

Bee Talk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
<http://www.kimberim.freemove.co.uk>

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Registered Charity

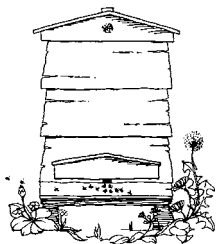
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Editorial

December 2001

NOT A BAD YEAR AFTER ALL

It is generally agreed that the beekeeping year 2001, started badly and improved as it progressed. The results turned out to be far better than could have been expected at the beginning of the year. The honey my bees gathered proved to have a beautiful flavour. I think this was largely due to pollen collected from Lime trees, some thing that happens rarely I have been told "Once in seven years".

KEN PREEDY MEMORIAL APIARY

The Ken Preedy Memorial apiary at Holden Clough was hit by the foot and mouth epidemic, there were no visits of any kind during the whole year. A big 'thank you' to Joe for keeping an eye on those stocks we had to leave unattended for so long.

THE HONEY SHOW

What's all this about the honey show? Pauline says "Our regular competitors were missing, their attendance would have raised the standard of the show". Is she inferring my rubbish honey would not have won had the more experience showmen been there? See full report page 7.

Whilst discussing the honey show it was decided to add a class for beeswax candles and other beeswax decorative items.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM turned out to be a success, after a bit of a stumble with the venue, but all was well in the end. We had a good meeting with more member present than had been expected.

The business part of the meeting was carried out fairly quickly and an interesting and fruitful discussion followed.

There is a list of the elected officers and phone numbers on page 14.

HONEY TASTING

It looks like there is three months before our next meeting but that shouldn't stop us from looking at ideas for next year.

How about offering the public who visit us at John Zamorski's Townely Hall Exhibition a honey tasting? We need a few more samples to add to my Lime, Heather, Manuka from New Zealand and a sample jar from one of the Greek Islands. Please let me know if you have a spare jar of some thing a bit different?

Now is the time to get all that equipment ready for next year. It is going to be a brilliant year. In the mean time how about that bee book you keep looking at but haven't got round to reading yet?

Good beekeeping and just before we go, a Christmas message from the Chairman

The last twelve months have not been the best of times for beekeepers in general due to varroa and the Foot and Mouth Disease.

However, here in the Blackburn area, we would appear to be coping quite well and my Christmas wish for you all is that we will continue to enjoy our fascinating hobby and the companionship and support of the members of our association.

May we wish beekeepers everywhere a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Prosperous New Year.

HOW DO BEES BEHAVE IN WINTER?

INTO CLUSTERS

They usually go into cluster in the month of November and stay in cluster until the end of January. During the month of February they can be seen collecting pollen from the first flowers available, should weather permit. These flowers include snowdrops, crocus, winter aconite, and a shrub with a white blossom called laurustinus. Early in February queen bees in healthy colonies start to lay.

They start off laying two or three eggs per day increasing gradually to five hundred eggs per day at the end of the month. The rate of egg laying depends on the age of the queen. A young queen will lay vigorously and will build up her colony far more rapidly than an old queen. Under these circumstances a watch should be kept on the supply of stores in the hives.

We can rest assured that a queen is present and laying when we see the foraging bees bringing in loads of pollen on a fine day in February. All the hives in the apiary should now be hefted from the back and by comparing like with like we can discover the light ones. When identified feed the light ones immediately with candy or bakers fondant. This feed should be placed over the feedhole in the crown board.

MAKING CANDY

A simple way to make candy - mix three parts of icing sugar with one part of lukewarm honey. Should the mixture turn out a little runny add some more icing sugar to stiffen it up. It improves the quality of the candy if it is stored in a plastic bag at room temperature for a week or more. The enzymes in the honey will invert the sugar to fructose and dextrose and make it immediately available as an appetising food for spring feeding. It is recommended that the beekeeper should use his or her own honey in the mixture, otherwise one has to be sure of its source. Honey can spread disease such as American Foulbrood.

Bakers fondant can be purchased from bakers or confectioners and can be applied as an alternative to candy. Both candy and fondant can be applied to each hive by placing them over the feedhole in the crown board using an upturned margarine container. If you have pollen from last years crop it can be mixed with the candy and it will raise the value enormously.

NATURAL POLLEN

Natural pollen can be collected in a special pollen trap attached to a hive. It is collected on a daily basis and can be preserved by freezing or drying. Before mixing natural preserved pollen with candy it is necessary to grind it down into a powder with the aid of a coffee grinder or the like and then knead the powder into the candy or fondant. The candy or fondant can also be fed to the bees by way of a cake, six inches square by three quarters of an inch thick placed directly over the brood nest under the crown board and covered with a bit of cling film or plastic.

From the middle of February to the middle of March is the most dangerous time for deaths from starvation, so keep up the candy feeding until then. Sugar syrup can then be fed until the first honey flow in April.

(Don't forget to lace the candy with thymol Ed.)

