



# South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

The July meeting will be held on Saturday 19th July at 2.30pm at Tim Selwyn's apiary, on Cadwell Farm land, near Chalgrove. Apiary location: O.S. 642962, Parking location: O.S. 643958.

## In the Apiary - July

Swarming problems should be receding by now but not with the late developing colonies. Colonies which peak in July could very well swarm, so keep an eye on them and don't forget that as the flow will be finishing at the end of this month any swarms taken could require feeding.

### Newsletter No.7 July 2003

#### Forthcoming events:

Woodcote Rally  
12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> July

Hon. Secretary:  
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Keep an eye on any swarms you hived earlier in the season – they could very well be full strength colonies by now and will require ample super space to cope with the main flow. If not given plenty of space, expect a swarm!

Weather permitting, a good main flow of lime, white clover, bramble, rosebay willow herb, etc., should now be in the supers so prepare clearer boards to put on for the last week in July/first week in August. When putting the clearer boards on with the supers temporarily off the hive, heft the brood box to check the weight of stores. If light, be prepared to feed immediately the supers are off. I have a suspicion that a lot of autumn feeding will be required this year.

Porter bee escapes seem to be the most popular way of clearing supers. If the bees are reluctant to clear from the supers it is most likely to be due to badly adjusted bee escapes. The springs at each end of the Porter bee escape should be matchstick width only and not bunged up with propolis. Queenless colonies are also reluctant to clear from the supers so check this out.

The absence of eggs doesn't necessarily mean that the colony is queenless. To check this, put in a test comb of eggs from another colony. If it is queenless they will build queen cells on the test comb. If not queenless they will not.

Finally, Varroa treatment. Get prepared. The first week in August, after the supers have been taken off is the very best time. So buy your strips now. You will have the choice of either Bayvarol or Apistan. The cheaper product is Apistan

and only two strips are needed for a full treatment instead of the four with Bayvarol. I have used Apistan from day one and Varroa for me has been a non-event thanks to this effective treatment. Bayvarol is equally efficient.

George Butler

## Secretary's Report:

The May meeting was held at Linda Scurr's apiary at Cholsey with approximately 25 members and guests attending. Linda uses National hives and has found yet another use for old wooden pallets; use them as hive stands. The setting was very rural with the bees having a wide range of animals and birds for company,

The recently appointed Regional Bee Inspector, Ian Homer, gave the demonstration. A typical bee disease inspection was carried out on 2 hives with additional comments where appropriate. Ian uses a freshly laundered bee suit for each apiary and treats all hive tools in a solution of 1Kg washing soda in a gallon of water. A side benefit is that washing soda solution dissolves propolis.

Ian believes in using a minimum of smoke and does not smoke the entrance because this drives the bees up into the supers, which are the first part of the hive to be opened. Only a small amount of smoke was used to clear the bees from the edge of the boxes and when closing the hive the boxes were lowered gently without smoking. Either the technique worked or Linda's bees were very docile (or both) because the bees were very well behaved.

The first colony, which was very strong, bbbbbbwas on a brood and a half together with 3 supers and an empty top super that had been added to try to pre-empt swarming. The marked queen was found and during the examination Ian demonstrated looking for Varroa in drone cells as well as maintaining a commentary on exactly what he was looking for together with other interesting asides. For example, brood is not as easily chilled as is sometimes thought. Before carrying out some dissections, brood was placed in a refrigerator for 10 hours and at the end of that time bees were still emerging.

The Federation Of Berkshire Beekeepers Autumn Event & Honey Show will take place on Saturday October 11th at St. Joseph's Church Hall, Berkshire Drive, Tilehurst.

We would like to extend an open invitation to any member of South Chilterns Association who would like to attend on the day and/or enter the Honey Show classes (most, if not all of the classes are open).

It is intended to have two speakers on the day. First speaker booked - Dr. Rose Cooper of The University Of Wales Institute, Cardiff who will speak on the subject of "Honey and Healing".

Both the inspections and the plant sale were curtailed because of the weather and everyone retired to the house for the usual wide selection of sandwiches, cakes etc. The majority of the plant sale was conducted from the back of Harry's car selling plants provided by John Vickery. Once again John supplied many established customers with tomato, onion and sprout plants as well as various flowers. To be sure of getting the plants they need members have taken to phoning John before coming to the meeting to place an order. Its surprising he has time for bees.

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Brian Carter

## Editorial

So far there seems to be little sign of the June gap but the bramble and willow herb is early indicating that possibly forage may be short at the end of July; nevertheless a flaming June is said to portend a good crop from the clover. Manley averred that a ground temperature in the 60s was required for clover to yield, accordingly, this year, assuming that there is no drought, looks promising.

Harry Jessup has reported European Foul Brood in the Checkendon area (within bee flying range of Wallingford); the affected bees have been treated in the appropriate manner. I have been asked for a disease grid, but at present no details have been provided. In the meantime, if anyone has any doubts, notify the Bees Officer also John Westcar or the Editor so that we can try to organize an impromptu instructional meeting..

