



The bulletin of



The Rotary Club of Swindon Thamesdown

'The Moonraker'

District 1100 England

'Keeping Members in Touch!'



Editor; Past President
Peter Goldsworthy P.H.F.
*Swindon Thamesdown Editor of the year 2007
District 1100 Editor of the Year 2008/9 (Yeah!)*



*President Richard Fry
2009/10*

Issue 108 - Volume 5 and Number 28 of this Rotary Year

By email to all members of **Swindon Thamesdown Rotary Club, Foothill Highlands Rotary Club, Tappahannock Rotary Club** and selected **Australian Rotary Club Members** by Snail-mail to Hon, Members of Swindon Thamesdown and **now available on our website at;**

<http://www.rotaryclubofswindonthamesdown.org.uk/>

The comments expressed in this newsletter, if not credited to someone else, are the thoughts & opinions of the Editor and therefore may not be the opinions of all the members of the Rotary Club of Swindon Thamesdown.

Meeting 23rd March 2010

Editor Golds is away, yet again, (yawn) so you have my sense of wit (such as it is) to contend with once more pleasant reading: Hon Sec **Richard Goddard**

Host for the evening Peter Winton reports:

We were entertained by Ross Gregory who is a member of the Swindon Beekeepers' Association who gave us a very interesting and amusing insight into the mysteries of bees and bee-keeping generally.

His background is that of chemical engineering and he worked with Rotarian Mike Slipper in Water Research.

He took up bee-keeping about 16 years ago and produced his Pandora's box, which was a suitcase full of interesting items, including model bees, toy bees, wind up larvae, and display of types of bee and larvae. The first object was a "Skep", a traditional form of beehive until about 150 years ago. It is a round basket woven from what looks like hemp, which is turned upside down, and has a hole of about two inches in diameter in the base through which the bees pass. The drawn frame was then invented, and Ross produced from his case three different sizes of what we recognize as being honey frames. He explained that the Queen is kept



in the lower level, but the honey is stored in the upper levels. Some keepers use a “queen excluder” which has slots that the workers can pass through but not the queen.



Bees collect sugar, water and pollen, together with propolis which is used like a glue, and which is a red, resinous, aromatic substance collected by bees from the viscid buds of trees, such as the horse chestnut (research by Peter Winton). Water is also used in the hive to cool it: water is collected, and brought to the hive where it evaporates.

Wax is formed into cells in different sizes, smaller ones for the worker bees and larger for the drones. Queen cells can also be formed artificially. Ross passed around examples of the frames that are used, which had a distinctive smell.

At this time Ross was wearing a teapot cosy in the shape of a beehive as a hat (please refer to the photographs ably taken by the Secretary, Richard Goddard)].

The sole object of a queen bee is to lay eggs. They

produce pheromones to attract the drones, but as they age they produce less, and the bees then replace her. The drones exist to find a virgin queen and to mate with her, but with calamitous results as their “bits” are broken off and they die (at which point there were some suitable comments from the Rotarians present.) The worker bees also produce pheromones which they waft with their wings to attract other bees to their “happy” hive.

Ross produced jars containing examples of queen bee and worker bee pheromones, which had very distinctive but not unpleasant aromas. He then produced a large pair of rubber gloves which he explained were used for hygiene purposes when handling the hives, and also because everything tends to be somewhat sticky.

At this point Ross produced his beekeeper’s helmet which he insisted that President Richard should try on for size – it did hide his face somewhat!

Ross then went on to tell us about the “Verona mite” which it was thought would decimate



the bee population. The mite develops in the cell with the bee larvae and lives off its blood, it does not kill the larvae but weakens them so that they are more susceptible to viruses and disease. If left unchecked the mite can weaken the whole colony. Ron Hoskins (another member of the Swindon Beekeepers Association) chose not to use chemicals to control the mite, on the basis that if the colony can be preserved then it develops a resistance to the effects of the mite, just as the mite developed a resistance to the chemicals when they were misused. The effect of the Verona mite has not been as bad as had been expected.

The lifespan of a worker bee is about 6 weeks in the summer, 6 months in the winter, or about 500 kilometers of flying (so in the North, during the long summer days they have very short lives).

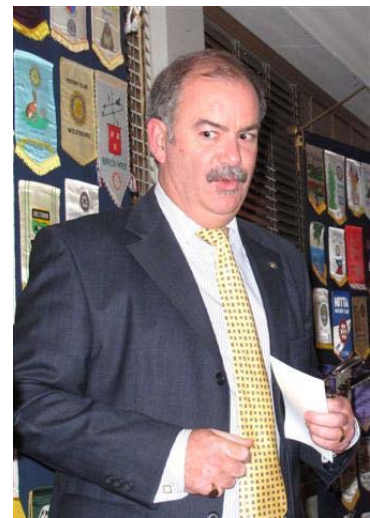


Ross announced that Ron Hoskins has an active apiary at Stanton Park, is often there at week-ends and will be more than happy to answer questions and demonstrate the work that he is doing.

Host for the evening, Peter Treasure gave an excellent vote of thanks and the Rotarians and guests responded appropriately.



Assistant District Governor Tony Horn receiving his odour fix - obviously a District thing



Peter Treasure not quite sure about President Richard



President Richard displays the latest headwear for the ministry of silly hats

Peter Newson Reports:

As President Richard mentioned at the last meeting I visited the Lake District recently, went to Keswick Rotary Club and exchanged banners and enjoyed myself.

The main topic of the meeting that I attended was the distribution of the £180,000 collected by Keswick and Cockermouth Rotary Clubs. The whole effort appeared to have been coordinated by Keswick Rotary Club but split 50/50 with Cockermouth Rotary Club.

Only a small part of Keswick was affected (250 properties rendered uninhabitable) with Cockermouth taking the brunt, this town is a real bomb site.



Now, we as a club discuss what we are going to do with say £10,000, now multiply that by 20, what a task!

Having read the list of recipients ranging from mountain rescue to the little old lady to the Keswick Rugby Club it seems that they have about 80% allocated but were holding the balance back for a couple of weeks in the knowledge that some folks will have been forgotten and left out.



Now here is something to ponder on. The average age of Keswick Rotarians is around 65, and attendance is not a problem, the following Saturday after my visit they were doing a collection for Haiti disaster over 75% of the club made themselves available as they had time on their sides and this is just after almost exhausting themselves with their own efforts.

Final comment, meal choice of three mains and three desserts all cooked in the hotel £8.50 including coffee; if its good enough for Julia Bradbury it is good enough for me.

Peter Newson

Many thanks Peter, I have included some photos of the flooding, we always moan about rain but when we see such sights it makes us realise that we have nothing to moan about.

Remember.....



Hon Sec Richard Goddard