

## North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

# Newsletter February 2015

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### Calendar at-a-glance

9 <sup>th</sup> February	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
28 <sup>th</sup> February	Beds BKA AGM, Flitwick village hall
28 <sup>th</sup> February	Bucks Country seminar, Wendover Memorial Hall
10 <sup>th</sup> March	NBBKA committee meeting, Rectory Cottage (7pm, please advise if coming)
24 <sup>th</sup> March	Simon Crosan talk on "Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal"
28 <sup>th</sup> March	BCBKA practical training session, Wendover
30 <sup>th</sup> March	Anaphylaxia course
13 <sup>th</sup> April	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
28 <sup>th</sup> April	Richard Smith talk on "Extracting the Crop"

### Anaphylaxia Course

(We have arranged a course for Monday 30 March starting at 5pm) and going on until 9pm) at the Methodist Chapel School Room, High Street South, Stewkley, LU7 0HU. The course will be run by Andrea Woolley, an expert in this field. Andrea's presentation will cover all the serious medical incidents which unfortunately can so easily arise during an apiary visit with hands-on advice on how to deal with them safely.

Some 75 Beds BKA members have attended these courses over the last year or so and the overall feedback I have received is that they are excellent. For myself I dread the thought of someone being taken seriously ill and being unable to deal with the incident through ignorance.

The cost of this four hour course is £38 which basically covers Andrea's fees, her travel expenses and room hire. Older clothes and trousers are recommended as there will be quite a lot of work to do on the floor. Teas and coffees will be available throughout the evening.

To ensure maximum benefit the course will be limited to 15. Provisional arrangements have been made for a further course at The Church of the Good Shepherd Aylesbury on

Saturday 20 June starting at 10am . However if anyone wants to arrange their own course, just ring me for Andrea's contact details.

If you want to come to the course in Stewkley on 30 March, please send a cheque for £38 payable to NBBKA to me, Andrew Beer, 1 King Street, Stewkley Leighton Buzzard , Beds LU70YA. If you want to attend the course on 20 June please email me as above and the arrangements can be made later.

## Beekeeping in Nepal

Simon Croson is coming to talk about 'Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal' on 24 March at 8pm (Doors open at 7.30pm for refreshments) at The Longueville Hall, Whaddon Road ,Newton Longville ,MK 170AT. Claire Waring of Beecraft tells me that the talk with its wonderful photography provides a unique insight into beekeeping in this wild mountainous land. So we have specially booked this large hall in the hope that as well as our NBBKA members, our many friends from elsewhere in Bucks and in Beds will join us. No need to book but please tell me if you are coming so there is enough coffee .Telephone 01525240235 is the number to ring.

## Pesticide protest

The following is a circular received from pressure group SumOfUs.

*Bees are dying by the million -- so what is Bayer, one of the world's biggest producers of bee-killing pesticides, doing about it?*

*It's paying scientists to do bogus research claiming that its pesticides aren't actually harming the bees at all.*

*These are the same dirty tricks that the oil industry uses to attack climate science and that the tobacco industry used to deny that cigarettes cause cancer.*

*But we've got a plan to make Bayer's lies backfire. We're launching an ad campaign calling out Bayer for its lies -- so that consumers know that buying Bayer products means funding the global bee die-off.*

*Bayer's spin machine is absolutely shameless. Not only is it paying phony experts to attack the science, it's also launching a slick PR campaign to distract the public.*

*For the last two years, it has hosted a "Bayer Bee Care Tour" and opened two "Bee Care Centers" in Germany and the U.S. to delegitimize the science showing that its chemicals are killing bees.*

*Bayer has even produced a children's book called "Toby and the Bees," which tells kids that Bayer's pesticides aren't the reason bees are dying.*

*But we can make all this backfire on Bayer by simply calling Bayer out and making sure consumers know what the company is up to. Every time the company organizes a phony "bee care" event or releases a bogus study, we'll use social media and hard-hitting ads to call Bayer out.*

*That way, all Bayer's PR money will accomplish is to draw attention to the fact that it is killing bees—putting pressure on the company to pull its bee-killing pesticides off the market.*

*Thanks for all you do,*

*Hanna and the team at SumOfUs*

NBBKA members can donate to this cause here: <https://action.sumofus.org/a/bees-bayer-fundraiser-2015/?akid=9263.7854614.NfXBhv&ask=1&rd=1&sub=fwd&t=2>

## Seasonal Notes

It is reasonable to think that we could be active with our bees from, or about, the first week in March. That was just the time activities started in 2014, but as always timings are weather-dependent. In 2013, in these parts, March was an incredibly difficult month with the temperature hardly rising above freezing, and even in late April many colonies were showing no growth – in fact I recall one particular colony, although strong and healthy, not having a single egg. Later it grew into a particularly fine foraging one.

