



Bee Talk

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

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Registered Charity

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Editorial

WHAT SUMMER!

It's September and we have had no Summer at all, what a disappointment to all the new beekeepers just starting out. If you have started with one stock and got any honey at all, even just a few pounds then you are in a very favourable situation or just plain lucky.

The thing for us to do now is to cut our losses, be very grateful for what ever we have got and start preparations for next season. Be assured next year's beekeeping begins right now. Empty and extracted combs carefully put away until needed next Spring. Stocks united if needs be, treated for varroa if necessary, settled down in a water proof hive sheltered from the East winds, well fed and ready for those long Winter months. All this will pay big dividends in 2008.

KEN GAIGER

Most members, but not every one will know Ken Gaiger suffered a minor heart attack in August. He was in hospital for about three weeks and in the end it was decided that medication and rest would see him right. We all wish him the best and hope he is one hundred per cent by Christmas.

THE DREADED VARROA

This year I have been having a go with the thymol and olive oil treatment against varroa (It was mentioned in Bee Talk some one or two issues ago and I said I would report on it) My bees needed some treatment in July.

I was getting a natural daily drop of one to two mites per day so decided to treat all my colonies with the thymol and oil treatment.

The results were very slow compared to what I would expect from putting in Apistan strip, and though the treatment is supposed to take two weeks, then a second dose, the varroa drop I experienced went on for four weeks and the thymol oil from the first dose was still not exhausted. The varroa drop with the treatment on varied a lot between stocks but a strong stock was loosing around 40 to 50 mites per day.

I think the temperature was too low for the

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treatment laid down in the instructions I had, they were, after all, designed for use in Spain. There is some time to go yet before a decision can be made. I'm certain the bees were happier after a weeks treatment, and no damage to the Queens. We will see!!

MORE ABOUT YOU?

Arthur & I have been taking a good hard look at Bee Talk and wonder if perhaps we are bit short of articles about our branch and its members. Some of the other magazines we see are much more about members, Joe Bloggs and his bees rather than the more general stuff we include.

Drop us a line or an email with something about yourself and your experience with the bees. Perhaps you have a useful tip or you have struck a particular problem.

Please let us know, we can't guarantee to put everything in the magazine but we will do our very best.

THE QUIET ONES

Every club or society has a handful of people who get involved with things but the vast majority of us just want to stay quiet and simply enjoy our membership.

However, there are one or two things coming up where you may like to stir your stumps and join in.

There's the Barbeque which is always good fun and is an opportunity to put names to faces and meet up with others of a like mind.

There are two honey shows. Even if you enter and get nowhere you will be helping to make these two events a success and, let's face it, the more the winners beat - the more they'll like it!

Finally the AGM. If you have a bee in your bonnet and think you have an idea which would improve things - come along and say your piece.

Full details of these events are on page 17.



PREPARATION FOR WINTER

With all the honey taken off, it is necessary to feed the colonies so they can survive the winter. Once all the supers have been removed feed as soon as possible. One kg bag of cane sugar to one pint of warm water, we say warm because it will dissolve the sugar more easily. We recommend you use contact feeders as they are more efficient. Place the feeders on the hive during the evening just before dusk and try to feed all colonies at the same time to prevent robbing.

For a reasonable sized colony to survive the winter you need to have 30LB to 40LB of food on board about 20 Kg. The brood box needs to feel like it is glued to the floor when you try to lift it with one hand on one side. Colonies returning from the moors will need feeding, probably not much, but once the supers have been removed some food will be required. Some people do leave supers on over winter with extra food. We do not recommend this, for three reasons; a sparsely populated super could lead to robbing, large populations of bees could migrate up into the super and leave the queen stranded and in an enlarged space the bees would find it more difficult to maintain the temperature of the cluster.

Derbyshire Beekeepers Association

SPACING

Spacing can be a bit of a jigsaw puzzle for beginners. There is wide and narrow spacing for bee frames. Narrow is for the brood box. Wide can be used in the supers, the idea being that more honey can be stored in each frame and that means fewer frames for the beekeeper to have to uncap and extract!

HOFFMAN

You can use narrow spacing to start off for frames with new foundation, then change to wide spacing when the bees have built the combs (otherwise, with wide spacing to start with, they will have room to build brace comb....). There is no mystery to this! The plastic end stops are different widths, according to whether you want wide or narrow! Personally, I prefer Hoffmann self spacing frames, with the spacing already built into the side bars so you don't need to fiddle with end stops, but they only come as narrow spacing. The bees, needless to say, don't care which spacing is used!

WAX MOTH

Incidentally, alternating frames with foundation and frames that have already been "drawn" by the bees is a good protection against wax moth. The adult bees are attracted to the drawn combs and the young wax makers to the foundation. The youngsters have plenty to distract them and the adults plenty of storage space, so their thoughts may be less likely to turn to swarming.

I suggest for the time being beginners just stick to narrow spacing to simplify their beekeeping life. It gives you more flexibility if you need to change a frame. You don't have to go hunting for a narrow spaced one when you only seem to have wide spacers left and a wide one when you can only find narrow spacers!



If all the world's a stage,
where does the audience sit?

BEEKEEPING IN A NUTSHELL STARTING OUT (PART 3)

An excellent starting point for the beginner is to join the local beekeeping association. Besides the social events, lectures, demonstrations, magazines and insurance, there is advice, encouragement, assistance, and access to the secretary, who usually knows where to get hold of bees.

Alternatively, the major beekeeping equipment suppliers offer nuclei, usually in travelling boxes which themselves become useful pieces of kit. The advantage of starting with a nucleus is that the colony grows with the owner's experience and confidence.

NEW ARRIVAL

The hive should be set up in time for the delivery of the nucleus. When the nucleus arrives, it should be placed on the hive stand, the entrance opened and the bees allowed to fly for at least a couple of hours. If it is not convenient to hive it the same day, there is no harm in leaving it overnight, but the screened top should be covered to prevent too much heat loss.

To transfer the bees, move the nucleus off the hive stand to one side and replace it with the hive. Unscrew the lid of the nucleus, give the bees a few puffs of smoke, and prise the frames apart with the hive tool, puffing gently to keep the bees out of the way. Each frame is then lifted out and placed in the hive in sequence.

The space in the brood box is then filled with frames of foundation and the cover board put on. A feeder with one or two litres of sugar syrup (50:50 water: white sugar) is placed over the feed hole, and the roof put on. As long as the colony is expanding through the brood box, drawing out the foundation and encouraging the queen to lay in the new combs, the feeding can be continued, although if there is a good nectar flow the feeder will be largely ignored.

A GOOD YEAR

In a good year, the colony may fill the brood box within a month. Then a queen excluder and honey super should be put on. It should be possible to take at least a few pounds of honey in the first season.

THE CHEAPEST WAY

A swarm is the cheapest way to get bees. If the hive is ready, there is no harm in placing it on its intended site in April or May with the entrance open. It is quite possible that a swarm will move in of its own accord. If bees are seen scouting around the hive, looking all around outside and in and out of the entrance, then a swarmy colony is house-hunting. Sit back and wait.



Useful contacts for picking up a swarm are the local beekeeping association, the police station, the fire brigade and the local authority pest control. Each of these gets calls about swarms, and they are only too happy to pass them on to a willing beekeeper. Get experienced help, though, and be prepared to tackle awkward situations.

To hive the swarm, lay a board or cloth sloping up to the entrance and throw the swarm down on it, preferably in late afternoon or evening. For a few minutes, nothing may be happening, then the whole swarm seems to turn round and troop into the hive. Often the queen can be seen at this stage. The other alternative is to remove the roof and cover and drop the swarm straight into the hive, but it isn't so dramatic. Since the bees in the swarm are full of honey, and have no comb, it is pointless to feed them straight away, but they should be fed generously in one or two days.

The disadvantage of picking up a swarm is that nothing is known of the health and temper, so once it is established, the advice of a friendly expert would be useful.

By Matthew Allan

To be concluded in next issue.

TIPS ON RE-QUEENING A VICIOUS COLONY



Many bees are called bad tempered, but occasionally you get a colony that is really vicious. They will come to meet you, boil out of the hive and follow several hundred yards, stinging enthusiastically. Even in an isolated apiary, there is absolutely no pleasure in having bees like this. They have no place at all in a garden, or anywhere else frequented by people or animals. As well as stinging indiscriminately, swarms will be let loose if you are reluctant to go through them, and the drones will be spreading their genes all over the place. You could well end up being sued if they cause a problem. Destruction may be the only answer, but assuming that you do not wish to destroy the colony, re-queening is the other option.

1. Make sure your new queen comes from decent tempered stock. Any old swarm queen might be just as bad as the ones you've got.
2. A new queen may be introduced by uniting two colonies or in an introduction cage. In either case the bad queen must first be removed.
3. To find the queen more easily in a strong, bad tempered colony: The previous evening, move the whole hive some distance away. Leave a spare hive with some comb, on the old site. The next day, all the foragers, which are the most aggressive of the bees, will return to the old site. You can then search for the queen in relative calm.
4. You can re-queen by the cage method either immediately, or after waiting a couple of hours for the bees to realise they are queenless. Your new queen must: a) Be alone in the cage. b) She must be in full lay, to be reliably accepted. Reassemble the hive on the old site.
5. An expensive queen that has come through the post is not in laying condition at all.
She should first be introduced by cage, into a nucleus of stores, brood and nurse bees. (Put the nuc. brood box close to the bad hive, with a very small entrance)
6. When the queen is laying, put her in a cage for safety, and follow step 3., using the nucleus hive to house the returning foragers.
7. After a few days check that the queen is OK, then unite the rest of the nasty brood and bees with her, through newspaper.

This method of re-queening is almost guaranteed successful, and causes minimum disturbance.

Harrogate & Ripon Beekeepers' Association

What goes around comes around. This little article was published in the very first Bee Talk that Arthur and I produced in May 1999. It strikes us we could have written it for this issue of September 2007 - eight years later.

BEE LOSSES

From what I hear round and about many of you have lost colonies this Spring and the ones remaining are poor, with only one or two seams of bees left to build up the stock.

My losses, and I have had one or two, have been entirely due to a lack of bees. There

was plenty of food but insufficient bees to move over from empty cells to those containing stores. That again was due to the awful weather we had last back end.

The bees never got a chance to breed sufficient numbers to see the whole colony through the Winter.

THE DISAPPEARING BEE SYNDROME

I suffered from this in Spain in 2004 and it now appears to be causing trouble in the USA on a large scale. Increasingly the problem appears to be linked to *Nosema ceranae*. *We take a look at this in the article below.* What I know personally about it is that this little microsporidia was one of the causes of my departure for New Zealand in 2004/5 from Spain. The problem really is astonishing. A full hive of well organized bees with good stores and a laying queen can literally disappear within a week to ten days, leaving a hive resembling the bee equivalent of the Marie Celeste; uneaten stores, no dead bees, no live bees, no wax moth or damage and everything neat and tidy. I hadn't treated for *Nosema* because it really was not a problem in our area and I didn't at the time ascribe the losses to *Nosema* because of the rapidity of it all. We learn all the time. Let's hope that if it hits the UK, beekeepers are prepared for it because believe me, it takes no prisoners. You all might end up in New Zealand as well! **David Cramp.**
Editor. Apis-UK

NOSEMA CERANAE COLONY COLLAPSE

Because the 'Colony collapse Syndrome' seems to be featuring in the news more prominently, and because a possible cause could be *Nosema ceranae*, it may be worth reminding readers of the relatively new phenomenon which was identified in *Apis Melifera* in Europe by Spanish scientists in research that was a response to increasing bee losses.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of the problem are seen when strong colonies lose their workforce in a matter of weeks even though the hive has food stores, capped brood, and no outward appearance of a serious disease or parasitic condition. No build-up of dead bees occurs in front or inside the hive. Food stores are not immediately robbed by hives in the vicinity and attacks from wax moths. *N. ceranae* and *N. apis* have similar life cycles, but they differ in spore morphology with *N. ceranae* having smaller spores. Without doubt, the most significant between the two types is just how quickly *N. ceranae* can cause a colony to collapse. Bees die within 8 days after exposure to *N. ceranae* which is faster than bees exposed to *N. apis*. The foraging force seems to be affected the most. They leave the colony and are too weak to return, therefore die in the field. This leaves behind a small cluster and a weak colony. There is little advice on treatment but it has been suggested that the most effective control of *Nosema ceranae* is the antibiotic fumagillin as recommended for *Nosema apis*

POINTER

A pointer to research workers looking into the 'disappearing bee syndrome' or 'colony collapse disorder', was a huge increase in the detection of microsporidian spores in Spanish honey bees in recent years. To help look in this direction, molecular tools were developed to improve accurate diagnosis of nosemosis in the laboratory. Most samples studied were sent from colonies suffering unexpected decreases in bee population per hive or lower honey production as reported by the beekeepers during the last two/three years.

CONCLUSIONS

The research wisely concluded that due to the increasing bee losses (Spain as well as some other Mediterranean countries have been suffering increased winter losses of colonies of up to 40% in some regions of Spain) and due to the resulting significant reduction in honey production in recent years further detailed research must be carried out.

However, a clear, without doubt, explanation for this problem has not been found and the pathological consequences of *N. ceranae* in *A. mellifera* are not known, but it is important to discover if there is a causative relationship between the findings reported in the research and the documented population depletion and colony losses of honey bee colonies in southern Europe.

Courtesy Apis-UK.

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

JENI'S JOTTINGS

30 July 2007

THE SNAKE DANCE

"Is it the year of the snake?" I ask myself, as I do the 'snake dance' as a very large black grass snake slithers at great speed beneath



my feet down the wooded steep track. Wally the truffle dog had disturbed it in the field above us, as Brigg the collie and I made our way back from the river, after the first swim of the year for the dogs. Good start to the season I thought.

The snake dance entails lifting one's feet as high of the ground as possible usually to the cries of "Oh! Oh! Oh!" It differs very much from the 'Bee Dance' which involves much arm waving and the smacking of oneself round the head. The only similarity is the sound effects.

ALFALFA

Spring turned out to be very good for the bees, plenty of good weather and lots for them to go at. Some hay making was done early this year as the good weather prevailed. I prefer it like this as it usually means the cut fields produce a crop of *herba medica* (alfalfa) and the bees aren't suddenly left with nothing to go at. Which can happen when all the fields around are cut at the same time. A bit like the June gap in England. Due to the mild Winter and good Spring the bees built up very quickly and swarmed early, another good thing.

SWARM COLLECTOR

Michael Costello had announced he only wanted four stocks. So he often appeared with swarms, but even with all his efforts to keep the numbers down, I think he's doubled up, it's the Italian bees, they have their own set of rules. Michael has become known as a bee-keeper in his area, so also gets called out to collect swarms.

While putting supers on, one fine May morning, my three drakes, Charlie, Donald and Sir Frances, suddenly took flight from their walk round the apiary. This is very unusual for these "Oldies". One crashed into a bee hive, another crash landed near me and the third in a field. "Probably a snake" I said to myself and got on with what I was doing, knowing the drakes would sort themselves out and thought no more about it. Some weeks later I got round to looking into a hive that hadn't been building up. Oh! snakes alive! No, "Snakes dead, very dead", I took a second peek when taking the super off. What a surprise and how on earth had a snake (later identified by the local biologist as a *elaphe longissima*) got into the super I shall never know.

The poor bees had already started to propolise it, I can only think it must have hidden in the super when I had been checking the bees previously as it couldn't have passed the queen excluder. I asked the biologist whether snakes like honey or bees. He assured me that they live on small warm blooded creatures. I'm sure after this it must be the Year of the Snake.

MORE SWARMS

I was also called out to collect another swarm. Swarm it may have been once but it was well entrenched before anyone noticed it. Bees here do like the space between shutters and windows, which mean they make fairly straight natural comb. This particular colony had four and a half frame sized combs and I've a feeling it may have been the swarm I saw disappearing into the blue while I was dealing with another.

I have now got them back here after spending a few hours sorting them out and will need a lot more time next Spring as they are on natural comb and I want them on

new foundation and frames.

I have also been asked to deal with another colony in a near by hamlet. It's been there two seasons, again I think a swarm from here. Many years ago Jake and I cut out a colony from the very same spot - the bees obviously like it there. I've told the owner of the property to leave them till next spring.

While England has been drenched, here in Italy it's just got hotter and drier. No rain to speak of for over a month now. The bees are out searching for water not nectar. So I think it's time to do some extracting. I trust that things aren't as bad in England as the media would have us believe and that the bees haven't suffered too much with all the rain.

Best wishes to you all,

tante salute Jeni.

FROM CANADA

While the cost of producing honey has increased, the price for honey has gone down. Producers have been getting a lot less for their honey ever since cheap honey from countries like China and Argentina returned on the market.

"Honey prices have taken a nosedive. The low import costs have been a serious concern. It's been a recent phenomena in the last two years."

Honey producers used to get over \$2 a pound. With the arrival of honey from countries like China, the price has dipped as low as 60 cents a pound, although it has been on the increase in the last couple of years, it is still less than half what it was before.

It constantly amazes me that local beekeepers who produce relatively small amounts of high quality honey, still charge similar prices to the mass produced, imported, Supermarket honey. Most of you are not in it for the money but I think the public would welcome the opportunity to buy named honey with a label which gave a bit more information.

Sadly, in order to match customer expectations, you would have to substantially increase your prices. Here's my suggestion for a label (Arthur):

(Once a salesman-always a salesman Ed)



PURE UNPROCESSED HONEY
Collected within four miles of
the apiary during the months
of April to June 2007.



**Mostly from Lime Trees and
early Spring and Summer flowers.**

£12.50

Jar No. of

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£1 from each jar sold is donated to

The Blackburn and East Lancashire Beekeepers Association.

To promote local beekeepers and beekeeping.

www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

I have just picked up a very interesting bee book "BEES by I Khalifman" It was part of Albert Morris's library.

Published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House Moscow and translated in 1953 it was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1951.

For all it's strange origins (to us) buttering up Stalin, Lenin and constant references to the collective farms etc. I found it fascinating and instructive. I have included some snippets in this issue hope you enjoy them Ed.

COLONY WARMTH

In a colony, bees, cold blooded like all insects when taken individually, have acquired the ability to maintain the nest temperature constant in all weather, thus becoming warm-blooded, as it were.

The colony began producing for itself a very important condition of life **warmth**.

What special advantages has the big colony of modern bees in this respect? - was the next question of the researchers.

DOUBLY PROFITABLE

It has been established with the help of an ordinary precision balance that while warming or cooling the nest, a bee from a small colony expends, on the average, more energy, and consequently, more honey than a bee from a large colony. Calculations have shown a bee from the strongest colony experimented on (35,000 bees) to be six to seven times more "economical" than a bee from a weak one (2,000 bees). It was known before that in weak colonies the bees produce less honey, and now it has become clear how more wasteful such colonies are. The smaller stores of honey gathered by weak colonies are the result of both smaller takes and greater waste. A strong colony is doubly profitable; the bee in it is at the same time more efficient and more economical.

In an experiment, one colony of sixty thousand bees weighing about six kilogrammes stored one and a half times as much honey as four colonies weighing one and a half kilogrammes each and totalling the same number of bees.

FULL VIGOUR

Strong colonies show to the best advantage in localities with a poor honey-flow. It should be borne in mind that, after wintering in cluster and preserving the fertile queen and a sufficient number of workers, the colony enters the spring season in full vigour, ready for hive work and field flights.

Winter is not yet over, but immediately after the solstice, bees even if they have wintered in a cellar where no sun-rays penetrate and where the temperature is maintained at a constant level, will start eating more bee-bread and feeding the queen with royal jelly. The queen then begins laying eggs in the empty cells. Larvae are hatched from the eggs and the workers rear the first generation of spring bees which are to replace the winter-worn autumn bees.

SWELLING THE COLONY

The higher the sun rises over the horizon the more intensively the queen lays. By the time fine spring weather sets in, young bees emerge in masses from the cells rejuvenating the hive population and swelling the colony, whose compound strength has enabled it to pass through the ordeal of wintering, a task that would have been too much for an individual bee.

I. Khalifman

THOSE DRONES ?

The summer is gone and bee-colonies start preparations for the winter. Merciless to the stingless drones, the bees drive them beyond the entrance which they will cross never more, since a living wall of guards bars the outcasts way to the warm home; and when evening falls the drones perish from cold one after another. A cool night wind sweeps their light bodies and whirls them away together with the first dry leaves, the precursors of autumn.

WHY SO MANY?

Why, then, does a colony breed so many drones? Perhaps because, with a great number of them, a queen has more chances to mate in her first mating flight, and the sooner she starts laying eggs the stronger the colony will be.



BODY GUARDS

We may also suppose that the denser the crowd of drones following the queen in her flight, the better she is protected against all kinds of winged pirates. True, the cost of supporting such a number of body-guards is rather heavy, but to protect the queen is the colony's prime concern. Incidentally, do plants not produce

more pollen than is necessary to fertilize the flowers? Nature is indeed unstinting where reproduction of the species is concerned.

AN ORGANISM

The anatomy and physiology of the honeybee are adapted to life in a colony it is a complete organism but is entirely dependent on the colony of which it is a member. The colony like any other product of natural selection, under normal conditions itself obeys certain laws in its growth: it breathes and consumes food, like all living things, it obeys the laws of heredity, variability, and survival. Although it consists of many thousands of individuals, the bee-colony is at the same time an entity-a parcelled, discrete natural community, a kind of "organism of organisms." Link and subordination between parts in this entity are so shaped and regulated that every individual taken singly is connected by innumerable criss-cross ties of dependence with all the other members of the community.

PERFECT CELL

Bees, of course, have no more idea that they build their cells at a definite distance from one another than they have of the magnitude of the rhomb angles in the Great Pyramid. But in the course of *millenniums* natural selection has picked out, favoured, developed, and accumulated those modifications in bee-colonies, which have resulted in the construction of cells of the greatest possible strength and of the proper size and shape with the greatest economy of wax.

Those bee-colonies which made the best cells with least waste of honey in the secretion of wax, flourished and transmitted their newly-acquired instincts to new swarms, which in their turn, owing to their economical



instinct and the peculiarities of their building habits, grew and developed more successfully than others.

It is a weapon in the struggle against the conditions of existence. Poor builders, having spent their energies on the secretion of extra precious wax, will store less honey, which may not last them through the winter so that they will perish. This will not happen to good builders, who, on the contrary, will spread ever wider, conquering localities where the Winter requires greater stores of honey.

From I Khalifmans Bees.

It is imperative: if you want to keep your bees alive that you undertake some form of monitoring of your Varroa levels and check your mite drop after treatment. It is important to take action before the Injury or economic threshold level is reached (See Managing Varroa leaflet for details obtainable from DEFRA)

This item was taken from our Lancashire and North West beekeepers Annual Report. I think it is so very very important and so little taken heed of, that I felt an urge to remind every one, yet again.

Bill Ainsworth

Shop Sign seen in a Hampshire village store:
If you see something that is not on the shelves, we probably have more out the back.'



Notices

DOWN
WITH
VARROA

INFORMATION ABOUT 'BEE TALK'

Planned Publication
Dates: December 2007
March 2008, June 2008,
September 2008,

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

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Beekeepers quarterly Annual subscription from the
publisher is £24 - from our treasurer only £16.00 with a
slight profit to our society.

Talk to Ken Gaiger phone. 01282 778887.

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

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

KEN FOR
PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE MEETINGS

SUN 23RD SEPTEMBER 2.30 PM ANNUAL BARBEQUE

at Mr & Mrs Moyle's, Twiston. The Annual Barebeque.

SUN 7TH OCTOBER 2.00 PM BRANCH HONEY SHOW

at Castle Cement, Clitheroe.

SUN 14TH OCTOBER 12 NOON COUNTY HONEY SHOW

at West Bradford Village Hall, Nr Clitheroe.

WED 7TH NOVEMBER 7.00 PM ANNUAL GENERAL METING

at Ken Gaiger's, 2 Higham Road, Padiham.

For more information about these events, please see page 17

**DONT FORGET
THE MONEY SHOW**

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

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Bill Ainsworth	Vice Chair	01282 614015
John Zamorski	Hon. Sec	01200 427661
Ken Gaiger	Hon. Treas.	01282 778887
Caroline Coughlin	Honey Show Sec	07702 824920
David Rayner	Librarian	01200 426898
David Rayner	Education Officer	01200 427661
John Zamorski	Programme Sec.	01254 261216
Robert Bradshaw	Member	01200 428152
David Bush	Member	01254 772780
Bob Fulton	Member	01254 246212
Philip Ottewell	Member	01282 699881
Ron Dempster	Member	01200 426898
David Rayner	Manager Holden C.	01772 330159
Paul Aldred	Manager Holden C.	

**DELEGATES TO THE
CENTRAL COUNCIL**

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

NOT NO MONEY?

NEW MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

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

The new classes of membership are as follows:

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

PARTNER MEMBER. This is a new class of BBKA member. It is for partners of registered members living in the same household wishing to keep bees and includes full insurance cover. However they will not receive their own copy of BBKA News. Subscription will be £10.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. Another new class of BBKA member. This is for people who do not keep bees, but wish to receive BBKA News and attend branch meetings etc. This class of member does not include any insurance cover. Subscription will be £9.00

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

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

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

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

Ken Gaiger

August 2007

A HISTORY LESSON

2600BC Egypt: Knew how to smoke bees using earthenware pipes and remove honeycomb.

340BC Aristotle's discussed the fact that bees assume different tasks at different stages of adult life, and mentions foulbrood disease.

25BC Virgil (Roman) told about placing hives out of the wind and away from livestock, and the importance of a clean water supply.

7BC Varro (Roman) discussed commercial aspect of beekeeping, leased hives for pollination and the sale of propolis for medicinal use.

60 AD Comella (Roman) described beekeeping tools, including a smoker and a hive tool.

1400 Straw skeps introduced by Anglo Saxons, replacing fragile pottery hives.

1650's Rev. William Mew of Gloucestershire, England, built an octagonal hive and supers from wood.

1675 John Gedde, a Scot, granted patent for a wooden hive with removable inside frames.

1792 F. Huber, Swiss, did the first truly scientific observations of honeybees. Huber discovered that bees can transform worker eggs into queens, that a queen ruled the hive, that workers could lay eggs that would hatch, that queens will fight, that queens mated in flight, studied the causes of swarming, the use of antennae, and the production of wax scales.

1851 Rev. Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth discovered the concept of bee space, realizing that honeybees will leave open a space of $\frac{5}{16}$ " building burr comb in spaces over $\frac{3}{8}$ " and propolizing spaces $\frac{1}{4}$ " or less. Langstroth developed the 10 frame "deep" hive with moveable frames as used today.

1857 Johannes Mehring, a German carpenter, developed wax foundations with octagonal indentations (5 per inch) for use in Langstroth's frames. With this development straight combs could be assured.

1865 Abbe Collin built the first wire queen excluder.

1866 Major Franz von Hruschka of Austria developed the centrifugal honey extractor, designed for the 10" x 10" Austrian frames.

1868 A. J. Root designed a centrifugal honey extractor for Langstroth frames. Root's extractor was the first all-metal extractor.

1870 Moses Quinby of New York State developed the first bellows-type smoker.

1891 E. C. Porter of Illinois developed the leaf-spring bee escape, still in use precisely as designed by Porter.

1896 E. B. Weed of New York State developed rollers for imprinting a continuous sheet of wax foundation of a uniform thickness. Previously, a wooden board was dipped into molten wax, the wax allowed to cool, then the sheet pulled away from the board.

1920's Root and Dadant improve Hetherington's idea of wire reinforcing in the foundation. Weed's thin foundation would often fail in Root's and Dadant's extractors, and they were the principal sources for wax foundation in America.

1919 Karl von Frisch, of Germany studied honeybees for 59 years, discovering bee language as expressed in the "bee dance," plus other discoveries which together were more than all other scientific discoveries in history combined. For his work von Frisch won the Nobel Prize in science in 1973.

HONEY LABELLING REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED IN THE CONSUMER'S FIELD OF VIEW (I.E .VISIBLE ON THE SHELF.)

BEST BEFORE DATE

The best before date can be two years from bottling but the choice of date will depend on the honey. For example, honey sold as clear honey should not show signs of crystallisation before the end date. Honey predominantly from Oil Seed Rape would therefore have a shorter shelf life than Ling or Heather Honey.

The 'Best Before Date' must indicate the day, month and year. However, 'Best Before End' can be just a month or just a month and a year. The period starts from the date of packing not the date of extraction.

