Bee Talk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association

www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

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What's in this issue of Bee Talk

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Editorial March 2009

MONEY!

Good news has come to us in that the government has said it will give £4.3 million over the next five years to bee health research, as yet we have not seen the small print and you all know, that is where the devil is. Who gets it and just how is it to be spent and what on?

BBKA

If BBKA gets its hands on it they will not give the likes of you and me a chance to say what happens to it. What with the way BBKA have been handling them selves in the last few months, especially the financial links with the enemy (Chemical companies). I do get despondent and would not need a lot of persuading to pull out of BBKA. We will see what happens!

GOODBYE BEETALK

As you will see on later pages, Beetalk is to be discontinued in its present form. After discussion at the committee meeting on January 25th at West Bradford Village Hall the following was minuted as item 3.

"The future of Beetalk was discussed and agreed that one more issue would be sent out. This would inform everyone that in future it would be available on the internet."

So that is the end of Beetalk as we know it. I think it has been a good little magazine and has done a lot to keep our members interested in the association and, indeed, to assist in recruiting new members. But then I'm prejudiced! It has however from its very beginnings, as two a 4A sheets, got better and better. More pages, photos, pictures, cartoons, and then colour! It all costs money of course and those costs have got more and more. Ah well! we go back to the old ideas, two or three pages and on the web at that, so if you don't have the web at your disposal, you will have to get someone to print it out for you.

However, the last word (Well almost the last) on this matter is from the Hon. Sec. John Zamorski:

BEETALK NO MORE

After much deliberation Bill and Arthur have decided to wind up Beetalk.

I really can't believe how those two nearly 80 year olds have managed to keep it going for so long. They have been producing an amazing booklet which is read and admired up and down the country and also abroad.

I think it is too important a publication to lose and would love to see someone stepping forward to carry it on even if it is only on the website. I am sure we have someone out there who must be interested in having a go.

On behalf of the Branch and all the other readers I would like to say a big thank you to Bill and Arthur for their splendid work. I know I will miss reading it from cover to cover the day it arrived. I used to take a copy with me to Greece to read again.

Elsewhere in this last issue Bill will explain what is happening in future, but if there is anyone out there who thinks they could have a go at something similar then step forward. Bill and Arthur deserve a well earned rest.

Any comments you want to make please go on the website and you will find something Michael is setting up to leave them.

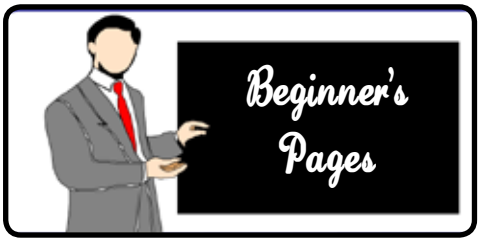
John Zamorski

THE LAST WORD - REALLY!

We are both too fond of Beetalk to just walk away and let it be thrown to the wolves (Another mixed metaphor) so we shall keep preparing and publishing on the web site, a simple two or three page news letter. It will only be available on our website but at least it will keep everyone in touch.

We will keep it going until someone decides to have a go. Naturally, we will give them all the help we can to get them going

Bill and Arthur



SOME KILL OR CURE REMEDIES

To stop the smarting of a bee sting apply some clay kneaded and thinned with urine.

- A bee sting treated with ammonia and whisky will relieve you in a measure.
- Cure a bee sting by covering it with earwax.
- Immediate relief from a bee sting can be secured by covering it with a piece of lean raw meat.
- If you are stung by a bee, use harts-horn: if bitten by a snake get drunk.
- If you would prefer to treat bee stings naturally, use fresh cow manure. Others suggest smearing with mud or clay – less smelly!

- If any person should be stung by a bee or other insect, rub some spirits of turpentine on the place, and the pain will nearly cease in one minute.
- Rub the bee that has stung us, or any other bee, around the wound. This is making the body the antidote to the tail.
- An old English Apiarian advises a person who has been stung, to catch as speedily as possible another bee, and make it sting on the same spot!

Thanks to Warwick BKA via BEES

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

I read that beta blockers are being replaced; the super new pills work by dilating blood vessels so making it easier for the blood to flow around the body. Following insect sting, this dilating action also increases the likelihood of an anaphylactic reaction. Moral – read the medicine small print and ensure your GP knows you are a beekeeper – take a jar of honey to your next consultation.

From Hampshire Bee Talk via BEES

THE MAGIC OF POLLEN

POLLEN GRAINS

It is rather puerile, I suppose, to attempt in a few lines something on the magic of pollen, but it was while watching the activity round my five colonies during the morning of the 15th November – that last really warm few hours this autumn and noting the numerous pollen loads going in that my thoughts wandered a bit and became somewhat botanical.

The pollen was coming from a nearby mahonia – it was 'alive' with bees. My thoughts then centred on individual pollen grains.

SIZE

To remind one of the size of these miniscule pieces of vegetation, just touch a ripe Scots pine male cone – the same with a hazel, larch or alder catkin – the pollen floats not dissimilar to a little cloud of steam and, each grain carrying the genetic material so vital for the perpetuation of their species.

The same over a field of wheat or an oak wood. The grain's response when it alights on a receptive stigma: it divides, the vegetative nucleus making a pollen tube down the style along which to the generative nucleus follows, finally entering the ovary where the real business of fertilization takes place.

MATTERS APICULTURAL

These thoughts were with me until the evening when I had to take down my Fritsch and Salisbury (used when a student over sixty years ago) to go into the intricacies of this. I must say I was rather alarmed at how much had slipped my memory. Back on 'home ground' now, switching to matters apicultural.

The very existence of our honey bees depends on pollen. We are told that all pollen isn't equally nutritious and we read that in some parts of the world there can be shortages of pollen then pollen substitutes or supplements are given.

My experience leads me to think that there is invariably enough pollen available for my bees, I see it going in as early as the end of February right through until October, so I've never resorted to supplements. It is noticeable what an appetite the bees have for fresh pollen in early Spring – how they plunder those crocuses! It was the warmth from that short burst of November sun on my neck that brought on this reverie. The whole thing just a very tiny bit of our Planet's miraculous system.

Jack Cox, NDB, President. :udlow Beekeepers

BEE NUTRITION

POLLEN

Beekeepers who see pollen loads coming in at the entrance generally assume that the colony is queen right with brood present. Pollen foragers carry their pollen loads directly to the brood nest, and use their heads to pack it into cells adjacent to larvae. This pollen is generally consumed quickly by nurse bees.

LIKE YOGHURTS

The dynamics of pollen storage and consumption produce the typical ring of pollen around the brood. Pollen that remains stored for longer periods may undergo lactic acid fermentation in the cell this likely preserves it, much as similar fermentation does sauerkraut or yogurt. Cells of pollen may be covered with honey in Autumn to be used the next spring as the colony expands the brood nest prior to early pollen flows.

TROPICAL INSECTS

Honeybees are tropical insects that need a warm environment and constant feeding. When they migrated from the tropics to more temperate climates, they "learned" to create dry homes (a cluster in a cavity) that they can heat to comfortable temperatures during winter, and to store food in their larders for lean times (i.e., any time that plants aren't flowering).

GET TO THE POINT

O.K., in my roundabout way, I'm finally going to get to my point. Bees not only store pollen and honey in the combs, but they also store food reserves in their bodies. This is done mainly in the form of a compound called "vitellogenin." Vitellogenin is used by other animals as an egg yolk protein, but bees have made it much more important in their physiology and behavior, using it additionally as a food storage reservoir in their bodies, to synthesize royal jelly, as an immune system component, as well as functioning as a hormone that affects future foraging behavior!

This is a great example of the conservatism of evolution. Just as the same genes that code for a fish's fins also code for a dog's paw, a human hand, or a bird or bat's wing, bees have expanded the role of vitellogenin to perform multiple functions in their systems.

They are able to do this because most of the bees in a colony are sterile females who rarely lay eggs. Therefore, they have the mechanism to produce this egg yolk precursor, but no use for it. So instead, they deposit it in fat bodies in the abdomen and head.

NOT JUST FAT

Now, fat bodies aren't just fat. Putnam & Stanley (2007) put it well: "In addition to its important roles

as a storage depot, the fat body of insects functions as a key center of metabolism and biochemistry… fat bodies biosynthesize and accumulate not only lipid reserves, but also carbohydrates, amino acids, proteins and other metabolites. Fat bodies respond to physiological and biochemical needs in a number of ways, including very high rates of protein biosynthesis, formation and release of trehalose, release of lipids, detoxification of nitrogenous waste products, and biosynthesis of hormone.

Many of the proteins that are crucial in the lives of insects are biosynthesized in fat bodies" (including vitellogenins).

FORAGING

Now here's where Dr. Gro Amdam comes into the picture. She wondered what all the vitellogenin synthesized by bees was doing. She found out that instead of being used for egg yolk protein, it was being fed to queens, larvae, and older workers (Amdam, et al 2003). "The insight that vitellogenin was important during the nest stage, and thus for worker division of labour, led Amdam to speculate that the protein could--directly or indirectly--affect the bees transition from nest tasks to foraging duties.

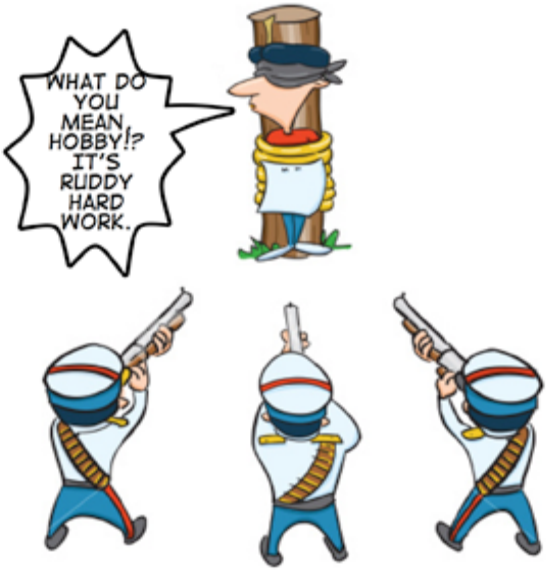
'The age at onset of foraging is highly variable, but there was no good physiological model for explaining this variation. One possibility was that the probability of starting foraging was related to the level of the bees' vitellogenin stores. This would ensure that vitellogenin rich bees stayed in the nest as useful nurses of the brood and other bees, whereas vitellogenin exhausted bees became foragers'"

GETTING RID OF HOBBY BEEKEEPERS!!!

James E Tew, OHIO

LACK OF EXPERIENCE

New beekeepers frequently bemoan their lack of experience. After having done this bee thing for most of my adult life, I honestly have only the faintest memories of my novice years, but one memory is vivid.



LATE SWARM

Within my first two years of beekeeping enterprise, I remember finding a late-season swarm hanging near one of my hives.

Having been told that a late swarm had a poor chance of winter survival and that my honey crop would be negatively affected, I logically selected the closest hive and shook the swarm directly into the unsuspecting colony.

IT WENT WRONG

It would be a mild statement to tell you that everything that could go wrong, immediately went wrong. Obviously, the two colonies were, in no way, related. The elements of my fiasco were:

(1) a three-pound late-season swarm

(2 a strong, established colony, and

(3) a declining nectar flow.

EXPERIENCE

Bees killed each other en mass. The swarm was essentially decimated while the established colony was damaged and traumatized. I was simply a dork – and an inexperienced one at that. Ahhh, the confidence and surety, experience doth bring. I would never do that now. But there is a darker side to 'experience' that is never discussed.

The experienced beekeeper develops feelings of confidence and familiarity but loses the sense of innocence and excitement that new beekeepers possess.

The experienced beekeeper develops ways of doing things to the point of getting in a rut. Boredom sets in. So, the experienced beekeeper tries other beekeeping activities. Queen production is a common fresh direction. Pollen collection, propolis collection, comb honey production, collecting bee books, and pollination contracts, are other common exploration avenues. But after all that is done, what then?

BACK TO THE START

After years of beekeeping exploration, the experienced beekeeper finds himself or herself back near the point where it all started – missing the early passion and curiosity that was once felt. Hence, I say that there is absolutely nothing wrong with beekeeping newness and innocence. It may very well be the best time of your beekeeping life; something akin to your teen age years. Don't rush your early beekeeping years. This philosophy has been mine for a long time.

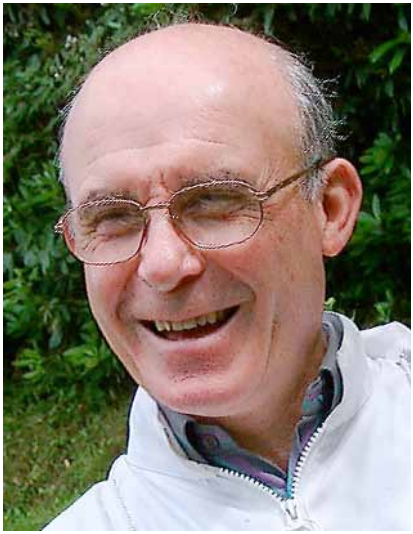
PART TIME - FULL TIME

'Hobby beekeeping,' as an industry beekeeping designation, needs to go away. I feel that I need to say that a different way. 'The designation, 'hobby beekeeping' needs to be removed from the industry lexicon and should not be used in a general beekeeping context.

The clear opinion of outside advisors is that all beekeepers are either part-time or full-time. Why bother with this category of beekeepers that are exceptionally part-time and label them hobby beekeepers? Golfing or stamp collecting is a hobby. Either you keep bees or you don't. Either you do it some of the time or all the time, so all beekeepers are either part-time or full-time. Why confuse things with this third 'hobby' category?

