



## **CBKA - May 2013**



May 2013 Newsletter – Colin Marshall - Ed

**Chairman – Mark Stott**  
**Secretary – Joyce Atkinson**  
**Treasurer - Tamar Devane**

### **Extended Newsletter available on line**

#### **'Planting for Pollination'**

Dr. Karen Alton is a research scientist working with Professor Ratnieks in the Department of Apiculture and Social Insects at Sussex University.

Karen had been waiting for over half an hour at one of the several churches in Warlingham (but not where WE were) wondering where on earth everyone had got to. To our relief Tamar Cavett proved herself to be extremely proficient in 'search and rescue' - our Chairman was turning distinctly pale at the thought of producing last minute entertainment for an audience of over 50. Karen had expected to be speaking to a SMALL group of about 12-14 enthusiastic beekeepers but was so heartened at the level of interest shown.

The huge decline in insect population should come as no surprise to those of us that used to drive the M1 in the 60's & 70's – blood spattered car windscreens seldom occur in the modern day. Insects of course are our main pollinators and their breathtaking reduction in numbers is of great concern. Decline in pollination is attributed to pests & diseases, herbicides & insecticides and lack of forage – all linked with modern farming practice.

Improving availability of forage will make some inroads into the problem. 50% of our hedgerows have disappeared since WW2; field boundaries have been removed to make bigger areas (many ancient hedgerows) 97% of our meadows have been lost in recent years; 50% of our ancient woodland has vanished since the 1930's leaving the UK as the least wooded country in Europe (only 2% of our existing woodland is classified as 'ancient'). Also 80% of our lowland heaths have disappeared in the last 200 years, over 50% of these since the 1940's. It is all quite alarming.

There is no doubt that lack of food (forage) and habitat are the key causes of low pollinator numbers. The plants cultivated by man for food, in the main do not provide food for insects. Habitats that remain are isolated and do not provide corridors (wildlife highways as Karen called them) in which animals can move, leaving isolated communities which are genetically unviable. Demand for more building land is an unstoppable phenomenon.

Professor Ratnieks' unit has been monitoring foraging patterns of bees for several years in Sussex (Brighton area) Naturally bees will only travel further if forage cannot be found locally, travelling 1- 3 miles usually but generally within the mile radius. Snowdrops, Crocuses & Ivy featured in the urban areas, although there were fields of oil seed rape in the area which proved useful. Karen said that they had identified a lack of forage in August – bees started to travel much further – which indicated that maybe we should be thinking of providing more bee friendly flowers in that month.

Their studies had indicated that the optimum hive density seemed to be 2 – 6 hives / km<sup>2</sup>. London's estimated 2,230 hives are within an area of about 100 km<sup>2</sup> and this has featured in the recent news.

Karen spoke about two other studies specifically concerned with flowers in urban gardens:

1]the 'Bugs' project based on Sheffied University (Biodiversity in Urban Gardens in Sheffield)

<http://www.bugs.group.shef.ac.uk/BUGS1/bugs1-index.html> 2]Jennifer Owen who had been doing an individual study in the Leicester area: 'RHS Wildlife of a Garden: A Thirty-Year Study' – available from the RHS or other websites – recently mentioned in the news.

Karen with her husband, a botanist formerly of the Millennium Seed Bank (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) has set up 'Flowerscapes – planting solutions for pollinators' :

<http://www.flowerscapes.org.uk/> and is convincing local authorities to plant annual wild flowers instead of bedding plants (which are not bee friendly and are much more expensive to cultivate) with some success.

**91% of our pollinators are bees – so get planting in your gardens!**

## **Things to do in May :-**

May it seems is the month for colony build up and swarming - In years past this is something most of us would be fearing, but not this year. The imperative this year I feel would be to make sure that the bees have everything they need for a slow but sustained build up. For my own part I am feeding my bees with a sugar syrup to maintain a constant food supply.

However should you be fortunate to have a very strong colony make sure they have plenty of room for the queen to lay, this will delay the inevitable, the day when you are called away and they decide to swarm. This happens to the best of us.

