

**SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
BEEKEEPERS  
BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
MAY 2025**

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## **Queen Marking at Barrwood**

The second Saturday in April was the first full meeting at Barrwood, and it was great to welcome so many new members (*writes Liz Birchenough*). The weather was good, and the bluebells were just on the point of coming into bloom. We started with the general health and safety briefing for the new members, then we set to with the first task of the day: how to light your smoker. Once we had got the smokers going, we divided into two teams. The plan was to find and mark the queens, then go through the basics of an inspection. Luckily, all the queens were found and marked fairly quickly, and there were no signs of imminent swarming. The new long hive was working particularly well, so the first brood box was expanded sideways into the second chamber, and the bees fed to encourage them to draw out new comb. It will be interesting to see how the long hive develops over the next few weeks.

At the next inspection, two weeks later, the long hive was giving cause for concern (*writes Cliff Hayward*). The colony had not expanded further and there was no sign of eggs or larvae. However, the bees remained calm so queenlessness is unlikely to be the issue. Quite why the queen should be off lay remains a mystery. Perhaps by the next meeting the bees will have sorted themselves out.

The National was continuing to expand, so the opportunity was taken to split the colony. Although the queen was only found on the last frame, it did allow us to move her to another box with frames of foundation. The remaining, now queenless, colony will produce queen cells. However, as these will be made under the emergency response, only those produced from eggs will be allowed to develop fully. It is important that these are closely watched as queens made from old larvae will be the first to hatch, and they produce poor queens.

It was nice to meet many new beekeepers and watch them handling the frames so competently although having such docile bees helps. I would like to thank Liz for sharing inspecting her own hive with everyone. Being 14x12's it gives a good lesson in the extra weight and difficulty of using larger brood frames. It is also important to ensure that beginners don't become too complacent about the need to handle the bees carefully.

## **Come to the Fair**

We will have a stand at Sevenoaks Climate Fair on Saturday 3rd May at The Vine (10am-4pm). We will be talking about protecting pollinators and controlling the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet.

## **Beekeeper Wanted**

We are currently looking for a beekeeper to assist us with keeping an apiary in our organic fruit orchard, located on the Bayham Estate close to Lamberhurst. Our previous beekeeper has moved on to new ventures. Contact Sam: 07481135490 / 01892 891581 / [samcogger@outlook.com](mailto:samcogger@outlook.com)

## **Yellow-Legged Hornet**

A number of sightings of Yellow-Legged Asian Hornets are being investigated in Kent and East Sussex. We need to remain vigilant. If you would like to put out monitoring traps and need supplies, please contact our Asian Hornet co-ordinator Martin Barrett: [mcb58@hotmail.com](mailto:mcb58@hotmail.com)

## For Sale



Bee suit, approx. size 18 top /  
small trousers with no size label:  
£20 ono

Honeycomb cutter: £5 ono

Extractor: £175 ono

Contact Helen Robinson:  
[helendesres@gmail.com](mailto:helendesres@gmail.com)

## Hidden Garden Treasures

At our April meeting, Chris Stewart gave a wide-ranging talk about the weird and wonderful flora and fauna that live literally on our doorsteps. Many of the insects and invertebrates are so small we never see them, but they still form an essential part of the ecosystem of our gardens. Chris said that where he lives, in Sevenoaks, he is on greensand, which drains freely. I live only five miles south in Tonbridge, but on clay, so my biome is totally different. Nonetheless, we do share many common species, especially the larger birds and mammals, some of which can be a nuisance. Our local foxes took just a few minutes to break into the "fox-proof" food waste bin provided by the council, which now has additional fox-proof bricks. We also have our share of ring-necked parakeets, although the resident jackdaws usually chase them off.

Chris mentioned a number of native species that are either extinct or very rare in the wild although even with reintroduction plans, I doubt we will ever see the likes of the pine marten in our gardens. As beekeepers, we need to have an appreciation of the importance of a wide range of flora and fauna, but at the same time take the greatest care to protect against unwanted alien species such as Japanese Knotweed, Water Hyacinth and of course, the Asian Hornet. The message is simple, don't mess with what should be here, and don't forget that many "weeds" are actually very valuable plants. Dandelions might just be the best plant in your garden!

It was great to see new members and guests at the talk this month, not to mention an excellent selection of homemade cake - thanks to all the bakers!

*Liz Birchenough*

## Fruitful Relationship



This photograph, by Simon Staffurth, was awarded third place at the Branch Honey Show. It was taken on a Howgate Wonder apple tree in his front garden. The bee is almost certainly from his own hive.

## Diary Dates

**Saturday May 10th at 2pm:** Barwood Apiary  
**Sunday May 11th at 11am:** Hilbert Road Apiary  
**Saturday May 24th at 2pm:** Barwood Apiary  
**Sunday May 25th at 11am:** Hilbert Road Apiary

Send photos or articles for the newsletter to:  
[marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)

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