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

***A very Happy Christmas to you all!***

***Editorial***

Most of our members are not trained biologists, but we do try to make some sense of the information that is put before us on bee-related topics The highly technical nature of some of this information is often presented to us by journalists or science writers who, by the nature of their work, have to be “jacks of all trades”, and while no doubt they do their best with unfamiliar material, they may not have any better understanding of what they try to pass on to us than we do ourselves. Also I doubt if we have access or the time and inclination to struggle with the original articles in top scientific journals such as *Nature* or *Scientific American.* We may become aware that some people or groups have vested interests. In addition we are often presented with information which, while being correct in the writer’s opinion, or while being ‘truthful’ is skillfully biased (don’t most of our politicians spend much of their public lives doing this?). Indeed this tendency can be seen even in presentations by highly knowledgeable scientists who can be convinced that their view is unquestionably right, and surreptitiously aim to convince us as well. I sometimes think it would be interesting if some of our current scientists and politicians who initiate actions that have far-reaching consequences could return in, say, 150 years to see the results of their decisions (a much greater time than was required for DDT). As I have said before, I think that all we can do is listen to and read as much as we can with an open mind (is this possible for us poor mortals?), think about it, then try to come up with a balanced conclusion.

A very important current topic which illustrates these various aspects is the use (or not) of neonicotinoids. Some of the latest findings and conclusions can be found, together with some historical background, in an article published in the *World of Chemistry* andbased on articles in *Nature.* The article is highly readable by non-biologicical beekeepers and is summarised on page 4.

**Important letter from the Chairman – Permanent site for Weybridge Beekeepers**

Dear Weybridge Beekeepers,

As you will know from having read the email sent to all members in April this year, from a lengthy item in the June newsletter and also from my comments at the AGM, we are actively searching for a site that would be suitable for our beekeeping activities.

A Working Group for taking this project forward has been set up recently and we are seriously searching now, with a view to making a decision on a possible site in a few months’ time. There have been a few suggestions, but none to date that meet as many of the requirements as we would like, so we would very much appreciate input from members who may know of a site that could be suitable.

Please feel free to make preliminary enquiries yourself and report on these, or to pass on details to me for the Group to investigate.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Andrew Halstead

Here is a slightly modified list and a handy table of requirements that have been prepared by members of the Working Group:

*The following criteria would be essential:*

* Access at any time during daylight hours
* Access for vehicles
* Parking
* Secure
* Firm ground with no flood risk
* Space for a large shed and 10 colonies, ie about 20 x 30 m
* Possible to obtain permission to erect shed
* Low risk of conflict of use with surroundings
* Natural screening or permission to erect it
* Low risk of vandalism
* Located within the area covered by the Weybridge Division

*The following, whilst not essential, are desirable for an ideal site:*

* Water, electricity
* Toilets
* Meeting room
* Storage facilities (more secure than a shed)
* Ability to build/adapt a room as an extractor room

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| **Requirement** | **Minimum** | **Desirable** |
| Access | Daylight hours |   |
| Parking | 10+ cars or nearby | Hard surface parking |
| Frequency of Visits | During the summer weekly sometimes twice a week in the evenings and sometimes at weekends to run courses.  October to March once a month. |   |
| Space | In addition to car parking, room to put 10 hives in an area of say 30 – 50 feet square, but does not need to be square, could be along the edge of something or unusual shape as long as it is flat enough for a bee hive to stand on. | More room the better |
| Security | Site can be made in some way secure with fence or other screening. | Not seen from road, some form of security possible. |
| Land | Flat, no flood risk, not dense wood. |   |
| Shed | Space to erect 10’ x 8’ shed for storage. | Any sort of building that could be utilized. |
| Club House |   | Place to put a portacabin or two or any building that could be utilized, refurbished. |
| Utilities |   | Connection possible, particularly water.  Electricity can be through renewables. |
| Location | Within Weybridge Division area but this goes from Woking to Molesey. | Centre of Division is the Hersham area |

**REMINDERS**

**Winter Meeting, Tuesday 19th January**

A talk on oxalic acid sublimation for the control of varroa at Epsom Division’s hut – see pages 3-4 for details.

**Surrey BKA Training Day, Saturday 23rd January**

Sandra Rickwood has sent a reminder about this event (Preparing honey and wax), for which places are still available. See Gil Bray’s enthusiastic note on page 4 about one of the presenters, and the attachment for full details.

­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­**REPORTS**

**Weybridge Division AGM**

This was attended by 27 members. Those responsible gave reports on the various activities of the Division.

