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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER: February 2015 [**www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com**](http://www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com/) |

***Editorial***

In this issue you will see minor changes to the format of the newsletter; later issues will be in ‘perfect’ order, but a start has been made this month. The entries of items for sale will be collected together in a section at the end of the newsletter; items wanted will be similarly treated in another section, as will requests and offers relating to apiary sites. Notices of future events will also be shown collected together in a group.

As has generally been the case in the past, reports of past events will follow the editorial, then there will be the section listing details of forthcoming events, with those run by our Weybridge Division first, followed by Surrey BKA events, then others in the wider beekeeping world.

If you would like to advertise in the newsletter, please let me have the exact wording, including the price (or offers or whatever) and your contact details. If you do not have means of typing, let me have it in handwriting, and I will type it.

May I remind you of another, perhaps more important topic? Do keep a very careful eye on the stores in your colonies from now on. After that mild winter, there is a greater than normal chance of starvation in February and March, to say nothing of the potential for higher than usual varroa populations if you did not watch for this and treat after the mild November and December.

**Report of Winter Meeting: talk on the Wax Chandlers**

At the meeting held on 14 January, Heather Hawker, The Master of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers gave an account of the livery company’s origins and history. From the earliest times, beeswax has been used to make candles, tapers and torches, and for other processes, such as casting of metal objects by the lost wax process. Beeswax candles have always been expensive and were primarily for use by churches and wealthy people; lesser folk lit their homes with smelly tallow candles made from animal fat. The wax chandlers in the City of London got together to form an association that was partly to maintain standards in the trade but also to provide training and mutual support. The first record of an apprenticeship in the wax trade was in 1291 when John de Benstede was apprenticed to John le Cirger. A ‘cirger’ is an old name for a candle maker, with the term ‘wax chandler’ not coming into use until the 1330s.

In 1319 there were 11 wax traders in London. During the Black Death in 1348-50, most of the wax chandlers died, possibly because they were involved with funerals and embalming. However, business picked up afterwards as funeral rituals became more elaborate. The Wax Chandlers were granted their Royal Charter by Richard III in 1484. This permitted them to appoint a Master and two wardens, to acquire property and make their own bye-laws. Premises were acquired in what is now Gresham St, EC4 and this remains the address of the Wax Chandlers, although the building has been replaced several times as a result of fires. The Wax Chandlers will be providing candles for the service when Richard III’s bones are reinterred.

In 1516 the Court of Aldermen decided upon the order of precedence of the various London livery companies. The Wax Chandlers are ranked as twentieth in the order of precedence. Heather noted that the Tallow Chandlers are number 21. 1538 was bad news for the beeswax candle trade, when Henry VIII set about dismantling the monasteries and later banned the use of candles in churches.

The Wax Chandlers continue to this day but their role changed during the 19th century as alternative methods of lighting buildings became available. They currently support beekeeping by sponsoring the National Honey Show and giving prizes for the best candidates in some of the BBKA examinations. They make awards from a charitable fund to support community ventures for young people, and have provided funds to help train people who want to become professional beekeepers.

A fuller account of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers and its history can be seen on their website, <http://www.waxchandlers.org.uk>. At the end of her talk, Heather answered a wide range of questions about the Wax Chandlers and her role as Master. She was presented with four jars of local honey as a ‘thank you’ for the talk.

The talk was warmly received by the audience of about 40 consisting of some of our own members, some of our current students and some visitors.

Andrew Halstead

**Report: Bee Improvement for all**

This one day course on Saturday 31 January, was aimed at all beekeepers with the objective of explaining the benefits of adopting a bee improvement plan and introducing a range of techniques that can be used. About 80 attended the the course, including at least six Weybridge members. A substantial buffet lunch was provided as well as tea and coffee throughout the day.

The speaker was Roger Patterson, a very knowledgeable beekeeper of over 50 years’ experience, based in nearby West Sussex. He started with a number of themes: bees today are not as gentle as they used to be, queen imports are not a panacea, locally adapted bees perform best, beekeepers need to decide what characteristics they desire in their bees and work towards promoting those characteristics, bee breeding can be simple and most of all fun.

A number of techniques were introduced for assessing your bees, selecting the desirable ones to breed from, starting queen cells, allowing the queen cells to develop and finally allowing the virgin queen to emerge and mate and come into lay. Interspersed in the techniques was a wealth of practical details and tips gleaned from years of practical experience.

I attended the course wanting to improve my techniques, and pick up some new ones for queen rearing that I could practice this coming season, as I agree with Roger’s point that beekeepers should be self-sufficient in queens without needing to buy in new queens every season. I came away with some knowledge that will undoubtedly help me in those directions, but more importantly that our queen rearing can very easily improve our bees.

