



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2010

BOB'S BIT

Any sheep-farmer will tell you that his stock are both skilled and determined to kill themselves in ways worthy of the Darwin Award. Getting hung up in fences or leaping to their death are par for the course. Bees, one would hope, are above such behaviour, but I can offer some evidence to the contrary.

Following my "Beekeeping Study Notes" (Yates), I put out a shallow dish of clean water, in the sun, sloped so that they could walk down to the water's edge. In no time they were like so many lemmings, drowning determinedly. Stones in the water, guard rails and warning signs "Deep Water" had no effect. My solution is to fill the dish with moss, or lay on some sacking.

The next task is to train the bees to use this source, rather than the pond by your patio. I found the wash-water from my cleaning out of ivy honey was effective, and should train the new generation of water-gatherers along the right path. I once had a call from a lady to say that bees were drinking from her hot-tub. My suggestion that she wear a veil while in the tub went down badly.

It is still vital, if not more so, to keep hefting your hives, for now is the time of greatest consumption. It does no harm to put a jar of syrup on a colony; if they don't want it they will ignore it. I tried it on the lightest of mine, and they politely sipped half a jar but no more.

Leafing through back numbers of the Newsletter, I found in the issue for March 1814 that the Itchen was still frozen, and there had been a Frost Fair on the Thames. Members were greatly feared for their bees, and gloomily forecast a Bad Year. Casks of smuggled French honey were taken by the Revenue at Beaulieu instead of the usual brandy, and it was all blamed on Napoleon (of course).

APIARY MEETING **Saturday April 10th at 2.30 p.m.** **Association Apiary at Three Maids Hill**

Then equipment viewing and demonstration, tea and biscuits at [Bob's house].

Directions: [available from the association secretary].

EVENING MEETING **Tuesday 9TH March**



Robert Carpenter-Turner is a Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) for Wiltshire. He presently has six hives in his own apiary, having lost two over the winter. Robert entertained the twenty five members present with a most informative talk on his experiences as a SBI, with 'Other Peoples Bees'. During the course of his

excellent talk he passed on a variety of tips/advice, including the following.

When inspecting your hives, always put the supers down in front of the hive, not behind or to the side.

When performing a 'shook swarm' always put a QX under the brood box.

Melt down drone brood wax, do not throw it away. Put culled drone brood in the freezer to kill it.

Do not use mothballs to prevent wax moth!

Bees have an aversion to leather and will sting leather boots, watch straps and gloves, for example.

Do not use creosote on your hive!

Constant monitoring for Varroa is essential. The recently approved product ApiLifeVAR is showing great promise as a treatment for Varroa. It is based on essential oils and very easy to use.

BEEKEEPING FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

This course, superbly designed and organised by Tim Ellison, was attended by twenty four people from a wide area around Winchester and as far away as Lymington. The series of illustrated presentations was given by five members of WDBKA, 'topped and tailed' by Tim. Many questions were asked by the very attentive audience, and appropriately answered.



Tim keeps an eye on the students – and the speakers!

A continuous supply of tea, coffee, a variety of 'wicked' biscuits during the day, and a delicious cream tea, were provided most efficiently by two of Tim's daughters, Maria and Charlotte.

A good day was had by all and several of those attending signed up as full or associate members of WDBKA. It also made a very useful contribution to Association funds.

SWARMS

If you need a swarm please contact the duty Swarm Co-ordinator on 0701 775 8191 or 0701 775 8192, or by e-mail [http://www.winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk/html/contact_us.html] Swarm allocation is on a first come first served basis. You will be notified when your turn comes.

MEON VALLEY BKA AUCTION Saturday 1st May, Village Hall, Greatham

Catalogues for this years auction (of beekeeping equipment and stocks of bees) will be printed on 12th April. If you have items you wish to sell in the auction contact James Laybourne **within the next week:** Telephone 01489 892853, e-mail jamesdeb12@tiscali.co.uk

On the day, viewing is from 11.30 a.m. and the auction starts at 1.00 p.m. sharp.

TOPICAL TIP An alternative to sugar syrup for feeding. From Theresa Waterworth

"Buy a box of baker's fondant. It comes in a 12.5kg box. Get together with 2 or 3 pals if you like. You can get it from bakers' suppliers. Open up the box. It comes in a big lump in a polythene bag. Chop 1 inch slices off of this big rectangle and put each slice in a plastic bag and seal the bag closed. A box will do 20-30 packs depending on how big your slices are. Place a bagged slice on top of the crown board over the hole of any hive in need, making sure that you stick your finger through the bag so that the bees can get in. The bees will walk around the inside of the bag and take the fondant down to the brood chamber. When you next look at the bees just remove the empty bag.

Fondant is used by bakers for the tops of things like iced buns. It also come in convenient hive sized portions of about 500g and is much easier in winter than making up syrup which may freeze."

See also Beekeeping Study Notes by Yates and Yates, Module 1, section 1,14. Ed.