

# North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

## Newsletter June 2012

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### Calendar at-a-glance

16 <sup>th</sup> & 17 <sup>th</sup> June	Loughton Open Day
24 <sup>th</sup> July	Committee meeting
31 <sup>st</sup> July	Going For Gold
25 <sup>th</sup> September	Committee Meeting
13 <sup>th</sup> October	County and NBBKA honey shows and County AGM

### News Articles

#### ***Vandalism alert***

We had initially started to write that members are reminded to be vigilant to vandalism and theft of hives, after a hive was found floating in the canal. However it turned out that the hive was not thrown there by vandals, but by the beekeeper himself. Some of our members were involved in rescuing the bees and do not believe the story that the beekeeper told the newspaper, that he dropped the box as the bees started to sting him, because *two* hives were in the canal.

So rather than write that one should consider branding or marking one's hives, perhaps it's better to write that we should keep well clear of such beekeepers.

## ***Teaching apiaries***

Ken Neil gives us an update on our two teaching apiaries, at which our beginners continue to enjoy their practical sessions.

Andrew used a Ged Marshall technique for producing queen cells at Cosgrove from a section of comb containing eggs cut out and suspended vertically in a small square box. Phil and I checked it last night and the bees had built around eight or nine queen cells.

## ***Constitution***

The revamping of the NBBKA constitution is underway. Thanks to the members who have provided suggestions for alterations. A subcommittee has been formed and is in the process of ensuring that the constitution is appropriate for the clubs current size and reflects its practices.

## ***Website Update***

Congratulations to member **Peter Haynes** who was randomly drawn from those members who heeded the call to update their profile on the NBBKA website. Well done and thank you, Peter, your prize will be with you as soon as possible.

## ***Wax Moth***

We read in the literature about how important it is to store old combs in a way that protects them from wax moth. Below are a few photos showing what can happen in just a few days. I placed some manky old combs loose in my garage after removing them from safe storage, in a manner that did not protect them. A week later I tidied them up and was shocked at just how many wax moth larvae were chewing through them. One can identify wax moth by the silky matt they create, the tunnels through the wax and the silk, the small brown droppings, and the larvae themselves. I took the time to remove the larvae and froze them to feed to my koi.

The mess made to the combs:



Tell-tale droppings and silk:



The offending larvae. All these from just five combs.



**Get to know: Treasurer Rod Pakes**

I have been asked to write a short contribution about my beekeeping. Well it all started about four years ago when I was on my Whitsun holiday. Odd you may think well this is how it happened. There I was sitting on a sun lounger outside my caravan cup of coffee and working on the crossword when the mobile rang it was Chris. The message went something like Dad can you collect a hive I have just purchased on Ebay from Alton. Well Alton was about 30 miles away also I had no idea what constituted a hive so anyway I contacted said seller who was at a bee auction and arranged to meet him later. When I got to the seller he had a large shed full of hive components and he sorted out complete hive loaded in boot and eventually brought home and gave it to Chris. Chris had

a beekeeping friend who provided him with some bees and mentored him along the way. I became more interested and was bought a suit, smoker, hive tool as a present. The original hive was subsequently resold on Ebay and replaced by nationals. Once I had retired from work I took the opportunity to do the beginners course also take the Basic Certificate. When the vacancy of NBBKA treasurer appeared I offered to help and was subsequently elected it's quite enjoyable and keeps me busy along with my other hobbies.

Happy Buzzing

Roderick Pakes

## Regular Columns

### ***Gardening Column by Bob Sibley***

In my last report I touched on the subject of frost and how my dad would never plant until the end of May. This was highlighted from a telephone call I received whilst on holiday in Dorset last month. My mate Paul rang me to say we are expecting a sharp frost tonight Tuesday 15th May, I have been round your house fleeced all your plants, prepped the thermostat in your glasshouse, closed all your cold frames, visited your allotment and earthed up your late potatoes which were just pushing their noses through. That will cost me a pint or two in our local, but it pays to have good mates all of whom rally round to help each other should the occasion arise.

