



# Southampton & District Bee Keepers Association



## December 2008 *Foragings* Newsletter



### Contact Details

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### Contributors this month

Diane Burrows

Tony Mabey (Photography)

Andy Willis

### Dates for the Diary

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#### **Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 19.30**

La Parisienne, 21 Bell Street, Romsey

#### **S&DBKA Festive Meal**

For those that have paid up, a chance to have a nice meal and a chat with fellow bee keepers. Talk about the weather! And your plans for the coming year, maybe.

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#### **Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 14.00**

Waterloo Arms, Waterloo Road, Shirley

#### **Robin Dean, Crisis in Pollination**

It's the first winter talk for our association. Robin has agreed to give us a talk based on his knowledge and experience about the state of pollination. Robin is an excellent speaker and worth the time to listen to.

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#### **Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 14.00**

Waterloo Arms, Waterloo Road, Shirley

#### **Lucas Marshall, Trading standards the rules and regs**

Lucas has kindly agreed to get up on the rules and regulations imposed on the selling of honey and possibly over hive products, so that we don't fall foul of the law! Lucas has a very good ability of turning what could be a dry subject into something more interesting.

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## *PESTS & DISEASE*

In line with the CSL guidelines the Varroa count for December

| Level and Control Required | Average Mite Drop per Day | Proportion of Infested Drone Pupae |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Low<br>No Action           | 2 or less                 |                                    |
| Medium<br>Plan Action      |                           |                                    |
| High<br>Take Action        | More than 2               |                                    |

### *Varroa Alert*

Recent checks on hives that have shown consistently low Varroa counts indicate very high Varroa infestations even though IPM was used all season. Alarming high counts of 25-50 average natural daily mite drops have turned up at the start of December.

I have heard a rumour that the National Bee Units complicated mathematical calculator for estimating a hives mite population from its natural daily mite drop is flawed. This means that hives in

September that were in the green area and not needing treatment are now well in the red and at risk of not making it through the winter, or of collapsing early next year.

I urge you all to do a natural daily mite drop count this month. If you are getting more than 2 mites drop per day then treat with oxalic acid as described in the February '08 newsletter article, 'A November meeting at the Broadlands apiary'.

Newly available from Thornes is the 'trickle 2' system, which is

enough oxalic acid ready mixed to treat 2 standard hives at an economical £2.45 per bottle. You will not need a syringe. Please follow all precautions on the bottles. December or early January is the best time to use oxalic acid as this is when there is the least brood (if any). But as the days lengthen in January most queens' return to lay. Varroa in sealed brood is unaffected by the treatment which is why a brood free period is recommended.

## *2008/09 Association Officers and Post holders*

### *Elected Officers*

|            |               |                                                                                                                   |
|------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair      | Dave Norris   | <a href="mailto:Chairman@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">Chairman@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8032 0995   |
| Vice-Chair | Mark Wilmot   |                                                                                                                   |
| Secretary  | Diane Burrows | <a href="mailto:Secretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">Secretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8088 7724 |
| Treasurer  | Jan Margetts  | <a href="mailto:Treasurer@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">Treasurer@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>01489 782531  |

### *Post Holders*

|                             |               |                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apiary Manager – Broadlands | Andy Willis   | <a href="mailto:broadlands@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">broadlands@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8032 7686 |
| Apiary Manager – Nursling   | Steve Irish   | <a href="mailto:nursling@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">nursling@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8078 3788     |
| Education Secretary         | Graham Watson | <a href="mailto:membership@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">membership@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8087 1756 |
| Membership Secretary        | Graham Watson | <a href="mailto:membership@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">membership@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8087 1756 |
| Newsletter Editor           | Mark Simmons  | <a href="mailto:newsletter@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">newsletter@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a><br>023 8032 7686 |
| Show Secretary              | Tony Mabey    | <a href="mailto:showsecretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">showsecretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a>            |
| Swarm Co-ordinator          |               | 07989 920609                                                                                                        |
| Web Master                  | Tony Mabey    | <a href="mailto:webmaster@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk">webmaster@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk</a>                    |

## *Bee Disease Insurance*

In today's world, we take it for granted that if something gets damaged or destroyed we can get a replacement, usually by the insurance company we pay a (not so slight) fee to every year. This even applies to our bees, should they catch one of the notifiable diseases under the 1982, Bee Diseases control order.

But why do we have to use Bee Diseases Insurance Limited, or BDI as it is commonly known, to cover our bees and honey against destruction by the bee inspectors. The answer to that one is, I don't know, partly because I have never shopped around to find out. If I did I would most probably find out that no other Insurance company would cover me or would charge an astronomical fee for the privilege.

So how do BDI Ltd keep the charge so small, by not employing anyone to do the work. This means

that all the administration for the company is undertaken by unpaid volunteers who wish to further the aims of the company, 'for bees, education, protection and research'. In the field they have an agreement with the National Bee Unit, involving the regional bee inspectors to confirm the presence of the notifiable diseases and authorise any claims that may arise.

So we should be thankful that back in 1937, a group of beekeepers got together and formed the current version of the company, with the goal of promoting beekeeping and contributing to the health of bees.

It is interesting to note that BDI Ltd doesn't only provide insurance cover for beekeepers in England and Wales, but that they also invest in research to further the health of bees to the benefit of all. And sponsor items at beekeeping

events throughout the year. Last year our own member, Andy Willis, provided a BDI sponsored talk at the 2008 Spring Convention at Stoneligh.

Because BDI Ltd was set up as a society, it has evolved over the years and is now owned by all the member associations, of which Southampton and District BKA is one. All the member associations have a share, we have a £1 share which in November 2008 had a token value of c£1,000.

Therefore a big thank you is due to the officers of BDI Ltd, for all the work they put in, hopefully you will never need to use them, but as I have seen in the past, you never can tell, but you have probably benefited from one of their sponsorships of lectures at various beekeeping events already, and we all agree we need more research in these troubled beekeeping times.

## *2009 National Honey Show*

*By Andy Willis*

On a cold but sunny Halloween Tony Mabey and myself joined up with beekeepers from all over the country for the annual National Honey Show.

Neither of us were exhibiting at the show, although after my recent success at the Hampshire Autumn Convention and Show, several people have said that I should, the sight of hundreds and hundreds of jars of honey and wax and comb of all shapes, sizes and colours was worth the trip alone.

Then there are the trade stands, where you could purchase all manner of things to do with beekeeping, from jars to books, hives and foundation, Varroa control, beeswax soaps and hand creams to tea towels with bee designs on.

Not only was there all this but lectures and workshops and finally the beekeepers themselves. Ian Homer (our regional bee inspector) was back on winter duties helping to cover the National Bee Unit stand. He looked particularly well and recovered from his heart attack earlier this year and this was

helped by a good suntan gained from a recent holiday to the Canary Islands where he has a holiday home.

The venue was new to host the show and deemed a success by all those involved. And was by far the better venue than the RAF Museum at Hendon. The only downside was that the lecture room used was just a little too small and some visitors had to stand at the back.



But that aside it was the best National that I have attended and two linked huge rooms were full of the exhibits, and these allowed plenty of access to view all the displays.

We were pleased to see Southampton on an exhibit which

gained 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the biscuit section. Chris Walters was the baker and though lives locally is not a member of our association.

The prices of the gift honeys were rather interesting to say the least. A 1lb jar of blossom honey sold at £5.00 whilst a 1lb jar of Heather honey was selling at £7.00!

The one workshop, Tony and I managed to attend was rather interesting. 'Preparing granulated and set honey by Mary Hill a senior Honey judge. She did let slip that oilseed rape honey was the best for showing in the set class but urban or city bees produced the best flavoured liquid honeys that usually won the prizes in the other classes. So that may explain why I do so well in the shows I exhibit at. It also means that all our members' honeys are potential winners in shows.

