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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER: April 2014<http://www.pyrford.com/weybridgebees> |

*Editorial*

Beekeepers may not always agree with each other on local policy matters, and even less on political ones associated with beekeeping, but I think that it is true to say that they are always very tolerant of each others’ beekeeping practices. Beekeepers are not usually dogmatic on beekeeping management matters. “If it works for you, great, keep going”, is a comment so often heard after a mild difference of opinion. After all, for example, if a beekeeper claims to have a foolproof swarm prevention method, there’s not much to say if the bees swarm soon after the method has been explained. In the past I have been confident in my modern beekeeping methods, but recently in the light of the very serious state of health of the world’s bee populations, I am starting to have significant doubts about present established beekeeping practices, and here I am thinking mainly of hobby beekeepers. I am not thinking so much of the undoubted calamitous effects of some of the large-scale bee farming practices abroad that are are initiated by ignorance and greed; these are obviously beyond our control, or of the effects of pesticides and insecticides that have led to the necessity to hand pollinate fruit crops in (at least) China. I am thinking more of some of the suggestions of which I have recently become aware which are possibly having long term detrimental effects on the bee population. There are a number of aspects of modern beekeeping taught and carried out by hobbyists: for example: queen breeding practices; supplying foundation comb with fixed cell comb sizes when it is known that bees left to themselves build a range of cell sizes as appropriate; standard swarm prevention methods; the use of queen excluders; hive manipulations involving moving queens and bees around within the hive; moving complete or part hives around to different locations; feeding bees wholly or partly on sugar; the free use of a variety of chemicals for disease and pest control, including imported cheap products (acquired by individuals on holiday). Then, of course, there are techniques not so much used by hobbyists, for example feeding yeast- and soya-based pollen substitutes; clipping the wings of queens; stripping out all of the bees’ winter honey stores even from the brood nest and replacing it with sugar; harvesting the pollen collected by the bees to profit from its sale in health food shops. I am sad to say that when some of these things (not an exhaustive list by any means) are mentioned to ‘conventional’ hobbyist beekeepers, the response is often far removed from the attitude mentioned earlier, ie one of tolerance of other beekeepers’ views and practices; indeed the response is not usually a seriously considered one, but is often instant and hostile, and frequently with a degrogatory reference to ‘natural’ beekeepers. Now I don’t think that I would be considered a ‘natural’ beekeeper, a term with extreme connotations. However, it does seem to me that most of the points raised above are at least worth serious consideration rather than their instant dismissal as the whims of fools. I have become very aware that our beekeeping management is geared mainly to our own convenience and desires, rather than considering, then trying to practice, what is best for the bees. The human race has certainly gained a remarkable amount of knowledge in so many fields, including that of honey bees. It would be good if it also realised to a much greater extent the huge amount that it does not know, *or more dangerously, thinks it knows*. This is an extremely complex planet on which we live and the interactions between the trillions of systems and materials are surely too great for our small minds to evaluate with anywhere near the certainty that we are ‘right’. This applies very much in our own field in working with a tiny part of nature. As Professor Robert Pickard said, “Studying bees is like a fairy tale, it’s like looking into a well with no bottom”. I hope that there will be some feedback from you on this article. As usual any of your comments will be printed with or without your name, whichever you prefer.

NOTE I would not want our new beekeepers to put any of these ‘unconventional’ ideas into practice in the initial stages of their new hobby. This is intended as a few thoughts for beekeepers with a significant amount of experience, which can only come with time.

Final Winter Meeting, Wednesday, April 2nd

This will be a talk on some aspects of Bee Nutrition by one of our members, Jonah Chitolie. He will be explaining how the bees break down and use pollen and proposing some new ideas on such matters as the presence of the nosema in the gut of the bee. Jonah has other new hypotheses to present, and his talk will undoubtedly be stimulating. The meeting will be in our usual place, St Peter’s Church Hall, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham KT12 4AA, and will start at 7.30 pm. Jonah is contributing a series of articles on this topic to BeeCraft, the first three being in the February issue, page 15, the March issue, also page 15, and the April issue, page 32 – do read them and come, maybe with questions. Members from other Surrey BKA Divisions have been invited to this talk, so do try to attend and welcome them, as well as benefitting from the meeting yourself.

There will also be tea/coffee and cake… Marion C.

