



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 2008

BOB'S BIT

So, how was it for you? The honey crop was the usual curate's egg, in one case two hives standing side by side yielding respectively zero and 70 lbs. Overall, I can't grumble, though there was a lot of scraping of curiously thixotropic honey. Now I can smell the ivy coming in, so I must go and take off the supers I'd put back to be cleaned up. I have no problem with ivy honey in the brood box, but I don't want to have to chisel it out of my supers.

Last week I moved one of my best stocks into a new box. The weather was good, but at this time of year bees tend to be defensive. So before taking out any brood frames, I sprinkled them generously with icing sugar. They were very appreciative, and the operation was conducted in a most cordial atmosphere. I recall that Sid used to keep a spray-gun of weak syrup for this purpose.

The bees could be excused for feeling man is out to get them. The latest evil is the class of insecticides called neonicotinoids, which have been banned in Germany and strictly controlled in France, because of their believed responsibility for colony collapse. In this country they are used for seed dressing, which might appear safe. British Sugar Group (Silver Spoon) assure us there are no residues, and their sugar is OK for feeding, but I'll stick to cane sugar.

Another threat came to my notice from an anti-phone-mast e-mail. Look at www.mastsanity.org for a collection of scare stories about microwaves and bees. Unfortunately none of the sources are given so, as a Chartered Engineer with more

NEXT MEETING Tuesday 14th October

Itchen Abbas Village Hall

Change of speaker

In place of the advertised speaker (Bryan Dixon), **Dr. John Gowar**, a retired plastic surgeon and a beekeeper of 25 years, will talk about:

'Stings and Beekeeping'

Directions: *Itchen Abbas is on the B3047 between Kings Worthy and New Alresford. When coming from Winchester the entrance to the Village Hall is on your left in the centre of the village, immediately after a sharp right-hand bend. If you are coming from Alresford, it is on your right after 'The Trout' Inn.*

degrees than a thermometer, I have to express my doubts about this one.

Yesterday went to reclaim my supers, only to find them heavy and full of bees. I dug out a bit of honey to taste, and shared a problem with Victorian ladies, that you can't drink tea or taste honey through a veil. But it's mostly ivy, so I put the clearers back and told the bees to put it in the brood-box.

APIARY MEETING Saturday 13th September



Tea on the terrace in glorious sunshine. A perfect end to an afternoon of beekeeping - and to the apiary meeting season.

Twenty members and friends met at Ros and George Medd's house in Twyford for the final outdoor meeting of the year. Half the group stayed with Ros and inspected two colonies. The first was an established colony on Langstroth jumbo frames which had produced 98lbs of honey in the season, where eggs and brood were seen on 4.5 frames. A new varroa floor was put in place and feeding was recommended. The other was a smaller but vigorous colony with eggs and brood, which had been created from two casts (one kindly supplied by the Chairman, and the other taken locally) which were combined in July. No crop had been taken. Both colonies were gentle if noisy, and looked healthy but were nonetheless given Apistan. The mite count on one inspection tray was 2 after 6 hours. A super of stores left on each for the winter.

The second half of the group went off by car to visit Russell's bees about a mile away near Morestead. These were in two 14 x 12 Nationals, plus a third hive of unusual configuration (See 'A Cautionary

Tale' below), adjacent to 'No. 1'. This third hive contained a recently acquired colony that was to be united with the very weak and queen-less colony in No. 1. This was performed under Avril's expert guidance, using the newspaper method. No. 2 was full of happy healthy bees which were thoroughly dusted with icing sugar, a form of Varroa treatment that Russell has been applying at every inspection this year.

At 4.00 p.m., everyone met together again on the terrace at Ros and George's house, for a tea of cream scones, cakes and Ros's delicious Brownies.

A CAUTIONARY TALE – *Russell Fairchild*

At the end of May it was evident that my No 1 colony was struggling to re-queen itself. The previous queen had been performing poorly during the Spring and the colony had swarmed two or three times with no sign of a new queen having been successfully mated and returned. By the end of June it was evident that there were laying workers. All the books confirmed that these are useless creatures and they were duly disposed of.

It took until nearly the middle of August to find a swarm, albeit a small one. This was installed in my empty, but fully refurbished No 1 hive, with a 'welcome pack' of Apifonda. It showed no signs of having a queen and was steadily diminishing. More in hope than expectation considering the time of year, the quest for a stronger swarm to unite with it began.

Towards the end of August news came from Hugh Loftin of a lady who had a colony in her orchard in a WBC hive, that she wanted removed. It hadn't been looked at for two years and the bees were a nuisance. Hugh very kindly offered to help me remove them as it was obvious that this wasn't going to be a straight - forward move.

On 30th August, equipped with among other things a spare National brood box, roof, crown board and floor, and using plenty of smoke, we set about extricating the colony.

Bees were coming out from all sorts of strange places and it took a lump hammer to dislodge the roof. Cutting away the mass of wild comb between the inner boxes and the outer shell, amid a veritable storm of bees, eventually

revealed two supers full of apparently healthy sealed brood, larvae and stores – all welded together and to the walls with masses of brace comb. The spare National brood box was no use for holding the shallow frames from the two WBC supers so Hugh kindly went home to bring back two of his spare National supers. The frames in the WBCs were cut out one by one and transferred into the Nationals - an extremely messy process.

Under the supers was a QX over a frameless brood box packed solid with wild comb! This was not readily removed, so we contrived to re-assemble the hive with the National supers, crown board and roof over the mis-matched WBC brood box with clearer board between, and decided to 'call it a day'! It had been four hours since we started.

I returned a few days later to review the situation. I stapled the double-super pseudo brood box to the spare floor and strapped it together with the crown board and roof ready for carrying. The WBC brood box full of wild comb had partly cleared of bees and most of the rest were smoked out. So I 'topped and tailed' it with crown boards and wrapped it in a sheet before carrying it – with three rest stops – to the car.

Three days later, with Hugh's stalwart support we set out early, well 7.15 a.m., with retrieval in mind. All was quiet when we arrived at the hive, with no bees camped on the outside of the hive, although a small cluster could be seen just inside the entrance. BUT, there was a large slug on the front face of the floor that would have to be removed before the Duck Tape could be applied to seal the entrance. This was done with a careful deft flick of the hive tool – and the bees all came storming out! Mission aborted.

That afternoon I went back and 80% taped up the entrance. I also secured the two supers to each other with staples (which I should have thought of originally).

Next morning, literally at crack of dawn, we successfully moved the colony to my apiary near Morestead, ready for uniting with the queen-less girls in No. 1, at the Apiary meeting on the 13th September.

Except for the final move, the whole exercise had been nightmare, but at last I had a strong colony in No 1 with which to go through the winter – or so I thought..... At some point in this saga the queen must have got lost or damaged. Two weeks after uniting there is no sign of queenly activity and no brood, just a few random cells with eggs in and one or two random cells larvae – it seems that I

am back to laying workers again! – and they probably won't survive the winter. However, many lessons have been learnt in the process – and we did get some honey for our efforts and a donation of £40 for WDBKA from the owners at Sparsholt. I owe many thanks to Hugh for all his assistance, not to say courage in the face of a lot of very angry bees!

HBA CONVENTION AND HONEY SHOW **Saturday 11th October 2008**

To be held at Jubilee Hall, Bishops Waltham.

Full details in the latest issue of Hampshire Bee Talk. A few tickets still available from Pat Loftin (Tel 01962 861176) for £10.00 (in advance) or £12.00 at the door.

We look forward to seeing you there!

FOR SALE AND WANTED

The Winchester Oxfam shop in Parchment Street has received a donation of beekeeping books as follows.

<i>R O B Manley</i>	Honey Farming
<i>Tickner Edwardes</i>	The Lore of the Honey-bee
<i>Julien Francon</i>	The Mind of the Bees
<i>W Herrod-Hempsall</i>	The Anatomy Physiology and Natural History of the Honey Bee
<i>W Herrod-Hempsall</i>	Bee Produce: producing, preparing, exhibiting, and judging
<i>Snelgrove</i>	The Introduction of Queen Bees
<i>W Hamilton</i>	The Art of Beekeeping
<i>George A Carter</i>	Bees and Honey
<i>A L Gregg</i>	The Philosophy and Practice of Beekeeping
<i>E B Wedmore</i>	A Manual of Beekeeping
<i>Brother Adam</i>	In Search of the Best Strains of Bees
<i>Brother Adam</i>	Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey
<i>Dadant</i>	The Hive and the Honey Bee

Either call in at the shop or give Stephen Tompsett a call on 01962 864553

Ros Medd is still looking for a second-hand small electric extractor for Langstroth frames. If you can help, please contact her on 01962 712463 or by e-mail at:

Ros.medd@btinternet.com