



Bee Talk

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

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December 2007

Registered Charity

What's in this issue of Bee Talk

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All sorts of topics - from shortbread to Tiny Tim and from the AGM to transponders!

BEGINNER'S PAGE

PAGE 2,3,4 & 5

A huge but most interesting article for ALL beekeepers on that most vital part of beekeeping - *EXTRACTING*. We think it's worth filing away for next year

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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So you want to be a beekeeper? But can you cope with stings and how's your back?

BEEKEEPING CLASSES

PAGE 5

David Rayner will again be running beekeeping classes starting early in the New year. Why not give him a ring and find out more?

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It hasn't been a good year in Italy. What with colony collapse and perishing chemicals.

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Two articles on our latest worry - Colony Collapse Disorder which go to prove that it's not "All in the mind"

OUR HONEY SHOW

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A report on our very successful honey show by Carolin Caughlin

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All sorts of notices and reminders. Do read them and make a note in your diary?

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John Zamorski sums up the year. He praises the honey shows and other events of the year.

MEMBERS ONLY

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A new feature which shows great promise. Articles by OUR members, Please keep it up after all it is your magazine. If you have something to tell us - drop Bill a line or give him a ring.

THE COUNTY SHOW

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A report on the County Honey Show which this year was hosted by our own Blackburn and East Lancashire Association

IN A NUTSHELL

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The final part of this article which, amongst other things, talks about moving hives

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As if you hadn't enough to worry about - something else to keep you awake at nights

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Is the hive a democracy? and are you really PC or what's more, do you want to be?

SCRAPINGS

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Bits and pieces which wouldn't fit anywhere else. A lovely eulogy for a beekeeper and bees working the night shift!

Editorial

WINTER DRAWS ON

A cold and gloomy December is where we start on what we hope will be a bright and informative Bee Talk.

MEMBERS PAGES

Information is what this news letter is really about, and I'm pleased to see that on pages 14 and 15 "Bits and Pieces from the Members" has got off to a good start. Do keep it up. Any sort of information from you is grist to the mill. We want to know what is going on in the Blackburn area not the other side of the World, Well that as well if we can! but really, what works in Blackburn area is of more importance to us.

A LONG ARTICLE

Arthur has at last yielded to putting long articles in. Beginners pages has a superb article Three and a bit pages long. We have never done that before but I think it should suit beginners and experienced beekeepers alike. It is an article that is well worth keeping for reference. Let us know!

THE AGM

The AGM was well attended and the business got through without any fighting. There is a slight alteration to the list of officers and members (see page 11) Mainly that Pauline Roberts has agreed to take the job of programs secretary. John Zamorski says he will love her for ever!

HOLDEN CLOUGH

It was put to the meeting that due to a lack of volunteers to run the Holden Clough apiary it should be closed down, the meeting was in general agreement, so it will be left to the new committee to take that forward.

SHORTBREAD

Thanks were given to Ken for his hospitality and the shortbread was as good as it has ever been.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

I suppose I should mention the changes in the way of paying our subscriptions. See Page 15 it is all there. I'll just say "please do help."

DECEMBER 2007

AUTUMN CONVENTION

I must tell you about the North West Beekeeper Autumn Convention. It was held at West Bradford Village Hall on the 20th of October. The speakers were Professor Pickard speaking on "The Wonderful Thing About Bees" and "The Evolution of Societies" Also we had Dr. Juliet Osborne speaking on Bumblebee Behaviour and Radar Tracking.

The venue was superb, the organization was great but best of all Professor Pickard was absolutely brilliant. I have heard many speakers but never one to match this one. His talk was suitable to all grades of bee keepers from raw beginners to professionals, even to peoples who had no reason to be there, but for a sit down! I was so pleased, that I just had to go and congratulate him personally. What a wonderful day!

TRANSPONDERS

Dr. Juliet Osborne's talk about transponder radar tracking was fascinating. It shows just how much effort and skill is put into research of this kind, she brought some transponders to show us how small they are. These tiny things are glued on to the backs of the bees, and the radar tracks these alone. At one point Juliet accidentally dropped one, and it seemed that half the audience was on its knees looking for it. It made a good show.

Next year the Convention will be held in Spring The 1st of March to be exact. The venue has yet to be arranged.

AND FINALLY

A very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year from Arthur and Bill.

And, no matter who your God may be, as Tiny Tim observed in Dickens Christmas Carol, "God bless Us, Every One!"



EXTRACTING



HONEY

The main reason for keeping bees is to harvest the honey they produce. Before the nectar collected from flowers becomes honey, the bees bring about several changes. Enzymes are added and excess water is evaporated until the water content is reduced to about 18%. The latter is essential if the stored honey is not going to spoil because of fermentation.

‘RIPE’ HONEY

When the honey is ‘ripe’, the bees seal each cell with a wax capping. When the combs in a super have been mostly capped in this way, the super is cleared of bees and removed for extraction. The cappings are cut off with a knife to expose the honey before extraction. To remove the honey from the combs you will need an extractor - most designs consist of a drum in which several frames can fit and these are then spun round to throw the honey out of the combs by centrifugal force.

EXTRACTORS

There are two basic types of extractors. The tangential type has the faces of the combs placed at right angles to the radii or tangentially. Honey

is removed from the outer face - the combs have to be reversed to complete the extraction. The radial type removes honey from both sides in one operation. The frames are arranged like the spokes of a wheel on the radii of the rotor. New extractors are expensive so don’t buy one until you are certain of your interest.

OUR ASSOCIATION HAS ONE

Your local association has one you can hire. Since their invention, much beekeeping equipment, including extractors, has been made from tin-plate. However, recent legislation prohibits their use - don’t, therefore, be tempted into buying second-hand equipment, unless it is made from food-grade plastic or stainless steel.

LEAVE THE TAP OPEN!

The third rule of beekeeping: “You will leave the extractor tap open (only once!) and have your precious honey on the floor”. Be warned - honey flows silently! And however careful you are, every door handle and surface will be sticky.



HEATHER HONEY

The extraction of heather honey is somewhat different to other honeys. Heather honey is thixotropic or jelly-like and has to be pressed out of the combs - alternatively, the honey can be eaten in the comb. If you don’t want to extract heather honey, an alternative is to cut the comb into pieces and use and sell it as ‘cut comb’ for which there is a ready market. Cut-comb fetches a higher price.

