

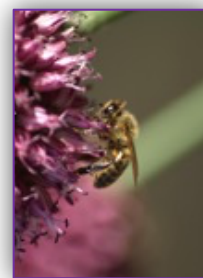
# SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

**AUGUST 2024**

Editor: Mary Staffurth

Tel: 01732 462931 / Email: [marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)

Branch website: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>



## Asian Hornet Steals the Show



I volunteered to help at the Kent County Show for the first time this year when the organisers sent emails, just the week before, saying they were short of helpers. My shift was on the Friday afternoon, and I was assigned to the pollination display. The weather was windy and rainy and there must have been fewer visitors than usual, although Saturdays and Sundays at the show are always busier. The footfall around my stand was certainly low but most of the people who stopped to look at the bee-friendly plants were keen to chat. What was noticeable, though, was that each time I turned my gaze towards the Asian Hornet stand, being manned that day by Martin Barrett (*pictured*), there were people eagerly engaged in conversation. The publicity about the threat from the Asian Hornet seems to have captured the imagination and there were plenty of takers for Martin's homemade traps.

*Mary Staffurth*

## Festival of Nature at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve

This was our first invitation to take part in the Festival of Nature, and I was looking forward to seeing the reserve, as I had never been there before. Our main purpose was to publicise the Asian Hornet situation, so we went armed with mini bait stations and plenty of leaflets. Our group included Betty and Malcolm Pankhurst, who live nearby and know the reserve well, and members of the AH verifiers team.

We were unlucky with the weather: there was a strong blustery wind sweeping in heavy showers, and it was unseasonably cold. This, combined with the added attractions of England's quarter final in the Euros, and Andy Murray playing at Wimbledon meant that footfall was lower than predicted. Nevertheless, we had a good chat with visitors, and it was pleasing to hear that many of them were aware of the Asian Hornet and were keen to find out more. The star of the show, in hornet terms, was the actual hornet preserved in a Perspex block. Several people were surprised at how small it was compared with the familiar European Hornet and could see how it could be mistaken for a wasp unless you looked carefully. We reminded visitors that they should not try to kill or catch any suspicious insect, but instead take a photo and send it in. We reassured visitors that accidentally reporting a wasp or European Hornet was not a waste of time because someone, somewhere will find the first Asian Hornet in our area, and this could easily be a member of the public.

A huge thank you to Betty and Malcolm for braving the weather and, at times, holding the frame of the trusty gazebo in place.

*Liz Birchenough*

## Varroa Management

Now midsummer has passed we need to be thinking about varroa management before the bees settle in for the autumn. The branch has a stock of Apiguard available to members at a cost of £7 for 2 sachets, which is the recommended dose for one colony. Please refer to BeeBase for guidance on measuring the varroa load in your colonies, and management options. If you wish to obtain Apiguard for your own colonies, please contact Liz Birchenough: [membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk)

## Under Cover Operation



This small swarm had settled in a pipe access chamber and had been building up for a few weeks before the homeowners called the club for help. The lid was easily removed, and the comb transferred into a nuc. The queen was found and put in a clip inside. By sundown they were all inside. They have a lot of work to do before winter as it was late July when they were collected - so I have given them drawn comb and plenty of syrup to give them a good chance.

*Sarah Rapley*

## St John's Summer Fete

We have become regular users of St John's in Hildenborough, where we hold our annual honey show, so it is fitting that we support their community events. On Saturday 13th July, they held their summer fete, which featured a fascinating display of model railways. This included a beautiful recreation of Westerham station which succumbed to modernisation and electrification in the 1960's. The railway models needed layout space in the main hall, so the other fete stalls, including ours, were in the family room (where we held the craft fair at our honey show) and the foyer. We were in the foyer in a prime spot next to the tea counter.

Our main purpose was to raise awareness of the Asian Hornet problem and get as many people as possible to set out bait stations for any newly emerging workers. We also had some honey for sale and potentially gained a few new members. It was gratifying to find out that most of the public had heard of the Asian Hornet and were aware that it was a serious issue, so it sounds like the message is getting out there. It certainly helped to have the official list of confirmed sightings to show that they are getting ever closer, and having a genuine preserved hornet to show people was of great interest.

If you have any questions about Asian Hornets, please contact the branch co-ordinator, Martin Barrett.  
*Liz Birchenough*

## Two for the Price of One?



This swarm was collected in Bullfinch Lane, Sevenoaks, in July by one of the club's collectors. Our research suggests it is not unusual but, equally, not common to see two clusters. Typically, it is caused when the queen settles momentarily on one branch and then moves to a difference branch. Pheromones are left at the original spot, so some bees are happy to settle there for a while before combining back to the main cluster. It is far less likely to be two swarms. As with all beekeeping, other opinions may prevail.

*Malcolm and Betty Pankhurst*

## New Examiner

Congratulations to the Branch President, Paul Abbott. After completing a training course at the BBKA headquarters in Stoneleigh, Paul can now undertake BBKA Basic assessment examinations for beekeepers.

## Honey Extractor Hire

The branch has two nine-frame mechanical extractors available to branch members. They cost £15 each for up to three days. The user is responsible for collection and return. The extractors are quite bulky, so you may need another person to help lift one in and out of your car. You will be given instructions on use and cleaning. Please make sure the extractor is clean and dry on return.

To hire an extractor contact Sarah Rapley [stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:stweditor2@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk) if you are in the Sevenoaks area, or Liz Birchenough: [membershp@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:membershp@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk) if you are in Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells area.

## Apiary Meetings

Saturday 3 August at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.  
Sunday 11 August at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.  
Saturday 17 August at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.  
Sunday 25 August at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary, Tunbridge Wells.  
Saturday 31 August at 2pm: Barrwood Apiary, Shipbourne.

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