

1923 - 2017



MBKA

Medway
Beekeepers
Association

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



Newsletter July 2017

Phew! The weather has finally picked up and we have started to take off some honey. It looks as though this could be a very good year. However, now we have an alert to check the level of stores and feed if necessary but don't contaminate any honey in the supers with sugar syrup. Keep checking for signs of congestion and be aware of wasps and continue to set traps where necessary.

Past Event:

Saturday 27th May 2017 A visit to Mark Ballard's Apiary

There were 14 members at the meeting including our president – Pip. This is Mark's home apiary, which he uses for his 'hospital cases' and bees that he has taken out of buildings etc. As a result he has to deal with a lot of frames, which have comb tied to them, these are then gradually replaced with frames of foundation. He uses both National and 14 X 12 frames and it was interesting to see the differences in the way that the bees used these frames within the different hives. Mark produces a number of boxes of cut-comb each year and he showed us how he prepares and uses the sections in his colonies. It will be interesting to see what he produces later in the year, particularly in our Honey Show in September!

Our thanks go to Mark, for spending the time in sharing his expertise with us and for welcoming us to his apiary.

John Chapman

Apiary Open Day Saturday 10th June 2017

There were a small number of members present as Mark Ballard conducted the apiary hive inspections, whilst Sheila and Jen carried out first aid where necessary! Meanwhile I was studying the oriental side of my personality "Won Stung Mei" (sorry couldn't resist). The bees also performed refreshment 'evaluations' of ginger cake, tea and cream jam scones, which were confirmed and consumed by members later in the afternoon.



Interestingly, it was noticeable that any fresh foundation that had been added to the hives had partially been eaten away by the bees. It was thought that they may have been scavenging wax to build up cells during the recent rain and windy weather which had prevented the bees from foraging.

The first hive opened (Hive 2) had brood in all stages present and the Queen was spotted. One of the brood box frames had patchy sealed brood but there was no fresh eggs or larvae on this frame. Mark said that this is sometimes due to Varroa, EFB or AFB. However, no disease was evident. The bees had started to draw out foundation in the bottom honey super and the top one was empty at this time.

Hive 1 was next and this one had little activity at the entrance, however, the house bees were quiet and there was no roaring sound, which would have indicated the absence of a queen.

Mark said he thought that a frame of brood had been added last time. Larvae were present as was a torn down queen cell. We looked for the queen but she was not found. Mark was sure that a queen was present and that she might be a virgin or one recently mated.

The top two honey supers were found to be heavy. The bees had just about finished drawing out cells on the bottom honey super and were starting to draw out frames on the top super.

So onto Hive 3, this one had had a queen cell on a brood frame on 13th May. The bees were calm but the hive was not busy with foraging bee flights. The queen was not seen but a sealed queen cell and an emergency cell were seen on brood frame 4.

We then opened up the three Nucleus Hives. In Nuc 1, the bees were working on two brood frames, the rest were empty. It was estimated there are about 2000 bees in this nucleus. A queen was found and marked with a yellow dot. But as there were no eggs or larvae present this could indicate that the queen still has to mate so she was not clipped.

Nuc 2, a queen was not seen and there were only sealed brood present from the original frames. Mark thought that this was a weak colony and may have to be united with another hive.

Nuc 3, the new queen was found marked with a yellow dot and she was clipped as eggs and larvae were both present. Bees were on three frames.

Thanks to all of those who organised this very busy session.

Peter Pavely

Saturday 24th June 2017

A visit to Jen Ferry's Apiary

Time: 3pm to 5pm

Venue: Buckhole Farm



16 members visited Jen's Apiary and the weather was fine. She has 16 beautifully coloured hives on a field edge filled with, rhubarb. There was a cherry orchard at the top of the field and nearby is the RSPB reserve with marshland on the banks of the River Thames.



Jen and Sheila had produced queen cells using 'Cupkits' in two breeder colonies. The session involved splitting out the queen cells, brood and stores into six Nucleus Boxes.

Each Nuc contained a frame of brood, two frames of stores and two frames of foundation, the queen cell was attached to the brood frame. On top of this was poured a mugful of bees.



The entrances were then shut for 24 hours to allow the bees to settle down. The Nucs were then moved to a purpose built protected area, which was surrounded by an electric fence and illuminated with a PIR controlled floodlight. What was the reason for this enclosure? Badgers! There is a large set quite close to the apiary and the residents have taken a liking for polystyrene boxes and honey. Their large claws enable them to tear open the side of a hive and pull out the frames. They will then lick the stored honey off the frames right back to the foundation base. Oh the joys of out-apiaries in the countryside!