A note on the above winter meeting

*If you have read the articles in ‘Beecraft’ mentioned above, you may well have found some unfamiliar material for practicing beekeepers, so Tony Johnson has kindly written the following abstract of the articles which will be very helpful before listening to Jonah’s talk:*

Breakdown of pollen by microbiota (this used to be called gut flora – the ‘good’ microorganisms present in the digestive system of insects - and people!)

Part 1: Bee nutrition model

Part 2: Bee nutrition model systems breakdown

Part 3: Causes of systems breakdown

Pollen structure is described and illustrated and five stages of pollen breakdown by microbiota (gut bacteria and fungi) to produce a supply of nutritional products are recognised. A system is defined as a whole that cannot be divided into independent parts: these parts are interdependent and interconnected to one another. System changes can lead to system breakdown. It is suggested that *Nosema* is part of a normal gut flora, ie is not a pathogen but is adversely affected by fungicides in the environment and as a result produces spores (a resting and dispersal stage in the life cycle). Bacterial diseases of developing larvae may be caused by a reduction in the gut flora that is dominated by bacteria which break down cellular structures of developing larvae. The effects of insecticides on bee nutrition and their accumulation in small non-lethal amounts in pollen grains are discusssed. A figure links bee colony decline to use of insecticides on farm crops.

A fourth article, to be published in another issue of BeeCraft, deals with honey, considered as a conserve of valuable pollen (honeypollen) as well as an energy source. Particular emphasis is placed on the special requirements of overwintering bees.

**Teaching apiary update**

Thank you to all those who helped with the ‘apiary tidy up’ during March: Joan and Terry on two occasions, Debbie, Andrew, Lou and Gil on two occasions, Roy for boiling umpteen frames and finally Marion for bread and honey. Your help in the apiary is invaluable. The apiary is neat and tidy once more after all the blustery winds we have experienced this winter. Three colonies have survived the winter and are now on Bailey comb changes which should all be complete by the time we start the practical sessions of the current Beekeeping Course on the 26th April. Sandra Rickwood

Report of Talk on Bee Diseases, by David Rudland, March 11th

A number of members joined our student beekeepers for this talk, making a total audience of over 40. This was the first time that most of us had had the opportunity of listening to a talk on the subject by David, our Seasonal Bee Inspector. In his vote of thanks the chairman said that he was already looking forward to the next presentation of the talk to us in 2015. The warm response to David’s talk was visibly seen and heard in the audience. David and his wife Celia were among the victims of the recent floods, which affected both their bees and their home. We wish them well in recovering from these very distressing events.

Geoff C.

Request for a hive site

I would like to find a site, preferably in the Weybridge area, for my one colony now, possibly with a second later in the season. Please contact me if you have any suggestions. Thank you, Fiona. fionaharrup@btinternet.com

**Bees plus hives for sale**

National hives complete with floor, crownboard and roof with a brood box containing a 5-frame nuc of bees and 6 frames of foundation. The hives are used, but are in good condition. The queens are locally bred, some late last year and some this year. £225 complete.

Contact Jonathan Hall 07850 696844, jonathan-hall@talktalk.net

**For sale: Charles’ bespoke beehive**

Prince Charles has initiated the manufacture of top bar bee hives. They are said allow the bees “to live in an environment which is sustainable, and low impact, more akin to their natural environment”. All profits will go to the Prince’s charities. The price of a hive is £1250. Full details are on the Highgrove website.

**Opening times of Epsom Division shop**

The shop will be open for the purchase of beekeeping materials every Saturday afternoon, 3 - 5pm, from April 5th to late September, at Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 2AF.

**West Sussex Bee Market**

The West Sussex Beekeepers’ Association is again organising a Bee Market and Auction for the benefit of its members and non members with beekeepers attending to buy and sell from a very wide area. The event will again take place at Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus in Pulborough, West Sussex on Saturday 26th April 2014.  Auction details, Guidance Notes & Rules and the Entry Form are available to download from the WSBKA website - [www.bbka.org.uk/local/westsussex/auction](http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/westsussex/auction).   If anyone would like hard copies of the Guidance Notes and/or Entry Forms please let me know.  The Auction catalogue will be published online after 22nd April.

Graham Elliot - Secretary WSBKA, grahammt@tiscali.co.uk, 01403 752493 or 07761 349281

**Shook Swarm for Cut Comb?**

For those who attended David Rudland’s talk on bee diseases you may be amused to hear that a shook swarm is also the surest way of producing cut comb! Edwina lent me a book, The Joys of Beekeeping, in which the author claims that of all the methods he has tried to produce cut comb, the following gives the most consistently good result. When the spring flow starts, move a strong colony to one side. Replace it with a super of foundation and two queen excluders, one below, one above. Place the section box with foundation above and close the hive. Leave the bees to do what they do best – collect plenty of spring nectar. The author recommends using round sections rather than squares and advises one to keep an eye on the colony for the first day or two in case the bees try to abscond. Cut comb is a precious commodity – why not try it? Good luck!

Reference: Richard Taylor (1974), ‘The Joys of Beekeeping’.

Sandra Rickwood

**Improver beekeeping courses**

Over the past two years we have been operating a series of beekeeping courses, aimed at improver beekeepers from all over Kent, using the superb classroom and laboratory facilities available at the Kent Science Resource Centre (KSRC) in Sittingbourne.  During that time, more than 200 beekeepers have attended and more than 500 training places have been provided.

This year we are again offering a series of courses but, for the first time, relaxing the previous policy of "Kent only" and welcoming *Improver Beekeepers* from neighbouring Counties.

The list of courses is available at  [www.ksrcbees.org.uk](http://www.ksrcbees.org.uk/) and booking may be completed on-line.

Bob Smith

**Used Beekeeping equipment for sale**

Beekeeping carpentry and associated BK items. 40 year accumulation and well maintained. Still keen, but at 89, strength and stamina flagging. My last colony expired in Feb. 2014. This prompts my plan for a ruthless clear out. Just pick the items that interest you, e-mail or ring me with your list and I’ll quote you the price I ask. These are mostly less than 10% of the new equivalent. Assistance may be available to move them.

Norman Chapman. Fair Green, Mitcham. Tel. 020 8640 0030E-mail.  bees.njc@gmail.com

4 solid w. r. cedar floors.

1 other solid floor.

Box of 20 Summer entrance blocks.

Box of 7 Winter entrance blocks; spaced nails.

2 18” Sq. Spacers. 22mm High. Open frame. Eke for Apiguard.

4 18” Sq. Spacers. 42mm High. Open frame. Eke for Apiguard.

18” Square, wooden, Miller feeder.

3 Hive tools.

1 Wiring jig, with transformer. For transverse wiring.

3 Transformers. Suitable for heating/embedding.

4 reels of standard embedding wire.

1 Unopened box sulphur strips.

1 Metal burner for sulphur.

 Solar wax extractors, with stout stand.     Overall height 52“. Triple glazed polycarbonate front frame. £60

150 Lb polythene settling tank, has top filter bucket, with stout stand.

10 White plastic 2 gallon buckets with lids. Honey quality.

2 28 Lb honey tins and lids.

Pack of spare black butterfly mesh; 23 sq feet, for repairs.

2 Brood boxes. Commercial. With frames.

Honey extractor. Polythene. Manual. Takes 2 deep or 4 shallow frames & other sizes and standards.  DIY

2 Carrying boxes. Hold 18 1lb jars.

6 18” Square Snelgrove boards.

**Vita launches ApiShield - the Asian hornet trap**

This week Vita launched ApiShield, to combat the Asian hornet which is invading many countries in Europe and decimating honeybee colonies. The trap can replace your existing hive floor and catches hornets, wasps, wax moths and robber bees.

The news release about the trap is [here](http://vita-europe.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=83ce2ddc981d99c360395e400&id=18cdb8c231&e=69e2a0d346)and below are links to two videos featuring Dr Max Watkins explaining how the trap works and discussing the invasion of the Asian hornet from its native China. Click on each image below for the videos. (videos not available on this newsletter – go to Vita website by clicking here (above).

**Weight of honey left in wet (ie extracted) combs – what would be your guess?**

Last year I measured the amount of honey left in combs after extraction, ie just before giving them back to the bees for them to “dry out”. The results were as follows:

The measurements were made on ten frames.

weight of extracted (ie “wet”) frames = 5lb 13.5oz (5.84lb)

weight of “dried out” frames = 4lb 12.1oz (4.76lb)

so weight of honey in “wet” frames = 1lb 1.4oz (1.09lb)

This would give a weight of 1lb 3oz (1.20lb) in a normal 11-frame super.

A second experiment gave a similar result - 1lb 6.9 oz (1.43lb)

Geoff C.

