



KENT BEE-KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

County Newsletter No. 59 January 2012

2012 is going to be a very eventful year. We have the Olympics in July and August, the Queen celebrates her diamond jubilee and John Hendrie celebrates 50 years of beekeeping. You also cannot fail to have noticed a change in the format of the newsletter. It is hoped to introduce a few more items on beekeeping and news on what the various branches are doing. To make it a success it will need input from our members so if you have anything you think would be of interest, whether branch news, anecdotes or topical tips, please e-mail jennifer@spon-smith.com

A cautionary tale

At a lecture I attended earlier this year, during question time afterwards one of the questioners clearly could not see the need to treat colonies with Apiguard, or any other substance, if the varroa drop during the year had been minimal or non-existent.

I have four colonies in my garden, all of which had varroa counts this year of little more than the odd one or two. I also have a 5 frame nuc which I am nursing and with a bit of luck, and adopting the "tank" approach, will get through the winter. Some of you more long-standing beekeepers may recall reading in Beecraft some years ago now about a swarm I tried to run into a nuc box which was clearly too small and the bees sat on the outside showing no inclination to do anything. After a couple of rather cold and miserable days I took pity on them so covered the whole lot with an upturned water tank (the type you have in your loft). The result was a very nice colony which surrounded the nuc with comb but never ventured inside where 5 frames with fresh foundation awaited. This time the bees are inside the nuc and have plenty of stores but I'm not hopeful they will get through the winter.

I digress. Late August/early September was perfect weather for treating with Apiguard. The first tray produced a drop of about 50 in hives 1, 2 and 3 but nothing from 4 (maybe I missed one). I had put the Apiguard on top of the queen excluders and kept the crown board clear using a 1½ inch eke I had made. Number 3 obviously didn't like the smell as they covered most of the queen excluder with propolis and wax. Having removed the queen excluders, the second tray produced the same drop in 1, 2, and 3 but the drop in 4 came as something of a shock. It is quite a long time since I have seen so many mites and I gave up counting after about 200.

Hopefully my colonies will all get through the winter but I cannot help wondering how no. 4 would have fared if I had decided varroa was something I need not worry about. I don't usually treat with oxalic acid but this year I thought it prudent to do so.

Jenny Spon-Smith



Around the Branches

Ashford

- 6th January New Year Party
- 3rd February Talk by Gary Saunders on pollen
- 2nd March Talk by John Hendrie on brood diseases

Winter meetings are held at St Mary's Hall, Rylands Road, Kennington at 7.30 p.m.

Bromley is busy formulating its calendar for 2012 which promises to be as busy as ever with outside events. Branch meetings are on the first Sunday of the month at Kent House Road from 11.30 a.m. onwards. The annual lecture programme is as follows:

- 17th January Norman Chapman: DIY beekeeping
- 21st February Alan Byham, Regional Bee Inspector, will give a talk on his work
- 20th March Pat Allen: The many uses of a nucleus hive
- 17th April The Peter Springall Memorial lecture given by Norman Carreck:
Breeding bees for hygienic behaviour to fight varroa

These lectures take place in the main pavilion at 91a Kent House Road, SE23 5LJ at 7.30 p.m. There is no charge and refreshments are provided

Canterbury

- 1st February Talk on swarm control by Nick Withers, seasonal bee Inspector
- 7th March Talk on the short haired bumblebee reintroduction project
by Dr Nikki Gammans

Meetings at 7.30 p.m. at Whitefriars Conference Room, Canterbury

Dartford

- 21st January Dr Sara Robb: Making lip balm and creams
- 4th February Bob Smith: Disease and dissecting for acarine
- 10th March Terry Clare: Queen rearing for the small beekeeper

All meetings will commence promptly at 3.00 p.m. and are being held in the upper room at Asda's Warehouse on the Crossway Industrial Estate

Mid Kent

- 17th January 7.30 p.m. Detling Village Hall
Talk by Dr Nikki Gammans FRES, Bumblebee Project Officer
- 14th February Mini honey show. Judging by Mary Hill
The aim of this event is to demonstrate that the exhibitor can produce honey which is fit for sale, whether it is sold or not. An acceptable standard should always be the aim
- 20th March Dr Sam Andrews: The medicinal uses of bee products

Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells

- 17th January David Wood: My tool box
- 14th February Gerry Wood: Pesticides
- 13th March Rudy Repka: Beekeeping in Turkey

These meetings will be at Weald Memorial Hall, TN14 6PS and will start at 7.30 p.m. See website for details of apiary meetings which start at 2.00 p.m. at Barrwood Apiary and Hilbert Road Summer Apiary unless otherwise stated

Yalding and District

Monthly meetings take place at The Chequers Inn, Laddingford, ME18 6BP. Meetings start at 8pm. Come along for an informal chat, a pint and a bowl of chips!

Please also see branch websites for details of branch meetings, lectures and courses.



To charge or not to charge

A lively debate has been going in Guernsey as to whether or not to charge for swarm collection, so much so they decided to contact Associations around the UK to see what the policy is in various areas.

Kent does not have a policy and having canvassed a number of beekeepers, it is a clear case of ask six beekeepers the same question and you get six different answers. Some beekeepers regard the removal of swarms as a public service; some charge for collecting swarms on the basis that a householder will pay some £60 for the removal of wasps so it is reasonable to charge for removing a swarm. It could be argued that this approach is flawed on the basis that wasps have set up home and built a nest whilst a swarm could disappear at any moment and sometimes does just before the beekeeper arrives. Others make a modest charge to cover petrol (an important factor in light of the ever increasing cost at the pump) and some do not charge for swarm removal but charge the recipient.

The latter course is a reasonable approach. Our aim is the welfare of the bees and by charging the recipient and not the owner of the garden where the swarm landed will hopefully help to avoid a situation where a swarm is sprayed with insecticide or, as a friend of mine witnessed, being sprayed with a power hose and then stamped on by children.

Jenny Spon-Smith

County and other events 2012

Saturday, 14th January **ADM at Stoneleigh**
Brian Palmer is our delegate

Saturday, 10th March **Cambridgeshire Beekeepers' Association One Day Seminar "Survival in spite of all the odds"**. Speakers and provisional titles are as follows: Norman Carreck: Honey bee viruses – what are they and why are they important? Professor Andrew Bourke: Eusocial evolution, social behaviour, foraging ecology and conservation of bumble bees"; Catherine Thompson: The statues of the feral honey bee in the UK; Norman Carreck: Honey bee colony losses – what are the causes? Tickets £19.50 (includes lunch and refreshments). Contact David E Abson, 6 Ascham Lane, Whittlesford CB22 4NT 01223 834620 SAE appreciated

Friday to Sunday, 20th to 22nd April **Spring Convention**
This year the Spring Convention will be at a new venue, Harper Adams University College Campus, Newport, Shropshire which offers greatly improved lecture and workshop facilities. It is offering a broader programme with new courses and a bigger and better trade show

Sunday, 13th May **Bee Fayre and Auction**
Following previously successful auctions held by Chris Morris in his Yalding field, the event is being organised this year by the Yalding and District Beekeepers Association (YDBKA), and it is hoped to 'upgrade' the event to a more family-friendly Bee Fayre, but still with the traditional beekeepers auction taking place as normal. More details to follow in the next newsletter

Friday to Sunday, 13th to 15th July **Kent County Show, Detling**
Stewards are always needed so please make a note of the dates in your diary. Details will be circulated nearer the event

Thursday to Saturday, 25th to 27th October **81st National Honey Show**
St. George's College, Weybridge. The show schedule will be available in August