In view of adverse comments, only one of which is in writing, I have reverted to the “traditional” style of Newsletter, personally, I would like to see something different, please put forward your ideas – I do take notice.

Finally, the Berkshire Federation has “got their finger out” and has organized their show in reasonable time. It has been suggested that we combine our show with theirs, along with others; I agree that this is a useful idea.

R.F.Crocker

### **Short-lived bees.**

Within eleven months of beekeeping I have had many experiences. The excitement and satisfaction of extracting my first few pounds of honey; I cannot say golden honey since it resembled old engine oil rather than the golden sweet smelling English honey. After having it analysed by the Trading Standards Agency it was found to contain 25% palm nectar! I do not believe the local garden centres have that number of tropical plants.

Opening the hives after the winter showed two colonies of good size and looking promising for the coming season. I felt very proud of them. The supers were going on and the bees working well until one day there were signs causing concern. All was far from well and both colonies, although in the very early stages of disease, were condemned. It was a most terrible experience to kill them in preparation for their burning. The warm honey smell replaced by petrol. The buzz for a short time became stronger, then silence.

I must thank Ian and Will our bee inspectors who did their job so efficiently whilst coping with me in my state of grief and many questions.

On the bright side I have learnt a great deal not just about bee disease, but also about the support and friendship of members of the association, thank you. As a result I now have two colonies on a new site where hopefully, they will be safe from disease and their lives will not end so abruptly.

Kate Malenczuk

### **Letter to the Editor**

This is my second attempt to get a thank you in print; my last thank you was to Anne Arlidge for all her time and effort in arranging our annual dinner. This thank you is much bigger so hopefully it won't go unnoticed and will get into the newsletter. My biggest thank you of all goes to Ian Homer our regional bee inspector. Not only did he do a wonderful demonstration but he also passed my bees as fit, healthy and no evidence of the dreaded AFB that is on our doorstep. Ian gave up his time and travelled all the way from Dorset. THANK YOU Ian, as a new beekeeper I haven't been to many demos but found yours so informative, understandable, fascinating and full of common sense.

Thank you to everyone who provided refreshments: cakes, biscuits, sandwiches and tea. My cat would like to say thank you for leaving some ham sandwiches and then distracting us long enough for him to polish them off, including the mustard!!!

John arrived with a carload of really healthy plants for sale and despite the weather went home nearly empty handed. Donations were put into a pot and totalled £24.30

The only thing I won't say thank you for is the weather; rain held off until almost the end of the demonstration but then drove us indoors at speed. Fortunately we have gutted our kitchen so managed to cram everyone in. Nobody slipped on the wet floor and nobody was left stuck to the wall by one of our cobwebs. Not bad, considering there were about 26 of us altogether.

Does anyone want to claim a green and white umbrella, a plate with a burgundy rim, or a mug with angels on???

Linda Scurr

Oh! TIP FOR THE MONTH.....I was given a very good tip for getting propolis off porter bee escapes. Easy, just put them in the deep freeze, the propolis goes brittle and then comes off really easily. Well established experienced bee keepers already know this fact but what they don't tell you is that when the propolis returns to room temperature and has rolled off the table into your shoes.....YEUCH!!...How long do you need to put your feet in the deep-freeze for to get it off your feet?

### **Ref: use of stale foundation.**

This is a myth that has been handed down for years. Provided foundation is kept wrapped, away from light, heat, and perhaps most important, dust, it will keep for decades.

I well remember being given some USA Dadant made crimped wired foundation about 1970. The bees took to it as if it was new. Imports of Dadant foundation ceased with the start of the war in 1939, this foundation must have been at least 30 years old!

Regarding cutting foundation, keep it in a warm place for a day or so, 65°-70°F, use a straight edge and a Stanley knife.

For "cut-comb" production, I always used "extra thin" foundation, cut diagonally to form triangles. The frames arranged with one deep edge of foundation on the left – the next frame with deep edge on the right. Put extracting supers on as required, when the bees are working well and storing there remove two frames from the outside and put two "cut-comb" frames with the diagonally cut foundation in the centre. Mark the frames with drawing pins and sit back for the finest comb honey.

George Hawthorne

**Advertisements:** - Small advertisements free to members. Traders £1 per issue (up to 5 lines) additional lines 20p per line. Cheques to be made payable to South Chilterns B.K.A. and forwarded to the Editor.

**Don't Go Miles** to get your bee supplies or pay expensive carriage. **Go to John Belcher** who has most of your needs in stock and every thing else at the end of the telephone. Please call any time on: - 0118 984 232

**FOR SALE:** A number of National and Langstroth hives and supers – no bees: New Langstroth equipment in the flat, 5 roofs, 3 floors and 3 supers: Quantity of wired and unwired Langstroth brood foundation. Price to be negotiated. R.F.Crocker. 0118 972 2315

**FOR SALE:** A number of Dadant hives. (No frames) Arthur Aldridge, Telephone: 01491 681305

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