High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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Newsletter - May 2007

Diary

Forthcoming Events

25th May	**-**	**Beekeeping with another Full Time Job. Andrew Gibb**
2nd-5th July	**-**	**Royal Show &BBKA Honey Show, NAC**
11th July	**-**	**New Beekeepers Meeting**
11th August	**-**	**Outing to John Hamer's Black Horse Apiary, Woking**

25th May Beekeeping with another Full Time Job. Andrew Gibb, 7.30pm at the Environmental Centre
Andrew is the author of the Beecraft 'For Beginners' articles. He comes from Woking. His topic will be of great relevance: even to retired folk!

11th July New Beekeepers Meeting
A reprise of how the beginners are getting on, problem solving suggestions etc. At the other end of the room a second group will explore the theme of bees of various types, honey and what is involved in beekeeping.

11th August Summer Outing to John Hamer's Black Horse Apiary at Woking in Surrey
This is John's Open Day. He has excellent displays of equipment, honey processing and all the common hive types. Get there by car sharing. Please let Sylvia know if you would like to come. Details in the July newsletter. Tel: 01494 522082 Email: sylvia.chamberlin@zen.co.uk
or visit www.blackhorseapiaries.org.uk

Frame of Honey' Competition
As I explained last month, we are holding a competition for 'Best Frame of Honey'. John Crick is selling marked 'Top Bars' (or empty frames) for an entry fee of £1 – and has had quite a good uptake. Last sales will be at our May meeting. Members then make up the frame, and fit it with foundation. So far so easy, but then they need to get their bees to draw and fill the frame. The competition part will be held at either our September AGM, or at the President's Supper, where the frames will be judged by our very own Honey Judge, Vivienne Brown. A useful prize will be awarded.
Come on, all you recent recruits, see if you can win!!

8th September Ian Homer - Integrated Pest Management for Varroa Day. Ian is the CSL Bee Inspector for the Southern Region. He will be coaching us on Varroa control.
There will be a pub lunch. Watch the newsletter for further details.

28th September AGM

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Chairman's Chat

I am enormously impressed with the great amount of work our key members do on behalf of the Association. They have got us safely and positively through an extremely busy and demanding month that could have gone badly wrong. And the feedback about HWBKA that I am hearing from people with little prior contact with us, has all been extremely complimentary.
Let us consider the last month for example ….
The Beginners Classes progressed through from the last lectures to Apiary Work sessions. The BBKA Basic exam group completed their tutorial sessions, and are about to do a couple of apiary sessions – and their exam is being booked. We've had a committee meeting and an ordinary meeting. The programme for the coming year has been organised. A good number of our members went to the BBKA Stoneleigh Bee Convention. And also, during an informal lunch at The Environment Centre for 'The Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire', when I explained the association's activities there: he was most impressed. Not only all that, but we've also coped with the Beginners Group tutor being taken very ill, part way through the course, so others needed to step in at short notice to 'keep the show on the road'. So, many many thanks to Christine, Clive, Scott, Phil, Bob, and many others; and 'keep up the good progress' to John too!

HWBKA Website
When I checked this morning, there have been 239 different visitors to our website so far. Keith Wood, who designed and manages it, has said "that during April there were over 1538 pages viewed on the site. Friday the 13th seemed especially busy for some reason …? The pages on "types of bees" and "Bees in the Curriculum" are proving to be popular with visitors: and 50 people apparently wanted to know how to contact us." I've fielded several of these queries myself, so I can see that our investment in the site is already making us useful contacts.

Beginners Classes & Spreading the Load
As I outlined above, the classes have gone extremely well. There have been 17 new recruits and four 'refreshers'. Real-life bees are now being experienced during the Apiary Work sessions: and I am hearing great enthusiasm from the participants – both tutors and pupils. A few of the participants are moving from the area, but most show signs of becoming enthusiastic new recruits: so the course has been most rewarding for the Association.

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Our AGMs are always quite lively events and are getting significantly shorter too! We expect we will need to make small changes to our constitution this year, to adjust our membership categories with those in the new BBKA constitution. Watch the newsletter for further details.

6th October Presidents' Supper

This informal evening (with an after dinner speaker not about bees!) will be held at Frieth Village Hall. Watch the Newsletter for further details. *Clive Hill*

Recent Event Reports

27th April 2007 Pests and Predators: An Interactive Presentation by Margaret Holland.

