

**North Bucks Beekeepers' Association**  
Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA  
**Newsletter: October 2009**

**September** Members were busy at various shows in the area.



Over the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> NBBKA had a presence at Rectory Cottages for the Heritage Open Days. This proved to be a great success in terms of publicity for beekeeping, our Association and honey sales. Many thanks to those who rallied at the last minute to help over the weekend.

The guardians of Rectory Cottages are planning to hold a Christmas Sale to raise funds for the upkeep of these thirteenth century cottages ([www.mkheritage.co.uk](http://www.mkheritage.co.uk)). You may wish to prepare festive bee products in readiness and I will let you all know in the next Newsletter if it is definitely going ahead.

The **Annual Honey Show** took place on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> at Wyevale Garden Centre in Wavendon.

Three Counties Radio gave us several good plugs on Friday afternoon.

The Wyevale staff always make us welcome and Nicola was there early with a band of helpers setting up the staging and displaying the exhibits. Martin Buckle was the honey judge and Gunter Weber was show steward. There were 51 entries for the show so Martin was able to award the Certificate of Merit.

After the show, Nicola delivered nine jars of honey to Willen Hospice.

**The Lady Chesham Cup** – highest overall points in show – Ken Gorman

**Stoke Road Apiary Shield** – second overall highest - Sue Lang

**Clara Furness Award** – highest points for wax & mead – Ken Gorman

**Albert Toms Shield** – highest points in honey classes – Ken Gorman

**BW Apiary Cup** – winner of Class 9 – Ken Gorman

**Arthur Foreman Cup** – Novice Classes – Ray Mitchener

**Certificate of merit, for the best exhibit in show** - Ken Gorman

Ken must be congratulated for the very high standard of his honey and bee related products. **Well done, Ken!**

A big thank you to Martin. One member said, "Martin was his usual steady dedicated self, meticulous in his attention to detail."

**October** Lots of activities this month.

**The AGM** is to be held on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>** at **Rectory Cottages** at 7.30 p.m.

After the business side of the meeting, Bucks County President, **Bob Hunter**, will give a talk on **Experiences in Beekeeping**. Bob really is an experienced bee keeper of many years. He is also a Honey Show judge and his talk will be most interesting and informative.

**Election of Officers** : -**Some of the following posts will need to be filled, please consider taking on one of the roles to enable our association to continue efficiently:**

**Treasurer**

**Secretary**

**Honey Show Secretary**

**Publicity & Events**

**Newsletter Editor**

**General Committee Members**

**Chairman**

**Membership Secretary**

**Education**

**Library**

**Apiary Managers**

When I took over as Newsletter Editor last October, I said I would do it for two years. I have one more year to do and will be standing down next year. I have been the Publicity and Events Officer for more than two years now, if anyone would like to take it over they are welcome to do so. If not I will continue for one more year but will also be standing down from that next year. Suggestions for next year's programme to Libby Culshaw.

**Bucks County Honey Show** this is being revived after a gap of seven years.  
**MID BUCKS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION HONEY SHOW 2009 Incorporating The BUCKS COUNTY HONEY SHOW**



To be held at the Bowls Club, Dobbins Lane, Wendover,  
Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009 at 7:30pm  
Honey Show Secretary – Ernestine Matthews 01296 662181

Judge: Vivienne Brown

Judging will start at 7:30pm. All exhibits must be in place by 7:15pm.

**TROPHIES to be competed for by all BUCKS COUNTY BEEKEEPERS members**

**Tweedie Silver Skep:** to the BCBKA branch whose members gather most points in the show.

**Peggy Cup:** for the BCBKA member gaining the most points overall.

**Margery Parker Trophy:** to the BCBKA member with the highest award in the cake class.

**John Raven Award:** to the BCBKA member with the best honey exhibit (Classes 1 to 5).

**SCHEDULE of CLASSES**

1. Two 1lb jars of light honey
2. Two 1lb jars of medium honey
3. Two 1lb jars of dark honey
4. Two 1lb jars of naturally crystallized (not stirred) honey
5. Two 1lb jars of soft-set honey
6. One jar of liquid honey judged solely on taste and aroma (to be shown in a transparent 1lb jar)
7. One frame of capped honey for extraction (may be granulated).
8. One carton of (unwired) cut comb to be judged by appearance only
9. One bottle sweet mead
10. One bottle dry mead
11. One cake of beeswax 200-255g (7oz – 9oz)
12. Two matching beeswax candles in holders. To be lit by the judge.
13. Beginners class: One 1lb jar of honey
14. One honey cake – see recipe below.

**Classes 15 – 17 to be judged in the hall by everybody.**

The entry in each class with the highest number of votes will receive a £5 prize.

