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

***Editorial***

Just a few reminders to all and especially to our new beekeepers regarding important work in the apiary now that most of our honey has been harvested. Varroa levels must be monitored and the appropriate treatment administered. We need to bear in mind the advantages and limitations of these various treatments in the light of current weather, etc. Remember the possibility of treating with oxalic acid in December should this seem to be appropriate. We also need to do a thorough check for AFB and EFB by shaking off all the bees from the combs and examining the sealed and unsealed brood very carefully for any signs of abnormality. It is also an appropriate time to cull poor queens and combine small (not diseased) colonies, and of course, feed as necessary for winter. What we do now will have a significant effect on the performance of our colonies from next March through to our next harvest in July 2015.

Please take note of the date of our next meeting, at which all of these points – and more – will be covered. The details are below, copied from the August newsletter.

**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 try to attend.

Marion C.

**Hire of honey extracting equipment**

Members are reminded that honey extracting equipment is available to hire from our Division. Contact Rob Chisholm (01483 715779) or Sandra Rickwood (01932 244326) for details.

**Renewal of Subscription to Weybridge Beekeepers**

Your subscription is now due. The form is included in this newsletter as an attachment. I would appreciate your response as soon as you can.

Michael Main (Treasurer)

**Fondant for sale**

I have some fondant available for sale in packages that are approximately a kilo each. They're priced at £1.95

per kilo. which is a little cheaper than buying it from Thorne’s. I shall bring some to our evening meeting on September 10th, but ordering from me in advance would be helpful.

Thank you, Paul Hildersley (01784 450242, 07827 916186, homeapiary@btinternet.com)

**Granulated sugar – best buy?**

Don’t know if anyone has found cheaper sugar – I have just bought a 5 kg bag in Sainsburys, Cobham for £3.85 (77p/kg).

Joan Baron

*More fondant and sugar syrup advertised on next page*

**Invert sugar syrup and bakers’ fondant for sale**

Jonathan Hall is offering the following at the same price as last year:

A quantity of Invertbee Syrup in 14kg jerry cans - £22.00 each

The Invertbee syrup is similar to Ambrosia syrup and has the same advantages for winter feeding.

He also has bakers’ fondant in 12.5kg boxes priced at £14.50 each. The fondant can be stored for many months, even years, providing it is kept sealed, use what you need and wrap the remainder for the future.

Contact Tel: 07850 696844 or [jonathan-hall@talktalk.net](mailto:jonathan-hall@talktalk.net)

**Report on the Garden Meeting, Saturday 16th August at Gil Bray’s house in Claygate**

We were welcomed to Gil's beautiful home and colourful garden on a glorious sunny day. We were 8 in number plus Sandra Rickwood and a retired member came to visit for a brief time too. Whilst Gil has just recently completed the course to hone his skills, he demonstrated impressive and successful beekeeping skills and a honey crop for 2014 which could be a local record (figure withheld to avoid honey envy). A peak number of an incredible 9 supers on one of his two colonies posed a few anxious health and safety concerns! How high was that ladder?

Personally I had a memorable final 2014 garden meeting as I saw a new Queen and watched it marked. Too late we considered was the Q mated yet? Now it was marked this may preclude mating. I also learnt to identify a live varroa mite. As a novice I know what they look like in magnification scale and of course have none in my new hives (... will be checking again)! Michael Main was peppered with questions all afternoon. We discussed 'to treat or not to treat' as Gil had consistently had a 0 to five mite count. Gil has a comprehensive range of equipment often skillfully home made i.e. a steam wax extractor and another to clean the wax before it goes back to suppliers. We did, almost reluctantly, sit for a superb tea eagerly consumed by all in the sunshine. The conversation continued apace on preparing hives for winter.

Quite an afternoon. Thanks again Gil.

