

APRIL 2012

Surrey Beekeepers Association

CROYDON DIVISION

Chairman Mark Stott 0208 684 1098
Treasurer Tamar Cavett 0208 406 9258
Secretary Joyce Atkinson 0208 657 2817

www.croydonbeekeepers.co.uk



DATES TO NOTE IN APRIL

MONDAY 2 nd. APRIL

The first of a series of study evenings, 7-30 p.m. to prepare for the Basic Assessment being run by Mark Stott - for details phone Mark 0208 684 1098

SATURDAY 14 th. APRIL

'TASTER' day for new beekeepers - the morning session will cover the theory and an afternoon to see and handle bees at our apiary. venue and times from Mark 0208 684 1098 or David Shepherd 02086684538

SUNDAY 15 th, APRIL

The first meeting at Hartley Down Apiary this season - 2 -00 p.m. for those who are following David Shepherd's introductory talks followed by the usual hive inspections at 2-30 p.m.

NOTE - the next apiary meeting will be on the 29 th. April - this is not our usual pattern of 2 nd. and 4th.Sunday meetings due to Easter - next month, May they will be back to the usual - 13 th. and 27 th.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY 20 th. 21 st. &22 nd. APRIL

The BBKA Spring Convention in Shropshire
Both Beecraft and BBKA News have whole page details of this.

REPORTS ON PAST EVENTS

You will find a summary of the Surrey Training Day on one page of this edition. Thanks to several of our members this went very smoothly, especial thanks to Joyce Atkinson and her team for the content and organisation of the catering.

We were favoured with a fine, warm day for the Apiary Tidying day and thanks to those who came we are ready for the season which seems to have already started! Maintaining the apiary is an ongoing task, always something to be done and if you can assist please let David Shepherd know.

ARE YOU PREPARED ?

Our long serving agent for Thorne's equipment, Richard Palmer can supply any items you are short of - a new catalogue is now available to tempt - ask Richard for a copy 0208 679 0401

A resume of the 2011 season at Hartley Down by Richard Snelling

Last year some of us were lucky enough to be invited to the official opening of Reigate Division's amazing new apiary. In short the planning and execution of this project were stupendous and got me thinking about our own apiary.

Hang on! I thought, we've got something pretty good going on of our own and it is no coincidence that our apiary meetings were so well attended. These remarks are mainly for those members who missed out.

The grass is regularly cut avoiding the meadow flowers planted on the middle level, there is a profusion of divisional and members hives of different types kept for teaching, honey production and queen rearing not forgetting an ingenious scale hive and David Shepherd's observation hive in the main hut.

New and potential beekeepers were held spellbound by David's beginners classes aided by the slides shown on his lap top while brave visitors, kitted out in bee suits provided by the division, experienced hands on beekeeping with experienced members (thanks Tim).

After such a strenuous afternoon's activities tea and cakes miraculously appeared. At the end of the season David (who else) organised a very successful barbecue.

I have mentioned just a few of the things going on at our apiary and take this opportunity to thank everyone involved who make it possible, including our visitors, whether cutting the grass, baking the cakes and everything in between. I am sure 2012 will be more of the same.

VACANCIES

Our long serving county treasurer, David Humphreys is retiring and a replacement is required for this responsible position by the end of this year therefore if you feel able to take over the task Sandra Rickwood will be very pleased to hear from you -rickwoodsba@gmail.com

Since Surrey Beekeepers Association is a registered charity each division has to appoint a trustee, ours is currently Rosemary Collett who after several years service wishes to retire, a not too onerous job but quite responsible.

Another of the tasks that keep our division going, editing this newsletter to keep members informed - surely one of you could take over and make it more interesting than my efforts!

Volunteers for the two Croydon positions ? let me know 01737 822394

The SBKA Training Day held in The Mitre Theatre at Trinity School, Shirley on 3rd March 2012.

The core of the day was a set of lectures given by our Regional Bee Inspector Alan Byham, our Seasonal Bee Inspector David Rudland, and SBKA's Chairman Bob Maurer.

Alan started the morning with "Spring Management". The exceptionally short and mild winter has been potentially bad news for our bees. They were more active, for longer, consuming more food, with more bees dying off thus resulting in smaller, less efficient clusters. This left colonies weak and likely to die off. Early visual inspection (rather than the imprecise "hefting") and consequent feeding, even on the coldest days, may save a vulnerable colony. If stores are low, or even less than generous, feed the colony some candy. Also change floors on a cold day when the bees will stay in a tight cluster rather than fly out and attack you. To allow the bees to use their stores, and to train them not to go to the neighbours' bird baths or kitchen drains, it is helpful to provide an accessible source of water for them in the apiary, at least 3 or 4 metres from the hives. However, once started, you should try to ensure that the source never dries up. On a mild day, go through the brood and check for eggs, unsealed and sealed brood; these are usually in the ratio 1:2:4, ie the ratio of the number of days bees spend at each stage of development. Try to mark the queen, and clip her wings if required, whilst the colony is still small and easily inspected. Brood comb should be kept clean either by regularly swapping 3 or 4 new frames for old each year or by renewing the whole set via a Shook Swarm or a Bailey change. As the honey flow starts to build up, add supers when the existing super is "full of bees" and don't wait until it is "full of honey" when it will probably be too late.

