



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - JULY 2010

BOB's BIT

It is time for me to do something about creating a nuc to overwinter, as an insurance against a colony loss. It is also time to think about re-queening at least one colony, so I consulted Hooper, Yates et.al for a method of small-scale queen raising. In no time I was drowning in cell-builders and breeder colonies, with emphasis on following a strict timetable of manipulations. That rules out workers (beekeepers who work) and only have weekends. It also rules out the visually-challenged, i.e. those who cannot reliably find a queen or see an egg.

So I went out to make up a nuc from my nicest colony and let them rear me a queen. But the bees were ahead of me, and I found unsealed queen cells. Thus making the nuc only involved choosing two cells and some stores, and shaking in plenty of bees. I remember Sid* had made a plywood funnel, so that he could shake in bees from different colonies. That part was easy, but the parent colony is an early swarm, and it seemed clear that they wanted to supersede. The queen cells were in the middle of the face of the comb, which is supposed to indicate a supersedure. So I decided to risk it, and leave one nice cell. At least I know when they are likely to swarm, if that's what they want. The donor colony will be weakened, but eggs laid after the beginning of July will not in any case provide any foragers before the season is over.

(Note. A refinement is to knock off the emergency cells in the nuc, and supply a 'punching' of eggs and larvae from a desirable source. The punching is made with a sharpened piece of tubing, and inserted in a matching hole in a frame in the nuc, or stuck to the underside of a spare top bar.)

Sadly, we can do little about breeding, as we have no control over whom our virgin mates with. Stern admonition is no more effective than when applied to teen-age daughters, our virgin will run off to the nearest drone congregation area, where she will meet with all sorts of people. But our nuc will give us the chance to assess her offspring, which is what really counts.

**The late Sid Pullinger was an eminent local beekeeper, for many years President of WDBKA.*

SATURDAY 10TH JULY
APIARY MEETING
With Hugh Sykes' bees

APIARY MEETING Saturday 12th June - Bee Diseases Day Contributed by Trish Bright

The June meeting was hosted by Margaret and Malcolm Rittman, at Hillier's Arboretum on a fine, summer's day. We were welcomed with coffee and a quick game of 'The Great Beekeeper's Bingo', which proved an excellent way of meeting the twenty or so other members and learning a little about their bee keeping experiences.

Nigel Semmence, who was to lead the day, had unfortunately been called away to the Channel Islands on urgent 'Bee Business'. We were, however, lucky enough to have the presence of two eminent Bee Inspectors, Robert Carpenter-Turner and Frazer Young, who stepped into the breach in Nigel's place.

In the morning Robert and Frazer gave a fascinating talk on colony inspection with a particular focus on disease recognition. As a new bee keeper, I had felt slightly daunted by the title of the talk, as recognising the elements of healthy brood seemed challenge enough and to date I'd not managed to see an egg.

The coloured slides and the enlightening discussions between the two Inspectors proved quite heartening. We viewed slides of foul brood, other common brood disorders

such as sac brood and chalk brood and parasitic mites, including exotic pests. The small hive beetle was perhaps the scariest, laying up to 23 eggs in one brood cell. Hopefully this will never be encountered in the U.K. Discussions on treatments between Robert and Frazer demonstrated that there could be several views, alternative views being treated with respect even when they differed from one's own.

Following coffee (more delicious cake) we examined frames of European and American foul brood. Demonstrations on looking at suspect cells and taking samples for testing were given, with encouragement to use our eyes and noses for signs of disease.

In the afternoon, time was spent in Malcom's and Margaret's apiary – where we had the chance to examine the hives with Robert and Frazer, which for novice bee keepers was a great opportunity to learn from experts. By careful questioning, our Bee Inspectors helped us to recognise what we were seeing and at least three members with the sun behind them (and new specs.) saw eggs for the first time! A great confidence booster! The colonies had no apparent disease but it was really interesting searching.

As a new beekeeper, I found the day fascinating, the learning curve steep but worthwhile. The main points I felt were to be able to recognise when something was amiss with the colony and to ask for help when in doubt. The Bee Inspectors are there to give advice and support should one be unlucky enough to have a notifiable disease in the colony.

Thank you to Robert and Frazer for leading the day with such good humour and to Margaret and Malcom for their kind hospitality and allowing us to handle their bees. It was a thought provoking day and an enjoyable way to tackle a serious subject.

BBC RADIO 4 GQT GARDEN PARTY



A glorious day in the orchard at Sparsholt College.

Hundreds of visitors came to our stand at the Gardeners Question Time Garden Party at Sparsholt College and were given a brief introduction to beekeeping by Hugh Sykes,

aided and abetted by several WDBKA volunteers. Many thanks to all of you for giving your time.

Throughout the day Hugh gave five ten minute talks and demonstrations to large groups of gardeners who were keenly interested in bees and beekeeping. He was also interviewed for the radio programme which will be broadcast on Fridays 2nd and 9th July 3.00 p.m. repeated on Sundays 4th and 11th July at 2.00 p.m.

In addition to his broadcasting talents and the comprehensive display of beekeeping equipment, Hugh had also provided a hive of very well behaved bees nearby, for those who wanted to see the real thing.

The great success of the day was due to the hard work by Hugh, Stephen (Tompsett) and John Cleverley, who provided a very fecund marked queen with an excellent frame of brood, for the observation hive. The queen was laying eggs for the visitors all day!



Hugh Sykes describes to a Radio 4 interviewer what is to be seen in the observation hive.

INTECH BEE DAYS

Saturday and Sunday 14th and 15th August

As widely advertised by INTECH: "Activities, displays and a chance to meet bee-keepers to find out more about these amazing animals."

These are very popular family days for visitors of all ages. They are great fun and make a significant contribution to promoting beekeeping, public understanding of the importance of the honey bee and the profile of WDBKA. But much volunteer help is needed to ensure that we repeat the success of previous INTECH Bee Days.

If you can spare a couple of hours (or more!) at INTECH some time on 14th and/or 15th August, between 10.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., please contact Russell Fairchild stating the time slots you could help to cover, on 01962 852333 or by e-mail: russell.fairchild@virgin.net, as soon as possible.