

Nov/Dec 2014

Wealden Apiarist

Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the Sussex Beekeeping Association

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EDITORS BUZZ....

A fine summer and as the season closes for this year we can give a collective sigh of relief that, as yet, the Asian hornet has not crossed the channel. However, as you will all have read, an additional and very serious pest has recently been detected in southern Italy: the Small Hive Beetle. There is plenty of guidance on identification and defensive measures available in DEFRA, BeeBase and the regular journals for us to study. However, unlike the Asian hornet, this insect is unlikely to fly here. Unfortunately, this is not grounds for complacency. This beetle is much more likely to arrive through fruit, vegetable, plants and any other organic import, via truck, train or ship. I'm not sure what we as individuals we can do, apart from pester our local parliamentary representative to ensure that rigid inspection and plant quarantine procedures are in place and practiced. Basically all we can effectively do is keep a super vigilant eye on our colonies and call the inspector, even when it will hopefully be a false alarm. As in previous invasion threats, keep calm and carry on.

John Lyte

High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary

Date	Event	Address
Thursday 13 th Nov	Bee Banter	White Hart Crowborough
Saturday 22 nd November	AGM and Honey Show 2014 Doors open 1.30	Five Ashes Village Hall Five Ashes (Limited parking and none on road)
Tuesday 25 th November	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
Thursday 11 th December	Bee Banter	White Hart Crowborough
Thursday 4 th December 7.30 pm	Christmas Dinner	Buxted Inn (Just South of station in High Street)
Tuesday th December	Bee Banter To be confirmed	Rose & Crown Mayfield

HIGH WEALD DIVISION

of the

SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

AGM and HONEY SHOW 2014

Saturday 22nd November 2014

To be held at Five Ashes Village Hall, Five Ashes.

DRAFT for DISCUSSION

1.15 Doors open for Honey Show entries

1.30 AGM commences

1. Apologies
2. Minutes
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Secretary's report
6. Treasurer's report.
7. Apiary and Training report
8. SBKA delegate's report
9. Newsletter Editor's report
10. Election of President & Officers
11. AOB

1.40 Entries close for Honey Show. No entries accepted after this time.

2.30 Judging closes

2.45 AGM closes and Members Tasting / Refreshments

3.30 Results of Honey Show & Prize giving

4.00 Village Hall Closes.

Wax Workshop

Words and Pictures John Lyte



Our annual Wax Workshop and the first official outing of the association wax melter all fired up for candle making.



Under the expert tutelage of Johannes Blummel, we were soon doing the candle dipping circuit.



On the other tables Helen Hadley instructed on the art of making creams, polishes and hive lubricant (very useful for applying to runners to help prevent frames from getting stuck).



We were a smaller group this year as numbers had to be confined to members only for insurance purposes, but this actually meant that the event felt more like a masterclass and everyone had a really productive and enjoyable afternoon.



Making foundation starter strips

Words and Pictures

Helen Hadley

Report on making foundation starter strips in frames. Kindly hosted by Johannes Blummel at the Camphill community school wadhurst.

Johannes is very interested in bio dynamics and keeping bees as naturally as possible. Making wax is a natural process for bees and it's healthy for them to do so. Wax foundation may contain lots of impurities as it is a recycled product. So by putting in foundation starter strips as a guide for the bees they can making new fresh clean wax, this process taking a lot of energy. Queens love to lay in new wax. Making these frames takes a bit of time but it's quite therapeutic and could be done on cold wet rainy days in winter ready for use come the spring.

Tools required:



- Small hammer
- Eyelets punch
- Stainless steel wire
- Ruler and pencil
- Wire crimper
- Gimp pins and eyelets,
- Wire cutter and wooden frames

All tools and materials available from Thornes, Paynes, Maisemore and all good beekeeping suppliers.

How to:

Mark the side bar frames, for eyelet holes, ruler and pencil.

