

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter June 2012

There is no doubt about it; the weather is out to confuse all of us. The plants don't know which season it is; the birds can't work it out either, so goodness knows what our poor bees think is going on. When we had our hot spell of weather a fortnight ago, the supers were filling up fast, however on venturing out after all this rain, I have looked around the garden and allotment, and there aren't very many things in flower just now. Having said that, I took a run on Sunday from Cuckoo Wood in High Elms, through the back of the golf course and crossing Shire Lane onto the farm fields, which were ablaze with field poppies and into the fields of Tubbenden Recreation area. The farm fields seem to be fallow this year with just paths mown across them to define the public rights of way, and I noticed a good amount of red and white clover and other natural plants conducive to the survival of bumble bees, and helpful to honeybees.

Dr. Nikki Gammans managed to persuade the BBC to spread the news about the release of the short-haired bumble bee which took place at Dungeness at the end of May. I heard an item on Radio 4's Today programme as the release took place and saw further coverage on the TV news bulletins throughout the day. Let's hope this release is successful. Previous reintroduction programmes with bees from New Zealand have failed, so all is resting on these Swedish bees.

Orpington Branch talks: In March Nick Withers came and gave us a glimpse of beekeeping in Australia. The talk was well attended and we learned that there is no varroa problem in Australia but they do have AFB and small hive beetle. Anyone finding AFB in their hives have to send all their equipment off to be irradiated. Nick visited some very large processing plants and showed photographs of the mechanization necessary to deal with producing up to 15 tonnes of honey a day. Plastic foundation is used to cope with the stresses of extraction.

Talks at Bromley Beekeepers apiary: In March Pat Allen from Romford Beekeepers gave an excellent talk on the 'many uses of a nucleus hive.' This was followed in April by Norman Carreck on 'Bee breeding for hygienic behaviour to fight varroa.' All Orpington members are welcome to attend the talks arranged by Bromley, it's just a bit of a hike for us to journey over to Beckenham.

The phones have been ringing off the hook this month with members of the public requesting swarms to be removed from their gardens, keeping our swarm collectors very busy. Members are also reporting that their hives are growing at a rate of knots enabling them to start up a new hive. If you are not on the swarm list, but would like to be on it, contact Richard Brook or Tony Trinnick.

The bees at High Elms apiary are keeping us busy at the moment. Queen cells seem to be in abundance, so if you are not sure about what to do with queen cells, supercedure cells or how to requeen hives, come along on a Saturday afternoon at 2.30pm for the hands-on experience.

Kit Erhardt has invited Orpington members to his garden at 2.30pm on Saturday 30th June for a demonstration and refreshments. 43 Homestead Road, Chelsfield. BR6 6HN

Roger Campkin has some nuclei for sale. Costs have previously been circulated to the members. Please contact him directly if you are interested.

Jackie Williams' brother-in-law is a carpenter and is making crown boards, brood boxes, and if he gets enough orders, dummy boards. Prices are reasonable and were circulated at Easter time. If you would like to place an order or check up on prices please email me directly.

Events coming up:

Sunday 8th July. Please note that we will not be attending the event at Foal Farm.

13-15 July - Kent County Show. If you can offer to help out on the stall please contact Bob Smith on bsmith12@ntlworld.com. You will only be required to do 2 hour sessions on the stall in one go and will also have time to yourself to visit the show.

15th September - Bromley Honey Show. Please put this date in your diary now and think about entering your honey or other associated products.

25th-27th October – The National Honey Show at St. George's College, Weybridge, Surrey. Lots of demonstrations, lectures and goods for sale plus competitions for the best honey!

If you came along to High Elms on Saturday, you will have seen that the equipment shed is neat, tidy and organized. Thanks to Helen and Roy Gilbert for doing this. We must make every effort to keep it this way. A special notice to all, to not put foundation containing honey into the shed as this encourages mice.

This seems to be a very long newsletter – sorry folks. If you have an article or comment that you would like to see in the September newsletter, please let me have it in good time.

And finally, a plea for help from the moth recorder for North Kent. Four moths are elusive due to their preferences for beehives. There are very few sightings of them. Ian Ferguson would really appreciate your reports of any sightings of these moths directly to him. Please see article on next attachment. If you encounter any problems in passing on this information to him, please feel free to do it via me. All my contact details are on the membership list.

Please click on attachment Bees and moths.

Happy beekeeping
Helen.