



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Secretary:
Hon Treasurer:
Newsletter Editor:

Patricia Loftin, Orchard House, Lankhills Road, Winchester, SO23 7AE
Robin Leonard, River House, Northington, ALRESFORD. SO24 9TG
Russell Fairchild, The Thatched Cottage, Chilcomb, WINCHESTER SO21 1HR
E-mail: russell.fairchild@virgin.net

01962 861176
01962 732792
01962 852333

President: Bob Geary
Chairman: Hugh Sykes

NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2008

BOB's BIT

On Tuesday to Chelsea, where all Great and Good Gardeners gather, to see how the horticultural world views our little friends. But in vain, for there was not one mention of bees in any context. Having expressed my dismay on the RHS stand, I asked them how they would pollinate their precious plants without us. Would they spend hours with a rabbit's tail, or a camel hair brush? There was an uneasy silence, before it was suggested that perhaps bees were not very relevant to the sponsor of the show, a maker of stone ornaments. I left them a written complaint, signed "Disgusted of Winchester".

This strange spring continues, with several members reporting losses. Mine have just been slow to build up strength, so that the rape went largely unnoticed. Perhaps my queens are getting old, certainly a nuc, which wintered on 5 frames, has been laying more vigorously. On the other hand, the older colonies were notably docile. Truly, you can't have everything. Now it's raining and blowing a gale, and no little bee is going to risk its head outside.

I have taken a couple of swarms, neither of which were any size, so one wonders why they were motivated to swarm in the first place. I spotted the queen in one, and she was a little old thing, so it



APIARY MEETING BEE DISEASES RECOGNITION With Ian Homer and Malcolm Rittman's Bees SATURDAY 14th JUNE Hilliers Arboretum, Ampfield.

Go in the main entrance to the arboretum and park in the first car park on the left. We will be meeting in the farm. 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 out buildings where we shall be meeting.

1000 Gather and coffee

1030 Talk on colony inspection and disease recognition

1130 Look at diseased combs

1215 Disease Recognition quiz (light hearted - multiple choice)

1300 Bring your own lunch

1345 Apiary session to practice the morning lessons

Malcolm and Margaret will provide tea, coffee and biscuits, but please bring a packed lunch and a mug. Alternatively, lunch may be purchased at the Hilliers Centre.

was probably an expression of public disappointment with her performance. Just like the voters of Crewe.

I took some honey to the Bishop's Bring and Buy, where the lady in charge was diffident about pricing it above £2.50. I pointed out that this was a charity event, where you expect to be mulcted in a good cause. Imagine my dismay on finding Gales honey in Sainsbury's at £1.50, without even the excuse of "Produce of many countries". I could buy that, re-pot it, and still make a profit.....

APIARY MEETING Saturday 17th May.

A significant improvement in the weather (compared with last month) tempted seventeen members to George and Judith's lovely walled garden and the compact apiary tucked into a well screened corner.

The apiary comprised three jumbo Langstroths:- one strong colony, a colony created by uniting two colonies in March and a third colony in which, on the day, the/a queen was spotted above the QX! That (third) colony had been collected in two stages from a neighbour, but in between the two collections a swarm had decided to occupy the remaining comb in the original hive. When it was shaken into the top of its new home the queen

was left 'upstairs'. The problem was remedied during the meeting by shaking down the upstairs bees (and queen) into the brood box.

The meeting was rounded off with an ample supply of tea, sandwiches and delicious home made ginger and lemon drizzle cakes. Very many thanks Judith and George for your kind hospitality.



George in discussion with new members Susanna and Ian.

NEW MEMBERS

In addition to Susanna and Ian (see above) we are delighted to welcome Tim Ellison and the return of previous member Alan Whetman.

WINTER LOSSES

It is interesting to note that WDBKA's winter losses (37%) appear to be higher than the national average (26%) reported in Hampshire Bee Talk this month (copies in the post/enclosed with this newsletter). While we cannot be certain that the parameters and context of the NBU's survey and our own were exactly comparable

and there may be a regional effect, the figures indicate that somehow we must improve our beekeeping skills and in particular pay more attention to the hygiene of our hives and equipment. So we look forward to seeing you at the Bee Diseases Recognition Day! – even if you attended last year, there is always more to learn - and to replace what you have forgotten over the year!

The figures also underline the need for greater government funding for research into bee diseases. With this in mind your committee has sent a donation of £100 to BBKA. This was suggested to all associations by Tim Lovett, President of the BBKA, to demonstrate their commitment to this cause.

BEEKEEPING STUDY NOTES, MODULE 8 - HONEYBEE

MANAGEMENT - includes the following advice (among many other recommendations):-

“Do not combine weak colonies unless you are sure both are healthy.

Never exchange brood or super frames/combs between one colony and another unless it is known that both/all colonies are free from disease. Where possible supers should be marked and always used on the same colonies.

Do not omit to 'sterilise' your hive tool between hives.

Never just throw brace comb or propolis on the ground. Remove it from the apiary.

If a colony dies out during the winter (or at any other time) and the trouble is not due to starvation, close the hive pending the examination of a sample comb and bees, to prevent the remaining stores being robbed out.

Maintain large colonies; small colonies are always stressed.

Commit regicide more often; ailing queens do not produce strong colonies.

Replace all brood comb every three years.”

BASIC ASSESSMENTS

We now have four candidates entered for this years BBKA Basic Assessments in July: Malcolm and Margaret Rittman, Hugh Loftin and John Hand.

WINCHESTER PRISON BEES

Progress with this project is held pending the resolution of prison Health and Safety concerns.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Please let the editor know, preferably by e-mail (see below) if you are in need of specific equipment or have equipment for sale, and wish to advertise that fact under this heading in future Newsletters.

russell.fairchild@virgin.net