

# High Wycombe and District Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity No. 299638

Chairman: Clive Hill 01494 526557

President: Will Steynor 01494 881205

Secretary: Sheila Borwick 01494 729315 shejont@waitrose.com

Treasurer: Edward West 01494 520874

Swarm Officer: Bill Bendyshe-Brown 07527 798659

## *Newsletter - September 2008*

### Diary

#### Forthcoming Events

- |                  |   |  |
|------------------|---|--|
| 11th September   | - | Colony Collapse Disorder - Dewey Caron |
| 26th September   | - | AGM and Competitions                   |
| 11th October     | - | Presidents Evening - Frieth            |
| 30th Oct/1st Nov | - | National Honey Show                    |
| 31st October     | - | Monthly Meeting - Clive de Bruyn       |

11th September. Dewey Caron Talk

26th September AGM, Talk & Honey Competitions.

11th October. Presidents Supper - Frieth

30th October – 1st November - National Honey Show

at Weybridge in Surrey. Although staging does not take place until 17th October, ENTRIES MUST BE IN BY 1st October : or else you can pay the late entry fee. You will find further details at the schedule on the National Honey Show Web-site <<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>> Entries must be made on the official forms.

31st October. Monthly Meeting Clive de Bruyn – “The joys of raising Queens”

#### Frame of Honey Competition – Judging Rules

Judging will be by Vivienne Brown, our own National Honey Judge. We aim to achieve a balance between discrimination and inclusiveness. *It is important that all entrants bring their frame along to the AGM evening.* It doesn't matter how 'imperfect' the frame is – that is the bees' fault, as much as your own! So bring it along even if they never even drew out the foundation; or made you a wobbly-sided frame; or only part filled it.

We will gather the frames together, make sure it is impossible to identify who submitted them: then hand them over to Vivienne. She will then group the frames into one of three categories:-

1. Frames suitable for extraction. (1st, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> prize cards can be awarded.)

2. Frames whose contents are very beautiful, but set, or otherwise not suitable for extraction. (Again, 1st, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> prize cards can be awarded.)

3. Frames suitable for Educational use and Learning.

After the judging, Vivienne will explain how and why she has made the prize decisions; and she will discuss the frames in category 3, so we can learn about them, and their contents (or lack of contents!) and begin to understand both the judging process; and the intricacies of getting a frame for honey drawn and filled.

#### Chairman's Chat

This is a very important Newsletter since it contains the Annual Reports Agenda etc needed for our coming AGM. Please familiarize yourself with the contents in advance of the AGM so that the business can be carried out swiftly, but with good opportunity for discussion. Then all the hard work that your officers have put into the past year and into preparing these reports will have been worthwhile.

**KEY INFORMATION - The Dewey Caron Talk.** *I would like to encourage you all to come to the exceptional meeting on THURSDAY Sept 11th.* This will be the first meeting the Association has held with a Speaker from overseas. Professor Caron is from the USA, where they have had catastrophic honeybee colony losses in the recent winters - they call it CCD. We are expecting to learn more of this situation from him, but the formal title of his talk “Reducing Colony Stress in the Fall” (Autumn) has been chosen to allow him to discuss important material around that topic. We are greatly looking forward to this very special evening and anticipate something like a ‘full house’ – hence the request that you let Julian Parker know you will be coming (but turn up anyway if you forget to do so - we are unlikely to reach the 100 max numbers !)

Professor Caron is on a short tour in England and beyond. At his request we've circulated news of the talk around other local BKAs and so hope to provide him with a really good audience: and a really lively one too if Wycombe members are as searching as we usually are! Dewey has also specifically asked us to provide him with an opportunity to meet with beekeepers from a broader location base than High Wycombe - so that he might increase his 'network' of contacts within English beekeeping. To achieve this, there will be an informal and rather rushed pub supper before the talk, at which he will meet the Chairs of Bucks, and Mid-Bucks BKA, and with Beulah Cullen, who is heavily involved with Beekeeper Education at BBKA level. I'm sorry that it has been impossible to invite more HWBKA people: but at least you won't have to pay for your own rather rushed and chattery supper; and you will be able to talk with him at the Environment Centre.

I have heard little detail, but I believe that the wet summer has resulted in many poor honey yields: and a few extremely good

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*Continued from page 1 column 2*

yields. My own crop was about 40% of last years, and with high water content: so it has been a very poor year.

The Environment Centre has been working really hard at collecting signatures for the BBKA Research Petition. Thanks to their help we have now amassed **1796** signatures, 83% of which are the Centre's work.

September is the time for renewing our subscriptions. I would like to draw your attention to the occasion it gives you to subscribe to Beecraft, which is a truly excellent magazine: and to the idea of making a personal donation towards Bee research. As part of your BDI payment there is some support for our national research of bee diseases: but some years ago our committee decided that we would ask all of our members to make a donation to the fund set up by BBKA for further research. At the AGM last year we agreed to move our 'suggested donation' up to £5 per member. Now that the Research Funding campaign has gathered such momentum, Ed West, our Treasurer has sent in a really good communal donation to the Research Fund thanks to these 'subs donations'.

