

East Lothian Beekeepers Association

(Founded 1887 - Scotland's oldest Local Association?)

www.eastlothianbeekeepers.org.uk

Newsletter 138

April 2006

Even though it's a late spring, that is no excuse for this very late notice that the talk by Graham White scheduled for the 6th April has been postponed until the 20th April – my fault, my apologies.

Forthcoming events

Thursday 20th April: Talk by Graham White on “The Dartington Long Deep Hive” Haddington Town House at 7.30pm – **please note change of date!** Graham also has an interest in imidacloprid, a systemic pesticide that is used as a seed dressing for oilseed rape and potatoes amongst others. We hope that Hilary Smith, a teacher at Knox Academy will also present the results of a project carried out by one of her pupils on East Lothian honey.

Sunday 7th May: Apiary visit to Association Hives at George Barton's apiary at Rhelonie, near Jerusalem on the A6093 between Haddington and Pencaitland. 2pm. We will carry out a spring inspection of the hives and discuss the alternatives for relocating the Association apiary.

Sunday 28th May: Parent & Child camp East Fortune. We have been invited to mount a display for the benefit of Cub Scouts and their parents at this camp. Anyone would like to help organise this educational afternoon event please contact me.

Saturday 10th June Apiary visit to John de Pree's apiary at Beech Hill 2pm. Follow the B6369 from Haddington to Gifford and take

the first turning to the left after passing the turn off to Morham. Beech Hill is half a mile further along on the right. John expects to be in the middle of his swarm control procedures.

Saturday 1st July United East Lothian Agricultural Show, Westfield Farm, Haddington. All hands to the pumps as usual for our major public event of the year! An observation hive, virtual hive, candle rolling, honey tasting – what else can you come up with to enchant the bee-wary visitor?

Sunday 9th July Apiary visit to either Ross Langland's and/or Donald Smith's apiaries. Access is via North Lodge on the Pencaitland Road at the very Western edge of Haddington. 2pm.

Past meetings

George Hood gave a virtuosic display of beekeeping on the 9th February at which the only things missing were a bit of sunshine and some bees! George Hood can trace his beekeeping lineage back to the legendary Willie Smith of Innerleithen, the inventor of the Smith hive, and from whom he bought his first hives in the 1960s. He began by paying homage to the Reverend Lorenzo Langstroth, the American who discovered “bee space” in 1852. Using an empty hive and frames of honeycomb, George demonstrated how things had to be done when you have hundreds of hives to look after. He showed how to find, catch and mark queen bees, how to deal with swarming, and how to remove honey at the end of the season. He particularly stressed the importance of looking after your equipment by keeping tools sharp and cleaning out the smoker, as well as keeping an eye on “bee space”, everything geared towards not stirring up the bees. He finished with a few tips on marketing, explaining how the customer's tastes were not always easy to guess, and therefore the importance of thinking about packaging and presentation.

The meeting held on 9th March took the form of a slide show in which John Hoskin from Capstone Valley Apiaries based in Fife and Kent (hive inspections courtesy of Easyjet!) did battle with technology to bring some summery scenes to warm a beekeeper's heart.

Pestilence

I have had disturbing reports from Colin Russell and Nick Cowan of colony losses. Two of Colin's colonies may have been lost because swarming, and another for unknown reasons. Nick has been advised that his losses may have been due to excessive treatment with Oxalic acid; he used the trickle method on all his hives in both October and December, a cumulative level which the bees apparently can not tolerate.

However, it is worrying that both of these beekeepers have apiaries at the western edge of East Lothian and were amongst the first to detect Varroa in their hives. Unusual levels of unexplained losses have been observed in many areas of Scotland, and there is a possibility that this change may be due to the presence of Varroa. Our "East area" representative at the SBA, Marion Lang, has asked me to collate information about hive losses over the last two years. Please let me know of any losses and any relevant details.

My colonies have all survived the winter, but I have noticed many bees with crossed-over wings on the landing boards (deformed wing virus – associated with Varroa). After a sunny day, I have also found clumps of comatose bees in front of some hives. I presume that these are bees that can only just fly and never make it back to the hive after their orientation / cleansing flights.

Wanted

Mike Bain now has an apiary site and is looking for bees if anyone has any to spare, or early swarms (01875 341226).

Sandy Murray is also looking for bees (01875 870928).

Nick Cowan is desperate for colonies or swarms to replace his sad losses (0131-665 2817)

One of our new members, Jenny Fraser, is looking for any second hand hives or equipment for sale (0131 477 1662)

Membership

Despite Mike Bain's burgeoning beginner's group, our membership total for the year is still less than 20! For only £5, you get my (irregular) newsletters, a series of winter lectures and summer apiary visits, access to the Association library of books, magazines, and leaflets, Apistan strips to test for Varroa (while stocks last), an Association apiary (currently looking for a new home), use of the Association's electric extractor, as well as a membership card in this year's queen colour. How good value is that? You can get the membership form from the website or from me. Do let me know if you want to be taken off my mailing list.

New members

We welcome Jennie Fraser, Bob Rees, Eurig Scandrett, Susan Moffatt and Alistair Smith

Donald Smith (Secretary)

Garden Cottage

Clerkington

Haddington EH41 4NJ

01620 822441

gardencottage@ntlworld.com