

1923 - 2017



Medway  
Beekeepers  
Association

Celebrating over 90 years of support for beekeeping  
and beekeepers in and around the Medway Towns



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## Newsletter February 2017

This winter has again been generally mild so don't forget to heft and check hive weights then feed fondant if you think your bees are getting low on food.

### Apiary Site Bees:



The bees at our apiary site in City Way, Rochester, have been very active during January and both colonies have required feeding. Mark sent in a photo of them on the front of one hive enjoying the winter sunshine!

While we are thinking about at apiary;

- Would you be prepared to help run it?
- Do you have an hour or two to spare?
- Would you like to learn more about managing bees?
- Would you like to help and support new beekeepers?
- Can you help with the inspections of the hives at the club apiary site in City Way?

Lots of questions I know, but there is currently a team of about ten Association Members who take it in turns to attend the site to look after our bees in accordance with a planned rota. We always have two members (inspectors) who attend, usually on a Saturday, for about one hour. This year on one Saturday a month the site will be used for an educational apiary meeting. Any member can attend, take part, get hands-on experience and perhaps try out a procedure that you have never had the confidence to attempt. One of the members (inspectors) must be the holder of the basic certificate but this will be covered in the rota arrangement. You will never be without support!

This is an excellent opportunity to learn and even share your knowledge and experience.

Please e-mail Elaine at: [e.laight@virginmedia.com](mailto:e.laight@virginmedia.com) if you would be interested in joining the team.

Go on give it a go!

Eliane Laight  
Apiary Co-ordinator

## Past Event:

28<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Preparing for the New Season

2-5pm Wainscott



Mark Ballard give an informative little talk to 16 of us, on the things that need to be checked to make sure our bees have the very best chance of surviving the winter and getting off to a flying start in the coming spring. There were 3 new members at the meeting and it was very refreshing to see how they each got stuck in with everyone else. As well as taking us



through a checklist of things to consider, including feeding, woodpeckers, mouse guards, making sure the entrances are clear of dead bees and keeping our medicine records up to date. Mark also gave those members who had never put together a super frame, a chance to do so. With 100% success I might add. After tea, Sheila Stunell gave a short report on the BBKA's Annual Delegates Meeting which she attended on our behalf and then we just chatted for half an hour or so. Which was in itself very pleasant and so nice to put faces to some of the names that I write to each month.

Paul Lawrence

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## Next Indoor-Meetings:

**MBKA AGM**

18<sup>th</sup> February 2017

2 – 5pm Wainscott Community Hall

16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4LG

Just a gentle reminder, to please ensure that you have paid your membership fee by this date or you will not be able to take part in any discussions or vote on any proposal submitted to the meeting.

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## A Beekeepers' Get Together:

The next get together is planned for Wednesday 22nd February 2017. We will be meeting at 7.30pm, in The Pier, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA. All welcome, friendly chat - starting off with bees!!!

Jen Ferry

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## South Eastern Regional Report 2016:

In the summer of 2016 the South East Region welcomed two new Seasonal Bee Inspectors to the team, Hilary Hayward and Mark Patterson. Hilary has been looking after the beekeepers of West Sussex, and Mark commenced work in the Greater London area, south of the river. Adjustment of other inspecting areas, meant north of the Thames is now covered

by Brian McCallum, whilst Kay Wreford and Michael Cooper have ably managed Kent and East Sussex.

Yet more changes are to come in the 2017 season; Jonathan Brookhouse has decided to leave the inspectorate and give his gas gun a well-earned rest after 4 years of thoughtful and effective wielding in the Surrey area. His area, (and I suspect his gas gun), will be taken up next year by Hilary, leaving a gap in West and East Sussex for a seasonal inspector, which I hope to step back into.

**The 2016 Season:** The mild weather of November and December 2015 continued into January 2016. Checking the hives became a soggy business for those affected by localised flooding in the South East. Temperatures were higher than average for the time of year and brought narcissus into bloom, whilst autumn daisies were still in flower. From the bees point of view, these mild temperatures meant that colonies were using up stores far faster than expected, as activity levels were still high. Varroa levels were also found to be higher than normal in the spring, as mite levels had continued to increase after late summer treatments. In some cases, winter oxalic acid treatments were not able to work as effectively as normal, and colonies were unfortunately lost. Towards the end of April the Bee Unit sent out advice that in some areas colony food levels were getting very low, and directed beekeepers to check their colonies by hefting, and if necessary to make up feed.

Those colonies that did winter successfully were then faced with a further challenge by the erratic weather of May. With few consecutive days of good weather, some queens were poorly mated (or did not mate at all) resulting in long gaps before the appearance of eggs. The ensuing relief of some beekeepers unfortunately turned to disappointment when they subsequently found drone-laying queens.

