

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter March 2010

The meeting at Atomwide was packed and included lots of visitors so the subject of the talk and the speaker had created a lot of interest. Tom Hart Dyke had been born at Lullingstone Castle which had been built in 1497 and had been in his family ever since. At one time it had been the site of a silk farm but that had moved to Dorset some years ago. His grannie, who is still alive, had inspired his love of plants, especially orchids, and that had got him into trouble and the news. On an orchid expedition with a friend to Colombia they had been captured by some rebels and all their equipment taken. For many months they were held captive, being marched from place to place in the rain forest, always expecting to be killed at any time. No explanation was given as to why they were being held and eventually they were just released, given back all their belongings which had been kept in plastic bags and wished a Happy Christmas! They had no idea where they were and after going along a path had to return to ask the way. It was during this time of captivity that Tom sketched out the idea of a world garden with beds in the shape of the land masses, each containing plants that had originated in that area.

When he returned home he set about turning his dream into reality with the help of seven volunteers with two pigs to clear the scrub. This was all very hard work and necessitated transporting some very large trees and shrubs on his car. The shape and size of the beds has had to be distorted, e.g. Tasmania is relatively huge to hold all its plants but the world shape is clear to see. He doesn't use much fertiliser but watering is a big problem, especially on acid loving plants with the chalky water that exists on the site. In spite of living here a long time, I have never been to the castle but I will set that to rights this year. It will probably open about Easter time.

Our next talk at Atomwide is on March 17th and is probably by Peter Bashford on exhibiting so this is a must for anyone hoping for an award. But a word of warning - Peter is a perfectionist and is a regular winner of trophies and the preparation of his entries is very involved. It may put you off but you can be successful with just a little attention to detail and I hope to tell you how in a few month's time.

Another reminder of the open days at Rothamsted on May 22-23.

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.

West Sussex BKA is holding a Bee Market and Auction at Puborough on Saturday April 24th. Further details from www.britishbee.org.uk/local/westsussex.

Unfortunately, some cases of Nosema Cerana have been found in N.Ireland. It is difficult to distinguish this from our normal nosema but appears to be treatable by Fumidal B if that isn't one of the useful chemicals that has been banned by the EU.

There have been some interesting items in the newspapers. A letter complained about the increasing number of badgers in the writer's area who were destroying bees nests to get at the honey. A Polish beekeeper was stung and affected so badly that he was declared dead. Fortunately his wife wanted to retrieve his necklace and the undertaker opened the coffin to do it and detected a faint heartbeat. The U.S. Military have been investigating the use of bees to locate explosive devices in Afghanistan but have not solved the problem of carrying bees inside vehicles there. Apparently a bee can be trained to detect a chemical in 20 mins. A cream called Heaven's Bee Venom Mask is good at getting rid of your wrinkles as an alternative to Botox. It is a mixture of honey, shea butter and bee venom and Kylie Minogue thinks it good stuff. Why don't you have a go at making some?

Frank