



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2008

BOB'S BIT

Let it not be said that Robert has been merely exhorting the faithful from the depths of his armchair! On the contrary, I have done all those things that I ought to have done and, were it not Lent, would have rewarded myself with a bar of the darkest chocolate.

I have made an eke and a screen floor, turned a redundant screwdriver into a scraper to clean out the grooves in frames, and finally sugared the stock in the garden. This last operation went very well, to my surprise. It was a bright but chilly day and the smoker fuel was damp, so I was pleasantly surprised when the bees showed every sign of enjoying the procedure. They stayed on the frames and ate the sugar as I tipped it down between. I remembered Sid's trick of spraying weak syrup on a troublesome stock. Mind you, there wasn't one extra varroa on the droppings tray, confirming Ian Homer's low opinion of it all.

I also gave an emergency feed to my nucleus up on the Hill. It is a strange spring, and not likely to improve dramatically. The rape field across the lane has been ravaged by wood pigeons to an extent I have never seen before, eaten bare in the middle. I recall years when I rushed round with supers before going on my spring hols.

APIARY MEETING

**2.30 p.m. SATURDAY 19th
APRIL 2008**

**At the Association's Apiary at
Three Maids Hill**

**Tea afterwards at 56 Cheriton
Road, Winchester, with
Alfred and Isabel.**

My next experiment on the stock in the garden will be to try them with a whiff of thymol. A teaspoonful tied up in the toe of an old stocking, and put above the brood somewhere. Is the vapour heavier than air? It will have to come out before the flow starts. I also promise to make up some short frames, one per brood box, to encourage the building of drone comb. It can then be cut off at one sweep. Chocolate-coated bee grubs, anyone?

INDOOR MEETING Tuesday 11th March.

Andy Willis, a horticulturalist by profession and eighteen years a beekeeper, provided a highly informative talk on 'Flowers for the Beekeepers Garden'. Each plant was illustrated with a beautiful slide and supported by comprehensive technical and practical information. For the eighteen members present it was an evening very well spent.

SOUTH HANTS SPRING CONVENTION Wickham, Saturday 8th March



At £10 (£12.50 on the door) this event again proved to be a beekeeping bargain. It comprised four first class lectures, tea, coffee and biscuits in abundance and an almost immoral array of home-made cakes at the afternoon tea-break, and a very adequate ploughman's lunch (including apple pie and ice cream). It was most efficiently organised and hosted jointly by the Portsmouth, Meon Valley and Fareham associations.

It is not possible here to provide any more than a cursory overview of the lectures, but they are summarised as follows.

Ian Davison spoke on the techniques and equipment he uses for queen rearing, with a view to

obtaining better behaved and more disease resistant bees. He provided a step by step 'Basic Guide', 'Handy Hints' and a guide on 'Introducing Queens', as handouts.

Robin Dean gave an inspiring talk on 'Bees as an Agricultural Tool'. He expressed concerns about the accelerating decline in insect populations, changing orchard management practices, self-fertile seedless crops – but which still need pollen transfer – and lack of government funding. In the context of UK honey production valued at £20M to £25M, the challenges for us include:

- Changing the mind-set that pollination is a free service.
- Convincing government to release funds for pollination research.
- Convincing the agricultural industry that management of pollination is necessary.
- Restricting the import of alien species for commercial pollination.
- Creating viable incentive plans to conserve bee habitat e.g. by planting round the verges of fields.

Barbara Dolby's talk provided a complete overview of the therapeutic uses of honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly and venom. It was authoritative and realistic about the limitations of the treatments and careful about the potential benefits.

The final talk, by Andy Willis, on 'Wax, uses and cleaning', delivered a really useful description and demonstration of the equipment and techniques he uses for separating and preparing wax to various levels of purity up to award winning standard. Whether you just want to produce clean wax for trading back to Thornes or have ambitions to win prizes, there were many useful

tips and a handout 'Wax Purification – The Andy Method'.

WINCHESTER PRISON BEES

Hugh reports that the project to introduce beekeeping to Winchester prison is progressing well. There are now 6 inmates and 3 warders, (one of whom used to keep bees and has just become aware of the initiative) involved and we have held 4 of the 5 sessions of Richard Kimish's course which have been received very positively with lots of questions and a discussion. One of the prisoners wanted to know if they would get time off for good *beehiveiour*, geddit? The final session is on April 1st, in the afternoon.

The next stage is to introduce the bees by mid April, although there are one or two small hurdles to overcome first. There have been objections from 3 warders, one of whom suffers severe anaphylactic shock when stung and we have had Q&A sessions to deal with the risk. We need to finalise a risk assessment before the formal decision is taken by the Governor. The risk mitigation plan is good, however so we are confident that it will go ahead. It includes adrenalin Epi pens for First Aiders, radio messages warning of bee inspections and activity and the selection of very docile bees! They also need to acquire the bee suits for the large number of people involved.

BASIC ASSESSMENT

Only one member has entered for the BBKA Basic Assessment this year, so further volunteers are needed to maintain our track record of previous years and make an assessment session at our Three Maids Hill apiary worthwhile. It's a really enjoyable as well as

informative hour or so, and passing results in a £20 per head contribution to the Association's funds – as well as a certificate. Do yourself a favour and give Pat Loftin a call (01962 861176) to get yourself on the list.

BEEKEEPING STUDY NOTES

A complete set of Study Notes for the BBKA exams has been purchased for the Association's library. Between them, these contain almost all the information you will need for passing the General and Advanced Certificates, Microscopy, and the eight Module exams. They make fascinating and very worthwhile reading, which will make preparation for next years exams a pleasure!

Contact Hugh on 02380 254521 if you would like to borrow a copy.

MEON VALLEY AUCTION Saturday 3rd May at The Village Hall, Greatham, Nr Liss.

This is an ideal opportunity to obtain additional beekeeping equipment or dispose of your surplus kit. For details contact James Laybourne on 01489 892853 or by e-mail to jamesdeb12@tiscali.co.uk but be aware that the catalogue is being printed on 12th April, so you will need to get your entries in during the coming week if you want to be included.

ANY NEW E-MAILERS?

If you do not already receive the Newsletter by e-mail, but are able to do so, please let me know your e-mail address.

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