

KENT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Orpington Branch Newsletter March 2006

This may be a bit late because I have had a serious computer problem that I can't cure and have had to buy a new computer. It has a different operating system and so far it has resisted all my attempts to use the associated hardware. It is quite probable that I will find that I cannot print this when I have finished.

The proposed alterations to the Nature Centre have been getting under way and the existing hut has been gutted. They start knocking it down on April 1st (in my opinion a most appropriate date) and expect to be opening the new one on January 1st 2007. The position for us is not so favourable now since the lady in charge is worried for the safety of the much larger number of children who are expected to be coming to the site. There was an open day last week at the hut where drawings of the proposed building were shown. Twelve of our members attended and lobbied her with the advantages of continuing to have an apiary at the site. She was taken to see it and hopefully realised it was not such a dangerous place. I believe she is to arrange a meeting with us and the teachers before she takes any decision. We will shortly be making some alterations to our site with the hope of anticipating any objections.

It was noticeable that there were many against the new building, the idea for which seems to have appeared out of the blue without consultation with interested parties. Some of the critics are local residents who have no wish to see coaches full of children arriving along their narrow roads. Some suspect that it is all part of the council's attempt to obtain World Heritage Site status for Downe which will bring loads of tourists to clutter up their village.

What seems to be certain is that it will go ahead no matter what anyone thinks. We have to try to continue to be part of it.

There was a good attendance for Alan Byham's talk, which covered all the normal problems and also referred to the exotic ones which have yet to affect us. Varroa is still the major one and he thinks that it will cause the loss of over 50% of hives this winter. Over the years, cases of EFB have been decreasing whilst AFB has been going up. Make sure that you can recognise AFB and EFB; AFB looks greasy and spreads over the whole frame, EFB can occur in isolated cells. In order to reduce the risks of chemicals in honey, they are trying to cut out the use of oxytetracyclin as a treatment for disease. The shook swarm technique used in April-July is a good way of keeping your bees healthy and gives an increased honey yield. It also helps to control varroa since most of the mites are in sealed cells. If you include a frame of unsealed brood in the new hive, any varroa carried over will be in sealed cells after a week and the frame can be removed and destroyed. Normally, checks for varroa should be carried out twice a year- once in Spring and once when you have taken off the honey. Beekeepers are the main cause for the spread of disease, so don't move frames from one hive to another unless you have to, when you should check for disease first. Mark supers with their hive number. Practice apiary hygiene. If you buy a colony from another area, find out if there are pyrethroid resistant varroa there. Whilst you are looking at your bees, watch out for anything unusual - it might be a sign of the small hive beetle or Tropilaelaps.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday March 22nd at the Petts Wood Memorial Hall at 8.00pm, (not 7.30 as in your programme), when the "Badger Man" will be coming to talk to us about the mysterious animal (I have yet to see one in the wild).

Frank