

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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Newsletter - July 2006

Diary

Forthcoming Events

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| 12th July | - | New BeeKeepers Meeting |
| 15th July | - | Apiary Inspection, Barbeque and Farm Tour |
| 19th/20th August | - | Wycombe Town Show (Note Revised date) |

Wednesday July 12th New Beekeepers Meeting - 7.30 at The Environment Centre.

This meeting is for all new(ish) beekeepers and/or people interested in beekeeping. Experienced beekeepers will be available to advise and support on any issues that have arisen, and to share experiences concerning the rewards and difficulties encountered. Some second-hand equipment will be available for sale.

TO ALL BEEKEEPERS WITH SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT FOR SALE - please bring/get it to this meeting.

Saturday July 15th - Marlow Apiary Inspection, Barbeque and Farm Tour, Widmere Farm, Marlow.

10.45 - Inspection of Association Apiary at Marlow.

Directions: This site is on the Lane End to Marlow Road, approx 1 mile past the junction that leads to Booker Garden Centre/Booker Air Park, on the left-hand side, when travelling towards Marlow. The site will be highlighted with a bee sign, park on the road verge.

ALL NON-BEEKEEPERS WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HIVE INSPECTIONS, PLEASE BRING WELLINGTON BOOTS AND SOCKS TO PROTECT THE LEGS/FEET

12.30 - Barbeque at Widmere Farm. Directions: Widmere Farm is off the same Lane End to Marlow Road and is approx half a mile past the Booker turn, on the right-hand side - again, a bee sign will highlight the turn into Widmere Lane.

We will supply all disposable crockery/cutlery - barbeques will be set up - salad supplied. Please bring your own meat/veggies for the barbeque and pudding/cake/drinks to share. Also bring picnic chairs/rugs for seating - we have the use of a barn if the weather is wet.

2.15 - The farmer will take us on a tour of the farm.

Please feel free to join in and leave the day as you wish - we will have some spare bee-suits available for non-beekeepers who

Chairman's Chat

At last our summer has arrived and we can show various degrees of optimism. Early honey crops have been taken off and the bees are now working away on the main flow. A number of colonies are still suffering from virgin queens which were unable to mate during the poor weather we experienced and it needs the experienced eye to decide whether we have a sub standard queen or the inevitable reduction in brood rearing. If you are in doubt then appeal for help from an experienced member. - it's all too frustrating to see a beginner carefully nurturing a colony of drones.

Congratulations to Sylvia and Raymond who have arranged such an informative exhibition at The Environment Centre; and thank you to the members who have assisted them over the four weeks.

We offer our best wishes to the six members who, later this month, will be taking their Basic Assessment - that essential first step in furthering your knowledge of beekeeping.

Our best wishes also go to Anna and Paul Chambers who have moved this week to more northern parts. Our loss will be Yorkshire's gain.

Don't forget that our Field Day is rapidly approaching and we look forward to seeing many members and families at Widmere Farm on Saturday 15th July.

John Crick

wish to see the apiary inspection. This event will be suitable for family and friends.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU ARE COMING ON 01494 531599 [/chazecamber@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chazecamber@yahoo.co.uk) - this is for catering purposes.

August 19/20th Wycombe Town Show.

We appear to have enough beekeepers to cover this event, so will be going ahead and having a marquee at the show.

Christine

Summer Showtime

Beekeepers all around the country are putting on shows, publicising the craft, raising awareness of the value of bees as pollinators and selling their honey. I am receiving information from many of them who would welcome visitors from other areas and in some cases invite entries to their honey-shows.

A visit to someone else's event can be an interesting way to pick up new ideas and make new friends. Look out for these shows when you are on holiday. Below is a list of those who have contacted me. If you want more information about any of them ring 01494 522082 or email sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk

Shrewsbury: The 119th Shrewsbury Show 11th & 12th August – Bees Honey and Wine section.

Hertfordshire: Hertfordshire Beekeepers' 'Bee World' 23 September at Capel Manor College

Gloucester: Ashleworth- Gloucester Summer Bee Fair, 5th August – Trade stands, Car Boot Sale, Auction

Devon Annual 2 day conference in Exeter 21st – 23rd July - Science and Beekeeping naturally

Kent: Kent County Show, Detling 14th -16th July includes Honey Show

Do not forget to book the weekend of August 19th – 20th for our own event at Wycombe Show.

