



# WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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## NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2012

### BOB's BIT

In T H White's "The Once and Future King", the hapless King Pellinore is endlessly hunting the Questing Beast. Meeting the future King Arthur, he shows him a sample of the Beast's fewmets, which we would call it's droppings. A mediaeval huntsman had to be a fine judge of fewmets, from which he could assess the quarry's condition. I thought of this while cleaning my windscreen of my bees' excrement, which had clearly been fairly dry and thread-like. (Good) A round blob would be more liquid, (doubtful) while full-blown dysentery is unmistakable. It is an indicator of the possibility of nosema, which requires a compound microscope to determine, the spore being only 6-8µ. (jolly small). Now that Fumidil has been withdrawn, the best treatment is a Bailey frame change or a shook swarm, as soon as possible. Then sterilise everything with strong acetic acid.

If you had been at the last meeting, you would have seen how to prepare a specimen, and what to look for. You start by cutting the heads off a sample of bees and grinding them up in a mortar. Add a drop of water, and it's ready for examination. It reminds me of those Tudor recipes, "take of a dozen fat hog's lice and....".

The pollen is plentiful this year, and everyone is carting bags of it home, except one colony up on the hill. It is also very heavy, as if it is not eating well, and I fear the worst. But the weather has turned cold again, so I am left to pace up and down outside like an anxious father. It is slight comfort that if the queen has died there is nothing I can do immediately.

Last month I suggested making laying-space by taking out excess food frames and replacing them with foundation. I should have added that it needs a nectar flow to draw them out. An alternative I have used is to uncap the food frames and wash out the honey.

### **SWARM CONTROL & BEE DISEASES** **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April. Hilliers Arboretum** **With Nigel Semmence RBI and Malcolm and** **Margaret Ritman's Bees**

*Directions:*

*Available from the secretary, and printed in the newsletter.*

**10.30** *Gather and coffee*

*11.00 Bee inspections and swarm control*

*12.30 Lunch break (bring your own)*

*13.15 Bee diseases*

*15.30 Tea and depart*

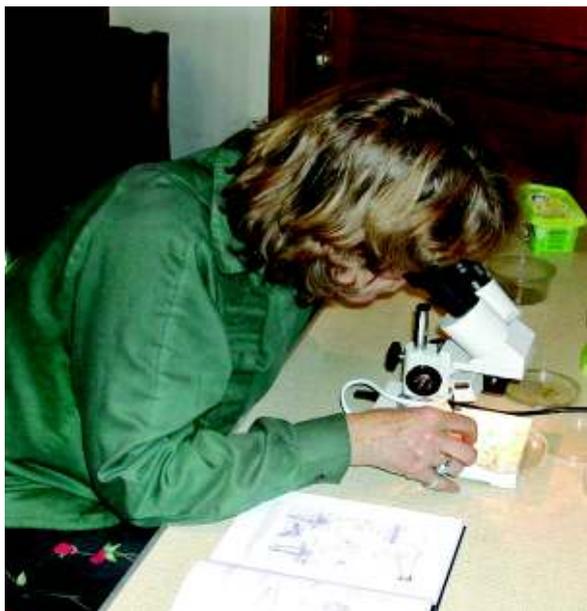
*Malcolm and Margaret will provide tea, coffee and soft drinks and biscuits, but please bring a packed lunch and a mug. Alternatively, lunch may be purchased at the Hilliers Centre.*

**NB. This is a 'not to be missed' meeting for anyone who has not been to a 'bee diseases' meeting before, and an important 'refresher' for those who have.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE EARLY START**

Ecce La Primavera, as Vivaldi might have cried. Up on the Morestead road there is a field of rape, just showing yellow. So hail to the Spring.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO MICROSCOPY FOR BEEKEEPERS, March 13<sup>th</sup> 2012



*Heads down! Astra getting up close and personal with a Varroa mite.*

Tim Ellison provided an overview of the association's microscopy equipment and its capabilities. The association's two microscopes, one dissecting and one high power, plus dissecting and pollen identification kits, were complemented by dissecting and high power microscopes kindly provided by Avril and Len Burt, and also Avril's centrifuge. Tim summarised the capability the equipment provided for disease identification, and Avril described the potential for and usefulness of their use in pollen identification.

After the introductory talk, the meeting broke into smaller groups to allow people to view various specimen under the different microscopes. The association's high power microscope was connected via our laptop computer to our projector, so Tim was not only able to show a number of images of dissected bee anatomy and disease, which he had prepared earlier, but also the results of investigating some of Clarissa's bees for Nosema.

Clarissa had brought the bees along in a jar because she was concerned that the colony was not developing as it should. A few of the bees were killed in a killing jar and then their abdomen ground with a pestel and mortar and mixed with water to make a paste. A small of this material was then spread on a slide and examined under the microscope. No Nosema spores could be seen, which was good news for Clarissa, but not so good for the purposes of the demonstration! Meanwhile, Avril had been preparing a honey sample from last year, for pollen identification. The honey

was diluted with water and put in a small glass tube for centrifuging to separate the pollen sediment. Some of the pollen was then transferred to a microscope slide for examination, which showed that it contained lily pollen. Avril also showed examples of crocus, catkin and daffodil pollen grains.

It was an absorbing and informative evening. Later in the year, members will be given the opportunity to use the equipment to aid their own beekeeping activities.

### SWARM LIST

If you are planning on increasing your stocks or replacing winter losses, with a swarm, enter yourself on the association's Swarm List via our website: [www.winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.winchesterbeekeepers.org.uk). As swarms are reported the co-ordinators will do their best to place them with those offering homes for them (ready for occupation), on a first come first served basis.

Please note that it is not the co-ordinators job to collect the swarms. Recipients will be responsible for collecting their own, but help will be arranged for those who have little or no experience.

### HEADS UP! – MAY APIARY MEETING PRIOR NOTICE.

This will be held at Matt Avery's apiary in Oliver's Battery on 12<sup>th</sup> May. As usual all members are welcome, but in particular we want to give children/young people the chance to look inside a hive. We have some junior bee-suits but children will also need to bring wellington boots and gloves - and an adult to accompany them! There will be lots to see - a variety of chickens and ducks - and other bee related activities for children whilst they are waiting their turn. To assist in planning it would be very helpful, but not essential, to let either Matt or Amanda know if you are intending to come, plus the age of the child/ren. Details of the venue will given next month. [matt.avery@hants.gov.uk](mailto:matt.avery@hants.gov.uk) [atrigg@waitrose.com](mailto:atrigg@waitrose.com)

### MVBKA AUCTION

The Meon Valley Beekeepers Association annual Auction is to be held this year on Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup> at Greatham Village Hall. Lots for sale are now welcome. For further information telephone Bruce Taylor on 01489 895428 or e-mail at: [bruce.taylor@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bruce.taylor@tiscali.co.uk)