

the Petersfield Beekeeper

Diary

EVENT	DATE	VENUE
<p>ALL APIARY MEETINGS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. The current situation has led to the cancellation of the summer shows which the association usually attends. Let us spare a thought for the organisers and for the stall holders whose livelihoods are at risk.</p>		

PDBKA HONEY SHOW 2020

Unfortunately this year's Honey Show has been cancelled as it will not be possible to hold such an event whilst maintaining proper social distancing.

Please send items for inclusion in the August Newsletter by 25 July to depeyrecave@gmail.com

THIS WEDNESDAY, 1st July at 8:30pm Brad Davis will be hosting the first of a series of

INFORMAL BEEKEEPER TRAINING SESSIONS ON ZOOM!!

These will be aimed at newer beekeepers but will be good revision for the rest of us! The sessions will be very informal with lots of opportunities to ask questions.

If you would like to join in the fun, please email PDBKA@BeeDavis.co.uk for your Zoom invitation and password for the meeting.



Piping and Quacking

Having just done a hive inspection in which I observed a virgin queen piping on the frame I was examining - she was close by a QC with the cap still attached and vibrating with my movement - I was interested to hear that researchers from Nottingham Trent university had been studying the noises emitted by virgin queens.



Lime blossom has been abundant this June

Having acquired a copy of 'At the Hive Entrance' by Storch, I have always observed and listened to my hives. After dark (little outside noise and no bees to bother the listener) and with an ear pressed against the different 'boxes' it is amazing to here the different sounds emanating from within as the bees go about their business.

After a swarm, natural or artificial, or during supersedure, I have often heard a newly hatched queen piping and the answering 'quacks' of her still-to-emerge sisters and followed the free virgin as she moves, with evil intent, in search of those trapped.

The initial report on the BBC World Service confirmed my observations; that heard later on Radio 4 and printed in The Times, suggesting that it was the *fertile* queen piping and the about-to-hatch virgins responding, prior to her exit with a swarm.

This contradicted all I had been taught and observed about swarm-timings - and suggested, if the swarm only issues as virgins are about to hatch, we need only check our colonies once every two weeks during the swarming season!

Tom Blackburn, PDBKA President, similarly perplexed, went to the original report <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-66115-5>

'Once the mated queen leaves with the primary swarm, the first virgin queen will be released from her cell between a few hours and up to ten days after, depending on her stage in development when the primary swarm occurred. Following hatching, the newly emerged virgin queen will produce a type of piping known as "tooting" or "toots", which is thought to announce her arrival to the colony'.

'Mature virgin queens still confined within their queen cells respond to this tooting with their own distinct piping sound, referred to as "quacking" or "quacks", which probably alerts the emerged queen and the workers of their presence'.

We still need our 7- day inspections and it *is* only virgins that pipe.

I have only experienced swarming just as QCs are capped. With 7/8 days before the new virgin hatches there is the opportunity for a follow-up inspection five days after the primary swarm issued to remove any further unwanted QCs and the after-swarms they engender.

Pippa

Apiary Honey

The Apiary Custodians have removed five supers of honey from the Association's hives. 95lbs from four of the supers is in sealed buckets in the cool, waiting for the day we are once again able to attend local shows. Honey from the fifth super is sitting in my spinner waiting for me to filter and bottle it.



MAD HONEY

One evening recently my son and I were talking about just how much we dislike rhododendrons. We have our reasons. Joe told me this story from one of his favourite books, "Six-Legged Soldiers: Using Insects as a Weapon of War" by Jeffrey A. Lockwood.

Xenophon was a student of Socrates, a historian and a military commander. He led an army of 10000 Greek mercenaries who fought in the service of Cyrus the Younger of Persia in about 400BCE. Returning to Greece, they set up camp near Pontus on the Black Sea coast of North East Turkey. Some of the soldiers found hives of honeybees nearby and helped themselves to the honey. Shortly after consuming the honey the soldiers began behaving strangely and many became completely incapacitated, making the whole army vulnerable to attack. Fortunately, after a few days, they recovered sufficiently to continue their journey.



In 97BCE the Roman general, Pompey, was not so fortunate. His army of 1000 was fighting against King Mithradates of Pontus. Mithradates put honeycomb in the path of Pompey's army. He and his troops then waited until the Roman soldiers were paralysed before attacking and killing them. This may be the first occurrence of biological warfare.

The honey in question was apparently made from the nectar of rhododendrons. The nectar (and other parts) of rhododendron ponticum and rhododendron luteum (yellow azalea) in particular, are sources of Grayanotoxins, a group of neurotoxins. Symptoms of consumption in humans include hypotension, a slowing of the heart, vomiting and loss of consciousness. They are among the reasons that rhododendron ponticum has successfully colonised so much of our woodland as they are toxic to the deer who graze the understorey, removing any plant competition.

Before you go and dig up all your rhododendrons (please do - horrible things...) you should know that honeybees in the UK tend not to visit rhododendron flowers, perhaps because the nectar is toxic to them, too. Interestingly, the buff-tailed bumble bee and several other pollinators are unaffected (<https://phys.org/news/2015-11-toxic-tastesireland-bees-non-native-rhododendron.html>) as are honeybees in the countries where the rhododendron is a native species. Hence the production of so-called "mad honey" in countries like Turkey where it is used in traditional medicine and Nepal where it is used as a hallucinogenic. It is available to buy online - a snip at around 100 dollars a kilo. That people will pay for this seems no more extraordinary to me than paying for a rhododendron ponticum...

Helen deP



Crispin Paine sent links to the following information from the AngloEthiopian Society about beekeeping in Ethiopia which is one of the main honey producing countries in Africa.

- This 2014 documentary, [Honeys of Ethiopia](#), takes a look at some of the special honeys that are produced in different regions of the country.
- Here's a link to a [Honeys of Ethiopia](#) pdf document produced by the same groups that made the film. It contains descriptions of 11 different honeys produced by the different groups of beekeepers that they are supporting.
- And finally here's a short piece from CNN *Inside Africa* about [honey collection in Tigray](#) - and how difficult it can be:

This month's Guest Editor is Falcon, the rescued Harrier Hound, who would sooooo much rather be chasing rabbits.



Your Committee for 2020/1

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