

Harlow Bees-letter - August 2015

Upcoming Meetings

6th August - "Harlow Honey Show"

3rd September - "Winter Preparation"



Secretary Notices

Last meeting we had a all about photography - the bits I was able to catch seemed simple and practical for the amateur to easily achieve without expensive equipment

Beekeeper's Pockets

I wrote a piece on my beekeeping blog recently, just for fun, showing what was in the pockets of my bee suit - From the top – lighters (have a spare), multi-tool (pliers, knife, screwdrivers), compass & thermometer, keys to the farmer's storage field, queen marking cages, butler cage, 3 puzzle cages, queen markers (this year's blue for new queens, last year's green for re-marking), hive strap, sting relief and scraps of paper to start the smoker. In the middle is a thin piece of plastic I use to break brace comb in mating nucs between the comb and the hive wall.



Neonic update

Regarding the ban on neonicotinoids the government have done something, rightly or wrongly, very shady looking. Earlier this year the National Farmers Union applied to be allowed to combat flea beetle on Oil Seed Rape (OSR) - The application was denied.

The government, namely DEFRA, has recently gagged its own "Expert Committee on Pesticides" (against the rule in the group's terms of reference), after they refused to back a further application by the National Farmers Union to lift a ban on bee-harming chemicals. The gag is intended to prevent campaigners lobbying ministers on the issue, according to documents seen by the Guardian, the government has said the information is commercially sensitive.

That was at the start of July - now even more scandalously the government has pushed through the approval the day after parliament breaks up for 6 weeks of summer leave, making the decision impossible to be questioned by MPs or anyone else. David Cameron has defended the situation by saying *"We should follow the science. The EU put in place the ban on neonics, but we have to be informed by the science and if scientists start telling us that these things are safer than they thought then perhaps we can license them...But we do have to think very carefully about these things. My view as someone from a rural constituency is that we should listen to the local experts such as the beekeepers and see what they have to say."*

This month elsewhere

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board Winter survey says that Oil seed rape losses due to flea beetle were in the range of 3.5%.

BeeCraft are doing a Beekeeping Photo of the week each week at <http://www.bee-craft.com/our-best-beekeeping-photos/>



Burt's Bees Founder Burt Shavitz has died, at 80.

The fourth annual Vita photo competition is now open for entries to anyone with an interest in beekeeping or honeybees - deadline for entries is 18 October 2015. Entrants may submit up to four photos (preferably each about 1mb in size) relating to honeybees or beekeeping by emailing them to gallery@vita-europe.com. Photos can be on any relevant topic: from honeybee behaviour, to beekeeping practices, foraging honeybees and honeybee produce.

A 500,000 signature petition has been delivered saying the UK populace don't want the ban to be breached. Farmers have been allowed to plant 30,000 hectares of OSR (over 74,000 acres).

Events reminder

We have 2 events coming up and we will need people to come and help.

<http://harlowbees.co.uk/events/>

1st & 2nd Aug : 11-4pm - Bee Weekend at 'Parndon Wood' Nature Reserve

19th September : 12-4pm - St Mary-at-Latton Church - medieval event to celebrate 1000years of the church

Another different year

Last year 2014 produced a warm Autumn with late honey. The bees worked ivy which produces an unpleasant honey which solidifies quickly. I have three buckets of it which smells strongly of thymol, used to kill varroa, to deal with. I do not use thymol. I am experimenting with the bees, seeing if they can survive without any chemicals. I do not use oxalic acid in the winter. I have been given combs of set honey which is fermenting. I want to extract the wax but what to do with the honey? Fermenting honey cannot be sold. It could make mead but I do not drink. I may boil it with rain water, filter it and feed it to the bees. Fermented honey is poisonous to the bees so care is needed and it needs to be boiled.

Recycling wax.

A colony makes 2 pounds of wax every year. Some beekeepers collect it and make candles or polish but the majority find it more trouble than it is worth and get rid of it. One lady took her solid combs to the rubbish dump and was told they did not take food. Another took old combs but was told the wax was not wanted. The refining of wax takes time and heating and is a messy business. In the UK we destroy 50 tons of beeswax every year. Now beekeeping is a hobby and I never grudge the time spent in making wax fit to take to exchange for foundation. So keep up the hard work and let's not waste so much.

Wasps

These are a nuisance at this time of year. I asked a very experienced beekeeper what he did about wasps. Nothing. They only go for weak and vulnerable colonies. Queen mating colonies are susceptible. Give the hives a small entrance. Efforts to kill wasps in traps have little effect.

Hard honey

A box of combs of hard honey is put on the floor of the hive, a queen excluder is put on top and the brood chamber over this. The bees will clear all the hard honey. They do not like stores below the brood chamber and raise it all up.

by Roy Cropley

For sale

Nucs of bees

5 frame national nucs £120

Terry Thrussell (01279

842367)

Buckets

- Honey buckets £2

David Tyler (01279 730228)

Wax for sale

- recycle wax with Roy

Roy Cropley (01992 626668)

Division committee

President, Spray Liaison & Swarm Liaison Danny Nicoll

Chairman & Librarian

David Tyler

Vice Chair

David Tidmas

Secretary & Web Editor

Nick Holmes

Treasurer Pauline Tidmas

Divisional Trustee Martin

Cavalier

Training Liaison Mike Barke

Council Liaison Brian Bull

Mailing Officer Zena Wilkins

News Letter Nick Holmes &

Roy Cropley