

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

Chairman: Clive Hill 01494 526557

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Treasurer: Edward West 01494 520874

Swarm Officer: Bill Bendyshe-Brown 07527 798659

Newsletter - June 2008

Diary

Forthcoming Events

6th-16th July	-	Gardening for Wildlife Exhibition
9th July	-	Introducing Bees - Environment Centre
21st-26th July	-	FIBKA Summer Course
17th August	-	BBQ in Bledlow
11th September	-	Colony Collapse Disorder - Dewey Caron
26th September	-	AGM and Competitions

June 6th - July 16th Exhibition: Gardening for Wildlife

9th July 7:30 pm, Environment Centre

New Beekeepers Progress Tutorial

Plus for the general public 'Introducing Bees, Beekeeping and Honey'

17th August BBQ at Bill & Eugenie's in Bledlow. Sunday
Cost ~£11 per head. Please let Sheila Borwick know if you would like to come. Full details and directions will be in the July and August Newsletters.

11th September We will be holding a Special Meeting, when Dewey Caron, visiting from the USA, will be speaking about "Preparing for the Fall" which will allow him to cover the current status of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) Research, and also American Beekeeping methods.

Sept 26th AGM + Frame & Honey Competitions

Honey Extractor for Hire

Association Honey Extractor and
Strainer/Settling Tank

The Association has a tangential honey extractor and a settling tank with a strainer available for members to use.

This saves new members the expense of purchasing a costly extractor in the first couple of seasons.

It gives new members time to get used to extracting and then decide what type of extractor best suits their needs, before making a purchase.

Using The Association's extractor is more than adequate for anyone with only a few hives.

Available for Loan to Members

(£10 rental on collection)

To arrange collection call:

Julian Parker 01494 714460

Chairman's Chat

VITAL INFORMATION : AFB / EFB Bee Disease outbreaks near High Wycombe.

Ian Homer, our NBU Regional Bees Officer has told us that 64 cases of AFB & 11 of EFB have been discovered in one Bee Farmer's apiaries in the Berks / Oxon areas close to Wycombe and Stokenchurch. You can see the outline details on Beebase. He has now checked the known apiaries which could feasibly have been in contact, but has not so far found any further outbreaks. I understand colonies involved were nuclei imported last year from France.

AFB and EFB are legally 'Notifiable diseases' and you **MUST** by law inform the Bee Inspectorate if you suspect that your bees have the diseases. If these diseases are confirmed, a **Standstill Order** will be applied to the apiary. All colonies with AFB are destroyed by fire. Bad cases of EFB likewise, but lower level EFB cases will be treated by the use of antibiotic and the "Shook Swarm" technique.

BEE DISEASE CHECKS we should all do

Check through your colonies ASAP. These diseases are BROOD diseases, so look for unhealthy brood. Shake the bees off the frames, so you have a clear view of the comb.

The symptoms are:

EFB – dead / dying larvae in unnatural positions in the cells. Look MELTED – Tummy Ache

AFB – Sunken cappings. Stir cell contents with matchstick. AFB = Coffee coloured slimy rope when withdraw the matchstick. In bad cases there will be a "Pepper Pot" appearance, with many empty cells and also Black Scales in the lower side of the cells.

If you spot signs of AFB / EFB: Close colony down and leave the apiary. Contact Ian Homer urgently - ring and leave a message on 01 308 482161. Email : i.homer@csl.gov.uk Flame or Bleach sterilise your hive tool, smoker and other equipment. Do NOT visit / work in any other apiaries until you have had a proper diagnosis. Further information is available from : <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/>

We also have the opportunity to attend Ian Homer's Bee Disease Recognition Day at Benson on Sunday July 13th.

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See his Flyer which is attached. Here you will be able to see real disease comb specimens etc under special controlled conditions.

May Meeting

Bill Bendyshe-Brown gave a short presentation about some bee breeding work he had recently visited in New Zealand, when he was on holiday. The researchers are attempting to select for resistance to Varroa. Significant improvement had been achieved, and large scale trials on an isolated island have now taken place. This was a fascinating talk.

We also had a "Study Session" using photos of swarms etc to explore the phenomenon of swarming and how one catches swarms etc. All seemed to enjoy the session and many useful ideas were swapped. I hope to use such study session or workshops to access the considerable accumulated know-how within the membership of the Association. Possible topics are Honey Extracting, Beeswax Recovery and use, and Honey processing.

BBKA Honeybee Health at Risk Campaign

BBKA's Campaign is going well. There have been many relevant articles in the national press and TV; also in local media throughout the country. There is an on-line petition at No 10 Downing Street, closing date 11th June. Please sign this if possible. You will find this at

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/BeeResearch>

Locally The Environment Centre has been very active in gathering signatures on petition pages. We will shortly send in the first sheaf of pages to BBKA. You can find out more by looking at the BBKA Campaign Toolkit in the Members area of the BBKA website : <http://www.britishbee.org.uk>

Please download some forms and outline letters etc. Get the neighbours and your honey customers to sign. We have attached a blank Petition form to this Newsletter.

Marlow Apiary

Our then Apiary Manager, Kenn Shearer, was just getting going in the role when he had the misfortune to suffer some bee stings and ended up in Hospital for two days having treatment for possible severe allergic response to bee stings. Later tests have unfortunately confirmed the diagnosis, so Kenn has had to back out of the Apiary Manager role: although he will continue on our Committee as our Records Manager.

This left an urgent problem which I countered by circulating an email asking for volunteer help in managing the apiary. We had an excellent response, particularly from this year's beginners. Former president and chairman, Phil Wiggins is now leading a small team which is managing the apiary. My sincere thanks to Phil and the team for taking on this work!

In my email, as an attractant, I promised those helping to run the apiary should receive some recompense in the form of honey: something we have not done before - but which seems to have been accepted as a good idea. Phil tells me that we already have a little spring honey from the apiary.

It would appear that we have managed to mislay some of the apiary equipment: small numbers of queen excluders, clearer boards and porter escapes. If any member knows where these might be, please talk to Phil Wiggins.

EGGHEADS TV Programme

A team of beekeepers is going to be on the EGGHEADS Quiz programme, 11th June. - BBC2.

Nationwide survey of Bee Sting Allergy

BBKA have on their website a link to an information gathering search about Bee Sting Effects. This is for background know-

how for medical research. Please log on and record your experiences of sting effects. Go to: <http://www.britishbee.org.uk>

National Insect Week June 23 – 29th.

In support of this we have our usual observation hive display, the bumblebee colony and a large poster display about bumblebees. The posters are also in support of the newly opened Wycombe Wildlife Group Exhibition entitled "Gardens for Wildlife". Please come along and take a look.

Beginners Course

The Tutor, Clive Winslow, tells us that nearly all the apiary sessions have now been done - just a few laggards to catch up! And that a good number of the beginners have now got their first colonies. Many thanks to Clive and his team for all the hard work they have put in. The next Beginners Group Meeting will be on Wed July 9th, 7:30 at The Environment Centre, when the theme will be a Progress & Problems review.

Bumblebees at The Environment Centre again

Quite a number of our 'Swarm Calls' turn out to be caused by bumblebee problems – a lot of the general public can't tell bumblebees from honeybees. Last year we were able to re-home a colony into an observation nestbox at The Environment Centre. It had it's own tunnel through the wall, and the bees could fly freely. The colony was a major hit with the visitors to the Centre.

From one of the recent calls to our Helpline, I have obtained a small colony of *Bombus hypnorum* and these have now been established at the Centre. *B. hypnorum* has been expanding it's range steadily in "mainland" Europe. It was first found in the UK in the New Forest area in 2001. It shows a liking for urban edge and woodland habitats throughout Europe, where it occurs up to the Arctic Circle. It is a "Rare Bumblebee", but becoming common in gardens in the South of England; with a northwards expanding range. It was first seen in High Wycombe in Spring 2007.

