

1923 - 2018



# MBKA

**Medway Beekeepers Association**

Medway  
Beekeepers  
Association



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

---

## Newsletter August 2018

As the heatwave continues there are an increasing number of reports of heathland and cereal crop fires. Our thoughts perhaps should turn to fire safety when using smokers. Simply tipping out the contents onto the ground and stamping is not 100% guaranteed to do the job. Better to tip the embers into a metal container and extinguish with a little water. It would be bad news if a wild fire were to be traced back to a beekeeper's smoker!

Many members have now started to take off some honey. Don't forget to keep a little back for the Honey Show, details below. Keep checking for signs of congestion, be aware of wasps and continue to set traps where necessary.

---

### Past Events:



#### **Sunday 22nd July 2018, at 11.00am MBKA Summer Outing A Visit to Chapel Down Winery**

The summer programme this year included an Association outing to Chapel Down Winery - it seemed a good place to visit!

On a warm, sunny Sunday morning, 21 members and guests gathered in Small Hythe at the Chapel Down Winery, we were all wondering just how hot it would be walking around the vineyard in this heatwave!!! Fortunately, we learnt early in the tour that this area, that used to be on the coast, still has a maritime microclimate and we enjoyed a gentle cool breeze.



We learnt that of the 6 million bottles of wine produced in England, 1 million of them are produced here by Chapel Down from grapes grown in Kent & W Sussex. Having been shown some of the many different grape varieties growing in the vineyards we moved into the processing areas and were amazed at the size and number of presses and fermenting vats. Did you know it takes one bunch of grapes to make every bottle of wine!

We were also surprised to learn that Chapel Down does not have its own bottling plant, they hire an outfit in from France that brings an articulated lorry/bottling plant over for 6 weeks in the autumn - sounds a bit like honey extraction – it's an expensive thing to have equipment sitting around that you only use once a year!

For the wine tasting, we were thoroughly indulged with 8 different wines to sample, it would be fair to say the level of noise & conversation increased as the tasting progressed and I learnt a bit less about the last ones than I did the first...

It was really good to see a wide range of members present, from some of this year's beginners, to some members who live further outside Medway who don't often make it to events, and some of our old timers who have supported the Association over many years. As we left, several of those present asked for a return visit next year and I think from the thanks offered everyone enjoyed themselves. Thank you to those of you who attended for coming.

Please let me know if you have any ideas of where we might visit next year (or if we want to go back!!). At £10 a head this tour was excellent value. In the Autumn, we are hoping to be able to visit A C Gothams new Packhouse at Hoo, a date will be circulated once this is confirmed.

Jen Ferry

---

## August's Events and Meetings:

### Saturday 4th August 2018

#### MBKA Apiary Open Day

2 – 4pm Association Apiary Site

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

### Wednesday 22nd August 2018

#### Bee Chat

Come and share your stories and hear everyone else's!

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at The Pier, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA, at 7.30pm.

---

## Welcome to New Members:

### Since the last newsletter the following have joined the Association:

Peter Swanborough and Christine Allsebrook. From all at MBKA, a big welcome to you both!

---

## Future Events:

### 6th-9th September 2018

#### The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) Conference

Venue: The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

BIBBA will be holding its conference on the date shown above, all beekeepers are welcome. The programme contains a wide variety of topics, with three simultaneous lectures, together with seminars and workshops. There is something for everyone, whatever their interest or experience. The three lecture streams are themed as follows:

- **"Bee Improvement"**: Queen rearing, bee breeding, genetics, queen mating, mini-nucs and their management, overwintering queens, etc.
- **"General beekeeping"**: Management techniques, treatment free beekeeping, overwintering nucs, comb honey, marketing, bee communication, etc.
- **"Beginner and beyond"**: Forage and feeding, wintering, swarming, bee space, nutrition, mystery of mating, colony cycle, simple management techniques, colony health, etc.

There are over 50 presentations from more than 30 top presenters, many having over 30 years beekeeping experience, some well over 50, so they are telling participants what the bees have told them, not something straight out of books. Of particular interest to the newer beekeeper is stream 3, above. The whole three days in this stream will be at a level that can help you understand and care for your bees.

There are a variety of scientific and practical topics and this conference is about as good as you will get. You can attend on whichever days you wish and choose the presentation you want. There is also accommodation onsite as well as plenty in the locality.

