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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER: December 2014 [**www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com**](http://www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com/) |

***I hope that Christmas and 2015 bring you all you wish.***

***Editorial***

The remarkably mild and sunny autumn mentioned in the last editorial has continued through to the middle of November, so the bees have still been been very active, and we have had many new bees emerging from our hives as evidenced by their orienteering flights at around 12.00 noon. We need to continue to be aware of the possibility of high varroa populations in our hives as one result of these unusual conditions, and continue to monitor and treat as necessary – some suggestions are made for this in an article on page 2.

The coming of the small hive beetle looks as if it could be imminent, so the three items concerning the SHB in this newsletter and mention of them in the AGM Minutes seem to have appeared at an appropriate time. Do keep a small glass jar with a lid in your bee tool kit so that you can use it to keep for further inspection any suspicious insects that you come across in your hives. Remember two indicators that help to identify this 5-7mm long, blackish beetle: the **club-shaped antennae** and their **scurrying for a dark place** when the hive is opened. Also the great prize is still there for the first to see it in this country: an appearance on National TV…… cor!

**Questionnaire – your views on Weybridge Division are requested**

On behalf of the Committee, Michael Main has kindly prepared a questionnaire, which is being distributed to members as an attachment to this newsletter. It would be very much appreciated if you would ALL complete and return it, even if your views are already known to the committee. No names are requested, but if you would like to add yours, perhaps for a response, please do so. The findings will be given in a later newsletter.

**Teaching Apiary Working Party, Saturday December 13th from 10 am - reminder**

We should be extremely grateful for any time that you can give to help with the winter jobs at the Apiary. Please ring or email Sandra if you are able to come (01932 244326, sandyrickwood@gmail.com).

Thank you.

**AGM, Weybridge Division**

The Minutes of this meeting are attached.

**Update on the new Weybridge website**

I've updated the website with the local retail honey outlets - not many so far.  Please let me know if there are further places to add.

Ongoing work and styling on the site is being carried out. Martin Major (majormajor7@gmail.com)

**Bee Advisor needed**

We are sorry that Stephen Sore has decided to step down from this work and thank him for all the help that he has given to beekeepers in his area for a number of years. We are now looking for someone to replace Stephen, particularly serving the Staines / Wraysbury / Egham / Ashford, etc. area. Please think about offering to do this. It can be very interesting to try to come up with solutions to the problems brought to an advisor. It has been said that the best way to learn a subject is to teach it and I think this applies to a bee Advisor’s position as well. If you think that you would like to do this, please contact a committee member.

**Some suggestions for dealing with the late season high varroa levels (see October and November newsletters)**

Further to previous warnings from bee inspectors, others, and my own observations, I have heard from a number of our members as well as beekeepers in other areas that they are also currently measuring high varroa drops in their hives. This is obviously a serious situation as it means that our colonies may have large numbers of varroa-damaged bees next spring and consequently poor spring colonies. We need to be careful to use the most suitable treatments for this late time in the year to try to control this very unusual situation. There are now many more fairly new treatments available to us, some which have official (VMD) approval, and some which do not (although widely used). We need to be very cautious if deciding to use an unapproved product: it may well be that they are safe and beneficial in all respects, but the manufacturer is not prepared to spend the very large sum of money to obtain the necessary registration in this country. I suppose that if a product is approved for use in countries abroard, this may give us at least some indication of whether or not to use it on our bees.

It may be of some help to have a few thoughts on some treatments that I feel appropriate for the present time. I have used all of these at various times I but must emphasise that I am not making recommendations or offering advice; these thoughts are based on manufacturers’ information, what people have said to me, and my own experience and deductions.