Punch holes, insert eyelet

Make up the frames in the usual way, thread the wire, secure wire at the start and end with gimp pins. Run the crimper along the wire. Wires need to be tight.

Cut strip of wax insert, run a bead of liquid wax to secure wax starter strip.

It might be useful to run a bead of melted wax in the groove on side bars.



Super frame, just 2 wires were required.



The above is a 14x12 frame, note the bees often chew starter strip before they draw it out.

National frames wired, starter strip need to be added, 3 wires used.



A word of warning though. You need to insert these starter strip frames in a hive between drawn frames. The drawn frames act as a guide for the bees. The few of us that turned up for this workshop, went away with a wired frame. I think we all planned to make more frames and use them in the coming beekeeping season. Please let me know if you want a go at making these, we can run another workshop.

Happy beekeeping

Helen Hadley. h.hadley@btinternet.com

The Beekeeper's Garden

Today it is St Fiacre's Day, 30th August. He is an Irish 7th Century hermit and Patron Saint of gardeners.

I am in my kitchen watching my bees on my Hyssop which is covered with bees and two black and white swallow tailed butterflies (Apollos). The potatoes have been harvested and the ground planted with leeks, which I save a few plants to flower in the late spring for the bees and for me the seeds! The other half of the plot I have sown with Phacelia which will flower just before December; it is a good bee plant, there is always some in flower in my garden. Another good one is Borage, which self-seeds itself.

Last Autumn I planted 400 Dutch crocuses. There was not a bee on them as I had in Sussex, but the bees were on Muscari (grape hyacinth). I only planted 40 bulbs; more to be planted. Another plant visited on the sunny days of February was Lonicera Fragrantissima (winter honeysuckle) and Mahonia (Sweet Charity).

To my amazement all through the winter and spring they worked Eleagnus Ebbingei. It is grown as a hedging plant here and is fast growing. In amongst the branches there are small flowers, and they were bringing in pollen even on cold days for an hour or two in the early afternoon (pollen – white). This year 2014 the temperature did not fall below 1°C. I am going to plant Eranthis (Winter Aconite) near my lime tree (Henryana). It is different, having heart shaped leaves, flowers late August, comes from Central China. As I know the Aconites need plenty of leaf mould or compost, I can remember this plant in Mr Knight's garden in Fairwarp in February along with single flowered snowdrops; hard to get going, but best planted in the green after flowering.

Just before the wild dandelion flowers we have Prunus Myrobalan (Cherry Plum) – Atropurpurea, which is planted along our streets. This year along with my two large cherry trees brings in a surplus amount of nectar – supers on last week of March!

As with all plants they need sunshine as well as rain. Some flowers are visited in the morning or in the afternoon, in some years more so than others. So this year it was a cloudy, wet May and as last year it was very dry at this time of year, there were hardly any flowers on the False Acacia – Robinia trees along the River Garonne, so it is a major source, but not this year – hundreds of trees!

This brings me to early June with the start of the lime trees; they were worked by the bees! We have several kinds flowering all through the month. The most I have seen growing. I have also Tomentosa, white or silver leaf lime tree, as well as Melia Azederach with its sprays of blue flowers.

Back to my garden, I have grown Canterbury Bells, a good bee plant, as well as Wallflowers and Sweet Williams. I raise my own plants, which are better than the ones you buy! Another plant that can be of benefit is the Californian Poppy (Eschscholzia) which are well worked for early pollen, and it self-seeds in SW France.

Early June was the time to extract my surplus spring honey which was 60 lbs (30 kg). So now I have 2 colonies with young queens and 2 nucs in case of any mishaps!

Back to the limes. After a wet May, dry winds and hot sunny days dried up the moisture in the soil, so no surplus from the trees which flowered for 6 weeks.

I see across the road (sports centre) they have 4 Tulip Trees which the bees worked; unlike SE England the white clover is worked from early May onwards, even though it is watered. The soil here is silt (quick draining) unlike Wealden Clay which holds the water. So you beekeepers in the Weald pray for sunny days, but I pray for rain!

