

AGM Meeting and 'Bee Keeping Talk'

On Thursday 27th February, Park Farm Community Cherry Orchard Group held their annual general meeting in the community room at Lynsted Church.

Having been offered a cold beverage on arrival, the guests and committee members settled down to the business part of the evening's agenda including the nomination of a new chairman in Tom English. A 'huge thank you' was also proffered to Bob Baxter for his sterling work as Chairman over the last few years and whose experience, judgement and support will continue to be invaluable in his capacity as a committee member. After the necessary discussions had taken place the attendees were treated to a presentation on the 'Bee Keeping Year' by visiting speaker and local bee keeper Kay Wreford.

For someone, like me, who had no prior knowledge of this pursuit, Kay's talk was a very interesting 'eye-opener'. She quickly dispelled the generally accepted notion that the 'Queen Bee' leads a life of luxury by explaining that, having specially selected, she is fundamentally an 'egg-producing' machine. The only job of the drones, (males from unfertilised eggs), is to find and mate with a queen, after which the poor things expire. The queen lays her eggs in cells of the comb and the resulting hatched larvae are then fed by the workers who are all non-reproducing females. New 'Virgin Queens' develop in cells and, when the queen dies, a new queen is raised by the worker bees.

Kay also explained the work that goes into good, effective husbandry and how the reverse can have a disastrous effect on the well-being and survival of the honey bee colonies. It obviously takes dedication to produce her award winning honey and her enthusiasm and passion was clear to see. Kay's relaxed style encouraged lots of questions and discussion from her audience who had the opportunity to sample and purchase her local honey. I plumped for the apple honey – delicious – and a winner with all the Haffenden clan! I hadn't given it much thought before but it's a comforting feeling to know that the honey you are enjoying was produced by bees on your very doorstep!

Report by Ann Haffenden