

Sussex Beekeepers Association Brighton & Lewes Division



MARCH 2009

www.chelifer.com/bees

This months meeting Tue 3rd March-7.30pm David Rutland

David Rutland's talk is "Preparing for the New Season", David is a Seasonal Bee Inspector in West Sussex and is currently lecturing on Beekeeping at Plumpton Agricultural College - so he should know what he's talking about.

Look forward to seeing lots of you there - it's an important part of Beekeeping - it may make all the difference between a good season and last years bad one.

**NB Venue change this meeting only:
Christ Church, Prince Edwards Road**

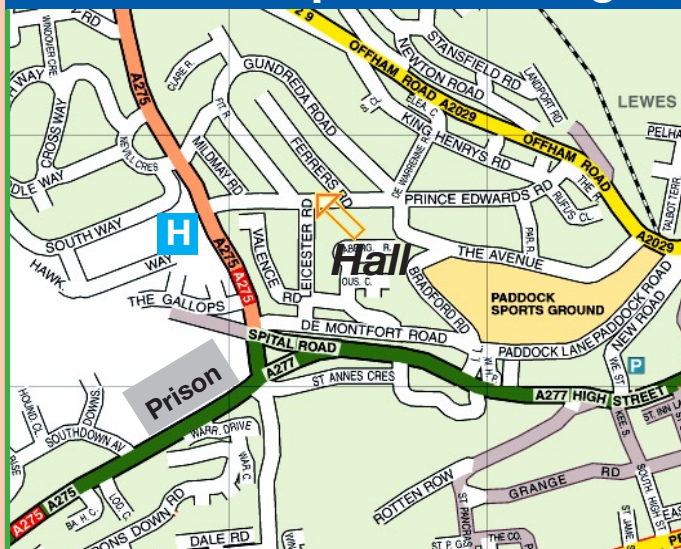
Guests and non-members welcome.



Please note date and venue change



Location map for meeting



SWarm

*We all like to hear tales about
about this favourite subject. Do
you have an anecdote about a
swarm (or two)? Send it in to share with others.
Here's one to set the ball rolling.*

A local man called stating there was a swarm of bees in his back garden, this was September, Lyn said you don't get swarms in September, so as it was close to our bees we took a look, he lead us to a fuschsia bush being worked by wasps bumbles and honey bees - we came away with lovely fuschsia cuttings. **TRH**

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The Secret Life of Elephants



The Secret Life of Elephants 25 January BBC1.

The programme showed that in the drought period herds of Elephants leave the safety of the Reserve and raid small farmers fields. This is disaster as most African farmers have very little money so a field destroyed is a serious problem for them. Unfortunately the human populations have moved onto the land that the elephants have been using for generations. So how do you overcome the problem without harming the elephants?

The African bees are very aggressive and will soon cause the death of young elephant calves by stinging. It was discovered that a recording of the buzzing of honey bees caused the invading elephants to move off. The solution is bees.

Log type hives were suspended on wires under a long thatched shelter, the hives were also wired to the fencing: when the fence was broken down the hives were shaken about stirring up the bees, their agitation driving the elephants away.

The farmer reaped a hidden benefit selling the honey from the bees, an excellent result all round.

Africa is a huge continent containing some 47 Countries, most are agricultural dependant and have been for thousands of years; the problem must have been there when they first started scratching about on the soil, why they are so dependent on Westerners always amazes me. TRH

BBKA and BAYER

There is much debate at the moment regarding the use of various pesticides. The EEU has acted to restrict or ban various substances deemed harmful to the environment which includes insects and specifically for us bees. Our government has been dragged screaming and kicking to follow the rulings.

At the same time you may have read some of the dissent by beekeepers to the co-operation between Bayer and our organisation the BBKA. Much of the criticism is levelled because the BBKA appears to endorse the use of pesticides by allowing the logo to be used in conjunction with advertising: in return for which they receive £20,000.

There is a fair amount of matter available on the net regarding the anti-pesticide stance, some sites are listed here:

www.biobeas.com/cgi-bin/fump/rss.cgi?u=W11Yn5yz70Y5&m=web

www.naturalnews.com/o25287.html

www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/blogs/beeswww.honey-bee-pesticides-55081801

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/farming-news/Insecticide-ban-plea-to-help.4558542.jp

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/Bee-keepers-abuzz-over-pesticides.4862872.jp

The committee would like to gauge the feeling of the members of the division regarding BBKA/BAYER. Please let us know your opinion. Respond to Amanda Millar (see officers).

