



Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

April 2012

www.eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk

March Meeting

As usual in the Spring, we had a refresher course on the Artificial Swarm – useful for both beginners and experienced beekeepers alike, and as you'll see from the Chair's comments below this meeting was well-timed. As well as demonstrating the procedure involved in an artificial swarm, Ted Grad took

questions from the floor and was able to advise on the benefits of marking the queen, and what to do if you can't find her. We also had some advice from Eric Beaumont on collecting swarms. ⚡

Certified members

Last year five Division members successfully passed their Basic Beekeeping Assessment, and certificates were awarded at the last meeting – Eric Beaumont (right) gained the highest mark in the County, and won the Miss Avey Award.

Certificates were also awarded to Olivia Burren, Chris Branch, Cathy Branch, and Jackie Clarke (pictured right receiving her certificate from President Ken Barker).

If you've been keeping bees for at least two seasons, you could take this straightforward practical test this year. We want to encourage all members of the Division to undertake this qualification. There's no written exam, although the examiner will ask some questions about beekeeping, and it is a good indicator of your experience and practical ability. Please contact Ken Barker for more details. ⚡



Lost colonies

Every beekeeper looks forward to the first inspection of spring with mixed dread and anticipation – have the bees survived the winter? Sadly, for some of our divisional members this year the answer was 'no', and our Chair Ted Grad has been collecting information about these dead colonies. If you haven't already spoken to Ted, he would be interested to hear if you've lost one or more colonies, and if so what the cause was. Preliminary indications are that most losses this winter were due to cold or starvation, or sometimes a combination of these. It's hard to think about winter preparation now when spring is on the way, but the Division will be arranging a meeting on this at the appropriate point in the autumn. It is dispiriting and disappointing to lose a colony, and if you would like some advice on what may have happened to your bees and what steps you might take to avoid this happening again, then please contact Ted or Ken Barker. Please don't give up though – even experienced beekeepers can lose a colony, and there's always something to learn from this. ⚡

Bees in fiction – a book review contributed by Christine Poerschke

Sara George: *The Beekeeper's Pupil*

Set in 1785 to 1794 in the countryside outside Geneva, the book consists of the journal entries of Francois Burnens. Burnens is manservant and assistant to Francois Huber, who aged fifteen has learned that he is going blind. Together the two men investigate the formation of swarms, the fecundation of the queen, the production of wax and building of comb, and many other subjects. An enjoyable read, evenly balancing historical novel backdrop and bee science discoveries. ⚡

Chair's Corner

The recent spell of exceptionally warm weather has seen bees flying and bringing in pollen, with an inevitable result – I've heard several reports recently of queen cells being found on inspection, and even a swarm. Don't forget to check your hives every seven days from now on, and make sure you've got equipment in place to carry out an artificial swarm as soon as you see queen cells being made. Swarms are even more likely when the current cold spell is over and the bees can get out again!

Ted Gradosielski ⚡



Next meeting – The Beekeeper's Toolbox

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 19th April and will be at the Chingford Horticultural Hall, Larkshall Road, Chingford E4 6NH. Please arrive promptly from 7.30 so that the meeting can begin at 8.00 pm. President Ken Barker will talk about the contents of the beekeeper's toolbox – if you've got any unusual (or unusable!) items in your kit, bring them along to join in the discussion. ⚡

Queen Rearing

Ted Grad is going to run a Queen Rearing Study Group this year, for those interested in learning about this. To participate in this, you must be a full member of the Epping Forest Division, have passed the Basic Beekeeping Assessment, and have at least three hives available to house any queens raised. If you meet these criteria and would like to join the study group, please contact Ted to register your interest, dates and times will be arranged to suit the group. ⚡

John Gracey's legacy

You may remember that in October last year we reported the death of John Gracey, our auditor and a member of the Epping Forest Division for many years. John's family have informed us that he left a legacy of £100 to the Division. John was highly respected within the Division and this legacy is very gratefully received, and will be put to good use in continuing to encourage and educate beekeepers in the Epping Forest area. ⚡

Tips from the Bee Man

Make sure that your bees have enough space, by adding supers as soon as you can see that they are needed. Once there is brood occupying around three quarters of the frames, then add a super, preferably with drawn comb if possible. It will not stop the bees from swarming, so continue to check carefully for queen cells and take appropriate action as soon as necessary. ⚡

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