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

*Editorial*

“What rubbish there always is on television” seems to be a common comment. This is obviously a matter of opinion, but I personally would go along with this assessment regarding the recent four-programme series (*The Wonder of Bees)* featuring Martha Kearney. As one of our members, Gil Bray, wrote to me: “I was wondering if you watched the above and in view of the appalling techniques [filthy gloves, ghastly state of supers] and complete insincerity [“my passion for years” vs “goodness, there’s the queen, the first time I’ve spotted one” (!!)], was also wondering if you are minded to register any views with BBC 4. Personally, I am amazed that such a programme could get onto the airways and goodness only knows what the so-called Master Beekeeper thinks he’s doing”. The programme opened with the presenter very concerned as to whether her bee colonies had survived the bad winter (it turned out that several had not). Anyone with a basic knowledge of bee management would know that a severe winter in itself is no problem for bees if they have been properly prepared by the beekeeper. This was soon followed by a visit to the food department of Fortnum and Mason where the only information on honey presented by the member of its staff in its food department was suitable for a 2-year-old. And so one horror followed another. I viewed this programme with great sadness in view some of the very fine honey bee programmes produced by the main TV channels in the past, and conscious of what a wasted opportunity this was. I understand that there was a unanimous groan when the programmes were mentioned at the end of the recent SBKA Council Meeting. I hope that our new students, and other recently started beekeepers were not too impressed by this latest offering.

**Bee Disease Insurance**

  BDI is the company that insures all our hives in the event that AFB or EFB are located in your Apiary and require destruction.

This year BDI is offering to sponsor groups who arrange meetings/events for the express purpose of bringing the necessity of vigilance on bee diseases to the attention of members. We are very grateful to Michael Main, who, on behalf of Weybridge, has already had an application approved for which we shall receive £100. Details of the two events that have been organised (Garden Meeting and Nosema Clinic) are given below.

**Garden Meeting, Sunday May 11th, 2.30pm**

This meeting will be at Michael Main’s house: Hill House, Northfield Place (off Brooklands Road), Weybridge KT13 0RF.

The program for the day will be as follows:

 Check Varroa boards so new members know what a Varroa mite looks like.

1. Inspect for Brood diseases - Split into 2 groups Hive 1 and Hive 3 (Rob Chisholm and Geoff Cooper)
2. Discuss actions to be taken in event of AFB/EFB being identified
3. Shook swarm a colony - All. (Rob Chisholm)
4. Clean hive from shook swarm
5. Discuss what to do with old combs

All members are encouraged to attend. Please bring food to share and a cup for a picnic in the garden following the hive activities. Tea and coffee will be provided.

**Nosema Clinic, Wednesday June 4th, 7.30-9.30pm**

The disease called nosemosis is caused by gut parasites (*Nosema* species). Colonies of severely affected bees dwindle and die, so it is important that we all check for the disease. We have organized an evening for this purpose and would strongly recommend that you take this opportunity.

Anne Miller, our Secretary, (wbks\_secretary@outlook.com) is co-ordinating the event, but has asked me to write this note, to give some background and details. The clinic will be held in St Peter’s Church Hall, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA. Bee samples can be collected from your colonies at any time now, and placed immediately in a freezer to kill them and keep them in good condition until required; this is important, as decomposing bees are disgusting and such samples will not be checked. Instructions on how to collect samples are given in an attachment to this newsletter. It is envisaged that members will bring their bees to the Clinic, then participate as much as possible in the process of preparing samples for microscopy. The procedure involves separating the abdomens of 30 bees from the rest of their body and grinding them up with 2 teaspoons (approx. 10 ml) of water. A drop of the resulting liquid is then transferred to a microscope slide and examined for nosema spores. Some find this procedure quite revolting, while others launch into it with great enthusiasm – either way, it has to be accepted as the only method currently available for diagnosing this potentially serious infection.

The timing of this Clinic is appropriate, because June (during the so-called June Gap – if there is one) is a time when a comb change (Bailey method or shook swarm) can be done, this being a recommended way of controlling, although obviously not eliminating nosema, as the organism is present within the bees. Comb change, although a drastic disturbance for the bees, is ultimately beneficial and strongly recommended for several other reasons as well as for controlling nosema. Since the withdrawal of Fumidil B (the antibiotic fumagillin) from the UK market, there is no approved treatment, although products such as Nosevit and Vita Feed Gold (which are claimed to be effective against nosema)are available.

We are in need of microscopes (x 400 magnification) and microscopists who know how to use them. If you have the equipment and/or the expertise, please contact Anne. Instruction on all stages of the process will be available on the night. We would also appreciate the loan of pestles and mortars big enough to grind the 30 abdomens with the water. The other equipment needed will be supplied.

We urge all members to have a sample of their bees tested, but would appreciate it if you would tell Anne in advance if you are coming and how many samples you will be bringing, so that we know roughly what to expect at the Clinic; it may be necessary to arrange more than one session.

At the risk of describing what you all know… (you don’t need to read on if you know all about it):

*Nosema* is now classified as a fungus. One species, *Nosema apis*, has been with our bees for ages, and now another species, *Nosema ceranae*, is almost universally present; most affected bees have a mixed infection of these two species, but this is only of academic interest, as both are harmful. Bees with nosemosis are sick bees; they do not thrive. Some bee viruses are also transmitted by nosema. Yellowish-brown splashing on the front of hives or visible on top bars or on combs within the hive are evidence of dysentery. This is often attributed to nosema, or taken as an indication that nosema is present; currently there is debate about whether or not there is a direct connection and if so, whether both *Nosema* species are involved. The life cycle of the parasites is worth studying, but again this is only of academic interest; it is the spore stage that we look for in the ground up bee abdomens, and it is from the density of spores in slide preparations made in a standardised way that we can make a rough assessment of the level of infection.

Marion C.

**Some comments on the editorial in the March Newsletter**

The editorial in the last newsletter was uplifting. I can see that we do not have to interfere with the habits of the Bees; they have done a lot better than us over the years. You might call me a bit old fashioned, but I do think they do everything for a reason. The least you do the better, I do not mean that you let them go wild, and you still have to make sure to control any pests and diseases.

I have a friend that has a couple of hives. I have sat next to the hives watching the bees coming and going, and you can almost feel part of them to see what a hard life they make for themselves only to survive under the circumstances we have created. His hives are on an allotment and you can see the benefit everybody has through him having the bees. Paul Svard, a student on our current Beekeeping Course.

Your Editorial in this month’s Newletter highlights the ways that some beekeepers hold that their way of bee keeping is THE WAY.

The honey bee colony has evolved over many millions of years. A colony’s ability to collect, process and store all that is necessary for the continuation of the colony through the changes in climate that the seasons bring is only one part of a colony’s ability.

Another important ability is to be able to adjust to differing home/hives. Bees cannot build hives. Swarms will send out their scouts to find a suitable location and once found the swarm will move in and make the necessary adjustments.  If we are thinking of this country the feral bee is most likely found in the hollow of trees. No two hollow trees can be the same design or layout therefore the bee colony has had to evolve the ability to adjust to different types of housing. This has led the bee colony to thrive in all sorts of hollows. As long as it large enough, is a location where there is water and forage nearby and can be protected from robbing of its precious stores, the colony will continue to thrive.

In conclusion we need to provide a well located hive close to water with plenty of forage in the location, our colonies then have the basics requirements. There is no particular hive that is best for the bee colony, though some hives may suit what we as humans find easier to use. There are MANY natural ways for bee colonies to thrive, so if your colonies are doing well you are using one of them.

Robert Crosley BA (Environmental Science)

**Honey For Sale At The County Show**

The prices that hive products will be sold for at this year’s County Show are as follows:-

454g (1lb) Run, Crystallised or Soft Set £6.00

340g (12oz) Run, Crystallised or Soft Set £5.00

227g (8oz) Run, Crystallised or Soft Set £3.50

227g (8oz) Cut Comb £6.00

340g (12oz) Heather Honey £8.00

340g (12oz) Chunk Honey £8.00

340g (12oz) Teddy Bears £6.00

90g Solid Polish £4.50

227g (8oz) Jar Cream Polish £4.50

1oz Wax Blocks £1.00

Hive products will be booked in on a sale or return basis on the Bank Holiday Monday morning before 09.00. The supplier will receive 90% of the sale price, the balance being retained for show expenses. Additionally one jar from every ½ gross, or lesser quantity, will not be booked in but passed to “Honey Tasting”, this definitely increases potential sales.

Heather Honey will not be sold as such unless it is clearly marked.

Please remember we are promoting a premier product “Surrey Honey” and all products must be clearly labelled in accordance with EEC regulations and of saleable quality. Sub-standard products will not be sold.

Chris and Rob Chisholm

**An example of young ladies working their magic**

I just wanted to tell you that as of yesterday I have 2 colonies of bees. They seem to have settled in ok (Rob Chisolm has been overseeing their arrival). Both colonies seem very calm. Neither myself nor my husband have been stung in the process (David was always in the back of my mind - *he was stung quite dramatically while hiving his newly acquired bees*).

The first colony were settled in on Thursday evening and when we went to bed Nigel (my husband) asked me if his girls would be ok as he didn't want them getting cold - His girls! When I started this (beekeeping), he told me he had no intention of getting involved. He even phoned me from work this morning to ask if the second colony were ok. - Men.

Micki Minto

**Another finds a beneficial side-effect of working with bees**

While working on an open hive at the Teaching Apiary last Saturday morning, one of the students commented that he thought this must be good for you, as for the time you are working on the bees, you forget completely about the rest of life.

Repeat Request for a hive site

I am still hoping to find a site, preferably in the Weybridge area, for my one colony now, possibly with a second later in the season. Please contact me if you have any suggestions. fionaharrup@btinternet.com

Thank you, Fiona.

**Report of meeting on April 2nd**

We were grateful to Jonah for condensing his extensive thoughts and the contents of four Beecraft articles into one talk for us.

He has asked us to include the following ‘thank you’ note in our newsletter:

 **“I’d rather be a human than a bee”**

Many thanks for inviting me to give a talk to the Weybridge beekeepers division. I was happy to see a number of young people there, I just hope they got some value from the talk, if not the cakes were well worth the visit.

I just need to mention a few things about the meeting. Firstly I have no intention of telling beekeepers what they should be doing, what I want to do is to provide information in relation to the many adaptations this species has made to living in temperate regions. Having a supply of honey is a key adaptation. Honey can be considered as an end point of a process and its main components are monosaccharide sugars. I think monosaccharides in honey provide an immediate source for developing energy required for thermoregulation during winter. So I posed the question why are we supplying sugars which are present at the starting point of the process? I am not looking for an answer, I just want to make beekeepers think about what honey is to bees.

I would also like to clarify that I think pollen stores are not places for pollen storage; they are places where pollen is processed by a microbiota to produce a pollen that is rich in the nutritional product of pollen breakdown. If this is not consumed by bees, it is consumed by many other microorganisms, mites and even beetles. Decomposition of this nutritional product can happen rapidly when the number of bees in the colony reduces from 60 000 to 10 000, resulting in a large surplus. Once decomposition happens the pollen stores are no longer accessed by bees for nutrition during winter. This is a hypothesis.

I thought about a comment that was made, “I’d rather be a human than a bee as they are nasty to one another”. Animal behaviour is generally governed by stimulus and response and not by conscious and judgmental responses which humans have a capacity of carrying out. Altruistic behaviour is carried out by all worker bees for the benefit of the colony, not for the benefit of individual bees as they do not pass on their genes. The bee colony has no health care provision for looking after damaged, sick or elderly bees, sick bees in particular may transmit contagious diseases which can have devastating consequences on the colony. To regard such behaviour as nasty is applying anthropomorphism to deal with what we don’t understand. This Walt Disney approach applied to understanding the natural world is, sadly, still common place. All organisms would do what they need to do in order to survive, in honey bees for the benefit and survival of the colony. Some of these behaviours might be judged by us as being “nasty”, but is “Nature red in tooth and claw” natural?

I enjoyed talking to beekeepers. Many thanks to Marion, Geoff, and Sandra for the support given me and for putting up with some of my wacky, illogical and wayward ideas. On behalf of my family, thanks for the honey.

Jonah

**Auction of bees and beekeeping equipment, Saturday 3rd May, 11.00 am**

Reigate Beekeepers invite you to their "Auction of Bees and Beekeeping Equipment", that will be be held in Mickleham on Saturday 3rd May. Early indications are that we will have a record number of Lots to bid for as well as a number of colonies going under the hammer. The Auction catalogue will be available on-line by Friday the 2nd May, with printed copies available to purchase on the day. Paynes will also be present with their sales stand. Further information, and full details are available on and via our website:

[http://reigatebeekeepers.org.uk](http://reigatebeekeepers.org.uk/)

Richard & Graham

**Two Beekeeping courses for those who have completed a Beginners course**

*Practical Queen Rearing Day at East Surrey Bees, Saturday 24th  May 2013  10am – 4pm*

The aim of this course is to give you the knowledge and practical experience of some of the different methods and techniques you can employ to raise queen bees in your apiary.

