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

***Editorial***

Report from one of our current students after being shown a colony run by another association in the South East (not in Surrey): “I looked into the brood box, the combs were black and dirty; ‘Should you not be changing this comb?’, I asked”. Apparently the reply was even more appalling than the comb. “Oh, no”, he was told, “the bees don’t mind”. An even more horrifying story concerned a man in Wiltshire, who runs 20 skeps only looking into them when they die out, ignoring the advice of his local bee inspector and a colleague in his association. “This is how they used to do it”, he said. I was not very surprised to hear any of this, having come to the conclusion over the last few years that the general level of beekeeping knowledge and practice among hobby beekeepers seems to leave a lot to be desired. I once met a beekeeper who was surprised to be told, “No, you can’t do repairs on your (occupied) hive this month”; it was December. Another kept getting swarms despite the good advice that he was receiving, and when I went to see him, he displayed no real understanding of how to carry out an artificial swarm. “Did you check for queen cells?”, you ask many, and the reply often indicates that if a check was made it was not very thorough. I once heard a lady at the Spring Convention assure Ron Brown (an renowned Devon beekeeper) that her colonies were free of varroa, (his answer was totally inoffensive but truly unforgettable). Also a surprising number of beekeepers have never seen varroa and a few even look blank when you mention the word. Then there are the beekeepers whose colonies starve out in the spring (when asked how they much they were fed the previous autumn, the answer is, to say the least, vague). We also come across the casual misuse of the array of chemicals that we can flood into our hives willy nilly, ignoring the manufacturer’s clear instructions on the container. “Ah well, our members never read the instructions”, I was told very recently. Perhaps a flippant remark, but (often) no smoke without fire (this was not referring to Weybridge members). Then there are the beekeepers who rely on help from other very kind beekeepers who, every time they receive a request for advice, go to see the problem and do the corrective work him/her self while the person ‘watches and learns’ (is this not misplaced kindness?). A basic component of learning any skill is to carry it out under the watchful eye of someone who knows what they are doing. I remember a former chairman of our Division, the late George Noblett, in his report at an AGM, lamenting the fact that the main purpose of many beekeepers when they open a hive, is to see the queen. He pointed out that this is of relatively low importance in beekeeping, and went on to exhort beekeepers to study the more relevant beekeeping activities and practices as expounded in Ted Hooper’s very well known book – (a mine of information for all beekeepers, whether new or experienced). I recently came across a superb new book on bees and beekeeping written for children, published by *Beecraft,* called *Honey Bees and Beekeeping* by *Pamela Todd*, who is Melissa Bee, of the Bkids pages. I showed it to one of our very experienced members who, having looked through it, said, “I would like some of the **beekeepers** I meet to read this book!” So let us all learn as much as we can about the important parts of a beekeeper’s responsibilities, for the good of our bees, for the good of the environment, and (perhaps of least importance) for our own honey crop.

**Garden Meeting, Saturday 16th August at Gil Bray’s house: 26 The Avenue, Claygate KT10 0RY**

We are very grateful to Gil and his wife for hosting this meeting. Gil has had bees for a few years now, and was on our beekeeping course last year, since when he has volunteered his help in several areas of the Division’s activities. He has 2 colonies that can be enjoyed in his garden and there will also be some beekeeping equipment to see and discuss. Do try and attend this meeting, bringing a contribution of food to share for tea; drinks will be provided. Please let me know if you intend to come along - either phone 01932 843209 or email slawes@hotmail.co.uk. Sue Lawes



**Can you help make a difference?**

We wouldn’t be where we are today without all of our valued committee and volunteers, but we need more people to continue to provide information and inspiration to local beekeepers.

We would love to hear from you, regardless of your beekeeping experience. There are plenty of tasks. Could you take a few hours a month to help? We need people to give talks to local groups, be a coordinator for talks, an events coordinator, do publicity, raise funds, help at meetings, organize winter meetings, help extract honey, look after the group’s hives. The list is endless.

