

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter May-June 2017

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Calendar at-a-glance

27 th June	Committee meeting, Shoulder of Mutton, 19:30
Saturdays	Saturdays in May Apiary sessions, Cosgrove Apiary, 12.30
13 th October	AGM and Fish & Chip Supper Friday. 19.30pm. Venue TBC
21 st November	Celia Davies talk
20 th March 2018	Celia Davies talk

Beekeeping News

Committee

Daniel Clarke has volunteered to be the chairman for the next period. We still need a permanent chairperson, if you would like to join us on the committee please let us know.

Bee Buddies

If you are a more experienced beekeeper, please consider buddying up with a newer beekeeper to help them during their first season. Let Fiona Eelbeck know what area you are in, and we will try and link you up with someone local to you.

Swarm List

Please update your details within the NBBKA Year book area of the website for your options to be able to collect and Receive Swarms. Remember to keep this updated during the season, especially if you run out of suitable kit to hive any more.

Andy Fenner (who is based near Buckingham) is going to man the Swarm Line again (07342 930851). He does work full time, so if there are any beekeepers who can collect swarms around the eastern half of Milton Keynes, Bletchley and other areas, please let Andy know directly – he can then pass calls onto you. At the moment he is wasting lots of timing phoning around.

If you are a beginner looking for your first lot of bees, and have time in an evening to collect a swarm with Andy – again please let him know. He will help you to hive them if you live within a reasonable distance of Buckingham.

BBKA News, and appeal for Show Stewards

The 2017 South of England Show at Ardingly during the 8th, 9th & 10th June will soon be upon us all. This year, displays within the Bees & Honey marquee will be marking the 50 years of SoE shows by presenting aspects of beekeeping spanning those years ... highlighting both how much and how little has changed. All this will be in addition to hourly Demonstrations of Beekeeping, Observation Hives, Display of the Honey Show Benches, Honey and Hive Product Sales, Equipment Sales and Information Stands. All this of course can only be possible with the tremendous help received from many individual members of Associations and Divisions throughout the south east of England.

If you would like to volunteer to help on the stand, please email beesandhoneyinfo@gmail.com or go to <http://www.seas.org.uk/info/competing/competing-south-england-show/bees-honey/>

As the organisers have a fixed budget they have decided to concentrate on just two exciting events, both sited at stunning venues.

They are, in conjunction with the Derbyshire Beekeepers,
The RHS Chatsworth Flower Show - 7th to 11th June 2017

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chatsworth-flower-show>

BBC Countryfile Live at Blenheim Palace - 3rd to 6th August 2017

https://countryfilelive.com/attractions?qclid=ClfVzqTardMCFQs8Gwod95MN_Q

Please contact Gordon Robbins, bbkasc@gmail.com 07900 852236 to volunteer for these two events.

Bee Health Mentors

Please see this link for details of the scheme being run by BCBKA:
<http://www.buckscountybeekeepers.co.uk/disease/bee-health-mentors/>

Upcoming events

AGM

Friday 13th October 2017. AGM and Fish & Chip Supper. More details will be in the next newsletter.

International Meeting of Young Beekeepers

This is being held in the UK in 2017. BBKA have asked for donations from all members to fund the meeting (£1 per member). Bucks County have donated an amount to cover all Bucks members. The committee agreed that as we have sufficient funds that we would donate an extra £1 per member (currently 82) to the fund. For more information about this event please follow this link:
https://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/international_meeting_of_young_beekeepers_2017_imyb_2017

Committee meeting

Next Committee meeting Tuesday 27th June 2018, Shoulder of Mutton, 7.30pm.

Cosgrove Apiary

Saturday sessions at 12.30 have now started. Whilst these are intended for those who have been on this years Beginners Course, all member are welcome to attend sessions. A working party is needed to lay paving slabs and erect the new shed. Please contact Terry Lock if you are able to help.

Bucks County Honey Show

This is on Saturday 23rd September in High Wybombe. All members are welcome to put in entries. The best entries will go forward to the inter-county Federation Cup, being held at Woburn Gardens on Saturday 30th September – being hosted by Bedfordshire Beekeepers.

North Bucks Honey Show

This is being held on Sunday 24th September, Buckingham Nurseries as part of their Apple Day event. More details and the amended schedule will be in the next newsletter.

Education

Improvers Group

From Fiona and Andrew Eelbeck (eelbeckbees@gmail.com) The next improvers group is 15 May, 19h30-21h30 at Stoke Goldington, Reading room (it is next to MK16 8NR, on the high street). It has a little white rail next to the road and is on the bend of the road. Subject: disease inspection, failing queen, collecting swarm, oilseed rape honey. £1.00 for refreshment and room hire.

There will be a session in June, please look out for an email from the association with the details, alternatively email Fiona and Andrew direct, and they will let you know.

Basic Assessment Course

A short course covering the BBKA basic syllabus will take place in May/June on a Saturday afternoon. Contact Andrew and Fiona Eelbeck (eelbeckbees@gmail.com) to be included in this course. The course is suitable for all who have had at least one hive for one year.

For Anyone interested in learning about bee behaviour Fiona and Andrew are planning to go through module 6 syllables in the autumn.

Fiona and Andrew will have a few 5 frame nucs for sale at end of May.

Apiary Notes for May/June from Andrew Beer:

Bee Health: How boring can I get?

