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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISIONNEWSLETTER: February 2014 <http://www.pyrford.com/weybridgebees> |

*Editorial*

I came across the following note by Andrew Halstead (now our Chairman, but Editor at the time) in the Weybridge Newsletter dated February 1991:

“I should like to thank those who have contributed to the newsletter, particularly Carol Charlesworth, Rob Chisholm, Albert Golder, Derek Haig, Peter Hanson, Peter Hartt, John Hudson, Angela Hume, George Noblett, Les Gray, Sandra Rickwood, Andrew Romaine, Andrew Wooders and anyone else I have overlooked. . . .” Some of these are now household names and their remembrance will bring happy memories to the present members who know or knew them, but what Andrew wrote next will, I suspect be ever current to all newsletter editors into the infinite future. . . (Editors) “will find the job much easier if all members will make a resolution to contribute items for the newsletter. Successes, failures, observations on bee behaviour, beekeeping, items pirated from other publications, news of forthcoming events, equipment and bees for sale all go to make the newsletter informative and interesting to the readership. Everyone should be able to provide something for the newsletter at least once a year.” The present editor could have written that second section, word for word. Indeed, “…there is no new thing under the sun”, but hopefully, the newsletters are not “all vanity”, (*quotes from the* *Book of Ecclesiastes*). I should like to thank all those who have contributed in the past and encourage them, and others to send in more.

Surrey Bee Day, February 15th

The times were inadvertently omitted from the flyer that has been circulated. Please note the following:

Registration from 9.30am; Start 10am; Finish 4.30-5pm. See you there.

Winter Meeting, Friday 28th February, 7.30 pm

At our next meeting, in St Peter’s Church Hall, Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA, there will be four presentations, all by our own members:

Paul Hildersley – The Swarm

Tim Hutchinson – ‘An alternative to Ted Hooper and the bread bin…!’

Edwina Wardle – Bees behind Bars

Lou Gilpin – Robbers

There may be a short fifth presentation, if time permits.

Do come – to learn, to be entertained (you will be) and to support the presenters and the committee.

Our final Winter Meeting, on Wednesday, April 2nd (hopefully spring by then) will be a talk on Bee Nutrition by another of our members, Jonah Chitolie. He is contributing a series of 3 articles to Beecraft, the first being in the current (February) issue, page 15 – do read it.

Marion C.

**Teaching Apiary Tidy-up, Saturday 1st March, 10am - noon**

Volunteers are needed to tidy up the apiary. Tasks include gardening, general tidying, tidying up sheds after winter rains and some equipment to be cleaned - not much.

There are frames that need to be cleaned in boiling soda if anyone has some time - a large saucepan is available. Does anyone have a Burco boiler?

Please let me know if you can help, Thank you. Sandra 01932 244326

**Report of the showing of the film “More than Honey”, Winter Meeting, January 24th**

It was very encouraging to welcome to this event an audience of 40, especially as it included several young people. The film can be enjoyed at different levels. It certainly has a message, presented by photography which “speaks” the message against a very laid back, informative and well presented commentary. The photography is beautiful and demonstrates the very high level of expertise of its makers. For example, I wonder how many have managed to photograph a cloud of drones pursuing and mating with a virgin queen? A poignant section of the film describes the “superorganism” aspect of a colony, mentioning the specific work of every bee, depending on its age. It then immediately cuts to a scene showing the rough handling of multiple colonies in a commercial beekeeping operation in the USA. During this sequence you could have heard the proverbial pin drop in the audience.

The retiring collection of over £60 will be sent to the sponsors of the film, Friends of the Earth. Sally Abrahams (who provided the DVD) is willing to lend it to anyone who was not able to see the film, or you could consider buying your own copy, as several who saw the film intend to do. The film has its own website: http://www.morethanhoney.co.uk/ where there are details of how to buy the DVD (£9.95 from Amazon, by the way) or watch it online.

Geoff C.

