your Membership**

Don't forget that it is time to renew your membership. Liz Birchenough has already sent the forms to everyone. She will be collecting membership forms at October's meeting.

## **November Annual General Meeting**

I would like to remind members of the AGM on Tuesday 19th November. All members are welcome as it is a time when questions are asked of the officers, propositions can be put to members for deliberation, and officers and committee members are elected, re-elected or resign. We need some more committee members and a permanent apiary manager for Barrwood. Please think about whether you can help. If anyone has any business for the AGM can they give details to the secretary, John Farrow, at least 2 weeks in advance. Email: [dynesbarn@gmail.com](mailto:dynesbarn@gmail.com)

*Peter Hutton, Branch President*

## **Hoovering up Your Bees**

A bee vac can be a very handy piece of kit for collecting swarms from difficult spaces, allowing you to suck the bees into a nucleus box via a vacuum cleaner. Go to our website to see how to make a simple bee vac: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Bee-Vac.-Construction.pdf>

John Farrow and Sarah Rapley have successfully used this method of swarm collection. Follow the link to see how they did it:

<http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Shingles-and-Bees-1.pdf>

*Please send any photos, articles or ideas for the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: [marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)*