

## Apiary Custodians' Report 2015

Spring started and stopped, with a warm spell at the end of February followed by a cold spell which kept the bees in their hives, using up their stores. Unable to get out to get water they could not process the crystallised stores and several cases of starvation were reported. The eight Apiary colonies all came through the winter OK with a bit of additional feeding using fondant.

The first March Apiary meeting was very well supported with more than 25 members attending, many of whom had been through the winter training sessions and were now ready for their "hands on" tuition. Unfortunately, for various reasons the numbers attending declined rapidly and by mid summer we were down to 10 -15 regular attendees. By the autumn we were down to 2 -3 in addition to the custodians.

We have tried this year to add interest to the meetings by using a range of different methods for swarm control, Bailey comb change, raising nucs and by adding different methods of beekeeping. These are a Top Bar hive, a Warre Hive and a 14x12 hive, each having their own peculiarities. We also have a colony made up using Super boxes only.

As mentioned we raised several Nucleus colonies in differing ways, some in polystyrene, cardboard, and wood boxes. These were to replace any Queenless or aggressive colonies that required re-queening. They were also used for populating the observation hive at several events. Currently we are overwintering two nucs, one in a polystyrene hive and one in a National Deep with dummy boards restricting use to 6 frames.

To date the Apiary has ten full colonies fitted with mouse guards and woodpecker cages. On checking in early December, when the sun made a rare appearance, all the hives were active with bees flying.

This year, at two club extracting evenings, we harvested over 150 pounds of honey, which has now been sold at various events. Early in January we are planning to run a comb sterilisation morning using acetic acid. We shall also be treating the colonies against varroa using oxalic acid, if and when it gets cold enough. Please check the website for dates and details.

A great debt of thanks must go to **Pippa Barker**. She has loaned us a lovely shipping container, now installed at the Apiary. This is now completely 'boarded out' and with a workbench as well. It is great for storing supers, frames, spinners and other essentials. We are still working on getting some lighting sorted out.

A very big thanks must also go to **Brad Davis** and **Fred Whetnall** who have both been " Apiary Trustees" for the last three years and have now stepped down at the end of the Apiary year in September. Their expertise and knowledge have been invaluable. Their positions have been taken over by Liz Howes and Mel Epsin. To avoid confusion with the Charity Commission's use of the term "Trustee" we have been renamed '**Apiary Custodians**'.

Please try and make a few Sundays next year, as at the moment there is only a small core of active members and extra help is needed to keep the Apiary running smoothly. There is always something new to learn about keeping bees. And it's a great place to discuss and chat about bees.  
Hopefully we will see you at the Apiary in 2016

**Richard Williams** on behalf of the custodians