

LIME HONEY 2006.....sublime?

At the end of June last year I visited the Tudor Re-creation at Kentwell Hall in Long Melford. The quarter-mile avenue of Lime trees leading to the Great House was sublimely fragrant and buzzing loudly with bees of all sorts. I knew on the instant that I must try again for lime honey. The year had started badly with my hive having a 'very heavy infestation' of varroa [a mite-fall of 7/24hours in early April]. With Apistan the bees recovered but not quickly enough to bring in any rape nectar [our local main source]. They did however bring in a full super of what I call 'mixed garden honey' in June, and the hive continued to grow in strength.

With the chance of more honey in early July I went to see the bees as soon as I was home from Kentwell. I asked them if they had yet decided to swarm this year—No, and no sign of it either. I whisked them off to a secluded little glade beneath one of the great trees [with permission] and in just ten days the super was full and ripe and the lime flowers all done.

I had been told that lime honey was quite rare, more in the unpredictability of the nectar flow ; that honey-dew was the more likely source of any honey from these trees; that nectar provided lime-honey in only one year out of four. So was this honey? Had we collected the real thing?

It was bright, light and magical; not at all like honey dew, and the later analysis confirmed this.

Then one of life's little spontaneous joys came in the form of an advertisement in the BBKA NEWS August 2006 "have you thought of pollen analysis". This was very much in my mind from the moment of the aroma when I opened the super and especially during the 'bottling' of the honey.

I sent 2oz.of honey to Peter Martin [peter@hipa.org.uk 02085-613393] , and what follows is taken from his professional report.

Lime pollen is a large grain, larger than most and is therefore 'under-represented' in any sample in terms of grains per milligram or grains per bee-journey. But the specialist analysis report was a surprise... that out of hundred grains counted there was only one grain of lime-tree pollen. Only one percent of the pollen came from the lime trees! Perhaps. I hope there actually was a smidgen of lime nectar in my honey [unless the one percent of lime pollen just fell down from the trees above and was merely a 'contaminant'].

This wonderful honey goes perfectly with Greek yoghurt, but it turns out to be half Borage- half Blackberry, and yes, just a mile away from the hive there was a field of glorious blue blossom.

There was more news in his erudite report to me. The EU currently do not recognize the sale of DUAL-FLORAL honeys for example my own borage&blackberry honey, and Peter Martin is doing his utmost to change this rather odd ruling.

The more difficult phenomenon is that Borage honey has a high sucrose content. The current analysis of honey-for-sale has a limit on the sucrose level to prevent the sale of sugar fed to the bees being dressed up as honey. At present, pure borage honey is not within that limit and the vendor would be prosecuted.

I am very glad that I sent my little sample off to Peter Martin and extremely grateful to him for a quite extraordinary report

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