



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - MAY 2012

BOB's BIT

The news of floods in Dorset turned my mind to the greatest Flood of all, and I wondered how the bees fared when they had to put up with this weather for forty days. Plus the ensuing drifting about while the dove was showing off and doing its long-range patrols. I suppose they could cope if well-fed before it started raining.

And what of the bees that were taken to the colonies? Pitching and rolling for weeks on end. Stick your nose out of doors and you'll be blown to leeward in an instant. Which reminds me, I got an e-mail from FERA, warning me that bees generally may be starving and in need of succour.

Other nations have climate, but we only have weather. And it is because of the present weather that I have seen – in one spring- any number of bee phenomena that one only reads about. Like near-starvation in mid-April. Like a queen cell, built when the sun was shining, torn down in the rain., or a colony on Three Maids Hill unable to work the rape 200m away as the wind howls past. Meanwhile one on a farm at Crawley, with a hedge at its back and wildflowers at its door, positively smiling as they fill their boots. Only the garden hive is significantly filling its super. So be sure to have some bags of sugar to hand . Enough of this gloom. The spring crops will wait for the sun, just like our bees. Meanwhile I have been making mead, and dreaming of another prize card if it turns out well, or tipping in the woodshed if it's like most of my brews. Unlike brewing beer, there is no heavenly aroma, so it is Socially Acceptable.

APIARY MEETING **Saturday 12th May at 2.30 p.m.** **At Matt Avery's apiary in Olivers Battery**

All members are welcome, but we also want to give children/young people the chance to look inside a hive – but adults will still have the same opportunities to participate and learn as usual. Some junior bee-suits are available if you don't have your own.

Directions: {See newsletter for details}

BEE DISEASES AND SWARM CONTROL MEETING

Hilliers 28th April with Nigel Semmence (RBI) and Malcolm and Margaret Rittman

In spite of the rain more than twenty members and visitors turned out for this particularly important meeting. Because of the weather, the order of play was reversed so that the talk on bee diseases was given in the morning.

There is no way that a brief report here can hope to summarise adequately the wealth of advice imparted by Nigel. It covered everything from hive and apiary hygiene to the vital importance of close Varroa monitoring and management and monitoring for the real nasties – AFB and EFB.



Nigel explains the results of the NBU's Random Apiary Survey for the southern area.

The rain eased as lunchtime arrived, so Malcolm suggested we take the opportunity to go to his apiary and get on with the practical demonstrations. Despite the cold and damp the bees were very well behaved. Nigel demonstrated re-hiving a nucleus into a 14 x 12 National and, how to look for and test for EFB.

He was concerned that one particularly strong colony was a bit light on stores for the weather conditions we are experiencing. He reiterated the alert recently e-mailed out by the NBU to all beekeepers on BeeBase, that there is a high risk of starvation due to the extraordinarily wet weather. All beekeepers should ensure that their bees have adequate stores and are fed with sugar syrup or fondant as necessary – and make sure that they and their colonies are registered on BeeBase!.

The afternoon ended back in the meeting room with a demonstration of EFB and AFB testing using infected comb – very carefully handled!

In spite of the weather the whole day had been hugely informative and much enjoyed by all, not least due to Malcolm and Margaret's inexhaustible supply of tea, coffee, flapjacks and cake, for which very many thanks.

HEADS UP! – JUNE APIARY MEETING

To be held in Hugh and Barbara Sykes' garden at Chandlers Ford, on Saturday 9th June at 2.30 p.m.

WDBKA WINTER LOSSES

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
TOTAL RESPONSES	24	31	36	40	49
TOTAL COLONIES	103	94	97	117	151
TOTAL LOSSES	37	26	30	12	18
% LOSSES	36	28	31	10	12

Thanks to all for the prompt returns. This year's results are summarized above in the context of the preceding years. There is still room for improvement in preparing our colonies for winter.

MVBKA AUCTION - Saturday May 5th at Greatham Village Hall.

For further information telephone Bruce Taylor on 01489 895428 or e-mail at: bruce.taylor@tiscali.co.uk

ALRESFORD OUT-APIARY SITE

Members in the east of the WDBKA area may be interested in using an out-apiary site in Old Alresford. This is on land adjacent to the watercress beds on Bighton Lane. There is good access close to the manager's house, and it is quite well screened, but additional screening can be provided if required. For further information contact Tom Amery, the MD, at The Watercress Company on: 01929 401400 or e-mail at: tom.amery@thewatercresscompany.com

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

1 National hive, 1 all in one suit, 1 top half suit (both with hats), hive tool, bee brush, smoker, 1 pair of leather gloves and a feeder. Contact Sam Hughes on: 01962 733046 or at: swh33@hotmail.co.uk