

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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Newsletter - July 2007

Diary

Forthcoming Events

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| 11th July | - | New Beekeepers Meeting & Learn of bees & Beekeeping |
| 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 July - New Beekeepers' Reprise & Learn of Bees & Beekeeping

At one end of the room we will have a small gathering to review how the beginners are getting on, problem solving, suggestions etc. At the other end we hope some 'bee interested' members of the public will come to join me for an informal group to explore the theme of bees of various types, honey and what is involved with beekeeping. I will finish by cutting up some honeycomb, and having a honey tasting session: and hopefully the beginners will join in too.

We've been advertising this on our website and via the Environment Centre but won't find out who is coming until the event. Over the last two years this has proved to be quite popular, and may well be a participant's first move towards becoming a beekeeper.

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 those who are not yet up to speed on the techniques needed. **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. We will go to a local pub for Lunch. Ring Christine to book your place. 01 494 531599

28th September AGM

Our AGMs are always quite lively, but a few years ago we started using the evening to have an extra short talk too: and they are much appreciated. This year Christine has got a Physiotherapist to come and talk to us about 'Lifting and getting the best from your Back': which will be extremely relevant for us beekeepers!

Later, Vivienne Brown will be judging our 'Frame of Honey' competition.

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.

Clive Hill

Chairman's Chat

Bumblebee Colony installed at The Environment Centre

A small colony of *Bombus lucorum* has now been installed at The Environment Centre. They have access to the outside world through a new tube in the wall, which ends at a small alighting board. A local plumber, Kelvin Thomas, drilled a hole 50 cm through the brick wall for us as a charitable work. Secure tubing allows the bees to move safely from their box to the entrance. Thanks to Stewart Thorburn's swarm officer work, I had the small bumblebee colony we have re-homed in a box at home. I kept it contained at home by supplying it with pollen and nectar over the 5 week period while we negotiated about and prepared for getting them installed.

The bees have taken well to their new home, were flying within seconds of being able to do so, and are now bringing back both nectar and pollen. The room is so warm they've even uncovered their comb for us to see! They are now providing an excellent educational comparison for the public, where the two types of social bees can be seen in close proximity. 'The Bumblebee Conservation Trust' and 'English Nature' have provided pamphlet material about bumblebees: and the Trust have told me that they know of no other 'Bumblebee Observation Colonies' in the UK – so yet again HWBKA is leading the way!

Beginners update

My thanks again to all the team involved with launching the beginners. A significant proportion of them have now reached the stage of having their own bees: and the 'stragglers' are now being launched. Unfortunately the poor weather probably means that they are unlikely to get much honey this year: but just think how this means fewer complaints about 'sticky residues' from non-beekeeping 'other halves' – so perhaps it is not all bad news!

Frame of Honey Competition

Don't forget to get your competition frame into your hive. I'm hoping that all 21 frames that have been taken up actually get used. The competition part will be held at our September AGM, and we will hand out the awards at the President's Supper.

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HWBKA Website

The website continues to be an exceptionally good bridge to the wider world. When I checked a few minutes ago, there have been 450 different direct visitors (excludes those who arrive via the BBKA). This is up from 343 last month and 239 the one before. At our recent Committee Meeting we decided to add two further resources: 1. Some talk reports from our back history on key subjects, such as swarm control, How to get high quality brood comb, comb replacement, bumblebees etc. 2. Some short biographical details of our Vice Presidents, Life Members etc - key people who may not be known to our newer members.

Thanking the 'Workers' & Spreading Know-How

As I have said before, the Association is extremely fortunate in its active base of key members who get called on to help us run events, purchases, tutorial sessions, meeting reports etc. Many of these are current committee members, several are past Committee folk, and the great news is that we are now getting help from our newer members too. As we move to the end of the beekeeping year, my thanks to all of these people for their hard work.

John Crick's excellent Beginners Courses have brought us a useful number of vigorous new members, and the Association is growing. One of my aims as Chairman is to find a way of

allowing the newcomers to access the considerable practical know-how we 'old lags' have acquired. I hope next year that we will introduce one or two 'workshop' sessions, where we can learn practical techniques etc from each other. Topics such as Honey Extracting, Honey Processing, Preparation for Sale etc are in my mind. Please let me know if you have any other topics you would like to cover.

Best Wishes to John and Gill Chudley

Long term member John Chudley and his wife Gill are soon moving down to the New Forest area. John was one of the group who were steered through the then BBKA Intermediate certificate by Denis and Felice Pigram and others, some years back. We took the exam in the junior school where he was headmaster! Since then John has more than pulled his weight in various committee roles, including Librarian and Microscope Keeper. He has also been active at county level; and has risen to high office in the Mid Bucks Association. Our thanks to John for all his help: and our best wishes for a smooth transition to their new home. A target for them: at cowslip time next year, look out for *Anthophora plumipes* solitary bees down in the New Forest. They look like little black darting bumblebees! John Crick has an announcement on the subject elsewhere in this edition.

