



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Secretary:
Hon Treasurer:
Newsletter Editor:

Patricia Loftin, Orchard House, Lankhills Road, Winchester, SO23 7AE
Robin Leonard, River House, Northington, ALRESFORD. SO24 9TG
Russell Fairchild, The Thatched Cottage, Chilcomb, WINCHESTER SO21 1HR
E-mail: russell.fairchild@virgin.net

01962 861176
01962 732792
01962 852333

President: Bob Geary
Chairman: Hugh Sykes

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2008

BOB'S BIT

My hunt for the fabled honey of Hymettus, as served on Mount Olympus, took me to eastern Crete, where I found that it was in fact the ever-plentiful thyme. I smuggled some home, and found it pleasant but not up to a good English heather honey. While acquiring a sun-tan, I read a jolly little book, "A world without bees" by Benjamin and McCallum. It is a review of all we know about Colony Collapse Disorder, or the "Marie Celeste syndrome", and makes great holiday reading. Basically, it's all our fault for destroying habitat, using pesticides and discouraging bio-diversity. Trucking bees to a crop causes stress, and weakens resistance to dormant pathogens, so if you have taken bees down to the Forest, you should be ashamed. Nothing is spared, not the Varroa, the Israeli nor the Kashmiri virus, not to mention the neonicotinoids I told you about. It's doom and more doom for us as well as our bees.

While resting between bouts of doing nothing, I fell to wondering what would have happened if English Heather honey had been served on Olympus. It would have left Cronus in a better mood, and less likely to eat his children, so Zeus (his youngest) wouldn't have got a look in. We would have got Poseidon instead, and goodness knows what would have happened. Zeus is a much

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday 11th November
7.30 p.m.
Itchen Abbas Village Hall

Brains Trust

The panel will comprise John Hanks (Best Master Beekeeper 2008), David Purchase, Bob Geary and Ron Broadway under the chairmanship of Hugh Sykes.

To take full advantage of all this expertise, please come prepared with questions, or let the Chairman (or Secretary) know in advance.

Directions: *Itchen Abbas is on the B3047 between Kings Worthy and New Alresford. When coming from Winchester the entrance to the Village Hall is on your left in the centre of the village, immediately after a sharp right-hand bend. If you are coming from Alresford, it is on your right after 'The Trout' Inn.*

snappier name, and good to swear by.

Now what of our bees? Got your mouse-guards on and everyone well-fed? Hives lashed down? Then give yourself a modest pat on the back and look for some winter jobs. I have to put new foundation in some frames which suffered from over-scraping, and have one spare brood-box ready.

Finally, does anyone know who is the Patron Saint of bees and beekeeping? Perhaps it should be St. Anthony, patron of lost causes?

INDOOR MEETING **Tuesday 14th October**

There was an attendance of 16 for this excellent talk and everyone came away with valuable new knowledge. John Gower had a delightful presentation manner and illustrated the aetiology of the Bee Sting with OHP slides of bullet points and some wonderful pictures of the bee in 'sting position.' He related the bee defence system of the hive and then 'why and how' the sting is delivered. The detail of the actual barb of the sting was clearly illustrated.

John then proceeded to inform us of our reactions and body defence mechanisms against such poisoning, swelling, oedema, pain etc. the reactions being: Mild, Moderate and Severe. Anaphylaxis is the extreme end of severe and can happen to anyone at anytime from 1st sting to 1001st sting or never.

Always wear protection, especially a veil as venom in the eye is painful and damaging. Carry antihistamine cream and tablets, e.g. Piriton and if swelling is moderate take a double dose

i.e. 2 x 4mg tabs, and seek help from professionals. If there are any signs of anaphylaxis e.g. breathing changes, call an ambulance immediately.

CHRISTMAS SUPPER & QUIZ

Tuesday December 9th

By popular demand the format will be similar to last year, including another delicious hot buffet by 'Astronomie'.

The (subsidised) price is £5 per person payable in advance. Spouses/partners are welcome. Places are limited to 25, so please contact Pat Loftin a.s.a.p.

HBA CONVENTION AND HONEY SHOW

Saturday 11th October 2008

The convention comprised three very different lectures, starting with Norman Carreck's talk on 'Are Honey Bees British?' He described the on-going debate about whether *melifera melifera* is indigenous to the British isles or is actually an alien species. This is not just a philosophical issue. Organisations such as the National Trust are banning the honey bee hives on their land because they deem to be aliens in competition with native species such as the bumble bee.

Norman cited much historical and archaeological evidence of the existence of honey bees in the British Isles, as far back as at least 2000 BC and probably much earlier than that. He concluded that common sense is needed and that in any event, local strains of honey bees are equally in need of conservation.

John Home talked about the work of his charity 'Bees Abroad' and how it is helping people in third world countries such as Kenya, to

produce income from beekeeping. He demonstrated his 'Kenyan Top Bar Hive' the design of which originated at Sparsholt. It is the essence of simplicity, having only top bars with no frames or foundation (much too expensive). The bees simply hang the comb from the grooved or ridged top bars.

Professor Ratneiks, now recently moved to Sussex University where he is the UK's only Professor of Apiculture, gave a most authoritative lecture on his applied research into queen rearing and breeding. This included the use of DNA 'markers' to trace bees back to their originating hives. He addressed queen behaviours prior to mating, queen drift and methods of introducing queens.

Professor Ratneiks future work will cover: the rearing of 'hygienic' bees, What is killing bee hives?, treatment of diseases, improved beekeeping techniques, management, and queen introduction. But his biggest problem is inevitably FUNDING.

The Honey Show saw some local successes. Edward Thornton carried off first prize in the Sweet Mead class....



Eliza and Edward Thornton with Edward's prize-winning mead.

.... and the Ellison family acquitted themselves honourably: - Tim was second in the novice honey category (but there was only one entry!) and second for his baked scones (at least there were three entries!). Daughter Charlotte got first prize for her 'Hive' painting.....



.....and other daughter Maria was second with her 'Queen Bee' (below).



CANE SUGAR

Info for those concerned about using beet sugar for feed and trying to source cane sugar, Pat has noticed that Tate & Lyle icing sugar is 'pure cane sugar' so should be suitable for feeding.

Pat also writes that if anyone wants to borrow candle moulds she has a lot in various sizes which anyone can borrow.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Ros Medd is still looking for a second-hand small electric extractor for Langstroth frames. If you can help, please contact her on 01962 712463 or by e-mail at:

Ros.medd@btinternet.co