

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association
Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA
Newsletter: October 2010

This is going to be a bumper edition mainly because there is a lot of information to disseminate but as it's my last Newsletter I think I'd like to go out with a **BANG!**

September

Over the weekend of 12th – 13th NBBKA had a presence at Rectory Cottages for the Heritage Open Days. We also had a two hour session at The City Discovery Centre. Both venues proved to be successful in terms of publicity for beekeeping and our Association. Many thanks to all who assisted over the weekend.



Earlier in the year, City Discovery Centre staff encouraged NBBKA to apply for an award. We won £750.00 from the Grassroots Grants Fund which is administered by the Milton Keynes Community Foundation. With this grant we have been able to purchase bee suits; three flat pack hives, which will be used at the Beginners' Classes in the hive building sessions and two fantastic books shown here. The first contains superb photographs and an easy to follow text with riveting information about bee behaviour. The second is by Adrian and Claire Waring. Andrew Beer often refers to it in his monthly apiary notes.

Our apiaries are ready for winter in a very strong condition. The bees are flying in, very purposefully, with great loads of pollen. The smell of ivy is quite intoxicating. In the summer they were given a clean bill of health from Margaret Holland our Seasonal Bee Inspector. They have been fed and treated with Apiguard. There will be a final feeding check over the next few days then we can say we have done all we can to help them face the winter.

The **Annual Honey Show** took place on Sunday 26th at Wyevale Garden Centre in Wavendon. The manager made us welcome and Nicola was there early with helpers setting up staging and displaying exhibits. Martin Buckle was the honey judge and Sue Bird was show steward. There were 21 more entries than last year and lots of new members exhibiting and joining in. We are doing something right! Martin was able to award the Certificate of Merit.

Lady Chesham Challenge Cup – Highest overall points total in show **Ed Reney**

Stoke Road Apiary Shield – Second highest overall points total in show **Sue Bird**

Clara Furness Award - Highest points total for wax and mead, classes 12 to 15 and 19 to 21 **Libby Culshaw**

Albert Toms Shield - highest points total in the open honey classes excluding any class for which a specific award is made. This year this shield is for classes 1 to 8 **Sue Bird**

BW Apiary Cup - winner of class 9, six jars as for sale. **Ed Reney**

Mini cup - winner of class 16, fruit cake **Libby Culshaw**

Arthur Foreman Cup - highest total points in novice classes **Cynthia Smith**

BBKA Blue Ribbon / certificate of merit - best exhibit in the show **Ed Reney** (for his entry in Class 9)

Honey

- 1 Two matching 1lb jars of light honey
1st Sue Bird
2nd Andrew Beer
3rd Ed Reney
- 2 Two matching 1lb jars of medium honey
1st Sue Bird
2nd Ed Reney
- 3 Two matching 1lb jars of dark honey
1st Sue Bird
2nd Sue Lang

- 4 Two matching 1lb jars of crystallised honey of any type (incorporates naturally crystallised, soft set and creamed honey)
1st Ed Reney
2nd Nicola Smith
3rd Libby Culshaw
- 5 Two matching jars of honey not as in classes 1 to 4. (eg. chunk, ling, jar variations, etc.)
1st Sue Bird
- 6 One piece cut comb, gross weight 200-255g (7-9oz), in container with transparent lid
no entries
- 7 One standard comb of honey showing the work of the bees. In bee-proof show case (note: combs may have crystallised honey in them without penalty)
1st Sue Lang
- 8 Gift, One 1lb jar of honey of any type. (Donated after the show to Willen Hospice)
1st Ed Reney
2nd Cynthia Smith
3rd Sue Bird
VHC Nicola Smith
HC Andrew Beer
C Libby Culshaw
- 9 Six matching 1lb jars of honey presented labelled as for legal sale under current rules
1st Ed Reney
2nd Sue Bird
3rd Chris Becque
- 10 One section of honey, round or square- no entries
- 11 One 1lb jar of honey, the jar painted black
1st Ed Reney
2nd Carole Hammelev
3rd Chris Jay
VHC Cynthia Smith
HC Libby Culshaw

Wax

- 12 One cake of beeswax, 200g to 255g (7 to 9 oz approx)
2nd Sue Lang
- 13 NOT USED THIS YEAR
- 14 Six matching cakes of beeswax. (total weight within 160 to 180g)
2nd Libby Culshaw
- 15 Three matching beeswax candles made by any method, displayed erect, ready to burn
No award made