Check the programme, tell your local beekeeping friends and why not fill a car for an enjoyable break? Booking opens soon, with early bird discounts:

<https://bibba.com/event/bibba-conference-2018/>

---

## **8th-9th September 2018**

### **MBKA Honey Show**

Time: 2-Day Event

Venue: Elm Court Garden Centre Gillingham ME7 3JQ

Please click on the link below to find the schedule for this year's honey show:

<http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/honey-show-schedule-2018.pdf>

Or go to [www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news) and look under '2018 Honey Show'. So as you are harvesting your honey please think about entering. Its good fun and a great way of showing off the excellence of our honey and hive products.

There are twenty-one classes to choose from, including, cookery, craft and photography. So even if you haven't got any honey from your own bees yet you can still have a go.

Tex Garbutt from Hampshire is our judge this year. He is the deputy show steward at the National Honey Show and has a successful record of exhibiting both at the National Honey Show and Hampshire BKA's own show.

Nearer the time we will need offers of help to set up, from 3pm on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> for about an hour and to 'man' the sales table and to talk to visitors on the Saturday and Sunday. The show is open during garden centre opening hours, which are Saturday 9am – 5.30pm and Sunday from 10.30am until we start to clear up at about 4pm.

There will be the chance to sell honey and hive products the usual 10% to association funds will apply.

Any queries please get in touch especially if you need to buy a few 1lb jars or borrow a frame case. The association owns three frame cases that are available for loan on a first come first served basis.

Sue Chapman

---

## **Saturday 22nd September 2018**

### **Ploughing Match**

Time: All day event

Venue: Tudor Farm, Upper Stoke

---

## An Education Update:

Our 2018 beginner's course – “**An Introduction to Beekeeping**” finished in June and a review of the course has been completed; the 2019 course, which is already about half-full, should benefit from a few small changes. Key aspects going forward will be the availability of suitable apiary sites and our ability as an association to provide on-going support to beginners in the form of mentors. Expect these two to be mentioned frequently in the coming months!

The 2019 course will run for 6 consecutive Monday evenings in Wainscott, starting on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March. If you know of people who have expressed an interest, get them to contact Sheila Stunell.



Congratulations to the eight members who undertook the BBKA Basic Assessment during June and all passed; Andrew Garnham (Credit), Christine Dudley (Credit), Christopher Hayes (Credit), Darragh Skerritt, Dominic Baker, Jane Howells (Credit), Peter Kimble (Credit) and Sonia Belsey (Credit). Thanks again to Tony Edwards for making his apiary available for the assessments.

Anyone interested in undertaking “The Basic” next year should let Jen Ferry know, she is collecting names. [Jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk)

Jen is also collecting names for the 2018-19 Winter Studies group which will cover all aspects of the BBKA Module 2 syllabus – Honey Bee Products and Forage. Please let her know if you would like to be involved in this enjoyable and worthwhile winter activity.

10 sessions will be on alternate Monday evenings starting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, with a break over Christmas and the New Year. Cost will be just £20. Only 5 names down so far..... Although the course will be guided by the BBKA syllabus, there will be no obligation to undertake the exam next March – just an interest and desire to learn more. Usually, about half the group do take the exam (on 23<sup>rd</sup> March next year).

Bob Smith

---

## Notes from the Apiary:



The continuing heatwave is causing problems at the Apiary site as it is with most gardens. It has one benefit – the grass is not growing as quickly which means less frequent cutting. Though the weeds are still growing! The grass is now becoming a shade of light brown instead of green.

The pond water level has now dropped about 200mm, even though it has been topped up from the two rainwater barrels next to the sheds. One barrel is permanently draining into the pond (if we get any rain). **Please do not take the hose pipe out of the pond. It is not draining the pond!**



Up until the 2 July we had six colonies of bees in Nationals and WBC hives. Unfortunately hive number 3 had a drone laying queen and it was decided to cull the queen and shake all the other bees out onto the grass in front of the other hives. Hopefully the bees would find their way into other hives.

We now have 5 colonies:

**Hive 1** – National deep. all okay, queen seen and laying well. Slowly filling super

**Hive 2** – National 14 x 12 also going well, queen seen and doing her stuff. 4 supers – 1 removed 21/07/18. Another super is also ready to be removed. We have taken two very full supers off of this colony to-date.

**Hive 3** – National deep. Drone laying queen (queen culled) Bees shaken onto grass. **See hive 6 below**

**Hive 4** – National deep. expanding strongly. Filling super

**Hive 5** - WBC – 14 x 12 Colony expanding ok. Slowly filling super

**Hive 6** – was a nucleus - **this is now Hive No 3** - a full size WBC 14 x 12. This one needs checking for feeding.

**Please note:**

We will have full supers available for members who would like to extract Apiary honey for themselves. Whole supers are available and the cost is £2-50 per 1lb. of honey extracted. The undamaged clean supers / frames will need to be returned.

