

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter October 2011

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Calendar at-a-glance

4 th October	NBBKA AGM Roger Patterson lecture, Bletchley
18 th October	Ged Marshall lecture, Houghton Conquest
25 th October	Pam Hunter lecture, Chalfont St Peter
Thurs 27 th – 29 th October	National Honey Show, Weybridge
1 st Nov	Committee meeting (N.B. New date)
2 nd November	Bucks County AGM, Chiltern Woodland Burial Park
12 th November	Ron Hoskins lecture, Northampton

16 th November	Nigel Semmence lecture, Bletchley
22 nd November	Peter Tompkins lecture, Houghton Conquest
17 th January 2012	Bob Sibley lecture, Bletchley
4 th March 2012	Bucks County Seminar

Articles

Editorial

A well-known football commentator in extra time of the 1966 football World Cup final match between England and West Germany, with England on a slender lead, famously said "It's not over yet". Englishman Geoff Hurst, at that precise moment, scored, so the commentator added "It is now!"

Not so beekeeping, as Autumn comes upon us. As supers are put away and feeding is finished, we beekeepers take off in fresh directions and there is much, much to do. Like coming to our meetings at Rectory Cottages, kicking off with the AGM. Do have a look at the calendar, put the dates in your diary and COME! Have a look, too, at the events being organised by the Associations both inside and outside the County. For example, our good friends at Beds BKA always welcome our presence at their meetings. There is literally a feast of events for you to enjoy and information to gain

If I may suggest it, do give a thought to what happened in your apiaries in 2011 and what you hope to achieve in 2012. It may help beginners if I mention that things can go wrong for any beekeeper, experienced or not, the experienced usually having the advantage of assessing the problem and being able to deal with it before it is too late. At least two of my hives in the last week or two have (or may have) become queenless. I am loath to undertake a full inspection because of the severe risk of robbing and I am still deciding upon my action plan.

The point is that these two hives could have been your (and your only) stocks, in which case it probably would be virtually impossible for you to resolve any problem without getting queen brood or bees from some other source. With winter losses on an apiary basis of say 20% to 30% it really does make a lot of sense to keep a minimum of say 5 colonies (assuming that number will not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours), going in to winter, so that a loss of, say, 2 during the winter may not be too disastrous if you have other colonies to make up the shortfall in the following season.

Beginners' Registrar

We consider it vastly important that beginners continue to have a bee buddy to who to turn, not just in their first years of beekeeping but in the years to come. We want, too, beginners coming into courses to have a ready and established person to whom to turn and for that person to chart their progress and needs. Far too many – and here we are talking about a national problem – take up beekeeping for a year or two and then drop out. Maybe that will be for good reasons but let it not be because NBBKA has failed in its support. The truth of the matter is that we need you beginners: you will one day lead this Association, so that oldies like me can step aside!

The theoretical course for beginners will start, probably, in January. Beginners, if they wish, subject to numbers, may also start with apiary visits, which start in April, taking the theoretical course in the following Spring. I am very pleased to say that Ruth Hewitt has agreed to be Beginners' Registrar so please turn up at the AGM and vote for her. The Committee is working on the detail.

Apiaries

Last month we told you about the successful move to Calverton; all our bees are now fed and "Apiguarded" and we are having a laying up party on Saturday 1st October (after the England v Scotland Rugby match) for each apiary at Calverton and Cosgrove and the Cosgrove hut. We need probably six volunteers starting off at Calverton at, say, 1.00 p.m. before moving off to Cosgrove. Can any kind volunteer please contact me on 01525 240235 or mobile 07968 277 247.



Apiary improvements and targets for 2012



During the winter, the renewal of various roofs, etc. started in March, will be completed so that we can start our season with first-class kit. At the time of writing we have sold £176 of honey with a similar sum expected from later sales. We want to make our apiaries self-financing and we could make a tremendous dent in our expenses if we could annually re-cycle wax to the value of, say, £250. I can, here in Stewkley, recycle wax in bulk so here is how together we could achieve that sum. You decide that recycling wax is a dirty business – believe me it is – and want to have nothing to do with it. From the Association's point of view, that is fine – read on, please. If so, would you agree to cut out your old combs (no black stuff, please), put with your cappings, wash out honey, dry (laying over several open copies of the Sunday Times works wonders), bag and pass to me (at one of the lectures you are going to attend!) I will do the necessary boiling and straining for the Association's benefit. We also have an urgent need for, say, 15 Ashforth or Miller feeders (which sit directly over broodchamber and normally hold 2/3 gallons of syrup).

