

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: May 2009

My circumnavigation of Papua New Guinea was amazing & I really did not want it to end. I won't say any more on the subject as there is a lot of information to pass on regarding bee keeping. Many thanks to Ken for sending his topical apiary notes to everyone.

March The Bucks County Beekeepers' Association Thirteenth Annual Seminar took place in Wendover. As usual the lectures were varied and extremely interesting. The first one was by **Professor David Warrell** on the subject of **Bee Venom**. He explained that bee venom consists of peptides, enzymes and amines and how venom allergens stimulate the immune system in a bad way. He told us to be alert for symptoms of anaphylaxis and to act quickly. Often people in their 60s and 70s become prone to anaphylaxis. He advises us to learn how to use an epi-pen because 60% of people don't know how to use them. If you are with someone who goes into shock, call for help straight away; remove the victim from the area of danger; lay the victim flat – they must not sit up or stand up in case their blood pressure is low; make sure their airway is clear. Despite the gravitas of the lecture, Professor Warrell was a brilliant and witty orator. He delivered his lecture with alacrity and even bravado! He had us rolling in the aisles.

The next lecture was by **Dr Robin Wootton** on **Insect Flight**. He told us how bumble bees can fly at 4.5 metres per second and how a German scientist flew a blowfly on a tether for two weeks constantly, feeding it sugar syrup, to see how the wings degenerated over time.



Andrew Beer was presented with the **Fifty Years of Beekeeping Award** from County President, Bob Hunter. Andrew started beekeeping when he was 16 years old and living in Thame. He became a solicitor and started work in London, proudly delivering his own honey to Harrods and the Civil Service Stores in the Strand. Andrew led a busy legal life and now advises BBKA on legal matters. He is a member of the Rolls Royce Enthusiasts' Club and belongs to both the Bedfordshire BKA and North Bucks BKA. He is a champion of agriculture and is passionate about the future of bees.

After a good lunch, lectures resumed. **Richard Ball**, the National Bee Inspector, told us that the annual consumption of honey in U.K. is 23,000 tonnes. Depending on weather, we actually produce only a quarter of that in a good year. He explained that the new varieties of oil seed rape are not as nectiferous as those of 25 years ago. He reported that scientists think that viruses may be latent in bees and these can be stimulated to become active. Years ago every bee club would screen for acarine and nosema but we have been so busy with varroa we have forgotten to do this. To improve husbandry standards, Richard suggests: feed good quality, nutritious food; practise effective varroa control and check and treat for nosema. Providing new comb increases the honey yield by 30%. It is also thought that Apistan reduces sperm in drones.

The final lecture was from **Peter Tomkins** entitled **Colony Compromise Disorder**. In Peter's vast experience he realises that high density apiaries are more prone to disease and stress. He suggests 8 - 10 maximum colonies on any one site. He finds the open mesh floors to be excellent and advocates leaving them on all year round. He prefers the screens are open to the ground rather than an insert or floorboard so that mites drop out and cannot get back up. Peter does not feed syrup to his bees. At the end of July he extracts the honey then starts varroa treatment. He puts a super of odds and ends *under* the brood box. Nectar that comes in after July is for the bees. Then in the spring Peter feeds candy to his colonies. He advises us to change as many combs as we can in spring and keep everything CLEAN. Peter feels that excessive manipulations cause stress and this leaves the bees vulnerable to disease.

It was a super day and John Catton and his team are to be congratulated on making it so.

Also in March Andrew Eelbeck painted/preserved the shed which Bob Sibley, Chris Jay, Ed Reney and Ken Gorman had erected on the apiary site at Cosgrove. Many thanks to John Marchant for donating the gate.

April The Beginners' course was over-subscribed. It is the number of people in the apiary which dictates how many beginners we can deal with at a time. Rather than disappoint people and send them away empty handed a compromise was reached. Everyone could attend the theory classes at Hazeley School as there is plenty of room but only the first 20 who signed up can attend the practical classes. However, for those who can't attend the apiary meetings we will try to link them up with a member who could do with an extra pair of hands when they manipulate their bees. So we hope everyone is happy!



Whilst talking of our teaching apiary, we were approached by the director of Bradwell Abbey to see if we would site some hives there. On Saturday 25th Bob Sibley, Chris Jay, Andrew Eelbeck, Tom Charge and Peter Haynes set off at the crack of dawn and took four hives from our Cosgrove apiary over to the Abbey. So NBBKA now has two teaching apiaries which will take the stress off one set of bees being constantly manipulated. Funny how one thing leads to another! Talking of our apiaries.....

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

Bob Sibley is expecting to be called for hip replacement surgery any time now. The recovery period will be 15 weeks. Bob has assisted **Chris Jay** on the beginners' apiary sessions and from time to time with general apiary management during the year e.g. mowing, fence maintenance, checking equipment etc., **Please contact Chris with your number and dates and times when you will be available to lend a hand at the Beginners' Apiary Sessions and with general maintenance at other times.**

Chris Jay – 01908 373465 chris.jay@talktalk.net

Also in April, by way of thanking us for our attendance at the screening of their new advertising campaign, the Co-op kindly sent us a donation of £100.00. This has been used to buy equipment for the Beginners' Classes.

The BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh was another success story. Many of our members were there enjoying the lectures, demonstrations and making purchases from the many trade stands. Pam Konieczny and Fiona and Andrew Eelbeck attended the three day Queen Rearing course led by Clive de Bruyn. They were bubbling over with the experience. Apparently people are already signing up for next year's course. Chris Jay and Libby Culshaw attended Martin Buckle's wonderful skep making course. He has agreed to come and give us a work shop next year. Not to be missed. Watch out for the latest Robin Hood film – Martin made the skeps for Friar Tuck's apiary!

Are there any 60s music fans out there who remember the pop group called "The Honeycombs"? They still tour and are bringing out a new CD in the autumn. Their photographer contacted Libby Culshaw from our website and subsequently photographed her bees on the comb for the CD cover.

During the month the Government, along with a combination of agencies, announced increased funding for honey bee research. Knowing how hard we British Beekeepers have battled for this funding, I was somewhat rattled to see in the press that the Whitehall ministries have spent £780,000 on cut flowers and potted plants over the last four years. With the Department of Children and Families running up a bill of £174,000, the Foreign Office spending £106,053 and DEFRA £79,871.

Plants for sale! On a more modest scale, Libby Culshaw has walnut, cherry, hazel, holly, box, rosemary, sage, redcurrant, gooseberry, buddleia for sale at 50p each, proceeds to NBBKA.

Equipment for sale:

David Boddy of Stewkley is retiring from beekeeping and has various items for sale. Please ring 01525 240451

Ken Gorman has an almost new, cedar, pitched roof for a National Hive. List price £59.95, Ken's price £20.00 a bargain! Please ring: 077 7980 1774

Apiary Notes from Ken

I set out bait hives two weeks ago and scout bees are visiting them. Bees were also nosing around a pile of supers at one apiary, where there was a small crack between two boxes. I sprayed that area with Bee Charm and a swarm of bees came in whilst I was at the apiary the following day. I transferred them to a brood box two days later. They handled beautifully. So it is possible to pick up some very good bees in a swarm. There is also the danger of picking up trouble in the form of diseases, bad temper or mite infestation. A hived swarm needs careful inspection a week or two later. It is acceptable to treat a swarm for mite infestation in the summer, before they have stored honey which might be taken for human use,

Hive inspections have revealed a number of colonies building swarm cells. Colonies are very large for the time of year and there is plenty of stored honey, some colonies needing a fifth super – in late April! Warm weather is forecast for the next few days and there will be many colonies ready to swarm. What can be done? There are several alternatives:

1. Catch the swarm, by chance you have bees in the garden and see the swarm issue or find it hanging, ready to take.
2. You know the colony is building cells, you are able to keep a watch day by day and catch the swarm after it has issued. In the case of both 1 and 2, hive the swarm on the site of the colony from which it has issued, moving the parent colony two yards to one side. Transfer the supers from the parent colony to the swarm.
3. If you are inspecting regularly and find a colony building queen cells then carry out some form of colony separation. Find the queen and put her on that comb into a fresh brood box of combs or a mixture of combs and foundation. Remove any queen cells on that comb. Stand that new colony on the site of the parent colony, which is then removed to one side, having removed all queen cells, except for one good, uncapped cell. Remove the supers from the parent colony and place them on the newly formed colony. You will have made an artificial swarm. In about five days time, re inspect the colony with the uncapped queen cell (now capped), remove any other queen cells which have been built and then move that colony to other side of the artificial swarm. Using this method you will maximise honey production.

