

1923 - 2020



Medway  
Beekeepers  
Association

**Medway Beekeepers Association**

Celebrating over 95 years of support for beekeeping  
and beekeepers in and around the Medway Towns



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## Newsletter January 2020

**Happy New Year!!** This is a quiet month but we do need to check the mite drop on our colonies and treat if necessary. Also, don't forget to heft and check the stores. Feed fondant if you think your bees are getting low on food.

Sorry to remind you all, but, please note that **it is subscription renewal time!**

If you haven't yet renewed, you can find a 2020 renewal form in the member's Area under the '**Membership Renewals**' Tab. If you are having problems logging on, then please do get in touch.

Lastly don't forget to put the **AGM** date into your diary for details see below.

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### Past Event:

**Saturday 7th December 2019**

**Indoor Meeting – "Pollen – super-food for honey bees"**

**Presented by Bob Smith:**



Honey bee on clover.

In order for a honey bee colony to thrive, it needs be able to gather food resources throughout the active season. This talk looked at the role of pollen in honey bee nutrition, what pollen is and how bees collect it.

Bob started by stating how beekeeping often produces other offshoots of interest such as woodwork, botany, biology gardening and in his case pollen. He started his talk by looking at the bee's nutritional needs, nectar / honey is the fuel on which bees run but pollen is used to build the bee in the first place.

**Interesting fact number 1:** it takes about 120 mg of pollen to make a bee. Pollen is packed with protein and other nutrients particularly amino acids, the basic building blocks of all life on earth.

Bee colonies store nectar and honey for use all year round and is used by the adults who amongst other duties look after the brood. Young bees eat it for themselves, but also use it to produce brood food for the developing larvae. While for the older bees it is their energy source to enable them to undertake their individual tasks for the colony, foraging etc. Bees will store more than their immediate requirements for use in times of dearth.

Pollen however is stored for short term use for feeding larvae and young bees when they are developing and require amino acids to stimulate and promote their growth. Some colonies hoard pollen in large amounts and this can take up space that should be used for nectar or for egg laying. The only way to overcome this tendency is to re-queen. In summer the pollen

is loosely packed by the incoming foraging bees and mixed with a little regurgitated nectar and will be stored around the brood area for instant use when they need it. In winter the pollen is more tightly and densely packed in cells on more distant frames. **Interesting fact 2:** Usually only 1kg of pollen is stored. Whereas many kilos of nectar will be stored.

There are only 20 amino acids and animals cannot make them. They are made by plants through photosynthesis. **Interesting fact 3:** All life needs the sun which enables plants to produce the amino acid building blocks, they are then eaten by herbivores and they are in turn are eaten by carnivores. Without the sun there would be no life.



Honey bee on OSR

Not all plants will produce the full range of amino acids but oil seed rape (OSR), and clover are two that do. Monocultured crops are not necessarily good at providing a balanced diet and foragers will often use a variety of gathering sites.

Lipids as well as vitamins and trace minerals are other important components of pollen and must be collected by bees, dandelion pollen is rich in lipids.

Pollination is a vital service that bees provide to plants when foraging as they move pollen from one plant to another resulting in seeds. We tend to forget this when talking about the activities of our bees and concentrate on the honey production.

Bob then talked about how bees, that are incredibly hairy, move the pollen from their body hairs using their legs. The front legs clean the head and the middle legs the thorax. It is then passed to the back legs for packing into the pollen baskets. **Interesting fact 4:** This is done in flight!

Bees can be choosy when picking flowers on which to forage. They tend to prefer wild flowers such as bramble and clover rather than some crops such as beans. They are constantly looking for alternative food supplies. Once they find a rich source they will exploit it until it runs out. This can cause problems when crops such as OSR ceases to flower and the bees need to find an alternative quickly.

Bees go for a balanced diet and will fly up to 3 miles for a high reward crop, but it is usually around 1 mile. **Interesting fact 5:** A mile radius provides an area of 2000 acres and they will know exactly what is in this very large larder.

Finally, Bob talked about inspecting the stores in our colonies and suggested that we don't just look at nectar / honey stocks but also for pollen as well. In times of dearth feed pollen patties. But be careful when taking pollen from one hive to another as it can cause bio-security problems.

16 members turned out to listen to Bob talk about pollen, sadly many of you missed a good one. **Interesting fact 6:** Who would have thought how fascinating this topic could be!

Here I have attempted to just give a flavour of Bob's talk, which was informative, thought provoking and delivered in the slightly humorous way that Bob provides. We thank Bob very much for giving us his time to talk on this amazing topic.

Paul Lawrence

## January's Events and Meetings:

### Monday 6th January 2020

#### Winter Study Group 6

Time: 7.00pm (7.30pm start)

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

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### Saturday 18th January 2020

#### Indoor Meeting: Margret Ginman – General Secretary of The Bee Farmers Association, the professional body for bee farmers.

Time: 2 – 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

Margret will be visiting us again to talk with her usual enthusiasm, about the progress of the Wax Chandler's Diploma in Excellence in Beekeeping. This is an apprenticeship scheme run by the Bee Farmers Association for young people who wish to make a career from their beekeeping activities.

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### Monday 20th January 2020

#### Winter Study Group 7

Time: 7.00pm (7.30pm start)

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4

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### Wednesday 22nd January 2020

#### Bee Chat

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

4th Wednesday of the month at The Pier, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA, at 7.30pm

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## Please don't forget to put this one in your diary:

### Saturday 15th February 2020

#### MBKA Annual General Meeting

Time: 2 – 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4L

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## Reading Around:



A monthly glance at a topic or two in the media with Archie McLellan.

This month: Is the American beekeeping way going to lead (or mislead) us down a slippery slope? Varroa: treatment by date rather than data! I Love Honey Day... and Herb Alpert. And Slatted racks... if there's space!

To view this month's edition please: [Click Here](#)

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## Education Courses for 2020:

MBKA's courses for 2020 will be posted early next year.

In the mean-time East Surrey Beekeepers have sent us a list of their courses for 2020. They are also offering a discount of an extra place when 6 applicants, book at the same time. For details of these courses and an application form, go to the Member's Area and look under the 'Courses' tab.

To go to the Member's Website: [click here](#)

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## National Bee Unit, South East Region, Annual Report 2019:

To read this report: [click here](#)

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## Website Update:

Now that we have established our Member's Area, the Public Website will be undergoing changes to make it both more pertinent to non-members and easier for members to navigate to other areas.

Watch out for the latest updates.

**Paul Lawrence** (Website Manager)

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## Facebook:

Join our Facebook page for information, updates and events:

<https://www.facebook.com/medwaybka/>

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## Next Year's Meetings:

A full list of next year's meetings can be viewed by going to the Member's Website: [click here](#)

Please note that there was an error in last month's edition. **The Spring Convention will be held on 3rd – 5th April 2020**, apologies for this error.

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## And Finally:

Many thanks to all who have contributed to the newsletter. Please remember if anyone has any news, ideas, amusing stories or comments or indeed suggestions about the websites 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:

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