

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter February 2010

I completely forgot the Bromley meeting this month so am unable to let you know anything about it. If another member went and can inform me of what was said I can put it into the next issue.

There is a working party at the Apiary on Saturday February 13th weather permitting. On the following Wednesday the 17th we have a meeting at Atomwide for which you should already have a ticket. If you haven't and there are some tickets left it will cost you £3 to get in. Tom Hart-Dyke is the speaker.

Richard Brook tells me that the raffle at the Winter Convention raised £90 for the branch due to the generosity of all those donating the prizes. He also told me about a problem he had had with removing sticky labels from jars which had been solved by Doreen who had told him that I used to use Brasso. What she had said wasn't correct since I always used White Spirit to get the labels off - Brasso was used to give a final polish to the jar before putting it in to a show.

It was great to read that Rothamsted are starting research on bees again but it is a pity that most if not all of the former experts are now dispersed. There is to be an open weekend there on May 22-23 and I can recommend going to that since what they do there is very interesting.

Alan Byham's Honey Survey showed that the average crop last year was 35lb/colony, 10lb less than the previous year. The summer rain had stopped the bees foraging one month earlier than usual and they had consumed some of the honey in the hive. Amazingly, the highest yield reported was 121lb/colony and this was from a beekeeper with only three hives. The average sale price was almost £4/lb but in his opinion this should be the minimum since world honey crops are reducing and locally sourced honey is a premium product.

In another email, Alan gave the south-east region disease review. There was no AFB but 11 beekeepers with a total of 47 colonies had EFB. He remains concerned about Acarine and Nosema and would like more beekeepers to be able to diagnose these afflictions. It appears that David Rudland on 01883 622788 is our Bee Inspector. Apilife var. is now approved as a treatment for varroa.

Last month I referred to "A World without Bees" which I was reading. Well, I've now finished it and as I suspected it reaches no conclusion. We seem to be in the position of investigating whether a combination of two or more factors which individually are insignificant but together produce CCD. I feel very sorry for American bees who don't seem to get any rest at all. If they aren't pollinating a crop they are on a lorry going to another crop. No wonder they give up!

What surprised me in the book was how important the almond crop is in the USA. There is a valley north of Los Angeles containing 600,000 acres planted with almond trees which produce 80% of the world's almonds. Half of all the honeybees in the United States have to be taken into the valley in February to pollinate the trees. About 3000 lorries make the journey from as far as Florida each carrying hundreds of beehives stacked four high. More than one million hives are unloaded and placed at two hives per acre. Needless to say there are people whose job it is to ensure that it is all organised. Hives can be stolen. When the flowers fall the hives get loaded up again to go to another crop. When I get some chocolates at Christmas I will look at the almond on top of one with more respect.

Frank