



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - JULY 2009

BOB's BIT

Captain Treadwell, the Sparsholt former head of Beekeeping, used to declare that "if it's too hot to sleep at night, there's a flow on somewhere". Well, it's been hot o'nights and my bees are all very busy at something, so it must be true.

Quite what the crop is, I'm not sure, but we have acres of white poppies all around. Nobody (RHS included) seems to know if the poppies yield anything useful, other than little black seeds to stick on my rolls.

I have recently amalgamated two stocks (courtesy of the Sunday Times), and subsequently arranged all the brood in the top box, with the dregs below. This worked well, the lower frames being cleaned out and then ignored. I was encouraged by this to perform a Bailey frame-change on a stock with some shameful comb, putting the new box on top without an excluder but with three strips of 1/2" square making a "U" between the boxes to form an auxiliary entrance above the main one. Then at dusk I closed up the lower entrance. I also gave them a gallon of syrup to get them drawing out the new frames. In lieu of finding the queen, I will wait until she moves upstairs in her own time. This method is actually more sanitary than Bailey, as no old frames are taken upstairs. This will also avoid the stress involved in the classic Bailey method. Now there is a flow on, they should look after themselves. I am also trying Ian Homer's suggestion, and applying Vaseline to the frame ends to prevent propolis.

Now is the time of year to try things which carry any risk of the colony being rendered queen-less. Any eggs laid after today are unlikely to produce gatherers before the season is over. Meanwhile, there is plenty of time to beg, buy or rear a queen before autumn.

SATURDAY 18TH JULY 2.30 p.m
APIARY MEETING

With Hugh Sykes bees

BEE DISEASES DAY AND APIARY MEETING, Saturday 13th June



Erica gets down to sampling for AFB.

It was standing room only for this well attended event, with the age range of the audience members spanning more than sixty years, proving that beekeeping is for all ages and that bee disease recognition and prevention is a subject to be taken seriously.

In giving his talk, Ian Homer, still not quite retired as our Regional Bee Inspector, was assisted for the day by Frazer Young, a newly appointed Seasonal Bee Inspector. With the aid of excellent slides, he provided a comprehensive description of the diseases to which we must all be alert and their symptoms. There was too much to report here in detail, but among the points of note were:

There's no such thing as CCD in this country. It is 90% due to unmanaged Varroa and 10% to Nosema.

Always have a reasoned cause for claiming the presence of a specific disease.

Beware of Blue Tits using flight boards to perch on, tap and then eat the bees which emerge to find out what is going on! Ian has discontinued the use of flight boards on his hives for this reason.

Use a solution of washing soda (1 Kilo to 1 gallon), with a few drops of washing-up liquid, for 'sterilising' equipment between hives. Don't forget to include the bellows on your smoker which get a lot of handling.

Always thoroughly clean out (and 'sterilise' i.e. flame) hives of colonies that die over the winter.

Replace brood frames over a three year cycle, i.e. replace one third of them each year.

Thoroughly inspect for disease once or twice a year by shaking off the bees so that all the comb can be seen clearly.

Always hive swarms on new foundation.

Use Vaseline on runners and lugs to prevent procolising.

After Ian's talk and a short quiz, and with the doors and windows tightly closed, Frazer demonstrated testing for AFB and EFB combs known to be infected.

Having eaten our picnic lunches sitting in the sunshine, we adjourned to Malcom and Margaret's nearby apiary. There, Ian and Frazer took us through each of the six colonies and two nucs, showing us how to inspect them for disease and pointing out features and bee behaviour of interest.

To round off the day, and notwithstanding the constant supply of biscuits, flapjacks and drinks provided throughout the day, Malcolm and Margaret treated us to a delicious cream tea. Many thanks Malcolm and Margaret and for organising all aspects of an excellent and very worthwhile day.

OPEN FARM SUNDAY

June 7th at Stoke Charity - *From Pat Loftin*

The farm day went really well and the rain came close but we stayed dry. We had a good trip round the farm and farmer Nick Rowsell was very interesting and trying to be environmentally friendly. They grow wheat, barley and have lots of fields under Poppies being grown for the seed for the bakery industry and the resin for the pharmaceutical industry, opioids for medicine, the most familiar being paracetamol, all shipped up to Edinburgh for processing etc. He would welcome all pollinators to the poppy fields.



Big thanks to Matt Avery and Avril Burt for their help and support on the day (*and to Pat and Hugh for organising the WDBKA stand Ed.*).

CONGRATULATIONS

To Erica Brett and Tim Ellison on passing their Basic Assessments.

There are still vacancies in July and August for those who have not yet obtained their certificates. The assessment comprises an informative and enjoyable hour of practical and aural tests with an expert beekeeper, so contact Pat Loftin for details (01962 861176).