Honey demand Gerald Legg

During the past year producers and traders found a rise in UK honey consumption which is thought to continue over the coming years. Last year producer and packer Rowse launched a year long campaign to help UK consumers understand the benefits of honey which may well have helped to boost sales. Life-style TV programmes may also be contributing. Consumers want 'natural' 'health' products. There is now a wide variety of honeys available from all around the world - but you can't beat English honey! Prices have risen considerably - good for the beekeeper particularly as this special product has been undervalued for far too long. The demand is increasing, let us hope that it continues as people use honey not just for spreading on their toast but in cooking and an alternative to sugar.

Beekeeper 'starter kit' offer from Sherriff

If you are attending a beekeeping course you may be interested to know that B J Sherriff have a special offer on a starter kit (all the apparel, smoker, hive tool) for the sum of £135 VAT & post included. New beepers only. You can contact them Tel:01872 863304, Web:bjsherriff.com

The Co-op's bee initiative and new bee movie preview

Last night I attended a preview screening of a new and unreleased movie focusing on Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and issues surrounding it. It is called 'The return of the honey bee' (directed by George Langworthy & Maryam Henein and due to be on general release in September 2009). Although CCD has not been officially acknowledged as being a UK phenomenon, British bee losses over recent years have been heavy. It was being screened as part of the Co-op's latest Plan Bee campaign which outlines a 10 point plan and is aimed reversing the decline of the British bee population.

The Co-op, who are the UK's largest farmer have decided to take a stand on the use of neonicotinoid based fertilizers and now prohibit them on all of their farms. This move is controversial because even though these chemicals have been implicated as being harmful to bees, the BBKA has yet to ask for a ban on their use in the UK. My understanding of the situation is that this may well be related to financial agreements between the BBKA and Bayer- the manufacturer of the pesticides. A hot issue at the moment for many beekeepers. I arrived at the screening excited to find out what else the co-op were doing to help bees.

When I arrived at the Komedia in Brighton, I was ushered downstairs to a packed room. After a preview of the Co-op's latest TV ad was shown, the film began. It focuses on the phenomenon of CCD and right from the beginning I could tell that it had been well researched and had many interviews from a variety of beekeepers. It was engaging and informative. Large scale commercial beekeepers in the USA talked about losing a hive within a matter of a couple of hours, with all bees gone but leaving brood behind. This was complimented with footage of French Beekeepers up in arms at their losses, blaming pesticides use and throwing empty hives over the gates of chemical manufacturers in protest. Also shown were the views of smaller scaled beekeepers, school children and some who advocated an organic approach. The one thing that they all shared was an acknowledgement that something has been going wrong and that there needs to be more understanding of what that might be. Many beekeepers spoke about how little research has been done recently for beekeeping related issues.

The film is powerful and questions whether modern

farming methods including the use of particular fertilizers are directly hazardous to not just bees, but all life on earth. These fertilizers have entered the entire food chain and are affecting everything. At one point in the film, the effectiveness of fertilizer use is brought into question. One farmer states 'We used to lose a certain percentage of all crops when we didn't use chemicals. Now, we use the chemicals and we still have the same percentage of crop loss.' I could not help feeling whilst watching the film, that the whole food industry has somehow 'lost the plot' and that we need to return to simplicity and recognise the interconnectedness of all life, both animal and vegetable, within our farming methods.

The film ends suggesting that greed and a desire to have more and more at any price has brought us to this point, and that a radical change is needed if we are to keep our bees healthy.

When the film ended, many people wanted to know about how the Co-op were going to spend the £150,000 that had been allocated into research. Would they do research into the effects of fertilizers upon bees? Would they look at whether organic beekeeping is healthier for bees? All they could say is that the money has already been allotted. I hope that it has been allocated for some research that will really help the bees. To my mind, £150,000 doesn't sound like much money at all from an organisation like the Co-op, but I guess it all adds up. It also seemed a little odd that the presenters of the event knew very little about beekeeping. I imagine that plenty of beekeepers work on their farms and they could have teamed up for this venture. The chairman of Sussex BKA who was present at the screening was very surprised that he had not been contacted prior to the screening to assist new people wanting to take up beekeeping. Anyway, let's hope when this film gets a general release it can generate more action from more organisations and individuals that can really make a difference. The Co-op's Plan Bee is definitely a step in the right direction. In my opinion, contaminated food is no good for bees or humans.

Clive Hedger

If you want to know more about Plan Bee check out:-
<http://www.co-operative.coop/ethicsinaction/takeaction/planbee/>

Institute of Biology - Kent, Surrey & Sussex Branch

Darwin's Bicentenary - Lecture morning at Down House followed by a tour of the house and grounds. Wednesday March 11th 2009. Starting 11 a.m.

John Williams. *Darwin's Bees.* John is an expert beekeeper in Kent. Recently John has been assisting English Heritage to show Darwin's work with bees at Down House.

