

## APIARY REPORT 2016 PRESENTED BY PETER ROSE

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The year started on a positive note with the target number of 20 active colonies. Prolonged wet weather and wind during late winter/early spring caused significant chilling of hives with a negative impact on colony development. The poor weather also deterred bees from taking advantage of early pollen and nectar sources, further restricting brood nest increase and production of young bees.

By mid April four colonies had succumbed and two more failed during May in the less than favourable weather.

At this time 8 colonies were identified for training purposes/exams which again took place regularly from mid-May to end July with between 6-10 members attending. The remainder were set aside for queen rearing. It was hoped this would commence in June but the colonies were not sufficiently strong, especially noting that many bees would potentially be required following a queen insemination training planned for the end of the month. This 2-day training was expertly provided by Michael Collier and his mobile laboratory with 4 members being trained. Collecting drone semen was notably difficult both technically and with few sexually mature drones being harvested (1 in 15) even from the more advanced colonies. This supported the view that colonies had been slow to develop and it was not until late June that the strongest hives were showing signs of natural queen cell raising enabling nuclei to be made and at the same time taking the opportunity to move brood frames from stronger to weaker hives.

Seven inseminated queens were processed (plus several others wasted!) and placed in mini-nucs to monitor progress but all turned out to be drone layers.

By the end of July eight nuclei were developing giving a total colony count of 22. Although supers had been placed on all hives in May little honey was present which continued to be the case until the main nectar flow had finished. Only a single swarm was housed at the apiary during the year and from hive records it was unlikely to be of ADBKA origin. The queen from this small swarm was a drone layer, was killed and the bees united with a weak nucleus.

Throughout August much time was spent uniting weaker nuclei, replacing some drone laying queens following poor supercedures and re-queening some colonies with young queens. Two colonies were temporarily placed in

observation hives for demonstration purposes at both Warkwoth and Glendale shows.

With little stores present, winter feeding commenced early and we now enter winter with 17 well fed colonies having fed these an astonishing 27 full containers of Ambrosia. The majority of the hives are headed by young queens and hopefully some of the feed and good autumn weather will have ensured that there is also a good number of young bees to help over-wintering success.

In September all hives were treated against varroa with Thymovar strips.

For the first time all hives have been oriented 'warm way' for winter in attempts to reduce the risks of chilling, all double nucs have been placed in convectional single brood boxes and all hives fitted with either solid wooden floors or have varroa floors with the insert fully in position.

While focussing on the bee colonies a special thanks must be given to all members who have helped at Eshott during the year and in many different ways. This includes those who have provided the training, the apiary maintenance (shed, wind breaks--Glyn et al), the weekly gardening group (Sandra et al), running the shop (Susan) and Bryan Cole and Peter Rose for all of their work in managing the hives and making weekly visits from May to September....plus anyone else!!

Maybe this is too much..

Peter