



Beetalk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
June 2012 www.blackburnbeekeepers.com Registered Charity

COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONTACT DETAILS for 2012 SEASON

<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>AND</u>	<u>EMAIL ADDRESS</u>
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Brian Jackson. Vice Chairman	01535 634503		bmjackson1@talktalk.net
Victoria Winstanley. Hon. Sec	01282-701692		vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk
Philip Ainsworth. Hon. Treas.	0771 3161480		philipainsworth@btconnect.com
Caroline Coughlin. Honey Show Sec	07702 824920		caroline.coughlin@hotmail.co.uk
David Rayner. Education Officer/Librarian	01200 426898		davidrayner1@yahoo.co.uk
Annette Hawkins. Programme Sec	01282 8507		nettie_hawkins71@yahoo.co.uk
John Zamorski. Bee Disease Liaison Officer	01200-427661		john@johnzamorski.wanadoo.co.uk
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Karen Ramsbottom. Member	01254722514		john.rammy@ntlworld.com
Alistair McLean. Member	07815049283		AlistairMcLean@ymail.com
Ellen Howarth. Member.			helen@waltonhowarth.co.uk
Steve Ganner. Member	07954585019.		cathcook@blueyonder.co.uk

Michael Birt. Web Master/Beetalk Editor webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

DELEGATES TO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Philip Ainsworth. Hon. Treas. 0771 3161480 email philipainsworth@btconnect.com
Vici Winstanley. Hon.Sec. 07827292844 email vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk

MEMBERS SERVICES

Bayvoral - Apiguard - Oxalic Acid -
Thymol - Fumidi 'B'

These Chemicals for treating bees can be obtained from:
David Bush Phone 01200 - 428152
Dave will have them available at beekeeper's meetings.

LIBRARY

There is an extensive range of books on all
aspects of beekeeping that can be borrowed from the
Association library.
Please contact
David Rayner on 01200 426898

MEMBERSHIP

REGISTERED MEMBER. Subscription for the 2012 season will be £30.00

PARTNER MEMBER. This is for partners of registered members living in the same household wishing to keep bees and includes full insurance cover. However they will not receive their own copy of BBKA news. Subscription will be £17.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. This is for people who do not keep bees, but wish to receive BBKA news and attend branch meetings etc. This class of member does not include any insurance cover. Subscription will be £12.00

IMPORTANT INSURANCE NOTICE

Under the new constitution, prompt payment is essential. Basically, payment will be required by the 31st December each year as insurance is now based on the current years membership. New and lapsed members insurance cover will not start until six weeks after paying their subscription.
For insurance purposes subs will need to be promptly, otherwise you will not have third party insurance
SUBS SHOULD BE PAID TO PHILIP AINSWORTH HON. TREASURER Phone 07713161480
Address ::::: Phil Ainsworth Riverside Cottage Potters :Lane Samlesbury Preston PR5 0UE

Association Swarm Catchers.
For the 2012 season

A small charge is made to collect swarms to cover expenses which is up to the discretion of the individual collector.

BLACKBURN, DARWEN, ACCRINGTON , MELLOR, PRESTON and
ROSSENDALE
AREAS

Karen Ramsbottom.
Telephone 01254722514
E-mail:: john.rammy@ntlworld.com

CLITHEROE AND SURROUNDING AREAS

[John Zamorski](mailto:John.Zamorski@wanadoo.co.uk)
Telephone **01200-427661**
E Mail:::: john@johnzamorski.wanadoo.co.uk

[David Bush,](mailto:david.bush2@talktalk.net)
Telephone **01200 428152**
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BURNLEY, NELSON AND SURROUNDING AREAS

[Nigel Banford](mailto:Nigel.Banford@ymail.com) Telephone **01282-861170**

Alistair McLean 07815049283 AlistairMcLean@ymail.com

Victoria Winstanley. 01282-701692 vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk

Ellen Howarth. helen@waltonhowarth.co.uk

Please feel free to ring any of the above in your area and they will do their best to sort out the problem.

Swarm collectors will not come out to Bumble Bees and Wasps problems

FUTURE BRANCH MEETINGS

June 24th 2012 @ 2pm Salmesbury War Memorial Hall, Cuerdale Lane, Salmesbury, Preston PR5 0XD

Mead/Wax/Open forum Three Groups

July 22nd 2012 @ 2pm Towneley Hall, Burnley BB113RQ Branch Open Day Committee

August 19th 2012 @2pm Towneley Hall, Burnley BB113RQ Microscopy Three Groups

*Details of all the meetings can be found on the web site on the events page at
www.blackburnbeekeepers.com*

We will, where possible open hives so bring along your protective clothing just in case.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in any of the articles in 'Bee Talk' represent the personal opinions of the Contributors and in no way should they be regarded as the official opinions or views of the 'Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association' nor of our local Branch of this association 'The Blackburn & East Lancashire Branch'

For Sale **Protective Clothing**

1. Cotton Bee Protective Boiler Suits all sizes a bargain at £20 each
2. Net Veils that need to be fitted onto a hat at £3 each
3. Box of thin but very strong gloves at £3 for a box of 50 pairs

**These are available by ringing Bob Fulton on
01254-772780**

3. Available from Early March 2012 Fitted Veil at £15.
- All in all if you buy the protective Suit, Veil and Gloves you will have yourself fully protected at a cost of £35 compared to something like £85 to £100 from other suppliers.

Sugar and Candy

20 kilo Buckets at £12

10 Kilo Buckets at £6

1 Kilo Bags at 60p

Candy Sticks at 30p per stick

These are available by ringing David Bush on

01200-428152

UK Honey Labelling Regulations

Below is our simple advice on honey labelling. For more detailed information - go to the website of the Food Standards Agency. www.food.gov.uk

- 1. The Word **HONEY**'s required.*
- 2. The weight must be on the label - we will ensure it is the legal size and format.*
- 3. You can specify the area where the honey is produced. For example, Lincolnshire, Forest of Dean, Scottish Borders.*
- 4. You can specify the type of honey. For example, Heather, Borage. The honey must be at least 75% of that particular type.*
- 5. If you are selling the honey, you must have your name and address on the label. It does not need to be complete but you should be able to be found from the information.*
- 6. If you are selling the honey through a third party, you must have a lot number.*
- 7. New for 2003 You must have a best before date on the jar. We suggest 2-5 years from now.*
- 8. New for 2003 You must have a country of origin on the jar. For example - Produce of England, Product of Scotland, Harvested in Wales. Adding the country to the end of your address is not acceptable.*

E H Thorne (Beehives) Ltd disclaims all responsibility for all consequences of any person acting on, or refraining from acting in reliance on, information contained above.

From EH Thorne's online catalogue 2010 - other sources are available



What's in the Honey Pot

A few snippets of news and information that may be of use to you



Editorial

Our membership secretary reports that several members' email addresses no longer work and emails are bounced straight back at him by the "mailer-daemon". If you've been feeling neglected by your Association lately, please check that we have your correct email address. You can rectify this problem, if it applies to you, by

emailing

Michael Birt at webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

Editorial

Well here we are in June and up to now what a washout the season as been, washout and cold and all this after the best 2 weeks of March that you could possibly wish for. What is going on with the weather up here in Lancashire. After saying that, some of our members had drones flying in April and Queen cells in early May where they had to carry out the curry method of swarm control to prevent them from swarming. So all in all its been a very strange start to the year, up to now for our bees. Lets hope things get better for them and of course us too.

On a brighter note, the meetings that we have had have been all very well attended and reports are included further on in this addition of BeeTalk. A big thank you to all the speakers and members who attended, lets hope that the rest of the seasons meeting go as well as I am sure they will.

