

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

Chairman: John Crick 01494521557

President: Jim Earley 01628521881

Secretary: Christine Hazell 01494 531599 chazecamber@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer: Edward West 01494520874

Swarm Officer: Stewart Thorburn 01494510327

Newsletter - August 2006

Diary

Forthcoming Events

19th/20th August - Wycombe Town Show

Recent Event Reports

12th July - Bees & Beekeeping for Non-Beekeepers

The Association held its second annual 'Informal Discussion Evening'. At one end of the room was a large group of 'Beginner Beekeepers' having a lively Q&A session with their tutors, led by John Crick. At the other end I introduced the subject of the 'World of Bees & How we keep them' to a small group who had come along to learn, perhaps have their life-horizons expanded a little and perhaps take a first step towards becoming a beekeeper.

We made good use of the Observation Hive, the Virtual Hive (a real hive with pictures of bees on their frames), watched and discussed two Videos, and saw and handled the standard beekeeping equipment. I also explained some of the many factors & interactions that underlie a successful honey harvest.

The group were impressed by the weight of a full super of honey; and enjoyed trying a wide range of honey samples for flavour and texture. They (and some of John's group) really enjoyed it when I cut up a frame of honeycomb to eat, and take home as a reminder.

The group appeared to have thoroughly enjoyed the evening and several of them expressed an interest in joining the 2007 Beginners Course. In the meantime they will receive email copies of our Newsletter.

Clive Hill

For All Your Beekeeping Equipment and Supplies

contact our local Thornes agent

John Parslow

Bailiffs Cottage, Bledlow, Aylesbury
Tel: 01844 344948

Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the end of another beekeeping year. After the prolonged spell of cold weather which held back colony development for about four weeks we have reached the long spell of hot weather which has brought forward the end of the honey gathering season by at least two weeks.

Like the old man reminiscing, I can remember the days when we took off our honey in the third week in August. This day gradually moved forward to the end of July and now in 2006 all pasture land and field crops appeared to dry up by mid July.

Our Field Day at Widmere Farm was a very successful event and we thank all members who contributed to it. Christine for the overall organisation, Beulah for carrying out the colony inspections in the morning, Bob for the barbeque and our friendly farmer William White for such an enlightening explanation of the modern farming techniques. For a fourth generation farmer to be able to run a six hundred acre farm singlehanded demonstrates how farming has adapted to current demands.

Please remember the help and support we need in order to maximise our presence at the Wycombe Town Show on 19 / 20th August. Even an hour's duty will release another member for a well earned break.

Varroa Control

For those members using IPM open mesh floors you should by now have fitted the solid trays and carried out the second week long count of the season to determine the drop down rate of Varroa mites. My own results show a maximum drop of 16 which equates to 2 per day and a low infestation.

We have, however, heard reports of drop downs in the high hundreds and this demonstrates the importance of maintaining a check on the degree of infestation in your colonies. It is also apparent that we have isolated examples of pyrethroid resistant mites within our area.

Your committee consider that in 2006 we can still use Apistan strips in most cases and we have made a bulk purchase of strips. These are now available at:

Pack to treat 5 colonies: £15.00

2 strips to treat one colony: £3.00

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These are available, whilst stocks last, from John Crick. Please phone on 01494 521557 to check and arrange for collection.

They should be placed in the brood area as soon as the honey for human consumption has been removed and should be left there for a six week period. Routine inspection and feeding can still carry on as normal. Once again, people with IPM floors or similar should monitor the drop down rate on a weekly basis over the treatment period.

Bee Suits

During the start up period for our new beekeepers I loaned out my spare bee suit and veil and also the set belonging to my wife. I do not have a record of who borrowed them and their absence is now proving to be a problem. Would the borrowers please contact me.

Extraction of Honey

The Association has purchased an extractor and ripening tank to assist new beekeepers who are still lacking facilities. These items are retained by Julian Parker of 82 Windmill Lane, Widmer End. Tel: 01494 714460 and may be used in exchange for a donation of £10 to Association funds.

