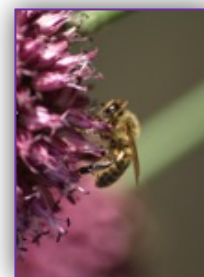


SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JUNE 2026

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How to Paint a Queen

In May, I was invited to visit a Squirrels group in Tunbridge Wells. Squirrels are the youngest members of the Scouting family, boys and girls aged four to six years. Their leader, Angela, has been doing some nature projects with them, so I went along to talk about honeybees. I took our training hive, which is a standard national brood box with life-size laminated pictures of bees on frames. It is much safer and easier to handle than an observation hive, especially with enthusiastic and curious small children. They all had a good attempt at finding the queen which, helpfully, was marked with a large yellow dot. I was asked quite a sensible question: How do you keep the queen still to paint the dot? This led into a discussion about protective clothing, so they then all wanted to try on the little bee suit that I had with me. It was quite a bit too big for them, but they all seemed to enjoy the experience. After I had talked to them, their leader got them making bees using black and yellow tissue paper glued to paper plates for bodies. If nothing else, they have learned that bees are important and useful creatures, and there is no need to be afraid of them.

Liz Birchenough



A Lucky Escape

“I must tell you about the bees in my next-door neighbour’s garden,” said my hairdresser, Darryl, as he was doing my hair in May. “He called me and said he had a swarm of wasps on one of his shrubs. I went round to have a look and told him they were honeybees. He was surprised and told me he was about to spray them with something to kill them.” Last year Darryl had a swarm in his own garden in Bluebell Hill. I was away when he contacted me, so he got in touch with a local beekeeper who collected the swarm. We don’t know whether someone collected this swarm (*pictured*) or whether it left of its own accord but at least it wasn’t sprayed with insecticide. This tale does make me wonder how often people try to kill off swarms.

Mary Staffurth

Watering the Bees

Wednesday 20th May was World Bee Day and to celebrate this, the Brownies at Rose Hill School in Tunbridge Wells held a bee-themed meeting. I was invited to talk about the importance of bees in the environment, and how I look after my own bees. I was really impressed by how much information the Brownies had gathered; they already had a working understanding of the basic life cycle and anatomy of insects, so we had a good discussion about the differences between social insects and solitary insects. I also took along a selection of flowers from my own garden, so they could see where the pollen and nectar developed and, with the help of some very much enlarged bee photos, they could see how the bees extracted the nectar, and the pollen clumping on their back legs.

The most important point was looking after our bees, so we talked about the best flowers for our gardens as well as providing shelter and water. After the talk, the Brownies made some bee-friendly water stations to put in their gardens, which will have been much appreciated in the hot weather.

Liz Birchenough

Extractor Hire

The club has two manual extractors available for hire. The charge is £15 for three days. You are responsible for collecting and returning the extractors and cleaning after use. You will be given instructions.

For the smaller three-frame extractor contact Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

For the larger nine-frame extractor contact Sarah Rapley - sarah@chartcorner.com Please be aware that the nine-frame extractor is quite bulky, so you might need a friend to help load it into your car.

Fancy Selling Your Honey at the 19th Hole?

Knole Golf Club has asked if any of our members would like to place a hive or two in their grounds at Knole Park. Tim Johnston met one of their committee members and was shown a possible location, but it was very exposed and rather too close to the edge of their driving range. Since then, the club has given it further thought and can offer alternative site options. The club is also interested in buying any honey from the hives to sell in the clubhouse labelled, possibly, as Knole Golf Club Honey. All this needs to be agreed with the beekeeper. If you are interested, please contact Tim Johnston: secretary@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Last Call for Microscope Meeting

There are a few spaces left for our scanning electron microscope meeting on Sunday 7th June. If you would like to attend and haven't already expressed an interest, please contact Tim Johnston for full details:

secretary@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Attracting the Crowds at Climate Fair

This was our second year at the Tunbridge Wells Climate Fair. Luckily, although there had been overnight rain, the day itself was dry, and there was a good turnout of visitors. Martin Barrett was leading our YLAH response and handed out several dozen trappit bait stations to members of the public. It was pleasing to hear that the majority of visitors were aware of YLAH. As part of the approach, Martin was keen to ensure the bait stations were correctly located, and anyone spotting a suspicious insect had the contact details to report a sighting, plus a description of what would happen next.

Cliff and Pauline Hayward were running craft activities for the children and exhausted all their wax candle supplies. We also had the training hive for people to take apart and have a look at pictures of bees in action.

I was looking after honey sales and general enquires, assisted by my husband. We managed to sell out of honey, and several people took note of the date of our honey show, so may be back for more supplies in September. All in all, it was an exhausting but rewarding day.

Liz Birchenough

Show Willing

With the Kent County Show around the corner, on 3rd to 5th July, the organising committee is looking for volunteer stewards to help with everything from setting up and dismantling, to showing the public around an observation hive, rolling beeswax foundation candles with children and much more. If you're able to help, contact Hilde Koets: koets@btconnect.com

Apiary Meetings

Saturday June 6 at Barrwood Apiary at 2pm

Sunday June 7 at Hilbert Road Apiary at 11am

Sunday June 14 at Hilbert Road Apiary at 11am

Saturday June 20 at Barrwood Apiary at 2pm

Sunday June 28 at Hilbert Road Apiary at 11am

Don't forget to check our website for all the latest information: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Send photos or articles for the newsletter to: newsletter@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk