

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

For Your Diary

30th January	Colony Collapse Disorder Update - Norman Carreck
27th February	Swarming - Andrew Gibb (Note: meeting at Bassetbury Manor)
7th March	Bucks Seminar (at Wendover Memorial Hall, Wendover)
21st March	A New Approach to Beekeeping with the Long Deep Hive - Robin Dartington



From the Editor's Desk

Hello and welcome to this first newsletter for 2009.

As is custom with any change of Editor I plan to make a few small additions to both the content and layout which I hope you will find beneficial.

The obvious alteration is to move from black & white to colour. This will enable us to add photographs and other graphics hopefully making the newsletter a little easier on the eye and a little more entertaining.

These "glossy" changes however do not effect the primary purpose of a newsletter which is, in my view, to support the organisation and its members by informing and educating.

With this in mind Tim Fountain has agreed to continue with his review of the Association's meetings for those of you who are unable to attend. I have to say that despite Tim's excellent efforts there is nothing like the real thing so please come along and I am sure that you will have many fun-filled and educational evenings (as well as great tea and cakes).

Your Chairman, Clive Hill, will keep you up-to-date with many of the other goings-on in the

world of beekeeping through his Chairman's Chat column.

Clive is also continuing to provide a selection of Seasonal Tips and Reminders. As a relative newcomer I find this invaluable and even if you have been "at it" for a while it is always good to have a check list.

Talking of reminders I would welcome any suggestions on additions and improvements which could be made. Contributions are also important. If you would like to submit any material (things for sale, events of interest) then feel free to contact me directly by email or telephone. I have added contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Please read on and enjoy one of the benefits of belonging to our great Association.

Kenn Shearer

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

First, may I wish you all a very Happy New Year! May your beekeeping in 2009 be enjoyable and productive, your bees Docile, your Supers full, the Honey easily extracted, flavoursome and with a low water content ... and let's hope we'll all have a bumper harvest.

IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

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2009 BUCKS COUNTY BEEKEEPERS SEMINAR

- Agenda

HWBKA LIBRARY

BEEHIVE OF THE MONTH

HIGH WYCOMBE & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Changes.

This is the first Newsletter since the beginning of November, so I have quite a number of items to mention. It is also the first to be compiled by Kenn Shearer, using a new format which will contain some photos. Terry Kelly, who compiled the Newsletter for a good many years has now handed on the publication and we owe him a large debt of gratitude for all his hard work - and for the massive sum the Association has saved by being able to use email circulation for most of our recipients. Terry has refused to accept any form of "Thank You Gift" from the Association, so I hope he will take these few words as a group Thank You from us.

November Meeting.

Unfortunately I was down with Flu at the time of the Meeting (and got a second dose later) so I missed the Meeting and Clive Winslow Chaired it - Many Thanks Clive. One thing I was able to do, was assemble a Slideshow of the pictures taken at our Coach Trip to "Smokers at Westminster" on Nov 5th. The photos came from John Catton, Paul Baker, Scott Rutland and myself. I've had feedback that you



enjoyed the Talk and the photos were well received. Please read on for Tim's review.

January Meeting

The January meeting is not to be missed. Norman Carreck, our Speaker has visited us many times and always gives us a fascinating evening. He was at Rothamsted Research for many years. His topic, CCD is the present major concern of Beekeeping. Our US visitor Dewey Caron gave an excellent review of the subject and added a fascinating, and chilling, account of the way commercial beekeepers work in the USA. If you read the book "A World without Bees" you will get an overview of the potential catastrophe should beekeeping become untenable: but Norman Carreck's many years in Bee Research will hopefully allow us to put our concerns into context for Europe and the UK.

Sorry to keep repeating this but the February Meeting will **NOT** be at Environment Centre. It will

instead be at Bassetsbury Manor. Unfortunately the Wycombe Society pre-booked The Environment Centre before us. Full location and "How to get there" details will be in the February Newsletter.



MP response

Following the Westminster March I invited all our local MPs to our January Meeting. I hoped they might meet more of their beekeeping Constituents and learn at first hand about CCD. They have all expressed support for our cause, but all plead prior engagements that evening. Both Paul Goodman, our High Wycombe MP, and Cheryl Gillan, the Amersham MP have come back to us following our Westminster event. Paul about Research Project Costing; and Cheryl with information at EU level. The European level looks the right place to assemble evidence of CCD type events. We will keep you posted.