Margaret is a Seasonal Bee Inspector for our area. Working from April to September last year, she opened more than 900 hives, looking for EFB, AFB and advising beekeepers on varroa control.

This evenings meeting wasn't so much of a talk, more of a quiz. Using cells of a different kind, namely our brain cells, we had to test our knowledge of bee pests & predators.

Imagine if you will, a table covered in photographs & samples in jars and plastic bags.

Our first task was to identify each of the pests or predators. Some of the pictures should have been obvious; a green woodpecker and a mouse lying across some brood frames (flattened by the super frames above: served him right!). Other pictures showed spiders, braula and microscopic views of acarine mites and tropilay..tropelai..the other mite that we don't have here yet…tropilaelaps (sorry had to go and look it up). A wasp nest, both sorts of wax moth, varroa and small hive beetles (in separate jars) completed the line-up.

Having identified, or not, these culprits, further tables had more pictures and samples of the damage that they each caused to the bees or hives, and also some possible solutions. Our task was to match up the pest with the damage and then the solution. And for a final challenge, Margaret had another table with a list of the Latin names of all the pests!

As an example, one super was displayed which had great fist-sized holes in each side, as evidence of woodpeckers, while on another table, the solution would be the cage of chicken wire to go around each hive. To complete the task, the Latin name is Picus Viridis (and yes, I had to look that up too). I hope that you get the idea.

At the end of the test (sorry, Interactive Presentation), Margaret ran through each of the pests to see how we had fared, and invited us to add our own experiences or solutions for the benefit of others.

A brief run-down:-

Pest - Mouse**; Damage**-comb streaked with mouse wee (Ugh!)**; Solution**-Floor with very narrow entrance of 5/16 of an inch, or mouse-guard fixed over entrance.

Pest - Woodpecker**; Damage**-Holes in super/brood where they have tried to get at the bee larvae**; Solution**-Chicken wire round hive.

Pest - Wasp nest**; Damage**-Ragged honey comb robbed by wasps in August or September. This can potentially kill a weak colony**; Solution**-Entrance reduced to one single bee space to give less area to guard. A tube from a solitary bee house is very effective as an entrance.

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Having a few existing beekeepers on hand to chat during Tea break has been very popular with the students, and effective in building bridges with our members.

As an organisation, we've put a lot of effort into training these beginners, and others from John's previous Beginners Classes. These new beekeepers are now a significant part of our membership. They are the future of our Association, and it is crucial that we retain them both as members and as beekeepers.

This situation is both a challenge, and an opportunity, for us established members. Those of us who have been deeply involved with the training work are now working towards a gradual widening of the network of members with which the newcomers interact. This will be useful for both groups.

What will be needed is probably a low level of one to one contact, usually by phone, with advice and brief discussion of ideas and techniques. This sort of thing works best if those involved can break out beyond initial shyness, into an interaction based on a developing acquaintanceship and trust.

The buzzword for such two way contact is 'mentoring'. The established person becomes a source of informal advice. It doesn't take up much time, and is extremely rewarding. It will give you opportunities to talk about the basic skills you have developed to the point of forgetting – but which you use all the time. The exciting and fulfilling thing is that you will be handing on your skills to the newcomer, and the future. And it is great fun too! Not only that, but it is a way of expanding your contacts and coming to realise how much know-how you have picked up,

The Association is extremely fortunate in having a small base of key members who get called on to run and participate in events: but a good many of those key members are getting older, so it is time that we spread net somewhat wider. A small level of involvement is all that is likely to be needed to launch these newcomers: so how about helping with this challenge!

How can you get involved? Obviously, by talking to Christine, or John, or myself, and making an offer. Secondly, we are likely to be approaching members who are based not too far from the beginner we are aiming to launch. If you are approached, please try to help.

Stoneleigh Bee Convention

This Convention was a wonderful day out, and a good many of our members were there, as usual. I met and had a catch-up chat with a former member there, and have since heard from another. Andrew Scarlett, has become a Bee Farmer, and moved to Perth in Scotland. He was pleased that HWBKA was still using the apiary that he had established at Hughenden. I was astonished to hear that his company is now running over 1000 hives; and heavily involved with contract honey packing too. He was on the Swienty stand, helping them give practical advice on their honey process equipment.

I hear that Jo Schup, another former member, was there too. Jo is "now secretary of North Shropshire Beekeepers for my sins nowadays and seem to spend most waking minutes doing something bee related!"

