

# High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

Chairman: John Crick 01494521557

President: Ron White 01494712640

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

Treasurer: Edward West 01494520874

Swarm Officer: Stewart Thorburn 01494510327

## Newsletter - February 2006

### Diary

#### Forthcoming Events

- |               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| 4th February  | - | Woodworking Day   |
| 15th February | - | 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course starts                  |
| 15th February | - | Wildlife Day at Booker Garden Centre, 10.00 - 4.30 pm       |
| 24th February | - | 'Beekeeping in Mexico' - Nick Withers, Oxford Bee Inspector |
| 27th February | - | Food Hygiene Course run by Mid-Bucks BKA 7.30 pm            |
| 4th March     | - | Bucks County BKA Seminar                                    |
| 31st March    | - | 'Healthy Bees' - Beulah Cullen                              |
| 27th April    | - | 'Beekeeping and doing another full-time job' - Andrew Gibb  |

#### 15th February Introduction to Beekeeping Course

starts and runs for the next five Wednesday evenings

The course has six evenings of theory followed by a combined evening with all members on Friday 31st March and a further two sessions of practical beekeeping. Once again we have a good response from potential new members but I need existing members to come along to offer their support and experience to the newcomers.

*John Crick*

#### 27th February (Monday) Food Hygiene Course

Mid Bucks BKA are running a repeat of this popular course at the Bowls Club, Dobbins Lane, Wendover. 7.30 to 9.30 pm An essential course if you sell honey or wish to improve the quality of your product. The cost is £5, pay on the night, but phone 01296 489651 to reserve your place.

*John Crick*

#### 4th March Bucks County Seminar

The details of this event were given in last months newsletter and in Beecraft and since then I have been receiving enquiries and bookings not only from Bucks but also from beekeepers throughout the south of England. The event was started about 10 years ago to give beekeepers in the area an opportunity to get together. We have talks on a variety of subjects and try to get both specialists and innovative speakers. Those coming are invited to put on small displays of beekeeping interest **and also to bring items for the beekeepers BRING and BUY stall (10%) to county funds.**

In view of the recent controversy on pesticide residues we were asked to find a speaker who could put these issues in perspective. Peter Martin the Chairman of the Honey International packers Association is the international expert on honey quality and standards. His talk entitled 'Honey Quality Issues' will explain the problems and current legislation. We are fortunate in having Phillip Denwood, editor of 'Bee Improvement' the magazine of the British Bee Breeders Association living locally. Phillip will be talking about the rational approach to queen

### Chairman's Chat

The days are getting longer, the sun is shining (on some days) and the beekeepers can start to anticipate suitable activities. We seem to have a busy few weeks ahead with our Woodworking Workshop, County Seminar, Introduction Course and our first exhibition of the year. Following the survey of members carried out by our secretary Christine, we are encouraged to believe that there will be a lot of support for our activities. Please make sure that you make that extra effort to offer assistance where possible.

#### HONEY FOR SALE

Honey from the Association apiaries is available for sale in 30lb or 40lb buckets at £1.80 per pound. Fully strained when extracted but requires melting. Empty buckets returnable. Contact John Crick.

#### WYCOMBE TOWN SHOW

We have agreed to take part in the Town Show again this year. Please reserve the weekend of 5th/6th August. Over the two days it will be so much easier if we can have a number of volunteers willing to offer their time.

breeding now being promoted by this association. Chad Cryer and Ceri Collinborne are two enthusiastic young beekeepers who have recently started their own beekeeping enterprise. They will share some of their ideas and experiences. They attended the Apimondia congress in Dublin in August last year and Ceri was chosen to represent Britain as Honey Queen against representatives from such countries as USA, Argentina, China and Russia and was subsequently selected to become World Honey Queen for the next two years. It was an honour for Britain and we are honoured to have her joining us.