It is fun talking to people about bees, beekeeping and honey and your participation will be appreciated.

Finding a market for your honey

People have at last got the message that local honey is best, particularly if it is to help hay fever sufferers. They need to find their local beekeepers. I have recently been contacted by Caroline Guthrie who has launched a website to assist the process and also help beekeepers find a market.

It is www.englishhoney.co.uk

<http://www.englishhoney.co.uk>

It sounded like a very business like venture. I do not know what costs are involved etc but it could be worth pursuing if you are looking for outlets. She told me she had already had a request for honey from High Wycombe.

Sylvia

My Pal Joyce

(A true story)

"Good evening, this is Bucks Fire and Rescue. Are you the beekeeper?" Yes, that's me. "We have an incident at a house in Beaconsfield, are you able to attend?" It's 5.30pm, so I'm about finished at the office and agree to "help" all I can. "We are unable to attend this incident but a lady has reported lots of bee activity at her home, can you call her and she will furnish you with details? She is very distressed" (plays back recording of call made to 999). This sounds entertaining! OK, I say, leave it with me; I'll sort the lady out. I call the number and Mrs. *\$%£""^ answers. "Thank God you've called," she says. "We have a major problem with bees". Tell me about it, I say. "Well, I was having a glass of wine (a decent one you know, my son Aubrey is a vintner up in town) and I noticed bees going into my roof". Mmm, I think, this is very serious. "Well, we have guests at the weekend and I know one of them will die if they get stung" All this excitement AND business! "Be a good chap and come and remove them" Right, a few details please. Are the bees in a group on the fascia board? "Group? No" How long have they been there? "We noticed them last night" How many bees would you say you could see? "Well my dear, we saw six go in last night in the space of an hour" I ask her to pour me a glass of Aubrey's "decent" wine. This is going to be one of those calls. Six? I repeat. "Yes, six and they have been flying today and if Joyce, you remember, the lady who dies if she gets stung, will be out of her mind with worry. Can you come now?" It is very unlikely that Joyce will get stung, I tell her. You have bumblebees and they are quite harmless. If I were you I would crack open another bottle and enjoy them. They will die out in September, unlike Joyce who will be with you for many summers to come. "I'd rather you come and remove them, we've been so looking forward to Joyce's visit and she'll be so upset. If ever a bee gets into her bedroom she'll panic and get terribly jittery". I assure Mrs. *\$%£""^ that Joyce will survive the weekend and she has more chance of getting picked by Sven for the next England game than getting stung by her very own bumble bees. Tell Joyce to keep a rolled up Daily Telegraph on the bedside table. "Good Idea, to swot them?" No, I reply, to read through the obituaries and find out how many people passed on as the result of a bumblebee sting!

Good night and God bless.

Names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Stewart Thorburn

Informal discussion evening:

A brief Introduction to Bees & Beekeeping for Novice Beekeepers

The Environment Centre

Wednesday 12th July 2006 7.30pm

This event is offered without charge & has two purposes:

1. For Non-Beekeepers - To give an insight into Bees & Beekeeping

(An opportunity for the public to learn a little of the many factors & interactions of the World of Bees & Beekeeping. This will be an informal Talk, with Videos.)

2. An Up-date session for New & Novice Beekeepers

(An opportunity for Novice Beekeepers & members of our recent Beginners Course to meet again & raise the issues that have arisen for them, with some of our more experienced members.)

Some Second-hand Beekeeping equipment will also be for sale.

"When you set out as a Beekeeper, many issues arise which you need to discuss. An ongoing discussion amongst Beekeepers & with the public is vital. Whatever your level of experience, there is always plenty to learn & there are many different ways of finding solutions to issues."

Clive Hill

Seasonal Tips and Reminders - July 2006

The weather over the last few weeks has been mixed again, but the bees have been busy. A good many colonies have swarmed, but others have been able to get something of a spring honey crop. The main summer nectar flow has now started and white clover, lime, bramble and rosebay willowherb are all in flower. There are also many acres of borage being grown again in the Wycombe area: so, let us hope we get a prolonged flow!