Marlow Apiary

The Association Marlow apiary currently contains six colonies and gives us an excellent training facility and source of funds from the sale of honey. I have been looking after it for the last four years but I now need to reduce my workload for health reasons. The committee are seeking an experienced beekeeper to take on the role of Apiary Manager. Assistance from newish beekeepers is readily available. Please contact John Crick if you can assist.

Honey for Sale

Honey from both of the Association Apiaries has now been extracted. Some will be used to supple the sales point at the Wycombe Town Show but the remainder is available for bulk purchase in 30 lb returnable containers. Please contact Bob Hunter on 01494 716379 for details.

Purchase of New Equipment

It is not unusual for members to join in the free for all at the Thornes Sale at Windsor in early September. These products are repeated at the same prices in the January Sale.

We intend to collect orders later in the year and place a composite order with John Parslow and are intending to arrange another woodworking day in February when, amongst other projects, you can assemble all of the purchased items, with assistance if needed. Watch this space for all the details.

John Crick

Apiary Tour & BBQ 15th July 2006

I have decided to delay a proper report until the next Newsletter. In brief, we had a wonderful day, well tempered bees and good turnout for this event. Many thanks to Beulah Cullen again for acting as our Bee Expert, to Bob Hunter our BBQ Chef and to William White our Farmer and host for his talk.

Clive Hill

HIGH WYCOMBE AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No 299638. Annual General Meeting to be held at: - The Environment Centre on Friday 29th September 2006

Agenda

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) Minutes of the last AGM held on 30th September 2005
- 3) Matters arising from the minutes
- 4) Chairman's Report
- 5) Secretary's Report
- 6) Treasurer's Report
- 7) Reports from Apiary Managers and Librarian
- 8) Election of Officers
President, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary
Treasurer, Apiary Managers, Librarian
- 9) Election of Committee Members
- 10) Election of Auditor
- 11) AOB
- 12) Date of next AGM

Christine Hazel

Extra help needed at The Environment Centre

The Front of House Team at The Environment Centre have asked for some extra help. The email below explains why.

In particular Frances is looking for helpers with some 'Bee Knowledge' to explain the Observation Hive and our small bee-keeping display at the Centre.

You would be talking to children and their attendant adults. Anyone who has helped explain Bees & Beekeeping to the public at Wycombe Show will find it very easy and very enjoyable. There are even chairs to sit on, cups of tea available too; and lots to look at or read if there is a quiet spell! If you would like to help, ring the Centre on 01 494 511585. If you would like to find out more, give me a ring on 01494 526557.

Clive Hill

Sent: Wednesday, July 26, 2006 12:08 AM

Subject: The Environment Centre

Today at The Environment Centre we had 116 people through the doors. There were just 3 of us looking after the place, and it was a little too busy at times. We do need extra help to cope through the summer.

We aim to be open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11am - 4pm. It is great fun, chatting in the hall to people about the exhibition and encouraging children to play the computer water game (Some need no encouragement - 3 teenagers came in and were there nearly an hour going through the game!)

It is pleasant when there is someone upstairs to answer questions about bees, with another one to oversee the activities tables. At one time today I counted 28 parents and children there - all engrossed in making ladybirds, water voles watching the film about insects and small creatures, doing puzzles or discovering the contents of the discovery drawers.

So I'm sending out a help message. If you can spare time over the next 5 weeks - 11-1.30 or 1.30- 4pm, please let me know.

Or if you can manage the whole day, there is a simple bread and cheese lunch.

Or if you know someone who perhaps is a bit lonely and might help, suggest they get in touch.

But have a happy summer, come what may!

Frances Alexander

Seasonal Tips and Reminders - August 2006

After a difficult spring, the summer honey flow was short but very good. The willowherb and blackberry nectar flow has now dried up and old man's beard (wild clematis) is in flower. This is a pretty good marker that the main summer honey flow is at its end; but the actual date varies from year to year. This summer I would think the hot dry weather brought the season to an end at least two or three weeks earlier than normal. For my own bees the season ended when the borage crop was mown some days ago. Now they are hunting for that little bit of extra honey and will quickly rob exposed combs.