Back to February. Whatever the weather does, no colony is going to start raising swarm queen cells so there is no pressure, for example, to open up hives and give more space. In fact, opening hives and moving about combs, and with it breaking up the cluster, is the last thing you want to do, unless there is a special urgency (more about that in a moment). You see, at this time of year if you disturb the cluster, the colony may not only lose heat but take fright and wreak their annoyance out on their queen, forming a ball of bees around her and crushing her to death. Almost any queen in February is vulnerable, because she will have laid few or no eggs for some time, to the bees' frustration. Incidentally, if you see a tight ball of bees, the queen will almost certainly be inside it, and you must break up the ball by dropping it in a bowl of warm water, recovering the queen and placing her back alone on the frame she was on originally, having first shaken off all other bees. You then put the frame with the queen in the middle of the occupied brood frames – not against a wall of the hive where, having no escape she could be chased, trapped and killed by other bees. They say a balled queen will never be any good afterwards. I simply don't know.

So what should you be doing to your bees in February? First, go to your bees on a warm flying day at mid-day. Colonies may be doing one of three things: -

a) Actively flying, taking in much pollen and generally operating with a sense of purpose. Do no more than check that the bees have both food and are in contact with food (easy to see, if you have an eke without frames below coverboard and can remove the coverboard without disturbing the bees). Make sure entrance is clear of rubble, dead bees etc., and clean floor if necessary. Heft hive, replenish fondant as necessary and leave until next inspection on a warm day in late February/early March.

b) A few bees flying without conviction. Gently remove coverboard and have a look-see. If there are just a few unclustered bees, assume colony is on last legs and destroy. It won't get through to spring. If no signs of disease, shake the bees off on to the ground and leave to their own devices, and get that hive back for thorough cleaning and sterilisation. In these situations I simply cut out/render down the wax (black combs are best burned) and make a clean, fresh disinfected start. NB The great thing about losing a few colonies in spring is that you have spare equipment for the summer!

On the other hand, you might have a tiny cluster of bees, perhaps no bigger than an orange, showing no sign of disease. If so, TLC may pull it through.

c) Bees dead. Take back to base, clean as above and start again! Investigate if foulbrood is seen or suspected, and take advice.

In all these situations, be alive to the fact that great activity at the hive entrance could be robbers working through a dead or dying hive. Furtive darting at hive entrance, or torn-down combs in the broodchamber, give their game away. If a strong sound hive is being attacked, move it to a temporary site elsewhere (at this time of the year do not worry about the "3-mile rule").

Greater investigations can wait happily until March, so finish getting your cleaning of equipment done now.

## Editorial

We have got some exciting THINGS COMING UP, and here are some of them. As you will see above, Simon Croson is coming to speak to us about Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal on 24th March, at 7.30 pm (venue TBA). Fiona Eelbeck has made this visit possible. Claire Waring of Beecraft tells me that some of Simon's photos are spectacular. This is an EVENT NOT TO BE MISSED. We are inviting the Chalfonts, High Wycombe, Mid-Bucks, Buckingham and Bedfordshire to join us, and we hope for a "sell-out".

Rather earlier: Saturday 28th February. Bucks County has contrived to have their Spring Convention on the same day as the Beds AGM, which time-wise is "set in stone" for the last Saturday in February, ie has been for years. The fact is that these are going to be two fantastic meetings (if you like national events on your doorstep), so please, please go to one of them. Personally, I shall attend Beds AGM in the morning and slip across to Bucks/Wendover in the afternoon.