April Meeting

Margaret Thomas, who is our local Seasonal Bee Inspector, as well as the Training Officer for Northants BKA, gave us a really interesting evening. As an Inspector, Margaret told us that she checked 199 apiaries last year, which involved inspecting 925 colonies. We all enjoyed her Quiz – based on real life examples, and she provoked much discussion. Later we were shown a short video about 'Small Hive Beetle'. The effects of an infestation appear absolutely devastating!

Visit of Lord Lieutenant to The Environment Centre

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher is the Queen's Representative in Buckinghamshire. He had visited the Centre when it was

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Pest - Lesser Wax Moth**; Damage**-Grubs eat comb and expose the honey**; Solution**-Store drawn combs outside to allow frost (if we get any!) to kill the wax moth eggs. Other options were suggested as putting combs in the deep freeze for 48 hours in rotation, store combs 'wet' after extraction, allow spiders access to the stored combs to eat the moths, use a 'bait' nuc in a dark corner with old combs to attract the moths, then burn the frames/combs in January and finally, use the biological control Certan to kill the moth larvae.

Pest - Greater Wax Moth**; Damage**-Grooves eaten out of hive woodwork where the larvae have pupated, also similar damage to the Lesser Wax Moth**; Solution**-Good hive hygiene – clear away loose wax and remove from the apiary. Other options as for Lesser Wax Moth.

Pest - Spiders**; Damage**-Bees caught in webs get eaten**; Solution**-Brush out the hive roof.

Pest - Braula**; Damage**-Larvae of this wingless fly used to tunnel under the wax cappings, but is not much of a problem now**; Solution**-Apistan/Bayvarol kills these, which is why they are not an issue these days.

Pest - Acarine mite**; Damage**-Bees crawling outside the hive suffering from 'paralysis' as they can't fly, also 'K'-wing bees. The mites also spread virus'**; Solution**-A well laid-out apiary to prevent drifting, with good forage to prevent robbing. Apiguard also works, and is licensed specifically for this purpose in Turkey.

Pest - Varroa**; Damage**-Bee numbers dwindle in the spring**; Solution**-Apiguard was the solution given, although we know that this problem will have to be tackled in more than one way!!

Pest - Small Hive Beetle**; Damage**-Larvae feed on honey and brood, turning the honey in to a slimy fermenting mess**; Solution**-Beetles are not here yet, so do not import bees illegally. Some beetles where discovered at a Portuguese port with bees imported illegally from the USA.

Pest - Tropilaelaps**; Damage**-Weakens bees and spreads disease in a similar manner to varroa**; Solution**-Varroa-mesh floors used for monitoring. These mites are not here yet, but we need to look for them to make sure that we find them if they arrive. Deemed to be less of a worry than the Small Hive Beetle though.

After the interval, Margaret introduced a short video showing us how the Small Hive Beetle had affected beekeepers in the USA, and gave us something else to keep us awake at night!

Tim Fountain

Queen Substance

Colin Butler MA, PhD, was the first person to identify the pheromone responsible for colony cohesion whilst working at the Rothampstead Research station. He named it Queen substance. Sadly, due to vastly reduced funding, much of the valuable bee research previously carried out at Rothamstead no longer takes place.

I thought the attached lecture given in 1954 by Colin Butler at Copenhagen would be of interest to experienced and new beekeepers alike at a time of the year when swarming occurs, largely due to a lowering of the available queen substance within the colony.

Phil Wiggins

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opened, some four years ago and was in HW for a Civic Service on April 29th. He had agreed to come back and learn of the Centre's progress during an informal light lunch following the Service, and prior to another formal engagement at RAF Halton in the afternoon.

I was asked to be present (best bib and tucker) and meet him to talk about our links and activities at the Centre. He was amazed at and intrigued with our Observation Hive; and most impressed with the results of the Association's efforts there. He came over as extremely well informed and concerned about environmental matters. Discussions ranged over a wide range of subjects and he was most impressed by the progress the Centre has achieved in it's short life. In summary, and interesting man and a lunch-time well spent.

Clive Hill

Advertisments

The Chamberlin's have downsized and have spare equipment to give away.

Supers, Miller feeders, Brood chambers, Travelling screens.

Although this is Smith size equipment, because the internal dimensions of Smith and National hives are identical, standard National frames are used in both hives except that 3/4 inch (18mm) is cut off the lugs on the end of each frame to fit in Smith brood/super boxes. So Smith frames will locate in National boxes if 18mm strips are laid at the frame ends inside the National boxes.Also, both the Travelling Screens (which you will need if going to the heather) and the Feeders, can be easily adapted for use on Nationals by fixing wood strip to their outside short side.

