

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter November 2013

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Calendar at-a-glance

11 th November	Pub night – Shoulder of Mutton
2 nd March 2014	Bucks spring convention (Wendover)
TBA	Winter lectures/events programme

North Bucks AGM

At the end of October the annual general meeting for NBBKA was held at Rectory Cottage. It was a success, with reports from several committee members. Although some members stepped down, two new members we co-opted. All other officers we re-elected and a vice chairman nominated. All details will be updated on the website shortly.

Request for speaker for St Paul's Catholic School

Please see below regarding a request for a member of NBBKA to give a talk to some year 7 school children.

Dear Sir

My name is Andrew Beckett and I work as the year 7 Chaplaincy and Pastoral assistant at St Paul's Catholic school in Milton Keynes. Every year during the period of Advent the school undertakes to raise money to support an organisation called CAFOD (Catholic Agency For Overseas Development) and this year is no different. We utilise CAFOD's "World gifts" scheme where, for an amount of money donated, we can purchase certain essentials to be used in developing countries. This year I would like our year 7's here at St Paul's, and there are 275 of them, to raise money to purchase two Beekeeping starter kits that are priced at £127 each, therefore we need to raise £254, less than £1 each.

Now, where do you fit into this plan? Well, I am not sure that many of our year 7 know exactly what bees do, apart from sting and then they might mean wasps! Nor would they know that they produce honey and that you can eat it! So I was wondering if you would be willing and able to come into school and give a short talk in our year 7 assembly.

We have our assemblies on a Monday morning between 8.50 and 9.15 and I can offer you the following dates.

*Monday 11th November
Monday 18th November or
Monday 25th November*

And if you could bring in some bees that would be great!!

Best regards

Andrew Beckett

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Regular Columns

November Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

I must start by extolling our splendid AGM held a week or so ago: all very happy and positive, and extremely well attended. Good on 'yer! It would be tremendous if you could now start thinking what you can put on for the association (and we for you), be it a barbecue, a talk, a visit to your apiary, a cookery course, a coach trip to the Spring Convention – really whatever. Let's be very focussed and positive this year.. I shall be using my Beecraft articles in 2014 to “push” NBBKA when I properly can – would you be surprised that the Editor finds me somewhat long-winded – no, of course you wouldn't! In fact to shorten some of the articles, background material will be shifted to NBBKA website for the world (and you, hopefully!) to visit, so I shall try to be on the best of behaviour! OK my articles only to on for a year, and then I can go back to normal!

Which brings me conveniently to nuc-raising. I really consider this is going to be a key ingredient in maintaining bee numbers in the UK in future. Think of it this way. Beekeeper A has one hive; the bees are magnificent: crop over 100 lb and then they swarm. Unfortunately the queen's only remaining daughter ends up in the tum of a large thrush on her wedding return flight . Result - queenless stock which dies out during winter. Now Beekeeper B: He also started with one stock, but using nucs he goes into winter with four - two of which die out during winter – but he has the other two to get going at once in spring. If the Committee agrees, I propose to give an evening talk on the Joys and Rewards of Nucs: none of the fancy stuff, grafting larvae or the like, but just getting bees to do “it” naturally with no special equipment or additional cost. Many of the great beemen left increase to nature and pretty successful they were too, so it ought to work in North Bucks. I shall follow this up with a queen-rearing course too, if there is demand.

The idea will be to get queens to the sealed cell stage at which point cells can be passed to members, who then introduce to their own QUEENLESS nucs. Bookings are now being accepted. This is as much an experiment for me as it may be for you. I shall be using Ged Marshall stock as breeders, so temperament should be good.

You may ask sometimes why you need a beekeeping association. There are many reasons - here is just one. NBU is no longer going to mollycoddle beekeepers, i.e.

inspectors will no longer be on call at the whim of a beekeeper, but in future will only provide training and deal with suspected or confirmed disease outbreaks. In future monitoring will be left to the beekeeper and to local associations, e.g. NBBKA. So we, through our association, need to work together and protect each other against disease. It is as simple as that. There will be no other safety net for us against disease in future.

And yes, of course, it is now November. Some points:

A. "They" should be quiet now. It has been too warm for winter clustering, and I am sure your bees have been active on warm sunny days. But food stores may be in fast decline: be diligent.

B. Anti-woodpecker protection should be in position where needed – method described previously.

C. If you use them, mouseguards should be fitted (I haven't used these since 1996 because I place hives on 12-inch stands, with entrance blocks fitted with special openings in the blocks (1 inch long, 3/8th inch high). I also use mesh floors for ventilation: never had trouble since – and no stings, either, fitting guards!

D. Varroa – Order any treatment for December/January.

E. Gale damage: None reported, thankfully, in North Bucks. One of the many advantages of Hoffman frames is that if tipped over, generally they stay put in the broodchamber with no harm done, with luck.

F. Have candy, fondant or your OWN honey scrapings, i.e. the foam scraped from the top of honey buckets, ready to feed your bees 1st December onwards. Then feed in like manner until full spring flow. Feed containers are placed within eke and below coverboard, directly over the clustering bee below (discussed previously).

Are you ready for 2014? 1st April is 151 days away when this newsletter was due to reach you. The delay is mine – and mine alone. So sorry. I imagine there will again be no newsletter in December, so have a great Christmas and New Year (and all you would wish for in bees).

Andrew

IMPORTANT ADVANCE WARNING. Bucks Spring Convention – Saturday, 2nd March 2014 at Wendover. A national event on your doorstep! Far too good to miss. In diary now, please.