Given the time of year, and the current varroa levels, it seems to me that the best option is *Hiveclean.* It can be used at any time of year in a temperature range of -1ºC to 25ºC. It does not have official approval in this country, but it does in some European contries and does not appear to contain any ingredients that are not used in other preparations, and it certainly knocks down the mites. One very experienced “monitor of mites” tells me that it becomes ineffective about 4 days after application rather than 7 hinted at by the manufacturer, but I have not yet attempted to verify that. (I suggest that those who use *Hiveclean* check this). The thymol-based varroacides (eg *Apiguard, Apilife Var, Exomite Apis*) should not be used now as they have a minimum effective temperature of 15ºC. Synthetic pyrethroids (eg *Apistan and Bayvarol)* should only be used if you have checked the colonies for resistant mites which we know to have been in the area. MAQ strips (*formic acid*) appear to be the ideal choice for several reasons, but there are suggestions that they kill queens, and to risk this in November or December could lead to disaster for a colony as they obviously would be unable to raise a mated queen so late in the year. For my main treatment this year I used, for the first time, the long established *Apivar* (amitraz)strips that are officially approved. These can be used at any time of the year, but they can only be prescribed by a vet, and I thought that this could be a difficult process. However, one of our members, Peter Webb, kindly provided me with details of a vet in Dumfries who is also a beekeeper and he proved to be very helpful and prompt in supplying *Apivar.* I have found no reason not to use it again another year, and know of no reason for it not to be used to deal with the present situation; however it may not be advisable to use it more than once in the same season (does anyone know otherwise?). It can be left in the hive for up to 10 weeks - an advantage during this extended autumn. Contact details for the vet are as follows: tel: 01387 759111; e-mail: bees@bridgevets.com. The only other varroacide of which I have experience, but which again is said to risk queen loss (which I have not suffered) is oxalic acid, normally applied late in December.

If any of you have used other varroa treatments, do let me have details of how you have found them, especially their effectiveness in knocking down the mites and any effect on the queens. The more we know of beekeepers’ actual experience the better will be our own judgments on how to control Varroa*.*

A few people in our Division have told me that are not treating for Varroa in any way at all. It would be great to hear of any long term success, or otherwise, that they have. All comments and reports will be published with or without the name of the contributor as desired.

 Geoff Cooper

**General Husbandry Training Day**

This is a one-day course run by Surrey BKA to prepare those who have kept bees for 5 years and passed the Basic Assessment, for the General Husbandry Module. It will be run by Master Beekeeper Alistair Welch on Saturday 17th January. An attachment gives full details.

**Quiz night with fish and chip supper at Jacob’s Well, Guildford on Friday January 23rd at 7.30 pm**

We are invited to this event that has been organised by the Guildford Division of Surrey BKA. The £12.00 ticket covers the cod and chips or veggie burger. Booking is essential; ring 01483 275949 or e-mail m.bainbridge@btinternet.com; further details are on the attachment.

**Yellow pollen in October (see November editorial)**

Two suggestions have been made as to the source of the bright yellow pollen: ivy (of which there has been a great deal collected this year) and Mahonia. We have looked through a number of text books and web sites but neither pollen is shown as bright yellow. However, compaction on the bees’ legs and in the comb as well as the amount of moisture present in the pollen can have an influence on the colour.

Our bees were still bringing in loads of the bright yellow pollen yesterday (30th), but the ivy has finished flowering now and the fruits are developing. Any more ideas, beside ivy and Mahonia?

My thanks to Rob Chisholm, Andrew Halstead, Richard Hignett (who supplied a photo of a bee on Mahonia, taken on 22nd November), Sandra Rickwood, and Marion C. for their input.

**Free Webinar about Small Hive Beetle**

We are re-launching the BeeCraft Hangouts on **Wednesday, 19th December at 8.00pm to discuss the Small Hive Beetle**.

**Jamie Ellis,** Associate Professor of the University of Florida, will be our guest.  He graduated in 2004 with a PhD in Entomology from Rhodes University in South Africa with his thesis on the Ecology and Control of Small Hive Beetle.

We have been extremely fortunate to have him join us, so definitely not a Hangout to miss. It will last for approximately one hour and all you need to do is click on this link:

[http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/hangouts/](http://surreybeekeeper.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=1b3026ffe9de637a5feece3be&id=fa06410947&e=a00887cebc)

This will take you to our Hangout page where you can join in our live webinar hosted by James, our Marketing Manager.  **You can email questions to our team before the Hangout, or watch it live and ask questions on the page**.  In case you really can't join us live, we will record it for you to watch later, again through our website.

