

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: July 2009

June has flown by and by all accounts people have been busy extracting, gathering swarms and expanding their colonies. The weather has been fine enough for apiary meetings to take place twice a week. The apiary at Cosgrove is set out very nicely and is proving its worth to the Beginners, who are learning to handle the bees for themselves amongst many other things. Do come and join in.



Members continue to be busy in the community:

Sue Bird had a stand at the Stony Stratford Riverside Fair. The theme was environmental so her observation hive proved to be very useful and informative. Sue has given talks about bees at four secondary schools in Milton Keynes as part of the Science Week programme. Two of the schools have asked her to go back and do more lessons about bees with the younger pupils. Sue also runs a bee club for pupils at Hazeley School. As if she's not busy enough, Ed Reney asked Sue to take her observation hive and sales stand to the Open University's 40th Anniversary Open Day. Over 4,000 people were there, Sue and Ed sold out very quickly.

We've had a request from a group of mothers who would like to have beekeeping classes when their children start school in September. Sue Bird is going to give them an Orientation Day with a view to possibly running a Beginners' Course later in the year.

Libby Culshaw has spent a fair bit of time on presenting our case for some community funding to purchase a variety of equipment for our association. This has included writing an equal opportunities statement. Rather surprising as we have been open to **all** ever since the Association was founded, but that's modern times for you.

A letter was passed on to us from BBKA Headquarters. A nine year old boy from Tingewick had written to say he would love to keep bees but his mother thought he was too young, so was there a beekeeper nearby who would let him see into a hive? Julia Lykiard has kindly agreed to show the young man her hives and John Marchant has kindly donated a brand new child's beesuit.

One of our Beginners had a nasty experience with a colony of bees in the hive in her garden. They turned out to be extremely aggressive and unmanageable. Bob Sibley and Chris Jay removed them and put them with our other colonies at Bradwell Abbey. Ed Reney and Bob have sorted them out and they seem to be settled. Ed is keeping an eye on them.

I wonder if we more experienced beekeepers make it all seem too easy and reassuring thus giving beginners a false sense of security. When I started beekeeping 25 years ago the 'old boys' hosting apiary meetings used to bang the hives and shake them about well. This ensured that when the lid was lifted off, the bees came rushing out like angry hornets. Quite a fearsome experience for a beginner but you either learned to stand your ground or think twice about whether you could cope with keeping bees or not. One newcomer at such an apiary meeting was so shocked at the angry mass of bees which erupted from the hive that he jumped into the hedgerow and stayed there until the end of the session.

Brian Penfold of Woodhill Prison, reports that the colony that Chris Jay and Bob Sibley put in the young offenders' garden is going strong. There are two supers to extract so Brian will be having a session with Bob and learning the best way to do this. Tom Charge's photo shows Bob, Chris and Brian in part of the garden with the new colony before the supers were added.



July looks set to be another busy month, especially if the good weather continues.

Don't forget the **Disease Recognition Day** on Sunday 5th July at the Great Missenden Memorial Hall, HP16 9AE. This is your opportunity to meet our new Regional Bee Inspector, Julian Parker, as well as finding out the latest news in bee husbandry and meeting our friends and fellow beekeepers from the south of the county.

Our annual **Bee Safari** is on **Saturday 11th July**. Seasonal Bee Inspector, **Margaret Holland** will be leading us as we look at three apiaries. Margaret has close links with the National Bee Unit and is immensely knowledgeable about diseases and problems within our colonies. She explains things in a very thorough and clear way. It is an enjoyable and informative day. We will start at 10.30 a.m. at Ed Reney's apiary at the Open University. Then we move onto the Association's apiary at Bradwell Abbey, where we will also have a picnic lunch. After this, we will proceed to our main apiary at Cosgrove. We expect to finish at about 4.00 p.m. This event is for all members and Beginners too, so please make the effort to attend. You can join us for just part of it, if that is more convenient. I can't **stress** enough how **valuable** this session is. Further information about the **Bee Safari** will be sent separately.

Donna Clarke of Moray College, Elgin, is carrying out research into the distribution and prevalence of the varroa mite in British honey bee colonies. The focal point of this phase of the project is a survey to gauge individual beekeepers' experiences of varroa. She will use special software to map the spread of the mite in an attempt to identify areas which have remained varroa-free.

To produce a meaningful picture it is vital that as many beekeepers participate as possible.

If you would like to take part in this valuable research contact Donna Clark at:

Donna.Clark@moray.uhi.ac.uk or telephone 01343 576272

Forage Lime blossom is still open and the bees are on borage and thyme. Creeping Jenny is proving very popular at the moment. This simple purple flowering plant spreads and forms carpets of nectar bearing flowers. Clumps for sale, 50p to NBBKA funds!

Just coming into flower now are rosebay willow herb, Himalayan balsam and blackberry



For Sale: Hived swarms on new comb £60.00 each. Full brood chamber colonies ready for supering £90.00. Contact Ken Gorman – 0777 9801 774

Best Wishes You will be sorry to know that our chairman of many years, Mike Bensley, has been in hospital for some time. We send you our very best wishes for a speedy recovery, Mike. Get well soon.



Apiary Notes from Ken

It has been a very good season for nectar gathering so far. It has also been a season leading to a high level of swarming. Swarming preparations commenced in early April and the bees are still at it now, at

the end of June. I saw one swarm leave a hive mid day today, Sunday and finally settle 25 feet up in a hawthorn tree. I tried getting up to it using an extending ladder, but decided that I needed my extension handle, patent swarm catcher as well. Quite foolish really, but I am always reluctant to give up on a swarm. One son warned me against getting up ladders at my age. He's quite right

This was a Carnica colony which had made preparations for swarming earlier in the season and which I artificially swarmed. So they are trying again-it looks to be successfully, as I haven't attempted to take them today. Perhaps they'll stay overnight and I will give it a go.

