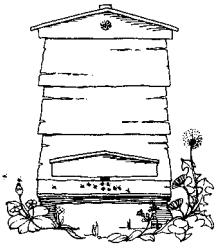

Bee Talk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
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What's in this month's Bee Talk

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EDITORIAL

MARCH 2003

THE CAMP HILL TRUST
Barry Mellers who used to live on the North Yorkshire Moors, gave The Camp Hill Trust, which is a charitable organisation in North Yorkshire, two stocks of bees. We invited them to let us know how they got on and on page 5 you will find a letter with more information. We also said we would try to let them have some spare bits and pieces to help them. If you have anything, give Barry a ring.

IS THIS YOURS?
We have used a photograph on page 9 and know not from where it originated. If it is one you sent in, apologies. Let me know, so credit can be given were credit is due.

WHERE ARE THE BEES?
As I write this, in the second week of February, it occurs to me that I have not seen my bees since before Christmas.

I have been to the apiary many times but I have not seen any bees. In fact there has been no sign of any kind that there are bees present - just hives, sitting there, bleak and bare. It must be seven or eight weeks since they have had the opportunity to fly and relieve themselves and that is a long time! Much more than is mentioned in the books I read. My apiary has a very open and windswept aspect I suppose that is the reason. Adrian Hoyle, whose apiary is no more than a mile from me, reports seeing his bees bringing pollen in! But then, his apiary is snug and warm in a sun trap.

What a difference in such a short distance.

BRITISH BLACKS
Looking through "Bee Improvement", the magazine of BIBBA (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association) I wonder if there would be room for a talk or discussion on our British Black Bee?

Some of us think we should ban the import of exotic bees (Italian, Caucasian Etc.), so that our feral (naturally occurring) "British Blacks" can remain pure insects, or at least not get more mixed than they already are. After all that is what Holden Clough is all about, trying to keep a small island of purity in a sea of crossbreeds!

A lot of the writing on this subject is very scientific and complex and beyond the understanding of many of us beekeepers, but it doesn't need to be.

The basic idea behind it all is very simple and any beekeeper can do a great deal to improve the bees in his hives without getting too technical about it.

Morphology is the measurement of parts of a bee's anatomy in order to identifies its origins, whether it be a British Black, an Italian or more likely still, a crossbreed. This is not as big a job as it sounds. You could be shown how it is done in a matter of an hour or two, without the use of fancy equipment.

I just wonder if there is sufficient interest to do this. If there is anyone out there who would like to know more about it, contact me and we will see if something can be done.

HOLDEN CLOUGH
With regards to Holden Clough. With a bit more effort it could be a great asset to all the beekeepers in our association and even in the whole of the North West but we really do need to generate more enthusiasm for the whole project.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

NOSTALGIA

Take a nostalgic trip back to 1950 BV (Before Varroa). The British Bee Journal was published weekly by Herrod- Hempsall FRHS, and cost threepence - that's less than two-and a half pence in today's currency. A picture of the cover can be seen at the bottom of this page

I first began to subscribe to it in 1932 at the tender age of eleven, when I bought a small swarm for five shillings - today's 25p and seriously started to be a beekeeper. I could hardly wait for the Journal to arrive at the newsagent's shop each week and read it from cover to cover, which didn't take long as there were only some seven pages. So I read it twice, then three times, so absorbed was I with all things concerning bees. Within it, were articles, some of which were humorous, some informative while at times, one or two were downright argumentative to the point of being offensive.

MOONRAKERS

Many wrote under pen-names, one from Wiltshire calling himself 'Moonraker' after the Wiltshire lot who it was said had used a rake when trying to rake the reflection of the moon out of a pond and Wiltshire people to this day are still occasionally called Moonrakers.

Another wrote under,'Soliloquies from Surrey' while yet another, simply, under the name of 'Harry'. A most interesting writer called Roger Silberrad, told us interesting things about bees and beekeeping in the Okavanga and Kalahari Desert areas, which was headed, 'A Bushman's Notes. 'Cornwall Calling' was used by Dolly, who, many years ago, left Yorkshire with her late husband Raymond, to live in Cornwall. Raymond too, wrote for the Journal and now Dolly enjoys keeping in touch by reading Bee Talk, kindly sent to her by its producers, for which, many thanks.

MUM LOOKED AFTER THE BEES

During WW2, I was away in the RAF for six years, four of them in India and Burma and my mother over that Period, subscribed to the B.B. Journal. She read every issue and though she knew little about bees, she managed to attend to them and she later told me that the Journal had helped in that direction. She had kept every issue and there were boxes of them when I arrived back home.

HAVING A CLEAR OUT

We eventually decided they were taking up too much room and so reluctantly, threw them all out. However for some reason, this 1950s copy was kept. It might have been the last of this style of cover and price. Later, Cecil Tonsley took over the BBJ and ran it for some forty years, helped by his wife Nora, until illness prevented him from continuing with its production.

Sadly, for some reason, perhaps as a result of his illness, he refused to allow anyone else to take it over and run it and so it was, that a first-class bee publication which had been established in 1873 and to which, several generations of writing beekeepers had contributed, went out of existence.

Regards to All *Albert J Morris*


British Bee Journal & Bee Keepers' Adviser, April 22, 1950. Phone: CHNtral 5403.

The

BRITISH BEE JOURNAL

& Bee-Keepers Adviser.

Edited by J. Herrod-Hempsall, F.R.H.S.

A Weekly Journal Devoted to the Interests of Bee-Keepers.

Offices: 1 Gough Square Fleet Street London, E.C.4

No. 3537 Vol. LXXVIII. Week Ending APRIL 22, 1950 Price 3d.

Take a look at the address. It struck us as rather odd that a relatively small journal should be produced in Fleet Street - even in 1950! Ed.

NORTHERN BEE BOOKS

Over the past fifteen years or so we beekeepers have had tremendous support from Northern Bee Books. We would like to thank them by publicising their Website www.beedata.com
The postal address is:

NORTHERN BEE BOOKS
SCOUT BOTTOM FARM
MYTHOLMROYD
HEBDEN BRIDGE HX7 5JS
'PHONE 01422 882751

By the way, their publication BEEKEEPER'S QUARTERLY can be obtained from our treasurer at a concessionary rate

CALLING ALL EXPERIENCED BEEKEEPERS.

