

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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President: Will Steynor 01494 881205

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Treasurer: Edward West 01494 520874

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Newsletter - February 2007

Diary

Forthcoming Events

- | | | |
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| 10th February | - | Apiary Clearance - Hughenden |
| 23rd February | - | Dr Sara Robb - Toiletries and Cosmetics from Hive Products. |
| 25th February | - | Associations Day at Stockcross Village Hall near Newbury. |
| 2nd March | - | Bucks County Seminar at Memorial Hall, Wendover. |
| 7th March | - | Start of Beginners Classes |

Saturday 10th February at 10.30 am - Apiary Clearance Workparty at Hughenden. The Association Apiaries needs annual maintenance on hedges and scrub. Please come along and bring your hedge trimmers to help the apiary manager with the annual clean-up. Last year, with several willing helpers, we managed to get all the work done in just over an hour. If the weather is too wet on this day, we'll aim for Sunday 11th Feb, same time. To get directions to the apiary, and/or check that we'll be going ahead if the weather looks doubtful, please call Bob on 01494 716379.

Christine Hazel

17th February, Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers - Beekeepers' Day at Ruislip Methodist Church Hall, just off Ruislip High Street(B4180). Admission £6.00 on the door. For further information, contact Jo Telfer on 020 8868 3494

23rd February, HWBKA Meeting. This will be a talk and practical demonstration of making cosmetic preparations and soap. The speaker comes highly recommended, by Anna Chambers; who is now a 'satellite' member of ours, up in Yorkshire. For this meeting, we will be located downstairs, in what is normally the Exhibition Room.

25th February, CSL Southern Region Associations Day. Ian Homer has organised this for Sunday 25th February 2007 at 10.30 at The Sutton Hall, Church Road, Stockcross, Newbury, Berks. He has a good programme. Please book in advance if you would like to attend, and take your own lunch. e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk

3rd March, Bucks BKA Seminar . Sylvia Chamberlin has organised an excellent day for us again: her swansong as County Secretary. Do come along if you possibly can; you will have an enjoyable and highly stimulating day, with beekeepers present from far and wide. We pay on the door, but food has to be pre-organised, so you must book in advance. Margaret Crick is coordinating the provision of cakes and chutney; so if you can help with the supply of these, please give Margaret a ring on 01 494 521557. If you have any un-needed beekeeping items, please bring them along to sell on the Bring & Buy Stall. The programme for the day is given elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Clive Hill

Continued on page 2 column 1

Chairman's Chat

We had a good turnout for the first meeting of 2007. It started with a brief EGM, in which we modified the Association's Financial Year; and reduced the number of people who have Charity Commission Trustee status from the whole committee, to just the four key posts. Then we stayed in 'Formal Mode' to show our long term gratitude to four people who have done outstanding work for the Association over many years: Bernard Wells, Jim Earley, John Crick, and Phil Wiggins. All were presented with a pack of Garden Centre Tokens. John and Phil have also been honoured with Life Membership status. Formalities over, Will Steynor gave an excellent talk on Queen Rearing. As usual for Will, he had some challenges for the normally accepted rules; and he sparked some interesting discussion. Many of the necessary operations were explained using some of his beautifully home made equipment.

Bucks County BKA – AGM

A few days before Will's Talk, a number of HWBKA members were at the Bucks County AGM, held this time at Chalfonts BKS. Change was afoot in the county committee: Vivienne Brown handed over her role as President to John Crick, and Sylvia Chamberlin handed over the County Secretary role to Richard Simpson, from Chalfonts. Following the AGM, Margaret Thomas, from Essex, gave a very interesting talk about Queen Rearing. So those who were at both meetings saw two very different talks on the topic of Queen Rearing within a week! It was also interesting to see differences in style of meetings: Chalfonts broke part-way for food (tea and sandwiches) before the talk, but were a much less question-asking audience.

Question Time on BBC1 TV came from High Wycombe last week. Did you watch? The audience of 150 is selected from perhaps thousands of applicants, so as to have a balance of men and women, young and old, and ethnic mix.

Somehow HWBKA managed to get four members in the audience. One (Bill B-B) managed to get a point in: his quip was that 'the prisons are running out of space, so when Tony Blair finally resigns from office, they won't have space for him'. A good laugh followed!

Clive Hill

Recent Event Reports

HWBKA Woodworking Day. We had an excellent turnout, this year filling two adjoining Workshops: and later, the dining area of the Royal Oak Pub for lunch. The day was organised by Christine Hazel; and Clive Winslow and Scott Rutland had worked hard to prepare the supply of pre-cut wood for varroa floors and ekes this year. Bob Hunter had also prepared parts for nucleus boxes. A good number of people were assembling flat pack supers, roofs and brood chambers which the Association had purchased from Thornes January Sale. These will be used either to refurbish some of the Association's hives; or for sale to some of the new beekeepers we anticipate launching, after the coming Beginners Course. There was a real buzz of activity throughout the day; and an excellent mix of long and little experience - with old hands showing others how to do the fiddly bits. It was good to meet several new faces too. Many thanks to Christine, Clive, Scott and Bob!