Beekeeping Equipment Supplies.

Several members have commented about the quality of products and selling prices of the different beekeeping equipment suppliers. Thornes is the leader, but I've had comments that both Maisemore Apiaries and National Bee Supplies have better quality equipment - particularly woodwork. Direct comparison is possible at the BBKA Stoneleigh Spring Convention, if you don't mind the scrum!



You'll have to make up your own mind, but don't forget the following:-

Thornes is holding another Winter Sale. It started on January 6th. Outline details can be found on

page 40 of the January Beecraft, or on their website www.thorne.co.uk. The range of items is reduced this year, but includes second quality frames, utility cedar hive parts, honey tanks and plastic extractors. Orders over £100 are carriage free. The sale lasts until Jan 31st so if these items could interest you, get on line as soon as possible on January 6th, since they'll probably quickly sell out.

Our own Local Thornes Agent is John Parslow. John tells me that he keeps in routine stock National Supers, Roofs and Brood Chambers: aiming to supply some items as Thornes 'Seconds' quality at good prices. He stocks some frames too: with 'seconds', DN4s (self spacing brood) and SN1 super frames. High quality Beeswax Foundation is also available. John can also get any other items from Thornes catalogue within a few days, if required; and Extractors at 10% discount. If you are interested, give John a ring, on 01 844 344948. He is at Bledlow.

Expensive Honey.



West Wycombe Garden Centre are selling local honey at £4.69 per lb, clear or set. This is probably the highest price in the area, but the grapevine says they shift quite a bit.

Honey Jar Bulk order.

Phil Wiggins has offered to co-ordinate a joint purchase again for us. The order will be based on prepared packs (boxes) of jars. We expect to order 1 lb BS Squat Honey Jars, and Hexagonal 8oz or 12oz jars, all with gold lacquered lids. The pack size varies with jar size. Further details will be in the February Newsletter.

Winter losses?

Bee colonies can generally tolerate cold snaps remarkably well, since damp conditions are much worse than cold: but it will be interesting to see if we get losses due to poor mating of virgin queens in the prolonged dreadful weather last summer. Information please!

Bucks County Seminar - 7th March 2007.

I thoroughly recommend this Seminar to you. John Catton, the organiser has arranged an excellent range of Speakers. The cost is £12 for the whole day, including an excellent Ploughman's Lunch, so it is tremendous value. Please book the event in your Diary. For further information, see the detailed programme later in this newsletter.

Do we have your email address?

If Santa, or some other source has recently brought you into the world of email, please make sure that we have your email address, so we can send you Newsletters and Meeting Reminders by this route. Please contact Kenn at kennshearer@me.com. Thank you.

Ian Homer is retiring.

You will find a copy of the NBU Southern Region Newsletter alongside this Newsletter. In it you'll see that following his health problems last summer, Ian has decided to retire. He's been an outstanding Bee Officer whose tireless energy, excellent communication skills and farseeing advice have been of great use to our members during his period as our Regional Officer. We wish him well in his retirement and hope that he will be able to maintain contact with us, like Beulah Cullen, his predecessor.

Clive Hill

November Talk

Ian Gourlay - Beekeeping past and present

Ian began by explaining that this talk is one that he usually gives to non-beekeepers, and so he was wary of talking to beekeeping groups. He shouldn't have been, as his informative talk and easy style were very well received.

Ian uses two themes for his talk. Firstly to engage peoples minds on a fascinating subject, and secondly to emphasise the link with bees as perhaps the oldest attempt to manage or farm an animal.

He started by introducing one particular book as a great source of historical information, namely *The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting* by Eva Crane. Honey hunting has been depicted in cave scenes in Spain, dating back to 7000BC, and Nepalese hunters have a tradition where

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ladders and equipment are owned, and handed down from generation to generation.



Honey robbing or hunting was not a casual activity, but an annual event. Trees colonised by bees would be owned by locals and revisited by the hunters, who would live by following the bees through the seasons. Payment would be made to the tree owners by the hunters.

Bee 'keeping' is depicted in Egyptian hieroglyphs of 2500BC, where bees are kept in part sealed clay tubes, which are stacked to form a wall. They were even moved by boat along the Nile to follow the blossom. Starting in the south and flowing north to the Mediterranean Sea, anchoring for a few days, and then moving down stream at night.

Hollow logs came in to use, followed by skeps, from the Norse word 'skepper' - a container for grain. An additional top skep may have been added, known as an 'eke'; as in to 'eke out' the space for the bees.