We are planning to arrange "anaphylactic courses". Anaphylaxia is something we all ought to know more about, given that in some cases – fortunately few – it can be lethal. NB As Paul Walton sadly stated in his excellent talk last Tuesday, for which many thanks, Paul. A course will take about four hours and costs around 30GBP. If you would like to join a course, please let me know. For myself, I dread any possibility of a fellow beekeeper in my presence being taken ill and I unprepared and unable to help. Remember: anaphylaxia can kill in even ten minutes.

May I say once again that there will be a **Honey Show** this year. Date 27th September (venue TBA). In order that all our many entries may be up to scratch, Sue Lang our Honey Show Secretary and Judge, will be holding a teaching session at Rectory Cottages on 7th July.

Arrangements for the **Beginners' Course** are now set. We are using Hazeley Academy, Emperor Drive, Hazeley, Milton Keynes MK8 OPT, tel. 01908 555 620 for the technical sessions as follows (NB: All on Thursdays): -

- |                                                 |               |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| • Bee anatomy/life cycle (Fiona Eelbeck)        | 26th February |
| • Hive building (as many old hands as possible) | 5th March     |
| • Beekeeper's year (Chris Jay)                  | 12th March    |
| • Swarm prevention and control (Andrew Beer)    | 19th March    |
| • Pests and diseases (Fiona Eelbeck)            | 26th March    |
| • Hive products (Sue Lang)                      | 9th April     |

All sessions start at 7.30 pm and finish by 9.30. Coffee/biscuits will be provided, but please bring a mug (to save washing up at the school). Members are welcome at any session, particularly last year's beginners who might not have been able to attend all last year's sessions. Whether you are a beginner or established member, to the Carpentry sessions please bring a set of the tools you would use to put together, say, a cupboard (small hammer, pincers, small pliers, cordless drill bits, square and tape measure). As an association, we regard it as incredibly important not only to start you right in beekeeping, but to keep you on course thereafter. It is in the nature of beekeeping that we get setbacks, which is perhaps just as well, otherwise the whole country would want to keep bees, and would that not be awful?! Seriously, if you have a problem, you can be pretty certain that the problem has occurred before and believe me, no bee problem is incapable of being solved. Ring a member of the Committee – help is only a phone call away!

We are remarkably lucky in having some of the people who help us in this association, and here I would like to single out our webmaster Daniel Clarke. Daniel does an incredible job. I know it is an incredible job because I was born in 1939 and anything like a calculator or computer really does seem amazing to me. In my first office as a lawyer, double entry bookkeeping consisted of writing entries with an inky pen, then slapping shut the book to create a smudgy entry on the other side of the page. Do make use of Daniel, and these newsletters would be far more interesting if we had your news, thoughts, photos, whatever. Remember, the season is now just a month away.

### **Circulation of members' details**

Bucks County BKA has not issued a list of members since 2008. Clearly some members for personal reasons don't want their details published. My own view is that we and the various associations of Bucks are in beekeeping together: we are not rivals as, say, Chelsea and Manchester City clearly are. Indeed, to succeed we all need to be able to communicate, and release our details to each other on all sorts of "bee things" (swarms, equipment, apiary locations etc.) Some 35 or you, when you returned your subscription forms, consented to this happening, so the details of consenting members (name, telephone number, e-mail address and your village/town location (for me, Stewkley) will be passed to Bucks for them to publish, and you will have access to these details.

### **Subscriptions**

I was saddened to hear from our Treasurer, Rod Pakes, that of our 120 members, only some 60 have paid up. As an association affiliated to Bucks and Bucks to BBKA, getting the subscriptions in and the necessary funds paid to the two other organisations, is a formidable and time-consuming job, and carries penalties if we get it wrong. It is totally

unacceptable that both Rod's and fine new Membership Secretary, Tania Thorne's times are being spent both sorting out badly completed forms and dealing with those of us yet to pay. May I plead with those who have not paid, to do so, with completed renewal forms to Tania by 28th February, otherwise we will assume, with great reluctance, that you no longer want to be a member, either now or in the future. If this causes you any difficulty, please let me know. I am sorry to write in these terms, but anyone who is really worried about bees should be spending as much time as possible working for bees rather than chasing for subscriptions.

Regards,  
Andrew