Now there's an incentive to try your hand at showing your honey! Our honey show is in August next year. As an extra help, in March 2009, our association has booked a honey judge to give some tips

## *Who are they? Who they are - Diane Burrows*

**Present Position in the association:** Secretary

**When did you join this association:** June 2008

**Why did you join this association:** I found the Association's website, and was very impressed!

**Past Positions held in the Association:** None

**When did you start bee keeping:** June 2008 – a real novice.

**Where did you start:** With S&DBKA. I bought a second-hand hive and Andy put it onto the Broadlands Apiary for me. As he was setting it up he found a swarm on the grass – just waiting for a new home!

**Why did you start:** I read an article about urban beekeepers, which had an interview with someone who kept several hives of bees on his roof garden in the middle of London. I had thought about beekeeping before, but thought you had to live 'out in the country'. So

the article encouraged me to look for a local group and get some more information.

**Day job:** Civil Servant (Budget Manager for a MOD IT project at Worthy Down near Winchester).

**Favourite Beekeeping Moment:** Hearing I had a swarm so quickly! Also, I had a really good day of beekeeping with Andy Willis in June, going round his hives with him and picking up lots of tips. That was very useful and enjoyable.

**Worst Beekeeping Moment:** Nearly fainting in the heat at the very first out apiary meeting I went to last summer. What a wimp!

**Highest Yield from one Hive :** Nothing so far – my colony was quite small. Fingers crossed for next year.

**What is your favourite type of Honey?** - It's all lovely, although I prefer the milder varieties - heather honey is a little strong.

**What other hobbies / interests do you have:** I used to go metal detecting most weekends with a local club, and have some quite interesting finds. I haven't been much in the last couple of years as my elderly mother now lives with me. Also I have four grandchildren aged 4 and under, so family takes up quite a bit of my time. I also enjoy a bit of gardening.

**Pet hates:** None - I love pets.

**Qualifications:** No bee-related ones, but a degree in Environmental Science from Southampton University, where I went as a mature student in my late 30s. I was living in Devon, and moved here to take up the place at University, and have been here ever since.

**Best year in beekeeping:** This year, as it's been my only one. Hopefully next year will be better, with some honey at the end of it.

**Why do you continue to keep bees?** Too early to ask me that!

## *Confessions of a blue ribbon winner*

*Part 1 By Andy Willis*

Not normally one to boast, but being known as a winner of two blue ribbon awards for best exhibits in show, at the county level, does tend to get you noticed and give you some kudos amongst beekeepers, who you have barely met. I don't really know why this should be, as both Mark and myself were on both occasions the most surprised in the room to discover the results.

There is a great deal of time, care and attention to detail that goes into exhibiting anything at a show. The work normally starts months before by choosing the flawless, matching 'show jars', and carefully bottling some of your best honeys into them. Putting them to one side to allow the microscopic air bubbles to gently rise.

Supposedly, a short period before the show, you then gently warm these 'show jars' to make sure no haze or incipient granulation or

crystals of set honey are visible (even shining a bright torch through the jars to illuminate any specks of impurities). These chosen jars are then carefully stored for a few days to allow the full 'aroma' to develop under their new perfect lids.

Even with the best intentions some exhibits don't get the full time devoted to them that they deserve. It was with two different, last minute exhibits that I achieved the great accolades of the blue ribbon in the eyes of the judges.

The first blue ribbon was for six matching jars, labelled as for sale. This in it self is not an easy class to enter because of the number of matching jars required. The judge has to like the labels as well as the honey giving rise to lots of opportunities to fail to please the judge.

My six matching jars were from the previous years honey and although had been warmed several months

before to keep liquid, small crystals/clumps of set honey had started to form at the bottom of the jars. This was only spotted at 10pm the night before the show. So some last minute warming was going to be needed and the lids changed and the jars polished / buffed up. All was going well until I spotted Mark (who was helping me get all the last minute things done) vigorously buffing the jars, (now nicely warm) with a fluffy tea towel without their new lids on! On close inspection the top of each jar of honey was now covered in dust/fluff and I spent the next hour with a cocktail stick trying to remove this fluff from the honey surface. The air was blue and all hopes of a prize had vanished as I worked on until 3.30am trying to get this last exhibit up to standard. So what a surprise it was when the blue air turned into a blue ribbon the next day on the show bench. To be continued .....