

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter December 2009

For those of you who weren't at the AGM here are the changes made to your committee. Tony Trinick, Carol Courtney and Mandy have resigned due to pressure of other work but Tony has agreed to stay on as a member. His role as Treasurer is taken on by Richard Brook and John Huckle is the new Meetings Secretary. Ann Blackburn has agreed to do our liaison with the Honey Show organisers. At the meeting, Chairman thanked those leaving and wished the new committee members success in their new posts. Because the cost of the winter meetings is getting higher and the internet makes it possible for anyone to know about them and maybe come, the committee has decided to make a charge (£2.50 in advance, £3 at the door) for talks of general interest. For talks on beekeeping those charges will also apply to non-members but they will be free to members.

Don't forget the Winter Convention on Saturday December 12th at Mandy's house, 7.30pm. It would be a great help to her if you could let her know you are coming. Last year the proceedings were enlivened by a monologue delivered by Eric. Is there anyone among you who could help to entertain us this year?

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome to the branch the following new members Richard Masterman, George Ponder and Jacqueline and Lance Williams and we look forward to seeing them at our meetings.

According to a report in Beemail 2300 more beekeepers have registered on Beebase. If you haven't done it yet the email address is nationalbeeunit.com. Beemail also reported that work was continuing in America on the breeding of hygienic bees - ones that remove from cells any larvae with varroa.

The two talks at Lenham were by Graham Royle from Cheshire, another beekeeper who is also a keen microscopist. His first talk "The Honeybee Outside In" consisted of excellent slides of highly magnified images showing external and internal features of the bee accompanied by his commentary on what was being shown. For anyone studying for the bee anatomy part of the beekeeping examinations it would have been compulsory viewing. It also included pictures of his microscope and associated equipment. He had dedicated the show to "The six bees, the queen and the drone which had contributed".

The second talk "If Heath Robinson had been a Beekeeper" was a misnomer because he is a very practical beekeeper. The essential requirements for his "inventions" were for them to be simple, save time and add interest. He showed a collapsible hive stand he had made - ideal for going to the heather, and a more efficient clearer board using some hollow cones. He had also mounted a hive on a bathroom scale to monitor weight change during the season and in order to be able to read the scale had incorporated a periscope system. He thought you should practice with your smoker to find out how long it burns to avoid having to recharge it whilst you are inspecting your bees. Small pieces of towelling soaked in saltpetre solution and dried were good for starting the burn (but it may not be possible to buy saltpetre these days). He had a bung to close up the smoker when he had finished (I used to have a bung with a hole in it to slow down the burn when I wasn't using it). He had made a swarm collector for bees in trees using lengths of plastic drainpipe joined together connected to some drier tubing and a nucleus box with a mesh floor. This stood on another box containing a battery and a heater blower from a scrapped car. Switch on with the end of the pipe in the bees and they are sucked into the hive. He had also found that, used as a blower, the box was ideal for getting bees off frames for extraction. He had used a steam wallpaper stripper connected to a super with a mesh floor to deal with old combs and a junk electrically heated wash boiler finally to clean the frames. It is best to use rainwater so that the wax that comes out when you open the drain tap is not affected. An old refrigerator with a light bulb at the bottom makes a good warming cupboard. Finally he showed the shed for extraction he had built in his garden. This also provides undercover open air storage for his boxes. Water and electricity are laid on and a shower tray is used instead of a sink. There is a controller which gradually increases the speed of the extractor since he has found that this reduces the vibration. He has also used a hot-air gun for uncapping. Plenty of ideas for you there!

Frank