



Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

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Beekeeping Kit... the good, the bad and the ugly!

Yet another great turnout for our evening where members were asked to bring along their best and worst beekeeping purchases

It was a little bit like a therapy session, with members eager to share their worst bee-kit buying decisions with the group. The plan was to help others avoid making the same mistakes - but equally it was about showing off your best buys and it resulted in a table full of the weird and wonderful world of beekeeping paraphernalia.

On arrival it was a little bit like the local school jumble sale rush, with 30-odd members and guests cramming around the table eager to find out what was laid before them. I'm sure there was a deal or two struck in those early moments for some of the unloved kit that was brought along. Like other aspects of life, what one man sees as useless another will cherish and value.

Once the general hubbub subsided, Jenny and Michael Johns kicked off the formal session by explaining the contents of their box of beekeeping gems and bad investments.



In beekeeping, time is a great teacher - and its only after working with beekeeping equipment that you learn to either love it or hate it. Jenny and Michael demonstrated various frame types and attachments which

they have used over the years - explaining why they either loved or loathed them. They had also brought along two different size smokers, explaining that whilst the smaller was lighter and easier to handle, the larger one did not need to be re-fuelled quite as much as was therefore preferred.

We were then treated to a demonstration of how far beekeepers go in the DIY department, with Tony Benham giving an explanation of how he built his own warming cabinet. Thermostatically controlled, fully insulated and adjustable to cope with everything from simple frame warming through to wax melting... The only drawback of this Goliath of beekeeping hardware was witnessed at the end of the evening when you could see Tony looking for some muscle to help him get it back into his car.

Just before the usual break for refreshments, I gave a very, very brief introduction to the two pieces of kit that I had brought along. First the ugly - an electric de-capping knife which would cost you in excess of £100 from Thornes today.

We've found it's either too hot or too cold - and that it's far easier to use the much less technical solution of an uncapping fork.



As I said at the meeting - if anyone fancies owning one it's still available at £20! Our "great find" was a hive tool that we bought for a couple of Euros from a honey co-operative we visited on the Greek island of Thassos. It's a wonderfully simple and universally adaptable beekeepers tool. It's not for sale - even at £20!

The rest of the evening showed that there have been hundreds of years of development in an incredible range of beekeeping accoutrements. Some are invaluable and some without any merit or worth - but each has found its way into beekeeping history. Our sincere thanks go to all members for making this a fun and entertaining event. ♂



Next meeting

What with all the media talking about regulation for hobby beekeepers, our April should be of interest to everyone - both new and experienced beekeepers!

As we know, the starting point in formal exams is the Basic Assessment in Beekeeping - but where do we go from there? County examiner, Derek Webber, will be coming along to tell us about the General and Advanced certificates in Beekeeping Husbandry - as well as other practical assessments such as the Microscopy Certificate and Show Judge.

To see how knowledgeable we all are, following Derek's presentation we will be holding a fun quiz on the world of beekeeping.

As usual the meeting will take place on Thursday 16th April from 7.30pm at Chingford Horticultural Hall, Larkshall Road, Chingford. ♂

Bees up close

The Division has acquired a number of microscopes. If any member would like to borrow one for a few weeks please contact Jenny Johns (see contact details below). They do not have any lamps but a table lamp can usually be positioned to provide adequate light! ♂

Topical Tip

By Jenny Johns

After the warm days in March the bees are building up now and brood rearing will be well under way. If we get a prolonged cold spell heft the hives to make sure they have enough stores and feed 1:1 sugar syrup if necessary. Once the weather warms up to above 15c carry out your first full inspection - and continue to do so regularly if the weather is right. Keep an eye out for signs of swarm preparation. You can get caught out in April if the weather is good. ♂

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