



Bee Talk

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

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Registered Charity

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I suppose this is here in case we have a hot, dry Summer

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Take a spoonful of honey and be as fit as a rat!

Editorial

KEN GAIGER

Most people will now know that Ken Gaiger, our treasurer, was taken ill. Ken is now in Blackpool hospital having had by-pass surgery. He is still quite ill but seems to be on the mend. I am sure you will join us in wishing him a full and rapid recovery.

PHILIP AINSWORTH

In the mean time Philip Ainsworth has generously agreed to take on the job of treasurer until Ken is ready to get back in the saddle.

To ease the burden on Philip, I will take on the job of holding and selling the stocks of chemicals. Oxalic acid Thymol crystals etc. Contact me on 01282 614015.

A big thank you from all of us, Philip. We would be in great difficulties without you.

Philip's home is 9 Duchess St. Darwen, Blackburn, BB3 0QQ. His phone number is 01254 262461. His mobile (which is more useful) is 07713161480

DOOM AND GLOOM

All in all this issue of Bee Talk is a bit gloomy. What with varroa becoming resistant to treatment, the real threat of Nosema and continuing tales of Colony Collapse Disorder.

When it gets like this it is sometimes difficult to remember, that in spite of all the troubles, beekeeping is still a great and rewarding hobby.

It just means we have to be a bit more professional in our approach and take on board modern conditions and ways of dealing with the threats to our bees

VARROA YET AGAIN

I'm getting reports of heavy bee losses in our area (see report from John Wilson page 14 also Ian Molyneux's report page 9). It seems to be Varroa that is the culprit, or rather the viruses that accompany them. What to do?

CURES AND REMEDIES

We get all manner of cures, all of which seem to be long winded, too complicated or very uncertain in result.

So I think it is every man for himself. Find something that suits you and stick to it until you

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find that it don't work or there is something very much better on offer.

I DO IT MY WAY !

I have come to the conclusion that doing the natural daily mite drop to determine the amount of varroa in a stock is nowhere near accurate enough, at best it is only a very rough guide. Also it looks as though we shall have to abandon the use of Bayvarol strips. Take a look on page 7 to see how I attempted to control varroa.

Is there anyone out there who can give us a run down on which varroa treatment they give their bees, especially if they have found it successful in getting rid of these devils??

MAKING CONTACT

There are often times when we need to let members know of some event, meeting or other item of news in between issues of Bee Talk.

It is too expensive to write to everyone so we have to content ourselves with sending out emails. At the moment we have email addresses for about half the membership. If you have an email address, please send a message to either Bill or Arthur: bill@scotroad.co.uk or arfur3@mac.com we will add you to the list and when there is any news we will ensure that we get the message to you

THE MEMBERS' PAGE

Page 15 is where we publish bits and pieces from you, the members. We would love to spread to two or even three pages. So, if you have anything to say - tips to pass on, things you struggle with or even things that have gone well for you - please drop us a line or email us. Try to keep it fairly short as we always struggle to fit everything in and bear with us if we have to edit it down a bit.

Just bear in mind, we and the rest of the members would love to hear from you

OUR WEBSITE

Michael Birt does a marvellous job with our website. Just take a look at

<http://blackburnbeekeepers.com>

Go to resources and then e-books. This is a wonderful collection of short articles on many aspects of beekeeping. Well done Michael



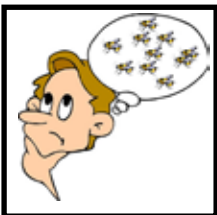
I WANT BIGGER QUEENS !



THIS IS A 'LOGIC' TEASER:

- Some hairy bees are fat,
- All fat bees are yellow,
- Some yellow bees have six stripes
- Some bees with six stripes are fat.
- Therefore some hairy bees definitely have six stripes!

Is this true or false?



This is the size of Queen I want to rear. Not this colour but this size. Don't ask, because I don't know how to do it!

This has been taken from a book on feeding bees. An Australian Government publication freely down loadable at. <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HBE/05-054sum.html> Probably worth a look at but it is about 200 pages long!!

Bill A

PRESENCE OF NOSEMA CERANEA

CONFIRMED IN THE UK

From Andy Wattam, Eastern Region Bee Inspector

Ceranae has been confirmed in several areas of the United Kingdom. From a regional point of view I would affirm that we wish to investigate and sample any cases of abnormal' or extreme winter losses of Bee Colonies. In this way we can really get a hold on what is happening to our bees and build up some baseline scientific data.

Ceranae has been confirmed in several areas of the United Kingdom

Three hundred and nine samples have now been tested for the presence of Nosema apis and Nosema ceranae using real-time PCR. All positive results were confirmed using published assays for the detection of these pathogens. Positive results have therefore been confirmed using 2 methods both based on the detection of species specific DNA. Of these samples 31 samples tested positive for N. apis (10%), 14 for N. ceranae (4.5%) and 3 (1%) tested positive for both Nosema species. N. ceranae positives were confirmed across seven counties

of England. Cornwall Essex Lincolnshire , Hereford Worcestershire, Greater London, North Yorkshire and three in Wales (Glamorgan, Powys, Dyfed).

N. ceranae infections have been reported not to show typical signs of Nosema infection. Therefore we recommend beekeepers check their colonies for adult bee diseases. Treatment using the usual veterinary medicine is effective against Nosema infections in honeybee colonies. It is also important

to treat effectively against Varroa mite infestations.

We will carry out a more detailed survey to estimate the prevalence and impact of both Nosema species across England and Wales. Samples of DNA extracts from the European foul brood study, imported bees and historical samples stored in the NBU labs will be rescreened.

National Bee Unit, CSL, November 2007

This will also apply to our area, I'm sure. If you think you have a problem Ring me. Ed.

BITTER WORMWOOD FOR TREATING NOSEMA

Since the appearance of Varroa disease on the scene of world apiculture, Nosema disease has rarely been featured in discussions on bee pathology. However, the importance of Nosema disease on beekeeping today cannot be dismissed.

It is generally believed that the latent, invisible form of this disease is the reason for the loss of 15- 20% of the honey crop because Nosema infection considerably shortens the life span of bees. Statistical analysis of diagnostic data over a period of 50 years shows a constant presence of Nosema disease, the average Nosema-positive samples being about 15% . The antibiotic Fumagilin (Fumigil B) is an extremely reliable drug for treating Nosema, but there is always the problem of it contaminating honey. It is also an expensive drug to apply as a prophylactic.

ARTEMISIA

For some time many beekeepers have recommended the use of tinctures of different herbs in the spring food of honeybee colonies to treat Nosema, but these recommendations had no scientific basis. However, scientists in the Ukrainian institute of Beekeeping have now tested artemisia alcohol nastoyka (tincture) against Nosema in comparison with Fumagillin.

They used 100 grams of dried artemisia leaves and flowers per 1 litre of 96% alcohol. (*) They used 20 grams of this tincture per 1 kilo of sugar syrup or candy. The use of candy with 5% of dry pollen is usual practice here for early spring feeding of bee colonies, especially in the regions where early development of colonies is important. These are in areas where package bees are produced or where there is an early honey crop from false (white) acacia. The candy, or syrup, with the tincture was used in 200 grams doses per bee-way (**), three times, with an interval of 5 days between each treatment.

Fumagillin was used according to the manufacturer's instructions. The drugs were tested in two apiaries where two groups of Nosema-infected colonies were housed. The outcome of using the two different methods, Fumagillin or artemisia, was almost the same, but the authors recommended the use of candy rather than syrup when using artemisia as its bitter taste could contaminate honey should any of the syrup be stored.

MUCH CHEAPER

So, proof at last that the alcohol tincture of bitter wormwood for treating Nosema infection is almost exactly as effective as Fumagillin - with the added advantage of it being much cheaper

(*) *The dried leaves and Flowers are steeped in the alcohol for a few clays.*

(**) *Every 5 days, 1 litre of syrup or 1 kg of candy is used for a colony which occupies 6 frames (ie has 5 bee-ways between the frames) The use of 3 kilos of sugar per 15 clays is the normal practice for beekeepers who rear bees for sale.*

Dr Alexander Komissar

From BEEKEEPERS QUARTERLY

WORMWOOD

The plant's characteristic odour can make it useful for making a plant spray against pests. In the practice of companion planting, because of the secretions of its roots, it exerts an inhibiting effect on the growth



of surrounding plants. It can be useful to repel insect larvae but it need only be planted on the edge of the area of cultivation. It has also been used to repel fleas and moths indoors.

It is an ingredient in the liquor absinthe, and also used for flavouring in some other spirits and wines, such as vermouth. It is also used medically as a tonic, stomachic, febrifuge and anthelmintic.

For medicinal use, the herb is used to make a tea for helping pregnant women during pain of labour. A wine can also be made by macerating the herb. It is also available in powder form and as a tincture. The oil of the plant can be used as a cardiac stimulant to improve blood circulation. Pure wormwood oil is very poisonous, but with proper dosage poses little or no danger. Wormwood is mostly a stomach medicine.

NUCS

"There is no problem in beekeeping that can't be solved, by either putting something into, or, taking something out of a Nuc, and, Nucs rarely give problems." Wedmore 'A Manual of Beekeeping'.

MUCH SAFER

While a Four frame BS Brood Frame Nuc is OK for Summer use, and also Winter with extreme care, a Five frame BS. Brood Frame Nuc, makes overwintering much safer. It is important to have young, well mated Queens that will continue to lay well into the Autumn, and will start laying again early in the Spring. Queens producing rubbish bees are not worth keeping.

PUT WEAK COLONIES DOWN

When conditions are right, a small colony will expand at an incredible speed, and it will survive the coldest winter weather, providing that it has sufficient of the right stores, in the right place. A weak colony will rarely survive, even in the mildest winter.

The old beekeeping adage of taking Winter losses in the Autumn should be applied, and any weak colonies should be put down. Uniting up weak colonies should NOT be done unless both colonies are healthy, and reasonably free of Varroa and Viruses. Nucs are best made up in late May, or early June, when most colonies can stand the loss of bees and brood, and Queen Cells are plentiful. Just two frames of bees and brood (not too much brood), a frame of stores containing **fresh pollen**, and a ripe Queen Cell.

QUEEN EXCLUDER

If frames of brood (sealed and unsealed without bees), are put over a Queen Excluder above the supers of a strong colony for a few hours, then the bees will migrate and these frames will become covered with young nurse and house bees. These frames can then be used to make up Nucs, and if the bees are pinned in and not released until the following evening when other colonies have stopped flying, most of the bees will stay put.

If it is possible the best thing is to moved the Nuc away a mile or so for a couple of weeks so that the bees don't desert. Then it would be unwise to move it back until the Queen is mated and laying.

INSURANCE

Making up a Nuc with the old Queen from a colony that is making swarm preparations, and leaving two unsealed Queen cells, (one to be broken down before emergence), in the main colony is good beekeeping practice. And if a colony has swarmed, making up a Nuc with one of the surplus Queen cells, is a form of insurance, in case the Queen cell left in the main colony comes to nothing.

The Queen emerging from a ripe Queen cell should be mated and laying in about 14 days after the Nuc was made up, weather permitting. And it will be another eight days before the new brood is ready for capping, by which time all of the original worker brood will have emerged.

This is an ideal time to apply an effective Varroa Treatment (APIGUARD)? since all the mites will now be on the bees!

ROBBING

The new Queen's first brood will not begin to emerge until about 5/6 weeks after the Nuc was made up. The Nuc will now be at its weakest strength-wise and robbing (mid/end of July) must be prevented at all costs.

SHORT SUPPLY

In a normal August, pollen and nectar is in short supply and any necessary feeding should be done with the utmost care. Feed only in the evenings using a 1lb honey jar with 5 or 6 gimp pin holes in the lid, but not more than twice a week. Use 50/50 wt./wt. syrup, ie. 1kg. of sugar to 1 litre of water, made with white granulated sugar. If any syrup is spilt then it must be washed away quickly with plenty of water.

TWO HALF FRAMES OF BROOD

At the beginning of August the Nuc should have a minimum of two HALF frames of brood, and two half frames of stores. (Feed if not). Half the stores should be open, and half of the stores sealed.

Bees will only store in combs that they can cover, and if over-fed, the bees will fill up the cells that should be used for brood rearing, and there will be less bees to go into Winter. In September the Ivy yields an abundance of pollen and some nectar.

"Nuc" (nucleus) refers to a Queen, bees, brood, and food covering two to five frames, or a specially designed small hive box holding a three- to five-frame nuc.

A CRITICAL TIME

September is most critical! A young Queen will now show what she is worth! The Nuc should have a minimum of two well filled frames of brood, this brood represents approx. 5,000/6,000 bees, which together with the existing bees will be sufficient to take the colony through winter.

The bees should be covering at least three frames, and providing that the bees are healthy and they have been given an effective Varroa treatment the Nuc is in an ideal condition to survive The end of September is the time to prepare the Nuc for Winter.

HEAT LOSS



The heat loss from a Normal plywood crown board is wasteful and a strain on the bees. Cut a piece of 25mm thick polystyrene insulation board to cover the whole of the crown-board. If candy is to be fed over the Winter, cut a hole 135mm x 85mm in the

polystyrene to coincide with the position of the feed hole, and make up a cover to go over the top of the candy box. (500gr. margarine tub).