Our September meeting will be much more than an AGM evening. Julian has organized us a short talk on "Food Safety and Legal responsibilities" by our local Environmental Health Officer, Andrew Collinson. This will be followed by our AGM, for which all but one of the detailed reports are provided in this newsletter. The missing item is the Treasurer's Financial Report, copies of which will be available both on-screen and in hard

copy at the AGM. Ed is beavering away on the accounts as I write, then they will be vetted by Chris Gee, our 'independent examiner'. Ed tells me however that the association is very solvent. Following the AGM we will move on to hear Vivienne Brown's review and judging of our Frame of Honey Competition, and the Honey in Blacked-out Jar competition. May the best beekeeper win! You will find details of the "frame competition" in John Crick's article in our April 08 newsletter and in the short article below; and for the "Run Honey in Black Jar" competition in the August 08 Newsletter. You can download these from our website.

#### **Training**

We will shortly be establishing the training programme for the coming year. The beginners course will be coordinated and led by Clive Winslow. We hope to offer the BBKA basic course again: and perhaps some of the BBKA intermediate modules: but must have enough candidates. I hope to have outline details available at the AGM. We are not trying to turn everyone into highly qualified 'boffins' but are very aware that in the present environment a good knowledge-base is becoming essential.

#### **President's Supper**

After a slow start, we now have almost enough bookings to be certain that the supper will be going ahead. Will Steynor will take the last bookings on AGM night. Assuming we go ahead, we will be hearing about the highly successful "Red Kite Re-introduction Programme" which should be absolutely fascinating – and nothing to do with bees!

*Clive Hill*

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## **PRESIDENT'S EVENING**

### **SATURDAY 11th OCTOBER**

This will be held in Frieth Village Hall and will have a similar format to last year. Commencing at 7pm supper at 7.30 followed by presentation of the President's Cup and various other awards.

This will be followed by an after dinner speaker on a subject which will have nothing to do with Beekeeping. This is a social evening for members and partners to get to know each other.

The cost of the ticket (yet to be finalised but will be under £20) includes the meal and soft drinks, you bring anything stronger.

To book places please either phone or Email Will Steynor at 01494 881205 or [willsteynor@hotmail.com](mailto:willsteynor@hotmail.com)

All emails will be replied to to confirm that I have received them.

The HWBKA website can be visited at

[www.hwbka.co.uk](http://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](mailto:newsletter@hwbka.co.uk)

Website: [www.hwbka.co.uk](http://www.hwbka.co.uk)

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# Seasonal Tips and Reminders September 2008

## **Making Sugar Syrup**

### **How much Stores needed ?**

### **Varroa Control**

September, the honey crop is off, Varroa treatment started ..... so, what is to be done?

Anti-robbing precautions. Completion of feeding and varroa treatment. Starting preparation for winter. Removal of varroicide. Checking that it worked. Selling honey.

### **Protection against robbers.**

With the dearth of nectar, honeybees (and wasps) will be hunting round for food. They can easily turn to robbing weakly defended colonies: so you need minimal size entrances to allow effective defence. The hive must still have good ventilation – but mesh Varroa floors work wonders here.

### **The remaining Bee Forage.**

The summer nectar and pollen flow flowers are now. On recent trips from home I've seen some residual willowherb and quite a few hawkweed flowers on the verges, also some white clover and dandelion. Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed are also in flower at the moment. These, and late summer garden flowers such as golden rod, Michaelmas daisies etc, the bees will work avidly. The only significant nectar flow yet to come will be from Ivy. This usually flowers in October, but nowadays can start significantly earlier, and I've seen some ivy flowers open in several different places: as in 2007 !

### **Preparation for winter.**

Honeybee colonies are now shrinking in numbers by natural wastage. This leaves a population of younger "winter bees" to go through to spring. A useful thing the passing "summer bees" can do is to use their time and enzymes to work up sugar syrup feed and turn it into winter stores. Working-up syrup to stores is a slow process: you need to allow time for the enzyme-induced inversion of the sucrose, and the reduction of its water content to 18% - like ripe honey. But how much syrup do you need to feed? and what is the best way to do so?

### **Sugar Syrup for feeding bees.**

Lets start with some facts and figures about Sugar Syrup. The "standard concentration" talked about in beekeeping books is 2 lb. of sugar to 1 pint of water: but you don't need to be accurate - the bees won't notice. In the simplest format, put some granulated sugar in a container; add enough water to fill the air gaps between the sugar crystals; then stir to dissolve. Hot water or cold won't matter, but you need to stir longer to dissolve the sugar with cold water.

8 lb. sugar gives 1 gallon of syrup, which weighs approx. 13 lb. The water content of this syrup is 38.5%, the sugar 61.5%. The specific gravity (density) is about 1.3. A gallon of this syrup, when fed to the bees, will produce approx. 12 lb. of stores and this will be equivalent to 10 lb. of honey stores.

If you think in metric quantities, a rough metric equivalent to 2 lb/pint (but a little stronger) would be 1 kg sugar to 600 ml water. Scaling this up, 5 kg sugar plus 3.0 litres water gives 6.1

litres. 5 litres of this syrup will produce approx. 6.0 kg of stores and this will be equivalent to 5.0 kg of honey stores.

Feed syrup as early as possible during September. When you feed it, give it in the evening, and keep the hive entrance small. Feed all the hives in the apiary, even if it is just a little for some colonies, because this will help prevent robbing. A small entrance will help the guard bees to protect the colony from prowling robbers, or wasps.

A colony needs access to some 35 - 40 lb. (16 - 18 kg) of stores to overwinter successfully, but may only use 20 - 25 lb. (9 - 11 kg) in some winters. (It is not an exact science!)

