

High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

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President: Will Steynor 01494 881205

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Treasurer: Edward West 01494 520874

Swarm Officer: Bill Bendyshe-Brown

Newsletter - November 2007

Diary

Forthcoming Events

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| 30th November | - | Monthly Meeting - Ged Marshall & Bucks County AGM |
| 14th December | - | Family Fun Day |
| 25th January | - | Monthly Meeting "Encaustic Art" - June Hughes |

30th November Ged Marshall: Commercial Beekeeping plus Bucks County AGM

We are 'hosting' the 2007 Bucks County BKA AGM: so members of the Chalfonts BKS and North Bucks BKA will be joining us Wycombe folk. We hope some Mid Bucks members will also come along as Observers, prior to their re-joining Bucks BKA and BBKA later in 2008. It will be good to meet these people from the other Associations, and to build contacts with them!

Bucks County AGM Paperwork

The October newsletter carried the formal notice about this AGM, and an article by Sylvia Chamberlin, which explained how our threefold BKA membership system works (HW, Bucks & BBKA). You will find the Agenda, for the coming 2007 Bucks AGM, and Minutes of the 2006 AGM, elsewhere within this Newsletter. Still to come are the Annual Reports from the Constituent associations of Bucks; and the Financial Report. These will be circulated via email, or by post (as appropriate to each member's needs) prior to the meeting, so that we can take "as read" all the necessary paperwork which the AGM is to vote on. Then we can keep the AGM as short as possible, but still have adequate time for discussion and voting: and all this prior to our Talk and Food etc.

Running Order Arrangements & Talk Details

I aim to start the meeting promptly at 7:30pm. We hope the AGM will take about 45 minutes: and straight afterwards we will be having a talk by Ged Marshall. "A year in the life of a commercial beekeeper." (Which should be a bit of an eye-opener for us amateurs!) This will be followed by tea/coffee/food, and hopefully then our normal Q&A session to end the evening. Ged, who is based at Steeple Claydon, near Buckingham, and earns his living by beekeeping, will have a long drive to get home again; as will the North Bucks Members: so I anticipate the evening will close at about 10:00 pm.

Family Fun Evening – Dec 14th

Definitely NOT a talk - this will be a totally new venture for us, and is being organized by Clive Winslow. He's aiming to give us a light hearted and social evening, with Christmassy food and drink available. It will be minimally orientated towards beekeeping, so we hope that members will take the opportunity to bring their partners and children along. Activities will include candle making. There will also be quiz. Come along and find

Chairman's Chat

Good news - Mid Bucks re-joining BBKA membership

At their AGM in October, Mid Bucks Beekeepers (based in Wendover) voted by a two-thirds majority to 're-join both Bucks County Beekeepers Association and the BBKA during the year 2008 / 2009'. 'We look forward to working with them more closely in the future - John Catton, Chairman of Bucks County BKA'

The National Honey Show

There was much to see and do at 'The National' again this year. As well as the usual excellent lectures, and the honey show competitions, there were the usual well patronised stands by Thornes, Sheriff, BBKA, The Central Association, Northern Bee Books, IBRA, etc. Dr Sara Robb, who gave us a fascinating Demonstration on soapmaking, back in February, had a stand of her own, selling her range of luxury soaps, lip balm etc. Sara said her business has prospered further since she visited us, and that she was soon to open a shop. Sara's small daughter, Jasmine, a charming little lady who has recently started at School, was helping mum with the sales!

October meeting

Pam Hunter gave us a wide ranging and extremely well organised talk about 'The amazing sex life of the honeybee'. It was a fabulous title; and I expected a 'full house', but we only managed an audience of 23. The talk will be reported in a later newsletter. Following tea break, we had a good question session, and Pam also told us about the Central Association, of which she is currently Meetings Secretary.

The Central Association of Bee-Keepers is a unique organisation. It is a registered educational charity whose objectives are to promote and further the craft of beekeeping by organising lectures and producing publications. The association enables beekeepers, bee scientists and others interested in bees to keep in touch with the latest research and ideas about bees and related topics, acting as a bridge between the beekeeper and the scientist. It invites as its speakers those who are acknowledged experts in their fields, both nationally and internationally. More than ten lectures are given each year. A selection of the lectures given to the association are published and distributed free to

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out! Ring Clive on 812344, if you have ideas for the evening, or can help, or to help – and so spread the workload!