NEW CUP FOR THE HONEY SHOW.

Your committee decided at the last meeting that a cup should be bought in the name of Ken Gaiger for use as a presentation at the honey show.



It has not yet been decided for what the cup would be presented, so if you have any suggestions please get in touch with one of the committee members and put your idea forward.

With a bit of luck and a good strong wind the monies raised from the sale of Ken's beekeeping stuff will go towards the cost of the cup.

The idea of a cup, of course, comes from the members of the committee as some kind of recognition for the work he did for many years as our treasurer. He managed to virtually run the branch on the small amount he reclaimed from the tax authorities. Almost all of the rest of the member's contributions going to Lancashire Beekeepers and the BBKA as capitation fees.

Ken died in September 2008 he was 68 and was a widower.

ANTI VARROA FUNGI

CHIEF CAUSE

Bees world wide are suffering a serious decline and despite our current limited understanding of that decline, most beekeepers and scientists believe that varroa is one of the causes – if not the chief one.

Biological control technologies (the use of one organism to control another) could offer a way of moving pest management strategies away from a reliance on synthetic pesticides and many alternatives have been researched and tried in many countries, but no natural insect or other enemies of varroa species have been identified on the varroa or on their bee hosts.

NEW VARROA ENEMIES.

Now Defra-funded studies by researchers at the University of Warwick's plant research group Warwick HRI, and Rothamsted Research has found some new natural enemies of varroa from other hosts.

KILLERS OF VARROA

The university researchers under Dr Dave Chandler examined 50 different types of fungi that afflict other insects (known as entomopathogenic fungi) to see if they would kill varroa. They needed to find fungi that were effective killers of varroa, had a low impact on the bees, and worked in the warm and dry conditions typically found in bee hives. Of the original 50 fungi they are now focusing on four that best match those three requirements."

The team now hope to secure additional funding to further examine the effectiveness of these four fungi and to begin to consider the best ways of applying this weapon across the hive. A number of approaches are being considered including having fungal foot baths at the main entrances to hives. However the complex environment within bee hives means that more devious means of application may be needed.

Dr Chandler hosted the Society for Invertebrate Pathology international conference at the University of Warwick which started on 4th August, where a special session was held on honey bee health. The session brought together some the world's leading experts in bee colony collapse disorder to discuss the full range of its possible underlying causes.

FROM AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE 1933 BRITISH BEE JOURNAL:

BEGINNINGS

Now we are ready. Come on. Oh! By the way, we have not got any bees yet. Shall we have a swarm, or just what?" "Well, I think a swarm is best as they are, as a rule, more quiet, and we can see it build up. A nucleus is good, but I think that a big lot is a big job for a beginner, so let us go down the lane to see if we can get a swarm.

Yes, here is one - what luck! It is hanging from a branch of a tree and just within easy reach of the ground, but we learn that it has been there for several days. Therefore, they will probably be "HOT", so let us just mix some honey or sugar and water, and pour it over them - only just a little at a time - and give them twenty minutes or so to clean themselves. Then place the skep or box just under the swarm and shake the branch, when most of the bees will fall into the skep. Some will fall onto the ground so, to prevent loss, spread a sheet - which may be a flour bag cut open - on the ground. This is especially necessary when the bees cluster onto a wall or the trunk of a tree, as when they are brushed off they fall onto the sack and are more easily transferred to the skep.

So now we can cart the catch or the stray home. But don't start to hive them at once - allow them at least an hour or more to cool down, and be sure not to suffocate them!

Imagine finding a swarm in the hedge just like that???
Sad thing is - I can remember when it was very much like that!!!
Bill.

This is a summery of a three page report from Ian. (To long for Bee Talk) The full report is available from me if wanted. Ed.

FROM IAN MOLYNEUX

Northern Regional Bee Inspector

There have been no reported cases of the Small Hive Beetle in the U.K. this year

There has been no Foul Brood disease found in the Northern region .

My Northerly Seasonal Bee Inspector's, John Newton and Sue Scott have helped out this year in North Yorkshire, where there has been a large outbreak of EFB. Considering how close the disease is to the Northern region, it is important that beekeepers are vigilant when obtaining bees and second hand equipment.

Sterilise all such equipment thoroughly before using, remembering never to buy or use any old brood combs.

Please give me a call if you need advice on area's that might have a high disease risk and visit our web site http:// beebase.csl.gov.uk where you can find information on the levels of disease in particular areas.

PYRETHROID RESISTANCE & VARROA

Mite resistance to the registered pyrethroids has now been confirmed in nearly all the Northern region.

Beekeepers must learn to use alternative methods of Varroa control or they will loose 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 high virus levels and thus dead or small colonies in Spring.

It is important if they 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 of 1000 to 1500 mites.

From our studies of samples from dead colonies, most had died as a result of poor Varroa management and Nosema.

THE 2008 HONEY SEASON.

2008 has been a poor honey season for nearly all beekeepers. Some have commented that it is the worst season they can remember.

Spring started late and many small colonies that would have normally survived, just dwindled and died out.

Some beekeepers with strong healthy colonies that were near or on the rape managed to obtain a crop.

There was little or no summer flow and many beekeepers in Cumbria have had no honey at all, they have informed me that they have been feeding their bees since July/August.

Honey crops in the Northern region were down by at least 50%.

It seems that the only beekeepers that got any surplus honey were those that were near large areas of Himalayan Water Balsam.

Some beekeepers, again with strong stocks, reported one or two boxes of Heather honey.

Total honey crops for England and Wales was 2990 tons (metric) 50% down on average year.

On my late inspections this year, I found that many colonies were low on stores in the brood nest. It is important that your colonies go into winter with adequate (30 lb) accessible, sealed stores.

Please can you check the stores levels in your colonies and add food if necessary.

THE OLD ONES ARE THE BEST

A beekeeper was feeling ill and very stressed. He and his wife went to see the doctor. The doctor examined the beekeeper for some time and then asked to see the man's wife, alone.

"Listen," said the doctor, "Your husband is way over-worked. He worries about everything too much. If some big changes aren't made, he will be dead in less than six months."

The wife asked what she should do and the doctor replied, "Well, I know you've got a great career, but you'll have to quit your job, stay home with the kids, cook lots of vegetables, keep the house spotless, and give your husband a kiss every time you see him..."

On the way home, the beekeeper asked his wife what the doctor had talked to her about. The wife looked at her husband and said, "I'm sorry dear, but you're not going to make it."

