

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: November 2009

October saw the **AGM** come and go. As President of the Association, Ken Gorman led the evening. Twenty two people attended, several were newcomers to beekeeping, which is very heartening for the future. **The President's Address** was a resume of the year's activities and events. Ken then read the minutes of last year's AGM. Ken is standing down as President. The Committee are to decide whether we continue with a president's role. If you have any thoughts on this, please contact a committee member.

Ed Reney read the **Chairman's report**, which stated that we had achieved most of what we set out to do. However, we need more help from the general membership.

Ken, as the outgoing **Treasurer**, reported that in the past, subscriptions have trickled in. This has held many people up and made a lot more work for them. To alleviate this everyone agreed to the alteration of the constitution regarding the timing for setting the level of membership fees. As of 10th October we had 49 registered members and 17 partner members.

Chris Jay's **Education report** explained that the Beginners' Course was oversubscribed. The numbers are limited by the number of people we can successfully teach around a hive. Although this is changing with the advent of two association apiary sites, more people are needed to help out at occasional apiary meetings to spread the load. The standard of equipment is improving, all hives are in good condition. Chris is unable to stand as Education Officer next year so please think about offering assistance or taking on the role of this vital post.

Election of Officers: Andrew Eelbeck – **Treasurer**, Liz Parsons – **Secretary**, Bob Sibley – **Chairman**, Nicola Smith – **Honey Show Secretary**, Libby Culshaw – **Publicity, Programme, Newsletter, Library & Equipment**, Kevin Emmett – **Membership Secretary**, Gunter Weber, Andrew Beer, Ed Reney – **General Members**,

Ken Gorman was thanked for all he has done for the Association and all of us over the years, including the processing of the Association's honey. Ken does not intend to retire from NBBKA altogether and has said he will rear queens to improve the stock in our apiaries next year.

Libby Culshaw reported that the **Events Programme** for 2010 is in the planning stage with speakers already organised for January and February. If anyone would like to make suggestions, please don't hesitate. We look forward to Beulah Cullen's illustrated talk this month.

After the 'business,' **Bob Hunter**, President of Buckinghamshire Beekeepers' Association gave a very light hearted but nonetheless informative talk about his experiences in beekeeping over the many years. He became interested in bees as a child. At nine years of age his family moved to High Wycombe and fortuitously, the new neighbour was a beekeeper. Bob told us many tales of those early years. With his job as a pattern maker, Bob was able to purloin mahogany to make his first hive. He was delighted to get his first swarm and wanted to do everything by the book. He put a board to the hive entrance and threw his swarm onto it. Needless to say, the bees went everywhere except up the board. After lying in the grass till well after dark, wondering what went wrong, Bob decided he'd better get home. As a newly wedded husband, he crept upstairs in the dark, put his pyjamas on and got into bed, only to hear a very loud scream. He had taken a bee to bed with him! Bob entertained us with all manner of beekeeping tales. Many, many thanks, Bob for informing us and making us laugh long and loud too!

During October, Ken attended the **Bucks County Honey Show**. He took 8 entries and only just missed the cup for most points from a single entrant. Twenty eight Bucks members had submitted entries. The Mid Bucks AGM was held at the same event. Mid Bucks has had a significant increase in membership and raised a "profit" of £1,500 on the year. They had had a busy summer programme which included school visits. Mid Bucks also ran a "learn together" group for eight weeks and studied for two modules of the BBKA Intermediate qualification, apparently it was hard work but with good results.

Many years ago John Rainey led a similar group for NBBKA members. Is there any interest for such a group for next year?

It is believed that the National Honey Show is considering dropping the Bucks Classes as very few people are entering of late.

Dr Juliet Osborne who leads the Rothamsted Research active programme of research on honey bees, bumble bees and other insect pollinators, contacted us to advise us that her team have been awarded £1 million to study honey bee disease and foraging behaviour, in collaboration with Warwick University. The project entitled: *"Honeybee population dynamics: Integrating the effects of factors within the hive and in the landscape."* This three year project will enable them to start studying bee diseases again. They will use a combination of mathematical modelling and experiments to understand the most important factors in colony survival. They are also looking at how nutrition is related to the hive's ability to resist disease and how the health status of a colony influences the bees' effectiveness at foraging. Rothamsted is hosting an Open Weekend 22-23 May 2010 so we will be able to discover how well the research is going.

I had got last month's Newsletter away before the following photos and Martin's comments about our **Annual Honey Show** came through. First is Sue Lang receiving the Stoke Road Apiary Shield for the second overall highest points in show from the manager of Wyevale Garden Centre. Then Ray Mitchener receives the Arthur Foreman Novice Cup. Finally Ken Gorman receives the Albert Toms Shield for the highest points in honey classes.



Honey Show judge, Martin Buckle said, "It was a bit disappointing to see only 51 entries for our Annual Honey Show. However, the quality was quite good and there are obviously people in NBBKA who know their honey and wax preparation."

As usual Martin left quite a few comment slips to encourage and help people for the future. I must say, I personally, find them invaluable for my progress in producing good quality products. As Martin says, "One of the main purposes of exhibiting is to improve our preparation and presentation of honey and other produce, and to see how we compare with other people doing the same thing. Without competing, how does one know if one is getting it right?"

Message from the Treasurer – Andrew Eelbeck:

A gentle reminder for those who still have to renew their membership.

Many thanks to those who have already paid and made donations to various bee charities. It is important subscriptions are paid promptly so that we can all benefit and make life easier for all. The membership fee is very reasonable when considering membership of the British Bee Keepers Association (BBKA) is included. The cost of joining BBKA directly would be £33.00. **BBKA membership** gives the following benefits:

BBKA News; Public Liability Insurance; Product Liability Insurance; Bee Disease Insurance; Free Information Leaflets to download; Members' Password and Protected Area Discussion Forum; Correspondence Courses; Examination and Assessment Programme; Telephone Information; Research Support; Legal Advice; Representation and lobbying of Government, EU and official bodies; Reduced entry to the Spring Convention at Stoneleigh.

Then there are the **benefits of NBBKA** – Newsletters; training apiaries; Beginners' Courses; guest speakers; activities organised throughout the year; equipment to borrow; a library with books, slides and DVDs to borrow; local knowledge of suitable sites and forage; reduced subscription to *BeeCraft*: a great bunch of beekeepers ready and willing to help each other and share information and hard work!

Following the AGM change to the constitution, the committee can now set the subscription level **before** the new financial year (1st September) which will improve the arrangements for the future because by the next AGM we will all be paid up members.

To learn more about subscriptions, contact: Andrew Eelbeck – 01908 551 886

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Don't let this be your last Newsletter!

Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer Bees will start clustering with the arrival of Winter and temperatures several degrees above freezing. Sunshine for a few hours will encourage cleansing flights and possibly pollen gathering. If you *quietly* take off the roof of your colony on a cold day and look down through the feedhole (don't remove the coverboard!) you may observe bees closely clustered in a ball over several combs, otherwise looking dead to the world. Be assured your bees are well!

These are the tasks in the apiary for this month:

- A. Fix mouse guards. I don't trouble with mouse guards for reasons given in my October notes. The decision is yours! Please don't remove the entrance blocks or ventilate hives until robbing by wasps and other bees is over for the year. Mouse guards, if fitted, should generally remain in place until Spring and bees are flying freely daily and can give intruders a "bloody nose". Remember that in favourable conditions and especially if colonies are weak, robbing can start at any time of the year. So be ever watchful and restore entrance blocks in the "narrow position" whenever necessary.
- B. Ventilate hives; If you have open wire-mesh floors with no under-trays then there may be no need for top ventilation. As I have open-mesh floors I am experimenting this year with no top ventilation but be careful about robbing!
- C. Second Varroa Treatment: You will have treated your bees with APIGUARD, mentioned in September's notes. It will shortly be time to apply a second treatment – between the last week in November and the end of December. It cannot be over emphasised that we still have no long term solution for Varroa; the experts take differing views from year to year, and the last thing I want to do in these notes is to lead your bees to an early demise, so I have consulted and believe the following represents a consensus of views: **-OXALIC ACID** You apply during daytime when temperature is 8 degrees C or above. You can get the treatment from appliance suppliers. It is dangerous stuff. Get in liquid form in one-litre bottles which will serve 20-30 colonies (no smaller bottles available). You can get the treatment in powder form but preparation is more dangerous and you may not get the mix right. It will be sensible to share a bottle with other beekeepers in your area. Liquid is applied through a dribbler, available as above, at the rate of 5ml for each seam of bees clustering between combs. **PLEASE READ AND COMPLY WHOLLY WITH ALL MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS.** BEGINNERS SHOULD WORK WITH EXPERIENCED BEEKEEPERS.

In Stewkley and its surrounds we treated some 60 colonies in this way in 2008 with only three losses from causes unknown by Springtime. Oxalic acid is not a permitted treatment for bees in the UK although permitted on the Continent. UK Government bodies have said that they will turn a blind eye to its use adding that if anything goes wrong then we beekeepers carry the can!

