

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter April 2015

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Next meeting - April 19th-Out apiary, Stanmer

The first of this seasons out apiary meetings. The meeting starts at 1.30pm for beginners and continues at 2.30 in a more general vein. These times are for all out apiary meets, notice will be given should times vary. The committee wishes all members a happy and productive season. See panel back page for calendar.

Last meeting Pam Hunter - Feb 24th Is Nature always Nice?

The meeting was the lowest turnout I have ever seen for an indoor meeting.

Those members attending heard a very interesting discourse on all things natural. Pam comes from a scientific background in pharmaceuticals, stressing the point that all chemical products we see need good data to allow adequate assessment.

A series of slides were shown highlighting the use of the words "natural" and "organic" and the use of green and plant pictures in packaging, designed to enhance our belief in product efficacy. The lecture debunked all of this marketing effort.

Marketing companies use the two words because most people associate them with goodness and purity, unfortunately there is a darker side to the issue. Many of the chemicals lauded for their remedial qualities are poisonous when used in larger doses. Green is associated with wholesomeness as are picture of plants, all is not what it seems as a large number of them (some quite common) are highly toxic.

A large number of remedies originated from plants and were known to ancient man. Romano Greeks and later cultures produced texts and herbals such as Culpepper's.

As far as bee products are concerned there are many propriety products on the market (mostly pricey) which are sold on the premise that they are natural therefore beneficial – very few are backed by solid data and sell on the dubious link of natural and organic.

Pam made special mention of products with multi-



chemical formulae, she herself would not touch them with a barge pole as there is no concrete evidence (data again) for their benefits.

"Natural" and "Organic" are catch all words, we should remember that some of the deadliest poisons known to man such as cyanide are organic and that all medicines are themselves poisons if used in larger quantities.

Queen rearing - Sunday 3rd May with Amanda Millar

Amanda Millar will be holding a queen rearing practical session at Grassroots starting 2.0pm. Please note this will not be a normal out apiary visit, but intended for more experienced beekeepers wanting to learn some methods of rearing queens. Please email Amanda if you have something you particularly want her

to cover and to let her know for numbers. If the forecast is poor for the Sunday, then she might hold it on the Saturday, so please email so she can let you know if the date changes. Bring bee suit and clean gloves.

E: amanda.millar@

Amanda advises

In the middle of March I was pleased to see 10 queen bumblebees on a patch of crocus, mostly *Bombus terrestris* but also 2 tree bumblebee queens, *Bombus hypnorum* and also some bee flies mimicking bumbles so well. The give away was a different pitched buzz and faster jerky flight

We have had a typical changeable March, it was warm enough to check a couple of colonies on the same day as last year; 12th March. My out apiaries had their first inspection in the following week, changing floors, checking for stores and brood etc. I have checked my smaller ones and nucs at home, but as I write today (20th) it has been too cool to check my most vigorous ones at home other than hefting for stores and counting the seams. The forecast suggests it may not be suitable for another week. This is worrying as two large-ish ones at one out apiary had 4 frames of brood and included capped drone. Until you find drones hatching you can be fairly sure they will not be making swarm preparation, so I am keen to inspect my really big colonies. We have heard of swarms at the end of March before now. Also the biggest colonies are more likely to be the ones needing feeding as they use more, I found one which was very light and only on a brood box. Most of the other large ones I left with a super of stores and they seem fine. If they have super frames full of capped stores in April when I feel they need a super, I shall remove them and store them for the autumn as they will have syrup in and I don't want them to mix it with incoming nectar. Today the air was full of buzzing bees when the sun finally came out after the not-so-total eclipse, a huge number were busy collecting water and others bringing back large pollen loads, and all seemed to feel the need to defecate over my car which is now covered in yellow spots, thank you bees!

One large colony which had drones flying on warm days in early February turned out to have a drone laying queen and I requeened them in February using a queen I had in an Apidea - a good reason to do some queen rearing and practice with Apidea - and I was pleased to see they now have some lovely clean capped brood and are filling a brood and half with worker bees, I did not notice any drone when I looked last week, but they only live about a month anyway, or have been thrown out. If you are interested in queen rearing, there will be a theory session at Heather's on Tuesday 5th May, and I will be doing a Queen rearing practical at Grassroots for those interested the weekend before, see calendar for details, it would be helpful if you drop me an email if you plan on coming so I have an idea of numbers. I

recently bought a book called *The Principles of Bee Improvement* by Jo Widdicombe, from Northern Bee Books for about £11. It is only 80 pages and while I agree with what he is saying I found it very repetitive and the useful information could have



