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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER: May 2016[**www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com**](http://www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com/) |

***Editorial***

So my semi-optimistic thoughts in last month’s newsletter on the coming of warmer weather have not been fulfilled, and it has been a month of constantly watching stores and feeding carefully so as not to put too much sugar into the hive that would ‘contaminate’ the honey should a flow suddenly come upon us.

There have been better things for us to enjoy in the last few weeks: the BBKA convention at Harper Adams, helpful information on oxalic acid treatment, a very interesting meeting with Michael Main, a talk by a renowned speaker to look forward to, news about our first swarm (22nd April, see page 6) indicating that the beekeeping season is starting, although the current cold day, 2nd May, is causing doubt – more of all this and other things in this newsletter. If you know of an earlier swarm, please tell me, and I’ll report it next month.

**REMINDERS and New Items for the near future**

**Summer Meeting, Sunday 15th May, with Peter Bowbrick**

See below, under FUTURE EVENTS for details

**NDB Short course on colony manipulation, Friday 20th and Saturday 21st May**

See below, under FUTURE EVENTS for details

**Surrey BKA Training Day for the General Husbandry Practical Assessment, Saturday 21st May**

See attachment

**Surrey County Show, Monday 30th May, Guildford**

Attached is another copy of the Honey Show Schedule in a format that can be used for direct input of your entries, which should be in by 9th May. Late entries are usually accepted, but will not be printed.

Full details are on the website: http://www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/pdf/bee-schedule.pdf and in the March Newsletter.

**REPORTS**

**Nosema Clinic**

The results recorded at the clinic on Monday, 4th April were as follows:

 **Infestation level Number of samples**

 nil 5

 low 3

 medium 6

 high 4

Anne Miller

Note that at least one more member will check his samples soon, and the results will be included in the next newsletter.

**Report on a lecture at the BBKA Convention:**

**More information on the use of oxalic acid for Varroa control**

I listened to an exceptionally interesting lecture on oxalic acid control of varroa at the BBKA Convention; it is of great interest to all of us as it comes when there is debate on its use (and possible misuse?) in our own area. The lecture was given by Dr Antonio Nanetti of the Research Unit of CREA, Italy where he has spent several years working on varroa control.

He made a number of significant points, perhaps the more important ones being:

* he regards the drip/trickle method of the application of oxalic acid as preferable to sublimation as oxalic acid crystals degrade into other substances if heated to temperatures greater than 150°C
* the syrup quantity of 4.2% solution was recommended as 5ml/comb, and should be trickled across the top bars of the combs (ie at right-angles), not along the gaps (as I suspect many of us do) to avoid the syrup being lost on (and through) the hive floor; liquid falling on the top bars would not be absorbed due to the presence of propolis and wax, etc., so the bees can take it

Other helpful information gleaned included:

* the treatment should be applied twice a year, once in spring to deal with the winter mites before they have time to multiply to a dangerously high level, and once in August (in Italy – perhaps we should change this time in the UK) to deal with the mite population that has grown in the summer. He reminded us that the mite population of the hive doubles every month, and that the timing of treatments must be such that the critical mite level in the hive is not reached
* although as far as we know, the acid seems to be ‘safe’ to use, Dr Nanetti does not feel it advisable to use it excessively or without limit (I felt he was saying, let’s be sensible – don’t push it too far)
* the system has been tried in a number of European countries and the efficacy has always been at least 90% or greater except in Finland where it was 84%
* the treatment is effective in killing mites for 2 or 3 days after application
* the treatment can be applied with the honey supers on the hive
* the treatment does not kill mites in capped cells, so with summer treatment it is more effective to remove all sealed brood before treatment
* brood interruption by caging the queen is a good method to kill more mites and the queen can be caged even when a honey flow is expected
* queen mortality due to treatment is 5%
* unsealed larvae are not damaged
* no example of resistance to oxalic acid treatment has been found in the last 20 years
* if sublimation is used, great care must be taken to ensure that temperatures of 150°C are not exceeded
* Dr Nanetti has spent some time wondering how the acid works on the varroa mite, but has formed no clear idea of this

Apart from his great knowledge, Dr Nanetti came across as a very pleasant, self-effacing man, and he spent an hour around his table with a group of several of us after his lecture, discussing the subject further and answering more questions. One of the group was a member of Prof. Ratnieks research team (from Sussex University) which recently published some papers on the same topic. It was most interesting to listen to the two men very amicably sharing their sometimes differing thoughts and views.