Honey was collected by putting the whole skep over a burning sulphur pit, killing all the bees. The swarming trait of bees was therefore important in order to fill new skeps for the following year.

The action of 'tanging' was described as the banging of metal objects to prevent a swarm from settling, when attempting to drive the swarm back to the beekeepers own garden.



Egyptians believed that bees were the tears of the Sun god Rah, while the Greeks believed that tears from their gods would fall on the flowers, which the bees would then turn in to honey - the 'Food of the Gods'.

Both honey and wax were important to the Egyptians for use in embalming. Coffins were

made airtight by use of wax. Alex the Great had his body transported home in a barrel of honey to preserve it, and honey was sealed in tombs as food for the journey to the afterlife.

Aristotle in 300BC observed bees, and noted the acts of regurgitating nectar etc, and also the bees working on the combs.

Virgil in 50-70BC had 'seen' pollen being carried, but believed that the balls were small stones used as ballast in windy weather.

In both Islamic and Christian religion, wax is very important, and almost all the wax from Somalia is exported to Saudi Arabia.

Some important dates:-

- 🐝 Rev Langstroth - Frame Hive 1851
- 🐝 Wax foundation - 1857
- 🐝 Wired foundation - 1865
- 🐝 Queen excluder - 1865
- 🐝 Bellows smoker - 1877
- 🐝 Porter bee escape - 1891

The 'Lost Wax' process for casting was a high quality method of production. Fine wax was sculpted, clay moulded over the wax, and then molten bronze poured in to the clay causing the wax to 'disappear'.

Unconnected items were later labelled as being "made to the standard of the lost wax process", known in France as 'sans cire' then corrupted in English as 'sincere' - honest, genuine.

Ian finished his talk with a few slides, mainly of different styles and locations of bee hives:-

The 'Urban Bounty Seeker' - a hive located on a Paris tree-lined street

A hive on wheels outside a shop, with a long entrance tube to take the bees away from the street. This used as a sales point for honey.

In Poland, vertical log hives with a hinged door for access.

A German 'bee house' with supers like a chest of drawers so no lifting!

And finally a slide of a vast field of a single crop, irrigation channels running through them being the only water that the bees would have access too, and Ian speculating on what might actually be in the water! A candidate for CCD?

Tim Fountain

SEASONAL TIPS & REMINDERS

- 🐝 Ensure hives are wind secure & draining forward.
- 🐝 Check hive weight by 'Hefting' or using a hand-held scale.
- 🐝 Look for hive Debris - a sign of recent colony activity.
- 🐝 Check entrances are clear & Varroa Floor debris can drop out.
- 🐝 Any signs of flight activity?
- 🐝 If needed, move hives within the apiary - during non-flying weather only.

In the dead of winter you should not expect bees to be very active, but some flight activity will be seen on mild days; particularly in the midday sunshine. (My hives were flying on the 21st Dec.) Hives facing into the sun will fly the strongest and such winter flights will occur at air temperatures of 8°C (46°F) or above. At the end of a cold spell, when the bees haven't been out for a few days, you'll see them flying slowly, and often backwards, as they leave the hive. They then move away with increasing arcs, to the left and right. These are reorientation flights, in which the bees relearn the point in 3D space where the hive entrance is located.

Flights at this time of year are mainly for "cleansing" but if the ground is warm, bees will also bring back water. Single walled hives react more quickly to warmer temperatures, and bright sunshine helps. In my hives I have top beespace, and use pieces of clear Perspex as Crownboards. (There's a sheet of expanded polystyrene board



directly over the Perspex, to keep the heat in, and minimise condensation.) It's easy to look through the Perspex into the top of the brood nest, so in winter visits, you see the tightness and position of the cluster, it's mobility within the hive, and how dry the hive is - all without disturbing the colony. In early January the clusters tend to be tight and deep - and located towards the front of the brood chamber.

Expect to see crumbs of cappings and the odd dead bee at hive entrances. Piles of dead or crawling bees indicate a problem - Acarine, or a Virus infection. Brown streaks of bee faeces over the hive front indicates dysentery caused by fermenting stores, or a bad attack of Nosema. Be

careful the entrance isn't blocked by accumulated dead bees. This can happen easily in WBCs. If necessary remove the Mouseguard, rake the entrance clear with a hive tool, or thin twig and then replace it again. If you do this, expect some angry bees to emerge, to send you packing!