RAPE HONEY

Farmers in most areas are now cultivating large acreages of oil seed rape. Honey from this source granulates or crystallises rapidly, which is said to be undesirable in cut-comb - but there are customers who seem not to mind. You can purchase a comb cutter to give either 8 oz or 12 oz pieces and plastic cases in which to package them. It is necessary to use thin unwired foundation in the supers if you intend to produce cut comb. Supers containing rape honey must be removed and extracted when the water content has been reduced sufficiently to avoid subsequent

fermentation and before it sets solid in the comb preventing extraction in the usual manner. This is usually when about two thirds of the comb have been capped.

HEATING

Don't try straining straight from the extractor.

Fill suitable containers and use as required. The solidified honey will need melting before straining through muslin and will be warm enough to strain easily. An insulated cabinet for melting honey can easily be constructed for this purpose. A refrigerator from the local tip can provide an insulated body - a bulb provides the heat. Refinements include a thermostat and fan to circulate the air. A honey warming kit is available and provides a thermostat, heating element and thermometer.

COLD PRESSED

If your honey is "Cold Pressed" you could use this as a selling point - it is more valid than "Organic Honey"! Similarly, the enzyme diastase is destroyed by heating and age and is used as an indicator of quality. Neither HMF nor diastase can be analysed easily by the beekeeper - therefore, the heating of honey must be kept to a minimum.

Honey that exceeds the limits for HMF or diastase can be sold only as bakers honey i.e. for general manufacturing purposes - at a lower price. You can, of course, simply leave the supers of rape honey on the hives for the bees to consume. The experts tell you that this is not good practice. As the honey crystallises, a weak solution of sugar is left around the crystals.

THE RUNS !

This, it is frequently stated, causes dysentery. In addition the bees have to fly out to find water to dilute the solid honey, causing mortality if the weather is cold. Fortunately, bees do not read beekeeping books. I never used to admit to this heinous crime until I heard a well-respected speaker say that he always left a super

of granulated honey on each hive as winter feed! I can only say that my bees winter well and show no signs of dysentery. I assume many wild colonies have similar stores.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

The best food for bees is the honey they produce for that purpose. There is a lot of moisture produced during the winter which they can utilise. It used to be standard practice to feed a block of candy during the winter until it became unfashionable. My bees always get a block of baker's fondant on Christmas Day when I wish them "Happy Christmas"!

QUEEN EXCLUDER

When preparing your bees for the winter, it is usually recommended that the queen excluder be removed in case the queen is left behind, when the cluster moves up into the super. I never seem to get around to removing excluders, but I don't think I have lost a queen because of "isolation starvation". It perhaps shows that the right management is the one that works for you and the bees that survive your management are the ones for you!

KNIFE BENDING

Rape honey can set to knife bending consistency, not liked by most customers - and it tastes gritty because of the coarse crystals. To produce a more acceptable product, the honey should be creamed: Cool the heated and strained honey to 75 deg F (24 deg C). Stir in a finely grained seed honey saved from a previous occasion. Mix thoroughly. Leave for 24 hours to allow air bubbles to escape and bottle.

THE BLOOMING E.U. AGAIN!

This used to be sold as Creamed Honey but I think the EC regulations insist that we now call it Soft Set Honey - because it does not contain cream! When honey is allowed to granulate naturally in the jar frosting can occur. As the honey crystallises it shrinks and leaves a gap between the jar and the honey and displays the crystals. The honey remains wholesome but may look unattractive.

A refrigerator from the local tip can provide an insulated body - a bulb provides the heat.

MICROWAVE

To overcome this problem, one producer packages honey in dimpled glass to disguise the problem! The only solution is to re-liquefy the honey carefully. A microwave oven can be used for small quantities, but you will need to experiment - stir the contents in between periods of heating.

Be careful the honey does not boil over the top of the jar! If you are bottling extracted honey for your own use you may use cleaned jam jars etc, but you should buy standard jars if you sell your honey.

CONTAINERS

Various shapes and sizes, in plastic and glass, are available. Fancy containers are also available. Whether you sell or give your honey away, it must comply with the food regulations. In particular, you must label your jars correctly. For example, a producer of "Heather Honey" was prosecuted successfully because it was shown that the honey so labelled was not predominantly heather honey - the bees had also collected nectar from a late crop of clover. Moorland Honey may be a safer description.

CLAIMS MUST BE TRUE

However, if you state your honey is Heather Honey, Northamptonshire Honey, English Honey etc, such claims must be true. Apart from fraud such as adding corn syrup to honey, unscrupulous packers have been known to pack foreign honey as English Honey and sell at a higher price. However, each flower has pollen that is unique.

If the pollen is extracted from a sample of honey, an expert (a melissopalynologist!) is able to deduce the source of the nectar - a large proportion of eucalyptus pollen in a sample of English honey would be highly suspect! If you depict a flower on your label, the honey must be predominantly from that source.

The Food Act and EC regulations have in recent years caused concern among beekeepers - especially those who simply sell the odd jar of honey with no intention of making a living from their hobby. Nevertheless, whether you sell one

jar of honey or tonnes (or give it away), the laws still apply - and the punishment can be severe !.

There remains some confusion over the intention, interpretation and application of the new regulations.

Trading Standards Officers are always helpful and willing to advise. It is worth remembering that honey is a very safe food product. In experiments, bacteria (including those causing typhoid fever, chronic bronchopneumonia and dysentery) placed in honey were killed after a few hours.



GREEN HONEY

In a good year you can expect at least 40-50 lb of honey from each colony - in a poor year, none at all and you may have to feed sugar to keep your bees alive. The latter makes it difficult to satisfy customers who want honey from bees that have not been fed "artificial" sugar.



When beekeepers were given a special allowance of sugar during the Second World War, it was coloured green to prevent it getting onto the black market. It was then realised that bees move honey stores around the hive and green honey was on sale!

CHUNK HONEY

In contrast, in America and Australia, for example, each colony might produce an average of 200 lb. In 1954, Rob Smith's hives sited in the Australian Karri Forest country averaged 629 lb.

Too often one sees poor quality honey on sale and prices that are too low. Less often one sees honey that is rather expensive, usually when sold in small containers or from "up-market" outlets. Comb honey attracts a higher price as does 'chunk honey' - a piece of comb placed in a jar of honey. Both are only feasible if the honey does not granulate. The market for "enhanced" honey products has not been fully exploited eg honey with added pollen or "Royal Jelly".

OTHER PRODUCTS

There is a good market for other hive products - wax can be sold in 1 oz blocks or made into candles, polish and hand cream.

Propolis (used by Stradivarius in his violin varnish) is made into an antiseptic for sore throats. Beekeeping suppliers will buy wax and, sometimes, propolis. Customers sometimes request pollen and wax cappings. A pollen trap can be fitted to a hive and the collected pollen used in the spring to feed bees or processed for sale. Selling mead would require a license.

Process and present your honey properly. Don't sell cheaply in glut years - the lean years will follow. Honey properly processed and stored in suitable sealed containers in cool conditions will keep without harm.

CHEAP HONEY

Rather than selling your surplus cheaply, make mead and toast your good fortune! Sell at a price that takes into account your time, effort and costs. Your local association should be able to recommend a satisfactory price - remember, other beekeepers in your area will not benefit if you sell too cheaply.

A large-scale beekeeper was promoting British honey at a Food Fair in Hyde Park in London. He had considerable difficulty in convincing some potential customers from the Middle East that his honey was a quality product because he was selling it at £2 per pound. At home they expect to pay £20! It is important to keep a record of income and expenditure, however small your sales. One beekeeper received a substantial tax demand based on the assumed profit from his hives - the onus was on the beekeeper to show that he did not owe tax. Bee prepared!



"That's too cheap!"

BEFORE YOU BEGIN!

There are two considerations to weigh before committing yourself to beekeeping: the sting and the back.

If you keep bees you will be stung by them and probably some of your family will get stung over time. For most people a bee sting hurts, and a brief period of discomfort follows. For others (about 0.4 per cent of the population) there is a danger of death from anaphylactic shock brought on by the bee sting. Frequently there are indications that a person is becoming highly allergic to bee stings, but occasionally the problem occurs unannounced. (Swelling at the site of the sting is normal; hives over the body, itching in areas of the body remote from the sting and shortness of breath are abnormal and cause for concern and a visits to A & E.)

You do not have to be physically strong to keep bees, but it is helpful to have someone to help with the heavy lifting. If the stings can be endured and the lifting accommodated then by all means go ahead and become a beekeeper.

BEEKEEPING CLASSES

David Rayner has agreed to take Beginners Classes again. He has already got sufficient names to warrant doing a class for persons who have not yet got bees or persons who just want to get to terms with the very basics. The course will take approximately six weeks on a Sunday morning starting in Mid Feb 2008. There will not be an examination at the end of this course.

Dave would also do a basic course with a very simple practical BBKA examination at the end of it, for persons who have kept bees for at least 12 months. If he gets sufficient names to make it viable, it would start some time in April.

Anyone interested or wants to know more ring Dave at 01200 426898

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

JENI'S JOTTINGS OCTOBER 2007.

In Italy, 2007 has been a blooming disaster for many beekeepers. What with Colony Collapse and Nosema Ceranae, or what ever it is, the beekeepers here have had to contend with terrific colony losses due to insecticidal use, varroa, and a drought.

WHERE JENI LIVES

The report in the 'Regional Agricultural' magazine for Emilia Romagna (The region in which I live) states that the problem started in April with the sowing of the maize (corn), this is grown in a vast area of Northern and Central Italy. The grave contamination to the environment and to the bees has been blamed on a toxic molecule in the insecticides and four have been named.



They all have fancy names. Imidacloprid, Fipronil, Thiamethoxam, and Clothiamidin. The problem is they are systemic and get into every thing and it doesn't go away for many months, if not years!!

How clever is that? *Thank you very much* chemical companies. It doesn't seem they have done their research very well.

IT'S BAD

The regional Bee-keepers Association's report in August starts off 'E Brutto' meaning 'It's Bad'. They've been alarmed at the number of colony losses due to Varroa as well. It seems that Varroa has been a massive problem this year because of the last very mild Winter, allowing Varroa mites to build up.

The association has asked all beekeepers to treat with 'Api-life-Var' and 'Apigard' at the end of July and August. These treatments are none toxic (organic) and are mainly Thymol based.

TIMING

Presumably the timing is to coincide with the terrific build up of varroa. The taking off of supers and using the high summer temperatures will make the treatment work well.

And last but not least, the drought. No rain to speak of since May, till the third week in October, just the odd thunder storm. So, not good for any thing after a fairly good 'Spring start.

WHITE CLOVER

The main crop for the bees locally has been the white clover after the spring flowers. We have had reports that Accacia, Lime and Chestnut honey were all poor compared with last year and that Millefiore was the best both in quantity and quality. My honey is always Millefiore as there's never enough of any one plant.

VARROA

Thankfully this area is not contaminated with insecticides as the land is too mountainous for



much crop growing. As for Varroa there's been plenty, but I'm hoping it's under control as the bees have been treated with Api-Life-Var and will get a treatment with Oxalic acid in a Month or so. Some of this Year's swarms have been united and they all have plenty of stores, so I'm hoping I'll have some bees next Spring.

Let's hope 2008 is a better year for all.

Tante Salute Jeni.

IS YOUR HONEY FERMENTING?

We will start by summarising the conditions necessary for fermentation.

- The presence of yeasts.
- Adequate warmth for yeast growth
- A sufficiently high water content of the honey to allow the yeasts to grow.

So how do we prevent fermentation in our honey?

THE YEASTS

There is nothing that we can do practically to keep yeasts out of our honey, but yeasts can be destroyed by heat. Commercially this is done by 'pasteurization', taking the honey to 71° C instantaneously and cooling it rapidly. The necessary equipment to do this is not available to the small-scale honey producer and various temperatures are suggested in the literature. Heating liquid honey to 60°C for 1 hour in a water bath does the job. (It also ensures that the honey will stay liquid for several months provided that it is not opened.) The honey must be cooled as rapidly as possible (a cold water bath)

Since yeasts grow best in temperatures between 13° C and 21° C, storing honey outside this range will slow yeast growth. Storage at high temperatures will damage the honey so that is not an option, but storage below 13° C will solve the problem. This may not be easy as most of us do not have temperature-controlled storage and ambient temperatures may be above this level for a major part of the year. However, you can commandeer the coolest, darkest place in the house for storing your buckets of honey. It is a pity that most houses in Britain do not have cellars as these could provide quite good conditions.