15. Home produced food item containing the exhibitor's own honey.
16. A bee related photograph.
17. Craft item made by the exhibitor with a clear bee related subject.  
Could include needlework, woodwork, wax-craft (but *not* candles), and pottery.

**Recipe for honey cake – class 14.**

**Ingredients:** 5 oz butter, 6 oz exhibitors own honey, 4 oz soft brown sugar, 2 eggs, 7 oz self raising flour, 1 tablespoon water or milk.

**Method:** Place butter, sugar, honey and water into a saucepan and heat until the fat has melted, stirring all the time. Remove pan from heat and allow contents to cool to blood temperature. Gradually beat in the eggs. Add sieved flour and mix until smooth. Pour mixture into a greased and lined 7" (180mm) cake tin and bake for about 1 hour until risen and firm to the touch. As a guide, oven temp. 350F/Mark 4/180C

**NOTES TO EXHIBITORS**

- 1) ~~Open only to members of Bucks County Beekeepers' Association.~~
- 2) ~~There is no entry fee and no prize money.~~
- 3) All exhibits to classes 1-15 shall include / be the produce of the entrant's own hives.
- 4) British Beekeepers' Association Rules apply.
- 5) On arrival, exhibitors must register their entries with the steward and affix to each entry the labels supplied by the steward, as follows:
  - a. **Jars** (honey / mead) – about half an inch (12mm) from the bottom
  - b. **Frames** – top of frame with duplicate on showcase, top right hand corner
  - c. **Cut comb** – on the lid with duplicate on one side of the container.
  - d. **Cake** – one on bag with duplicate on plate
  - e. **Beeswax** – one on wax with duplicate on display plate/dish
- 6) Extracted honey must be exhibited in clear matching 1lb BS pattern squat jars.
- 7) Honey colour in classes 1, 2 and 3 will be assessed by means of BS filters (available for use on day of Show).
- 8) Class 7: Frames must be submitted in showcase.
- 9) Class 8: Cut comb in standard 8oz rectangular containers.
- 10) Class 13: Honey cake. Show plate and bags will be supplied by the show secretary.

**The National Honey Show** Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>-Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> at St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey. This will be the 78<sup>th</sup> National. The workshop and lecture programme continues to expand, there will be 21 workshops and 10 lectures.

### **Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer**

Life for our bees is slowing down. Expect activity on warm, sunny days, with bees laden with pollen.

Continue to be vigilant about robbing, limiting entrances if necessary to one bee space, and stopping the slightest gap in the hive bodies with tape or whatever is to hand.

Aim to finish feeding by 30<sup>th</sup> September. Continue only if urgent, changing the mix to one pint of water to 2 ½ lbs of sugar. Some add Thymol to the feed after 1<sup>st</sup> October. Late feeding is not ideal, and can cause dysentery but better than starved bees. Once it gets colder bees will be reluctant to climb up into a tray type feeder to collect syrup so it may be better to use a contact feeder.

In some years **woodpeckers** pose no problem to our bees; in others a great nuisance. Where there is a will woodpeckers attack single wall hives (WBC type too) with gusto, and evidence of their work will be holes 2-3" in diameter and shattered combs. The best course of action is to cover your floors, bodies and roofs in ¾ inch wire mesh of a suitable width. If you decide to use wire mesh you may find this suggestion helpful: take a length of mesh and form a "tea cosy" of it. You can then simply put the tea cosy over your hive, secure it and the job is done. When no longer required you detach the "cosy" for future use. I only cover hives which are likely to be attacked.

The classic way of keeping **rats and mice** out is to remove entrance blocks and fix mouse guards with drawing pins in their places. Your bees should be secure, although the small apertures of the guards tend to dislodge incoming pollen. I have not used mouse guards for over 15 years. Instead I leave the entrance blocks in place in the narrow position from August until spring, making certain that the "headroom" of the entrance is "bee height" and no more. Mice will enter any space they can get their heads through. It is probably not sensible to try my suggestion unless your hives are on stands with entrances at least 9" off the ground because mice seem much more destructive at ground level. If you do follow my suggestion, you must "top ventilate" your hives. You can do this with any suitable material. I use two frame bottom bars, wider sides of the bars placed downwards between brood and coverboard so you get a narrow gap. Ventilation of hives is incredibly important to stop damp problems building up. I have always top ventilated when my bees were over solid wooden floors whatever the entrances, The bee experts now recommend open wire floors which I am now using (see below). I intend to try and do without top ventilation when open floors are in use – top ventilating if I see a need as winter goes on.

Please do not remove entrance blocks / top ventilate until the threat of robbing is over, usually by late November, otherwise your bees could be robbed out.

