

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter December 2015

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Calendar at-a-glance

5 th December	Christmas dinner
2 nd February	Lecture: "Raising Nucs"
19 th February	Bucks County Spring Convention
8th March	Lecture: "Unusual Ways of Keeping Bees"

Christmas Dinner this Saturday

I am not doing as well as I should be doing in finalizing numbers for the dinner for which, no excuses. According to my records, we have the following joining us at 7.30pm at Shoulder of Mutton on Saturday, 5th December for the Association's Christmas Bash.

My list tells me the party is:

Knox (2)
Gale (2)
Eelbeck (2)
Michael & Yvonne (2)
Jay (1)
Woodbridge (2)
Lock (2)
Clarke (2)
Hinson (2)
Battrick (2)
Flint (1)
Beer (2)
Picton (2)
Warren (2)

If I have missed anyone out, please, please let me know soonest - tel. 01525 240235. If you have not got around to telling me you are coming, it is PROBABLY not too late. Please ring, as above. Cost £20.95 per person for 3-course Xmas dinner. If you have not paid, just confirm you are coming and pay me on the night. The menu (selected by me) is Prawn Cocktail, Turkey and trimmings, Xmas Pud, coffee and mince pies. I can secure changes to the menu if you ask – "SOM" awaits – see you there!

Ken Gorman's talk

Anyone who came to Ken Gorman's very informative talk on DIY Beekeeping cannot have failed to leave without many useful tips. My own favourite is Ken's advice about Dummy Boards. If you fill a national brood box (or most other brood boxes) with brood frames it is inevitable that you will crush some bees during operations. This is partly caused by misshapen comb faces. You can get around that problem by replacing one frame with a dummy board, narrower than a frame and therefore removable without any crush. Incidentally, when you remove frames, ALWAYS move them slightly sideways into the space you have created by first removal of the dummy and then move the frame upwards. The frame you remove will then be clear of its adjoining one and there will be NO crush. But if you use dummies, certainly those supplied by the trade as Ken explained, there is a further problem. Trade supplied dummies are often flimsy, but their greatest drawback is that each side of the dummy is flat, i.e., no Hoffman type protrusions which means that when you press the "trade" dummy up against a comb face the essential bee space is lost and again bees can get crushed. The matter can be righted by attaching two strips of wood, say quarter inch square to one face of the dummy so that each strip is in direct contact with the protrusions on the Hoffman (or other) frame. Personally, I make my own dummies from whatever wood I can find in the nearest skip (and am permitted to take) but suitably trimmed down and narrowed brood frames with wood in-fills will do the job. Thank you Ken for a really interesting talk and it is very good to have you back in the fold.

Committee matters

I am absolutely delighted to tell you that Jackie Flint, one of our many 2015 super beginners, without actually having her arm twisted has agreed to take on this essential role – so we now have a **Treasurer** – and a complete committee. You will soon be able to contact Jackie through the “association” email set up, e.g., treasurer@nbbka.org. but please be very nice to Jackie as she learns the ropes. Currently she is a Press Officer for the WI which is as good an introduction as there can be to bees!

I am standing down from all roles at November 2016 AGM and from a point of continuity, I think it would be a great idea anyway to have a **Deputy Chairman** who hopefully can takeover the reigns. I shall be discussing this at the next Committee meeting, but if you would like the opportunity for taking forward our great (but small) laid back (but friendly) family of NB beekeepers please let me know. I believe with a passion that we need and will continue to need a strong association if we are to best protect our bees and those who help them here in N Bucks. If I do not see you at the Christmas Dinner, many thanks to you for your support to the Association during the year and may your New Year be a very happy one and your supers be well, bulging!

Subscriptions

These are Now Due. To pay, please go online and follow the procedure set up by Daniel Clarke. In brief: log in to our website, click the “renew membership” link at the bottom-left corner of the navigation menu, follow the prompts, then pay by bank transfer.

There are three points I would like to make:

- Of the total subscription only some (£4) of it is retained by NBBKA, the rest is passed on to the British Beekeeper's Association.
- The reason why the NBBKA part of the subscription is so low is because committee members and others in general do not charge their sometimes considerable expenses in terms of fuel, postage, etc.
- Some members failed to pay their subscriptions until the season was well underway – and the demands on those involved with swarm collections, public bee queries and the like – sometimes up to 10 calls a day - enormous.

We do the BBKA returns in March so it means that in practice anyone who pays later has to be subject to a late return. This is simply unfair so the following arrangement will apply at least for 2016. **All subscriptions please must be paid before 31 January 2016.** Anyone who does not pay by that date will have no assurance of his subscription being included in the North Bucks BBKA return in which case his or her right to BBKA News and membership of NBBKA will cease and any insurance cover provided by BBKA or BDI will lapse. Further, any subscription which is received after the association has submitted the BBKA will be cashed by NBBKA as part of its general funding and applied if the lapsed member desires in or towards his or her membership subscription for the NBBKA year 2016/2017. We reserve the right to amend or vary the above. Sorry to be so firm and pedantic but a lot of people have wasted much time on dealing with late subscriptions in 2015. Please remember that the BBKA too is under enormous pressure dealing with membership renewals right across the country and mistakes will occur and in 2015 did occur through no fault of NBBKA, resulting in several of our members being without BBKA News or insurances.

Seasonal Notes

In the Apiary

It has been a very mild autumn – with a lot of hive activity. This may mean that colonies will be getting through stores more quickly than usual and may lead to them running short in early spring, even if they were well fed earlier. This caution particularly applies to nuclei. Just keep hefting every few weeks and feed fondant in case of need. And as Ken reminded us, from now on, watch to ensure that colonies not only have sufficient stores but that their winter clusters occupy stored combs because if they do not and really cold weather strikes they will stay put and starve. If in any doubt, a block of fondant placed on frames over the cluster (use a stick or two to avoid crushing) may save the day. Please put anti-woodpecker measures in place if you live in “woody” areas. Incidentally I read that woodpeckers have special built-in pressure absorbers behind their beaks otherwise in

striking our hives they might blow their brains away!

At Home Base

Just a reminder that we all need to get equipment bought, repaired, cleaned and renewed for 2016!

Oxalic Acid

I will again be treating my stocks with Oxalic Acid (6% solution in distilled water) using the trickling method. This has never been an authorized treatment but has been tolerated by the authorities. Indeed, NBU suggested I should use it some 7 years ago because that is what they used. Anyway, we now have an authorized treatment in the form of Api-Bioxal which is powdered based. The downside is that any other Oxalic treatment apart from Api-Bioxal may now be targeted by the authorities as illegal unless authorization is sought (for more detail see article by Dr. Ivor Davis, BBKA News, November 2015, page 389).

On the subject of varroa there was a very interesting article in The Times (18 November, p.29) – the gist of the article was this:

Worker bees exposed to controversial pesticides either return to the hive woozy and disorientated or never return. This causes a colony to cut back on its one luxury – males. N.B. it is a well-known fact that in times of crisis, e.g., colonies will eject drones at any time of the year. The article is based on a report on work carried out by French researchers. If this research is correct, then, as the article goes on to suggest, is this a reason why some beekeepers are having difficulty in getting queens mated?

May I suggest a target for us all in 2016: to ensure that not one beekeeper who has at least one established colony ends the summer without some surplus honey! This is what this association is about amongst other things.

Best regards

Andrew.