Martin Major

*Please read on…*

**Bee Improvement – anyone interested?**

Prompted by the Bee Improvement course (see above) I have been thinking about how I can develop my bee keeping skills. In past years I’ve attempted queen rearing, but in a half hearted way which has given mixed results. So this year I want to try queen rearing properly and wondered if any other members are interested and would like to get involved.

My aim is to select a method of queen rearing to suit my needs, plan it out, execute the plan this season and then at the end of the season review the results to see how I got on and what I can improve for next season.

It would be interesting and educational if other members were interested in doing the same so we could compare methods, approach and results.

So if there is sufficient interest I would be happy to arrange a meeting at the start of the season, where members (or small teams who decide to work together) can describe their objectives and plans and another at the end of the season where results can be shared and reviewed. Additionally there may be opportunities during the season to witness some of the practical steps in our chosen approaches.

If you are interested please let me know (martin@tectoday.com). If there is sufficient interest I will arrange the necessary meetings.

Martin Major

*I think that this is a very good idea; it will provide mutual stimulation, encouragement, help and sharing of knowledge and new experiences and (hopefully) show that queen rearing is not so difficut as we may think.*

*Thank you for this initiative, Martin. – Ed.*

**Waitrose Weybridge, a Community Matter**

Waitrose in Weybridge have selected Weybridge Beekeepers as one of their Community Matters charities for this February. For those of you unfamiliar with the scheme, when you shop in Waitrose you will be given some tokens, and as you leave the store you can decide which of three charities to support, by putting your tokens in the appropriate container. At the end of the month a sum of money is divided between the charities in proportion to the tokens collected. So please support us this February if you shop at Waitrose in Weybridge, and please tell your friends and get the word out.

Martin Major

**Why are bees disappearing? an excellent talk on the current situation**

This is a recording of a live presentation by Dr Marla Spivak, who is Professor of Apiculture at the University of Minnesota. It can be heard on:

<http://www.ted.com/talks/marla_spivak_why_bees_are_disappearing?language=en>

It is well worth seeing by all beekeepers, but especially new beekeepers and current students.

*Thanks to one of our current students, Franck Crosnier, for bringing this to our attention. – Ed.*

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**Future Events**

**Winter meeting: Short presentations by members, Friday 13th February, 7.30pm**

This is the latest one of a form of meeting that, by popular request, has become a regular feature of our winter programme. For the information of new members, these meetings consist of short presentations (about 15 minutes each) by several of our own members on a topic of their choice. Each talk is followed by questions, comments, and discussion. The meetings have been found to be stimulative and a good way of sharing information and experiences. This meeting will be at our usual venue, ie St. Peter’s Church Hall, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA.

This year there will be five talks:

Social wasps, by Andrew Halstead

‘Some heretical thoughts on beekeeping’, by Geoff Cooper

Oxalic acid sublimation for varroa control, by Tim Hutchinson

Shook swarms, by Rob Chisholm

"That's another fine mess you got me into, Stanley", by Brian Foley

Marion C.

**Talk on honey bee diseases, their recognition and control. Wednesday March 11th, 7.30 pm**

As first mentioned in the October 2014 newsletter our Seasonal Bee Inspector will speak on this subject at one of the sessions in our Beginners’ Beekeeping Course. As usual, all of our members are invited, and indeed encouraged, to attend. As well as brushing up their knowledge of this very important topic, members

would have the opportunity of meeting our students, our Seasonal Bee Inspector and also sampling the flavour of this course (and the drinks and cakes) which is in its 6th consecutive year. The meeting begins at 7.30 pm sharp and will be at our usual meeting place of St Peters’ Church Hall, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA.

**10th Surrey Bee Day Saturday 14 March from 9.30 am**

The speakers from the first Surrey Bee Day have been invited to ‘continue’ their presentations 10 years on and reflect on the developments since the first Bee Day. Tickets £22 including lunch from Sandra Rickwood. Full details from rickwoodsbka@gmail.com or 01932 244326.

**Candle Making Course at East Surrey Bees, Sunday 22nd February 2015**

This day course is designed for anyone who wants to make decorative candles with beeswax.  Starting from collecting wax from your hive, through the initial cleaning processes, to the production of clean slab wax blocks and making rolled, moulded and dipped candles.

We also look at safety issues, the equipment needed, showing at the local division honey shows and briefly the history of beeswax candles.

We provide all the equipment and materials needed for you to produce your own candles during the day because this is essentially a practical course and you get to take the candles you’ve made away with you.

The day starts at 10am and finishes at 4pm and there is a ploughman’s type lunch provided along with tea and coffee available all day. Cost for the day’s tuition, lunch and all the candles that they make is £60.

