

HoneyBee Times

2011 Issue 1

Journal of the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



In this issue:

- Your plans for this year
- Moving house ... again
- Report from Regional Bee Inspector

Contents

Chairman's Report.....	3
Branch Reports.....	4
Year Book 2011.....	10
Letters to the Editor.....	11
Your plans for this year.....	15
Book Review.....	17
Moving house (again) - Part 2.....	19
2010 Report from the Regional Bee Inspector.....	22
Calendar of Events 2011.....	23

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Closing dates in 2011 for copy as follows: Issue 2, 4th May; Issue 3, 24th August;
Issue 4, 9th November.

Disclaimer. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of Wiltshire BKA or the Editor.

Front cover: Collecting pollen from *Sarcococca* (Christmas Box)
Photo: Chris Jackson

Welcome to the first issue of HoneyBee Times for 2011. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. There is a new section - Letters to the Editor - all comments and views welcomed. Please keep the articles and photos coming in so that everyone can enjoy your contributions.

Sally Wadsworth, Editor

Chairman's Report

Firstly, let me say that I am very pleased to have been elected as chairman of Wiltshire Beekeepers Association. During my two year term of office, I have a short wish list:

- To provide help and support to our new beekeepers so that they enjoy the hobby and to encourage the continuing education of those with more experience to provide a body of excellence and good practice, in order to ensure the future of beekeeping within the County;
- To start a new Branch within the County – possibly in the Marlborough area. In times gone by, there were many more Branches and with our increase in new beekeepers (and the cost of fuel!) it would be good to have another Branch;
- To encourage as many people as possible to register on BeeBase – in these times of austerity we need to use the service (which is free!) - this is essential to the future health of our bees;
- The public face of beekeeping within the County is also very important so I would like to see the maximum number of entries from Wiltshire at the Royal Bath and West Show this year – not only to win the County Shield again but also to have the opportunity to show the general public what a great hobby beekeeping is;
- To set up a proper spray liaison service between beekeepers and farmers.

With regard to the latter, I have already met with our local agronomists and attended a meeting of the farmers whom they serve. I have found them without exception to be very willing to listen to the beekeepers' point of view and to co-operate fully. This will however require effort by both the Branches and farmers.

On a different note, it was sad to see that the whole of Wiltshire was only able to field four delegates to the recent IBRA Varroa conference: Graham Rendall, Alan Stonell,

Robert Carpenter-Turner and myself. We had a very interesting day and we will be able to disseminate what we learnt to the Branches to which we belong – there will also be a report in a future issue of HBT. It might be worth each Branch considering the payment of the fees for one delegate at future such conferences, as part of our continuing education.

To close, I wish all our members a good beekeeping year.

Sally Wadsworth

Branch Reports

Melksham

Since the last report we have held two successful Branch meetings. In November we had a most informative talk from a beekeeper who works with Bees for Development. Bees for Development promotes sustainable beekeeping to support livelihoods and to conserve biodiversity. The organization aims to assist people living in poor and remote areas of the world and to raise awareness about the value of beekeeping for sustainable development. The talk also included slides showing work carried out in Africa.

At our most recent meeting in January we watched an excellent film, *The Vanishing of the Bees*, which some may have caught when it was in the cinemas for a short time in 2009. This showing was an ideal opportunity to bring the film to beekeepers who missed it in the cinema; it highlights the issue of colony collapse disorder. The film follows concerned beekeepers, bee farmers and activists as they try to determine a reason for the decrease in the bee population. Intensive farming seems to be a possibility as well as pesticides.

It is heartening to see that the pesticide issue is gaining more ground and Melksham members were happy to see that an early motion on the subject was tabled in Parliament in January. It was particularly pleasing to see that this was brought by a number of MPs one of whom Melksham members lobbied at the 2008 demonstration, which is highlighted in the film.

Despite the snowy weather work has continued at the apiary. Periodic checks have been made to ensure the bees have sufficient stores and it has been noted that less fondant has been consumed compared to last year. Hive entrances have been cleared of winter fatalities. We have done general tidying up jobs and grass cutting equipment has been serviced in readiness for the new season. Beesuits are ready for our next

course members. Thanks to Den Matthews, Chris Jackson and Patrick Anderson for their time and energy.

Our next course begins in March and we already have an overwhelming number of enquiries. We have noted that many people have recommended us from last year so it is good to know that people found our last course worthwhile.