Also new Honey buckets *for sale* 15Kg (approx) £1.00 and 5Kg (approx) 50p

Please get in touch if you would like to arrange to come and see any of these things.
Tel: 01494 522082 Email: sylvia.chamberlin @zen.co.uk

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Christine Hazell 01494 531599

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British Bee Journal September 9th, 1954

A Leading Lecture at Copenhagen~

THE PART THE QUEEN PLAYS IN COLONY COHESION

By COLIN G. BUTLER, M.A., PH.D. (Author of The World of the Honeybee)

If the queen is removed from a colony of honeybees its workers quickly become Aware that she is no longer with them and start to run about in an excited way around the entrance of their hive. Within six or eight hours, often within two or three hours, a much more definite sign of "queenlessness" will usually become apparent as the worker bees will normally have modified one or more worker brood cells containing young female larvae as emergency queeu cells, from one of which, all being well, a new queen will eventually emerge.

One is tempted to suppose that honeybees always recognise the presence of their queen either directly, as might happen if she were to emit some specific queen odour which permeates the hive atmosphere and is appreciated by all her bees; or, indirectly, by those bees which have recently been in contact with their queen somehow informing other members of their colony of this fact.

The results of many different experiments have shown that bees do not recognise the presence of their queen by her scent. One is thus almost compelled to suppose that the worker bees of a colony, or at any rate the household bees. obtain from their queen regular supplies of some substance which inhibits them from building emergency queen cells and it is necessary for them to be in contact with their queen to obtain it. However, not every worker, it seems, can have direct contact with the queen to obtain this "queen substance." More than likely only a certain number of bees obtain this substance directly from the queen and they then pass it to the others within the colony.

This theory was tested in a number of ways. In one experiment a large colony was divided into three equal parts and bees were subsequently transferred from that part contaiing the queen into one of the queenless parts at regular. short, intervals. The other queenless part served as a control.

After four hours the control part, to which no bees from the queenright part had been added. had altered five worker cells to emergency queen cells. No such cells were found in the other two parts. Similar results were obtained with another colony of bees.

It appears, therefore, that the bees taken from the queenright part carried with them some substance which they had either obtained directly from the queen, or indirectly from other workers who had obtained it from her, and that the bees in the queenless part received some of this "queen substance" from the transferred workers and were satisfied~ and inhibited from building emergency queen cells. The bees in the other queenless part! the control part, did not receive regular supplies of "queen substance" and so built emergency queen cells as "queen substance " was not obtainable.

From what part of a queen do workers obtain "queen substance"? An answer was obtained in the following way: A small colony of bees in a single broodchamber was divided into two equal parts by means of a bee-tight, wooden partition in the centre of which was a hole covered with sheet rubber, In the middle of this rubber diaphragm a small hole was made and the laying queen was thrust through it so that her head and thorax were exposed to the bees on one side of the partition, and her abdomen exposed to the bees on the other side. The bees on both sides of the partition paid a great deal of attention to whichever part of their queen they could reach. Those on the side where her head protruded fed her, and on both sides they examined her with their antennae and licked her body. Neither group of bees built any emergency queen cells.

It is clear that "queen substance" can be obtained by worker bees either from the head and thorax, or from the abdomen of their queen. It is not necessary for the bees either to feed the queen or to remove her excrement or eggs in order to obtain sufficient "queen substance." That it is, however, necessary for some of the bees to be able to touch the queen is shown by the fact that after the bees which could only reach the queen's abdomen had shown no signs of queenlessness for three days, they started emergency queen cells a few hours after the abdomen of their queen had been covered with a wire-gauze cage so that they could not touch it but could get any eggs or faeces dropped. Ultimately it was found that "queen substance" is obtained by workers from all parts of the body surface of their queen. Indeed, in one experiment it was found that access to three legs and about 4 square millimetres of the thorax of their queen was enough to inhibit a small group of bees from building emergency queen cells.

Other experiments have shown that the greater the area of the body surface of the queen available to the bees the larger the number who will obtain sufficient "queen substance" and remain inhibited from building emergency queen cells or tolerating eggs and larvae in queen cell cups. Similarly, in experiments in which apparatus was used which only allowed bees access to their queen for short periods in each hour, the longer the bees of a given group had access to the body of their queen the fewer emergency queen cells they built.