REGARDLESS OF WEATHER

From now on the block of candy **MUST** be checked every week and replaced as necessary, regardless of weather conditions. It doesn't take long! The candy soaks up surplus moisture in the nuc and helps keeps it dry, and the bees don't have to forage for so much water to break the candy down.

THE END OF MAY

In the Spring, nucs expand very quickly, (bees do best when kept tight), and they will need to be transferred into a full brood chamber about mid April, before they get too tight and start swarm preparations. A decent 4/5 frame nuc will fill a brood chamber by the end of May and in a reasonable year will get a super of honey by the middle of June.

CANDY RECIPE

Put the water from a 'full to the brim' 1lb honey jar into an 8" saucepan. Heat the saucepan and slowly add 2kg of white granulated sugar stirring constantly. When the mixture comes to a rolling boil - turn off the heat and leave for a few minutes. A crust will start to form on the top of the mixture. Start stirring until the mixture begins to thicken and turns a milky colour. Pour out into three 500gr. Margarine Tubs. Keep the candy in a cool dry place with a lid on. I spoil my bees and add some honey to the mix. For every tablespoon of honey added, half a table spoon less water is used. Old fermenting honey won't hurt since the heat drives off any alcohol and kills any yeast.

FUMIDIL B

Having Done a quick search of the Internet for Fumidil B, the only place I could find where the chemical is available for sale is Thornes. The paragraph below is taken from their site. The prices quoted are £7.38 To treat 3 hives or £82.27 To treat 54 hives. If you know of alternative sources please let me know on 01282 614015

"This is now widely accepted as the only proven effective treatment for the control of Nosema. In 26g. or 475g. bottles, enough for three or fifty-four colonies respectively. Fumidil B is effective when fed in syrup in the autumn. It can also be used in spring as a preliminary measure to the transfer of bees onto clean combs. Each colony to be treated should receive 1/3 of a 25g. phial administered in a syrup containing 14lbs. sugar in seven pints of water."

Feed at a time when the bees will consume the syrup rather than store it. This stuff has a short "Use by" time.

I have ordered a large pack of Fumidil B with a view to reducing it down to one colony doses. For members to purchase but it will not arrive until April at the earliest.

Bill A

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

JENI'S JOTTINGS



Bee on Ivy flower

The Autumn and start of Winter (If you can call it that) remains very dry and mild. The bees got their last pollen from the ivy but they were still flying well right into December,

although there was nothing for them.

NOVEMBER.

My time was taken up largely by an attack on my small flock of sheep, by hunting dogs. As a result of this I lost three sheep and had to nurse a very poorly lamb for two months. Thankfully he's as happy as Larry now, (Larry being his name of course). Lots of officialdom and form filling, has left me counting sheep to go to sleep but having nightmares about them! The whole episode has still not been resolved as I'm still waiting for some sort of compensation from the hunting lobby. (The less said the better on my part!)



DECEMBER.

The time for vaporizing the bees with Oxalic acid for varroa. All done with the help of Michael Costello, bar one, that's in an old type hive which has too narrow an entrance for the varroa gadget to pass. This one needs to be changed to a better hive next Spring if it survives. Fortunately with the mild weather I was able to open them up and give them a treatment with the trickle method.

At this stage I think it would be wise to inform newcomers that Michael Costello was a member of our society living in Leyland. He and his Wife went out to take a holiday at Jeni's place, enjoyed it so much that they came home, sold their house and went straight back out there to live. That is why Michael often appears in Jeni's jottings. Ed.

The new type hives with the varroa screen haven't turned out to be as brilliant as I first thought them to be. The problem being the space between the screen and the tray underneath becomes a real haven for wax -moth. The bees can do nothing to keep their house clean and if you are not 'on

the ball', before you know it, there's loads of wax-moth grubs. (Chickens love them).

Many things seem to happen here at a greater rate than in England. It is a country of contrasts and extremes it seems. This Winter, Michael is trying out a method of taking out the floors of his hive and just leaving the varroa screen. The only problem we can foresee at the moment is how to seal them up again to give them the vaporisation of oxalic acid, as they need to be closed up for 10 minutes to let the stuff penetrate and circulate.

That is only a once a year job so I'm sure the problem can be resolved. It will be interesting to see how his bees fare. My husband Jake who died three years ago, always had this idea about the more ventilation the better for the bees and a healthier environment for the bees. The same could be said for us too, so turn off the central heating and open the windows!!

JANUARY.

The New Year brought some real Winter weather, at last some snow! Much needed. Then some really heavy rain to wash it all away and clean out the streams and rivers. Then back to very mild temperatures and bees flying again.

Not a lot for the bees to get yet awhile until the catkins get their act together, and the bees at last find some pollen The other very insignificant flower that abounds here is the tiny "Bull's eyes" these are a great help to the bees in early Spring. Apart from them there's the Hellebores and Primroses but not much else yet.

It's now the end of the Month and I've a feeling Winter is still to come . Better it comes now, rather than in the Spring.

I've still a jobs list as long as my arm, including making up frames and foundation. Oh, you name it!! Never a dull moment that's for sure! Lets hope it's a good season for one and all.

Tante Salute Jeni.



MY WAY WITH VARROA

Last year I abandoned relying on the daily drop. I started to treat my bees whether they needed it or not in the following way.

1. About the second week in March, I put Apiguard on.
2. Second week in April, second lot of Apiguard put on.
3. Second week in May, clear out the Apiguard that is left, if any, and fit supers for the spring flow.
4. Second week in August take any supers off and put Apiguard on.
5. Second week in October second lot of Apiguard
6. Second Week in December Oxalic Acid treatment.

The exact timing depends on the strength of the colonies and the state of the weather but it should work out somewhere about the times given above



APIGARD

Just make sure the apiguard gets the full time and isn't on at the same time as the supers. Work it out for yourself, starting when you want to put the supers on and when you want to take them off.

FINGERS CROSSED

It all worked very well for me last year. As I write this on February 2nd. I have lost one stock and I knew it was on its way out last September. Faulty Queen! The rest are doing well, But there is a long way to go until we are out of Winter. So better keep my fingers crossed.

NOSEMA CERANAE

I am convinced that it is going to be a very serious problem. As one American beekeeper recently put it, 'This one just snuck up on us!' And he



was right! Whereas the threat from varroa was known and its arrival predicted over a period of many years, *N. ceranae* was first identified as a separate species from *N. apis* in 1995 by Professor Ingemar Fries. When Dr Dinh Quyet Tam of the Bee

Research and Development Centre in Hanoi, Vietnam contacted Dr Robert Paxton at Queen's University, Belfast about the increased levels of nosema in his bees. Subsequent research by members of the Queen's team revealed that the Vietnamese bees were suffering exclusively from *N. ceranae*. In the same year it was found in Taiwan. Just like varroa, it appears to have crossed the species barrier from the Eastern honeybee to the Western honeybee.