Work is also underway for the next Bee and Honey day at Lacock Abbey in August. 2011 should prove to be another busy year for Melksham.

Mary White

Swindon

By the time this edition of HBT is read the worst of the winter is hopefully behind us and we can get out to the apiaries and see what damage has been done to our stock. I know already that one of my colonies has died, likely cause, the colony wasn't large enough to deal with the severe cold, plenty of food in the hive but too few bees. I was made aware of this due to the lack of dead bees outside the entrance. The hive entrance should be regularly checked to ensure it's not blocked and mice haven't entered.

Tony Herbert from Salisbury was our guest speaker in November. His presentation, using informative photos on his involvement with the 'African Bee Project' which he has been closely involved with over many years, included ideas to produce beekeeping kit that the locals could make with limited local resources.

Our annual skittles evening in December at the Haydon Wick Club brought our social activities for 2010 to an end and saw Bryan Hopper retain the prestigious 'knock-out' trophy with some very fine bowling.

Our membership at the time of writing is 74 members, 19 associates, 5 partner and 1 honorary. The low associate number will slowly increase as the participations from beekeeping courses will be given associate membership. Full membership is slightly down on last year with several still to decide to renew if they intend to keep bees.

If you haven't checked the site recently, BeeBase has added a few more downloadable leaflets of information including pests, diseases, environment protection, bees and the law. Another new issue, the daily update through the season of data from disease incidents and reports is accessible to beekeepers.

We shouldn't be surprised this year in the large increase in beekeeping suppliers that are appearing around us. Having weathered the storm of gloves and suits from Poland it seems that Bulgaria is coming on strong. On Ebay, the goods from the USA are very competitive (even cheap at times) until you check-out the postage.

Our Training Officer Ross Gregory has set dates for our 2011 training program. One day Introduction course and Starting Beekeeping course details and dates can be found on the WBKA website or contact Ross directly. The BBKA Basic Certificate and Module exams meetings have just recently started, but it's not too late to get involved.

Throughout the summer from April, weather permitting, Apiary Skills will again be taking place at the TWIGS apiary, details from Ross via email nearer the time. Ron Hoskins at his Stanton Park Apiary will also be running similar courses throughout the year.

The Branch meeting programme can be found at the back of this issue. Visitors, guests and members from other Branches are always welcome. We meet at the Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Haydon Wick, Swindon, SN25 1JD (not far from Morrison's, West Swindon).

Dennis Simpson

West Wilts

Our AGM in November saw some changes on our Branch Committee. Both the Treasurer (David Goldstone) and the Secretary (David Newell) had given notice that they wished to step down this year. Roger Stanley stepped forward and was duly elected to become our new Treasurer but, as nobody offered to step into the Secretary's shoes, David Newell was asked to serve as Secretary for a further year – unless a new Secretary could be found in the near future. We were sorry to lose David Griffiths and Irene Tout who did not stand for re-election to the Committee. After the AGM, the Committee persuaded David Goldstone to accept cooption back onto the Committee.

The Branch meeting in December took the form of a beekeeping "Question time". The panel consisted of Arthur Goodhead, David Newell and Irene Tout, and the panellists were kept in order by the Chairman, Alan Ridout. Seventeen written questions were

submitted by members in advance but there was not time to consider them all. The Chairman selected the order in which he put questions to the panel during the meeting and members of the audience were invited to voice their own views, after hearing the replies from the panel, if they wished. The panel got through eight questions and gave comprehensive replies to each one. The meeting was orderly and interesting (so I'm told) – differing views were expressed occasionally but there were no raised voices, nobody was injured, and discussions continued in a friendly manner over tea and biscuits afterwards!

We had just about recovered from the Christmas/New Year feasting when the annual Branch dinner was held at the Bell at Standerwick. Thirty people sat down to a lovely meal and, afterwards, whilst most were enjoying their coffee, Bill and Pam Clark presented another brain teasing quiz. Nobody solved all of the cryptic diagrams but, when the answers were revealed, Chris and Sue Rawlings had more correct answers than anybody else – so they won the prize.

We are pleased to see that the steady influx of aspiring new beekeepers is continuing and Irene Tout has organised two six week courses for them this year. The two courses will run from the second week of January until the end of March without an intervening gap.