Norman L. Carreck. *Charles Darwin - Cats, Mice, Bumble bees, Old Maids and Clover.* Norman is also an expert beekeeper. He joined Rothamsted Research in 1987 as an agronomist. Between 1991 and 2006 he was apiculturalist in the Plant and Invertebrate Ecology Division, with responsibility for maintaining about 80 colonies of honey bees. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society He has recently joined Prof. Francis Ratnieks at the newly established Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects at the University of Sussex.

Numbers are restricted and booking is therefore essential. Entrance, lectures and audio tour £10. English Heritage members £5. Please contact Pam Hunter, 01403 864007. Email: pamhunter@burnthouse.org.uk
Fuller details of lectures are available from Pam Hunter, Ed

Food for thought – TRH

The division always gets a crop of potential beekeepers throughout the year, the reason for their interest is perhaps they have more time on their hands, some have moved to houses with a larger garden, others have been given a book on beekeeping, mine was "Starting Beekeeping", and a few have a bit of land which they think would be suitable for a hive or two, most have been thinking about keeping bees for years, all have a love for nature, well if not love then an interest in nature and that is an important part of beekeeping. I think before one starts it is most important to first handle bees, summer meetings or a friendly beekeeper will give you a chance to do that, if you are happy removing frames of bees from the brood box and feel comfortable only then consider taking up the craft. (The division will not press you to join until you have bees, joining the association you are then covered by liability insurance)

I think looking into the heart of a colony of bees is a privilege clearly that nature didn't intend, as the bees would normally select a home in a tree, a hole in a rock face or in fairly modern times a cavity in a house wall or disused chimney. The bees would leave the safety of their parent colony as a swarm consisting of most of the flying bees, a queen and a few drones and as much honey as they can take with them, they form a cluster then send out scout bees as they need to find a suitable site quickly then clean it up and start at once to build worker comb ready for the queen to lay, a queen with a prime swarm may lay that night, a virgin queen may take several weeks. A swarm is an ideal way for a beginner to get started, as the colony goes weaker before they become strong (bees dying and not being replaced yet) they are normally not aggressive as they have little to defend.

Beekeepers requiring a swarm put their name down and are told when one is in their area. Perhaps it would have been better if the program on swarms on BBC 1 Sunday 4 January was not seen by potential beekeepers as it stopped a football match between, Costa Rica and Italy, the swarm flew over the pitch stinging the players, waving their arms about and trying to swat them with the linesman flag didn't help either, those that laid flat on the ground got away without a stinging.

Any potential beekeepers needn't worry as these bees were the dreaded African killer bees, (African cross Brazilian) our swarming bees are normally in a happy mood, swarming is the only bit of pleasure they get from endless toil. I would recommend those interested to get a copy of "Taking A Swarm" from the Editor or Secretary (available in April ed), this gives you an idea how to capture a swarm yourself. Beekeepers normally don't mind picking up a swarm locally but haven't the time to drive some distance to box up the swarm and then drive over again in the evening to pick it up, different if they want the swarm for themselves. I feel it is the duty of all beekeepers not to let their bees swarm to bother other people, of course it's not our bees causing a problem they are somebody else's.

Divisional Diary Winter/Spring Programme 2008/09

Winter/Spring meetings are held monthly on Wednesday evenings at St Thomas's Church Hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes (7.30 for 7.45pm). Summer meetings are held at our divisional out-apiaries at Whitelands and Plumpton (downloadable maps available at www.chelifer.com), as well as at members' apiaries and those of other divisions; summer meetings start at 2.30pm (bring a mug for tea and something to share to eat).

New date TUE 3 MARCH Speaker: **David Rudland** on "Preparing for the New Season"

NB: at Christ Church, Prince Edward's Road, Lewes (not Cliffe Church Hall) *see map overleaf*

TUE 17 MARCH : The Sussex Lecture Series **Dr Francis L W Ratnieks** at Brighton & Sussex Medical School, Chouwen Lecture Theatre 6.30pm. See Feb newsletter for booking arrangements.

Other dates for your diary

SAT 7 MARCH SBKA County AGM (Forest Row)

SUN 17 MAY SBKA Annual Bee Market (new venue in Heathfield)

The Brighton & Lewes Division of the Sussex Beekeepers Association cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, injury or damage sustained by any person in consequence of their participation in any activity arranged

Contributions to the newsletter

Contributions to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent preferably by email to the editor Email:lionel.r@talktalk.co.uk or by post to Lionel Reuben, Whincroft, Station Rd, Nth Chailey, BN8 4HG. Photos for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, Gerald Legg, Email:bees@chelifer.com

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