Quite apart from their highly efficient quick feeding they will also lessen the number of feeding visits to the apiaries. We are looking into cheap sources of materials and construction. Thoughts, ideas, welcome. Another plan for 2012 is to improve the quality of the apiary bees.

Pratley Uncapping Tray

We shall shortly be investing in a thermostatically-controlled uncapping tray. This will provide a generally acceptable method of separating wax and honey, though the experts appear to disagree whether the honey obtained (because of the possible destruction of enzymes) can be sold as top-grade honey or just as cooking honey. Always remember that if you are not concerned with honey which may be recovered, cappings may be given back to the bees placed on a tray (say a seed tray) within an eke and a strong hive will soon gratefully lick clean and even produce some fine architectural structures from the wax.



The Association's old Pratley tray (no thermostat) is for sale for £50, first come first served. Please speak to Bob Sibley, telephone 01908 647 597. Purchaser to satisfy him/herself in all respects.

Bucks County Show and Heritage Weekend

Once again, these were two highly successful events for the Association and we received many enquiries about beekeeping which we hope will lead to more beginners on 2012 courses. Those to thank – Libby Culshaw, Chris Jay, the Woodbridges, the Hardys, Andrew Eelbeck, Ken Gorman and David Warren. If you are not named it is my fault and mine alone – we are very grateful indeed and, of course, many thanks to our hosts, Waitrose, at the County Show.

Further Education

BBKA run a number of courses during the year. With this newsletter, please find a helpful note from Sheila Borwick, Bucks County Examination Secretary.

Your hive problems solved

Member Chris Pakes writes:

“Looking for someone to build hives for you? Need hive parts or stands made to your requirements? I can help. Experienced joiner and beekeeper with full woodworking and engineering workshop. I can provide a comprehensive service to beekeepers, to help them get exactly what they require”.

Please call Chris Pakes, 01908 315177 or 07580 567 766.

NBBKA Honey Show

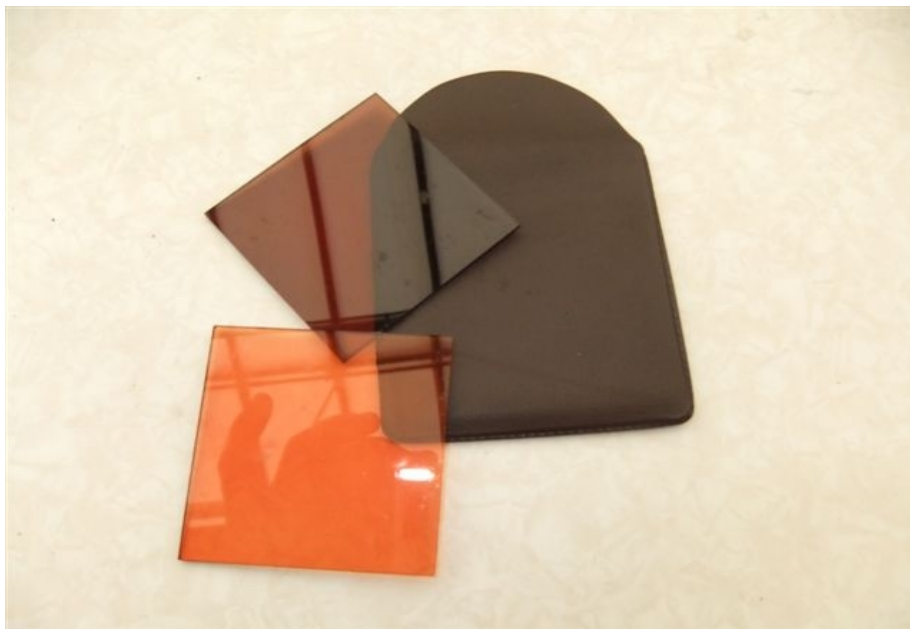
What a fantastic NBBKA Honey Show this year !



118 entries and the BBKA Blue Ribbon Award! Well done Nicola Smith and YOU! More details in the next newsletter or on the website at <http://nbbka.org/honey/honeyShow/2011results.aspx>

Grading Glasses

A set of honey grading glasses has been added to the association's equipment after a very generous donation. Thank you, Libby Culshaw. They will be kept with the honey show equipment.



Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

Once again may I invite you to refer to my out of season Bee Notes (http://nbbka.org/newsletters/archive/files/NBBKA.org_Newsletter_2011_07_Beekeeping_Outside_the_Season_June_2011.doc)

I also refer you to the excellent monthly seasonal notes in Bee Craft, especially Bridget Beattie's September 2011 Notes. As to the latter two comments:

Wax Moth Damage

Some other steps which could help you: Service your supers and combs by letting your bees have a run in them each year. Most bees will do a fairly effective cleaning job. Alternatively, leave supers with frames in the deep freezer for say 7 days to kill off moths. Moths are particularly attracted to used brood combs. My simple solution for these combs is to render down wax, sterilise frames and start again. Some use acetic acid, dangerous stuff - only for the professionals, in my view. I use soda crystal solution in water.



Uniting

Currently, if you have a weak queenless stock on, say, 3 frames, you have to unite it with a queenright one. The difficult case is if you find a strong stock fit for winter with absolutely no brood, which may or may not have a queen.

My preference, if I cannot find the queen during a quick search and the colony is not displaying queenless symptoms, and the colony to which it would otherwise be united is well capable of surviving the winter, is to delay any necessary sorting out until the Spring when the suspect colony will in any event be smaller, and its state will be easier to determine.

What you want to avoid is wrecking a perfectly good colony in your attempt to save one which is suspect but may turn out to be perfectly sound. I am totally against unnecessary operations which will distress a colony, neighbours, or result in robbing, especially after August. The great Brother Adam tended his bees until September and then left them to their own devices on the Devon moors until the Spring. If, as a result, you find yourself with a surplus stock in Spring, there are likely to be several takers for them, to whom you may make a reasonable charge. There will of course be some jobs to do in the coming months.

Future Events

NBBKA AGM

Tuesday 4th October at Rectory Cottages. **Note the date change.** It's now getting close, this is your opportunity to play a more active part in Association's affairs and get yourself elected to the Committee. It's hard work, but fun. To find out more, call me on 01525 240235 (or any other committee member). After the AGM Roger Patterson, a leading beekeeper, will talk to us about "Breeding Better Bees".

Ged Marshall Lecture on queen rearing

Tuesday 18th October, Houghton Conquest Village Hall, 7.30 p.m., by invitation of Beds BKA.

Pam Hunter lecture, "The Bees' Magic Ingredient"

Phyllis Warden Memorial Lecture. 7:30p.m., Tuesday 25th October, St Joseph, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St Peter, SL 9 8RY. By invitation of Chalfont BKS.

National Honey Show

Thursday-Saturday, 27th-29th October, St George's College, Weybridge. See Bee Press for more details

Bucks County AGM

Wednesday 2nd November, 7.30 p.m. at the Chiltern Woodland Burial Park. Directions: coming from Amersham, take the A355 to Beaconsfield. Take the A40 to Gerrard's Cross. Turn left into Pothiln Lane (Jordans) Entrance to park is 40 yards on left. May I ask for a grand turnout from North Bucks, and there will be 2 places in my car going from Stewkley.

Ron Hoskins Lecture: Breeding varroa-free bees

Lecture in conjunction with Northamptonshire Beekeeping Association, Saturday 12th November, 3.00 p.m. at the Abbey Centre, Overslade Close, East Hunsbury, Northampton NN4 0RZ. This should be a very interesting talk by an acknowledged expert in the field by kind invitation of Northamptonshire BKA. Tea/refreshments will be provided. Entry £2.00 per person. Let's have a torrent of North Bucks members there! Ron's views have generated national discussion, including on the BBC.

Nigel Semmence lecture: disease and pests

Wednesday 16th November, 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages, Bletchley. Tactics, especially against the varroa mite are constantly changing. Many have now given up Apiguard. Come and find out the alternatives.

Peter Tomkins lecture: 1 ½ ways of keeping bees

Tuesday 22nd November, 7.30 p.m. at Houghton Conquest Village Hall, by invitation of Beds BKA.

Bob Sibley lecture: Plants and bees

Wednesday 17th January 2012, at 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages. Bob, who is a highly-experienced gardener, is planning a talk with bees in mind. This will be a departure from the normal bee format and perhaps we can develop it into a "start of the season" social get-together?

Bucks County Annual Seminar

This is a splendid event with guest speakers of national acclaim. Note especially the date – Saturday 3rd March 2012. Only the Gales and I were there to represent the NBBKA in March last year so the rest of you don't know what you missed! Please come! Venue: Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover, HP22 6HF. I am awaiting further details but what I have heard so far is mouthwatering.

**Next Month**

Any interesting news to share?

We would love to hear from you. Whether it is the swarm that got away, the queen with green eyes, please tell me so I can tell all!