

7th December 2012

The bees have been happily taking the feed and they have produced more comb to store their winter reserves. However, other bees discovered this source of food. On a morning inspection I found a lot of bees buzzing around the hive entrance in a way that I had not seen before. This was not normal behaviour and it was hungry bees from other hives robbing the honey from the orchard bees. I reduced the size of the entrance so only two bees could get in or out at the same time and the numbers flying around the hive reduced over the next couple of days.

The bees have completed throwing out the male drones and have settled down to their winter task of keeping the brood warm. The size of the brood is now reduced but healthy. Just a few flights are now being made usually after a bit of morning sun has warmed up the hive. The laying of the hedge has opened up the hive to more sunshine and I am sure they will appreciate this in the Spring.

This year the hive has not produced any honey but I hope for a good year next year with some of the honey being raffled off for the benefit of the orchard.

The bees look well set to get through winter and all being well start flying again in February when some early pollen should be about. They are quite capable of tolerating the cold by adopting 3 mechanisms to ensure its survival down to very low temperatures. These are,

1. Clustering,
2. Generating metabolic heat by micro vibration of indirect flight muscles,
3. Ensuring the nest is draught free by use of propolis

They are not keen on draughts so I will keep the reduced entrance in place and the Orchard group are building a dead hedge behind the hive to give it some shelter.