If you look at the committee meeting of the 20th of April you will see that . It has been agreed that as well as using the apiary site at Towneley the Branch will identify a site at Samlesbury Hall. Phil Ainsworth is in the process of identifying a suitable location to situate the 3 hives.

Sharon Jones and Gwen Lewis will be supported by Phil Ainsworth and Caroline Coughlin to get the site up and running.

Steve Ganner has also offered up equipment that the branch can borrow which includes an observation hive. This will be a great addition for the members to be able to look into the hives and get a more hands on approach, so watch this space or the website for more details when they become available.

Phil Ainsworth as mentioned that the list of members e-mail addresses is not complete and that some of the members are not getting information. If anyone has not given Phil their e-mail contact could you please do so by contacting Phil at philipainsworth@btconnect.com . Any information can now be sent out to members by e-mail e-block which makes life quite a lot easier. So its important that all addresses are up to date.

Well that's about it for this issue. I will be going back to the Far East on the 1st of June and will be back for a few months in October. By then you will know how things have gone on for you all over the summer and I really hope that you enjoy your beekeeping and the summer. You can always contact me by e-mail at webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com and I would love to know how you are all going on. If you have any problems you can always ask and the same goes for any comments you may have. Remember the club belongs to you all. Also why not take a look at Bill Ainsworth great blog were again to can post a comment and will most certainly receive a reply. Bill site is at www.blackbees.com

Best wishes to you all

Michael

Meet some of the Committee for 2012



John Zamorski (Chairman)



Brian Jackson (Vice Chairman)



Vici Winstanley (Hon Secretary)



**Phil Ainsworth
(Hon Treasurer)**



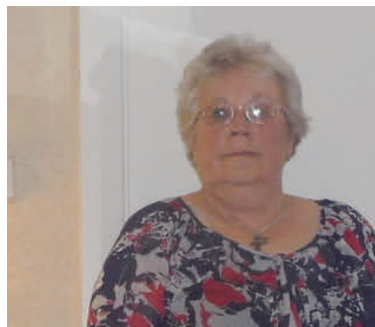
**Caroline Coughlin
(Honey Show Secretary)**



**Dave Rayner
(Education Officer)**



**Bob Fulton
Communications Officer**



Annette Hawkins Committee Member



Alistair McLean. Committee Member



**Michael Birt.
(Webmaster and Beetalk Editor)**

Association Meetings

June 24th 2012 @ 2pm Salmesbury War Memorial Hall, Cuerdale Lane, Salmesbury, Preston PR5 0XD

Mead/Wax/Open forum Three Groups

July 22nd 2012 @ 2pm Towneley Hall, Burnley BB113RQ

Branch Open Day Committee

August 19th 2012 @2pm Towneley Hall, Burnley BB113RQ

Microscopy Three Groups

At all the meetings we will where possible open hives so it is advisable to bring along some protective clothing.

Please see the website for full details and directions

Woven beehive from the Netherlands. This is a skep, a beehive woven from straw. The bees enter the skep at the naval. It is in the form of Saint Ambroise, the patron saint of hives.



Our Annual Dinner



The Annual Dinner this year took place at the Alma Inn at Laneshawbridge on the 21st March 2012. Although a few of the members got lost on the way they got there in time for the lovely food. The wine and conversation flowed and the raffle went down a treat. Bill Ainsworth said a few words to promote the work that is happening at Towneley Hall with the Bee Project and John closed the evening with words of thanks for the organisation and attendance.

We would love to increase the attendance at the annual dinner and any suggestions would be gratefully received

Thanks
Vici

Towneley Hall Sunday 22nd April 2012

The branch monthly meeting was held one week late due to unforeseen circumstances. Apologies to all who were inconvenienced by this. Please remember it is most important that everyone checks the website before attending any meeting for the up to date information.

The subject of the meeting was “the Rearing of Queen Bees” there were around 55 members in attendance and the speakers were Helen Howarth, David Rayner and John Zamorski.

Members were given details on the basic rearing of queens during swarm control and then detailed methods of specific queen rearing. This is a huge subject and may have been a bit baffling for some of the beginners but the intention was to give everyone an overview of the many different ways to rear queens and then make their own choice of method.

The choice of breeder queens was explained and each individual beekeeper should select the important qualities he or she requires in the new queens, for example, gentleness, low swarming, good spring build up etc.

During all types of queen rearing it was stressed that the colonies involved must always be kept well fed or the resulting offspring will be of poor quality.

Details of queen rearing methods can be found on the website but anyone who would like more one to one information can talk directly to any of the speakers.

J. Bee

Blackburn and East Lancashire Committee Meeting Tuesday 24th April 2012 at 7pm, Salmesbury Hall

Attendees: Dave Rayner, Alistair McLean, Helen Howarth, John Zamorski, Michael Birt, Brian Jackson, Phil Ainsworth, Victoria Winstanley, Annette Hawkins; Bob Fulton, Steve Ganner

Apologies: Karen Ramsbottom, Dave Bush & Caroline Coughlin

Update on the Branch Apiary and Bees

It has been agreed that as well as using the apiary site at Towneley the Branch will identify a site at Salmesbury Hall. Phil A is in the process of identifying a suitable location to situate the 3 hives. Sharon Jones and Gwen Lewis will be supported by Phil A and Caroline to get the site up and running. Steve Ganner has also offered up equipment that the branch can borrow which includes an observation hive.

Venue

It was agreed that in order to serve all members of the branch that we will use both at Towneley Hall, Burnley and Salmesbury Hall, Salmesbury as venues for monthly meetings.

Black Bee Project

Dave Rayner gave an update on the project and confirmed that he was awaiting the arrival of 5 queens has and been looking at isolation sites for the hives.

There was discussion about what the Black Bee Project wanted to achieve and that we needed to inform our members of its progress.

Michael Birt is going to meet with Dave Rayner and do a write up on the project for BeeTalk and the website.

Money matters

We currently have 129 members

There is a concern that the BBKA has overcharged us for the amount of members and Phil is currently raising this issue with Lancashire's Membership secretary and BBKA.

Speaker for Honey Show

Confirmed as Graham Royle who will do a talk titled 'Closer look at bees'.

Communications to members

Concern that some members don't have contact details whether that is an email address or telephone number. Going to send a letter to the members we don't have any contact details for to gain the relevant information.

It was agreed that Michael will set up an email address for Blackburn and East Lancs members so that we can send out regular updates.

Towneley Hall Sunday 20th May 2012

The meeting was very well attended with 50 plus members present. Before the talk Phil Ainsworth mentioned that a few of our members had not given their e-mail address and could therefore not be contacted with important news and updates of things that are going on with the association. . If anyone who is reading this article and have not given Phil your e-mail details and want to be included in the mailing list, please contact Phil on 0771 3161480 or by e-mail at philipainsworth@btconnect.com and he will put you on the mailing list.

John Zamorski did a very interesting and informative talk on various ways of swarm control and demonstrated to us all

The Snelgrove Method. The Curry Method. The Taronov Board and the Horsley Board. Maybe a little hard for new beekeepers and as John pointed out maybe to short a time for a subject so be fully justified. But all in all a great demonstration and very well informed talk Thanks to John .

All the methods have been put onto the website under the resources section in **General Section: Tips Etc. Swarm Control**. Have a look and maybe have a go at the different methods.

After the talk. Some of the members went down to the hives at Towneley with Dave Rayner and had a look at the bees which are doing very, very well. Dave also mentioned that any members are always welcome to go along, when Dave is present to have a chat and look into the bees.