Since then, it has moved around the world at a frightening speed; in just ten years it has been spread through four continents - and yet we still import bees! Dr. Higes discovered widespread infection in Spanish bees in 2005 and massive losses were subsequently reported during the winter of 2005-6. There is speculation that the huge losses of colonies in France, originally attributed to the use of the pesticide 'Gaucho', may well have been due to *N. ceranae*. It has also been found in the colonies that have collapsed in America - and may be the cause of CCD

Older infected bees defaecate on brood combs and this contamination is subsequently cleaned up by young bees, thus spreading the infection. Although colonies suffering from N. apis often recover spontaneously, it does not appear to be so with N. ceranae. However N. ceranae is susceptible to fumagillin that is in the bee. Feeding syrup containing fumagillin (available as Fumidil-B) offers some hope. Keeping bees on clean comb may also reduce levels of N. ceranae infection and is good practice even if it does not. Empty comb in good condition can be fumigated with 80% acetic acid successfully. Moving colonies on to clean combs is good beekeeping keeping practice. From, Stratford on Avon "News Letter"

NEW QUEENS

Margaret Thomas, NDB

In our first year with bees, we made the classic mistake and removed all Queen cells before checking if the Queen was still present. The result was a Queenless colony, the bees having no means of replacing her.

MATCHBOX TECHNIQUE

We sent off for a new Queen. Couston's simple booklet *Principles of Practical Beekeeping*. Recommend that the workers accompanying the Queen received in the post are removed so that there is no chance of them fighting with the bees to which they are being introduced. The Queen should not be left without attendants for any length of time. Couston did not think much of reusing the travelling cage as an introduction cage, so we went for the matchbox technique he favours. It worked and a week later, there she was, laying well.

What was all that fuss about? We had cracked the problem. But it was beginner's luck - in subsequent years, failed introductions taught us that Queen introduction was one of the more difficult operations in beekeeping.

Bees retain the memory of their own Queen for about 24 hours. Bees prefer a Queen of the same age and in the same physiological condition as their own.

PREPARING TO SWARM

This is difficult to reconcile with the fact that you are often attempting to replace an old Queen with a younger one; a laying Queen with one that has travelled through the post and has gone off-lay; or even Queens from different strains (black bees do not readily accept Queens of the yellow bee type). Colonies preparing to swarm will expect a Queen cell or a virgin, not a laying Queen.

Bees are less vigilant during a nectar flow and will be less alert to changes.

Bees are less likely to reject a new Queen after mid- August and before mid-April, when they seem to know that they will have little chance of re- Queening themselves successfully.

QUEENLESS

Bees will not accept a new Queen if they have one of their own in the hive, or even a Queen cell or a virgin. Always ensure the colony is Queenless before attempting to re-Queen it. Lack of brood is not a guarantee of the stock being Queen less. If in doubt, place a test comb of young brood (eggs and larvae up to three days old) in the

colony for a few days. If the bees do not build Queen cells on this comb, it means they have a Queen cell or a virgin in the hive. Queen cells on this comb confirm they are Queen less.

Although some literature recommends just running in a new Queen, we feel this is taking an unnecessary risk, especially if the new Queen has been purchased. It is safest to introduce the Queen in a cage, so that the workers can get used to her slowly.

She needs physical protection until she has solicited food and has been fed by the workers, thus acquiring the 'hive odour', and until they have had time to forget their old Queen. There are several types of cages available.

USE A NUCLEUS

During the active season, (After Mid-april and before the end of August) additional precautions need to be taken to protect the new Queen. Introducing her to a small colony - a nucleus - gives her a chance to be accepted by a smaller number of young, less-aggressive workers. She will come into lay and her behaviour becomes normal, ready for introduction to the main colony.

SMOKE THE COLONY

Make up the nucleus from the colony you intend to re-Queen a couple of days before you expect the new Queen to arrive.

To do this, smoke the colony lightly and find the old Queen. Place her and the frame she is on in a holding box. Now take out a frame of sealed, hatching brood. Shake it lightly over the brood chamber to dislodge the older bees, then place it in your nucleus box. Add one frame of stores, preferably sealed. Again, shake this comb lightly to get rid of the older bees and then add it to the nucleus.



DUMMY BOARD

Add 4-5 frames of young bees to the nucleus. Shake each frame lightly over the brood chamber to dislodge the older bees, then shake the young bees into the nucleus box and replace the frame in the brood chamber of the main colony. Use a dummy board to restrict the little colony to one side of the nucleus box.

Place the nucleus next to the main colony and close the entrance for 3 or 4 days by which time they will have adopted the nucleus as their home.

Uniting is easier using the newspaper method (a method I favour anyway). The nucleus needs to be relocated into a brood chamber. Having found the old Queen and removed her, place a sheet of newspaper over the old brood chamber. Make a few small holes in the paper with the edge of the hive tool. Unless it is a windless day, something is needed to hold the newspaper down - maybe a spare pair of hands or a drawing pin or two. The brood chamber holding the nucleus is placed on top of the old one with frames aligned above and below. The Queen excluder is placed on top of the nucleus chamber. Reassemble the colony and leave it for a week. In most cases, no wild comb will be built in the gaps if dummy boards are placed to act as temporary walls. The following week the colony is rearranged. Putting all the brood together, and the spare frames removed if the Queen is laying out well.

SWARMS

Once the colony to be re-Queened has made a Queen cell and there are no eggs, it is safe to assume that the old Queen has gone. The next question is, has a virgin hatched? Shake the bees off the comb into the hive and search thoroughly for Queen cells. All Queen cells should be carefully opened to check that they still have an occupant and then destroyed. Make a nucleus for your new Queen as above. Leave the colony for a week to feel thoroughly Queen less before uniting it with the nucleus. If there was an empty, sealed Queen cell, 'pull' one or two other 'ripe' Queen cells. This means assisting mature Queens to emerge. Ripe Queen cells usually have the wax at the tip chewed down to expose the cocoon. This colony cannot be re-Queened with your chosen Queen until the new virgin begins to lay and is easy to identify. The new Queen can be housed in a nucleus and a decision on re-Queening made at a later date.

The really important parts, of a report from Ian Molyneux.

***The North Regional Bee Inspector
The full report is available from me on request.***

PYRETHROID RESISTANCE AND VARROA.

New cases of resistance have been found in many areas of the Northern region. It must now be considered that mite resistance to the Pyrethroid strips 'Apistan' and Bayvarol' is present in most apiaries. Beekeepers must learn to use alternative methods of Varroa control or they will lose their colonies. Many beekeepers are still letting their colonies go into winter with high levels of Varroa, which reduces the emergence of healthy winter bees, resulting in dead or small colonies in spring.

It is important if beekeepers want to keep their colonies alive that they regularly monitor Varroa levels throughout the year and take action before mite levels reach the injury threshold (1000 to 1500 mites).

NOSEMA CERANAE

Nosema ceranae has recently been confirmed in England & Wales and has been linked with colony losses in Europe.

Because it is difficult to distinguish between Nosema apis and Nosema ceranae using microscopical examination, it is possible that Nosema ceranae has been present in this country for some time. Should you or your members suspect Nosema disease, it is important to undertake macroscopical examination of the bee's gut (approx. 30 bees required) to confirm the disease is present.

Once confirmed, treatment is the same as for Nosema apis, by using Fumidil B' in sugar syrup. Any small or weak colonies should be destroyed.

Sterilization of bee less combs and boxes can be completed by fumigation using Acetic acid. Any poor or soiled combs should be burnt. Wooden hive parts should also be scorched with a blowtorch.

It is also important to get colonies onto new comb as soon as possible by using the 'Bailey' frame change' or 'shook swarm' method of comb replacement.

Please ring me on 01282 614015 if you would like to know more Bill A



Notices

DOWN
WITH
VARROA

INFORMATION ABOUT 'BEE TALK'

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

**LATEST TIME FOR
COPY - 2 WEEKS BE-
FORE THE MONTH OF
PUBLICATION.**

Please contact Bill
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7YS Telephone 01282
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These chemicals for treating bees can be
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beekeepers' meetings)

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
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FUTURE MEETINGS

WED 26TH MARCH 7PM

SUN 27TH APRIL 2PM

SUN 18TH MAY 2PM

ANNUAL DINNER

at Hill Crest Tea Rooms, Mitton

MY BEEKEEPING

With Ken Pickles

at Mr & Mrs Jacksons, Crosshills

SWARM CONTROL AND QUEEN REARING

With John Zamorski

at Mr & Mrs Wrigley, Holden Clough

**LANCASHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**
Annual General Meeting
March 15th 2008
Please ring John Zamorski for full
details



**COMMITTEE MEMBERS
CONTACT DETAILS**

Brian Jackson	Chairman	01535 634503
Bill Ainsworth	Vice Chair	01282 614015
John Zamorski	Hon. Sec	01200 427661
Philip Ainsworth	Hon. Treas.	0771 3161480
Caroline Coughlin	Honey Show Sec	07702 824920
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David Bush	Member	01200 428152
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**DELEGATES TO THE
CENTRAL COUNCIL**

John Zamorski	Hon. Sec	01200 427661
Philip Ainsworth	Hon. Treas.	0771 3161480

email philipainsworth@btconnect.com

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.

December 2007

Philip Ainsworth Hon. Treas. 0771 3161480

HONEY IN MALAYA

by Stephen L. Buchmann and Gary P. Nabhan

Malaysia's rainforest at two o'clock in the morning was, for most of us, unlike anything we had ever seen before.

RITUAL

There was something stranger still about the rainforest on this particular night: an ancient honey-harvesting ritual had begun. We stood not far from an enormous Tualang tree, Somewhere high



in the Tualang canopy, a seventy year-old Malay honey-hunter and his sixteen year old grandson were readying their gear to gather honey from giant Asian bee colonies. On the ground below them, three singers chanted ancient prayers integral to the Tualang honey-hunting ritual.

We had come with a dozen other bee scientists to see one of the few giant Tualang trees near Pedu Lake, in the Kedah Province of peninsular Malaysia.

PIS DORSATA

The native Asian rock bee, *Apis dorsata* is a giant reaching an inch in length. Nevertheless, no amount of reading could prepare us for the ways the honey hunters still directed their contact with the giant bees through animistic rituals--ones mixed with Islamic and Hindu symbolism--to cajole, charm, then finally calm the bees in order to gain access to their glistening honeycombs.

Professor Makhdzir Mardan, the group's guide and honey-hunting specialist had heard many of these stories over a decade working with honey hunters. He selected one fable to tell us

DARK SWEETNESS

"It seems in ancient times, there was a Hindu handmaiden, called Hitam Manis... 'Dark Sweetness,' for she was a dusky beauty. She fell in love with the reigning Sultan's son, who returned her love. But they could not marry, for she was a commoner. She and her fellow maidens--called dayang--were forced to flee the palace, for the

furious ruler wanted to kill her. As she ran, a metal spear pierced her heart. She and her friends were turned into bees and flew away."

The Professor paused, and suggested that the group lie down on the open sloping ground and look up toward the Tualang tree, in anticipation of what would happen next in the story: "One day, the prince--now engaged to a princess--noticed a honeycomb high up in a tree. He climbed the tree for it and discovered a sticky, sweet substance inside. He called for a knife and a pail. When the pail was hauled down, they discovered to their horror that the prince's body all chopped up in pieces!"

"A disembodied voice cried out that he had committed a sacrilege by using a metal knife in cutting the comb, for Hitam Manis herself had perished from a metal instrument."

GOLDEN SHOWER

Later, a 'golden shower' by the bees restored the prince to his entirety..." Makhdzir paused again, with irony apparent in his voice; we recalled that these native Asian bees made such a 'golden shower' during mass defecations just after sunset.

This same 'golden shower' is believed by some scientists to be the dreaded 'yellow rain' which covered American soldiers during the Viet Nam war; by others, yellow rain was diagnosed as a deadly form of biological warfare.



(In fact, the bee droppings enrich the tropical soils with massive quantities of nitrogen, which is often of limited availability in rainforests.) Whatever the case, the 'golden shower' was attributed restorative rather than destructive qualities in this fable. Otherwise, the body of man would be left fragmented for failing to pay respect to Hitam Manis.

Professor Mardan concluded by reminding us how this legend continues to guide honey hunters in the way they harvest the delicate combs: "To this day, no metal--only equipment of wood, hide and cow scapula--is used at all stages, in deference to the early anguish of Hitam Manis."

HONEY GATHERING

The honey hunting is always done on moonless nights, when the bees are not active. The Dayang on the ground are forbidden to carry torches near the tree. Otherwise, the 30,000 to 70,000 bees in the nests up above would make beelines toward the lights, stinging everything in sight. Compared to rock bees, the Africanized “bravo bees” now found throughout much of the Americas are but minor irritations.

CLIMBING

While we stood safely below the hundred twenty foot tall Tualang we were painfully aware that two Malay men were risking their lives, climbing up ninety feet into the canopy on makeshift herringbone ladders. The older man, Pak Teh, had been climbing this very tree since 1965, but still adhered to all the precautions and taboos. The wiry seventy-year old had ritually bathed, prayed, then left honey offerings at the base of the tree before beginning his ascent around one o’clock in the morning. For his grandson, this was the very first time that he would make the climb to serve as a torch-bearer.

