



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2011

BOB's BIT

Passing the time with my bees this week, I apologised for my autumn leaf bonfire which, no matter where or when I light it, sends its smoke straight down to the apiary. I noticed holly leaves on the ground in front of the hives, but the tenants were evasive when I pointed out that there were no holly trees nearby. Now some birds show behaviour which looks like decorating, but when I tried them with a verse of "The Holly and the Ivy" the guard bees all came out and, rightly, shooed me away. Perhaps the mention of ivy upset them, because the yield was scanty, and I had to give an extra gallon of syrup to one colony

The directors of energy-producing companies are crying in their cups at the mild weather, which has wounded their sales expectations. Great for my pocket, but of concern for the bee-keeper. Mine are out every day, bringing in pollen and probably breeding prodigally. They will regret it, say the old doom-sayers, when the real winter arrives and too many mouths to feed. In the old days, things were better run, the cluster formed in mid November and stayed clustered until February, which is the most economical configuration. Now we shall have to worry about food stores before we've even chucked out the Christmas tree.

Feeding in cold weather calls for a contact feeder to minimise the distance that the foragers have to travel, so collect a stock of useful containers, jars etc. I have used plastic tubs, ex Flora, which are not higher than the eke which surrounds them. Give a thought to your crown boards, do they have a hole in the right place for a feeder? It is easier to change a crown board now than in early spring, and you can grease the mating surfaces at the same time.

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 13th DECEMBER 7.30 p.m.
Itchen Abbas Village Hall

CHRISTMAS SUPPER



With gluhwein, wine and soft drinks, game pie (or veggie option), dessert and coffee – plus one of Bob's brain twisting quizzes!

*£12 ea. Partners welcome. Only a few places left!
Contact Angela on 01962 712 443.*

EVENING MEETING 8th November Brains Trust (a.k.a. Beekeepers' Question Time)



A Kitchen Devil is at least as effective as a specialist uncapping knife – and a lot cheaper!

There was another full house for the Brains Trust this year, and a host of questions were put to the panel. They covered most aspects of bee husbandry

including the efficacy of advertised bee products, the benefits of castellated spacers, the problem of pollen in supers, the latest EU ruling on GM pollen and its impact on labelling, equipment that the panel wished they hadn't wasted money on, queen clipping, etc. etc! Much very helpful advice was given by the panel.

In addition to expertise provided by the Association members of the panel, Gerry Fry brought his immense experience gained from bee farming for forty years. He is currently running eighty hives. His words of wisdom were hugely appreciated by all present.

BOB'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

Some books for Christmas.

'The Beekeeper's Pupil'. Sara George. Francois Huber, the blind scientist and his apprentice, Burens, who discovered sex in bees.

'The Honey Bee'. James & Carol Gould. Astounding complexity of honey bees, navigation and communication. "The only other complex language in the animal kingdom, apart from our own".

'A Spring without Bees'. Michael Schacker. Lyons Press. Blames neonicotinoids.

'The buzz about Bees'. The biology of a superorganism. Jurgen Taus. Strong on biology.

...Plus a recommendation from Trish Bright:

'The Bees' by Carol Ann Duffy, Poet Laureate. She has a fascination for and love of bees. One section is titled 'Bees are the batteries of orchards and gardens, guard them' A super book for all poetry loving beekeepers or simply poetry lovers. Don't miss 'The Bee Carol (Silently on Christmas Eve.....).

HBA CONVENTION AND HONEY SHOW

HBA's annual show continued to build on the success of recent years. Again, there were excellent speakers and workshops and record entries for the show.

In particular Celia Davis' excellent talk on 'Mr Bee', gave a highly informative insight into the vital role played by drones in the survival of the honey bee species. This is recognised by the workers who groom and feed him (he cannot feed outside the hive) and send him out on successive attempts to find and mate with a queen. Only the fittest drones are successful. The flights are long and hazardous and they don't necessarily return to the same hive,

nevertheless they are still well received and 'turned around' for another mission.

In addition, Celia informed us that research has indicated the probability that Varroa treatments reduce drone sperm count, which may explain the increase in the number of poorly performing queens.

Mike Brown, Head of the NBU, gave a comprehensive overview of the work of the NBU and progress with various important research programmes.

WDBKA again achieved a few successes in the Honey Show: Hugh Sykes a 2nd place for his dry mead and a highly commended for his sweet mead, Russell Fairchild a 2nd and a 4th in the photography classes and Mary Weller the award for the maximum number of points in the Novice classes. Congratulations to all.



Mary Weller receives her award from Charlie Dimmock.

AGM Tuesday 10th January 2012

Don't forget this important occasion. There will be a brief review of the accounts, election of the committee for 2012, an illustrated report on the activities of the past year, and then lots of chat over wine and cheeses. We look forward to seeing you there.