B. hypnorum has an unusual and very distinctive colouration, with an all brown thorax, a black abdomen and a white tip to the tail. Thorax colour can vary from dark brown, to tawny or foxy red. Queens, workers and drones have similar colouration, but drones have yellow on their faces. Many of the older bees in this colony are going bald, probably due to wear from the rather scratchy nest material.

Swarm Arrangements 2008 - Don't forget the new Mobile No 07527 798659

Bill B-B says that the plans he has outlined have worked well so far. There have been a small number of real swarm events, a good number of solitary bee calls, some bumblebee calls. Those who want a swarm must let Bill know. They will go on a list on a 'first come first served' basis. He needs to know - Where they live, Their telephone (home and mobile) numbers, Whether they want mentoring. If they turn down 2 calls they will be moved to bottom of list.

'Frame of Honey' Competition – 2008 ... And Run honey in a Black Jar

We've had around 20 entries to the competition: and the list is now closed. John has also suggested we could consider holding a 'Blacked-out jar of Honey' Competition too. I put this to the audience for our May Meeting and the idea has been accepted. Vivienne Brown has volunteered to Judge the two Competitions, which will be held at our AGM on September 26th.

We will now work out how to prepare some black Jars; and further details of the competition will be in the July Newsletter.

Clive Hill

Goodbye to the Secretarial Hat

About 20 years ago, I went to the show on the Rye. Local beekeepers were there showing the public inside the hives. This sparked off an interest in beekeeping, so when I saw a beginners course advertised a few years later, I signed up. This was in the mid 90s and the course was then held in Great Missenden and tutored by Dennis Pigram, assisted by his wife Felice, who was then secretary of HWBKA.

After a while I went to a few HWBKA meetings. I was rather apprehensive to begin with – there were very few female beekeepers at the time and certainly none that called themselves Ms, as I did. Persuaded by the wonderful home-made cakes I eventually joined the association and had my first beekeeping experiences in accompanying Terry Kelly, when he was called out by Felice Pigram, the Swarm Officer to deal with a swarm. That summer was warm and balmy and there was plenty of activity on that front. Seeing Terry demonstrate running a swarm into a hive one evening was an unforgettable highlight of those days.

Clive Hill then kindly supplied me with a nuc, which I overwintered in my garden. I subsequently moved the nuc to Clives' apiary in the spring 'just until I found my own site' and stayed there for several years, sharing the apiary. I finally declared UDI a couple of seasons ago.

I have fond memories of our association and always found the members supportive. I frequently found myself in situations where I felt out of my depth and always found members free with their advice and suggestions. I've made plenty of mistakes – why is that pile of supers surrounded by bees? – whoops, a swarm has moved in. Lesson no 1 – keep your equipment

beeproof. Where's all that honey under the extractor coming from? Lesson No 2 – remember to turn the extractor tap off. And so on – the list could be endless. I also learned about disease the hard way, having EFB in my first year. I'd just completed and passed the basic course and our group had decided to give Phil Wiggins, our tutor, a surprise barbeque as a thank you. The inspector was also at the evening and after our celebration meal I took her to my hive, where she destroyed the colony. That was a low point and a big learning curve. And I'm still learning. Last year, for the first time, I had worker laying in two colonies so had to shake them both out. There are always new challenges. Some things however remains constant – the pleasure of having a warm sunny day, the bees making a contented hum and going through the colonies at leisure; the satisfaction and pleasure of collecting a swarm; the camaraderie at meetings and conventions. Vivienne and I went to Apimondia in Dublin a couple of years ago and it was a super experience – lots to learn and plenty of faces both old and new to share it with.

I've now finished my stint as secretary however am continuing my beekeeping and will be assisting with the newer beekeepers as and when they need some help. So – it's goodbye with my secretarial hat on – and a sincere thank you to all the members who've given me help and support over the years, especially Clive, Felice, John, Phil, Stan and Terry – it's been much appreciated and has helped me to develop an interest that I hope to be able to enjoy for many years to come.

Thank you also for my 'thank you gift' of a years subscription to Which magazine – it will be well read.

Christine Hazell

Report from the Swarm Officer

So far this month (as at 29th May) we have only had 7 swarms reported to us of which 4 have either disappeared before we reached them or left after being caught! The cold and wet weather has meant that there has not been much swarm activity so far but, I am told, they are just waiting to do just that. So expect some feverish telephone calls soon.

I have produced a waiting list for those who have asked to be put on it and we currently have approximately 40 swarms wanted. Do let me know soonest if you want to be added to the list.

We have had some excellent feedback from swarm owners and, on average, they give a £20 donation to the Association for the collection. Also, there has been a deal of interest about the state of the bee community. Virtually everybody has heard about the problems the bees are facing and they all want to do their bit to help maintain our bees.

I have published 2 articles in the local Press, one stating that we exist and how to contact us and the second giving general advice about the differences between honey, bumble and solitary bees and, of course, wasps. I have received many calls about solitary bees and have learned a lot myself about the solitary bee 'villages'. We have also 'captured' a bumble bee nest from a bird's nest which Clive Hill will be placing in the Environment Centre. Again, the owners were most appreciative of our help and advice.

Finally, may I ask you all to keep a note of the swarm officer telephone number **07527 798659** and alert as many people you know of our existence. Swarm owners have been very impressed that in most cases after being reported we are collecting the swarm within an hour. Let us keep up the good name and work of HWBKA!

Bill B-B

URGENT : Bulk Purchase of Apiguard

Varroa mites in the HW area are resistant to pyrethroid acaricides (Apistan & Bayvarol). The Association recommends members to use IPM methodology to control mite levels; then treating when mite levels are high enough to need it. You should use a Thymol based treatment, because the mites are NOT resistant to this material, 'Apiguard' produced by Vita (Europe) Ltd, is a thymol gel, supplied in small aluminium trays, packed in boxes of 10 trays. A box is sufficient for treating 5 colonies. Thornes list price (including VAT) for 'Apiguard' is £22.99 per box. The association is organising a 'BULK BUY' of Apiguard, and we expect to achieve between £15 and £16 per box – a significant reduction. But, if we are to do this, it is essential we MOVE SWIFTLY ! We will buy from a UK based supplier, and expect the Apiguard to be available by the end of July. We will tell you about the collection / handover arrangements 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 it's own bulk buy.

To treat a colony using 'Apiguard' 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 from Varroa attack; and also to obtain the necessary ambient temperature during the treatment period. To prevent tainting by the strong odour of Thymol that will occur during treatment, your honey crop must be removed first.

If any member wants to join in with this Bulk Buy: please contact Sheila Borwick, our Secretary, using the email or telephone details at the front of the Newsletter. The cut-off deadline for orders will be 22:00 on Monday 14th July. Having placed an order, you MUST pay for the product - NO CANCELLATIONS allowed! Payment must be made on collection / delivery, by Cheques made payable to HWBKA, or cash.

Seasonal Tips and Reminders June 2008

June Gap Starvation Selecting Honey for Extraction Care when lifting Honey Extraction ideas Colony Maintenance & IPM Summer Nectar Flow

During May we've had a right mixture of weather again: quite a bit of cold, some warmth, and quite a bit of wet. The different plant flowering periods knitted together to give a prolonged spring nectar flow: but the doubts have been if the temperature was OK, and bee numbers were high enough for productive foraging.

I think it makes four successive years in now that the horse chestnut trees have been in flower for nearly the whole month. We've seen some of their 'brick red' pollen being taken into the observation hive at our base in The Environment Centre. The bees will have been eating their new honey during the colder and wetter spells; but if your colonies didn't swarm, there could still have been a good nectar surplus to be converted to stored honey. My own bees have stored quite a bit of honey, but mainly in central combs, not sealed it well, and eaten a fair bit during the colder and wetter periods – as is their right.