#### Foulbrood Finds in 2016

A table of the foulbrood finds in the South East Region for 2016, is available to view in the full version of this report. ([www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news)) I would like to remind you to refresh your knowledge of the signs and symptoms of both American and European. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=7>

Even if you are still unsure whether you have foulbrood after consulting the literature or an experienced beekeeper, please make the effort to send a photograph via email to your local inspector, Kay Wreford: phone 07775119483 or email: [kay.wreford@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kay.wreford@apha.gsi.gov.uk) and she will respond as quickly as possible.

#### Update on Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe Asian Hornet



A natural or assisted spread of the Asian Hornet, *Vespa Velutina*, from mainland Europe into the UK had been anticipated and a Contingency Plan is in place to deal with any confirmed outbreak.



With the amount of traffic, both commercial and private, entering the UK from Europe, further

incursions are likely and, as experience has shown, could occur anywhere in the UK, not just in our higher risk areas along the South East coasts. The NBU will be assisting beekeepers in placing hornet traps in the affected areas early next year, but all beekeepers are advised to put out monitoring traps with a sweet-bait in apiaries in late winter. Experience in France has shown that these are highly attractive to queen hornets coming out of hibernation. These should be checked regularly, preferably daily so that non-target species can be released. Any suspect sightings should be reported to the Non-Native Species Secretariat at [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. A fact sheet detailing a suitable home-made monitoring trap can be found on BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>  
An updated identification sheet for the Asian hornet and further information on the Asian

Hornet can also be found on the dedicated pages on BeeBase at:  
<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>

(Note the report on small hive beetle in Europe is available in the full report.)

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the South Eastern Seasonal Bee Inspectors for their hard work this season. Please be vigilant for the imminent arrival of the Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle. I wish you success with the 2017 season, it may well prove to be challenging!

Diane Steele<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

Regional Bee Inspector, South-Eastern Region

**Please note due to a lack of space this is just a part of the report. The entire document is available to view on the website: [www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news)**

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## Kimber's Corner:



Hi, my name is Peter Kimber and I have been invited, as a new beekeeper, to share my experiences with you all over the coming season.

I had worked with bees prior to getting my own, mainly at the sites of other MBKA Members, all of whom were experienced local beekeepers. A great reason to join your local association!

This has given me the confidence and basic skills, to look after my own bees. A much better way than coping with learning the many new skills that are needed to look after them successfully 'on the job'.

Prior to getting my bees there was the small issue of what beehive to buy. After much deliberation, I finally settled on a National Hive, with a gable roof and 14 x 12 brood box. As my hives will be in my garden, my thinking was that this setup would give the bees plenty of space and me a little extra time to stop them swarming. Only time will tell!

Last July I built my hive and a stand for it to sit on and my colony arrived in early August. It was an established colony on 8 frames. This gave me a couple of months to carry out weekly inspections before I closed them up for the winter.

As a new beekeeper it proved quite an experience to inspect my own bee's solo, especially

the first time! Good fun though. I have now had them for some 7 months and I fed them up with sugar syrup before the winter and in the second week of January with help I applied Api-Bioxal as a winter varroa treatment.

I began feeding fondant towards the end of January, as, when I hefted the hive it felt a little light. Better to be safe than sorry; they have been taking it, so a good move, I'm thinking.

I am sure that I will have many worrying moments over the coming months but one thing that I do know is it doesn't matter how many books you read, to actually look after your own bees is a great experience.

Talk to you all next month!  
Peter

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### **Interested in giving talks:**

Are there any MBKA Members interested in giving talks to other beekeepers?

The BBKA is reviewing the list of speakers that are currently displayed on their website, in order to check that the information and contact details are still current.

If anyone would like to be included on the speaker's list. Would you please pass your details onto Sheila Stunell; [Sheila.stunell@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Sheila.stunell@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk) .

Sheila will then collate all of the information and forward it to the BBKA General Manager.

You need to include the following information:

Name / Location / Contact Details / Areas prepared to travel to / Talks (topics) / Fees / Travel and hospitality arrangements.

The information needs to be collated and uploaded onto the BBKA Website fairly quickly, so we ask that you reply to Sheila by 6th February 2017 at the latest.

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The 2017 Winter Meetings Program is on the website:

[www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events)

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### **And finally:**

The website has undergone a recent upgrade so that things are a little easier to find. We now have a 'Latest News' Tab. Here you will find the latest newsletters, minutes and any alerts or urgent issues that members will find useful. At a later date you will also find AGM and Annual Dinner information as well.

Also, as from next month, instead of receiving this newsletter as an attachment, it will be sent to you all as a link from which you can download your copy.

The reason for this change is that the growing size of the attachment is using up more and more space in inboxes and this change will hopefully avoid failures of the email delivery.

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Many thanks, to all of those who have contributed to this newsletter.  
Looking forward to seeing you at the winter meetings.

If you have any news, ideas or comments about the website or for future newsletters, please get in touch with me, Paul Lawrence at the address shown below, we really do appreciate your input.

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## Contact Details:

### Chairman

John Chapman  
[john.chapman@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:john.chapman@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk)

### Newsletter and Website Enquiries

Paul Lawrence  
[paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk)