

North Bucks Beekeepers' Association

Affiliated to BBKA and Buckinghamshire BKA

Newsletter: January 2009

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOUR BEES!

We start the New Year with a strong membership and a full programme of events and courses. If the weather behaves itself we could have a good year. **This year's queen marking colour is green.** I was reading somewhere that some beekeepers use the same colour coding on their frames, with the use of coloured drawing pins, so that they can keep a check on them and change them regularly.

Apiary Notes from Ken

So far the the winter has been the best for bees for many years. There have been long, cold, dry spells, some frosts and a few warm days before Christmas. The bees flew strongly during the warm spell and it gave the chance for the cluster in each hive to reposition itself onto fresh stores.

I have quietly removed roofs and sniffed at the feedholes. The odour from a colony can be detected. A sour smell could indicate dysentery and the smell of decay could mean a dead colony. Fortunately, the ones I checked all had a pleasant, sweetish odour. If in doubt about a colony's life, give one smart rap with the knuckles against the hive side whilst listening at the feedhole or entrance. A momentary buzz will indicate that all is well. If there is absolute silence wait until the next warmer spell & investigate further. If a colony has died out, close the entrance or better still remove the whole hive into the work shed for sorting out. **Never leave a dead colony accessible to other bees.** That is a sure way to spread disease.

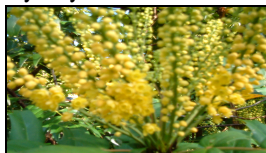
The other worry that beekeepers have is the state of the stores in the colony. If a proper assesment of the colony and subsequent feeding took place in the autumn, there should be no worry now. A small fraction of stores is used from November to February in a cold winter. Lift the colony carefully, one side at a time. You soon get to know the weighty feel of a well found colony. Some colonies that I have seen this year have had a shallow super of stores left on. This is the ultimate food insurance. However, I have noticed the queen excluder is sometimes left on between the brood chamber and super. This is a mistake because if the whole cluster steadily moves up through the excluder the queen could be lost.

The only other aspect of wintering to attend to is hive security. Is the roof watertight? Is the hive firm on its stand and sloping slightly forward? Is the mouseguard or entrance block securely in place? Crumbs of chewed up comb outside the entrance could mean that a mouse is inside. If woodpecker trouble starts up, protect the hive with a wrap of thick shiny plastic or a cage made from small hole chicken wire. This is expensive but it can be used in future years.

If you decide to buy in the winter sales, steer clear of DN1 frames, the ones needing spacers fitted to the lugs. Keep to self spacing frames at the very least. DN5s with wide bottom bars are absolute tops as the bee space is correct all the way round. Such frames have a heavier timber content and will last for many years, even when subjected to a boil-clean in washing soda solution every few years. Budget brood boxes and supers will last if kept repaired and treated with a water repellent such as clear Cuprinol. Always check the information on the side of the tin, don't use if there is a warning of danger to bees. Floors – go for the screened floors with a removable tray for checking hive droppings (mites, cappings etc). **The pull out tray must be metal, not plastic, to allow for flame sterilisation.** I'm about to set up some mite drop counts and will report back next month.

Forage

The last few days of December have been bitterly cold so the bees are not venturing out. Neither am I but nothing is flowering in my garden except for the Mahonia 'Charity' which I mentioned in the November Newsletter. It is beginning to look past its best but if we do get a warm sunny day there is some forage for the bees. It has lasted well and provides plenty of good forage at a thin time.



Meetings/Events 2009:

January

Wednesday 21st – an illustrated talk by **Claire Waring** –
HONEY HUNTING IN NEPAL 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages, Church Green
Rd, Bletchley MK3 6BJ

Friday 30th – **AN UPDATE OF COLONY COLLAPSE
DISORDER** by **Norman Carreck** hosted by the High Wycombe
Beekeepers' Association 7.30 p.m. at the "Environmental Centre", Bassetbury Lane,
High Wycombe HP11 1QX (adjacent Holywell Mead swimming pool on The Rye)
Contact: Ken Gorman 01908 560610

February

Thursday 12th – An invitation by **The Coop** to attend a meeting about **The
Demise of the Bee**. 6.30 p.m. – 9.00 p.m. at Jury's Inn Hotel, Midsummer Blvd,
CMK. Contact: Ranjit Singh 01908 361504

Wednesday 18th – a talk by **Ian Homer** –
EUREKA MOMENTS IN BEEKEEPING 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages,
Church Green Rd, Bletchley MK3 6BJ

Saturday 28th - **MICROSCOPY** with **Martin Buckle**
1.00 p.m at Hazeley School, Emperor Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

March

Saturday 7th -**13th ANNUAL BUCKS COUNTY SEMINAR** 10.00
a.m. – 4.15 p.m. Wendover. Contact: John Catton 01494 72616

**For information about Beginners' Beekeeping Classes contact Chris Jay 01908
373465**

Thursday 12th **Beginners' Class 1** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

Thursday 19th **Beginners' Class 2** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

Thursday 26th **Beginners' Class 3** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

April

Thursday 2nd **Beginners' Class 4** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

Thursday 23rd **Beginners' Class 5** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

Thursday 16th **Beginners' Class 6** 7.30 p.m. at Hazeley School, Emperor
Drive, Hazeley MK8 0PT

17th -19th BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh
Apiary Meetings for Beginners to start this month

May

Apiary Meetings for Beginners continue
Bank Holiday weekend – Steam Rally at Stoke Goldington
Contacts: Sue Bird 01908 501101 or Mike Bensley 01908 230261

June

Saturday 16th Riverside Fair, Stony Stratford 1 – 4 p.m. Contact Sue Bird 01908 501101

July

Saturday 11th - **BEE SAFARI** visits to our apiaries with our Seasonal Bee Inspector, **Margaret Holland** Contact: Libby Culshaw 01908 375968

August

Saturday 1st – visit to **BUZZ WORKS**, bee garden in Hitchin. Leave MK at midday. Contact: Libby Culshaw 01908 375968

Bucks County Show at the County Show Ground, Aylesbury – contact: Sue Bird 01908 501101

September

Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th **ANNUAL HONEY SHOW** at Wyevale Garden Centre, Newport Rd, Woburn Sands MK17 8UF
Contact: Nicola Smith 01280 860102

October

Wednesday 14th – **AGM** and talk **EXPERIENCES IN BEEKEEPING** by **Bob Hunter** 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages, Church Green Rd, Bletchley MK3 6BJ
National Honey Show

November

Wednesday 18th – **HOW DOTH THE LITTLE BUSY BEE?** an anatomical talk with electron microscope images by **BEULAH CULLEN** 7.30 p.m. at Rectory Cottages, Church Green Rd, Bletchley MK3 6BJ

QUEENIE'S KITCHEN

It is coming up to the time of year when your bees may need a boost to their stores. I use this **Sugar Candy** recipe. Boil 1 pint of water, remove from the heat. Use a big saucepan or the mixture may boil over when simmering. Stir in 6lbs sugar and 1 teaspoon cream of tartar. Return to the heat and stir continuously until the mixture boils. Continue to simmer for 3-4 minutes until the mixture thickens. Stand the container in cold water, stir vigorously until the mixture is about to set. This is arm breaking work! Pour the mixture into suitable containers. I line medium to large pyrex dishes with foil. When the mixture has set the block just falls out of the dish. The block can then be inverted over a feed hole. This recipe is enough for two x 3 pint dishes or 3 x 2 pint dishes.

Buzz Words

Did you know...

- there is a honey recipe website? www.honeyrecipes.org.uk
- that trainers feed their greyhounds with honey before a race?

Committee Meeting

At the last Committee Meeting it was decided to increase the charges for hired items. A deposit of £25.00 will be required. £20.00 will be returnable and £5.00 will go to NBBKA. The items we have for hire are: 2 x nine frame, hand turned honey extractors, steam wax extractor, Pratley tray, 2 x microscopes. Only members may hire equipment. To hire items contact Libby Culshaw.

There are still members who have not returned their subscriptions to Liz Parsons. This means that you will not have BD Insurance. This will also be your last Newsletter.

Several people have volunteered to assist at apiary meetings but we could still do with a few more to help spread the load. Beginners also need help with siting their hives and collecting swarms. Contact Chris Jay.

I am often approached by organisations and societies to speak about bee keeping at their meetings or to have a sales stand. If you would like your details to be passed on, contact Libby Culshaw.

We have held our meetings at Rectory Cottages for the past year. To date the car park at the back has proved to be safe. If you are in doubt though, you can park on the road in front.

This Month's Gathering on Wednesday 21st at Rectory Cottages at 7.30 p.m. **Claire Waring**, who is the editor of Bee Craft, 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. Martin Buckle and I have made this trek and we can recommend the breath taking scenery high in the Himalayas and the fascinating lives of the Gurung Tribe and their ancient honey hunting ritual that dates back 12,000 years. You will also learn about the important links with Bees Abroad as they help Nepalese to teach each other about non-destructive ways to keep bees and harvest the honey and wax.

Also this month High Wycombe BKA is hosting an important talk by bee scientist **Norman Carreck** entitled **An Update of Colony Collapse Disorder**. Ken Gorman is going and has a spare seat or two in his vehicle.



Whilst we have no beekeeping activity outside, these winter months are ideal for cleaning equipment, making frames and having a general stock-take.

If you would like to swot up on beekeeping to improve your knowledge or skills, don't forget you may borrow books from the Association's library. Contact Libby Culshaw.

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