

## KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

### Orpington Branch Newsletter April 2010

Peter Bashford's talk to us was very comprehensive and covered the preparation for show of not only honey but wax and mead. As a very successful exhibitor he is well qualified to let us know his secrets though I can't remember him showing mead. He is so good at exhibiting that he no longer enters our honey show so that others can have a chance of winning. The following are some of the points that he made:

Read the schedule carefully and don't assume it is the same as last year -it might be different. He likes to enter the light, medium and dark classes and to do this, he adds supers from the bottom so that the earliest and lightest honey is at the top. When preparing for extraction, he searches through all the frames selecting for the colour of the honey. He uses an uncapping fork very gently and allows the honey to run out rather than spinning it. A very fine nylon cloth is used for filtering. He makes sure that the jars are of the same make (I always understood that they had to have the same number on the base but maybe the requirements have changed) and runs the honey on to the side of the jar using a jug to avoid trapping bubbles. Make sure the lids match and that includes the colour. Before the show, spoon off the top surface of the honey and shine a light through it to make sure it is clean. The surface should be like a mirror. Keep the lid on for two days before the show to trap the aroma since the smell of the honey is important to the judge.

I have some difficulty in understanding my notes about wax but this is what I think he said. Cappings are washed and dried and then heated and filtered through lint in an oven with the wax dripping into a bowl of distilled water. After drying it is then filtered through a wine filter. If making a wax block it is important to get the weight correct so you need to have a mark on the bowl at the right level and the inside should be rubbed with two drops of Fairy liquid as a releasing agent. The bowl should stand in another bowl containing water at 66°C with the wax at 71°C and the wax allowed to cool very slowly to avoid the surface cracking. Use meths to clean the surface of the wax and then polish with a silk cloth.

With all this information I hope we will get many more entrants at the show in September.

Free annual membership of the National Honey Show is offered to anyone who has joined the branch since August 1st last year. This will also enable you to put in entries to the show without charge. If you are eligible please let me know by the end of July.

The West Sussex Beemarket is at Pulborough on Saturday April 24th and there is one at Yalding on May 9th. Weald branch is organising a trip to the beemarket at Verendaal in Holland on July 19-21st. It will also include visits to Bruges and Arnhem and the price is £211 per person. There are a few places left so if you are interested ring Ronnie Eagle on 01622 843614. Deposit of £50 required.

Beekeeping is no longer banned in New York but an American judge has banned the use of a chemical made by Bayer and named Spirotetramet. It is said to inhibit cell reproduction in insects and has been found to have adverse brood effects in honeybees. Bayer is appealing but it is due to be launched here this year.

BBKA are offering a pack of their beekeeping guides for £19.75 post free but Richard Brook may be able to get a discount if he can order enough, so contact him if you would like a pack. They have also announced an "Adopt a Beehive" scheme. If you pay £29.50 a year you are kept in touch with the progress of the hive and get a gift of honey or honey mustard.

The Co-op is expanding its Bee Plan by extending it to London and Inverness.

An article in the Daily Telegraph reports findings from Germany that clash with what I have always been told about the control of temperature in the hive. According to the article there are special heater bees in the hive which are capable of raising their temperature as much as ten degrees above the normal. The brood pattern contains holes destined to receive these bees which can influence the temperature of the larvae in the surrounding cells. Those kept at 35°C turn into forager bees whilst those kept at 34°C emerge as housekeeper bees that never leave the nest. This idea that bees become specialised whilst they are still larvae is different to all my teaching apart from the queens. I wonder if it is true?

The Apiary is due to open on Saturday April 3rd, weather permitting.

Frank