**Please can you be a steward, in the bee tent, at the Surrey Show?**

Attached is a form for volunteers to help as stewards at the Surrey Show on 26th May 2014.  Please get your applications in to Michael Main by 28th April.  By offering your help you will receive free entry to the show with a free lunch and tea and coffee during the day.  You will have at least 2 hours free to go around the show as well as time for lunch in the Bee Tent.  The sample menu for lunch is set out on the attached form.

 We would also like to see as many entries into the show classes as possible.  There is the Vincent Challenge cup which is awarded to the division which achieves the most points from entries as well as the Golder Memorial Trophy awarded to the winner of the Novice Class.  So why not get a group of members to get together and prepare some entries to the show for the first time this year.  The show schedule is also attached.  For every 5 entries a free ticket to the show is supplied and you have the whole day to go around the show.

Michael Main, Chief Steward

*I would encourage you to volunteer for the job. It is not a drudge but a very enjoyable experience for anyone interested in bees. – Ed.*

**More on the Surrey Show**

Surrey Beekeepers old and new. Here, attached, is your show schedule for 2014. The show is a great venue for everyone and the Bee Tent is one of the star attractions. Do please put in an entry - there is something for all of you. Perhaps a group of you might collaborate with one to deliver entries and one to collect prizes. The best prize is undoubtedly the Novice  plate,  awarded for one pound jar of any honey. There is also the hotly contested total points competition between the divisions so get to work now!

Hazel Sharples (Hon. Entries Secretary)

**Swarm Collection in Weybridge Division - 2014**

I am putting together a list of members who are :

1. Willing to collect swarms

2. Want a swarm but would like to go with an experienced beekeeper collector to collect it.

3. Want a swarm but do not wish to be involved in its collection.

Anyone wishing to be added to the list, please send me (at michael\_main@talktalk.net) the following details:

1. Name and your address

2. Telephone number and e-mail address

3. What days you are not able to collect swarms

(Your personal contact details will only be used for swarm collection activities). Only email contacts will be added to the lists so please do not telephone me as emails are all dated and timed for prioritisation purposes, and my wife is not a beekeeper and gets enough calls already.

People on the list “wanting swarms” will be contacted in the order of me getting your details (subject to your availability).

New volunteers - If you are receiving a swarm you will need to think about its quarantine arrangements if you want to keep the bees on a club apiary site, indeed this should also be considered if you already have your own apiary.  EFB has been seen in our area in the last two years and should a swarm issue from a feral colony it could well be carrying disease.  Last year I collected at least 4 swarms that had come from known feral colonies in chimneys and trees adjoining the properties where the swarm was collected.

A note of advice, if you give us a phone number and then leave the phone on voice mail it makes it very difficult as swarms need to be dealt with quickly, not several hours later.

Attached is the swarm protocol from the BBKA.  Whilst this relates to people on the BBKA website list it does explain about the insurance cover all members have as well as what would invalidate the cover.

Michael Main

**National Honey Show - details**

The 2014 National Honey Show will be on Thursday 30th October to Saturday 1st November, once more at St Georges College, Weybridge.

A draft article is attached. The article contains details of some of the lectures lined up so far, new show classes for this year as well as information on the lectures videoed last year.

Leaflets will be available at the Thornes and Northern Bee Books stands at the Spring Convention, or you can e-mail us (nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com) with orders.

 Fiona Matheson and Helen Cave

**Guidance for preparing exhibits for a Honey Show**

Anne Miller has suggested that new beekeepers who would like to enter a Honey Show (National or local) would find it helpful to be given some guidance on preparing their entries. Here are some suggestions; they are not exhaustive and we would welcome any further ones that you feel would be helpful:

* carefully read and observe the rules of the Show and in particular of the class that you enter
* select your best honey jars, no blemishes, air bubbles in the glass, perfectly clean…, etc.
* use exactly similar jars and lids if more than one jar is required for the class
* filter the honey very carefully
* leave honey to settle before dispensing into the jars to minimise cloudiness due to small bubbles
* for liquid honey classes, slightly overfill the jars initially
* later scoop off the excess to remove bubbles and any specks on the surface of the honey; this can be done with a spoon initially, then a piece of clingfilm
* carefully clean round the rim of the jar, inside and out, including the thread
* ensure that no space can be seen between the top of the honey and the bottom of the lid (even if this is not necessary to give the correct weight content)
* select lids very carefully, no dents, scratches…, etc. (not always easy to achieve even from a new batch)
* no honey on underside of the lid
* some put on new lids at the show; others say that this is a sure way to get dust into the jar
* affix your supplied number label exactly the specified distance from the base of the jar (usually ½”)
* if the class needs a label (‘as for sale’), position it with great care, ie suitable distance from base (not usually specified), nice and level (not always easy with oval labels)
* liquid honey must be completely clear, ie must not contain specks, bees’ knees, minute bubbles, crystals…, etc. This can be checked by holding the jar over a lamp and viewing it from all directions
* no ‘frosting’ in set, creamed or crystalised honey (very hard to achieve on the day)

