

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter June 2015

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Calendar at-a-glance

6 th June	Emberton Country Park event
20 th June	Anaphylactic course
7 th July	Honey show preparation, Rectory Cottage
12 th July	Picnic
9 th August	Stewkley Bee Safari
27 th September	Honey show
6 th October	NBBKA AGM
20 th October	Lecture
17 th November	Lecture
19 th January	Lecture
16 th February	Lecture

Honey show

On Sunday 27th September, North Bucks BKA are holding its annual Honey Show, *writes Sue Lang*. This will be at Buckingham Nurseries, and will be jointly held with Buckingham BKA.

If you've ever wondered what happens at a Honey Show, read on....

The show staging is set up on the Saturday (late afternoon), if anyone is available for an hour that would be brilliant.

There is an entry form on our website, with a list of all the classes you can enter. They range from differing sorts of honey, beeswax, but comb, candles and other crafts. There are some classes designed specifically for novice beekeepers, and for the more experienced.

On Sunday, entries will be accepted from 9.30am to 12 noon. Please consider staying for the rest of the day at the nurseries, we will also be staging various displays for members of the public to learn about beekeeping. The show is being held alongside Buckingham Nurseries Apple Day, which is always very well attended. If you can stay, and can man one of the displays for a few hours, please let Sue Lang (Honey Show secretary) know).

Judging of the entries will take place from 12 noon, and trophies will be awarded at 3.45pm. Help to take down the staging and the displays from 4pm for an hour would again be very much appreciated.

If you are unsure of how to get your honey, beeswax and crafts to show standard, please consider attending the North Bucks BKA workshop on Tuesday 7th July, Rectory Cottages, Bletchley. This is a free event, and Sue will take you through how to prepare for the various classes. Members of Buckingham BKA have also been invited to this event, so please let Sue know if you would like to attend, so that we have enough space for everyone.

For sale

Bees

We received this request from a member of the public. Please contact Kath Hunter directly on khbees@googlemail.com

Do you know of anyone interested in buying a (or more) colony of bees? My dad is 85 years old and has kept bees since the age of fourteen. He is finding it difficult to manage them and I can only help one day a week so he is looking to downsize. His apiaries are all in the Biggleswade area. We are selling them as working hives (National) at £150. Hives are old but functional.

Equipment

Due to downsizing, Ken Gorman has spare equipment available, as follows:

- National hives.
- Hive: standard floor, separate screen, and varroa catching tray, brood box, empty, crown-board and shallow roof-all cleaned and flame sterilised this year and in sound condition.....£40.
- All of the above, but with a National Bee Supplies' varroa floor-with galvanised steel withdrawal tray and white plastic catcher.....£50.
- Heavy duty, deep roof-add £10 to the above prices.

These can be collected from his home address, by prior arrangement: 2 Tavelhust, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes, MK8 8EE. Tel: 07779801774. Email: special@kennethgorman.plus.com

Top Bar Hive Nucs

I have a small number of Top Bar Hive Nucs that are currently building wax (not very straight!) on circa 6 bars each, *writes Jeff Martins*.

I'm willing to "gift" these two anyone who is interested in keeping bees on a TBH - You will need a TBH or large TBH Nuc for them to be transferred into.

I should know in the next week or so if they are queen right or not (2015 queen).

All I ask for is replacement bars (circa £17 I think the last time I checked, but if you have a TBH then I can take unused ones from that, if you prefer).

If you'd like to know a little bit more about TBH beekeeping, then just get in touch. I'll be more than happy to show you one of my hives and talk through stuff with you.

Jeff Martins.

Tel: 07973 669908 email: bees@mk-forum.co.uk

Catching an unsettled swarm

I'd like to share my experience of catching and housing a swarm before it's settled, *writes Daniel Clarke*. I arrived at my apiary for a normal weekly inspection, planning to split a hive that had the week before shown signs of a desire to swarm soon. As I arrived I could see that the air was thick with bees – a swarm was in progress! I estimate that the bees had only exited a matter of minutes before I arrived, as most were still in the air or littered far and wide on blades of grass, and some were collecting on a fencepost. By the time I unloaded my gear, others had settled on a second fence post. They had not yet formed the calm ball we see in the literature – had they done so, collecting them would have been easy.

Since I was on my lunch break from work, I decided not to wait until they had formed a cluster, as either I'd be late back to work or they'd have left by the time I returned in the evening. Instead I decided to gather the bees there and then. Perhaps this decision was a mistake, perhaps not. The gathering was slow but straight forward, and consisted of scooping bees from the post into a hessian bag by hand, then tipping the calm bees into the new empty hive I'd brought for the split. Since I could only gather small numbers at a time, it's hard to know whether I was tipping more or fewer than the number escaping from the new hive as I worked, but I finally made headway. The last stragglers were either jarred from the post into a sheet, or smoked into the air to let them smell their way to the new hive. The bees were starting to form a cluster in the empty box, clinging to the underside of the crownboard, which made it quite hard to lift the lid to insert more bees, but I'd decided that I'd caught around two-thirds the number and tried no further. I placed the remaining frames of foundation into the box, put a queen excluder underneath it, and closed up. The last stragglers from the sheet, now placed in front of the hive, started to march up into it, and none flew out of the hive, so I thought they'd settled.

Two days later I came back to give syrup and to remove the queen excluder. The bees were still there and apparently happy. However, ten days after that they'd all gone. Luckily the bees had entered a bait hive just a few feet away (confirmed by checking the markings on the queen), and had almost filled the box with honey already.

So what made them leave again? I'm not sure whether I'd made a mistake in catching and housing the bees before they had balled up. I suspect that although they had been

given a decent new home, they had not had the chance to make the group decision to stay in that new home. Perhaps somehow the urge to find a new home was still present, even though they had already left their brood and had already been up in the air.

Next time I arrive in the middle of a swarm I will wait for them to settle before catching them... but this is no guarantee, I have previously had to catch the same swarm twice after settling!

Swarm Collection Service

NBBKA are taking back the operation of the local swarm collection service from BBKA, whose list is out-of-date and does not reflect our membership.

We have a new 0845 hotline number, available to the public on our website, for them to call our team regarding picking up a swarm.

Andy Fenner is kindly co-ordinating the distribution of requests to members who have said that they will collect a swarm, and as such is taking the first shift in answering the hotline.

If you would like to be on the collection list, please update your website profile to indicate that you are a swarm collector and that you consent to your details being shared among the membership (yearbook consent). In order for you to be found using our new tool, which Andy will use to find who is located the closest to a reported swarm, the coordinates of your postcode must be known to our system. Press the "Check/update coordinates" button on your website profile page to do this. Without coordinates we do not know where you are and therefore you are excluded from the list.

In the future the hotline will be manned on a rota and swarm collectors may be asked to take a turn at this job next season (the advantage of manning the phone is, of course, that you can give yourself first refusal for the swarms).

To make sure you're included, edit your website profile (1), tick these boxes (2 & 3), and press the blue link (4):

Coordinates	(52.0633, -0.7891) Check/update coordinates
Year Started Beekeeping	2010 4
Year Joined NBBKA	2009
Opt-in to yearbook?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2
I can collect swarms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3
I want a swarm	<input type="checkbox"/>
Password	**** 1
	Edit

Mobile-friendly website

The NBBKA website is now mobile-friendly and you can view a smaller and simpler version on your mobile phone. It will automatically detect your device and show you the most suitable version, but you can always view the rich desktop version by clicking the link at the bottom of every page.