Are you prepared to help a beginner during their first couple of seasons?

The idea was mooted again at the AGM that it would be of great assistance to beginners to have a 'mentor' or someone more experienced to call upon for advice. Obviously it would be easier if both parties lived reasonably close to each other although often all that is wanted is simply someone to talk over problems on the telephone.

If you would like to assist new beekeepers in this way, please give your name and phone number. to Bill Ainsworth on 01282 614015. He can then flag it up in Bee Talk

This idea is not new, but it would be nice to get it up and running. If you are a beginner, here are one or two names for starters:

Michael Birt	01706 222849	(Rossendale area)
Bob Fulton	01254 772780	(Blackburn area)
John Zamorski	01200 427661	(Clitheroe area)
Ken Gaiger	01282 778887	(Burnley area)
Bill Ainsworth	01282 614015	(Nelson area)

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Here is another little snippet from the past. This is an extract from a copy of the July 1973 issue of Bee Craft, which published this article from the 1870 edition of "Enquire Within"

TO CHLOROFORM BEES
The quantity of chloroform required for an ordinary hive is the sixth part of an ounce; a very large hive may take nearly a quarter of an ounce.

Set down on a table opposite to, and about four feet distant from the hive; on the table spread a thick linen cloth; in the centre of the table place a small shallow breakfast plate, which cover with a piece of wire gauze, to prevent the bees from coming in immediate contact with the chloroform. Now quickly and cautiously lift the hive from the board on which it is standing, set it down on the top of the table, keeping the plate in the centre; cover the hive closely up with the cloths and in twenty minutes or so the bees are not only sound asleep, but not one is left among the combs; the whole of them are lying helpless on the table. You now remove what honey you think fit, replace the hive in its old stand, and the bees, as they recover, will return to their domicile. A bright, calm, sunny day is the best; and you should commence your operations early in the morning, before many of them are abroad."

If you read this article carefully, you will notice that it does not actually tell you to put any chloroform in the breakfast plate.

I wonder what today's Health and Safety Regulations, Risk Assessments etc. would have to say about this practice. Animal Rights organisations would be out gathering signatures on petitions and tying themselves to railings in Downing Street. Well maybe not so drastic but I sometimes wonder if maybe the world is becoming a place where we will be afraid to do some things which were everyday practice not so long ago.

As long as we look after our bees, I see no reason why not. Having said that, apart from a few stings, I find the clearer boards to be OK *John Zamorski.*

I am told the fungus, Puff Ball has a similar effect when burnt in the smoker Ed

DYNAMIC FEET

Every beekeeper (and in fact just about everyone else too), knows that bees, flies, bugs, lizards etc. can walk up walls, across ceilings and along very smooth vertical surfaces such as glass, with apparent ease. The geckos in my own house seem to live almost exclusively on vertical surfaces.

MINIATURE ROBOTS

Now, a team at the University of Massachusetts have completed a study of how certain types of ants and bees do this. The team explain that the findings have implications not just in the field of Biology but also in the development of miniature robots for use in medicine. The study focussed exclusively on honeybees and Asian Weaver ants. They found that unlike geckos, and many other insects that have peel off sticky pads, the adhesive organs in ants and bees are much more dynamic.

When the bee (for example) tries to walk along a smooth vertical or upside down surface, the claws try and fail to get a grip. These claws then retract and the sticky pad or arolium comes into action. It quickly unfolds and inflates with blood thus protruding between the claws and enabling the sticky adhesive pad to come into contact with the smooth surface. The footpad then deflates and folds back.

STICKINESS

The process takes tenths to hundredth's of a second and is repeated with each step. The footpad also secretes a fluid which helps the arolium adhere. (Similar to a wet piece of paper sticking to a smooth surface). Thus this dynamic system provides varying levels of stickiness depending upon the surface. The claw flexor tendon that retracts the claws on a smooth surface also moves the footpad into place and it is this combination of mechanics and hydraulics that has intrigued robotics engineers who design tiny robotic devices used in medicine.

NOTE. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst is the original source of this article.

HUNGRY BEES

A couple of weeks ago, I got an e-mail from Ian Molyneux, our Regional Bee Inspector, warning about the risk of starvation. Apparently, several colonies in the county have died out because they've run out of food. The shortage of food has also been evident during some of his regular apiary visits.

The weather in June has been so bad in many areas that the bees have been consuming much more honey than they could collect. If they didn't have sufficient surplus stores to start with, they would simply starve to death. And it doesn't take very long!

I make no apologies for repeating this item which we used last year. It orginated from Cumbria Bee Times and it is ***very appropriate right now****. Ed*

EARLY HONEY

The colonies most at risk are those where you have taken the honey off early for extraction. Similarly, artificial swarms set up during May can rapidly run short of stores. However, even colonies that had a full super of honey earlier in the year can succumb. In the later stages of starvation, the bees will take the brood food from uncapped cells. Then they will uncap the sealed brood and consume that too.

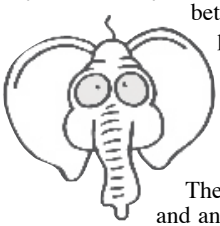
HEAD FIRST

Finally, the bees will all die in the characteristic posture of lying headfirst in the cells in which they have been desperately trying to find traces of food to keep themselves alive.

In the early part of this process, the queen stops laying and, because she is not being constantly fed by her attendants, she is slimmer and much more mobile than usual. In this condition, she's very difficult to find unless she's marked, so it's easy to assume in the early stages that a starving colony has become queen less. However, in most cases, after a good dose of sugar syrup from a rapid feeder, the queen will start laying again and patches of eggs can be found in the brood chamber.

beebits

A SPECIAL PAGE
A page where members can advertise for things they want to buy; things they want to sell; or, better still, things they are prepared to give away.



All we need is your name, phone number and details of the item.

There is no cost involved, and any arrangements, financial or otherwise are strictly between the parties concerned.

John Zamorski 01200 427661
Still wants bees wax to make candles. If you can spare some, give him a ring.

Bill Ainsworth 01282 614015
How about making a solar wax extractor this Winter? I have three brand new $1^{1}/_{8}$ thick 21 inch x 33 inch double glazing units - ideal for the job. Yours for the asking

Pauleen Roberts 01282 438615 / 698119
still has some metal shop display stands ideal to stand a hive on. She also has some 6 ft ladder like display stands which would also make hive stands. all are free. Do contact her if you think you could use them.