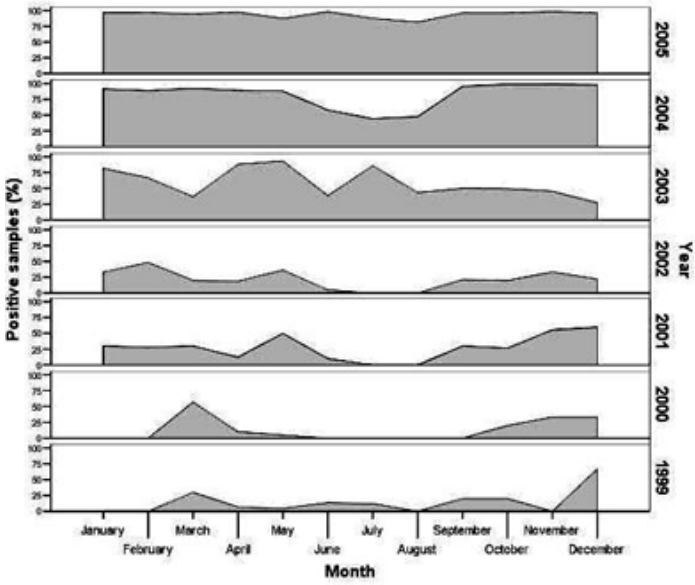
From Beetalk September 2006

NOSEMA CERANA —THE "NEW" KID ON THE BLOCK

Nosema ceranae grabbed headlines in the U.S. in April of this year when Drs. Joe DeRisi and Don Ganem of U.C. San Francisco were given samples of CCD. DeRisi, who had helped solve the SARS disease mystery. He analyzed the bees, and was surprised to find that they contained considerable DNA from N. ceranae—a parasite previously unreported in North America.

At that point, the team announced they had already been preparing a paper to formally announce that ceranae had been in the U.S. since at least 1995 (based upon analysis of stored samples of bees). This new bug had only been first named in 1996 by Dr. Ingemar Fries, but wasn't detected in Apis mellifera until 2004 in Vietnam, then in Taiwan, and by 2006 was reported to be widespread in Europe, Asia, Israel, the Caribbean, and North and South America. Amazingly, in a few short years N. ceranae appears to have supplanted N. apis throughout much of North America and the world! In many areas, it is now difficult to find the previously common N. apis!

So ceranae snuck in under our noses, spread widely, and now researchers worldwide are scrambling feverishly to find out answers about this new, and apparently different acting, species. Once again, just as with varroa, our poor bees are being forced to evolve yet another new host/parasite relationship. How did ceranae get here? Cox-Foster (2007) found it in imported Chinese royal jelly used by queen producers, but Williams's (2007) genetic sequencing indicates that the likely origin was from Europe.



Percent Nosema-positive samples, by month, in Spain for the years 1999-2005.

The full version of this article is very interesting and instructive. However it is far too long to be printed in Bee Talk, so any one who needs it can read it on the web at

http://www.scientificbeekeeping.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=48

I think this disease is important to us and is difficult to diagnose it is not something that can be observed, as the bees die away from the apiary. It could well be the cause or a big contributor to CCD. It is controllable with Fumidil "B" so all is not lost.

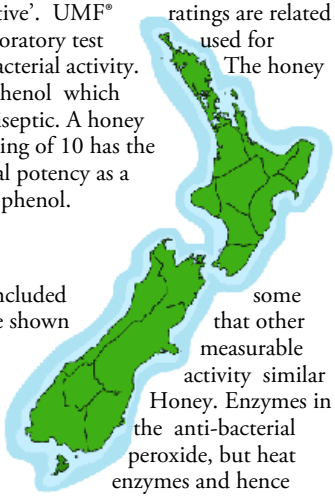
Is there anyone out there with a microscope who would look at suspect samples for us. I think the results would surprise us. If you think you could help, give me a ring.

Ed.

MANUKA HONEY.

ACTIVE HONEY

Active honey refers to a classification devised in New Zealand for rating the anti-bacterial properties of honeys, in particular Manuka Honey. An 'active' honey is given a UMF® (Unique Manuka Factor) rating. A honey must have a rating above 10 to be classed as 'active'. UMF® ratings are related to a standard laboratory test used for measuring antibacterial activity. The honey is compared to phenol which is a standard antiseptic. A honey with a UMF® rating of 10 has the same antibacterial potency as a 10% solution of phenol.



HYDROGEN PEROXIDE

Studies, which included some UK honeys, have shown that other honeys do have measurable anti-bacterial activity similar to Manuka Honey. Enzymes in honey produce the anti-bacterial agent hydrogen peroxide, but heat destroys these enzymes and hence the anti-bacterial properties of many honeys are destroyed. There is an additional anti-bacterial agent in Manuka honey which is not destroyed by heating.

There may be other honeys that also contain this factor, but more research is needed to find these. There is a Manuka plantation on the Tregothnan estate in Cornwall and honey from this area has been found to have a high anti-bacterial potency, though it is believed that the environment and soil that the Manuka is growing in affects the potency of the honey produced.

COLD EXTRACTED

The Littleover Apiaries website does not mention the honey having a UMF® rating, so it is not clear how 'active' it is. They mention it being cold extracted and micro-filtered, which I imagine most members of this Association could also claim. I suspect, therefore, they are basically relying on the hydrogen peroxide activity of the honey and thus are trying to ensure the honey is not heated too much so that the enzymes are not destroyed that produce hydrogen peroxide.

Regards Sarah Davis MRPharmS Warwickshire beekeepers

THEN THERE IS CLEANLINESS

Brood boxes should be taken out of circulation on a regular basis, scraped down and cleaned thoroughly using a blowtorch or 80% ethanoic (acetic) acid. Brood comb must be replaced regularly to remove the disease-causing organisms (pathogens) which build up on it. I use the Bailey comb change. I burn my old brood comb, and the frames if they are really past it. Burning removes any chemicals absorbed by the wax from Varroa treatments and ensures that these do not get recycled into new foundation, causing a build-up, which can be damaging to the bees. Any reusable clean frames can be fumigated with ethanoic acid at the same time as the boxes.

STRESS

Unfortunately for the beekeeper, all unnatural operations will cause stress to the bees. Weekly inspections: moving bees: keeping many hives in one place and many other activities, must be kept to a minimum. So as to keep stress levels as low as possible. Stress will weaken the natural immunity, enabling pathogens already present in the hive, to cause disease. These pathogens are present in enormous numbers in most hives and, if we neglect the commonsense rules and cleanliness and subject our bees to stress, they can take over.

The arrival of Varroa changed bee health dramatically, but the above rules still hold true and all the 'old' diseases are still there waiting to pounce. Varroa, apart from its direct effects, is another cause of stress enabling other pathogens to flourish in a weakened colony, so the final precaution we must take is to keep Varroa to a minimum at all times, and Clean, Clean Clean.

Celia F Davis Warwickshire beekeepers

Wash your bee suit regularly to get rid of sting pheromones, honey and propolis. This will also help to prevent the spread of disease from colony to colony and also apiary to apiary when you visit elsewhere

Making a minimum of twice yearly inspections just to search for disease is a big help.

Notices

INFORMATION ABOUT BEE TALK

After this issue, Beetalk will be produced soon after each committee meeting and will consist of details of the association, forthcoming events and any snippets of urgent news.