Seasonal Notes

The cold winds have continued during May. Despite that, many colonies, especially those close to oil seed rape, have crops to extract; and as ever the watchword with oil seed rape is 'extract' as soon as it stays put in combs even though not sealed when you do the 'Shake Test'. Leave the crop another week, and that glistening crop could be solid in the combs, and only retrievable by melting down. However careful you are, melted honey is not the same as honey extracted by centrifugal force from the comb, and may only be fit, if overheated, by law to sell as baker's honey. The no.1 priority really in the next few weeks for all in 'O.S.R.' areas is to get the crop extracted as soon as it is ready (as described above.) Don't wait until a whole super is ready to extract. Go over the super combs every seven days and take away all 'ripe' combs. And don't bother with porter bee (or similar) escapes. Instead, go to the bees when flying for the day is over, shake bees off the 'ripe combs' (or handful of grass brushed against the bees does the trick) back into the hive using an empty eke or super as a funnel and avoid spillages outside the hive. Fill gaps in supers with frames of foundation or drawn-out comb. Once back at home base, extract combs 'that night' or the next day. Until extracted, store in a warm place. As necessary, I use a 3 watt 'blow' heater to keep the crop warm and more easily extractable.

There has been, too, the normal 'crop' of swarms or more beneficially, artificial swarms to do. A method I am trying out this year is as follows: You have a stock making preparations to swarm. I find its queen and take the deep frame she is on, one additional deep frame with advanced sealed soon to emerge brood and one of stores, each with a good covering of bees, and put in a hive box and take to the next apiary I visit (which must be at least 3 miles away) to develop into a full colony. No worries about drifting or risk of the old queen (as may happen in my view if left in the original apiary) distracting the future development of a new queen in the queenless parent colony. Stocks moved in this way ought to make fine colonies in 2016. N.B. If you don't, have a suitable second apiary, then try using another beekeeper's, he or she can use yours!

As I have said before, it is depressing to lose a swarm (despite the recent critical article in the Daily Telegraph castigating bumbling beekeepers for losing swarms) but if you do it is best to lose one early in the season because there may still be time for the colony to build up later for a good crop July onwards. Steps which will help get a swarmed colony back to full strength include the following:

- Mark the position of say five good well filled larvae open queen cells and destroy the rest.
- Go back to the old colony on say day 11, 12 or 13, and select from the marked cells the one for your new queen. If you want further increase and the colony can spare it, take one frame with one queen cell or reduce it to one queen cell and one frame of stores and adhering bees, put in a box and find somewhere to put it at least three miles away. There is no need to shake more bees into the box because there will be no drifting back to parent colony.
- The original colony is left with just your chosen one queen cell to develop into a mated queen.
- Subject only to continuing to make sure that the colony (and any stock you made up) has sufficient stores, taking off super frames when ready for extraction,

reducing entrance size to one bee space if stock weak, leave any stock raising a queen well alone for three weeks and hopefully when you next open it your eyes will settle on the most beautiful queen with a lovely family of brood the world has ever seen. It does not always work, perhaps the queen got gobbled up by a thrush in full flight, that is why I suggest always, during the season you make up more colonies than you need to allow for disasters, and so you can be certain to have enough stock going into winter . You can always deal with any surplus stocks at the end of the summer – many of our new members are crying out for more bees.

- A final thought. When you go through your colonies, have a medical sample bottle or the equivalent, line with something soft, and harvest a few surplus queen cells from your better or best stock. If you find a colony which has, or you think has failed to requeen or you are simply in doubt – most of us are at times! Or you wish to improve its pedigree – give it a queen cell. If the bees want it, they will accept, otherwise they or a rival queen will pull the cell down – and nothing will be lost.
- (emphasising an earlier point) Allow at least 21 days from the departure of the old queen for the arrival of a laying replacement – don't keep opening up to check. If all is going well – your interference may do more bad than good. Leave alone and get cracking on those heavy supers for extraction, or plan for more bees!

Emberton Park, Millton Keynes : 6th June

Come and see your association at this MK spectacular. Better still, come and help and, if so, sell some of your 2015 crop.

Sunday 12th July

The Beers are putting up a tent for that weekend to meet up with various friends. Why not join us on Sunday 12th July, 1 pm onwards, bringing your drinks and picnic chairs, and we will provide nosh of the burger variety. More details to follow. Keep the date now.

Cheers,
Andrew Beer