



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2009

BOB's BIT

“Panem et circenses” said Caesar, “ that's the stuff to keep the plebs happy”. Down at the City Mill we have been assisting with their Bread and Honey week, the circus element being provided by trained Association members, with Tim as ringmaster. No animals were harmed in the course of this event.

The spring continues on its unhelpful way. Not a hint of rape to be seen from the apiary, and colonies slow to build up. I was called to Hilliers Arboretum to take a very small swarm, which posed the question – where did they come from? I hived them in the traditional manner, hoping to catch the queen on the way in, but in the failing light I just saw her tail as she raced for home. They have time to build up, if not to yield.

I have a stack of vacant boxes in the garden, and noticed bees going in and out, which I took to be a bit of harmless scrounging. But then a bee arrived carrying a load of pollen. So I took the lid off, and there was a nice little swarm, furiously drawing out foundation like carpet-layers in a one-hour house makeover program. I had no time to enjoy my undeserved good fortune before it became clear that the swarm was, to be polite, very defensive. They were banished to The Hill that same night.

An interesting question presented itself today. A neighbour has a swarm newly arrived in the false ceiling of his bathroom, where they are peering at him through the spotlights There is no non- destructive access. Discuss. Answers on one A4 page.

Talking to a farmer about the lack of rape in our area, he said that the crop had been “oversubscribed” last year. In other words, too many people climbed on the bandwagon, which collapsed under the weight.

**SATURDAY 13TH JUNE
APIARY MEETING
BEE DISEASES RECOGNITION
With Ian Homer and Malcolm Rittman's Bees
at Hilliers Arboretum**

Directions:

Go in the main entrance to the arboretum and park in the first car park on the left. Follow the road past the overflow car park to a five bar gate and enter the yard. Large compost bins are on the right and across the yard the buildings where we shall be meeting.

10.00 Gather and coffee

10.30 Talk on colony inspection and disease recognition

11.30 Look at diseased combs

12.15 Disease Recognition quiz (light hearted - multiple choice)

13.00 Lunch (bring your own)

13.45 Apiary session to practice the morning lessons

Malcolm and Margaret will provide tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits, but please bring a packed lunch and a mug. Alternatively, lunch may be purchased at the Hilliers Centre.

This is ‘required reading’ for those who haven’t attended one of these sessions before, and a highly desirable refresher for those who have.

APIARY MEETING, Saturday 16th May

Against the weather forecast odds, Robin had managed to organise a sunny day for us to view his bees and learn how to recover from winter losses.

Only a few weeks before he had only two colonies after the winter. From these he had made two nuclei, but one lost its queen. He had solved that problem by grafting in a spare queen cell from one of the original colonies. Then, a few days before the meeting he had collected a local swarm. By the time we met he was able to show us five colonies – and explain how he had done it.

This was an educational and encouraging meeting, rounded off with Ann's super cream tea, for which very many thanks.

WINCHESTER MILL, BREAD AND HONEY WEEK. 23rd to 31st May

Thanks to Tim Ellison's hard work and very professional planning, WDBKA provided a comprehensive static display throughout the week. It comprised, among other things: a wide variety of beekeeping equipment, our observation hive complete with Loftin bees, a continually running video 'Dancing with Bees', pipe cleaner bees, candle making, quizzes and puzzles, and bread and honey tasting. We 'manned' the stand on Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th May, and our volunteers were kept extremely busy by the continuous stream of visitors, especially children.



Chris Ray helps a young visitor to make a candle

MEON VALLEY AUCTION Saturday 2nd May

Among the more than 300+ lots sold on this fine sunny day, was equipment kindly donated to WDBKA, by Emily Windsor Aubrey-Windsor who has had to give up her bees. These raised £316 for the Association, which will be used for the purchase of a 'virtual hive' for demonstration/educational purposes. Very many thanks Emily.

Also of note at the auction was the price of bees. One nucleus, in a returnable box, was sold for £360!



What am I bid?

APIARY SITES

The following people are keen to have bee hives on their land.

Donald Hutchinson at Sandy Down Estate
Paul Murphy at Morestead
Harry Ree at Compton
Lavender farm at Kiln Lane, Otterbourne

If you are interested, please contact Pat Loftin for their contact details.

FOR SALE/WANTED

Bob has a 3 cu.ft. ex-fridge which would make someone a good warming cabinet – free!