There will be no printed version but you will be able to see it on the web site www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

MEMBERS SERVICES BEE TALK

Batyvoral	**These Chemicals for treating bees**
Apiguard	**can be obtained from:**
Oxalic Acid	**Bill Ainsworth 'phone 01282 614015**
Thymol	**(Bill will have them available at bee-**
Fumidi 'B'	**keeper's meetings**

LIBRARY
There is an extensive range of bee books that can be borrowed. Please contact David Rayner on 01200 426898

FUTURE MEETINGS

	DATE	TIME	EVENT	ORGANISER/CONTACT
	Wed 25th Mar	**7pm**	**Hillcrest tea rooms Mitton** Annual Dinner	**John Zamorski**
*	**Sun 26th April**	**2pm**	**Mr. & Mrs. Wrigley Holden Clough** Question time With C Coughlin, D Rayner & P Aldred	**Pauline Roberts**
	Sun 24th May	**2pm**	**Mr & Mrs Fulton's Darwen** Reclaiming Wax	**Bob Fulton**
*	**Sun 28th Jun**	**2pm**	**Mr & Mrs Jackson Crosshills** Ian Molyneux, Regional Bee Inspector	**Brian Jackson**
	Sun 26th Jul	**2pm**	**Colne Masonic Hall** Mr M Smith Chairman BBKA	**Pauline Roberts**
	Sun 23rd Aug	**2pm**	**Mr. & Mrs. Fulton's Darwen** Doug Jones Seasonal bee inspector	**Bon Fulton**

Reminder to all committee members. Meetings marked * are also committee meetings which will start one hour before the main meeting.
Beetalk will be published on the web soon after each committee meeting.

MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

REGISTERED MEMBER. Subscription will be £18.00

PARTNER MEMBER. This is for partners of registered members living in the same household wishing to keep bees and includes full insurance cover. However they will not receive their own copy of BBKA News or Bee Talk . Subscription will be £11.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. This is for people who do not keep bees, but wish to receive BBKA News and Bee Talk. Attend branch meetings etc. This class of member does not include any insurance cover. Subscription will be £10.00

ASSOCIATE MEMBER. A member of our branch only, without any benefits from the BBKA or County. Will receive Bee Talk. Subscription will be £9.00

FOR INSURANCE PURPOSES

Under the new constitution, prompt payment is essential. Basically, payment will be required by the 3l December each year as ***insurance*** is now based on the currant years membership. New and lapsed members insurance cover, will not start until six weeks after paying their subscription.

To help members, a reminder will be sent with December's Bee Talk. That for ***insurance*** purposes their subs will need paying right away. Bee Talk itself is also tied in with subscriptions. So if you don't get Bee Talk you probably have not paid your subs. and you will not have third party insurance

Philip Ainsworth Hon. Treas. 9 Duchess Street Darwen Blackburn BB3 0QQ Phone 07713161480

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LIFT ME ONTO MY SOAP BOX

BUY MY HONEY

You probably don't produce enough honey to even think about advertising. Nevertheless, if you have a hundreds or so surplus jars of honey, you have to let people know they are available to be bought. Just a word here and there is going to be enough, with perhaps a mention of quality - - that's advertising.

THEY CAN'T CON ME!

Like me, you probably feel you are immune to the blandishments of the advertisers. You select what you are going to buy on sound judgement and careful consideration of what it is you want. Your decision as to which soap powder, breakfast cereal, vacuum cleaner, motor car, TV set and all the other things you spend money on are the result of free choice. However, it is reasonable to assume that you and I are just average citizens. It's a sobering thought but in the main, we, like the other 61 million citizens of the UK, just follow the herd. Which means we are just as influenced by advertising as anyone else. That's why is the advertising industry in the UK worth an annual £19 billion.

£19,000,000,000

57 VARIETIES

Think about it. Nineteen billion pounds to persuade you that Heinz beans are better than the others; that you really MUST have a VW motor car; that the Sun has 'Better' news than the Daily Star; that if you have tripped over the kerb you should claim compensation. Plus the subtle, editorial stuff, paid for by manufacturers. One of whom tells you on Tuesday, something is good for you and the next day a competing manufacturer pays a journalist to tell you it will shorten your life.

PERSUASIVE

The messages they pump out are persuasive in the extreme. Is it really a good thing to drink alcohol until you can't think straight and behave like an idiot?

IMPARTIAL?

Fortunately we have The Portman Group which is concerned solely with the social responsibility issues surrounding alcohol. Who finances their activities? Why,the UK's leading drinks producers, of course.

LET'S GET SMASHED!

To digress for a moment, if it really was a good thing to slur your words, find it difficult to stand up, feel sick, have a headache and be unable to remember what happened last night. Would it not be cheaper to pay a brain surgeon to perform the equivalent of a vasectomy and snip out a bit of the brain? Just think, you could spend the rest of your days in something like an alcoholic haze without having to spend any more money on booze.

Sadly, however, advertising gets worse. The same techniques used to persuade you to buy Kellogs cornflakes are used to elect the politicians.

THE PRESIDENT

Take the recent elections in the USA. Barack Obama seems a reasonable sort of choice but it is reckoned that it cost over a billion dollars to get him into the White House and less than a quarter of that came from small donors. Was he elected because of his grasp of current affairs; because most Americans thought his policies and ideas would lead to World peace or was it because he would look good on TV; that he had charisma; presents himself well and will promote the aims of those who financed him?

Am I being cynical in thinking that those who stumped up the millions of dollars are now going to look for a return? Not a real worry unless those who helped him become president happen to be arms manufacturers.

NOT A LOT

To be fair, there isn't a lot you can do. Only try to see through some of the advertisements and make more rational judgements. But now I'm off to the supermarket to buy some of that margarine which reduces cholesterol; some new, improved, better than before, miracle soap powder; stuff guaranteed to make hair grow on my bald patch and I might buy some of those capsules which prevent ageing - mind you it might be a bit late for that!

VARROA & APISTAN

Bee Centre news

Varroa has been the biggest single cause of so many colony deaths in the last couple of years.

DEBATE

There was some debate at a recent meeting about whether we should be leaving control colonies, (colonies not treated) so that our bees have a chance to develop a strategy for coexisting 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.

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

DEFORMED WINGS

I got called out to a couple of non members colonies that had lots of crawling bees with deformed wings. I put on some thymol rease 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.

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. I won't claim that the knock down was all due to the thymol patties! 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.

RESISTANT

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.

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

From the November 1999 issue of Beetalk. An extract from an article on Hygienic bees, See the current article on page 19. What goes around . . . . .

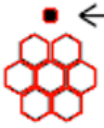
CHECKING THE LARVAE

First find a frame with a good patch of capped brood on it. Check that the larvae or pupa has not got past the purple-eye stage by lifting one of the cappings. Three small areas should be tested in the capped brood.

THE PIN OR NAIL

Insert a small nail to act as a marker for each of the areas to be tested. Then with a very fine needle pierce seven cells below it to kill the larvae or pupae (see the drawing below). That is one cell in the middle and the six cells around it.