FERAL COLONIES

AN INTERNET DISCUSSION

The internet discussion group BEE-L made an interesting point recently. Peter Borst wrote, "The term feral colonies is a misnomer. In countries where beekeeping is widespread, the only difference between bees in hives and bees in trees is just that: the former live in hives, the latter in trees"

PAMPERED BEES

Trevor Weatherhead replied thus: "In Australia this is not the case. We have carried out DNA work on feral colonies and they are not related to the lines we currently run as commercial hives. Our ferals are descended from the *Apis mellifera mellifera* brought to Australia in the early days which swarmed regularly and has adapted quite well as feral colonies in our environment.

COMMERCIAL STRAINS

We find that commercial strains, if they swarm, will not survive as ferals for any length of time. They have been pampered too long by beekeepers and have to be shifted around or fed to survive. We have bred bees that are not inclined to swarm because a hive that swarms is no longer a highly productive unit. They are not there for the view, our hives must work. The DNA work was commissioned to show that feral and commercial colonies are different.

*From Devon BKA's Beekeeping, January 2000.
Courtesy of BEES*

KEEPING IN TOUCH by Albert Morris

SEARCHING FOR FERAL COLONIES

In June 1946 having left the R.A.F. after my war service, I went to Cornwall on holiday for three weeks, staying at the Oates Hotel in Redruth. I met a chap and played an occasional game of pool with him on the table there. He was Fred Davies brother of Joe Davies the then world billiards champion. At the time, not being much into billiards and snooker, his name did not mean much to me, he was just another chap on holiday.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

After a few days, I went to a place called Portreath, which I had been urged to visit by a friend from my hometown, Edgar Rawlinson who had been stationed there during the war years. Walking along a road leading to the beach, there was a row of some six terraced houses and the first one had eight beehives in the large front garden. I knocked on the house door met and introduced myself to a pure -bred Cornishman, Hedley Tonkin who lived with his wife Annie and from that time on, I had found two new friends for life. They were both somewhat older than I, and were in there late thirties while I was twenty-five.

Living in a country where there was much unemployment, Hedley had a hut in the garden where he repaired footwear and sold bee products. His third source of income came from fish he caught by rod and line, mainly pollock and mackerel which he sold to local people. He also made a fair amount of money removing bees from houses, and at times there were several estate agents waiting for him to remove feral colonies from empty houses, wanting the bees removed before prospective customers could be shown round.

PONSANOOTH

There was an estate where there were many holiday homes, in a village just of the Redruth to Falmouth Road which had a rather odd name-Ponsanooth which Hedley said was pronounced Ponsn'nooth. Here the properties were mainly bungalows constructed mostly of wood with plasterboard panels, specifications which were adequate in the warmer, dryer climes of Cornwall.

The panels were used on all the walls and were spaced about three inches apart and fastened to three by four inch timbers which made the insides ideal for the bees were they could build combs three or four feet square and spaced three inches apart.

SENDING BEES TO COLNE

On removal of a panel, all the combs were exposed and so were easily removed. I constructed three travelling boxes and sent several of these full of bees to a friend in Colne.

Hedley showed me a feral colony in an old building close by Redruth railway station which was an ironmonger's shop and the bees were in the chimney breast which extended from the first floor to the top of the third floor. Someone had told Hedley that the bees had been there before he was born, that they threw three big swarms off each year and that the chimney-breast must be full of honey. For some fifteen years without a break, our family holidayed in Cornwall and we always went to see the bees there, flying high against the blue of the sky. The last time we visited there was 1995 and despite varroa being widespread in Cornwall, the bees were still flying profusely from their entrance, a crack in the masonry near an old flag pole some fifty feet up.

To be continued.

By the time this is in print, the bees will be settled into their seasonable rest and we should have bottled the surplus honey we took from them in exchanged for providing a home for them. The last meeting of the year will have come and gone and soon the tinsel will be sparkling on millions of Christmas trees. So at this time I would wish everyone a peaceful Christmas and a happy new year- remembering that when Christmas is with us, the days will be lengthening once more.

Albert Morris.

ALBERT MORRIS IS NOT THE ONLY ONE

Another way to stop robbing

Cynthia H Waller (Bee Craft Aug 99) suggests a way to stop robbing.

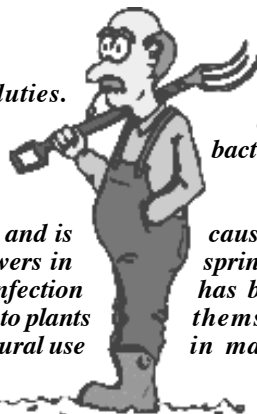
I have a method of preventing and even stopping robbing for over 60 years. I dip the tip of a paint brush in creosote and paint a lick or two across the entrance. This not only prevents robbing but will stop it immediately should it be taking place. It doesn't bother the bees in the hive where it is applied, and a swarm will readily occupy an empty hive which has been so treated. It also keeps out wax-moth and Mice.

(Courtesy of An Beachaire - The Irish Beekeeper)

BUSIER THAN EVER.

