



# Southampton & District Bee Keepers Association

## June 2009

*Foragings*

## Newsletter

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### *Dates for the Diary*

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**Sunday, 14th June, 14.00**

Broadlands Apiary, Romsey

#### **Apiary Meeting**

Finding and marking newly mated and laying queens. Making up mating Nukes and distributing ripe queen cells to hatch in them. Getting ready for the main honey flow. Drone brood culling and varroa control and monitoring

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**4 July 2009**

#### **Heather Permit Deadline**

The dealine for Jim Stuart to recieve your applications for Heather Permits. Jim can be contacted on (01264) 323185 or email at [pearity@lemonia.org](mailto:pearity@lemonia.org)

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**Sunday, 12th July, 14.00**

Broadlands Apiary, Romsey

#### **Apiary Meeting**

Join the growing number of members attending the Apiary meetings. It is the perfect opportunity to speak to an experienced and knowledgeable bee keeper about issues that you are currently facing with your bees

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**Sunday, 2nd August, 14.00**

Broadlands Apiary, Romsey

## PESTS & DISEASE

In line with the CSL guidelines the Varroa count for June

Level and Control Required	Average Mite Drop per Day	Proportion of Infested Drone Pupae
Low No Action	1 or less	Less than 1 in 30
Medium Plan Action	Between 1 and 7	Between 1 in 30 And 1 in 15
High Take Action	More than 7	More than 1 in 15

### *A Novice's Diary, My First Bees*

*By Chris McDonald*

It was 8:30pm on a early April evening when I received the phone call to notify me that very soon I was to be a father. There were no customary cigars or wetting the baby's head at the local, only sore thumbs and annoyed neighbors as I raced to finish making up the frames on the kitchen table with a tack hammer. This was because I was having girls but not twins, just 15,000 or so honeybees, and the mother of my new children wanted even more?

But this wasn't the start of my journey into the world of beekeeping and I am not the sole character, as Frodo had Samwise, I have my good friend and co-worker Steve Smith. 6 months ago Steve, a keen environmentalist (emphasis on mental) had the notion that it would be a worthy and noble adventure to keep bees. So off we set at the end of August 2008, not quite sure which direction to go, so I suggested that we visited the wise and all knowing oracle (the internet), and after a quick google search it wasn't long before we discovered the S&DBKA and Andy Willis this tale's version of Gandalf.

After much consulting with the oracle and Gandalf it was clear to Steve and I, that what we needed was a hive, and not just one but two hives. Vectis Apiculture had just started up shop on the Isle of Wight and we couldn't believe our luck, we got a National hive for a very reasonable introductory price. Unwrapping it all was like Christmas in October, it didn't take us long to piece everything together and satisfied that we had got a good deal we ordered a second

hive and a bee suit for me which I promptly tried on and commenced the re-enactment of the moon landings.

We soon found ourselves at the AGM, although this was only a brisk ten minute walk from my front door it definitely seemed further away, I am not sure if that was because of the lack of an obvious entrance to the Waterloo Arms or the strange new vocabulary of everyone inside? It was clear we still had a long way to go before we got our hands on the precious elixir of life - honey.

Our first question was where do you keep them? Steve and I weren't able to house them in our gardens, so our journey would have ended there at the bar of Waterloo Arms had it not been for the whisper of the association's out apiaries. After confirming with Gandalf that there was indeed a spare bay at the Broadlands apiary, Steve and I stepped out into the cold November afternoon safe in the knowledge that our bees would have somewhere to live and that I had learnt the meaning of at least one new word - apiary.

Once the hives were placed on the apiary with Gandalf's assistance, all that was left to do was wait out the cold winter months with bee books, blankets, cocoa and a distant memory of sun kissed flowers and honey to keep me warm.....

So here I am sitting at home still slightly sticky, (Curiosity got the better of me and I decided to test the viscosity of my sugar solution and the surface tension of my contact feeder by turning it over, only

I did it slowly and towards myself - we live and learn.) on a warm sunny bank holiday, beer in hand, the first BBQ of the season sizzling behind me, contemplating the days events.