Cake

- 16 One honey fruit cake, as per recipe provided
1st Libby Culshaw
2nd Carole Hammelev
3rd Cynthia Smith
VHC Sue Lang
- 17 One plain honey cake, as per recipe provided
1st Chris Jay
2nd Elizabeth Beer
3rd Cynthia Smith

Fudge

- 18 Honey fudge as per recipe provided, eight square pieces on a plate
1st Chris Jay
2nd Libby Culshaw
3rd Cynthia Smith

Mead

- 19 One bottle dry mead

- 1st Nicola Smith
- 20 One bottle sweet mead
2nd Libby Culshaw
- 21 One bottle Honey Wine, label stating main ingredients apart from honey – no entries

Crafts

22 One item made or produced by the exhibitor, relevant to beekeeping either by its uses or subject, or by being made using beehive produce. Could include, for example, cookery or preserves, skeps, inventions, paintings, cosmetics, needlework, woodwork, photography, or even a sales display. Excludes items covered by classes 1-21 and 22a.

1st Libby Culshaw

2nd Sue Lang

22a A skep, made by the exhibitor

1st Bob Sibley

2nd Chris Jay

3rd Libby Culshaw

NOVICE CLASSES

22 Two 1lb jars of clear honey, of any colour but matching

1st Cynthia Smith

2nd Chris Becque

3rd Ray Mitchener

VHC Carole Hammelev

23 Two 1lb jars of crystallised honey, of any type but matching

No entries

24 One cake of beeswax, between 110g and 170g (4 to 6 oz.)

1st Cynthia Smith

3rd Daniel Clarke

A big thank you to Martin and indeed everyone who rallied round to help make it such a successful event. Nicola delivered 14 jars of honey and a honey fruit cake to Willen Hospice after the show.



October

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual General Meeting of the North Bucks Beekeepers Association** will take place at 7.30pm on Wednesday 20th at:- Rectory Cottages, Church Green Road, Bletchley, MK3 6BJ

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting,
- 3 Matters arising from the minutes
- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 Treasurer's Report
- 6 Education and Apiary report
- 7 Election of Officers
- 8 Events Programme for 2010-11
- 9 Any Other Business

Liz Parsons will post the minutes of last year's AGM on our website.

If any members wish to nominate anyone as an officer of the association or has any matter they wish to raise under any other business please get in touch with Liz Parsons, at nbbka@tiscali.co.uk or there will be forms available at the meeting

We are obviously looking for someone to take over the role of publicity and events coordination and would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining the committee.

The **AGM** will be followed by a talk and demonstration by **Johannes Paul of Omlet** about "**The Beehaus**"

The National Honey Show

Thursday 28th - Saturday 30th at St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2QS

This will be the 79th National Honey Show. The U.K.'s 'gold standard' honey show is just weeks away. There are 250 classes and beekeepers come from all over the world to enter so it is truly an international show.

Apart from the world class honey show there will be a full programme of workshops and lectures throughout the event and a wide selection of trade stands with lots of equipment and books to buy. Speakers include Kim Flottum, Editor of Bee Culture, from U.S.A. and Dr Mark Goodwin whose research team carries out most of the honey bee research in New Zealand. Workshops (which should be booked in advance by 23rd October) cover a wide range of subjects including wax modelling, skep making and tips on passing the BBKA Basic Exam.

You can see the line-up and download the show schedule on the NHS website www.honeyshow.co.uk Advance tickets are available now.

Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

Picking up from September's notes the following should now have been completed:

- Winter feeding
- Varroa treatment
- Putting your bees to bed for winter

But what if you are not so advanced? If you are like me, there will always be some (including the above) jobs still to be done in October and I will now try and cover them.

- Feeding: As September ends, feeding may still not be complete. Nothing too disastrous is likely to happen if you are, say up to 7 days late with feed but if you stretch beyond that, the following suggestion may be useful as very much second best.+ Strengthen syrup to 1 pint to 2 ½ lbs sugar mix (or metric equivalent, you work it out).
- Keep that eke! - something that you might like to try which is not normally in the books. Having removed queen excluder, insert eke (an empty box, a deep or shallow box will do fine) immediately over brood chamber. N.B. If you think about it you should have placed an empty eke over brood chamber as part of your Apiguard varroa treatment; if so, just leave the empty box in place! This helps ventilation and enables you without any disturbances at all to peek at your bees to see all is well once winter sets in with your bees left in unaware bliss! There is always the risk if there is a late flow that your bees will build wild comb in the eke space – that I think is a risk worth taking, as there are, in my view, so many advantages such a system offers (to be covered in later notes).
- Is your hive fit for winter? Our bees have worked their socks off for us during the summer so the very least we can do for them is to provide them with a decent home now and the job is EASY! Here is a check/action list:

