

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter August 2015

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

Next meeting - Saturday 15th August-Out apiary, Barcombe

Usual start time of 1.30pm beginners and 2.00pm general. Heather McNiven will be leading the meeting. Don't forget your cup/mug and something to eat.

Last meeting - July 12th July - Out apiary, Stanmer

This meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. Members should note that out apiary meetings do not take place if the weather is unsuitable.



Near perfect swarm?

Amanda sent this picture of an enormous beautiful A-shaped swarm collected in Lindfield. I don't know who claimed this wonder but Amanda regrets it wasn't her. I suspect it would be too big for a nuc. How thoughtful of the bees to arrange things at an easy level!

Amanda advises

I saw the first water balsam pollen on bees on 20th July, the same date as 2013, unfortunately I did not record when I first saw it last year. I have also been bothered by wasps already and will put my wasp traps up and will consider putting my reduced entrances back in to minimise robbing. I was thinking things were early this season but perhaps not, although I have a feeling the flow is on the decline as I write this (20th July) and I will finish taking any finished honey off by the end of the first week in August. I have been moving round the frames so the finished honey can be removed leaving them to keep any unfinished frames and stores they collect from now on for themselves. If that means too many supers, I will spin off uncapped honey and feed it back to the colonies it came from. It is too much effort trying to reduce the moisture content myself; I will leave it to the bees. Research indicates they winter better on honey, which has more in it than just sugars. The workers, which do not normally eat pollen, may get their small protein requirement from the pollen in the honey. In early July I was able to take a bit of honey off, which was much darker than I normally get, and very low moisture content, and yet a week later a super produced really pale honey and I turned some of the frames into beautiful cut comb with pure white cappings. I wonder what they were visiting between one week and the next.

I normally winter my productive colonies on a brood and a super and with a bit of luck this year I shall not have to feed them much if this fine weather continues. You can remove the queen excluder now. I have not used queen excluders this year and most of the colonies have obligingly moved up one box leaving the old comb to be removed and recycled. I have tried giving them a brood box of foundation to draw and put honey in but they seem reluctant to draw out a full box. Perhaps I shall try putting them on immediately after taking off the supers as they may be more inclined to draw it out then. Another good reason to leave them an extra box is that although the brood is declining the population of adults can still be quite large and may not fit into a single brood box. I am pretty sure some of my colonies will not fit!

Having taken off the honey the next important job is to treat for varroa. But first give them a health check. Is the queen there and laying good-looking brood; any sign of disease? Now is the time that some colonies and this year's swarms supersede old queens, so you may find these cells. Are the stores OK or at least enough to last the 5 to 6 weeks of varroa treatment? When applying thymol based treatments watch the temperature; if it is more than about 24 degrees C, the smell can make the bees bad tempered and may drive them out of the hive. If too cold (below 15 degrees C during the day) it

may not be so effective, so check the long range forecast which may give a slight clue as to the forthcoming weather and the optimum timing of the treatment. It is generally recommended you do not feed at the same time as treating as it reduces its effectiveness. Having

made sure they are queenright and have sufficient stores to last the treatment (feed if insufficient) I generally leave them undisturbed during the treatment. They are unlikely to swarm now and are usually grumpy and bothered by wasps. If you find signs of common diseases do not be tempted to merge small colonies, it is too late to shook swarm etc but requeening might help, removing the worst frames, and giving a herbal tonic in their feed might also help. If bad, rescue any honey and cull them.

Nuclei and late swarms will need special treatment, some are slower to store the necessary stores and will also need a reduced amount of Apiguard or whatever you choose to use. Small colonies which have either had a long brood break such as with nucs or swarms or have small amounts of brood, should not have huge numbers of varroa and after monitoring by using the insert in for a week or a dusting with icing sugar, I will probably use icing sugar as treatment rather than half a tray of Apiguard (see B&L Website information sheets).

Before using Apiguard plan to have your insert in for a week to assess the mite levels of all your colonies. This will give you an idea which colonies are most resistant to the mites and ones you should breed from next year and those you should re queen. It is not entirely straightforward though as those which had most brood are likely to have the most mites and those which had brood breaks in the summer for one reason or another would be expected to have lower numbers so you need to take this into account. Several authorities advocate no treatment at all, even though this would lead to severe losses for a few years. However, for as long as there are some feral colonies, or neglectful bee keepers near me which cause late mite invasion, my bees would not survive if I followed that course of action, but I will keep culling or requeening any bad ones and breeding from the best. I think - I hope - I am beginning to see a reduction in varroa related problems, but this maybe because I try not to let the varroa get to a level at which problems are seen. I hope you have a good harvest this year.



Honey jars

Our division is buying a quantity of 1lb honey jars to be sold to members for £20 a box of 72 jars with lids. These will be available for collection from the

Stanmer out apiary. Contact Pat Clowser (see Officer panel back page) to order and for further details. A limited number of 1/2lb jars are also available.

