

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter November 2015

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Calendar at-a-glance

10 th November	Lecture: "DIY Beekeeping"
17 th November	Committee Meeting (n.b. may be held on 10 th instead)
24 th November	Lecture: "Flower Power"
5 th December	Christmas dinner
2 nd February	Lecture: "Raising Nucs"
19 th February	Bucks County Spring Convention
8 th March	Lecture: "Unusual Ways of Keeping Bees"

Membership matters

Enormous thanks for the large turnout at the **AGM** when we successfully appointed a new committee and our gratitude to its members for assuming their roles. The AGM was followed by a highly constructive, good humoured discussion led by Daniel Clarke about what you wanted out of the Association and what you might contribute to its workings. These were the key points:

- You wanted talks, particularly talks relevant to your own beekeeping
- You thought it a great idea to run another honey show with Buckingham and District BKA at Buckingham Nurseries.
- You liked the Noggins and Natter evenings, (on the 2nd Monday of the month) at Shoulder of Mutton, Calverton.
- You thought the Christmas Dinner was a good idea.
- You thought it important that we have a continuing education programme.
- You were not in favour of a Bucks County Honey Show (i.e., the various Bucks Associations together), whether the Bucks County Honey Show was held at the Bucks County Showground in August or at an Autumn gathering in October.
NB: The first Autumn Gathering for the benefit of Bucks County was run by North Bucks in 2012, one object being to have a single event at which to hold the Bucks County BKA AGM and Bucks County Honey Show.

- You were not in favour of an Autumn Gathering in any forum. In particular, you would not wish to attend an Autumn event arranged for the County whether or not the event was in, say, Milton Keynes or say, Amersham. And just as you were unlikely to attend, you would not expect to help to run any such event.

I cannot thank you enough for so clearly expressing your views. We live in changing times – if I may make one generalisation, I am deeply aware that you younger beekeepers' spare time is far less than that available in earlier years to crumbies like me, so finding time to do such things as playing cricket, other team games and even beekeeping is for you now more difficult to arrange or attend. I do hope in North Bucks we will always work towards one standard: Ensuring that our bees are kept only in the best order. With the help of Fiona and Andrew Eelbeck with their improvers groups and with Terry Lock taking the apiary sessions and Ken Gorman rejoining us we have made bucketfuls of progress and will continue to make bucketsful of progress in the future, you can be sure. The quality of beekeeping in North Bucks is becoming well-known and respected in other parts of the County – may our good beekeeping reputation spread and spread.....

Winter and Spring Talks 2015/2016

Let me amplify on the schedule above.

10th November, 7.30pm at Rectory Cottages – Ken Gorman – D.I.Y. Evening.

Ken has kept bees much longer than any other association member and is a commercial beekeeper. The cost of starting out in beekeeping is not insignificant and it is all too easy to buy in expensive equipment for little or no return. Ken has done beekeeping for a living and this talk could save you a fortune. Unmissable for beginners, we can all learn from Ken...

24th November, 7.30pm at Rectory Cottages – Brenda Harold – Flower Power.

We are beginning to understand the messages flowers send out when they want – or do not want – to be pollinated, and the part flowers play in the distribution of their seeds. Perhaps this is a subject which as beekeepers we take too much for granted – but the effect on our crop can be enormous. This should be a fascinating talk for all.

2nd February, 7.30pm (venue to be advised) – Celia Davis, BSc NDB – Nuc It (Celia's title!)

There cannot be one beekeeper in North Bucks who has not at some time in his or her beekeeping life gone out and bought some bees. I am not suggesting you should not do that sometimes but once you have a colony or two, the ability to increase is largely in your hands.

With a little application you can do it and there cannot be a better person than Celia to tell you how. Celia is a nationally-known speaker; the demands on her time are enormous and I felt I was being particularly cheeky asking her to come to us. Well, she is coming and we are finding a special venue for her talk – Stewkley Methodist Church Hall, High Street South, Stewkley, LU7 0HU. But make a note of the date now and COME! We shall be inviting the other Bucks and adjoining County associations, and Stewkley will be most

convenient for them to reach.

8th March 7.30pm at Rectory Cottages – Dr Fred Ayres – Unusual ways of keeping bees. Fred is chairman of Lancaster Beekeepers many of whom have questioned current beekeeping practices. Lancaster Beekeepers use no varroa controls, the crop is taken in April. His talk “Unusual ways of keeping bees” will, I am sure be mind-blowing to those of us who are set in their ways but no one can help bees well without an understanding of all techniques on offer and without challenge to our views.

I hope you will agree this is as a mouth-watering programme as we could possibly arrange and that all nights of the talks, 10th November, 24th November, 2nd February and 8th March are NOW in your diaries and you will be there!

And the **Christmas Dinner** – Saturday, 5th December, 7.30pm at Shoulder of Mutton, Calverton – Christmas Dinner £20.95 per person.