Bob Maurer took us through a simple method of "Queen Rearing". Even so, it may be a little too much to expect beginners to attempt such procedures, but fore-knowledge of what might be attempted in a couple of years is never wasted and the subject is a high priority for most club apiaries in order to improve strains and to become less reliant on expensive outside providers. Bob went through a practical demonstration of the Wilson Method of queen rearing using the Association's "Virtual Hive". This is a full-sized hive with frames fitted with photographs of combs and bees instead of the real thing – an ideal teaching aid.

After coffee and biscuits, it was Alan's turn again, telling us all about "Swarming", the reasons why it occurs and various methods to postpone it, or coping with the results after the event. We have to accept that we will never stop the bees from doing what comes natural to them!

As his "seasonal duties" had not yet begun, David appeared in his other role as owner of East Surrey Bees. He claimed that his most useful tool in his apiary was a "nuc" (ie nucleus box). He listed all the various operations in which it proves invaluable, viz queen introduction, splits, making queens from swarm cells, holding back-up queens, artificial swarm control, swarm catcher/bait hive, sale of small colonies and, if full brood boxes are punishing beekeepers' backs, the contents can be placed in two nuc boxes and easily moved around the apiary. He listed many of the benefits and some of the potential problems with nucs.

After a super lunch and a lot of chat amongst members, Alan was back again out front with a talk on one of his favourite subjects – Varroa. Over the years, he has come to discover that this little mite is really a fascinating opponent! Although Alan must have given this lecture hundreds of times before, this talk was neither dry and boring nor overly filled with scientific facts. His presentation and obvious interest in the subject captured the audience's imagination and it came over with sparkling freshness, helped by a good dose of humour.

The afternoon was rounded off with a light-hearted quiz involving Alan plucking from a large cardboard box loads of anti-Varroa products that he had accumulated over the years and asking whether they were authorised, non-approved or outrightly banned for use in the UK. The subject is obviously a minefield and he had to be careful not to give official blessing to some products that are currently in wide use. However, several he claimed were positively dangerous.

If you missed this £8 bargain of a day, then do yourself a favour and try to get to the next one.

Terry Stephensmith

(Reprinted from SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE, Spring 1960)

Simplified Swarm Control in Honeybee Colonies.

Swarm control is the first essential for success in beekeeping and the method described here has been expressly designed for those who can devote only a limited amount of time to their bees. Single walled hives are necessary, as well as a spare brood chamber filled with combs or foundation and an extra prepared crown board. This board should have the feed holes closed with perforated zinc and a 6 in length of the beading in the middle of one side removed to form a rear upper entrance when the board is used between two brood chambers.

In most years in Scotland the time to try out this method is early in June. In all years and districts, however, it is preferable to use the flowering of lupins as a guide - timing the operation for those few days when lupins are well out but have not yet set their first seeds.

On a fine morning during this period take the spare brood chamber with frames and the prepared board out to the colony of bees. Put the spare brood chamber down and remove the three central frames from it. Then smoke the colony, lift off any supers and see that the colony is strong and in good fettle. If it is not, don't proceed further. If the colony is strong, take out any three combs with brood upon them and quickly shake the bees off these combs back into their hive. Put these combs in the centre of the spare brood chamber and fill the gaps in the colony with the three empty frames. Now lift the colony off its floor board, set it aside, and put the new brood box in its place (i.e. on the old floor board which is still in its original position). Cover the box with the prepared crown board so that the entrance on the upper side of the board is to the rear. Place on top of the board the original colony of bees, including all boxes in their original order.

If all goes well a new queen is raised in the bottom box and can be left there until the autumn. The board should then be removed and the two lots united with a single sheet of newspaper to make a strong colony for winter.

Since such a simple method cannot be claimed as 100 per cent successful, a keen beekeeper will check every ten days (for this is the only really certain way in swarm control) to make quite sure that all is going according to plan. He may also with advantage on the tenth day reduce the number of queen cells in the bottom box to one. There may not be time for these refinements. Nevertheless by following the above plan exactly the beekeeper will have more success than would otherwise be possible.

E.P. Jeffree,
Bee Research Department,
North of Scotland College of Agriculture.

OUT APIARY SITES

A couple of places where members could keep hives are available in the South Croydon area BUT only to experienced beekeepers who have mastered swarm control.
Contact Mark Stott for details.