The house was being bothered by scout bees on Friday and Saturday, so I went to check the Two Mile Ash apiary and sure enough, there was a massive swarm of the same coloured bees, nicely positioned about five feet from the ground. I caught them in a skep and hived them within the hour, giving them a mixture of foundation and built comb on a double brood chamber. They stayed. Best normally to hive a swarm in the evening, but I thought that this one might have been hanging for 48 hours and was ready for the off. The scout bees visiting stopped immediately the swarm was skepped.

Bait hives have worked well this season. I have used boxes larger than a national brood chamber, some adapted from the larger commercial brood chambers and some with different combinations of boxes fixed together. The entry holes were one inch diameter and the combs a mixture of foundation and old comb. All were sprayed with artificial pheromone attractant - Bee Charm. The bait hives were positioned five or more feet from ground level.

Several queens have managed to work their way through queen excluders. I use wire queen excluders which have been obtained from various suppliers over the years. Queens evidently explore the surfaces of queen excluders looking for a way through. One excluder had a single weld loose: the queen found the weak spot and got through. Because I use drone comb in many supers this creates problems-not just rearing hundreds of drones, with the consequent drain on pollen and honey, but releasing said drones from the supers periodically, as well as eventually having to find the queen and put her back in the brood chamber, below a fresh excluder. In two cases I had to resort to shaking all the bees from all the super frames, from three or four supers, onto the front of the hive and then putting a fresh excluder in position. The bees stayed calm-that's Carnica for you!

Porter bee escapes can offer problems. I like these escapes as they usually lead to stress free emptying of supers-for the bees and the beekeeper. They do need adjusting and checking prior to each use. Don't buy those with plastic springs inside-use copper springs only. Bees will not clear from supers if they: a) contain the queen, b) contain brood of any sort, c) contain drones, which can block the escapes d) escapes are not correctly adjusted and allow the bees to move back and forth. e) there is a hole, however small to the outside world, either in the woodwork, or as a crack between two supers, when the super(s) can be robbed out entirely. Amazingly, in the presence of a honey flow full, accessible supers can be ignored by bees.

When placing supers over a clearer board, I always check before leaving the apiary, when a small knot of bees will betray the presence of an exit hole, which needs blocking with foam. Bees trapped in supers, or held by presence of brood etc., are not very happy.

Coming decisions. What treatments are you intending to use for varroa? What hive configuration will you be using for winter- one or two brood chambers, whether under floor screens and monitoring apparatus. Do you have a weak or fractious colony that needs sorting and probably uniting with another, over newspaper?

Finally be prepared for the honey flow to stop. The bees' temper changes in a day. They become meaner as they prepare to defend the harvest and then seek out other sources of food, for example, other colonies' stored food, spilled syrup feed, honey extracting rooms and so on. Once serious robbing

starts the results can be terrifying. Feed only in the late evening and return wet supers at a similar time. Close down entrance sizes, especially of smaller colonies. Watch out for wasp activity.

Queenie's Kitchen – it's barbecue time! There are many marinade recipes for ribs and other barbecue favourites, but this has to be the most lip smacking one.

For the marinade: put 6 tabs thickish honey, 3 tabs oyster sauce, 4 peeled & chopped garlic cloves, 1 tsp dried chilli flakes, 4 whole star anise, ¼ tsp salt flakes, ¼ tsp black pepper corns in a roasting tin or baking dish. Mix together.

Take 1.5 kg of meaty pork spare ribs and toss them in the marinade. Set them aside for at least an hour or, better still, overnight.

Whilst the rest of the foods are charring away on the barbecue, put the ribs in an oven at 175/gas 4 for an hour and fifteen minutes. Turn them in the sauce from time to time and keep an eye on them as they could burn easily because of the honey. They are ready when the meat is tender and the ribs are glossy with sauce. Stand them by the barbecue and save the day!

When I started beekeeping 27 years ago, nobody ever wore gloves when manipulating bees. I swell up very badly after a sting so gloves are the order of the day. The elastic on my gloves had given way and a bee crawled inside. Feeling trapped, it stung me on the wrist. A friend in Wiltshire BKA gave me the tip of using old 'pop socks' with the feet cut off as bees don't like the feel of nylon. So far it has worked and the elastic of the 'sock' around my elbow prevents any more insurgents.



Buzz Words Did you know.....

- A new company has emerged called the Honey Doctor? It sells all sorts of bee products to ease aches and pains. For a free trial of "Nectarease Honey and Balm with added Bee Venom" go to www.thehoneydoctor.com or phone 01884 860625 postage is £2.95
- Rubbing honey on a bee sting stops the swelling and relieves the stinging sensation?

Advance WARNING on **Saturday 1st August** we will be visiting **Buzz Works** in Hitchin.

The project to create a bee centre to educate the public and promote the craft of beekeeping started in 2007. There is now a bee shed and public viewing gallery overlooking eight hives, also a log cabin which is to become the Discovery Centre. The bee garden features plants that will hopefully stimulate the public interest in planting for bees in their own gardens. Robin Dartington has kindly agreed to show us round at 1.00 p.m. We should leave Bletchley at midday (contact Libby Culshaw) or meet there, if you prefer. The postcode is SG5 1XT. Aim for the village of Ickleford, opposite the church take a right turn. After one field you will see house No 178, follow the track beside this house and it will lead you to the BuzzWorks' car park. There are picnic benches if you would like to take a picnic.

DON'T FORGET our **Bee Safari Saturday 11th July 10.30 a.m. at the Open University**



Bee thereor bee square!

If you would like to comment upon or contribute to our Newsletter, contact Libby Culshaw 01908 375968
laviniaculshaw@hotmail.com