

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter June 2010

I'm a bit late with the newsletter this time due to a computer problem which means that members receiving it by post will have missed the Biodiversity Day at High Elms which is on Bank Holiday Monday May 31st. My apologies to them. We have been invited to participate and I believe the new observation hive may be on display for the first time, all being well. Let us hope for good weather since it could be a good opportunity to inform more people about bees.

Another opportunity will occur on June 5-6th when we will have a stand at Coolings in Rushmore Hill.

I was disappointed that the microscopy event which I mentioned last month did not take place since the inspectors would have had a chance to find out whether acarine and nosema are a problem in our area. Maybe someone will organise something similar in the future.

A new research technique called Diagnostic Radioentomology offers hope of us being able to find out what goes on in the hive in great detail. It has been developed at the Swiss Bee Research Centre and the University of Bath and uses X-ray Computerised Tomography which is non-invasive and does not affect the normal behaviour of the bees. It can provide a view showing the location of each bee and can keep track of the movements of the queen. New scans are made every 90 seconds.

Eric tells me he is down-sizing and is offering a beginner one of his hives complete with bees for a nominal sum. If you are interested please ring him on 01689 831166.

It is probably too late now to put entries into the South of England Show at Ardingly but why not go along for the show anyway? It is a great day out and these shows are running into financial problems so it may not be there for much longer.

A sign of the times is a report that German beekeepers are installing satellite tracking systems or GPS devices in hives because of the number being stolen. An insurer reported more than 300 hive thefts last year and the Agricultural State Institute in Stuttgart has had 72 colonies stolen over the past few years. Hive thefts are also a problem in Japan.

The agreement between the BBKA and the chemical company Bayer which endorses the use of some "bee friendly" chemicals has always worried some beekeepers and it appears to have come to a head with a group of them leaving the association. The number of bees has been decreasing throughout Europe and many believe that pesticides may be responsible. Bayer say their testing proves them safe. In an effort to bolster our dwindling hive populations, queen bees are being posted here from the Isle of Man. The Manx Government's bee inspector will send twelve healthy queens to find out if they can repopulate and cure hives infected by disease. Beekeepers in Birmingham and Stockport are to receive them. Manx bees are said to be healthy since the import of foreign bees has been banned since 1987.

A warning of what can happen if you are careless was a paragraph in the paper about a beekeeper who was killed by his own bees. It was a hot day and he had left off his protective gear and his shirt to feed the bees. His mother said that he'd been stung so much that he probably thought he was immune. Another report was the death of a new beekeeper who was stung on the face while she was being helped by an "experienced" beekeeper. Experienced and without a veil? There are so many people now taking up beekeeping it is vital that proper precautions are taken. Better safe than sorry!

Frank