



Edenbridge u3a – June 2021

Newsletter from your Chairman

Hi everyone,

Can you believe that it is now 15 months since we first entered lockdown? I don't know about you, but that time has certainly flown by. Just when we thought we were getting back to some degree of normality a new variant of the covid virus is causing case numbers to rise again in the UK. Despite this, the good news is that the vaccination programme is proving its worth with very few of the new patients being elderly or severely infected. Well done science teams across the world!

It's funny how sometimes something happens that brings you back down to earth and reality. Earlier this week I was sitting in my garden reading when a familiar droning sound got closer and closer and finally appeared overhead flying at about 5 mph. It was a swarm of bees off from a hive to set up a new home in a site discovered by a scout bee sent out by the queen. As an ex-beekeeper this was a sight and sound I was quite used to – I think if you are musical the droning sound is a middle C note! As I said it made me stop and think - life for bees and other living things around us is just going on as normal. COVID-19 has not stopped our species from getting on with their lives.

I was reminded of the old country rhyme about bees and swarming:

A swarm of bees in May

Is worth a load of Hay

A swarm of bees in June

Is worth a silver spoon

A swarm of bees in July

Isn't worth a fly!



There is an element of truth in this poem - the earlier in the year that a swarm leaves the hive the more value it is to a beekeeper (particularly to the beekeeper whose bees they are and if he is able to collect the swarm as it settles). If a beekeeper has a swarm in July and collects it, many of the nectar and pollen bearing flowers are finished and he/she would have to feed the new colony artificially to build them up with enough food to last the winter. And sugar syrup is quite expensive to make up and feed to the colony to give them that nourishment to survive through the cold and barren Winter months. Hence their value is outweighed by the cost of feeding.

Thinking of insects again, that cold and wet end to Spring – (particularly in May!) - has meant that there are fewer wasps about this year. The queen wasps who survived their hibernation over Winter set about building their new nests only to find the weather totally against them. It is a similar story for aphids (both green and blackfly) who have not found it warm enough to go through their accelerated reproduction process so far. In a normal Spring these colonies of aphids are an important source of food for our blue tit population and, without this supply of food, there are fewer baby blue tits around.



So, talking about food brings me back to our u3a. Apart from the inspirational talks from our speakers many of you look forward to the tea and biscuits afterwards. Behind the scenes one person has been responsible for making sure there was a team of helpers, supplies of tea, coffee and biscuits and, of course, always a smiling face to greet you. That person was Caryl Hayes, who has had to resign from the post of catering manager.

Thank you Caryl for the wonderful job that you have done to keep us all fed and watered during the many years you have been in charge.

Obviously there is a vacancy to be filled here so if you feel you would like to take on this role please get in touch with a committee member or email me direct. If you would like to join the committee and be part of our organisational team please let us know – you would be very welcome.

And finally – in my last newsletter I informed you of our change of venue for our monthly meetings. Our first meeting planned for September seemed such a long way away and with most of us now having had both jabs of vaccine we have decided to have a social get together in July. So diaries at the ready – the date is Tuesday 27 July, the venue is the Edenbridge Hall and the start time is 10.30. You are all invited! We have three aims for this meeting. The first is quickly to go through the formal part of electing our officers and deciding on subscriptions for the next year (our AGM). Second to give all our group leaders an opportunity to explain their group activity to you all and recruit new members. Thirdly, to have a cup of tea and a biscuit and meet up with old friends again. We would love to see as many of you as possible on that day.

So stay safe and alert. Looking forward to seeing you all together again next month for our social get together.

Best wishes

Mike

Mike Collins, Chairman (chairman@edenbridgeu3a.co.uk)

PS – nature has some wonderful colours and patterns this is a close-up of a foxglove flower. What a beautiful pattern!