The serving officers and committee members were re-elected. There was discussion on the proposed permanent site for the association, and a Working Group to develop this has been set up. All of the latest details are given on pages 1 and 2.

The Honey Tasting Competition result was a tie – the samples brought by Andrew Halstead and Jane Hunter each attracted the same number of votes. They will each hold the Les Gray Trophy for six months – congratulations!

**Surrey BKA AGM**

This was hosted by our Division at Cobham Village Hall on Saturday 28th November. Those who attended from other Divisions were complimentary about the arrangements – and the tea! Official thanks have been received from Surrey BKA. The meeting concluded with a very interesting, illustrated talk on Bumblebees by our Chairman, Andrew Halstead, who was in his usual good form.

**Central Association of Bee-keepers weekend Conference in Kenilworth**

Four of our members were among the 50 or so attendees at this annual event, where we enjoyed lectures on a wide variety of bee-related topics that included some pre-publication information from researchers. The date is already set for 2016 – the third weekend of November, at the same conference centre, where the accommodation and food were excellent. Do consider attending.

**FUTURE EVENTS**

**Winter Meetings**

These have been arranged as follows:

Tuesday 19th January – Talk / discussion of Oxalic acid sublimation for Varroa control – see below.

Friday 5th February – Short presentations by one visiting speaker and three of our own members.

Tuesday 29th March – A talk on ‘Climate, weather and bees’, by Howard Lawes (Sue’s husband)

Please make a note of these dates; further details will be given in later newsletters.

Tuesday 19th January, 7.45 pm

Last month some of our members listened to Liz Knee, Chair of Epsom Division, give an excellent presentation on Oxalic acid sublimation for the control of varroa. This method has been used by a few beekeepers for some time, but has recently gained popularity and appears to have several significant advantages; some of our members are already practicing the system, and it is highly recommended by Professor Ratnieks of the University of Sussex. Before using the method there are various important things to know, and this presentation will cover these aspects.All who attended Liz’s talk were very impressed and it was suggested that I invite her as a speaker for one of our Winter Meetings. Booking a Hall locally was a problem, so Liz suggested that we may like to go to Epsom. *Please read on…*

After initially rejecting this suggestion (too far away, not a truly Weybridge meeting, etc.), I thought that, in view of our current interest in finding a permanent site, it could be interesting / helpful / encouraging to see Epsom Division’s premises, which they have been developing over many years. A show of hands at the AGM indicated some support for this idea and this week the majority of the Committee members decided that we should go ahead with the proposal.

So – here are some instructions:

Epsom’s base is behind **The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Epsom KT17 2AF.** At the entrance there is a white, oval ‘Upper Mill’ sign. It is approached through a gap (easy to miss) in an old brick / flint wall more or less opposite the junction with Mill Lane and the Wheatsheaf pub. From the entrance, drive straight ahead, past buildings on the left; the car park is on the left and the hut on the right. There is limited parking at the venue, which I suggest we try to use, although there is plenty of room at Bourne Hall, about 5 minutes’ walk away. Double parking may be necessary, but make sure the person you are blocking in is one of our group!

As parking space is limited, I suggest that we meet this end and share cars. If you would like to travel this recommended way, please meet in New Berry Lane car park, Hersham (free after 6.30 pm). This is off Pleasant Place, the road that runs along from the shops opposite the end of Hersham Green, behind St Peter’s Church Hall. After passing the pharmacy (the last shop on the left) take the first left into New Berry Lane, then left again into the car park – it’s only a very short distance from the Green.

**Please meet there in time for a prompt 7.15pm departure – we shall not wait if you are late!**

If you have any queries, please ring me (01932 242179).

Thank you, Marion C.

**Products of the Hive Day Training Day, 23rd January – Something well worth the time and effort**

I consider myself privileged to have been able to attend the workshop run by Andy Willis at the recent National Honey Show on the subject of Cleaning Wax for Show. He spoke – with only a 15 minute break – for almost 2.5 hours and, as a result of his highly amusing style of presentation, held the assembled company of about 25 people, totally enthralled for the whole of that time. By the end of his talk, we knew a huge amount about cleaning wax for show, but had also been royally entertained and amused for that time.