Clive Hill

26th January, Will Steynor "Queen rearing on a small scale"

Will began by reminding the audience that a good queen was the secret to a good hive. We should aim for a queen that is virile, produces a good quantity of queen substance for control and growth of the hive and produces a colony that is good at honey production. His simple method of queen rearing uses a nucleus box comprising a floor with a ½" diameter entrance hole, brood chamber, feeder and roof. The hole is small to give the small number of bees an appropriate entrance to protect. Will uses 5 or 6 frames, and believes that a good 6-frame nuc is enough to see a queen through the winter, ready for use as a backup in the spring if necessary. As a rule, Will keeps one nuc for every 4 – 5 hives.

For 1 – 2 hives.

During inspections in April or May, you may find the first queen cells. If the queen is still present, you may add supers for space, and cut out the qc's to stall or stop the swarm.

However, Will explained that these qc's created instinctively by the bees were probably the best that the hive would produce as they would have been built from scratch with the egg laid and hatching in them, rather than later qc's which may be built as an emergency response using a young worker grub that had not been initially fed on royal jelly. This would lead to an inferior queen which is not what you want leading your colony.

Make a nucleus from these first qc's. Ensure that the queen remains in the main hive. Use a side frame from the hive, which should have pollen and honey in it. Add the frame(s) with the qc's and finish with a frame of drawn comb for the bees to cluster on. Close up the frames in the main hive and add foundation around the outside. Take young bees from one of the supers in the main hive and transfer to the nuc. These are most likely to stay put. Take the nuc to another site if possible, or at least, move it away from the hive and point the entrance in a different direction.

From egg to a laying queen could take 4 or more weeks, but this nuc will only produce one laying queen, no matter how many qc's. The main hive may well not swarm now, but if later qc's are found it is better to cut out any capped cells as they may be from worker grubs. Uncapped cells are more likely to have been planned properly. It may be worth checking the nuc to see if the original queen has been moved by mistake. The nuc will have eggs before the qc's have hatched.

Best to put her back in the main hive to ensure the best honey crop. Lock her in a cage in a super for a couple of days to allow the bees to get used to her again, then put her in the cage in the brood chamber but use candy to block the end so that the bees can get her out. Following this introduction, leave the hive for at least a week. Will initially uses a hair roller with a bung, then uses a candy plug of "a little honey to a lot of icing sugar" to plug the end. A handy item, rolled in to a ball and kept in a jar with a dusting of flour to stop it sticking. The above method of queen rearing does not employ any selection process.

To breed queens from a specific hive, Will uses the following method:-

Mark your queens!!

Take a queen, a supers-worth of bees, frames with eggs and 1 frame of food from a host hive and put in a nuc. We are trying to remove all eggs and very young grubs from the hive so that they cannot create their own qc's. Close up the remaining frames, but leave enough room for a new frame of eggs taken from your selected hive to breed from. After 5 – 6 days, remove any qc's from the host hive, and insert the frame of eggs from the selected hive.

After another 3 – 4 days, if there are capped and uncapped qc's, remove the capped ones as they may contain original worker grubs. Uncapped qc's will be from fresher eggs. When all qc's are capped, move these in to the nuc, and bring back the host queen. To get more than one selected queen from your nuc, 3 – 4 days before hatching, take a qc from the nuc and introduce it in to another queenless hive. Remember to feed the nuc, and be aware that the host hive may need feeding also if there is no significant flow on.

To rear more queens.

Will has had limited success with grafting techniques, but has used the Jenter system of rearing with great success. He has aimed for 24 queens from 36 cells and always exceeded his target. This system is available from suppliers, and comes with full instructions, but Will explained it, more or less, as follows.

Ideally three hives are required:- One is the selected hive whose queen you have chosen to lay the eggs, one is a host hive that will further rear these in to queens, and the third is a hive that will create some mini-frames for use in mating nucs.

A strong host hive is needed, and it is possible to bring brood frames from disease-free hives to boost this hive if required.

Form a nuc with the queen from the host hive and remove to a new site if possible. Put a frame of food next to the gap in the host hive as the bees will need it to work on all the qc's that you are going to give them.

In your selected hive, take a drawn comb, and cut a space big enough to hold the Jenter mini-frame. Feed the hive and the bees draw out this mini-frame. Trap the queen in the mini-frame to force her to lay in the cups. After 3 – 4 days, each cell should hold a newly hatched grub, not yet a perfect 'c' shape. Release the queen as she has done her job. Take each Jenter cup and insert in to a modified brood frame. Will uses two rows of eight cups per frame. Put this frame in to the host hive, ensuring that any qc's these bees have made are removed. The bees will continue to draw out these new qc's. Two or three days before hatching, a roller cage is fixed over each qc, such that the queens hatch directly in to cages.

To make the host hive easier to handle, 4 – 5 days after the Jenter cups are introduced, it is possible to put this brood box above all the supers, and reintroduce the original queen from the nuc in to a new brood box below. The hive will then be 'queen-right'.

In order to mate the hatched virgin queens, Will creates a series of mini-nucs. He uses a modified super to create comb on half-size frames, trapping a queen using two excluders so that the bees will draw them out. A mini-nuc, (floor, 5-'frame' brood, feeder and roof) is made up of food and brood to retain the virgin queen. Add 1 – 2 cupsful of bees. Shut the bees in for a day and keep out of the sun. Open the following evening and most bees should remain. Once the queen is mated, she can be moved to a new hive, and the min-nuc used for the next queen.

Notes It may take a virgin queen two weeks to mate, but if a mated queen is caged, and another virgin queen introduced, this virgin will mate within a week.

If replacing a queen in a 'queen-right' colony, it is possible to put the new queen in a 'roller' with a candy plug straight in to the brood, (having removed the old queen), without having to introduce her in to the super first.

Tim Fountain

SONNING MILL THEATRE TRIP on TUESDAY 3rd APRIL

A REMINDER TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS WITH ME BY FEBRUARY 9th IF YOU INTEND TO ENJOY THIS SOCIAL EVENING.

Sonning Mill 25th Anniversary 1982-2007

BACKSTAGE TOURS OF THE MILL

A free of charge tour of the Theatre for parties of 10 and over.

To celebrate our 25th Anniversary The Mill is delighted to offer patrons a comprehensive and enlightening backstage tour of our theatre. A chance to see the tunnels and byways burrowing behind the scenes and under the seats of the auditorium. Visit the dressing room corridor - chat to the actors, if any are about - where the cast prepare themselves before a performance. A glimpse - for safety reasons, a look-see is all that is permitted - of our workshops, where we build the scenery for each production. And a chance even to say hello to the theatre's ghost - although, since he is a non-union member - we regret we cannot guarantee his appearance!

Each tour will be preceded by a talk in the theatre by our Managing Director, Sally Hughes, who will outline the machinations and mechanics of keeping this, Britain's only unsubsidised repertory theatre, alive and working. Sally will also recount the history of The Mile from its beginnings - as far back as the Domesday book - to its days as a working, grinding mill - with the water wheel still spinning to this day - to its conversion into a theatre. Any questions~ Sally will happily answer them.

The tours and talk will commence in the evenings at 6.00 pro. Matinee days at 12.00 pro. The tour will end in the Water Wheel bar. Allowing plenty of time before each meal.

And the cost? . . . The tours are **FREE**.

All we ask is that each tour consists of a minimum of 10 members of the audience.

Please advise if you would like to arrive in time for the 6pm backstage tour

Phil Wiggins

HONEY JARS

A REMINDER TO ORDER FROM ME BEFORE **FEB 15th** IF YOU REQUIRE ANY JARS FOR THE COMING SEASON.

DETAILS WERE IN THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER.

Phil Wiggins

BUCKS COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SEMINAR

Saturday March 3rd 2007 10.0am to 4.0pm
Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover

10.00 Meet for coffee and registration

10.30 Welcome

10.40 Training for Disease management

Ivor Davis. President of the BBKA

11.45 Short Break

12.00 Conflict in the Bee-hive Adam Hart – lecturer in evolutionary ecology and animal behaviour at the University of Gloucester

12.45 Awards

1.00 Ploughman's lunch with time to chat.

Awards

Sales: new - and second hand equipment – Bring & buy.

Raffle with valuable prizes

Displays of beekeeping interest

2.00 Bees in winter- Mick Street - Chairman of Devon BKA

3.05 Mexican beekeeping Adam Hart

3.45. Closing remarks

We extend a welcome to all who are interested in beekeeping.

Cost:- £10 including Ploughman's lunch, coffee etc.

Pay on the door but **please book beforehand.**

Telephone Sylvia Chamberlin on 01494 522082, or email sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk A map is available on request.

BBQ & Fun Day

You are invited to a day out at Mumbleys Farmhouse in the rural hamlet of Mumbleys, South Gloucestershire

Catering by top chef, Michael Young

19th May 2007, 12.30pm

Tickets £20 per person

Events include:

- A talk about our projects in developing countries
- Meet the Project Managers
- A chance to see a Kenyan Top Bar Hive
- A raffle: prizes include the "Committee's Dozen" – a selection of honey chosen by Bees Abroad
- A plant stall
- A tour of this 12 acre smallholding with lambs, chickens, ducks, a small apiary and a wildlife area
- And a great many other fun activities!..

Michael Young will personally cook you a choice of Aberdeen Angus Sirloin Steak, Baked Salmon in white wine & herbs or BBQ Yams with Corn on the Cob. All served with baked potatoes with chive dressing, mixed french salad and herb pesto and a glass of good wine. Followed by Deep American Apple Pie with fresh local cream

For more information, please contact: **Mrs J Moore, Bees Abroad, PO Box 2058, Bristol BS35 9AF** (Tel: 01454 415296 e-mail: info@beesabroad.org.uk) or send a cheque made payable to *Bees Abroad Trading Ltd* with details of your menu choice by 1st April 2007. Maps will be sent out with tickets.

Seasonal Tips and Reminders

February 2007

Key Tasks this month:

1. Check hive weight by 'Hefting' – Feed Fondant?
2. Check for hive Debris
3. Any signs of flight activity?
4. Ensure hives wind secure & draining forward.
5. Check & Repair Hive stands & Fences

Days are getting distinctly longer now, and we've had a fair bit of sunshine. We've had the warmest January for more than 90 years, the weather folk say. Perhaps that explains why we've had hazel catkins in our garden almost all January. Snowdrops and some crocuses are flowering too in the neighbourhood – all much in advance of 'standard timings'. Honeybees must have been out and about on a good number of days: but in the sun-shadow of our little valley, I've not seen much insect activity. However, on 1st Feb my wife saw a queen Bumblebee (*B terrestris*) active at her allotment site, just a couple of hundred yards away.

Despite very mild weather in January, February is another month in which the beekeeper's role should be about "keeping an eye on things" and planning for the coming season. 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.

The short day length keeps the bees in, as well as low temperatures, and with the apiary quiet, and ground soft, it is an excellent time to check your fences and the hive stands. Are your stands at the right height for you to be able to work the brood chamber without stooping? Do they have firm legs? Check to see if these wobble, or are really tight. It is easy to drive new legs into 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.

In the coming weeks the forage available will be hazel catkins, which give greeny yellow pollen, snowdrops and crocus. Pussy willow (sallow) with more golden pollen loads will follow, nowadays this is 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 can "emergency feed" sugar in paste form, such as commercial icing sugar paste, bakers fondant, or candy. Position it close to the cluster. Don't give syrup at this time of year.

Clive Hill

Visit to Blackhorse Apiary St John's, Woking, Surrey

Several members have shown an interest in learning about the different types of hives used by beekeepers.

This Beekeeping Centre run by John Hamer is a good place to see them.

The centre, **opened in 1999**, comprises of a modern single story building containing a classroom with teaching aids, a honey and wax processing room with honey extraction and bottling equipment, a workshop for general maintenance and storage, and the usual facilities for tea/coffee and comfort. Outside the centre is supported by areas of car parking, hive demonstrations, examples of apiary layouts and beehive types, bee-houses, and a large apiary equipped with colonies of quiet bees to enable beginners to gain experience and confidence.

The 1.5 acre (0.6ha) apiary at Blackhorse was once a tree nursery, now divided into several sections, and contains at least one of every type of hive commonly used in Britain (8). Besides its function for demonstrations, teaching and learning, the apiary provides for queen rearing, and equipment or technique trials.

The web-site www.blackhorseapiaries.org.uk/index.htm

It has been suggested that the Association might run a coach trip to visit the Apiary possibly the first weekend in July. John Hamer will be happy to see us and will run a special tour if we are a large party. For this to be cost effective we would need to fill the coach. For a 30 seater coach it would be in the order of £15 - £20.

If you are interested would you please let Sylvia know. 01494 522082 or email :sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk

NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION

Associations Day Southern Region

The Sutton Hall, Church Road, Stockcross, Newbury, Berks.
Sunday 25th February 2007 at 1030

1030 Coffee

1055 Welcome and Introductions

1100 An Inspectors View. Alan Byham, CSL Regional Bee Inspector, South East Region

1200 Alternative Varroa Treatments – their efficacy and legality Richard Ball, CSL National Bee Inspector

1300 Lunch – please bring your own – tea and coffee will be provided

1345 Anything but honey!! Robin Dean – Commercial Beekeeper

1445 A Needle in a Haystack? Ian Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector, Southern Region

**1530 Open Forum and discussion of matters arising
Tea and cakes**

Special thanks to those members of Newbury and District Association who provide catering and support for this event.

If you would like to attend please send your Name, Address, Phone No., e-mail address (if applicable) and number of delegates to:-

Ian Homer, 5 Malters Cottages, Litton Cheney, Dorset, DT2 9AE
e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk (/Fax 01308 482 161)

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@ucheldir.co.uk

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