On the plot things are going slow but they will always catch up so there's no need to worry. I always plant my early potatoes, on this occasion Maris Bard, in containers and if the potatoes underneath are as prolific as the 2 ½" haulms I am in for a grand crop. My onions, Storon, and shallots, Golden Gourmet & Red Sun, are looking well. The shallots are beginning to separate. They should by tradition be set on the shortest and harvested on the longest day, a tradition I find hard to live by because of our climate. My meteor peas are in pod; if you remember I planted these under glass Jan/Feb. My 1st earlies, Onward, are in flower, my main crop of Sutton went in last weekend and I will continue planting right up to August. However I will go for a 1st early variety with a good mildew resistance, Kelven Wonder & Pioneer. As with all my peas I take out a good 6" deep drill and 2" deep and will place a ¾ to 1 pint of seed into a 10 ft row. Remember to water regularly.

My leeks, Musselburgh, which were sown from seed into trays and then pricked into individual pots are now at the 8 – 10 inch high stage; they are now ready for their final growing position. Shorten their leaves by a 1/3rd and their roots by a ½, water your area first for a good while before stringing a taunt line across the row, then using a dibber make a hole 6" deep 6" between plants 12" between rows, and drop your plants into the hole. Water in but DO NOT BACK FILL, just water in the holes regularly. I choose Musselburgh as it is a late variety. However if you want an early variety go for Splendid or King Richard, either of which should win you a certificate at your local show.

I have been picking over-wintering lettuces since March I was rather reluctant to trial these. Setting lettuce in October in my glass house and planting under cloches in January just did not ring true, but Artic King & Valor have given excellent early heads and I will almost certainly be growing more next year. However do protect from slugs & snails in your own way.

On the sowing side this month: runner beans, lettuce, radish, turnip, swede, peas, French beans, carrots, spring onion, winter cabbage, sweet corn, courgette and squashes.

You should now be able harvest your 1st earlies. I generally have a good rake round with my hand checking the size of the tubers and anything golf ball size or larger will find itself onto my dinner plate.

I find a lot of people waste money on lettuce, radish & spring onions. In my glasshouse I have 3 containers made from 6" gravel boards, I simply cut 2 side and a base 2ft long plus 2 end caps, screw or nail together, drill a few holes in the bottom and you have an ideal trough. Fill each with multi compost and simply scatter a few of each seeds over the surface. Cover with ¼" sieved compost and within a couple of weeks you can harvest your lettuce leaves. I have been using a cut & come again variety, there are several on the market and you have to simply cut the leaves at the base and they will re-shoot. As you go from one end to the other just re-seed as you go. Radish will take a little longer but the same method applies: pull as required as with spring onions. I started this method early under glass and we will have a continuous supply from February – November.

Remember: all the caesars and all the csars of the world have not the staying power of a lilly in a cottage garden.

Happy Gardening - Bob

### ***Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer***

*Notes from June 2011. If you'd like to become our seasonal notes contributor and provide our beginners with new notes or a different perspective, please contact [website@nbbka.org](mailto:website@nbbka.org).*

#### **Colonies queenright on full blast**

Keep them that way! About 10% of my colonies don't swarm each year. Go on with 7-day inspections, check no swarming plans (evidenced by eggs/jelly in those queen cells – and ACT if you find any). Go on ensuring that the queen has enough room to lay and add a frame of foundation when necessary to increase laying opportunities. Old frames cleared of all bees can be placed above supers and bees will take down honey (decap any honey in frames first and place a cover board with a narrow entrance between supers and frames to speed up the process). Workers will come up from below to take care of any brood. Put a suitable twig between the boxes containing brood and the supers to allow the drone boys to exit! And go on extracting as needed. I like to get all oil-seed rape honey off and extracted within a week or so of flowering ceasing, and, remember that the crop will be ready for extraction even though not sealed if it does not run out of combs when violently shaken. If your colony is a "non-swarmers" count your blessings. Put on, clear, and remove supers as needed

(perhaps as often as every 7 days) and with luck you will get a lot of honey! As a guide, bees not intent on swarming by 1st July probably won't, and the queen may be replaced by supercedure by the bees later in the year. Great if your bees are nice, gentle ones bringing in lots of honey.