**Five-frame nucleus colonies of bees for sale**

One of our members, Tim Hutchinson (who is a bee farmer), is able to supply five-frame nucs of bees headed by his own locally produced queens. Those available around June 2014 will be £170, and overwintered nucs will be available in spring 2015 at £190. It would be advisable (as always) to place orders for these soon in order to avoid being too late. If nearer the delivery date you find that you no longer need the nuc you have ordered, this is no problem to Tim as he would then use it in his own apiaries. Tim is also able to supply local mated queens. Contact him on 07758 739668. [info@beehappyproducts.co.uk](mailto:info@beehappyproducts.co.uk)

**Small (circular) table saw for sale**

£45. Contact Tim Hutchinson for details. 07758 739668. [info@beehappyproducts.co.uk](mailto:info@beehappyproducts.co.uk)

**Bee equipment – almost new – for sale**

Don Whyte, a student on one of our recent courses, has had to give up beekeeping because of an allergic reaction. He has equipment to sell. Please see attachment for details.

**Beekeeping equipment. Epsom Bee Keepers, Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF**

See attachment for full details of a special one-day sale on 29th March. From then until the end of September, the shop will be open every Saturday afternoon, from 3-5pm. New members in particular should be aware that the Epsom beekeepers run this shop, which sells a wide range of items from queen cages to complete hives.

**BBKA Annual Spring Convention at Harper Adams University 4, 5, 6 April**

We have just received notice of this excellent annual event. Full details are on the attachment.

**Some more experience of MAQS**

On 5 Jan 2014, Linda Pakuls wrote:

I treated 5 hives (with MAQS strips) in September for 1 week only and all varroa checks so far have been less than 1. **All queens were present at the last inspection towards the end of September**. I actually had a lot of bee loss, but I believe that was down to wasps which were attacking my hives for over 2 months (Aug and Sept) despite collecting a small mountain in wasp traps, so I didn't attribute those dead bees to MAQs.

I was very happy with the use of the strips. The treatment only took 1 week and was very easy to use. I will let you know how the varroa counts go in the spring, but I am happy to repeat then if I need to. I'd also like to know how effective a half treatment would be, especially for smaller colonies or nucs. I'd like to write an article on it for the newsletter.

*Thanks for this report, Linda. Do send in your article when it is ready. – Ed.*

**Some Guidance and information on MAQS (Varroa treatment strips)**

Tony Kirkby of the Guildford Division reports that one or two of their members had some problems, but (they) confessed that they never read any instructions; (he commented that you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink). – I hope that all of our members read instructions, especially those relating to chemical hive treatments. (Regarding the misuse of chemicals, Marion once heard a representative on the Bayer stand at a show say that farmers are bad enough, but beekeepers are in a class of their own).

Tony also sent us the following very helpful article that he had published in the Guildford newsletter:

The new (for Europe) MAQS varroa  treatment is an improved and simplified version of Mite-Away which was available in Canada some years ago. The active agent is formic acid, which has been applied for years but is dangerous and difficult to apply.

MAQS has been in wide use in North America for 3 years, so there is a lot of experience to guide us.

*Advantages*

These are considerable:

Does not contaminate either wax or honey, and can be legally used when supers are on.

Kills varroa in capped cells, unlike oxalic acid.

Is simple to apply, and treatment only lasts for 7 days.

Is biodegradable - no disposal problems.

All this means that treatment can be applied any time the bees are active. It should not be used in winter. It is particularly useful if varroa numbers become excessive by June or July. Many commercial beekeepers apply in April and July, with no other treatment.

*Disadvantages*

There may be some brood loss in the first 2 days of application, but this is quickly made up. Varroa infested larvae are lost anyway.

There is some bee mortality.

There have been reports of some loss of 2-year queens, though this does not seem to be common, they may have been due to be replaced anyway, and supercedure proceeds as normal.

It should be noted that all these losses were reported after summer application in California with temperatures over 32ºC. At lower temperatures these effects are much reduced and are not regarded as important. The cost is about £5.50 per hive.

