



Beetalk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
September 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>
John Zamorski. Chairman	01200-427661		john@johnzamorski.wanadoo.co.uk
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
Bob Fulton. Communications Officer	01254 772780		home.brew@talktalk.net
David Bush. Member	01200 428152		david.bush2@talktalk.net
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**
Email :::david.bush2@talktalk.net

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

September Meeting September 16th 2012 @2pm Brian Jacksons, Lower Lane House Farm Cowling BD22 0LX.
Association BBQ.

October Meeting 7th October 2012 @ 2pm Salmesbury War Memorial Hall.Cuerdale Lane Samlesbury, Preston
PR5 0XD

Association Honey Show.

Speaker :::::Apis through the Looking Glass' with Graham Royal

October Meeting 21st October 2012 @ 2pm Salmesbury War Memorial Hall.Cuerdale Lane
Samlesbury, Preston PR5 0XD

Cooking with Honey **Phillipa James**

November Meeting. November 18th 2012 @2pmTowneley Hall Burnley BB113RQ
Annual General Meeting

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.

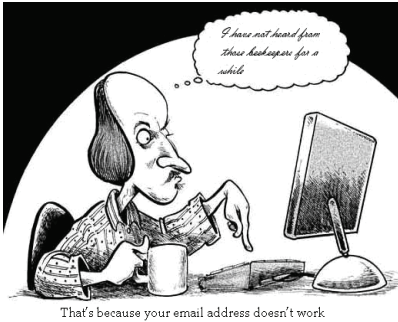
From EH Thorne's online catalogue 2010 - other sources are available



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

How many species of honey bee (in the genus *Apis*) are there? Scientists have reached different conclusions: somewhere between 6 and 11 species, with a total of approximately 44 subspecies. That's diverse. The one that we keep in the UK *Apis mellifera*, has 28 subspecies.

Now you may say to yourself what is our editor Michael going on about, well, the point I am trying to make is that in the UK we have a mixed bag of *Apis mellifera* and what we are trying to get is back to the basics and back to the British black bee that is suited to the UK. It will be an uphill struggle but if we all put our heads together and push the same way we will have at least a fighting chance. If we keep importing and bringing in other queens from here and there I am afraid all will be lost..

So the summer as been a total wash out and reports are coming in saying that apart from having to feed the bees right through the season, there as been little to no honey off the bees. That is not just with us in Lancashire , but nationwide. There is little or nothing that can be done ,as we all know that our craft is dictated to by the weather. Lets just hope that the winter is kind to us and that maybe next season will treat us kinder.

The meetings that we have had have been a great success with many members attending and lots of new faces. The planned queen rearing as not done as expected, again because of the atrocious weather conditions but again what can you do, I am afraid nothing. The association as now up and running association apiaries , the one at Towneley Hall and the other a Salisbury Hall, see chairman's chat below.

In a few months it will be time for the AGM and there are a few of the committee members standing down. It would be great if we had some members stand for committee. Its not a hard job and is very rewarding. So please have a go.

Great news regarding the new association apiary at Salmesbury Hall, (see details below). This is going to be a real asset to our association and on behalf of everyone I would like to thank Steve Ganner, Sharon Jones and everyone else who have help to set up what is going to be a valuable addition of our association

Been to visit a university over here in Thailand and have been talking to Guntima Suwannapong, Ph.D. Associate Professor of the Department of Biology Faculty of Science. Burapha University. Chon Buri Province, Thailand who is carrying out some latest research on *Nosema ceranae* and its treatment and that maybe, and the trials are looking good, may have a cure with a treatment using stingless bee propolis. Its all very interesting and exciting research. Has we now have *Nosema ceranae* in the UK, the research could have very important implications for us too.

Getting a few more articles sent it for publication. Please keep them coming as news of our branch is always welcome.

Back in the UK in October so hope to see you at the honey show, lets hope lots of you will have a go and put something into the show. Until then, you all take care

Best wishes as always.

Michael

Meet some of the Committee for 2012



John Zamorski (Chairman)



Brian Jackson (Vice Chairman)



Vici Winstanley (Hon Secretary)



**Phil Ainsworth
(Hon Treasurer)**



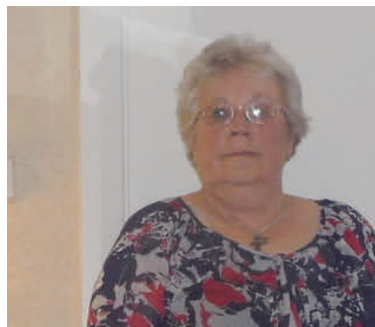
**Caroline Coughlin
(Honey Show Secretary)**



**Dave Rayner
(Education Officer)**



**Bob Fulton
Communications Officer**



Annette Hawkins Committee Member



Alistair McLean. Committee Member



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

Committee meeting held on the 17/7/2012 at Salmesbury Memorial Hall

Committee members present

Karen Ramsbottom, David Rayner, David Bush, Vici Winstanley, John Zamorski, Helen Howarth, Annette Hawkins, Phil Ainsworth. Bob Fulton.
Apologies from Steve Ganner, Alistair Mclean

1. Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted.

2. Club Apiary at Salmesbury Hall.

Tony Houghton and Steve Ganner have set up 9 hives. Also the Hall have prepared the site and provided fencing paving stones etc. On the site at the time of this meeting we have 3 large hives and 6 small ones and have been in place for 2 weeks.

Steve Ganner is on holiday at the moment but on his return he will invite the committee to look at the site so as to discuss the future running and upkeep.

Steve will also put the site on Beebase.

Vici will write to Salmesbury Hall to thank them for the providing us with an excellent site and for all the help they have giving us. The committee need to decide whether we need a manager for the apiary, but decided to discuss this when the site is up and running.

Signs for the apiary will need to be made which will include contact numbers, e-mail address and web site details.

3 Black Bee Project..

As you would expect from the terrible weather we are having that the project to raise queens and nucs for members is struggling. Nothing that can be done as we are what you call in the lap of the gods. Hopefully things will get better.

Every Thursday 5 volunteers help out.

4. Branch open day.

Dave Rayner confirmed that the Natural History Centre is free for our use.

Bob Fulton will bring along a wax exhibit for display.

John Zamorski will bring along a observation hive.

Helen Howarth will look at setting up a candle making demonstration. David Bush will see if we can purchase wax sheets so that we can charge for making candles.

Annette Hawkins will speak to Bill Ainsworth and ask if he can provide honey for tasting.

Phil Ainsworth will provide books and leaflets to sell at £1 each.

Vici Winstanley to e-mail members with details of the days events.

Brian Jackson will bring a display.

The committee will arrive at 11am and set everything up.

It will also be a good opportunity for the committee to answer any questions on the Black bee Project and the new Apiary at Salmesbury Hall..

The open day will run for 1pm until 4 pm

5. Money Matters

The issue of having to pay BBKA for extra membership as been resolved and no extra money as to be paid. The treasurer said that he had to dip into the clubs funds but all will balance out when the gift aid comes back.

Salmsbury Hall apiary as cost £300 to set up but Steve Ganner as sold 4 sets of bees and a donation of £50 as been received.

It was mentioned that all members are not buying raffle tickets at meetings which helps to cover the cost of Tea and coffee.

6, Banners

We need to contact the company who are making the banners to make sure that they are ready for the open day.