I had spent the day with Steve and Gandalf, we performed a shook swarm from the original hive in to our as yet, uninhabited one. All the frames were in place with fresh foundation and shiny new spacers; the queen (kindly marked by Tony) in a small trap thingy that I'm sure my girlfriend uses to tie back her hair, the bees were "shook" from the old brood frames, into the new brood box with a queen excluder at the bottom to prevent her from leaving and another on top just incase she made a run for it, we then released the queen into her new home. Placed on top of the crown board was our feeder of 1:1 syrup expertly turn over by Gandalf this time, and the entrance block ajar to allow any flying bees to return. We then retreated to let them settle down.

This was my first contact with our bees, any bees come to think of it, I'm pleased that both Steve and I didn't panic or wave our arms around, neither of us got stung and all in all it was a very positive experience. All those months of waiting patiently came down to ten minutes of hectic buzzing, a dramatic finale if a little bit anti-climatical, fingers crossed they will adopt their new home and the queen will be happy and healthy. I can't wait to get back out there and see how much of the comb they have drawn.

# Annual S&DBKA Honey Show

15<sup>th</sup> August 2009

Pear tree Green Church Hall, Woolston

It's that time of year again and anyone who is planning to enter, or even those who hadn't thought about it, now is the time to start planning what entries you can make in the show.

Building on the successes of the 2007 and 2008 events, S&DBKA will again join the Southampton Allotments and Gardens Association (SAGA) to organise a joint an-

nual show. The honey show will be held alongside the SAGA annual show on Saturday 15 August 2009 at Pear Tree Green Church Hall, Woolston. The event brings a mix of beekeepers, gardeners and allotment holders together under one roof.

The rules and regulations, Schedule and entry form can be

found on the association website, under [Honey Show](#).

If you wish to help or have questions about the show, speak to Tony, he can be contacted on 07810 528201 or by email at [showsecretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:showsecretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk).

So put the date in your diary and support our Association and SAGA.

## A Bee-Keeping Masterclass

By Doug Lumley

As a new beekeeper who gained his first two swarms at the end of the swarming season last year, I was a little taken aback and found myself totally unprepared for this season's onslaught of activity.

Up until the weekend of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, I had two hives: One in a 14X12 brood box (yellow marked Queen), which also had its original national deep brood box on top, along with a super. Ostensibly, the bees were supposed to be cleaning the honey residue from their old brood box, having recently expanded into the 14X12, they were also drawing wax on the super. The second hive (red marked Queen), in a national brood box, had suffered large losses after the snows earlier this year and was recovering slowly.

We were shipping off to France for a weeks holiday on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, so, before going, I went down to my Apiary and checked the bees. What I found was, 6 or 8 Queen cells in hive 1 (yellow) and hive 2 (red) still slowly improving. Both queens were present at this juncture.

I destroyed the queen cells in hive 1, I also moved the excluder up above the brood box; this meant the queen had access to a 14X12 + a brood box. Naively, I did this thinking it would buy me enough time to return from France

and sort them out when I got back. Wrong!!!! (Andy advises, this will only buy a person about 4 to 5 days).

I returned mid-week of the following week and phoned Andy on the Friday afternoon in order to arrange for him to visit my hives. When I told him what had happened prior to going on holiday, he said, "I think you will find your Queen has already gone." An inspection on Friday evening confirmed he was correct. But what was even more devastating was the fact that the Red Queen had also gone. I was stunned.

I noted that the Yellow Queen had colonised some of the national brood box and there were 2 Queen cells, therefore, I split the hive - placing the brood box on it's own and putting the super back on the 14X12 box, which also had Queen cells present.

I then left all 3 hives until Saturday to await Andy's visit.

Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup>, I went down to the Apiary, strimmed round the hives, did one or two other things, then Andy appeared, strolling across the field as if he didn't have a care in the world. He made some quip about the walk to the hives not getting any shorter, we then started to inspect the hives.

A quick inspection confirmed my findings, so we then set about a second inspection.

Part way through hive 1, Andy casually said, "Can you pass me my box please?". He flipped the lid open, produced a Queen Clip, then without another word, he gently used the hook of his hive tool to ease the cap off one of the Queen cells and out popped a Queen !! He caught this, in his clip, grabbed another clip, did the same again and Hey Presto, two Queens !! Eventually, he ran out of clips and we had to revert to the old method of using a matchbox. This process gave us 4 Queens, the other cells were not fully developed and they were destroyed. We also found 2 hatched cells in this hive. Despite Andy's best efforts he could not see any Virgin Queens in the hive.



