



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2009

BOB's BIT

While bashing the neeps to accompany the haggis for Burns night, it occurred to me *while vacant and in pensive mood* that, between fathering illegitimate children, the Bard had a ready eye for nature.

'The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer toils,
Unnumber'd buds an' flow'rs' delicious spoils,
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen
piles,
Are doom'd by Man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils, [smoor'd](#) wi' brimstone
reek.'

So clearly beekeeping was fairly basic in his parts.

While on literary matters, I am currently reading "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd. The story is not about bees, but they are central to it, which is of the "can't put it down" kind. I highly recommend it.

I went up to Three Maids Hill at the weekend, and was pleased to find that all was well. It was a mild day, just the usual force 10 blowing, and I was interested to compare the activity outside different hives. Most were pretty quiet, but a few were flying quite strongly. Sid used to say that you could learn a lot by just studying what was going on outside. I was hoping to see a bit of pollen going in, but they were just relieving themselves and fetching water. My stock in the garden have the benefit of some early snowdrops, but the crocuses are a week or more away. I have a recipe for pollen substitute, but have never used it.

If you find a stock which is too light for your liking, then weak syrup or diluted honey can be fed

NEXT MEETING

7.30 p.m. TUESDAY February 10th
Itchen Abbas Village Hall

Julian Chisholm on 'Viticulture in Hyde'

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 the left in the centre of the village, immediately after a sharp right-hand bend. If coming from Alresford, it is on your right after 'The Trout' Inn.

in a contact feeder. A jar with a perforated lid, full of syrup, can be put directly on top of the brood frames. If the bees want it, they will take it. I was told not to disturb the cluster if the temperature was below 10 C., but just putting a jar on top should be OK. It would be a good time to put those carpet squares on top.

When walking out to admire the crocuses, collect any nice rotten wood you find, take it home and dry it. It makes the best (and cheapest) smoker fuel.

£4.3M BEE HEALTH FUNDING INCREASE

Defra News Release via Tim Ellison: "An extra £4.3 million to safeguard and undertake more research into the health of bees was announced by Environment Secretary Hilary Benn today.

Mr Benn said that nearly £2.3 million over the next two years would support the work of the National Bee Unit in its efforts to help England's beekeepers deal with the problems facing their bee colonies. This will include identifying all those who keep bees and providing expert advice to them on tackling pests and diseases and applying good husbandry.

In addition, Defra will put an extra £400,000 towards bee health research every year for the next five years. This extra funding - a total of £2 million - forms part of a comprehensive bee health strategy, which is under development."

Tim comments: "Short of the £8 million that was called for, but better than nothing."

WDBKA WEB SITE NOW OPEN

Based on some initial work by Bob, Tim Ellison has now produced a colourful and informative web site to titillate the taste buds of existing members and whet the appetites of potential new members. So now, browse away! Find us at:

www.winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk

AGM

After the statutory two years in office, Bob Geary stood down as President and Ron Broadway was duly elected as his replacement. Many thanks Bob for occupying the seat so ably.



At the AGM, Hon. Treasurer Robin (left) discusses 'the state of the nation', with newly elected President Ron Broadway.

All the members of the committee were prepared to continue for another year and were re-elected, and Tim Ellison was elected to further strengthen the committee.

In his report the Treasurer showed the healthy financial state of the Association and it was agreed that notwithstanding a small increase in capitation costs, the annual subscription fees would remain unchanged. Those fees are now due and the membership renewal form is enclosed/attached with this Newsletter. The completed form and your remittance must be returned to Robin Leonard by **28th February. PLEASE DO IT NOW!!!**

At the meeting, it was also agreed to purchase a junior bee suit for the association, so that young visitors can be encouraged to attend apiary meetings.

The interesting and business-like meeting was rounded off with an enjoyable selection of wines and cheeses generously provided by the Chairman. Many thanks Hugh.

2009 APIARY MEETINGS (TBC)

Saturdays at 2.30 p.m.

April 18th Three Maids Hill then tea with the Loftins
May 16th Robin Leonard at Northington
June 13th Bee Diseases Day/Bee Safari
July 18th Hugh Sykes at Chandlers Ford
September 12th Three Maids Hill then with Avril at S Wonston

NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK (NSW)

at INTECH

10.00 am to 4.00 pm Saturday 7th March

We have agreed to help Intech and the British Association (BA) with an exhibition on bees and pollination. We aim to provide an observation hive and a display including empty hives and accessories, bee products, candles etc. Posters will be obtained from Thornes for a display and microscopes to allow children to look at bee parts, mites, flower parts etc.

There will be speakers from RHS Wisley and Hilliers Arboretum to talk about pollination and bee friendly plants, and activities for younger children such as fingerprint bees and pipe cleaner bee modelling and making nest sites for red masonry bees out of bundles of canes. There will also a balloon modelling performer making bees.

We will need volunteers to help man our stand for three two hour shifts, with at least two people on each shift. If you can help, please contact Pat Loftin on 01962 861176, or the Editor.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Don Ross needs some help in exchanging a slab of clean New Zealand wax for new foundation. He does not have a car and cannot get to visit Stockbridge Bees. Please can anyone help him with a lift, he lives in Eastleigh, or buy the wax from him at a reasonable price? His telephone number is 02380 610258.