In early June it's common to get a nectar dearth, due to a lack of flowers that bees can work. It's known as the "June gap" and occurs roughly when the *Pyracantha* hedging shrub is in flower. The Gap can cause a sudden risk of starvation even at the height of summer. In such circumstances, a small emergency feed of syrup will save the colony and be used by the bees as food, not stored. But if your bees have been busy and there's lots of honey, then what's to be done? That depends on if there is oilseed rape honey in the hive, which because it is a high glucose nectar, carries the risk of honey setting in the combs. If you're sure there's no rape, you can leave it on and give yourself the luxury of a single honey extracting session probably in August.

If you do need to extract to make some empty super space, or get rape honey off before it sets; you **MUST** check that removing this honey won't leave the bees at risk of starvation if the weather clamps down and they can't forage; or that no forage is available. If all is well, then put the full supers on the hive over a clearer board (with at least two Porter escapes, or one of the modern plastic grid tunnel bee escapes in it) and with an empty super beneath to take the bees.

Bring the full supers home as soon as possible, say no more than a couple of days and preferably less, so the honey stays warm. Then extract while the honey is still warm. Preferably do it in a warm room too. My own honey extracting is done in a south facing conservatory, where it quite easily gets up to 30°C on a sunny day. You have to have the windows shut of course to keep the bees out – so I sweat quite a bit; but the honey is much easier to process. Even a few degrees temperature difference makes a huge difference in honey viscosity, the colder the thicker – with more honey left in the combs after extracting, even after a longer spin time.

You're supposed only to extract capped honey: but a small proportion of properly viscous uncapped honey shouldn't cause problems. (Test uncapped honey by shaking the combs. Unripe honey has low viscosity and falls easily from the comb. Ripe, viscous honey will stay put.) If the moisture content is higher than 20%, fermentation is a certainty. Between 18 and 20% it's likely. The moisture content can be measured easily with a refractometer, or less accurately with a hydrometer; but these

are expensive luxury for a beginner. Put rape honey into buckets to granulate, and then re-melt it later. In jars it sets very hard, and usually has bad frosting. Honey for sale must look appetising, not scruffy.

Put the empty supers back in the evening to reduce excitement in the colonies, and to feed them a little too. Make sure the colony has sufficient stores after removing the honey crop: transient nectar dearths can cause starvation.

If you decide not to extract the spring honey, the decision carries the penalty of a significant increase in your exposure to back or arm injury due to excessive lifting. In equipment terms you'll need to have plenty of supers to put on the hive; and perhaps a small ladder to reach the top, to get the supers off the hives. In the past I've taken the leave-honey-on option, but it's not enjoyable to get the top supers off full of honey when they're six foot or more up in the air, and you're standing on a milk crate or two, to reach them!

What matters in lifting is a combination of factors: weight lifted, distance of load from the body, level of lifting, maintaining balance, and turning while lifting. The Lifting we do in conventional beekeeping is close to the legal limits which apply to anyone subject to the Health & Safety at Work Act: and it makes good sense to follow such guidelines when pursuing a hobby. In 2002, Beecraft carried an excellent series of articles on wise lifting and back care for beekeepers – so look there for further information; or if you have access to the Web, take a look at the Presentation at the following address, it looks a very useful summary:

http://www.hsfb.co.uk/Downloads/Ian_Stone/Manual_Handling_Presentation.ppt#256,1,Manual_Handling

And so, to colony maintenance during June. Much like May really, regular 7 - 10 day inspections. In early June the brood nest should still be expanding, but will soon tail off. Keep your eye out for the queen, eggs, brood of all stages, and huge areas of capped brood. Look for brood disease, and queen cells. Also check for the level of Varroa mites: either by using a decapping fork to check drone brood; or much better, put the check board in position beneath the mesh floor for a few days, and check the daily mite drop rate. On the IPM front, cut out the 'sacrificial drone comb' each time you go through a hive until the bees stop producing drones, at about the end of June.

If you do take a swarm, treat it for varroa as soon as you have it, while the mites have no brood cells to hide in. Now that we have Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa mites, this will now mean that you install it in a box with an open mesh floor, then dust the bees with icing sugar dust using a Sugar Dredger (like an oversize pepper pot). The dust dislodges the mites, so the new brood has a lower level of mite infestation.

Later in the month, make sure the bees have plenty of space (2 - 3 supers) to store the main summer nectar flow. In my experience this usually fits well with the month of July, but with our earlier summers, it could start at the end of June. This nectar flow tends to be from Lime trees, Brambles, and Rosebay Willowherb. Once it starts, a strong colony can fill a super in a few days, then they'll run out of cluster space inside the hive on a wet day, and have to make hive space by hanging outside, perhaps in the rain. Such over-crowding tends to make colonies swarm too! Finally, don't forget to make a little time to sit beside the hive: relax, listen, watch and wonder.

Clive Hill

Advertisements

For Sale

Two National Hives for sale complete with

2 brood chambers

5 supers

bases, roofs and ancillary equipment

Please phone Nick on
01844 345244 or 07957 610673.

For Sale

2x five frame nucs on national frames
(Bees and frames only) no hive.
These have been overwintered.

1x National hive complete with bees

Varroa floors for national

5 frame National Observation hive

Contact Scott Rutland, on 07748788241

FOR SALE

I have received the following items from someone giving up beekeeping. Some are new, are ex-Thornes, and are being offered at close to catalogue price, or nearest offer. Second hand items are being offered at approximately half price or nearest offer.

Items are being offered both to Chalfonts' Beekeepers and High Wycombe Beekeepers in their respective newsletters.

If interested please contact me on 01494 729315 or at shejont@waitrose.com

New

2 packs of 50 frames DN5 Hoffman (self spacing)
£50 each (List price £53.21)

3 solid National floors-flat packs £15 each ono
(List price £18.07)

1 National brood box-flat pack £25
(list price £30.61)

Second Hand

5 National Brood Boxes £20 each
(New £39.69)

Queen Excluders £2 each
(New £5.65)

All items to be cleared. Offering stated price ensures purchase-offer price must await opportunity for members from both societies to purchase.

Send contributions to

newsletter@hwbka.co.uk

The website can be visited at

www.hwbka.co.uk

If for any reason your copy of the Newsletter doesn't arrive do remember that it can be obtained from the website very soon after publication

usually around the 5th of the month

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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2008 Southern Region Disease Recognition Day

Make a note in your diary now, Sunday July 13th 2008

Benson Village Hall, Oxfordshire

1000 to 1630

An opportunity for everyone to polish up their disease recognition skills

Not every beekeeper gets the opportunity to see European or American Foul Brood first hand, and many who have experienced it forget what the signs and symptoms look like if they haven't seen it for a while. For this reason, we have offered disease recognition days to individual associations over the past few years. Now, for the first time, we are offering this event on a region wide basis to any beekeeper who wishes to attend. The entire day is free with tea and coffee provided but we do ask that you bring your own packed lunch. Anyone who is familiar with Southern Region Associations Day will recognise the form.

Recent Associations Days have attracted comments such as

"I can guarantee that you wont find better quality speakers at a free event anywhere"

"a most worthwhile day"

"this is an event not to be missed in the future".

During the day we will cover:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on maintenance of hygiene in the apiary and in the hive• Identification guidance for European Foul Brood• Identification Guidance for American Foul Brood | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparison of similar looking conditions eg. EFB, Parasitic mite syndrome, Chalk brood• Adult bee diseases• A fun quiz - with prizes• Varroa management• Exotic pests |
|--|---|

In order that we are properly able to manage the numbers attending, attendance is strictly by prior registration, either by e-mail or by post.

I would like to attend Southern Region Disease Recognition Day on Sunday July 13th 2008

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

e-mail address (if applicable): _____

No of delegates:

Names
of.....
Delegates

Ian R. Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,
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