+ Hive on a decent stand? Leaving hives standing on bricks (or the like) is a recipe for disaster in my view as your bees will live in damp conditions, the worst of all winter evils. Get your hives a minimum of one foot off the ground in any way you wish. I use three milk crates per hive adding 2"x3" of wood battens to spread the weight. N.B. It is very helpful if the top edge of the brood chamber is just above the level of your knees when you are standing up – it makes detailed summer brood inspection a treat rather than a pain in the back! N.B. Some years ago, I was told milk crates would collapse under the weight of heavy hives. All I can say these hives must have been mightily heavy because I am still waiting for a collapse despite some of my colonies going up to 7 supers this year! Crates have this advantage – you just place them where you wish in accordance with apiary needs.

+ Hives protected against mice and rats? One of the advantages of getting your hive in the air (see above) is that any mouse or rat considering an entry has an "Eiger Wall" to climb to the entrance. However don't rely on just that. Getting your entrance right in the coming months, indeed at all times, is vital if it is live bees you want so the topic is worthy of further examination. This is how I proceed over the year.

= Late April (or when bees fly strongly) to July (or the end of flow) – strong colonies have 4"x3/8" entrances, weak colonies have 1"x3/8" entrances, wee nucs one bee space.

= Rest of any year – strong and weak colonies both in the 1"x3/8", wee nucs one bee space.

NOTE The 4" and 1" entrances are achieved using usual entrance blocks with appropriate settings. I never remove the blocks.

= You can if you wish, at the end of bee/wasp robbing season say, 30 November remove block and replace with mouse guards – awkward fiddly things to affix, I don't bother (and don't get stung when trying to affix them without gloves!)

* What about the rest of the hive? Some points to note and act upon.

= Keep bee and wasp tight N.B. This applies throughout the year of course!

= Hives riddled with one or becoming riddled with woodpecker holes:

Woodpeckers are unpredictable nuisances; for years they leave you alone and then wham! The safest course, if woodpecker damage is likely, is to wrap every hive in small-bore wire netting but if that is not practicable, protect the most likely targets and accept that from time to time you will be caught out. In any event it is now time to seal up, if not done earlier, any woodpecker holes from earlier attacks. Use anything which comes to hand (I usually use odd bits of fine wire mesh and try to remember to put my bees into a sound hive next season). The small-bore wire netting is best to put on in Late November when the bees have settled down. Form the netting into a tea-cosy and then it is just a matter of putting the cosy in place over the hive and tying it down, a 5 minute job. When not needed, the cosy can be stored for later re-use.

= Fresh air for your bees. Damp conditions result in mould and slime on frames and boxes alike and are wholly unpleasant but thoroughly avoidable. For those on solid floors or with floors with undertrays, place thin, say 1/4" strips of wood under top cover boards. (N.B. Frame bottom bars will do the job). Don't add the strips until the bees are hibernating and wasps (and bees!) are no longer a menace, or you will have robbers! If you have open mesh floors without undertrays you need do nothing! There will be ventilation enough.

= What about the roof? A leaking roof in winter is asking for trouble. So put it right now. You can obtain replacement tin covers from the manufacturers or suitable tin to knock into shape for peanuts from a scrap yard. I find that when a roof is, say, about 10 years old, damp may enter it laterally through joints and other parts. Once this happens to a roof, it is regularly painted – the left over paint from your house outside decoration is as good as any and will be saved from waste.

= The Brick: putting bricks on roofs is described by one of the bee books as a practice to be avoided. So what! Winds, indeed gales blow – use whatever you wish to secure roofs and keep bees dry. Bees don't worry about fashion and I have used bricks for years.

- General action October to April. Brother Adam used to finish his winter preparation in September and then left his bees to their own devices on Dartmoor until Spring. It will be best to leave our bees as undisturbed as possible until Spring but there will be things to do both in the apiary and back at base so please keep reading these notes in November and beyond !

Queenie's Kitchen

It has been a bumper year for apples so how about trying Golden Apple and Honey Squares?

