

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: June 20 2009

Introducing our very own Association Honey Label



This beautiful label has been designed especially for NBBKA by commercial photographer and photo illustrator, **Ian Williams**. Ian has generously produced this label for us free of charge. To see the work of this inventive and inspirational artist see Ian's website: www.ianfwilliams.com

Ken Gorman has kindly volunteered to process the Association honey so that is why his address appears on the label. The regulations state that an address has to be displayed.

May has been incredibly busy, we have been lucky with the weather and most reports are of strong colonies and plenty of swarms. Our training apiary at Cosgrove is going from strength to strength. Chris Jay has demonstrated two artificial swarms to the Beginners. Ed Reney is looking after the second apiary at Bradwell Abbey. Of the four colonies, three are doing well but one has totally absconded!

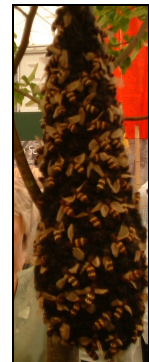
Libby Culshaw has applied for a grant from the MK Community Foundation so that we can purchase more equipment for the Beginners' Courses, training apiaries and the library. If you have any suggestions for equipment or books, let her know as soon as possible.

Sue Bird and Mike Bensley expected to run the stand at the Stoke Goldington Steam Rally as usual, however, Mike was called for an operation just before the event and Sue was taken ill. Very best wishes to Sue & Mike for speedy recoveries. Many thanks to Mick Egan, Maurice Cartwright and their supporting team for stepping in. There was a great deal of interest about bee health and pollination of crops. Business was brisk and they had sold out by 4.00 p.m. on Sunday.

Young offenders at Woodhill Prison are designing and making a community garden within the prison. Bob Sibley and Chris Jay have been to put a five frame nucleus box with a clipped queen. They were pleased to be bombarded with serious and searching questions from the young people.

The BBKA had a stand at Chelsea Flower Show. The theme was based on the fact that four or five large trees can provide as much forage for bees as an acre of wild flower meadow. The interest in bees and beekeeping was phenomenal and people actually queued to ask questions. The highlight of the stand was a *knitted* swarm!

Bad news – Stephan has had a hive stolen. It was brand new, painted Cuprinol green, had a varroa floor and lovely bees. He had put it in the borage field off London Road, near Broughton. Sadly there seems to be a spate of hive thefts all over Britain. Make sure your equipment is marked and report any such losses to the police and BBKA.



Apiary Notes from Ken

Once again we have a typical British beekeeping year. Unpredictable weather, with sudden periods of change; rapid build-up of honeybee colonies in April/early May. We hear of beekeepers being caught out in ways that should not happen: lack of spare equipment to accommodate swarms, whether of the natural or artificial kinds and the failure to provide adequate accommodation soon enough for a) stores, b) the queen to lay c) standing room for the bees. The day that you remove a crown board and you see wall to wall bees you know that you've missed the boat-swarming preparations are already in train. So now is the time to make some plans for 2010-yes, next year!

Every colony that you plan to keep needs two brood chambers and three, preferably four supers. There needs to be additional spare kit to accommodate swarms. Queen bees need more than one brood chamber for egg laying-period! Either that or use a larger brood chamber, such as the "Commercial", where there are real problems with lifting full boxes. I used the large Dadant hives for many years, but with my increasing age they became too heavy for a one man operation.

The system of double brood chambers that you use can vary. For example, you could winter bees on a single brood chamber and give a second brood chamber of foundation in the spring, perhaps supported by feeding, for the bees to move up into. When the second brood chamber is occupied and you see the queen in there, raise the first brood chamber above an excluder, let the brood hatch, extract any honey for feeding back and melt down the combs. **COMB RENEWAL AS A YEARLY PLAN IS ESSENTIAL IF CHEMICAL AND DISEASE BUILD-UP IS TO BE AVOIDED.** Wax recovered from melting down combs can be used in the exchange system for buying foundation, thus lowering the price substantially. For three years now I have been using a system of 8 frame brood chambers with home-made, wide, hollow dummy boards. It is a very flexible system and lowers the weights being lifted. I've done the same in the WBC hives at The Museum of Rural Life.

Have you seen the recent TV programme showing bee handling in the USA and Australia? The bee losses in USA were enormous in percentage terms: small wonder when one saw the state of the boxes and combs-black as the ace of spades and propolis everywhere. Also did you see the bee handlers bashing combs of bees back into the boxes? In Australia, the methods of making up packages of bees for export to the USA involved blowing, shaking and funnelling bees like wheat; the stress involved must be devastating. All this followed by shipping to the airport and a plane journey. We didn't see what happened at the other end.

You may need to extract some honey. There is some oil seed rape honey around, which will set hard. If you have a melter then the problem can be overcome, cutting out whole combs. If not, then you need to scrape honey out into tubs for melting down and filtering at a later time.

Have you identified any weak colonies, defensive bees or those with much chalk brood? Get rid of them! Remove the queen and unite over another colony, placing a sheet of newspaper with a few pin pricks between the two. In a season like this one, something is wrong with any colony that is not developing rapidly.

Have you planned for varroa treatment this coming late Summer and Autumn? I know that one member used oxalic acid in colonies last year. I do wish we would get feedback from members about the level of success that they are having. Chris, our apiary manager tells me that he has encountered problems with mites in some of the Association colonies this Spring. How does he know? He's monitoring mite fall-out as we should all be doing.

Lastly, should you collect or receive a swarm, it may need feeding if the weather turns bad. Having a swarm on foundation and feeding, will ensure that some very good combs will be built. It would be great to receive some swarm taking stories from members. One member removed bees from a shed wall-yet we hear nothing. We need input from beginners as well as experienced beekeepers. For this reason I will be ending my monthly notes in August; three years is long enough.

What a shame Ken feels like this. He has been the backbone of our Association for almost thirty years and has given his time most generously to everyone in the Association. The monthly notes will be a great loss for all of us. Ken's knowledge and understanding of beekeeping is immeasurable and he has always been glad to share this with us. Perhaps this is a good time for us all to ponder on the fact that we really ought not take the stalwarts for granted and offer to assist occasionally. Two hours on one Saturday afternoon once a season is not too much to ask.

Might as well get the moaning over in one go! Beginners, please make every effort to attend apiary meetings. These practical sessions are an important follow up to your theory sessions. They are a valuable way of finding out if you can cope with tens of thousands of bees flying up in your face, what to do if things go wrong, how to handle swarms, how to identify pests and diseases, what patterns of behaviour to look out for, indications of pollen gathering, brood rearing and so forth. This is your opportunity to find out these things before you go to the expense of buying your own equipment. The other consideration is that we have reserved your places on these apiary sessions and have turned other people away. MK Council is set to issue an ASBO to a "beekeeper". He is not a member of an Association and has not attended classes or approached anyone for help. Consequently his lack of knowledge has led to him struggling with aggressive bees and terrorising his neighbourhood!

Following the screening of the programme which Ken referred to, several people have contacted us via our website to offer sites for a hive or two in their gardens. People suddenly understand the plight of the honeybee and want to help. There is a site near Winslow – if you are interested, contact Chris Jay 01908 373465. There is an orchard near Preston Bisset with blossoms and herbs. Please contact Brendan Walker 01280 848160 mail@rosemarycottage.org

Coming up

Northamptonshire Beekeepers are hosting a conference 4-6 September. www.beeconference.org.uk
One has to register in advance, contact David White 01604 406664

Julian Parker, our new Bee Inspector, has organized the Disease Recognition Day. You need to register in advance.



NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE BEE HUSBANDRY
&
DISEASE RECOGNITION DAY**
SUNDAY 5TH JULY 2009
10AM TO 4:30PM
FREE EVENT – ALL BEEKEEPERS WELCOME

At
Great Missenden Memorial Hall, Memorial Centre, Link Road, Great Missenden, Bucks. HP16 9AE

🌀 An Opportunity to Improve 🌀
🌀 Your Bee Husbandry and Disease Recognition 🌀

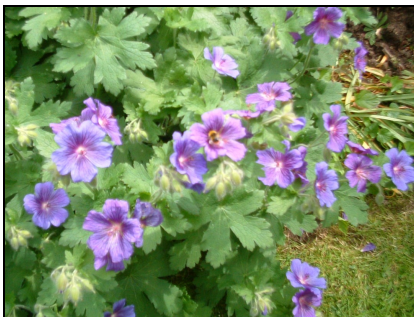
Some encoding program is not allowing me to print the whole poster but the main information is displayed here. www.nationalbeeunit.com Julian 01494 711 782 julian.parker@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Messages

- Please let Ken know if you haven't received your BBKA Membership card 01908 560610
- Do not pass on names of members for swarm collection if they don't appear on the Swarm List
- Parking at Rectory Cottages – at the rear of the Church Hall or by the War Memorial or in the left hand side of the fenced area (for disabled users). Police are issuing penalty notices to those who park on the pavement and cause obstructions

Forage

We are coming up to the period known as The June Gap. June is not entirely devoid of pollen and nectar producing plants. Cranesbill flowers for a long time and is favoured by both honey bees and bumble bees. Raspberries and loganberries are in flower now. Opening up are thyme, sage, pyracantha and escallonia. White clover is out – a good bee plant with about 50 flowers on each stem. Lime will soon be flowering with its petals hanging down thus keeping the flower clean and dry. Lime releases nectar in thundery conditions. Robinia Pseudo Acacia is a good bee tree, although it only flowers for about nine days, the blossom is spectacular, the scent fabulous and the honey has a low water content.



Queenie's Kitchen

Picnic time is almost upon us, here is a **Picnic Fruit Cake** recipe from the BBKA Leaflet No.9

- Cream 4 oz butter and 8 oz caster sugar together until light and fluffy
- Beat 3 eggs together, then add to creamed mixture with 6oz plain flour, 1 teasp baking powder, ¼ teasp salt and ½ teasp nutmeg
- Stir in 2 tabs milk
- Add 2 tabs honey and ¼ teasp bicarbonate of soda to the mixture
- Add 8 oz chopped walnuts and 1lb seedless raisins and pour into a greased and floured 2lb loaf tin
- Bake at 160C / 325F / Gas 3 for 2 ½ hours
- Cool in tin before turning out

Buzz Words Did you know....

- Online games with a bee theme can be found on www.draperbee.com/games/games.htm?
- A board game for children entitled "busy little bees" can be purchased from Oxfam for £12.99?

June

Saturday 13th June is the **Riverside Fair** at Stony Stratford from 1 – 4 p.m. Sue Bird will have a stand with an observation hive, information and bee products for sale. Please consider giving Sue a hand for an hour or two. Call her on 01908 501101

And Finally...

June owes its name to Juno, the goddess of heaven, who takes a special interest in women, and protects their interests. So the queen and workers should be alright then!

A dripping June
Brings all things in tune.
If St. Vitus Day (14th) be rainy weather
It will rain for thirty days together.
If on the 8th of June it rain
It foretells a wet harvest mensain.

If you would like to comment on or contribute to our Newsletter, contact Libby Culshaw 01908 375968
laviniaculshaw@hotmail.com