The traditional way to check hive weights is by "hefting" them - lifting them gently and guessing the weight. (They should feel significantly heavy!) However, a better way is to use a spring balance to weigh the hives and so check more accurately that they have enough stores. Position the balance midway on either side of the floorboard. Round head screws located in the centre at either side of the floorboard will help you to locate the balance. Use a piece of string, to link balance hook to the screw. Lift from both the left and right sides in turn, noting the balance reading when the floorboard is just eased off the hive stand. Add the two weights together to give the total weight. (You should be able to do a similar weighing with a digital bathroom scale and a stick to take the weight between the hive side and the scale platform ! )

To have the recommended 45 lb. (20 kg) of stores, the following total weights should be achieved. (These figures include floorboard, crown board, brood box, combs and bees.) National Brood Chamber - 68 lb. (31 kg). National Brood and a half - 77 lb. (35 kg) National Double Brood 85 lb. (38.6 kg) Commercial 16" x 10" - 75 lb. (34 kg)

If you have a WBC, you can still weigh the hive as above, but since these hives vary widely in the type and thickness of wood used, the empty weight and correct target weight required is rather more problematical. Here is a way round the problem ..... You need a spare floor, brood box porch lift and coverboard. Put a carton onto the bathroom scales, then load it with bricks to 50 lb. in weight - this allows 10 lb. extra for frames and bees. Put the loaded carton into the hive, then test its weight by hefting, or by using the spring balance as before.

### **Varroa Control / Treatment.**

In August I stressed the need for Varroa control - to ensure healthy bees for the over-winter period. There is still time to treat the colonies, if you missed that time window: but if there are significant numbers of mites, or (with Apiguard) if the night time temperature dips for long below 10°C, since this reduces the thymol vapour level inside the hive; you'll not get such good colony strength in the spring. Make sure to monitor the colony's mite drop rate before, during treatment (to see that it is working) and again after treatment. Make sure to record the results before and after, the Apiguard batch number, the start date and the end date. The CSL DEFRA booklet 'Managing Varroa' (PB10859) June 2005 explains all about how to do this. HWBKA has a small stock of these at The Environment Centre, so ring me on 01 494 526557 to get one. Otherwise you can view the text on-line at the CSL NBU website <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> or get your own copy of the booklet from CSL.

Finally, do make the time to sit beside a hive ..... and wonder where they're finding that pollen!

*Clive Hill*

# HIGH WYCOMBE & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

(Reg. Charity No 299638)

## 64th Annual General Meeting Friday 26th September 2008 at 7.30PM

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of AGM 28th September 2007
3. Matters arising from the minutes

### Reports

4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Reports on:

Apiaries  
Librarian  
Swarm Officer  
Minor reports - as published.  
Proposals

### 8 Alteration to the Constitution

I propose that paragraph 7 .1 of the existing Constitution of HWBKA be amended to read  
"The PRESIDENT shall not be eligible for re-election after the **fourth** consecutive year of office".....

Proposed by Bill Bendyshe-Brown

Seconded by Sheila Borwick

### INFORMATION

The proposer writes: I believe it would be of benefit to the Association if the length of time a President may serve is extended from two to four years because. it adds continuity to the governance of the society. The office of Chairman is held for three years. This proposal, if accepted, would ensure that both positions do not become vacant in the same year, thus ensuring greater stability for the society when either of these significant positions has a change of officer.

NB *The rules of the association can only be altered at an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting. Any alteration to the Rules must receive the assent of two-thirds of the members present at the AGM. I confirm that this proposal was notified to me at a Committee meeting on 7 July, where it received the support of the Committee. Sheila Borwick*

### 9 Election of Officers-see published nominations

### 10. Election of Committee Members-up to 3 Ordinary Members nominated and elected from the floor

### 11. Election of Independent Examiner

### 12. Any Other Business

### 13. Date of next AGM - Fri. 25th September 2009

## Minutes of the 63rd Annual General Meeting held on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007

**Present:** Clive Hill (Chair); Tim Fountain (Minutes); Sylvia Chamberlin; Raymond Chamberlin; Chris Gee; Bill Bendyshe-Brown; Scott Rutland; Bob Hunter; Clive Winslow; Stan Grierson;

**Apologies:** Christine Hazell; Mark Scott; Keith Wood; Terry Kelly; Sheila Borwick; John Chudley; Pat Field.

**Minutes of AGM held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006.** Read and Approved

Proposed: Sylvia Chamberlin

Seconded: Chris Gee

**Minutes of EGM held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2007.** Read and Approved

Proposed: Bill Bendyshe-Brown

Seconded: Scott Rutland

**Matters arising from the minutes.**

None.

**Chairman's Report.** Read and Approved

Proposed: Bob Hunter

Seconded: Scott Rutland

**Secretary's Report.** Read and Approved

Proposed: Clive Winslow

Seconded: Stan Grierson

**Treasurer's Report.**

**Overview.** Read and Approved.

Proposed: Bernard Wells

Seconded: Bill Bendyshe-Brown

### Financial Details.

The Treasurer explained that honey sales were currently down on last year. The Associations liabilities to the BBKA and Bucks BKA will have a greater effect on the balance of the Association as, due to the change in the financial year, these liabilities will be paid twice

in the current financial period. It was also noted that the balance contains £1400 from donations for schools education, which is money not available for other activities.

Proposed: Scott Rutland

Seconded: Felice Pigram

A motion of thanks to the Treasurer was proposed by Clive Hill and seconded by Ron White.

