

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: February 2009

There is much information to impart this month so without more ado I'll crack on! Following the prolonged sub zero temperatures I was concerned about the level of stores in my colonies. On January 13th we actually had a fine sunny day and I was able to very gently slip blocks of candy over the hole in each crown board. Each colony has come through so far but we are still enduring very cold temperatures so it is worth putting candy on if you haven't done so already.

January Claire Waring gave a fascinating talk on **HONEY HUNTING IN NEPAL**, complete with wonderful photography and some Nepalese artefacts. We saw the honey hunters scaling the cliffs and learnt about the log, top-bar and wall hives that the Nepalese now use. Plaited cloth was utilised for a smoker. Crushed bees and larvae, which the tribespeople ate were likened to cold scrambled egg. The scenery was spectacular. Claire has thanked us all for the £36.00 received from the audience in the collection box for **Bees Abroad**. She also donated her fee to the charity. Claire and **Bees Abroad** are planning another trek to Nepal to see the honey hunters in November. It is an amazing journey and well worth doing.



Association Apiary As many of you may know, the farmer who allowed us to site our association apiary in his orchard died. We were asked, at quite short notice, to quit the site. Fortunately Bob Sibley found a new one over Cosgrove/Old Stratford way. Bob, Ken Gorman and Chris Jay, with helpers, prepared a firm flat surface and fenced around the area to make it sheep proof; Ken and Chris then had a rush on in the week to move the colonies before the deadline. Many thanks to the members who assisted Bob, Ken and Chris in this operation; Bob is in the throes of erecting a sturdy shed at the apiary to provide a dry storage area for spare supers and brood boxes. If you need a handyman contact Bob 01908 647597

BBKA Membership Last year's members should all have received their BBKA membership card and also be in receipt of BBKA News. Any members not in receipt of either, please contact Ken Gorman on 07779 801 774 or write to him at 2 Tavelhurst, Two mile Ash, Milton Keynes, MK8 8EE.

New members enrolling for the first time this year should also be in receipt of the above as their details are forwarded to BBKA. Please inform Ken of any shortfalls.

BDI Forms Ken is in the process of reissuing these as the previously used 2007 forms are now out of date. The new 2009 forms have updated compensation rates.

For Sale Overwintered colonies on sale in April £90.00 each. All treated for varroa and nosema, should be in time for the rape. Bees in single brood chamber, collected, screened and strapped. Box, screen, strap and foam closer to be returned within 7 days. Limited numbers so to reserve yours phone Ken Gorman 07779 801 774

Apiary notes from Ken

I spoke with another “bee farmer” recently, who felt that his bees were wintering well. On the 26th January colonies were flying in sunshine, but with a shade temperature of only 8 degrees. The bees could be seen orientating themselves, flying in ever increasing circles. At this shade temperature however, a bee coming in to land and missing the entrance is not likely to make it into the hive. For this reason I always use sloping landing boards to minimise this loss. Colonies in the natural, wild state are positioned high up in trees where there is no danger of landing on cold, wet grass.

By sampling the outfall of colonies, one is able to see where the cluster of bees is located within the hive, the amount of nibblings of cappings, as stores are uncapped and the onset of brood beginning to hatch-the nibblings changing to a dark brown. I lay a sheet of stout paper onto the sampling tray, which is then slid back underneath the colony. It is easy to see what is landing upon it. It can be folded up, and taken back home to have a closer look, perhaps with a magnifier.

At the moment it's all uncappings from stores. One also gets a view of the size of the colony, as the outfall appears as stripes on the paper, each stripe representing a seam of bees between two combs. I'm not seeing any varroa mite, which indicates that the colonies were cleaned out in the autumn. Though I had a report from one of last year's beginners, of a colony suffering badly, with mites falling out and bees dying. Apiguard had been used in the autumn in that instance.

I haven't seen any colonies yet suffering from dysentery. This can result from consuming unsuitable stores, or indicate the presence of Nosema-a single cell parasite that can be present in the bee's gut, and when in the active form attacking the lining of the mid-gut. Spores are formed, sometimes millions in a single bee, which then burst out of the gut cells. These can be vacated outside the hive during winter airing flights, but in a very cold winter the bees can soil the inside of the hive, including the combs. More bees are infected when they attempt to clean up the mess.

There are two types of Nosema; a more recent type seen, Nosema Cerana, is thought to contribute to colony collapse, as weakened bees leave the colony in the spring and don't make it back. Peter Tomkins, in a talk given to Beds BKA recently, quoted from an article written in 1932, discussing “Disappearing Disease.” How much is really new? Disease is dealt with during the beginners' course and members are welcome to attend any lectures to refresh their knowledge.

Samples of bees or brood can be taken up to the BBKA Convention for diagnosis, on the spot, in late April. Why not use the opportunity? A sample of dead/dying bees can be taken now and kept in the freezer until then.

Forage The constant cold seems to have held back many flowers in my garden. A few scrawny little aconites and the odd crocus have peeped through at last. Even the snowdrops seem reluctant to get going. Hellebores are just showing tight buds. The hazel catkins are providing pollen at the moment but a warm sunny day is needed for the bees to get out and gather it. The pollen should stimulate a little brood rearing.



THIS MONTH

Demise of the Honey Bee The Co-op is holding an event for its members to showcase a documentary about the devastating effects of varroa, pesticides etc., on the honey bee. The meeting is to be held at Jury's Inn Hotel, Midsummer Boulevard on Thursday 12th. Be there at 6.30 p.m. for a 7 o'clock start. Members of NBBKA are invited to attend but numbers are limited and I have to give them the names of attendees in advance. So please contact Libby Culshaw 01908 375968 by 6th Feb if you would like to attend.

Eureka Moments in Beekeeping a talk by Ian Homer at Rectory Cottages, Wednesday 18th at 7.30 p.m. This talk is **not** to be missed. Ian's knowledge, expertise and style of delivery will hold your full attention. Ian has been our Regional Bee Inspector for many years. Following a heart attack last July he has decided to retire; sadly for us, this will be his last talk to NBBKA.

Microscopy Martin Buckle shows us how to get the best out of a microscope in order to look closely at the anatomy of the honey bee and how to look inside a bee so that we can learn to identify certain diseases and abnormalities.

This will take place at 1.00 p.m. Saturday 28th at Hazeley School, Emperor Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

Places are limited to 30, to book yours contact: Libby Culshaw 01908 375968



The pink bee suit rides again! Some months ago a journalist from **Womans' Weekly** phoned, asking for an interview regarding the parlous state of bee health. I duly obliged then heard nothing more until a few weeks ago the Pictures Editor was asking for photos. The article will appear in the 10th February edition and will be on sale from 4th Feb.

All publicity is good for our bees and I feel sure that it has had a great deal to do with Defra capitulating and offering more money for our cause. I, personally, feel that the 'increased funding' is like me saying, "I have put petrol in your car." Then it runs out at Northampton when you really needed to get to Leeds. It smacks of smoke and mirrors to me. The headline says "£4.3 million bee health fund increase" but then read on, it is actually £2 million over five years. Not so generous as they would like the Public to believe. Mr Benn says (*airily*) that some of that money will go to informing beekeepers about what is happening. We amateurs have been telling him for FREE all these years! You may think I am being cynical and unfair so if you would like to read more about the deal and form your own opinions, go to: www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2009/animal-0121.htm

Beginners' Course Advance information of the forthcoming course. If you know of anyone who would like to learn the basics of beekeeping, do pass on the following information:

- 12th March **Local forage, nectar & pollen gathering**
- **Equipment, Hive Design**
- 19th **Natural History of Bees, Life Cycle**
- **Basic Anatomy**
- 26th **Colony Management**
- **The Beekeeping Year**
- 2nd April **Reasons for Swarms**
- **Swarm Control**
- 23rd **Bee Diseases**
- **Good Apiary Practice**
- 30th **Hive Building – a practical session**

The above classes are to be held at Hazeley School, Emperor Drive, Hazeley, MK8 0PT

Weekly practical **Bee Handling** sessions will take place at the Association Apiary from May until September. The cost of the course is £45.00. For further information contact Chris Jay: 01908 373465

Important Advance Notice Bucks County Beekeepers' Association **13th ANNUAL SEMINAR**
Saturday 7th March 10.00 a.m. – 4.15 p.m. at Wendover Memorial Hall, Wendover HP22 6HF

10:00	Meet for coffee & registration
10:30	Welcome by the County Chairman - John Catton
10:40	Bee Venom – Professor David Warrell
11:40	Insect Flight Systems – Dr. Robin Wooton
12:40	Awards presentation
13:00	Ploughman's lunch - Time also to spend visiting the various exhibits & sales stands
14:00	The State of Beekeeping in Britain Today – Richard Ball
15:00	CCD – Colony Compromise Disorder – Peter Tomkins
16:00	Closing remarks by the County President, Bob Hunter

£12 per person, to include refreshments & Ploughman's lunch. Pay at the door, but **please book beforehand** with **John Catton tel: 01494 726616** e-mail: richard.catton1@ntlworld.com

John has requested that people attending bake a cake, biscuits or scones & also provide one or two raffle prizes. The seminar is well worth attending, there is always a lot to learn and new and 'old' beekeepers to meet. There are some spaces in Libby's car if you would like a lift.

Queenie's Kitchen With the cold Siberian winter bearing down on us we need to keep warm, one way to do this is with Barbara Dalby's suet pudding, containing honey and fruit. Barbara made this during her demonstration at the November meeting, it was delicious and so quick and easy to make.

Take a 2 pint pudding basin and grease well with butter. Mix together 4 oz self-raising flour, 2 oz shredded suet and 2 tbsp honey. Add 1 tsp almond essence, 1 large egg, 4 fl.oz milk and **stir** with a fork until smooth. Do NOT beat the mixture. Stir in 1 oz mixed peel, 1 oz chopped glacé cherries, 2 oz mixed fruit.

Put 3 tbsp thick honey in the base of the basin and carefully spoon the pudding mixture on top of the honey. Cover with clingfilm and pierce two holes in it to allow steam to escape. Cook for 4 – 4 ½ mins on Full Power. Remove cling film, taking care not to scald yourself, invert over a plate, cut into wedges and serve with hot custard.

Buzz Words

Did you know that...

- Waitrose are selling *Honeydew & Blackcurrant Fusion*? – "...a blend of tart New Zealand blackcurrants and honeydew, a sweet syrupy liquid produced by bees." It has yet to appear in the MK Branch.
- if you burn yourself, rub honey on straight away. This will take away the burning sensation and prevent the skin from blistering? I have used this remedy many times, it really works.

On Friday 30th January several members of NBBKA travelled over to High Wycombe to hear the latest update on Colony Collapse Disorder from University of Sussex scientist, Norman Carreck. First of all Norman showed us how 'The Press' can manipulate things and use scaremonger headlines to whatever ends they choose. He then pointed out devastating and unexplained bee losses from 1868 to the present day, in countries as far afield as Mexico and Australia, and included the huge bee losses in the Isle of Wight in 1906. He talked about all known bee viruses and how scientists are using molecular techniques to study the various pathogens. They are still not advanced enough to say if the viruses are closely related or even strains of each other. However, it is felt that Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus is a convincing culprit in the case of Colony Collapse Disorder.

And finally ...

My aim is to get the Newsletter out to e-mail members on the first of the month and post newsletters to others on the same day. If you haven't received a Newsletter by the 7th of the month you will know that by some sleight of hand the computer has tricked me into missing you! Please contact me straight away and the matter will be

rectified.

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