HELPING THE FARMER

Fighting disease has now been added to bees' duties. are being enlisted to tackle fire blight, a disease that apple and pear orchards. By spreading a harmless prevent plants becoming infected.



Honeybees can devastate bacterium, the bees

*Fire blight affects apples, pears and related species, and is rium called *Erwinia amylovora*. This infects the flowers in rapidly through the rest of the plant. Traditionally, infection using either copper-based compounds, which are toxic to plants antibiotic streptomycin, which is banned for agricultural use countries.*

caused by a bacte-spring and spreads has been prevented themselves, or the in many European

“Once the pathogen is in the tissue there is nothing you can do” says Joel Vanneste of the Ruakura Research Centre in New Zealand. “We wanted to prevent the infection by breaking the cycle early on in the Spring”.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

More recently, researchers have been looking for biological controls. One close relative of the fire blight bacterium, *Erwinia Herbicola*, is harmless to plants, but can check the growth of *Erwinia Amylovora*. By competing for space and nutrients on blossoms, and by producing a protein than Inhibits the growth of its harmful cousin, it can prevent the disease spreading.

MORE ELEGANT

“Targeting the blossoms directly is more elegant than spraying bacteria around” says Eve Billing, who previously worked on fire blight at the East Malling Research Station in Kent, now called Horticulture Research International (HRI). She hopes the method will help to eliminate antibiotic use in orchards.

USING HONEY BEES

Vanneste and his colleagues decided to use honeybees to carry *Erwinia Herbicola* directly to apple and pear blossoms in orchards. He asked growers to put powder containing the bacteria inside hives where bees would walk through it as they were leaving. After 7 days, more than 95% of the flowers harboured the bacteria.

BEEES HAVE THE POTENTIAL

Fire blight is most serious in areas where spring temperatures are between 21 and 30c, such as the US, New Zealand and southern Europe. David Harris of HRI said “In some places, fire blight absolutely devastates trees, ripping through orchards. The method has the potential to be very useful in these areas”

Joanna Merchant - New Scientist.

“The key is that honeybees are being used to distribute living organisms” So said Vanneste at an International Symposium on Biological Control Agents in Crop and Animal Protection, held in Swansea last year. “They bring a few bacteria and then the bacteria multiply. So if no more powder arrives, the bees continue to spread the bacteria”.

WE HAD ONE OF THOSE . . . !
but we threw ours away



It's about four inches long, it screws apart but what is it - bullet mould; finger crusher; cigarette maker? If you want a clue I can remember seeing this in use at Hayhurst's on Market Street in Nelson in the 1950's

Turn to Page 12 for the answer

PORTRAIT OF A BEEKEEPER

To say I am a beekeeper is somewhat of a misnomer.

MUSHROOMS DOWN THE CELLAR

I was aware of the existence of my mentor many years before I actually met him. My husband came home from work one evening and said "Do you remember telling you about that man I met who



grew mushrooms in his cellar, well today I met one that keeps bees." "Where -in his cellar?" "No, but he has all his tackle down there, isn't it strange what some people get up to."

SLICK SALES TECHNIQUE

I cannot recall my first sighting of Willemus Ainsworth Apiarius, but vaguely recall a conversation whereby I told him I loved honey and was not afraid of bees. Bill not being one to miss an opportunity obviously bore this in mind. Three days later I received a telephone call from someone with a very slick sales technique, my first reaction was to respond in the normal way one does to a double glazing salesman.

THE NEIGHBOURS CHIMNEY

However, realising that it was Bill who told me he was acting as intermediary for someone that had some beekeeping equipment for sale at a greatly reduced price and that he was giving me the first opportunity to take up this fantastic offer as he was sure it would be gone within the week - how very opportune!! Of course one cannot resist a bargain whether one wants it or not - can one? Within the week I was the owner of all these bits of wood and a wonderful colony of bees, courtesy of Bill. I was very proud and fascinated. When one moves house it takes some time to settle in and within two weeks my lovely bees decided they didn't quite like their new abode and thought a neighbours chimney was in a better area. My luck was in, they were away on holiday for three weeks!

HE JUST SWEARS

I know I am a constant irritant to Bill, swarming bees, asking silly questions, putting the floor board on upside down, can't keep the smoker going, but he never grumbles at me - just swears. He is also extremely kind to me, one day I had a bee under my veil and in my hair, Bill immediately zapped both bee and sting into my scalp, but I was very stoical and did not let him see the tears welling up in my eyes, needless to say I had to cancel the hairdressers that week.

The bees Bill gave to me were quiet, very productive and gave wonderfully flavourful honey, but this year for some unknown reason they took umbrage and promptly died. I must admit I was very upset.

In my opinion Bill and I rub along very well together and I am full of secret admiration for his immense knowledge, dedication and humour, but don't tell him this. All I can say is that I am very glad my husband went down that cellar thus enabling me to be a part of the B.B.K.A.

"DO NOT ALTER THIS DOCUMENT IN ANY WAY- DO YOU HEAR!! !! !! !! !! !! !!"

