

BUZZ NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2020.

SBKA Annual Lecture Day at Somerton 15.2.20

The first and last lectures of the day were by Clive de Bruyn. He gave an entertaining talk about beekeeping, full of useful tips and ideas. (I'm going to pinch some of them for the 'Here's an Idea' part of Buzz.) A man of huge bee keeping experience and well worth listening to but a hard task master when teaching. He told us that he frequently sends his students off to find the queen in a hive and report back which colour she is marked with, but he knows which queens he hasn't marked.

The second lecture was by Prof. Lars Chittka on bee minds. I cannot think of a practical application for his work but it was absolutely fascinating. He uses radar to track a bee's foraging flights. Over a couple of days each bee gets more and more efficient in going to a series of feeding sites. His tracks also showed that bees remember different foraging sites and will re-visit earlier sites once the one they are working is played out. Prof. Chittka then talked about his experiments teaching bumblebees to pull a string attached to a 'flower' under a strip of perspex. Once the 'flower' was pulled out from under the perspex the bumblebee could get to the sugar water in the centre of the 'flower'. He then let an ignorant bee observe and interact with the knowledgeable bee (i.e. get in the way and steal the nectar). After a few goes he tested the ignorant bee on her own and she had learned from observation and was pulling the string herself. One expects such learning from birds, mammals, and octopuses, but insects! If ever you get the opportunity to listen to Prof Chittka talk, take it. (You can find some of his lectures on Youtube.)

The final lecture of the morning was on bee sting allergy by Dr. Nikos Tsioungkos. He spoke from practical experience as a doctor but added some statistics I had not heard before, such as 3% of the general population being allergic to bee stings but 35% of beekeepers, unless the beekeeper get 200 or more stings a year in which case they are statistically immune. I can see a full time bee farmer getting 200 stings a year but any hobby beekeeper would need to be very bad at the craft.

In the afternoon John Sweet stood in for his wife Dinah, who sadly is in hospital. They make mead and brought some along for us to sample. He discussed Dinah new book (available from the BBKA shop online) giving practical advice on how to make mead. I took copious notes and will be having a go later this year. His brother brews beer and told us about making braggot which none of the audience had heard of before. It is either a beer with honey added during brewing or a mead fermented with added grain. The advantage of braggot is that it is mature and ready to drink in about 6 weeks rather than the 1 or 2 years you are supposed to give mead.

Tea, coffee and biscuits were available during the breaks. David Pearce had equipment for sale; Northern Bee Books had a wide selection of publications; AHAT had Asian Yellow Legged hornet information and samples; and the NBU had a supply of their publications with Eleanor Burgess on hand to answer questions. At only £5 for the day I would recommend you think about going next year.

Skittle Match



The social evening skittle match last month was against Tiverton division at Bradford on Tone. 25 people attended but sadly the Taunton team lost 204 points to 206.



Mary Adams receiving the wooden spoon.

Here's an Idea

As worn by Amanda Cresswell.

If you dislike bees crawling inside your sleeves, and bought cuffs are always too loose or too tight, then sacrifice an old pair of sport socks by making a small slit in the heel and cutting off the toe. Slide your hand inside the sock with your thumb sticking out the heel and fingers out of the toe. Tuck the sock fabric around the cuts inside so there are no loose threads. Pull the sock up over your sleeve. The elastic in the sock will keep it in place comfortably and marigold or latex gloves will still fit. When dirty pop the socks in the wash with your bee suit or discard and cannibalise another old pair of socks.



Help

Graeham Welfare is no longer able to maintain the grounds at the apiary and the committee is looking for a volunteer. Do you like cutting grass or do you know anyone who does? If you do please call Barbara Drakeford or any member of the committee.

March 29th Auction.

CANCELLED DUE TO CORONA VIRUS.

However if anyone has items they wish to sell, photograph it and send me the details for another newsletter. Send to vmwoodford@hotmail.co.uk and reference it Buzz just in case the system dumps it in the junk folder. Vanessa.

Offer of an Out Apiary.

One of our members, Andrew Dormer has moved house and had to give up an out apiary in Bishops Hull, but the land owner, Sue, would still like bees in the garden. The site is hidden from the road, away from the house, screened from the neighbours by trees, near Netherclay Nature Reserve for the spring pollen and autumn Himalayan Balsam. Andrew kept 2 hives there but thinks there is room for 4 and always got a good crop of honey. If you are interested please call or text Sue on 07780883256.

Care of your Beekeeping Veil

Have you suddenly found bees buzzing around your face when you are in the middle of opening a hive??

1. When you put on your veil have you been catching the fabric just where the net and the cloth join. Remember that there is just machine stitching holding the two fabrics together and a good pull could part it enough for bees to get in.
2. Do you look into your smoker when lighting it. A flash of smoke also holds heat or flame and once again you do not notice till you have that hive open and they are in. You have scorched the veiling and have a hole. It is not just inexperienced beekeepers who have this problem. Hold your smoker away when lighting it.
3. Make sure you have cut those brambles back in your apiary – you can catch the net on the top of your veil when you bend over your hive. If not the veiling, then the banding. If you get caught on the brambles do not just pull away. Detach yourself carefully.
4. When washing your veil –it is not a good idea to put it into the washing machine with the suit. They both need different temperatures. In fact do **not** put your veil into the washing machine – remember that veiling is nylon. **Nylon** is effected by heat. Your veil needs soaking in **hand warm** soapy water. Rinse in the same temperature hand warm water.
Do not put it into the drier to dry-that is **far too hot**.
Do not put it out to dry unless you have the veiling out of the direct sun – **far too hot** .
Looked after and washed correctly your veil should last you for a long time. If not you can always contact me for a repair job.

Jenny Gammon 01823 270465