

Whitstable & Herne Bay Beekeepers

Newsletter for December 2015

Welcome to the final news round-up for 2015. The branch has had a good year and we're looking forward to 2016.

Local News

1. The branch's Beginners' Course will run on 5th and 19th March 2016, taught by Julie Coleman. We've already had some applications and look forward to welcoming new beekeepers to the group. The committee is now considering how we might support junior - ie, under age 18 - beekeepers as well, as we potentially have three of them. Anyone interested in taking the Beginners' sessions should contact Julie using the link on our website at

<http://whitstable-hernebay-beekeepers.org.uk/courses-for-beekeepers-and-beginners/> .

2. The successful 'Improver Key Skills' course will run in January/February 2016, using the lecture facilities at Mann Lake, Bridge. This promises to be a particularly interesting series of sessions for those of us in East Kent who want to improve our beekeeping skills and knowledge. Details, including how to book, can be found at http://ksrcbees.org.uk/?page_id=481

3. Members visiting our branch apiary will probably be surprised by the change in local habitat since our last meeting, as the University has just had the large Leylandii trees at the back of the apiary trimmed right down to about four metres. The extra sunshine that the bees will now get in the mornings should prove of great benefit to them, as you can see from the (slightly unfocussed) photo below that was taken yesterday morning in a rare patch of December sunshine. There is still shelter from the north and east winds from the shorter hedge.



4. If anyone would be interested in taking the Basic Assessment this coming year - a short practical-with-questions session that is really helpful in making sure one is covering basic needs of one's bees, please talk with Julie or with someone who has taken the assessment in the last few years to find out more (Dale, Amanda, Diana, Sandy, Ian, Maggy, Tilly, Rick). We know that at least two members of the branch are intending to take the assessment this coming year and it would be good to have a group going forward for it that we can support.

5. For those interested in taking the BBKA theory modules as a route to improving their interest and practice as active beekeepers, and who have passed the Basic, the application form, syllabuses, and past papers can be accessed on the BBKA site at http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations__assessments .

6. Our programme of topics for branch meetings during the next six months is currently being developed and will be published after the committee has finalised it at their next meeting, on 18th January. If there are any topics that members would particularly like to see covered then please do let me know as soon as possible and we will try and include them.

News from the County and the wider region

7. BBKA HONEY SURVEY 2015 - the survey showed an average yield of 21 lbs per colony this year, down 34% from last year. There were considerable differences between the regions, too.

8. BBKA Spring Convention 2016 - this will be over the weekend 8,9,10 April and will be held at Harper Adams University in Shropshire. More details will be available on the BBKA website over the next couple of months.

9. Bee Farmers' Journal - did you know that you don't have to be a bee farmer to subscribe to their interesting Journal? More details of how to do so here - <http://beefarmers.co.uk/bee-farmer-journal/>

10. BBKA members' survey - the BBKA has grown enormously over the last decade and wants to hear members' views on what sort of organisation it should be in the future. If you have five minutes or so to spare before the end of December, then the survey can be completed online via the link on this page - http://www.bbka.org.uk/members/bbka_survey_october_to_december_2015 or on a paper copy obtainable from the address on that page.

11. Oxalic acid treatments - from recent research results published by the University of Sussex (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/33537>) the benefits to the bees of a mid-winter oxalic acid treatment are greatest if given by the sublimation method. It would be interesting to know if any members of our branch do it that way and what their experience has been.

and finally...

12. The Hive board game - possible a bit late for Christmas but a good birthday present?
<http://gen42.com/hive>

ajlr, 24-12-15