THE WORD 'HONEY'

This can be 'Honey', 'This kind of Flower Honey', 'Blossom Honey', 'This regional Honey', or 'Honeydew Honey'.

These words are reserved for Honey, and must be used to describe Honey which fulfils the specified criteria for the product. These words must not be used to describe inferior products, otherwise known as 'Baker's Honey'.

In addition, somewhere on the jar, although not necessarily in the Field of View, the following information must be shown:

THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

If the country of origin is the UK, somewhere on the label should be the words, 'Product of the UK'. Including UK in the producer's address label fulfils this requirement if a region is included on the label, e.g. 'Warwickshire Honey' in the consumer's Field of View. Blended honeys from EU countries can have the words, 'Product of the EU'. Otherwise, the label must have the words, 'Product of more than one Country'.

THE LOT NUMBER.

This is a batch number which identifies a jar of honey and allows traceability back to the colony and the date of processing. Traceability depends, obviously, on the beekeeper working systematically and maintaining adequate records.

WEIGHT

The label must also display the weight of honey in the jar. This must be displayed in the consumer's Field of View and the letters must be at least equal to the minimum prescribed height for the size of jar (4mm for 454g). It goes without saying that the weight contained in the jar must be equal or greater than the weight displayed on the label. Also, the producer's name and address must be visible somewhere on the label, although not necessarily in the Field of View.

WHAT IS HONEY?

The rules to describe honey have been tightened.

The maximum moisture content permitted is 20% for all honey with the exception of Ling heather honey, which can have a moisture content of up to 23%.

The maximum permitted HMF content is 40mg/kg reduced from 80mg/kg.

The minimum total of fructose and glucose combined is 60%.

Products which fail to conform to the standard cannot be labelled with the word 'Honey'.

POLLEN

Honeybees collect pollen (which contains proteins) which they mix with nectar (or honey) to feed their young. When they collect more pollen than they need, they store it away in cells, similar to the way they store excess nectar as honey.

Beekeepers can harvest a small portion of what the bees collect without causing any problem for the colony. To harvest this pollen the incoming forager bees are routed through a screen. While passing through the screen some of the pollen is dislodged from the bees and is collected in a drawer. The beekeeper then removes the pollen from the drawer.

This harvested pollen can be used for any number of things. It can be used as a nutritional supplement for people, as an ingredient in soap or other products, or it can be saved and given back to the bees should there for some reason be a shortage of pollen.

INTOXICATED HONEY BEES

Inebriated bees could give researchers better insight into alcohol's effects on human behaviour, a new study suggests.

"Alcohol affects bees and humans in similar ways – it impairs motor functioning along with learning and memory processing," said Julie Mustard, a study co-author at Ohio State University.

"On the molecular level, the brains of honey bees and humans work the same. Knowing how chronic alcohol use affects the honey bee brain may help us understand how alcoholism affects memory and behaviour in humans."

Researchers gave honey bees various levels of ethanol, the intoxicating agent in liquor, and monitored the ensuing behavioural effects – specifically how much time the bees spent flying, walking, standing still, grooming and flat on their backs, so drunk they couldn't stand up.

Not surprisingly, increasing ethanol consumption meant bees spent more time upside down. The appearance of inebriation occurred sooner for bees that were given a larger dose of ethanol.

This study is preliminary – the researchers simply wanted to see what effects ethanol had on honey bee behaviour.

"The honey bee nervous system is similar to that of vertebrates," said Geraldine Wright, a study co-author.

Honey bees were secured into a small harness made from a piece of drinking straw. The researchers then fed bees solutions of sucrose and ethanol, with several ethanol concentrations ranging from 10 to 100 percent. The 10 percent solution was equivalent to drinking wine, Wright said, while the 100 percent solution, which contained no sucrose, was equivalent to drinking 200-proof grain alcohol. A group of control bees was given sucrose only.

The scientists fed the bees and then observed

them for 40 minutes, tracking the insects' behaviours – how much time each bee spent walking, standing still, grooming, flying and upside down on its back.

The bees that had consumed the highest concentrations of ethanol – 50, 75 and 100 percent – spent a majority of the observation period on their backs, unable to stand. This effect happened early on, within the first 10 minutes of the observation period. They also spent almost no time grooming or flying.

Except for the control bees, bees that had consumed the least amount of ethanol – 10 percent – spent the least amount of time upside down. Even then, it took about 20 minutes for ethanol's effect to set in and cause this behaviour.

"Honey bees are very social animals, which makes them a great model for studying the effects of alcohol in a social context," Wright said.

"Many people get aggressive when they drink too much," she continued. "We want to learn if ethanol consumption makes the normally calm, friendly honey bee more aggressive. We may be able to examine how ethanol affects the neural basis of aggression in this insect, and in turn learn how it affects humans."



I have seen carpets of bees under Lime Trees, apparently dead. Later, on returning to the trees, I found the bees were gone.

They had probably been binge drinking on fermented nectar in the tree flowers.

I wonder if bees have headache?

Bill

HONEY DOESN'T SPOIL

The primary reason for long shelf life of honey is the low 'available water' content. The water activity (relative availability of water in a substance) of honey is only about 0.6 and growth of fungi and bacteria requires a minimum water activity of about 0.7 and 0.9 respectively.

PARTIALLY DIGESTED

Therefore honey does not support the growth of microbes which would spoil it. Honey is a thick solution (about 83 per cent solid matter) of primarily fructose and glucose, two simple sugars. Honey bees collect nectar from flowers and the sucrose in the nectar is partially digested by the bees to yield fructose and glucose.

Nectar is very dilute compared to honey and contains natural yeasts and some micro organisms commonly present in the environment.

LOW WATER CONTENT

In the beehive, water from the nectar gets evaporated (apparently due to air flow created by the beating of honeybees' wings) leading to low water content in honey.

While the low water content of honey does not support growth of micro-organisms or fermentation, some spores could stay dormant in honey for a long time.

UNFIT FOR BABIES



For this reason, it is not advisable to give honey to young infants (under 1 year old) especially to avoid the risk of Clostridium botulinum infection.

*Chetan K. Gopal
Chikmangalur,
Karnataka*

When an agnostic dies, does he go to the Great Perhaps?

POISON

The French have banned the systemic insecticide IMIDACLOPRID which is used on oil seed rape, sunflowers, maize, beans and potatoes, as well as winter barley and wheat. More than 50,000 colonies were lost in France in the period 1998 - 2001, which the commercial beekeepers ascribed to Imidacloprid.

This is a neurotoxin which attacks the nervous system of all animals but especially insects, earthworms, beetles, ladybirds, lacewings - you name it.

IN THE POLLEN

Unlike previous insecticides, this one is INSIDE the plant - it is systemic. It is in the sap, the leaves, the flowers and crucially the pollen and the nectar. Over 2.5 million hectares of crops in the UK are sprayed with this stuff every year and it kills over 99.9% of every earthworm, beetle, ladybird, butterfly or whatever in those fields.

Sadly the beekeeping establishment are in bed with the insecticide manufacturers and even mentioning this topic is a 'no-no'.

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

We are currently seeing a great mass-extinction of insects and invertebrates on all British farmland where this and other poisons are sprayed hedge to hedge. It is agricultural napalm. Why does this matter? No insects means no birds: skylarks, bluetits, peewits, curlews, redshank all feed on caterpillars and worms. Oh and yes, they deny that this nerve poison which they are putting in the foods you eat - has any effect on humans. Now where have I heard that before? Dieldrin? DDT? Aldrin? Furocarb? -.....continue for the 2,000 or so pesticides LEGALLY allowed to be sprayed on your food.

Overheard at a drinks party:
Just between ourselves dear,
I've got a few thousand put
away that Richard doesn't know
bout and he's got £8000 put
away that I don't now about."

AN APPRECIATION SPRING HONEY

During the second of two sunny days in mid-May, I decided to take off some early Spring honey and began with some colonies on the Oil seed Rape. Lo and behold, the first lot I opened sported an impressive collection of swarm-cells! Most were sealed, and there were several Queen-cups occupied by big fat grubs. Fortunately none had emerged as far as I could see. All this despite having ample space above the excluder. No problem- this hive had a Queen which had been marked earlier in the year. Could I find her? No, I could not. There were so many bees present it was difficult to see how they could possibly fit into the available space.

TARANOV BOARD

Fortunately, a week or so previously I had been designated to produce a Taranov board for the next Apiary meeting of our Bee-Group which was to be demonstrated for the edification of all, by one of our Elders, who had seen it all before.

Nothing for it, the board must now be put to work. All was put in place according to the instructions in the book and all of the bees were shaken off the combs onto the sheet covering the ground and the end of the board.

ORDER FROM CHAOS

There were bees everywhere; tens of thousands of them. The air was full of them and the sheet was knee deep in bees. Slowly, slowly, over the ensuing half-hour or so, order gradually emerged from chaos, as a huge mass gathered under the famous board. Eventually there was a normal-looking hive and a peaceful bucketful of a cluster (artificial swarm), under the Taranov Board. Very soon after, this artificial swarm all obligingly took up residence in a new box a few feet away from the original. Wonderful!

I offered up a heart felt thanks to
G.F. Taranov and his marvellous invention.

There is an excellent description of the Taranov board and it's use on the web at
<http://website.lineone.net/~dave.cushman/taranovswm.html>

BASICS IN QUEEN INTRODUCTION

- * Bees retain the memory of their own queen for about 24 hours.
- * Bees prefer a queen of the same age and in the same physiological condition as their own. This is difficult to reconcile with the fact that you are often attempting to replace an old queen with a younger one; a laying queen with one that has travelled through the post and has gone off-lay; or even queens from different strains (black bees do not readily accept queens of the yellow bee type). Colonies preparing to swarm will expect a queen cell or a virgin, not a laying queen.
- * Bees are less vigilant during a nectar flow and will be less alert to changes.
- * Bees are less likely to reject a new queen before mid-April and after mid- August, when they seem to know that they will have little chance of re-queening themselves successfully.
- * Bees will not accept a new queen if they have one of their own in the hive, or even a queen cell or a virgin. Always ensure the colony is queen less before attempting to re-queen it. Lack of brood is not a guarantee of queenlessness. If in doubt, place a 'test comb' of young brood (eggs and larvae up to three days old) in the colony for a few days. If the bees do not build queen cells on this comb, it means they have a queen cell or a virgin in the hive. Queen cells on this comb confirm queenlessness.

Although some literature recommends just running in a new queen, we feel this is taking an unnecessary risk, especially if the new queen is of great value. It is safest to introduce the queen in a cage, so that the workers can get used to her slowly. She needs physical protection until she has solicited food and has been fed by the workers, thus acquiring the 'hive odour', and until they have had time to forget their old queen.

FUTURE MEETINGS

THE DETAILS

SUNDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER

THE ANNUAL BARBECUE

Please give John Zamorski a ring if you are going to be there. His number is 01200427661.

It's always a really good do. Please bring a present for the raffle, if you can and don't forget to bring your own drink.

SUNDAY 7TH OCTOBER

THE BRANCH HONEY SHOW

We have arranged for Graham Royle to speak to us (He's is a first class speaker).

Please make the effort to attend and even if you are only a beginner, try to enter something - honey, cake, beeswax, photographs - give Caroline Coughlin a ring on 07702 824920 for all the classes and more details.

SUNDAY 14TH OCTOBER

THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW

Our branch is sponsoring this year's show so it is important that we make the effort both with entries and attendance.

