



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2010

BOB's BIT

If you have a big leather-bound family bible, go to Genesis ch.2 and, reading between the lines, you will find "and on the eighth day He created chocolate". Why the importance of the eighth day? Well, my garden stock swarmed on the eighth day at 11 o'clock, confounding all the pundits and upsetting my breeding plans. I should have kept to seven-day inspections, or given them readings from the Book of Hooper. The swarm was hived on foundation and well fed, and is showing the expected swarm work-ethic. I have already borrowed a frame of eggs to give to an apparently queen-less colony up on Three Maids Hill (by the way, the land around the site has been sown with white poppies, which are of no use to bees). The same parent hive threw a cast a week later, which fiercely resented being boxed. As I was going out, I couldn't do more than leave the box on top of them, so I was not sad to find that they had moved on. Yet the parent hive was still a happy no-glove lot. I still have much to learn!

I have taken a couple of smallish swarms from places where there are no known beekeepers, suggesting that there are still feral colonies about, despite the forecast that varroa will eliminate them. The University of Sussex boasts the only UK Professor of Apiculture, Dr Ratnieks, and his four-point Sussex Plan. He sees no evidence of a colony collapse disorder in this country, but points to the intensification of agriculture as a contributing cause of the decline of British bees.

97% of herb-rich meadows and 20% of heather moorland have been lost since the 1950s. More efficient herbicides mean fewer flowering weeds. Another part of the plan is his search for "hygienic" bees, who are good housekeepers and undertakers. He finds that 12% of hives are naturally hygienic, and would like to breed for this trait.

SATURDAY 12TH JUNE
APIARY MEETING
BEE DISEASES RECOGNITION
With Nigel Semmence RBI and Malcolm and Margaret 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

13.00 Lunch

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.

NB. This is 'required reading' for those who haven't attended one of these sessions before.

The £10 million fund for the Insect Pollinator Initiative is due to be allocated next month. What chance does it have of surviving the Great Spending Cut?

APIARY MEETING Saturday 8th May



Bob Geary and Hugh Sykes demonstrate the finer points of candle rolling.

In April we worried that it was going to be too cold to open hives at the apiary meeting, and we had a glorious spring day. This month we reasonably expected a warm May day, but in the event the temperature was only 10 degrees C. Nevertheless we had an interesting and enjoyable meeting at Clarissa's beautiful 17th C house.

When we arrived (about twenty of us) we were greeted with mugs of hot tea, over which we exchanged the latest news of our various beekeeping experiences and got to know some of our new members. In due course we viewed Clarissa's many hives (from the outside) while enjoying an abundant supply of cream scones with strawberry jam, and cakes – oh what hardship! Bob and Hugh put on an impromptu demonstration of how to produce decorative candles using wax foundation in a variety of colours.

At the beginning it had looked to be unpromising day, but it didn't rain and thanks to Clarissa and Tim's kind hospitality it was productive as well as very enjoyable.

BBC GQT GARDEN PARTY

WDBKA has been invited to participate in the BBC Radio 4 Gardeners Question Time (GQT) Garden Party this year. It is on Saturday 26th June from 10am to 4pm at Sparsholt College. We will have a hive in the orchard and an equipment display, observation hive etc. and Hugh Sykes will be giving short talks on beekeeping to the assembled populace during the day.

However, **we need volunteers to man our stand** so please, if you can spare a couple of hours on that day to help answer questions about beekeeping and how to become involved, contact Stephen Tompsett on 01962 864553 or by e-mail at: stephentompsett@waitrose.com

SWARMS

The cold weather during the first half of the month delayed swarming, but then a burst of activity enabled many people to be provided with swarms. The last week, however, has been cooler and swarming activity has diminished. Meanwhile further people have asked to be added to the swarm list and there are still a dozen awaiting bees at the time of writing.

If you need a swarm or know of one, please contact the Duty Swarm Co-ordinator on 0701 775 8191 or 0701 775 8192, or by e-mail to: swarm@winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk Swarm allocation is on a first come first served basis. You will be notified when your turn comes.

MEON VALLEY AUCTION Saturday 1st May

Although it was a beautiful spring day, there were slightly fewer buyers and sellers than in previous years. Nevertheless it was organised with MVBKA's usual efficiency, and over 200 lots were sold within a couple of hours. There were several bargains to be had but also the potential for the enthusiastic unwary to pay over the odds (someone paid twice the Thornes new price for a couple of round feeders – but I am not complaining! Ed.). Several inspected, queen-right five frame nuclei were sold for £150 each.

A constant supply of tea and coffee, cakes and biscuits and ploughmen's lunches kept the punters well nourished throughout the day.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Don't forget, if you are wanting to buy second hand equipment or are looking to sell unwanted items, please let the editor know by e-mail (see top of the newsletter) and it will be included in the next newsletter.