David Newell

Salisbury

We start the New Year with a new secretary for Salisbury (Nancy Shering) and as such, it's her job to follow in Chris Wilks' competent shoes, and update you on our Branch news. All of us in the Salisbury Branch would like to thank Chris for his tireless work and expertise on our behalf. Fortunately, as he has agreed to remain as a committee member, we can continue to call on his services, although with working full-time and being a member of the Bee Farmers Association, he has plenty to keep him occupied.

In December the SDBKA Committee undertook an emailed questionnaire survey in order to find out what members would like the Association to provide in terms of training, workshops, social activities and resources. With a response rate of 55%, the information obtained will enable us to plan the Branch's activities for the coming year and beyond.

The Branch Christmas dinner was held on 8th December 2010 at the Milford Hall Hotel in Salisbury. This was a new venue, chosen with the intention of making it more accessible for all members. There was a good attendance with the agreed highlight of the evening being the quiz. Whilst traditionally the questions are set by the previous year's winner, unfortunately, on this occasion, the organisers were unable to remember who won last year's quiz, but Tony Herbert saved the day by putting together a superb quiz at only a few days' notice. Tony posed questions with a nature and bee-related theme, which were accompanied by stunning power-point slides. There was a magnificent prize for the fortunate winner, Sally Nelson: the honour of organising next year's quiz!

So how are your bees? The weeks of relentless cold in December were followed by a milder period in January. Bees have been emerging on sunny days to collect water and evict dead comrades. We have had a timely reminder from Kevin Horner to check the stores in our hives. Bees, which were well fed in autumn, have been found starving, with some smaller colonies already succumbing. Whilst not all beekeepers are in favour of carrying out an oxalic acid treatment, this should have already been completed before the queen started laying. However, you should continue to check the weight of your hives and feed if necessary. It is also considered good practice at this time to check the mite count and manage your colonies accordingly. If your average daily drop rate in spring is more than 0.5 rising to more than 6 per day in May, the likelihood of the colony collapsing is very high and you need to take immediate action to save the colony.

Our winter meeting started in January with a very well attended members meeting to which members brought all sort of items of interest. Our beginner's training course kicks off in March with two theory sessions on Early Spring Management led by John Troke. The practical sessions start on 3 April at John's apiary. The beginner's classes are already fully booked, reflecting the continued popularity of beekeeping. We have a few apiary visits planned for the summer: one being a Drone Safari, starting at the Branch breeding and research apiary at Vernditch in June.

Finally, we hope spring will soon arrive and your colonies will have successfully overwintered. Remember to get your equipment ready in time, so that an early spring doesn't catch you out!

Nancy Shering and Sally Nelson

Kennet

The majority of our members have renewed their membership for 2011 and we go into 2011 with 37 full members and 22 associate members. The majority of the Branch turned out on a very cold December for our Christmas dinner. Thanks to Margaret Nightingale who arranged a buffet and skittles evening; it was great fun.

Fee Robinson and Terry Cooke ran our first Introduction to Beekeeping course in January to 13 members of the public. It was a fun day with great feedback from the attendees, a number of whom have already signed up for our beginners beekeeping course scheduled for March.

Our big project for 2011 is to move our apiary to a new site. Apiary manager Keith Hudson has identified a site owned by a bee-friendly landowner and we are in the process of formalising the agreement which involves us paying rent in honey. The Apiary is a fantastic club resource, many of our members started out learning about bees in the club apiary over the last two years, and as well as moving the apiary we will be expanding it in 2011.

Finally KBKA will be running the County Honey Show this year on 15th October. David Beaton is leading the organisation committee and the team has already identified a wonderful venue, St John's School, Marlborough, and have booked one of the speakers. David and the team are in the process of visiting each WKBA club to understand what County members want from their honey show, so if you have any ideas or suggestions, please pass them to the team when they visit.

By popular demand, Chris Rawlings will be speaking at our February meeting on Working with Wax and Tony Herbert will be visiting us in March to talk about the Herbert Hive and his Mikindani Bee Project.

Jeremy Pack

NOTICE: Royal Bath and West Show 2011

The 2011 Royal Bath & West Show takes place from Wednesday 1st June until Saturday 4th June at the Royal Bath & West Showground near Shepton Mallet. Entries for the Bee and Honey classes will need to be made **before 23rd March or online before 30th March**. Volunteers as stewards will be welcomed - please contact Chris Rawlings on 01225 344258.