The imminent need is for someone to help with the management of the

teaching apiary.

If you can make a difference please contact Anne Miller (wbks\_secretary@outlook.com) or anybody on the committee.

**September Meeting, Two Talks, Wednesday 10th September, 7.30pm**

This meeting will be held in St Peter’s Church Hall, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA. Instead of another outdoor meeting in September, we shall be having the first of our Winter Meetings, with two talks by Adam Leitch, who is a member of Reigate Division, a Master Beekeeper and a tutor for students taking BBKA Modules. The first talk, before the refreshments break, is entitled, ‘A photographic tour of the honey bee’, and promises to be fascinating. Adam was recommended to us by Tim Hutchinson, who heard him give an excellent presentation on all that is involved in preparing bees for winter; ‘Autumn preparations’ will be the subject of his second talk. By the time this meeting takes place, some members will have started on these preparations, but Adam will stimulate all of us to carry out what is needed at this critical time of year. Do make a note of the date and try to attend.

Marion C.

**Report of Painshill Park Bee Festival, Sunday 20th July**

By request of the Painshill Park staff, our annual bee event was extended this year to include stalls selling bee products, bee-related items, a new bee book for children and also stands from the Croydon, Reigate and Wimbledon Divisions of Surrey BKA. There was a good atmosphere throughout the day and all of the participants told us that they had enjoyed being there. As always, the observation hives were a major attraction. Although almost 500 visitors came to the Park that day and more may have come to the bee event alone, the stallholders were not exactly rushed off their feet, and the format of the event will be discussed again should it be repeated next year. We would like to record out thanks to Sandra, who liaised with the other Divisions and the Park, and to the many Weybridge members who responded to our request for help – this was very much appreciated.

Geoff and Marion C.

**Apiary meeting at Garsons Farm, Sunday 13th July**

We were very sorry to hear from Peter Bowbrick that there is an outbreak of EFB at his apiary in Wimbledon, so as a precaution he cancelled our meeting with him at Garsons Farm. At very short notice Wendy Osborne very kindly offered to have a meeting in her garden; a report of this meeting follows.

**Report of Garden Meeting at Wendy Osborne’s, 13th July 2014**

Sunday's weather turned out to be perfect for a garden meeting of the WBKA, which took place in the elegant garden of Wendy Osborne, near Woking. She welcomed us to her gorgeous 16th century house and introduced her spanking new hives. Following the prudent cancellation of the meeting at Garson's farm due to the risk of spreading disease, we were a select group of five Weybridge beekeepers plus Wendy's mentor, another local beekeeper.

Wendy chooses to use as little smoke as possible, so we discussed the pros and cons of this approach, and then the best fuels for smokers.

We opened the larger of her two occupied hives, to find some beautiful frames of drawn foundation - as well as some wild comb built on the end wall at right angles to the frames where a space had been left unfilled. This was cut out and left under the roof at the end, and the gap filled with frames.

The bees seemed very well behaved as we lifted a queen excluder and looked through the lower box. Frame after perfect frame of full, white capped stores were lifted out. These are obviously very tidy bees. Wendy had fed them for some weeks when they were new to her earlier this year, so some of this may be syrup rather than flower nectar, but it was certainly impressive.

The deep brood frames were looking good with a lovely round brood pattern, except where two shallow frames had been hung. The wild comb below these was rather fragile but interesting to see.

We closed up the hive and retired for tea, with an exceptionally good spread of nibbles and cakes. Thank you Wendy for stepping in at short notice and hosting a lovely afternoon.

Jane Hunter

**Report of Bee Meeting at Burhill Allotments Apiary – Saturday 26 July**

The Burhill Allotments apiary is in its 4th year and at present has four beekeepers and a ‘fluctuating’ ten hives. Any other members who would like to consider putting bees here should contact the Apiary Manager, Jim Joyce (01932 225435, enid.w.joyce@gmail.com).

