

**MID-KENT BRANCH
KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

NEWSLETTER

April 2011



"I wonder if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun
And crocus fires are kindling one by one:
Sing robin, sing:
I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring."
- Christina Rossetti



As this is being written, the signs of Spring are becoming more evident, and Daffodils are finally open as well. Pollen is coming in and things are finally on the move after a prolonged cold winter and awful spring. Pollen sources are Hazel, Alder, crocus, aconite, Yew, Snowdrop, heather (in my garden) and Mahonia. Sloe/Blackthorn is already in flower, but temperature often prevents the bees from collecting nectar, or the flowers producing it. Now is the time for stimulating colonies if you wish to do so with a weak syrup solution, but to paraphrase Mastermind, Once I've started, I'll finish when nectar is flowing in. I prefer using a rapid feeder since it means that the crown board does not have to be lifted, and topping up is carried out without disturbing the bees. Don't forget: feed in the evening otherwise you may trigger robbing as bees find the food communicating that 'there is food close by' and rush out of the entrance in an attempt to look for it (in any adjacent hive). If mouse guards are still on it is worth removing them now as they tend to knock the pollen from the legs of bees returning from foraging flights.

Poisoning of Honeybees

A report on the HSE website could be relevant in the future should your bees become the victim of poisoning by the irresponsible action of pest controllers operating in the vicinity of your colonies.
<http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/approvals.asp?id=2860>

The following link will take you to the DEFRA site for a recently updated Managing Varroa leaflet as well as the new Small Hive Beetle which contains a few small amendments [NBU Advisory Leaflets](#)

Questionnaire

Please remember to return the Questionnaire. Your views really count in ensuring that the branch responds to expectations and meets your needs. What will the branch offer aspiring future members? Bring the completed form to the next branch meeting or e-mail.

Notes from the Chair

The apiary at East Malling (Bradbourne House) is nearing its completion. Roger FINN from Laddingford Engineering has kindly donated a number of galvanised hive stands to the Branch. Please take opportunity to look on his website @ www.laddeng.co.uk at the stands and when visiting the apiary. A big thanks for these Roger.

On Tuesday 15th March the final indoor meeting for this winter was held. Professor Jerry Cross provided an interesting lecture about the use of pesticides and their potential problems to bees, the environment and the human population. It was apparent that not only should we as beekeepers be making contact with our local farmers about crop spraying but as gardeners we should also be aware that chemicals we use in the garden can cause as much damage.

The basic bee course classroom work has now been completed by the 15 participants. The practical part of the course is being held on Sunday 27th March at the Pavilion at Bradbourne House at East Malling.

The first apiary meeting will be on 10th April at 2pm and will be the Grand Opening of the site. It is hoped that as many of you as possible can attend. It will coincide with the first inspection of our bees. (Directions as attached to this newsletter.) Teas and coffees will be available and perhaps I can persuade the wife to make some buns. Please come and support your branch apiary.

Stoneleigh weekend (Saturday 16th April) the chance for you to buy everything and more for your beekeeping needs. Get there early - cash and cards taken - loads of bargains. See BBKA website www.britishbee.org.uk for more information. Also contact David Lloyd d.Lloyd@blueyonder.co.uk committee member who has kindly agreed to sort out car sharing if possible.

Dick Cullen

A word of caution: on examining a small colony that had been dead for about a fortnight, to my surprise I found a number of live varroa crawling about on the tray. It would appear that the varroa had been existing on the rotting corpses of the bees. This was apparently reported by Norman Carrick about two years ago and reinforces the importance of isolating any dead colony until the frames have been sterilised or re-cycled, and any foraging bees prevented from gaining access to the colony, which could happen if food is left or a swarm takes up residence. Good comb can be sterilised using 80% acetic (ethanoic) acid which will destroy any Nosema spores as well as wax moth

Another word of caution. Speaking to the wife of one member who was in his second or third year of beekeeping, she commented that 'If I had known what was involved, I would never have made the suggestion that we (meaning he) should keep bees!' So do think hard before committing yourself and your spouse to a course of action that could take over your life. 'Beekeeping is a disease from which few ever recover'. That said, it is a very satisfying hobby and beekeepers are doing a very vital service for the environment.

