

1923 - 2019



Medway  
Beekeepers  
Association

**Medway Beekeepers Association**

Celebrating over 95 years of support for beekeeping  
and beekeepers in and around the Medway Towns



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## Newsletter December 2019

**Please note that it is subscription renewal time!** If you haven't yet renewed, you can find a 2020 renewal form in the member's Area under the 'Renewal' Tab.

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### Chairman's Message:

Your committee and I wish you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year in anticipation of a good beekeeping year in 2020. After the vagaries of the weather this year, I hope that you managed to get your bees through the year and that they are now prepared for winter. Some people eventually got some honey from their bees this season, but I know that some did not. We wish for better conditions next season and less variable weather for our bees. Please think about coming along to some of the winter meetings advertised in this newsletter and keep a look-out for other events during the year. We try to offer a selection of different events during the year, but we are always open to ideas as sometimes it is difficult to pick topics that we think will appeal.

**John Chapman**

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### The Next Event:

**Saturday 7th December 2019**

**Indoor Meeting – A Talk By Bob Smith**

**Time: 2 – 5pm**

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

Bob Smith, NDB, is a retired Seasonal Bee Inspector, our Education and Examination Officer, and a nationally recognised authority on Pollen and its importance in identifying nectar sources in honey.

### **“Pollen – super-food for honey bees”**

In order for a honey bee colony to thrive, it needs be able to gather food resources throughout the active season. This talk will look particularly at the role of pollen in HB nutrition, what pollen is and how bees collect it. We will also touch on the practical aspects that beekeepers may need to consider and the role of pollen in verifying honey label claims.

## Last event of 2019:

### Monday 9th December 2019

#### Winter Study Group 5

Time: 7.00pm (7.30pm start)

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

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### National Honey Show 2019:

The National Honey Show was held at Sandown racecourse from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October. This year saw the largest number of entries in the show (2100) from 285 exhibitors.

Two of our members entered the competition. Elaine Laight entered the photographic classes. John Chapman got 6 place cards, some prize money (which paid for lunch), and the Coronation Mead Mazer in the Kent classes (probably the smallest cup in the show, it's about the size of an egg cup!).

The lecture programme, which runs alongside the show, was very well attended. All the lectures are available to download from the NHS website.

The trade stands in the hall were as usual very popular and several sales offers were to be found. It does offer a good opportunity to replenish equipment stocks prior to the winter.



Our President, Pip Blaxland was presented with a Patron of the Show Certificate by Bob Maurer, Chairman of the NHS. Pip is a Past Master of the Wax Chandlers Guild and has been a great supporter and donor to the National Honey Show.

John Chapman

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## Past Event:

### Saturday 16th November 2019

#### Indoor Meeting: A talk by Ben Sweeney from 'Plantlife'.

Time: 2 – 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L



A good number of members turned out to listen to Ben Sweeney's talk about the work of 'Plantlife' at 'Ranscombe Farm Reserve'. The Reserve is situated on the stunning North Downs and is a site of Special Scientific Interest. It was originally part of the Darnley Estate and has been farmed since medieval times. Part of this area was owned by the Blue Circle Cement Company and when the company closed was sold off as a reserve.

The area covers some 560 acres and is part country park, ancient woodland and working farm. The wildflower areas attract a wide range of pollinating insects including many species of bee. Woodland accounts for roughly half of the site and the fields are a mixture of arable and grasslands.

'Plantlife' is a conservation charity and is involved in the surveying and monitoring of wild plant populations and is active in protecting and preserving wild plants, many of which are very rare. They also work with local authorities helping to advise them on issues such as the management of road verges.

Ben has worked for the company for around 11 years and so has seen the area change and develop much over the last decade. The area is an historic landscape and many of today's features, such as field margins and the outlines of woods are still recognisable on a map



Lady Orchid

dated 1789. The area is important because it contains over 400 flowering plants, 30 of which have national or local conservation status. Some such as the Bell Flower are rare in Kent and 6 species including the Lady Orchid are endangered. And the Pasqueflower has been rescued from extinction.



Pasqueflower

The area has a wide diversity of plants and these support a large number of invertebrates including, 30 types of butterfly, 300 moths and 131 bees and wasps. It also has badgers, foxes, fallow deer, dormice and harvest mice in residence. Many of the rarer plants do well on chalky soil as they have good stress tolerance. They do well on poor soil, where they are not out competed by other plants. However, this can be a problem when the area is cultivated as the use of fertiliser encourages other plants which can then dominate an area. So, the company spends a lot of time researching ways of looking after these areas without putting the rarer plants at further risk. Volunteers clear and mow some areas and grazing cattle are used to clear others. Ongoing experiments are made using differing cultivation methods. Around 95 hectares are under arable management and about a third of this is conservation management. Grassland habitats are linked together using wide 'Drove Routes'. These allow cattle to move from one area to another and so re-distribute seeds from flowering plants



which have been caught on their coats. Much of the woodland is made up of chestnut which was grown to provide 'Hop Poles' and is now used for fencing post and palings. These trees are still coppiced as they have been for centuries to promote ground plants and insect life. The numbers are also being reduced to allow the native species such as oak more space to grow.

This was a really interesting insight into the world of conservation and highlighted the interconnectivity of plants, trees, insects and animals. It also highlighted the importance of land management for the sustainability of plants and their support of wildlife and the efforts that need to be made if we are to preserve these beautiful areas for future generations to continue looking at, walking in and enjoying nature at its best.