January Meeting – 25/1/2008

June Hughes, who is a beeswax specialist, will be giving us a talk and demonstration of “Encaustic Art” - which is painting with melted beeswax. It is a very ancient art form, and was a technique used by the ancient Egyptians to paint mummies.

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members. These lecture booklets, of which approximately 240 have now been produced, are offered for sale to other beekeepers and additional copies may be purchased by members at a reduced rate. They hold a Spring Meeting in London in March; a Social Evening, held in Wax Chandlers' Hall in the City of London during October; and an annual Autumn Conference held in Stratford upon Avon in November. If you want to know more, talk to Raymond and Sylvia Chamberlin, who are regular attenders; or visit the Association's stands at Stoneleigh, or the NHS.

Reminder: Sub Renewals

Ed West, our treasurer tells me that some people have found the new Membership Renewal Form a little confusing: so he has had a go at making it easier to understand. This revised version will be found elsewhere in the newsletter. Ed has also asked me to make clear that (unless you pay them via another Association) BBKA and Bucks County Membership subs are required as well as the Wycombe sub.

Education & Training

Our 2007/8 Training will be based at The Environment Centre, as usual.

BBKA Modules - URGENT

Please will any members wishing to take the BBKA Modules contact me ASAP. (526557, or clive_hill@talktalk.net) If enough members are interested, we hope to run the course for Module 1 on Honeybee Management again. Other modules are already underway at Chalfont BKA, and Mid- Bucks. Time is short, we will need to start ASAP, because the exam will be on March 15th 2008.

Beginners Course

Clive Winslow has been busy planning the course, which he is leading. It will be held on seven consecutive Tuesday evenings at The Environment Centre, starting on 4th March 2008 and ending on 15th April. So, it is timed to finish just before Stoneleigh, which is on 19th April, and link with Woodworking Day on 26th April – so the beginners can make up their purchases with expert guidance.

Colony Collapse Disorder - Asian Parasite Accused (extract from theguardian)

Scientists in Spain believe they have found the killer parasite that is responsible for wiping out bee colonies from California to Cannes. They believe the cause is *Nosema ceranae*, an Asian parasite that has worked its way into hives across Europe and America, wreaking terrible damage on the bees' internal organs. It is a close cousin of *Nosema apis* which has lived in relative harmony with bees in Europe and elsewhere for centuries. However the new variety of *Nosema* is hardier than the old one, and so continues to thrive under harsh weather conditions. It also spreads easily and rapidly.

The results of the Spanish research, carried out on samples from Germany, Spain, Switzerland and France, are due to be published in the next edition of *Invertebrate Microbiology*.

BBKA Basic Assessment: Have you got this yet?

In the last few seasons, we have run a short course for the BBKA Basic assessment: and we hope to do so again in 2008. Ideally we want about 6 – 8 people. We use a format of five evenings of ‘round the table study’ and two practical sessions. Our candidates have greatly enjoyed the course, and have had a high level of success at getting the qualification.

Description of the Course: - BBKA hope that all ‘recent recruit’ beekeepers will attain this level of competence as part of a natural progression in their beekeeping skills. The syllabus is designed to provide newish beekeepers with a goal which will give them a measure of their achievement in the basic skills and knowledge of the craft – and so increase their enjoyment of beekeeping, and their competence. The syllabus covers five areas: Manipulation of a Honeybee colony, Equipment, Natural History of the Honeybee, Beekeeping, Disease, Poisoning and Pests.

You will need at least one (more likely two) year's beekeeping experience with one colony: so it is a natural follow-on from our Beginners Course; which itself is based on BBKA designed material. Full details can be found under the heading of Examination Board, in the Public Information area of the BBKA website. See <http://www.bbka.org.uk/freefiles/syllabuses> Once you have the Basic under your belt, you could go on to follow the courses for further BBKA Beekeeping qualifications – which are arranged in Study Module form.

Please will you contact me (Clive) on 01494 526557 or clive_hill@talktalk.net if you would like to join the 2008 Basic Group. It will probably be run in the coming Spring /early summer. Once we know the numbers interested, we will firm up the arrangements for the course.