Into July we have some blackberries by the river, but not as good as yours. Not enough to make bramble jelly or surplus honey! Courgettes, melons and gherkins are worked in the early morning for pollen; the sunflower fields were 1¹/₂ miles away. Sometimes there are fields of onions for seeds – lots of market gardens nearby – all organic!

Meanwhile in my garden the bees are on the thyme, marjoram and English lavender, which I have planted in various forms, some worked by the bees better than others. In the corner by my old W.B.C. hive, made from an oak sideboard in the late 1930s, I have two Lavatera (mallow) and a few Alpine Poppies which the bees and bumble bees fight for early morning pollen – yes, they fight for it at first light in the morning!

Another plant, Rosemary, grows like a weed on our quick draining soil. But a good all round plant is Perovskia (Russian Sage). Best spot is a very sunny one, and I cut back the stems in spring about 4" above ground level which keeps it bushy.

At the end of July they were very busy, going mad on a tree I have never seen before – Koelreuteria (Pride of India). I counted 12 trees nearby, amass with bright yellow flowers (panicles); from it the bees produced golden honey with primrose yellow wax-comb.

Time to extract 70 lbs, (35 kg) surplus. Total for 2014 – 130 lbs (65 kg). I could have obtained more but my other new colony's temperament was not all that good; so I re-queened it using a frame of eggs from my other docile colony. So now all is A1, very good!

August. Asian hornet guards on! (Must go on 1st August). It is good because I can walk or sit down by my bees without a veil, but I wear a baseball cap, killing and catching hornets in my net which gives me great satisfaction! Talking about good temperament, the policeman next door has a very large swimming pool and as it works with me, most of my work with the bees is in March, April and May. I just put supers on June and July, bees will not swarm – new queens each spring – clipped wing.

From the end of July we have one very large field of Sunflowers nearby plus others two or three miles away, and as it has been hot and dry (dry winds) only a small amount of surplus. Mostly if not all going into the brood chamber. They finish flowering in the third week in August. Until the first loads of yellow from the Ivy (4th September) we have purple Loosestrife growing in the ditches, but some Himalayan Balsam, not as much as in the Sussex Weald – must be the soil; which surprises me as the large River Garonne is just down the road. It grows mostly in people's gardens.

From the 1st September bees have been treated with Thymol soaked pads to treat against Varroa. All hives have been weighed (less roof) plus all supers removed, so average weight 28 kg. This weight is a little less than my Mod-Commercials (32 kg) I had in Groombridge. So I will now feed with thick syrup in 3 lots in September giving 6 kg per colony or more if they need it to bring the weight up to 35 kg second week in October. I also add Vitafeedgreen to the syrup, as Nosema is widespread here.

As I finish writing my first year starting from nothing:- small swarm in June 2013, I now have 2 colonies and two 5-frame nucs in Langstroth. Also 48 drawn combs for next year. I use Langstroth broad frames for storage (supers) of honey. (They have drawn 70 combs of foundation this year!). So I think I have done not too badly since I had no drawn comb, but I did my queen rearing at the right time of year. A beekeeper in Agen collected 12 wild swarms late May early June, just before the lime trees flowered and as bees were brought in to pollenate the Kiwi Fruits.

It is now the end of the 2nd week in September. It is very dry, max day temperature 34°C , night 24-25°C; in other words very hot and even the school children are not playing outside games at the sports centre. The first lot of swallows were on the power lines at the end of July, but there were thousands of them on the 8th, 9th, 10th September after feeding on flies on the river! Also usual glow worms and butterflies – not many Clouded Yellows; saw a wild boar at the bottom of my garden.

Will follow same pattern next year, requeening late April, and I expect more honey, as we do!

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!
Please send them to the Editor jlyte@btinternet.com
Next newsletter out at the end of August