Check the website for details at www.bathandwest.com

Year Book 2011

The 2011 edition of the WBKA Year Book has been prepared, printed and supplied to Branches. You should receive a copy if you have paid your subscription as a Full Member or a Partner Member of your Branch because your subscription includes the WBKA capitation. Around the Branches there are also a couple of Associate members who also pay WBKA capitation and they should also receive a copy of the Year Book.

I prepare the Year Book with the help of the Branch membership secretaries. I have been doing this for five years now and I think this year has been the easiest in terms of the cross-checking needed with the Branch membership secretaries. For this I thank them: Graeme Newton-Cox (Kennet), Mary White (Melksham), Chris Shingles (Salisbury), Sue Harris (Swindon) and Roger Stanley (West Wilts). I am also grateful to Sally Wadsworth, HBT Editor, who organises the printing of the Year Book.

The Year Book should account for all members who had paid their subscriptions by 30 January. Should the entry for yourself be incorrect, or should you during the coming year change your contact details, then please inform your membership secretary as soon as possible. This is especially important for Full Members so that you will continue to receive your BBKA News on time.

On the subject of keeping your details up to date: are your details on BeeBase up to date? If you have bees and are not registered then you are encouraged to register at <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/> The accuracy of BeeBase is enormously useful to our Regional and Seasonal Bee Inspectors in carrying out their job.

Ross Gregory, Year Book Collator

Research into viruses which affect bees

Guido Cordoni

Friday 11th March 2011 at 7.30 pm
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire

Newbury Beekeepers' Association warmly invites you to the 29th annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, to be given by Guido Cordoni who is in the PhD programme at the University of Surrey. His work has included field studies on the spread of AFB in Italy and current research into the genetic characteristics of slow bee paralysis viruses.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Firstly, there are many new beekeepers in the WBKA over the last few years and I would like to take this opportunity to remind beekeepers new and old of the etiquette within the beekeeping world.

The things I was always told when I started and most are told today is don't put your hives too close to someone else's - that doesn't mean that if someone in your street /road /village has bees you need to find a distant field - it means that if someone has them in a distant field don't use the same site!

Secondly, if someone is giving advice, even if you think it's wrong don't contradict, wait until the person talking has finished and ask what they meant by their comment. If they then agree with you it's up to them to point the person in the correct direction - we all keep bees differently, there is no right and wrong.

Finally, and what I think is the most important – don't undercut someone else's prices to get into the shop. I happen to be a commercial beekeeper - not only have I paid out a lot of money to keep in line with health and hygiene legislation but I also have to pay tax on honey sales and related items. I'm sure that if you pay tax on your honey then you would not sell it for any less than I do. Please bear this in mind next time you have a little honey to sell and it seems a good idea to get the money back you've spent on your hobby. If someone else is selling honey in the shop don't ask to sell yours there!

Terry Cooke, Kennet

Editor's note: *shouldn't everyone be declaring their proceeds from honey sales to HMRC – under 'Other taxable income'? Let me know your thoughts on this.*

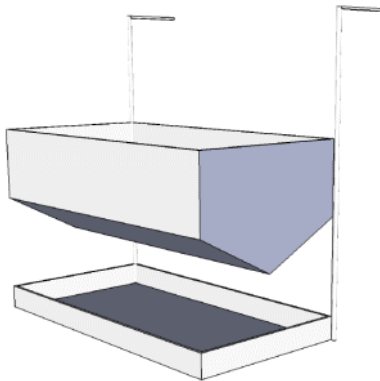
Dear Editor,

There was a statement in Lindy Paramor's article in the recent HBT that I find intriguing and feel deserves further investigation. I refer to the statement that Lindy has observed workers stinging drones in the eyes to deliberately prevent them from returning to the hive during the 'drone massacre' that occurs towards the end of the season. I have never witnessed this event nor read about this happening but neither have I observed the widely reported act of workers biting off the wings of drones to

achieve the same ends. I propose that both events should be fairly easy to verify this coming season without the need for lengthy periods of observation.

It should be possible to collect the bodies of evicted drones and carry out a microscopic investigation of the eyes. Each eye is made up of around 8000 individual ommatidia so physical damage to even several hundred should not have any significantly deleterious effect, nevertheless, it is conceivable that the venom injected may cause paralysis. It is well known that workers do not feed drones during the eviction process and prevent them from entering the hive so that they rapidly become weak and unable to fly. Blinding them or biting off the wings seems an extraordinary waste of energy.