Some local beekeepers have already taken off their honey crop; but what follows assumes that the task is still to be done.

In August you need to carry out two "mandatory jobs" and they need to be sequenced together:-

1. Honey removal and extracting. (Assuming there's some honey to harvest!)
2. Varroa control - to ensure healthy over-winter / spring bees & link with other beekeepers' treatment times.

Dealing with the honey crop

Honey Removal

If you haven't done so already, sometime in the first few days of August, check to see if the honey is capped. When you re-assemble the hive, put on a clearer board, then remove the brace comb from the top and/or bottom bars of the frames when the supers are put back. Then it is much easier, and less messy, to take the supers back for extracting. Be careful you don't leave the trimmings exposed, or you could start a spate of robbing! In the re-assembled hive the bees will tidy up any exposed honey, and then move back down through the clearer board. Once the supers have been cleared (1 to 4 days) take them home for extracting.

Handling Supers. During honey extraction, I make great use of strong flat castor boards 18" square, with a strong castor at each corner. These are used as base-boards for stacks of supers. You can push the stacks around, rather than carrying separate super boxes to move them. Honey extracting and moving supers about is very heavy work: so 'Watch your Back and your Toes!' If you have a lot of supers to handle, wear safety shoes if you have them!

Weighing Supers. At the apiary I mark each super with the hive origin. Back home I weigh each super before and after extracting. I can then calculate the yield of each colony and also the total crop of honey & wax. For weighing I use a digital bathroom scale. These are now reasonably priced and give readouts to 0.1 kg (100g - less than 4 oz) which is massively more accurate than the fisherman's spring balance I used to use. A word of warning; check no propolis is left on the scales before they go back to the bathroom!

De-capping. The traditional way of decapping frames is to use a sharp knife to slice through the air-space just beneath the cappings. An electrical decapping knife makes the job much faster but they are hideously expensive. A decapping fork is useful for those awkward sunken areas of comb and can be used more widely, but may be rather slow. A recent idea for de-capping honey is to use a hot air gun (paint stripping type) to flash-melt the cappings. It seems a popular and time-saving technique, very fast and effective, but with a hidden snag: it can be very easy to blast liquid wax droplets about - instant mess - so practice first! You can also buy 'decapping rollers' which look like a painter's roller, but with spikes. I have one awaiting use, but don't know

how much it will damage the comb, or make extra mess: In due course I'll let you know how I got on with it!

Extracting. If you are using a tangential extractor, never attempt to completely empty the first side of the comb before reversing it to do side two. If you do this, the comb will break, so part extract, then reverse the frames; part extract, then turn again etc. Apart from that golden rule, the longer you leave the combs spinning, the less honey you will leave behind in the comb. Warm honey extracts better and leaves less residue: so work in a warm room - say 30°C rather than 20°C.

Filtering & Separating. Warm honey filters much faster, so 30°C will be dramatically quicker than 15°C. If there is any set honey crystals in the unfiltered honey, they will slow things down enormously. If you only want to filter coarsely, then use a 250 micron mesh (hole size) filter. A 150 micron mesh will filter noticeably more slowly, but will take out those little specks and make the honey look more sparkling. 80 micron filters very very slowly, but the honey will sparkle even more. However, sometimes you can never get rid of a haze if it is due to pollen or a protein component. Allow the honey to 'settle' for a day or two, and then remove the air-bubble scum from the top before filling to jars. The 'froth' is a 'beekeeper's perk' and delightful on bread, or on ice cream, so don't throw it away!

Dealing with the Cappings. You have several options here. 1. Eat them (before the honey has set). 2. Sell them to 'Health Food' customers. 3. Put them back on the hive in a tank-feeder, to let the bees recover the honey. 4. Wash them in rainwater and make mead. 5. Melt them to separate the wax and honey.