MOISTURE CONTENT

This is the key to controlling fermentation. First ensure that the moisture content of the honey you extract is 17% or lower. Generally speaking, if you only extract honey which is fully capped there will be no problems, but we all know that this is

a counsel of perfection and that it is impossible to avoid extracting some uncapped honey, especially with oil seed rape. So, we resort to shaking frames - if the honey stays in, we extract, if it flies out, we give it back to the bees to 'finish off'!

Fine in most cases but not really reliable. The only safe method is to use a hydrometer or refractometer and actually measure the water content of your honey before, or as, you extract it. Expensive I know, but how many buckets of fermenting honey do you need to pay for it?

HYGROSCOPICITY & FERMENTATION

Because honey is hygroscopic the moisture content can increase with storage if the conditions are not right. To avoid this. Never leave the honey exposed to the air. Use sound, airtight containers for storage. Fill buckets as full as possible. Store in dry conditions so that when lids are removed the honey is not exposed to damp air.

GRANULATION & FERMENTATION

Honey is at its most vulnerable when it is part-granulated so try to ensure rapid granulation. The optimum temperature for granulation is 14 C which is within the range of temperatures at which yeasts grow best, but if it can be kept at this temperature until it is fully granulated and then stored at a lower temperature, that is probably the best course of action.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

When all else fails and you are presented with a bucket of honey which has started to ferment what do you do with it? If it is slight, the honey can be diluted and fed to your bees, but not as winter stores, try and pasteurise it so you can keep it until Spring. The bees will reprocess it for you. If it is really horrible and the bulk of the honey is affected, have a go at making mead, better still you could get some one else to have a go at it! Then go out and buy a refractometer!

It is a pity that most houses in Britain do not have cellars as these could provide quite good conditions.

NEWS ON COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER (CCD)

WELCOME NEWS

Some welcome progress is being reported into the causes of CCD, which has devastated beekeeping in parts of the USA this year. A virus has been identified as the possible cause of the collapse of up to 90 per cent of commercial hives in the United States as the mysterious and deadly bee disorder continues its spread worldwide.

VIRUS

Now a comparison of healthy and unhealthy bee colonies in America points to Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV) contributing to or even causing CCD, according to a report published today in the journal Science. One of the authors of today's paper, Prof Ian Lipkin, director of the Centre for Infection and Immunity, Columbia University, New York, said. "Our next step is to ascertain whether this virus, alone or in concert with other factors such as microbes, toxins and stressors, can induce CCD. If the virus does turn out to be a key cause, there may be opportunities to develop vaccines or drugs.

Adapted from an article appearing in the Daily Telegraph on 6th September

**IF YOU HAVE A COMPUTER - TAKE A LOOK AT THIS LITTLE VIDEO. JUST ENTER:
http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/i_video/main500251.shtml?id=3424316n
IN YOUR BROWSER**

IMMUNITY

Bees with immunity against the disease have been identified in Israel by the scientists who first found the virus. The bees have taken up some genetic elements of the virus, which has the same effect as a vaccination" "This research gives us a very good lead to follow, but we do not believe IAPV is acting alone," said co-author Jeffery Pettis of the Bee Research Laboratory, US Department of Agriculture. "Other stressors to the colony are likely to be involved." Those stressors could include intensive migratory beekeeping practices, poor nutrition, pesticide exposure and parasitic varroa mites, the latter being responsible for false alarms in Britain.

FALSE

So far reports of CCD reaching Britain have turned out to be false alarms, a spokesman for DEFRA said yesterday, though she acknowledged that there is widespread concern among beekeepers. Mike Brown of the National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, said yesterday that testing is under way for the virus in Britain, though so far the results had been negative.

MORE ON CCD

"... van Engelsdorp. imported some packages of bees from Australia, where CCD is unknown. He put one group into recently abandoned CCD hives, He put a second group in CCD hives that had been fumigated with concentrated acetic acid, a hive cleaner. He put a third group into hives that had been irradiated, a process that kills all living organisms and potential pathogens but does not break down chemical toxins. The bees in the untreated abandoned hives developed all the symptoms of CCD. The bees in the fumigated hives held their own. In the irradiated hives, the bees were flourishing. 'It definitely points towards a biological cause,' he says. 'And probably a new or newly mutated pathogen.'"

REPORT OF THE HONEY SHOW FOR 2007

The 2007 Branch Honey Show took place at Castle Cement, Clitheroe, on Sunday 7th October.

The Judge was Mr. Arthur Gillett (HLM) from Aintree, Liverpool, who was delighted at the quality of the exhibits, and encouraged all participants to submit exhibits at the County Show.

Our Guest Judge was Mrs. Wendy Leeming from Clayton-le-Dale, who, along with husband John, has been a keen supporter of the branch in recent years.

There were 65 exhibits from 19 entrants (an increase from 2006), and over 40 people attended the interesting & informative lecture by Graham Doyle (NBD) from Cheshire.

The Ken Preedy Memorial Cup for the Best Exhibit in Show was for the Bees Wax Cake exhibited by John Zamorski.

The Challenge Cup was awarded to John Zamorski for the most points in the show.



Caroline Coughlin & Arthur Gillett

THE WINNERS OF EACH CLASS

Class	Entry	Winner
1	Light Honey	Bob Bradshaw
2	Medium/Dark	John Zamorski
3	Heather	Si Birt
4	Soft / Granulated	No 1st awarded
	2nd place	David Barrett
5	Novice	John Ainsworth
6	Frame of Beeswax	David Barrett
7	Beeswax Cake	John Zamorski
8	Honey Cake	David Bush
9	Honey Fudge	Ron Dempster
10	Honey Desert	Brian Jackson
11	Mead	Fiona Wells
12	Photographic Print	John Zamorski
13	Wax Craft	John Zamorski

Congratulations to all of the winners, and thanks to all the exhibitors for the time and commitment put into showing, as the Branch Honey Show would not be possible without your continued support.

