

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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Treasurer: Edward West 01494 520874

Swarm Officer: Stewart Thorburn 07966 956477

Newsletter - August 2007

Diary

Forthcoming Events

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| 11th August | - | Visit to John Hamer's Black Horse Apiary at Woking |
| 8th September | - | Ian Homer - Integrated Pest Management for Varroa Day |
| 28th September | - | AGM |
| 6th October | - | Presidents' Supper |

11th August - Summer Outing to Blackhorse Apiaries

Sylvia Chamberlin has a good list of people who will be joining us on this visit to John Hamer's excellent Teaching Apiary. John is one of the UK's best B beekeeping know-how experts, so we expect a really interesting afternoon. Raymond and Sylvia are about to become Grandparents for the first time, so as well as waiting for the (now overdue) baby to arrive, Sylvia has been finalizing the details for our lunch stopover. She will circulate final details by email.

8th September - Ian Homer - Integrated Pest Management for Varroa Day

Ian is the CSL Bee Inspector for the Southern Region. He really knows his stuff and is an excellent communicator. His target is to coach us in the techniques necessary for 'living with' Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa.

This is an **essential day** for all our new members and the rest of us who are not yet up to speed on the IPM techniques. **There will be no charge for paid-up members of HWBKA.** We will be at North Dean Village Hall, a bit up the road from Hughenden. You will need to bring your own chair. Christine is already circulating the lunch menu choices, so if you haven't yet done anything about coming along, please ring Christine to book your place. 01 494 531599

28th September AGM

Our AGMs are always quite lively, but nowadays we also use the evening to slot-in a short extra talk of high relevance to beekeeping. On the business side, we must elect the Committee and Officers for the coming year; and adjust our constitution to align membership categories with those in the new BBKA Constitution. The formal papers will be coming out in the August newsletter.

This year we have a physiotherapist coming to talk to us about 'Lifting and Getting the Best from your Back': which will be extremely relevant for us beekeepers! I anticipate we will have the talk first, then the AGM. We will follow this with Vivienne Brown's judging our 'Frame of Honey' competition.

6th October - President's Evening

Will Steynor needs to get an idea on numbers for the President's Evening by the end of August. The lady who is providing the

Chairman's Chat

A difficult season is now drawing to a close. A cold wet year, following last year's hot and dry one: so I hope our new recruits will not have become dispirited! I've heard of poor honey crops and good ones. It will have depended on bees' local access to forage during those short good spells of weather scattered amongst the cold and rain. Several people have had colonies fail to re-queen themselves after swarming. In my own apiary three colonies 'hung' without brood for a prolonged period during the prolonged bad weather: but now the queens are laying again, and with a good brood pattern.

Apiguard Order

The 'Bulk Buy' Order was well received. We had 23 orders, buying 38 boxes, which is enough material to treat 190 hives. I bought from C Wynne Jones, at £15.30 per box - 31.5% discount against Thorne's list price. Interestingly all the orders arrived by email: despite my holding off the order to allow for orders by the paper recipients of our Newsletter, no more were forthcoming - so a good lesson there? My thanks to Clive Winslow, for taking on the delivery and handover aspects of this 'mini-project'. Delivery to members started on July 20th - in good time for August use.

Bumblebee Colony at Environment Centre

The bees are doing extremely well, have greatly expanded their comb area, and are of much interest to visitors. To date they have not been attacked by the bumblebee wax moth *Aphomia sociella*: which is a major achievement. As you stand outside and watch the relative flight activity at the separate honeybee and bumblebee alighting boards, you will be amazed at how little flight activity the bumblebees have. Our two colonies are an excellent demonstration of the two very different types of social bees.

Learning of Bees & Beekeeping + New Beekeepers' Reprise

This informal gathering was highly successful. Eight people came to learn of bees and honey and three are potential recruits for the 2008 Beginners Course. Clive Winslow's gathering of this year's (and a few of last year's) beginners was well attended

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food is herself away for a large part of September and wants to know the approximate number of people she is catering for before she goes away. Will already has 21 places reserved and is limiting it to 80 people. Please send Will an email, or ring him to reserve your places for this highly enjoyable occasion. willsteynor@hotmail.com

Clive Hill

PRESIDENT'S EVENING

**Saturday 6th October 2007
at Frieth Village Hall**

Club Awards & Supper

After dinner speaker
Capt. Tim Orchard
(ex Concorde Captain)

Cost £12.50 per person
Soft drinks included,
please bring your own wine/beer

To book either email:
willsteynor@hotmail.com

or write to:-

Will Steynor,

Moor House, Moor Common, Lane End,
High Wycombe, Bucks. HP14 3HR

When booking please state how
many tickets you require and
inform me of any specific dietary
requirements.