Jen and Sheila want to produce nuc colonies now, so that they can be overwintered and used in the spring to make up for winter losses with ready-to-go queens.

A fascinating session involving a lot of hives and bees, our thanks go to Jen, for inviting us, and to all of those who helped prepare for this most useful of meetings.

Paul Lawrence

Next Outdoor Meetings:

Saturday 8th July 2017
MBKA Apiary Open Day
Time: 3pm to 4pm

You can find the apiary at 215a City Way, Rochester, Kent ME1 2TL

Future Events:

7th – 9th July Kent County Show
7th July Kent Bees and Honey Show

Can you help steward at the show? There is still time!

Contact Bob Smith: phone 0208 3001807 or email bsmith12@ntlworld.com

Kimber's Corner:



Hi everyone,

Well my queen has hatched, she emerged some 4 weeks ago, so that when I checked my hive last week I was hopeful of finding some brood.

I had been checking every week and getting quite disappointed that nothing seemed to be happening but when I watched the entrance a week or so ago I noticed quite a lot of pollen arriving. This was confirmed when I made my inspection and there it was being stored in the frames. I thought that this was a positive sign that there might be brood present.

Well this good sign turned into something spectacular! There were eggs and larvae on the middle frame of the hive. But to my amazement there was the queen as well! After all the disappointment this was an added bonus. What a relief to find, that the colony had started to bring itself back to normal. I suppose this as one of the highlights of beekeeping, it can be disconcerting not knowing how things are going to play out and as a new beekeeper this is

just one of many issues that have to be faced. But the most reassuring thing has been having back up help on stand by. What with having experienced my bees swarming, not to mention my failed attempt to retrieve a swarm some way up a tree, with ropes, ladders and bait hive, I have learnt a lot this year. I will take note in future and try to stick to the established does and don'ts.

Re-queening takes a number of weeks and is quite disruptive to the production of honey but that's nature for you.

Looking back at my problems with swarm control, one of my issues was not being able to find the queen and hence the difficulty in splitting the colony. So my next job will be to find the queen again and mark her with a yellow dot before the colony grows and it gets more difficult to find her again.

But my second job, is to remove some honey, extract it and jar it! Another set of skills to learn! Still was it all worth the hassle? You bet it was!

Talk to you all next month
Peter

Saturday 15th July 1 to 4 pm

Vines Cherry Picnic

Venue: The Vines, Rochester

The Vines in Rochester will come alive with demonstrations, Tombola, a range of activities for the children and a variety of stalls in marquees around the grounds, it's a day out for all.

Bee Chat:

The next gathering will be on 23rd July (4th Wednesday of the month) at **The Pier, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA, at 7.30pm** come and share your stories and hear everyone else's!

Next month's date is, 23rd August.

All members new and old are very welcome, and if any of you want to collect a box or two of Honey jars from me while you are in the village then this can be arranged too!

Please call Jen Ferry for further details. 07990 581858.

See you there.
Jen Ferry

Beekeepers Bazaar

Special Purchase:

As a service to members and a fundraiser for the Association we have purchased a bulk order of traditional 1lb Honey Jars from Freeman & Harding.

These are available to members at £25 per box of 72 jars. (Freeman & Hardings price is £31.50). There are only a few left so if you want some be quick - payment by cash, cheque or BACs all accepted!!

If you would like to secure a box or two (or more!) please contact Jen Ferry on 07990 581858 or email jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk.

The boxes are at Jens home in Upnor and can be collected by arrangement.

The association has also purchased a small quantity of foundation, at favourable prices, which is available if you would like some (14 x12 & supers only left but more is on order).

Jen Ferry

Local Bees for Sale:

Simon Marshall has some bees for sale:

11 frame colonies, 2 available @ £180 each and 5 frame nucleus, 2 available @ £80 each, the hives are not included in these prices. All colonies have 2017 queens.

Simon is situated in Rainham and if you are interested in purchasing some bees call him on 01634 234066.

Need Some Equipment:

Jen Ferry is selling some bee equipment on behalf of a retiring member:

There is a stand with landing board, a floor, a national brood box, two supers, a queen excluder, a crown board, a flat roof and a feeder. This comes complete with a resident colony of bees for £120, or £100 empty.

If interested please contact Jen 07990 581858 or email jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

The remaining program of summer meetings is on the website:

www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events

Many thanks, to all of those who have contributed to this newsletter.
Looking forward to seeing you at this summer's meetings.

Are there any other beekeeping products / accessories you might like us to purchase in bulk?
If you have any ideas please let us know.

Whether you are old or new members, If you have any news, ideas, amusing stories 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.

Contact Details:

Chairman

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Newsletter and Website Enquiries

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