You should also be considering your next steps towards queen rearing. The essentials being a strong colony and congestion/lots of young bees.

If you are yet to do your first inspection now is the time

Has the colony survived? - If not why not can we learn anything?

Is a queen present and is there evidence of brood?

Is there any evidence of pests or, disease?

Are there enough stores to last until the next inspection?

Is there old, damaged or, mouldy comb that needs to be moved and progressively replaced?

If pollen substitute needs to be provided to sustain a growing brood nest, in the event that rain or cold weather prevents bees from flying during the next critical weeks.

## **Events**

3<sup>rd</sup> May NDB course on Queen Rearing in Devon

4 May Meon Valley BKA annual auction Greatham Village Hall, GU33 6AD

18<sup>th</sup> May Sussex Beekeepers Bee Market - See Flyer

27 May The Surrey County Show Stoke Park, Guildford 8am - 6pm on Spring Bank Holiday.

9-14th July Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

Notes:- If you receive a posted version of the newsletter please consider if you really need it posted. There is normally far more content in the online version.

Many thanks to David Shepherd for his contributions to the newsletter - much appreciated. If you would like anything included please send it in .

If you are online have a look at the Surrey site <http://www.surreybeekeepers.org.uk/>

**Local Agent for E.H. THORNE (Beehives) Limited**

**RICHARD PALMER    Tel: 0208 679 0401**

Email: [palmersbees@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:palmersbees@hotmail.co.uk)

## News from the Apiary - March/May

Thank you to everyone who turned up for the work party in November – much was achieved the major task being the giant leaf rake.

We also now have the beginnings of an apiary team who are meeting for a couple of hours in the week to do routine maintenance.

There have been a few problems with the apiary huts over the winter: some vandalism, and a leak in the roof which made everything very damp inside; also a resident mouse built a nest in the cutlery drawer; after the drawer had been cleared, washed, dried and made less comfortable, it made its way across to the overall box and chewed up a number of 'disposable' overalls.

The deer are still there (3 of them) which look pretty, but are a huge problem for the plot holders – large numbers of crops eaten, apple trees barked etc. The problem has been so serious it prompted communication amongst the ploholders, a communal meeting has been held with council representatives (we were there); the outcome is that an allotment committee has been started with a view to setting up an allotment association with some delegated responsibilities. We have some work to do on the fences - which may not deter the deer but could make it less easy for them to move around.

However by far the worst problem was some mindless vandalism in February, where a large number of allotments were damaged during the schools' half term week (fruit cages, fences, posts pushed over; cloches broken; sheds broken etc) and seven of our Croydon Division hives were pulled apart. We are very fortunate that our immediate plot holder tracked us down to inform us, which helped save some hives (we've been giving them much tlc since) but the temperature was only a few degrees above freezing and three of the smaller colonies have already succumbed. The largest swarm was particularly angry when we eventually arrived to put things right, so it's very possible that we have IT to thank for preventing more from being pushed over: one suggestion was that we ought to telephone around the hospitals to check whether anyone had arrived in casualty for treatment for stings!

The woodpecker has not caused any problem (wire protections were on early) this year although we have seen it in the apiary area – it's a green woodpecker.

The plan for this year is to continue our theme of planting (to plan) bee friendly plants – we know that our own bees are unlikely to profit much but there are the bumble and solitary bee species to watch.

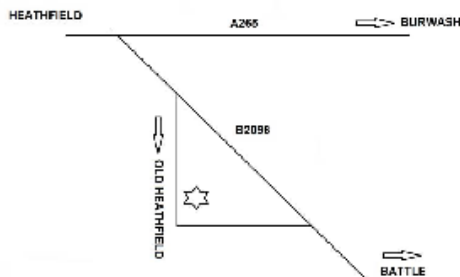
Two new flower beds have been constructed and seeded, further ones will follow – but we are mindful that 'Rome was not built in a day'