Please contact John Zamorski on 01200 427661 if you are going to enter - he will be able to talk you through it and supply you with entry forms.

The Humphrey's Memorial Lecture is to be give by John Charlton. His subject is "Beekeeping in General"

WEDNESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The branch is doing well and it's down to you to see we continue to make progress. Please make the effort to attend - your input is important.

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LIFT ME ONTO MY SOAP BOX



ALL YOU NEED IS . . .

In the last issue of Bee Talk there was a short article about a fossilised bee which was something like a hundred million years old. From what we gather, the colony, the bee's world within the bigger world, has changed very little whilst the world we have created has changed, and is changing at a frantic rate.

THE BASICS

No running water, no sewage, no gas or electricity - not even a proper track leading to it. A desperately hard life - - from where I stand but quite normal for the people who had lived there. None of us could survive



that sort of life now but they would have had the basic necessities of life, in fact all

they **NEEDED** to survive. Shelter, warmth, food and water and companionship.

They probably moved out in the 1940s or 50s to acquire the things we Sassenachs had possessed for many generations and to which we add every day.

Central heating, motor cars, mobile phones, TV, dining out, super markets, roads, designer clothes, Continental holidays, computers, bank balances, divorce and all the other things we now see as necessities.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

There is no way we shall ever go back to those 'Good Old Day' and I am sure no-one would want to but perhaps it is time to take a good hard look at the things we start to think are essential.

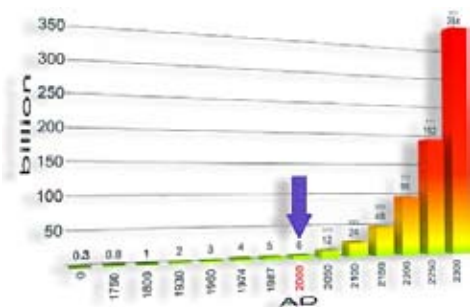
A bit like humans, bees do stock pile. We strive to increase that figure at the bottom of the bank book even if we could never use it in a dozen lifetimes but we can say "It's mine, all mine!". The bee on the other hand, during the good times, crams in more and more honey. The difference seems to be "It's ours, all ours!".

The bottom line for me is, if we can say "I have all the things I really NEED and a quite few things I just want and enjoy" Then I reckon we are wealthy.

Do you really NEED any more?

LOTS OF PEOPLE

What's more the changes we see seem to parallel the growth in the World population. Take a look at this graph: For millions



of years - right up to 1800, the World population was less than a billion. In the next two hundred years it rocketed to something over six billion.

ALL CHANGE

Bill and I stood on the motorway bridge in Barrowford and looked back over the village, we estimate that two thirds of the buildings have been put up in our lifetime. Mind you, we are getting on a bit!

Another little statistic - in 1950 there were 6 million cars in 2005 there were 35 million But back to the bees. They seem to have settled on their needs and accepted them millions of years ago whereas we . . .

Here's another anecdote. A few years ago, on the Island of Uist in Scotland I saw an empty house in the middle of a field. It was an old Scottish black house, probably built about 1900 and abandoned in the 1940's.

Scrapings

A TIP

If you have a situation where a new queen has been thrust upon you to be introduced and you do not have the time to make proper arrangements for the **safe** introduction. A way that has worked for me is to get a 25cl (or there about) bottle of gin or some other spirit will do, lift off the cover board and sprinkle it directly on to the bees give them a minute or two to get the spirit down, then simply run the new Queen in amongst the bees.

SNIPPET

Most beekeepers know that one hive of 60,000 bees can produce more honey than two hives of 30,000 and research tells us why this is, but this fact was known about as far back as the early 1800s by progressive beekeepers such as W. C. Cotton. Cotton also believed that the bees' ability to thermoregulate the brood nest and keep it up to temperature ensured that a hive joined to another hive thus doubling the bees would eat no more honey than a single hive. In this piece, he tells why he thinks this, and as usual he adds a short homily on good behaviour as well:

'The reason for it seems to be, that where there are many bees in a hive, they can keep warm by hanging close together, instead of eating; so that in a full hive, the same quantity of honey goes further than in a weak one, as each bee eats less. They keep themselves warm from the outside, and so do not require to be heated inside; as a man who can when keeping bees, or any other honest way, have a good coat on his back, is warm enough without a brandy bottle'.

Courtesy of Apis-UK.

August 26th is St Bartholomew's Day, the traditional day for harvesting honey

If you leave a super on the hive for Winter stores, take the queen excluder out and then, after a cold, frosty night in early Spring, when the bees have gone down into the brood box, replace the queen excluder

BEESWAX

Beeswax is produced by bees in the form of tiny scales which are "sweated" from the segments on the underside of the abdomen. To produce one pound of wax requires the bees to consume about ten pounds of honey. Beeswax melts at 64C (147F).

It has a high resistance to the passage of heat but if cooled quickly will become pale in colour, more brittle and liable to develop cracks due to rapid contraction. Whilst stories abound of exhibits being left to soak in honey over the winter to retain the honey aroma, fresh wax and low temperatures are an unbeatable combination

IMPORTANT: When melting beeswax always use a water bath by placing the container of wax - probably a small saucepan - inside a larger pan of water. Never place a pan of wax directly on a hot plate or gas ring. If it ignites it can burn more ferociously than any chip pan fire. Beeswax does not boil - it just gets hotter and hotter until it ignites.

Wax should only be melted in stainless steel, plastic, or tin plated containers. The next time you see a very orange wax in may have been melted in a copper pan.



The uses for beeswax are many but these days the most common are for candles, soap, furniture polish, batik art and in quilting and heavy sewing it's put on the thread to ease its passing through tough materials. The polishing of parade boots by servicemen, to lubricate zips, particularly for sub aqua clothing and for the mouth piece of Didgeridoos!



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Same conditions as above. Ring him on 01282 614015



A HONEY EXTRACTOR