7. Committee members

Dave Rayner, Annette Hawkins and Karen Ramsbottom are resigning from the committee as of the November AGM, so we need and education and program offices as from the AGM. There was no one interested in the positions from the committee although John Zamorski said he would take up the roll of Education officer if no one else was interested.

Brian Jackson said that he would take over the librarians job.

8.Any other business.

If anyone is interested in selling honey, candles etc. at Rosendale Museum open day, please contact Brian Jackson.

David Bush is selling bulk sugar. Details are all on the website.

Bob Fulton asked the committee for a possible grant of £200 for his beginners course. The committee decided to put this on hold until the education officer was appointed at the AGM and a training strategy was incorporated to complement the great work done by Bob Fulton,

Steve Ganner and Dave Rayner . There was discussion on whether to charge beginners for the courses and will be brought up at the AGM in November.

9. Grants.

Annette Hawkins will look into the possibility of the club obtaining any grants.

END OF MEETING



Photo of the new apiary at Samlesbury Hall

.Last year, thanks to a charity donation. The club acquired 5 hives with 10 supers. These hives, by next spring, will have all the colonies transferred into them. We have also managed to get 3 other hives from various sources at no cost. Bees from these 3 hives, and 6 others, have allowed us to put 9 small colonies at the apiary, which had kindly been prepared thanks to the efforts of Sharon Jones, who is the Director at Samlesbury Hall. And, as you can see in the photo, what a great job she's done organising the clearing of the site, laying the hard standing and erecting the fence. Any visits to the apiary for whatever reason do need to be cleared by Sharon first, before even setting foot in the grounds, due to the many private events which take place throughout the week. Details on how, and who to contact for visits will be put on the website as soon as possible. The site has good access with plenty of space to hold meetings and hive openings. The total number of hives has been reduced now to 5 strong colonies for overwintering and is currently being fed sugar syrup. Beekeepers new and old will benefit from this new facility. It is hoped that the apiary will allow courses to be held, for the members of the Blackburn club, possibly on Saturday mornings. However, unlike the project at Towneley Hall, the apiary can be tended by any number of volunteers, whether they are new to beekeeping or not. Volunteers **will** be needed, even if it is only to nip down and top up the feeders. The apiary belongs to the Blackburn and East Lancs Branch and you, as members, are a part of the club. Please don't wait to be asked. Come forward and offer. Help and advice is available. Also, it is hoped that in future years, new beekeepers will benefit from being able to purchase a colony, raised on the site. A shed has been erected, close by (see photo) where spare equipment such as supers, a notice board, hive record cards, feeders etc. can be found. Adjacent to the apiary is a large outbuilding which is to be re-furbished by an outside contractor, and I believe it is to be used for plant sales. We are hoping that we can utilise a corner of the shop and put on a display about the honey bee. Possibly even an observation hive, which I already have available. Again, any help, suggestions or items for the display will be welcomed. We are on the lookout for some green scaffolding mesh to fence around the apiary if anyone has any contacts for it. Send any comments please to Steve Ganner e-mail cathcook@blueyonder.co.uk

Chairman's Chat

Once again we have our autumn edition of Beetalk. These years seem to be passing faster. I can't really think of this being any sort of a year either. Everyone has been having problems with the rubbish season we have had. I don't think we can really call it a summer because it has been so wet. Anyone who started keeping bees this year must be very disheartened by the poor results we have had. Those who started last year when we had a great honey season who thought the hobby was very fruitful are now realising it's not always the same.

The bees have all been acting strangely this year and certainly are not behaving as it says in the books you have all been referring to. Poorly mated queens or completely unmated seems to have been very common throughout the County. Low honey yields are being spoken about, bees starving in the middle of summer.

Swarms swarming again and leaving either loads of queen cells or none at all. What a year.

The attendance at meetings has been good throughout with in excess of 50 people being the norm. The Microscopy meeting only had 26 but that could have been because of holidays. For those of you who didn't make it don't worry because I think we need to follow up on that meeting because there was so much interest afterwards. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have some classes for interested people. Let us know what you think and if you are interested.

I have noticed that there seems to be a small rise in the number of people sending things to the website. It is still not enough. Come on folks, we have 120 plus members, it's your website so get something sent in. I'm sure there are loads of you out there that have had a funny or strange incident happen to you as beginners or novices. Share your experiences with us all. Don't think you may appear daft because we have all been through similar things. For example, David Bush always likes to take me with him when he inspects because the bees always sting me and not him. I remember when we were first starting out we were standing in front of my hives and a bee came out of one, flew straight past David and stung me on the end of the nose. Mind you I don't blame the bee, would you like to sting David?

As most of you will be aware, David Rayner and Annette Hawkins have resigned from their committee positions. David is heavily involved in the Black Bee project and Annette has stopped keeping bees. This has left two positions vacant for the AGM. Juli Scott has kindly offered to take up the position of Programme Secretary and I am happy to have a go at Education Officer. I have only put my name forward for this position to ensure there is not a gap. I would like to think that someone out there would seriously consider filling this position. You do not need to have any of the modules to hold this position, it just needs someone who is willing to co-ordinate the applications and hold details of any training courses etc.

At long last we have a Club Apiary at Samlesbury Hall. Steve Ganner has been working very hard to set this up and should be proud of his achievement. I know it's late in the year but at least now we can get properly prepared for next season and regular hive opening and practical training. We are going to need willing people to help run this apiary because Steve is meeting himself coming back because he has so much on. Let Steve, Phil or myself know and we can get you on the list.

Next meeting is the Bar Bee Que at Brian Jackson's house in Crosshills. Please contact Brian, David Bush or myself if you are coming. Please try and attend it is a good do and Margaret makes some great puds.

Finally thanks to David and Annette for their efforts in the committee positions. I am sure they will both continue to support the branch and will be happy to help or advise anyone who takes up the vacancies. Thanks also to everyone who has stepped up to have a go as speakers and also to all of you who have supported the Branch by attending meetings.

Don't forget, we need to support Michael with our contributions to the website with which he does such a wonderful job

John Zamorski

Few words from the Secretary

Following on from the Chair's chat, I can only encourage our members to get involved and continue to give feedback. This is the only way that we can ensure we are providing the services and support you as a member require, however we as a committee can't do this alone.

If you want to make a difference and have a spare few hours we have available roles on the committee. If you want more details please contact me (vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk).

It has been a very challenging year for all beekeepers, partner Alistair and I included. We lost 2 hives over winter, slow start to the session, followed by 3 infertile queens and the weather continues to confuse the bees. Fingers crossed we will have some Honey to show at the 'Honey Show' on the 7th October 2012. We had a fantastic number of exhibits last year. It would be great to see more members entering anything from a cake to picture. Details of the Honey Show will be sent out in due course.

This year we as a committee have looked to take your feedback on board and this will continue, you may need to bear with us as Rome wasn't built in a day but we will work towards getting there.

That brings me on to mention the great work that Steve Ganner has done in the set up of the Samlesbury Hall Apiary, Dave Rayner in working on the Black Bee Project and Bob Fulton for mentoring groups of new Beekeepers.

Going forward we will also ensure that Committee Meeting minutes are communicated on the Website and if you have any suggestions or points of concern please let me know and I will ensure we as a committee will discuss them and hopefully find a resolution that best fits the majority of members.

Finally thanks to David Rayner, Annette Hawkins and Karen Ramsbottom for their efforts in the committee positions. Also thanks to all the Committee who ensure that the monthly meetings take place and that our members new and old continue to gain knowledge and experience in the world of beekeeping.