Bob Fulton 01254 772780
has some white boiler suits ideal for beekeepers. £5 each

Adrian Hoyle 01282 707844
has quite a number of double glazing units, various sizes. Do for solar extractor or cold frames.

Please ring Bill Ainsworth on 01282 614015 if you have for sales, wants or 'give aways' for the next issue of BeeTalk.

If you should be lucky enough to get something for free from a fellow beekeeper, How would you feel about making a small donation to the Association? - - Just a thought (AB, Assistant, acting, honorary, co-opted, unpaid, assistant editor)

A LETTER TO US FROM CAMPHILL
Camphill Friends
Whitby
North Yorkshire YO21 2NJ

Hello fellow beekeepers, a short note about our new bees at Botton.

Botton village is situated at the top end of Danby Dale, on the North Yorkshire moors, a working community for mentally handicapped adults, covering some 500 acres, with five farms, extensive gardens (both flowers and vegetables) and many workshops.

In early spring of 2002 work began on the renovation of Botton hall, where for many years a large colony of bees have lived in the Gable end, entering their nest through a small gap between two stones. When the contractors opened it, they found no bees just comb hanging in the cavity. With no bees for pollination I was asked if I could provide some bees for them, so my quest began to establish an apiary. Through the Ryedale Beekeepers Association I found one hive with a long-serving beekeeper who was retiring. This was the start of our venture. After further enquiries, to Mr Peter Kirby of the RBA, about two hives which had stood in a field in Farndale for a number of years I was put in touch with Mr Barry Mellers a past beekeeper from our area who had moved into Lancashire. My conversation with him did indeed prove fruitful as he said we could certainly take the beehives to Botton. A young, worker who was keen to keep bees came to help me pick them up, unfortunately one hive had been robbed out but the other has a good strong stock of bees.

Botton is an organic community, no artificial fertilisers, no chemical sprays, no OrganicPhosphates's so out came the Bavarol strips and the next spring will see the use of a "friendly alternative" possibly Thymol crystals which I have been using for the last four years. This method works for me at the moment but perhaps we will have to try something else in future.

We look forward to spring 2003 when things begin to move and the new bees emerge into this beautiful environment. We say thank you very much to Barry Mellers for helping us provide Botton with its bees and we hope next year is a productive year for us all.
Thank you kind regards Philip Collier

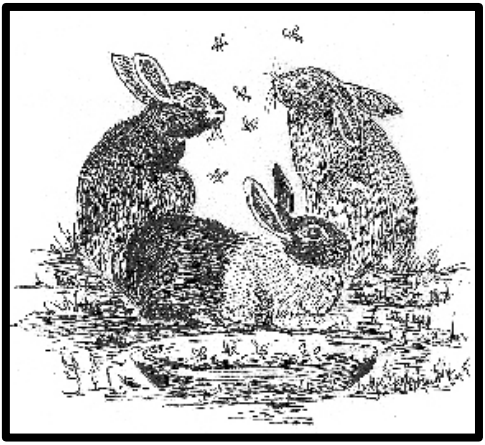
THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

GEMINIANO. MID FEB.

Saluti, once again from a very chilly Geminiano. Yes it did stop raining! At the end of December and a change to snow, we had got fed-up with ankle deep mud inside as well as out. A good job we have tiles in most rooms and not fitted carpets as in England. Our ten cats and two dogs going in and out, not to mention ourselves, brought most of the mess indoors but a quick mop up and a 'rub down' with a 'Sporting life'- clean again in two minuets.

FROZEN

For the last few weeks with high pressure from Siberia it has remained cold - 6°c most nights -and dry; the land frozen so we are behind with ploughing; the mountain tracks a layer of ice and dangerous for Percy our tractor. So we are also behind with our wood cutting. But we are getting some things done. The kiwi and vines pruned and a start on the home gardens, the last of the root crops dug up from frozen soil and even a bit of cleaning around our Autumn sown onions and garlic. Lots of time for working inside the hovel with another floor finished and some new electrics, to replace our 'sparking' old wires.



BBKA NEWS

With the short days, plenty of time in the evenings by the warm stove. Jeni painting and me reading, lots of thinking time! The December BBKA News provided much food for thought, reading between the lines starting with the chairman's letter on page two and the mention of pyrethroid resistant mites, GM crops and residue in honey on page four, the NBUs answers on varroa resistance on page five, honey labelling and GM crops on page six and then organic honey production on page nine with at last a mention in G.B, in the disease control paragraph of natural acids : lactic, acetic, formic and oxalic, ***that can be used without restrictions*** for organic production of honey. I think in the past I have said enough on this so no more for now.

EXCEPT - -BACK TO ESSENTIAL OILS.

After talking about them a bit in the last Bee Talk, I was brought a stack of information by our local biologist who had been 'surfing the net' for us, mainly for info on wintergreen oil but had come up with a whole stack of stuff mainly from the United States on essential oils used to control varroa as well as the tracheal mites, the list is endless, Starting with: catnip, through eucalyptus, penny royal, rosemary, spearmint and of course thyme oil, wintergreen and many more. All very interesting reading - chemical composition toxicity for varroa the bees and us, what sort of measurements to use etc., it seems some of these oils have over 90% kill rate for varroa with little or no effect on the bees. I will pass on the address etc., to Bill who can put it all in your library. This year I for one am going to give some of the essential oils a try and see how they compare with thyme, and my normal oxalic treatments.

THE FIRST POLLEN

With the cold clear weather at the moment it gets quite warm by mid-day, warm enough for the bees to get out for a cleaning flight and also into the hazel catkins. Our first sight of pollen being brought home was on the 27th January. Now if it gets a little warmer. the willows by the streams will be almost ready to start flowering, the first primroses and crocus are out and another season is starting.

RABBIT FOOD?

And to end - a question to readers. Our rabbits live outside in runs and large cages, as part of their food - a mix of flakes, maize-oats etc - we also mix in bran. At this time of the year the poor rabbits don't go near the food as it is full of bees stealing the bran and treating it as they do pollen, going back to the hives with back legs loaded, even though there is natural pollen nearby. What are they getting out of it? And why do they like it better than the nice hazel pollen next door?