I plan to investigate these claims by placing a mesh basket beneath the entrance to one of my hives to catch the bodies of evicted drones. The weakened/flightless/blinded drones should fall into the basket and may well wander around on the surface but not be able to fly away. I will place a tray of water with a drop of detergent beneath the basket to catch and kill any drones that fall off the surface. A low power scan of the wings and surface of the eyes should reveal whether either of these events has caused the demise of the drones. I will report the outcome of the investigation in a future edition of HBT.



Tony Herbert

Salisbury

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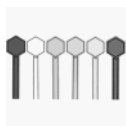
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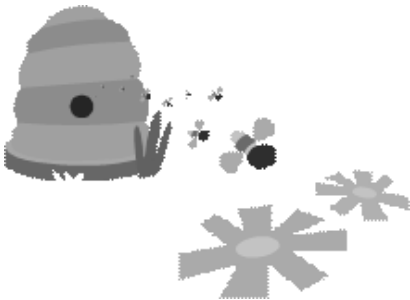
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Your plans for this year

Now is the time of year, early spring, to firm up on your plans for your beekeeping this year, at least to be a better Bad Beekeeper. Perhaps one of your plans should be to read, if you have not already done so, Bill Turnbull's book 'The Bad Beekeepers Club'. A review of this book was in the previous HBT and is worth reading. We are all bad beekeepers to some extent, and we all need to try and be one to a lesser extent. One particular piece of advice in the book is that even Bad Beekeepers need to practise their own three 'D's': dedication, discipline and determination. One because it is not a hobby to be taken lightly. One to guarantee that the things that need to be done get done. And one to make sure that when things are going wrong, as they surely will, you keep yourself going. So your plans for the year should take account of these.

There is still time before the routine beekeeping starts in March to repair and paint those hives and nuc boxes that need it (see HBT 2010 Issue 4, p.14 article 'Wood preservers for beehives').

It is important to have a spare hive and nuc box ready to cope with the need to do artificial swarming or to collect and house a swarm. You could leave the spare hive ready near your populated hives to act as a lure for passing swarms.

If you do not know how to carry out an artificial swarm or have the confidence to do it then seek the assistance of your Branch training officer or other mentor. Take advantage of the training your Branch provides. Your Branch should be able to provide the training you need, except for the most experienced and capable of beekeepers i.e. those who successfully do their own queen rearing. Try not to be complacent about allowing your colonies to swarm and fly away. This is not socially responsible beekeeping.

Even a relatively inexperienced beekeeper can produce some nucs with queens. This is something most beekeepers should do every year. When your colony that was the quietest to handle last year raises queen cells, then do not simply carry out artificial swarming and destroy most of the queen cells. What you should do is split the colony into possibly three, each with three brood frames from the colony, ensuring each of the resulting nucs has two or three of the stronger looking queen cells. Once the new queens in the nucs have started laying then you could use one, say to re-queen your colony that is least pleasant to work. Once again, if you want to understand this better and seek confidence to do it, ask your Branch training officer or mentor. None of us

enjoy working aggressive colonies, so one plan every year should be to re-queen our worst behaved colony. If you have only one or two colonies then perhaps it will be rewarding to team up with a fellow beekeeper, or two, in the same situation and help each other produce some nucs to re-queen with.

The Swindon Branch now has about 34 current and recent past members who have gained the BBKA Certificate in Basic Beekeeping. Last year we had seven successful candidates. This year many more than this have joined our Basic Certificate Study Group. If you do not have the Basic Certificate then I encourage you to have a go: contact your Branch training officer for details of the training available. The syllabus can be downloaded from the BBKA website. You should also have, need, a copy of 'Beekeeping Study Notes: for BBKA Basic Certificate' by Yates & Yates (otherwise known as 'The Brown Book').

Ross Gregory

Education Officer

Beekeeping courses in 2011

A range of introductory and more advanced courses on all aspects of beekeeping. New courses this year (dates to be arranged - please contact):

- ✓ Preparation for the BBKA General Husbandry examination
- ✓ Queen Rearing (including grafting)

Well paced, presented, informative and unfortunately over all too quickly!

Student on Microscopy course, 5 February 2011

Other courses include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ✓ Introduction to beekeeping | ✓ Swarms, queens and nuclei |
| ✓ Spring management | ✓ Products of the hive |
| ✓ Introduction to swarm control | ✓ Simple queen rearing |
| ✓ Pests and diseases | ✓ Preparation for the BBKA Basic |
| ✓ Routine colony management | |

Fantastic course. Excellent presenters. Really passed on their passion for beekeeping.

