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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER: January 2014<http://www.pyrford.com/weybridgebees> |

*Editorial*

So, here we are at the end of another disappointing year that started with a dreadful spring. But the glass is half full, with many of us getting a good, or at least a reasonable summer harvest. There is another Hive Full goodie for Weybridge on p. 6. And we all know that the coming year will be absolutely marvellous in all (or most) respects (at least beewise). A final word about the high mite drops I mentioned last month, when, for no particular reason, I did a final mite count before applying netting to protect against woodpeckers. The hives had been treated in autumn, but were given a full 3-application *Hive Clean* treatment in December, after I found high counts. During this period of 3 weeks, the total mite drop in one colony (a small nucleus colony) was a horrifying 1693 mites! The average drop over 3 days immediately before the treatment was 7 mites/day. You will understand my alarm. Thankfully the daily drop on completion of treatment was 1½ (even this is not wonderful under the circumstances). Hopefully there were not too many mites left in the colony. I have given fuller details on this and 3 other hives on p. 4.

Updates to the December issue

As indicated in the last newsletter, Michael Main will take over treasurer duties from Sandra Rickwood for our Division from January 1st. Sandra has been our Treasurer for many years, and we thank her for looking after our finances for that long period. We also have a new Regional Bee Inspector, Mr Julian Parker. I am sure that you all join me in wishing Julian well in his new post. Contact details for both Michael and Julian will be found on the last page of the newletter, and an email concerning the new RBI follows this entry.

**New Regional Bee Inspector for our area**

*We have received the following email from Alan Byham:*

As my last email to you as RBI, I have pleasure in telling you that Julian Parker was successful at the recent interviews and will be taking over as RBI for the South East region in the New Year. He is currently a Seasonal Bee Inspector working in the Southern Region, so has plenty of experience of the work and I’m sure will be a very good RBI.  You can contact him on julian.parker@fera.gsi.gov.uk 07775 119469.

Regards

Alan Byham

Alan concludes his South East Regional Annual Report (see p. 6) with the following:

‘This will be the last newsletter that I write as RBI for the SE region, as I am retiring at the end of December. I have been working as an inspector in the SE since 1999 and have very much enjoyed the experience. One of the best aspects has been meeting beekeepers from all over the region with a vast range of ideas. It makes you think carefully about keeping bees and how best to manage your colonies.’

*It came as a surprise to hear the news from Alan so suddenly at the National Honey Show in October. He has become known as a highly respected beekeeper, friend and advisor. I have had the great pleasure of working with him on his visits to local beekeepers and introducing his talks on bee diseases on a number of occasions, when I have always learned something new at each of these presentations. Alan will be greatly missed. We wish him well in his retirement to Wales. – Ed.*

**Film, ‘More than Honey’. Winter Meeting, Friday 24th January, 7.30 pm**

**St Peter’s Church Hall, Burwood Road, Hersham, KT12 4AA**

It is with great relief that I can now confirm that, as previously intimated, this film will definitely be shown at the meeting – and shown legally! It has taken long strings of phone calls and emails to obtain permission to hold a public performance, even though I explained the showing was advertised only within the membership, and that there would be no entry fee. Permission came on Christmas Eve – I think I’d eventually worn them down because the final email simply read:

“I'm in a Christmassy mood, I am happy for this to proceed without any licence fee.” This from the Business Administration Manager of an organisation to which my request had been passed (via about 5 other people, one of whom had asked for $260).

Please make an effort to come and see this beautiful film. It is promoted by Friends of the Earth, and has a message of caring for bees that is gently put across visually, not forcibly thrust at you. The photography is spectacular and the narrator is John Hurt, of Dr Who fame.

Our thanks go to Sally Abraham, who purchased the DVD and is lending it to us for the evening.

See you there – maybe with non-beekeeping family and friends; do invite them. Marion C.

**Surrey BKA Training Course, Adult Bee Diseases, Wednesday 12th March**

This course has been designed and will be run by Bob Maurer, SBKA Chairman, and author of a recent book, *Practical Microscopy for Beekeepers*. It will be run twice on the same day, to give participants a choice of time; the attached flyers give full details.

The course will cover the diagnosis of Nosema and Acarine disease.

***Nosema*** Since Fumidil B (fumagillin) has been withdrawn for use on bees in this country, many beekeepers are questioning the point of looking for Nosema in their colonies, but the fact that there is no approved chemical control should not deter us from checking. There are some products on the market which are claimed to treat Nosema, but the results are inconsistent. A spring check is especially valuable as heavily infested colonies can be moved onto new comb, a technique that has been shown to be very successful in reducing the level of infestation, as many of the organisms are present in the old comb.

**Acarine mite disease** Similarly, checking for acarine (tracheal) mites is no longer considered important by many, as the chemical treaments for varroa mites have also reduced the numbers of these mites. However, with the current moves towards essential oils and organic acids rather than insecticide treatment for varroa, it is highly likely that acarine mites will again become a problem for the bees.

It is proposed that each Division sends 2 members to one of these courses, which, in addition to diagnosis, will cover suggested ways of setting up local bee disease clinics to which members can bring bee samples. We have one volunteer from Weybridge, but need another: will it be you??? Please let Sandra or me know if you are interested.

Marion C. (Education Co-ordinator, *pro tem*)

**A warning about possible bee or honey thieves in the Ashford area**

We had a phone call from Vic Halliday reporting his concern about visits to his house by ‘foreign men’ (one of who came several times) enquiring where he kept his bees. The visits were in response to the ‘Honey for Sale’ sign outside his house. He has the feeling that the men were potential bee or honey rustlers. On one occasion he called the police to come and deal with them. His concern was such that he asked me to pass it on as a warning to our members. Vic also mentioned that he still has some equipment for sale; please contact him on 07973 243187 if you are interested.

*Thanks for the warning, Vic. – Ed.*

*By coincidence, there is a report in today’s (31st December) issue of the* ***i*** *newspaper**of bee rustlers operating in the Cardiff area earlier this year, and in Norwich just before Christmas.*

**Beehive site available in Esher**

We have had another kind offer from a lady who would like a beekeeper to keep bees in her garden. Her name is Mary West and her address is 101 Ember Lane, Esher. Phone 0208 398 5891. Please contact her directly if you are interested.

**Response to the request (last month) for feedback on MAQS Beehive Strips for Varroa**

*Robert Crosley sent in the following:*

…I had seen deformed wings on many of the bees. I was dusting with icing sugar but it seemed like a losing battle… I treated (with MAQS) in May and the mite drop in the first 24 hours was too many to count. Over the next few days the mite count dropped off. I removed the strips after 7 days. The colony picked up and I was able to take a nuc. Throughout the rest of the summer mite drop was very low, with some weeks none seen. In September I treated the colonies again and had 6 mites counted in 4 days. On November 30th I checked and had no mite drop in 7 days and will keep checking.

*Thank you, Robert, for letting us have your experience of this product. You have certainly shown it to be very effective in controlling varroa. – Ed.*

**Some more findings and thoughts on MAQS**

We purchased a bucket of MAQS intending to treat our colonies with it last September, but on reading the instructions, we were troubled by the following:

* apply to a full-sized colony of bees covering a minimum of 6 brood frames *(is this sealed brood?)*
* hive entrance must be full width and needs to be fully open, entrance reducers must be removed to prevent excessive damage to colonies *(but autumn, the most frequent time of application, is when the entrances must be reduced to prevent robbing)*
* do not use for treatment of smaller colonies than those listed in these instructions *(can the dose not be reduced pro rata for nuclei or small colonies?)*
* formic acid *(the active ingredient)*… may, within one day of application, result in queen rejection

Marion then contacted the manufacter’s help line and found herself speaking to an advisor in Germany, from whom she learned:

* they could not comment on whether partially open mesh floors would allow for the use of partly blocked entrances as they have no experience of mesh floors *(this came as a great surprise)*
* you must expect to lose bees when using MAQS, typically 2-3 cupfuls *(could include the queen)*

Another (very long) paper on the internet reported that about 20% of queens are lost when using MAQS.

In view of the doubts raised above, I decided to postpone using MAQS until the points could be clarified, either from more information or from others’ experience of the material. It may well be that the queens are lost only when they are not much good anyway; the same could well apply to the “cupfuls of bees”. It is pretty clear that MAQS are very effective at killing the mites; I feel that they will be a very useful part of our armoury against varroa but need to be used with more caution than many other products: for example perhaps we need to find the best time to use MAQS, eg in the spring. Do continue to send in your own thoughts, findings and personal experiences.

Marion and Geoff Cooper

**The Sustainable Apiary - a talk at the NHS by Mike Palmer**

A film of Mike Palmer's talk, recorded at the National Honey Show, can be found here:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nznzp...ature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nznzpiWEI8A&feature=youtu.be)

Anne Miller

*This was an excellent lecture and well worth finding the time to watch.*

*See also paragraph 2 of the final article on p. 6 for details of recordings of other lectures at the NHS. – Ed.*

**Closing dates for applying for BBKA exams**

The attachment, from Celia Perry, gives information on BBKA Examinations in 2014.

Sandra Rickwood

**High varroa mite populations in some of my colonies this winter (see editorial)**

This report covers 4 of my hives C, D, E, and F, all of which had been treated in autumn.

The top table shows the daily natural mite drops measured over 3 days, 1st-3rd December 2013.

The lower table shows the mite drop on the days indicated and the total mite drop for the treatment period.

 Mite drop per day in Hive

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 C D E F

 Daily mite drop

 before treatment 11 9 7 13

(1st-3rd December 2013)

Daily mite drop after applying

Hive Clean (3 applications, C D E F

(approx. weekly)

1st application day 1 117 311 347 170

 day 8 14 5 27 13

2nd application day 1 229 52 113 124

 day 10 7 1 5 6

3rd application day 1 17 7 11 14 day 9 2 ½ 1½ 1

Total mite drop 1199 935 1693 1236

during treatment

In the colonies above, assuming that the Hive Clean has an efficiency of 80%, based on the manufacturers information, (ie it knocks down 80% of the mites in the colony) the mite population of these colonies before treament would have been about 1500 (C), 1170 (D), 2120 (E), and 1550 (F). Considering that C and E are fairly small nucleus colonies, probably with at the most 5000 bees, these are extremely high numbers of mites, ie a rough average of 1 mite for every 2 – 5 bees. It will be interesting to see the state of these colonies in the spring. As they say, “Watch this space.”

I intend to remove the trays and replace them after a few days, then check the mite count again. It has been suggested that mites can crawl back up into the hive if they are not killed when dropping onto the tray. This test may provide an indication of whether or not this is true.

I also hope to give one more Hive Clean treatment to one colony to see if significant numbers of mites are again knocked down during the first day. I certainly do not go along with the principle of departing from the manufacturer’s instructions, but it will be interesting to treat just one colony this way.

I would be glad to hear from any of you who have also measured mite drops in this very mild winter (November onwards). I do not normally do this after my main autumn treatment. Perhaps we are on to something.

One thing the exercise has shown: Hive Clean certainly knocks down the mites (but I wonder if it also, in the long term, causes overall damage to the bees– a question which can well be asked of all of our hive treatments – despite assurances such as ‘harmless to bees’ or ‘contains only natural ingredients’).

Geoff Cooper

**Influence, get involved and share your experience**

This is to draw your attention to the article under the above title on page 32 of the January 2014 edition of *BBKA News.* It would be good if Weybridge was represented at these sessions.

**West Sussex Beekeepers Association Annual Convention, Saturday 22nd February**

I attach for your information details of our Annual Convention in February which may be of interest to your members. Speakers: Graham Royle, Bob Smith, David Rudland, Ben Jones, Tom Moore, and Celia Rudland. Full details are available on our website [www.bbka.org.uk/local/westsussex/convention/index.shtml](http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/westsussex/convention/index.shtml)

We look forward to welcoming as many of your members as possible to the Lodge Hill Centre in Pulborough.

Graham Sec WSBKA

**Varroa control in New Zealand**

*Peter Webb has sent us a copy of the following, which he recently received from a professional apiarist contact in New Zealand.*

This is their personal view of the treatment situation there:

The common treatments licensed and in use here are Apistan, Bayvarol, Apivar (Amitraz), and up and coming oxalic acid. Mite-Away-Quick-Strips (formic) might be registered shortly. Apivar is very effective, (generally used eight to ten weeks) and the residue thought to be more benign. Some localised resistance to the synthetic pyrethroids has been found, hence the growing interest in oxalic. A few are trying thymol (mainly down to cost). Most treat twice, spring and autumn, and alternate between Bayvarol and Apivar.

Langstroth is the only hive in use (if we discount the odd TBH/Warre), most commercials using full depth, a few 3/4 depth. Wintering on two deeps, although many in a single full depth. The winter, depending on location, can be too mild to bring in a brood break (a challenge for oxalic), or it can be quite snowy, but it's usually relatively short. Honey flows tend to be multiple, short duration, so it can be tricky fitting treatments in.  *Thank you, Peter, for this – Ed.*

**A large population of *Varroa*-free Caucasian bees**

A 32-hectare botanic garden, in the least likely place, straddling the intersection of two motorways in the Camili region of Artvin, Turkey, is being made as part of a major development. It is the brainchild of Turkish industrialist and philanthropist Ali Nihat Gokyigit. A keystone species in the programme is the Caucasian bee (*Apis mellifera caucasica)*,a crevice-nesting subspecies of the western honey bee found primarily in Georgia and Northern Turkey. Believed to be locally extinct, colonies were rediscovered after a nine-month search and, in common with the unique genetics of many of the plant species in the area, was found to be genetically ‘pure’. The Caucasian bee is considered to be one of the most docile bees and is highly productive, making very high quality honey. Camili’s remoteness had ensured that the bees had never come into contact with *Varroa destructor*. Although there is little hope that the Camili bees are resistant to *Varroa*, there are benefits to the introduction of a strong gene pool into the wider beekeeping world. A breeding programme has been put into place to raise tens of thousands of queen Caucasian bees from the Camili colony to help generate income for the region and as a wider apiculture rehabilitation programme for Turkey.

*Selected from an article in the Financial Times dated 24th August 2013. Thanks to Michael Gotts, a long standing ornithologist friend in Scotland, who kindly sent it to us.*

*The article describes much more ecological work than only that with the bees in this part of Turkey, all under the influence of the industrialist named. It’s very heartening to read of the generosity and ecological awareness of* Ali Nihat Gokyigit*, contrasting so dramatically with some of the other depressing industrial activities on the planet, driven by people intent only on lining their pockets. – Ed.*

**A honey-collecting wasp**

I was interested to read this article in Wikipedia.  I never knew that there was a wasp that collected honey!  I thought it may be interesting for the Newsletter. See attachment, labelled Brachygastra.

Michael Main

 *Thank you for this, Michael. –Ed.*

**Another reason for winter losses?**

Is it possible that the increased hive ventilation that results from the use of mesh floors upsets the water balance in a hive? Honey (sometimes crystallised) is often found, untouched, in collapsed colonies. It is not always possible for bees to leave the hive to find a water supply in winter, so could it be that bees die because they are unable to make use of this honey store as there is a lack of the condensation that was always present in hives on solid floors?

Marion C.

**Sticky situation for backyard beekeepers**

It is said to be the perfect place for backyard beekeeping but, as the news item states, ‘residents in Los Angeles are not allowed to harvest honey’. A group of bee advocates have been lobbying the city’s council to allow them to keep bees. The council is due to decide in January whether to legalise beekeeping.

