



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 - DECEMBER 2009

BOB's BIT

"It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking eggs.... was on the larger end:" until a royal decree forced the people of Lilliput to crack the small end. The Big-Endians were forced to flee to the neighbouring land of Blefuscu, and the dispute has endured to this day. A similarly enduring dispute lurks within the breasts of bee-keepers on the question of winter hive ventilation. My study notes (Yates) goes for a restricted entrance block and matchsticks under the corners of the crown board, while Ted Hooper says that there is no real indication what is best, but suggests experimenting. But if you are using screen floors, as you should, and particularly if in an open situation, I believe that is sufficient. I have not had a mouldy crown board for many years, but one thing the Association site does not lack is fresh air. I expect to be assailed with contrary views by closet Little-Endians carrying sharpened egg-spoons.

You have probably heard of BEEBASE, an online source of bee information. There is an excellent publication on varroa, which can be reached with this short address.

www.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/pdfs/varroa.pdf

I have always regarded eating comb honey as an uninteresting perversion. So when a friend asked for some, rather than carve out a piece I gave her a whole frame of best brick-hard ivy. It was returned empty, with ecstatic reports from all the people she had treated with a piece. So I have stopped washing out frames of ivy and instead stood some in a deep baking dish inside an old upright fridge to soften. For heating, I put in a 100W inspection lamp and left it overnight. In the morning, horror, horror, or as Lady M said, "who would have thought he had so much honey in him". The dish had overflowed out the door in a golden carpet. So I know how to economically extract the stuff, just a few details to get right.....

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday December 8th
7.30 pm at Itchen Abbas Village Hall

CHRISTMAS SUPPER AND QUIZ



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.

INDOOR MEETING Tuesday November 11th BRAINS TRUST

With thirty members present plus the panel comprising Tim Lovett, Bob Geary, Ron Broadway, John Hanks and Hugh Sykes (Chair), it was almost 'standing room only' at Itchen Abbas Village Hall on the evening of the 11th.

Space in this newsletter is too limited to allow a comprehensive report on the wide ranging questions asked and authoritative answers given during the meeting. They covered the latest advice on Varroa treatments in lieu of pyrethroids, the possible residual cumulative effects of neonicotinoids on soil and plants

and consequently bees, the use of crystalised (ivy) honey for winter feeding, the importance of feeding pollen as well as sugar syrup in the winter, particularly in early February to take advantage of the early rape crop, where best to source bees for the new beekeeper, selective breeding and how to engage with it, how does Defra funding for beekeeper education flow down to local associations? And is there a product on the market for extending the short lugs found on Smith hives?



BBKA President Tim Lovett (left) gives the latest news on government proposals for the allocation of bee research funding.

We were also privileged to have the President of the BBKA on the panel. He had come straight from an all party meeting in the House of Commons, on Defra plans for investment in measures to help beekeepers to improve honeybee health and increase the honeybee population. He was scathing in his comments on the Defra 'decide and tell' approach to the issues. In this, the nation-wide beekeeping community represented through the BBKA, is not being consulted in any way about the use of the £2.3M funding that resulted from the BBKA's hugely successful 'Save our Bees' campaign. For example, £1M has already been allocated for additional inspectors, a bee diseases survey (to 99% confidence level!) and BeeBase (a national database of bee colonies). So nearly £2M of the £2.3M has been pre-empted without discussion. A further £100K has also been allocated without discussion, including £40K to £50K to be spent on a social science study of beekeepers! Tim had evidently made the frustrations of the UK beekeeping community at this total lack of consultation very clear to the meeting in the Commons, and on the way down to our meeting had received a call from Lord Davis (the Chairman) inviting him to a further meeting with him as a matter of urgency. No doubt we will get an update on the progress of these discussions in the next issue of BBKA News.

BBKA MODULE EXAMINATIONS - 2010

Now is the time for members who have passed their Basic Assessments to start planning to take a module exam (or two!). Applications need to be in by 10th February for the exams on 20th March. Why not start with Module 1 – Honeybee Management? If you have been beekeeping for a few years, you will probably find that you already know a large amount of what is required. The additional information you will not only find interesting, but also valuable in further improving your beekeeping and hence helping you to have happier, healthier and more productive bees.

Start mugging up now using, among other books, 'Beekeeping Study Notes' by Yates and Yates. This is in 2 volumes available from the Association library via Hugh Sykes. Better still, persuade someone to give you a volume, or both, for Christmas.

HAMPSHIRE BKA AUTUMN CONVENTION AND HONEY SHOW Saturday 14th November

Well organized, highly informative, excellent facilities – the HBA committee must be congratulated on putting on a first class event.

In the morning Dr Dave Chandler from Warwick University, a microbiologist specializing in biological pest control, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and bee health, gave a captivating totally engaging presentation on the latest research into possible fungal control of Varroa. The work done so far has clearly been thorough and is very encouraging. In four or five years time it could result in products that would be valuable weapons in our bee health IPM armoury. Inevitably, however, continuing success leading to a usable commercial product is dependent on the provision of further research funding.

Dr Chandler was followed by Clive de Bruyn talking about 'What the Hobbyist can learn from the Commercial Beekeeper'. Clive is a veteran beekeeper of more than forty years experience, a bee farmer and government adviser at the National Bee Unit. His authoritative and entertaining talk imparted a wealth of practical knowledge and advice on most aspects of beekeeping. It was equally absorbing for experienced beekeepers and novices alike, and perfectly complemented Dr Chandler's rigorous scientific forward look.

The afternoon was filled with workshops on 'Bee disease Identification', 'Making Mead', 'Beekeeping on a Shoestring', 'Making up a Nucleus', 'A Natural Approach to Beekeeping' and 'Encaustic Wax Art'. There was something for everyone here and the excellent speakers gave their respective presentations and demonstrations twice to enable as many as possible to participate.

Meanwhile, during the morning the impressive array of Honey Show exhibits had been judged. They were open to

viewing in the afternoon and it was good to find two winners from WDBKA among the successful entrants.



Charlotte won a first prize in the junior section for her painting.....



..... and Hugh Sykes second prize for his sweet mead.

At the end of the afternoon the various prizes, cups, shields and certificates for exam successes were awarded by Eastleigh MP Chris Huhne.

This was a very worthwhile day. Over two hundred members participated, comfortably seated in a superb theatre with excellent audio visual facilities. Although no bees were present, there was a buzz of interest and involvement about the whole event and it is clearly something to look forward to next year. Be sure to book as soon as the arrangements are announced. At £10 (in advance) this year, including a very acceptable ploughman's lunch, it was a bargain.

THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW (NHS)

From Bob Maurer, NHS Publicity

Did you make it to Weybridge for the National Honey Show in October? If not, you missed a treat. The word is getting around that this is a 'must see' event. Visitor numbers to the show were up by 30%. With 1,180 exhibits on the show benches there was a lot to see. The Radio 4 Food Programme visited the show and devoted an entire programme to it. Great publicity for the show and for beekeeping.

The new Honey Beer class attracted entrants from Cornwall to Scotland. With their usual selfless dedication to duty, a large number of judges gathered around this class. No doubt second opinions were needed!

A really encouraging sign for the future is that, compared to last year, the number of exhibitors increased by 22% to 202. World class speakers including Dr Jennifer Berry and Dr Jim Tew from the U.S.A. were a major attraction, the excellent series of workshops were full and the trade stands were busy.

You can find out all about the show on the website – www.honeyshow.co.uk

See you next year.