This Summer's Programme (See Richard's note above)

In next month's newsletter the full summer programme will be published. The committee has thought carefully about the meetings and ensuring that there are different activities at some meetings that reflect the different level of skills and abilities of the branch members. On April 10th at the first outdoor meeting there will be a beginners group with emphasis on frame handling technique. Even though some of the beginners don't yet have their own bees, we want to give them the opportunity to handle frames with bees. The knowledge and experience of our branch members that have kept bees for many years is one of our most precious assets. This will be our first meeting at the new Branch Apiary site at East Malling.

Committee Meeting Minutes

If you would like a copy of the committee minutes – let Richard, Brian or Tim Polglase know. We'll be happy to provide them electronically.

Next Meeting

Sunday April 10th at 2.30 pm

'Spring Inspection'

The first of our summer outdoor meetings will be held at the branch apiary East Malling Research.

This meeting will also serve as the concluding session of the Beginners Course.

Directions to the Apiary Postcode for those with Sat Navs is ME19 6DZ.(however, don't just rely on a Sat Nav as it may try to direct you through a locked gate).

Access at weekends is only via Bradbourne Lane which is a turning at the Kia Garage on the A20. Along Bradbourne Lane for about 200yds turning on the right signposted Bradbourne House Private Road. Follow road towards the large house.

Drive around the front of the house and a short distance up the drive turn left signposted to the Pavilion. Over small bridge and to Pavilion and apiary.

Book Review 'Natural Beekeeping.' Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont, publishes Ross Conrad's book 'Natural Beekeeping organic approaches to modern apiculture'. www.chelseagreen.com ISBN 978-1-933392-08-0 and is probably available through Amazon. A book well worth the read.

In his book with the above title, Ross Conrad makes the following observations:

'The effect of exposing honeybees to sublethal doses of these compounds (coumaphos found in Checkmite, and fluralinate found in Apistan) is rarely discussed. Just as with people, the long term health and vitality of the hive is likely to be compromised from such exposure, even if such detrimental effects are not readily immediately evident. Because long-term tests have not yet been done, we may yet find that physiological and metabolic changes occur

within honeybee populations over extended periods, and these detrimental effects may become obvious only after several decades of exposure. Research indicating reduced sperm counts in drones that have been exposed to compos, and negative effects on queens that have been reared in cells constructed out of coumaphos-impregnated wax, validate these concerns.

The effects of repeated exposure of bees and humans to small amounts of several toxic chemicals simultaneously is also unknown. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency: USA) requires safety studies to be carried out only on individual pesticides in isolation, rather in combination with one another. In actual practice, more than one pesticide may be utilized by a beekeeper during the course of the season. Knowing that compounds may combine synergistically and have greater effect when acting together than when acting alone raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the regulatory guidelines that are designed to safeguard our health and the health of our bees'.

'However, as health food advocates have been pointing out for years, just because you can make it to the door after consuming minute quantities of these toxic compounds does not mean that they benign and have no deleterious effects in the long run'.

Beginners Wanting Nucleus Colonies

Contrary to some mis-information, Peter Allen will be able to supply 5 frame nucleus colonies for £70 (a remarkably low price for members) which are headed up by queens produced this year and therefore they should not swarm this year. Please get in touch with Peter to place your order and for payment terms. These colonies will probably be ready by the end of May. Phone 01622 674768.

Basic Examination: Everyone who has requested to take the exam should have received their date and time. Now you need to send your application form and cheque to Michelle (michelle_t_fountain@yahoo.co.uk).

****West Sussex Beekeepers' Association** is again holding its annual Bee Market and Auction for the benefit of members and non members. The event will take place at Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus in Pulborough on Saturday 30th April. A copy of the Auction flyer and entry form is attached.** For further details visit the West Sussex BKA website www.britishbee.org.uk/local/westsussex/auction or contact me by email or phone 01403 752493.

Finally: If you have surplus equipment for sale, please contact me and I will advertise it in the Newsletter.

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