

## KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

### Orpington Branch Newsletter July 2005

There have been many occasions over the years when weather has affected what we could do at the Apiary. Saturday June 18<sup>th</sup> is the only one I can remember when activity was almost impossible due to fine weather – it was so hot! At the start of John Williams' demonstration, there were probably about a dozen members round the hive, but the number soon shrunk to about five with everyone else sheltering in the shade. It was a relief to retire to the Nature Hut for tea after looking at only two of the hives.

I could not come to the Coolings weekend or the event at the Hadlow College site at Mottingham but I am told that they both went well.

The next event is at the Hop Shop on the weekend of July 9/10<sup>th</sup> and that is followed by the Kent Show on July 15-17<sup>th</sup>.

Some of you will know that John Fitton has been ill and he has decided to give up keeping bees. There are consequently about eight out-apiary sites in the Shoreham valley which will become available and presumably also the hives on them. If you are interested please give John a ring on 01959 524071. He will be notifying other branches as well so you should be quick about it.

Gordon and Jim have told me of strange goings-on when, with Chris, they were collecting a large swarm. It was shaken from a tree into a skep, which was inverted on a cloth on the ground and left to allow all the bees to go in. When they returned, bringing a hive, the outside of the skep was covered with bees so that it looked like a Christmas pudding! They transferred the bees from the skep to the hive and noticed that some of them appeared to be fighting. When they returned towards nightfall there were a lot of dead bees around the hive.

So what was the cause of the fighting? The only one I can suggest is that there was a second swarm, which decided to settle on the outside of the skep, which sounds unlikely. But in beekeeping books you can read that it is all right to tip more than one swarm into a hive because the bees are so confused and mixed up that they don't fight. I don't suppose we will ever know the reason. Maybe it is another instance of the bees not reading the right books. Alan Emus who now has the colony tells me that they have settled down and have drawn out foundation very quickly. He is hoping they are nice gentle bees since he had to destroy all his colonies which were very aggressive.

An article in a Kent newspaper about bumble bees made depressing reading. According to Dr. David Goulson of the University of Southampton the spread of intensive farming is tending to isolate the bees and leading to inbreeding. If the queen mates with a relative, many of the genetically female offspring develop into sterile males which are useless and represent a loss of workers. So the outlook is a bit grim for them. However, the bees in our gardens should avoid this.

Frank