Best wishes

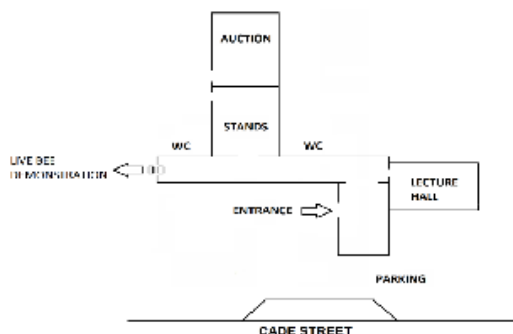
The Shivering Drone

## Getting There

Heathfield Community College  
Cade Street  
Old Heathfield  
East Sussex  
TN21 8RJ



Heathfield Community College is on the South side of the B2096 just to the east of Heathfield - watch for the SBKA signs.



[www.sussexbee.org.uk](http://www.sussexbee.org.uk)



Sussex Beekeepers' Association

# Bee Market

2013

Heathfield Community College

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May

Free Admission

Non-members Welcome

Tea & Coffee  
Trade Stands  
FERA Stand  
Talk  
Local Honey

Bee Auction  
Free Parking  
Hot Food  
Equipment Auction  
Bird & Bat Boxes

Raffle  
Bee Demonstration  
Plants for Sale  
Bee Advice  
Children's Workshop

[www.beemarket.info](http://www.beemarket.info)

## PROGRAMME

### 17th May

4:30pm - 6:30pm

#### Goods Accepted for Auction

Bring along your unwanted bee keeping equipment: hives, extractors, wax, stands, etc. Items can be sold in the Auction or on the second hand stall - see website [www.beemarket.info](http://www.beemarket.info) for full Auction conditions and contacts.

### 18th May

08:30am

#### Goods and Bees Accepted for Auction

Live Bees are accepted subject to prior inspection and booking in by 10.30am - see website [www.beemarket.info](http://www.beemarket.info) for full Auction conditions and contacts.

10:30am

#### Market Open for Business

Stalls include:

Paynes Southdowns Bee Farms  
Ben & Maggi Pratt Beekeeping Supplies  
Mantel Farm  
DEFRA  
The Monday Group

Plus various stalls run by Sussex Members and their Divisions:

Second Hand Equipment  
Tea, Coffee and Cake Stall  
Hot Food  
Raffle  
Plants  
Local Honey

11:00am

#### Bee Handling Demonstration

Come along and see live bees being handled by our experienced Bee Keepers.

12:00 noon

#### Talk

'Darwin's Bees' - John Williams

John is an expert beekeeper based in Kent. Recently John has been assisting English Heritage to show Darwin's work with bees at Darwin's Down House in Downe, Kent.

12:00 - 13:00

#### Bee Workshop

This fun, bee-related workshop is for under 12's and is organised by Maggi Pratt.

### Auctions

1:30pm

#### Bee Auction

All bees for sale have been inspected by our local Bee Inspector to ensure they're healthy. Bidders need to register to get a bidding card.

2.00pm

#### Auction

Indoor Auction of Equipment in the Gym. Buy hives, stands, frames, equipment, wax, tools etc. Bidders need to register to get a bidding card.

4.30pm approx.

#### Close

All timings are approximate and subject to change at short notice.

[www.beemarket.info](http://www.beemarket.info)

## What's a Transition Town -- and A Call to Action for CBKA - by Susan Oliver

We beekeepers know more than most people that something funny is going on with the weather. It's becoming more unpredictable, more downright miserable, and more inhospitable to the bees.

We also know how expensive everything is getting, particularly petrol. This is due to a number of factors but one thing remains clear: the age of cheap oil is over and who knows how expensive supplies will become.

The Transition Town movement was created to face these two major fears (climate change and peak oil\*) in a positive way. It is a world-wide initiative that was ignited by Briton Rob Hopkins and his students in 2005. At the time, Hopkins was a permaculture teacher in Kinsale, Ireland. He soon took the idea to Totnes, Devon where the first Transition Town was born. Transition Towns basically ask, "How can we perceive this (scary) situation as an opportunity rather than a burden?"