Beekeepers not wanted - Mary King

Whilst in holiday mood and idly watching honey bees forage for nectar and pollen on unidentifiable (to me) plants on the coast of Southern Tenerife - I began to wonder about bee-keeping in Tenerife. So, instead of worrying about how my bees were coping with the heatwave in the UK, I started to do a bit of 'Googling', as one does! Safe in the shade of a parasol and with a glass of wine to hand, I discovered the following:

There are some 500 beekeepers on Tenerife, an island considerably smaller than the UK. Its land mass being 2,034 square kilometres compared with the UK which has 243,610 sq kms. From recent statistics Tenerife has 10,000 hives and 150,000 kgs honey produced per annum. But despite this golden crop, there is a problem as bee-keepers are not wanted in a certain area of the island based on the results of a 15 year study, done by Alfredo Valido and team from the Spanish Research Council.

The area in question is the National Park around Mount Tiende (extinct volcano) which supports a particular habitat on the scree slopes. In recent times it has become the norm for many Tenerife bee-keepers to move their hives into this ecologically sensitive area so they can maximise their honey crop. In Spring some 3,000 hives are moved into the Park increasing the number of pollinators by 100 million and all have to compete for the same flora. As well as this man made competition, there is another factor to be taken into account as *Apis Mellifera* is not regarded as a particularly efficient pollinator for certain Tenerife native floral species. It is the Red Tajinaste that is most affected, with its large flowering spike that can reach over 2 metres. It has been found that the effects of the poor pollination results in reduced seed production and suppressed vigour of the plant in the long term. Ironically it is the Red Tajinaste honey, along with the Tiende broom honey, that the bee-keepers seek. This is principally due to its commercial value because of its flavour and consistency. Like the UK, the Tenerife bee-keepers do have to abide by strict regulations controlling the labelling and source of these specialist honeys.

It is not only the flora that is suffering from the introduction of the honey bees, it is also the native pollinators such as the native Canarian black bee, birds and even lizards. They have to compete with the



Tajinaste Flowers Photo: walkingtenerife

thousands of industrious *Apis Mellifera* for the same nectar and pollen sources. This has resulted in a decline in the population of native pollinators, which is deemed another sign of the imbalance in the ecosystem.

So this study unearthed two significant problems in this fragile ecosystem as a direct result of the labours of our friend the honey bee. As a consequence of the research, Valido and team have emphatically stated that there must be a ban on all the seasonal placing of *Apis Mellifera* hives on Mount Tiende, in an attempt to redress the imbalance. This clearly will have a significant impact on the Tenerife bee-keepers, as it will reduce the quantity of honey produced, which will in turn affect the apiarist's income. Valido's work was published in 2014, but with the limited Wifi access I had at the time, I could not find out whether the Tenerife bee-keepers have responded to this call.

However, this study in Tenerife does beg the question as to whether areas of multiple hives in the UK imbalances a natural micro environment.....something to ponder over another glass of wine perhaps?

References:

- 1 Alberto, 3 February 2015, Tajinaste honey and pollinator crisis, Available: mieladictos.com
- 2 Valido A et al, 2014, Impact of the introduced honey bees on Tiede National Park (Tenerife, Canary Islands), Abstract available: cabdirect.org

For sale

Pre loved Thomas 3 frame extractor. Suitable for up to 5 hives, this little machine is a gem. Hand operated with an integral 50kg settling tank. It will hold 3 shallow frames of any size tangentially. Approx. 400mm diameter, 870mm high. Offers £200 (Similar machine in Thorne's Catalog £720)

Please contact Ian White 01273 48797 / 07875 663665 or email: ianda.pinehill@yahoo.co.uk

Don't panic, more swarm tales

Wherever bees are just collect, featuring special equipment

Helena Lewis and a slightly more unusual way to collect a swarm

"The swarm was about 20' up on end of a branch so the Lansing College maintenance staff had a novel way of getting me up to reach it! I needed a qualified cherry picker driver and had to be harnessed in (health & safety of course)".



A call came to me from a gentleman who was having some work done to the exterior of his house. A scaffolder had been stung by a bee from a colony which had existed for some time under a balcony. Not wishing to kill the bees he had called me. From

previous experience I knew that Heather McNiven was the right person to pass this on to. The photos show how awkward this recovery was. Attached to the newsletter is a video of Heather doing her housework, take a look!



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– managing the honey flow and supering, swarm aftercare

June 28 Microscopy workshop – at Bob Curtis’s

July 12 Stanmer

August 15 Barcombe

September 6 Grassroots – Winter preparation

September 13 BBQ at Heather McNiven’s

Dates for your diary

June 11-13 South of England Show

July 5 Brighton Cafe Scientifique. qv P2 for details

October 29-31 National Honey Show, St Georges College, Weybridge

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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Pat Clowser, Bob Curtis

Education coordinator

Heather McNiven

National Honey Show Representative

Vacant

Committee Members

Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather McNiven, Mary King

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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