By three in the morning, they were so high in the Tualang’s canopy that we could not have seen them even if there had been lights. They signalled the Dayang to send up a cowhide bucket on the rope-and-pulley hoist.

THE TORCH

All of the Dayang were now chanting loudly, hoping to appease the bees and to insure a safe harvest. Pak Teh lit a torch made of a tightly-bound tail of pounded liana vines. From their precarious position, Pak Teh and his grandson directed the heat of the torch toward the comb, arousing the bees from their slumber.

Beginning the “shower of sparks,” the men directed the tail end of the giant torch against the massive parabolic comb, singeing it and brushing the thick curtain of bees which surrounded it. Then he started to bang the smoldering end of the torch against the bees on the comb. Glowing embers of all sizes rained down by the thousands like a meteor shower.

The cascading sparks fell into the clearing below the giant Tualang; those of us craning our necks below the tree moved back, more deeply into the protective cover of the forest.

RAIN OF FIRE

As the flickering lights reached the ground, we heard an ominous roar following them out of the tree. Tens of thousands of angry bees were swarming, following the rain of fire from the tree down to the earth. They were so loud, so close, that we instinctively ducked and held our breath.

The rock bees dispersed, clustering around each dying ember. They soon settled on the ground, where they remained until the first morning light lured them upwards again to the remnants of their nests.

Pak Teh used the shoulder bone of a cow to cut away at the comb.

This comb section was draped over the cowhide bucket, which he filled until it overflowed. He lowered the honey to the men waiting below the tree, and another bucket was hoisted up.

The Dayang filtered the honey into seven-gallon vessels waiting to be transported back to nearby marketplaces.

Pak Teh moved from one colony to the next over the following four to five hours. Exhausted, the sinewy old man finally reached the ground just before six in the morning, where the Dayang helped him nurse the few stings he had suffered during the night with rock bee honey!

DEFORESTATION

All told, Pak Teh and his crew would gather nearly a thousand pounds of honey from this tree. The Tualang honey hunting allows each of the men in the Dayang crew to make 25 to 150 U.S. dollars more per month than he would make as a rubber tapper or farm labourer. Collectively, they have harvested as much as 150,000 pounds of honey in a single season, but that yield may decline as deforestation further impacts on their activities.





Bits and Pieces from the Members

John Wilson's report

At the tail end of my last letter I stated that varroa in my apiary was out of control. How can this have happened?

I had strong stocks at the start of July and mite drop was not exceptional. I had a warning in May, which gave me a feeling of unease. Two stocks had drones running in the grass in front of the hives. Then I noticed young house bees behaving the same. Why should this cause concern? You will have read that drone brood is more attractive to varroa due to the longer sealed condition, and young bees are attractive to migrating adult mites.

The bees gave a very good honey crop in August from the balsam. These bees I proposed not to treat until the end of the month as has been my practice in the past.

It was in September that colonies started collapsing. From about 15 stocks, I will be lucky to save 2 or 3. I must suppose that my bees have some resistance to 'Apistan' etc. It is all so true that the weather kept the bees inside, in July making the Queen stop laying.

It may be that some type of artificial swarm system with a treatment of brood less bees may become the norm, but a more simplified system will have to be developed. If a life form cannot survive without medication by mankind then by some definitions it could be considered to be heading for extinction.

The Asian honey bee, the source of varroa as far as we are concerned, evolved with the mite and formed some sort of balance over millions of years, it developed strategies that enabled the bee to live in spite of the mite. Its European cousin, never exposed to the mite until man introduced it recently, has no defence strategies to offer.

Our only hope is that Science will come to our aid with selecting European bees that have

some resistance to the mite, and with the aid of artificial insemination they may succeed. Let's hope they do.

John Wilson Dec. 2007

FROM MICHAEL BIRT

I was in a National park in Thailand a few weeks ago and was in an area where there are a few Sun Bears. Now you might think Sun Bears and beekeeping what are you talking about Michael. Well, I noticed a bit of a commotion high in the trees and low and behold there was a male Sun Bear doing a bit of beekeeping Sun Bear style. I took a video of it and I have put it on the web site. It's under Resources in the Bee Related Videos. Have a look by visiting the site at www.blackburnbeekeepers.com. Take care Michael and Saipin Birt

Hi Bill

Have been sent these web addresses of pollen may be of interest to members?

<http://www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk/pollen.htm>

<http://www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk/pollen/index.htm>

<http://www5.pbrc.hawaii.edu/microangela/mvalento.jpg>

Mary Anne Hartley

Hi Bill

How did you get on with the idea of raising pure English bees? I don't know how your bees have Wintered but out of my four hives there seems to be just one down but the other three seem to be OK.

Fred Nutter

Bill,

In the year 1000 Anglo Saxons were very knowledgeable in bee husbandry, the English had made considerable advances over the Romans. The Romans believed that when bees swarmed they were setting off to war against some rival hive. The Anglo Saxons, however, had worked out that the chief bee in any colony was a female and they also understood that when bees swarmed it was a matter of proliferation and the creation of another colony. Honey was so precious it was almost a currency in medieval England. People paid taxes with it and it was a lucky day when a swarm of bees settled in your thatch. That is in your roof not in your hair!

Pauline Roberts.

SEASONAL NOTES

HONEY - PREPARATION

Most people can make some sort of a job of extracting their honey crop, but that is only half the job. If you have surplus honey that you wish to sell or even give away, presentation is very important.

DISCARDED FRIDGE



It soon becomes evident that cold honey will not pass through a fine straining cloth, so some means of warming it up is necessary. Because honey is a bad conductor of heat it is important to warm it slowly over a long period. For this you will need a honey heater of some kind. Effectively these consist of an insulated box with a low heat source, and can be most easily constructed using a discarded fridge or freezer fitted with one or two conventional light bulbs under the bottom shelf. In the case of a chest freezer, which is ideal, a slatted floor can be made to go over the heat source.

STRAINING CLOTH

The temperature required to sufficiently warm the honey enough to reduce its viscosity so that it will pass through a straining cloth is only 35 degrees C. You simply achieve this by experimenting with different wattages of light bulbs until you get it right. The length of time it takes the honey to warm up will depend on how cold it is to start with, but as a rough guide 12 - 24 hours should be sufficient.

If you have a bottling tank with a strainer, it is best to discard the strainer and tie the honey straining cloth to the top of the tank so that it droops down inside 20 or 30 cm. . Make sure the tap is closed and pour the warm honey slowly onto the cloth. This process will introduce some air bubbles into the honey so it is advisable to leave it for several hours before filling the jars.