- Preheat the oven to 200 C/400 F/Gas 6.
- Grease and line the base and short sides of an 11 x 7 inch shallow oblong tin with a strip of non-stick baking paper.
- Sift 6 oz self raising flour, 1 tsp baking powder and a pinch of salt into a bowl. Stir in 3 oz caster sugar finely grated zest of half a lemon.
- Whisk one medium egg with 6 tbsp milk and 2 tbsp vegetable oil and pour into the bowl. Beat all together until smooth, pour into the lined tin.
- Peel, core and thinly slice 1lb desert apples. Arrange the slices in the batter and brush with 1 oz melted butter.
- Mix 2 oz vanilla caster sugar with the zest of the remaining half lemon and sprinkle over the apples.
- Bake for 30 – 35 minutes or until the base has risen and the topping is golden. Cool in the tray for 4 minutes before brushing with 2 tbsp clear, warmed honey and cutting into 12 squares.

Serve hot with custard or ice cream or cold with whipped cream. It can be frozen uncut and wrapped in foil for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature, brush with honey and cut into squares.

Buzz Words Did you know.....

- Honey contains all the vitamins nutritionists consider necessary for health? It contains B vitamins which enhance immune and nervous system function. A new study shows that B vitamins may slow the rate of brain shrinkage which can lead to dementia.
- There is a tool for working out your bees' forage area? It uses a gadget for Google Maps to draw a circle of a given radius about a point. To use it, you need to have a user account with Google Maps. Sign into your account, and open this URL: <http://tinyurl.com/22mvj73>. Add the gadget to your account, open a map and search for the approximate location of your hive. Switch to satellite mode. In the bottom left corner of your screen you should now have "Radius" listed as an installed gadget. Ensure this is ticked, which will change the left-hand panel to show you the gadget's options. Set a radius of, say, 1 mile, and then click one on the map on the exact location of your hive. A blue circle will be drawn showing you a circle centred on your hive.

If you need more information regarding the Google Maps, contact our Web Master, Daniel Clarke at website@nbbka.org

Forage The ivy is providing plenty of pollen and nectar. Helianthus, balsam and hardy fuschia are still being worked. Sedum is just opening and this will shortly be followed by Michaelmas Daisy. To help your bees late in the year consider planting Mahonia Charity. The little buds are just forming and by the end of the month there will be flowers which will last beyond Christmas. (pictured left)

Other plants for later include: Leonaurus Cardiaca (Motherwort) apparently a widely acclaimed bee plant producing amber honey with a strong mint flavour. It flowers from July – October. Monarda Didyma or Bee Bergamot produces abundant nectar and flowers from June – October. Russian Sage provides nectar and pollen, it flowers from August – October.

The photo on the right is of Anise Hyssop. All hyssops provide pollen and nectar from July through to the end of September.



Some of the plants mentioned here can be ordered from www.beehappyplants.co.uk. With profit from the sale of these organically grown plants a 'bee sanctuary' is being created on the Devon/Somerset border. This company is selling young Wild Alpine Manuka shrubs. (*Leptospermum scoparium*)

November's Meeting is at Rectory Cottages as usual, Church Green Road, Bletchley MK3 6BJ, at 7.30 p.m.

Ged Marshall will be giving us a talk entitled **A Day in the Life of a Bee Farmer**.

Many years ago Ged was a member of NBBKA. He became a commercial bee farmer and currently works approximately 400 colonies. Ged follows the nectar sources around the country and produces in the region of 10 tons of honey per annum. Ged rears queens for his own use and for sale. Ged is a great supporter of NBBKA members to the extent that he often helps us out when we run low on jars and other equipment!

Don't miss Ged's talk on **17th November**



Bee thereor bee square!

And Finally...from Libby Culshaw

For the past three years I have been the person who has organised the programme of speakers, bee safaris, demonstrations, talks for other associations and public displays. These events have been publicised on the local radio stations and in the local newspapers. It is time for new blood, so please consider taking this job on or at least making suggestions to the committee regarding speakers, demonstrators and so on.

Although I will no longer be writing the Newsletter, I remain in the Association as a Country Member, i.e. a member with no bees. I will continue to run the library and store the equipment for loan at my house.

Our Association has 60 members, as I write, and we already have a long list of people who hope to join the Beginners' Course in 2011. We have a thriving and forward looking Association, so do please consider helping out and taking part. This is how one learns so much about bees and beekeeping.

It remains for me to thank **Andrew Beer** for volunteering to take on the Newsletter. Daniel Clarke has agreed to assist with photos and layout. Andrew is quite new to the Milton Keynes/Buckingham area in terms of beekeeping and has asked that you all keep him updated with information so that it can be included in the Newsletter. Do please send any articles for inclusion to Andrew. Your contributions will be gratefully accepted.



If you would like to contribute to or comment upon our Newsletter please contact Editor, Andrew Beer
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