If you have lost colonies and you want to make increase, leave two good uncapped cells, one in each part of the old colony, which you split into two strong nuclei. Move them about in the same way described above.

Last month you received a copy of the **Swarm Collection List**. Carl Durnford 01908 586066 has recently registered to be on the list.

New Seasonal Bee Inspector

Julian Parker is the SBI for Buckinghamshire. **Margaret Holland** will remain the SBI and point of contact for those with apiaries in the northern end of Bucks – roughly from a line just below Buckingham and Milton Keynes northward or more accurately any apiaries within OS 10km grids SP63, SP73, SP83, SP93, SP84, SP94, SP85 and SP95.

A **Husbandry and Disease Day** will be arranged for Bucks Beekeepers. Please contact Julian with any thoughts on a preferred date, bearing in mind he has to find a “best-fit” for the 5 associations within Buckinghamshire. Currently Julian is looking to arrange different events at a County level within the Southern Region, so that each County has a separate day. Contact; Julian@Fiolian.co.uk

Forage It has been a marvellous spring, the bees don't know which way to turn! I haven't seen such luxuriant blossom for years and we've been lucky not to have winds, frosts and rain to spoil it. Fingers crossed for a good honey crop. The set on the redcurrant and gooseberry bushes is abundant to say the least and fruit blossom is still opening up with crab apple, apple, quince and medlar doing just that as I write. Dandelions are going strong everywhere I look. This can't be bad as there are between 100 and 200 flowers on a single dandelion head. Holly is just coming into flower. The male flowers give pollen as well as nectar whereas the females are sterile and only produce nectar. Look out for the bright dark pink colour of horse chestnut pollen going into your hives any time now.



Queenie's Kitchen Simone Capell of High Wycombe BKA gave a superb honey cookery demonstration at Stoneleigh. She demonstrated five honey recipes, all were delicious but I repeat one here that will be handy to sustain you when you are having a picnic at your out-apiaries: **Spiced Date Tray Bake**

- Put ½ lb stoned and chopped dates, ¼ pint water, juice and rind of one lemon, 2 tabs honey and 1 tsp ground cinnamon in a saucepan.
- Heat gently stirring all the time until the mixture comes to the boil. Simmer gently until thickened and a smooth spreading consistency is achieved. **Stir all the time** or it will burn. Remove from the heat and cool.
- Combine 8 oz melted butter, 3 oz Demerara sugar, 8 oz self raising flour and 8 oz semolina in a bowl. The mixture should be lumpy!
- Spread half the semolina mixture over the bottom of a small rectangular Swiss roll tin and press down well.
- Spread the date mixture over this, leaving the edges clear.
- Break up the rest of the semolina mixture and fork over the dates.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes at 190c until golden brown. Cut into fingers and cool. Simone says this also works well with figs and is far better for you than the e numbers in cereal bars!

Buzz Words Did you know.....

- There is an online auction site specializing in buying and selling apicultural equipment? Anything from hives to protective clothing. bid4bees.co.uk Registration is free.
- A type-one diabetic friend who has been taking pollen grains for hay fever has reported a marked reduction of sugar levels in urine. Scientists in France & Poland have made studies which agree with this.

MAY Beginners' apiary meetings really get under way. Please remember to contact Chris Jay with times you can help. 01908 373465

The weekend of 9-10 May is the **Steam Rally** at Stoke Goldington. Sue Bird and Mike Bensley will have a stand and welcome as many offers of help as possible. Contact Sue: 01908 501101 or Mike: 01908 230261

If you would like to comment on or contribute to our Newsletter contact Libby Culshaw 01908 375968
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