The next meeting is on the June Meeting June 24th 2012 @ 2pm

Salisbury War Memorial Hall.Cuerdale Lane
Salisbury, Preston PR5 0XD [Click for Map](#)

Mead/Wax/Open forum Three Groups

Hope that the rest of the meetings are as well attended and have a great a speaker as we have had today

Michael Birt (Webmaster)



John demonstrating the various methods of swarm control



A captive audience



Saipin and Caroline posing for the camera



Dave and members down in the apiary

Bees in the Borough

Bee in the borough are at the beginning of a new and exciting project, Bees in the Borough, and have taken on there Bee Breeder, David Rayner. David has been involved with beekeeping for 11 years and currently has 20 colonies of bees in various parts of the Ribble Valley. He is involved with the Blackburn and East Lancashire Beekeepers Association in the role of Education Officer. David also delivers the Association's training programme. David will be working alongside the Project Officer, Lisa Griffin, who has 8 years experience of working alongside honey bees. Together, they will organise the delivery of the project, including putting together the training programme, raising awareness of the plight of honey bees, arranging the bee forage plant nursery, organising planting 'bee friendly' plants across the Borough's parks and building honey bee colonies.

The overall aim of the Bees in the Borough project is to establish a thriving population of our indigenous Black Honey Bee, which are currently under threat of extinction, within the local area. This will be done by a programme of queen rearing, colony establishment and training.

The British Black Honey Bee is now included on the Lancashire list of BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species. The boundaries of this project are dictated by a belt of high moorland surrounding the Burnley and Pendle area thereby isolating our bees from those in the surrounding areas. This means they should be able to improve the quality of our bees by a programme of selective

breeding of the indigenous British Black Bee, providing we do not import foreign bees.

This work was initially started by Bill Ainsworth and Arthur Bickerstaffe, local beekeepers, under the heading of 'Black Bees in Pendle'. and are proud to take up the banner and continue this important work.

Beekeeping courses will take place over the autumn and winter months. Training will be free to anyone interested in the project.

Please look at the website at

http://www.offshoots.org.uk/bees_in_the_borough.html



Take a look at my major cockup for this year. Queen excluder slipped and completely blocked the exit. For how long? No bloody idea. Noticed it a while ago and just thought I'd give you a laugh. It goes without saying that it weakened the colony, almost wiping it out. I took the photo to send to Beetalk. Feel free to print to show new or even "experienced" keepers if you like. I must have seen the Queen X a dozen times during the winter checks but I only looked to see if it was still there, not if the exit was bloody clear!!! Another first.



Thanks for sending this in. It just goes to show that even if you have been keeping bees for years cockups can be made. So all you new members take heart.



John off to the bees with his new helper

Simple and Safe Varroa Mite Control

My description below of what I thought was an original idea- until I saw a similar idea on an American website. My intention was to bring it to the attention of fellow beekeepers who maybe wanted to try it out as I have done- successfully I might add!!!

It works by forcing the honey bee to stoop and squeeze through a gap. This precise measured gap (known throughout beekeeping as the 'bee space') does not inhibit its entry or exit, but by making this space just less than the 'bee space' means that the bees back (thorax) rubs against the entry/exit brushes, knocking off any varroa mites. The bee exits and enters the hive hundreds of times a day (weather permitting) and so increases the likelihood of catching a mite at some point. Once the mite is knocked off the bee, it falls through the hive meshed floor onto a sticky board, thus preventing it climbing back into the hive. In fact, the existing sliding varroa floor can be smeared with petroleum jelly or similar for the mites to stick to.

Parts; approx. 17 inch length of door draught excluder brush.

An 18 inch piece of wood batten to fix the brush to using 4 bee pins (small nails)

Small amount of petroleum jelly or similar to smear onto the already positioned board below the hive base

The brush is placed at the entrance of the hive and fixed in place by one small screw

TOTAL cost £3 per hive max

First of all, before we start- there is always varroa mites in the hive. BUT- the fewer the better

It will lessen the amount of varroa mites in the hive which are arguably the biggest problem the bees have at present and are causing the decline of their population. The mites nibble at the bees in their larvae stage whilst still in the cells. This results in dead or deformed bees. If the mite numbers reach a certain level in the hive, the hive collapses and dies. By knocking the mites off in this way, it does away with the need to treat the bees for this pest with chemicals such as Oxalic acid. In red is a statement from a well-known beekeepers site, David A Cushman. Other treatments affect the bees in many ways but the brush has no detrimental effect at all. Importantly, the hive does not have to be opened to check for infestation or to treat it. Before the winter, bees glue up any draughty gaps in the hive, particularly the lid. In Dec beekeepers open the hive, breaking this gap and pour oxalic acid onto the bees to kill the mites. They then replace the lid, by no means sealing the gaps and leave the bees for the rest of the winter with those draughts. This cooler hive results in a later start to the season and the laying of the spring bees.

The brushes can be left on all year. Oxalic acid, formic acid, lactic acid, Chemical strips, chemical pastes in the feed all have to be used BEFORE, and I stress before the 'SUPERS' (these are the top boxes added to the top of the hive. from which we take the honey for consumption), the beekeeper can add these top boxes, otherwise the treatments end up in the food chain. Honey production is slowed down by all other treatments but not the simple entrance / exit brush

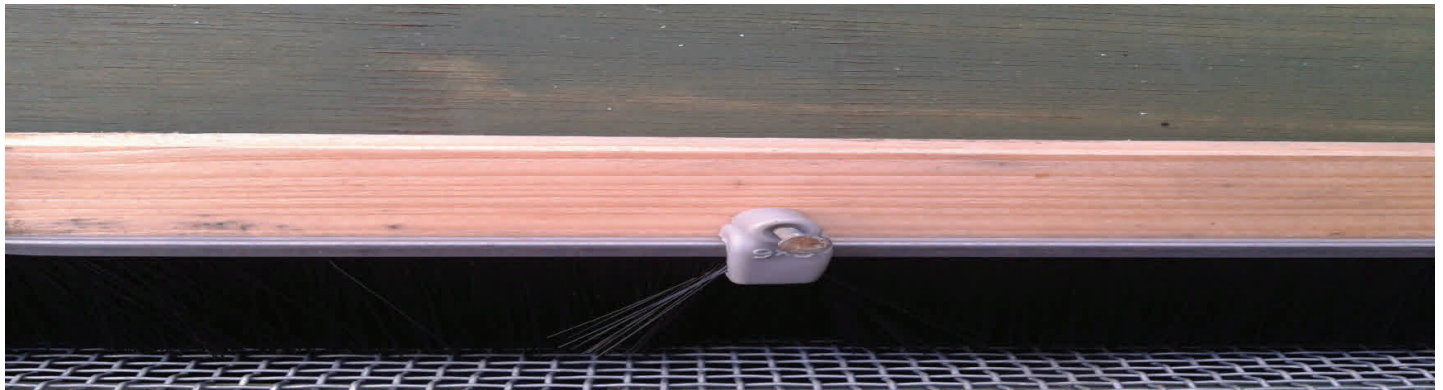
It cannot be stressed too strongly that oxalic acid is an aggressive substance and needs to be treated with respect. Acid resistant gloves and goggles should be worn and an apron of the type used by mortuary attendants, along with wellington boots that have the tops covered by gaiters so that any falling liquid cannot fall into the boot. A respirator that has specialised organic acid filtering will be required in cases where the acid is sprayed or vapourised. Oxalic acid is also poisonous to humans by ingestion.

The same warning is given for the other acids

The most important features are: NO opening hive to sprinkle with talcum powder, icing sugar, pouring acids or spraying acids or heating acids up and fumigating hive with the resultant fumes, bee friendly herbs to encourage bees to clean more frequently, placing chemical plastic strips into the hive right into the centre of the brood pattern, only to be removed after 2 weeks-- plus all the other methods. All methods involve opening up the hive and disturbing the bees, inevitably killing some in the process. In my tests watching the bees in and out of the hive, they accept the entrance brush as being part of the hive and are not affected by it in the slightest.

With thanks to Steve Ganner.

Pictures showing Bristles and how they are fixed



Long Bristle Fixed at the entrance.



Short Bristle



Long Bristle

June – Swarms care?

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

What does this poem mean? Well swarms need aftercare if they are to build-up and are big enough to survive the winter. If it was an early swarm then could have built up to be sufficiently strong to gather a crop during the late summer and so is worth something. In the days gone by barter meant it equated to a bale of hay!

A swarm can be one that you collected or one that was attracted to your bait hive but it also includes those artificial swarms you made. The box left after the 'AS' which contained the brood and queen cells will be depleted of foragers, and will have a brood gap as it will take at least two weeks before the new queen starts to lay. This will need some TLC.

So how do we care for a swarm?

Firstly wait 24 to 48 hours before feeding unless they are at the point of starving. This has two benefits: firstly, the bees will use up the honey they brought with them in their honey stomachs rather than storing it and contaminating the new drawn comb. Secondly, it reduces the risk of robbing as all the bees will have orientated to their new home and will defend it.

Once this time has passed then feed weak syrup (1:1) but don't put a 'load on' in one go! What you want to do is provide a steady supply of food which will be like a natural flow. Add a pint or two at a time and keep feeding until they have drawn out about 75% of the comb in their box; by then (hopefully) they will be able to collect their own food. Once you have stopped feeding it is time to add the first super should it be an early swarm.

After 'hiving' is the perfect time to treat for Varroa because there will be a 'brood break' or at least a period of little open brood. All this means there will be lots of desperate female mites looking for somewhere to lay so this can be used to trap and remove them. A simple icing sugar treatment will work well because as a lot of mites are phoretic (the phase when the mites are piggyback on the bees) with few inside the cells so they can be knocked off. Another trick is to put a frame of open brood from a disease free colony into the centre of the swarm's box; this will attract all the free mites and can be removed once sealed.

Once the swarm has new brood, if it is a foreign one you caught you must check for brood diseases. Finally, although less likely, swarms can build up and swarm so do not neglect your checks.

With thanks to Warwickshire Beekeepers and of course e-bees

Just a quick comment on the above which is of course an excellent article. What I would recommend when a swarm is picked up is to treat it with oxalic acid so as to knock off any varroa mites that may be on the swarm as this is the only time apart from the winter treatment that this treatment can be carried out

Michael

What is a drone trap

This is a frame placed within the brood box to proprietary trapping board, or more simply a capture and remove Varroa mites, as part of shallow super frame with foundation, which is your Varroa management programme. The method takes advantage of the preference of the Varroa mite to occupy drone cells. Because the drone larvae remain capped about three days longer than the workers, more eggs are laid in the drone cells. On average, approximately three mites will emerge with a drone compared to two mites with a worker bee. Research has shown that the population of mites in a hive can be greatly reduced if the drone brood is removed before the cells are uncapped and the mites emerge. Consequently a 'drone trap' should be placed in the brood box. This can be either a special positioned at the edge of the brood. The bees will build drone cells in the space below the frame. Whilst these drone cells are still capped, the frame can be removed from the hive, and the drone cells together with their cargo of mites discarded. Drone trapping is a great way to reduce the number of Varroa mites, without the use of chemicals, during the honey production season, and is recommended standard practice for all beekeepers. But be warned if you don't remove drone frames before the brood hatches, you will be raising bumper crops of both drones and mites.

Graham Pooley

Use of Cuprinol on Bee Hivesfrom the Weybridge BKA newsletter

This is the reply received from the manufacturers of Cuprinol, when asked about using their wood preserving products on bee hives.

"I can confirm that our formulations have changed and that currently none of our products are suitable for this type of application."

This is clear confirmation of 'rumours' to this effect that have been circulating over the past year or two. Note that this means that we should no longer use the Cuprinol Clear preservative that many of us have used for many years on our hives, (except perhaps on the outer lifts of WBC hives). Thornes, also confirmed that they no longer recommend 'Cuprinol Clear'. Thornes can supply a water-based wood treatment called 'Lifetime', but they say it is cosmetic rather than preservative. They also confirmed that cedar hives do not require preservation materials to be applied, although they do weather to a greyish colour.

June Tips Checklist

The topical advice is be prepared, if it hasn't happened already, for swarming. This is because the recent appalling weather has meant the bees have not been able to get out and forage regularly so we have been forced to feed them. Causing the sequence - lack of food - bees hungry - feed weak syrup to encourage comb drawing and keep them going - which stimulates the bees to feed the queen to encourage her to lay - more bees - so they become crowded - and need more food. You may have added a super, but the bees don't like it up there because there is no spare food in the combs to keep them warm, so they all stay down below, becoming crowded, so.... Swarm time!

- Keep making inspections for queen cells and brood diseases.
- Create bait hives, and check them for occupants. If yes, feed them to help draw out the foundation.
- If you have taken off oil seed rape honey, make sure the colony has enough honey to get through future periods when nectar is not available. Feed if necessary.
- Check weekly for varroa.
- Mark your queens if you have not already done this.
- Buy or make feeders, so that you have one for each of your hives.
- Ensure you have sufficient queen excluders. .
- Scrape/brush wax from the excluder, and remove burr comb from the top of the frames.
- Continue to keep records for every hive.

.....adapted from Northants BKA website

Busy Bees Fail MOT

Mr James 81, of Haslingden was shocked when he discovered the reason why his car had failed the MOT. There was a colony of bees that had decided to take up residence and make there home inside the cylinder head.

When Mr James' 11 years old Peugeot 106 was take to the local service garage he was told that the bees had blocked his ports by building their nest. The retired environment technician said, " I thought that the garage was playing tricks on me. I thought it was a joke. My garden is a haven for bees, but never in a million years did I think that bees would make my car their home.

Mr Wright the manager of the service station said that in all is 25 years of working in this business, he had never seen anything like it. He sais that the car was misfiring and running really badly.

Mr James has been running the car a couple of times a week and every time he used it, it was running really rough. The problem only became apparent when he took the car in for the MOT and it failed the omissions test.

Mr Wright said that another garage was unable to diagnose the problem and when we started to investigate the problem there were no bees present so we were not expecting to find any honeycomb. It was amazing that the car was still running as the rock solid honeycomb was completely blocking 2 of the 4 cylinder head in-let ports.

The bees must have flown into the garage, gone under the bonnet and into the cylinder head. It was quite extraordinary

I DON'T NEED ONE OF THOSE!

Metal or plastic ends.

I am not sure who invented the dreaded metal (now plastic) end, but I do remember walking to work for many years past the Waldron factory in Great William Street and hearing the thump of the press as it stamped them out. I have a feeling that these ends probably originated with the WBC hive which needed them in order to prevent bees accessing the space between the inner and outer walls - not that they even did that very well!

So what is wrong with metal or plastic ends? If used in the brood box they do a good enough job of spacing when clean and new, but as they become propolised the spacing inevitably increases a little and it is not possible to squeeze the frames up with a hive tool as the ends will deform or break. If placed on the end of the lug they are liable to drop off during manipulations and if some get pushed part way in then spacing is lost completely. Some prefer to push them right onto the lug so that they are up against the side bar, but this encourages propolisation and they also then sit on the runner and raise the frame a little - losing or increasing top or bottom bee space. The answer is to throw them away and use Hoffman self-spacing frames in brood boxes with a dummy board at one end of the box; this gives perfect spacing as the frames can be squeezed together to maintain correct spacing.

In the supers 'ends' are even worse because they all have to be removed when extracting - and then replaced afterwards. Because of propolis on the lugs, this is difficult and dangerous with metal ends - many a finger has been cut - and the plastic ones often break. Throw them away and use 9-slot castellation's in your supers!

Peter Edwards

BOOK REVIEW

Queen Breeding and Genetics How to get better bees - Eigil Holm

Northern Bee Books - £20 post free Although queen breeding may seem to be an advanced subject - and in many ways it certainly can be - there is plenty in this book for those who are relatively new to beekeeping.

Everyone should be producing their own queens and there are many ways to do this, from simple methods suitable for those with just a couple of hives, to ways more suited to those needing hundreds of queens. Whichever category you fall into, it is important to understand some of the principles involved in the selection of breeders and the physical methods of producing, mating and introducing queens from them.

This excellent book is a translation of the second (2009) Danish edition and is packed with the latest information, all well illustrated with clear photographs and drawings. The first eight chapters (50 pages) cover the practical aspects of the selection of breeders and the production of mated queens; they are written in an easy-to-read style and are packed with useful tips. The remainder of the book (36 pages) gives a relatively easy introduction to the genetics involved and also covers the origin of the various races of bee that we have today It is perhaps a pity that such a valuable reference work was not produced in hardback - and I have to say that proofreading by a native English speaker before publication might have eliminated some of the odd language that occurs from time to time, e.g.

'the creeping of the queens', meaning hatching of virgins from queen cells when they 'creep out'!

Peter Edwards

Propolis For You?

Some considerable time ago (pre-Varroa), one of our members gave a talk on the health benefits of propolis. Arthur Gillette is an elderly gentleman whose looks and demeanour belied his age. His method and use of propolis I give below:

1. Collect clean propolis by scraping off with a *spoon* (a knife can break up the propolis).
2. Place the propolis on the lid of a honey jar, put the lid on to a radiator to make the propolis softer and pliable.
3. Roll the propolis in the hand into *pill* size pieces (about the size of a match head).
4. Drop into a small, lidded container into which you have put icing or caster sugar and shake to coat the pieces with the sugar. This will stop the pieces sticking together.

Dosage

In the Summer he took 2/3 pieces per week.

In Winter – 1 piece per day .

He advised, if you intend to go to crowded places, (especially indoors, e.g. the cinema) take one beforehand. Propolis can be bought from some health shops, and from beekeeping suppliers (e.g. Thornes) as can tincture of propolis. The tincture is superb for treating sore throats and warding off impending colds. Simply place several drops as far back in the throat as possible.

With thanks to Maggie Böhme Manchester Beekeepers

Far from being only a cementing agent, Propolis performs a number of valuable functions for the hive. Fungal infections can destroy a colony, as can bacterial ones, but Propolis helps to prevent these infections and keep the hive clean and sanitary. Simply by rubbing against the Propolis, the bees help to protect themselves against infection from the external elements, but also help to spread the inhibitory qualities throughout the hive. A 'Google' search revealed a lot of claims for the health benefits of propolis - more than there is room for here.

20 things I learned in my first 8 hours as a beekeeper.

- 1) A nuc transit box is remarkably unprepossessing - so no dramatic drive home in a bee suit. Dammit.
- 2) You get the smoker going, dress up, open the nuc and.....nothing much happens.
- 3) A smoker is child's play if you were in the Scouts.
- 4) Not much continues to happen - then, suddenly, an hour later, you realise there's a hell of a lot of bees flying around.
- 5) Some of these little beggars don't know how to fly!
- 6) There's a lot of bees in a nuc.
- 7) The temperature of the base of a smoker is slightly higher than the melting point of the lid of a wheelie bin.
- 8) Cloud of bees in my garden; Yet over the (high) fence, there's nary a sight of a bee in nervous next door neighbour's garden - phew!
- 9) None of those clever clogs at the Dower House, pointed out that an absolute essential piece of kit, is a garden chair.
- 10) A bright sunny day with frequent fluffy clouds doesn't half mess with the bees' heads.
- 11) Pollen comes in such pretty colours.
- 12) Three hours, four hours - passes in no time at all.
- 13) A feisty cat needs lots of reassurance when she realises there are bees in her garden.
- 14) Yes, if you look carefully, you can see which bees have what jobs.
- 15) Six feet away from the hive and you're interesting; eight feet away and you might as well not exist.
- 16) Aviva Premiership Rugby v bees? Close one - but a half of rugby is only 40 minutes long.
- 17) 1 : 1 syrup tastes nice.
- 18) Going solo - transferring bees/frames from nuc to new hive - isn't as scary as it might be. You know, I might be able to do this!
- 19) One hive looks so lonely.....
- 20) The smile on a new bee's face, is just as stupid as the look of someone who's just completed their first scuba dive.

What did you learn on your first day?

With thanks to Adrian Rhodes of Manchester Beekeepers

MAGNETIC BEES

Each honeybee hive produces about 29 kg of honey per year. To help them make this honey, the bees talk to each other - and just recently, some scientists have learnt to speak this language! The story begins back in 1923, when Karl von Frisch from the University of Munich in Germany, published his first paper on the language of the honeybees. He reckoned that they "spoke" with each other by dancing the dance!

Suppose a honeybee has found a flowerbed rich in nectar and pollen. She flies back, into the hive, and tells her fellow workers about the flowers - by dancing. If the flowers are within 100 metres of the hive, she flies in circles. Soon, her fellow workers leave the hive, and fly in ever-enlarging circles until they find the flowers. But if the flowers are further away (up to three kilometres away), she dances a different dance inside the nest. She flies in a straight line, while wagging her rear end, and then flies a curved line to the beginning of the straight line, and does it all again. If her straight line points vertically up, then the other bees leave the nest, and fly in the direction of the Sun. And if the straight line points 60° to the right of vertical, the other bees fly in a direction 60° to the right of the Sun. And the speed of her wagging bottom tells the other bees the distance to the flowers - the faster the waggle, the closer the food! Karl von Frisch received a Nobel Prize for this theory in 1973. But his theory didn't go far enough.

Most beehives are pretty dark inside, and like us, honeybees can't see very well in the dark. So how can they see each other do the dance? In the 60s, other scientists discovered that dancing honeybees emitted a sound from their wings, vibrating at 220 beats per second. They were singing a song with their wings. And honeybees do have a sort-of-ear on the second joint of their antennae. It seemed reasonable that bees could hear this song, but how do you prove it.

In the late 80s, Wolfgang Kirchner and William Towne proved it with a robot honeybee. It had razor blades for wings, and tiny computer-controlled motors to make it dance. It could sing the song with its razor blade wings, and dance the dance via its electric motors. Real honeybees would ignore their robot razor blade honeybee if it just danced the dance, or just sang the song. But when it did both the song and the dance, the real honeybee would obey it. The scientists could actually talk to the animals! They could get their robot honeybee to send the real honeybees out of the nest in any direction they wanted! So by using a song-and dance routine, the bees can tell each other the best place to eat out. But once they've picked up their nectar and pollen, how do they find their way back to the hive? Honeybees have another trick - tiny compasses, in their tummies, that sense the Earth's magnetic field. Now under the right conditions, magnetic fields can effect humans. Susan Blackmore wrote about her experiences in the New Scientist, after a neuroscientist had blasted her brain with intense magnetic fields in his laboratory. She felt nothing for the first ten minutes. Then, even though she knew that she was reclining perfectly still in a chair, she felt as though she was swaying on a hammock. Almost immediately afterwards, even though she knew that there was nobody near her, she could feel "two hands grabbing her shoulders and pulling her upwards." As the magnetic fields continued to act on her brain, she could "feel" something grab one of her legs and try to pull it up the wall - although her eyes told her nothing was happening! And then the magnetic fields began to act on her emotions. She suddenly felt very angry - but she didn't know what she was angry about, nor at whom she was angry. This anger lasted only ten seconds, but as it faded, she was suddenly beset with a very intense attack of fear. Again, she was not scared of anyone or anything, but she was very afraid. Now the human brain is very complicated, and we don't know why intense magnetic fields can cause such dramatic changes. But we do have a better idea of what's going on in honeybees. There are a few different types of magnetic materials. One is a type of iron oxide called magnetite, which is naturally magnetic, and we know that lots of creatures have tiny magnets of magnetite in their bodies. But there's another type of iron oxide which is paramagnetic. Paramagnetic materials are themselves not magnetic, but, they are pulled by magnetic fields. So a non-magnetic paper clip made of soft iron is actually paramagnetic, because it can be pulled by a magnet.