*Any other members who also attended this lecture are welcome to add to or correct anything in’ this report.*

Geoff Cooper

**FUTURE EVENTS**

**Summer Meeting, Sunday 15th May, with Peter Bowbrick at Garsons, Esher**

Peter Bowbrick, a Wimbledon beekeeper, has kindly agreed to host another meeting for us at his apiary on Garsons Farm, Winterdown Road, Esher KT10 8LS. Peter is a very experienced beekeeper and was for several years a Bee Inspector in our area; his meetings are always informative and well worth attending. This year, among other things, he will be demonstrating how to do a bee disease inspection. Further details will be provided in the reminder that will be sent out later in the month. Please bring a plate of food to share at a picnic afterwards. Tea, coffee and milk will be provided, but please bring a mug; a flask of hot water would be useful as well, if possible.

To reach the apiary, drive to the diagonally opposite corner of the car park from where you enter, keeping the buildings to your right. Please wait by a farm gate there for further directions round the one-way-system that will be in operation.

**Dates and topics for the rest of the Summer Meetings**

Full details of each will be given monthly in the newsletters.

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| **Hosts** | **Date** | **Main Subject** | **Secondary Subject** |
| Geoff & Marion Cooper | 11th June | Queen Rearing | Super Clearing Methods and types |
| Chris Burnett and Sue Lawes | 9th July | Top Bar Hive | Finding and marking a queen (or drone) |
| David Parker | 20th August | Make it Session | Guildford and Weybridge Divisions |
|   | 3rd September | End of Season Social | Location TBC |
|  |  |  |  |

David Parker

**37th Annual Auction at Meon Valley BKA, Saturday 7th May**

This is to be held at 1.00 pm at The Greatham Village Hall, Hampshire GU33 6AD; viewing starts at 11.30 am. I have been to this event, intermittently, for many years. Like all auctions, the quality of the items offered is very variable, but its always a very enjoyable day out in a delightful setting. Excellent light lunches and cakes, etc. are available at very reasonable prices. Further information from Margaret Pallant 07784 773345 or margaretpallant@btinternet.com

*I am sorry that this note is so late. I forgot to include it in last month’s newsletter. – Ed.*

**An evening with Jamie Ellis, Monday 1st August 2016**

Jamie is well known to visitors to the National Honey Show having given lectures there on numerous occasions. He is an Associate Professor of Entomology at the University of Florida. His broad research interests include pollination, ecology of honey bees and native bees, Varroa mite control, honey bee pathology/parasitology, honey bee nutrition, honey bee chemical ecology, sub-lethal effects of chemicals on bees, and general honey bee behaviour/ecology. The title of his talk will be:

“Addressing the sustainability of beekeeping in the 21st century”

and covering beekeeping trends, stressors affecting beekeeping and how his department is trying to address the stressors. The fee is £5 (under 18 free). The venue is East Horsley Village Hall KT24 6QT, doors open at 7.00 pm for 7.30 start. To book contact Sandra Rickwood at rickwoodsbka@gmail.com or telephone 01932 244326. This talk has been arranged by the SBKA.

*This promises to be a very helpful and informative evening a significant topic. As well being at the cutting edge of research in his subject, Jamie has the ability to present his information in a very entertaining manner. I think that we are very fortunate to have the opportunity to hear him in our locality. Do try to make the time to attend his talk, especially if you are an new beekeeper. – Ed.*

**NDB Short course on colony manipulation, 20th - 21st May**

Adam Leitch NDB (Surrey) and Tony Harris NDB (Scotland) will be running a 'NDB Short Course' on colony manipulation in May at Reigate BKA's apiary in Surrey. This 2-day course is open to all beekeepers, although aimed at those with at least a year or two experience. The course aims to take you through key

manipulations required for successful beekeeping. It looks at the theory and practical aspects of well used techniques, allowing beekeepers to undertake them successfully but also provide the theory behind them so that beekeepers can modify them to suit their own requirements and management systems. Students preparing for their BBKA General & Advanced Husbandry courses will benefit from this course. We will spend time in the classroom and out in the apiary covering the following topics:

Making Nucleus colonies

Introducing Queens

Feeding colonies

Sterilising using Acetic Acid

Shook Swarms

Artificial Swarms

Progressive Comb Replacement

Uniting Colonies

Bailey Comb Change

The course takes place on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st May 2016 and costs £80 including a light lunch. You can book the course through the NDB website or with the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/manipulations-handling-2-tickets-24257083590>

