

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: December 2008

Traditionally we do not create a Newsletter in December and August. However, with the advent of digital photography, I thought it might be nice for us to look back over the year and see what we've achieved and what fun we've had.

JANUARY

Martin Buckle kicked off the year with a **talk on Beeswax**. He showed us several inexpensive day to day household items which can be used for cleaning wax. With his usual aplomb, Martin demonstrated various ways of making wax candles. I had never seen wax being poured down a suspended wick before but we can always rely on Martin to be totally innovative. His wax models are exquisite. Look out for Martin in February 2009 when he leads the **microscopy afternoon**.

The presenter of "The Afternoon Show" contacted Libby Culshaw to see if it would be feasible to adopt a hive and give a live monthly broadcast from it. So **The Three Counties Radio Beehive** was born and a monthly slot has taken listeners through the beekeeping year.



FEBRUARY



Early in the month we promoted the Association and beekeeping by setting out our stall at the **Community Desk** in the Shopping Centre. It's so satisfying to explain what happens inside a hive, how bees collect nectar and so on to people who are curious but they didn't like to ask!

Pam Hunter travelled from West Sussex to give an illustrated talk on **Bee Plants, Navigation and Foraging**.

MARCH

The **Bucks County Seminar** took place on the first of March. The lectures, as usual, were excellent. There was a second hand sales stand, a plant stall and honey tasting tests. This is a whole day event and a ploughman's lunch is served around midday. The **lecturers for March 2009** have been secured it is really worth attending. This year **Ken Gorman** was presented with the BBKA award for **Fifty Years of Beekeeping** very well deserved too. Ken is a meticulous and knowledgeable beekeeper. He gives his time most generously to our Association and all members individually.



Twenty one people embarked upon the **Beginners' Course** coordinated by **Chris Jay**. There had been substantial expenditure on bee suits, frames, foundation, wire excluders and hive parts so that the beginners were able to see hives maintained and managed in top condition. The heartening thing is we have very young people joining in too.

Our Regional Bee Inspector, **Ian Homer**, gave a *brilliant* illustrated talk entitled **No Bees, No Honey – No Honey, No Money**. Of all the bee talks and lectures I have heard over the years, this has got to be one of the very best. Ian has a wealth of experience and his delivery cannot be bettered. Make a note of his forthcoming talk **Eureka Moments in Beekeeping** next March.

APRIL

The **Beginners' theory classes** continued. Members with different areas of expertise gave talks.

Robin Dartington brought one of his **Long Deep Dartington Hives** and explained the thinking and development behind his invention. This was a really thought provoking session and Robin fielded questions until very late. Robin is the instigator of "**Buzz Works**" – a bee garden/training/visitor centre in Hitchin. Make a note in your diary for a visit on 1st August 2009

Outdoor apiary meetings for beginners started at the end of the month when the weather allowed.

Sue Bird and Mike Bensley made a presentation at the **Chemistry in Action** schools' event.

MAY

Roy Cropley came from Hertfordshire and gave us a totally different style of talk **Beekeeping in Foreign Lands**.

His 'alternative humour' and breadth of experiences about commercial beekeeping all over the world showed us beekeeping tricks we'd never have imagined! They will be put to good use.

Mike Bensley and **Sue Bird** represented NBBKA at the **Stoke Goldington Steam Rally**.

A BBC1 team came to Bletchley to do a garden makeover and create a garden for insects, birds and bats for their series **Wild About Your Garden**. This took place in the Gibbons Family garden. Libby Culshaw was bee mentor and advised Chris Beardshall on placing the WBC kindly donated by Thornes. Her now 'famous' bees can be seen very briefly in the opening credits and the programme featuring Andrew and his family is to be broadcast on the 17th December at 8.30 p.m. The Gibbons family have joined our Association and will be attending the Beginners' Course next year. Barry Taylor kindly set them up with a nice swarm and they want to learn the ins and outs of beekeeping.

JUNE

Our Seasonal Bee Inspector **Margaret Holland** joined us for the **Bee Safari**. We started with Ken's WBC hives at the Museum of Rural Life, where amongst other things, we could admire Ken's impressive homemade swarm catcher. We proceeded on to the Association Apiary, then to Gunter's apiary at the Community Orchard and ended up at Libby's hives followed by tea and a report from Margaret on the general health of the bees of Milton Keynes.

JULY

Beginners' Apiary Meetings continued through July. Can you spare a couple of hours on an *occasional* Saturday afternoon in 2009 to help at a session? We all "beekeep" differently so it is a good way to show a variety of techniques, beliefs and skills to those who will follow after us! Contact Bob Sibley or any committee member if you would be prepared to help in any way at all.



AUGUST

Beginners' Apiary Meetings continued when weather permitted.