We also need volunteers for an Apiary working party / tidy up:

**Saturday 1st September 2018**

**MBKA Apiary Clean Up**

12 – 2pm Association Apiary Site

Mark Ballard

---

## **A Salutary Apiary Site Lesson:**

Where to start? I recently discovered EFB in one of my colonies and, apart from the actual disease in my bees, several lessons were learned which I'd like to share with you.

EFB is a notifiable disease and lesson one to learn is that the Seasonal Bee Inspector is your friend. In our case she is a known person to us – Kay Wreford. Make use of your Seasonal Bee Inspector if you are worried. Remember she works during the week not weekends and you need to fit in with her but that said I know she works long days and travels widely to help beekeepers county (and often out of county) wide!

EFB is not something we should be ashamed of or hide any more than a serious illness would be kept from your GP. Hiding it will not make it go away it will cause it to spread through your apiary and your neighbours' apiaries.

Healthy brood and the recognition of it is what we should be looking for. Anything that detracts from this is a cause for concern – you might not know what the problem is but you should know that it is not healthy brood. Talk to your mentor or another more experienced beekeeper and then talk to your Seasonal Bee Inspector.

Apiary hygiene is essential at all times not just when we know about disease in the neighbourhood. Don't drop comb, don't spill syrup, clean up old boxes and kit. There will be beekeepers in your area who you don't know, they are not always registered with the association(s) and in some cases they are careless of hygiene. Not very far from me were old boxes and frames that had not been touched for years. Inevitably my bees and yours will find these boxes and rob out everything they can including the foul brood and they will bring it

back to our apiaries. Don't be the person that causes this. Clean your tools between each hive. Clean your gloves or change them between each colony. If you only have one hive tool scrub it off between each colony. Your gloves will be carrying pheromones from one colony to the next and changing or washing your gloves will give you a much easier ride with the bees!! Clean your boots as you take them off. Wash your suit when you get home. Never go to your apiary (or anyone else's) with a dirty suit and boots.

Insurance; we all get our first three hives from within our subscription to BBKA. Particularly new beekeepers are you aware that if you get a fourth colony (a swarm, a split) you will not be covered for any of your colonies until 40 days from your request to increase your insurance? I have kept bees for a while and was aware of this but.....! I increased my insurance at the beginning of the year but I am on the swarm collectors list and this year have also had to make artificial swarms. Even if the plan is to reunite your artificial swarms there is often a delay. I found that I was two colonies over my insured limit when EFB struck. It's hard to know at the beginning of the year what you might need but however many colonies you have it's certain that you will need to cover more by the end of the year! I would say double up. If you have three colonies, cover for six which gives you an opportunity to undertake an artificial swarm on each colony. Some members do not buy into the insurance and that's also a choice, what I'm saying is don't get caught out. If you're insured make sure you are covered.

EFB was found in only one of my colonies and Kay came to do the six- week check this week. No more EFB was found. She will now come every year for three years and I will need to be vigilant forever. It's a horrible experience but one made so much better by our hardworking Bee Inspector who I cannot thank enough for being available and dealing with everything so well.

Sheila Stunell

---

## Have you a site that an MBKA Beekeeper could use to keep their bees?

We are now training more new beekeepers than ever and they often need a site for their new colonies. If you can offer an area in a large garden or on a piece of land which has reasonable access and good forage then please let Jen Ferry know:

email [jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk)

Jen will keep a list of potential sites that beekeepers can consult in order to help find new accommodation for their bees.

---

## Beekeepers Bazaar:

A short Bee Jacket made with extra thick cotton/polyester with two zip pockets, one either side, a top zip pocket and reinforced elbows. A detachable hood in hat style not bonnet. Wrists have Velcro fastenings to enable size changes, hood has two zips one either side and a Velcro fastening at the front to keep it secure. Size: Europe S Norway XS. 65% Polyester 35% cotton. Body can go in washing machine but hood must be hand-washed.

For collection please call Mai Monk on: 01634 581647

---

## Congratulations!



Congratulations to Diane Wakeling and her family on the arrival of a new Grandson Ruan.

Another beekeeper in the making or is he going to be a fisherman!

---

## And Finally:

### Summer Meetings:

We look forward to seeing you at this summer's meetings. A list of the meetings can be viewed by going to: [www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events](http://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events)

Thank you to all who have contributed to this month edition and remember if anyone has any news, ideas, amusing stories or comments or indeed suggestions about the website 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

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)