

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter December 2005

By now I expect you will all know of the death of Clare Trinick. It was in the December 2003 newsletter that I reported her illness and in the intervening time she was in and out of hospital and had countless operations. In spite of that, she remained optimistic and even managed to win two cups at the 2004 honey show. When she was young, she was known as a caring person and she remained that throughout her life. This was demonstrated by the numbers at her funeral when the large church was filled to capacity. To me, it seems sad that you only find out about people you know, when they die and you hear or read their obituary. In outlining Clare's life, the vicar listed all the organisations with which she had been involved and the reason for all the mourners was obvious. We will all miss her very much. I am sure all of you will join me in extending our condolences to Tony and his family.

Since Clare was our Meetings Secretary, you will understand that the programme for the coming year has not yet been prepared, but we will issue it as soon as possible. One item that is being chosen at the moment is the date of the annual tour by our Bee Disease Inspector. If you would like your bees inspected, please let Kit know as soon as possible.

The next event for us is on December 10th at Gordon and Jackie's house. I hope you will all be able to come. More details shortly.

The speaker at Bromley on Tuesday January 17th is Peter Tomkin on "Sniffer Bees and Flight Rooms for Bees". I am afraid I know nothing about this, but it sounds interesting.

It had always surprised me that an organised society, a hive of bees, would allow members of the society to loaf around without doing anything. I refer of course to drones. As a result of listening to Celia Davis talking about "Mr. Bee", I now know. Drones come from unfertilised eggs and so carry only the genes of the mother. In order to maintain the strain they must mate with as many virgin queens in the area as possible. So they are very important to the colony and are cherished. There are reports that it is becoming more difficult to ensure that queens are mated, and if so this may also be due to varroa. The mites have reduced the number of feral colonies and their drones, and the procedure of drone trapping practised by beekeepers results in many drones finishing up in some bird's stomach. You can't win!

A letter from Gordon Dowson tells me that he is taking each day a dose of honey in cider vinegar, presumably for joint problems since it involves tennis. He thinks it is doing some good. Another believed remedy is bee stings and he recalls a programme on TV when a young man rolled up his trousers and encouraged bees to sting his knee. Recently an item in a daily reported a company offering a "cure" for arthritis which consists of a mixture of honey and bee venom. Gordon writes "The mind boggles at the idea of "milking" a sufficient number of bees to make this a viable proposition".

An item in the Daily Telegraph" last week reported that a man and his wife were being prosecuted for selling a mixture of honey from Argentina and China and labelling it as Norfolk Honey. A beekeeper had become suspicious after seeing a huge quantity of honey being sold by a beekeeper of whom he had never heard. The prosecution alleged that he had sold 17.7 tons of honey (that's about 40,000 one pound jars). A search of their premises had revealed tub upon tub of Argentinian honey as well as records referring to 10.8 tons from Argentina, 2.9 tons from China and 6.5 tons from elsewhere in Britain.

I'll finish by wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New Year and hoping that you will have good beekeeping in the new season.

Frank