As such, and while I don’t suppose his slot at the Products of the Hive Day, will be anything like 2.5 hours; I would thoroughly recommend attending the day, if only for the chance to see Andy Willis in action. You will learn a huge amount and leave the happier for the experience!  Gil Bray

*Thank you, Gil, for this very helpful report. I think it must whet some appetites.*

**ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST**

**A further article on neonicotinoids**

Professor Dave Goulson of the University of Sussex has found a discrepancy in the data collected in the Fera study that concluded ‘that there was no clear evidence of a harmful effect of neonicotinoids’ on the bumble bees studied. Researchers at Newcastle University consider that the insects may even be choosing to feed on neonicotinoid-treated plants, and it is even suggested that these compounds ‘may act like a drug that makes bees crave more of the same food’. Read more in the attachment.

**Why is a worker a worker and a queen a queen?**

Research at the University of Illinois suggests that it is what queens are NOT fed, rather than what they are fed that determines their ability to lay eggs. While queens are fed only on royal jelly, workers are also fed pollen, the outer coating of which contains p-coumaric acid, which activates genes that control developmental pathways in the larvae. It is not claimed that this is the whole answer, but it is significant that bees fed royal jelly with p-coumaric acid had significantly less well developed ovaries than controls fed only royal jelly. Read more in the attachment.

*Thanks to Rob Allan, one of this year’s students, who passed on the above two articles from his father-in-law’s Chemistry World magazine.*

**A price point reference for honeycomb**

The following should be helpful in setting a price for your honeycomb:

http://www.thepresentfinder.co.uk/buy/small-honeycomb\_294.htm

*Thanks to David Parker for this information.*

**Bees and pesticides – ‘missing link’ found**

This is the title of an article from *Science and the Environment*, on the BBC website dated 18th November*.* The main thrust of the article is:

 “… monitoring of tagged honeybees in the wild suggests bees foraging around crops treated

 (with neonicotinoids) die off at a faster rate than normal. However, colonies are able to make

 up for those dying off by boosting the number of worker bees in the hive overall.”

This compensatory effect is claimed to be the ‘missing link’ between the differing results from field and laboratory tests.

Read the complete article on the BBC website: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-34846629

*Thanks to David Parker for this information.*

**FOR SALE**

Neither the Newsletter Editor nor Surrey Beekeepers Association take any responsibility for the accuracy of any of the following entries, or for 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 all equipment is sterilised before use. Inexperienced purchasers should take a knowledgeable beekeeper with them.

**Apiary clothing**

Bee Togs Apiary clothing.  Sale now on:

Go to the Bee Togs website at [www.BeeTogs.co.uk](http://www.beetogs.co.uk/) for some great festive deals on bee suit and bee jacket bundles, or call Martin on 07973 653575.

Martin Major

**STOP PRESS**

The following request has just been received by our Secretary:

Dear Anne,

You may remember I contacted you in March about the Bees in the City study carried out by Royal Holloway University. That experiment has been very successful, and we are now moving on to a second study in January to March next year looking at winter pollen foraging in Berkshire and Surrey. We’re comparing three apiaries in the countryside, three in villages and three in the city – our hypothesis is that bees in cities and villages may have access to pollen earlier in the winter due to the availability of garden plants. Would you be able to circulate details of the project to your members to see if any of them are interested in taking part?

The experiment will consist of fitting pollen traps to three hives for 5 hours twice weekly from mid-January to mid-March. This can be done by me if access to the apiary is possible, although beekeepers would of course be very welcome to accompany me. The hives will not need to be opened up. To follow up, I will ask the beekeeper to take photos of the brood frames when they do their first three spring inspections.

We are specifically looking for **apiaries in the countryside with very limited access to gardens** (no villages for 1-2km), and **apiaries in rural villages**. Could you ask your association members whether their hives fit into either of these categories, and if so whether they would be interested in taking part? If you or any of the members have any questions or would like to get involved please don’t hesitate to contact me at Elizabeth.samuelson.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk.

Thanks very much in advance.

All the best,

Liz

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Tuesday | 19th January | 7.15 / 7.45 pm | Winter Meeting. Talk on Oxalic acid sublimation, by Liz Knee, AT EPSOM | pp. 3 and 4 |
| Saturday | 23rd January | 10 am to 4.00 pm | Training Day. Honey and wax. Walton on Thames (details confirmed on booking) | Nov. p. 3Flyer |
| Friday | 5th February | 7.30 pm | Winter Meeting. Four short presentations. St Peter’s Church Hall, Hersham | Details tba  |
| Saturday | 5th March | 9.30 to 5.00 pm | Beekeeping for beginners, improvers and non-beekeepers. Pulborough | Nov. p. 3 |
| Tuesday | 29th March | 7.30 pm | Winter Meeting. Climate, weather and bees, by Howard Lawes. St Peter’s Church Hall, Hersham | Details tba |

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