Bucks County Show - **Sue Bird** manned the stand.

Following remarks made by Libby Culshaw to a Marks and Spencer Official at their Shareholders' Meeting, a meeting was organised for Libby and BBKA President Tim Lovett at M&S Headquarters. Discussions have started about what M&S can do to help British Beekeepers and their beleaguered bees.

SEPTEMBER



The Annual Honey Show - once again Wyevale Garden Centre made us very welcome. **Nicola Smith** organised the show and **Martin Buckle** was the judge. Willen Hospice wrote to thank us for our kind donation of honey following the show.

The Guardians of Rectory Cottages invited us to be a presence at the **Heritage Weekend**. We accepted and were overwhelmed by the interest and concern about bee health expressed by the visitors, to say nothing of the numbers! I don't think anyone sat down all weekend. Almost all of the Association Apiary Honey was

sold so there is more money to plough back into buying equipment, hiring the hall and paying for speakers.

Our **AGM** was brought forward a month so that we could accommodate the County AGM. After the business side of things **Sue Bird** gave a talk about how she has developed from seeing the advertisement for beginners' beekeeping classes to attending them, to having her first hives. She is now an accomplished beekeeper and her brilliantly pristine, well presented products are testament to that and of course, to her teachers!

OCTOBER

Sad news for us all, long time member and Chairman of our Association, Ian Beaty died. We have wonderful memories of this amazing man.

NBBKA were the hosts for the **County AGM**. After the business side of the meeting **Peter Tomkins** told us about his working life as a professional beekeeper and of the history of **Rothamstead Research Centre**. A scrumptious buffet, provided by several of our members, followed and at the same time it was lovely to socialise with our friends from the south of the county. There was a real **HUM** about the place. There was also a plant stall.

NOVEMBER

November 5th was the day chosen by BBKA to hand in the 140,000 signature petition to 10 Downing Street. Several hundred of us marched up Whitehall in our beesuits, holding our smokers aloft & puffing! We then *swarmed* into the Houses of Parliament to lobby our MPs. Libby Culshaw spoke to Dr Phyllis Starkey's secretary. Andrew Beer and Libby spoke to Nadine Dress a Bedfordshire MP and Lord Taylor, who is the opposition spokesman for the environment.

Honey Cookery by **Barbara Dalby** was an excellent finale to our year. Barbara used a microwave to cook several dishes containing honey. They ranged from honey lemon curd, to chocolate cake, barbecued sausages, flapjacks and even suet pudding with fruit. We then ate the evidence!

It was all delicious. A revelation if you are not a regular microwave user.

A team of helpers led by **Bob Sibley** prepared a new site and moved the Association Apiary.



QUEENIE'S KITCHEN

It is the time of year when people suffer from colds and sore throats so give **Garlic Honey** a try.

- Peel 25 cloves of garlic, put them in a large screw top jar
- Pour in a pound of runny honey
- There should be a 1 inch gap between the honey and the top of the jar
- Cover the jar tightly and leave in a warm place, turning the jar upside down occasionally
- The juices released by the garlic will begin to turn the honey syrupy and the goodness and the flavour of the garlic will pass into the honey

This mixture can be used as a marinade and for basting meat. Use it to baste the turkey – you might not get many kisses under the mistletoe but the turkey will taste *great*.. I chop the garlic up and use it in recipes where garlic is required. It seems to have a stronger flavour and by now the garlic has a rubbery texture – no problem as you are chopping it up anyway. This is also a wonderful honey mix to use in salad dressings.

I have read that this is also a traditional remedy for acne and cold sores. Eat it AND rub it on to be really sure!

Buzz Words

Did you know...

- there are beehives on the roof of the Fortnum and Mason store in Piccadilly? If you look at their web site you can see these statuesque hives and watch the bees coming and going as there are two web cams recording them. www.fortnumandmason.com The bees were flying on Friday when I looked.
- that burning a beeswax candle is supposed to ease the effects of migraine?

NEXT MONTH JANUARY 2009

Claire Waring gets the NEW YEAR off to a brilliant start with her amazing photography and artefacts as she regales us with her **Honey Hunting in Nepal** adventures.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

One of our members has encountered problems in finding Rectory Cottages and then finding their way out of Bletchley. MK can be tricky, all the roundabouts can look the same. If you are having difficulty getting to meetings/lectures/demos etc., please give me a call as I may be able to organise a lift with someone who passes by your door. It is partly money from your subscriptions which pays for the speakers and hall hire, so it would be a shame if are not getting your money's worth!



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

What is happening on our Bee Safari? How many people can you identify? Answers on postcards, please..!



If you would like to comment on or contribute to our Newsletter please contact Libby Culshaw
12 Larch Grove, Bletchley MK2 2LG 01908 375968 laviniaculshaw@hotmail.com