For more information about Ranscombe Farm Reserve and their work visit their excellent website: [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)

Our thanks to Ben for giving up his time to come and talk to us and for a very enjoyable talk.

Paul Lawrence

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## **This One Is for your Diary:**

**Saturday 18th January 2020**

**Indoor Meeting: Margret Ginman – General Secretary of The Bee Farmers Association, the professional body for bee farmers.**

Time: 2 – 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

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## Reading Around:

A monthly glance at a topic or two in the media with Archie McLellan.

To view this month's edition please: [click here](#)

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## Sentinel Apiaries: what are they? could you run one?

A sentinel apiary is one on which extra checks are made looking for exotic pests, such as Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Tropilaelaps mites and (of course) Asian Hornets. Hopefully early detection will help with their control.

There are 120 of these apiaries in England and Wales each run by a volunteer beekeeper. They are located all around the country, but particularly near ports and places where food is imported.

The twice-yearly monitoring involves checking floor and frame traps for SHB, doing a thorough colony examination for exotic pests, especially SHB and providing samples of floor debris.

All of the equipment is provided, so the National Bee Unit is simply after a little of the beekeeper's time. However, it is important that they get a **complete** set of samples and that **the log** for the apiary inspections **is accurate**.

Kay Wreford our Regional Bee Inspector is keen to have more Sentinel Apiaries in the Medway / Grain areas so if you think you have time to do this and would find it interesting please get in touch with her. Her email is: [Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk)

I have been personally been involved for the last 9 years and find it very interesting.

Sue Chapman

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## Honey Pollen Project:



Jasmine Carter, is a Geography Undergraduate Student at The University of Reading. Her team are analysing honey samples in order to find out which plants our bees visit during a season.

She has asked for samples in the Kent area, but they have now reached the maximum number of samples that they can deal with. However, she has asked if we might be able to contribute towards this study if anyone has signed up to the National Honey Monitoring Scheme and sent off samples to be DNA tested. These results would be very useful to the team.

If you have taken part in this monitoring scheme and the website for it is: <https://honey-monitoring.ac.uk>, perhaps you would like to send a copy of your results to the team via Jasmine's email: [jas.carter@outlook.com](mailto:jas.carter@outlook.com)

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## Beekeeper's Bazarre:

Bob Smith has 8 boxes of 1lb honey jars, complete with gold lids for sale.

They are going for the knock down price of only £20.50 for a box of 72.

If you are interested in buying some from Bob, please contact him on: **07922 631106**

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**Just to remind you all, here is a list of this winter's meetings  
Hope to see you at a few:**

7 December 2019	Indoor Meeting	Wainscott Comm. Hall	2.00pm	Bob Smith – Pollen super food for honey bees.
9 December 2019	Winter Studies Group 5	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start
6 January 2020	Winter Studies Group 6	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start.
18 January 2020	Indoor Meeting	Wainscott Comm. Hall	2-5pm	Margaret Ginman – General Secretary of The Bee Farmers Association
20 January 2020	Winter Studies Group 7	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start.
22 January 2020	Bee Chat	The Pier, Upnor	7.30pm	
3 February 2020	Winter Studies Group 8	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start.
15 February 2020	Indoor Meeting	Wainscott Comm. Hall	2-5pm	AGM
17 February 2020	Winter Studies Group 9	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start.
26 February 2020	Bee Chat	The Pier, Upnor	7.30pm	
2 March 2020	Winter Studies Group 10	Wainscott Comm. Hall	7.00pm	7.30pm start.
21 March 2020	BBKA Exam Day	Wainscott Comm. Hall	9.00am	1.00pm finish
25 March 2020	Bee Chat	The Pier, Upnor	7.30pm	
4 April 2020	Apiary Open Day	Association Apiary	2.00pm	4.00pm finish
18 April 2020	English Festival	Riverside Country Park	All day	
18-19th April 2020	Spring Convention	Harper Adams Univ.	all day	3-day event organised by BBKA

A full list of next year's meetings can be viewed by going to the Member's Website: [click here](#)

**Education Courses for 2020:**

MBKA's courses for 2020 will be posted early next year.

In the mean-time East Surrey Beekeepers have sent us a list of their courses for 2020.

They are also offering a discount of an extra place when 6 applicants, book at the same time.

For details of these courses and an application form, go to the Member's Area and look under the 'Courses' tab.

To go to the Member's Website: [click here](#)

## Asian Hornet Update:



There is a useful App for phones, 'Asian Hornet Watch', this has pictures of the hornet and of similar insects that you might observe, Wood wasps, European hornets etc.

Also note, that it is crucial you report any possible sightings so our experts can take quick and effective action to eradicate Asian hornets.

For further information go to: [www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news)

Visit: [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) for the latest updates.

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## Website Update:

By now you should all have received your login details for the new secure '**Member's Area**'. Any problems just let me know, email: [paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk).

Now that we have established our Member's Area, the Public Website will now be undergoing changes to make it both more pertinent to non-members and easier to navigate.

Watch out for the latest updates.

**Paul Lawrence** (Website Manager)

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## Facebook:

Join our Facebook page for information, updates and events:

<https://www.facebook.com/medwaybka/>

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## And Finally:

A merry Christmas to you all and many thanks to all who have contributed to the newsletter over the past year. Please remember if anyone has any news, ideas, amusing stories or comments or indeed suggestions about the websites or for any future newsletter, please get in touch with me, Paul Lawrence at the address shown below, we really do appreciate your input.

## Contact Details:

### Chairman

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### Newsletter and Website Enquiries

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