

## KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

### Orpington Branch Newsletter November 2005

You should, by now, have paid your subscription to Tony Trinick for the coming year. If you haven't you will miss out on "Beeecraft".

Members have recently attended the cremation of Shirley Sax's husband Sydney. He was always a welcome visitor to our Christmas parties. A famous musician, recordings of his playing were heard during the ceremony. Flowers were sent on behalf of the branch.

The talk by Roger Dartington about his new long hive was very well attended and the large amount of discussion both before and after showed the amount of interest. He started by explaining how his ideas for it developed from when he was keeping bees on the fifth floor of a house in London, the climb to the last level being by ladder, his feeling that the hives he was using were too small for modern bees and that inspections caused too much disturbance. When adding a second hive to do an artificial swarm, it occurred to him to join the two hives and halve the width of the supers, so reducing back strain, and incidentally reducing the overall height so that the hive could be mounted on legs at a convenient height. By having an entrance at each end and a dummy board it is possible to run two colonies after an artificial swarm. There are 21 frames and the dummy board, and the cover boards are thick to provide thermal insulation. The entrance/alighting boards can be inverted to close the hive completely (if you are having a barbecue) and when turned provide a resting place for a super. The roof can be rested between the alighting board and the ground to provide a ramp for the bees from a swarm that you have collected.

He emphasised that the hive is for people who keep their bees in one place – it is not suitable for taking to the orchards or heather. Varroa control is achieved initially by drone trapping in the spring and then after an artificial swarm by sprinkling the swarm (containing the new queen and no brood) with icing sugar. A week or so later, the other colony without a queen and now without brood can also be sprinkled. Apistan is used in the autumn. The hive is made of thick plywood and is painted in a bright colour for protection and for fun. If you want to make one yourself plans are available and the cost of materials is about £100. A kit is on sale for £285. I just wish that the Dartington hive could have been available when I started beekeeping – I might not have had a bad back now!

I didn't go the National Honey Show, but Peter Burden and Jim Grierson both reported that there seemed to be fewer entries and fewer stands this year. This is a great pity since honey show finance depends to a considerable extent on receipts from exhibitors. Possibly the new location is not so convenient. One thing that both Peter and Jim noticed was some honey which looked like water and had a thin constituency; it had come from borage. A talk by Willie Robson, a well-known beekeeper in the north, gave some details of his methods. If the bees are going to rape he puts only a strip of foundation in each frame, and leaves it to the bees to make the comb. He then uses heat to separate the honey and wax. He is experimenting with putting a polystyrene super on first in the spring to avoid a cold shock to the bees, and is also trying plastic foundation for the heather honey. There were polystyrene National boxes and supers on sale at the show. A talk by Dr. Rose Cooper from the University of Wales was about the healing properties of honey but she had found no traces of antibacterial activity in Welsh honeys. The New Zealand Manuka honey is effective against MRSA. She also surprised Jim by saying that honey is acidic.

I have received an email from a lady who needs to dispose of an active colony of bees comprising a jumbo Langstroth brood body and two supers with enough parts for another full hive and extra supers for both. There are unused packs of foundation for the brood body and supers, and mouse guards and a Porter escape board. Her husband can no longer go near the bees and they must be off the site at an allotment at West Wickham by the end of December. If you are interested contact 0208 462 5574 and ask for Lee or Claire.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday November 16<sup>th</sup> at 8.00pm at Petts Wood Memorial Hall. It is the AGM and Harvest Supper, so don't miss it. I believe that Kit is thinking about resigning as Chairman so there could be a vacancy on the committee. Any volunteers?

PTO.....

Jackie Harradine has organised a day trip to Calais for a super meal in a hotel and a visit to a supermarket. It is on Tuesday December 6<sup>th</sup> and the price is £32 each. I can recommend it because Doreen and I went last year. There may be a few seats left. If you are interested, ring Jackie on 020 8467 8368.

Gordon has confirmed to me that the Christmas party will again be at their house on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

An email from Alan Byham as usual requests us to let him have details of the honey crop this year. The form is an attachment to the email and I will include a copy with this newsletter.

Greg Snell has sent an email giving details of his new address in Norwich. It is 30, Hellesdon Close, Norwich NR6 5EF, telephone 01603 741739. He hopes that you will be able to look in on him when you are in the area and suggests that you don't delay it too much because Norwich is scheduled to be under the sea by the year 2100.

Apple Day at High Elms was extremely successful with Peter and Jim selling over 100lb of Honey.

A pleasant surprise was a visit to the Apiary by a German beekeeper Heinrich Widenhorn with his wife, daughter Inge and her two delightful and well-behaved children. He had been visiting the country to see his daughter (who lives in Orpington) for a few days, she had seen my name on the net and had rung me to make the arrangement. Peter Burden and Jim Grierson joined me and Inge translated. The following may not be exactly right since I found it difficult to listen and write at the same time.

Heinrich lives near the Swiss border with his house overlooking Lake Constanz. He has about 45 colonies, some in Zandor hives and some in a beehouse. The climate there is similar to ours and the seasonal nature of the flowers of the surrounding area means that he can get four different types of honey and may extract four times a year. In Germany you have to be qualified before you can keep bees and Heinrich is an Imkermeister (Master Beekeeper). His bees are Carniolan and he doesn't use a veil or gloves. The frame size is similar to National and he does not use queen excluders. Varroa arrived in 1980 and mites have been pyrethroid resistant for some time. Treatment during the winter is by oxalic acid (1l water, 25g honey and 35g oxalic acid) and is done by soaking paper dishcloths in the solution and draping one over each frame; the bees chew the paper and so distribute the chemical. In July a 60% solution of formic acid is dripped on to a thick absorbent cardboard pad above the brood frames possibly with a spacer to prevent it being too close. This is repeated in September with an 85% solution.

He also makes candles from silicone rubber moulds which he makes himself using a master mould carved from wood.

It was a very pleasant occasion to meet him and his family and we hope he will be able to come back when more is happening at the Apiary. He would welcome visits from us.

I think this is the longest newsletter that I have ever written!

Frank