We will cover the use of cup kit systems and grafting and also discuss and demonstrate the preparation of breeder hives, cell raiser colonies etc. in addition to looking at how Demaree and Pagden  methods of swarm control can be used to produce colony increase.

 We will be using nuc boxes and mini mating hives.

 Students will be able to practice making wax artificial queen cups and grafting larva along with the general manipulations for dealing with the various operations

 This day course will cover both theory and practical aspects of queen rearing, with some activities in the class room and some out in the apiary depending on the activity and the weather conditions.  Cost £55.00 including a ploughmans lunch.

Please contact enquire@eastsurreybees.co.uk  if you are interested and we will send further details and a booking form.

*Further Beekeeping Mondays starting 19th May –6.30 pm*

This ten week course is designed for those who want further practical experience with handling bees in a variety of hive types and sizes. Under expert guidance it is a chance to develop skills and techniques to increase honey production and deal with swarming and disease management. This is planned to take you further than the basics covered by the beginners practical and specifically targets the potentially problematical areas of swarm control and disease management but we also cover other topics including spring and summer build up, maintaining a healthy hive, maximising honey production and preparation for the winter which is why we start a little later in the season when hives are larger and more interesting!

For any further details and a booking form don’t hesitate to contact us,   enquire@eastsurreybees.co.uk

**Herbicides more dangerous than insecticides?**

This is true and is a result of the spreaders and stickers used to make the herbicides, and fungicides, spread out on the leaves and stems of the plant. The wetters and adjuvants used are wax strippers which can remove the wax surface of insects, bees in particular. Without the waxy layer insects dehydrate and die, the fungicide and herbicide chemicals may also cross the cuticular layer and have a deleterious effect.

Peter Dawson, Guildford Beekeepers

**More on honeybee decline**

A new study covering 17 EU countries says that far more honeybees are dying in the UK and other parts of northern Europe than in Mediterranean countries. The European Commission says it is Europe's [most comprehensive study](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/live_animals/bees/docs/bee-report_en.pdf) so far of bee colony deaths. Winter mortality was especially high for bees in Belgium (33.6%) and the UK (29%) in 2012-13. But in spring-summer 2013 France was highest with 13.6%.

*Extracted from the BBC News Europe website dated 7th April 2014. Thanks to David Parker for bringing this to our notice.*

**An opportunity to contribute to a research project**

I’m a research scientist based at Royal Holloway University of London. I work on social insect behaviour, and I’m currently very interested in how honeybees are faring in urban environments. Urban beekeeping is on the rise, and my team would specifically like to know more about how competition between hives in cities and their surroundings affects honey crop. To do this, we’d really appreciate the help of beekeepers in the Surrey area. Your participation would allow us to gather a much larger dataset and cover a wider range of environments than would otherwise be possible. We would simply ask that you **send a brief email to Elli.Leadbeater@rhul.ac.uk** to indicate that you're interested in participating, and then **keep records** of the following data each time that you inspect your hives over the coming summer season:

1.     The date of the inspection

2.     The number of supers that you add or remove (and the total number that were left on the hive over the winter)

3.     How much feed you added, if any

4.     How many frames contained brood

5.     How many frames contained nectar or pollen stores

6.     The general health of the brood and adult bees

7.     We’d also like to know much honey you collect over the season

**If you indicate that you'd like to participate**, we will get in contact to find out a bit about the location of your hives, and send you a questionnaire in the late summer/early autumn. If you’d like to know more about the work we do, you can find information at [http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/elli-leadbeater(a2edc845-5d79-4c83-bab4-6c58102f485f).html](http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/elli-leadbeater%28a2edc845-5d79-4c83-bab4-6c58102f485f%29.html) or [http://ellileadbeater.weebly.com](http://ellileadbeater.weebly.com/).