For now ....Spring is just around the corner, are we all ready, the bees certainly are!!

Salvi.... Jake and Jenny.

PORTRAIT OF A BEEKEEPER

Hi, I'm Fiona Wells, a Colner born and bred. The

youngest only daughter (Yep, I am still a Daddy's girl) with two older brothers to contend with, my life has been surrounded by males (nice) and constantly trying to better them – and have succeeded at times.

After leaving school I went into Printing (being the third generation to have done so, my grandmother worked at Coultons as did my mother then the Mitre at Nelson then onto a small Printing firm in Colne) this is where I completed my apprenticeship – Graphic Design and being a member of the NGA.

My boyfriend had eventually managed to get me to agree for my hand in marriage (only my hand you understand). My mother and I decided that to get married in New Zealand would be different (I do enjoy anything out of the ordinary) we have family out there but to leave my family here was difficult.

We were married in New Zealand and soon after, we had our first daughter Sion Emily, then followed by Bayley Morgan, then Sydney May. With four women in the house, John is well and truly over powered.

With my love of animals – the guinea pigs, rabbit, love bird, several tropical fish tanks, cat, a new border collie puppy, a few thousand bees – the house is bursting but happily bursting.

Beekeeping! ^How did I manage to get involved with these marvellous creatures?

The only answer has to be the drink talking, I was having a beer with a friend, he had tried, looking after them, but it wasn't for him, so feeling rather brave (other words do come to mind) but I thought "That sounds interesting" and before I knew it, he had got me the basic equipment and I was on my way. This is when reality started to kick in "What do I know about bees really, apart from that they BUZZ!"

The library books only told me so much, I needed an experienced beekeeper to hold my hand, (I still do), but the difficulty of finding an association or society was worse than me trying to locate my Queen, (I still haven't found her after eight months!) Finally an association down South put me in touch with the local branches "Which to choose?" One suggested that I Should go on a beekeeping course! hmmmmm (Which really put the frightners on me), I couldn't attend to them because of work commitments but then I got talking to Michael Birt who was very reassuring and the rest is history.

I attended my first meeting at Holden Clough, I was welcomed with open arms and felt much happier and confident (Especially now that my six year old daughter was peering into the hives and not phased by any of it, if she could do it, well!)

I went to Holden Clough fortnightly to watch and learn, going into the hives - this is what I needed. However, it still took a while before I felt happy enough to give the bees a home. Eventally I was sorted out with a swarm in June 2002 and this is where the fun begins.

With my love of animals – the guinea pigs, rabbit, love bird, several tropical fish tanks, cat, a new border collie puppy, a few thousand bees – the house is bursting but happily bursting.

As for the Bees, my middle daughter Bayley is also fascinated with them and from time to time accompanies me to the monthly meetings with her Bee Wellies and outfit. The invaluable information and friendly atmosphere I receive from the Beekeepers is wonderful and inspires me. I would just like to thank you all for your patience and help for this 'new' Beekeeper and hope I can pass this onto my little ladies. Thank you again.

BEGINNERS PAGES - CASTS AND PREVENTION

PRIME SWARM

The first swarm to issue from a hive in spring is known as a ***Prime Swarm*** Any swarms after the prime swarm are known as after-swarms or casts. A colony which issues a prime swarm normally does not suffer any ill effects other than a three or four week cessation of brood rearing and a decrease in nectar collection. The issuing of one or more casts however is a different matter and is the result of problems existing within the nest.

Large swarms that occur early in the season have a much greater chance of surviving through the winter than smaller or later swarms.

WHY COLONIES ISSUE CASTS.

At some point during the life of a colony, congestion or the lack of queen substance may become evident. These "imbalances" are usually corrected when swarming takes place and by this act colony life returns to normality. There are however occasions when imbalances will prevail. They may manifest themselves in the form of over population, low food stocks or a lack of some other resource. There is also a distinct correlation between the amount of sealed brood and the number of casts that a colony will issue. A great deal is dependent on how much the colony's adult population and emerging brood can support.

Large swarms that occur early in the season have a much greater chance of surviving through the winter than smaller or later swarms.

Any one of the imbalances can threaten the existence of the colony and it must take steps to rectify them. It does so by issuing a cast, the first virgin queen to hatch being forced out at its head. If that still does not rectify the situation, a second or even a third cast may issue. Most researchers assume that the issuing of casts is a regularity factor, the objective being to control the number of mouths that the parent colony must feed. Put simply, the issuing of casts is a matter of self-preservation for the parent colony.

HOW THEY ARE FORMED.

When a prime swarm departs taking the old queen with them, The queen cells left behind will hatch within a week or so. If the colony is balanced, the first queen to emerge is allowed to kill her unhatched rivals, mate and head up the colony. On occasions, more than one queen may hatch at the same time and although they may tolerate each other for a few hours more often than not open warfare is immediate. Sometimes workers intervene, balling one of the protagonists. A newly hatched queen will announce her presence by "piping" and releasing pheromones. Piping is a series of pulsed, high-pitched sounds produced by the queen pressing her thorax against the comb and exercising her flight muscles without actually opening her wings.

These "tunes" can occur at other times but are most frequent when the first virgin queen emerges. As it is carried out on the comb, the tarsal pads on the feet of the workers pick up the vibrations and the information that a new virgin queen is amongst them.

IMBALANCE

If imbalances exist and the colony is predisposed to issue a cast, these vibrations, coupled with the new Queens presence has a stimulating effect on the workers. They become agitated and perform dances. These "dances" may be carried out on the queen herself and or on queen cells. The net results are

(a) to force a queen out with a cast and
(b) to prevent emerging queens from hatching. (The unhatched queens are imprisoned in their cells and thus mortal combat between them is prevented).

It is often the case that workers will physically prevent new queens from emerging from their uncapped cells until such time as a cast has issued. Second or subsequent casts follow a similar procedure as that of first casts.

Mature queens which are still in their cells but ready to hatch may also pipe. This serves to inform workers and any emerged queens of the imminent release of the piper. This type of communication is important to the colony as it will not swarm or issue a cast if there are no remaining viable queen cells or a queen within the nest. The piper provides an "all clear" to a potential swarm or cast.