Obviously a lot of common sense must be used. For example what would you expect of the presentation of a jar of honey that you purchase in a shop?

Do consider entering the Shows, in as many classes as possible. If you have not previously won a first prize for a jar of honey in any Show, then an entry in the Novice Class at the Surrey Show would be appropriate. A first in that class wins the Golder Trophy, donated in memory of one our past, much-revered members.

Geoff C.

**Honey and the cost of living**

In the Daily Telegraph, 14/3/2014, there is an article on the items that make up the Office of National Statistics ''shopping basket'' from which they calculate the inflation rate.  From time to time the list of items changes to take account of changing consumer trends.  Honey is making a return to the list after an absence of 25 years.  It is a sobering thought that when we change the price we charge for our honey we could be having an impact on wage demands and pensions.

 Andrew Halstead

**Exotic plants give bees a lift**

Gardeners’ interest in foreign and exotic plants is helping to save the threatened bumblebee. Ecologists say growing a variety of plants creates a diverse ecosystem in a garden, providing pollinating insects with a range of food sources. In a three month survey… scientists from Plymouth University found that only one, the foxglove, of the six plants most visited by bumblebees was a British native. Common foreign plants favoured by the bees included trailing bellflower (originating in the Balkans), *Hebe frankiscana* (from New Zealand and South America), *Deutzia* shrubs (China), and lilac (California). Bees visited plants in proportion to flower availability… Dr. Mick Hanley said that this should encourage gardeners (and beekeepers?) to cast their net wide when choosing what to cultivate.

*I wonder if these findings apply to honey bees as well? It’s good to read of this kind of work. – Ed.*

*‘Daily Mail’* *Thursday March 20th – contributed by Marion C’s niece, Heather John*

**Two items from the *Sun* newspaper, 2nd and 9th March**

*Money bee*: The world’s costliest honey at £4000 a kg comes from bees in a cave a mile underground in Artvin, Turkey. (*Sounds interesting – perhaps someone would like to try to find more details; all findings will be published. – Ed.).*

*Mafia kill 2m bees:* A honey-making firm lost £100 000 of business after two million prize bees were wiped out in a suspected Mafia hit. Raiders in protective gear are thought to have struck at night, spraying more than a dozen hives with insecticide. Police in Titignano, Italy said, “we’re working with the owner of the apiary to see if he’s been the victim of threats or extortion from crime gangs”.

*I wonder what is meant by “prize bees”? Thanks to a friend, John Langdon, for contributing these newspaper articles. – Ed.*

**Bees are better for strawberries**

Further to this article last month, we have since wondered if honeybees or others were meant. Another look at the article does not answer the question, and we do not want to subscribe to *Nature* in order to find out from that source. Do any of you have any information on this? It would be nice to know for obvious bee ‘propaganda’ reasons.

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| **Dates for your diary** |
| Wednesday | 2nd April | 7.30pm | Winter Meeting, Jonah Chitolie, Pollen and bee nutrition | p. 2 |
| Friday, Saturday and Sunday | 4th 5th and 6th April | 3 days | BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University, Shropshire | Feb. p. 2 , BBKA News |
| Friday | 7th April | 7.15 for 7.30pm | Meridian BKA Varroa talk, Bishop Waltham | March p.3 |
|  Monday | 26th May | All day | Surrey County Show, Honey Show, Guildford | p. 5 and Schedule |
| Thursday, Friday, Saturday | 5th-7th June | 3 days | South of England Show, Ardingly | See the Show website |
| Thursday-Saturday | October 30th – November 1st | 3 days | National Honey Show, Weybridge | p. 6 |
| Saturday | November 15th | 2.30pm | Weybridge Division AGM | Details later |
| Saturday | December 6th |  | SBKA AGM, Reigate | Details later |

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