



BURTON and District BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Updates from Sam

AGM

The AGM was held at Henhurst Hill on 26th July. About 30 people attended including several new members. Although the committee will stay the same for now, the positions of General Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer might become vacant during the year, so anyone interested is invited to shadow the current post holders.

Monthly meetings will resume from 16th August, and Henhurst has therefore been booked for every third Monday of the month starting on that date. The first meeting will be a general get-together without a speaker.

BIBBA East Midlands

Last December I wrote about a local Bee Improvement Group through which I wanted members to begin working together to improve their bees. This spring eight of us met many times either as a group or separately and I think that we all learned as much as we could bearing in mind the restrictions of Covid. I will write more of what we achieved in a later edition.

This month I thought readers might



A large field of poppies and harebells in flower

be interested in a project which I'm involved in with a group of experienced beekeepers (BIBBA *Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association East Midlands*) who are working together to breed near native queens (*Apis mellifera mellifera*). They select from their stock of 40 colonies where queens have the right characteristics to either be mothers or drone mothers and then raise 30 – 40 new queens each year, continuously purifying and improving their breeding lines.

Until this year we have used an isolation apiary in the Derbyshire Dales to try and prevent lines from being “polluted” with genes from imported non-native species. Last winter the group was required by the former apiary landowner to move. After quite a lot of effort a new site at a wildflower farm just south of Nottingham was found. The farm is around 200 acres, a large part of which is dedicated

to cultivating wildflowers for seed – a really great environment for having an apiary I'm sure you'll all agree.

Instead of moving breeder colonies to Derbyshire for mating, there is now a different approach, using open mating. Drone mother colonies are kept at the extremities of the farm. Also many of the really local beekeepers have been contacted and most have agreed to have their colonies re-queened with some of the group's best stock. The result is that much of the immediate area is now saturated with large numbers of drones having near-native characteristics.

This approach isn't perfect of course, but the native honeybee genes which the group is selecting for will still be dominant whilst still allowing the genetic diversity from natural mating. It also has the really significant advantage of not requiring many long journeys to manage the apiary or having to move lots of beehives.

The selection system is a simple A, B, C classification of the queens. A are breeder queens – only the very best are classified as A. B are good support colonies and C are marked for culling. C colonies are not tolerated for long and are never used in the rearing process. Treatment of C colonies will vary depending on the reason – poor behaviour will lead to requeening, but colonies with high levels of disease may be shook swarmed. B colonies will be used to stock mating nuclei or as starter/raiser colonies, depending on size.

This year I resolved to be a more active member and we have met every Sunday to inspect all 40



Mini mating nuclei on stands



Group members at work



Black queen introduced to a nuc

Many have been used to re-queen C colonies, others have been sold to local beekeepers and inactive members, and some of us have taken queens home to improve our own stock.

The pictured queen (above) is one I introduced to a nuc I've made up in my home apiary. She has only just begun to lay again so the brown/yellow workers near her are not her daughters. I'm expecting that after she's overwintered her colony will be much darker and more consistent in colour. She should also be quite calm and productive.

Next year I plan to organise more queen rearing training for anyone who is interested. so having a bee improvement group within our association makes perfect sense. §

Courses & Honey Show

Suzanne King, Education Officer & Honey Show Secretary

I'm just about to start a third beginners' course, as there have been so many people enquiring this year. I already have eight on the list for next spring too! Anybody wanting to do a beginners' course to start early next spring should contact me now, if I don't know of them already:

suzanne.king21@btinternet.com

The honey show is booked for 9th/10th October at Cooper's Square, Burton. Do have a look at the schedule which Sam will send with this newsletter and plan to bring some honey, cakes etc. §

To Do List for August

- Carry out a thorough disease check on the brood. Seek help if anything looks amiss.
- Continue to harvest honey when it is capped.
- Monitor varroa mites. Plan how you are going to treat them if numbers merit it.
- Watch to see if wasps or robber bees are gaining entry into your hives. Take steps to deter them eg, reduce entrance size if necessary.
- Keep an eye out for Asian hornets.

Bee or not (to) Bees?



This photo (above) was taken and sent to us by Liz Ratcliffe, one of our new beekeepers. The unlucky intruder was found in one of the training apiary beehives. Is it a black bee?



Graham Blues was watching the entrance to a hive when this insect (above) joined him. It landed on the ground and seemed to be watching the bees coming and going. He wonders if anyone knows what it is?

Answers to *newsletter@honeybee.org.uk*

Who's Who

<i>vacancy</i>	<i>Club Secretary</i>		
Sam Hampton (temporary)	Membership Secretary	<i>sam.hampton@btinternet.com</i>	
Bob Hurd	President	<i>pat90bob@gmail.com</i>	
David Coates	Chair	<i>dave.coates32@gmail.com</i>	01283 713603
Suzanne King	Education and Training Secretary Honey Show Secretary	<i>suzanne.king21@btinternet.com</i>	
Sam Hampton	Treasurer	<i>sam.hampton@btinternet.com</i>	
Sue Coates	Librarian	<i>susan_coates@talktalk.net</i>	
Hamish Low	Asian Hornet Team (AHT) leader	<i>hamish51151@gmail.com</i>	
Sheila Pirie Jane Ratcliffe M Baker	Committee members	<i>smpirie@hotmail.co.uk</i>	
Richard Matkin N Alsop M Schumskij Sarah Winfield Graham Blues		<i>richjomatkin@btinternet.com</i>	01283 812958
Chris Ring	Website Editor	<i>ChrisDRing@outlook.com</i>	
Sarah Winfield Margaret Cowley	Minutes Secretary Newsletter Editor	<i>newsletter@honeybee.org.uk</i>	
Trustees	Bob Hurd David Coates S Hampton S King H Low R Matkin Graham Blues	Volunteers	C Ring P Yates R Wykes R Harrison I McMillen