been given in half that. In a nutshell he says we should be using our locally adapted bees and improve them by selection not importing foreign strains and subspecies of bee in order to achieve more quickly a healthy hardy strain which is more likely to have consistent behaviour and attributes. Introducing foreign queens just produces hybrids which are very variable and frequently have undesirable characteristics. I have long suggested and practiced rearing queens from my best colonies and culled unhealthy colonies and requeened healthy but undesirable colonies. I like his suggestion that instead of culling poor colonies (I assume he is talking about healthy colonies but with poor behaviour or other attributes) we use the bees for mating nucs etc so they are requeened in the process, and do not produce drones with undesirable genes. He also suggested that locally adapted/semi-native bees are prepared to fly in cooler weather and queens can get mated better in our changeable weather conditions than do the warm-adapted Italians and other foreign strains. So keep local!

I came across a recipe for a face pack which I might try one day when I have a few hours to myself, it's supposed to be good for reducing wrinkles! 1 tablespoon of Coconut oil, 2 tablespoons honey, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, mix and spread all over face (avoiding eyes) then relax and enjoy some nice music for an hour before rinsing off.

So, work for April is watching out for swarm preparations and putting supers on as soon as they might need more space. Check mite levels and keep an eye on food stores but don't feed unless absolutely necessary or they will probably just put it in the supers or fill the space which the queen should be laying in. Change any old comb and make records of what you see so you can monitor the expected rapid population increase. If they do not increase then investigate why not - virus, hunger, poor queen etc. Why don't you select your best colonies and have a go at some queen rearing?

'Bees - The Colony' - Anne Miles-Eve

On 3rd May there's an outdoor theatre performance, 12-5pm, which is free, and the first bit of it is about bees. www.AtWoodingdeanCentralParkBrighton.com

Petition - Stop import of Italian Bees

Here's a chance to protect our bees from foreign imports. Sign the petition!

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/ban-importation-of-honeybees-from-italy>

Swarm Swarm Swarm

If you are looking to have a swarm this year you need to be on the swarm list. Should you wish to learn about or help with swarm collecting. Contact Sue Taylor and let her know about your interest.
Email sue.geoff.t@hotmail.co.uk.

West Sussex BKA lecture - just made it to this newsletter

Professor Keith Delaplane from the University of Georgia, USA will be presenting a lecture 'Biological Clues for Good Bee Management' at the Leconfield Hall, Petworth GU28 0AH on Monday 13th April at 7:30pm.

Unlike other agricultural animals, the modern honeybee occupies an ambiguous niche between 'domesticated animal' and 'wild animal'. The history of agriculture has been one of increasing productivity of plants and animals far beyond levels required for their own reproduction. Much of what we do in beekeeping is, in fact, solidly in this camp, including things like

breeding bees for productivity, swarm management, colony equalizing, and migratory honey production. But recent honeybee declines suggest that we may be pushing the limits of honeybee productivity. Perhaps we need to pay renewed attention to the 'honeybee as wild animal' paradigm. How can beekeepers partner with honeybee biology to improve bee health while maintaining reasonable levels of production?

Entry will be free to West Sussex BKA members with a £5 charge to non-members.

For sale

Member Steve Edwards of Southdown Avenue in Lewis is unable to keep bees any more and is therefore offering his colonies (5) and equipment for sale.

4 standard deep brood hive - including roof, crown board, QE and drawn comb super: £150 each.
1 standard 14 x 12 hive with same: £150

4 green rapid feeders (from Paynes) - £10 each

I have two poly nucs - £15 each

Other smaller bits and pieces eg crown boards, supers etc.

There are individual stands for three of them, and thermal block and posts for the other two. Also, two of the roofs are gable, the others flat.

Tel: 01273 479115, E: Steve@eyfs.info

Divisional Diary 2015

Outdoor meetings This year we will be holding meetings on Saturdays and Sundays. Unless otherwise stated a 1.30 start with beginners in mind will be followed by a general meeting at 2pm. All meetings advertised will be weather permitting.

Programme

Out apiary meetings

April 19th–Stanmer 1.30 Beginners 2pm General

May 23 – Barcombe Swarm control

June 14 Grassroots

July 12 Stanmer

August 15 Barcombe

13 September Grassroots

Dates for your diary

May 16 Heathfield Bee Market

June 11-13 South of England Show

The Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged.

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Vacant

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Contributions to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent preferably by email to the editor see Officer panel above for details
Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, see panel above.

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