From these results and many other experiments it was concluded that anything which interrupts or retards the worker bees from obtaining "queen substance" results in removal or reduction of the inhibitory effect of this substance and either the building of emergency queen cells or the toleration of supersedure or swarm queen cells.

Thus data has been obtained which indicates that when a queen becomes old, or ill and failing, her production of "queen substance" becomes reduced and her workers promptly either build emergency queen cells or tolerate and maintain supersedure queen cells. (There is evidence that the amount of "queen substance" produced by a queen is not directly related to her egg production.)

It is also probable that a breakdown in the distribution of "queen substance" amongst the members of a colony--perhaps on account of overcrowding and jostling of the queen and her attendants, rather than any reduction in the quantity produced by the queen may result in toleration of eggs laid in queen cell cups and, often, in the end, a swarm.

What "queen substance" is, is not yet known. It seems possible, however, that it may be a part of the waxy substance with which a queen's body is covered or, more likely, the volatile solvent in which these waxes are said to be secreted. It is found on all parts of the body surface of a queen and can be removed with cotton wool which, for a short time thereafter, is almost as attractive to bees as the queen herself.

So great is the desire of worker bees for "queen substance" that they will, if their colony is queenless and broodless, even join other colonies in search for it. Nevertheless, although both virgin and mated laying queens are attractive to worker bees, the latter are able to distinguish between the two very quickly, probably because of difference in the qualities of the "queen substance " they produce due to differences in their diet. Virgin

queens appear to produce one kind of "queen substance," and laying queens another kind.

"Queen substance" is apparemly obtained by those house bees who happen to be nearest to the queen at any given time by licking her body, and these bees quickly share it with other members of their colonies so that its distribution is both rapid and widespread.

It is clear that "queen substance" plays an important part in the maintenance of colony cohesion, the control of the production of "laying workers," emergency, supersedure and swarm queens. It appears to play a similar role in colonies of termites and ants. If, under natural conditions, a honeybee colony loses its queen, and thus, its supply of the inhibiting "queen substance" emergency queen cells are built. If, on the other hand, the supply becomes reduced without being lost altogether the bees attempt to rear a supersedure queen. Absence of "queen substance" also appears to result in removal of the factor which inhibits the development of "laying workers" under conditions in which they would otherwise appear.

It has become clear that "queen substance "should be considered in connection with the problems of queen introduction. This concept has led to the adoption of a method by means of which the new queen is introduced, without attendants or food, directly the old queen has been removed, as it has been found that the longer the interval between removal of the old queen and introduction of the new one the greater the chance of failure. The bees of the colony being requeened must not be allowed to suffer even temporarily from a deficiency of "queen substance."

Seasonal Tips and Reminders May 2007

Hive Records.

Monitor & Control Varroa by IPM

Comb replacement?

Regular Inspections & Swarm control

Use supers to reduce hive crowding

Keep providing water

Take off Honey crop?

May should be a time for Beekeeping with good strong brood chambers, a colony that's foraging hard, and copious pollen coming back to feed a large brood nest. Most years these days there is a spring nectar flow strong enough to give us some stored honey: but that obviously depends on colony strength, useable weather and accessible forage. All being well, late in the month you may need to take off the spring honey crop. On the pollen front, expect to see greenish pollen coming in from oilseed rape or trees like sycamore; also brick red pollen from horse chestnut.

The spring developed quickly and there has been quite a good springtime nectar flow. My own bee colonies are both building up well, and storing honey. The weather continues to be warm and, to me too dry; with the ground cracking-up already on our Allotment. Although the deciduous trees are bursting into leaf, and the landscape going green, I'm worried that without significant rain soon, we might not get much honey in the summer – due to high temperatures and drought conditions.

The bee 'water source' gravel tray in my apiary continues to be busy, but activity has lessened with the nectar flow. We went away for a few days in mid April and to ensure a continuing supply of water I put out a traditional 'Poultry Drinker' made of galvanized steel – then crossed my fingers that they would use it. And yes, they do: so that can stay there as a summertime standby, because as a covered water reserve it will lose much less by evaporation.

Nectar is not only a carbohydrate food source for bees (and the source of the honey crop we seek), but also a source of water. Water collected specially can be used for liquefaction of stored honey, and for hive temperature control. Nectar water also contributes to hive cooling, where the latent heat of evaporation has the effect of causing significant air temperature reduction.