### **The Rest**

i.e. colonies which have swarmed, colonies which are in some sort of trouble, nuclei. The question is, in each case, what are you hoping to achieve? The first thing I think which is necessary is to assure that even in the most organised apiary all does not go according to plan and in June there will be bees at various stages of transition. June is a good month to start consolidating your bees. The possibilities are many. For example, if we want more bees we can simply allow each to build into, or remain, a full grown colony, or if we wish to reduce numbers uniting of stocks can be made and of course if a stock becomes and remains hopelessly queenless, we need to act! It is impossible here to cover every situation but please speak to our experienced beekeepers, or even me, in case of need. But I would like to cover one regular worry. Typically, the telephone rings and the conversation starts "My bees have become queenless". The plain fact is that if you lost a queen for any reason it is going to be at least a month before your new queen is in production as this example will show.

#### **Example**

20th May. Bees swarm. Original queen goes off with swarm. There are, as you will expect, queen cells in the colony, the oldest is 9 days old. You know that because that queen cell has just been sealed. With experience that will become obvious.

About 27th May. The oldest queen cell is now about 16 days old and about then out comes the queen. She will mill around the hive for at least 5 days, or, with bad weather, she will not go on

a mating flight for up to 20 days. That could be as late as 17 June (perhaps even later). Once mated, the queen may go on milling about the hive for another 3-8 days before getting down to the business of laying her first eggs! In this example you will see that the earliest time the queen can start laying is 4th June but, if the mating flight is delayed to 17<sup>th</sup> June she is unlikely to lay before 20<sup>th</sup> June.

If virgin queens go off with swarms, timing will be dependent on the date the first queen returns to the hive successfully mated – this could be up to 1st July if the egg producing the mated queen was actually laid on 20th May, virgin queens departed and the new queen's flight was delayed by bad weather for 20 days.

Let's be honest. Getting a colony back to bee production is a constant concern to all beekeepers after any swarm has emerged. All positions need careful monitoring. The period is always longer than you think. Then you see the polished queen cells, then eggs in turn, later larval juices, later still sealed worker brood, in a regular pattern and you are pretty certain all is well. Good luck.

## Future Events

### ***Loughton Open Day***

As part of the National Gardens Scheme (NGS), an Open Gardens Weekend will be held in Loughton (in MK) on the **16th and 17th June** from noon until 5pm. As well as the gardens themselves, there will be a Flower Festival in the church, an art exhibition and a plant sale. Our bee-keeping association is part of a few groups that have been invited to attend. There will be an area set aside in one of the larger gardens where there will be some stands of a horticultural or natural history interest. We are planning to run a stand to promote NBBKA and to increase the public's knowledge of bees. The Loughton Open Gardens event is usually very well attended so it should be a great event.

Can you help us by coming along for an hour or two to run the stand? Please offer your support! To do this please let Karen Glasse know which day and when you can help on 01908 312389 or [secretary@nbbka.org](mailto:secretary@nbbka.org).

### ***Going For Gold – an exciting new event***

Expert beekeeper Mike Bensley will be presenting "Going for Gold" at the Rectory Cottages on the 31<sup>st</sup> July at 7pm. This exciting talk will assist you in producing excellent quality honey and wax for sale and show. Mike regularly cleans up at the NBBKA honey show, so this event is not to be missed.

### ***NBBKA & Bucks County Honey Shows and AGM***

A reminder for your diary, that all these events are taking place together in **Stewkley**, a few miles south of Milton Keynes, on Saturday **13<sup>th</sup> October** 2012.

We know many members have skills about which we would like to know a lot more! For example, would you like to run a honey cooking demonstration that day? If you are able to **help**, or have a **suggestion** for a feature for the day, could you very kindly tell the Organising Committee, through Andrew Beer, [andrewbeer@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:andrewbeer@tiscali.co.uk), tel. 01525 240 235.

*For full details of proposed plan, please see April's newsletter on our website at ([www.nbbka.org/newsletters](http://www.nbbka.org/newsletters))*