### **Subscriptions.**

The Treasurer talked the meeting through the new subscription form explaining the new structure of membership defined by the BBKA this year. A discussion ensued over the suggested level of the 'voluntary contribution' to BBKA Research Fund. In light of the present situation with Government funding for bee research, it was suggested that the voluntary contribution should be increased to show the Government that BBKA members are serious about their part in a properly funded research scheme. After further discussion, the following was proposed:

That the suggested voluntary contribution be increased to £5.

Proposed: Ed West Seconded: Ron White

After a show of hands, the motion was carried

A further discussion centered on the recent colloquium held regarding bee research which one of our members attended. Clive Hill will ask Sheila Borwick for details on the total annual research fund and on what research is being run.

Sylvia Chamberlin will ask the BBKA if a report can be included in a future newsletter.

### **Capital Equipment.**

Better use has been made of the Association's extractor this year.

### **Reports.**

Written reports were submitted covering the Association's apiaries, library usage and from the Swarm Officer. Clive Hill discussed the Association's thoughts on moving the bees from the Hughenden site to Marlow assuming that the Association still wanted to maintain its own apiary. The possibility of using John Crick's site was mentioned and this would be discussed further at committee. A further discussion followed regarding the issues experienced this year by the swarm officer, Stewart Thorburn, and his subsequent resignation from the post. It was decided that further discussions be held within the committee.

Donald Thomson reminded members of the Association of their duty to reduce swarms.

Thanks were given to Keith Wood for his hard work on the Association website which launched this year.

Sylvia Chamberlin requested assistance with an ongoing schools project on Wednesday afternoons in Princes Risborough.

### **Adjustment of Constitution to allow fit with new BBKA Membership Categories.**

It was decided that no such adjustment was necessary.

### **Election of Officers**

**President:** Will Steynor

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Bob Hunter

**Chairman:** Clive Hill

Proposed by: Will Steynor

Seconded by: Sylvia Chamberlin

**Vice Chairman:** Clive Winslow

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Bill Bendyshe-Brown

**Secretary:** Christine Hazell (Until Spring 2008)

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Bernard Wells

**Treasurer:** Ed West

Proposed by: Clive Winslow

Seconded by: Donald Thomson

**Apiary Manager:** To be discussed at Committee

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Agreed by Meeting

**Librarian:** To be discussed at Committee

(Stan Grierson to continue at present)

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Agreed by Meeting

**Election of Committee Members:** Bill Bendyshe-Brown; Scott Rutland; Keith Wood; Julian Parker; Kenn Shearer; Katy Hart.

Proposed by: Clive Hill

Seconded by: Clive Winslow

**Election of Independent Examiner:** Christopher Gee

Proposed by: Bill Bendyshe-Brown

Seconded by: Will Steynor

### **Any Other Business**

Thanks were proposed to Stewart Thorburn for his work as Swarm Officer, especially in this most difficult year.

Ron White proposed a vote of thanks to all those involved in the production and distribution of the Newsletter.

John Crick suggested that more books and DVDs should be purchased for the library.

### **Date of next AGM**

Friday 26th September 2008

# Annual Reports on 2007/8 year

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**BBKA Research Funding Petition** In support of the BBKA petition for better funding of Bee Disease Research, we have been collecting signatures. The total to date is 1796, of which The Environment Centre has collected 1689 with HWBKA members 107, mainly at Shows etc. BBKA are now pressing that we get our MPs involved, so this has to become our next focus.

**Reflection** It is both encouraging, and daunting, to reflect on how busy we have been during the last year. Our monthly lecture meetings featured an excellent selection of speakers and subjects and at least one provoked some strong debate! They were well attended, but we could easily have fitted in some extras from among our 'low-profile' members. We used group buying power again, to allow well priced key purchases. On the Varroa control front, our members now treat mesh floors, drone comb trapping and thymol based treatments as the norm – and Varroa control is back to being a normal factor of life again. Winter losses were mixed, heavy for some members, nil for others, but probably not that much worse than usual overall. It has been a mixed honey year too, although thanks to the poor summer I suspect more of us have had poor yields than the few with record crops. Thanks to its Bee Disease Research Funding drive, the public profile of BBKA has advanced significantly over the last few months: and we have had massive support in collecting signatures for this by the Environment Centre.

### Administration.

We had four committee meetings this year, and all of us have been busy: but several non-committee members also work hard for the Association. Christine Hazell handed over as Secretary to Sheila Borwick in the spring. We have introduced the post of Programme & Meetings Secretary, which has been very fruitfully taken up by Julian Parker. Ed West, Treasurer; and Clive Winslow, Vice Chairman have been very active and hope to continue in these posts. Bill Bendyshe-Brown has been Swarm Officer, has greatly reorganised the way we react with calls from the public – and shows signs of having enjoyed the role! Our thanks go to all these hard working people: and also to our 'out-workers', particularly Terry Kelly who still compiles our newsletter.

### Education.

The 2008 Beginners Course and other aspects of Education have been extremely successful. This year our training has encouraged about 10 new people to take up beekeeping as a hobby: but others are waiting to start and we have given good background knowledge of the world of bees and beekeeping to many more. Sylvia Chamberlin and her team have been introducing bees and beekeeping to hundreds of children at school. (She has sadly decided to relinquish this role.) Our website has also provided an education resource to the public and we continue to get many favourable comments. It has also led to outside bodies asking for talks on beekeeping. We offered BBKA Basic and Module classes to members, but did not take these further due to poor uptake. We are liaising with Chalfonts and Mid Bucks to further this objective.

