

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter March 2015

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

Next meeting - Pam hunter. March 18th. Is Nature always Nice?

Pam is a microbiologist by profession. She is a Master beekeeper and a Chartered Biologist. Her beekeeping started in 1989 and these days usually has 6-8 colonies.

The talk is a partly light hearted look at the terms 'natural' and 'pure' and the preconceived belief among many that natural is automatically good and safe. It includes examples of natural (plant-based) substances and how they were used by the Romans and Greeks to poison one another, discusses the problems in using natural products (such as tea tree oil). Included

are details of the value of thymol and oxalic acid for beekeepers, emphasising that they can also be toxic when not used correctly. Also referred to is the latest batch of supposed 'natural' hive treatments containing several different substances. Is it wise to use these?

In addition to the talk, Maggie Pratt will be bringing a range of beekeeping accessories for sale. If you require anything and would like to make a specific purchase from Maggie at the meeting, please contact her:

Email: beesretreat@aol.com Phone: 01323 842149

Last meeting Paul de Zylva - February 24th



Can we be the generation to save Britain's bees?

As might be expected from "Friends of the Earth" (FoE) the message which came out of the talk was that of the danger to pollinators generally. The name adapted for the campaign was chosen to catch the attention of the general public. Paul admits that he is not a scientist but is passionate about the environment. He therefore works to bring sense to government policies over the issues concerned with this aspect of environment.

Through his association with FoE many doors are open to him both in politics and science. Paul was critical of government with regard to funding for adequate research into the demise of polinators, no survey has been attempted outside of honeybees into the status of other insects in the environment. FoE are attempting to enlist the general public's help in assessing the number and location of bees and other insects such as as hover flies etc which make up the vast diversity of our environment.

The talk then turned to pesticides. Unlike Norman Carrick of LASI (October meeting), Paul held the strong opinion that apart from the severe decline of flower species in our countryside, the main culprit are neonicotinoids. He believes that the overwhelming evidence from science is now firmly pointing the finger at this group of chemicals. There have been no tests on this group under the latest regulations on testing and he points out that they would not pass the latest examination of such chemicals. Also there have been no studies on their effect on other species than honeybees; possibly because there is insufficient data regarding the insect population numbers at large. This of course does not stop informed speculation.

A question from the floor raised the question of crop yields in answer to which Paul explained at some length that many of the figures are misleading. He quoted a Lincolnshire farmer who decided that neonics were a bad deal and had decided to eliminate pesticide spraying on his farm. Using traditional growing methods he maintained a high crop yield.

I suggested that one of the reasons for the continuing struggle was money and vested interests. Paul agreed but pointed out that FoE were used to this conflict and would continue the fight.

Most well informed members will not have learned a great deal from the evening. They will have received confidence that their views are vindicated. For more look online , FoE The bee Cause.

The evening was sucessfully conducted by our new chair and concluded with the usual refreshments overseen by Connie Sturt. *Ed*



Amanda advises

By the time you get this newsletter, I hope this wet and miserable weather might be nearing its end. I was able to check that mine are all alive and hefted for stores in the middle of February, and even managed to do an icing sugar varroa check on a warm day. Only one needed fondant. If you have got fondant on do check that it has not dried and gone hard or the bees will be unable to use it. If the weather is warm enough for the bees to fly you can probably get away with using syrup instead of fondant in March, if they need it. Do monitor for varroa, using either icing sugar dusting or insert in for a week. They will make much bigger healthier colonies without the burden of varroa and there is time to treat if necessary before the spring flow.

Last year I was able to do the first full inspection on 12th March when the temperature was 14 deg C or more. At your first inspection the most important things to look for are good quality brood; that the Queen is not a drone layer and they have food stores. Make a note of the state of the comb, if it is very dark you may need to do a shook swarm or Bailey comb change as soon as the weather is warm enough. If there are some frames of dark comb with no food or brood on then now is an opportunity to remove them and replace them with clean foundation or clean drawn comb, I have already changed many of my crownboards for clean ones and removed my mouse guards and at my first full inspection I will start to change the floors for clean, sterilised ones as well, but as I only have a few spare floors this may take a week or two to do them all. There are likely to be dead bees in the corners and if you have been using icing sugar it may be clogged in places preventing the sugar falling through. If the brood box is bunged up with propolis you could move them into a clean box too in March unless you plan to do a shook

swarm in which case all this cleaning can be done then. I shall be getting my spare brood boxes, supers and swarm kit ready this month.

If you find on inspection that any of your colonies have died then seal them up to prevent robbing and clean up the boxes and frames at your earliest convenience. As the winter has been fairly mild and the bees were able to fly on a regular basis at least until January, I would expect most colonies to be in good condition, providing they had enough food and members kept the varroa mites at low level so they did not succumb to viruses. If there are signs of dysentery around the entrances (one or two squirts might be expected after the confinement in February) and on the hives, and even worse – inside the hive, then it probably signifies some sort of problem such as Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus, Amoeba or Nosema apis. Because dysentery spreads all kinds of diseases it would be a good plan to try to get them into a clean box, floor and onto clean comb as soon as you are able.