I do need to put in a final order by 15th November and whilst some of you are brilliant in letting us know your plans some are not particularly noted for speed....

According to my notes, the following are booked in:

Battrick (2), Clarke (2), Hinson (2), Beer (2), Flint (1), Jay (2), Lock (2), Gale (2), Knox (2). The limit is 40.

If you are coming and your name is not on the list, please let me know by 15th November with a suitable cheque payable to me, and if you are noted above but have not paid will you please do so. Thanks.

Subscriptions

These are Now Due. To pay, please go online and follow the procedure set up by Daniel Clarke. In brief: log in to our website, click the “renew membership” link at the bottom-left corner of the navigation menu, follow the prompts, then pay by bank transfer.

There are three points I would like to make:

- Of the total subscription only some (£4) of it is retained by NBBKA, the rest is passed on to the British Beekeeper’s Association.
- The reason why the NBBKA part of the subscription is so low is because committee members and others in general do not charge their sometimes considerable expenses in terms of fuel, postage, etc.
- Some members failed to pay their subscriptions until the season was well underway – and the demands on those involved with swarm collections, public bee queries and the like – sometimes up to 10 calls a day - enormous.

We do the BBKA returns in March so it means that in practice anyone who pays later has to be subject to a late return. This is simply unfair so the following arrangement will apply at least for 2016. **All subscriptions please must be paid before 31 January 2016.** Anyone who does not pay by that date will have no assurance of his subscription being included in the North Bucks BBKA return in which case his or her right to BBKA News and

membership of NBBKA will cease and any insurance cover provided by BBKA or BDI will lapse. Further, any subscription which is received after the association has submitted the BBKA will be cashed by NBBKA as part of its general funding and applied if the lapsed member desires in or towards his or her membership subscription for the NBBKA year 2016/2017. We reserve the right to amend or vary the above. Sorry to be so firm and pedantic but a lot of people have wasted much time on dealing with late subscriptions in 2015. Please remember that the BBKA too is under enormous pressure dealing with membership renewals right across the country and mistakes will occur and in 2015 did occur through no fault of NBBKA, resulting in several of our members being without BBKA News or insurances.

New Food Laws

As you would expect I gladly climb onto any hobby horse involving law so these new laws are no exception. But these new laws introduce some fairly serious stuff for keepers as I will try to demonstrate in my workshops for the fortunate (or unfortunate) (take your pick!) at 2015 National Honey but here are a few tasters.

- Labels must not mislead. The purpose of the label is to state what 'Jo Public' is getting and not a marketing tool for the beekeeper. Expressions like 'Pure Honey' 'Raw Honey' appear now to be out of order.
- If you have apiaries dotted around and you want to call your honey Buckinghamshire Honey, it must all come from Buckinghamshire because that is what the general public will understand even though under EU Law, honey comes from where hives where it is harvested whether the hives are in Bucks or elsewhere.
- In some very limited cases – I do not think it will affect us N Bucks beekeepers jarring honey through usual processes – there may be a need for honey jars sold to have affixed to them a nutritional statement. In any event, there are many exceptions to the rule – one being it does not apply to "small producers selling to local retailers in turn selling to the ultimate consumer". Needless, 'small producers' is not defined but sticking my neck out, anyone with up to say 5 hives should be a small producer.

I have produced an outline note not only about the latest food law but much much more and through Daniel, I will arrange for it to be readily available. But remember, I am no longer qualified to give legal advice, have no insurances and can only express views and that you should always rely on legal advice if you need it rather than me!

Seasonal Notes

I am going to keep them short having already rumbled on far too long.

At this time of the year (but the choice is yours) I like to put an eke directly over the brood chamber (queen excluded removed) and a cover board above the eke. This vastly simplifies later varroa treatments, fondant feeding and the passage of the cluster of bees over the tops of brood frames.

As soon as robbing season is over (I have not seen a wasp since about 20 October in these parts) it should be safe to remove entrance blocks and put mouseguards in place. Personally, I think mouseguards are a waste of time and if colonies are fitted with wire floors will have sufficient ventilation. My colonies happily live with entrance blocks in place, the blocks having 1" wide 3/8th" high entrances cut into them from 1 August to at least 15 April. Note, the provision of a wire floor should obviate any need for any top ventilation.

Do any "housework" around the hive; trim down grass, check for leaks, hive stability, etc. Remember whilst you are having your Christmas lunch, your bees will be going through the greatest battle of their short lives and by doing anything you can to keep a bee living until say 15th April rather than 1 March may make all the difference to a colony pulling successfully through the winter.

Get on with the winter jobs. Think what you did wrong in 2015. When a swarm got away on 18th April, don't blame the bees, it is probably because you failed to get yourself organized in time. I hate it when one of our members tells me at the end of the season he has had no honey - there is always going to be a rare season when this happens but I heard it many times this year and IT WAS NOT A BAD YEAR.

Despite all I have written, HAVE FUN!

Andrew.