Finally I know that John Zamorski has mentioned this however we have a great source of information in our Website and to support the great work that Michael Birt puts into this we need YOU to send us your story's, experiences and general information for the website and Beetalk.



Best wishes to you all

Vici

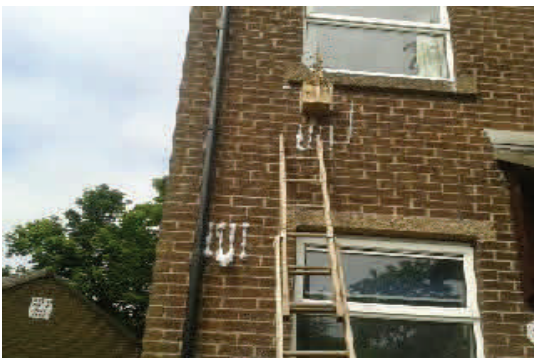
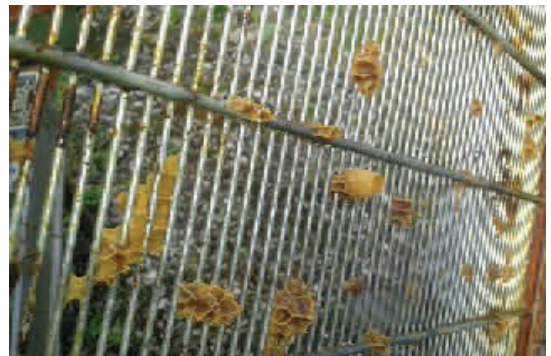
Removing a swarm from a cavity. With thanks to Steve Ganner

Pictures showing a successful attempt at removing bees from a cavity. They had been there only one day and so eggs had not yet been laid. It is simply a small cardboard box silenced to the wall and with a porter escape fixed to one side of the box and placed at the entrance hole. by morning the silicone had set and the bees came out through the porter escape into the box and then out through a small exit hole I made at the front. Once they are out they cannot get back in. This applies to any colony whether it is established or not. That night I returned to find the bees well and truly cramped in the box. No queen though. I have been asked to remove a swarm from another property, also in a cavity. I'm thinking of making a porter escape with a slightly larger opening which will enable the queen to get through, and, although she is likely to stay with the brood, if time is not an issue, and a larger water-proof box was placed at the exit and once all brood has hatched, would she herself join the "swarm" in the new box. Would she be coaxed out if a frame of open brood (too old for queen rearing) was put in the box? Comments are invited. Send them to Michael at webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com for next months issue

Also a photo showing how important it is to check for queen cells on not only the combs, but the queen excluder, the sides of the hive walls and also any blank or feeder frames.

Another photo shows 3 eggs in the BOTTOM of a cell laid by a new queen who hasn't quite got it right on her first few attempts. Easily mistaken for a laying worker where the eggs are usually on the side of the cell, being unable to reach to the bottom due to her shorter body length.

The last photo shows what I believe to be as important as obtaining free bees (a swarm), and that is involving the public, in particular those who have contacted you about the swarm, especially the children. Although this child was too nervous to hold the frame that I had tempted the bees onto, he was excited about having his photo taken so he could tell all his friends at school about the bees in his garden tree. Whenever I go to a swarm, the child's suit and Marigolds go with me, it only takes a few minutes to take a few photos and can be done while waiting for the bees to join the queen in the swarm box.



Branch Meeting June 24th 2012

The branch meeting was held at Salmesbury Memorial Hall where Dave Bush gave a talk, in front of about 50 of our members on saving wax and also making wax exhibits for the show and also candles etc. This was followed by a talk by Michael Birt on an alternative method of the Curry Method of swarm control which entails carryout the method where you can also treat the bees with oxalic acid in summer instead of the winter months. Also some member were treated to a look into the hives at Steve Ganner's apiary.



Towneley Hall Open Day. Sunday 22nd July

The committee, ably assisted by Bill Ainsworth, set up a display of beekeeping, candle making, honey tasting etc. There was also a display hive on show to let people see what goes on inside the hive. We arrived bright and early at 11am to set up and around 12.15 were ready for the first visitors. Unfortunately the banners had not arrived so

John Zamorski went around the site putting up extra signage to direct people in. There was a slow trickle of visitors to start so Annette decided to go and press gang the public who were arriving at the grounds in droves because it was such a beautiful day. Within 10 minutes of her setting off the visitors started to arrive and boy were we busy. I asked a few how they had heard about us and was told by most that a lady had been telling them all about it. Well done Annette you certainly got us busy. At times the room was so full I didn't see room for others to get in. When it quietened off, Annette was out again and soon we were full again.

David Rayner manned the display hive and Bob Fulton had a wax display and virtual hive on show. Brian Jackson filled two tables with his display and David Bush, Ron Dempster and Bill Ainsworth occupied the two tables at the end with candles and honey tasting. Helen Howarth was next to John with a candle rolling exhibit which was mainly for children but even had some of our own members having a go. There were microscopes available for people to look at bits of bees including one of the cornea from a bees eye which drew some great comments from the children.

It was a great day and I really enjoyed it. Thanks must go to all who helped including Vici who had a family function on but still came early and stayed to help set up before shooting off. Thanks to David Rayner who organised the building at short notice and had to stay back afterwards to clear up and put the bees back home.



Our Chris with his finished product. Chris don't give up the day job





Branch Meeting August 19th 2012

Sunday saw a mass gathering of budding microscopist.....well 26 actually.

By 1.30 pm loads of people had turned up clutching their microscopes and were setting them up in the Natural History room at Towneley Hall. Pollens, anatomy and disease samples were on show, plus a few stray insect parts....

At 2.00 pm everyone toddled back to the main lecture room where John explained about the different types of microscopes used by beekeepers, and Helen described the various elements of the BBKA microscopy exam.

Studying for this teaches you how to make pollen slides, how to analyse the honey to establish which flowers have been visited by the bees, to dissection and mounting body parts and checking for diseases.

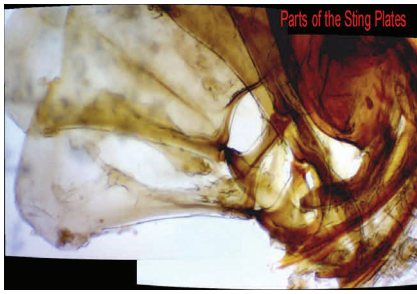
After an early tea break we all rushed back in great excitement to look through the microscopes again, and David, very bravely, gave a live demonstration of how to search for and recognise Nosema with the results projected up for all to see!

See below for pictures taken of microscope slides made by members of the Blackburn Beekeepers Group.

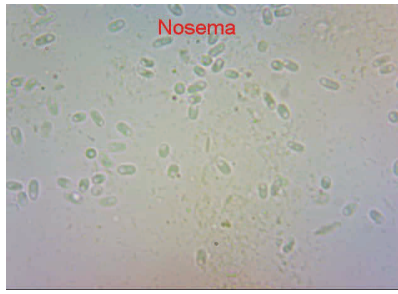
Many thanks to John Helen and David for giving an insight into the use and enjoyment from accessing this hidden world and well done to all of you who took the fascinating pictures for inclusion to Beetalk.



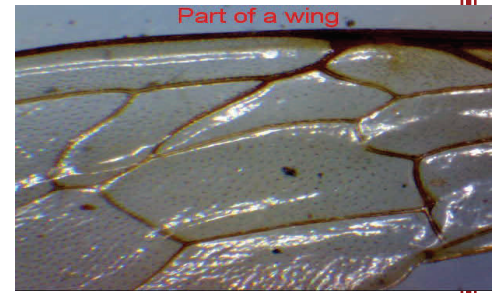
Pictures taken of microscope slides made by members of the Blackburn Beekeepers Group



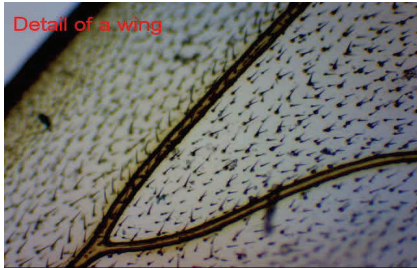
Parts of the Sting Plates



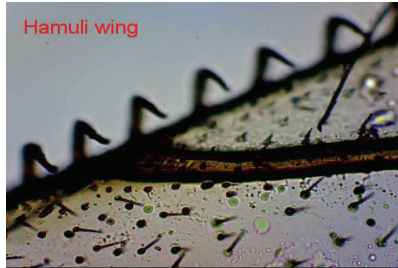
Nosema



Part of a wing



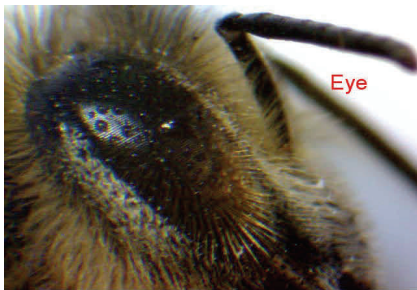
Detail of a wing



Hamuli wing



Pollen Press on rear leg



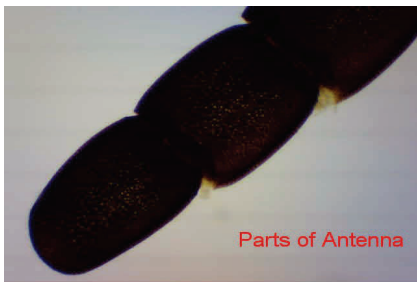
Eye



Proboscis



Trachea



Parts of Antenna



Lime pollen grain



Hazel pollen grain



Mandible



Snowdrop pollen grain



Heather pollen grain



Part of wax mirror



Worker
proboscis
9.2.2008

Well done everyone, very well done indeed. Lets hope that more of our members take up this fascinating part of our beekeeping world. Many thanks again to John, Helen and David for giving us an insight into the use, enjoyment and access to this hidden world.



Steve Ganner sent in above picture.

He uses it for a talks he does for a schools. We have included it for new beekeepers who maybe wondering what equipment they need to buy.

They are.

Bee Brush,

Cloth cover (no everyone like to use these).

Scraper for wax removal.

Roll of tape.

Black marker pen.

Secateurs.

Screwdriver. Small container for sample bees or queen cells.

Small pot of honey-For tempting the bees onto comb.

Lighter for the smoker.

Tipex or colour for queen marking. Queen

Introduction cage.

Multiple holder for queen cells or queens found in swarms (enough for 6 queens).

Drawing pins for marking frames which have queen cells on or fixing mouse guards.

Spare lighter.

Smoker material hessian.

Magnifying glass.

Mouse trap.

Smoker material wood chippings.

Queen marking cage.

Tissues (For wiping the tears away when things go wrong (JOKE)).

Small brush. Queen catchers-absolute minimum 2.

Small scissors for clipping queens wings-if you decide to!.

Mouse guard.

Small mesh to cover crown board holes (prevents the porter escape being propolised up) Secure with drawing pins.

There are many more items you will use obviously. The smoker isn't mentioned for a start. Nor is the hive tool or treatments for varroa.



A FIVE-star hotel especially for bees has been opened in the Ribble Valley.

Stirk House, in Gisburn, is providing special facilities to help give declining bee numbers a big boost.

The initiative, part of efforts by the hotel's owner Paul Caddy to highlight the plight of the bee, also includes projects to protect other species, like the planting of more than 5,000 indigenous trees.

Mr Caddy said: "Bees are the unsung heroes of the food chain. Most fresh fruit and vegetables depend on bees for pollination.

"Our new bee hotel is designed to provide the perfect habitat for some important wild bee varieties, allowing the friendly insects to check in and make their homes.

"We hope that by opening our bee hotel we'll be able to help rejuvenate the local bee population, and ensure our allotments continue to supply the hotel restaurant with lots of fresh, locally-grown produce."

Of the 250 species of bee found in the British countryside, there is a specialist group which nests in small cavities.

But changes in land management and agriculture mean these cavity-nesting bees often struggle to find enough places to nest.

Man-made bee hotels can provide a suitable alternative, giving them nesting sites to start the next generation of bees.

Mr Caddy said: "We recognise that. if we are to continue to source fresh local produce in the long term, we are going to have to look at protecting our wildlife, and do our bit to help solve the problem."

Phil Ainsworth, from the Blackburn and East Lancashire Beekeepers' Association, said he hoped the hotel would help give the bee population in the region a boost.

He said: "Anything that helps promote bees and gives the public information about them can only be very good. We definitely need these things and we also need a multi-pronged approach to help bees.

"Areas where bees can go and be looked after are very important for their long-term future."

Bob Fulton, along with a few of our members , went along to Darwen Gala and Herbert Parkinson's charity gala to promote Blackburn Beekeepers and beekeeping in general. Attached are a few photographs of the days events. Well done to Bob and everyone involved.

Darwen Gala Pictures.



Herbert Parkinson's charity gala pictures





One of our unlucky members sent in this picture. The hive that was on the ground was flooded, but luckily no bees were in. The other 2 were ok



No posting and collecting any letters until this lot are sorted out



Our Chairman, Johns granddaughter and Humphrey bear looking into the bees. Lovely Picture. It would be lovely to see more of our children doing the same instead of playing games on computers and the like.

BeeTalk Tip

Often, when lifting a frame out which has many bees hanging from the bottom (and possibly the queen amongst them) they fall off and are aggravated. To lessen the chance of this happening, when you have lifted out the frame to inspect, immediately turn it around and it will be upside down. The bees will then gently roll down onto the frame. By the time you need to inspect the opposite side, the bees will have moved onto the comb.

With thanks to Steve Ganner

BEEKEEPING TERMS EXPLAINED

BEESPACE Discovered in the mid.1800's and brought to the attention of the world by Langstroth. This is the distance 9mm between combs that the bees prefer to live and work. Any less and the bees try to fill the gap with wax or propolis, any more and the bees build brace comb to use up the space. This simple realisation made the movable frame hive possible and created modern beekeeping.

BRACE COMB Comb built by the bees in any available spaces within the hive. Modern hives are designed to minimise brace comb, which tends to fix parts of the hive together making it difficult to manipulate.

BROOD BOX A deep box without top or bottom in which the frames hang in a movable frame hive. This is where the queen lays and some stores are kept.

CELL One hexagonal unit in a comb. The worker bees build these from wax almost perfectly in complete darkness. The design of a cell is the perfect compromise of minimum weight to maximum strength and is admired by engineers the world over. The queen lays an egg in each cell, which is later capped with wax to allow the larva to turn into a bee. Other cells are used to store honey and pollen.

COLONY The name given to a collection of bees either in the wild or in a hive. A healthy colony can contain up to 60,000 bees at the height of the summer. A collection of bees all flying together is called a swarm.

COMB The place where bees are born and stores are kept made up of hexagonal wax cells. Supported by a frame in modern hives. Cut comb is honey sold in a block of comb straight from the hive.

DRONE A fertile male bee. He does little work in the hive and is thrown out of the hive in the autumn by the female workers. The queen will mate in the air with several drones that then die after mating.

EXTRACTOR A machine driven by hand or motor which spins the frames of comb and throws out the honey by centrifugal force. This allows the beekeeper to put the empty frame back in the hive to be re-filled by the bees saving them the extra work of drawing new comb/

FRAME An open rectangle usually of wood into which a sheet of foundation, usually wax, is nailed. The bees use the foundation as a template to build their comb across the hive. The discovery of bee space in the mid 1800's made modern beekeeping possible as removable frames with exactly the right distance apart enabled the beekeeper to examine and manipulate the colony.

HIVE The home of the honeybee provided by the beekeeper. There are many different types of hive some examples are called skeps, Nationals or WBC's. Modern hives consist of a brood box, supers, movable frames. a floor, a roof, a crown board and a queen excluder.

HONEY Produced by the bees in the hive by concentrating nectar over and over again. It is stored in 'cells' to enable the bees to survive through winter without hibernating. The art of the beekeeper is to encourage their bees to produce a surplus of honey to extract.

HONEYBEE Bees are insects and belong to the 'superfamily' *Apoidea* and the order *Hymenoptera*. Various sub families of bees exist.

LIFT The sloping slats that make up the sides of the traditional WBC hive. Many lifts can be stacked up to cover and protect the brood box and supers inside.

MOVABLE FRAME HIVE Although tried by many inventors in many countries, Langstroth patented the movable frame hive in 1851. Opening from the top with ten frames it allowed the beekeeper for the first time, to remove, examine and reposition combs.

NATIONAL The name given to the most popular style of hobby hive in the U.K. The debate over a National Standard for frame and hive size continued for years with everyone having their own preference

NECTAR A sweet liquid produced within certain flowers as an attraction to insects. This co-operation between plants and insects ensures the fertilisation of the flowers to produce seed. Bees concentrate the nectar in the hive to produce honey and store it in cells.

POLLEN Bees go from flower to flower gathering pollen and nectar as food. In doing so, some pollen is passed from one flower to another thus fertilising or pollinating the plant. This is a vital part of agriculture and we would have very little food or countryside without bees which perform around 95% of pollination in the U.K.

PROPOLIS This is a sticky brown filler or type of glue that bees collect to seal gaps in the hive. The main source is the sap of trees.

QUEEN The only fertile female in the hive, the queen can lay up to 2000 eggs a day! After emerging from the queen cell a virgin queen will feed and get used to the hive. After around a week, she will fly from the hive to mate with several drones in the air. She will return to the hive never to leave again unless the colony swarms. A queen can live up to five years but often exhaust her supply of fertile eggs within three years.

QUEEN EXCLUDER A metal or plastic grid placed between the brood box and super in a modern hive. The spaces are wide enough to allow workers to pass through with honey but are too narrow for the queen and drones to pass through.

SCOUT A worker bee that flies away from the colony or swarm to look for a new source of nectar or the site for a swarm to begin a new colony.

SKEP The traditional round hive made of straw or rushes. Few skeps are in use today as it is difficult to see between the combs built inside and attend to the bees. Skeps are still used to collect swarms by many beekeepers.

SMOKER A metal container with a spout operated by a hand bellows. If a whiff of smoke is blown into a hive, top and bottom, the bees instinctively sense that something is amiss and fill their stomachs with honey from the nearest cell in case they have to abandon the hive and start a new home. With full stomachs, they find it harder to position their abdomen and insert their sting, hopefully making them easier to handle. The beekeeper fills the smoker with dry grass, rotting wood or other vegetation. Corrugated paper is no longer used as it can contain toxic glues.

STORES Parts of the comb are filled with pollen and honey producing in effect a colony's larder. The pollen and honey is fed to the young bees, as they are high in protein and carbohydrate. The honey when eaten by the bees gives them energy. Honeybees do not hibernate: they have evolved to survive the winter by storing surplus honey and pollen in the combs to eat during the cold weather.

SUPER A shallow box without a top or bottom in which the frames of comb hang in a movable frame hive. A queen excluder prevents the queen from getting into the box yet allows the worker bees to store honey in the comb. This is where the beekeeper finds the surplus honey to remove from the comb with an extractor.

SWARM The way bee colonies multiply; when a hive becomes too crowded the bees will build queen cells. Soon after these cells are sealed, up to half the bees will leave the hive with the queen as a swarm. After settling nearby, scouts will seek a new home and the swarm will fly off to settle in the site they consider most appropriate. In the original colony, the first queen to emerge could either destroy any queens still waiting to hatch or leave the hive with up to half of the bees. As further queens hatch, this may result in further, smaller swarms called castes, denuding the colony of even more bees.

VARROA DESTRUCTOR A parasitic mite which lives on bee larvae and adult bees. Introduced into Britain from Europe in the 1992, it is at present impossible to destroy completely. Were it not for dedicated beekeepers, bees in the U.K. would have eventually died out before they could become resistant to the mite, with catastrophic results for the pollination of crops

WAX Produced in small plates by bees from glands along their abdomens. These thin oval plates of wax are chewed by the bees to soften them and then form the wax into comb

WORKER A sterile female bee that performs all the functions necessary in the hive. All honeybees seen flying around flowers will be workers.

With thanks to Bournemouth and South Dorset BKA and e-bees



Aristaeus (a Greek patron god of beekeeping) learned the art of beekeeping from Nymphs (goddesses) who taught him how to tame the Goddess's bees and keep them in hives. But Aristaeus attempted to rape Eurydice (a nature goddess deity and wood nymph of oak trees) who in her efforts to elude him stepped on a poisonous serpent, which bit her: She died. Then all of Aristaeus' bees died.

His lack of respect for the feminine earth led to his bees disappearing. This story seems appropriate/applicable then and now. Cutting of forests (including oaks) and over-tilling of the ground disrupts natural bee nesting and foraging; The loss of bees via insecticide use and over working of the bees and leaving them far too little of their own medicinal honey. An underlying reason could be lack of respect for mother earth - seeing her comprised of merely physical components and systems meant for man's use and desires only, rather than as full of living nature goddess deities worthy of respect.

Aristaeus went on to establish altars, sacrifice cattle and leave their carcasses, from which new swarms of bees rose (see bottom right of this photo).

In the ancient Mediterranean region, bugonia or bougonia was a ritual based on the belief that bees were spontaneously generated from a cow's carcass, although it is possible that the ritual had more currency as a poetic and learned trope than as an actual practice.

We can do positive things for actual bee nesting and foraging habitats. The world's many diverse bee species will benefit from our honour and respect.

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 broodnest

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 broodnest

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 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: Sacbrood, American foulbrood, European foulbrood. Call your Bee Inspector.

Pesticide damage.

Mummified larvae

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

Some bee Pictures



Drone mating with a queen



Stingless Bee (*Tetragonula pagdeni*) . Photo taken near the editors hives in Banglamung, 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, the overall stock in the area should improve.

With thanks to Julian Routh of Warwickshire Beekeepers Association and e-bees

Bee Pictures on stamps from Around the world





Bait hives

Many of our newly joined members are first-time beekeepers, who are not yet in possession of bees. Given the current cost of a 5-frame nucleus (anything up to £150) you might like to be ready for the possibility of picking up a passing swarm. The way to do this is to set up a 'bait-hive', which may tempt some bees looking for a new home to come their way. When a colony is preparing to swarm, scout bees will be out looking for a good looking billet – that is, one that looks, feels and smells right to them. The ideal quality of such a home is it should be big enough for both the bees and for the food they will need to store for survival, such as a typical brood box. It will be even more tempting if it has previously contained bees – the lingering odours of honey and wax will be an extra incentive for them to choose your offering, especially if you can also furnish it with two or three old combs (in reasonable condition). Of course, you may have no choice but to use a new hive and some foundation if that is all you have, but the 'second-hand' stock will usually have the edge for this particular purpose.

Find a cool spot for the hive to wait in. Many beekeepers recommend positioning it as high up as you can manage (e.g. 2 – 3 metres above ground). It is true that scouting bees can often be seen inspecting possible residences at or above head level (chimney pots are a favourite) but personally I have not found that to be necessary. Check your hive regularly (you will soon see if bees have arrived by the activity at the entrance). If you are lucky enough to lure a swarm then exchange the old comb for new foundation and, after about three days, put on a feeder with 1 weak (1:1) sugar solution. A good swarm is a comb drawing 'machine' and within a week or so will have made astonishing progress in making your hive fit to live in. At this point you may already find eggs being laid and then you must be ready to add further combs as the colony expands up to its full size.

There is a chance that you may have collected a 'cast' or secondary swarm, with a virgin queen. In this case you will have to wait longer while she mates with your local drones (there will be some waiting, you can be sure) and then comes into lay in your hive. Be patient and keep to a weekly inspection pattern. Too much intrusion, especially with a virgin queen, can put them off the whole enterprise. Good luck!

Honey Bees survive for millennia in Saharan oasis

Deep in the Sahara desert are honey bees that have remained isolated for at least 5,000 years. The bees arrived at Kufra in Libya when the Sahara was still green and have survived ever since around an oasis in the desert over 1,000 kms from the nearest neighbouring bees. These bees are also free from varroa. Around 10,000 years ago the area was a green savannah well suited to honey bees. Today most are kept by local bee-keepers for honey production and to pollinate oasis plants, but some wild populations survive; one such group is at the desert oasis of Kufra, and another at Brak in the west of Libya. DNA from sixteen colonies at Kufra and sixteen from Brak were analysed, along with colonies from three coastal sites. Fifteen genetic markers that indicate mating frequency, colony density and gene diversity were analysed, which showed the extent to which their populations have changed over time. As expected, the results showed that the coastal bees had high levels of genetic diversity, due to the intensive apiculture industry there; The colony at Brak was also diverse. Brak has a honey season which encourages beekeepers to bring their own bees to the oasis. The Kufra honey bees had similar colony densities as bees elsewhere, but certain genetic traits appeared in the Kufra bees at much higher frequencies, with some being unique. This showed that the Kufra bees have remained isolated from all others for 5,000 years, and possibly up to 10,000 years, ever since the moment that they were cut off by the creation of the Sahara desert. Perhaps surprisingly, the researchers' analysis also showed that the Kufra bees are not suffering from any ill effects, caused by in-breeding, from their isolation.

BBC Earth News & from West Cornwall BKA courtesy of E-BEES

Is this a modern work of art, a piece of coral or maybe a alien landscape



Beekeeping Tips with thanks to Essex BKA

Once the bees have started to forage early in the year, the pollen on the legs of the returning bees will tell you it's time to look at the pattern of the brood nest and to make sure that all is well. Firstly, the smoker should be lit and going well with little likelihood of it going out in the middle of an inspection. Whether it is likely to go out depends to some extent on what fuel you use in the smoker. I find

that collecting old fallen dead wood, when out walking through woodland areas, provides an adequate supply of fuel once it is dried. Always carry a plastic bag in your pocket before such walks. Put a small handful of grass on top of the wood fuel (or in the lid) to prevent sparks being blown on to the bees. Sparks that fall on to the ground can be especially dangerous in dry weather. So long as one hive is flying well then all hives in that apiary should be examined.

For inspections of the brood chamber it is wise not to smoke at the entrance as this drives the bee upwards in the hive whereas you want them below the top of the top bars of the frames. So just crack open the crown board, at one corner and puff in a little smoke before gently twisting the crown board horizontally a few seconds later. Twisting it avoids making vibrations and noise that are likely to

give the bees more warning that you are coming! None should fly up as you stand the crown board vertically against the hive stand, bees and all. Before you stand up the crown board inspect it to make sure the queen is not on it. If she is there then you can offer her up to the entrance by sloping the crown board, upwards, to the entrance so that she can walk into the hive or alternatively hold the board so that she is on that part of the board nearest to the top bars of the frames, and a few centimetres above them. With your other hand just thump the board edge next to the hand you're using to hold the board. The queen and bees around her will fall on to the top bars. Her ladyship will quickly go down into the dark.

Stand behind the hive or to one side depending on whether you have your frames the warm way (parallel to the entrance block) or the cold way. You are thus able to lift out each frame vertically. Start slowly with the second frame from the edge of the brood chamber nearest to you, as this one is easier than the first frame, which latter is usually attached to the hive wall by more propolis or wax. Examine carefully to ensure the queen is not on that frame before you stand it vertically near the hive entrance. If there is brood on that frame it must be examined. You now have a space within which you can lift out the next frame without rolling the bees on each other as you lift. In other words move this frame 10 mm or so towards you before lifting ... a process repeated for each subsequent frame until you reach your last frame against the hive far wall. Tilt the bottom of the frame away from you and face into the sun or best light so that you can clearly see into any cell by looking down and beyond the top bar. Be careful not to deceive yourself by reflections on the cell wall that you have an egg or young larvae in the cell, when in fact there is nothing in the cell. Eggs are roughly 2 mm long and at the bottom of the cell. Any on the sidewall of the cell spells trouble. Next turn the frame so that you can inspect the side of the frame that was previously nearest to you. It is important to do the two sides of the frame in that order as the first side you inspected has just emerged into daylight and since queens like the dark it gives you the opportunity to spot her quickly on that side before she makes a move to the other side via the bottom bar, which is now the darker side. When turning the frame do keep the foundation in the vertical plane as you turn it over. If you are not familiar with this move ask someone to show you. This prevents any sagging of the foundation, which is quite warm and soft. Remember that you do not need to find the queen if eggs are there.

Remember that the brood nest is in reality a small sphere about the shape of a football. In the early part of the season five or so frames will divide it. Each roughly circular patch of brood will have eggs around the periphery followed by increasingly larger larvae as hatched eggs are found as you eye moves towards the centre of the patch. In the centre you will observe patches of sealed larvae.

As you work across the frames of the brood nest the circles of brood will increase in size with a similar smooth pattern, and then decrease as you reach the far frames of the brood nest. The main difference being that some of the sealed larvae nearest to the centre will have hatched. You will possibly see bees about to emerge after 21 days from the time the egg was laid. At this stage if there is nothing untoward that has been observed you need to go no further.

Close up the frames and replace the first frame, which has been standing near the hive entrance throughout your examination. Replace the crown board by placing it initially so that its corners are halfway between the corners of the brood chamber and then rotating it alternately back and forth, in small amounts, until it arrives in its correct position. This minimises the chance of squashing bees. A bit of smoke at this time helps to keep the bees down before you finally twist the crown board back into position. Squashing bees is unnecessary and results in spreading disease if it's there, as well as releasing sting pheromone. Care and steady handling results in quiet bees for the whole season.