Mid way through our inspection, Andy looked up and said, "there is a swarm over there, I bet that's where the two hatched Virgin Queens are". Sure enough, once he

pointed to where the swarm was, I could see it in the bushes.

After gathering the Queens from their respective cells, Mark joined us to take pictures of us gathering the swarm, which did, indeed contain two Queens. We ran them up into a prepared hive. Having only ever put swarms in through the top of a box, this was a marvellous sight to see, especially as my hives are fairly high off the ground.

One of the Queens flew off, but only as far as the original swarm site, so we were able to capture her and return her to the swarm. Andy says they will sort themselves out.

We then introduced the Virgin Queens into the other three hives, two by placing them in (because there were related) and one by smoking the hive like crazy, then putting the Queen in. We did leave

a Queen cell in the National Brood which came off hive one – as Andy said “belt and braces”.

Master Class over? No.

After clearing up, we went back to our house and I observed Andy mix up some Queen Fondant (Honey and Icing Sugar) and put this, along with the remaining Queen and some workers into a Queen Cage.

I returned the next day to put some Syrup on two of the hives and whilst doing this, I noticed there was still a lot of activity over in the bush where the swarm had been. When I went over to the bushes, in clear view was a small cluster of Bees, the original Red Queen was clearly visible, so I gathered that, and placed her into another prepared hive. It was a small cluster of Bees, probably not

viable, but I like to think I have given her a chance; especially as, despite being slow to recover from the winter, she had managed to populate the hive with eggs prior to leaving.

So, I went from two Queenless hives on Friday night to four, possibly five within 24 hours; Four with Virgin Queens and one with a small cluster of bees, so I am ‘not out of the woods yet’, but hey, not bad for an afternoons work.

Master Class over? No.

Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup>, I went to the Broadlands Apiary meeting, but I will let someone else write about that one.

*Post Script: two weeks later 4 newly mated and laying queens were duly found and marked by Andy.*

## *And yet another one!*

### *A third Association apiary is set up.*

It doesn't seem that long ago that we were thinking that we were going to lose our Association apiary as the council had plans for the site.

What a member didn't tell us was that they were in talks with the Broadlands estate office about setting up an apiary on the Broadlands Estate. What a life saver we thought, as we had to get the bees off the Lee Lane site.

So after some discussions about the site and what the purpose of it would be, we came to an agreement that the association could have a site there but it must be used for educational purposes.

All was saved, then another member who worked at the Chilworth Science park negotiated for us to keep bees in the nature reserve behind Chilworth Manor. Fantastic we thought, 2 Association apiaries, and this one closer and in a good area. Or so we thought! the site turned out to be too vulnerable with no security as two hives were stolen.

So in a quick turnaround all the hives had to be removed from the

site for their own safety to the broadlands apiary where some additional bays had to be created to accommodate these hives.

Oh well, at least we still had the Broadlands site.

Going back to the Lee Lane Apiary, the council did their tests checking the gases being produced from the site (an old dump) and decided not to use it at the moment. We had a reprieve, but only on an annual basis, still that's better than nothing.

So we were back to 2 Association apiaries, until last month when we were able to agree terms with the Lansdown Estate to keep bees on some land that a member of ours uses in her farm.

The new apiary is based in Nursling by the watermill and is a small field with a large collection of willow's that have in the past been coppiced. The acting Apiary manager has already been there and marked out some bays, some on the edge of the trees shown in the photo and the rest nestled back amongst the trees.



The new site at Nursling

This should prove to be a very popular site as it is in a rich nectar source area with the river Test less than 500 metres away.

In all seriousness we should be very grateful that we have these sites. A lot of Associations do not have apiaries and the members have to keep bees where ever they can. Here in Southampton we can at least offer a location to new and experienced bee-keepers alike.

Contact Tony, acting apiary manager, if you are interested in this new site on 07810 528201 or [watermill@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:watermill@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk)