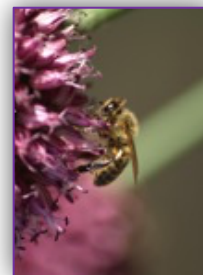


SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025

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Hidden Treasure

In July the branch received a request for help from the Allotments Officer at Sevenoaks Town Council regarding an abandoned beehive found on a plot at the allotments in St John's, Sevenoaks, that needed to be moved. The owner of the hive, one of our former members, died early last year with family and fellow allotment holders reluctant to take on responsibility for the bees. I volunteered to check it out and picked up a key to the allotment gates from the council. My visit revealed two active hives, not one as the council thought, along with several empty brood and super boxes plus assorted bits and pieces all scattered around a very overgrown part of the allotment plot. My initial thoughts were that the hives had remained untouched this year and probably all last year too.



There was a fair amount of gardening needed to gain access to the apiary, cutting back rampant brambles and vegetation before the hives could be inspected. One consisted of three Langstroth brood boxes with no queen excluder and, in the top box, several frames missing with space filled with lots of honey-filled brace comb. The second hive consisted of two brood boxes and one super, again Langstroth, with no queen excluder plus missing frames so the space was chock-a-block with comb. Both hives were very heavy.

Langstroth are large hives and not many people use them but luckily one of our newer members, Obi Winter, had recently taken up beekeeping after being given a Langstroth hive and was on the lookout for another hive. Two was a bonus.

I arranged to meet Obi at the allotments one evening and, with the help of a friend, we managed to split the hives so they could be carried to a car and transported to their new home, where they are thriving.

All a bit sticky and made more difficult by the need to carry them over uneven ground to Obi's car. All the reusable kit was removed and once home it turned out not all the equipment was Langstroth. After measuring box sizes and comparing on the EH Thorne web site, I discovered we also have Smith hive boxes plus a couple of Warre boxes. I'm going to experiment with the Warre hive but if anyone has Smith hives and would like a few more boxes please get in touch with me, and I can share the details.

The Town Council kindly sent a donation to the club for our efforts.

Tim Johnston



Get Ready for the Honey Show

Only a few weeks to the honey show now, I hope you are thinking about entering something. The show is open to all current members, regardless of grade. Even if you don't have your own bees, you can enter the cakes and biscuits class using honey from any source, or maybe a photograph or item of handicraft.

If you have any questions about entering, please contact Sue Knights, who is the honey show entries secretary on soozbeez@gmail.com

It would be really helpful if you could advertise this event to your friends and neighbours. We have a handout you can circulate.

We would also be very grateful if we could have a few volunteers to help with visitors in the afternoon, and we would also appreciate some additional cakes for refreshments. Please supply a list of ingredients for your cakes. If you are able to help, please let me know: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Liz Birchenough

Yellow-legged Hornet

As of Friday August 29th, the NBU was reporting a total of 342 credible sightings of the YLAH with more than 88 nests discovered and removed, 12 of them for August alone. If you follow the increase each year you can see they are spreading from east to west. We have had more sightings and nests in our branch area, and I urge all members to be vigilant. For those of you who have traps out, we will be staying with the purple 'worker' lids until later in the autumn. I will send out a reminder nearer the time.

We have been active at various shows from the Sevenoaks Climate Fair earlier in the year to the Kent Show and the International Scout Jamboree, both at the Detling Showground. We will be also promoting more awareness at the Tunbridge Wells Climate Fair on September 13th.

One of the biggest issues we have found is that people don't know how to report sightings. Please download the Asian Hornet Watch app for your phone. This can be found for android and apple operating systems online.

Studies suggest that about 70% of the UK's main food crop species benefit from insect pollination, and about a third of what we eat directly depends on it. For fruit specifically, the vast majority requires pollinators. For a physical representation of how voracious this predator is, imagine picking up a car tyre. This could weigh up to 11kg which would equal the number of pollinators a single nest of YLAH's can consume in a single season.

If you would like traps, bait or more information please contact me on 07403 119 207 or email: mcb58@hotmail.com
Martin Barrett, Branch AHAT coordinator

Renewing Your Membership

Subscriptions are due for renewal from 1st October. Renewal information will be issued electronically to all members. Paper renewal forms are available on request. Please check you have selected the correct grade. If you have any questions, check with me before making a payment. Payment details are on the renewal form.

There are four basic grades of membership: -

Registered members - for those with live colonies, includes insurance and publications. Additional insurance is available for those with more than three colonies.

Friend - for those who do not have live colonies but wish to be involved in beekeeping. Friends have access to all branch activities.

Partner - adult beekeeper resident with a registered member. You get insurance but not the publications. This may be especially relevant to couples hiring apiary space (e.g. allotments) where insurance for each individual is required.

Junior member - under 18 years of age, otherwise the same as registered members. A junior member does not have to be resident with an adult member however we do need to record the name of a resident adult for insurance purposes. Juniors can participate in all branch activities but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian for safeguarding purposes.

We are very grateful to everyone who adds a donation to their subscription, which we use to pay for branch activities and equipment. If you are a taxpayer, please include the gift aid option.

Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Hilbert Road Apiary

The bees at Hilbert Road have been active this year but have not been great producers of honey. Martin and I have continued work to clear out old, broken, unused equipment with a view to freeing up the 'bee shed' to house at least two colonies next season. We have been given an eight nuc long hive which we will be putting to use next season in a queen rearing programme.

In addition to the work at Hilbert Road, we have been supporting the Yellow-legged Asian Hornet public awareness programme with Asian Hornet Alert and KBKA.

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Diary Dates

Sunday September 7: Hilbert Road Apiary at 11am

Saturday September 13: Tunbridge Wells Climate and Nature Fair - from 10am at Calverley Gardens.

Saturday September 20: Barrwood Apiary at 2pm

Sunday September 21: Hilbert Road Apiary at 11am

Saturday September 27: Branch Honey Show and Craft Fair - St John's Church Centre, Hildenborough

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/>