



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Secretary: Patricia Loftin, 01962 861176
Hon Treasurer: Robin Leonard, 01962 732792
Newsletter Editor: Russell Fairchild, 01962 852333
www.winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk (Ctrl + click to link)
President: Ron Broadway
Chairman: Hugh Sykes

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2009

BOB's BIT

On Saturday to Brogdale, home of the National Fruit Tree collection to admire 200 different varieties of apple and the beekeeper who was asking £9.90 for a section of comb honey. Pure envy; the only time I persuaded my bees to make sections ended in a Moral Tale. I had produced three sections, and selected the fairest to proudly take to my daughter-in-law as a present. The remaining two were on the bench in my workshop. But in my absence the bees had come in and cleaned them out. The bees make, and the bees take away, punishing my Deadly Sin.

At the show, I picked up a heavily-discounted book with the simplistic title of "Honey". It was full of 100 recipes using honey, including a medicine against bedwetting. I will be pleased to send a copy to anyone, in the usual plain envelope. There was also a facial treatment using beeswax. You apply it like Polyfilla, to get a smooth finish. There was a good chapter about the evolution of the hive, with a picture of "a beekeeper holding a frame from a modern hive..." except that he is holding a queen excluder.

After extracting my modest crop, I put the frames back to be cleaned up. But due to my self-indulgent habit of taking an autumn holiday, I now have a quantity of ivy honey of exceptional hardness. However after uncapping it with a paint-stripping gun, I find that it can be dissolved out in a tub of water in reasonable time. It cannot get any harder, so there is no hurry to clear the frames until next March.

Today it was so mild that the bees were flying vigorously, and I was able to check the level of brood. No grubs, but quite a lot of capped brood. Like a watched pot, it is taking its time to emerge, while I am standing at the ready with my oxalic acid squeeze-bottle. They also serve, said Milton, who only stand and wait.

INDOOR MEETING, Tuesday October 13th

Nearly thirty members attended the excellent talk on bee anatomy and physiology by Dr John Gower. His presentation covered the structure and role of all parts of the bee's anatomy, including the structure of the

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday November 10th
7.30 pm at Itchen Abbas Village Hall

BRAINS TRUST

The Panel will comprise: Tim Lovett (President of the BBKA), John Hanks (Master Beekeeper), Bob Geary and Ron Broadway with Hugh Sykes in the chair.

Questions in advance to Hugh, preferably by e-mail (barandhugh@aol.com), alternatively by telephone (02380 254421)

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.*

exoskeleton, eyes, tongue, legs and sting, and some of its key senses. Breathing, circulation, and the digestive system were also described. The glands were not addressed.

Did you know that when a bee walks it does so on 'tripods, i.e. three legs at a time? And monitoring of bee brain activity (a mind boggling idea in itself) has established that bees do sleep. This is evidenced by their equivalent of human Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, Rapid Antenna Movement sleep.

Dr Gower recommended Celia Davis' books for those studying for exam modules and the book 'Form and Function of Honey Bees'.

This was overall a totally absorbing talk well illustrated with excellent slides. Although a highly technical subject, it was delivered in simple English that ordinary mortals could understand.

We very much hope we will have the benefit of Dr Gower's expert knowledge and presentation skills again, in future talks.



Dr Gower explains the working of the bee's tongue.

HAMPSHIRE BKA AUTUMN CONVENTION AND HONEY SHOW Saturday 14th November

This year the Convention is being held at Barton Peverill College, Eastleigh. Please make every effort to attend and participate. It would be nice to see some entries in the honey show from our members, so if you have honey, show it off - your bees deserve it! Application form and conditions for entry in last month's Beetalk.

Tickets are available in advance from Pat Loftin at £10 each or £12 at the door.

CHRISTMAS SUPPER AND QUIZ Tuesday December 8th 7.30 p.m.

By popular demand the format will be similar to last year, including a delicious hot buffet by 'Astronomie'. The price is £5 per person payable in advance. Partners are welcome. Places are necessarily limited, so please contact Pat Loftin a.s.a.p to book your place - first come first served.

'VANISHING OF THE BEES'

From Avril Burt

On Tuesday 13th October, Avril Burt and Tim Ellison were invited to the screening of the film 'The Vanishing of the Bees', so that they could answer questions from the audience. Avril reports as follows.

This film was mainly about the situation in the USA, where beekeeping is an industry. Thousands of hives are transported thousands of miles every year to pollinate mass crops of fruit and vegetables. During their travels (up to 500 hives per lorry), the bees are fed sugar syrup to replace their stores, and may be on the lorries for 3-5 days. They will be unloaded early morning at their destination where they will be left to forage for 2-3 weeks until the flowering is finished. Then they are transported again to another crop many miles away. The owner is paid for pollination, and honey then is a bonus. [There was some complaint about the low price of honey due to foreign imports of both honey and honey mixtures, which reduced beekeepers' income.]

Over the past 2 years these bee farmers have described Colony Collapse Disorder [CCD] where apparently healthy colonies have disappeared overnight leaving hives with stores and brood but no sign of flying bees or even dead ones. Who or what is to blame?

There were many suggestions and a number of research projects in USA, by both FDA and independent research centres. I think the most telling was a large organic mixed farm where the bees were treated with respect and allowed to follow their natural life without trauma, pesticides or sugar feeding and no CCD was seen.

My conclusions were that bees died from the results of *transport trauma to monoculture crops* which had been sprayed with various *systemic fertilisers* over the years. The bees were absorbing *sub-lethal doses* of these chemicals which are now universally present in the soil. The effects were various but resulted in damage to the bee's immune system, so that many diseases to which they are prone result in death. We were shown film of an organic bee feeding on a flower showing order and regularity as it worked, and another bee from a bee farm showing slower and irregular activity, then falling about and finally, falling off the flower!!

Some of the bee farmers [many have lost 90-100% of their bees] attended conferences where they learned that many European countries had banned the use of some pesticides - particularly neonicotinamides - which some research had shown was damaging bees. The UK has yet to follow suit!

The makers of insecticides and other pesticides were mentioned - particularly Bayer. Their research seems to be limited to the instant effects of their products on bees, not long term build up in plants and soil, which leads to gradual uptake by bees and future lethal effects. **Beekeepers in the UK beware. Now is the time to act.**