Dr. Elli Leadbeater, Lecturer in Molecular Ecology, School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway University of London **Elli.Leadbeater@rhul.ac.uk**

*It goes without saying that help in this field is well worth giving. Most of this hive recording will be practiced by serious beekeepers anyway. I specially commend helping in this project to new beekeepers as well, as it would encourage them to carry out the important practice of keeping records of their recently acquired colonies. – Ed.*

**Another source of expensive honey**

*Following the report of very expensive honey mentioned in the March newsletter, the following also mentions expensive honey, this time from Hong Kong:*

The growth of rooftop gardens has… meant more business for Hong Kong's urban beekeepers.

Michael Leung, founder of HK Honey, is always on the look out for new places to put his hives, and to help him locate them, he looks up for papaya trees.

“The papaya tree grows very well in Hong Kong - most people, if they grow anything on the roof, it's a papaya," he says. "The height of the tree allows you from ground level to see that someone is using the rooftop.”

"We're always looking for little trees that stick out. They're like a flag, a modern agricultural flag," he says. "Through that, we then try to approach the people growing on the roof."

Mr Leung then arranges to rent space for his hives.

He says that the honey his bees produce has a spicy tang, which reflects the biodiversity of Hong Kong's urban flora, and particularly the Chinese basil many people like to grow.

Such is the quality of Mr Leung's honey that he is able to sell it for a whopping 240 Hong Kong dollars per jar. (1.00 HKD = 0.08 GBP)

*Quoted from BBC News website dated 2 April 2014. Thanks to Georje Reed for supplying this.*

**Student given 190 bee stings in pain experiment**

A PhD student has allowed bees to sting him 190 times - to find out on which part of the body it hurts the most. Michael Smith, from Cornell University, chose 25 locations around his body to let the bees sting him. Despite subjecting himself to barbs in intimate areas, Mr Smith found that the most painful area was the inside of his nostril. He told [BBC Radio 5 live's Drive:](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01x0n2j) "When you get stung there your whole body reacts... I would not recommend it." *Thanks to Martin Major for this painful contribution.*

**Bees recycle plastic for their nest-building**

An article in a recent issue of *Ecosphere* reports thatscientists working at universities in Canada have found that the alfafa leafcutter bees (*Megachile rotundata -* a species imported from Europe), incorporated shreds of plastic bags for, on average about a quarter, of their construction materials – while the Canadian *Megachile campanulae,* went for polyurethane-based sealants used on building exteriors. Resorting to plastics seems to be their first choice as they use them when natural materials are available. Bees that nested in plastic straws have been found to be free of parasites.

*Abstracted from ‘Daily Telegraph’ February 1 2014. Thanks to Jane Deane for contributing the original article.*

Dog detects AFB

A black labrador named Bazz has joined the global ranks of beekeepers who are [fighting to save the world’s pollinators](http://inhabitat.com/whole-foods-shows-customers-a-future-of-produce-without-bees/) – and he even has an adorable custom suit to protect him on the job. Like [Boneco the donkey](http://inhabitat.com/brazilian-beekeeper-gains-advantage-with-worlds-first-beekeeping-donkey/) in Brazil, Bazz does important but dangerous work: his owner, Josh Kennett from Australia, trained him to sniff out American foulbrood disease, an incurable disease that can decimate bee populations if it isn’t detected early.

*Thanks to Gil Bray for this contribution; more on the following link:*

<http://inhabitat.com/bazz-the-beekeepers-dog-sniffs-out-bee-disease-in-an-adorable-custom-suit/>

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Saturday | 3rd May | From 11am | Reigate Beekeepers, Auction, Mickleham | p. 5 |
| Sunday | 11th May | 2.30pm | Garden Meeting – Bee diseases | p. 1 |
| Mondays | 19th May, 10 weeks | 6.30pm | East Surrey Bees, Further Beekeeping Course | p. 5 |
| Saturday | 24th May | 10am – 4pm | East Surrey Bees, Queen rearing | p. 5 |
|  Monday | 26th May | All day | Surrey County Show, Honey Show, Guildford | p. 3 and Schedule |
| Wednesday | 4thJune | 7.30-9.30pm | Nosema Clinic, Hersham | p. 2 |
| Thursday, Friday, Saturday | 5th-7th June | 3 days | South of England Show, Ardingly | See the Show website |
| Thursday-Saturday | October 30th – November 1st | 3 days | National Honey Show, Weybridge | April p. 6 |
| Saturday | November 15th | 2.30pm | Weybridge Division AGM | Details later |
| Saturday | December 6th |  | SBKA AGM, Reigate | Details later |

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