Before we get into prevention it is important to recognise the signs of a recently swarmed colony. They are the absence of eggs and the presence of recently hatched queen cells.

PREVENTION.
Casting will not occur unless there are one or more viable queen cells within the colony, there can be any number of loose virgins in the colony but provided there are no viable queen cells, after-swarming will not occur.

If a Swarm occurred only recently, i.e. within the past couple of days, it should be relatively easy to deal with. In the beekeepers favour is the fact that virgin queens will not have matured sufficiently to emerge from their cells. No chances should be taken however

This photograph was taken at Michael Birt's in August 2002 when the Bee Inspector was there. Just for fun, can you identify the four people in the picture?

and the hive should be opened immediately and gone through thoroughly to check there are no opened queen cells. If negative, a good queen cell should be selected and the frame marked for easy identification. Do not jar or shake it in any way for fear of killing the immature queen in the cell, she is extremely delicate.

DESTROY QUEEN CELLS
Destroy any other queen cells, close the hive and leave it alone for at least three weeks, by which time, hopefully, the new queen will have hatched and mated. If, however, there has been considerable lapse of time since swarming took place or, if during a colony inspection it is found to have swarmed, a different approach must be taken. (Bear in mind that the combination of a viable queen cell and one or more hatched virgins is a recipe for after-swarms. So too is more than one viable queen cell).

ARE THE NEW QUEENS THERE?
The beekeeper must ensure there are newly emerged queens present and then destroy all queen cells. It may not matter if you cannot find any emerged queens and virgins are very difficult to find!

Once you are certain you have noted all the sealed queen cells, you can release one or two of the occupants of mature looking queen cells by removing the tip of the cells with a sharp knife. Then every remaining queen cell can and must be destroyed. Providing there is at least one, the number of released queens is not important, fighting will eliminate all but one. This method is safe provided you do not destroy all the queen cells until you are absolutely certain that there is at least one young queen running in the hive.

OTHER POINTS.
If one of your colonies has swarmed and you know which hive it originated from, you should capture it and deal with it, in the Pagden Method. In short, open the swarmed hive, destroy all but one good queen cell as previously described, close the hive, move it about two feet to one side and leave it alone for three weeks. Set up a new hive on the original site, dump the captured swarm into it and provide it with a gallon of one to one syrup.

If you discover a swarm in your apiary but do not know it's origin, it's probably your own. So all your hives should be gone through to ascertain which of them issued the swarm and the colony can then be dealt with by whichever of the above methods is appropriate.

CELL SIZE

The cell size imprinted on foundation we use to day is on average 5.5mm in diametre. Previously it was 4.9mm. That was in the old days before the mass importation of Italian bees ***Quoting from the Internet*** "It is my opinion that an extreme emphasis over the years on breeding a bigger and better bee that produces more, to supposedly payback the beekeeper more, has led to a problematic bee."

I guess its human nature to always want to improve and push the limits to get more and more back, but at what price. It is clear from Cowan's research that the native black bee in 1890 was producing worker comb naturally with an average cells size of 4.9 mm. Sometime later possibly in the 1920s commercially produced foundation of 5.5 mm became available (the standard size available now). A point can be made, that between 1890 and 1920 when the Isle of Wight disease struck, that a sudden increase in bee diseases and pests also happened at the same time. Lusby (A commercial beekeeper) asked the question "Does cell size of the workers have any effect on the well-being of the honeybee?" His results have significant implications.

Using 4.9 mm cell size (foundations of this size are now avalable from Thornes of Wraby), Lusby's have successfully maintained their colonies without re course to using chemicals since 1997. Finally for BIBBA the question; "How can we possibly consider conserving the native British bee on 5.5 mm cells size worker comb in the light of Cowan's observations

My hope is that the Lusby's have hit upon a bio technical method of Varroa control in which the bee's do the manipulation themselves (drawing comb to 4.9 mm diameter) and may give us a natural answer to Varroa and some other bee disorders.

ENCOURAGING SUPERCEDURE

OLD TIME METHODS

Some time ago I quoted the method mentioned below which was used by an old timer to 'encourage' supercedure. It caused mayhem at the time and I was practically dragged out and shot for relating it, but before anyone jumps in and has a go at me, I do not follow this procedure, do not endorse it but - - it seems to work well for this old guy despite what anyone else may think.

And yes, it does seem cruel. Each spring he decides which of his colonies he wants to re queen, which turns out to be most of them.

MUTILATION!

He does not like to go through a season having to do examinations, as he is very old and not fit for it, so older queens, unless they are exceptional, all get the same treatment. He catches them, once the colony is into full ahead development, and damages the queen a bit. Not in the real key areas which would hamper her laying, but removes or damages a leg or two, clips the wings, marks her if not marked already, puts the colony back together, and lets them get on with it.

The queen is now definitely imperfect, and although damaged will be able to continue laying at a great rate, the bees set out to commence supersedure.

COME AUGUST

By August he almost invariably has a colony now headed by a young vigorous queen; well set for the heather crop and the wintering ahead. Apparently it does not always work as the bees sometimes just keep the old queen going instead, but it does have a brutal simplicity to it. As I said in another place, there are almost as many methods or variants as to how things should be done as there are beekeepers. To each his own
Murray McGregor The Irish Beekeeper.

FOLLOWING FROM THE ABOVE

Some of you may remember a lady school teacher, who came from Manchester to speak to us. It was a very long time ago. She kept her bees in the small garden of her house on a very densely populated estate. She could not tolerate swarming at all, due to the closeness of her many neighbours. The lady told us she had a foolproof way of making the bees supercede.

It also involved mutilating the queen, but she was adamant that no cruelty was involved. Her method was to clip just one antenna from the queen. It never failed --- simple !

I suggested to her that cutting an antenna from a bee was equivalent to someone gouging her eye out. But she would have none of it. Ed.

HONEY SAMPLING

NBU has been requested to take samples of UK beekeepers' honey in order to ensure the consumers that UK Honey does not contain any unauthorised substances. The following text is a copy of a document put out by NBU to help clarify the situation and allay fears.

Why are they taking honey samples from my hives?
You could be one of the 106 samples of honey that will be collected from apiaries across the UK. They are being taken to reassure consumers of the safety of UK produced honey. The Bee inspector is empowered to take the samples under The Animals and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997 as Amended

Is this new?
No. For some years now the UK in common with other EC Member States, has had to test honey and other animal derived foods for residues of veterinary medicines and other contaminants
.
Why haven't samples been collected before?
Previously honey samples were bought from shops. But, there were problems of UK honey being blended with imported honey. The reason for any residues found could not then he investigated. Imported honey will still he sampled under the VMD's non-statutory surveillance programme.

What am I required to do?
You must accompany the inspector as they take the sample. Also, you must sign and date a security label the inspector will seal the sample to show it is yours.

What will happen to the sample?
The sample will be sent to the Central Science Laboratory. They will analyse it for one or more veterinary medicine residues or other contaminants.

Will I be told of the result?
Yes. It can take some time for the analysis to be confirmed, but the Veterinary Medicines Directorate will post you the result

What happens if a residue is found?
DEFRA will come back to see how the residue might have arisen and give you advice on how to avoid residues in the future. If illegal substances or a very high concentration of an authorised medicine were found, we can not rule out the possibility of legal action.

Where can I get more information?
You can read more about the testing schemes and see the overall results of the testing of honey on the VMD's website at www.vmd.gov.uk.
Information can also be found on www.nationalbeeunit.com and www.csl.gov.uk.

Alternatively you can call
Mike Brown, National Bee Unit, Environmental Biology Group, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York, Y04 I ILZ. Tel: 01904 462510, Fax 01904 462240.
or
Stephanie Hunt, Janet Rubidge or Maggie Green: Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Woodham Lane. New Haw Addlestone, Surrey. Tel: 01932 3383/2~)/28/24 Fax 01932 336618

WE HAD ONE OF THOSE . . . . . !

Those of us who are of a certain age will probably recognise this brass object. It's about 5 inches long. Bill thought it might have been half a handcuff but what does he know!?

The one who usually knows these things is Albert Morris and I know for certain that he would have had one of these but it has nothing to do with beekeeping or photography

Ask Dad or more likely Grandad what this is and then take a look on page 16 for the answer

VARROA AND THYMOL

Thymol comes in the form of white crystals and is applied to bees either in this form or as liquid. (Crystals desolved in surgical spirit) Caution is needed when handling thymol as it is corosive and could cause breathing difficulties. These same difficulties can apply to bees if application quantities/methods are not strictly followed as recommended. The two main application parameters with thymol, are daytime temperatures and quantities used.

The safe average daytime temperature is between 10c and 15c and these temperatures occur in late March and April in this part of the world. They also occur normally in late September and October, but this is not an ideal time for this treatment. Regarding quantities per treatment, the recommendation of 8g. is lower than the previous guidance of 12g. *(One level teaspoon = 4g)* It was found these higher quantities were too near the upper safe limit, thereby occasionally damaging bees and brood.

TIMING

Having established late March and April as the most appropriate time to apply thymol, the methods of application are considered next.

(1) Using a special brood frame with a top compartment where thymol crystals are added. These are obtainable from Thornes with full instructions.

(2) Using small sachets of thymol crystals made from old tights or tea bags. Use two sachets each containing 4g of thymol at opposite corers of the brood nest. Repeat at 8 day intervals, with three treatments probably being sufficient.

(3) Make two absorbent pads from some florist oasis blocks, about 3ins by 2in by 1/4in thick Dissolve 8g of thymol crystals in just sufficient surgical spirit and divide between the two pads. Place the pads in opposite corners of the brood nest and repeat at 8 day intenvals.

(4) Like (2)above, but use plastic lids from jars to hold the thymol crystals.

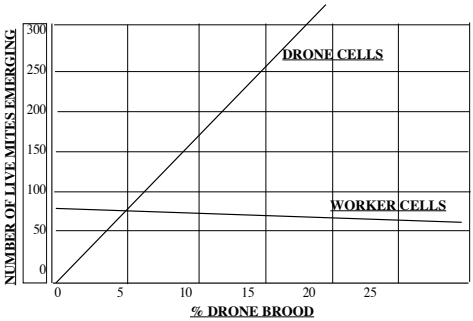
With methods (2) (3) and (4) greater efficiency is obtained by placing an eke, a wooden rim approximately 2ins deep between the roof and brood chamber. Whatever system of application is used, thymol is only effective on mites outside of the sealed brood cells. Therefore it is most effective when there is little or no brood present, up to 90% plus success rates have been reported. The three successive treatments at 8 day intervals are designed to ensure the majority of mites are exposed to thymol.

Next the hazards associated with the inappropriate use of thymol on bees and brood should be considered. Whether the problem is too much thymol or too high a temperature, the results are similar, namely, (a) Dead bees and brood, mainly local to application points, but can be more general if quantities or temperatures are excessively high. (b) More serious is loss of queens. The suspected causes are treatments given when average daytime temperatures are too high. (c) Bees absconding, again probably due to too high average daytime temperatures. i.e. evaporation rates too rapid and therefore too strong.

A further consideration is avoiding treatment when supers are in place as thymol will taint both honey and wax.

SUMMARISING

Thymol can be an effective treatment, provided caution is exercised. Treatment is less reliable than with Bayvora/Apistan. Therefore it is recommended as an additional, treatment in spring only, to help keep mite numbers relatively low. Treatment in August with thymol is impractical, because average daytime temperatures are too high. Therefore sealed drone brood removal is recomended



CONTROLLLNG DRONE NUMBERS

The higher the amount of drone brood, the greater the potential for high varroa mite numbers. Recent researchers have quantified the data (see chart) it illustrates the potential alarming mite increases possible.

When a colony contains 5% drone brood, the amount of live emerging mites from drone cells

equals the amount emerging from the remaining worker cells.(i.e. live mites emerging from a 1000 drone cells is the same as from 19,000 worker cells.) When drone brood reaches 10%, twice as many live mites emerge from these cells, compared with the remaining worker cells. The above raises the question, what is 5% and 10% drone brood in reality. Assume a reasonable stock with 9 to 10 frames of brood, 5% represents roughly half a frame counting both sides or approximately I00 sq ins of drone brood. Just double these figures for 10% drone brood. With this in mind the following steps should help,

Ken Gaiger

(1) Using full or part frames to trap mites in sealed drone brood, not only reduces drone numbers, but removes mites from the colony.
(2) Each year renew old brood frames, particularly those containing sections of drone cells. We should be renewing old frames anyway, but I suspect very few of us are that diligent. This not only reduces the potential amount of drone brood, but also reduces the risk of disease
(3) Remove drone brood from frame bottoms during the summer, remove it when its sealed, thereby removing some mites as well.