### Social events.

We cancelled the theatre visit this year, on cost grounds. We tried a Christmas Cracker in mid-December (organised by Clive and Karen Winslow) which was a great success with those who came, but got a poor turnout. We held a highly successful President's Evening, organised to great effect by Will and Jane Steynor. This was a sit-down meal at Frieth, with excellent food and a really entertaining and fascinating presentation afterwards about the supersonic airliner Concord. During this informal and delightful evening, Will made a first presentation of his new award, The President's Cup: given to the person who had put an enormous amount of work into the Association over the last year. It was given, with great acclaim to Scott Rutland. Finally, in Mid July we had a delightful BBQ at Bill and Eugenie B-B's home: and with great interest were shown round 'their version of the 'Good Life'. This was that first time in my life that sheep had ever rushed forward to be stroked when you entered the field: and the special pigs were simply fascinating!

### Thanks.

I would particularly like to record our debt of gratitude to the following people: Clive Winslow, for his work with beekeeping education for our beginners; and for the Christmas Cracker evening. Will Steynor, whose inspiration and hard work led us to our excellent first President's Evening. Phil Wiggins, for breathing new life into our Marlow apiary, and enthusing the team of helpers. Bill B-B for his new approach to the problematic area of bee problems and swarms. Sylvia Chamberlin for leading the school links work for many years; and particularly her work with PrincesRisboroughSchool. Raymond Chamberlin for his management of our Observation hive at The Environment Centre. Scott Rutland, who has been a tower of strength on many facets. Terry Kelly, for his continuing expertise with our newsletter. Tim Fountain, for his concise but detailed reports on meetings and the AGM. Keith Wood for his website support; and Sheila Borwick who has wholeheartedly joined in a huge range of HWBKA activities following her uptake of the secretarial role.

There is little mention elsewhere in these reports of the hidden work of three Committee Members. Julian Parker, who has organised us an excellent forthcoming programme; and managed the 'scoop' of getting Dewey Caron to come to give us a groundbreaking international lecture. Kenn Shearer, who is still mad keen on bees, despite his allergy scare: and who is taking our Circulation list know-how to new effectiveness. And also to Katy Hart, who has taken on the role of librarian, continues to get to grips with our book stock, and is gently evolving our display area at The Environment Centre.

And Finally. I end with a note of caution. We still rely on a remarkably small number of 'Key Workers'. I believe it is time the Association began to widen the group of people who help as volunteers. If we are to continue to be so active, we must widen this base and so reduce the individual workloads. But, as I come to the end of my second term of office as Chairman, I thank you all for your support with helping to run this healthy and vibrant Association.

*Clive Hill*

## Secretary's Report

Thank you for a very friendly welcome to your society. I look forward to working with you all if elected for the coming year. I am impressed by the friendliness of your welcome, the wealth of beekeeping experience within the society and the range and diversity of skills and experience which are available to the Association. It is truly a team effort. I wish to extend my apologies for my absence at the AGM. This is due to a prior commitment.

In the past year the Association has enjoyed a very varied and worthwhile programme arranged by my predecessor, Christine Hazell. In the forthcoming year, members can look forward to an equally stimulating programme arranged by Julian Parker, who has taken on the role of Programme Secretary. A regular pattern of interesting lectures throughout the winter is the lifeblood of the society and I am

sure members will not be disappointed at what is on offer. Programme cards are being printed and should be available for members to collect at the AGM. In addition to the published programme, there are plans to arrange a queen rearing day in the spring of next year, with a return visit from Terry Clare, who generated so much interest last season with his talk "Is there a Better Bee?"

My duties as Secretary are only just underway. We have once again signed up to the local Volunteers Bureau in High Wycombe. There have been regular communications from the BBKA through our County Secretary, Beulah Cullen. The new Bucks Bucks County BKA Yearbook has been published and circulated to members. It is a most valuable resource. Our thanks to Scott Rutland who organised the posting. We have purchased a few extra copies of the BBKA Year Book 2008, which is another excellent resource. If you need access to a copy, please ask. The BBKA petition was placed in the Environment Centre and has produced an excellent response from the visitors to the centre. Individual members have also played their part at various shows and events to encourage a response from members of the public and a list showing more than 600 signatures expressing support for the BBKA campaign has been sent to Stoneleigh. More recently, we received a request to participate in an audit on the Bee Inspection service and I am aware of an enthusiastic response to this from members.

Since taking over the Secretary's role, it is the HWBKA website which has generated most work. Surprisingly, a high proportion of enquiries in the earlier part of the season concerned bumble bees and solitary bees. The queries come in from all over the UK - that is a tribute to the excellent lay-out of the site, for which Keith Wood must be congratulated - with some from the USA. Many are from young people and I have to tell you that your Chairman is a master at responding to these in a kindly and informative way. The website is also a valuable portal for enquiries about membership and already a list of prospective recruits for next year's Beginners Course is emerging. Dates for that have already been booked with the Environment Centre. The Course will start on 3 March and will run for seven weeks. With the current interest in beekeeping from the general public, fuelled by the successful publicity campaign generated by the BBKA, I will predict a strong demand for this course next year.