*Application*

**Sufficient but not excessive ventilation is very important. Solid floors should have full-width entrances of more than 1.5 cm height. Mesh floors should have the tray in place but with a full-width entrance as above. An open mesh floor will reduce effectiveness after day 2.**

**In California in summer, with temperatures of 30ºC+, it is recommended to offset the upper broodbox or super by 2 inches to increase ventilation. This will not be much of a problem for us, but it does indicate the importance of adequate but not excessive ventilation.** (my highlighting - Ed.)

It is recommended that a super should be in place to give the bees more room - with or without an excluder. This is most important with a single brood box hive.

Application below 25ºC will greatly reduce any side effects, but the temperature should certainly not be less than the lower recommended limit of 10ºC - I would recommend a lower limit of 15ºC.

There is much disagreement about “safe” levels of varroa. I feel that a mortality of 4/day early in the season when there is much drone brood requires action of some sort, otherwise levels will be at danger point before the honey flow ends. At least with MAQS this is now less of a problem, but regular monitoring is still needed.

*Many of you will know that Tony has done a great deal of work over many years on the recording of mites - every day - in his own hives, probably more consistently that anyone else in Surrey (or even the UK?).*

**So what are we to make of MAQS?**

Firstly, do please continue to let me have reports of your own experiences of MAQS (past or future). This preparation is very new to us in the UK and it will be very helpful to learn how you are all finding it. If you don’t have the time or inclination to write a note, I would welcome a brief phone call. Did it clear your mites as well as you hoped? Were there any worrying effects? Did you lose any queens? How much ventilation did you have in the hive during treatment, and how was this provided - eg mesh floor fully open or partly blocked, solid floor, narrow or wide hive entrance or what?

From what I have managed to glean since last September, I have had my fears allayed sufficiently to give MAQS a try at an appropriate time in the coming season.

Geoff Cooper

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

I am mightily relieved to report that the natural mite drop in the colonies I mentioned last month has now dropped to virtually zero. I treated one colony with a 4th weekly dose of Hiveclean, and thankfully this did not produce further instantaneous mite drop. The next crunch time will be in the spring when we hope to find that the frightening mite population that I found earlier has not seriously damaged the bees. As they say, watch this space.

Geoff Cooper

**Two talks on Bumble Bees**

The Plight of the Bumble Bee – Wednesday, 12th March, 8.15pm

This talk is in the series organised by the Elmbridge Natural History Society, which meets in the Methodist Church Hall, Mayfield Road, Weybridge. Visitors are charged £3, with an extra 50p, for refreshments, if desired. Dr Nikki Gammans from the University of London will introduce us to the problems facing most of our bumblebees, and talk about the project she leads, to reintroduce the short-haired bumblebee to Britain.

My adventures with bumblebees – Wednesday, 9th April, 7.30pm

We have had the following invitation from Catherine Burton, of the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre:

I thought you might like to hear of an upcoming talk from Prof. Dave Goulson, bumblebee expert and author of ‘A Sting in the Tail’, at Woking Library. Tickets are available for £6 each (£5 until March 12th) online from [www.surreycc.gov.uk/writersbooked](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/writersbooked), from Woking Library or by calling 01483 543599. I hope to see fellow bee enthusiasts there and I will be bringing copies of our own Atlas, ‘Bees of Surrey’, if you would like to purchase one (£16). I think the event will prove very popular so would recommend booking as early as you can if interested.

**Keeping your beehive cool – one thing we DON’T have to do!**

We have been sent an interesting article from Australia where the extremely hot summers give the bees a problem in keeping their hives cool. Beekeepers are given the following advice on how to help their bees in this respect:

‘Insulate the TOP of the hive with polystyrene lids or use a polystyrene box, ask your grocer for broccoli box lids; overhanging sheets can also shade hive walls; an old towel draped over the hive, preferably sprayed with water, can help; spray hives during the day, hose has to run cool and not push sun-heated water; wet ground around hives can help; opening lids a little is NOT reccomended; place hives with entrances facing East, definitely not NORTH, North winds can blow through the hive and cause meltdown; place hive so that they get afternoon shade; do not move bees now, confused bees + hot conditions = stress (and very stingy bees); provide plenty of cold water in a shady position use foam floaters to insulate the water and provide bees with landing pads.’ *At least we don’t have these problems in this country, and I don’t think I have ever known of a case of meltdown (beeswax melts at 64*º*C). It’s interesting be reminded that North is where their heat comes from in Australia. Thanks to Bruce Murchie for passing on this item from his friend in Melbourne. – Ed.*

