



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - MAY 2011

BOB'S BIT

At the last meeting I was able, with some assistance, to penetrate the colony with the large box of natural comb on top. The queen had been up there laying, but by the end of our forced entry she had fled downstairs. Thus I was able to insert a clearer and eventually bring it home.



Photo: Bob Geary

The operation produced only a pound and a half of wax, which is astonishingly frugal of them. But parsimony is everywhere evident in nature, nowhere more than in evolution. The three little bones of your inner ear were once working your front fins, when you were swimming about. Not many people know that.

Seduced by a mild day, I set to and went through my three stocks in the garden. Copious pollen was coming in, so I was not surprised to find a satisfactory amount of brood in the first one, and a lot of remaining stores. But there was enough space for Queenie to lay more, so I left all the food until next time. Then it may be a good idea to take out a couple of frames of stores, uncap them and wash out the honey to give more breeding room. I am always amused by the often-given advice to "hive on drawn comb" when doing

APIARY MEETING Saturday 14th May – Hilliers Arboretum

BEE DISEASES RECOGNITION With Nigel Semmence RBI and Malcolm and Margaret Rittman's Bees.

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 and the bright yellow WDBKA flag, to a five bar gate and enter the yard. Across the yard are the buildings where we shall be meeting.

10.30 Gather and coffee

11.00 Bee inspections and swarm control

12.30 Lunch

13.15 Bee diseases

15.30 Tea and depart

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.

various manipulations. Where is that coming from, I ask?

The third hive was the best, with brood on seven frames and a good disposition, but also queen cells. I

am about to do an artificial swarm into a (deep) National. I didn't tell them, in case it upset them, but they are going to Hungerford.

So there is my plan for the garden stocks, reducing my work from three hives to two, which will be quite enough to pollinate my beans.

APIARY MEETING Saturday 16th April

Report by Hugh Loftin

Saturday the 16th was an overcast day yet warm, and on [the association apiary] there was no wind! Abundant supplies of Hawthorn and Cherry blossom had given a good start to the season and the happy bees offered plenty of opportunity for less experienced members to practise their skills.

The assembly of 40 was split into two groups lead by Bob Geary and Hugh Sykes.

Bob's group inspected a stock of two brood boxes, one added in September with the hope of securing free wax. A super was added in the spring.

The lower brood box contained six frames of apparently healthy brood although there was some evidence of wax moth activity. In the second Brood box there were no frames but wild comb was filled with Ivy honey. The super was partly filled with new season honey. The hive was reassembled with a queen excluder in place. and Vaseline was used to protect the top bars of frames from unwelcome comb. The queen was not seen.

A quick inspection of a second hive revealed nothing untoward and a super one third full with new honey.

The second group inspected two hives. The first was weak with only three/four frames of brood and it was concluded re-queening would be appropriate

The other hive was more robust with seven frames of brood and three of stores plus a developing queen cell. The queen was sighted and caged for the creation of a nucleus. The Queen cell was removed to the new hive. Bees were shaken into the new hive and a frame of stores and two of foundation were added. The hive entrance was sealed and secured for removal.

The assembly re-gathered at [Bob Geary's house] for tea provided by Ros Geary and her helpers after which members were invited to inspect the association's store of equipment and continue their discussions.

'SCIENCE IN THE GARDEN' at INTECH 16th/17th April

The beautiful weekend was very good for apiary meetings, but meant that daily visitor numbers to Intech were lower than usual. Nevertheless there was a steady flow of interested people to keep us busy for most of the time. Many thanks to Clarissa, Hugh, Ron, Alastair, Helen, Angela, Trevor, Matt, Cathy, Stephen and Amanda who took time out to help 'man' our display. Our efforts were greatly appreciated by Intech.



Trevor Broom explains the basics of beekeeping to an interested visitor. Photo by Cathy Crawley.

WDBKA WINTER LOSSES

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
TOTAL RESPONSES	24	31	36	40
TOTAL COLONIES	103	94	97	117
TOTAL LOSSES	37	26	30	12
% LOSSES	36	28	31	10

Thank you all for your prompt returns. This year's results are summarized above in the context of the preceding years.

It would be nice to think that this year's dramatic improvement was entirely due to our own efforts to improve apiary hygiene and pest management, and preparation of our for winter. But might the very severe December weather have had a beneficial effect in, for example, destroying pathogens? Let's see if we can do as well next winter.