



WISBOROUGH GREEN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

MAY 2012

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APIARY MEETINGS - DOUNHURST

WEDNESDAY - 09th MAY

6:30 PM FOLLOWED BY A BBQ

SUNDAY - 20th MAY (Changed from 19th May)

12.00 noon for Beginners and Intermediate; 2.30 for Advanced only

WEDNESDAY - 30th MAY

6:30 PM FOLLOWED BY A BBQ

SATURDAY - 09th JUNE

12.00 noon for Beginners and Intermediate; 2.30 for Advanced only

DIARY OF EVENTS

THURSDAY - 14th JUNE

BEE HEALTH & DISEASE RECOGNITION

PATTERSON IN PRINT



This really is a strange start to the season. An email goes out warning members to put supers on because the weather is good and the bees doing well, then within a short time another email goes out warning members about the same bees running short of food. This is where beekeepers need to be able to quickly interpret the state and needs of a colony, but this of course needs experience and takes time to acquire.

The acquisition of knowledge can't always be got from the various teaching aids available, but is often gained by simple observation. This unfortunately isn't the greatest strength of some people and I think it's fair to say that bees often suffer due to poor beekeeping. In the last few months when visiting other BKAs I have come across two cases where officials who have been keeping bees for some time (over 20 years in one case) didn't know the difference between emergency and swarm cells. These are not isolated cases as there were a few howlers in lectures given by well known speakers at the recent BBKA Convention. In one case the speaker clearly hadn't performed operations they were talking about. You certainly don't get that at Wisborough Green – if we don't know something we are happy to say so.

The BBKA convention was attended by at least 6 WG members and to the best of my knowledge was enjoyed by all. Daisy and Martin spread their time between lectures/workshops and buying equipment as did Tom and Gordon. Rachel Boxall attended a microscopy course on anatomy and helped with stewarding. I was there over 4 days and got myself into a few lectures, some very good and others a bit disappointing. There were plenty of things to buy and in some cases demand was so heavy that some items sold out. When it was only one day the BBKA Convention was the largest one day beekeeping event in Europe. I'm not sure of the current status, but it is still a very impressive display. If you didn't go, then I suggest you try to attend next year.

I mentioned queen cells earlier and this is one area where even experienced beekeepers often fall down. I will try to explain.

Swarm cells are built as queen cells from the start and eggs are laid in succession over 5-6 days. They may be found anywhere on a comb, NOT always around the edge as we are often led to believe. The Peak Queen cell Number (PQN) is the total number of Q/Cs a colony will feel comfortable building in a swarming situation in a full colony throughout the life of a queen. This is the first time Q/Cs are built, not after the beekeeper has cut some out. The number of Q/Cs built are relevant to the swarminess of a colony. The more built the more swarmy a colony is, the less built the less swarmy it is. I reckon 10-12 is the dividing line.

Supersedure cells look very similar to swarm cells and are built by the colony when they sense the queen is failing and naturally this happens in late summer or autumn. The numbers are small, my saying being "usually one, often two and occasionally three" and they can be anywhere on combs. Eggs are laid in these at around the same time. As you should all know there are regularly cases where supersedure cells are produced during the summer. These can be missed very easily and even if there is only one a colony will swarm on a supersedure cell. For more information see April BBKA News or our website.

Emergency cells are Q/Cs that are converted from worker larvae when the queen has gone missing for whatever reason. They come from the midrib of the comb, are started over several days and are built in roughly the same quantities as the PQN. In my experience bees never start emergency cells on larvae that are too old unless there is some intervention by the beekeeper, such as cutting some out. These later cells I refer to as "panic" cells.

The PQN is important because if Q/Cs are removed and there are worker larvae young enough the bees will raise more emergency cells to bring numbers back up to their PQN. This is rarely realised and very often results in a swarm where the queen that emerges from the one Q/C that was left will head the swarm. This leaves the queen from an unexpected emergency cell to head the colony. As this is likely to come from a larva that was old it is poorly fed, resulting in a poor queen. I'm sure this is why emergency cells get a poor reputation. It is down to poor beekeeping, not emergency cells.

When cutting out queen cells make sure you only leave one. If you leave two as is often advised nowadays the colony is likely to swarm with the first queen to emerge. The reason usually given is that if there is a problem with one Q/C then you have a second chance, but this is why we recommend everyone has two colonies. We are also often advised to leave an unsealed Q/C in case a sealed one is dud. This is also muddled thinking because in a short time the unsealed one will be sealed, so what's the difference? I believe it comes from the fact that when a queen emerges the lid of the cell is hinged and sometimes the bees put it back and partially reseal it, very often with a worker inside. This makes it look as if it hasn't emerged, but the tip can easily be removed, so a gentle touch on the tip will reveal if it is OK. or not. I think it is a simple misunderstanding that has become one of beekeepings many myths.

I suggest you save the above and keep it in a safe place in case you need it.

I have recovered well from trying to part beekeepers from their money at the auction. Thanks to those who have asked about the state of my throat. It is not easy in the open, especially when there is a breeze. I had several people speak to me at the BBKA Spring Convention about the sale, most with positive comments. I had to work much harder than ever to get a flow going and it seems there is a lot less money about than there was, although some prices were slightly higher than most of us would have wanted to pay. There was the usual banter and I think most people enjoyed it. Probably the most amusing thing was the person who seems to like bidding against himself! He is now a regular and I look forward to seeing him again next year. The auction continues to provide a good service to beekeepers and thanks must go to Graham Elliott for organising it and all those from WG who helped the whole event run smoothly.