*Sheila Borwick*

### **Swarm Officer**

Having volunteered to step into Stewart Thorburn's shoes to take over as Swarm Officer for 2008, I put forward my thoughts on how to proceed for the year to our Committee and then to a full meeting of our Association. With everybody's agreement we purchased a dedicated mobile telephone and mapped out our area of responsibility. I advertised to let members know to contact me if they required a swarm and we had over 50 swarm requirements. The Press were contacted with details of our Association and were given regular updates on various aspects of bee populations. In addition the Police, Fire Authorities and local District Councils were contacted to let them know of our existence. Our media campaign paid off with regular articles and a constant stream of telephone calls. Most calls fell into the category of providing information on solitary and bumble bees. However, we did receive approximately 30 swarm calls and were able to capture some 22 swarms. Unfortunately, we were not able to meet everybody's expectations of gaining a swarm and 2008 can be described as a poor year for swarms within our Association area. I have maintained a map of where swarms were picked up to try and help us plan for next year. Our mentoring programme for new beekeepers when they were helped to catch a swarm worked well. Additionally, we have had several plaudit letters back from satisfied members of the public, one even to the Press, on our speed and help in managing bee problems. Further, we have also received well over £200 in donations from the public just for taking swarms or helping them in resolving a local bee or wasp problem.

There have been several lessons learned from this year's experience. Firstly, having a dedicated help line number has been of enormous benefit as we have been able to pass the phone around when I have not been available. Another lesson has been that we need to include our details in 'Yellow Pages', as I found quite a lot of people came to me through reference from other members having first gained their details from consulting Yellow Pages. But I think the main lesson has been that BBKA have done an excellent job in getting through to people through the media the problems that bees have been experiencing; everybody I have come into contact with has expressed concern on the plight of bees.

If everybody is happy for me to do so I am quite happy to put my name forward for nomination as Swarm Officer for 2009, when I hope that the collective lessons learned from 2008 can be put to best effect.

*Bill B-B*

### **The Association Apiaries**

We run bee colonies for use in Teaching Beekeeping and also to obtain some honey which provides Honey Handling Training and a source of income to the Association. We entered the year with a decision to move the Association's hives all to one site: the Marlow Apiary. Scott Rutland undertook to transfer the remaining hives at the Hughenden Apiary onto 14x14 brood chambers and move them to Marlow. Two colonies have been transferred and are shortly to be taken there. The remaining colony has been used to top up a beginner's weak colony. We intend to have access to the Hughenden apiary as a fall-back: but it will mainly be used by our Ex-President Ron White.

Kenn Shearer had agreed to manage the Marlow apiary, but he quickly ran into a major bee sting allergy situation, so had to drop out. An SOS to the membership resulted in Phil Wiggins rescuing the situation, leading and helped by a group of other less experienced beekeepers who volunteered to help - several of them beginners. In an attempt to make getting involved more attractive, I floated the idea that those helping with apiary work should receive a small share of the honey as a 'Thank you' and this has been well appreciated. Over the winter period two colonies died out and a third was very weak. Phil and his working parties have re-invigorated the site, taken a small Spring honey crop and a larger Summer one: have updated the equipment and now have four strong colonies ready to be wintered. The summer honey has been extracted under the watchful advice of John Crick; and we have agreed to sell the spare summer honey to Phil, whose own bees have had a very poor year - "my worst year in 25 years of Beekeeping". In 2009 we plan to transfer the remaining colonies onto National deep brood chambers (14 x 12) so we have a uniform system in use.

Our sincere thanks to Phil, Scott and all those who have helped out at the apiary, where they have worked hard, had enjoyment and know-how transferred: and gained a little honey too.

*Clive Hill - with input from Scott Rutland and Phil Wiggins*

## **Adult Education and Training.**

**Beginners Course.** The Course this year was held over a period of 7 Tuesdays followed by two practical sessions with a mentor. The Classes started on March 4<sup>th</sup> and the course fee of £45 included a copy of Ted Hooper's 'Guide to Bees & Honey', a few months membership of HWBKA + BBKA + BDI – and was designed to break even with minimal profit. I would like to thank John Crick for all the help he gave me in setting up the course and his notes from the previous course's he ran. My thanks also to those members who offered to be mentors; and those who came to the 'tea-breaks' to talk beekeeping. It has proved to be a very popular and successful formula, with very positive feedback. The 2009 Course dates have already been booked and we have already started receiving enquiries. Each evening we had an informal Presentation of that evening's theme. This was followed by a tea break with an opportunity to talk with existing beekeeper members; then a discussion of that evening's material. Real empty hive etc demonstration material was used to keep the education practical and based on real-life.

We had about 28 people at the start of the Course and a few late joiners, so the final size was 33 people. Most people came from the HW area, but with outliers as far away as Langley, Maidenhead and Reading. One or two had done a Burchett's Green Beekeeping Course beforehand and said ours was much cheaper and much better. Most of the beginners nowadays have email facilities, which helps a great deal with onward communication. There was a good mix of ages, many women and quite a few young people in the group – which bodes well for the future of the Association. It has since become apparent that quite a few people came along to learn about bees and beekeeping from an environmental point of view, not necessarily to become beekeepers.

About a third of these beginners have so far become bee keepers: although some of the rest have equipment in-hand to start next year. Following the large number of swarms which were available in 2007, we planned to get the 2008 beginners provided with bees using swarms: but it didn't work out this way! Some were lucky enough to get swarms, others brought Nucleus colonies. We ran a follow up session in July which was run by Scot as a question and answer session to assist with any problems. Unfortunately the weather this year has prevented the beginners getting much practical experience.

**BBKA Exams.** A small group of us met at Beulah Cullen's house once a week to study for the BBKA modules; this was run in conjunction with Chalfont's. Unfortunately this year we were unable to run a course for the BBKA basic examinations because of the short fall in numbers, we are hoping to hold this course in 2009.

