KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter July 2006

Good weather featured for both days of our presentation at Coolings but the World Cup undoubtedly kept many visitors away. Nevertheless, the stand was usually busy and I believe we sold quite a bit of honey. Once again, Jim provided the demonstration hive, this time with different bees for each day and we had many helpers. Gordon was organizing a stand at Hadlow College a few days ago and as the weather was again good I hope it went well.
Our next activity is a stand at the Hop Shop on July 8-9th and I am sure Gordon and Jim would welcome offers of assistance from you.
At the Apiary, we were shown, by Keith I think, a syringe for sucking venom out of a sting. I don't know whether it works but it can be found in some shops which only sell things for one pound.

I don't have anything else to report, but Tony has provided me with this account of beekeeping in Bermuda where he recently spent a holiday:

"While on holiday in Bermuda in May 2006, I was lucky enough to be introduced to Randolph Furbert. Currently, Randolph is vice president of the Bermuda Bee Keepers Association having been president for 12 years.

We spent 2 or 3 days looking around some of his 37 apiaries of 250/300 hives. This included catching a swarm. Randolph's business involves supplying Bermuda with most of its honey sales from his Chartwell Apiaries. This was named after Churchill's Westerham home. It is very much a going concern, although it was very badly affected by the hurricane, Fabian, in September 2003. This knocked out the majority of his hives and about 100 years of the island's vegetation.

Bermuda is a fabulous place for honeybees with its warm and moist climate and plenty of foraging, through a season from April to the end of November

Interestingly, the main nectar crop is from the Mexican Pepper tree (an intruder from Brazil and Paraguay) in September, but there is also a constant source of good nectar from:

Wild Viburnum (May),
Pittosporum (April/May),
Sage Bush (April/May),
Wild Fennel (June),
Giant Privet (June/July), and many more.

The hives appear to grow rapidly in the spring with the Queens starting laying vigorously from mid March. Randolph starts splitting the hives from mid April, taking 3 frames out to a nuc, to include a frame of young eggs. This doubles his capacity for the season and gives more room in the existing hive, where he adds more foundation, alternately between the existing frames. When catching a swarm he will add a frame of brood to the new hive (not all drawn comb as the bees appear not to like it). He says he will always wish to introduce new brood by requeening from Hawaii (36 new queens last year), but this is partly restocking from the 2003 hurricane. Hawaiian bees are used because queens are free from varroa and disease generally. Bermuda has no varroa and very little other disease with only a small amount of AFB. Plenty of greater wax moth though.

Summer management is more about keeping up with the swarms and adding new supers to his vast numbers of Langstroff hives (not jumbo!). And, of course, if the bees swarm, well that's another to collect!

His hives on average produce about 150 to 200 lb per hive with 2 extractions per year, in July and mid October. This produces around 5000 gallons of honey in a season, with his honey selling at $4.40 per lb. The shop mark-up appears to be about 50%.

As you might expect, his houses have such wonderful names as, Honey Bee Apartment, Honeymoon Cottage and Shalom, while his production unit is, of course, The Honey House. Although very hard and hot work, it is sheer bliss to Randolph with no better way of combining business with pleasure, and for me too and to see it all. Randolph, thank you for showing me around".

Frank