October is a time for reflection, giving ourselves a nice pat on the back for things which have gone right and being honest with ourselves for everything else. One of the troubles about beekeeping is that every hive is capable of producing that potential "Titanic" moment when you look inside and find preparations for swarming under way and you have not put your swarm control measures in place. Strange to mention swarming in October, but planning for the new season must start as bees will simply catch out the unprepared. We must all re-think our beekeeping as the seasons pass and be ready to adopt new ideas and these are the ones I have adopted this year.

**Wire floors:** Following the experts' varroa advice, all my hives have wire floors. They are tough for transporting.

There are no undertrays, although if I want to I can use a solid floor placed in reverse underneath to catch the mites. As an aside, my bees in one hive thought it would be fun to build comb underneath the wire, only for a swarm to adopt the resulting combs as a ready-made home. The purpose, of course, is to get varroa mites to fall out below the wire. Incidentally, when applying Apiguard you must seal off the mesh e.g. with plywood, to prevent vapour loss.

**Dummy Boards:** You can make them yourselves. Recycled floor boards are ideal for this purpose or you can try marine plywood cut to the profile of your frames or buy from appliance manufacturers. You will then find you can remove/insert combs with little disturbance.

**Bait hives:** Following Ken Gorman's advice to NBBKA I obtained four swarms from bait hives strategically placed in my apiaries; one swarm produced 90 lbs of honey.

**Oil seed rape :**How often have you felt despair as you sink your uncapping knife into your hard-gained crop of combs only to find a solid mess of crystallised honey? I now simply shake combs as they fill up in supers and if the honey stays put then they are taken to the honey extraction room, left there to warm up (I use a simple blower heater for say 6 hours) and are then extracted. To clear the combs of bees simply shake them into the hive using an empty super as a funnel, replacing combs removed with fresh ones. This year, I had no need to use any Porter Bee Escape before 1<sup>st</sup> July. However, please note that if there is any risk of robbing, and after 1<sup>st</sup> July when things are getting scarce, you must use Porter Escapes (or the equivalent).

It is time for me to remind you that if you have three beekeepers in a room you will get five different

views. I fear I may be providing a sixth! In the coming months, I will say what has worked for me. Others will have different views. If you have, please tell me so that we can all enjoy the debate! I would add that if you are too old to learn about beekeeping then you should give up!

**Sugar** – information from Sue Lang: Booker's Cash & Carry Stores will allow BBKA members to register with them on production of their membership card. Their price for granulated sugar is 60p per kilo. There are stores in Bedford, Luton and Northampton. For more information go [to www.booker.co.uk](http://www.booker.co.uk)

**Overwintering tip-** in his February talk, Ian Homer suggested that if you are going to overwinter on a brood and a half, put the super **under** the brood box. The bees will use this as stores and you increase the area for air circulation and will not end up with mouldy combs. By moving the brood nest up, mice will not feel the heat and won't be so attracted to get in. After winter the super combs will be cleaned. Put the super on top of a queen excluder over the brood box, it will smell right and the bees will go up.

**Queenie's Kitchen** It's been an amazing year for fruit. **Honeyed Plum Crumble**, the plums can be substituted for whatever fruit you have a glut of.

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/gas mark 6.

Place 2lb halved and stoned plums in a saucepan with 150 ml water, 60 ml honey, juice and grated zest of an orange. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, rub 4 oz butter into 8oz plain flour with your fingertips until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in 2oz sugar and 2oz chopped toasted hazelnuts or porridge oats, mix well.

Put the plums in an ovenproof dish and sprinkle the crumble mixture over the top. Bake for 35-40 minutes until golden. Serve with cream or hot custard.

**Buzz Words** Did you know.....

- There is a European Honey Pot Collectors' Society? Go to [www.geocities.com/tehcsuk](http://www.geocities.com/tehcsuk)
- Jordans Cereals are giving away thousands of bee-friendly plants "to turn Britain into a nation of 'Buzz Stops'?" Check their special packs or go to [www.jordanscereals.co.uk](http://www.jordanscereals.co.uk)
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**Forage** I've been over the fields and down by the river, there doesn't seem to be much about yet the pollen is still coming in. The ivy is just opening up. My Michaelmas daisies haven't yet opened. Flowers seem to be suffering from the drought. There is still some balsam and sedum. The helianthus 'lemon queen' is still going strong and in Tuesday's sun, was coated with bees, bumbles and hoverflies. The hardy fuschia is also attracting bees.



**Next Month's Gathering** is at Rectory Cottages as usual, Church Green Road, Bletchley MK3 6BJ, at 7.30 p.m.

**Beulah Cullen** will be giving a talk entitled **How Doth the Little Busy Bee?** This is an anatomical talk with *electron microscope images*. This is going to be fantastic and will show us parts of apis mellifera we didn't know existed. **Prepare to be astonished!**



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