*Clive Winslow*

## **School Visiting Educational Work**

We have continued to run a busy and successful programme of school visiting across the area covered by the Association. Pupils in their early years of schooling are treated to a comprehensive experience, not only viewing bees in an observation hive, but feeling, listening, smelling and tasting the various products of the hive. This year I have trained up more members to help take forward this work. I have been assisted on our visits by a number of volunteers to whom thanks are also due.

All eleven school visits this year took place during the summer term. 'Minibeasts' has now been moved into the 'early years' curriculum, so five of these visits were to reception classes. However the teachers of the older children really appreciated how the presentation enhanced their work on pollination. There is a need to raise the awareness of teachers and beekeepers to this.

All presenters have made good use of the HWBKA teaching aids. These include relevant, pictures, models and specimens to guide the speaker. Vanessa Rickett of Mid Bucks has followed John Chudley's lead and made visits in their area. In our area I have been grateful for help in setting up and manning the activities from Raymond, Mary Baker, Paul Baker, Tim Fountain, Sheila Borwick and Ed West. Bob Hunter continues to do his annual talk. Sheila has now joined the ranks of presenters and I hope more will join her.

One exciting project has been the Princes Risborough School beekeeping project. "Enrichment" is a concept used in education these days aimed at giving school pupils an experience which they may look back on in later years as truly memorable. The call from Princes Risborough Secondary school to provide an opportunity to do beekeeping in their 'enrichment' programme on Wednesday afternoons has been a further challenge to our members. A team of members came in the Autumn term to help with candle making. Sheila Borwick, Bernard Wells, Simone Capell came back to supervise preparation of equipment and site then finally, real beekeeping with a very well behaved colony donated by Sheila. The pupils really enjoyed it and once the bees arrived the keenness to understand was intense. By the time of the AGM the pupils should have extracted their first honey crop.

I have led a group of volunteers who have worked with group of about ten pupils and two staff members from the school throughout the school year. The project began with candle making, the results being sold at Christmas, followed by frame making and equipment preparation, until finally a nucleus of bees arrived in early May to the apiary site, which the pupils had also prepared within the school grounds. The school was generous in making funds available to support the project. Valuable support was given by Simone Capell, Bernard Wells and Eugenie Bendyshe-Brown – as well as Sheila. There was even an article about the project in The Bucks Free Press. It was a big commitment for us and we had hoped they would be self sufficient for next year but the teacher in charge is to move with her husband's job to California. Following a serious meeting with the school authorities a new Teacher has agreed to lead the project from their side.

As some of you are aware I feel I must retire from this self appointed responsibility for bee education for children and for dealing with the equipment and resources. I do hope that someone will take over the organisation and keep the ball rolling. Of course I will help in the take over and possibly they will persuade me to do an odd visit. I am sorry to go but someone younger is needed.

*Sylvia Chamberlin*

## **Public Contact Education work.**

Our educational posters and equipment have also been used at 4 shows to teach children and to raise public awareness of the value of bees in the environment; Tim Fountain at Seer Green Show; Scott Rutland at Homer Green; Neil Strain and Andy Lyon at Hounslow Manor School Fete; and the Chamberlins at High Wycombe Society Mill day on the Rye. Scott has also been busy with other events of this type. Elsewhere, talks about bees and beekeeping have been given by Ed West, Ian Wright, Sheila Borwick and Clive Hill – and Clive has also given talks on Bumblebees. Donations have come in as a result from some of these activities: and signatures for the BBKA campaign. The permanent display at the Environment Centre has been in constant heavy use; and has been given a first stage makeover by Katy Hart. We are also assembling a presentation resource for wider use on the Association's laptop computer. Our new PC projector has made such work significantly more effective.

*Clive Hill*

### **Holder of the President's Cup - Committee Member Scott Rutland**

I have been busy managing 3 colonies up at the Hughenden apiary, preparing them for transfer to 14x12 deep Nationals and their eventual move up to the Marlow apiary. This has included reviewing the old equipment and it's eventual destination. (Clive tells me he needs a woodpecker damaged super for use as demonstration prop! ) I have also taken over organising tea and cake duties for all events: and I manage an observation hive for members to borrow for use at public events. I've also taken 'practicals' with four beginners, with two taking up bees this year. I'm also mentoring last year's beginners Barry Bricknell, Neil Strain and Wendy Jelden from this year at present. I'm also promoting HWBKA through fete-type events. I also led the July 'Beginners Refresher' evening and helped Clive Winslow with the beginners evening courses. I also organised 'Woodwork Day' although unfortunately owing to a lack of support this had to be cancelled.

*Scott Rutland*

### **The Environment Centre**

Our excellent relations with the centre continue, and we are still it's most active group. Committee, lecture, education, and beginners Course meetings are held here and we have a set of keys to the place. The observation hive is still the Centre's main visitor attraction, many people coming in specially to see the bees. The hive was given a re-vamp in late February from which it became queenless and proceeded to rear an emergency queen – much to the delight of visitors, who could watch queen production without too many bees in the way. The colony was later replaced by Raymond Chamberlin and quickly built up in numbers, producing much wax. Unfortunately the excess wax now obscures much of one side: but there is still enough to see to keep people interested. Several of the Centre's volunteers came on this year's Beginners Course, so bee know-how here has increased significantly. Centre staff make good use of our 'Virtual hive' and other facilities in talking to the public. We re-homed a free-flying bumblebee colony at the Centre again this summer, it was *Bombus Hypnorum*, a species which has recently been found in the UK. The "Bumblebee Conservation Trust" provided educational material to support this. Having the two types of bee colony present simultaneously greatly extends the educational impact of both colonies, the displays about Bees, Beekeeping and HWBKA. Honey is on sale at the Centre, also our honey cookery books.