THREE PATCHES



Do 3 patches on the same side of one frame, i.e. 21 cells. After 24 hours count the number cleaned out and work out the percentage of cells cleaned out. This is a very sensitive test. Number cleaned out divided by 21 X 100 e.g. 20/21 X 100 = 95.24% It is colonies with over 90% we should be looking for.

SELECTING COLONIES

Selecting colonies with the highest hygienic behaviour and using these for breeding, is likely to increase the hygienic behaviour in subsequent generations. Even if this only brings partial resistance it could mean that Varroa could be controlled using treatments that did not include "hard" chemicals such as Apistan or Bayvarrol, for we know that there are now mites resistant to such treatments in Europe.

A TALE OF SEX AND MONEY!

FORAGING

I have often been asked whether plant breeders have been actively discouraging bee foraging by reducing the amount of nectar in oilseed rape. My answer has always been that I was not aware of any differences between the attractiveness of oilseed rape of the 1970s to that grown today.

However, I decided to do some research in this area and I have pieced together a view on this subject, and like a lot of detective stories, sex and money lie at the core.

Oil seed rape is grown for vegetable oil - the seed is crushed and - what is left (the meal) is used as a highly nutritious animal feed. Some is being converted into biodiesel - in all cases, oilseed rape is grown for.money!

BREAK CROPS

Farmers traditionally grow wheat as their major crop but cannot grow wheat year in year out - they therefore have to choose "break crops", in those years they are not growing wheat, oilseed rape is usually the least bad option and farmers are prepared to pay for high yielding varieties - and this is where sex comes into the story.

"Oh! I've plenty of sex appeal - it's all here in my bank balance"

Normally, oilseed rape varieties are produced from inbred lines . The problem with this is that normally an oilseed rape pollinates itself - most scientists suggest that 90-95% of pollination in oilseed rape is self-pollination.

DEFORMED NECTARIES

The way that plant breeders get around this problem is to male-sterilise one of the lines and pollinate them with donor (male-fertile) plants. The first attempts to generate such hybrids produced the so called "Varietal Association" strains of oilseed rape; however, from a nectar perspective, these initial varieties often had deformed nectaries;. It was these varieties in the late 1990's which I believe gave credence to the idea that oilseed rape was deteriorating as a good forage crop for bees.

When these problems were discovered, varieties were developed which had dramatically improved nectaries. The Varietal Association hybrids quite quickly disappeared. By the year 2000 in any case, they were not commercially successful.

HYBRID OILSEED RAPE

In bad weather, the transfer of pollen from donor plants to hybrids was poor and some cases caused complete crop failure. Breeders therefore switched to fertile hybrids; outside of Europe, such hybrids are normally developed using genetic modification - closer to home, a high degree of technology is used but the resultant plants are not genetically modified. In both cases, the plants self-pollinate as long as the flowers are disturbed - normally by the wind and rain. Insect pollination, including that by bees is not that important for the commercial cultivation of oilseed rape.

SELF-POLLINATION

The exception to this is in seed production. In hybrid oilseed rape seed production, strips of male and female oilseed rape varieties are grown side by side. Since self-pollination is neither possible nor desirable, there is an ABSOLUTE requirement for insect pollinators to produce the top quality hybrid seed ready for commercial use - and this is where bees beekeepers come into their own!! These hybrids are just as attractive to bees as their non-hybrid counterparts, and in reality they have to be for hybrid seed production to happen.

CANADA

Incidentally, my colleagues in Canada tell me that thousands of beehives are transported many thousands of miles around Canada to help pollinate these seed crops. The caveat to this story is that 50% of oilseed rape grown in the UK is actually farm-saved - ie, the farmer has not bought first generation seed from the seed company. Of the 50% that is bought, perhaps 10% is of a hybrid variety. So perhaps there is a little substance to the story that oilseed rape had its problems with nectar production but I am assured that those days are long gone and, whether you like oilseed rape honey or not, that the present crop remains a good source of nectar.

Julian Little Public & Government Affairs Manager
Bayer CropScience Ltd

"IT WASN'T LIKE THIS IN THE OLD DAYS!"

WHO WAS IT SAID THAT?

It might have been your Dad or Grandma (or even me from time to time!).

If you remember listening to the Beatles or seeing the TV picture disappear to a white spot as the programmes came to an end at 10pm or not having a mobile phone in your pocket, you probably do find yourself occasionally referring to the good old days.

If you have been a beekeeper for more than about ten years, you could be forgiven for yearning for the days when your biggest worries were swarms or keeping mice out of the hives.

Nowadays it is all Varroa or Nosema or Colony Collapse Disorder. We even find Beetalk is heavily loaded with articles about the latest troubles and how to deal with them.

The loo at the bottom of the garden

The thing is, one way or another, things do change - some for the worse and some get better. The snag is, it is all too easy to look at the dark side without seeing the improvements. So next time you find yourself longing for the good old days, just think how far you would go back. Would it be to a time when there was no varroa but also no central heating and frost patterns on the ***inside*** of the bedroom window, coal fires and emptying the ashes every morning; one bath a week; outside toilets with squares of newspaper behind the door - "Ah them were the days".

HOME-MADE POLLEN SUBSTITUTE

Jeremy Quinlan, Ipswich & E Suffolk BKA

Please excuse my probably over-brief precis.

Effect of home-made pollen substitute on honeybee colony development (Netherlands) Pollen deficiency adversely affects bee longevity, brood rearing and pollination efficacy. Although this study was concerned with colonies in greenhouses, it has wider applications. The pollen substitute used was the standard one with the addition of linseed oil. Linseed contains linolenic acid, an isomer of the phagostimulating component of pollen. The mixture was as follows:

COMPONENT WEIGHT (PARTS)

Soya flour (degreased) 3

Beer yeast flour 2

Calcium caseinate flour (milk protein 90%) 3.2

Whey protein flour (milk protein 80%) 0.8

Sucrose 50% in tap water 10

Linseed oil 2

Soya and milk proteins can be obtained from fishing shops, beer, yeast and linseed oil from health food stores. The pollen substitute was put on the top bars, covered with plastic to slow drying. It must be within 50mm of brood. The mixture proved to be a successful substitute.

From the Journal of Apicultural Research

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

JENI'S JOTTINGS

At last a day of sunshine and warm enough for the bees to venture out. Nothing at all for them to get though, as every thing is still snowbound. This Winter, since November last, there's been snow, snow, and more snow with very few nice spells in between. In early January there was yet another very heavy fall of snow of about a metre, which grounded just about everything for a few days. Even the schools had to shut, which is very rare here. Bardi my nearest town, employed the laid off woodcutters and tractors to clear and transport the snow out of the town centres there was mountains of snow piled every where and nobody could move, let alone get near the shops. My beehives had disappeared under the snow, I knew thy were still there by the slight undulations in the snow.