Clive Hill

SUMMER OUTING

Blackhorse Apiaries, Woking, Surrey

11th August 2007

Blackhorse Apiaries is a teaching apiary built and managed by John Hamer. He has a range of different types of hives, workshops and a teaching room. This is his open day starting at 2.00pm. It will be an opportunity to see the different types of hives and discuss with John his views on beekeeping in a suburban environment.

The Beekeeping Centre is located in Blackhorse Road in St Johns, near Woking in Surrey. Blackhorse Road and the Bagshot Road (A322) take parallel routes either side of West Hill Golf Course, and both intersect the Brookwood Road section of the A324. Travelling along the A324 towards Woking, Blackhorse Road is a right turn just as the main road turns left over the Basingstoke canal. The road passes under the railway and past the Golf Course on your right. The turning into the apiary is on the left once you have past Toobees Exotics Nursery, and is not easy to spot. Vehicular access is via a steep ramp.

Go onto their website www.blackhorseapiaries.org.uk to get more information and to bring up a link to multimap.

We plan to share cars for this event and thought it would be a good idea to forgather at a pub near to the Apiary. Hunters lodge, Bagshot Road, Knaphill, Woking. GU21 2RP is in a convenient location and does food although if anyone wants to recommend an alternative I am open to suggestions. I suggest that those who want to eat at the pub meet up about 12. 15 and that we move off to Blackhorse Apiaries about 1.45pm.

Quite a number of you have expressed an interest in this event and there may well be others including beginners who would like to take this opportunity of seeing many different types of hives in action. Unfortunately I seem to have mislaid one of my lists so please email me or telephone (if you have no email) if you want to join in and have not already received confirmation of your booking. sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk
Tel: 01494 522082.

Sylvia Chamberlin

URGENT : Bulk Purchase of Apiguard

As you know, Varroa mites in the HW area are now resistant to pyrethroid acaricides (Apistan & Bayvarol). The Committee have discussed this situation and recommend that our members use a Thymol based treatment to control Varroa this year, since the mites are NOT resistant to this material. The leading Thymol based product is 'Apiguard' produced by Vita (Europe) Ltd. It is a thymol gel, which is supplied in small aluminium trays. To treat a colony, you place an opened tray of the gel in your hive, leave it for 10 days; then repeat the treatment with a second tray. Treatment must start in early August, both to protect the then developing winter bees; and also obtain the necessary ambient temperature during the treatment period. I believe it would taint the honey, so your crop must be removed first.

Apiguard is supplied in small boxes of 10 trays, which is sufficient for treating 5 colonies. It is quite an expensive product: and Thornes list price (Including VAT) is £22.33 per box. As part of our role of helping our members' beekeeping, the Association are to make 'BULK BUY' of Apiguard at a significantly advantageous price. But, **if we are to do this, then it is essential that we MOVE SWIFTLY !**

Details of this proposed purchase have been circulated in the last few days to those members accessible by email: and we have received an excellent response, so we are looking to achieve ~30% off, which means somewhere between £15 and £16 per box. We will buy from a UK based supplier.

If any member wants to join in with this Bulk Buy: please ring me. If I'm not about, leave a message on the Answerphone. 01 494 526557 (The cut-off deadline for orders is 22:00 on Sunday 15th July.)

Having placed an order, you will be expected to pay for the product - NO CANCELLATIONS allowed! You will have to pay for the product on collection / delivery to you (cheques please).

We expect the product to be available within a few days - certainly before the end of July. We will tell you about the collection / handover details when we've received delivery. If you are too slow off the mark to be included in the Bulk-Buy, then Apiguard will still be available via Thornes Local Agent, John Parslow: but this will be at Thornes List Price. John is quite happy that HWBKA should organise its own Bulk Buy. I look forward to hearing from some of you!

Clive Hill

PRESIDENT'S EVENING

6th October 2007 at Frieth Villiage 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 so please book your places soon

Beginners Group - Bee Suits

Please will the Beginners Group, and/or their Tutors bring their borrowed bee suits, veils etc back with them when they come to the 'Progress review meeting' at The Environment Centre at 19:30 on 11th July. We need to review our stock of them, and their usability.

Serendipity

On a recent inspection while trying to find which hive my latest swarm had issued from, I was half-way through the brood box when I heard a louder clattering of wings than my inexperienced ears have been used too. I looked up to be met with the sight of a hornet hovering above the frames. I wasn't quick enough with my hive-tool, but I shall have to keep an eye open for them now they know where.

Also while doing a varroa count, I discovered that my tray doesn't fit tight under my mesh floor. As I was drawing out the tray, counting mites as I went, I also drew out two bees. Each carrying half-a-dozen varroa looking for a lift back in to the hive!

Tim Fountain

Healthy Eating boosts Honey Sales

Last week, for the second time during June, I was invited to take part in the Consumer Affairs programme on BBC Three Counties Radio. It was a discussion on the increasing popularity of honey as a sweet spread. I received a briefing paper and would like to share the information with you.

According to market analysts Mintel honey continues to push ahead of marmalade as Britons' preferred sweet spread. The growing popularity of natural and organic food helped increase honey sales by 14% between 2004 and 2006. Meanwhile, marmalade sales fell by 10% over the same period. By 2006, honey had a 26% share of the sweet spreads market following jam at 35%. Marmalade trails in third place at 21%, while peanut butter, chocolate and nut spreads, fruit curds, syrup, and treacle make up the rest.

Consumer spending on honey hit £67million last year

According to Mintel's senior market analyst "Honey sales have done particularly well in recent years, as it has successfully highlighted its all natural credentials, making the most of Britain's recent obsession with all things natural and organic."

Lets just hope that our wet summer of 2007 allows sufficient product to be produced to support the demand.

John Crick

FAREWELL TO JOHN & GILL

It is twenty years since John Chudley declared an interest in beekeeping and had his initial training under CBI Bob Neill at Hampden Hall. He continued his training through to the Intermediate Theory Certificate.

As a regular member of our Association he has contributed to our activities, serving as our librarian, committee member and responsible for training. With dual membership of Mid Bucks he became their chairman and introduced many initiatives.

John and wife Gill have now decided to move down to the New Forest area to be near to their daughter and we acknowledge the loss of a very valuable member of our Association.

In conjunction with Mid Bucks we are holding a farewell barbecue at the home of Bob and Vera Hunter on Sunday 15th July at 1.00p.m. An open invitation is extended to all to join in the happy gathering. Please bring along your own food and your own meat which will be cooked for you.

Bring your own garden chairs with you and let John Crick know if you intend to come along to this most popular venue.

John Crick

Seasonal Tips and Reminders July 2007

Poor Weather Starvation

Summer Nectar Flow

Colony Maintenance & Varroa control

Getting ready for Honey Crop

Back Care - Lifting & Carrying

Selecting Honey for Extraction

Honey Extraction Know-how

The weather over the last few weeks has been pretty terrible and it is touch and go on a decent summer honey crop this year. There was little or no June Gap period in

flower availability, because the bramble started flowering at almost the end of May: but with the wet and cool weather we've had, perhaps the bees have been eating up the honey store to keep the colony going. Watch they don't starve waiting for the nectar flow to start! The wet weather should keep the bramble flowering strongly until later this month. Meanwhile the borage crop is in full flower, the clover out, the willowherb too. All we need is some dry warm weather at last. But despite the poor weather, a good many colonies have swarmed on the odd good day. So Stewart Thorburn has had some exceptionally busy days reacting to 'Bee Swarm' calls from the public.

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This 'main flow' usually lasts through July, then tails off rapidly in early August. Bee colonies normally anticipate the natural flower availability cycles by making a significant reduction in the size of their brood nest in advance of this time. At peak honey flow there is 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 the Varroicide treatment into the brood chambers to anticipate the potential damage. Action. Check the daily mite drop rate: then put the Apiguard varroicide trays into your bee colonies as soon as practicable in August, once the honey supers have been removed.

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 own time for removal and extracting honey would nowadays be the first week of August: but this is for colonies at the Flackwell Heath ridge. If your bees are in the Marlow area, you could expect to work to a 2 - 3 weeks earlier timing. A good visual indicator would be when the 'Old Man's Beard' (wild Clematis) starts to flower.

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 be-escape traps) and a (nearly?) empty super beneath to take the bees.

Lifting & Carrying. 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 sell 'back support belts' which could buy if your back is a little suspect, or you find lifting difficult. Alternatively, you could work on the 'little & often' principle, by moving individual frames on at a time: but if you opt for this, prepare to get sticky! For further advice swot up by reading the six excellent articles "Bee kind to your back" by Sarah Weaver in Beecraft, March - August 2002. (We have a talk on Lifting and Back Care lined up for our AGM evening.)

I try to bring the full supers home as soon as possible, say no more than a couple of days after putting on the clearer boards. That way the honey stays warm, and 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.

There are two contrasting techniques for what to do with the supers after extracting: to put them back on the bees, or to store them honey wet. If you choose the former, give *all* the colonies in the apiary 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 would then 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 store them honey-wet, without putting them back on the hive. This has the reputation of being a much better

method for controlling Wax Moth; and has now become my standard method. It works well; although the honey absorbs moisture and will ferment and drip a bit, so you will be glad to get the supers out of storage for use in the spring.

Decapping. Most of the 'old hand' beekeepers will uncap frames using an uncapping knife, but there are other techniques that might be worth considering. I've been told by lots of people that hot air paint stripping guns are excellent for de-capping combs: the cappings pop-melt instantly: it makes a sticky process much cleaner, and won't harm the honey. However, each time I've tried, it I've found I got hot liquid beeswax blown about a bit, which is very messy. Another technique some people use is a spiky 'uncapping roller', but I have found this significantly slower than an uncapping knife, and very messy. It would probably work well with Heather honey though.

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 as soon as you have brought them back from the hives. Even a few degrees temperature drop makes for a large increase in honey viscosity, then 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. Rape honey should be put into buckets to granulate, and then re-melted 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!

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. I hope you get a honey crop!

Clive Hill

newsletter@hwbka.co.uk

The website can be visited at

www.hwbka.co.uk

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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