Special thanks must go to John Zamorski for arranging the use of the excellent facilities at Castle Cement, and to Lynne Zamorski, who along with John, set up the rooms, prepared the refreshments and tidied up after us all once we had finished.

Once again, congratulations go to all of the successful prize winners

Caroline Coughlin Honey Show Secretary

AMAZING FACTS...ABOUT HONEY

1. Honey never spoils. No need to refrigerate it. It can be stored unopened, indefinitely, at room temperature in a dry cupboard.
2. Honey is one of the oldest foods in existence. It was found in the tomb of King Tut and was still edible since honey never spoils.
3. Due to the high level of fructose, honey is 25% sweeter than table sugar.
4. Honey is created when bees mix plant nectar, a sweet substance secreted by flowers, with their own bee enzymes.
5. To make honey, bees drop the collected nectar into the honeycomb and then evaporate it by fanning their wings.
6. Honey has different flavours and colours, depending on the location and kinds of flowers the bees visit. Climatic conditions of the area also influence its flavour and colour.



Notices

DOWN
WITH
VARROA

INFORMATION ABOUT 'BEE TALK'

Planned Publication
Dates: March 2008, June
2008, September 2008,
December 2008

**LATEST TIME FOR
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FORE THE MONTH OF
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Talk to Ken Gaiger phone. 01282 778887.

Library. There is an extensive range of bee books etc.
that may be borrowed.

Our librarian, David Rayner brings some with him to
our meetings. Contact him on 01200 426898 for special
requests.

TEACH BEEKEEPING
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL!

FUTURE MEETINGS

SUN 20TH JANUARY 10AM TO 12NOON

at West Bradford Village Hall

SUN 24TH FEBRUARY 10AM TO 12NOON

at West Bradford Village Hall

WED 26TH MARCH 7PM

at Hill Crest Tea Rooms. Mitton

TO BE ARRANGED

TO BE ARRANGED

ANNUAL DINNER

**DONT FORGET THE
ANNUAL DINNER**

Payments for THE BEE-KEEPER'S QUARTERLY are due so £16 would be appreciated. CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO L. & N.W.B.K.A. AND SENT TO KEN GAIGER, 2 HIGHAM ROAD, PADIHAM, BURNLEY BB12 9AP
Telephone 01282 778887

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS
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David Rayner	Education Officer	01200 426898
Pauline Roberts	Programme Sec.	01282 438615
Robert Bradshaw	Member	01254 261216
David Bush	Member	01200 428152
Bob Fulton	Member	01254 772780
Ron Dempster	Member	01282 699881
David Rayner	Manager Holden C.	01200 426898

**DELEGATES TO THE
CENTRAL COUNCIL**

John Zamorski	Hon. Sec	01200 427661
Ken Gaiger	Hon. Treas.	01282 778887

WOT NO BEES?

NEW MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

In early 2007 the BBKA Annual Delegate Meeting approved a new Constitution, which included changes to the membership classes. These changes unfortunately have resulted in increase subscriptions to full members. (what a surprise!) However there are now reduced rates for the new partial membership classes.

The new classes of membership are as follows:

REGISTERED MEMBER. This is identical to the previous full BBKA member, but with an increased subscription. Now £17.00

PARTNER MEMBER. This is a new class of BBKA member. It 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 £10.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. Another new class of BBKA 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 £9.00

ASSOCIATE MEMBER. Remains a member of our branch only, without any benefits from the BBKA or County. Subscription will be £6.00

For insurance purposes under the new constitution, prompt payment is essential. Basically, payment will be required by the 31 December each year as insurance is now based on the current years membership. New and lapsed members insurance cover starts six weeks after joining.

To help members memories etc, I propose to start collecting subscriptions from now on.

As a final statement, BEE TALK will remain available to each household, so long as volunteers continue to produce it.

Ken Gaiger

December 2007

HONEYDEW

Honeydew is the result of aphids and other, scale insects feeding on the plant life. They are beautifully adapted to their way of life with mouthparts which are modified into a system of piercing 'needles' and tubes for transporting liquids. The higher plants have, within their stems and leaves, tubes (called the phloem which transport dissolved food materials around the plant. Phloem carries what is usually referred to as sap and it is this which most aphids etc. 'tap into' to feed.

FEEDING

When an aphid pierces the phloem with its mouthparts two things happen: one duct within the mouthparts pours saliva into the wound, starting the digestion process; a second duct transports plant sap up to the insect. The plant transport system (sap) is interesting and important to understanding the production of honeydew.

The liquid solution moves through the plant under pressure and, when the tiny insect mouth

parts tap into it, the liquid is pushed into the insect without it having to make any effort.

If you watch a feeding aphid (a good hand lens is necessary) you will see that, once plugged in to this liquid food supply, the insect stays put.

LARGE NUMBERS

FROM THE BBC FOOD WEBSITE
"One speciality to look out for is honeydew honey, which comes, not from nectar at all, but from the bees gathering a sticky substance exuded from aphids feeding on tree sap. This Marmite of honeys, strong to the point of being almost savoury, is strangely addictive."

You may also see that, at intervals, a drop of moisture appears at its rear end and is thrown, by a flick of the insect's body, away from it. This is honeydew. Its production may be rapid under good conditions and, where the sucking insects are present in large numbers, as aphids usually

are, there may be large amounts produced, which collect on the leaves.

So, the tiny insects take in large quantities of plant sap, extract what they need as it passes through the gut, and excrete the remainder through the anus.

They probably need to do this so that they can obtain sufficient of the various nutrients, most likely vitamins and minerals, which occur in minute amounts in the sap. But the stuff that comes out is not identical to what went in! On its passage through the insect's gut it has been changed to some extent.

MAINLY WATER

Honeydew is mainly water, up to 90% of the dry matter is sugar. The range of sugars is large and includes, in addition to glucose, fructose and sucrose, complex ones such as melezitose and fructomalose. Some of these are synthesised inside the insect. 1.8 to 0.2% of the dry matter is nitrogenous substances.

Most of these are amino acids but there is usually some protein. Some of these substances are



**APHID FLICKING OFF
A DROP OF HONEYDEW**

synthesised by the insect there are always organic acids, such as citric acid, present.

There are also various enzymes present, these come from the saliva which the insect pours into the wound. Others are added as the liquid passes through the gut.

MOULDS

There are usually moulds and spores present, these can be seen under the microscope and act as a means of identification for honeydew.

They come from the moulds which move into the honeydew as it lies, exposed, on the surface of the leaf. (Where leaves are covered by honeydew they often go black due to the presence of sooty moulds).

COLOUR

The colour of honeydew ranges from light brown to almost black and is sometimes greenish. It is strong flavoured and slow to granulate.

Honeydew features in the Honey Regulations in two important places: it must have a minimum reducing sugar content (glucose + fructose) of 60%. (Other honeys 65%); Maximum sucrose content is 10% (5% for most other honeys).

These differences apply to pure honeydew or honeydew/blossom mixtures.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Honeydew is used as a food source by insects other than bees.

I have watched wasps and flies taking it, and ants are notorious for feeding on it, often forming a column of marching insects leading to an aphid colony. Because it is produced in small drops and is exposed to the air, it dries quickly. Bees often collect it in the morning when there is a dew to liquefy it.

Some people regard honeydew honey as a luxury, others will not touch it. That is purely a matter of taste. I look on it as yet another example of interaction between insects but with a less violent outcome than most!

Celia Davis. Bee Craft Jan 2000 much modified.

SECRETARIES REPORT

Another year has passed and a very strange one for Beekeepers. Great start to the season with some even taking off supers in late April. Then a horrible wet summer with some colonies needing to be fed to survive. Autumn arrived with nice mild weather again but not a lot of forage. My heather crop was only average this year because it did not seem to stay in flower for very long in the Ribbles Valley.

Meetings this year have been fairly well attended on average and quite a few new members have joined us. How about some of you coming forward to assist the branch officers so that their experience can be passed to some younger members. You are the future of the Branch and we need to keep moving forward. It isn't difficult; it just means spending some time to help the branch.

Fantastic result for Blackburn at the County Honey Show when we took the E. McCormick shield from Liverpool for most points in the show. The shield was donated in 1996 by Ernest McCormick, the President, and it is a wonderful achievement to win it. Thank you to all the members who supported me and put in entries this year. There are a lot more out there who are very capable of producing stunning exhibits but are not having a go. Come on Blackburn; let's win it next year as well.

The week after the County Honey Show we had the Autumn Convention at West Bradford village hall. This was well attended by our Branch and we were enthralled by two world class speakers. This was the last time the convention will be held in the Autumn, and is now moving to a Spring date. Don't miss next years when we have Celia Davis as the speaker.

To finish I would like to say thank you to all the members who opened up their homes to us throughout the year for the monthly meetings. You are the unsung heroes who keep us all together. Looking forward to a good Beekeeping year in 2008.

John Zamorski



Bits and Pieces from the Members

QUEENS AND HONEY

Just a little further on my article in December 2006 Beetalk about the good honey crop of that year. Well its happened again this year and I am getting more and more convinced that its not so much what I am doing, although obviously it helps. but more to do with what the bees are doing.

All my bees are about as British Black as you can get as there is no way I will buy queens from abroad or even from down the far south of the UK. Why? Because I am convinced that our UK bees will stand as much environmental upset as you can give them, because they have already come through an ice age and the subsequent warming up after the ice age which was far worse than today.

Also Britain unlike most of Europe has a unique climate all of its own and there is nowhere else like it on earth. We are surrounded by water which makes us different and the climate changes more or less every day. No long hot spells for us. To me this is what our own British Bees are adapted for and nothing else.

Another thought is, no one has ever introduced an insect into the UK as they have with mammals. The reason, insects cannot cope. Brother Adam I believe tried it and where are his bees now. MOSTLY GONE. All this to me is very relevant to our Beekeeping more so for us further up here in the north of England as we are a long way from Continental Europe unlike our friends down the south where its is sometimes like Continental Europe

Coming back to my honey crop, again over 200lbs. Brood boxes full ,plus a half full super to go through the winter and this off 4 hives. Read the December 2006 Beetalk. It's on the web. The only other thing I did was treat the bottom brood box with the swarmed queen with Oxalic acid as if she was a swarm and took the honey off a little later due to the bad weather after May.

Again all the best for Christmas and the New Year

Michael and Saipin

PALM SUGAR

Last year I stumbled across Unrefined Palm Sugar in blocks. I tried it out on the bees. They ate it clean. So during the bad weather this year and coupled with the fact that I was going to be away for a while, I decided to repeat the experiment and give some to the bees to help tide them over . I found that Ashraf's of Every Street, Nelson sold quite large blocks of Palm Sugar for £1.50 a go. So I got two and put a block in each of the two hives. When I returned from being away I saw that one hive had cleaned the block out but the other one was doing so more slowly.

I have been a member of a Beekeepers' web site on Yahoo Groups for a while now. It is called Santa Group and is interested in anything of a research or experimental nature to do with bees. So I put a piece on it about my Palm Sugar. I got varying reactions. One was that "under no circumstance would I feed my bees this", to "try running a control by using Palm Sugar in one and Bee Syrup in the other". Most said they thought it OK to use it in Summer/ Spring when bees are flying, so that if affected by dysentery they can get out to defecate. But not recommended when bees are hived up for winter.

I mentioned this to Ken Gaiger and he more or less concurred with Santa Group and said it was worth a try but keep an eye out for dysentery.

I'd like to say that this was not me being lazy but more of an expediency thing. What do you think?

Annette Hawkins

NEW WAY WITH ICING SUGAR

For those who use icing sugar as a defence against varroa. How about this for a good idea!

Make a shallow frame to fit on top of a brood box, the floor of the frame is a screen of some sort with a mesh of about 2mm. Placed on top of an occupied brood box, a cup full of icing sugar is dumped on the screen and brushed backwards and forwards, till all has gone through the screen, and down onto the frames and bees. I am told that it works well and limits the amount of sugar that gets into the open brood cells. Sounds good to me. I also have a lot of plastic net that would do the job OK. Ask for some - it's free.