Because of the fact that the apiary is on an allotment site, it was agreed that a meeting would be held for committee members only. Neighbouring allotmenteers were also invited to its initiation. As many of us know, some people can become concerned when the bees are flying and so numbers were kept to a minimum. The result of this was a concentrated ‘font of knowledge’ and we simple beekeepers were aware that the Jedi High Council was present! We were given lots of constructive criticism and this has been very welcome and helpful to all concerned. Thank you to the committee!

In October last year we decided to establish a bee friendly wild flower patch on the vacant area next to the apiary on the side of the River Mole. It was a lot of hard work clearing nettles, brambles and the odd bit of fly tipping but after five months we were finally able to erect a garden shed for the lawnmower and other paraphernalia associated with beekeeping and of course to create an area in which to have our tea and lemon drizzle cake… all very sophisticated.

Hawthorn whips left over from the Teaching Apiary were planted along the boundary in order to form a hedge and we added eight plug plants of various species from British Wild Flower Plants. We also sowed a wild flower cornfield mixture from seeds, bought from The Organic Gardening catalogue based in Hersham: Corn Buttercup, Cornflower, Corncockle, Corn Marigold, White Campion, Chamomile, Field Forget me not, Larkspur, Wild Pansy and several more. For good measure we added a packet of wild flower seeds from the freebie offer on BBC’s Country File. We have since been contacted with a view to using some photos we sent to them.

As this was our very first bee meeting, Sally set the benchmark of serving tea in porcelain cups and produced some wonderful cold lemonade. We had a lovely spread of cake and sandwiches and sat in the cool shade of our garden gazebo on the just-mowed green lawn, its fresh green scent in the air. The lawn was laid in April, in anticipation of our event and hopefully more bee meetings in the future.

Our little haven reminds one of these beautiful inspirational lines from William Butler Yeats:

 “I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
 And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
 Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
 And live alone in the bee-loud glade”.

Glenda Hill

*Those who visited were made extremely welcome and enjoyed the attractive surroundings - and the tea!*

**Taster Sessions for next year’s Beginners’ Course, August 13th and September 13th**

We already have a number of people who have expressed an interest in learning about beekeeping and attending our next course. They have been invited to attend one of these sessions at which there will be an introductory talk followed by an opportunity to see a hive opened and to handle some frames of bees, followed by a time for light refreshments and discussion. If you know of anyone else who may be interested, please ask them to contact Sue Lawes (01932 843209, slawes@hotmail.com) for admin details or Geoff Cooper (01932 242179, coopergm56@btinternet.com) for beekeeping details. The Taster Sessions will take place on Wednesday, August 13th from 6-8 pm, and Saturday, September 13th from 10 am-12 noon; there is no charge. Protective clothing will be available.

**John Hamer’s Blackhorse Apiaries**

As you have probably heard by now, the buildings at John’s apiary were severely damaged by fire a week or two ago. Despite this terrible incident, and after much effort in clearing the site, the celebration of John’s 80th birthday and Open Day went ahead on 26th July and was the great success that this event always is. Several Weybridge members assist John throughout the season, particularly with the courses he runs. One of these assistants, Allan Morris, sent me the following message, which he is happy to have copied here:

‘I think that where John needs more assistance in the immediate future is going to be with equipment as he has lost EVERYTHING, hives, nucs, frames, foundation, everything you can think of that he has collected in 30-odd years of beekeeping! If it is possible, could there be a trawl of spare equipment that members who know John would be prepared to donate to help him on his way. I am more that happy to collect from anywhere, but please don't use it an opportunity to dispose of your old equipment that is either unusable or in need of repair! John now doesn't have workshop facilities anymore. All of John’s stuff is National format.’

For the moment Allan has asked us to wait; he will tell us when it is appropriate to make offers of help and equipment.

**Honey Extracting and Marketing Day at East Surrey Bees, near Croydon, Saturday 9th August**

This is essentially a practical day with lots of hands on experiences at the different stages of a rather sticky but very satisfying process!

