



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - JULY 2011

BOB's BIT

I have always had a high regard for the works of Robbie Burns, and never more than today. I was checking a colony comprising a small swarm (which had arrived uninvited into a nuc box) and the leftover brood from a shook swarm. Unusually, I found the queen, and leapt for my marking kit. Plunging my spikey marking cage into some perfectly good brood, I cornered the lady and uncapped my yellow marker. BUT IT HAD DRIED UP. It was then that I felt that, like Robbie, my best-laid plans had gone agley, and that it was probably a divine punishment for being so mean as to have only one colour of pen and keep it for years.

The swarms keep coming. I took one from a farm at Crawley, which was on a fence post. I put a plastic bucket over the post, and the swarm at once started to move up. But then it started to rain. Smoking didn't speed them up, so I tried a spray of Bee-Quick, a repellent for clearing supers, which was more effective (and my smoker had gone out, anyway). With the rain drumming on my hat, I swept the last of them into the bucket with a piece of cardboard, and returned home damp but triumphant. I was also invited back next year, when they will be growing rape.

Last Tuesday, BBC4 repeated "Who killed the honey bee?", and paraded the usual suspects, stress, pesticides and our old enemy varroa. I have been examining forkfuls of drone brood all year, with very low counts up to now. All colonies are on screen floors, and I used oxalic acid in December, but I would expect the count to be building up by now. Perhaps swarms are a check to varroa growth?

APIARY MEETING
Saturday 9th July @ 2.30 p.m.

**With Hugh Sykes at
his home**

Address and directions are available from the secretary.

APIARY MEETING Saturday 18th June
With George and Judith Hand at Alresford



It was a very wet day!

.....nevertheless, George and Judith made us very welcome. In a very brief break in the downpour George gave us a quick tour of his hives in the garden. Their docility was impressive as he opened a couple of hives, suit and gloves free, for the twenty or so mostly un-suited members. But the rain soon drove us back indoors.

The afternoon was far from unproductive however, and the opportunity was taken for everyone to compare notes on a wide range of beekeeping issues and experiences, including vanishing and re-appearing queens, swarms and swarm collection anecdotes. In particular it was an excellent opportunity for the many new members present to pick the brains of the more experienced in a sort of impromptu 'brains trust'; and all this while enjoying the excellent tea which Judith had provided, and musical accompaniment from the nearby on-going Alresford Music Festival! Many thanks George and Judith.

NATIONAL TRUST CITY MILL BREAD & HONEY WEEKEND 11th & 12th June



Clarissa's bees performed well through-out the weekend in the observation hive. The use of a 'short' frame with drone comb provided a useful additional talking point.

It started off quietly, very quietly, on the Saturday morning. Unlike previous years, the event didn't coincide with half-term and the weather was bright and sunny (most of the time!), and such conditions are not conducive to attracting large numbers of visitors to indoor events. Nevertheless, the numbers picked up during the afternoon and there was a steady stream of visitors of all ages throughout the weekend, the main attractions being the observation hive, as ever, and the candle rolling.

Very many thanks to Ron for all his organizational work, and to the members who gave up their time to help at various times over the weekend.

NEW BBKA WEB SITE

Along with the new format monthly BBKA News, the new BBKA web site, is generally a great improvement on its predecessor. However, members should be aware that the "Do you have a swarm?" helpline featured prominently on the Home Page, is far from helpful. When it is used it will direct an enquirer to anyone within several miles of their postcode who has registered themselves with the BBKA as a 'Swarm Collector'. If that includes you, you could be asked to collect swarms from within a large radius of your home, whether you need a swarm or not – and you will probably get many spurious calls that actually turn out to be bumble bee nests.

The WDBKA's Swarm Co-ordination process ensures that members of the public in our district, who have a perceived swarm problem, are matched with an experienced beekeeper in their locality. He or she will then:

- Filter out bumble bee or solitary bee related enquiries, if not already done by the Duty Swarm Coordinator,
- Collect the swarm if it is safely accessible,
- Most importantly, find a suitable prepared home for the swarm with the next available person on the WDBKA Swarm List – and a health check!

The BBKA's role in Swarm Co-ordination at the National level, needs to be limited to routing/referring enquirers to local association Swarm Coordinators. Meanwhile, members should think twice before registering with the BBKA as a 'Swarm Collector'.

BS DEEP FOUNDATION FOR SALE

Richard Walker has the following BS National deep (14 x 8) foundation remaining from Robin Leonard's equipment. It comprises three packs of ten wired and three packs of ten unwired sheets, all still in their original sealed plastic bags. The current prices for these would add up to £55.05, but they are now available from Richard for £40. If you would like to buy these, please contact Richard by telephone on: 01256 389238 or e-mail at: srswalker@hotmail.co.uk