Reminder: Thorne's Winter Sale

If you need some extra equipment, look out for details of Thorne's' Winter Sale. The sale goes ‘live’ about the 2nd January, but check details in Beecraft, or on their website: www.thorne.co.uk They have a considerable range of bargains, many of them ‘seconds’ but very serviceable. Last year's list included Frames, hives, extractors, protective clothing etc. You can buy on-line, or by telephone. Although the sale is nominally for the whole month of January, expect it to sell-out quickly.

The last Newsletter for 2007

Since this will be the last Newsletter for 2007, it is also the place where I can wish our members ‘Happy Christmas’ and ‘Heavy Supers’ in the 2008 season to come. Let's hope we get a summer nectar flow, in 2008, like we used to!

Clive Hill

The team has also been studying samples from the USA, where colony collapse has hit 35 states and affected up to 875,000 out of 2.4 million hives. The disorder, which has also wiped out bees in Canada, Brazil, India and Europe, kills up to 90% of bees in each hive. Identification of the cause of CCD raises hopes that a treatment will be available in future seasons.

A significant collapse in the bee population could threaten food supplies as bees pollinate 90% of food crops.

In Britain, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), has insisted that recent losses are not a sign of colony collapse disorder but the work of the varroa mite, which eats bees and their larvae.

(Thanks to Phil for the cutting)

Bucks County Beekeepers' Association

Registered Charity No. 297335

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Bucks County Beekeepers' Association will take place on Friday 30th November 2007 at 7.30pm at the Environment Centre, The Rye, High Wycombe, HP11 1QX

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. President's Address
3. Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Secretary's Report (on actions of Executive)
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Reports from the three Local Associations: Chalfonts, High Wycombe and North Bucks.
8. Chairman's Remarks
9. Election of Officers and executive members:-

Nominations have been received for:-

Chairman - John Catton (Chalfonts)

Proposed by Ken Gorman (North Bucks), Seconded by Sylvia Chamberlin, (HWBKA)

Secretary - Beulah Cullen (Chalfonts and HWBKA)

Proposed by Vivienne Brown (HWBKA), Seconded by Sheila Borwick (Chalfonts & HWBKA)

Treasurer - Mike Leon (Chalfonts)

Proposed by John Crick (HWBKA), Seconded by Richard Simpson (Chalfonts)

Independent Examiner (Auditor) - Mr Reg Farmborough

Proposed by Richard Simpson (Chalfonts), Seconded by John Catton (Chalfonts)

Two other members of the Executive Committee are elected at the A.G.M. and two delegates from each of the three local associations are chosen locally.

10. Programme for 2008 - Seminar, Basic workshops, Honey show
11. Awards - Exam Certificates, Tweedie skep
12. Any Other Business:
 - 12.1 Year-ends: Should we attempt to coordinate with Mid Bucks?
 - 12.2 Quorum: Should we alter the County Constitution to make the Executive quorate if three out of four Associations are represented, post Mid Bucks affiliation?
13. Date and Venue for next meeting - North Bucks

Please

**Don't forget
if you change your email address
let us know**

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

Seasonal Tips and Reminders November 2007

Key tasks this month:

1. Ensure Queen can't lay in wild (drone) comb
2. Ensure hive positioned to drain forward.
3. Fit mouseguards.
4. Ensure hive secured against winds.
5. If necessary, install armour plating to keep woodpeckers off.
6. Check hive weight by 'hefting'.

As the Association doesn't have a December Newsletter, these notes are designed to cover the routine maintenance jobs necessary for November, December and early January.

So far we have had a mild and unchallenging autumn, with little to speak of in terms of rain, strong winds, or frost. A good proportion of the leaves are now off the trees, but there are still those lovely autumn colours. And except for the higher temperatures, all pretty much at the time of year you'd expect. Honeybees will still be flying on mild days for quite a while yet. They will be checking the location of home, taking cleansing flights, searching for late forage, and perhaps later on for water. The colonies will have started to form winter clusters - loose clusters, but a definite change. In the Nov. / Dec. / Jan. time period we are interested in, hives ought to be heavy with stores: you'll find them very heavy to "heft".

