

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter November 2014

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Calendar at-a-glance

10th November	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
25 th November	Fiona Cook talk on "Stress"
12 th January	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
27 th January	Paul Walton talk on "Breeding Better Bees"
9 th February	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
24 th March	Simon Crosan talk on "Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal"
13 th April	Social event at Shoulder of Mutton Public House
28 th April	Richard Smith talk on "Extracting the Crop"

New chairman's welcome

Welcome to another North Bucks beekeeping year. Well, our bees' year starts, apparently, on 1st September, so we are taking their lead. There is much to talk about.

We had, well I thought we had, a super AGM at Rectory Cottages. Someone counted - over 60% of the membership present; note that, you politicians worried about your "turn-outs"! These notes can't start without an enormous thank-you to those who are now coming off the Committee (I hope only for the time being!) First, foremost and in particular Ken Neil. Ken has done sterling service for the Association and certainly steadied the ship when he took over as Chairman in 2012. Sadly his health has not been too good. Ken get yourself better quick because we want you around! Also thanks to Ruth Hewitt as Secretary for keeping us going in the last rather difficult year, and thanks to Karen Dale and Phil Gabel: more of them later. Finally, but far from least, an enormous thanks to you

members for staying with us when clearly we were not providing you with the service you expect. Having got that out of the system, let's charge ahead to the future.

Frankly, when I hear of the problems other associations have got with foulbrood, bees that are failing to perform (cause partly "neonics"??), I think we are pretty well placed here in North Bucks. Let's take full advantage of that, and all be on our guard to keep troubles at bay. The safest rule is never to buy bees which have not been first vetted by an expert, and never to acquire bees outside, best of all, our North Bucks area.

You were good enough to appoint a very powerful Committee at the AGM (self obviously excluded). I have always taken the view that doing something in a conventional way can be boring, and as a lawyer I used to tell my clients that we would try to make their affairs fun (not that I ever did family law work!). Our techno-wizard Daniel will include in this newsletter a list of Committee members, members performing particular functions, and contact details. Yes we are here to be contacted about any matter "bee", particularly any health worries because in the beekeeping world a worry for one beekeeper is a worry for all. We are certainly not rivals in, say, a football sense - would Chelsea ever tell Man U their goal-scoring plans? - (and we don't bite each other when things go wrong!) - but a standstill order for bees and beekeepers simply because one beekeeper has got AFB and kept quiet about it could result in AFB being with us for years to come. Here I would like to commend a very new member of the Association who got some bees, and despite his inexperience was worried about their brood pattern. To put it briefly, Julian Parker, Regional Bee Inspector, called on them and put the trouble down to sac brood (a nuisance, but not notifiable to the authorities) which hopefully will clear.

Events

The new Committee will be meeting in early November, and I must not pre-empt them. Do you want to come to committee meetings? We might have to sit on each other's laps if so, but that's democracy for you! I think broadly we are agreed that we should now set up a winter/spring lecture programme and have "safari visits" during the summer. To get things under way, please get out your diaries and slot in the following dates:-

- Monday 10th November: Noggin and Natter at Shoulder of Mutton Public House, Calverton (the pub set up to serve the Calverton Apiary, see website for map) (8 pm onwards)
- Tuesday 25th November: A talk* by Fiona Cook, Bedfordshire BKA, about "Stress" NB Stress for bees, not humans! This is a little-understood subject, but critical to successful and ENJOYABLE beekeeping. You will miss out if you don't come!
- Monday 12th January: Noggin and Natter (as above)
- Tuesday 27th January: A talk by Paul Walton, North Bucks and Beds BKAS and bee farmer, on "Breeding Better Bees". There is a widely-held view that a key to defeating pest and disease problems is better bees. Paul will bring insight into a subject critical to our beekeeping endeavours.
- Monday 9th February: Noggin and Natter (as above)
- Tuesday 24th March: A talk by Simon Crosan, Lincolnshire BKA and bee farmer. "Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal" will transport you to a world of different bees beekeepers and honey hunters. Sit back and enjoy!

- Monday 13th April: Noggin and Natter (as above)
- Tuesday 28th April: A talk by Richard Smith, Beds BKA, on "Extracting the Crop". Richard's life as a pig farmer, his many years as a beekeeper and his wide knowledge of food safety place him in a unique position to give this lecture, hopefully at a time when you will be taking off your first 2015 honey. He knows all "the tricks of the trade". Not to be missed!

* Talks are held at Rectory Cottages, Church Green Road, Bletchley MK3 (see website for map)

The above dates for talks rather concentrate, as you will see, on Tuesdays - the traditional North Bucks meet night. They are not set in stone - what do you think about this? Sadly, Tuesdays don't suit all, I know.

Association Bees

By their activities at our two apiaries at Calverton and Cosgrove, North Bucks bees will be going into winter very much alive and "lively". Have your bees been cross lately, because they knew they should be hibernating, but the mild weather wouldn't let them sleep? Those at these apiaries were very cross on my visit a few days ago. This is a good moment to thank Karen Dale (at Calverton) and Phil Gabel (at Cosgrove) for superbly running these apiaries these past two years. Doing these jobs is, as we all know, far more than superficially checking that all is well. Equipment has to be cleaned, repaired and renewed; swarming plans have to be detected and stopped; varroa treatments need to be applied, feeding given and a host of other jobs done come wind come shine. Karen and Phil have looked after the bees immaculately, and we are very grateful. I am delighted to report that Terry Lock has agreed to look after the Cosgrove bees, and Charles Vaton and Jeff Martins, those at Calverton. Do please offer them any help you can. For example, come along to an apiary session with the beginners, offer help with repairs and feeding, and there are lots of other jobs to do! Beginners of last year, do please come back for the apiary sessions.

Beginners think of it this way. If you buy a bowl of daffodil bulbs, in the first year they will be brilliant, because the nurseryman did the hard work the year before. Future years depend upon you and what you put into the bulbs. So it is with beekeeping: the second year is always the most difficult year for the beginner. For example, that gentle little four-frame nuc you bought the previous July could be a monster-sized colony in the spring, and will inevitably swarm unless properly controlled. There is nothing sadder than a new beekeeper whose hopes have been dashed because "that lovely colony swarmed, failed to raise a new queen and, queenless, was robbed out by midsummer". This is not the moment to go into technicalities, but remember one thing. If every beekeeper, in respect of each of his stocks attempting to swarm, were to raise one nuc from a spare queen cell, then if he started the year with three colonies he might end up with six; but most important, he would have a queenright nuc or nucs, or better still additional queenright colonies to sort out colonies in trouble.

May I suggest, beginners you also take this thought into 2015: "The time to get the equipment ready is NOW!" A note about the Association's own equipment: it would be marvellous if a member in or close to Milton Keynes had a bit of garage space for the Association's extracting and other processing equipment and marketing materials. Say 6'x 6' square. And even better still if he were willing to act as Association Equipment Loan Manager. If you could help with this, please would you contact me. Also if you do have any Association equipment can you let me know, so we can log it out to you and take it back from you when convenient. Incidentally, you may not know that the Association has a library of books for hire, maintained by Daniel Clarke (book list and reservation system on the website, <http://nbbka.org/library/>).

Subscriptions

Our marvellous new Membership Secretary, Tania Thorne, is all ready to take your money, so can I urge you please to get the necessary paperwork/'on-lining' done. Out of the subscription we have to pay a capitation fee to the BBKA, and if you do not pay promptly then NBBKA has to pay your bit of the capitation fee out of reserves. Getting the capitation fee sorted is always fiddly for the Membership Secretary and Treasurer, and winter is the time to do it before the bees take over our lives in spring. Please pay using online banking transfer with your surname and membership number as reference as per the renewal document.