Assuming you are a 'traditional style beekeeper, when your colony has brood on at least five frames remove two or three of the old frames not yet in use for brood, and replace them with frames of foundation. Put these towards the sides of the brood nest. They will be drawn-out quickly at this time of year. Make sure the colony still has sufficient stores (at the tops of frames, and on the outer combs). If the colony is low on stored honey, it is OK to feed some sugar syrup: but not enough for the bees to store it in supers. Even in May, in prolonged poor weather, the balance of foragers to brood can be too one-sided - then the bees can't bring nectar back as fast as they use it.

A very different procedure to the above is to make the bees draw a whole brood box of new comb. This is called a 'Bailey Comb Change' and will result in a much healthier colony, because the bee equivalent of 'our minor ailments' disappear with the old combs; but there can be brood loss, and that has to be recovered from. For details, look at our newsletter for May 2006. You can find this on our website in the downloads section, under Archives. Whichever way, you do it, take care to dispose of the old combs quickly and hygienically.

A strong colony should be given supers as soon as it needs them. Adding supers needs to be timed carefully. When you add a super you make a significant difference to the contained airspace within a hive. You don't want to give the bees too much hive volume to keep warm - it can easily hold them back in a cold or wet spring. Supers function as honey storage space, but also as rest space for the large number of foragers that should now be present in the colony: so supers reduce the crowding and congestion of bees that promote swarming. An interesting way round this dilemma of when to put the super on, is to put it on, but do so over a sheet of newspaper. When the bees need the space they'll chew through the paper and gain access. The idea was publicised by Beulah Cullen when she was a Bees Officer, and has been widely found to be a useful and effective technique.

Varroa Control Use the really accessible guidance given in the DEFRA Leaflet 'Managing Varroa' to guide your Integrated Pest management (IPM) process. You can find one on-line at Beebase. (http://beebase.csl.gov.uk) When you are inspecting a colony, make it a routine to check the drone brood for mite infestation. Also, put the check-board under the varroa screen floor for a few days, to monitor the daily mite drop rate. Once this baseline has been established, you start varroa control by drone comb trapping. Do this either by putting a shallow super frame into the brood nest, and letting the bees build drone comb beneath it: or by putting a specially adapted brood frame into the

colony. This frame has just half the top half of the frame of normal foundation. The wax is supported by a bar of wood across the frame; and another can be fixed across at the bottom of the frame. The bees will make drone comb in the lower half of this frame: and the queen will lay it up with Drone Brood. As Varroa preferentially select drone larvae for their longer pupation time, if you cut out and destroy this drone comb AFTER it has been capped, but BEFORE it has emerged, then the mite population can be significantly reduced. Repeat the procedure several times over the summer for maximum effectiveness. NEVER let the drones from this comb emerge, or you will be artificially increasing the Varroa mite level.

Inspections: Keep monitoring the colony by regular 7 - 10 day inspections; and make notes. When you examine a colony, build up an overview of the size and state of the brood nest. It should be expanding fast in mid-May, then stabilising in June. Check for the queen, eggs, brood of all stages, but huge areas of capped brood; and hopefully no queen cells. Observe, but don't worry about queen cell cups - unless they have eggs in. Weather stressed colonies could also show signs of brood disease, particularly EFB. (Discoloured larvae, in unusual positions in the cells - under the weather, and with stomach-ache!) EFB is of course a legally Notifiable Disease, so if you are suspicious, you **MUST** inform our Bees Officer immediately.

When you check the brood chamber, keep your eye out for the queen. With a small brood nest you're much more likely to see her, so it could be a good time to mark the queen; and perhaps clip her wings too - to help with swarm control. If you want to follow the recommended queen marking colour code, she should be marked yellow. Once marked, she'll be much easier to spot when you go through the brood chamber.

Cutting out queen cells will give you a day or two of breathing space on swarming, but it's not a real method of swarm control. You'll do better to take a nucleus colony, or an artificial swarm. Consult the standard beekeeping manuals for detailed advice - Ted Hooper, Clive de Bruyn and Ron Brown are all excellent. So are the many articles in Beecraft.

Meanwhile, try to smell the aroma from the evaporating nectar as the bees fan at the hive entrance, and see if you can work out the flower sources they've used. And don't forget to sit beside the hive; to watch, and simply relax with the gentle bee sounds.

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 3rd 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