FULL WOODSHED

So this Winter has been a real Winter and it's not finished yet. For me with animals it means more work as everything takes longer, livestock has to be kept in and needs more attention feed etc. and that's after you've dug yourself out and made paths, cleared gates to get the necessary things. Oh, well roll on Spring. I'm very grateful I had a full woodshed last Autumn and there's me thinking I'd got enough to last two Winters! No such luck.

In December the bees were treated for varroa with oxalic acid. In fact I managed to do them twice in between snow falls, with the vaporizer and the help of Michael Costello and son. The second treatment showed there had already been a few Winter loses. These hives were closed up and I still haven't been able to clean them up yet, due to the sever weather. There's not a risk of robbing at the moment though and I expect there will be a few more loses before this Winter is over.

STUPID SHEEP

Are you putting it about that I'm stupid?

Today while dealing with a sheep who had got into the apiary (she'd spotted a blade of grass struggling through the snow.) I did have a quick look at the hive entrances as the sunshine had enticed the bees out, I know there's a few of them that need to be checked as soon as it's possible.

My theory is that sheep are very intelligent really, as they just know when to act stupid, and they never miss a trick, the gate not fastened properly or a gap in the hedge, nothing is unseen by them. I had originally got sheep to keep the grass down in the apiary but they are far to big and clumsy to have them near hives and I especially don't want the bees disturbing at this time of year.

BEE QUILT

In early Winter I was given a very large quilt to cut up for insulation for the bees. I've never done this before believing that bee numbers and food is the important factors for them to get through Winter. Any way having been given this quilt by a lady from the Ukraine who'd saved it especially for the bees, as she told me that's what thy do in her homeland and Winters can be very long and hard there too. So I duly cut the quilt up into hive size pieces and placed the bits in the roof space. That quilt may just have helped some of the bees this very long cold Winter, I hope so anyway!.

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING

There has been talk that some of this area be made into a National Park. The locals aren't in favour, especially the hunting lobby of course. Already wolves have been introduced locally.(Micro chipped of course)

I should think these beasts will be getting pretty hungry by now. Just something else to think about.

The next thing will be Micro chips for us, gone will be the old passports and identity cards, but I can't see the authorities micro chipping bees yet or am I wrong?? Best wishes for the coming season to all .

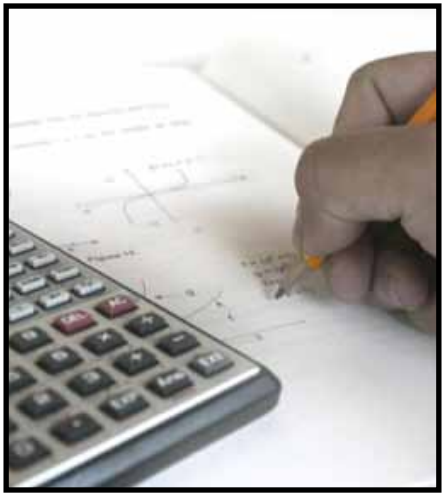
tanti salute Jeni.

Jeni and her late partner, Jake have contributed to every issue of Beetalk since May 1999. The articles have always been full of interest and given a wonderful insight into beekeeping and life in Italy. On behalf of all the members of our association and other readers who have looked forward to reading the latest in a life which many of us may envy but not many of us could manage. Thank you Jeni and all our best wishes for the future

KEEPING RECORDS

2008 SEASON REVIEW.

The freezing start to 2009 has given me chance to reflect on the 2008 season gleaning facts from my records. I try to keep detailed records of my bee keeping (some may say too detailed, but they have highlighted some interesting information):



HONEY PRODUCTION

My honey production for 2008 was just over 250lbs taken from six hives (not including "cut comb"), only slightly more than 2007 so perhaps a little disappointing, but given the season, and the fact that I started the 2008 season with ten colonies after the winter, and now have twenty colonies (and four support nucs) this winter, then I have to be happy.

Of the twenty-four colonies eighteen have 2008 queens, one has a queen of unknown age (a swarm) and five have 2007 queens - one of these queens has never shown any sign of swarming although in 2008 I removed eleven frames of bees and brood partly as a method of swarm control, and also to establish nucs to put new queens into (and so increase my numbers).

In spite of this the colony produced over 50lb of honey through the season. Another colony with a 2007 queen had seven frames of bees and brood removed and still gave me 45 lb of honey. A third of my honey came from one apiary which had two colonies.

Two colonies with 2008 queens introduced, built up from nucs into full 14x12 brood and produced over 70lb of honey in total. Not all the honey that my colonies produced was taken for extracting and probably just as well, indeed some colonies had to be fed toward the end of summer (such as it was). Of course then came the late Ivy flow!

TRIED TO SWARM

Three of the five yellow marked (2007) queens had tried to swarm in their first season, but in 2008 did not raise a single charged queen cell (does that indicate something about the 2007 season, which was quite wet as I remember). The ten colonies that started the 2008 season all had frames of bees and brood removed through the season to service my expansion, in all some thirty-five frames of bees and brood were removed to nuclei, either as part of an artificial swarm or to provide a queen-less colony into which a new queen was introduced.

For those still paying attention, four of my colonies that started the 2008 season did not produce an excess of honey. Two of these had supers on, but "removed the crop" before I could get to extract it!

The other two were struggling to build at all from spring (Nosema??); these were given "Apigold" and new queens introduced: they were strong and healthy come Autumn but time will tell.

Rob Jones. Warwickshire Beekeepers

DO YOU REMEMBER ALBERT MORRIS?

A very young Albert

He was a great character and a very knowledgeable and experienced beekeeper. We remember him with great affection.

In February 2001 he took us to task for making spelling mistakes in Beetalk. In an article he wrote he said *"Yes, Bee Talk does still go from strength to strength and is full of interesting articles and snippets, ferreted out from various sources and edited for the best presentation. However, a tiny bit of advice might not go amiss - watch the spelling - on the first page, there are seven mistakes".*

In that month's editorial the response was *"Albert Morris takes us to task for bad spelling/ I refute the allegation! My computer's spell checker is as good as any ones. It's my grammar that's at fault I don't know my were from my where or my there from my their. Sorry but I was (educated?) in the war years and Borstal was pretty bad."*

What we didn't say was that the article Albert submitted contained eight spelling mistakes!**.** *(We did correct it before we published!)*

TIME FLIES WHEN YOU ARE ENJOYING YOURSELF!

WHERE DO THE YEARS GO!?

It's exactly ten years since Bill Ainsworth told me that they were looking for a new editor for Beetalk. I'm not quite sure how it happened but I suddenly found myself as Assistant Editor of Beetalk working with Bill as Editor.

All I knew about bees was that they produced honey and lived in hives. However, over the last ten years I must have become one of the most knowledgeable non-beekeepers in Barrowford!

ARGUMENTS

My main mentor has been Bill and we have had hours of enjoyment (and the occasional argument) searching for material and deciding what to include in the little magazine.

