



KENT BEE-KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

County Newsletter No. 62 July 2012

Dartford celebrates 100 years of beekeeping

Beekeeping in Dartford has a long and influential history, and can claim to be one of the founding forces behind the KBKA. The current branch can trace its roots back to 1912 when the Crayford & District Beekeepers' Association, which had been formed around the turn of the century, approached other beekeepers in Kent with a view to creating a county organisation. Four years later the Kent Beekeepers' Association (KBKA) was formed and the Crayford group changed its name to the Dartford branch of the KBKA as Dartford was the market town for the area.

In 1932, the Dartford branch established its first clubhouse and apiary on Bedonwell Farm, Belvedere. Since then the apiary has had to relocate four times to sites in Erith, Birchwood, Longfield and, finally, to its current location at Tredegar Allotments, Dartford. It is still known as Bedonwell apiary in recognition of that first site 80 years ago.

The branch still has the original minutes from its first apiary meeting on 21 January 1932. Members agreed to buy shares in the apiary for one shilling (5p) each on the understanding that they would receive a dividend each year based on any profit the branch made. At that time, a single hive plus bees was valued at 40 shillings (£2).

During both world wars the government granted extra sugar rations to beekeepers to support their hobby on the basis that it provided a valuable source of food. In 1945 the accounts show that the branch sold 262lbs of honey for almost £29, whilst spending less than £5 on sugar to feed the bees through the winter. The profit that year was just over £10 and there were 526 shares in the branch.

In 1977, the club sent 25 jars of its honey to the Queen to celebrate the Silver Jubilee. The gift was evidently well received by Her Majesty and the club still has the thank you letter from the Palace.

The Chairman of the Dartford Beekeepers, William Mundy, has been keeping bees for 76 years and been a member of the branch for 75 years. During all that time, his only absence from the Association was during the Second World War when he was captured by the Japanese in the Far East and spent three and a half years in POW camps. Even then, he managed to keep bees in order to provide honey for medicinal use in the camp hospital.

Mr Mundy's enthusiasm is as infectious as it is lasting. New members are always welcomed by the club, which holds an annual beginners' course starting each autumn. Members meet regularly at the apiary and have an active program of talks and demonstrations by guest speakers. There is also an active schools programme and attendance at local events.

To celebrate 100 years of beekeeping in Dartford, the club is holding an open day at its apiary on Saturday 7 July – all are welcome. Please visit the website for directions and contact numbers: www.dbka-kent.com/contact

Around the Branches

Ashford

8th July Apiary meeting
11th August Apiary meeting and tea party
1st September Honey show
9th September Beginners day
Summer meetings are held at South Stour Apiary. Mersham at 2.30 p.m.

Bromley

Branch meetings are on the first and third Sunday of the month at 11.30 a.m. Kent House Road apiary
Practical support and queen rearing every Wednesday at 7.00 p.m.
All meetings are at the Kent House Road apiary SE26 5LJ

Canterbury

Meetings at 7.30 p.m. at Whitefriars Conference Room, Canterbury

Dartford

7th July Open Day at our Apiary 12.00 noon – 4.00 pm to celebrate 100 years of beekeeping
18th August Disease update and colony inspection Alan Byham SE Regional Bee Inspector
8th September Bumblebee Conservation Trust Nikki Gammans
All meetings to take place at Bedonwell Apiary, Tredagar Allotments, Dartford from 3.00-5.00 p.m.

Gravesend

28th July Annual visit to Peter Allen's at Sutton Vallenge on 28th July

Mid Kent

Please see website

Orpington

Branch meetings every Saturday at 2.30 p.m. from April to September at the apiary at BEECHE Centre, High Elms

Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells

See website for details of apiary meetings which start at 2.00 p.m. at Barrwood Apiary and Hilbert Road Summer Apiary unless otherwise stated.

Sidcup

Weekly meetings at 2.00 p.m. at Baldwyns Apiary. Please see website

Weald

21st July Diseases and the Asian hornet with Mike Cooper at High Halden. Weald meeting
18th August Terry Clare: Assessment and selection of colonies at Marle Place, Brenchley.
15th September Weald Group Honey Show, Smarden Charter Hall
Contact Nick Mengham for further details nick@mrbumble.biz 01233 840660 or 07884

Westerham

Spring and Summer meetings are held from May to July at weekends.

Saturday 30th June 2.30pm Peter Cobley's out apiary at St. Andrews Convent, Stick Hill, Edenbridge TN8 5NN. Tea afterwards at Lydens Cottage, Lydens Lane, Hever, Edenbridge TN8 7EP.

Saturday 21st July Carol Taylor's home apiary, Pipers Farm, Pipers Lane, Brasted Chart, TN16 1NE.

Saturday 18 August 2.30pm - demonstration by Bob Smith at Mick Andrew's home apiary, Mead Bungalow, Pootings TN8 6SD

Please see website for directions

Yalding and District

Monthly meetings take place at The Chequers Inn, Laddingford, ME18 6BP on the last Monday of each month. Meetings start at 8.00 p.m.

The Bee Fayre raised £1866 which will all be going towards developing a teaching apiary.

Saturday 30th June Yalding Gardens open day. More information can be found at <http://www.foyog.org/2012/06/opeday2012/>

Saturday and Sunday, 11th and 12th August: the Great Comp Garden Show. More information can be found at <http://www.greatcomparden.co.uk/greatcompshow.html>

Please also see branch websites for details of branch meetings, lectures and courses.