*Clive Hill*

### **Newsletter**

In the last year a good many people have prepared material for our Newsletter: but in particular we need to thank Tim Fountain, who makes an excellent job of reporting on meetings. Much of the rest of the content is my own work – but any member can submit content. We all email our input to Terry Kelly, who collates but does not edit the material and puts it into format. We work to a deadline of 07:00 on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month, which keeps us on our toes! Most of the circulation is by email, which saves enormously on our running costs. The residual postal distribution has been handled by Keith Wood, and more recently by Sheila Borwick. Our thanks to Terry, to Sheila and Keith for their work. Copies of the newsletter back to Jan 2006 can be downloaded from our website. By comparison with other BKAs within Bucks our newsletters are significantly larger, but also more informative and we hope useful. The limited feedback we get approves of the current format.

*Clive Hill*

### **Library**

The Library is located in our cupboards at the Environment Centre. It has had little use this year, but remains a significant potential resource for members – particularly if BBKA study modules are being followed, or for those wishing to expand their access to a wider background knowledge. I have been the Librarian and would like to remind members that books are available on free loan and without fines. Please record the books you have borrowed in the Loans Book. Beware, if you keep a book overlong, we will chase you for it's return! We have bought a small number of new books during the year, including Celia Davis's 'Honeybee Around and About'; and Honeybee Inside Out.

*Katy Hart*

### **Website: [www.hwbka.co.uk](http://www.hwbka.co.uk)**

Keith Wood, an IT professional is still our Webmaster, but has left the committee and moved from the area: initially to Kent, and recently to Thailand, where he is on a Diving Instructor course. For IT matters, the location of the technical know-how doesn't matter. The website has continued to be an excellent resource for the Association and has probably become our largest source of membership enquiries. We also get many 'bee enquiries' from the public: a good number of which appear to come from young people. Last AGM we reported that we had received over 600 visitors in the eight months it had been active. The current total is well over 1600 visitors; and this doesn't include the many secondary visitors we get via the BBKA website. It is also increasingly useful for our own members, as a place to look something up.

We are gradually improving the facilities and content of the site. During the last year archive material recording especially useful Talks etc; and a section of FAQs have been added. I hope we can soon add a section covering the back-history of the Association and have already started assembling "who was involved when, with what" type information.

*Clive Hill*

### **Special Purchases**

We have made four types of special purchases this year. Two for the Association, two 'Communal Bulk Buys', which allowed members to purchase at advantageous price. For the Association we bought a new PC Projector, which has two key improvements, much brighter pictures in Presentations and a significant reduction in cooling fan noise. We used Thorne's Winter Sale to purchase flat-pack Brood Chambers, Frames, Foundation and Beekeepers Smocks with veils for use during the Beginners Course, or the Risborough School project (for which the school later paid). We anticipate moving the association's hives to BS Deeps, which will greatly simplify queen searching etc compared to the present 'brood and a half system: and this transition has now started. We also purchased some veil/smocks last year and Clive Winslow has arranged to have them all embroidered with HWBKA, to show our ownership. We now have a useful stock of veils to take forward for future beginners classes.

Our communal buys were of honey jars and Varroa treatment. The honey jars were again organised by Phil Wiggins, with collection from Bob Hunter's home. Sixteen people took part, buying a total of over 30 gross of jars of several types, with a choice of lids. The total value was £1081 and Phil achieved a discount of about 35% against Thorne's prices and much greater convenience. We also organised a communal purchase of Apiguard Varroa treatment, which was organised by Sheila Borwick, with Kenn Shearer acting as collection point. We had 21 orders, buying 36 boxes from Wynne Jones at £15.70 each. This was enough material to treat 180 colonies. The total cost of £568 and achieved a 31.5% discount compared to Thorne's list price.

*Clive Hill*

### **Bee Diseases**

The CSL Southern Region bee inspection service for Bucks is run by Ian Homer, who is based in Dorset. Ian himself has been our local Bees Officer this season, travelling up from Dorset. There was a major outbreak of AFB and some EFB close to our area. We believe these were in colonies imported from France or Spain by a new commercial beekeeper. Fortunately the outbreaks have been contained: but it has meant a very significant workload for Ian. Several of our members attended Ian's highly successful Bee Disease Recognition day, held in Benson on July 13th. Shortly after this we heard that Ian had been confined to base following unexpected heart trouble. We sent our best wishes for a speedy recovery and believe that he is now emerging from sick leave.

Varroa, is of course endemic in all honeybee colonies in our area, the mites being pyrethroid resistant. The Association has recommended IPM techniques for varroa control, based on drone brood trapping, mesh floors and Thymol type treatments. Ian also gave a demonstration / tutorial on the use of small quantities of oxalic acid solution as a winter period varroa control technique: and I believe this will be a useful tool in our varroa control armoury.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Bee Disease data is available on the NBU website <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/>

I have asked members for data about over-winter losses, but have had very little feedback. What losses that have been communicated have certainly been patchy, with two apiaries badly affected in the Speen / Whiteleaf area. Other members have had no losses. We remain highly concerned about the colony loss epidemiology reported from the USA, where CCD appears rife. The NBU remains convinced that the losses they have investigated in the UK have been due to poor varroa control, although they have also found the new *Nosema ceranae* organism in the UK and this has been linked with severe losses in mainland Europe.

*Clive Hill*