

The Extractor



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The Editor writes:

Another beekeeping year is over and I hope everyone feels it has been a good one. It's such a great feeling taking jars of golden honey off the shelf to give to friends at Christmas time. I'm decorating mine this year with mob caps of holly fabric cut out with pinking shears! **NL**



Bzzzzz...zzzzzz

My plans to attend beekeeping conferences are usually thwarted by family commitments or Act of God or both, and this year was no exception. This summer I had booked one at Exeter University called *Healthy bees, healthy people*, while my husband was off sailing around the Channel Islands.

When he suggested that I fly to Alderney to join him for dinner I thought it was

ridiculous idea and immediately booked a flight. I was to stay one night and make it back for the conference the following day. But fog and delayed flights meant I drove down to Exeter late and exhausted. So, dear Reader, please forgive my skirting over the details of the lectures. All the top speakers were there. My heart was willing but my eyelids kept slamming shut.

It must be said however that the accommodation was excellent and the company convivial. Last year by contrast the Irish convention offered accommodation over which we will draw a veil – but boy, those Irish know how to party. This bodes well for Apimondia (the great beekeeping convention) which is happening in Ireland next August. See you there. Mine's a Guinness!

Gill Peacock

➤ Apimondia runs from August 21-25 in Dublin. See www.apimondia2005.com

Toxic sprays

Last September, I attended a meeting on toxic sprays organised by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. HSE regulations are strict and operators have to wear protective clothing – masks, breathing apparatus, that sort of thing. However, we, the bystanders, are not covered by any regulations: sprays can be applied within a few yards of people (and bees) and their place of abode. Several speakers stated that they been seriously ill after being near sprays or even walking across a recently sprayed area.

One speaker stated that a reason why sprays were necessary was 'the cosmetic requirements' of the supermarkets. He gave several instances of supermarkets only accepting certain products – all of which required several applications of sprays, either pesticides or herbicides.

I have the minutes of the meeting if anyone would like to see them. The final report by the Commission will be available some time next year.

Peter Smith

David Jutson has been experimenting with a long hive (right). He writes:

After a career as an engineer in research and development, I immediately recognised the long hive as a good idea. Several of us said to each other, what a good way to save our backs from bending! So I set about building one.

My hive is based on the Robin Dartington design which I first saw at a Mid-Bucks meeting in April 2000. As I had been given some old hives that needed repair, I had the materials to hand. I dismantled two of them, made a new floor and two sides twice the length of an ordinary national, so that two supers could sit on top. I also made a vertical queen excluder and a dummy board that reached the sides and the bottom of the hive.

I cut two slats of 60 x 25 mm to provide sloping alighting boards – at the front and back of the hive - which could be slid in, doubling as entrance blocks.

I follow the same method as Robin, raising new queens in the back quarter of the hive. I intend to make more long hives as they work for me.



The ecstasy of bees

Looking in one of my old beekeeping books recently, I came across this description of a swarm written in the 1920`s by J G Digges in his *The Practical Bee Guide*. Digges was the Ted Hooper of his day and was writing at a time when descriptive prose was often used in scientific writing. Perhaps we have lost something of the wonder of beekeeping in expecting our beekeeping books to be lacking in emotion. What do you think? **John Chudley**

The Swarm – An Ecstasy.....Pouring from the insufficient opening they come, in bewildering haste; a riotous throng, rapturously jubilant, in the very ecstasy of extravagant emotion; harmless, too, in their design, and in their exaltation so sweetly amiable that he who will may handle them in safety. A vast multitude it is, rushing hither and thither, with great noise of humming, until the queen has joined them from the hive and has alighted upon some neighbouring tree. Then they gather round her- in very numbers assuring her timid heart, unaccustomed to rough exposure and risk of outer dangers- and form a cluster with the faithful mother, so still that the passing traveller may hardly notice them. Now let the watchful owner hive them without delay, and set them to work in anew home, or they will rise and, following their scouts sent out before to find a dwelling, will settle in some distant tree or chimney, or will invade the ruined tower upon the neighbouring hill, and so be lost to useful purpose.