Wet Supers after extracting. You have two options for the wet supers. Either they can be returned to the hives a few days later, **in the evening**. They will then be cleaned-up by the bees. If you do this, all the colonies in the apiary will get supers to clean, or have a small feed. They must also have the hive entrances reduced. This treatment puts all colonies at a similar state of alert and excitement and reduces the risk of robbing. Leave the wet supers on the colonies for a few days, then clear them again, and remove them for storage. The alternative routine is to store the supers still wet with honey. If you do this, you must make sure that the stacks of supers are bee-proof; also that any drips of honey cannot seep out from the bottom.

A quick reminder to put some of your new honey to one side for honey shows.

If you can prepare honey for sale, then preparing it for show is only a little bit more difficult. If you're new, and haven't tried this before, plenty of members will willingly give guidance on preparation for showing. A good few years ago, Bob Hunter, who at that time worked as a Seasonal Bees Inspector came to check the bees. He asked to try some of our first honey crop, pronounced it as 'Good enough for the Show' and told us to put some into the Novice class. And it won first prize! So honey showing can't really be that difficult.

Varroa Control / Treatment - while honey supers are on the colony

(What follows assumes the use of acaricide strips, such as Apistan or Bayvarol, if you are using a Thymol based treatment, such as Apiguard; then follow the manufacturer's instructions. Check for further guidance in the DEFRA Varroa Control pamphlet.)

At present we are still able to control varroa using acaricide strips; which is a great blessing. Once resistant mites are here -

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probably next year - we will have to make major changes in our control methods. The regulatory authorities allow either Bayvarol or Apistan to be used on a hive in the presence of honey storage supers: but only if the honey is to be extracted, not used for cut comb. I'll put my treatment strips into the brood chamber of the hive when the clearer boards go on - so obtaining a treatment lead of about one to two weeks over post-harvest application.

The underlying reason for this treatment time is that a full strength colony anticipates the summer bee forage peak tailing off in early August. They do this by making a significant reduction in the size of the brood nest. As a result, a given number of varroa mites in the colony will affect a higher proportion of a smaller brood nest. In small colonies building up from Nucleus size, there should be a bigger proportion of brood, but it will still be vulnerable to varroa side effects. Bees emerging in the late summer are very important to the colony, since they will overwinter then become the foraging force in the spring. Any bees emerging from cells containing varroa mites are weakened - they have short foraging lives and don't live so long. A colony with a preponderance of these weakened bees takes ages to get going in the spring: and that's assuming gets through to the spring. So time your varroa control to anticipate the potential damage, and feed them some syrup to encourage brood production while protected by the varroicide. **Put the varroicide (Bayvarol / Apistan) strips into your colonies as soon as practicable in August.** Treat all colonies in the apiary simultaneously. Leave the strips in for six weeks, and then remove them. Put a reminder on your calendar to make sure you don't forget! Afterwards, check the daily mite drop to see that the treatment has worked.

When the big jobs are done.

In other ways August is the start of the relaxed "keep an eye on things, but not too much to do" phase of the beekeeping year. As far as stores for winter are concerned, you can feed more syrup later in September or possibly even October, if it should be necessary to top up. Once the weather begins to cool, and the wasps start prowling for sweet food, it is sensible to reduce the size of the hive entrance even further. This makes it easier for the guard bees to protect the colony.

And Finally

Don't forget to steal a few minutes to sit beside a hive, to relax, listen, watch, and wonder.

Clive Hill

Denis Pigram - In Memoriam Donations

Members will recall that our May Newsletter carried an obituary for Denis Pigram, who passed away on the 8th of April.

Denis gave long and stalwart service for well over 20 years to the Association. His wife Felice was our Secretary as well. Denis was particularly involved with Beekeeper Education and technical matters. He ran our Beginners Classes for a good many years and also classes that led to the BBKA Intermediate Certificate qualification - which a good bunch of us achieved. In this, and in many other essential ways, Denis did an enormous amount of work for our Association, and for the wider world of Beekeeping.

The Committee of HWBKA has decided to mark Denis's passing by making a donation to a suitable Registered Charity. We have chosen 'The C.B. Dennis British Beekeepers Research Trust'. Further information on the Charity is given below. Felice has told me that she is really thrilled to hear about this; and I know their sons will see it as a fitting gesture.