**An interesting note on wasps**

*From Tony Kirkby of Guildford Division:*

Some years ago I had a very small nucleus in the autumn which was being devastated by wasps. I closed the entrance but bee wings continued to drop out, wasps were in residence. I treated with Hiveclean, and the wasps were eliminated. There was also an immediate drop of varroa though in the absence of brood there had been none before.

*Thank you Tony. Another unexpected effect of ‘safe’ chemicals? – Ed.*

**“The Honey Diet” – a new book by Mike McInnes**

The Honey Diet by Mike McInnes is a new book on weight control, published by Hodder and Stoughton, that promises to take honey from an interesting food to the status of a SuperFood.

Many books have been written about honey, but none of these have challenged the scientific establishment on several levels as this book has done.  Furthermore only in recent years has the scientific community begun to uncover the metabolic benefits of honey in addition to its anti-infective qualities.

More information on this link: https://www.hodder.co.uk/books/detail.page?isbn=9781444775921

*The above is quoted from an introduction to the book by its author. – Ed.*

**More bumblebee damage**

Research at Royal Holloway College, Egham finds that prolonged exposure to a pyrethroid pesticide reduces the size of the bumblebees produced by a colony. Full report in a recent issue of *Applied Ecology.*

*Thanks to John Langdon for supplying these details from the January 23rd edition of the ‘Surrey Herald.*

**More media reporting of the plight of the honey bee**

On the 9th January, The Times  and the BBC reported that Britain has too few honey bees to pollinate its crops and that only Moldova has a bigger 'honey bee deficit' than Britain.  Reading University has calculated that Europe would need 13.4 million more honey bee colonies, a third more than at present, to be sure of having enough to pollinate crops. The study concluded that demand was high, because more farmers are growing crops for biofuel, but that there are not enough insects to pollinate them and that a strategy to conserve wild pollinators and honey bees was needed. The full report can be seen at:

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0082996>

**Further use of microchips attached to bees in the investigation of CCD**

On the 14th January, the Guardian reported that Australian scientists at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in Tasmania have glued small microchips, weighing about 5 milligrams and measuring 2.5 square millimeters on to five thousand honey bees to monitor their movements. The study will build data on the movements and habits of several generations of bees to shed light on the causes of CCD, which has led to more than 10 million beehives being wiped out worldwide in the past six years. The full report can be seen at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jan/15/scientists-fit-honey-bees-with-tiny-sensors-to-study-decline-of-colonies>

*Thanks to Anne Miller for sending in these two articles from the press. – Ed.*

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| **Dates for your diary** | | | | |
| Saturday | 15th February | 9.30am – 5.00pm | SBKA Surrey Bee Day, Ewell | p. 1 |
| Saturday | 22nd February | 10.30am – 4.30 pm | West Sussex BKA Convention, Pulborough | Jan. p. 5 |
| Friday | 28th February | 7.30pm | Winter meeting, Short Presentations by members | p. 1 |
| SEE | MORE | ON | NEXT | PAGE |
| Saturday | 1st March | 10am | Teaching Apiary Tidy | p. 1 |
| Saturday | 8th March | All day | Beekeeping Course, Pulborough | Nov. p. 3 |
| Tuesday | 11th March | 7.30 - 9.30pm | Winter Meeting, David Rudland, Bee Diseases | Beginners’ Course, but all welcome |
| 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 | p. 1 |
| Friday, Saturday and Sunday | 4th 5th and 6th April | 3 days | BBKA Spring Convention  Harper Adams University, Shropshire | p. 2 and attachment |
| Thursday-Saturday | October 30th – November 1st | 3 days | National Honey Show, Weybridge | Jan. p. 6 |
| Saturday | December 6th |  | SBKA AGM, Reigate | Details later |

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