SUMMARISING

The often repeated advice concerning renewing old brood frames to minimise disease and help maximise worker brood cells has now taken on an added benefit, namely reducing drone brood and mites. Obviously where a colony is being used for drone rearing the trapping of sealed drone brood cannot apply. Finally, the changing climate, which seems to be extending our brood rearing season, will only increase the potential for increasing varroa mite numbers

SEALED DRONE BROOD REMOVAL

Sealed drone brood removal would normally take place in May and June or even July. A great advantage of this method is the absence of any chemicals, i.e. purely a biological control so varroa mites are removed irrespective of any traits to chemical resistance. The method has two basic forms, part frame and full frame sealed drone brood removal.

PART FRAME TRAP METHOD

This method involves inserting super foundation into a brood frame and fitting a wooden bar along the foundation bottom. The bees invariably produce drone cells in the space below. This frame is placed in the brood nest centre, about 3 weeks later this bottom section should be filled with sealed drone brood. This can be cut out and destroyed. The frame can then be reinserted to repeat the process.

FULL FRAME TRAP METHOD

Here full frames of drone foundation or drawn comb are inserted into the brood nest centre. About 3 weeks later they should be filled with sealed drone brood and can then be removed. The following options for disposal/management are available,

(l) Place removed frame into a freezer for 24hrs to 48hrs to kill brood and mites. On removal, allow frame to return to ambient temperature, uncap cells and return to brood nest centre to repeat procedure. Note, the bees will remove all the dead brood and mites.
(2) Uncap brood and gently wash out brood and mites with hose. Return to brood nest to repeat procedure if desired.

Whether you use full or part frame traps will depend on your management procedures and to some extent your bees and the drone numbers they produce. Both part frame and full frame traps with foundation have the advantage of giving the wax builders an extra outlet for their work during May and June. Conversely, full frames with drawn out drone cells could be better in July if a late procedure is desired. lnvariably in weak stocks, part frame traps would seem the best option.

Each beekeeper can try the method best suited to their managmant proceures. However, remember it's unlikely any of the above procedures will fully control varroa mites, but they should hopefully avoid mite numbers getting out of control before the normal treatment with Batvoral/ Apistan in August. *Ken Gaiger Jan. 2003.*

ARE YOUR HIVES VARROA FREE?

Scrapings from hive floors can be sent to :-
Diagnostic Services
National Bee Unit
Sand Hutton
YORK
North Yorkshire
YO4 1YW

They will send you a report and the service is free of charge

MEMBERS SERVICES

Bayvoral	£3.10 per pack
Thymol crystals	£2.20 per 100 g

Beekeepers quarterly Annual subscription of £14.00 instead of normal £18.00.

Talk to Ken Gaiger phone. 01282 778887.

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

Our librarian, John Zamorski brings some with him to our meetings. Contact him on 01200 427661 for special requests.

From The Treasurer

Subscriptions for 2003 need to rise due to increases in Brood Disease Insurance (B.D.I.) and capitation payments to the B.B.K.A. also County funds. Part of the B.B.K.A. increases due to the extra cost of public liability insurance and B.D.I. Rises are due to increases in incidents of Foul Brood.

The extra cost to the branch is £2.80 per member, but 80p will be absorbed by the branch. (the monies coming from Gift Aid).

The new full membership rate will be £13.00 and £2 for each additional family member. Associate membership remains at £4.00.

The new rates for Bee Disease Insurance (B.D.I.) are;-
First 2 hives £1.50 covered by subscription
up to 5 hives £2.25
up to 10 hives £5.25
up to 15 hives £7.50
up to 20 hives £9.00
up to 25 hives £9.75
Above 25 hives see Treasurer.

CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO L. & N.W.B.K.A. AND SENT TO KEN GAIGER, 2 HIGHAM ROAD, PADIHAM, BURNLEY BB12 9AP
Telephone 01282 778887

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Robert Bradshaw	Member	01254 261216
David Bush	Member	01200 428152
Barry Mellers	Member	01282 612985
Joe Wrigley	Member	01200 447621
John Tracy	Member	01204 394558

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE !!

Place an advert in BeeTalk and contact beekeepers World Wide (Well!, Jake's in Italy, Bridget's in Montserat and Albert's somewhere off Manchester Road)

Full Page £14 Half Page £8 Quarter Page £5

(It helps to pay the postage on BeeTalk)

INFORMATION ABOUT 'BEETALK'

Planned Publication Dates: June 2003 September 2003 December 2003 March 2004

LATEST TIME FOR COPY - 2 WEEKS BEFORE THE MONTH OF PUBLICATION.

Please contact Bill Ainsworth, 296 Scotland Road Nelson BB9 7YS Telephone 01282 614015 .
Good, crisp photographs or line drawings are always welcome

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

DATE	TIME	VENUE	ORGANISER	SUBJECT
Sun 6th April	2.30pm	Holden Clough	John Zamorski	Bee keeper's toolbox
Sun 18th May	2.30pm	Brian Jackson's	Ian Molyneux	Shook Swarming
Sun 22nd June	2.30pm	Towneley Hall	John Zamorski	Branch Open Day

NOTES ABOUT THE EVENTS

April 6th. John is going to go through a typical beekeeper's toolbox and will discuss each item and explain the use and purpose. And, if the weather is suitable, it is an ideal opportunity for us all, beginners in particular, to examine the hives. (Don't forget your gear ! Bee veils and protective clothing)

May 18th. This meeting is at Brian Jackson's place - Lower House Farm, Cowling. telephone 01535 635503. Ian Molyneux who is the bee inspector for the North West, is going to talk to us. The subject is 'Shook Swarming' but knowing Ian he will wander off into all sorts of fascinating beekeeping topics.

June 22nd. Our annual Sunday open day. Lots of visitors to Towneley will come to look at us, taste the honey, see the bees and talk to our members. It is always a good day out but we do need you. The more the merrier. Have a word with John Zamorski and find out how best you can help.