It is quite likely that members who knew Denis may wish to join us by making their own donations to the Research Trust. We believe it would be helpful to gather together such donations by acting as a focal point before their onward transmission. Since taxpayers donations can be gift aided, the next Newsletter will include a Donation form from the Charity along with our normal AGM papers.

Clive Hill

'The C.B. Dennis British Beekeepers Research Trust' (Registered Charity No. 328685)

The Trust is an independent body making awards to institutions or individuals on the basis of scientific merit of submitted proposals and perceived benefit to British beekeeping. The trust was established in 1990 through the generosity of Mr. C.B. Dennis. It aims to use the interest from the capital investment to support British research projects that are likely to benefit beekeeping in the relatively short term, giving some priority to work on bee diseases. The Secretary of the trust is Brenda Ball, the world renowned Bee Virus Specialist, who recently retired from Rothamsted Research; and there is a board of six Trustees.

Since the foundation of the Trust more than thirty awards in diverse areas of bee research have been made. Particular encouragement is given to young scientists and the Heath travel bursary has recently been established to assist students or researchers at the start of their careers to attend national or international meetings to present their work.

The Trust is pleased to acknowledge the loyal support it already receives from several local beekeeping associations and many individuals. All donations, however small, will be added to the invested capital and bee research in Britain will benefit from the income in perpetuity. Supporting the Trust will ensure that sufficient income is generated to initiate the research that beekeepers would like to see undertaken.

Donations. As it is itself a Charity, the donation from HWBKA cannot be Gift Aided: but any personal donations from a person who is a taxpayer could be. Please think about this and help if you can. Brenda Ball has added the following information :-

"All donations, no matter how small are added to the capital investment of the Trust and the income this generates is used to support bee researchers, studentships and to provide travel bursaries to young scientists to help them develop their careers in bee related studies for the benefit of beekeepers in this country. In the current climate of cut-backs in research the role that the Trust fulfils is ever more important and the benefits to flow from the support it is able to provide will be a tangible and lasting memorial to Denis."

Items for publication will be accepted as hard copies (typed, printed or handwritten) as long as they are totally legible. Normally the closing time for material will be 7am on the 1st of the month

Send them (preferably unfolded) to:

Newsletter, 22 Claremont Gardens, Marlow, SL7 1BS.

E-mails (**without attachments**) can be sent to:

hwbka.newsletter@tiscali.co.uk

The Honey Show

At the end of the beekeeping season comes the honey show. This is harvest time. Beekeepers show off and rejoice in their harvest. Jars of clear honey are lined up on the show benches, the light passing through reveals the range of colours from pale yellow through gold and orange to a rich dark red. The bees have worked hard to bring in nectar from so many different flowers. The beekeepers have worked carefully to extract the honey, filter and bottle it and now the judges taste and smell and admire its clarity. Thicker opaque honeys are there too, seeded by fine crystals and stirred to make the creamy colour and consistency of soft set honey. Then there is the naturally crystallised honey, hardly stirred and allowed to set with the natural roughness of the many sizes of honey crystal from the many flowers that produced it. Honey on the comb can be seen encased under glass to display the bees own larder, wax cells filled with honey, each with its own white cap of wax to lock in the taste and aroma from the flowers of the spring and summer. Pieces of this comb are packed in white boxes. This is the honey for the connoisseur.

The monks in the middle ages prized bees more for their wax than their honey. It had many uses including waterproofing cloth, sealing vessels, and making healing ointments and candles. Wax is secreted from between certain segments of the bees' body to build into the hexagonal cells of the comb. Beekeepers collect the broken discarded comb and wash, melt and filter the wax to produce golden candles that burn slowly and cleanly to give a bright clean light. At the show the beekeepers vie with each other to make the cleanest and most perfect candles, blocks and models of wax but none of this artistry can compare with the intricate construction of the honey comb by the bees.

The show bench may well include sweets and cakes rich with the flavour of honey and to crown the celebration bottles of Mead, the ambrosia of the gods. Modern Science has removed the mystery from water which turns to wine. A little honey in the water and a few wild yeasts will soon ferment. But the art of controlling this is another challenge for the beekeeper and his patience. A prize winning mead probably takes 7 years to mature. It is the perfect drink to celebrate the success of the honey harvest.