Wendy Osborne

**PS to “A cry for help” - Bee stings for rheumatoid arthritis. See p 6 of August newsletter**

I have now had a considerable amount of email correspondence with this lady as well as some helpful input from Paul Hildersley and Paul Svard. In the correspondence with her, among other things, I expressed my concerns regarding the supply of bees to her (or indeed anyone) for use as a self-applied treatment for her condition, because of the potency and potential danger to health of bee venom, and my lack of medical knowledge to encourage this treatment. I also said that other beekeepers may have different opinions and more knowledge of the subject. In one of her lengthy replies she wrote, “I am more than confident and perfectly capable of making my own decisions for my own body and my own life, and I am confident in my own research and the prescribed course of treatment which I am following.” I, personally, have tried to help her as much as I could in several respects, but can add nothing further, so do not plan to write to her again. However, there is no reason why any member who wishes should not contact her, using her contact details given in the August Newsletter. Should any wish, I would be happy to send a copy of the complete correspondence relating to this matter. The provision of bee venom is a topic that we should all consider, as any of us could be asked about it, and we need to be clear in our own minds whether, in these days awash with litigation, we would be happy to do this.

Geoff C.

**Surrey BKA training day on Bee Behaviour**

Dan Basterfield will discuss the behaviour of honey bees. This workshop is designed to appeal to all beekeepers but will be of special interest to those wishing to take the BBKA Module 6 exam. It will be held on Saturday 4th October 2014, 11 am to 4 pm in East Horsley Village Hall, KT24 6QT. 60 places available at £15 per person to include refreshments and a light lunch. To reserve a place, email Sandra Rickwood on rickwoodbka@gmail.com or phone 01932 244326. Full directions and payment details will be provided with confirmation of place. An flyer advertising this event is attached.

**Another member reports his experience of the use of MAQS for varroa**

This year I decided to use MAQ strips on all my hives regardless of the state or size of the colony. Due to my Role of swarm coordinator, by early June I had far more colonies than I wanted as small casts had not found homes and all my spare equipment had been called into use. As a result about the second week in June I decided to consolidate the colonies. Of the 4 colonies that I had overwintered 3 needed re-queening the 4th, as those who attended my garden meeting know, had already been artificially swarmed. I reunited the Pagden colonies. The other 3 colonies were all united with small casts that had built up and had good strong laying queens. That still left me with 6 casts in varying strengths. I decided to take a radical step and unite these to create 3 colonies making 7 colonies in total. Due to pressure of time, instead of selecting the queen to be kept I just inserted paper between the two boxes and left the bees to sort themselves out. I had never done this before to colonies with laying queens, only fresh casts with virgins. The result was that after 2 weeks all colonies were doing well and the flow was in full force with loads of honey coming in. However, one of my overwintered colonies had decided to keep their old queen, 1 of the combined casts had two queens both laying but on separate sides of the brood nest, and one of the united casts looked to be superceding by 5th July. I left this colony be and when I came to extract honey in the middle of August, found no queen or eggs. I had a good crop of honey from the 7 colonies and decided to leave all colonies with a full box of their own honey, just extracting the supers. In total about 400lbs of which I extracted 200. I would only need to feed the small colony. So having extracted my honey from all colonies I treated all 7 colonies with MAQ strips: 4 strong well provisioned colonies, 1 medium colony, 1 small colony and one queenless. All colonies were given the full dose of 2 strips except the weak one where I just used 1 strip. All queens survived and are now working the balsam and heather strongly. I decided to unite the queenless one to the weak one and it has now settled down well. It was interesting that when the strips were put in the queenless hive most bees came out and sat at the entrance for a couple of hours before returning into the hive there being no brood to keep warm.

The following is a chart showing the mite drop from each hive:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hive No | Daily drop before | After 2 days | After 10 days | Total |
| 1 (Overwintered) | 1 | 166 | 71 | 237 |
| 2 (Overwintered) | 15 | 437 | 127 | 564 |
| 3 (Overwintered) | 1 | 77 | 6 | 83 |
| 4 (Overwintered) | 0 | 117 | 47 | 164 |
| 5 (United casts) | 0 | 64 | 18 | 82 |
| 6 (United casts) small  4 frames in a Nuc |  | Not counted |  |  |
| 7 (Queenless) | 1 | 99 | 26 | 125 |

Michael Main

*Thank you, Michael, for this detailed and informative account of your experience with MAQS.*

*Michael told me personally that he feels happy to use these strips again, and so the feed-back from our members on this topic continues to be reassuring. Please continue to send in your own experiences, especially if you have found problems (eg loss of queens or anything else). - Ed.*

**National Honey Show, St George’s College, Weybridge, October 30th – November 1st**

This year there are some new classes at the Show, in addition to the microscopy class added last year:

Class 6: two jars of set honey and Class 41: one bottle of sweet and one bottle of dry mead.

It is also important to note that the proceeds of the raffle will go to support the cost of videoing the lectures. This has proved enormously popular and there have been 98,000 views of last year's lectures. So do please help by selling raffle tickets at your local events. Please also read the attachment which contains many more important details.

Fiona Matheson and Helen Cave email: [nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com](mailto:nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com)

*Do consider entering a class or two… or more.*

**A message from a member who is on holiday in Albania**

I was chatting to the guy in charge while my car was being cleaned and the conversation came round to beekeeping, as you might have suspected it would. On one of my visits to the car wash, he raised the subject of collecting swarms and how they do it in Albania. It appears that they use a smoker to puff smoke above the swarm while holding a box below the swarm, the bees do their usual thing of going down, only this time the down is into the nucleus box. They then turn the box over leaving a gap, so all the other bees can get in. They don’t shake or cut branches or anything, just smoke from a smoker, or from an old oily rag. The bees remain very calm and there is no need to suit up, even if they had the protective clothing.

I thought the idea of using a smoker was very good as it kept the bees calm, I’m not too sure about no protective clothing though. Any thoughts on this method?

Brian Foley

*I would always advise donning protective clothing especially when handling bees that I am meeting for the first time. I wonder if the bees in Albania are those used in large areas of other parts of Europe, ie Buckfast; these are exceptionally docile, and I have seen beekeepers in Germany, Austria and Luxembourg working full-sized Buckfast colonies in large apiaries with no protective clothing. This is the norm in those areas. As for the method of swarm collection, the usual beekeepers response seems appropriate: if it works for you, great - carry on! - Ed.*

**Book review – The Bees, by Laline Paull**

I was in WH Smiths looking for a particular cookery book when the above book caught my eye, on its own with its bright yellow and black book cover. The words on the back of the book intrigued me: ACCEPT, OBEY, SERVE.

I bought it and what a roller coaster read it was. Flora 717, a bee born into the lowest class and destined only to clean, finds she has talents not typical of her kin. Thistle guards at the hive entrance, Sisters Sage who think they are a bit special, pandering to their Malenesses (drones), the weather and what we humans do, all play a part in this fascinating read. There were times when I couldn't put the book down and other times I had to put it down. The paragraph with the spiders was one of sadness, Flora's encounter with a wasp gripping. The Fanning Hall, The Treasury, The Morgue all parts of the hive that I as a beekeeper could relate to. Her Royal Highness laying her eggs, her attendants and the loyalty of all the workers and foragers to keep the hive strong give a true sense of what it must be like to be part of a colony.

This is a wonderful book and one I didn't want to end. I now look at things in a different light since reading this book, especially just recently when I've been in the fields cutting down the prickly thistles!!!

Jackie Cox

*“The Bees” is available from all the usual booksellers and there is an e-version on Kindle. -Ed.*

**Pesticide that spares bees**

Spiders and snowdrops could hold the key to saving our bees. Newcastle university scientists have combined spider venom and a flower protein to make a bee-friendly pesticide. The bio-insecticide killed very few honeybees even when given in high doses… it quickly poisons pests such as caterpillars and greenflies.

*From a newspaper supplied by John Langdon, reporting an article in the ‘Proceedings of the Royal Society’.*

*The next two articles were kindly contributed by Tony Johnson:*

**Dancing bees reveal a better land**

Researchers have decoded the honeybees’ dance to determine which types of land insects prefer. Margaret Couvillon and her colleagues at the University of Sussex in Brighton observed foraging honeybees from three colonies for two years. By analysing more than 5000 waggle dances, the team found that the bees preferred tracts of land with greater stewardship, and nature reserves with abundant wild flowers, to land sown with organic seed mixes and frequently mowed. The authors suggest that bees could be used as indicators for providing environmental management.

*Abstracted from ‘Nature’ 29 May 2014.*

**Honeybees’ genes key to hive air conditioning**

As beekeepers know, a virgin queen mates with as many as 30 drones on her ‘wedding’ flight so that her colony will have as many as 30 fathers for her brood. Julia Jones of the University of Sidney, Australia, has found ‘that worker colonies with multiple fathers were much better at maintaining the optimum hive temperature than experimental colonies created so that each worker had the same father’.

*Abstracted from ‘Science’ (DOE:10.1126/science.1096340)*

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

This is a last reminder that if you want to sit any of the BBKA Modules 1-3 and 5-8 on 8 November then the closing date by which you must get your application to me is 23 September.

Please make sure that you download the latest application form from the BBKA website – you can find it under the tab ‘Learn’. You can pay the fee either by cheque payable to BBKA or if you want to pay by credit card, ring BBKA headquarters on 02476 696679, tell them you want to pay for an exam and which one, they will take your card details and give you a receipt number which you must write on the form before you send it to me. Please make sure you fill in the form fully and that you have the Certificate of Entry Qualification on the form signed by someone from your Division to confirm you comply with the Conditions of Entry. The fee for each module in November 2014 is £20 but this will rise by £5 in 2015. The application form can be found on the BBKA website under the tab ‘Learn about bees’. Completed forms and cheques payable to ‘BBKA’ if you are using that method of payment should be posted to:- Celia Perry, White Gables, 68 Broadhurst, Ashtead, Surrey KT21 1QF. Please don’t leave it until the last minute before sending me your form. Every year I have to return at least one if not more forms because they haven’t been filled in correctly and signatures are missing. I wouldn’t want you to miss the application deadline because of a simple error.

If you have any queries you can contact me by email at beeexams@hotmail.co.uk or phone on 0790 3991120.

Celia Perry, Surrey County Exam Secretary

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| **Dates for your diary** | | | | |
| Wednesday | 10th September | 7.30pm | 2 talks, Adam Leitch | p. 1 |
| Saturday | 13th September | 10am - 12 noon | Beekeeping Taster Session | August p. 4 |
| Saturday | 4th October | 11.00am-4.00pm | Dan Basterfield - Bee behaviour | p. 2 |
| Sunday | 12th October |  | Twickenham BKA Honey Show | August p. 5 |
| Thursday-Saturday | October 30th – November 1st | 3 days | National Honey Show, Weybridge | p. 3 |
| Saturday | November 15th | 2.30pm | Weybridge Division AGM | Details later |
| Saturday | December 6th |  | SBKA AGM, Reigate | Details later |

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| Teaching Apiary Manager  Sandra Rickwood - 01932 244326  email: sandrarickwood@btinternet.com | Nosema Clinic  Jim and Enid Joyce - 01932 225435  email: enid.w.joyce@gmail.com |
| Regional Bee Inspector  Julian Parker 07775 119469 | Swarms  Michael Main - 01932 849080 |
| LOCAL BEE ADVISERS | |
| Rob Chisholm - 01483 715779 | Geoff Cooper - 01932 242179 |
| Jim Joyce - 01932 225435 | Stephen Sore - 01784 465323 or 07535 319753 |