I shall also put up my wasp/hornet traps in the next few days as the queens coming out of hibernation in early March need a sweet meal before getting on with establishing a nest. See Beebase website for trap details. We need to get into the habit of doing this as the Asian hornet is in northern France and may well get over here in the next year or two. Let's hope for a benign March.



Bacteria from bees possible alternative to antibiotics



Amanda Millar sent this link.

What a wonder if this were to turn up trumps

http://www.med.lu.se/english/news_archive/140909_antibiotics

Last months book review

Last month Amanda Millar reviewed the book "Bee". Here are the details I omitted to include. Ed

'Bee' by Rose-Lynn Fisher, paperback approx A5 size, 126 pages, full of truly stunning B&W photos of bees. Each photo has a few words saying which part of the anatomy we are looking at but there is little in the way of

detailed description. However it was only £10.99 which is remarkably good value. Sadly I have just checked and Amazon are out of stock just at the moment but it is worth keeping an eye open for it.

Another Bee book - Anne Miles-Eve

The Bees by Laline Paull review – a fantasy with a sting in its tail

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/21/bees-laline-paull-fantasy-novel-review>

Ann comments :- a bee book, apparently a little free with the bee biology though...

Candle Making Day at East Surrey Bees -Hilary Osman

Having had a few years of bee keeping now, I thought that it was time to do something with the wax that has been accumulating in my shed, and what better way than to learn to make candles. I had been looking for a course to attend prior to Christmas as the husband had no idea what to give me as a present!

Enthusiastically I applied to go on a day course, and after speaking to Pat Clowser who was also keen to attend, we made a plan. The weather was miserable and cold, so with nothing to lose, Pat picked me up and off we went to Whyteleafe. David and Celia met us at the apiary site, and there was also another B+L member Pamela Anderson. With only six of us on the course we could all get to the equipment easily. The first lesson 'the history of wax', covering how valuable a resource wax can be it was, benefits of a pure wax candle, and how the bees make it.

Then the hands on practical session we all came for, making a moulded candle with poured wax, rolled candles using foundation, and the need for the correct sizing of wicks.

After a delightful ploughman's lunch prepared by Celia it was back to making candles, this time dipped, slabbed and stamped candles. The cleaning of wax from its raw state transforming it into the beautiful yellow



wax that we all fight over. Later we covered the selling and merchandising of wax candles with all the safety requirements that are now required!

As Celia said you "keep your wax, you clean it and then make the most of it" Nothing is wasted, so if you don't want your wax or know what to do with it, I know of three people who would love to bolster their supplies!

All in, we had a great day and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part.

Education - Tuition details

- 1 For absolute beginners Heather is inviting you so that particular bee keeping subjects can be discussed/ taught. See the list on the web site. No charge
 - 2 For beginners with a little experience, Heather will be inviting anyone who wishes to attend to go through an open hive and discuss. No charge. No date as yet, weather dependent. Email Heather if you wish to be notified.
 - 3 April 18th Amanda and Heather are holding a full, more intensive Tuition day, 9-5pm, for people with no bees, or very new to the craft. £50 with £10 discount to B&L members. Please email Heather re this day as it is filling and numbers will be limited.
 - 4 Anyone else wishing to go for the Basic assessment, let Heather know. 7 so far... Well done B&L. All meetings held at Newick
- Contact Heather on email heathermcniven@btinternet.com

Swarm Swarm Swarm

If you are looking to have a swarm this year you need to be on the swarm list. All you have to do is contact Sue Taylor and let her know. Email sue.geoff.t@hotmail.co.uk.

Divisional Diary 2015

Indoor meetings 7.15 for 7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday, (October to March) at St. Thomas's church hall, Lewes unless otherwise stated. Members are invited to arrive early and assist in putting out chairs. Admittance £1 which will include tea/coffee, cake/biscuits Non-members are welcome.

Programme

Indoor meetings

October 15th – Bee behaviour and colony loss – Norman Carrick

November 19th – Practical beekeeping advice – Tom Moore

December 17th – A quiz evening with Amanda Millar - a change from our schedule

January 21st – AGM – Bumblebees and pollination – Dr Nikki Gammans

February 24th (*NB Tuesday*) – Can we be the generation to save Britain's bees?

Paul de Zylva

March 18th – Is Natural always Nice?– Pam Hunter

Out apiary meetings

April 19th–Stanmer 1.30 Beginners 2pm General

The out apiary programme for the rest of summer will be pulished here next month

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 our newsletter

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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