



Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

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www.eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

Summer comes early for the EFBK May apiary meeting

On the warmest weekend of the year so far, 21 members gathered at Kevin Cook and Tiffany Levi's apiary in Loughton for a talk on disease control by Ken Barker.

There's a growing need for beekeepers to monitor for disease and infestation within the hive so the topic for this apiary meeting was very appropriate. Ken handed out information sheets detailing the cause and symptoms of the main problems which effect bee colonies – including Foulbrood (European and American), Sacbrood, Stonebrood, Drone Brood, Chilled Brood – and the ever present problem of Varroa Disease.

To help demonstrate the appearance of American Foulbrood Ken had mocked-up an old frame of foundation with tissue covering cells filled with a syrup mix. The idea was to break through the tissue covering with a matchstick and demonstrate the 'ropiness' test whereby mucus-like thread can be drawn out 10-30mm. Unfortunately, the heat had got to Ken's frame and the demonstration didn't quite go as planned. Nevertheless, the point was made and members got the idea of what to expect to see if they are faced with American Foulbrood.

Ken divided us into two groups who were assigned to each of the hives in the apiary. Hive one was a small colony with a failing queen, barely occupying four frames. The



group almost instantly found a Wax Moth lava and the tell-tale signs of them on the brood comb.

Whilst hive two was much stronger, the more experienced beekeepers felt that the queen should be laying at a higher rate. This advice was heeded by Kevin and Tiffany and they have since ordered new queens.

Thankfully, neither of the colonies was showing signs of brood disease. And, having been treated with Oxalic Acid at the end of last year, neither colony was showing signs of Varroa infestation.

Ken also highlighted the potential for some new diseases and threats to the hive. Though unconfirmed, there was a report of Small Hive Beetle (*Aethina tumida*) just West of London. This is a South African scavenger beetle which can cause severe economic damage to bee colonies. If you suspect that you might have this within your hives (or any other disease or infestation), contact Ken immediately.

Though the plan was to follow the meeting with tea and cakes, the sunshine called for cooler liquid to accompany the wonderful choice of bakery that awaited. Jenny Johns had made a very naughty chocolate cake and for those of us trying to keep up with our five-a-day, a rather scrumptious fruit cake. To help us keep our eyes on our figures, Tiffany's mum (Pat) had also baked the obligatory honey cake along with a very popular coffee and walnut cake. Our sincere thanks go to both Pat and Jenny for their contribution.

The only negative aspect of the day was that Bill Stephens got attacked by a hornet just before leaving for home and ended up with a very swollen hand. Bill said, "I've had lots of stings before – but this was something else!" The considerable pain continued for a few days after the apiary event.

We hope that Bill is now fully back to health, and that everyone enjoyed their afternoon in Loughton. ☺

What's on this month...

On 7th June the division will be holding their meeting at Willow Cottage. This will be a presentation by Tony Gunton from Essex Wildlife Trust who will talk about the important work of the trust. This will be of interest to beekeepers and non-beekeepers alike.

The meeting will start at 2.30 – with the presentation starting at 3pm and finishing around 4.30pm. The full address is: - Willow Cottage, Curtis Mill Green, off Albyns Lane, Stapleford Abbots, Romford, Essex. Albyns Lane is accessed from Passingford Bridge roundabout where the A113 meets with the B175 near Stapleford Airfield. ☺

Email in your email

If you have not already done so, could all members supply their email address for membership records. In order to save trees and membership funds, we would like to encourage as many members as possible to accept Forest Beekeeper by email.

Please send you email to Kevin Cook at the address provided below. ☺

Division inspection

Seasonal Bee Inspector, Caroline Washington, visited five inner-M25 apiaries in the division on 12th May - accompanied by Ken Barker.

We are pleased to report there were no serious problems throughout the eleven hives that Caroline inspected. Ken said, "This was a long day. We started at Loughton at 9am and finally finished the last hive at about 4pm – having clocked up nearly 40-miles!"

Caroline did leave one bit of advice for division members. In hotter conditions she recommends we switch from 'Warm' to 'Cool' frame alignment ('Warm' being where the frames run from side to side – and 'Cool' being where they run from back to front of the hive). ☺

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