This 'main flow' usually lasts through July, then tails off rapidly in early August. However, thanks to the continuing drought it might well end earlier than 'standard' this year. Bee colonies normally anticipate these natural cycles, by making a significant reduction in the size of their brood nest in advance of this time. At peak honey flow there's then a large number of foragers, with not much brood to look after. This is ideal for highly effective honey storing, but in such conditions the varroa mites now present in our colonies will have a magnified effect on the developing bees - a given number of mites is a higher proportion of a smaller brood nest. So we need to get our varroicidal treatment into the brood chambers to anticipate the potential damage.

Action: Put the varroicide (Bayvarol / Apistan) strips into your bee colonies as soon as practicable in August, when the honey supers are above the clearing boards.

But what about other colony maintenance during July? From the mid-month you should be able to cease those regular 7 - 10 day swarm control inspections for queen cells. But keep an eye on the colonies still, particularly with regard to hive space for both the bees, and nectar storage. My pre-varroa time for removal and extracting honey would be mid to late August, but post-varroa I aim for the first week of August. Phil Wiggins in earlier editions of "Seasonal Tips" said he expected to extract his summer honey crop about the third week in July; so his Marlow area must be 2 - 3 weeks earlier than the colder heights of the Flackwell Heath ridge, where my bees live.

Nowadays I wait about a week after the end of the main summer nectar flow, then check to see if the honey is capped. When all's well, I remove brace comb from between the supers, to make carrying them home in the car much cleaner. Then, to clear the bees, I put the full supers on the hive over a clearer board for 1 - 3 days (at least two Porter escapes, or even better one of the plastic tunnel bee-escape traps) and a (nearly?) empty super beneath to take the bees.

Full supers are extremely heavy, so 'Mind Your Back!' Watch how you lift supers, how you carry them, and how far you carry them. Thornes in Windsor are selling 'back support belts' which would be worth a try if your back is a little suspect, or you find lifting difficult. For further advice swot up by reading the six excellent articles "Bee kind to your back" by Sarah Weaver in *Becraft*, March - August 2002.

I try to bring the full supers home as soon as possible, say a couple of days after putting on the clearer boards. That way the honey stays warm, and so is much more fluid to extract. The operations of taking the full supers off, and putting wet extracted supers back, should be done **in the evening**: then the colonies have an overnight period to return to an un-excited state of behaviour. All the colonies in the apiary will get wet supers to

clean, or a small feed. This puts them all at a similar state of alert and excitement and reduces the risk of robbing. I usually leave the wet supers on the colonies for a few days, then clear them down again, and remove them for storage. BUT an alternative methodology is to extract the supers and then store them wet, without putting them back on the hive. I tried this for the first time last year and it worked well; although the honey absorbed moisture and began to ferment and drip. I was glad that the supers all needed to come out of storage for use back in the spring.

Extracting time. At home my supers are stacked on trolley boards which have castors at the corners. It makes moving them around much easier! I have at least one board for full supers and another for extracted ones. Process the supers quickly: even a few degrees temperature drop makes for a large increase in honey viscosity. The colder the thicker (more viscous) and the more honey left in the combs after extracting. You're supposed only to extract capped honey: but a small proportion of very viscous uncapped honey shouldn't cause problems. Test uncapped honey by shaking the combs. Unripe honey will be low viscosity and fall easily from the comb. Ripe, viscous honey will stay put.

Extracted honey will filter much faster while it's still warm, so do this stage of the operation as soon after extracting as possible. Put the honey into a ripener for a day or two, to allow air bubbles to clear. Run rape honey into buckets to granulate, and then re-melt it later. In jars rape honey sets very hard, and usually has bad frosting. Honey for sale has to look appetising, as well as taste good. Such customer requirements **must** be met!

I've been told by lots of people that hot air paint stripping guns are excellent for de-capping sealed combs. The cappings pop-melt instantly: it makes a sticky process much cleaner, and won't harm the honey. In my first attempt, I found it tended to blow hot liquid beeswax about a bit, so I hope to experiment further before using the technique! I've recently bought myself an 'uncapping roller' to try too, so will report back on that in a later newsletter.

Finally, don't forget to put some honey to one side for Honey Shows, like the Bucks classes at the National Honey Show. The more entries the better! Plenty of members will willingly give some guidance if you're new to this.

That's all for this month. Happy extracting!

Clive Hill

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

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