SEEDING

Depending on the composition of the honey, granulation will occur sooner or later. If you want the honey to stay clear, it may be carefully re-heated in the jars (with the lids on) for about 8 hours at 50° C. Because of the type of natural granulation that occurs; it may be coarse or rock hard, set honey is best achieved by a process known as seeding.

The easiest way to achieve this is to buy a jar of fine grain set honey. Warm it up so that it becomes runny but not melted and stir it into twice the volume of your warm clear honey. Every couple of days you can repeat the process until enough has been produced for immediate needs. Do not use it all but always keep some back to seed the next batch. If you can keep a separate bottling tank for the set honey, then you simply leave some in after each operation.

Jim Crundwell.

HONEY STOPS THE COUGH

By David Rose

Tuesday December 04 2007

Natural honey is a more effective remedy for children's coughs than over-the-counter medicines, researchers say. A dose of honey before bedtime easily outperformed a cough suppressant in a US study.

Honey did a better job of reducing the severity and frequency of night-time coughs. It also improved sleep quality for children and their parents. Dextromethorphan (DM) -- the active ingredient in many cough mixtures sold in chemists and supermarkets -- had no significant impact on symptoms.

Honey has been used in medicine for centuries to treat coughs and bronchitis and also to assist the healing of wounds.

Ian Paul, who led the researchers from Penn State College of Medicine, said: "We hope that medical professionals will consider the positive potential of honey as a treatment, given the lack of proven efficacy, expense, and potential for adverse effects associated with DM."



VARROA.

T Hitchin Bee Centre news

Varroa has been the biggest single cause of so many colony deaths in the last couple of years. I trust that those who missed the meeting did so because they have everything under control, and that their bees are in safe hands!

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

There was some debate at the meeting about whether we should be leaving control colonies, (colonies not treated, so that our bees have a chance to develop a strategy for co-existing with Varroa. Unfortunately it's not the Varroa per se that do the damage. It's the Viruses, that the mites transmit from bee to bee, and bee to larvae, that cause most of the colony deaths. Some colonies seem to be able to cope with a much higher mite population than others. This is most probably because those colonies have less Virus problems.

I got called out on 29th of October to a couple of non-members colonies that had lots of crawling bees with deformed wings. I put on some Grease Pattie, and a strip of Apistan for good measure. When Apistan resistant mites were first found in SE Herts the number of resistant mites in different apiaries was very variable, and so was the degree of resistance within colonies of the same apiary.

THYMOL

Anyway, after we had a cuppa, and a chat, we had a quick peep at the removable tray under one of the colonies. The tray was covered in dead mites. I'd forgotten just how effective Apistan could be, and I won't claim that the knock down was all due to the Thymol! As I sit writing this report I have been told that the mite drop counts are less than a tenth of what they were just three weeks ago. I now have great hopes that the colonies will come through winter OK.

APISTAN

Although we will never again be able to rely on Apistan as a single treatment, because there will always be some resistant mites around. And if we don't test for resistant mites, we won't know just how many there are, but if 50% of the mites in a colony are resistant to Apistan, then 50% are not, and they will be killed by the Apistan very quickly. The resistant mites then remain, and if not killed by some other treatment, will breed mostly resistant mites the next year.

LIFE SAVER

As a short term, one off fix, if you are in a hole, and need to reduce Varroa mite numbers quickly, Apistan could be a life saver, and well worth the expense, but only if it works.

I would prefer now, to keep Apistan up my sleeve and not see it abused. And only use it in emergencies, not routine. Just in case one day I find myself needing to do another quick clean out of Varroa mites late in the season, when other treatment may not be so effective.

by Robin Dartington

HONEY & NUT BISCUITS

INGREDIENTS

225g / $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter
175g / 6oz brown sugar
3 tablespoons of runny honey
1 beaten egg
175g / 6oz self-raising flour
175g / 6oz rolled oats
90g / 3oz toasted chopped hazelnuts

METHOD

Cream the butter and sugar together. When it is smooth, add the honey and mix well. Gently stir in the beaten egg and add the flour. Then add the oats and hazelnuts. If the mixture is too stiff, add a little milk.

Put the bowl into the refrigerator for an hour to cool.

Roll out the dough. It will be very sticky and it may be easier to press the dough out with your fingers. Now cut out biscuit rounds with a cookie cutter or the bottom of a glass.

Place the rounds on a buttered tray, leaving plenty of space between each one and bake them in the oven at Gas 4 / 180°C / 350°F for 10 minutes.

When the biscuits have had time to cool, store them in a tin - or eat them straight away

The dough is very sticky and needs a bit of care. They turned out very well and taste OK. They would be even better if a cook had made them.

Bill's verdict:

"Aye! They're alright but they should have been round"

SMOKERS.

Reprint of an article by the late Albert Morris in Beekeepers Quarterly Spring 1995

"What happens when we smoke colonies of honeybees?" The use of smoke, I have always looked upon as a way of disorientating bees prior to handling them.

Smoking is world-wide amongst beekeepers both in sophisticated and primitive societies.

When I was shown the basics of beekeeping sixty-five years ago by a then old beekeeper (Alan Sharp, a member of our association), he stressed the need for smoke initially in the entrance, before opening up a hive, with an odd puff when the frames of bees were exposed but little if any smoke to be used on them.

"Just now and then," he told me, "give a strong puff in the entrance - because that's where the stingers come from.

The whole idea, he said, was to get the bees on top of the frames fanning, with their Nasanov glands exposed, emitting scent which fanning bees use to tell the others - "I'm here. Where are you? Let's get together again."

Once you have them fanning, he told me, you will have them where you want them. I was also told to bang the sides of the hive fairly hard quite a few times, or rock it gently, before smoking the entrance. Obviously this was all part of the process of making them wonder what on earth was happening.



I've used this method of opening up a hive ever since I started keeping bees and I have rarely, in all my years, worn protective clothing - shirt sleeve beekeeping some call it.

How could you start to open up the average hive without using smoke? It would be difficult because smoked and handled correctly, even bad-tempered bees can be persuaded to behave themselves. I firmly believe that bees in the natural state have programmed into their genes, the knowledge of forest fires, as they will have had them to

contend with over millions of years.

J. B. Free found that bees after being smoked "Will begin to sting again after fifteen minutes". That's probably why the odd puff of smoke into the entrance after opening the hives comes in useful as my mentor had said.

WAX EXTRACTOR

By Derek Driver

This article on solar wax extractors is very timely. I have always recommended to new beekeepers to make this essential piece of equipment and spring time is as good a time as any. They are so simple to construct, anyone can do it, Costs can be kept down to a minimum by using second hand wood, etc.

