

# North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

## Newsletter

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### Calendar at-a-glance

End February/beg. March 2011	Beginners classes start. There are still places. Contact Sue Bird soonest 01908 501101
Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup> March 2011 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. Wendover Memorial Hall	Bucks County Beekeepers Association: 15 <sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar – “Not Just Beekeeping”.
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> March 7.30 p.m. at Houghton Conquest Village Hall	Beds BKA: Scientific talk by Juliet Osborne “Honey, Bees, Bumblebees and other Insects”.
Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> April 2011 7.30 p.m. at Houghton Conquest Village Hall	Preparing Honey for Show: Bedfordshire BBKA Martin Buckle.
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> September 2011 Memorial Hall, Wendover.	Bucks County Honey Show.
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2011	NBBKA Honey Show. Make a note now. Details later.

## Articles

### ***They're Off***

No, not the nags! Our bees, of course! It has been a tough winter for them but so far casualties appear relatively light. Last December's arctic conditions were as severe as they were unexpected and isolation starvation mentioned in February's notes appears to have been a major culprit. Fortunately, February's warm days gave the "customers" an airing and "our little friends" were to be found happily on constitutional missions in and around their homes and even venturing as far as my bee shed and nectar thrills inside as I foolishly left a door ajar.

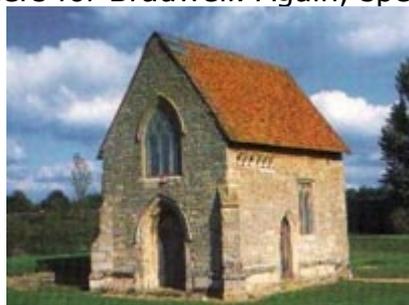
Unless you have unlimited covered accommodation (which few of us have) it has always seemed to me that a vital reason for getting equipment cleaned out and sterilised down in the winter is the fact that days will normally be "bee- and wasp-less" and there will be no buzzing as you go about the task. Of course, if bees get to dirty equipment and take nasties to their homes it seems to me they are simply bypassing your cleaning efforts and carrying forward trouble for the future.

Talking about cleaning of equipment it has often occurred to me that what would be a tremendous help would be what I shall call a "Hive Steamer". It would be some sort of box, probably made out of marine-ply, into which you could put hive, frames and all, turn on the steamer (which would be based on a wallpaper remover steamer, or something more powerful) and return, say, an hour later for the finished job – in the same way as washing is collected from the Zanussi. Does any member have any thoughts about this? How can I get a steam-maker suitable for the box I want to build? The plain fact is that cleaning equipment, though vital, is time-consuming and perhaps a reason why it tends to be overlooked.

It may interest you to know, according to Laurie Croft, author of "Curiosities of Beekeeping" (Northern Bee Books 1990) that the earliest recorded swarm issued from a colony in Essex on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1896. If our bees don't beat that record this year they are certainly in the "beekeeping stalls and ready for the chase!" Are you?

### ***Bradwell Abbey***

On "Moving Saturday" our marvellous beginners led the four hives move from Cosgrove to the Abbey and on to our Chairman's fine new stands whilst we oldies watched (well, some of the time). We are incredibly grateful to the Abbey team for their encouragement to us in all sorts of ways. The Abbey in fact would like more hives and will accept members' hives. Obviously this is going to require some co-ordination. For more details please contact Bob on 01908 647597. I expect to pass on shortly details of the Abbey's special event days, where we are all especially welcome! We are going to need volunteers for Bradwell. Again, speak to Bob.



## ***D.I.Y. Evening***

I hope that those who came enjoyed themselves and took away a DIY thought or two. Personally, I was intrigued by Ken Gorman's talk on bee spacing about which I know Ken feels, with some reason, very strongly. The plain fact is that hive designers over the years did not have the benefit of Ken's advice and whilst we can improve things with DN5 rather than DN1 bottom bars (to encourage the queen to lay to the bottom of the frames) the options for change are not great.

However one change we can make easily quickly and cheaply is this. If you look at most of the standard hives there is no space between the outer frames faces to the hive walls so the bees tend to treat these as "no-go areas" (which with no bee space, they are!). You can partly get round this problem, when using Hoffman spacing, by removing one frame and putting in its place a dummy board with the contours of a normal Hoffman frame on one side. Place this (Hoffman side to the adjoining frame) and you end up in the strange position of removing one frame but creating instead an additional channel of bee space between the dummy board and the nearest comb. Probably (at least on Commercial hives) you are still left with a problem with one frame i.e. no bee space between its face and the outer wall but perhaps on other hives there might be sufficient width to add strips of wood to that outer wall to create one further bee space channel.

## ***Repair of woodpecker holes***

From Andy Johnson, Beds BKA



Ingredients:

- A quantity of sawdust
- A quantity of decorator's interior filler (not exterior)
- A quantity of PVA adhesive or the residue of Vinyl Silk Emulsion (it's PVA)
- A piece of stout cardboard and a piece of polythene slightly larger than the hole
- A staple gun or drawing pins.

**Method:**

All quantities and ratios are approximate.

Fix polythene and cardboard on the outside of the hole; measure enough sawdust to fill the hole; mix 1 part PVA with 2 parts water, add enough PVA to sawdust to coat it; allow it to soak a few minutes. Add filler to about half the volume of the sawdust. (If too dry, add more water gradually until a firm consistency is reached). Pack tightly into the hole from the inside and smooth off. The filler will go hard overnight but is best left for a week to "cure" before sanding. It isn't easy to sand so the smoother you can get it the better.

**More From Libby**

Libby writes:

"A new shop has opened in Leighton Buzzard; on sale are items to do with candles and candle-making, soaps and soap-making and quality wine- and beer-making. There is also an interesting book on beekeeping. The proprietor also runs lessons in the workshop at the back of her shop.

The shop is called "Making the Best" at 11 Bridge Street, LB, LU7 1AH, tel. 01525 378022

or [www.makingthebest.co.uk](http://www.makingthebest.co.uk)

*Making The Best*

I have amassed plenty of Bee Craft and other beekeeping magazines, news cuttings and similar pertaining to bees and beekeeping. If any members would like these, they are FREE to a good home.

I have been given the following recipe, by a Wiltshire beekeeper, to get rid of **wax moth**. Don't know if it works but it's worth a try:

Take an empty, plastic 2 litre lemonade bottle, cut a hole threequarters of the way up. Place inside ½ lb syrup, ¼ pint vinegar and a chopped banana skin. Stand the bottle in or near your stored comb (don't let the rain get in").



[Call Libby Culshaw on 01908 375968].

## **Swarm Required**

Can any please collecting a swarm pass it to Philip Gabel, tel. 01604 864249 or [M] 07906 662 193

Phil is doing sterling work on the committee and is desperate to get started

## **Food Safety Courses**

This will be at the Cross Keys pub, Cranfield. Cost around £45.00 Duration 4-5 hours. Nicola Smith has given these details. Book through Sue Lang on 01234 764180 [bedfordshirehoney@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bedfordshirehoney@hotmail.co.uk) . At the time of writing, there are still places.

## **Bees for sale**

Andrew and Fiona Eelbeck expect to have some colonies and hives for sale from April. Please contact Andrew at [andrew@eelbeck.fsnt.co.uk](mailto:andrew@eelbeck.fsnt.co.uk) or telephone 01908 551886. Over-wintered colonies are available on National frames £140.00. 5-frame hives will also be available later in the year, £120.00. Contact Sue Bird email [suebird@aol.com](mailto:suebird@aol.com) or 01908 501101

Can I remind you again that Ken Gorman will have stocks for sale. Contact Ken on 01908 560610.

It is my hope that I can again this year raise surplus stocks to pass on. Please note I use commercial frames and if available supply would be late August/September. Have a word with me, Andrew Beer on 01525 240235.

## **Bees and the law**

I attach a note which is the basis of my recent talk at Rectory Cottages in case it will be helpful. Please treat this as an indication of the relevant laws but take and rely upon advice from elsewhere because I am not qualified to advise you and do not do so!



Image from Shutterstock.com

Please click here to retrieve the document from the NBBKA website:

[http://www.NBBKA.org/newsletters/archive/files/NBBKA.org\\_Newsletter\\_2011\\_03\\_BeesAndTheLaw.doc](http://www.NBBKA.org/newsletters/archive/files/NBBKA.org_Newsletter_2011_03_BeesAndTheLaw.doc)

If the link does not work, and you don't fancy typing the whole thing, try typing this shortened version: <http://tinyurl.com/64c59np>

## Apiary Notes

This is really a follow-up from February notes and a "job list" of things to do in March. Floors: They should have been cleaned by now. The cold winter produced thickish layers of dead bees over floors with the risk that hive entrances become blocked. If you use mouse guards keep them on until the weather warms up and bees are flying daily which should be in mid-March (but we can and do get snow in April and mice can easily strike with no protection in place).

Other Work.

Our bees should be ready for inspection. If the weather sets in cold at the beginning of March you simply delay operations until the weather improves and our bees have had several days of flying freely and the winter cluster has broken up. I know you will be raring to go but it is well to cause (because of risk of queen being balled and killed) minimum disturbance until Spring is truly underway.

1<sup>st</sup> inspection. Here in N Bucks/L Buzzard normally this can take place between 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March. Go to the bees on a warm sunny day between noon and 2.00 p.m.. Have the smoker ready and gently lift the coverboard (so much easier if you have had overwintered an eke over the brood, coverboard above that (because the coverboard so placed does not get sealed down during winter) and what you do next, depends upon what the situation you see.