2014 Beginners

We want to make certain that we have got you fully logged in. With Ken's unavailability there was a bit of a hiatus as 2014 proceeded, so please get in touch with Tania if there is anything you want which you haven't got! We will do our best to put it right because we want you! If you know any beginner who is lost 'in midstream' so to speak, and out of touch, please, please put them on to Tania.

Beginners and improvers

Once again we will be running the Beginners' Course. The technical sessions will be at Hazeley School, Milton Keynes, and these will be followed by practical sessions in one of the Association's apiaries. If you, or anyone you know, wishes to apply to join the course, please get on to the NBBKA website and make your application there.

We will provide further details of the course early in the new year. May I point out that Andrew and Fiona Eelbeck (email: fiona@eelbeck.fsnet.co.uk) run an improvers' course from their home at Stoke Goldington. This is proving tremendously popular. Those who will most benefit from the course are those who have passed their Basic Exam and are now wanting to become highly competent all-round beekeepers, but all are welcome. Just contact Andrew or Fiona.

Awards

No fewer than twelve beginners passed their Basic Exam which is tremendous, And we have our very own Master Beekeeper, Fiona Eelbeck. Congratulations from us all for attaining this accolade in just for years.

Calverton apiary - important

The current owners of our Calverton site, Mr and Mrs Henry Hayter, "positively glow" when speaking about NBBKA, and have been delighted to have us and our bees since September 2011. However, they advised recently that they are selling up and are due to leave on 1st December. The new owners will be Mr and Mrs Johnson. It is possible that the Johnsons will allow the bees to remain, but otherwise they must be moved, and really before the bad weather sets in. We are preparing contingency plans. Have you anything to offer: site if needed, and of course ideas? Storage would be a great bonus. Safety and security of bees, beekeepers and the public are essential. If the bees have to move, of course it will be ALL of the bees. If you have bees at Calverton can you please let me know, so that we can keep you particularly informed of developments.

Winter seasonal notes

After the above verbiage, there is not too much to say! Just some reminders:-

- a) Some people in late October are still feeding syrup. If the weather gets cold, bees will ignore it, and syrup will be wasted, or if taken it may ferment if bees do not have time to seal down. Fondant/candy are now safer bets if feeding is essential. Place the feed {buckets (syrup) or containers (candy/fondant)} directly above the cluster over the frames within an eke. Once you start feeding, you must continue feeding with fondant or candy until spring has fully sprung, because your supply of food will be a 'mother ship' to your bees, and bees will stay put in cold weather.
- b) For those who use mouseguards, remove entrance blocks and affix over entrances after the cold weather has set in for several days, i.e. when robbing by bees/wasps is over for the year.
- c) Where needed, set up measures (wire netting or whatever) to protect hives against woodpecker damage.
- d) Leave open mesh floors OPEN (i.e. no trays.) If you still use solid floors, place match sticks under coverboard to aid air circulation and to avoid condensation.
- e) Remove all unnecessary paraphernalia from hives: feeders not in use, etc. Bees in winter need dry hives which should receive maximum sun.

AND, of course, there's lots to do in the WORKSHOP.....

Best regards,
Andrew Beer

NBBKA Committee Members

Chairman	Andrew Beer	chairman@nbbka.org
Treasurer	Roderick Pakes	treasurer@nbbka.org
Secretary	Jenni Tibble	secretary@nbbka.org
Membership Secretary	Tania Thorne	membership@nbbka.org
Honey Show Secretary	Sue Lang	
Website Editor	Daniel Clarke	website@nbbka.org
Newsletter Editor	Daniel Clarke	
Apiary Manager (Cosgrove)	Terry Lock	
Apiary Managers (Calverton)	Jeff Martins & Charles Vaton	
County Representatives	Terry Lock & Andrew Beer	
Librarian	Daniel Clarke	
General Committee Members	Andrew Fenner, Chris Jay, Philip Gabel , Edward Reney	

Please visit this page and log in to see photos of these people:

<http://nbbka.org/about/committee.aspx>