County and other events 2012

Saturday, 7th July **Dartford celebrate 100 years of beekeeping** Open day at their apiary

Friday to Sunday, 13th to 15th July **Kent County Show, Detling**

Stewards are always needed so please make a note of the dates in your diary. Details will be circulated nearer the event

Thursday to Saturday, 25th to 27th October **81st National Honey Show**

St. George's College, Weybridge. The show schedule will be available in August

The **Kent Show** is a very important part of the Kent Beekeepers as it allows us the opportunity of sharing our interest with members of the public who may be interested in taking up beekeeping. It is a source of information for the general public and also allows us to try and allay any fears they may have in respect of bees – we can discuss the difference between bees and wasps for instance. What I would like are volunteers to converse with members of the public over the three days or even help to set up on Thursday 12 July 2012. The show is open to the public on 13 – 15 July 2012. I have sent out a general e-mail to people who have helped in the past. If you are not in receipt of that e-mail and would like to take part this year please send me an e-mail to bsmith12@ntlworld.com. You are asked to attend on a least one whole day and steward one of the actual activities for two sessions on that day. Your spare time is yours and you are able to wander round the show at your leisure when not working. **YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO ME AS WITHOUT STEWARDS I WOULD BE A VERY BUSY PERSON INDEED.** I look forward to hearing from you.

Bob Smith Chief Steward Kent Show.

An Olympic year for Canterbury Beekeepers

2012 always promised to be a busy year for Canterbury Beekeepers, the Canterbury branch of Kent Bee-Keepers Association, and it has proved to be so!

It started with the invitation to join the Canterbury City Partnership in their promotion of the Canterbury in Bloom city-wide initiative by installing two hives on the top of Whitefriars shopping centre. The project is being co-ordinated by Julian Audsley, Secretary of Canterbury Beekeepers. He explains: "The approach from Canterbury City Partnership and Whitefriars was timely, as I was looking for a suitable site for a secure teaching facility that could be used for those keeping or planning to keep bees.

"Whitefriars is an interesting location and one that presents its own unique set of challenges. A roof top site is more exposed than a ground level one, with higher temperatures and possibly reduced shelter from wind. Whitefriars has installed a water supply and the height won't present a challenge to the bees, as they are used to foraging in high trees. As a city centre location, all the gardens of the city are in reach, as bees can easily travel a mile and a half, and there is a plentiful supply of nectar from trees, plants and flowers within range, including the Dane John Gardens."

It is a particularly appropriate site as historical records indicate that monks used to keep bees on this site a thousand years ago when it was home to an austere religious community of Austin, or white friars.

Club members have erected some screens and planters to help to protect the bees from the roof-top wind which has been lively as Julian first predicted, as has the summer rain!

Whitefriars have been very supportive and keen to see the first crop of honey from the hives and have even designed some bespoke labels for the club to use (see image attached). As part of their commitment to bee-friendly planting in the city, they have donated 5000 packets of wildflower seeds that Club members distributed at a recent "Bee Day" that the shopping centre put on. Club members hosted the day and chatted to local families about getting started in beekeeping, showed live bees in an observation hive, conducted honey tastings and even had bee suits for children and adults to try.

They were supported by Martyn Barr, author of children's book "To Be a Bee" and a local facepainter who had a fantastic range of creative bee designs!

Club members sported t-shirts which showcased the new club logo (see attached image). Deborah Kellond, publicity officer, said "The logo helps to create a public identity for the club and creates a brand for our members to associate with. We have so many public-facing events this summer it was an ideal opportunity for us to create an image the community would recognise and one that associates us with our base of Canterbury. The logo will be used on our publicity materials, website, t shirts, caps and honey labels."

The most public of these events are the three fruit festivals at Brogdale Farm – home of the National Fruit collections in Faversham, www.brogdalecollections.co.uk . For the second year, the club has been invited to partner with the organisation to educate the festival visitors on all aspects of beekeeping through talks, practical demonstrations and honey-tastings & sales. The festival dates are:

- Cherry – 7th & 8th July
- Cider - 22nd & 23rd September
- Apple – 20th & 21st October

We had been looking for a new Club Apiary site in the Canterbury area for some time and have been delighted to be offered some land in Westbere, which has been quickly populated with a number of hives. It is an ideal site for transitioning swarm collections, as well as a regular home for the club's monthly apiary visits. It offers a variety of hives for inspection and education for new, prospective and experienced members. Thank you to local smallholder, Stan Truelove, for this donation.

Other diary dates for members, guests and other clubs who would like to see what we are doing:

- 1st July 2.30pm - A "royal progress" between members' apiaries. Regional Bee Inspector Michael Cooper passes on his expertise reviewing a selection of member sites.
- 14th July all day – Family Bee day Hambrook Marshes, Canterbury
- 29^h July – Bumblebee Identification day at Dungeness.
A day out with Nikki Gammans at the site of the latest bumblebee release in Dungeness.
- 4th August – Westbere Club Apiary Visit

Finally, part of our commitment as a Club is to encourage people to get involved with beekeeping. Julian Audsley has been running spring and autumn courses for a number of years with the next 6 week course with practical experience taking place on 11th September at 7pm in Barham Village Hall, nr Canterbury CT4 6NX. Booking is essential for these popular courses.

More details of everything that is happening in our club, please visit the website: www.canterburybeekeepers.org.uk

Contact: Deborah Kellond, publicity officer Deborah@dkellond.com