Student on Introduction to Beekeeping, 23 October 2010

To book a place on any of the courses or for further details, look on our website, phone 01380 859052 or email courses@learnbeekeeping.org.uk for a booking form.

Alan Stonell and Sally Wadsworth

www.learnbeekeeping.org.uk

Book Review

Thomas D. Seeley (2010) *Honeybee Democracy*, Princeton University Press, 273 pages. (Price: £16.35 from Amazon)

This is a wonderful book, a pleasure to read in every way. It combines scholarly discussion, painstaking and inventive research and philosophical musing about how human decision making can profit from understanding how bees reach agreement. The many beautiful colour pictures and the affectionate admiration with which the author regards bees will ensure its appeal to beekeepers.

The central topic is how bees choose their new home when they have swarmed. As such, it is probably not something many of us know about, since when we find a swarm we remove it and hive it, thus bypassing the procedures that Seeley, building on the work of Karl Von Frisch and Martin Lindauer, describes in such fascinating detail

Experiments done by the author over many years involved setting up artificial swarms, offering them a choice of different nesting sites and observing the activities of the scout bees, both in inspecting the sites and on the surface of the swarm as they return with news of their prospective new home. By altering different properties of the nesting site, the author determined the following characteristics as making up what the bees consider the ideal home:

- Small nest entrance
- South facing
- High off the ground
- Ideal size 40 litres
- Equipped with combs

When more than one suitable nest is located, the different sites are advertised by the dancing of scout bees, over several days if necessary. Only rarely do they fail to reach a consensus.

This process of consensual decision is, as the book's title suggests, truly democratic. When the individual scout bees return, they register their degree of enthusiasm for the site they have found by the intensity and duration of their dancing. However, unlike

humans, they do not then just continue to argue their point; they rely on other bees going to inspect the site and returning with their reports.

Seeley likens this to one of the few existing examples of human direct democracy, the New England town meetings. Once a year, the citizens come together in a face-to-face assembly to make binding decisions that govern the actions of everyone in their town. Seeley describes these as ‘a fascinating blend of communal ambience and individual enterprise, as is each honeybee swarm.’ A notable condition of success of these meetings is the minimising of a leader’s influence on group thinking.

The author’s epilogue concludes: ‘I believe that the story of house hunting by honeybees can inspire the light of amazement about these beautiful little creatures, a light that I hope has shined through each page of this book.’ It certainly shined for me.

Lindy Paramor

Salisbury

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Moving house (again) - Part 2

So, to Plan B. Early August 2009.

You may remember that I was hoping that my escapees would have decided to migrate upwards into the lovely clean brood box that was available above the horrid old box they had decided was home. They had investigated, found some honey and taken it home down below!

I needed more help. Many of you will know Irene Tout and Pat Pegrum. On a previous occasion, they had removed a colony from a compost bin, wiring as much comb as possible into frames and rehousing into a brood box successfully. So let's have a go at that with those bees in the wood.

Getting Ready

We moved the old brood box to one side, on top of the sheet. The new brood box went onto the old site; the floor had been changed previously. The flying bees would now return to their old site but into the new box.

After the scraping away of old comb at the last session, we could just about see between the frames. Most of the bees were nearest to the entrance so we thought that's probably where the new brood was too. We started removing the frames furthest from the entrance. What an effort. They were very stuck together and the first couple broke apart. Once we had that space, we managed to lever the frames out getting towards the new comb which interestingly they had made at an angle through the old frames, the entrance was small and at the edge, so perhaps this was warm way comb.

We wanted to keep as much brood as possible

This comb is being rested on a frame of foundation for the photo (see overleaf) and then wire was wrapped around the whole comb inside an empty frame. It did need 3 pairs of hands to do. As comb was wired into new frames, the frames were placed into the new brood box, seen behind in this picture, with crown board on, with my hive tool, I knew where it was at all times!

Once as much brood as possible was recovered and in the new box, it was time for the rest of the colony to get into their new abode. The brood box was shaken on to the sheet covered board angled up to the entrance and sheet next to the hive, there were a lot of bees. You know how it is, once they started, they all wanted to go in at once.



Photos: Diane Sleight

What a delight to watch.