It has been my observation that beginners tend not to use enough smoke in order to keep the bees below the top bars when doing inspections. As you gain experience you will learn how to use the minimum of smoke to control your bees and to smoke just before you lift out the frame.

Finally, if anything seems not to be correct, for example dead larvae or larvae lying in unnatural positions, then do call in your mentor or one of the ministry disease officers.



Left. A hatched queen cell.

Centre: A sealed queen cell-or is it a re-sealed queen cell?

Right: A torn down queen cell

Queen cells in the colony need attention at any time of year, but what you do depends on the type of queen cell. They are produced under three impulses- Swarming, Emergency and Supersedure. You must also know the stage of their development. An unsealed queen cell has an obvious bed of white 'royal jelly'. These are the best ones to keep as you know they are occupied by a larva. A sealed queen cell can sometimes be empty, so there is always a risk in leaving just one. A hatched queen cell is often resealed by the bees, sometimes with a greedy worker inside, eating the remnants of the royal jelly. It will reopen easily if the seal is tested with a pin.

Swarm cells are generally found at any time from April onwards. They are usually built around the edges of the frames and in any pop-holes. There may be a great many of them and they are produced in purpose built queen-cups. They hang down vertically. As soon as you find them take the appropriate swarm control measures. If the queen is a very good one you could use surplus cells to raise extra queens in mating nucs, but remember that they are from a swarmy strain of bee. Swarming is generally over by the end of July, but it is not uncommon for a colony with a very prolific new queen to out grow its accommodation and throw a swarm. New queens are otherwise unlikely to swarm.

Emergency queen cells are produced when a queen is lost for any reason (often beekeeper error, but sometimes inexplicable) These are produced from young larvae anywhere on the face of the comb and may be numerous. They project from the face of the comb before turning downwards. Because the larvae chosen may be older than the optimum age they may not be fed so well on royal jelly and therefore the queens produced may also be inferior. Remove any very small cells and try to leave a large, unsealed one. If they are all sealed the safest thing to do is leave the two best ones and hope no casting occurs.

Supersedure queen cells. Supersedure occurs when the bees feel that their queen is failing and try to replace her. This failure may not be obvious to the beekeeper, but is a case when the bees know best. If you remove the cells, almost always, more will be built. If you persist in removing cells into the autumn, any virgin that does hatch will have no drones to mate with, and the old queen may well die over the winter. Supersedure cells are found on the face of the comb and usually only two or three are produced. They are started in queen cups, so hang down vertically, are very well fed, and the subsequent queens are usually of high quality. Supersedure often happens at the back end of the year, and the first you know about it is finding an unmarked queen in the spring. You may though, see two queens laying on the same comb in the autumn, the only time this occurs. The old queen will eventually disappear. Supersedure can also happen by accident. I had a colony with many swarm cells, that I thought had already swarmed, and split the brood into three nucs, each with a queen cell. However, at the next inspection, in one of the nuc boxes, I found the old queen and next to her, her new daughter both happily laying away. This new queen was raised from a swarm cell, not a supersedure cell. I have also read several accounts of this as being a good way to re-queen an aggressive colony. Take an advanced sealed queen cell from a good tempered colony. Protect it in a queen cell cage or simply wrap the sides of the cell in foil. Place it between two brood combs and keep your fingers crossed. Apparently, more often than not, the new queen will supersede the old one. The old queen would have to be marked for you to be sure supersedure had (or hadn't) taken place. It would be interesting to know how much supersedure goes on. I have already had a letter from Jason Turner asking how many beekeepers have seen two queens on a comb, as he just has, and how often. I remember it happening in the observation nuc box at the Honey Show one year. The public seemed to think it was quite normal, but the beekeepers present were very excited about it.

Editor of The Apiarist, newsletter of Harrogate & Ripon Bee-keepers Association, via eBEES.

The Usefulness of Internet Information

Many beginning beekeepers use the internet as their first port of call when looking for information, but all beekeepers use the internet at some time or other. This can give some misleading information to the unwary as, indeed, can many books and research papers which can sometimes give a narrowly focused view. Let me explain that bee research is carried out in many different parts of the world, mainly using the bees that are locally available to the researchers. Bees are not all the same, all races have different characteristics and behaviour and exist in various degrees of racial purity, so information gathered and conclusions drawn in any particular study cannot be applied universally to all other bees and circumstances.

The UK and Ireland have a population that contains a large proportion of Dark European Honey Bee genes and as such are very different in behaviour to the majority of bees commonly studied by scientists, so we have to be particularly careful about interpreting and applying information that we read in books and gather from the internet.

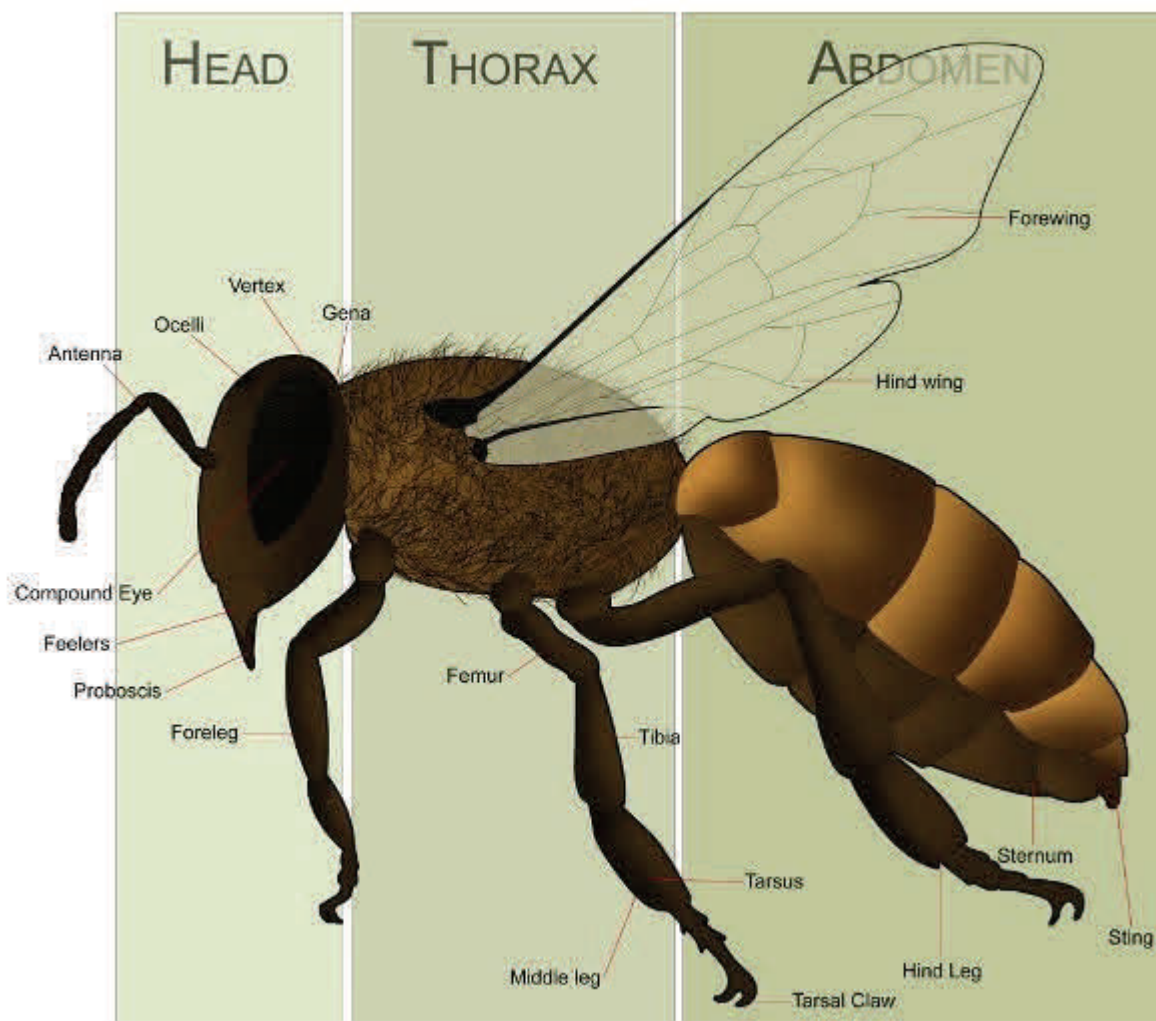
When reading papers and books you should try to fix in your mind where the bees concerned were and what racial type they may have been. For instance, in USA the bees are generally a mixture of Italian and Carniolan types, with less than three per cent Dark European Honey Bee genes; parts of Germany can be Carniolan or Dark European; Slovenia and Czech Republic are almost exclusively Carniolan – and many parts of South America are Africanised.