This was the heading at the top of this submission from Pauline - she must be a school-teacher. Anyway, Pauline, I haven't changed a word - - just corrected the spelling mistakes!!! Assistant Ed.

LETTER FROM ITALY (This was a personal note to me, I just felt it was too good a piece

of writing to keep

to myself)

Dear Bill

As you can see from the enclosed, not such a bad end to the year except perhaps for the poor beekeepers in Afghanistan!! Hope the bombs miss the hives.

A shame we could not get some honey to the show, I'm sure it would have been a winner. Cos of the chestnut content it has come out nut brown but not bitter at all as normal chestnut honey is. Our barracca is full of bursting with split logs, the Cantina and Cupboards stocked with goodies to eat and drink so unless the roof blows off we are ready for the snow, ice and gales of Winter.

The year seems to have flown by. We have now bought the rustico (another hovel) next door. After a bit of work on it we will have plenty of space for a bit of "agriturismo" or should I say "apitourismo" for beekeepers who like a bit of sun with their stings. Plenty of anaesthetic on hand after our experiments with the washed cappings!

Hope you are all well and varroa not giving too many problems.

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

Early November.
Saluti da Geminiano.

INDIAN SUMMER

What a contrast from last Autumn! After the hot Summer, September and October remain dry and warm, we have only just this week moved out of shorts into warmer clothing.

Our "Indian Summer" has given us chance to catch up and even get ahead with all the normal jobs. Shallots and onion sets planted, "home" gardens cleared and dug, the plough has been active on the larger plots and we can now relax and let the frost do its job on the soil.

For the last few weeks we have even done one or two major jobs on the "hovel" with down-spout drains and a new water pipe going in.

Lots of work with nothing to show for it as it is all underground. Once again the wild boar save us having the work of harvesting our corn as over night they did it for us. This year we put in a "demanda" for some compensation through our "ufficio agricolo" and after an inspection of the damage they agreed to pay for the lost crop but not for the work of ploughing sowing etc. In the end only the boars won! Our dry autumn put paid to the expected large crops of porcino, Boletus Edulus and although we walk in the woods everyday with our two border collies Brigg and Beck. This year we have found only thirty or so, but dried and in jars they will provide a few tasty sauces for our pasta.

MUSHROOMS

A normal sight in September are meadows full of field mushrooms. So many this year, I was soon fed up with mushrooms for every meal and Jeni preserved all the small button ones under oil for the winter, in the end we didn't bother to pick those!!

LOTS OF HONEY

After the slow start the bees built up strongly as did the varroa and in early September we extracted all the honey. A good job that we offer a discount on our honey for jars returned as again we had to fill over 500 kilo jars, the final total was 1270 lbs. of very dark honey. Even wholesale, jars seem to be expensive in Italy and the cost rises every year.

This year we paid 1100 lira (about 37p) per jar so we offer 500 lira for every jar brought back,

give them a new lid and we all save a bit. More important they get recycled!

OXALIC ACID

In the first week of October all stocks had a treatment with oxalic acid we results we now have come to expect, the drawers under the hive full of dead varroa after 24 hours and always a surprise to see so many, even from the swarms that all had a feed with Thymol in the Spring.

Continued on next page

Cont. from previous page

WINTER



All the stocks had plenty of stores for whatever winter throws at us and only one needed a quick feed. We have seen pollen being brought in as late as yesterday (5th.November) and if the Winter is short they are not going to get much rest as our hazel and willow start in January!! Now all that remains to do is to tie the hive roofs down in case of Winter gales and to start thinking about what we need for next year. (Yes, more supers)!

GRAPPA DI MIELE

And now to finish, the results from our grappa di miele. As reported in an earlier Bee Talk, last year after washing our cappings the resultant liquid was fermented. At the end of this Summer on a couple of wet days we got the still going and distilled this as well as a batch of fermented plums and some old wine that was undrinkable. The honey was a surprise and after putting it through the still twice to get rid of any methanol present, we ended up with a grappa that was slightly sweet, tasted of honey and about 60 proof! eye watering in fact. A big hit with all the Italian experts who have all asked for a sample. In the end we have had to say no to this, perhaps next year.

OLD WILLIE'S SPORRAN

Because of its success we have done the same after extracting this year as well and have a batch of cappings fermenting away in the cantina at the moment. All spirits seem to have a name but apart from grappa di miele we still haven't found one for distilled honey so ours has been called "old Willies Sporren". What we have left should keep us warm over the winter. As you read this we will be nearly in next year, for us the Euro to get used to, a jar of honey instead of costing 11,000 lira will be 6 Euros and for every thing else a calculator in hand for a while I'm sure.