One of the first ways of dealing with it is by talking. It's a bit daunting to take on these big topics by one's self so a major activity of Transition Towns is to provide educational opportunities to learn and discuss the realities facing the Earth.

Another major theme in Transition is strengthening the community. TTs are named with their town or city's name in it and there's a reason for that. Localism is at the heart of the movement; it's about acting locally and getting to value one's neighbour and town. The oil-based economy has encouraged us to look away from our communities for our well-being. With the decline of physical resources, it's time to look within and see our strength in our communities. Currently there are about 1100 TTs in the world at various stages of establishment. We started Croydon Transition Town with about 4 people in November 2012. Currently we have about 15 people coming to the meetings and are followed by 225 people on Twitter. A website has been created and our first major project is well underway: a community garden in collaboration with the Friends of Thornton Heath Rec Ground.

Personally, at the beginning of this journey I struggled with the idea of "what to do." The values of the organisation seemed vague but over the months, it's become clear to me that TTs are trying to get people to re-think the concept of value. What is really valuable in our lives – and to the earth? We have been trained to regard money as the primary value and to be the most important factor in making a decision.

One relevant example is the recent decision by the EU not to ban Neonicotinoids. Money was at the root of this decision – and the value of bees and our food supply were considered less important.

This is clearly madness. We're flirting with disaster – for what? A few bits of paper and metal coins? In order to counter-act this philosophy, we need to encourage people to value the environment more. This is where Croydon Bee Keepers can make a difference.

In a lot of ways, CBKA is already part of the Transition movement. It is already offering guidance and supporting bee-keeping and bee-keepers, teaching good practices, bringing environmental awareness to the local community and so on.

The only piece of advice I would give is: Stop hiding your light under a bushel!

The reason why big money has taken over is because smaller, more humane philosophies have been less robust in asserting themselves in society. We need to learn from them. We need to become more confident, less afraid. We need to become more creative and innovative in putting the message out there. The sky's the limit – let's have fun!

One fun way that CBKA can have a greater presence in Croydon is by collaborating with other groups. Art groups are usually very happy to do joint projects. Youth groups, cooking groups, allotment societies, resident associations, etc. What fun and creative ideas can you come up with? And who doesn't want to help the bees?

Get a Twitter account, start posting on local blogs, start networking in the community, work with the local press and with local companies. How can CBKA become an advisor to the Council Council? How can CBKA work with Council to make residents more aware of the plight of bees? Could you put a bee-hive (empty of course) in an empty store-front with relevant posters, etc?

Croydon Transition Town has already put CBKA as a link on our website and of course will do everything we can to bring it into greater public awareness. Let's see what we can accomplish together! There's no catch in this, we are not asking for money.

It's little steps that make a big difference. Different ways of saying "Let's work together to simultaneously promote Croydon and bees in Croydon." I think the 2011 riots led a lot of Croydon residents to re-think their personal commitment to the town. I encourage the Croydon Bee Keepers Association to become a stronger force in the community and I have every confidence it can.

\*Peak oil is short-hand for the concept that the world's production of oil has peaked and we are basically scrambling to get what's left.

<http://croydontransitiontown.wordpress.com/>

You can find more information about Transition Towns at: [www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org)

Contact Croydon Transition Town at [croydontransitiontown@gmail.com](mailto:croydontransitiontown@gmail.com) Follow us on

Twitter: [@croytransition](https://twitter.com/croytransition)

# SURREY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

## TRAINING DAY

# HONEYBEE DISEASES

## Saturday 6th July 1-5pm

Regional Bee Inspector Alan Byham will lead a workshop on honeybee diseases to include a 'hands on' session to examine combs with Foul-brood disease.

50 places available at £10 per person  
Venue: East Horsley Village Hall

### RESERVATIONS

For payment details and to secure a place please email:

Sandra Rickwood on [rickwoodsba@gmail.com](mailto:rickwoodsba@gmail.com)  
or phone [01932 244326](tel:01932244326)

Full directions and confirmation of place will be provided on receipt of payment