According to researchers Hsu and Li of the National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan, honeybees have tiny paramagnetic particles in their bodies. These particles are inside cells inside the bees' tummy. Depending on whether they are lined up side-by-side, or end-to-end, the paramagnetic particles can, as the external magnetic field changes, swell or shrink. But the particles are attached to the "walls" of the cells that they are in, so as they change shape, so do the cell walls. And nerves, attached to the outside of these cells, carry signals up to the honeybee's brain. So the magnetic cells in the bees tummy are like tiny on board compasses. This is the first time scientists have actually followed the "line of information" in a living animal, from the magnets to its brain. Now honeybees are told how to leave the nest and where to go by the buzzing wings and wagging dance of another honeybee. And, by using the paramagnetic particles of iron oxide, these honey bees can avoid getting lost on the way home, and iron out their problems with a little magnetic navigation.

With thanks to Nottinghamshire Beekeepers Association and e-bees



Egyptian hieroglyphics show bees and beekeeping scenes. In an Egyptian marriage contract, when the husband married the wife he would say to her, 'I take thee to wife...and promise to deliver thee yearly twelve jars of honey'.

Date and Honey Loaf

This recipe is from the Scottish National Honey Show, courtesy of B.E.E.S, via the Stratford-upon-Avon BKA ... it might be time for some comfort food!

Ingredients:

175g Plain Flour 25g Margarine 25g Sugar 1 Egg 100g Dates 225g Honey Pinch of Salt 5 tbsp boiling water
½ level teaspoon of Baking Soda



Method:

Grease a loaf tin. Stone and chop the dates, pour boiling water over them and allow to cool. Beat the egg. Drain the dates and dissolve the baking soda in the water from them. Sift the dry ingredients and rub in the margarine. Add the sugar. Make a well in centre and add the egg, water, fruit and honey. Mix thoroughly then turn into the prepared loaf tin. Bake in a moderate oven for about 1 hour.

Tip of the day idea. Just a thought if it can be continued for future editions, with ideas from members.

My tip is; Apart from the 1st one or two frames, when lifting frames from the hive, always twist them at an angle using the diagonal distance, By doing it this way, the distance from the sidewalls is increased, thereby making it less likely to squash bees (especially the queen) on the sidewalls. Same for replacing the frames. I have always done it this way

Another advantage of using this habit I found is that I only had to use the hive tool to break the propolis seal at the ONE end. By pulling the now free end of the frame towards me, there is enough leverage to break the seal at the other end, making it unnecessary to move my hand across the frames and alarm the bees.

The diagram shows the top view of the hive



Steve Ganner



Apis Cerana bees balling a Asian Hornet :: Picture taken in Thailand

Queen Selection to Improve Stocks

Queen rearing and breeding are the subjects of many lectures and books and made to seem very complicated and difficult. Indeed many of the methods require advanced skills and only become easy after much practice. This does not have to be the case and for beekeepers with a few hives, most of the methods of queen rearing are outside the requirements of the beekeeper. This does not prevent a beekeeper with even two hives improving their queens and stocks by methods that are part of their normal manipulations.

With all livestock selective breeding can be practiced whether it is dogs, cattle or even bees. The first principle is to decide which characteristics are desirable in the livestock and breed from those which best match requirements and not from those with a poor fit. In the case of bees the characteristics of individual bees are not the important factor but the behaviour of the hive; the genetics of which are determined by the queen. This is best done by keeping records of the characteristics desired and then determining which are the 'best' colonies. This has to be done over a considerable time as characteristics such as honey production or swarminess are seasonal whereas temperament and such like may be immediately obvious. Disease resistance should be a major factor in selection.

Once the rating of the colonies has been assessed this should be noted and only those with a high rating should be considered to use for selection.

Bees are undoubtedly the best at raising queens as they have had millions of years of practice. Most bees will try to raise queens in the early summer, which is why we inspect the colonies for swarm control.

In the perfect scenario a high rated colony will try to raise queen cells at the same time as a low rated colony and when the colonies are split for swarm control all of the queen cells can be removed from the low rated colony and replaced with queen cells from the high rated colony. The bees will not notice the difference and selection has taken place with two or more colonies headed by better queens.

More frequently the swarm preparations are not at the same time and this simplistic operation is not possible. The principles however can still be applied as removing extra queen cells from the best colonies at time of artificial swarming and placing them in nuclei or other queen rearing colonies will give a stock of 'better' queens. These queens once mated and proved for laying can be introduced into 'less good' colonies after the old queen has been removed. The benefits are a 'better', younger and hopefully more fecund queen, which will reduce the possibility of swarming in the following year.

If the 'best' colonies are not inclined to swarm, as all of the genetics required are contained in the eggs, the production of queen cells can be prompted by splitting a colony before swarming is evident. If you ensure that it has sufficient young bees new queen cells will be raised very quickly.

A good basic principle if one has more than two hives is to take queen cells only from the 'best' third of colonies and cut out and replace queen cells in the other two thirds.

Immediate replacement is necessary with sealed queen cells otherwise the colony will raise queens from larvae that are too old to produce good queens.

A few years of selecting only from the 'best' colonies will see an improvement in stocks.

Further improvement can be obtained by adjusting the drone stock in the area by only allowing significant amounts of drone to develop in the 'best' colonies; use other methods of varroa control. In the poorer colonies, use drone removal actively both for varroa monitoring and control by removing as much capped drone brood as possible.

This will only work well if the area has mainly drones from 'good' colonies and will only have a minor effect in areas of high densities of hives. It will also benefit other beekeepers in the area and if they can be persuaded to follow the same principles.

A HANDY CHECKLIST

Adapted from the Beehive, published by Northwest Ohio Beekeepers Association by Alan Stonell, Kennet Branch of Wiltshire BKA, courtesy of eBees

Over the last month or two, I have had a number of calls from new beekeepers phoning to check about problems which they have encountered with their bees this season. As always, my advice is to get to know what normal healthy bees and brood look like and check if you are unhappy or not sure about what you see in your colony - quite often Sally or I will go and have a look at them with the beekeeper. Inspecting the brood combs of a honeybee colony is the only way to determine the health and general condition of the colony. However, you have to know what you are looking at and what it means in order to make a diagnosis. In general, a healthy brood comb simply 'looks healthy'. The brood cappings have a 'digestive biscuit' colour; the larvae are white, glistening and 'fat'. The cappings of the brood cells are uniform and the overall pattern is solid, with few holes. A good queen will start laying eggs in the lower centre of the combs and radiate out from there. Once the oldest brood emerges, the queen lays in those cells, and the youngest brood on the comb will now be in the centre. Once the brood-rearing cycle gets underway in the spring or following the introduction of a new queen, all stages of brood should be found at each inspection. I came across this check list recently which would be helpful when inspecting your colonies. Here are some conditions you may observe during your brood inspections and their possible causes:

No eggs, no brood present

Not brood-rearing season.

No queen.

New queen not yet laying.

Extended shortage of pollen.