We go through the whole process of producing a jar of honey; from looking at the different ways in which you can take off the honey supers in the apiary, right through the uncapping and extracting processes to the bottling.  As always there are choices to be made in the ways in which you can uncap and extract and we look at the pros and cons of different methods and try your hand at using the uncapping knife!

After lunch we look at bottling and selling honey; looking at the different jars available and the rules and regulations about what must go on the label. Ideas for marketing your hard earned, golden harvest will be discussed as well as looking briefly at alternative ways of presentation like cut comb and chunk honey. Plenty of opportunity to ask questions and we will finish with a tasting of some of the range of honey collected in Surrey and Kent so far this year.

Honey is a premier food product and deserves the best treatment to maintain its many valuable properties whether you are going to sell your liquid gold or just keep it for friends and family.

Gates open at 10 o’clock for a prompt start at 10.30 and we finish around 4pm, a ploughman’s lunch is included with homemade breads and honey cake.

Booking is essential. Don’t hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Celia and David, Rudland, East Surrey Bees   email celia@eastsurreybees.co.uk 0208 6607753

**Great British Bee Count**

Throughout August, gardeners can take part in The Great British Bee Count by recording the number and the types of bees they see. Data submitted between June and August will contribute to the National Biodiversity Network and give a snapshot of bee health. The count, which could become an annual event, has been organised by  Friends of the Earth, Buglife and retailer B+Q. [www.greatbritishbeecount.co.uk](http://www.greatbritishbeecount.co.uk/)

*Contributed by Anne Miller*

**An invitation from Twickenham and Thames Valley BKA**

Each year the T&TVBKA run a Honey Show Competition for honey, honey and bee products, cakes confectionery, craft, fruit and vegetables. The competition is open to non members.

I would like to invite the members and friends and family of Surrey Beekeepers  to enter the competition. Staging for the show is on Friday 10th October and the morning of Saturday 11th with the show open to the public on Sunday 12th. Entry is free and the schedule, rules and entry form can be downloaded from:

<http://www.twickenham-bees.org.uk/events.html>

Clare Toberty, Honey Show Secretary

**Closing Dates for November BBKA Modules & Microscopy - 2014**

Full details of these and fees, etc. will be found on the attachment. Celia Perry, the Surrey Exam Secretary has pointed out that some of the exam fees will go up next year, so by taking an exam this year people will save money. Celia reminds us that the deadlines for the autumn modules and the microscopy exam are fast approaching.

**Another case of pollen helping to reduce hay fever**

*I had the following email from a lady following her visit to our room at the Painshill event:*

‘Geoff, I met you today at Painshill at the “honey bee" event with my daughter who is 10 and I learnt so much from yourself, your wife and all the other bee keepers, very interesting, and mind blowing, the fact these small beautiful creatures are so intelligent and give so much to the humans, I was shocked at how hard they work only to produce a small amount of honey. I will have a lot more respect for them from now on, although they are life threatening to me and I have to carry an Epipen with me. I was stung many years ago and my throat was closing up. I was telling you that I have started taking bee pollen, I have read a lot about it. I suffer from hay fever and this time of year is very difficult, it ruins my days, with flu-like symptoms,  sneezing, congestion, and lack of energy, but since I have been taking bee pollen, I have been able to enjoy the summer. I have more energy and have not had hay fever and feel less stressed.’

Sarah  Shortland

*On reading this I wondered if it was honey or pollen that Sarah was finding helpful, so I wrote to ask her. She replied as follows:*

‘I take bee pollen, I love the work bees do to make honey but I'm afraid I don't really like honey on it's own. Thanks for getting back to me, I only live in Byfleet, but wouldn't mind getting some local honey for my daughter.’

