

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter January 2014

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Calendar at-a-glance

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| 22 nd January | Winter lecture – Margaret Holland, Bletchley |
| 8 th March | Bucks spring convention, Wendover (note date change) |
| 4 th -6 th April | BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams College |
| 11 th October | Bucks county autumn gathering, Aylesbury |

Forthcoming events

Margaret Holland lecture. Join us at 19:30 on Wednesday 22nd January at Rectory Cottage, Bletchley, for a talk from seasonal bee inspector Margaret Holland.

Bucks spring seminar. Wendover Memorial Hall, 8th March. Note: This is a date-change from 1st March because of the Bee Trade holding a spring sale at Stoneleigh on 1st March. As usual, a marvellous programme is being planned – the seminar provides a national class of speakers expert on their subjects on your doorstep, and if you are really interested in your bees it is unmissable if you possibly can.

BBKA Spring Convention, Friday 4th April – Sunday 6th April at Harper Adams College near Wellington, Shropshire. NB: It is understood that although the Bee Trade will be at Stoneleigh on 1st March, there will be limited trade representation at Harper Adams, too.

Bucks Authum Gathering. Venue will be the Church of the Good Shepherd, Aylesbury, on 11th October. Hosted by Mid-Bucks. This will be another first-class day out and is again unmissable!

Obituary – Pat Kettley

12/08/1944 – 09/12/2013. John and Pat Kettley moved with their family and their bees from Devon to Wicken about twenty years ago. Pat joined the North Bucks Beekeepers' Association and set up her apiary at Haversham. John, being a quiet, shy man, stayed in the background making brood boxes, supers, floors, roofs and many bits of kit that help to make beekeeping easier. This equipment is still in use today.



Not long after joining NBBKA, Pat agreed to sit on the committee. At this time the Association was in a pretty bad way – low on funds and the Beginners' Course was being run by a first year beekeeper. Pat took over as secretary and as there was no money to pay for speakers, she gave talks on honey cookery and other aspects of beekeeping, which proved very popular. I attended Pat's cookery courses. She was ably assisted by Mike Bensley and the two of them formed a sort of double act. These sessions were enjoyable, happy and memorable occasions. They stood us in good stead for the cookery classes at the Honey Show. Pat also took on education and helped many beginner beekeepers.

When Mr W. W. Jones gave up the Thorne's Agency, Pat kindly took it over so that local beekeepers could continue to have a supply of discounted equipment at close hand. At this time Pat was diagnosed with breast cancer and John, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Undaunted, Pat continued to fulfil her roles in NBBKA. She nursed John at home until, sadly, he died in September 2001.

Pat was still the glue that held the association together until her son was tragically killed in a car accident in France. Pat finally decided to give up beekeeping. She was badly missed by her friends in NBBKA and members continued to keep in touch.

As you can tell, Pat was a courageous and caring lady, who in spite of tremendous personal loss, made time for others. She was a wonderful beekeeper and she will be sadly missed by all her friends.

Recipe - Boiled Honey Fruit Cake

Pat Kettle produced a “booklet” to accompany her Honey Cookery sessions. I share a few words of her wisdom and a recipe which she and Mike demonstrated in a room in Bradwell Abbey! It is well worth making.

It is possible to replace all or part of the sugar in your own recipes.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT HONEY CONTAINS 80% SUGAR AND 20% WATER, BUT THAT HONEY IS SWEETER THAN SUGAR

For baking, use 25% more honey than sugar by weight and reduce the added liquid accordingly. At first it is easier to replace half the sugar until you get the hang of it.

Oven temperature should be kept fairly low to prevent rapid browning and reduce the loss of honey flavour.

- 4 oz margarine
- 1 cup boiling water
- 0.5 cup caster sugar
- 0.5 cup honey
- 1 cup mixed fruit
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups self raising flour
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1 pinch salt

Add fruit, sugar, margarine, honey and bicarbonate of soda to boiling water. Bring to the boil – allow to cool (preferably overnight). Add well beaten egg, flour, spice, and salt. Mix well. Bake for 1 hr 30 min at 150 degrees/Gas Mark 2.

Thanks to Libby Culshaw for writing and compiling the content about Pat.

Regular Columns

January Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

Happy New Year! I hope this newsletter finds you and your bees fit and well.

I thought I would run through some of the things I have done, or am about to do, for my bees:

Oxalic acid treatment

This was undertaken and completed in the first ten days of December. It is still not too late to give this treatment. I have 1 litre of the stuff left over – some may be needed for the Cosgrove Apiary – any balance is yours FREE if you apply first for it now.

“Anti-isolation starvation” measure

Isolation Starvation has been previously described. NB: Bees in cluster isolated from food die. All my colonies were given slabs of fondant at the beginning of December, placed in direct contact above colonies' clusters, the fondant being placed directly on to brood frames. Ekes were used to enclose fondant with clearer boards put over ekes before hives were closed. In early January and February levels of fondant will be checked, and more added as needed. NB: Once fondant feeding is started IT MUST BE MAINTAINED.

Entrance blocks

Entrance blocks are in position using 1” settings, i.e. the narrower of the settings. Each hive is positioned above three milk crates and 2” x 2” wooden runners,, the hives sitting on the runners. All hives have OPEN wire mesh floors, so there is no need for top or other ventilation. Use matchsticks between coverboard and top super/eke for ventilation if you are on solid floors, but don't use mouseguards AND entrance blocks. Access/egress will be severely restricted, and if dead bees pile up inside entrance, colony may be ENTOMBED. Check entrances are clear with a stick, especially in snowy conditions.

Roofs dry

Replace/renew as necessary. NB: Cold AND damp bees may mean dead bees/musty or mouldy boxes/frames. Always take a spare roof to your apiary on visits.

Woodpecker

The warm Christmas period has probably delayed this annual menace. Install defences, e.g. netting, if you have not already done so, and regularly check.

State of bees

If your bees went into winter in sound order, they still should be, as weather has been mild.

State of food supplies

Bees have probably been getting through stores more quickly than usual because of mild weather. Be watchful. Another reason to keep fondant feeding.

Thinking about the season

Currently I have 21 colonies; reasonable to expect three or four to die out before spring is fully under way. That means I have to have, say, 17/18 additional hives/nuc boxes ready for immediate use during the swarming season, so I need to get busy. NB: The new season could be as little as 75 days away; first swarm in say 90 days. IT WILL SOON BE SPRING!

Nuc/queen raising

I will be very happy to run a raising programme, the idea being that (as in 2013) those needing bees would go off with nucs led by 2014 queens in readiness for 2015 season. Nucs would probably be again on 16 x 10 frames, unless I can think of a clever way of reducing to BS deep frames without checking nucs' progress. Ideas please. Payment to be by donation, gift aided to Bees Abroad.

At your home base

Take any opportunity to press on with repairs/renewals, or spring will rush you off your feet.

I am here to help on 01525 240 235.

Best regards,
Andrew Beer