Roger

EXTRACTING EQUIPMENT

The Division's extractor and associated equipment is available for loan. If you wish to "book" anything, please contact me by Email glover.fletchingshollow@googlemail.com .

To avoid disappointment, please book well ahead of your requirements.

Equipment will be loaned for a maximum duration of 3 days at any one time, and it will be necessary for it to be collected and returned to my home address in Loxwood, unless otherwise agreed.

Equipment available:-

3 frame extractor

Heated uncapping tray and knife

50kg bottling tank with strainer

John

TAKING THE BASIC THIS YEAR ?

Several of our members have taken and passed the Basic Assessment. This is a basic oral and practical assessment that is usually carried out in our divisional apiary by qualified assessors. It very satisfying doing it, focuses the mind on learning the essential elements of beekeeping and gives you more confidence.

There is no writing to do, and the assessment is conducted in a relaxed, conversational way. You will be asked to open a hive and explain what you are doing and seeing, so that the assessor can see that you handle the bees considerately and know the "basics". There is a syllabus which you will find here:

http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/basic_syllabus_2012_26-1-2012_1327597750.pdf

The assessor will ask you about several topics in the syllabus. If you have been attending the apiary fairly regularly, joined one of Roger's learning days, and supplemented what you have learned with a little additional reading, you should have little difficulty in passing. You also get a nice certificate you can hang on the wall!

You need to have at least one years experience of keeping bees.

You can read more about taking the exam here:

http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/13-08-2011;_taking_the_basic_assessment_part_1_by_ivor_davis_1313268887.pdf

and
http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/13-08-2011;_taking_the_basic_assessment_part_2_by_ivor_davis_1313268942.pdf

If you are interested in taking the Assessment this year, or would like to discuss further what is involved, please contact me on 01798-343470 or email: petworthgordon@btopenworld.com

Gordon

APIARY SALES

As before we will have good supplies of frames, foundation and other essentials for sale at Apiary meetings this year. A full price list is included in the newsletter.

Prices from other suppliers tend to have risen, and foundation in particular has become a lot more expensive. However, I am pleased to say that due to careful buying we are holding prices for frames and foundation at the same level as for several past years. This means that for foundation we are about 10% cheaper than other sources, which we hope is appreciated by members.

Please remember that meetings are very busy and there may not be time to supply you unless you have emailed your requirements to me in advance on stone.house@btinternet.com

Tom

Feeding / Starvation

ADVICE FROM THE NATIONAL BEE UNIT

With the on-going poor weather, there is a real risk of bee colonies starving.

Please check for stores in the colony and if in any doubt feed your bees. You should feed with either a fondant or a thin syrup.

Further information on feeding bees can be found in Best Practice Guideline No. 7, on the Advisory Leaflets page of BeeBase (click here).

Kind regards,

National Bee Unit.

We have issued a warning about the possibility of starving bees, and this was echoed by Beebase recently. A member has drawn attention to a good video on the making of fondant for those who might want to. At this time of year it would be more appropriate to feed with 1:1 syrup that is more immediately usable by the bees, but fondant is a good winter feed, and better for emergency feeding when there are supers on. If you make fondant do be very careful about temperatures as it is easy to alter the characteristics and composition by overheating.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KyJOM0pejw>

Tom

Information Notice

Plaistow & Ifold Parish Council are holding a big event on and around Plaistow village green on Saturday 2nd June 2012. The ceremony will be opened by Julie Walters, and in addition to numerous activities, they are hoping to have as many stall holders as possible. Pitches will be just £5.00, with stall holders providing their own tables, chairs, gazebos etc. Set up will be before 11am (the road will be closed for a procession then) until approximately 5pm.

If anyone would like to attend the event with a stand please contact Sallie Baker, the council member organising stalls, by email to salliebaker@btinternet.com

BEE HEALTH & DISEASE RECOGNITION 14 JUNE 2012

These sessions have been devised as hands on events to help beekeepers recognise bee diseases, and the exotic pests that are now notifiable. There will be samples to show you (subject to availability). It is most important that all beekeepers are aware of disease and can recognise both EFB and AFB. This is particularly relevant at the present time, as last year several instances of EFB were identified in our immediate area. Around 80% of cases are spotted by the Bee Inspectors. If foul brood is spotted by the beekeeper it is usually in a very advanced state that could have spread infection to surrounding colonies.

Our Regional Bee Inspector, Alan Byham, will provide a morning lecture which is suitable for anybody who has not attended a previous bee health session, but it is suitable for all – whatever your ability level.

The afternoon session will extend to other disease related subjects, but is only open to you if you have attended a previous bee health session.

You should not book on to this if you have not been on a previous session.

Please note that prior booking of a place is essential and if attending, it is important that you read the attachment,

“Bio-Security Precautions for the Bee Health Day”.

To book your place, please contact me, John Glover, preferably by Email glover.fleetchingshollow@gmail.com or phone 01403 751899. Please indicate “am” or “pm”

The morning session will commence at 9.30 and the afternoon at 1.30, both at The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood..

Please book before 30th April as after then, available spaces will be offered to our fellow Divisions at Chichester and Worthing.

John