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

0208 6607753.

Celia and David Rudland

*Knowing of the extensive flood damage that Celia and David suffered last year, we were glad to see their following addition to this notice and send them our best wishes:*

*‘Slightly delayed from the date advertised on our website originally, we hope, after a very long year, to be moving back into our newly refurbished home very soon!’ – Ed.*

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

*Michael Main has sent the following summary of the responses:*

Firstly I would like to thank all those members who completed the questionnaire I circulated. I would like to apologise to those members, that have Apples or tablets, who had problems in opening and completing the forms. A couple of members suggested an online survey tool that we will use if we try to do a survey in future, which should eliminate this issue. We had a couple of questions regarding hosting meetings and Buzz groups where members indicated that either they would be prepared to host a meeting or join a Buzz group. However, as the questionnaire was anonymous, we are unable to follow these up. Therefore, if you are one of these members please send me an email indicating which you want and I will send it to the appropriate person to action it. My address is shown in the contacts list at the end of this newsletter.

The full analysis of the results will be discussed by the committee in the next couple of weeks and we hope to modify our programme for the forthcoming year in the light of your replies. Here are a couple of conclusions from the survey.

97% of members are happy with the location of the venue of the winter meetings although the acoustics and parking could be better. (*There is very good parking less than 5 minutes walk away; it is free after 6.00 pm. To reach this car park from the Church Hall, continue along Burwood Road for about 50 yards towards Hersham with the hall on your right, turn right into Pleasant Place and after another 50 yards turn left into New Berry Lane. The car park is on the left. – Ed*).

The most popular activities in the list were Queen rearing, Disease and Pollen identification, achieving about 80% each.

Least popular were mead making and cooking with honey around 30% each.

Other activities wanted were – a social gathering at the end of the season with a barbecue, A visit to a Bee Farmer to see the operation, and Beekeeping for children.

66% of respondents would be interested in an improver’s course.

The majority of members are not interested in having our own honey show, nor in entering other shows.

Obviously we will not be able to include everything in this year’s programme but we will certainly start to reflect your wishes and will have a theme included with some of this year’s garden meetings.

There will be more feedback next month after our committee meeting.

Michael Main

*Thank you, Michael, for the time and effort that you have devoted to this survey. We look forward to reading your further analysis of the questionnairs. I think that it would be useful to regard this as an open-ended exercise. The committee is always glad to receive suggestions and constructive criticism that would lead to the development and improvement of our association. – Ed.*

**An appeal for help for John Hamer**

Blackhorse Apiaries in Woking was damaged by fire last year.  They are in the process of rebuilding and would welcome help from anyone who could spare a few hours during the week or on Saturdays to help paint, tidy up and get the classroom ready for teaching.  If you would like to help, just turn up, or contact them via Facebook at:  Rebuilding Blackhorse Apiaries.

Anne Miller

**Nosema Testing - Is it really necessary? (Feedback on the Article by Rob Chisholm last month)**

‘I have just been reading some of the newsletter articles and in particular the one from Rob on Nosema, all interesting stuff.

I was interested in Rob's comment about a "Shook Swarm" being his preferred method to combat the threat of nosema. Yes, it will obviously work, but it does have a downside in preference to a "Bailey Comb Change". With a shook swarm, by the very nature of the exercise you are shaking bees that have nosema onto new comb, it that process the bees will naturally get agitated and so possibly will defecate on the new comb. By using the "Bailey" method either for a strong colony or weak the bees are transferred rather more quietly onto clean comb.

Speaking with an exam board hat on, the Bailey method would be preferred to the shook swarm.’

Alastair Welch (Farnham Division of Surrey BKA)

**Honey contamination**

The BBKA and the Environment Agency have requested examples of known contamination of honey with sugar and other residues in order to seek ways in which such contamination could be stopped.

If you have any experience of contamination of honey please contact:-

Dr David Aston, Chair BBKA Technical and Environmental Committee at David.aston@bbka.org.uk

**Astonishing number of flowers in bloom on New Year’s Day**

‘Botanists have been stunned by the results of their annual hunt for plants in flower on New Year’s Day. They say according to textbooks there should be between 20 and 30 species in flower. This year there were 368 in bloom’. This and much more will be found on:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30754443>

*Contributed by David Parker*

**Commercial bees threaten wild bees, say researchers**

The trade in bees used for honey or to pollinate crops could have a devastating effect on wild bees and other insects, say an Exeter team of scientists. This is the central message of an article dated 19 January from the BBC website which is based on areport ofan article published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology.* There is little new in this article, and I was surprised to see the statement that “wild bee colonies can no longer be found in England or Wales, thought to have been wiped out by disease”. I know this has been suggested, but I do not think it is proven. Even ‘reliable’, sources (eg the BBC) may not always get it right.