*From an article in a December issue of i* *newspaper.*

*A good reminder to us all of the importance of ensuring that our ‘backyard’ bees are civilised? – Ed.*

South East Region Annual Report

This 8-page report by Alan Byham gives a report of various aspects of the the 2013 season, lists members of the SE team and the areas in which they work, gives foulbrood statics, details queen imports, updates the Asian Hornet situation and reminds us to report any suspect sightings of this or indeed any exotic pest via the Alert System: alert\_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk

The full report is attached.

*See also Alan’s message on p 1.*

Good news (for Weybridge members) about the National Honey Show

The latest news is as follows:

1)      As the planned building work has been postponed indefinitely, we’re back at St Georges College Weybridge for 2014.  Half term is a little later next year so the dates are Thursday 30th October to Saturday 1st November 2014. Judging takes place Thursday morning, the show officially opens at 2pm on Thursday, and the exhibition opens when judging finishes. We plan to continue the Thursday morning lectures, before the official opening and the trade hall will open at 12 noon on Thursday.

2)      This year, partly funded by the National Honey Show, and partly with National Lottery Funding, we were able to produce top quality videos of some of the lectures.  The first two of these, ‘The Sustainable Apiary’ by Mike Palmer, and ‘Origins and Evolutionary History of the Honey Bee’ by Robert Paxton  are now available to view on YouTube:   <http://youtu.be/nznzpiWEI8A>  and  <http://youtu.be/Wtm8URk-V9A>  respectively.  We would like to thank our lecture sponsors and all who took part in this project.  We hope it will mitigate the disappointment of all who were not able to be in two places at once during the show, giving you a chance to catch up at leisure.  Details of further lectures available to watch will be listed as they go live, on the National Honey Show Website [http://www.honeyshow.co.uk](http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/) under the ‘Education’ tab. It would be brilliant to be able to continue offering videos of our lectures in the future, so do contact us with all ideas for future sponsorship.

3) We have a new Facebook page so do visit from time to time to see the latest news. <https://www.facebook.com/nationalhoneyshow>.

Fiona and Helen (NHS Publicity)

*It is great (at least for our members) to hear that after the rumours of almost certain removal of the NHS to some far off place, we are to continue with the privilege of having it in Weybridge. It wasn’t such a bad year for Weybridge beekeepers after all! – Ed.*

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| **Dates for your diary** |
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| Tuesday | 14th January | 7.30 - 9.30pm | Weybridge Division Beginners’ Course – Session 1 | Nov. p. 4 |
| Saturday | 18th January | 10.00am - 3.45pm | Surrey BKA, General Husbandry | Flyer attached to Nov. letter |
| Friday | 24th January | 7.30pm | Winter Meeting, Film ‘More than Honey’ | p. 2 |
| Saturday | 25th January | 10.00am - 3.00pm | Surrey BKA, Mead making | Flyer attached to Nov. letter |
| Saturday | 15th February | All day | SBKA Surrey Bee Day, Ewell | Details later |
| Saturday | 22nd February | 10.30am – 4.30 pm | West Sussex BKA Convention, Pulborough | p. 5 |
| Friday  | 28th February | 7.30pm  | Winter meeting, Short Presentations by members | Details later |
| Saturday | 8th March | All day | Beekeeping Course, Pulborough | Nov. p. 3 |
| Tuesday | 11th March | 7.30 - 9.30pm | Winter Meeting, David Rudland, Bee Diseases | Details later |
| Wednesday | 12th March | 12.30 & 5pm | Adult Bee Diseases Training Course | p. 2 |
| Wednesday | 2nd April | 7.30pm | Winter Meeting, Jonah Chitolie, Pollen and bee nutrition | Details later |
| Thursday-Saturday | October 30th – November 1st | 3 days | National Honey Show, Weybridge | p. 6 |

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