The longish lunch break with an excellent ploughman's lunch should give us the opportunity to chat to friendly beekeepers from Bucks and neighbouring counties. We can look at both new

*Continued on page 2 column 1*

*Continued from page 1 column 2*

and second hand equipment that is up for sale and to other displays of interest. There will also be a 10min video running entitled 'Dancing with Bees', which aims at introducing the watcher to the world of bees. It was produced by Gill Sentinella from Bedfordshire who felt the need for a promotional video. It would enhance any educational event and could be used as an introduction to a school visit. Gill will be giving a short talk on making the film. My impression is that she spent a year living inside the beehive! Video and DVD copies will be for sale.

Each year the numbers at the Seminar have increased and we already have over 40 delegates on the list so **BOOK NOW**. E-mail [sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk](mailto:sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk) or Tel: 01494 522082

**We do also need cakes to go with our coffee and help in serving the reception coffee.**  
**If you can help in this way please let Sheila Taylor know**  
**E-mail: [shejont@waitrose.com](mailto:shejont@waitrose.com) or Tel: 01753 884893**

### **BBKA Spring Convention**

The BBKA Spring Convention is at the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire on April 16th & 17th. All the suppliers, booksellers etc are there and there is a good lecture programme too - full details in February BBKA News on page 12-13. The Local Association no longer have REDUCED ADVANCED TICKETS available but you can get them by applying directly to John Hayward before April 2nd - see the column on the left hand side of page 12 in BBKA News. If you want directions please ring one of our committee members. It is worth arriving early. Don't forget to take your new membership card. Non-members pay more. *Sylvia Chamberlin*

### **Forthcoming Beekeeping Events outside the County**

**Middlesex BKA Federation Day** 25th Feb at Greenford Community Centre.

Speakers:

Will Messenger - Historic hives  
Van Hinman - Aspects of Swarming  
Ivor Davis - Beekeeping Husbandry Course

Admission £6.00 on the door

Contact - Jo Telfer: [jvtelfer@hotmail.com](mailto:jvtelfer@hotmail.com) 02088683494

**Cambridgeshire One-Day meeting** 11th March at Waterbeach Community School

Speakers:

Rodger Dewhurst - Behavioural Adaptations of the Cornish Honeybee to Varroa  
Prof. Francis Ratnieks - Research into queen rearing, queen mating and stock improvement  
Dr. Juliet Osborne - Exploring the flight patterns and navigational abilities of bumble bees and honey bees

Cost £12.00 (by 28th February) includes lunch

Contact: Dr. David Abson, 01223 834620

**Central Association of Beekeepers** Spring Meeting on 11th March at @Roots & Shoots. The Vauxhall Centre, London, SE11 6DN\_

Speakers:

Elli Leadbeater - Flower choice 'copying' in bumble bees: who does it and how important is it?

Stuart Roberts - Pollinator decline - assessing the risks: ALARM and EPI

Matt Shardlow - Buglife - conserving life in the undergrowth

All welcome - Admission free but voluntary exit collection.

Contact: Mrs M.R. English, Tel: (0208)9775867 or [norman.carreck@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:norman.carreck@bbsrc.ac.uk)

*Sylvia Chamberlin*

### **Recent Event Reports**

**25th November 2005 A Botanist's view of local wildlife.**

#### **Angus Idle**

This talk came about through HWBKA's growing involvement with The Environment Centre. Some months ago, in a 'networking meeting' we made fruitful contact with Wycombe Wildlife Group, one of the local organisations which helped found the Centre. Our links with WWG continue to grow and Angus, one their key people, came along to be our speaker.

Angus Idle got involved with his school's Natural History Society, and soon became their Recorder. They drew up a Flora List for the school grounds, and found 200 plant species. One of the schoolmasters spotted Angus' interest in botany and advised that he should choose a difficult taxonomic group, then specialise in it: so Angus chose the Grasses. After National Service he worked for a while at Kew, and then moved to work for the Grassland Research Establishment at Hurley. At that time Intensive Farming was starting to become established and specially grown Rye Grass Leys had started to replace the natural field herbage. Grassland Research employed a small number of botanists, called Grassland Surveyors, whose job was to walk fields and record the type and number of the plant species present. Angus became one of these Surveyors and his 'working patch' was England and Wales. He reckons that he has walked over and explored some 250,000 fields! He used to get through about three pairs of gumboots a year, and would be away from base for weeks on end. A small screwdriver was an essential part of his kit: being ideal for digging-up plants to examine their roots: this sometimes being an important part of the identification process.

Angus really knows his subject, and was an excellent speaker. As the basis of his talk he used a collection of 35 mm projector slides, most of which he had taken. He both questioned us about the slides and encouraged us to ask questions. We worked him pretty hard and both sides had a stimulating evening!

Angus claimed that, to the discerning eye of a skilled botanist, it was possible to know how far away from the farm buildings you were, just by checking the types of species present in the ground beneath your feet! This know-how came from a knowledge that expensive Rye grass always tended to be sown fairly close to the farm; and an understanding that such specially sown feed crops would not necessarily be viable in the long term. In time they would tend to be superseded by resilient natural herbage growing from the enormous reservoir, or 'seed bank' of wild seed, that lies dormant in the soil.

Although he is a botanist, Angus used an ecologist's mindset to explore the photos with us. His underlying theme was the type of plants and animals we might find in the Wycombe area and further afield, and why they were there. He explained how the hidden driving force of 'soil type' (alkaline or acid, free-draining or wet etc.) caused differences in the types of plant which

*Continued on page three column 1*

grow in a place. Those plants then become potential food sources for invertebrates, which in turn can be food for vertebrates. So the types and numbers of slugs and snails, bees and butterflies, will interact with the types and numbers of birds and mammals through the range of food-chain interactions. This underlying wildlife ecology also interacts with the possible use made of farmland. And he showed that in livestock farming, the different types of farm animal had different eating habits - which leads to different types of browsing wear on the plants present.

Angus also used photos taken recently, and a few years ago to explain the potential habitat changes that result from something as simple as tree and shrub growth. Other photos were used to explain farming changes. His talk was frequently enlivened by interesting anecdotes. He also showed us photos of some of the local speciality plants and their distribution. Thus, to give a personal example, I now realise that those green helleborine type plants that grow a few yards from the side of Abbey Barn Lane are not 'garden escapes' but examples of *Helleborus foetidus*, an uncommon wild plant. Many other members of the audience must have had similar 'flash of light' experiences caused by the sudden understandings that came from this talk.

Many thanks to Angus for giving us a most thought provoking, interesting and engaging evening.

You can find about more about Wycome Wildlife Group from their excellent website : [www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk](http://www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk)

Clive Hill

## Phil's February Quiz

- 1 Name the three stimuli (conditions) that result in colonies naturally raising queens, and which stimulus is most likely to give you the poorest queen? (4 points)
- 2 Honeybee tracheal mites are internal parasites of adult, larval and pupal honeybees. (True or False)
- 3 On average about ..... percent of Varroa mites found within the colony are found in sealed brood cells.  
A. 26, B. 86, C.16, D. 46, E.66
- 4 Colonies with screened bottom boards result in the increase in the amount of capped brood, fewer Varroa mites on adults and significantly fewer mites in brood cells. (True or False)
- 5 Queen, worker and drone honeybee larvae of similar ages and genotypes are equally susceptible to American Foulbrood infection. (True or False)
- 6 When a female Varroa mite enters either a worker or drone brood cell, she crawls down the side of the cell and immerses herself in the brood food found underneath the larva. Please explain how the mite survives while it is immersed in the brood food. (2 points)
- 7 Multiple mating with unrelated drones increases the genetic diversity of a colony's worker population which is considered to be beneficial. (True or False)
- 8 What is the function of the drone's "Hairy Plate" associated with its reproductive organs? (2 points)
- 9 Swarming propensities vary widely in different honeybee races and strains. (True or False)

## Seasonal Tips and Reminders February 2006

This is another month in which the beekeeper's role is about "keeping an eye on things" and planning for the coming season.