SITUATION	ACTION
1. Bees happily going about their business, at least steady intake of pollen at entrances, the colony has aura of good health.	Heft hives i.e. check weight of hive as previously described, and consider feeding (see below) and if possible without disturbing bees replace, say, 2-3 grotty combs with fresh frames/foundation. Best not to make detailed inspection at this time.
2. Bees rushing about frames, emitting wails of anxiety, generally unhappy.	Quietly take out unoccupied frames until you reach frames with brood. If you see (a) close good patterned but raised dimples in worker comb of drone brood – no worker or very little worker brood. Queen a drone breeder, find, destroy and then either (i) unite to strong hive by newspaper method or (ii) simply chuck bees off frames in front of that strong stock. Remove vacated hive. If you use newspaper method, you will have later to sort out frames in 2 brood chambers in order to reduce to 1 brood chamber, <u>or</u> (b) scattered dimples of raised drone brood in worker cells, queen will be dead and you have laying workers. Proceed as follows. Move hive, say, 20 feet to left or right and turn entrances through 90 degrees away from original site. Put temporary hive and one frame of brood from moved hive into it on original site. Flying bees will return to original site and they can then be united to strong hive as per 2 above. The laying

	workers will choose their own destiny and many will become "good" workers again in another home.
3. Bees rushing about as 2 above but no brood.	Open hive as above. Check no queen and if so unite as per 2 above (i.e. use newspaper or chuck in front of another hive. If queen present, leave as she may be a slow starter and come right later. Keep your options open!

N.B.

(1) Never unite an unhealthy stock with a healthy one. Adrian Waring likes to unite all unhealthy stocks together and let them sort themselves out, ultimately putting in entirely fresh hive.

(2) March is the starvation killer month. Old bees will now be dying (naturally) at the end of their lives and the new bees may not be up to sufficient foraging strength or the weather could be adverse. Feed, feed and feed again if ever stores go below 15 lbs. Once weather has improved so that bees can fly at least once per week, liquid syrup (1kg of sugar to 1 pint of water (my mix)) can be fed. This rule about minimum stores applies throughout the year!

Use a feeder bucket for Spring feeding!

(3) We are now advised to change all brood frames once every three years, some say two. It is good practice so as to achieve those targets that dodgy old frames are removed whenever the opportunity arises. Spring is a good time to get started.

Second inspection. In these parts usually last week of March/early April) again around/after midday (as above) in suitable weather. Gently with smoker open each hive for the following purposes.

(a) check that there are good worker brood patterns in each brood chamber

(b) check there is plenty of food (see above) in each hive..

(c) check bees are happy and healthy – take advice if you are worried.

(d) check that the bees have enough space for the queen to lay and for the workers to perch. You can add a super of super frames at this point. If drawn comb use a queen excluder, if foundation let the workers have a run of the frames for a week or so before putting in queen excluder but check that the queen is not in the super!)

(e) treat this as another opportunity to remove dodgy or old brood frames with frames of foundation. If you have to remove frames with food or brood in them, wait till weather warms up, decap any food and place removed combs in second brood box placed above queen excluder; if super fitted then above that

(f) feed as necessary (but see below if supers fitted).

After 2<sup>nd</sup> inspection, heft each hive and bucket feed as before as necessary.

Incidentally, if you need to build up your colony for e.g. oil seed rape bucket feed steadily, leaving room only for the queen to breed and encouraging bees to put rape crop in your supers.

NOTE Once supers are added, bucket syrup feeding must stop to avoid contaminating supers. If food needed the best way probably is to turn a drawn empty brood frame on to its side and pour the syrup into it with the assistance of some sort of spatula and then put the comb in brood chamber against an outer wall. Messy, but I am told it works. Never mix bees or equipment if disease is suspected.

## Future Events

### ***Bucks BKA 15th Annual Seminar – “Not Just Beekeeping”***

Saturday 5th March 2011

10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover HP22 6HF

Speakers:

- Dr Nigel Raine: Insect Sensory Systems.
- Dominic Dyer: Can Pesticides & Bees Co-exist?
- Stuart Roberts: The Decline of Our Insect Pollinators.

Plus, related stalls, including NBU and BBCT exhibits and the North Bucks competition.

Cost for the day £12.00, including refreshments and lunch.

Pay at the door but please book in advance with:

John Catton (01494 726616). Contact John at once or you will get no food!

or email [richard.catton1@ntlworld.com](mailto:richard.catton1@ntlworld.com)

### ***The North Bucks Non-Swindle Honey Tasting Competition***

Bucks County Seminar – Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March

I trust you are coming to the seminar and have told John Catton (see above) if you want FOOD. Yes, we are running a tasting of honeys (exotic, less exotic and some definitely not exotic including some honey look-alikes to add a bit of fun). John Catton tells me that the winner will get £10.00 Please roll up for the North Bucks Non-Swindle Honey comp and if you can do an hour or so on our stand that would be the greatest. Please call me, Andrew Beer, on 01525 240235

## Next Month

Can I please have contributions by 15 March. Details to me, Andrew Beer on [andrewbeer@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:andrewbeer@tiscali.co.uk)