No eggs, but brood present

Brood-rearing ceased - end of the season.

Queen has died or colony is preparing to swarm.

Lack of pollen curtailed brood-rearing.

Test for presence of a queen. If there are no eggs and you can't determine if there is a queen present, put in a brood comb with young larvae from another colony. Check back in three days; if the suspect hive starts queen cells, it has no queen.

Eggs present, but no brood

Brood-rearing has just resumed after being halted for some reason.

Wet looking pollen - in the centre of the brood nest

If there is no queen and during the off-season, pollen may be stored in the centre of the brood nest and can take on an unkempt look - wet or glazed over [but note that native bees will store dry pollen in amongst and under the brood. P.E.]. When the workers anticipate needing the pollen to feed brood, they move the pollen and freshen it up and it has a dry look.

Clean, empty cells - in the centre of the brood nest

The opposite of the wet pollen look. When the workers anticipate that brood cells will be needed for eggs, they move nectar and pollen out of the way and give the cells a polish.

More than one egg per cell

Young, inexperienced queen, usually settles down quickly to laying one egg per cell.

Something happened to queen and laying workers developed.

[Note that queens lay eggs on the bottom of the cells, laying workers tend to lay them on the sides. P.E.]

Scattered brood

Same-age brood scattered over the comb, not in adjacent cells, means:

A failing queen running out of sperm.

Something is killing the brood. In early spring, cold nights when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm can result in chilled brood. Sometimes pesticides or poison pollen can cause scattered patterns. Clue: Is only one colony showing the symptoms, or are several?

Raised cappings on worker cells

The cappings look like the ends of bullets. Cause: Drone brood is developing in worker cells, because:

Queen has become a drone-layer. Usually her sperm reserves are depleted, due to her age.

Laying workers; lay only infertile eggs, resulting in drones. Normal drone brood has a 'bullet' look, but not as pronounced as when it is in worker cells. Normally, queens lay unfertilized eggs in the larger (both in circumference and depth) drone cells. These are frequently found around the bottom edges of the brood comb and in areas where the comb has been damaged. The presence of some drone brood indicates a vigorous, well-nourished colony.

Queen cells

Queen cells are constructed along a vertical plane, as contrasted with the horizontal plane of worker and drone brood cells. They somewhat resemble peanuts (in the shells).

Queen cells near the centre of the comb, growing out of worker brood cells – these are replacement cells the workers have developed in emergency loss of queen.

Queen cells everywhere, particularly near bottom of comb. This is swarm preparation - the old queen will soon depart with about half the bees (called the 'prime swarm'). Tip: For a quick check of swarm preparation, in a hive with two brood boxes, break the boxes apart, tip the upper box back and look along the bottom bars and bottoms of the combs in the top box. Most colonies preparing to swarm will show cells along comb bottoms.

Dead larvae (not white)

Chilled due to cold snap (usually in spring) when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm.

Died due to lack of care for some reason.

Disease: Sac brood, American foulbrood, European foulbrood. Call your Bee Inspector.

Pesticide damage.

Mummified larvae

Older stage larvae turn white and hard. This is probably Chalk brood. Can be confused with mouldy pollen (which is probably due to insufficient hive ventilation). Chalk brood will have a small yellow raised spot in the centre (the fungus does not invade the head of the larva).



Northern Europeans have a custom that when a beekeeper died, the survivors must go tell the bees of their master's death, persuading them to stay rather than take wing and follow the master to heaven.

**Honey bees, honey bees, hear what I say!
Your Master, poor soul, has passed away.
His sorrowful wife begs of you to stay,
Gathering honey for many a day.
Bees in the garden, hear what I say!**



**Gold Disc with Bees
seventh century Greece
(700-600 B.C.)**

Bees were important enough to be included in Greek myths. Here is a gold disc with bees, from seventh century Greece (700-600 B.C.). This piece may have been made with the "lost wax" process, which uses beeswax as the original model. Bee images are common on coins from the region.

Structure in swarms

Have you ever watched a swarm in the act of settling on a branch? Bees seem to be flying around in a chaotic cloud broadly centred on the new stopover point.

Randomness seems to be the order of the day. But what I found is that if you move your gaze from side to side slowly across the swarm cloud you will synchronise with a definite pattern of bees moving together in the one direction.

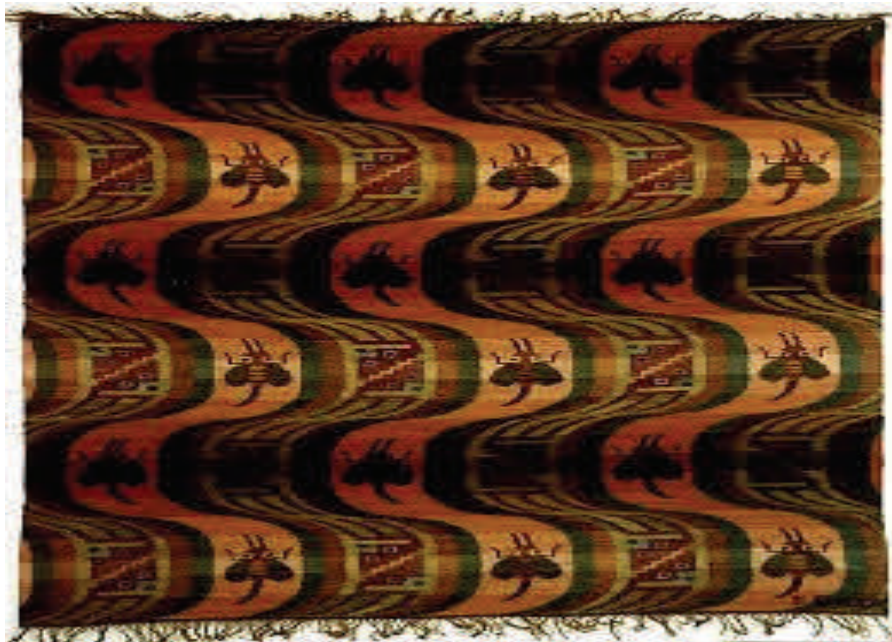
Amazingly the pattern reveals that each bee keeps almost constant and equal distance from each neighbour all moving together at the same speed.

The pattern is of course against a background of randomness but this is no more a concern than a painted wall, more or less a blur against which the pattern stands out. Swing your head in the opposite direction and you see another group of bees in an identical pattern flying the other way. I wonder if someone could take a picture or even a movie using a synchronised camera. I remember seeing something similar once before; So did I see a group of bees flying one way superimposed on a group of bees flying in the opposite direction? Did I see bees moving from one side of the swarm, reversing and flying back again? Did I see a group of bees going around in a circle, some in front of the main swarm and some behind? If so I would be seeing some of the pattern through the cloud. And it is unlikely that they all moved in the one direction clockwise or counter-clockwise. Incidentally I tried moving my head up and down to see if I could pick up a vertical pattern but with no luck.

The bees were going horizontally which is of course best for energy conservation. So I ended my surmising with this hypothesis: the bees were flying in two orderly groups (two at least) one flying around the swarm clockwise and one flying around anti-clockwise. So why didn't they collide? Maybe they fly in shells' like onion skins or were the two groups flying in the same space somehow avoiding collision, at the same time noting which bees were their neighbours in their particular pattern group? If so, what a remarkable feat!! Another thought kept nagging me; were these bees that fly in patterns be mature field bees that are forming a sort of barrier, a net, a fence, corralling the less mature nurse bees, preventing them from wandering. I urge all beekeepers to look carefully the next time you see a swarm. I need confirmation that I am not going nuts! The scientists among you - there are a lot of questions to answer here; may curiosity motivate you. There is always something new to discover about bees. They continually amaze me.

