

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter February 2016

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Calendar at-a-glance

20 th February	Bucks County Spring Convention
25 th February	Beginners' course starts
8 th March	Lecture: "Unusual Ways of Keeping Bees", Shoulder of Mutton pub

Editorial from chairman Andrew Beer

We urged you to come to **Celia Davis' talk "Nuc it"** and how mightily you, North Bucks, Mid Bucks and Beds BKA's responded. Well we had 80+ chairs and all were used. Celia's talk was brilliant as was to be expected and I am preparing a summary of her talk for you to retain and to put to good use.

Bucks Spring Convention, 20th February at Wendover Memorial Hall.

As I am repeatedly telling you, this is a national event with national speakers on your doorstep. I have never come away from any beekeeping event without learning something new and the convention is a great place for picking up some real gems.

There will be two talks by internationally known Margaret Thomas and her subjects will be "Pollen, the bees and the beekeeper" and "What motivates the bee to act like it does?". Then Marin Anastassov will be speaking about "How Bees Learn". There will be a second-hand sale of equipment and Northern Bee Books will have a stall.

Did you know that your beekeeping association, Chalfont Beekeeping Society, High Wycombe BKA and Mid-Bucks BKA between us operate Bucks County Beekeepers Association. The convention is not only a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow beekeepers in the county but to inspire you towards greater beekeeping goals. Maybe,

when you have attended a convention or two, you may decide to play a part on the county scene – you are all essentially welcome. That, of course, is the future, first things first: come to the Spring Convention on 20th February and find out what a great day out it is.

**BUCKS COUNTY
BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**
Registered Charity No. 297335

20th ANNUAL SPRING SEMINAR
Saturday 20th February 2016 - 10:00am to 4:00pm
Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Rd,
Wendover, HP22 6HF

SPEAKERS
Margaret Thomas – Pollen, the Bees and the Beekeeper
Marin Anastasov – How Bees Learn
Margaret Thomas – What Motivates the Bee to Act Like it Does?

VARIOUS STANDS
*Northern Bee Books, National Trust, Tree Bumblebee,
National Honey Show*

SECOND HAND BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT
Items accepted for sale 8.45-9.15 am on day, details
paul.hurley@hwbka.co.uk or 01628 524214

TICKETS
£12 per person in advance for Bucks members; £15 for non-members and on the day. Including Ploughman's lunch
All tickets must be pre booked by 13th February to secure a lunch
contact Fiona Matheson 01923 285637
education@buckscountybeekeepers.co.uk

Lecture – Dr Fred Ayres

Tuesday, 8th March 7.30pm – Dr Fred Ayres – **Unusual ways of keeping bees** at The Shoulder of Mutton, Calverton.

This talk will be challenging. Fred and his team at Lancaster BKA for several years have been defying beekeeping conventions by developing new ways of keeping bees. For example, apiaries are rarely, if ever, fed, varroa treatments are not applied and yet the loss of only 1 colony from varroa has occurred in years and perhaps most controversially, the surplus crop is removed in April. For this talk, we are trying an experiment – The Shoulder of Mutton will be set out in a lecture hall format and after the talks the pub will be providing nibbles and a light buffet which is essentially free but if you care to put a quid or two or three in the tin that will be very gratefully received.

Swarm at Little Brickhill

We received a call to tell us that a dangerous tree was being cut-down, but progress was at a standstill because, you've guessed, a colony of bees was in residence! Could the tree be cut down? I advised that would not be good for the bees in February. Solution?

The contractors will, and probably now have cut the tree down sufficiently so that it's no longer a danger to the public and to a point slightly above the bees' nest in a hollow in the tree. The remaining tree will then be left until spring when hopefully the bees can be safely removed. For those who like collecting bees in difficult locations here is your chance! Do contact me and the bees are yours!

Practical plans for 2016

Queen Rearing Courses

We hope it may be possible to run a course this year probably for 2 year + beekeepers. To help us assess demand, please let Fiona Eelbeck and me know.

Apiary Safari Visits

It would be wonderful if we can organize some Safari visits during the season. What is a Safari visit? We go to a member's apiary (yours), have a look through a member's bees (all under your supervision) and if you are very kind, stay for a cuppa and a slice of cake (but many will bring cakes so usually you will end up with more than you started with!) Beginners and more experienced beekeepers love these visits and however experienced you are, you will learn something from a visit. Would you like a visit to you and your bees? Do let me know.