As we were just watching I thought I might as well look for Madam, you know, on the off chance. There was also a lot of debris from the old box, yuk! We cleared up and traipsed wearily but satisfied, home across the field. I returned a couple of hours later with syrup and fed continuously on 2:1 syrup until early October 2009.

What happened next to the bees in the wood?

Diane Sleigh

West Wilts

Future Events for your diary

15th October - County Honey Show, St John's School, Marlborough

27th to 29th October - National Honey Show, Weybridge, Surrey

Alan Wadsworth - Beekeeping Equipment



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2010 Report from the Regional Bee Inspector

An overview of 2010

As my first full season as RBI, I have had a lot to learn and there have been many challenges. Thanks to all associations and individuals who have provided me with support. Overall it has been a very enjoyable year and I look forward to the next season.

The Bee Inspector's season began early in April with the annual Inspector's conference held at the National Bee Unit's (NBU) offices. This was a busy three day meeting, with plenty of lectures and training, to ensure everyone is up to date with any changes in working practice and to prepare us for the season ahead.

With beekeeping becoming ever more popular, 2010 was very busy in the Southern region and as well as routine inspections we did many events, including talks, apiary safaris and disease days.

Varroa

This year as a bee inspector has certainly driven home to me that the biggest threat to colony survival is *Varroa* and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. Keep checking your mite drop regularly and carry out *Varroa* control as necessary. Beebase contains lots of information about *Varroa* control, as well as the *Managing Varroa* leaflet. (See <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/>)

Foulbrood Summary

Across the whole country, 226 apiaries (588 colonies) were found to have EFB and 31 apiaries (93 colonies) with AFB. This is lower than the levels seen in 2009 but on par with the previous three years. In Wiltshire in 2010, there were 19 colonies with EFB and none with AFB. For those interested in seeing more details of disease incidence including maps and disease trends please visit BeeBase.

Random Apiary Survey (RAS)

The RAS aims are to investigate the national incidence of a range of bee disease and to investigate the factors that potentially affect the incidence of each disease. To this end, over 5000 apiaries will be surveyed across England and Wales. The survey involves the taking of a small sample of bees (approximately 60) from each hive (up to a maximum of five hives per apiary). The bees are then sent to the NBU and will be analysed for a range of bacteria, viruses and fungi which affect honey bees.

Thank you to everyone who have taken part so far and we would appreciate your cooperation if you are asked for samples this coming spring. The collection of samples should be completed by June this year and results will be published on BeeBase. It will take time for analysis, so please be patient as this is a research project rather than a diagnostic service.

Beekeepers New and Old

At the risk of being accused of repetition please could I take this opportunity to say that the basis of the inspection program is “risk based” meaning that we try our best to inspect all colonies within the locality of outbreaks of notifiable disease as these are at the greatest risk. Therefore we are completely dependent on having a good knowledge of where hives are otherwise the system fails and disease will be spread from unchecked hives. To this end we use a database called BeeBase. Registering yourself on it can be done very easily by contacting the NBU office, contacting myself or your local SBI, or online from the home page of BeeBase. Once registered you can access your own inspection records and update apiary details etc.

This year the NBU has introduced a new system whereby when notifiable disease is found BeeBase will automatically send an email to all recorded beekeepers with an apiary within 5km of an outbreak. This is a very powerful feature but will only work if apiaries are on BeeBase and an up-to-date email address has been entered. Please check your records on BeeBase and update them if necessary.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors of the Southern team for all their hard work: Robert Carpenter Turner, Margaret Holland, Bob Loades, Phil Spillane, Julian Parker, Fraser Young and Kevin Pope.

Nigel Semmence, Regional Bee Inspector, Southern Region

Calendar of Events 2011

February

23rd (Wed) Swindon: Dinner at the Tawny Owl

14th West Wilts: Tony Herbert, Swarm Control

16th Salisbury: Sally Wadsworth, Management of the Long Hive.

March

3rd Swindon: Sally Wadsworth, Management of the Long Hive.

4th Kennet: Tony Herbert, The Herbert Hive and his African project

11th Newbury BKA Lecture at Stockcross Village Hall

31st Swindon: Nigel Semmence, Regional Bee Inspector

April

11th West Wilts: Ian Homer, How to keep your bees healthy



January 20th 2011. Bee licking algae on uPVC cracks **Photo:** Chris Jackson

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