The members of your Association are encouraged to join this international online meeting of Beekeepers**.**

Wendy, *Bee Craft*

**Help to stop the beetle**

I am a Beekeeper in sunny East Kilbride just outside Glasgow, and I've been really concerned over the recent Small Hive|Beetle outbreak in Italy & Sicily (and possibly beyond). Defra suggest  the likely transmission to the UK will be via a package of bees or beetle eggs in a queen cage. Rotten fruit is also attractive the adult beetle. However I don't believe that this beetle will come here on plants or fruit. (If this was likely it would have been here years ago). I've started a petition to the UK government asking for a ban on imported bees until the outbreak is eradicated. This has gained some 800 signatures so far.

I would be really grateful if you would pass this on to the folks on your site for them to consider signing.

The Scottish BA are also pushing for a ban so the more people we can get behind this the better.

I have just created the petition "Stop the Small Hive Beetle spreading to Britain" and wanted to ask if you could add your name to it. I know it's a pain to fill these things out but it does put pressure on the Government to act. This campaign means a lot to me and the more support we can get behind it, the better chance we have of succeeding. You can read more and sign the petition here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-small-hive-beetle-spreading-to-britain>.

P.S. Can you also take a moment to share the petition with others? It's really easy – all you need to do is forward this email or share this link on Facebook or Twitter: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-small-hive-beetle-spreading-to-britain>

Please take 2 minutes out of your day to sign this; your bees will be grateful. Bill Rintoul

*You have to admire Bill for his initiative and deep feelings on this matter. If you are not yet familiar with the horrors of the SHB in your hives, do look it up without delay on the BBKA website or elsewhere. I feel sure that you would then be only to willing to respond to Bill’s appeal and add your name to the petition.*

**Beetle Blaster - A device to control Small Hive Beetles**

This device is marketed by VITA (producer of *Apistan, Apiguard* and other very reputable bee products).

The Beetle Blaster is a low cost (£1.50 from Mann Lake), simple and very environmentally friendly device that can alert beekeepers to the presence of SHB and help to control its numbers. A plastic trough filled with food grade oil is inserted in the hive and SHBs present will be attracted to it as a hiding place and trapped. The beekeeper can then dispose of the trapped beetles. Since the beetles tend to attack the periphery of a colony first, the 23 cm long traps are designed to hang between outer frames in the brood box and thereby have minimal impact upon normal honeybee activity. For more information refer to the VITA website.

**Making Beeswax Products – a workshop with Jim Ryan**

To be held by the Wisborough Green Division of the West Sussex BKA Sunday 1st and Monday 2nd February 2014 from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm. It looks to be a real bargain at only £10 per person to cover expenses. Jim Ryan comes from Co Tipperary and is a very good demonstrator of making beeswax products.

The content of each day may be different, but Jim will begin both by cleaning wax, then making such things as furniture polish, furniture cream, lip balm, skin cream, moisture bars, soap, etc. He will also look at using honey in recipes – honey lip balm, honey soap, etc. There may also be some alternative recipes that do not contain nut oils.

An attachment gives full details.

**A case history of treatment for anaphylactic reaction to bee venom: Part 3**

Not the end but the beginning of the end

Today was injection number 10, there are only 12 weekly injections so the end is in sight. Yes after that is three years of monthly visits but at least the weekly ones are nearly at end. Today’s injection number 10 takes me over a single bee sting level and to date for the last few weeks my only reaction has been a little bit of itchiness around the injection area both on the afternoon of the injection and the following morning. I have learnt just to put some antihistamine cream on the area and that seems to do the trick. I am thus starting to believe that getting back to bee keeping is a reality.

So the next challenge is of course convincing the wife that all will be safe. As I mentioned before it is amazing how many other bee keepers I have found/been introduced to that have also gone through the process and this has helped convince her all will be safe.