We are already looking forwards with our work with the bees over the next season what ever ups and downs it may bring. For now from us both as your chairman said *Faccai come sempre attenzi-one e tantiauguri Per 2002* (let him explain) *Jake and Jeni.*

As regards the last salutation your chairman has racked his memory and his computer, he has come to the conclusion that it is "all Greek to him" However we think a very loose translation would be, "From us to you, Good Wishes for 2002"

OUR HONEY SHOW

Held at Castle Cement Clitheroe on the 7th. October 2001 John Zamorski and David Bush once again cooperated in arranging such a wonderful venue. There wasn't a trip around the works this year but we all received a proper camera plus film as a gift. There were only eleven entrants this year and we were disappointed to see some of our regular competitors missing, their attendance would probably have raised the standard of our show. The entries totalled forty eight.

The show judge was Mr. Arthur Gillett who gave positive remarks on how to improve on our entries. Mrs. Jeanne Ainsworth was our visiting Guest Judge, she did an excellent job, Mr. Gillett agreeing totally with her decisions.

This year we had three workshops which were enjoyed by all. Bill Ainsworth demonstrated the construction and use of Varroa floor boards. Jack Armistead showed how to make foundation. John Zamorski demonstrated beeswax candle making and also decorative pieces.

May I thank you all for attending, the Judges, Castle Cement and Guests, especially the support of our Chairman and Committee.

SHOW RESULTS FOR 2001

Class 1	Light Honey	W. Ainsworth
Class 2	Dark Honey	W. Ainsworth
Class 3	Heather Honey	K. Gaiger
Class 4	Granulated Honey	B. Beattie
Class 5	Novice Class	No Entries
Class 6	Frame of honey	A. Cunliffe
Class 7	Cake of beeswax	J. Armistead
Class 8	Honey Cake	B. Beattie
Class 9	Honey Fudge	K. Gaiger
Class 10	Honey Dessert	A. Moyle
Class 11	Mead	No first prize
Second prize awarded to		A. Cunliffe
Class 12	Potographic print	D. Bush

Best in show K. Gaiger for heather honey
Most points in show W. Ainsworth

Pauline Roberts (Show Secretary)

NORTHERN BEE BOOKS

Over the past 15 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
'tel 01422 882751

RELOCATING A STOCK OF BEES (SHIFTING A HIVE)

This took place one evening early in September when Bill and I went to collect an unwanted hive of bees left in Colin Hardacres old apiary by his successor, who had gone of to Wales abandoning the lot. Naturally it was chucking it down with rain - quite normal for hive shifting! The apiary was very nicely over grown with a good crop of nettles, wire netting, palettes and other junk, deep in the undergrowth. However, the hive was - a double brood box.

QUIET BEES

We removed the mouse guard and took the lid off to reveal two empty feeders which we assumed were from last winter—

so the hive hadn't been touched for over twelve months. The bees seemed fairly quiet as we took of the crown board and feeders so as to put on the



perforated zinc travelling screen. Naturally, we had left our veils and gloves in the car a hundred yards away but we both had our flat hats on!

GOOD MOANING

When an exploring bee went up my sleeve and stung me I was puzzled to see that Bill was so pleased, he said he was thinking of my health, that it would help my rheumatism (I didn't tell him I don't have it). We blocked the entrance with a battered piece of foam plastic which had seen better days. That done, the stock was bee-tight apart from half a dozen flying round. We put two plastic bands round the lot through a fiddly fitting and strained them tight.

We had then to get it to the car and then we discovered just how heavy it was. My hive lifters were useless and kept slipping off so we sort of carried and tussled it between us. We finally got it to the open door of the car with Bill holding it half in and out whilst I went round to the other side. He complained afterwards that his hand was crushed and all feeling lost (Have you noticed Bill's tendency to exaggerate!)

WINDERMERE NEXT

The hive was left overnight in the car at Nelson ready for its journey to Windermere next day. Norma, my wife, was very apprehensive about travelling with a large stock of bees, but I reassured her that the 'box' was perfectly bee-tight.

BALER TWINE AND SPIT

Next morning she asked if there should be bees flying inside the car windows? Unfortunately a handful had got through the old foam plastic, but the judicious use of masking tape sorted the problem out, (a bit like a farmer friend of mine who used baler twine and spit for everything from veterinary work to fence repairs.)

WANDERING BEES

I then pacified Norma and the dog who also was a passenger and very nervus of bees so we set off. At Lancaster I had to deliver some goods and found several bees crawling about, I quickly dispatched them and naturally kept quiet.

They are now sited in an apiary with a beautiful Lakes view. They have Varroa and are not quite as calm as was first thought but I'll see what they're like next year and re-queen if necessary.

A big thank you Bill for your help and good humour. *Anthony Davies.*

How do I substitute honey for granulated sugar in recipes?

- * Substitute honey for up to one-half of the sugar. With experimentation, honey can be substituted for all the sugar in some recipes.
- * Reduce the amount of liquid in the recipe by 1/4 cup of honey used in baked goods.
- * Add 1/4 to 3/4 teaspoon baking soda for each cup of honey used.
- * Reduce oven temperature by 25°F to prevent over-browning of baked goods.
- * For easy removal, spray measuring cup with vegetable cooking spray before add-



HIVE ENTRANCES

GUARD BEES

Why do so many beekeepers have a terrific gaping hole at the front of their brood box, something they call the "hive entrance"? The entrance block removed from a National floor will leave a gap of over 16" wide and nearly 1" high, demanding a terrific number of guard bees to defend and defend they must to prevent invasion from other colonies, wasps and hornets and even the friendly bumble bee will often be found seeking an easy living.