There is another problem with online information, in that the internet is not policed, so Joe beekeeper can promote his favourite theory just as easily as a university researcher can publish genuine research. There are no checks as to whether the information is right or wrong so that someone who is a glib writer may easily promote misinformation just as easily as accurate data. Books pose other, additional problems in interpretation. During the period either side of year 1900, many of the beekeeping authors were members of the clergy, some of whom imparted a religious or moral 'spin' to their information. However the main problem with books is the propagation of inaccurate information, which in turn is repeated in subsequent books written by others that have done their learning from the earlier books. The fact that said piece of inaccurate information occurs in several books then lends weight for such information to be believed. There is another tendency with belief of printed texts and that is that 'it must be true because it has been published'.

I cannot give you any method of sorting the wheat from the chaff other than by improving your own education on bee matters. The best way of achieving this is by attending meetings, lectures and conferences and getting to know the researchers and lecturers themselves, so that you can ask them direct questions. This requires an investment in time and sometimes incurs travel costs, but over a few years you will gain enough knowledge to make sensible judgment on what you are reading. This process is also fun and you will meet many beekeepers in the process. I visit many conferences every year. I also get to meet many beekeepers as I also do a bit of lecturing.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the last ten years, during which I have attended hundreds of conferences and have met thousands of beekeepers from all over the world. I hope you all get as much enjoyment from your own self education as I have had during mine.

*(the late) Dave Cushman, Leicestershire
& Rutland Beekeepers Association
Newsletter, via eBEES.*



To bee or not to bee

by William Shakespeare

To bee, or not to bee: that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the hive to hurl the stings and buzzes of enrag'd workers, or to take smoke against a sea of troubles, and by sedation end them? To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to hope we end the thousand pests and pesticides that bees are prone to, 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wish'd. To hibernate; to sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub; for in that sleep of death what dreams may come of halcyon hives beyond a flowering sea, must give us pause: there's the respect of bees for keepers calm and kind; For who would bear the whips and scorns of wild, the raiding bears, the scratching mites, the colony collapse disorder, spring's delay, the insolence of kids with stones and dogs that stink a stinkhorn out, When happy bees their treaty make With but a gift of honey homely made. To wax and weary dance a busy life, bearing the dread of winters famine, the undiscover'd country from whose chill no colony returns, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of? Thus fearfulness makes cowards us all; And thus the natural drive to forage is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, And, enterprise of great collusion, with this regard our swarming turned awry, and lost the name of action. - Soft you now! The fair Melliferal Nymph, in thy prayers be all our stings forgiven.

This little known piece was written by Shakespeare in the late 1570s when he was in his teens and shows an amazing maturity of style. It has been largely forgotten since his adaptation of it to Hamlet about 20 years later. Shakespeare was much taken with the drama of the hive, queen flight and the personality of drones. He, with his contemporaries, believed that all female bee-keepers were known by their bees as 'Ophelia' but recent bee neuro-science shows that there is regional variation, with 'Loveday' occurring in the south-west and Nuala among Irish bees, so we have adopted a more generic name here.

Nick Tregenza
An Hes, The Newsletter of the West Cornwall BKA

DID YOU KNOW.

There are over 20,000 species of bees in the world (of all sizes and colours) - that is more species than mammals and birds combined. There are bees that specialize on orchids, bees that nest underground, solitary bees and communal/colonial bees, gentle bees and aggressive bees, nocturnal and diurnal bees, cleptoparasitic bees, stinging bees and stingless bees, and many more. Associated with bee diversity is cultural diversity - some peoples traditionally teach their children how to distinguish between over 50 species of bees. Bee and cultural diversity are both very important.



Agapostemon sp. A very colourful bee! The genus *Agapostemon* is a common group of Western hemisphere sweat bees of generally green or blue appearance (head and thorax always, sometimes also the abdomen in some females). There are some 45 species in the genus, ranging from Canada to Argentina. They superficially resemble various members of the tribe Augochlorini, which are typically metallic greenish in appearance. Members of this genus are commonly referred to as metallic green bees.



Bee carrying orchid pollen preserved in Amber that existed 15 to 20 million years ago.
Tiny *thrips* also were pollinators long ago (100 million years ago)



These are Garden Varieties of Native Bees of North America.

Tales of a beekeeper.

Whilst transporting a hive I recently broke the speed limit and opted to go on a speed awareness course to prevent points on my licence. Whilst there, the long-standing tutor asked for instances of pupil's reasons for speeding and if any of the class felt that if they had written to the Chief constable, they may have been "let off". He assured us that he and the Chief had heard them all!

I began by telling the class that I was in the process of transferring my hive to another site, when a car pulled out in front of me and I was forced to brake suddenly. The jolt caused the hive body to move an eighth of an inch from the stand. YES-ONE EIGHTH OF AN INCH!!! At first I didn't notice, but as I came to a built up area, there were 10 or so bees around me. I glanced over my shoulder to see the bees streaming from the hive at an alarming rate. As the windows began filling up and I took in the look of horror from the hundreds of pedestrians all around, I realised that I couldn't open the car door and allow ten thousand angry bees to envelop innocent bystanders. With bees covering much of my head and arms I put my foot down and headed back to my original apiary. Unbeknown to me, within 30 metres I passed a police radar van. A further 50 metres, I "U" turned and yes-he also got me on the way back. A possible 6 points in just 11 seconds. The result of my talk to the class, far more descriptive than space will allow in this magazine, and with slight exaggerations in the story, as you do, meant that the noise level (laughing) prevented me from fully finishing off my story about what happened at the other end. BUT, the tutor held his hand up and conceded that I may have had a good case had I written to the Chief

Steve Ganner

P.S I didn't get any points at all from either of the 2 incidents?

And Finally.

Your Beetalk Editor, hard at work knocking up Beetalk in his office in Thailand.



Bye till the next issue in December.

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