



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2010

BOB's BIT

Everyone knows about "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness", which Keats wrote after a walk near Winchester, but did you know that he was into bees?

"And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells."

So he too was bothered by the ivy flow, and not having screen floors nor yet matchsticks to put under his crown-board for ventilation, probably suffered from mildew. Not many people know that.

He missed a chance to eulogise a jar of golden honey, and how a small teaspoonful represents the life's work of one bee. I have been admiring the dozen I have just potted up, and wondering how long before it sets.

When runny, my honey has the ability to penetrate glass, or how else do you explain the fact that a day after washing them, the jars are sticky again? The subject deserves further research.

When it comes to actual bee husbandry, there is not much to do. I have a hive with a high natural mite drop, so having some Apistan strips, I put them in and was rewarded with a heavy drop. So some varroa will be immune, but a whole lot were not, and the threat has been at least reduced. The bees were surprisingly docile when I put the strips in; one would expect them to be defensive at this time.

You could sit and worry if everyone has enough stores, but its a bit late for sugar syrup. Honey would be ok, but when I offered one stock some diluted ivy honey, they turned up their noses at it. Let's see, you could stack up your supers and put a pad of acetic acid on top, or settle by the fire with a good book – on beekeeping, of course.

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 9th NOVEMBER
7.30 p.m.
Itchen Abbas Village Hall

BRAINS TRUST

New members may not be familiar with the format, which involves a panel of Association members/Committee members, and an external 'brain', this year David Purchase who many will remember was our Seasonal Bee Inspector.

Questions can be put to the panel on the night, but it would help if members could submit questions, or descriptions of problems they have experienced, in advance to: forderstent@talktalk.net

EVENING MEETING Tuesday 12th October Report by Amanda Trigg



More than thirty people gathered at Itchen Abbas village hall to listen to Frazer Young talk about

‘Winter Inspections-preparing bees for the winter and getting them through the winter months’.

Frazer started keeping bees when just 10 years old and now, at the age of 23, works as a Seasonal Bee Inspector, has his own 130 hives and helps with another 600 hives. He travels to New Zealand in November spending 4-5 months working on a bee farm with 2-3,000 hives. Work there includes the production of Manuka honey and the breeding and export of queens - 5-6,000 are produced annually.

He outlined the things we can be doing to prepare our bees for the winter months - or should already have done! Other than the siting and protection of hives, the use of suitable floors and insulation, the main topics were feeding and varroa treatment.

Feeding should be done early, as soon as any honey is off at the end of August/beginning of September. He prefers Ambrosia syrup as it contains just 20% of water and is, therefore, less work for the bees as they can use it straight away, taking about 10kgs in 1-2 days. Questions about feeding elicited these responses:

- If below 12 degrees in Autumn it's time to stop.
- When over 10 degrees in Spring it's OK to start.
- Aim for 20-25 kgs of stores per hive in Autumn.
- If using fondant do so around December, with a hole in the plastic bag as access for the bees.
- Ivy honey is OK if water is available and the temperature is not too low - it sets when cold. An option is to put on a separate super for the ivy honey and then remove it.

Varroa treatments come in three forms- chemical, thymol based and acid. He emphasised that any treatment should be done with care. He favours thymol based treatments and in particular the use of Thymovar, which is a recently licensed product here in the UK, although it has been in use in Europe for the past ten years. It is a slow release treatment which is less reliant on temperature than others and therefore more consistent. It does not require an eke, the wafers being placed directly on the brood chamber frames. Any other technique, such as the removal of drone brood, is a bonus.

Frazer touched on the topic of bee diseases but emphasised that it is more important to know if your bees are healthy than to be able to identify a disease. If you suspect that there is something wrong consult your Bee Inspector. The main problem is European Foul Brood which is largely a stress disease, if discovered, the colony must be destroyed.

An average good honey crop from a hive can be 50-100 pounds and 150 is achievable some years. The reasons for a lack of honey can be old combs, varroa, the age of the queen and the variety of bee. He favours keeping a queen just one year and no more than two and outlined how easy it is to breed a queen. He also said it is more reliable to have bred bees rather than a swarm which can be unknown in nature.

It was an interesting and informative talk and Frazer's maxim: "Look after your bees and they will look after you" was an appropriate summary of the evening.

CHRISTMAS SUPPER

Tuesday 7TH December 07.30 p.m at Itchin Abbas Village Hall.

By popular demand the format will be similar to last year, including a delicious hot buffet by 'Gastronomique'. The price is £10 per person payable in advance. Partners are welcome. Places are necessarily limited, so please contact Angela Forder-Stent a.s.a.p. to book your place - first come first served. Telephone 01962 712443 or e-mail forderstent@talktalk.net

HON TREASURER

A volunteer is still needed. Please contact Hugh Sykes: 02380 254521 or barandhugh@aol.com

ANNUAL HBA HONEY SHOW AND CONVENTION - Barton Peverill College on Saturday 13th November from 09.15 hrs.

POSSIBLE TRIP TO STONELEIGH PARK?

Due to the uncertainty of the weather in April, we have been considering replacing the first apiary meeting next year with a visit (by coach) to the BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh (16th April). Details of the event were in the October BBKA News. Please comment on this suggestion, in principle, to Stephen Tompsett at: stephentompsett@waitrose.com

FOR SALE

A couple of National hives, plus a big box of American Bee Journals. They need to go in the next week or two. Contact Erica Brett on 07760 272869 or e-mail: eri.brett@ntlworld.com