THE DRAWBRIDGE

Every castle I know has its entrance restricted by a drawbridge and an opening sufficient to allow minimal access only. Whenever I raise this subject the statement I always receive is "I want my bees to be able to get out easily, collect nectar and return without interruption, to be able to store it in the cells". Quite right but having witnessed many swarms (what an admission) emerging from my hives with narrow entrances, I can assure beekeepers that there is no hindrance, they still "pour out like water"

I am not an expert on colonies established in trees or buildings but those I have discovered have had small entrances. I do have experience of working a Log Hive, with a circular entrance of about 1 inch which is generally reduced by a propolis curtain to barely a bee width and the only ventilation is from a mesh covered 3" hole drilled through the floor at the back of the log.

WHOM NEEDS VENTILATION?

Using small entrances in my hives have attempted to assist ventilation by covering the crown board holes with steel mesh only to find the bees propolise them, even a plastic strainer received the same treatment indicating to me that they do not need this ventilation. The wire mesh fitted to the Log hive is NEVER propolised so maybe we should consider adding ventilating to the floor of our hives.

What other advantages are there to having a small entrance? Robbing I have mentioned but what about the spread of diseases? Not much use spending money on expensive Varroa treatments for other collapsing heavily infected colonies to be able to walk in through the entrance, accompanied by thousands of the mites.

GIVE IT A TRY

When using small entrances there will be the occasion that bees are observed clustering over the front of the hive during a spell of warm weather. Sometimes it is an indication that extra room is required (add a super) or pull out the entrance block from just one end, pushing it in when the weather turns colder. This year try half your hives with small entrances, the rest with the block removed and observe whether it makes a difference.

*Originally in Ludlow & District BKA's magazine
Published in Shropshire BKA's Newsletter*

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SOME NOTES FOR BEGINNERS

FIRST INSPECTION

The first inspection, some time in April, provides the opportunity to assess how well the colony has come through the winter and how strong it is. Take note of the number of frames that are covered with bees. If there are only two or three frames covered, then the colony is weak and if left to its own resources it may survive but its chances are very limited.

Where such a weakened colony exists the following option should be considered. At some time in the near future, when the temperature rises, it can be united with a strong colony.

If there are bees covering four or five frames with plenty of brood then it can be considered to be of normal strength.

A colony covering in excess of six frames can be regarded as a strong colony. The respective strength of the colonies should be noted on the hive record cards. These cards should be used to monitor the progress of the colony throughout the active season.

Provided the inspection is completed within a few minutes, there should be little chance of chilling the brood or of major disturbance to the bees.

FEEDING

If food reserves are running low, provide a feed of 1 to 1 syrup. If there is no suitable water supply within a hundred yards or so then one needs to be provided. It should be close to, or within the apiary and provide the bees with an alighting area to avoid any risk of their drowning.

During later April 'Routine' inspections need to be established. These are the regular examinations that are needed to carry out checks on the health, strength etc of the colony. They should commence in late April and need to continue until the end of July when the swarming season comes to an end.

Their frequency is dictated by swarm prevention considerations and whether or not the Queen's wings have been clipped. Fourteen-day intervals if they have, eight days if they have not. Both intervals are based on the assumption that the colony is not preparing to swarm.

ROUTINE INSPECTIONS

Routine inspections are the means of providing answers to the following:

Is the queen present and laying?

Is there sufficient space

(a) for the queen to lay in and

(b) for the colony to exist without congestion?

Is the colony building up in a satisfactory manner?

Are there sufficient stores to last until the next inspection?

Are there any signs of disease?

Is the colony making preparations to swarm?

WHAT IF?

If the findings of the inspections provide assurance to the beekeeper then the hives can be closed and the record cards updated.

If any of the findings are negative then some type of action is necessary e.g. if the queen is restricted in her laying activities then a frame of stores can be removed and a frame of comb, preferably drawn, be substituted. This is on the basis that there are still sufficient stores available in either the brood box or supers.,

If there are signs that the colony may become congested, (i.e. when eight or nine frames are covered with bees), then it is necessary to add a super.

COLONY BUILDING

In the event of the colony not building up satisfactorily the cause needs to be investigated. Equalising, i.e. adding bees, brood or both from another colony may solve the problem but it could be a waste of resources if the queen is incapable of laying sufficient eggs. Age, disease or injury are common causes of her inability to lay sufficient eggs, particularly age. Re-queening may be the only solution.

