

Harlow Bees-letter - November 2016

Upcoming Meetings

November 3 - A Beekeeping Trip to France, with Robert Pickford

December 1 - Christmas Party



Secretary Notices

Last month we had a meeting on a range of topics, next years programme, natural beekeeping, the Essex honey show, the Asian hornet, to name a few.

This month we have Robert Pickford coming join us to talk about a trip that he and a number of other beekeepers, including Danny, made to France.

Divisional Programme

We are now coming to the end of another beekeeping season & year. Now is the time where we consider the Divisional Program for next year.

Current suggestions are

Honey handling & hygiene - rules, regs and advice, Plants and pollination, Candles and wax moulding, Cooking with honey, Honey marketing - setting up your stall - options etc, Swarm taking - not by Danny, Queen rearing, Wax cleaning, Mead making, Bee Film watching, Bee health and disease recognition, Beekeeping stories, e.g. Caribbean or next month, Beekeeping history, Bee courses and training, Microscopy, How to win honey shows, Apitherapy, Gardening for bees, Solitary and bumble bees, Drone zones, Pros and cons of different equipment, Inventions day, Nature photography, what to do with propolis and how to process it"

Introduction to Beekeeping course

This years course has been planned. Those who wish to take the course again should book soon. If you would like to buy someone else a course for Christmas there is a voucher option. Otherwise if you can help us advertise the course wherever you can that would be appreciated.

The cost of the course is just £50 for an individual however we do offer a reduced price of £90 for a couple if only 1 set of Handouts & Book is required.

The course consists of:

- 5 Theory Sessions: Tuesdays – 28th Feb & 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th March 2017 At Kings Church (Katherines & Sumners), Red Willow, Harlow, Essex CM19 5PA – from 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm.
- 2 Apiary Sessions: Sunday 2nd & 9th April 2017 and will be held at Local Apiaries – from 11.00am to 1pm.

Please email pauline.bees@hotmail.co.uk or telephone 01279 441941 if you would like to book or help advertise.

Books

We have started buying some new books for our library the plan is to have them available for borrowing at each meeting

- Collins Beekeeper's Bible: Bees, honey, recipes and other home uses (Harper Collins)
- Honeybee democracy by Thomas D. Seeley
- The Honey Bee Inside Out By Celia Davis
- Honey bee around and about By Celia Davis
- Beekeeping Study Notes. Modules BBKA, SBKA & FIBKA By Yates & Yates
- The Bee Book (Dorling Kindersley)

Why did Summer go so slowly?

In the old days when we had proper weather we extracted in mid-July when there would be little nectar coming in and started feeding 30 lbs. of sugar in syrup. Feeding would be finished by mid-September, mouse-guards went on and we had no more worries until March. It's a bit different this year. There were queens laying through September so stores got used up, bees were building comb and some colonies decided to swarm. (It takes 7 lbs. honey to make 1 lb. of wax). When the weather gets cold they cannot use set solid honey so remove it and warm it to reliquefy it and bottle it. A lump of 'candy' is useful in cold weather put on top of the frames.

Borage

This is a late flowering plant with a blue flower which produces a light coloured delicious honey. The usual way to test the water content of honey is to see if it is viscous enough to have less than 20% water content. This test is misleading since we are testing the colloid content. Borage honey is never thick because it has a low colloid content. It is easy to say it is watery when it is so light coloured and thin. A test with the refractometer shows moisture is well below 20%. If honey has a high water content or stored too warm it will ferment and can only be used for cooking or mead.

Vicious bees

We used to collect swarms and some of them were very badly behaved. The feral colonies were notorious. They were mostly wiped out by varroa against which they had no resistance. For a year or two there were no swarms and we relied on nucs and queens from breeding stock. We looked for queens which produced bees that swarmed very little, produced honey and did not collect propolis. But most important they were gentle. The beekeeper must be gentle too. I cringe when I see rough handling. I seldom wear gloves and wear the minimum of protective clothing. I use little smoke. The bees do not run around on the combs and drop off. They do not follow when I leave them or buzz around the head. I have had bad bees in the past and tried to tame them by requeening. Since temper is a genetic thing we look to the queen to give us good bees. The theory is that if you replace the queen you will transform the colony overnight. I hope this works for you. My experience with a nasty lot a couple of years ago was painful for spouse and me. Ill-tempered bees are a nuisance when they swarm. They produce drones which mate with virgins to give bad queens. So my advice is get rid of them. They are not worth toying with. I now have virtually stingless bees. They are a pleasure to work with.

By Roy Cropley

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