With three ladies in my home I found the ideal filter is to use old stockings or tights, its best with cappings, you fill the tights until they look like legs so try and construct your extractor to take four legs. First any honey runs out and then the wax, golden yellow in colour. The honey & wax will separate with the wax on top and when it's all cooled down only the dross is left in the stockings. The blocks are so clean & good in colour you could even use it for shows. Depending on the sun you can produce a pound or two of rendered wax per day, for only the one off cost of construction.

If you're renewing a third of all you comb per year, which is the least all beekeepers should be doing, then you cannot be without a solar wax extractor!

Sometimes when I'm going through other people's hives I silently cringe over the amount of black comb I see. Remember, you cut down a lot of potential health problems with new comb and what a joy it is to pick up a newly drawn frame full of wall to wall capped brood.

So don't wait until summer when you are working like mad with your bees, **MAKE IT NOW!**

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“I KNOW I’M RIGHT !”

I don’t know about you but when I hear someone say “I *know* I’m right!”, I know the time for any sort of discussion as suddenly come to an end. If he or she *knows* they are right then it follows that they know with equal certainty that you are wrong.

A GOOD ARGUMENT

For me, there is nothing more entertaining than a sensible

debate or good, reasoned argument. Surely, listening to another point of view is how we develop our own philosophy and the way we live our lives.

Perhaps, what we should do is listen to different points of view and make up our own minds. But what influences us most? Sadly, I have a feeling it is the most charismatic speaker, the one who presents the best, but possibly not the most truthful, argument.

POLITICIANS

If you ever watch on TV the six hundred and forty odd people who were chosen to run things for you will find they spend a lot of time in pointless argument and ‘Point scoring’ and all too little time in honest, open debate.

In recent months a huge amount of time was spent on deciding which of the major parties had thought first of reducing inheritance tax. Who cares !? I always thought the House of Commons was there to decide the best way forward - surely that’s how Parliament *should* work - but perhaps I’m missing something.

Isn’t it time our politicians accepted the fact that no matter how strongly they may feel about their political beliefs, there is no way in the world that they are going to persuade the people on the opposite benches to change sides?

LEFT, RIGHT?

Staying with politics for a moment, can you explore the recesses of your mind and see exactly why you are Tory or Labour, Lib Dem or even Monarchist or Republican? I know in my case it was “Following in Father’s footsteps”. I don’t think he deliberately set out to influence me but in those early years what Dad said must be right.

I may have shifted ground a bit since then but those early influences are deep seated.

A CLEAN SLATE

For some the influence would come from a much admired teacher or tutor, a trade union official or respected work mate. The sad thing is we often think these emotionally based beliefs and attitudes are our own carefully nurtured beliefs and attitudes. So, is it possible to wipe the slate clean and start again? To take a long held belief and reconstruct it? Possibly, but I think it is very difficult.

There are so many experts; so many opinions; so many truths. You must, like me, see, hear and read about things that are bad for you and the very next day have those ‘Truths’ turned on their head by other so called pundits.

1000 TIMES MORE EXPENSIVE

Cynical thoughts are often awakened in me when I read the definitive article on why it is better to drink bottled water or this or that food will keep me fit. I wonder, “Did the writer get paid by the Pure Spring Water Corporation?” or whatever the thing is that is being promoted. If you drink lots of bottled water and you have a computer, take a look at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1309841.stm> and then think about it.

CARROTS!

I am old enough to remember ‘Cat’s Eyes Cunningham’ a famous World War 2 night fighter pilot. We were told that his night fighting skill was the result of eating carrots and you could see small boys devouring carrots by the yard in an attempt to emulate this popular hero. It wasn’t until after the war that we learned that his success was down to Radar - but we hadn’t to let the Germans know. Hence - carrots. Come to think of it, I had an old friend who used to use ‘Carrots!’ as an expletive. Tell Fred something he didn’t accept and his simple reply would be “Carrots!”.

So the next time you read in a Bee Journal a new revolutionary way of doubling honey production, just say “Carrots!” - at least until you find out for yourself if it really works.

Scrapings

HONEY AT £160 PER LB

Thought to be the most expensive in the world, this honey has gone on sale at Harrods.

Life Mel honey costs a whopping £42 for a pot containing just 120g.



Celebrities including Sienna Miller and Kylie Minogue are huge fans, according to the London department store.

But the jars will not be found on the shelves of the food hall.

Harrods is selling the product in its pharmacy instead, because of its reputed health benefits.

"This is the newest product that has just launched," said Andre Dang, Harrods press and product manager.

"People are tending to use it more as an alternative therapy rather than spreading it on toast."

Life Mel's high price tag is down to the fact that it is made by bees fed on a special diet including herbs such as Siberian ginseng and echinacea. It has a strong taste similar to manuka honey and is made without artificial ingredients. The honey, which is made in Israel, is supposed to be eaten by the teaspoonful in the morning and at night.

WHO NEEDS WATER?

Bees prefer to obtain moisture from a damp surface rather than from an open container of water. There are several watering devices used by apiarists. Two of these are: a tub of wet sand suitably located near the hive: or a shallow trough with floats, such as corks or straw, so that the bees can drink without drowning.

A teaspoon of salt can be added to each litre of fresh water to attract bees to the watering place, during the first week.

GOOD NEWS AT LAST FIRST - THE BAD NEWS

There has been a lot of tough news for beekeepers lately. CCD is coming back (We think, maybe, but we're not sure, and who knows if its here or not), nosema is more dangerous than ever, the mites are still killing our bees and we're steadily losing forage to urbanization. But lately, there was some really good news as well.

Okay, this first bit of good news is perhaps mixed. Researchers recently determined that most over-the-counter cough medicines are about as useful as, well, no treatment at all. We are apparently wasting millions of pounds on cough suppressants that don't actually work.

A SPOONFUL OF HONEY

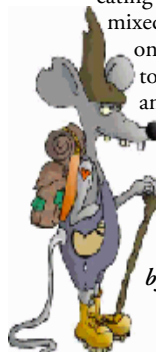
A nightly dose of honey, on the other hand, had a measurable effect at controlling night time coughing and sleep difficulty among children. The study evaluated 105 children between the ages of 2 and 18. Both children and parents reported significant reductions in the severity of coughing.

The study tested buckwheat honey but my guess is that any good local honey would do about as well. (And remember that honey, like all highly-concentrated sweets, should not be given to children under 12 months. Their digestive systems have not yet built up enough acid levels to manage the botulism spores that thrive in all sweets.)

FITTER RATS

The other good news came from New Zealand. Rats eating honey gained less weight than rats eating the equivalent of sucrose and mixed sugars. The weight gain by rats on the honey diet was comparable to that by rats on the diet without any sugars at all according to the study.

I really didn't need more of an excuse to eat up all my profits.



by Mike Rossander



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