STORES

With respect to the amount of stores, this will depend on the intervals between inspections and whether or not there is an intake of nectar. A good safety guide is that during an inspection, a minimum of ten pounds is seen to be available. That is approximately two full National brood frames.
Continued on next page

Cont. from previous page

PREPARING TO SWARM

If the colony is making preparations to swarm (queen cells present) then the beekeeper must implement his or her chosen swarm control procedure. Swarming is a great nuisance, losing the harvest. On occasion, albeit rare, it has even led to the loss of the entire colony when multiple casts have been issued.

Other tasks for the month of April include; Queen introduction on warm day. Queen replacement should be carried out in April when the colony is small in size. Unless you rear your own queens, they are not normally available that early in the year and introduction may have to be deferred until such times as commercially produced queens become available.

MARKING OR CLIPPING

If the incumbent queen requires marking or clipping this is the month to do it. She will have to be found in order to perform either operation and the smaller the colony is, the easier to find her. To implement any method of swarm control she will have to be found and that will be difficult if she is not marked.

Old and blackened brood comb should be replaced. After four years of use, deposits on the inside walls of the cells have been built up to such a level that the physical size of the inmates will begin to be restricted. If such comb is identified and contains eggs or brood, it should be progressively moved towards the periphery of the brood chamber during subsequent inspections. When all the brood has hatched the old frame can be removed and replaced.

If the colony is very strong, the replacement could be of foundation, not comb. That will keep the bees occupied drawing it out. It may be necessary to add the first super towards the end of the month. If you desire to take advantage of an oilseed rape nectar flow then colonies must be prepared and moved to the particular locality.

THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY

During the month of May routine inspections are a must, not only because of the risk of swarming but congestion can occur with all the side effects that it brings. If treatment for varroa was undertaken late in March or early April, the Bayvarol strips should be removed early this' month.

A BUSY MONTH

There is a six-week (maximum) treatment cycle from date of installation. Don't foster a build up of resistance to the acaricide by allowing it to remain in the hive for longer than the specified period. Avoid the strips coming into direct contact with honey.

It is also a busy month with other activities. If you are interested in either queen rearing or building nuc's then this is the appropriate time to get involved.

With the increased activity of the bees, the entrance blocks can be removed provided of course that the temperature is suitable. It needs to be up in the high teens during the daytime with no indications of frost at night, otherwise the brood may suffer.

In June the colony should be building up fast and because of the gap between the nectar flow in May and July's blackberry blossom, there is the possibility that hunger will affect the colony. If feeding is necessary the bees may store it in the supers and it could be extracted as honey. To avoid this, feed slowly and not to much.

We had one of those . . . (page 5)

I remember a Chemist telling me about an old Nelson man who came into the shop and asked for something for 'Biles'. The Chemist reached down a box of suppositories. The man looked and said "Hey, them's big, what do I do with 'em". The conversation went on for some time until the chemist was on the point of telling him in graphic detail what to do with the suppositories. The light dawned on the old fellow and he said "No! not PILES!, biles, on the back of me neck!"

That's what this device is a mould for making suppositories.

Heard on a TV cricket commentary

"... 'Maybe's' never gather honey..." also
"A closed mouth doesn't catch flies"

SCRAPINGS



MOVING HIVES IN WINTER

If you want to move your hives within the immediate vicinity, this should be done between November and March. During the coldest part of Winter, the '*Less than three feet or more than three miles*' rule can be ignored for re-siting bees. Chose a long frosty period so that the bees gradually re-orientate when they start flying again.

From The Welsh Beekeeper



SAY IT WITH SEALING WAX

You were once supposed to use different colours of sealing wax for different occasions. Business letters should be sealed with red wax while friendly letters are sealed with grey wax.

To your love, you devote blue in token of constancy - unless you wish to hint that you have, or think you have, cause for jealousy - then you use yellow wax. A reply to a wedding invitation should be sealed with white and a letter of condolence calls for black or violet wax.

A dinner invitation may be sealed with coffee coloured wax. When a man gets a letter from a girl he admires sealed with green he may feel she shyly bids him hope.

It must have been very profitable for the manufacturers. An idea for beekeepers to revive this fashion?



A PHILOSOPHICAL SCRAPING.

Rags make paper. Paper makes money. Money makes banks. Banks make

loans. Loans make beggars. Beggars make rags..



THE FACTORY

Honey is "manufactured" in one of the world's most efficient factories, the beehive. Bees may travel as far as 55,000 miles and visit more than two million flowers to gather



LANCASHIRE HONEY SHOW

On page 3 there is a full report of our own honey show given by our Honey Show Secretary, Pauleen.

However, the week after our show, the main Lancashire show was held at Chorley. Bridget Beattie who intended to enter the Lancashire show also dragooned four members from our own honey show to enter the Lancashire one.

All of those 'Dragooned' who entered in the show, were very pleased with the results.

We mustered nineteen entries and took twelve prizes, the most prestigious of which was Angela Moyal's first prize and the Boardman cup for the novice class. This class probably held more entries than any of the others whereas there were no entries in our own show.

It must also be said that apart from the number of entries, The Lancashire show does not put our little show in the shade in any way at all.



