

Harlow Bees-letter - February 2016

Upcoming Meetings

Feb 4 - Spring Preparation

Mar 3 - Bee Venom allergy & Anaphylaxis - with Mike Morgan



Secretary Notices

Last month - we had the AGM - it was well attended - **45% up on last year**. Minutes & accounts attached. The meeting went well, one item of note was the call for the division to invest in its library, see item below. There will also be a list of the current library posted on the website.

Membership subscriptions

We have only had about 50% of people paying their subscriptions so far. Pauline will be contacting people, but please everyone, it is overdue now, can people get on and pay their subs as mid Feb is when we have to register to the county who is still a member and pay capitation based on that; not to mention upcoming BDI deadlines.

Books

At the AGM Carole Rogers asked that we look to improve our divisional library, a popular idea which was readily agreed with. **Members attending the February meeting** are kindly asked to bring along examples of books that they feel should be available in the library - either by bringing their own copy or just the name / author along. If people could say why they recommend it and for what feature of beekeeping.

Events

We have a standing event at Parndon wood each year (start of August - date TBC).

In addition we have just confirmed **Hallingbury Flower Show** on Sunday 24th July at Harps Farm, Great Hallingbury 12-4pm.

This month's Editorial piece

Unfortunately, Roy has chosen not to write for us this month; however Jenni Hankins has very kindly written her thoughts on the Bibba "Bee Improvement for all" day with Roger Patterson hosted by Welwyn Beekeepers. **For those interested Epping forest are hosting this day on 13th March.**

"Observe, listen and be open to new ideas whilst challenging all that you are told," was how Roger Patterson, controversial beekeeper of many years opened his talk on Saturday.

Beekeeping should be a pleasure, with cheap to run, well behaved bees working on a simple management technique. We pay a lot for our equipment so our stock should be of good quality.

His preference is for less prolific, good tempered bees, maintained on a single National brood box providing plenty of honey, which he runs with a small support colony alongside



For sale

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
Newsletter Nick Holmes & Roy Cropley

Mailing Officer Lisa McCorkindale

used to provide replacements.

His basic message is to:

- have a plan
- assess your colony all the time for:
 - temper
 - quietness on comb
 - prolificacy
 - suitability for locality
 - colour etc.

- Set your own criteria and reduce your list.
- Cull the worst 50% and raise from the best 50%
- Be critical
- Keep it simple.

I will give you a snapshot of the many topics covered through the day as I don't want to send you to sleep.

Roger is keen for us 'bee breeders' to be more critical about our colonies and to decide whether we want to go for prolific or non prolific bees, dark bees perhaps better suited to our climate rather than an imported exotic which may not be and good tempered, non running bees which make our life easier.

Split your colonies mentally into two groups A and B, with A being the better colonies, work on bringing your B colonies up to the same level as the other group either by requeening, culling the aggressive colonies or working to keep the same coloured well behaved bees. Perhaps work in groups to achieve this.

Roger has discovered that queens are now emerging up to 4 days after the 15/16 days, the reason for which he does not know. Also some queens are presenting with either no wings, one wing or deformed wings; again the reason is unclear but it could explain disappearing/ failing queens. Large queens are not necessarily the best nor the most prolific egg layers, how does the colony perform with the queen you have? Assess continuously.

We need to look after the drones, poor queens = poor drones = poor stock, so maintain healthy colonies.

We talked about superseding, swarming and emergency queen cells with the instruction to not panic but to consider them as opportunities as the bees know what they are doing.

Also to beware cutting out all queen cells because the bees will recreate more and you could leave the colony queenless. Roger also imparted the information that a queen cell which is darker in colour could contain a queen that is deformed or even dead.

He was adamant that we need to assess our colonies, keep records to compare with others or even your own colony from the previous year, be aware of disease and look at the frames when you inspect observe what the bees might be telling you. A poor pattern need not indicate a failing queen but could be that bees have stored pollen where the queen was laying so she had to return to lay at a later stage when the cells were free, hence a spotty pattern with different stages of brood.

We ended with a comprehensive session on queen rearing which I will not go into now as it is too lengthy. He left us with the words 'continual assessment, raise queens continuously, further assess and cull, cull, cull ringing in our ears.

An interesting and informative day offering controversial alternatives to what we have been told.