Numbers are limited. Please book
your places soon!

and very lively. We finished by enjoying some cut comb honey. In early September Clive intends to hold a second discussion session on 'Preparing for Winter'. He is also planning a 'Preparing for Spring' session early next year. Contact Clive by email if you would like to join the group. clive.winslow@btconnect.com

Thornes Sale & Purchase of New Equipment

You may have seen adverts for Thornes Sale at their Windsor branch on 1st September. Although I've never been, many others have said it is a 'Free-for-All' and not worth the 'aggro'. Thornes also have a January Sale; and this year we managed to buy from their Sale List without difficulty via on-line purchasing. We can do another 'Bulk Buy' in January if members help us by planning ahead.

Calling All Entrants ... Frame of Honey Competition

After discussion with Vivienne Brown, the Judge; and John Crick, who organised the Competition; we have worked out how the Comparison and Prize Judging will be done. We aim to achieve a balance between discrimination and inclusiveness. It is important that all 21 entrants bring their frame along to the AGM evening. It doesn't matter how 'imperfect' the frame is – that is the bees fault, as much as your own! So bring it along even if they never even drew out the foundation; or made you a wobbly sided frame; or only part filled it.

We will gather the 21 frames together, make sure it is impossible to identify who submitted them: then hand them over to Vivienne. She will then group the frames into one of three categories:-

1. Frames suitable for extraction. (1st, 2nd & 3rd prize cards can be awarded.)

2. Frames whose contents are very beautiful, but set, or otherwise not suitable for extraction. (Again, 1st, 2nd & 3rd prize cards can be awarded.)

3. Frames suitable for Educational use and Learning.

After the judging, Vivienne will explain how and why she has made the prize decisions; and she will discuss the frames in category 3, so we can learn about them, and their contents (or lack of contents!) and begin to understand both the Judging Process; and the intricacies of getting a frame for honey drawn and filled.

Clive Hill

Honey Extractor for Hire

Association Honey Extractor and Strainer/Settling Tank

The association has a tangential honey extractor and a settling tank with a strainer available for members to use.

This saves new members the expense of purchasing a costly extractor in the first couple of seasons.

It gives new members time to get used to extracting and then decide what type of extractor best suits their needs, before making a purchase.

Using the association's extractor is more than adequate for anyone with only a few hives.

Available for Loan to Members

(£10 rental on collection)

To arrange collection call:

Julian Parker 01494 714460

Seasonal Tips and Reminders August 2007

Taking off the honey crop

Ensure colonies have sufficient stores for immediate future.

Honey Extraction – further know-how

Watch your Back! Take Care - Lifting & Carrying

Varroa control

Although my notes in the July Newsletter included some material on Honey Crop processing, these August Notes assume this task is still to be done.

After a difficult Spring, a difficult Summer too ...! The prolonged wet weather meant that for most of us, a great deal of the summer nectar flow never really got going. For my own bees a Borage crop just over the fence meant they have been able to gather some honey, but nectar sources further away must have had little bee activity. What of the other major forage? The Blackberry nectar flow is over; a little White Clover and Willowherb remain in flower. Old Man's Beard (wild clematis) is now flowering and this is a pretty good marker that the main summer honey flow has ended. From now on the available forage will probably produce enough nectar to cover in-colony needs, not honey to store. So the bees will now be hunting for that little bit of extra nectar, or stray honey, from wherever they can find it; and will quickly rob exposed combs.

In August you need to carry out two "mandatory jobs" which 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 and to link with other beekeepers' treatment times.

Dealing with the honey Crop

Honey Removal When you remove your honey crop, make sure that the bees have sufficient stores – and give them a small feed if you are uncertain. 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. It will then be much easier, and less messy, to take the supers back for extracting. Be careful you don't leave the brace comb 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 (hopefully after 1 day, but possibly up 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. After you have strapped the pile together, you can push supers around, rather than lifting and carrying separate 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, and make a record of them. 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 give readouts to 0.1 kg (100g - less than 4 oz). Do 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 cap-

pings. Cut upwards and tilt the frame so the cappings separate from the comb. The cappings can fall into a plastic box, or onto a Decapping Tray depending on your scale of work. 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. It is possible to use a Hot Air (paint stripping) Gun to flash-melt the cappings. I'm told the technique is very fast, but there is a hidden snag: it is very easy to blast liquid wax droplets about, with instant mess! You can also buy 'decapping rollers' which look like a painter's roller with spikes. I bought one to try it out, but found it messy and slow: so I'm keeping it for the future, if I have Heather honey needing 'loosening' before extraction.

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 and definitely not 15°C.

Filtering & Separating. Warm honey also filters much faster, so 30°C will be dramatically quicker than 15°C. Also, if there are 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 µm (0.25 mm) mesh (hole size) filter. A 150µm mesh will filter noticeably more slowly, but will take out those little specks and make the honey look more sparkling. 80µm filters very very slowly, but the honey will sparkle even more. But 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 – but use the absolute minimum of heat, or the flavour of the honey will be degraded.

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 must 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; and that 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

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this before, some of our 'old hands' will give guidance on preparation for showing.