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

Bees are the only insect that makes food for humans. In her lifetime, a worker honey bee makes only 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey.



MEAD HANGOVERS

Anyone who has ever attended a Mead-ing knows how wicked a mead hangover can be. Some form of moderation is generally a good policy when drinking mead, your mileage may vary. You control the vertical, you control the horizontal, don't drink and drive,

THESE JOKES KEEP TURNING UP AND WE JUST CAN'T RESIST THEM.

I was told that at a place called Loose, near Maidstone, members of the W.I. hesitated for some considerable time before forming the "Loose Womens Institute."



HONEY RECIPES

For the Kids - Young and Old

Honey Shake Makes 4 servings.

1-1/2 cups milk, 1-1/2 cups strawberries, sliced, 1 cup vanilla yogurt, 1/4 cup honey 5 ice cubes

Combine all ingredients except ice cubes in a blender and blend until thick and creamy. Add ice cubes one at a time and blend until smooth.

Ye Olde Batte's Proven Recipe.

Basic Metheglyn (*Took First Prize at a Homebrewers Competition*)

Put three pounds (1 quart) light honey to about a gallon of water and heat to just below boiling. Skim off as much as you can of the white froth & discard. Add a palmful of whole cloves, a handful of stick cinnamon, and a couple of palmfuls of whole allspice. Add the zest (thin outer peel) of one medium-large orange. Remove and discard the white pith from the orange and crush the remainder into the pot. Add one cup double-strength black tea (two teabags to one cup boiling water). Keep the whole mess at steaming (NOT BOILING) temperature for two to five hours. Cool to lukewarm ("baby-bottle" or "blood" temperature) and strain or rack (siphon) into one or two large bottles, filling only to the "shoulder" of each bottle. Add one or two tablespoonfuls of dry yeast to each bottle and attach airlock. (Mead is the ONLY fermented product it is not only safe, but often preferable to use bread yeast to manufacture). You may want to leave the bottles "unlocked" for 12-24 hours to give the yeasty-beasties a headstart. Leave in warm, but not hot, place for 7-21 days, or until airlock "breaks." Rack into clean bottles. You may top up with clean water, if you wish. This lightens the flavour and assists in the mellowing process. DON'T use processed city water! Age in cool spot for AT LEAST six weeks -- it can safely go for a year. Rack once more when it looks clear, and be sure always to leave all the GUCK in the bottom of the bottle whenever you rack.

For The Ladies (And men - if you like!).

Soothing Skin Lotion

Mix 1 teaspoon honey with 1 teaspoon vegetable oil and 1/4 teaspoon lemon juice. Rub into hands, elbows, heels and anywhere that feels dry. Leave on 10 minutes. Rinse off with water.

Skin Softening Bath

Add 1/4 cup honey to bath water for a fragrant, silky bath.

Hair Shine

Stir 1 teaspoon honey into 4 cups (1 quart) warm water. Blondes may wish to add a squeeze of lemon. After shampooing, pour mixture through hair. Do not rinse out. Dry as normal.



The Editor and Assistant Editor would like to take this opportunity of wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

We will leave it you to decide which is which!



IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE!

Place and advert in BeeTalk and contact Beekeepers World Wide (At least two).

It also helps to pay postage costs for our little magazine

Full Page	£14
Half Page	£8

BRANCH MEETINGS FOR 2002

March 20th	7.30pm	Samlesbury Brewery	(Subject to be announced)
April 21st	2.20pm	Holden Clough	(Subject to be announced)

FROM THE TREASURER

The subscriptions for the year 2002 were due on November 1st. If your subscription is outstanding, could I ask you to pay as soon as possible in order to simplify administration.

Up to	5 Hives	£1.80
Up to	10 Hives	£4.20
Up to	15 Hives	£6.00
Up to	20 Hives	£7.20
Up to	25 Hives	£7.80

The fee is unchanged at £11 per full member and £2 for each additional family member. Extra Bee Disease Insurance costs are:

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phone 01282 778887

ANNUAL DINNER

Will be held at the

Hillcrest Restaurant, Mitton Road, Whalley.

Wednesday 6th March 2002

***Angela really does need to know if you are likely to be interested
so please give her a ring on 01200 445398***

AS SOON AS YOU CAN!

INFORMATION ABOUT 'BEE TALK'

Planned publication dates : Mid March 2002
Mid June 2002
Mid September 2002
Mid December 2002

Latest time for copy is the second week of the month prior to publication.

If you have any information, tidbits, articles or stories about beekeeping, please contact the editor :- Bill Ainsworth, 296 Scotland Road, Nelson, 'phone 01282 614015
e-mail:- bill@scotroad.free-online.co.uk or arthur@lapwing.idps.co.uk

Please don't worry about writing skills, between us we will knock it into shape.

We have no objection to any part or the whole of this publication being reproduced. All we would ask is that Blackburn & District Beekeepers Association is acknowledged

Committee Members Approved at the AGM FOR THE YEAR 2001

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