With the apiary quiet and the ground soft, it is an excellent time to check your fences and the hive stands. If you work with Hive Stands, then are they at the right height for you to be able to work the brood chamber without stooping? Do the stands have firm legs? Check to see if they wobble, or are really tight. It is easy to drive new legs into the soft ground in winter, and with minimal flight activity it disturbs the bees less. Are the stands strong enough? A stand carrying two strong colonies in the middle of summer could easily carry a static load of 250 kilos (quarter of a ton), perhaps more.

On mild days you'll see bees flying: both to cleanse themselves, and to collect water. On days when it's not warm enough for flight, the cluster loosens inside the hive and bees scuttle about indoors, doing chores. Hence the wax debris (cappings removed to allow access to winter stores) and the odd dead bee on an alighting board.

In the coming weeks the forage available will be Hazel catkins (there are a few early ones out already), Snowdrops and Crocus. Pussy Willow (Sallow) will follow, often towards the end of February.

Keep monitoring the weight of the hives because once brood rearing begins in earnest, stores consumption increases rapidly. You could "emergency feed" sugar in paste form, like Bakers Fondant or Candy, positioned close to the cluster, but don't give Syrup at this time of year.

Clive Hill

## BBKA Basic Assessment

Last year 9 beekeepers from the south of Bucks got together to work for the BBKA Basic assessment test of beekeeping proficiency. They were provided with notes on the theory and met together to discuss problems with John Chudley (County Examinations secretary). Several practical sessions were then arranged where John guided them through the practical requirements. The test itself is an oral and practical test where the candidate opens a hive and talks about what he can see. Everyone passed the test and enjoyed the camaraderie. The syllabus for the test can be found on the BBKA web-site. John has agreed to run another such course starting around the end of March and already has 4 Mid-Bucks members signed up. If you would like to take part please let me know soon. You do need to have kept bees for one full year before taking the test. E-mail [sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk](mailto:sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk) or Tel: 01494 522082

## Life in the 1500's

There was nothing to stop things falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

Phil Wiggins

## Answers to Phil's February Quiz

1. Emergency, Swarming and Supercedure. Emergency stimulus is likely to give the poorest queen.
2. False. Tracheal mites are internal parasites of only adult bees.
3. E. 66%
4. True
5. False. Larvae of queens are more susceptible to AFB than larvae of workers of the same age and genotype, which in turn are more susceptible than larvae of drones.
6. Once a varroa mite enters the brood food under a larva it becomes immobilized. While immersed it erects its peritremes (Aquatic breathing tubes) which allows it to breath and survive.
7. True. Queens normally mate with 12-15 different drones. These drones will carry different genes for a wide variety of traits and the offspring resulting from the multiple mating produces a variable and cosmopolitan worker population.
8. The hairy plate is part of the drones reproductive structures and is used duping mating to push the 'mating sign' from the previous drone out of the way so he can deposit his semen.
9. True. The swarming instinct varies widely in different honey-bee races and strains.

There were a possible 14 points this month.

Score:           14-12 Excellent  
                  11-9 good  
                  8 -5 Fair

---

If you are a beekeeper  
or have beekeeping  
equipment for sale  
you could advertise  
in this space.

And the special feature  
is  
that it would be free

## HONEY JARS FOR 2006

Whilst the original supplier of our honey jars went into administration, I am pleased to inform you that two of the major suppliers to the Bristol Bottle Company have taken over the company under the new name Compak and have been trading successfully since September 2005.

Suppliers of jars are available as usual for 2006 and I have been assured that no increase is expected from last year's competitive price for lib. jars of £23.90 per gross, delivered and for collection and payment by you at Bob Hunter's House.

However I will inform you of the firm price in the March newsletter.

In the meantime if you intend to order your jars through the Association and take advantage of the bulk buying, would you please let me know the quantity that you will require, by one of the following means:, Telephone 01628 482110  
E-mail at philwiggins@tiscali.co.uk  
By letter 61, Pound Lane, Marlow, SL7 2AZ

**No firm orders will be placed until I get the price confirmed in writing.**

Any increases and I will let you know before ordering.

Note: Other jar sizes are available if required - Just let me know.

*Phil Wiggins*

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