*Original article contributed by David Parker*

**Seville oranges and marmalade**

The Seville oranges are in stock so it is Marmalade making time again, if you search the web there are quite a few recipes for Honey Marmalade around – great way to use up cloudy honey.  Last one is a pressure cooker method, much easier.

<http://rurification.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/honey-vanilla-orange-marmalade.html>

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/members/forum.php?t=3715>

<http://kathybrowngarden.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/honey-marmalade.html>

<http://www.recipelion.com/Preserving/Orange-Honey-Marmalade>

<http://beespoke.info/2013/12/02/honey-marmalade-recipe/>

David Parker

**FOR SALE**

Neither the Newsletter editor nor Surrey Beekeepers Association takes any responsibility for the accuracy of any of the following entries, or the condition of any of the items advertised. If considering purchasing bees or second hand equipment, the prospective purchaser should take great care to ensure that the bees are not diseased, and that second hand equipment is sterilised before use. Inexperienced purchasers should take an knowledgeable beekeeper with them.

**Promotional offer on beekeeping equipment, Epsom Division, Saturday 28th March**

Please find attached a flyer advertising a promotional offer on beekeeping equipment open to all Surrey members. This ‘One Day Spectacular’ will take place in the shop at Epsom’s apiary in Ewell.

Liz Knee

**2015 National Nucs**

Available to pre-order now. Depending on the weather, these will be available from late May/June onwards.

Your nuc will contain the following:

 • 2015 queen marked with this year’s colour (blue). These queens are reared from our own gentle local honey producing stock in Surrey.

 • 5 National Hoffman frames with brood in all stages and stores. The brood and bees will be from the queen supplied with the nuc.

 • Correx Travelling box.

We will keep you informed of when your nuc is expected to be ready. Cash on collection or by bank transfer prior to collection.

All nucs are collection only or local delivery within 5 miles of Chertsey.

Each 2015 nuc is £170.

Unfortunately all our overwintered nucs are spoken for, but if you would like to be added to our reserve list in case anyone drops out, please email me at the address below.

2015 local reared queens should be available mid to end May £30. Queen will be marked, but please ask if you would like the queen clipped.

Email: info@beehappyproducts.co.uk or call Tim Hutchinson 07954988136

**Auction of bees and beekeeping equipment : Saturday 11th April at Mickleham, Surrey**

Run by Reigate Division. Viewing on the day from 10.00am. Full details can be found on the Reigate website  <http://reigatebeekeepers.org.uk/2014/12/10/3394/>

*Notified by David Parker*

**Foundation at 25% discount**

This is the Premier grade foundation currently supplied by Thorne’s; it is not off the back of the proverbial lorry. Over the years I have accumulated an excess amount of old wax in my shed and felt it would be beneficial to take it to Thorne’s for conversion and sell it to members as foundation. New beekeepers may not know that Thorne’s supply only Premier grade foundation in return for traded-in wax (ie not their cheaper standard grade). It is interesting to note that the highly respected Kemble Bee Supplies (KBS) supply only the top-grade foundation at a similar price to that from Thorne’s. The prices charged will be 75% of the prices shown in the current Thorne’s catalogue so, for example, on a pack of 10 sheets of deep foundation (BS Deep) there would be a saving of about £1, a better grade of wax and a saving on fuel to drive to Thorne’s at Windsor or another beekeeping supplier.

If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please get in touch with me with your order.

Geoff Cooper

**WANTED**

I am looking for good quality second hand WBC hives and hive parts.  At the moment I’m particularly looking for a couple of bottom space WBC brood boxes to scrub and clean up for the new season.

Christopher Edgley cedgley@hotmail.com 07932 008785

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Friday  | 6th February |   | Anaphylaxis &AAI Management for Beekeepers | Dec. p. 2 |
|  Friday  | February 13th | 7.30pm | Short presentations by members |  p. 3 |
| Saturday | February 21st |  | Anaphylaxis &AAI Management for Beekeepers | Dec. p. 2 |
| Sunday | February 22nd | 10am-4.00pm | East Surrey Bees, Candle making | p. 4 |
| Saturday | February 28th | 9.30am-4.30pm | West Sussex BKA Convention, Pulborough | Jan p. 4 (not p 3) |
| Wednesday  | March 11th | 7.30pm | Alan Rudland – Bee diseases | p. 3 |
| Saturday  | 14th March | 9.30am-4.00pm | Surrey Bee Day | p. 3 |
| Wednesday  | March 25th | 7.30pm | Michael Main - Swarms | Oct. p. 2Details later |
| Saturday | April 11th | 10.00 am | Reigate Division, Auction Mickleham | p. 6 |
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