



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2010

BOB's BIT

Summer-time, and the livin' is uneasy. Swarms are jumping and the weather is dry. So Cole Porter may well have written if he were a bee-keeper, but he may have gone on to remark how things are easier once the high swarming season is over. Not that we can put our feet up until extracting-time.

Last week I went through a stock which I believed was superseding, at least they had food, old brood and a queen cell, but no queen was to be seen. Well, a frisky young queen can be hard to find, but "O horror, horror, horror" (cried Macduff) there were no eggs either. I at once gave them a frame of eggs and grubs, and closed them up. Reflecting on this, my thought was that bee-keeping with only one hive is a fraught business. To leave the stock potentially queenless for another week is to risk a laying worker, which is generally reckoned to be a terminal condition.

Without a stock to provide first aid, it is important to have someone to donate a cell punching of eggs or larvae. A piece of inch (sorry, 22mm.) copper pipe, a bit serrated at one end, and a piece of wood to push out the punching, is all that it takes, and you can bring it home in your pocket.

But today, even McDuff would be chuffed. My donated frame was carrying queen cells in profusion, and after excising all but two I had enough royal jelly to improve even my complexion. Better still, my selected cells were capped, so I have a good idea of when the nuptials will take place and when I may expect to see some eggs. The mood of the stock was also a marked improvement, further soothed by a spray of weak syrup. The next question will be their temper, once the new regime is established. The parent stock were bare-handed on a good day but, like children, you never know how they will turn out.

NEXT APIARY MEETING

**SATURDAY 11th SEPTEMBER
2.30 p.m.**

With Astra and Stephen at Rose Cottage,

<Directions available to members from Secretary>

APIARY MEETING

Saturday 10th July with Hugh Sykes

Contributed by Stephen Tompsett

About 30 members, including many new beekeepers, arrived at Hugh and Barbara Syke's house on a fine warm day, perfect for looking at the 6 hives Hugh keeps in his garden:

- One very strong colony where Hugh took charge of the inspection,
- A colony that swarmed from one of Hugh's hives into a tree two weeks ago and was then assumed to have moved into a bait hive that Hugh had placed in the garden. Malcolm Ritman led the inspection of this colony. If this was the colony

that had swarmed, the queen would be found marked white. Malcolm demonstrated how to look for the queen by taking out a couple of outer frames and placing the remaining frames in pairs, leaving the frames like this for a few minutes, and then opening up the pairs of frames to look on the inside faces. The queen will often be found here, sheltering from the daylight. The colony was building up well with good patches of eggs and brood, but despite our efforts the queen was not seen, so whether this is the colony that swarmed from Hugh's hive remains uncertain.



Members getting ready for inspection (of Hugh's bees!)

Bob Geary took charge of the inspection of the other four hives.

- Hugh had split the parent hive that had swarmed two weeks ago into two hives, each with queen cells. One of these colonies already had a laying queen.
- A weak hive which has proved useful as the observation hive at the Association's displays at Winchester City Mill and at Sparsholt.
- The hive that was taken to the Gardeners Question Time event at Sparsholt, where it was perfectly docile, but after looking at 3 frames Bob decided it was too bad tempered to continue. (Postscript – this colony swarmed on Sunday so perhaps they were trying to prevent us seeing what they were preparing)

Afterwards, we enjoyed a fine tea in Hugh and Barbara's lovely and peaceful garden and talked about what we had seen and learned. Many thanks to Hugh and Barbara.

INTECH BEE DAYS

Saturday and Sunday 14th and 15th August

Many thanks to all those who have volunteered to help with this event. We could still do with one more person for the morning of Saturday 14th August. If you can spare a couple of hours (or more!) at INTECH between 10.00 and 1.00 p.m., on that day please contact me (Russell Fairchild) on 01962 852333 or by e-mail: russell.fairchild@virgin.net, as soon as possible.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

After the September apiary meeting, Indoor meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Tuesday 12th October – Dr John Gower on Bee Anatomy.
- Tuesday 9th November – Brains Trust with an expert panel including David Purchase.
- Tuesday 7th December - Christmas Supper.
- Tuesday 11th January – AGM with Cheese and Wine
- Tuesday 8th February – Nigel Semmence (RBI) on Solitary Bees.
- Tuesday 8th March – Andy Willis on Trials and Tribulations.

All meetings will be at Itchin Abbas Village Hall starting at 07.30 p.m.

DID YOU KNOW?

From 'Beekeeping Study Notes' by Yates and Yates.

“6.2.3....Their may be as many as 10,000 drones in a drone congregation area coming from many colonies up to 5 or 6 km distance... A queen downwind will be scented by a drone at 6 metresThe drone can see the queen at about 1 metre....”

“6.2.2....The queen can mate with approximately 10 drones, probably on consecutive days receiving c. 11,000,000 sperm from each drone. Only c. 5,000,000 of a possible 110,000,000 sperm will be stored in her spermatheca to provide the sperm used for the rest of her life.....”

“6.2.6....mating only occurs at heights of greater than 10m (33 ft) and less than 40m (130ft).....”

“4.13.2...Newly mated queens will increase their eggs laying capacity with age, probably reaching their maximum capacity of over 1000 / day during their second year.”