**A fete to be held on Sunday, 22nd May in Ockham**

I am sending you a flyer (attached) for our lovely local fete to be held on Sunday 22 May in Ockham. I wondered whether you or the beekeepers might like to take a stall at the fete. They are £10 plus a donation to the raffle. It would be great to have a beekeeping hive and honey for sale - which everyone loves!  Something to think about and if you would like to be there, which would be wonderful, please just let me know and I will put you in touch with the organiser. Suzanne <su.lofthouse@hotmail.co.uk>

For more information:  [https://www.facebook.com/ockhamfayre/](http://facebook.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c65b11d13a3deff8ae4e8ba84&id=f973a98317&e=de6a1d35f5)

*Thanks to Robert Crosley for drawing our attention to this event.*

**The South of England Show is being held this year on the 9th, 10th and 11th June  at Ardingly**

As well as the usual features of such a show it will include aHoney and Bees marquee, which will contain:

* Show Benches of Competitive Honey Entries
* Sales of Associations and Individual Members Honey and other products of the hive.
* Flying Bees Demonstration Area
* Observation Hives
* Information about Bees & Beekeeping
* Information about Beekeeping Associations and Training opportunities
* Sales of beekeeping equipment from Paynes Southdown Bees.

Honey Show Schedules and Entry forms are being circulated separately; see the attached flyer sent by Richard Bradfield, a Reigate member, who is to be a Steward at the Show.

Full details can be found on this website: <http://www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show/>

**Courses at East Surrey Bees for 2016**

Attached are some dates and details of courses already arranged  at East Surrey Bees and as always we are happy to have suggestions of any activity, talk or course you might be interested in taking part in.

Celia and David Rudland, East Surrey Bees, [www.eastsurreybees.co.uk](http://www.eastsurreybees.co.uk/)

Apiary 0208 6607753, Office 01883 622788, Mobile 07798 915480

**ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST**

**Hive sites**

When looking for a site for your bees, do remember that Weybridge Division has two apiaries available to its members. One of these is on Burhill Allotments in Hersham, the other at Rowtown near Addlestone. At the moment, both sites have some spaces available. If you would like to use one of these apiaries please contact the appropriate Apiary Manager whose details you will find in the Contact Details section at the end of this newsletter. It is a requirement that before moving any colony to either site, it must be checked for disease. The disease check should be arranged through the Apiary Manager.

**A new Local Bee Adviser for Weybridge Division**

As you will have seen at the bottom of the Contact Details on every Newsletter, we currently have just two Bee Advisers, Geoff Cooper and Rob Chisholm, who can always be asked for advice, but with so many members now in our Division, it would be helpful to have more. We are grateful that at our last Committee Meeting Paul Hildersley agreed to be an Adviser; his contact details are at the end of this Newsletter. The advisers live in Hersham (Geoff), Horsell (Rob) and Staines (Paul), so you may like first to get in touch with the person nearest to your bees, but do feel free to contact any of them.

**Equipment Cleaning**

A huge thank you to Gil, Brian, Ann, Neville and Sarah for their help in cleaning umpteen frames and brood boxes, etc.

Sandra Rickwood

**Oxalic acid sublimation equipment for hire**

The Weybridge Division has now purchased an oxalic acid sublimator (vaporiser) for use by its members for the treatment of varroa mites during the winter or other times when the bee colony is without brood. You will need to provide a car battery, oxalic acid and your own safety gear. The equipment is held for the Division by Martin Major and if you would like to borrow the equipment please contact him at martin@tectoday.com. You will need to read the instructions carefully and sign a loan agreement form to use the equipment.

Martin Major

**How Weybridge ‘fits into’ the Surrey BKA**

Weybridge Beekeepers are one of eight divisions (with Croydon, Epsom, Farnham, Guildford, Kingston, Reigate and Wimbledon) which make up the SBKA and as a member of Weybridge, you are automatically a member of the SBKA. Each division is represented on the SBKA by a Trustee and a Council Member. Our Trustee is Marion Cooper and Council Member is Martin Major. In addition Sandra Rickwood, also a Weybridge member, is the SBKA Secretary. The SBKA represents us at the BBKA and organises events at the county level such as the Surrey Bee Day, education, training and the Honey Show at the Surrey County Show. The Council meets quarterly.

At the last Council meeting on 14 April we were notified that the Charity Commission’s guidelines on financial reserves had been modified and each Division will need to have a clear policy statement on their reserves. In August SBKA will be organising a lecture by Jamie Ellis (see page 3). Also the venue for the National Honey Show will change this year. The good news is that it is still very convenient for us as it is moving to Sandown Park Racecourse. Make a date in your diary for 27-29 October.