Another step in that process, though, is I have managed to find a Bee Suit specially designed for people like myself, or should I say designed for people who need to convince others that they will get very few bee stings through a suit (or if you just don’t like getting stung). Made by BJ Sherriff it comes with a net foam lining that is 3.5mm thick, then the thickness gets taken up to 6mm with the air space in between the foam and the outer polycotton fabric; so the sting, even if it gets through the fabric, is held away from your skin. In addition the outer polycotton fabric is a very tight smooth weave without fibres that a bee can get its legs caught up in so that it can come and go easily. It also has a rib in the top to stop your hood collapsing or blowing back onto your face, ribs extended down to the chest so the hood stays off your head, side protection of a sandwich of fabric so if you look to the right or the left your face is not exposed, a foam layer at the back of the hood and all around the collar and finally, which the wife likes, an Epipen pocket on the leg. So yes one is about to be ordered, made to measure to ensure that the wife feels I am good and safe. I have though tried one on and whilst it is slightly warmer than a normal suit it is no way restrictive I found.

The one bit of good news I suppose is that I had my anaphylactic shock when I was relatively young and fit. It seems the older you are, or the less fit you are the worse the anaphylactic shock can affect you. So two more injections to go and that is then equal to two full bee stings, the level that originally put me into shock. However even at this stage I have started to feel confident enough to do what I am told all good bee keepers do in winter and start making and repairing equipment so a lot of time is being spent in the shed in the hope/expectation of acquiring bees again in the early spring.

David Parker

*The news of Sherriff’s new suit is very interesting. It’s good to hear of David’s positive experience of his treatment.*

**A request for help with a top bar hive**

Has any one got a top hung bee hive full size? Could I visit it with you to see one working? I have made one and will put bees in it next year. Theory is very good, but seeing it in action will show me where I have gone wrong. I will not interfere but will ask questions. I am a new bee keeper (next year) and even Thornes said it is a hard learning curve. I have made the hive as well as a queen excluder, a spacer, and a feeder box of my design.

My telephone number is 01932 845401 with an answer phone. I am a fully paid up member of Weybridge Bee Society.

Hopefully, if  no one has one but know of someone who has, can you pass my name and tel number.

Chris Burnett

**Surrey BKA AGM this Saturday, December 6th at 2.00 pm - reminder**

If you are free, do consider attending this event that is for all SBKA members.

The meeting will be followed by tea and a talk by Margaret Ginman, the secretary of the Bee Farmers Association.

Venue: Mickleham Village Hall, Dell Close, Mickleham, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6EE.

The meeting will be hosted by Reigate Division.

**Winter Meetings**

Please make sure you have made a note of the dates of these, the first being on Wednesday, January 14th, when Heather Hawker will talk about the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers.

The dates for February and March are the last 3 items in the table below.

There is one vacany for a speaker at the short presentation evening on February 13th; please let me know if you would be prepared to fill the slot - a 15-minute talk on any aspect of bees or beekeeping. One of you must be able to do that!

Thank you, Marion C. (01932 242179, coopergm56@btinternet.com)

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Saturday | December 6th | 2.00pm | SBKA AGM, Reigate | p. 5 |
| Saturday | December 13th | 10am | Teaching Apiary | p. 1 |
| Wednesday  | December 19th | 8.00pm | BBKA Hangout on small hive beetle | p. 3 |
| Monday | January 12th | 7.30-9.30pm | Beginners’ Course starts |  |
| Wednesday | January 14th | 7.30pm | Heather Hawker – Wax Chandlers | Oct. p. 1 |
| Saturday | January 17th | Full details given on attachment | Training preparation for the General Husbandry module  | p. 2 |
| Friday | January 23rd | 7.30-10.30pm | Quiz and Fish and Chips Supper, Guildford | p. 3 |
| Saturday | January 31st | 1-day course | Bee Improvement | Nov. p. 3 |
| Sunday and Monday  | February 1st and 2nd  | 9.30am to 5.30pm | Making beeswax products Wisborough Green | p. 4 |
| Friday  | February 13th | 7.30pm | Short presentations by members | Oct. p. 1 |
| Wednesday  | March 11th | 7.30pm | Alan Rudland – Bee diseases | Oct. p. 1 |
| Wednesday  | March 25th | 7.30pm | Michael Main - Swarms | Oct. p. 2 |

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