Bill Ainsworth

JOHN WILSON'S REPORT

My bees wintered well, and were very powerful. Which prevented me getting queens marked as intended. They did well the first two weeks in May, the start of Sycamore and Hawthorn flowering. Then the bees stayed at home until the first two weeks in June when every stock swarmed. This was not a disaster, as my bees are in an orchard just outside my window and normally do as they are told and pick a convenient apple tree. Then disaster, tree blossom gone and the weather broke all records for rain and wind. Queens stopped laying and swarms had to be fed. August seemed to find the sun again. Swarms were united to parent stocks and it looked like Himalayan Balsam would save the day. My honey crop was better than expected and we had young queens all round. Varroa control looks out of control again, but that's another story.

John Wilson

BOB BRADSHAW'S STORY.

Hi Bill, You asked me for details about my medical condition. (Barrets Oesophagus, a pre cancer complaint).

About 6 years ago I started with stomach problems and I had endoscopy treatment (a camera down my insides) that is when the Barrets Oesophagus was found, I also had 6 Ulcers. No

operation was done just medication and 3 years later the ulcers had cleared up and the specialist said on seeing the second endoscopy, that he had never seen that part of the stomach clear up so fast in all the time he had been involved with gastro conditions. He was very keen to find what I had been doing to assist this clean up. It took some time to come to the conclusion that it was the amount of honey I normally ate that was the real case of the clean up. When I went for my third endoscopy the doctor said all seems fine, but we are awaiting results of a full biopsy. The pills I take are Nexium to control the acid, but I also take Lashings of Honey with everything. I strongly believe that honey has more than helped me.

Regards Bob,

FROM THE TREASURER

It is essential that I receive your subscription for 2008 by the 31st. December 2007. The BBKA have changed our membership rules. Payments are now based on the current years paid up membership. (Previously it was on last years, plus new members.) Now, late payment will mean a period without "Public Liability insurance"

PAYMENT RATES

See Page 11

Ken Gaiger

COUNTY HONEY SHOW REPORT

On Sunday 14th October 2007, Blackburn Branch hosted the County Honey Show at West Bradford Village Hall. This was the first time in many years that it had been held in our area.

Although Blackburn has more members than most other Lancashire Branches, we never have a good turnout at the County Show so I wanted to encourage our members to have a go at entering. I attend the County meetings in Leyland as Vice-Chairman, and two years ago asked if it would be



John Zamorski &
Brian Jackson

possible to hold the show in our area. This was agreed and so we found this venue. Eleven of our members had a go and put in one or more entries. Between us we totalled 64 points and as a result, won the Presidents

Challenge Shield for the Branch with the most points. Since the shield was first donated it had been won by Southport once and Liverpool ten times. The support that was given to achieve this was fantastic. Even a very highly commended gets a point so every entry counts.

The points tally was as follows.

Helen Howarth	1 point,
Ken Gaiger	2 points,
Phil Ainsworth	3 points,
Bill Ainsworth	3 points,
Ron Dempster	4 points,
Fiona Wells	6 points,
David Bush	14 points
John Zamorski	31 points.

This meant that I also won the Sir Wroth Letherbridge Presidents Cup for the most points in the show.

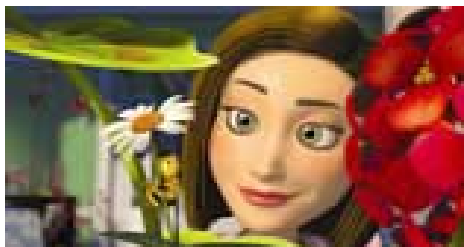
We had the advantage of holding the show on home territory this year and will have to work hard to retain the shield next year.

You know we can do it now so please help me to keep it for the Branch again. We have members out there who can produce excellent exhibits but who did not enter this year. With your help we can do it again.

Thank you to all once again, even the people who did not enter but came along to the lecture and helped to boost numbers.

John Zamorski

BEE MOVIE WILL YOU GO TO SEE THIS?



A soon to be released Hollywood animated movie about a rebel worker bee (he's male and called Barry!)

"Jerry Seinfeld provides the voice of Barry

B. Benson – a bee struggling to find himself and live an exciting, fulfilling life. He has graduated from college, and, like all bees, is about to embark on a life of working in the hive. However, Barry wants more.

On a dare, he leaves the hive with the pollen jockies who collect nectar and initiate the pollination process in nature. Of course, Barry gets separated from the other bees, meets up with a pretty human florist, Vanessa Bloome (Renee Zellweger), and has a chance to change the world as we know it.

When Barry finds out humans have been taking honey from bees (which is stealing to him), will he win a lawsuit against the major honey companies?"

BEEKEEPING IN A NUTSHELL

STARTING OUT (FINAL PART)

When buying colonies at a private sale or at auction, some experienced help is valuable. If there is the opportunity to open the hive and examine the brood nest, so much the better. The points to look for are:- reasonable temper; good brood laying pattern by the queen, i.e. solid patches of worker brood with eggs, larvae and sealed cells; no obvious signs of disease, such as brood cells with sunken discoloured cappings, dead larvae or dead pupae; and plenty of hive bees and stores. The condition of the hive, frames and combs will also affect the value of the purchase.

MOVING

The points to consider when moving a colony are how to fix the hive parts and keep the bees in the hive, and ventilation. Commercial clips and straps are available, or the boxes and floor can be fixed together by nailing laths up each corner. A strip of foam rubber pushed into the entrance is perfectly secure. For a journey of only a few miles, it is safe to move the hive at night without extra ventilation, providing there is a super of empty comb for the bees to spread into, and the colony is not prodigiously strong. For a longer trip, fix a travelling screen on top, and spray the bees with a little water or dilute syrup if they get obviously distressed.

ROUTINE

On arrival, put the hive on its stand, leaving all the fixings to be sorted out later and release the bees. Even in the pitch dark they will crawl out all over the front of the hive before settling. Now that the new colony is established, the beekeeping proper begins. Initially the nucleus and the swarm will need little attention as they grow, but the full-size colony will be a bit more demanding. There is a routine for carrying out examinations, but in the early days the value of examining the

colony lies more in the education of the beekeeper than in the husbandry of the hive.