Varroa Control / Treatment – Start this immediately after the honey supers have been removed from the colony. What follows assumes the use of Apiguard Thymol based treatment. Follow the manufacturer's instructions given on the pack; and in the 'Products' section of Vita's website. <http://www.vita-europe.com/> Further guidance may also be obtained from the DEFRA Varroa Control pamphlet, which is accessible at http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/pdfs/managing_varroa.pdf.

The underlying reason for treatment NOW is that a full strength colony anticipates the summer forage peak tailing off in early August by making a significant reduction in the size of the brood nest. As a consequence, a given number of Varroa mites 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 over-winter then become the foraging force in the spring. Bees emerging from cells containing Varroa mites are weakened: they have short foraging lives, are likely to be affected by virus diseases; and don't live so long. A colony with a preponderance of these weakened bees will take ages to get going in the spring - assuming it gets through to the spring! So you must time your Varroa control to anticipate the potential damage by starting the treatment as soon as possible: and give them a small feed of syrup to encourage brood production while protected by the varroicide.

Using Apiguard. Apiguard is a thymol containing gel supplied in shallow trays. Because the smell of thymol will contaminate honey and render it unpalatable, it has to be used AFTER the honey crop has been removed. Expose the gel by peeling back the cover. The bees have to gnaw at the gel, and spread the thymol round in the hive. Put the tray into the hive on top of the brood frames. Make sure that the bees can get at the gel. Give them headroom for this by putting a shallow 'eke' frame, or an upturned Clearer Board over the brood chamber. (You will need at least 15 mm headroom.) Put the first the Apiguard tray into your hive as soon as practicable in August, leave it in place for two weeks, and then replace it with a second tray, leaving this for a further two weeks.

IMPORTANT : During this time, either give the hive a solid floor, or put the blanking off (Varroa drop check tray) beneath mesh floor. You do this: 1. To ensure the hive stays warm, because an in-hive temperature of 15°C is needed to give a build up of thymol vapour within the hive to control the varroa mites. 2. The solid floor will also help maintain the vapour concentration. Treat all colonies in the apiary simultaneously. Put reminders on your calendar to make sure you don't forget to change, or remove the trays! Before and afterwards, check the daily mite drop to see that the treatment has worked. Record (and keep) full details of the treatment - eg. Product used. Batch number. Use-by date. When inserted. When removed.

When the big jobs are done.

In other ways August can be 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 wasps start prowling for sweet food, it is sensible to reduce the size of the hive entrance. 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

AGM

SEPTEMBER 28TH AT 7.30PM

We are again approaching the time to be considering nominations for both officers and committee members for the association. We are fortunate in that, on the committee, we have a broad range of experienced beekeepers and beginners, all of whom bring various skills and attributes to enhance the running of HWBKA. During the year, we have received resignations from John Crick, in his role as Marlow Apiary Manager and lead tutor for the Beginners Course and from Bob Hunter, in his role as Apiary Manager for Hughenden Apiary. Various members have been assisting with managing Marlow Apiary and Scott Rutland and Bill Bendyshe-Brown are currently managing Hughenden Apiary. Both John and Bob have offered many years of service to the association.

I will be resigning as Secretary as from Spring 2008, having then been in post for 3 years.

So, we are looking for new committee members and officers. What does this entail? Well, we have approximately 5 committee meetings per year; events need to be organised as does training and education. We ask each committee member to take responsibility for some area that assists towards our aims; for example, someone has written and set up the website, and is our webmaster, keeping the site updated; another member undertook cutting and organising the woodwork for the woodworking day. The work is divided out according to what time members have available and what their particular interests are. There are also non-committee members who offer to help in different areas.

The committee is open to new ideas and approaches and new beekeepers are welcome to join us. The nomination form is attached to the newsletter - please talk to members about considering nomination, or think about it for yourself.

Christine Hazell

**For All Your Beekeeping
Equipment and Supplies**
contact our local Thornes agent

John Parslow
Bailiffs Cottage, Bledlow, Aylesbury
Tel: 01844 344948

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 4th of the month. Send them (preferably unfolded) to:

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

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

newsletter@hwbka.co.uk

Website: www.hwbka.co.uk

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HIGH WYCOMBE AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NOMINATIONS

To: All Members

Nominations are invited for the posts of Officers for the Association for the Year 2007/8. Elections will take place at the AGM which will be held on Friday 28th September 2007, starting at 7.30 pm at the Environment Centre.

Nominations to be sent to the secretary, Christine Hazell, 1 Herbert Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7HL to arrive by 14th September 2007.

Christine Hazell will be standing down as secretary from Spring 2008.

Bob Hunter and John Crick have resigned from the Apiary Managers posts during the year. All other officers are willing to continue in post.

POST/PRESENT HOLDER

NOMINATION

PROPOSER/SECONDER

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Clive Hill

Secretary

Christine Hazell

Treasurer

Ed West

Vice Chair

Clive Winslow

Swarm Officer

Stewart Thorburn

Apiary Managers

Vacant

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Stan Grierson