

KENT BEEKEEPERS` ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter February 2004

A good group of members assembled at the Apiary on January 17th and spent an enjoyable time cutting back some of the hedging. Although cold, the weather was beautiful and it was a treat to be there. We seem to be a bit lucky with the weather for this event.

There was also a good turn out for the talk by Norman Carrick of Rothamsted at Bromley. He started by giving a brief history of Rothamsted, which is worth a talk just on its own. There is an experiment there which was started in 1843 and is the longest running one in the world. Bee research there started in the twenties. Recently they have been involved in the selection of wild flower seed mixes to promote the number of beneficial insects, including bees, in set-aside areas. Also, of course, the tests on GM crops. They have been using aerial photography coupled with ground inspection over a 10km square area as a calibration technique so that it should be possible in the future to be able to tell the farmer, from an aerial photograph, what food there is for bees. The use of radar to track bee flight paths has been extended to include honeybees. A tiny aerial with a diode at its centre is attached to the bee as it leaves the hive and is removed when it returns. It had been thought that bees use marker points to assist their navigation so to test this an experiment was carried out at a disused featureless aerodrome and the use of the radar showed that this did not happen. They were using a feeder as a target and it was interesting to see the plot of the bee's movements when the target had been removed. It kept flying round in the area where the feeder had been, but eventually gave up and flew back to the hive. When it emerged again, it did exactly the same thing. The bee appears to act as though it is programmed by computer. The work on varroa has shown that Deformed Wing Virus is universally present on affected bees. Even bees affected by varroa as adults and who live a normal life are full of the virus when they die. It seems possible that the queen has greater resistance to varroa, possibly because her longer life requires a better immune system. Since varroa do their damage by stimulating the virus in the bee, it is possible that something in the varroa's saliva acts as a catalyst. Rothamsted has also been testing the possibility that varroa could be killed by a fungus. This already happens, but the fungus kills the bees as well. So they are investigating a number of varieties of fungus to find one which could be selective. Tropical varieties seem most likely since they more nearly match conditions in the hive.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday February 25th at 8.00pm at the Petts Wood Memorial Hall. Our speaker is Peter Hutton who is well known for his beekeeping lectures. I have left the subject to him but have asked him to include his experiences of removing swarms from awkward places. It should be interesting.

If anyone is interested in Andrew Newson's hives and equipment, Jim Grierson has a complete list of what is available and knows the telephone number to contact.

As a result of selling the Apiary's wax crop, we will have foundation available for sale this year. There are British Standard shallow at

£3.69 for 10 sheets and 14x12 at £9.53 for 10 sheets. Please contact Peter Kirby or Jim Grierson if you are interested.

I have received details of the Annual Beekeepers' Lecture at Medway branch. It is at 3.00pm on Saturday March 6th and it is at Medway Council Offices. The speaker is Dr. Juliet Osborne of Rothamsted and the subject "How Honey Bees and Bumble Bees Utilise the Available Forage". This sounds as though it may overlap the talk at Bromley to some extent, in which case it is also likely to be very interesting. I have details of how to find the place and parking.

Frank

- * KentishBee mailing list hosted by ZbeeNet BBS from London.
- * To unsubscribe email: mailserver@zbee.com Messagebody: unsubscribe kentbee-L
- * Kent Beekeepers Association <http://www.kentbee.com>
- * Other options available email: mailserver@zbee.com MsgBody: help kentbee-L
- * To Write to this list either Reply or Send a message to kentbee-L@zbee.com