Martin Major

**First Swarm of the Year 2016 recorded in Weybridge Division (a very unusual one)**

On Friday morning, 22nd April, I got a call from Marion Cooper, about a swarm at Sandown Park. It was actually quite cold, only about 8°C. The swarm had settled among the tyres that formed the barrier of the Go-Kart track that is located in the middle of the racecourse. When I got there, the early racers told me that they had managed not to crash into it! The kart racing was finished until the evening, but the horse racing was starting at 1.00 pm. So, I put my nuc box down by the tyres, opened its entrance, gently brushed the bees off the tyres and watched them start to go into the nuc box. I took a few photos which are attached, labelled as IMPG3332, IMPG3335 and IMPG3336. As it was going to take quite a while for them all to get inside, I decided to go home and return to collect them after the racing. It took me an hour and a half to get from the centre of Walton back to Sandown, with Friday evening traffic and rain, but I installed them in my apiary at Hatchford and fed them with sugar syrup two days later, went back to check two days after that, only to find that they had all died. Obviously, it was much to cold for them to swarm, after all!

Paul Hildersley

Note: Apparently Sandra had been called to Sandown the previous evening – again in rush hour – but no one there at the time knew where the swarm was, so she had to give up. This means that the bees spent at least one cold, wet night out in the open, and probably accounts for their demise.

**A postscript to Paul’s article, above**

Reading Paul’s report reminded me of an experience that I had with a swarm which I collected from my apiary at Painshill about 5 years ago. This swarm was a very small one which was lying in a flat heap on the ground about 10 feet from the nearest hive. From my memory the weather had been wet and the bees looked pretty bedraggled. I put the bees into a nuc box and took it to my garden. Following normal practice, I did not feed them that day. They showed no activity the next day so I looked into the nuc box and saw that the bees were not on the frame I had given them, but in a moribund, inactive heap on the floor. They were obviously in poor shape and in no fit state to take syrup from a feeder, so I sprinkled some syrup directly onto the heap of bees. I visited them about 10 minutes later and to my astonishment the air was full of bees from the nuc box, and for a moment I wondered if they were swarming again. I soon realised that the light sprinkling of syrup had revived them. There seems to be a strong indication that both Paul’s and my bees were severely weakened by adverse cold and wet weather and that a very useful lesson could be learned from the two incidents: when collecting a cold wet swarm, drip sugar solution onto it straight away when hiving it to assist its recovery. What do other members think?

Geoff Cooper

**What is ‘a frame of brood’?**

Many beekeepers record the number of frames of brood in a colony as an indicator of how the colony is faring, and most of the examples of hive records I have seen include this as an item to be filled in at every inspection. Ideally any hive record could be taken up and understood by another beekeeper, this being epecially true for Division colonies which may be checked by more than one person during the course of a season. So – how do we define ‘a frame of brood’? As we know, a brood nest is not a rectangular block in which all frames are the same, but is roughly spherical or oval, so although frames in the middle of the brood nest may have ‘wall-to-wall’ brood, those towards the edge of the nest will have progressively smaller amounts until at the extreme edges, there is only brood on one side of the frames. Partly filled frames can also be found at the top of the brood nest on a colony with more than one brood box, when there may be only an arc of brood near the base of an otherwise brood-free frame in the top box, so – how do we come up with a meaningful number that can be recorded on a form? I do recognise that an exceptionally large colony can fill all frames in the brood boxes, but I am thinking of more ‘normal’ brood populations that do not cover all frames. Do we count any frame that has any brood, however little, as ‘a frame of brood’ or do we count only those more or less completely filled on both sides with brood (including eggs), or do we make an estimate of how many full frames any small patches of brood would equal if added together, or what? For our own colonies, this doesn’t matter at all, because we are the ones who will be recording each time, but if multiple observers come up with numbers, they may not be consistently recorded, and a colony that apparently had 8 frames of brood last week, may be recorded as having only 6 frames the following week leading to the conclusion that the colony is in decline or possibly preparing to swarm, while in fact it may only be a difference in how the estimating has been done. Am I being pedantic (again)? Your thoughts on this would be welcome, and perhaps between us we can come up with a definitive formula:

‘The Weybridge Method for Estimating the Number of Frames of Brood in a Colony’.

Marion C.

**ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST**

**How some beekeepers harvest their honey in New Zealand**

One SBKA Council member has recently returned from New Zealand and at our last meeting he described a couple of the innovative things beekeepers in that part of the world are doing. Use of solid plastic frames with embossed plastic, rather than beeswax foundation, is now common place. He also described the use of “Field Harvesting” and said we should expect to be hearing a lot more about this in coming years. Basically, when you have honey ready to harvest, you can arrange for a “Field Harvester” to visit your apiary. You open your hive and hand him one of your solid plastic frames full of honey. He inserts this into a machine, which in a couple of seconds scrapes off all the honey and comb from the frame. He hands you back the scraped frame for you to reinsert in your hive and you hand him the next full frame, and so on. The honey and comb fall into a bucket beneath the machine, which he later processes to separate the wax from the honey which he sells. Your extraction is done at the apiary. The hobbyist beekeeper in New Zealand who was describing this, sells his honey to the Harvester. Do you think we shall (or should) see this in the UK?

Martin Major

**A helpful weather website**

Some people may not know that the Met Office produce a long range forecast for the next 30 days. As you can see it is forecast to warm up, even feel above average in this area in the next few weeks. Given the current cold snap something like this might help people plan a little ahead.

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/long-range-forecast/>

 David Parker

 **Beekeeping videos**

There are some great beekeeping videos available at:

National Honey Show

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiOtIebcpY0Zqqma0H5wLYQ>

Barnet Beekeepers, beekeeping in the 1930s

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9oQpfWJMwMCmfcr7yVfgPw>

 Anne Miller

**Bees foraging on cannabis**

I send you my translation of an article originally written in French which I think you will find amusing:

‘A French beekeeper was asked to call back all his honey because bees had been foraging on cannabis. As a result many clients were really jolly. A worried father asked for a blood sample for his twins when they went from being hyperactive to totally contemplative (eg one boy watching butter melt for over 3 hours).

Many people wish they had bought more of his honey that had a good effect on their pain !!’

Franck Crosnier

*It’s a lovely story Frank. Thank you for translating it for us.*

*If any would like to read the original article in French, please let me know. – Ed.*

A second article on this subject, also from France, was sent in by David Parker. It tells of another beekeeper who is actively training his bees to forage on cannabis…

Here is the link: https://greenrushdaily.com/2016/03/03/bees-making-honey-from-cannabis/

**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 secondhand 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 for sale**

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 deals on bee suit and bee jacket bundles, or call Martin on 07973 653575.

Martin Major

**Bees for sale**

**A number of FULLY ESTABLISHED OVERWINTERED COLONIES with 2015 Queen on National brood frames**

The colonies were treated for Varroa late summer/autumn 2015.

All queens are locally reared from our gentle breeding stock.  Price of each colony: £160 (excluding hive)

These colonies are available now.

For more information, please contact me – details below.

**NUCS (available to pre-order now*)***

**6 Frame Nucs** (National frames) with 2016 mated queen (marked white).

Supplied in 6 frame Poly Nuc. £140 + £20 nuc deposit which is refundable on return.

**5 Frame Nucs** (National frames) with 2016 mated queen (marked white).

Supplied in 5 frame Correx Travelling Box. Price: £145.  The nucs will have a mated 2016 Queen, locally reared from our gentle breeding stock, together with a combination of her brood in various stages and stores.

These nucs will be available from June onwards depending on the weather.

Feel free to contact me, if you have any questions.

**Astrid Bowers-Veenman** (Hog’s Back Bees) Location: Ash Green (between Guildford and Farnham, just off the A31)  Distance from Weybridge: 12 miles (as the crow flies)  **Tel.No.: 01252 330229 / Mobile: 07803 069798**

**Email:****astrid@coginternational.co.uk**

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Saturday | 7th May | 11.30 / 1.00 pm | Meon Valley Beekeepers’ Auction, Hampshire | p. 3 |
| Sunday | 15th May | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, Peter Bowbrick, Disease inspection | p. 3 |
| Friday - Saturday | 20th-21st May | All day | NDB Short Course on Colony Manipulation, Reigate apiary | p. 4 |
| Saturday | 21st May | All day | SBKA preparation for General Husbandry Assessment | April, attachment |
| Monday | 30th May | All day | Surrey County Show, Guildford | p. 1 & March, p. 4 |
| Saturday | 11th June | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, Geoff Cooper,Queen rearing, super clearing | Details later |
| Thursday - Saturday | 9th -11th June |  | South of England Show, Ardingly | p. 4 |
| Saturday | 9th July | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, Chris Burnett & Sue Lawes, Top-bar hive, queen finding and marking | Details later |
| Monday | 1st August | 7.00 pm | Jamie Ellis - “Addressing the sustainability of beekeeping in the 21st century” | p. 3 |
| Saturday | 20th August | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, David Parker,‘Make-it’ session | Details later |
| Saturday | 3rd September | tba | End-of-season social event | Details later |
| Thurs - Sat | 27-29 October | All day | National Honey Show, Esher | March p. 4 and attachments |

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