

# North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

## Newsletter – April 2011

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### Calendar at-a-glance

Date	Event
28 <sup>th</sup> April	Lecture: Preparing Honey for Show
22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Village Green Fair, Aylesbury
7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> May	Stoke Goldington Steam Rally
4 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup> June	Lillingstone Lovell Open Gardens Weekend
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Social evening at the Betsey Wynne, Swanbourne
1 <sup>st</sup> September	Bucks County Show.
24 <sup>th</sup> September	Bucks County Honey Show
25 <sup>th</sup> September	NBBKA Honey Show
5 <sup>th</sup> October	NBBKA Annual General Meeting
16 <sup>th</sup> November	Lecture: Disease and Pest Update from Nigel Semmence
17 <sup>th</sup> January 2012	Lecture: Speaker and topic to be advised

...and some Committee Meeting details:

The Committee will meet in 2011 on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 8<sup>th</sup> November and, in 2012, the first will be on 10<sup>th</sup> January. All members are welcome at these meetings which are invariably enjoyable and productive but please don't all turn up at the same time as the meeting room is pokey.

## **Articles**

### ***Very sincere apologies***

I believe some (far too many) did not receive their January or February newsletters. My 19th century mind told me that if you pressed a button under the guise of "Bucks Bee Group" it would electronically flash to its intended recipients. Clearly it did not and I can only offer my sincerest apologies. Mea Culpa! To help things along in future the newsletter will be prepared by me and Christine Goodley here in Stewkley; it will then flash electronically to Daniel Clarke who will add the bells and whistles and then organise despatch. I try to get the newsletter out by 27th of the previous month so do please chase me if ever there is a delay. Please, however, allow me a little latitude at the height of the season.

### ***Bees and their health***

Successful beekeeping like all other activities involved with the land, is dependent on all of us looking after our bees in a way which causes no damage to others, whether fellow beekeepers, our customers, or, indeed, the public at large. One still finds cases of the "leave alone beekeeper" who leaves the bees to their own devices, not having a clue what is happening in the hive. In 2011 this approach is simply not on, and if I may stick my neck out, if you are one of these beekeepers then I suggest it is time for you to hand your bees to someone else. My impression is that we have been relatively fortunate in North Bucks as regards diseases but one false move and the game could be up for many of us. But following the rules is not at all easy. To take just one example, what is the agreed best plan for dealing with varroa? The list of products now for dealing with this scourge is ever lengthening, but who is to say which is the best? Or for that matter worst? I really hope that the National Bee Unit (or another authority) will address the problem, perhaps on 1st January in each year, giving an updated plan of attack. For all us keen beekeepers who want to do their best for their bees, nothing less will do. On this note, can I ask you to spend a moment reading the following note written to the Association by our seasonal Bee Inspector Julian Parker:

### ***Julian Parker: Bee Unit Start of Season Round-up***

*Seasonal Bee Inspector Julian Parker writes:*

I am looking forward to the new season and will be back in post as Seasonal Bee Inspector for the Bee Unit from the beginning of April. My contact numbers this year are as follows: My Bee Unit Mobile: 07775 119469 and my Bee Unit Landline: 01494 955271 - please note that this is a new landline number following my recent house move. If I am out or it's out of hours then this number has an answering machine.

Despite the government austerity cuts, for this year at least, all current Bee Inspectors are being invited back for the new season, however vacant posts unfilled last year remain frozen and won't be recruited to this year. This affects some regions more than others, however in this part of the Southern Region the position

is largely unchanged. You will notice however that Bee Unit publications, such as disease brochures may not be available at all this year in printed form. They are however all available as pdf downloads from Beebase ([www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)).

The disease brochures continue to be updated and I would like to particularly draw your attention to the newly revised Managing Varroa brochure, released Feb '11 - so hot off the press. Also the Small Hive Beetle (SHB) brochure has had some minor updates. Associated with this are the Bee Unit's contingency plans should our fears be realised and SHB get into the country. These contingency plans are now available on Beebase for download together with an excellent factsheet called "Small Hive Beetle - What you need to know".

The third issue of The Food and Environment Research Agency's partner and customer newsletter "Solutions" is available for download and this issue contains an article about the varroa gene knock-down research being carried out by the National Bee Unit working in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen .

Easy links to all these documents may be found on the Bee Unit's "News" page here: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/News/news.cfm#103>

Inspections this year will be a mix of two programmes. Firstly of course, a programme of inspections targeted by risk and prioritised by proximity to disease found last year (and this year as and when disease is found). Mixed into this during the first few months of the season will be the final stage of the Random Apiary Survey Inspections, where apiaries selected randomly by computer will be inspected and sampled, to provide a picture and pattern of viruses and other pathogens across the country. Some of you will have already been sampled during 2009 or 2010. The results of these samples are gradually coming through and should be available on your Beebase records towards the end of this season. Information gathered about the pattern of pathogens in bee colonies will help provide a picture of overall bee health across England and Wales.

Let's hope for an uneventful year but as events in Hawaii showed us last year, Small Hive Beetle could be upon us almost overnight and it only takes one bee or plant import carrying the beetle for it to get in and spread, so please be extra vigilant and think really hard about whether you need to import or use imported bees or queens. Finally, I would encourage you to update your Beebase record (either online or by calling the Bee Unit office) to include your email address. The additional of your email address will allow the Bee Unit to send out to you an automated disease alert within 24 hours of notifiable disease being found in proximity to your apiary. In this way, you will know when it is wise to keep an extra careful check on your own colonies for any signs of disease. Also throughout the year, the Bee Unit will send out good practice information sheets via email to beekeepers that elect to receive this information.

I wish you an enjoyable season of beekeeping.

Julian Parker  
Seasonal Bee Inspector  
National Bee Unit  
Southern Region

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Julian does a marvelous job for bees and beekeepers; please contact him if you have any worries or concerns, he is there to help. Incidentally, a visit from a Bee Inspector need not be daunting – Julian is a beekeeper himself and gladly gives advice on all subjects.

### ***Beekeeping in New Zealand***

Daniel Clarke has just returned from New Zealand and has sent this informative report on the NZ bee scene.

On a recent month-long holiday to New Zealand I was amazed at the differences between British and Kiwi beekeeping, at least the outward appearances. Although I was not able to visit a beekeeper to enjoy an inspection (I dashed about rather a lot), there were lots of hives visible at the side of the road. I usually pulled over for a gawp.

The first difference is the location of hives. Unlike in the UK, where in my limited experience hives seem to be hidden, in New Zealand they're placed right next to the main road in full sight. Perhaps they do not have so many vandals, or perhaps they do but they're not interested in overturning hives.



The next difference is the size. They really rack them up. All hives were at least 5' high, comprised mostly of brood-sized boxes, not necessarily supers.

Another interesting point is colour. Here most of our National hives are natural wood, or at least the Association's are. In NZ they like to paint them, but even then all the hives in an apiary might all be the same shade of green. I am not sure what the point of this is, because it cannot be to help bees identify their own hive within a site.



I was surprised to see dual-entrance hives. Not only do they have an entrance slot at the bottom of the hive, but at the top too. I suppose this makes it easier for foraging bees to unload nearer the stores, without needing to climb up through 5' of comb.



*A top entrance*

One interesting thing I saw was a wild colony living underground. We read and are told that bees like to be up high, but I saw a colony living in some cavity underground at the edge of a carpark, accessing it through a broken steel pipe set in the ground.



Bees entering their pipe



*The pipe in context*

### **More from Libby**

The National Trust are running a BEE PART OF IT campaign, launched in May. They now have bee colonies at 40 NT properties.

The National Pollen & Aerobiology Research Unit at Worcester University has adopted the campaign. They are taking samples of pollen & honey to determine if there is any link between the plants from which the bees collect pollen & the health of the hive at the end of the season.

If you would like to follow the findings visit:

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/beepartofit](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/beepartofit)

LIBBY

### **Beginners' Classes**

These are now in full flow. Sue Bird is doing a quite tremendous job as class instructor. Sue convened her class of 30 in the Haseley School workshops for a hive assembly session on 15<sup>th</sup> March with some of us more experienced (I hear the brick bats coming) lags and the enormous thanks to everyone who turned up Sue and Bob Sibley especially for a highly successful and deafening evening of hammers and enthusiasts' bee chatter.

*Here are some photos of the recent practical session (thanks Richard Carder):*



***Bees and their Health (again)***

The County Association has set up a website to record annual winter mortality rates over the period 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> March. The information needed is:

- No. of colonies on 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- No. of colonies on 31<sup>st</sup> March.

That's it. Can you send me your data by 30<sup>th</sup> April – I will then send "in bulk" to County. Your personal details will not be released.

### ***All-party Parliamentary Group on Science & Technology in Agriculture.***



ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON  
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURE

Those attending Bucks County Seminar on 5<sup>th</sup> March were invited to attend the following meeting: "Bee Health and Pesticides"

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011 4.30 – 6 pm Committee Room to Palace of Westminster.