However, it is the way of the World for things to change and this will be the last issue of Beetalk in it's present form. As you will see on page ?? the committee has decided that in future Beetalk will only be produced in an electronic form. In other words, no printed copies - just versions which can be read on a computer.

To see and read Beetalk you will need to go to our web site at www.blackburnbeekeepers.com There you can click on the 'Resources' button which will allow you to see the latest Beetalk and over thirty back issues dating from February 2001.

CUTTING DOWN

After ten years Both Bill and I have agreed this is probably the right time for us to cut down on the amount of time we spend on Beetalk. We have both reached the age where we get free TV licences and whilst we have no intention of joining the great swarm in the sky just yet, this would be the ideal time for someone else to pick up the gauntlet and run with it.

That's a dreadfully mixed metaphor but I'm sure you know what I mean. To use yet another metaphor, we hope you wont see this as us 'Taking our bat home' it simply feels as though the time is right to change things.


Editorial
May 1999
NEW FORMAT FOR BEETALK
BEE LOSSES
VARROA FLOORS
THANK YOU
The next issue of 'Bee Talk' will be published in late July. Please let us have your contributions no later than mid July.
Page 1

Our first ever Beetalk in May 1999

A NEW FORMAT

When we took over, Beetalk was just a couple of sheets and until a new team comes along we would like to revert to that. With your agreement, we will continue to produce a couple of electronic pages (To be read on your computer) immediately after every committee meeting, listing forthcoming events and any snippets of association news.

Don't forget, there is a fund of information about the association and beekeeping in general on our excellent web site which is managed by Michael Birt. Simply go to www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

There is also Bill's blog on Black Bees at http://www.arthurbick.co.uk

SADNESS

It would be so easy to look at the end of the current form of Beetalk with regrets and sadness. Speaking personally, it has been a good ten years I have met some great people - even though only by email in some cases - and at the risk of sounding big headed, I think the pair of us have done a good job.

IN THE BIN

We all receive magazines and pamphlets of one sort or another and if you are anything like me, some go in the bin unopened and unread, others are quickly skimmed through and with one or two you read some or more pages according to your interest. I am sure this also applies to Beetalk but we know from the odd comment we have received that most of you have found something to enjoy, learn from and even laugh with.

THANKS

Thanks for putting up with us for the last ten years. The silly jokes, the spelling mistakes, the long winded articles and some columns which had absolutely nothing to do with beekeeping.

I hope I shall see some of you occasionally and good luck with the bees in the coming years.

Arthur (Assistant Editor)

CLEAN-UP' BEES COULD SAVE HIVES

PLAN TO USE 'HYGIENIC' BREEDS TO COMBAT PARASITES

'CLEANER BEES'

A British scientist is hoping to reverse the critical decline of the honeybee by breeding 'cleaner bees' to protect hives from potentially devastating diseases.

Francis Ratnieks, the UK's only professor of apiculture, is undertaking pioneering research based on a breed of worker bee genetically programmed to keep hives clean. So-called 'hygienic' bees are responsible for removing dead pupae and larvae from hives, but they only exist in very small numbers.

VARROA

The Sussex University academic believes that, if more of them can be artificially bred, they will protect hives from parasites such as the varroa mite which last year killed two billion honeybees and wiped out one in three colonies.

THREE YEAR PROJECT

His research comes as beekeepers last week marched on Whitehall calling for £8m of emergency funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to tackle bee diseases, which are estimated to have cost the economy £54m in the past 12 months alone. His three-year project is being funded privately, partly by leading UK honey brand Rowse Honey, which has warned that Britain could run out of home-produced honey by Christmas.

The role of 'hygienic' bees was first observed in the 1930s. But because only about 10 per cent of hives are 'hygienic', and within those hives only about 10 per cent of worker bees have the 'hygienic' gene, it is difficult to identify which bees to breed from for the best results. In every hive the queen can produce up to 2,000 eggs a day fertilised by as many as 10 drones. Ratnieks's research concentrates on breeding queens from the same drone line as the most hygienic worker bees. Those queens will then be supplied to beekeepers. In all the project should take three to four years.

CONTROL DISEASE

'Hygienic bees have a strong tendency to clean things up, removing pupae and larvae if they are dead or dying,' said Ratnieks, who has been studying bees, ants and wasps for 25 years. 'What this hygiene can do is control certain types of disease, particularly diseases of the brood like chalkbrood, American foulbrood and varroa mite.

YANK OUT THE PUPA

'In the case of varroa mites, the female lays eggs on the pupa in its cell. These eggs turn into baby mites. Hygienic bees can detect this is taking place and they remove the wax cap to the cell and yank out the pupa. So they don't actually kill the female varroa mite, but they do prevent her breeding. It is not a complete control against varroa, but it can slow down the growth, therefore helping beekeepers keep on top of the disease.'

TEST

As well as producing honey, bees pollinate some £165m worth of crops in the UK annually, as well as wild plants and garden flowers. The Bee Farmers' Association is supporting the project by helping to test colonies with hygienic queens in 100 hives across Britain, to see if they are also good at making honey.

£100,000

Stuart Bailey, chairman of Rowse Honey, is committing £100,000 to the project. 'Our money will get the ball rolling,' he said, 'but much more needs to be spent on bee research. We totally support the British Beekeepers' Association campaign for £8m emergency funding from Defra over the next five years.'

A bee's front end is sweet and kind,
But never trust a bee's behind.
A bee can sting if it can sit,
So always stay in front of it!

B.... COMPUTERS
DON'T FORGET TO UPGRADE

Many bees are dying in droves because they have consistently ignored prompts from the supplier of their operating system to upgrade. The result has been incompatibilities between onboard and flight controller navigation aids plus an increasingly high number of bugs in the guidance systems (e.g. HiveDance Version 6 is liable to give totally erroneous information).

STUNG

Finance directors in several hives contacted recently have said that they were stung for the original exorbitant cost of the systems and are now being stung again for these upgrades.

STUNG AGAIN

To quote one particularly angry bee, "If I ever meet the 'individual' who stung me for something that was obsolete in less than a B... lifetime, I'll B... sting him where he won't forget."

I'M AN OLD B...!

Meanwhile, the bees continue to collide, crash and fail to return from nectar missions. The International Bee Federation is frantically trying to contact very old bees who may remember navigation methods from the pre-micro-chip days. Honey-lovers world-wide can only hope that the quest is successful.

The other solution is to buy a Mac! (Arthur)
From a BBC website

BEE DANCE

But what about the dance performed by the beekeeper? Often a novice, but also performed by the long time beemen and women (yes, even by me who has still to decide which is left leg or right).

YOU THINK BEES CAN DANCE !?
YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET!

It is quite a complicated dance and unique, it needs wide-open spaces to be done properly. Simply put, it consists of moving very fast at oblique angles, often though or over high edges and fences, arms and legs akimbo and when done proficiently by the more practiced, arm waving is often accompanied by beating ones self over the head with almost any available object, even ones own hands.

From Beetalk July 2000

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