*This is all very interesting as the ‘handed down wisdom’ is that local honey, therefore local pollen is necessary to help hay fever, but if my memory is correct, the pollen that Sarah uses is prepared on the continent. But never mind, Sarah is yet another person getting help from pollen whether in honey or from pure pollen. – Ed.*

**Neonics knock on**

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/09/neonicotinoids-farmland-birds?dm_i=NXK,2MSVS,5JG9Z7,9OZSN,1>

I picked this report up via the British Trust for Ornithology, interestingly shortly after talking with very keen birder friends who were talking of the decline in swifts and swallows, perhaps now we know why.

 Peter Webb

**A cry for help**

*Sandra has passed on for the newsletter this very unusual and interesting request; if anyone is able to help either by providing bees or even better with alternative ways in which she could proceed, I would very much appreciate receiving a copy of any such suggestion. I feel personally that this lady may be on very dangerous ground with her current treatment, and that it would be wiser to seek some expert medical opinion, but who knows what is out there and who knows what she may be discovering? – Ed.*

On Fri, Jul 25, 2014 at 5:11 PM, Chloe Chand Salder

Hello there!

I am from Staines and was hoping you might be able to help me locate (or put me in contact with) some local bee keepers in/around the area?

It’s a long story but, in a nutshell, I have rheumatoid arthritis and the only thing which helps me to live a semi-normal life is receiving bee stings on my joints! I've been stinging myself for the last month and it's been working wonders!

I'm living in the Dominican Republic at the moment but will be coming back to Staines for the rest of the summer and now that I've found this wonder cure, I’m very concerned about how I will be able to continue the treatment in the UK.

Basically, I need someone who has bees and who is willing to help me either harvest max 30 bees a week in a jar (less if they can't afford to lose so many) or help me to get and sting myself one by one on-site (that's what I'm currently doing)... unfortunately, the only other person locally I can ask is my neurotic mother - my sister is allergic in an anaphylactic way so if anybody would be willing to help me I'd  be eternally grateful!

It's a big ask I know, and I really feel bad for the bees but I'd also like to learn some beekeeping skills in the hope that I can pay them back one day...

I'm not sure if this is something you'd be willing (or able) to help me with but I guessed it was worth asking!

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

All the best,

Chloe

PS. I'll be in the UK from mid August-October.

*Since inserting this I understand that Paul Hildersley has contacted Chloe, but other members may also find the entry of interest and perhaps make some helpful input.– Ed.*

**Famous people who are beekeepers**

On the 4/7/14 the Observer and Guardian named 10 famous beekeepers including Aristotle, Sherlock Holmes, Agnes Baden-Powell and Sir Edmund Hillary.  To see what good company we keep, go to <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jul/04/the-10-best-famous-beekeepers> and look for famous beekeepers.

*Contributed by Anne Miller*

**Maintenance of neonicotinoid ban**

Yesterday (3rd July) Syngenta withdrew their controversial application to allow their banned bee-killer pesticides back on UK fields.

*Contributed by Peter Webb*

**STOP PRESS: Ian Rickwood**

We are very sorry indeed to report the sudden death, on 31st July, of Ian, the husband of our long serving member Sandra Rickwood. I am sure that you will all join me in sending Sandra and her children, John and Catherine, our sincere sympathy.

Ian’s funeral will be on Thursday, 14th August at 11am at Randalls Park Crematorium, Randalls Rd, Leatherhead KT22 0AG.

Geoff C.

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Saturday | 9th August | 10am – 4pm  | Honey extracting, Croydon | p. 4 |
| Wednesday | 13th August | 6-8pm | Beekeeping Taster Session | p. 4 |
| Saturday  | 16th August | 2.30pm | Garden Meeting, Gil Bray | p. 1 |
| Wednesday  | 10th September | 7.30pm | 2 talks, Adam Leitch | p. 2 |
| Saturday | 13th September | 10am - 12 noon | Beekeeping Taster Session | p. 4 |
| Sunday | 12th October |  | Twickenham BKA Honey Show | p. 5 |
| 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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