Where can the queen get to?

If you leave a tank feeder on the hive, or wild comb in an empty Super or an eke, put a queen excluder underneath it before the queen can get up into it. I've a little 'hard learning' story for you about this one autumn I left a tank feeder (Ashforth / Miller) on the top of a hive because after taking down their syrup, the bees had built wild comb in the tank, then filled the comb with ivy honey; which had gone solid - as it does! So I left the feeder on, thinking that the cluster could use the honey over the winter, and save me the messy job of cleaning it up. They did too: but when I did a Spring Check and tried to remove the feeder, to my horror I found the queen was up in the wild comb; and there was brood in the wild comb; and nearly all of it was drone brood! Ever tried finding the queen amongst fixed in position wild comb? Impossible: but I smoked her down. It was at that point I realised I should have had a Queen Excluder under the feeder.

Ensuring good Ventilation and Drainage + Securing against the wind. Make sure the hive ventilation and drainage systems are working. You're aiming to prevent dampness accumulating in the hive over winter. It is wet conditions that kill colonies, not cold.

For hives with a solid floor, I followed the "through ventilation" wintering ideas recommended by Manley in his book *Beekeeping in Britain*. They've worked well for me over a good many years: but with a Varroa Mesh Floor, things can be a bit simpler.

The Manley system was to raise the back edge of the floorboard with a 1 to 2 cm thick wooden block at either side. The floor then slopes forwards a little, allowing any liquid water to run freely out of the hive. His system was also to remove the roof and loosen the crownboard, then put a few pieces of broken matchstick between the crownboard and the top edges of the broodchamber. Aim to leave a small (2 mm) air gap between the crownboard and the hive body at the back and along part of the sides. The bees will propolise it in position, leaving a small air gap and this will allow gentle air movement through the hive. If you are using a Varroa Mesh Floor as standard practice, this will radically improve the ventilation of the hive. You need to

be certain that there will be a modicum of air movement within the body of the hive, not a 'howling gale', since this will hold the bees back once the brood nest gets established, late in the winter. I still slope the hive forwards slightly, but I now leave the crownboard fully attached.

Make sure the roof won't blow off in strong winds. If necessary weight it down. Make sure the hive (and if necessary the hive stand) won't rock about either. In a very windy location you could use a hive strap if necessary to secure hive to stand, and roof to hive.

Keeping out Mice - fitting Mouse Guards.

Remove any entrance blocks from a National or Commercial hive, to give a full aperture entrance. Then fix a metal mouse guard (zinc or aluminium) completely across the entrance. A Mouse guard across a full aperture entrance will allow the bees to get in and out, even if there is a significant build up of dead bees on the floor behind it. Use 3 or 4 large drawing pins to hold the Guard in place. Push the pins through the metal, into the woodwork, and fully home. It needs to be secure against strong winds! For WBCs I'd use a pair of scissors to cut the mouseguard so it fits in the entrance slide way in place of the wooden slides; then, to keep mice out, bung-up any gaps behind it (at the ends) that are 3/8 inch (9mm) or more across, or high, where it fits into the slide way. Put a mouse guard on even if your hive is on rails well above the ground. In the winter of 2000, mice got into an un-protected hive of mine on hive rails with the entrance at knee height. It held the colony back for months the following year!

Making sure that woodpeckers can't get a foot / beak hold.

Although my bees are close to a large wood, with plenty of green woodpeckers, I've never had the hives attacked. At the Association's Hughenden apiary and our former one at Widmer End, hives have been raided each year - often wrecked! Our Apiary Managers have found that wrapping hives in thick polythene sheet (builder's damp-proof membrane), stapled into position, is an effective preventative. You can even slit the sheeting into strips, so they blow in the wind. As an alternative, I've heard it is effective to enclose the hive in wire mesh, spaced off the hive surface to prevent the birds getting a foothold.

After all these chores, you can settle down and enjoy a period of beekeeping peace and quiet for a few weeks. However, do take a look at your hives on mild days. I've seen my own colonies flying well on Boxing Day, New Years Day and other mild days in January in the past.

That's all for now, talk to you again in the New Year. Happy Christmas.

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 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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