QUESTIONS

The questions to ask when going through the hive are-

- Is there enough food in the hive?
- Is there enough room? Should another super be added?
- Is there any sign of disease?
- Are there eggs as well as older brood?
- Are there new queen cells that the queen has laid in? Is the colony going to swarm?

VARROA

Two more points. The parasite varroa is spreading through the UK. If left untreated it will kill colonies over a period of years, but there are highly effective treatments which are simple to apply.

Secondly, in beekeeping there are usually several answers to each problem. From time to time everybody makes mistakes. It's not the mistakes that count, but what is learnt from them.

Good luck. Matthew Allan

A VERY RAPID KILLER

The Journal of Invertebrate Pathology Vol. 94, Issue 3, March 2007, reported on an experimental infection of bees with the Israeli strain of *Nosema ceranae*, which has recently been found in the western honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. *Nosema* free honeybees were inoculated with 125,000 spores, isolated from heavily infected bees.

By day 3 post-infection, mature spores of were seen, suggesting that development was complete - and by day 8 post-infection all the bees were dead. It seems that it can only be a matter of time before this will be yet another problem for us all! *Peter Edwards*

I'm putting my money on this being the cause of Colony Collapse Disorder.

Ed

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Democracy?

Abraham Lincoln said:

*"Government of
the people, by the
people, for the
people"*

TROUBLE

I will probably get into trouble because I rather think my ideas and beliefs are well and truly out of date. But let's see what you think.

A friend of mine was sent to visit a branch of his firm, somewhere in the South of England. Before he set off he was advised that this Southern Branch was very hot on PC - 'Political Correctness'. "Don't ask for black coffee" He was told "Ask for coffee without milk".

Now I happen to think all this is barmy. In fact I have been known to use strong language about it. I mean, here is this huge organisation where the staff follows PC to the ultimate limits and beyond.

Not so many years ago we hadn't to refer to people as black, instead we used the word 'Coloured' and if you called someone 'gay' it had a quite different meaning. It just goes to show how things change.

In those far off 'Coloured' days I knew a Scottish camera shop assistant who, when someone asked him for a film, would say "Do you want a coloured film or a coloured and white film?"

I think today he would probably be shot.

The other day there was a news item about a seaside village which has held an annual regatta since the early 1800's. We are told that they are probably going to have to stop the event because of health and safety. "Suppose someone falls in the sea?"; "Suppose someone hurts themselves launching the boat?" etc etc.

The volunteer secretary for the regatta has so many forms and reports to complete that they are unable to cope with the workload. It's only my theory - I haven't actually tested it out but I rather think that if I asked a hundred people about black or white coffee or if the regatta should be cancelled the response would be something like ninety-nine people agreeing with me that it's barmy.

The problem is, if we are all nearer right than the PC brigade, who the heck are 'THEY'. The 'THEY' who set, what to me, are ridiculous rules and patterns of behaviour?

My friend Bill Ainsworth is constantly telling me that I am living out of my time. It's a new World and it is probably me that doesn't fit. The younger generation probably accept it all as quite normal.

I headed this page 'Democracy' and I do wonder what sort of changes would be made if decisions really were made by the 'People'?

Would we prosecute the person who clobbers a criminal who is attempting to steal his car? Would we not accept that accidents DO sometimes happen and we shouldn't always look for someone to blame? Do we really want people to be hounded day and night by journalists and photographers? Regardless as to whether they are celebrities or poor unfortunates who somehow become 'Newsworthy'.

Would 'The people' not take a much harder line with people who use guns and knives when committing crimes?

You are probably asking what this has to do with beekeeping? Well, let's just hope that we don't suddenly have health and safety doing risk assessment on having beehives within half a mile of a public right of way?

What about extending animal rights to the Honey Bee? Are we treating them correctly? Is it right to rob them of their honey? And for goodness sake don't let me hear you refer to British BLACK bees!

Scrapings

CLAIRE CHAVASSE

Claire Chavasse died in Autumn this year. Claire did a lot of work for Irish beekeepers, particularly over the last five years or so. Even though we never met, I have watched her progress over the years and was always impressed with the various articles she wrote.

The following is the last paragraph from a eulogy in BBIBA magazine. (By him of the black bees!) It is full of Irish blarney, but it really struck home with me Ed.

Claire was laid to rest in a lovely old graveyard on a gently sloping hillside surrounded by old trees and forestry plantations amid the rich rolling countryside of West Waterford.

The large attendance included many beekeepers, and her fellow members of GBBG and BIBBA from many parts of Ireland and England formed a guard of honour at her graveside. As her coffin was borne past, bees flew out from a feral colony in the roof of the old church beside her grave as if in final salutation. It reminded us of the words of "The Beemaster's Prayer" which was read during Claire's funeral service in St. Cartage's Cathedral, Lismore by her good friend Sally Perceval Maxwell:

*Will there be bees in heavenly places
Will there be bees?*

*Winging their way through the golden spaces
To fruitify the eternal trees
That yield their sweet life-giving store
Month by month for ever more.*

*Will soft bee music haunt the stream
Whose waters shine with crystal glow
And will they come where lilies gleam
To sip the eternal nectar flow?*

*Lord thou didst love our earthly places
Birds and flowers and shady trees-
Let there be Bees in heavenly places
Let there be Bees*

Micheál C. Mac Giolla Coda.

EARLY RISING BEES

As beekeepers, we have come to realize that individual hives have individual personalities.

BEE AMAZED!

The more hives you maintain, the more you know what I am talking about. Given that, I continue to be amazed by honeybees on a regular basis.



A ROUND OF GOLF

One of my hives continues to impress me with the work ethic of its residents. Early in the summer I was out watering before a 6.15 am round of golf and noticed that there was a large number of bees flying out of this particular hive.

SOUND ASLEEP

My other hives right next to it were still sound asleep. This behaviour has continued on throughout the summer and now that the morning air temp has dropped substantially, the early risers still exit the hive at the crack of dawn. Last week the temp in my garden at 6:45 am was 45 degrees and yet there was a steady stream of bees (approx 150per min.) making their exodus to start the day.

NIGHT VISION

Nothing doing from my other hives. Furthermore, the bees in this hive are also the last to come home in the evening. What a combo, cold weather resistant bees with night vision.

By Michael Johnson, An American Beekeeper.



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