If you need to make adjustments of those awkward distances of a few feet, or yards, to the position of a hive in your apiary; or make a local move of the whole apiary; then it can be done with minimal fuss at this time of year. The bees will re-orientate when next they leave the hive, so you can ignore the 'less than 3 feet, or more than 3 miles' rule. Carry out the move in cold weather, when there has been no flight activity, and when the cold spell is due to continue. Beware the hives will be very heavy, so such operations are best carried out by two people working together. For small moves, take great care to move the hive very gently, so the winter cluster suffers minimal disturbance. If any bumping about might occur, block the hive entrance with a foam insert before you start; since even in the dead of winter an angry scout bee will whiz out to repel you! Remove the entrance block when all have had time settle down again. (Dusk is a good time for this.) Don't forget to replace the mouseguard afterwards.

Other than that, there's little practical beekeeping to do. Just occasional apiary visits to check the hives are secure, draining to the front - to shed rain and condensation; and have plenty of stores. (Heft them - they should weigh 15 - 25 kg or more.) If the hives are very light, and in desperate circumstances, you can feed with candy, or baker's fondant, directly over the feed hole.

Clive Hill



"From 15th to the 20th September 2009, all the major players of the beekeeping world will meet under the auspices of Apimondia.

Together, scientists, technicians, beekeepers, manufacturers, service providers, development agents and media specialists will celebrate the bee, its fabulous products and its crucial role as a

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pollinator and a bio-indicator in a changing and sometimes disturbing environment”

So says Gilles Ratia, President of the Apimondia Congress.



In addition to the congress Montpellier has a lot to offer as a late summer/early autumn holiday destination. According to tourist information “Montpellier’s mild climate ensures that your stay during Apimondia will be pleasant, surprising and comfortable”. I advises that you should “.... walk in the city’s narrow streets and discover its heritage of town houses and shady squares”.

At this time your Committee has not considered arranging an association trip to Apimondia however if enough people are interested we can look in to what is possible.

In the meantime all travel and booking information can be for at their website using the following link;

<http://www.apimondia2009.com/pages/?all=accueil&idl=22>

BUCKS COUNTY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION - 13th ANNUAL SEMINAR

As mentioned the BCBA Annual Seminar will take place on Saturday 7th March 2009 from 10:00am to 4:15pm. As last year the venue is the Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover HP22 6HF

Agenda

- 10:00 Meet for coffee and registration
- 10:30 Welcome by the County Chairman
by John Catton
- 10:40 Bee Venom.
by Professor David Warrell
- 11:40 Insect flight systems.
by Dr. Robin Wooton
- 12:40 Awards presentation

13:00 Ploughman's lunch

Time, also, to spend visiting the various exhibits and sales stands

14:00 The state of Beekeeping in Britain today.
by Richard Ball

15:00 CCD - Colony Compromise Disorder.
by Peter Tomkins

16:00 Closing remarks by the County President,
by Bob Hunter

The Cost is £12 per person, which will include refreshments and Ploughman's lunch. Payment can be made on the door, but it would be better if you could book in advance.

This can be done by contacting John Catton on;

tel: 01494 726616

e-mail: richard.catton1@ntlworld.com

As Clive Hill mentioned earlier this is a great event. As a beginner my wife Pauline and I attended last year and had a thoroughly enjoyable day making new friends and learning a whole lot of new stuff.

HWBKA Library

As often mentioned we have an excellent and extensive library of modern and historic beekeeping books for your education and entertainment.



It is fair to say that this library is under-utilised. We are therefore looking for someone who would be interested in helping us promote it more widely. If you are interested please contact one of your committee members or email me directly on kennshearer@me.com

In the meantime I will try to publish an index of the library contents in next months newsletter.

Kenn Shearer

HIGH WYCOMBE & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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Items sent by post for publication can be either typed, printed or hand written (as long as they are totally legible). If you wish to email your contribution feel free to use any format except Microsoft Publisher.

Normally the closing time for material will be the end of day on the 2nd of the each month.

Thank you.

Your HWBKA Committee	
President	Will Steynor
Chairman	Clive Hill
Secretary	Sheila Borwick
Treasurer	Ed West
Librarian	Position Vacant
Swarm Officer	Bill Bendyshe-Brown
Other Committee Members	Kenn Shearer Scott Rutland Heidi Brodrick

Beehive of the Month



The Museum of Apiculture in Stróža, Poland