Peter Carden Beekeepers Association of the Australian Capital Territory Incorporated.

Kindly sent in by Bill Ainsworth



Abejas en Ondulaciones - bees on waves, a weaving -Close observers of the natural world around them, the Inca carefully noted the industry, ambition and organization in the insect world. Ants were closely observed and lessons were extracted from their life style. The same was true of bees. The Inca felt that bees worked unselfishly, didn't take from one another and didn't try to subjugate their brothers and sisters. It is said that from these observations arose a simple set of three rules.

AMA SUA don't steal
AMA LLULLA don't lie
AMA OCELLA don't be lazy.

Mark the queen

Having a marked queen is such a help to hive management that I am surprised that more beekeepers don't make the effort to do it. It also means that you are more likely to see her before you squash her or drop her in the grass. The best time to find a queen is early in the year and there is a technique which can be used, even by those with little experience. Before you start, have the marking pen and cage, if you are using one, where you can put your hand on them without taking your eye off the queen. The first points to realise are that finding the queen is psychological to some extent! Be determined and you will probably succeed, be doubtful and you probably will not.. You are not looking for an individual bee, but rather a different pattern or way of moving on the comb. Try the following:

1. Use as little smoke as you possibly can, none at all if possible and be extremely gentle.
 2. Remove the first frame as before, quickly inspect it and put it to one side.
 3. Disregard outer frames filled with stores, she may be here, but is unlikely to be if you have not disturbed them.
 4. When you reach the frame which has lots of pollen on it, usually just to the side of the brood nest, start your careful inspection, which should be thorough but fairly quick.
 5. Remove each frame containing brood in turn and, **HOLDING IT WELL AWAY FROM YOU OVER THE HIVE**, turn it over immediately so that the side away from you in the hive (the dark side) is facing you. Take your eye quickly round the outside of the frame, spiralling inwards to the centre, then turn and repeat on the other side.
 6. Before you reach the end of the brood box she should have revealed herself, but, if not, go back through the frames, in reverse, a second time.
- If the queen is still proving illusive, there is another trick. Remove the outer frames, leaving just those frames with brood on them. Pair these up so that each pair has space around it but the frames in each pair have the usual spacing. Then leave the hive open for a while, perhaps while you inspect the next colony. When you go back take each pair of frames out together and immediately look on the dark side. (This is much simpler if there are two of you so that you can each look at one frame.) The queen will almost certainly be on the inside of one of the pairs of frames. I have seen this work even for complete novices.

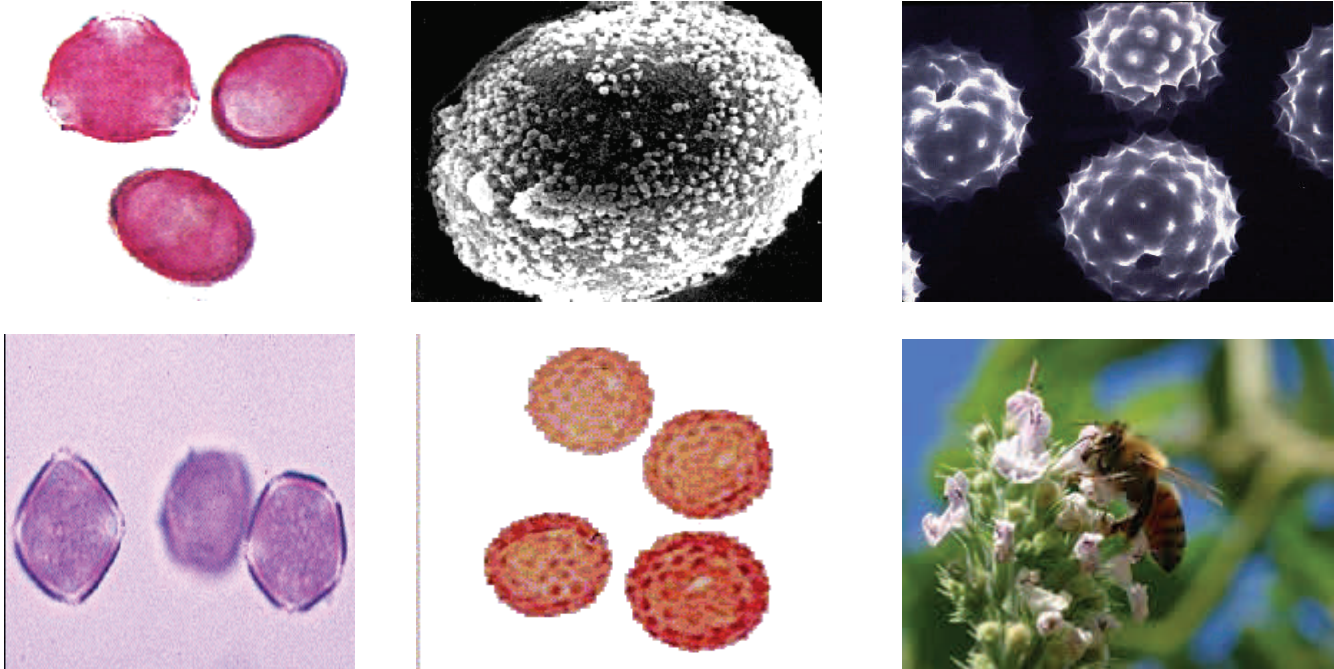
With the colonies confirmed as disease-free and the queens marked, you are ready for everything that the season can throw at you, so next month we will look at that perennial problem : swarming and its control.

WITH THANKS TO

**Celia F Davis
Warwickshire Beekeepers**

What is Pollen and what are Honey Bees Role in Pollination

Pollen is the male gametophyte of seed plants. Both gymnosperms (cone-bearing plants) and angiosperms (flowering plants) produce pollen as part of sexual reproduction. In gymnosperms pollen is produced in microsporangiate cones (male cones or pollen cones), while in angiosperms pollen is produced in the anthers (part of the stamen within the flower). Each pollen grain typically consists of one to a few cells. The wall of the pollen grain consists of two layers, the exine (outer wall) and intine (inner wall). The exine may be smooth or ornamented with spines, warts, granules, pores or furrows. The distinctive ornamentation permits the identification of the pollen grains.



Pollen is dispersed by wind or by insects. Wind-pollinated plants are called anemophilous, while insect-pollinated plants are called entomophilous. It is the wind-pollinated plants that is the cause of suffering to many who are pollen-sensitive.

When pollen is released by wind-pollinated plants, only a small per cent reaches a receptive stigma or female cone. At the proper season, pollen can be so abundant that clouds of it can be seen emanating from vegetation disturbed by wind or shaking. Although much of this pollen settles close to the source, some is carried by the wind long distances.

According to popular statements saying that if Honey bees were lost we would soon follow. The facts are that honeybees are not even the best choice of pollinator for many crops, flowers and plants. Honeybees cannot use the buzz pollination (the vigorous vibration used by bumblebees) necessary to efficiently pollinate tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, peppers, blueberries, watermelon, and cranberries and many other flowers and plants.

Honeybees cannot fly at low temperatures to efficiently pollinate early-spring blooms like blueberries, the first apple bloom and other early flowering plants. This is not to imply that honeybees are not used to pollinate these crops, just that other insects could do a much better job.

Only 15 per cent of the hundred or so crops that make up the world's food supply are pollinated by domesticated honey bees. At least 80 per cent are pollinated by wild bees and other wildlife and the wind. **This does not mean that honey bees are not important pollinators .**

More than 100,000 different animal species — and perhaps as many as 200,000 — play a role in pollinating the planet's flowering plants.

Insects, including bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, and beetles, are the most common pollinators, but as many as 1,500 species of birds, mammals, and other vertebrates also pollinate plants.

Michael Birt

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