

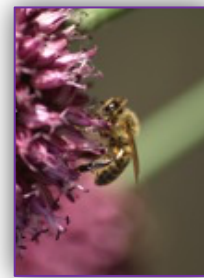
SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025

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Clearing the Way at Barrwood

At our first planned apiary meeting at Barrwood it was far too cold to open any of the hives, so we did some basic maintenance. The mouse guards and chicken wire were removed, and the feed topped up where needed. The other big jobs were to trim the emerging brambles away from the paths and clean up hive parts for the new season. Although we were going to have to wait for warmer weather to open the hives, the spring flowers were starting to emerge and it was not as wet as at this time last year, so fingers crossed for a better season than we have had recently.

If you would like to come along to either of the apiaries, the best way to stay in touch is to join our WhatsApp groups (one for each apiary) so you know what is happening on a weekly basis. If you wish to sign up, please tell me your mobile number and which group you want to join, and I will get you added: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer

Building Up at Hilbert Road

The weather was warm but cloudy, with a definite feel of light rain for our Hilbert Road Apiary meeting. The bees were flying but not very active; they were very docile. The group inspected four of the five colonies that came through the winter. It must be much warmer in Tunbridge Wells than it is at my home apiary in Plaxtol. All the colonies had built up six frames of brood: at home I have two! There were plenty of stores coming in and two colonies already have large patches of drone brood.

Floors were cleaned and the brood boxes swapped with the supers, which had been placed under for the winter. Queen excluders were replaced.

Unfortunately, one colony was not put into winter configuration correctly and the super was still above the brood box. This resulted in the queen laying in both the super and the brood box.

With the bees being so active and the next meeting not until the middle of April I felt that it was important for the bees to have enough space for expansion as well as storage for nectar and pollen. At least one of our colonies is an early swarmer. Second brood boxes with drawn comb have been added. This will give space and will enable comb changes and splits if required.

Thanks to all who attended and helped with cleaning the equipment.

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Who is Hiding in Your Garden?

There will be a talk on Tuesday 15th April at Weald Memorial Hall from 7.30pm by Chris Stewart. In "The Good, the Bad, the Ugly and the Beautiful" Chris will tell us about the plants and animals hiding in plain sight in our gardens, and how they create our own personal ecosystem. Some will be familiar; some you may never have encountered. This talk is open to non-members.

There will be a raffle and homemade cake. Donations of £3 for cake would be appreciated. RSVP to Liz Birchenough for cake counting. If you can donate a raffle prize or cake, let Liz know: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Swarm Request List 2025

If you have lost bees over the winter and would like to replace them with a swarm, please send your Name, Address, Landline number & Mobile number to John Farrow at: stweditor@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Malcolm Craig 1941-2025

We are saddened to announce the death of Malcolm Craig who passed away on 7th March 2025. He was a leading member of Sevenoaks Beekeepers during the 1990s.



Malcolm was born in 1941 in Wolviston, County Durham, during wartime. His mother had temporarily relocated from their home in London to the safety of her parents' house. It was there that Malcolm's maternal grandfather first ignited his love for the outdoors and farming: a passion nurtured by his parents. This early enthusiasm led him to become an active member of Dartford Young Farmers, where he met his wife, Nicky, and took part in exhibiting fruit, vegetables, and eggs at shows and competitions.

In 1980, Malcolm moved with his young family to Witches Lane in Riverhead, Sevenoaks. It was there his passion for beekeeping started. He established an apiary at home, immersing himself in the art of beekeeping and soon became actively involved with Sevenoaks Beekeepers. Malcolm shared his expertise and enjoyed exhibiting in honey shows.

Malcolm's professional life began as a groundsman and culminated in his role as Landscape and Environmental Services Manager for Surrey County Council, a position from which he retired in 2001. Following his retirement, Malcolm and Nicky, along with his apiary, moved to Sampford Courtenay near Okehampton, Devon, and they became deeply engaged in local community life.

Malcolm was a staunch contributor to the Okehampton Beekeepers' branch. As Show Secretary, he and Nicky worked tirelessly to organise and run the annual Okehampton Show, transforming the 'Bee Marquee' into an outstanding showcase of beekeeping: a tradition the branch continues to uphold. In addition, Malcolm served as swarm liaison officer, a role he held until only a couple of years ago.

Malcolm passed away peacefully at home after a short illness. He is survived by his wife Nicky, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him but leaves behind a legacy we will always be proud of.

The Craig Family

<https://malcolmcraig.muchloved.com/>

All the Fun of the Fair

Sevenoaks Climate Fair is on Saturday 3rd May at The Vine (10am-4pm). We will book a space for our stand at usual. We will be talking about protecting pollinators and, of course, controlling the yellow-legged Asian hornet. It is a bit early for honey, but if any members have stock available for sale, please let me know. The previous years have been great fun and thought-provoking. It is a great day out for everyone. The organisers are also looking for volunteers to help with marshalling vehicles and setting up, which includes gazebo wrangling. Please let me know if you think you could help out either on our stand or generally: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Liz Birchenough

Out-Apiary in Hawkhurst

We have taken on some ground close to a fruit farm and I am keen to start beekeeping. I would like to offer the space to a beekeeper who is looking to expand so that we could potentially learn from them before keeping our bees. We are based in Hawkhurst.

Contact Sam Johnson: swallowsfarm.kent@gmail.com

Diary Dates

Saturday 12th April at 2pm: Barwood Apiary meeting

Sunday 13th April at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary meeting

Tuesday 15th April at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall: A talk by Chris Stewart

Saturday 26th April at 2pm: Barwood Apiary meeting

Sunday 27th April at 11am: Hilbert Road Apiary meeting

Hastings and Rother Beekeepers' Association One Day Spring Conference is on **Saturday 12th April** at Robertsbridge Village Hall, Station Road, Robertsbridge, TN32 5DG. You can see details of the event and how to book via this Eventbrite link: [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

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/>