ARE YOU COMING TO DINNER?

If you are reading this before March 19th there is still time to get your name down for our Annual Dinner which is being held at Hillcrest Tea Rooms, Mitton, Whalley on Wednesday 19th March. (7pm for 7.30pm)Ring Angela Moyle, right now, on 01200 445398 The cost is £13 - pay on the night - bring your own wine.

AFTER THOUGHTS

THYMOL
Thymol is a powerful disinfectant. lt is said to have a 'phenol coefficient' of 27.6. What this means is that it will kill typhoid bacteria at a concentration 27.6 times lower than phenol (i.e. carbolic acid) needs for the same job. In the past, it is this property that has been utilised by beekeepers.

DEFORMED WING VIRUS.
D.W.V is the killer not the mite.
3000 varroa mites can transmit to the bees, sufficient Deformed Wing Virus to cause a colony of honey bees to collapse in Autumn / Winter

COLOUR OF HONEY
The colour of liquid honey can range from water white to almost black. The substances responsible for the colour are still largely unknown. Minerals are among the principle factors believed to be responsible. Generally honey colour is described as light, medium or dark as determined by standard colour grading glasses. Oil seed rape, clover, raspberry and lime produce the light varieties, blackberry, sycamore, and hawthorn a rich amber; bell heather a port wine; and ling heather brown to deep amber. Light colour honeys usually have a delicate flavour whereas dark honeys are normally strong flavoured. We are lucky in this country that there still remains a large variety of unspoiled nectar producing sources from which the combined raw materials afford our bees the opportunity to provide us with a product which is par excellence.

BEESWAX BALSAM POLISH
Try the following recipe. Put a pint of genuine turpentine into a jar and add 402 shredded beeswax and loz shredded white candle wax to it. Cover and leave it somewhere warm to dissolve for 48 hours. Then mix 2oz grated Lux soap in 1/4pint of warm water, and amalgamate with the dissolved waxes. Add two tablespoons of vinegar and mix well. Pour the resulting cream into suitable jars and store. This cream provides a lasting polish that feeds the wood and will withstand the damp.

HEALTH.
Look out for signs of health. Pollen going in will indicate the presence of a queen. A loud buzz should be the response to a rap on the outside of the hive. A closer eye should be kept on hives in the absence of these signs.

HEFTING HIVES.
Heft your hives at regular intervals to assess the quantity of stores left. Starvation shouldn't occur in Winter if the bees were adequately fed in the Autumn, but at the beginning of spring the daily demand for food is very heavy, especially if a early mild spell has prompted the queen into laying. So as Winter draws to an end be ready to provide syrup (1 pt. water / 2 lbs. sugar) with a contact feeder if necessary.

FEEDING SWARMS
Don't forget to feed a ***SWARMED*** stock (the parent hive). You should feed after three days, if you use the Pagnam method.
Remember they will have very few foraging bees, most foragers having gone with the swarm.

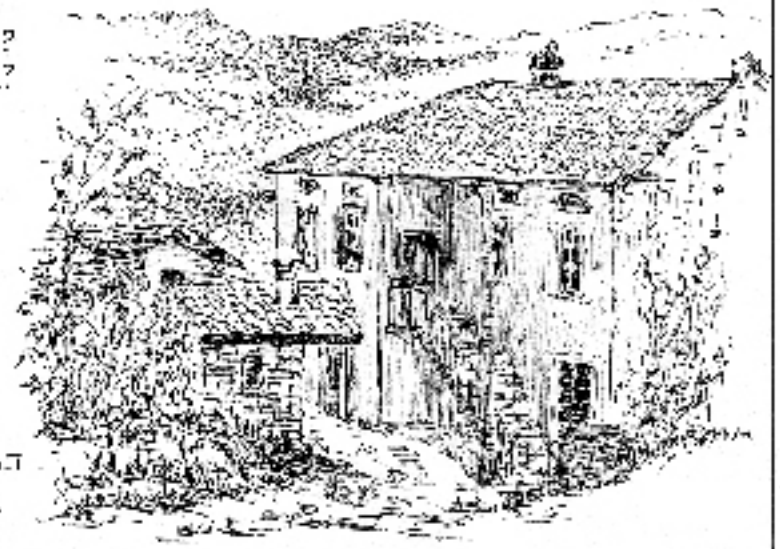
WE HAD ONE OF THOSE . . !
There it was on Standing Orders, AC2 Plonk or Private Bloggs has been posted to a new miltary base.

You dash back to the billet, pack all your kit in a long tubular canvas kit bag, thread this through the brass eyelts and secure it with a small padlock.

There you have it a kit bag handle.

If the car industry behaved like the computer industry over the last 30 years, a Rolls-Royce would cost £5, get 300 miles per gallon, and blow up once a year killing all passengers inside.

TIRED WITH NOISE, POLLUTION,
AND THE SAME OLD COSTA HOLIDAY?
WHY NOT TRY A DIFFERENT COSTA?
COME TO COSTA GEMINIANO.



AN ITALIAN RUSTIC FARMHOUSE
TO LET FOR HOLIDAYS IN THE
MOUNTAINS OF EMILIA-ROMAGNA
PROVINCE OF PARMA.

THE PROPERTY IS SITUATED AT
620 METRES ABOVE SEA-LEVEL
ON THE EDGE OF A SMALL QUIET
VILLAGE AMIDST BEAUTIFUL UNSPOILT
COUNTRY-SIDE. THE NEAREST TOWN
BARDI IS 12 KMS.

ACCOMMODATION CONSPRISES OF THREE DOUBLE BEDROOMS + ONE SINGLE.
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GUARANTEED NO INTERNET, NO TELEVISION, NO EN-SUITE BATHROOMS,
NO DISCOS OR FRILLY DUVET COVERS — JUST THE SOUND OF THE BIRDS
(COCKEREL ALARM CALLS) AND BEES (PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN VEIL)
WALKING BOOTS A MUST FOR EXPLORING THE COUNTRY-SIDE.
PRICE PER WEEK 650 EUROS. SHORT STAY B&B ALSO AVAILABLE AT 30 EUROS PER
PERSON A NIGHT. INTERESTED? NEED TO KNOW MORE? RING 0039 0525 76167.