Contact Daniel Pearsall, 01487 831425

The County seminar was an outstanding event at which many of the issues relating to bees and their survival were addressed. Sadly, only 3 people from North Bucks attended, no doubt due to a large extent by the delayed newsletter, for which I can only once again apologise.

### ***Honey Labels/Weight Declaration***

In my March Law notes, I stated that honey could only be sold in set prescribed weights. From April 2009, the restrictions on weights were removed. You can still sell your honey in "old" quantities if you wish. I am grateful to Daniel Clarke for drawing this to my attention.



### ***Access to Previous Newsletters***

Daniel Clarke is arranging for the newsletter to be put on the website immediately on publication, and to be accessible to members only. All newsletters will be on the website at [www.nbbka.org](http://www.nbbka.org), under the 'newsletters' link on the left hand side. The first few shown will be from recent months and access to these is only for NBBKA members. To see them, simply click the 'login' link, supply your BBKA membership number as your username and your surname as your password. You will then be able to open the protected files.

The newsletters link, the login link and the protected and public files:

**NORTH BUCKS BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

## North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

### NBBKA newsletters

Members of NBBKA are invited to **login** to access the most recent newsletters. You don't need to register, your membership details are sufficient. The general public are invited to access our archived newsletters, which are made available approximately three months after members see them. Why not [join today?](#)

Newsletters	Size	Type
<a href="#">2011-03 - Newsletter March 2011</a>	294 KB	
<a href="#">2011-02 - February Newsletter</a>	58 KB	
<a href="#">2011-01 - Newsletter January 2011</a>	341 KB	
<a href="#">2010-11 - Newsletter Nov &amp; Dec 2010</a>	240 KB	
<a href="#">2010-10 - October 2010 Newsletter</a>	277 KB	
<a href="#">2010-09 - September 2010 Newsletter</a>	2.5 MB	

- NBBKA
  - About Us
  - Education
  - Bees
  - Swarms of bees
  - Honey show
  - Newsletters**

Log in with your BBKA membership number and surname from your BBKA card:

**NORTH BUCKS BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

## North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

### Login

Login using your British Beekeepers' Association membership number and your surname. Naturally only North Bucks BKA members are enrolled on this site. These data are found on your BBKA membership card:

THE BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: **SAMPLE**

BBKA membership number (e.g. 12.34.567):

Surname (e.g. Smith):

Once you are logged in you will be able to open the protected files:



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'nbbka.org/newsletters/'. The page header features the NBBKA logo and the text 'North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association' and 'NBBKA newsletters'. A green notification bubble states 'You are logged in as Daniel Clarke'. Below this is a table of newsletters:

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## Safari Visits

We are not arranging Safari visits this year (meaning you cruise around looking at bees) These have not been well supported in the past. We are aware however that many members would welcome the chance to see how others keep bees on a so to speak "one to one" basis and the following members have indicated that, subject to considerations such as safety and availability they are willing for us to accompany them on visits to their apiaries.

Andrew Beer 01525 240235; Gunter Weber 01908 582757; Mike Bensley 01908 230261.

If anyone else is willing to be a "Bee Buddy" will they please let me know, 01525 240235.

## Bee Suits.



In future the Association will carry bee suits only for invited visitors plus a few in children's sizes which means that whilst stocks last we will perhaps have a few for sale. If you are interested please get onto our chairman Bob Sibley on 01908 647 597.

## Bees for Sale

Andrew and Fiona Eelbeck expect to have some colonies and hives for sale from April. Please contact Andrew at [andrew@eelbeck.fsnt.co.uk](mailto:andrew@eelbeck.fsnt.co.uk) or telephone 01908 551886.

Over-wintered colonies are available on National frames £140.00. 5-frame hives will also be available later in the year, £120.00. Contact Sue Bird email [suebird@aol.com](mailto:suebird@aol.com)

or 01908 501101

Can I remind you again that Ken Gorman will have stocks for sale. Contact Ken on 01908 560610.

It is my hope that I can again this year raise surplus stocks to pass on. Please note I use commercial frames and if available supply would be late August/September. Have a word with me, Andrew Beer on 01525 240235.

## Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

- You will almost certainly find that some of March's steps, set out in the last newsletter, especially in a cold Spring, have still to be taken. Take them as soon as the weather allows.
- Keep on checking that there is enough food and that the queen has enough room to lay. If you have to remove a frame or two of brood to make more space, put in a spare brood chamber above the queen excluder and any supers. Nurses will arrive to tend. Wait if the weather is cold, to avoid chilled brood.
- Keep supering as needed.
- Get those bait hives in position. Ged Marshall puts two old empty brood combs in a brood box on a floor with wide entrance, roof above (replacement metal roofs without the wooden frames will do fine) at head height say 30ft from hive on suitable support; otherwise on highest hive. Remember even if your bees don't swarm, you may gain a swarm from elsewhere! Any swarm from an unknown force should be checked for disease.
- From April 1<sup>st</sup> (no joke) start seven-day inspections.
- Swarm Prevention (which means taking steps to discourage swarming) and Swarm Control (which means controlling bees intent on swarming). Please read, re-read and read again relevant sections in "Get Started in Beekeeping" by Adrian and Clare Waring. Previous edition of this book is entitled "Teach Yourself Beekeeping" by the same authors. Clare is a member and strong supporter of our Association. The book is this Association's unofficial "bee bible".
- In relation to swarm prevention, I will make two very simple points:
  1. If you see an egg in a queen cell in a thin layer of jelly, then unless some event stops the bees in their tracks e.g. snow a swarm will emerge in about 6 to 8 days later. Tell yourself that the bees are on "amber", ready to swarm unless you intervene (again, see the "bible"). If you have only a few hives, and you want to "wait and see", to mark with drawing pins the relevant combs containing queen cells and go back 3 days later to decide on your action plan.
  2. Even the most experienced beekeeper can feel apprehensive having opened up a monster colony with bees spilling out all over the place and required to find the queen prior to operating a swarm control plan. Read the section in either of the books entitled "Can't find the queen?" You may find it easier to



implement the procedure suggested immediately (i.e. you don't even look for the queen on that visit) and come back later to complete your swarm control plan in accordance with the "bible". By then, the flying bees will have left the brood chamber you have moved, and the queen should be far easier to find.

Good luck for the season ahead and as they say, may your supers be full.

### **Early Swarm Warning**

Visits to my apiaries yesterday (March 24<sup>th</sup>) revealed two queen cells. It is time to start 7-day inspections!

## **Future Events**

Here are the details of the events mentioned briefly above.

### ***Lecture: Preparing Honey for Show***

Bedfordshire BBKA Martin Buckle. Martin is a font of knowledge, not to be missed. 28th April 2011, 7.30 p.m. at Houghton Conquest Village Hall.

### ***Village Green Fair***

Market Square, Aylesbury, 22nd May 2011, 11.00 am – 4.00 pm. Details from Andrew Beer, 01525 240235.

Stoke Goldington Steam Rally

Come and help on our stand and sell your honey. Further details from Mike Bensley 01908 230261. 7th-8th May.

### ***Lillingstone Lovell Open Gardens Weekend***

Another chance to sell your honey and talk knowledgeably to the general public about bees. Further details from Nicola Smith, tel. 01280 860102. 4th- 5th June

### ***Social evening at the Betsey Wynne***

A Summer Noggin and Natter and a tad of food at the Betsey Wynne, Swanbourne – an opportunity to meet fellow members (and especially, please, beginners) and their spouses and enjoy! 2nd July, 7.00 p.m.

Entry, to cover only food, £10.00. Details from Andrew Beer, tel. 01525 240235.

### ***Bucks County Show***

The Association is again invited to take a stand in the Waitrose Tent alongside major

international food producers and service suppliers. Waitrose invitation to the Association is very much a feather in our cap and follows our highly successful involvement in 2010. A chance to "sell" the Association and have a bit of fun, also to sell produce. Details from Andrew Beer, tel. 01525 240235. 1st September

### ***Bucks County Honey Show***

NOTE this is Bucks County, not NBBKA. Details to follow. Memorial Hall, Wendover. 24th September.

### ***NBBKA Honey Show***

Make a note now. Full details later. 25th September.

### ***NBBKA Annual General Meeting***

After the meeting, Roger Patterson, a leading campaigner for better bees, will be our speaker. Rectory Cottages, Bletchley, at 7.30 p.m., 5th October.

### ***Lecture: Disease and Pest Update from Nigel Semmence***

Our area National Bee Unit Inspector. What treatments you should apply. as I mention below. is mind boggling but Nigel will give a clear guidance for 2012 and beyond. This will be a very important event for all. Rectory Cottages, Bletchley, 16th November, 7.30 p.m.

### ***Lecture: Speaker and topic to be advised***

Rectory Cottages, Bletchley, 17th January 2012, 7.30 p.m. NB suggestions for speakers and subjects always welcome.

### **Next Month**

The closing date for contributions is 15<sup>th</sup> April.