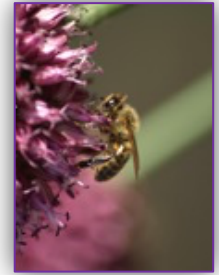


**SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS
BEEKEEPERS
BRANCH NEWSLETTER
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New Hive at Barrwood

Words and pictures by Liz Birchenough

Last year, the construction company Skanska offered KBKA a donation to allow each branch to buy a new hive for its branch apiary. We decided that rather than getting another national, we should experiment with a long hive. It is essentially two national brood boxes next to each other, with entrances on opposite sides. We will keep you posted as to how it performs.



The other hives at Barrwood are still in position. The bluebells are looking wonderful, and the bees are carrying so much pollen they can hardly fly.

Swarming Signs at Hilbert Road

It has been a difficult start to the season with the weather both cold and wet. This has meant delayed inspections at the Hilbert Road Apiary. Four strong colonies have survived the winter and there have been early signs of swarming preparations, lots of drone brood and the occasional queen cup.

The colonies are building up very quickly but are using up stores as a result. We are feeding light syrup where necessary. I anticipate that the increased temperatures will spur on swarming so additional inspections will be taking place in an effort to stay ahead of the game.

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Climate Fair

Saturday 4th May from 10.30am at Vine Gardens, Holly Bush Lane, TN13 3UH

Our branch will be representing the beekeeping community at the Sevenoaks Climate Fair. We will be talking to visitors about responsible beekeeping, protecting pollinators in general, and raising awareness about the Asian Hornet. This event is free and will have a wide range of displays and discussion groups about many environment-related subjects. If you are free, please try to come along.

Liz Birchenough

Wax Workshop

Tuesday 21st May - Weald Memorial Hall from 7.30pm



At the wax workshop in May you will have the opportunity to try your hand at a range of different wax-related activities. We will talk you through the process of preparing your old wax for reuse. You can use the wax to make your own foundation or products such as wax wraps, moulded, dipped or rolled candles, not to mention making wax presentation blocks for the honey show. (*One of the entries from our last honey show is pictured.*)

Sue Knights has also been experimenting with making hand soap, and there are a range of other recipes that you might like to try at home. Please note that due to space constraints we need to limit numbers to 16 to ensure everyone can participate in all activities. We are asking for a small fee of £10 per person to cover the cost of materials, paid in advance or on the day. You will be able to take your products home after the meeting. Please bring an apron to wear. Contact Liz Birchenough membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk to book.

For Sale

Nuc with a marked queen (2023) and six frames (14 x 12) of brood with stores. Cost £75, please return the nuc.
Contact Andrew Moon 0781 375 4981

Will You Raise Good Bees?

There was a really good turn out to hear Cliff's talk and it was great to see so many new members. The topic was that queen rearing is a variation on swarm management and it seems our bees are swarming more regularly, as queens seem only to survive on average two seasons. The reason for this is unclear but may be related to varroa treatments or other environmental pollutants. However, this provides beekeepers with an opportunity to select their best colony to produce a replacement queen, rather than the expense and risk of buying in a commercially-bred queen.

Cliff started by summarising natural swarming. It is triggered by many factors, such as overcrowding in the hive or a declining queen. Swarm cells are normally found around the sides and lower edges of the brood frame. Once a swarm cell is spotted containing a larva and royal jelly, swarming is imminent. However, if the queen has been lost, either by accident or design, the workers will raise an emergency queen cell. Similarly, if the queen is not producing good eggs, she may be superseded. Emergency cells and supersedure cells will not normally trigger swarming and are generally found on the face of brood comb.

Cliff demonstrated the principles of the two most common methods of swarm management, Pagden and Demaree. Whichever method you choose, you need to have your equipment to hand and act promptly. They both depend on separating the existing queen, flying bees and brood into two groups, so it really helps to be able to find your queen.

The point here is that you now have two colonies but this all happened when the bees wanted to swarm. With queen rearing, the idea is to pre-empt swarming behaviour. You need to choose your time and your colony carefully. May is usually a good time as the weather has started to warm up, there is a good flow of pollen and nectar and a decent drone population to mate with a new queen. It is good practice to monitor your drone brood for varroa but if you are going to attempt this process, you need to check your bees are in tip top condition before you start. So, using your preferred swarm management technique, you separate your existing queen plus some flying bees into a new hive, with additional feeding to get them over the shock. This leaves the queenless brood with some nurse bees. They will also need additional food or you can leave the supers on. The queenless brood should quickly raise an emergency queen cell, and the new queen should mate and become established before we reach the second half of the summer. If you have multiple queen cells developing, any spare ones can be transferred into queenless colonies, or raised in a mini-nuc.

Liz Birchenough

Apiary Meetings

Saturday 11th May at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.
Sunday 12th May at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.
Saturday 18th May at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.
Sunday 26th May at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.

Beekeeping Auction

Sussex Beekeepers Association is holding its Bee Market on Saturday 18th May at Uckfield College, Downsview Crescent, Uckfield TN22 3DJ from 10am. Admission £2. Equipment auction, sale of beekeeping paraphernalia, workshops, talks, children's activities, refreshments.

*Send photos or articles for the newsletter to: marystaffurth@yahoo.com
Go to our website for all the latest beekeeping news: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>*