This is a subject I would not normally select. I have suffered heavy losses this past winter, a matter I happily admit if only to demonstrate to and perhaps console beginners that we can all lose colonies for

reasons not always understood. In fact, I am pretty certain that the cause is one of the Nosema's and I am sure Fiona Eelbeck will kindly be able to put me right. However, an interesting feature of this Spring

has been the number of colonies with large slabs of crystallized stores as useless to bees as a dead rabbit. I think we should not just rely on hefting for stores, it is also the quality of stores that counts. In

oil seed rape and ivy areas and other areas where crystallization is a significant risk, it is worth giving at least a gallon of winter syrup feed in September, others leave a full super of 'good' stores below

the brood chamber as an insurance, usually dispensing with the need to feed fondant. If during the Winter or Spring you have worries about stores 'quality, gently open hives when the colonies are flying and lift

out a food comb free of bees and decap to establish quality. This will also be a good opportunity with aid of a torch to see if your bees are in contact with stores and if necessary, to move food frames towards them and if the colony is on the point of starvation, then decapped. Bees in a cold spell stay put and won't move to plentiful stores nearby and, therefore die- it is called Isolation Starvation. If you ever have any worries about stores in Winter or Spring then feed. It has to be fondant until the bees are flying freely in Spring after which you can give them syrup and I prefer the 2 pounds of sugar to 1 pint of water mix.

Back to Bee Health. The area I want to address is cleaning and sterilization of equipment. The first point to make is that it is not an option. But we need to be realistic. The very great majority of us are keeping our bees as a hobby and do not live in properties designed for beekeeping. No matter. In the words of Nigel Semmence at one time NBU South Regional Inspector or at least their effect 'any cleaning and sterilization helps but the more we can do then so much the better'. And as one of our more experienced beekeepers said to me, you are never going to get into every nook and cranny of a hive (meaning so it is sterile). It is well to remember that if we get either American Foulbrood or European Foulbrood or one of the notifiable pests then the trouble must immediately be referred to NBU which by law will deal with the clean up using whatever method it chooses. But we do owe a duty to our fellow beekeepers to take all proper care. History shows that even a small nuc of diseased bees brought into a district disease free can cause great problems for other bees and beekeepers in that district perhaps for many years.

I now want to turn to methods of cleaning and sterilisation readily available to us 'amateurs'.

GENERALLY. Scrape off wax, propolis and debris off equipment over a spare roof, collect and burn. Try to do each stage of the cleaning and sterilization process -scraping of equipment, sterilization, later washing down, rewaxing and, finally storage on different parts of your property to minimize the risk of reinfection.

FREQUENCY. All equipment should be cleaned and sterilized within a twoyear cycle. Equipment brought back from apiaries should not be reused without first being cleaned and sterilized. Brood frames can be cleaned and sterilized but personally I now burn all after their second year of use and also those returned from the apiary for any reason at any time after any use. I simply do not have the time to clean or space for these frames with the risk that they may contain disease and attract robbers who may pass it on before the frames are cleaned up. Wasteful you may well say- the choice is yours! Rightly or wrongly I am a bit more relaxed about supers and super frames only used for honey production. These are used uncleaned from year to year whilst combs are fully efficient e.g easy to extract after which frames are cleaned, sterilized and rewaxed.

METHODS

STRONG MIX OF BLEACH AND SODA CRYSTALS WITH WATER

This can be applied in two ways. By immersion in a suitable vessel (but costly in terms of materials and I question whether the disposal of a large amount of waste is environmentally friendly). For many years I have put the 'mix' in a 30lbs honey bucket and slogged it on to equipment with a soft brush, a soft dust pan brush is ideal, and it seems to be effective. Later wash thoroughly. Bleach should not be used on frames which are best steam cleaned or boiled (see further below)

SCORCHING

Using a suitable blow lamp or torch, the whole hive less frames is scorched to a chocolate colour and it is a method favoured by many. Personally, I hate it first because it is all too easy to miss bits and even easier to over scorch bits to a frizzle and over the years edges of boxes, in particular, become rounded and, hey presto, your hive is no longer proof against robbers, damp and the like. (Anyway why scorch a box which has cost you £20 plus when there are other methods of sterilization available for all troubles apart from 'AFB'?) Not suitable, of course for frames -and plastics must first be removed for separate cleaning with bleach/ soda crystals as above.

STEAMING

You may have come across the Thorne Easi-Steam. Basically, it uses a wall paper stripper producing steam which is directed in to a brood or super box containing frames. As far as it goes it is a good tool but it won't sterilize other parts of hives. An alternative may be to use an industrial steamer and give hives less plastic parts a general blasting of steam. Personally, I have had made a sectional box large enough to hold a whole hive which I intend to connect to an industrial steamer and blast hives that way. Neither steaming nor boiling (below) will eradicate American Foulbrood spores.

BOILING

For practical reasons, boiling with water is only suitable for frames, soda crystals being added to the liquid. An old Burco boiler does the job well.

ACETIC ACID

Broadly, this is only used by commercial beekeepers. It involves empty boxes and frames being subjected to abrasive fumes which can destroy both metal and concrete. Not to be used, I suggest by us hobbyists. I have no experience of it.

WARNING

For your safety and the safety of others do not undertake cleaning or sterilization of equipment without suitable protective clothing and after first implementing proper procedures.

AND AN ADMISSION

I cannot possibly pretend that I have never broken the above 'rules'. Of course I have but do try to follow them as well as you can because it may save you and others a lot of trouble later.

TIP FOR THE MONTH

You have found queen cells in a hive but you can't find the queen to work your swarm control plan. Move the hive to the side about 10 feet with entrance pointing 90 Degrees away from its original direction. Now put a new hive with drawn and/or undrawn frames in its place. Open the brood box of the moved hive and take from it one frame of mostly sealed brood and one of stores each with adhering bees. After you have checked that there are good queen cells on other frames in the moved box for your new queen, you must destroy all queen cells on the two frames you have removed and then put the frames in the middle of the new box. This will cause all the flying bees to go to the new box and without flying bees no swarm can immediately depart from the moved box. Return a day later to complete your swarm control plan.