This year we are inviting all our members to enter the National Honey Show. There is a special section for Bucks beekeepers and with friendly competition between us and the other Bucks beekeeping associations. The Show takes place between Oct 19th and 21st. There is free entry for beginners and we plan to provide help for those who want to enter. Vivienne Brown is a Senior Honey Judge and can pass on all the wrinkles.

At this stage you should make sure that your honey is clean by filtering well. Put aside about 6lb in standard clean honey jars with lids so that it can set naturally. It is worth weighing as they should contain the correct amount and with set honey there are no second chances. From these you can select the best two to show.

If you have some good looking combs you might have one good enough to enter 'a comb suitable for extraction'. Look through the combs and try to find one that is fully capped. The cappings should be white and even and high enough to be sliced off by the uncapping knife. Put this comb VERY CAREFULLY into the freezer. You do not want to damage the surface. Keeping it in this way kills off any wax moth eggs lurking in the woodwork and helps to prevent the honey from crystallizing. You may want to save one or two more combs in this way as these can be used to make cut comb honey.

It is a good idea to keep 10 to 20lbs of filtered honey to prepare for other classes. We will advise on this nearer the time. If you have honeys of different colours don't mix them. You might even find you have the whole range of light, medium and dark honey.

A word about the cappings wax. You may put it in a feeder for the bees to clean up or wash it but ONLY USE RAIN WATER. The Calcium ions in hard water ruin the wax. You can save the washing water to make Mead but boil it and add a Campden tablet if you are not going to use it straight away. The wax can be melted and filtered to make a wax cake which is not for eating, or more usefully, to make candles.

Below is the Schedule of classes for the Bucks Section of the 'National' which gives you an idea of what you might be able to enter. In addition to the cash prizes there are also trophies but more of that next month.

COUNTY CLASSES

Buckinghamshire Beekeepers' Association

Open only to Members of Bucks County Beekeepers' Association

HONEY (50p entry)

221. Two Jars Light. First: The Laurie Webb Shield and £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

222. Two Jars Medium. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

223. Two Jars Dark. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

224. Two Jars Naturally Crystallised (not stirred). First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

225. Two Jars Soft Set. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

226. Two Containers of Cut Comb. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2. /(See Rule 7.)/

227. One Frame of Honey for Extraction or Cut Comb. (Unwired for the latter) First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

MEAD (50p entry) /(See Rule 11.)/

228. Sweet, one Bottle. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

229. Dry, one Bottle. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

GIFT HONEY (no entry fee)

230. One Jar, Liquid any colour, or Naturally Crystallised (not stirred) or Soft Set. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

BEESWAX (50p entry)

231. One piece between 200-255g (7oz- 9oz). First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

232. One sheet of foundation, wired and mounted in a frame. Size B.S. Deep or larger. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2.

233. Two Matching Beeswax Candles. One to be lit by the Judge. First: £6; Second: £4; Third: £2. (Sponsor: Mr & Mrs KB Showier) /(See Guidance Notes).

Sylvia Chamberlin

HIGH WYCOMBE AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NOMINATIONS

To: All Members

Nominations are invited for the posts of Officers of the Association for the Year 2006/7. Elections will take place at the AGM which will be held on Friday 29th September 2006, starting at 7.30pm at the Environment Centre.

Nominations to be sent to the secretary, Christine Hazell, 1 Herbert Road High Wycombe HP 13 7HL to arrive by September 14th 2006. John Crick will be standing down, having completed his term as Chair. John Chudley will also be standing down. All other officers are willing to continue in post.

POST/PRESENT HOLDER	NOMINATION	PROPOSER/SECONDER
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Chair

John Crick

Secretary

Christine Hazell

Treasurer

Ed West

Vice Chair

Clive Hill

Swarm Officer

Stuart Thorburn

Apiary Managers

John Crick/Bob Hunter

Librarian

John Chudley