APIVAR available through veterinary surgeons if you can find one to prescribe it. To help, NBU have promised to issue a list of prescribers soon. I have no experience of it. Some, I believe, have had good results although it has been suggested that its effectiveness over the years will fall off. **API LIFE VAR** Available through the appliance suppliers. I have heard it is effective but have no experience myself. Do speak to other beekeepers about Varroa treatments. There is no assured course at present. A letter from one Bill Summners in the latest *Beekeepers' Quarterly* advocates use of a suitably modified queen-introduction cage doused in royal jelly preserved in the freezer and placed over the feedhole when the queen is not laying, but assuming that you have no jelly then he suggests instead you use a suitable attractant (peanut butter may work apparently – worth a try?). He is attempting to find other attractants.

Some members have been using **HIVE CLEAN** to deter the mites. Gunter Weber tells me that one of our local seasonal Bee Inspectors has advised Hive Clean should only be for hives with open wire-mesh floors, any under-tray to be removed. Gunter is further advised that hives should be on stands at a height of at least 9" from the ground so that the mites stunned or disabled by Hive Clean will drop through the mesh with no chance of returning.

D. Periodic Inspections. From November until the end of February you need only check colonies every two weeks, but in the event of gales or heavy snow you must obviously check all is well immediately. I will cover periodic inspections in greater detail in the next newsletter.

E. Repairs and renewals It is vital that Winter is spent getting you and your equipment and your bees ready for the new season. The bees will take no account of your unpreparedness which may well cost you a lost swarm or worse. Again, more of this next month but do start renewing things now because the Spring rush is just around the corner!

Forage The ivy is almost over. Hardy fuschia is still flowering and the bees are gathering nectar and pale, creamy coloured pollen. The Michaelmas daisies are thick with bees and they are collecting bright yellow pollen. Mahonia Charity is just breaking into flower, the bees have already honed in on it. This



will flower till January / February,
really do recommend you plant at least one of these.

Buzz Words Did you know.....

- Rowse Honey is giving away free seeds to encourage honey bees into your garden?
- Fancy decorated metal honey spoons and tie pins can be purchased from www.lucysylvester.co.uk ?
- An attractive ceramic bumble bee nester can be purchased for £19.00 from Wildlife World? www.wildlifeworld.co.uk or 01666 505 333

Queenie's Kitchen In readiness for Bonfire Night, try **Chocolate Marshmallow Fingers**.

Put 12 oz digestive biscuits in a polythene bag and crush them with a rolling pin.

Put 4 ½ oz plain chocolate (broken into pieces), 8oz butter, 1oz caster sugar, 2 tab cocoa, 2 tab honey into a saucepan and heat gently until melted. Remove from the heat and leave to cool slightly.

Stir the crushed biscuits into the chocolate mixture until well mixed. Add 2 oz mini marshmallows and mix well. Finally stir in 3 ½ oz white chocolate chips.

Turn the mixture into an 8 inch square (20 cm) baking tin and lightly smooth the top. Put in the refrigerator and leave to chill for 2-3 hours, until set.

Cut into fingers before serving. Makes about 18 fingers.

November

Look out for Ken Gorman's article in November's *Bee Craft*, complete with his own photographs. A follow-up article is expected to appear in the January edition.

On **Wednesday 18th** we have our long awaited talk from **Dr. Beulah Cullen** entitled **How doth the Little Busy Bee?** It is an anatomical talk with electron microscope images so we will be seeing parts of the honey bee which we had no idea existed!

Beulah has kept bees for thirty years. She holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping and is a Master Beekeeper. Beulah has been a Regional Bee Inspector, is a member of the BBKA Exam Board, a correspondence course tutor, a member of the Chalfonts BKS and Hon.Sec of Bucks County Beekeepers' Association. So a treasure trove of exciting information awaits us!

The venue, as usual, is Rectory Cottages, Church Green Road, Bletchley, MK3 6BJ at 7.30 p.m.

December

The **Bucks County AGM** is hosted by Mid Bucks BKA this year on 4th December at the Bowls Club, Wendover.

There will be a speaker from **BIBBA** with a subject related to selective queen breeding. All members of Bucks BKA are invited to attend. Ken will be attending and has seats available. If you would like a lift, please call 07779 801 774

Get well soon our webmaster, Barry Taylor, has been ill in hospital. We send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

If you would like to contribute to or comment upon our Newsletter, please contact Libby Culshaw 01908 375968
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