Beginners' Course

The classroom sessions start on Thursday 25th February; each session is at 7:30pm at Hazeley School

- 25th February - Introduction to Beekeeping – Andrew and Fiona Eelbeck
- 3rd March – Hive making workshop session so come suitably attired! Helpful if you can bring hammer, pliers, set square, Stanley knife if you have them. NB: Members to help very welcome!
- 10th March – The Beekeeping year – Chris Jay
- 17th March – Swarm Control – Andrew Beer
- 24th March - No Meeting nb Easter Weekend.
- 31st March – Pests and Diseases – Fiona and Andrew Eelbeck
- 7th April – Taking the crop! – Sue Lang

Apiary Sessions: Provisionally, these are due to begin in last week of April. Normally, these take place on Saturday afternoons, starting at 2pm and last 1-2 hours. One or two members have volunteered to help at the teaching sessions - That is marvellous and they are very welcome. 2015 beginners are welcome to come to the classroom and Apiary sessions, though we may be limited for space at the classroom sessions. If you are a 2015 beginner and want to come to a classroom session, please give me a call.

Subscriptions

If you are not yet paid-up can I please urge you to become so, and **immediately**. Unless you do that I cannot guarantee that you will be included in the Association's return for 2016, which will mean that your membership will cease as will your entitlement to BBKA insurances, BBKA news and other BBKA benefits. It may be helpful if I explain that passing on the BBKA capitation-fee part of the North Bucks subscription is labour intensive and needs to be kept as straightforward as possible, if mistakes are not to creep in at either County or BBKA levels, as happened in 2015 involving a lot of extra work. Once the capitation fee payment for paid-up members has been made in late March to BBKA we will not process any subscriptions subsequently paid during the season. The reason for this is that during the season committee members' time is largely taken up dealing with swarms and the like, and of course their own bees. I hope you will agree this matter of payment of your subscription rests in your own hands. Please sort your subscriptions out NOW, and if you are in any doubt what to do please contact Nick Hinson - membership@nbbka.org

General & Advanced Husbandry Course

If anyone is thinking of taking the General or Advanced Husbandry assessments this year the forms have to be with BBKA by Feb 28th and the fees are £55 and £80 respectively.

I will be away the last week of Feb so my last posting day to BBKA is effectively Friday Feb 19th, so please can you get the forms to me before then, or advise your candidates to post them directly to Val Francis at BBKA.

The application form is available on our website in the [Members Area > Private Docs](#) section. My name and address goes in the bottom left hand box so please check that is filled in.

Best wishes,
Fiona Matheson (fiona.matheson.fm@googlemail.com)

Seasonal Notes: In the Apiary

In this unusual winter, the mild weather has continued almost unabated and colonies are widely reported to be very strong. This clearly means that breeding has continued unchecked which raises a difficult question about varroa treatments. Oxalic Acid, my normal treatment, will kill open brood – this is the reason why oxalic acid is normally applied in winter when brood is at a minimum – or in a swarm before serious breeding gets underway. This year, I shall be treating with Hive Clean in March before adding supers. Whether that is sufficient, only time will tell.

What else? On a mild day when the bees are flying, lift coverboards for a quick peep. What you want to see is a cluster of bees over a minimum of five brood frames, oblivious to the world. This means probably all is well but check bees are in contact with/have plenty of stores. If in doubt give a block of fondant wrapped in cling film with holes added for access by the bees and carefully place a couple of sticks over the cluster and the fondant block, holes downwards, over the sticks and with care you will not crush the bees. Check floors are clear of dead bees, debris, etc. Easiest done with two people, ease brood chamber off floor. If wire floors are used, nothing more than a scrape with hive tool probably is necessary. If solid floors used, it will be best to replace with clean sterilized ones. Just coming back to stores. We are now reaching the time when stocks will be getting seriously depleted and if in doubt feed fondant – it is too early, for syrup. You need to check for stores now every two weeks, and to be sure that bees are in contact with them. Having a eke above brood frames makes feeding a doddle. Of course, it must be removed before spring gets underway to avoid bees building wild comb within it.

Back at home – this is really the last month for getting equipment ready for the season. And don't forget there will be bargains galore for all at Tradex at Stoneleigh Park on Saturday 5th March. Spring is not far away....

- Andrew Beer