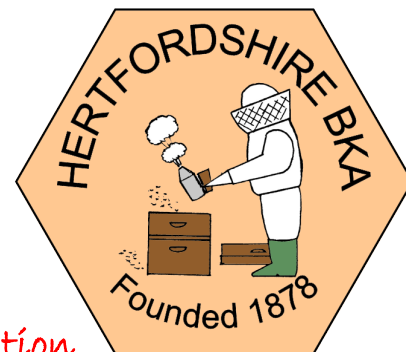


Herts Bees



The newsletter of the Hertfordshire Beekeepers Association

MARCH 2006

Editorial

A warm welcome to all readers of the HBKA newsletter – *Herts Bees*. I hope you like the new style. Before starting I need to give sincere thanks, on behalf of all members of HBKA, to Oonagh Gabriel for her dedication and perseverance in producing over 100 editions of this newsletter. I have a hard act to follow.

In taking on the role of editor I have asked myself what an association's newsletter should contain in 2006? It is clearly one way to inform about, and cajole attendance at, association events and activities. But the information flow should not just be one-way traffic. So, in addition to the regular divisional news and announcements, I am introducing some new, regular sections such as **Feedback** for your comments, **Bee Which?** for short reviews from members, **Wanted and For Sale**, and a complete **Diary of Events** to encourage greater awareness of what is happening across the county. I would also like to have a section on **Bee Science**. Are there any volunteers for this regular column? I welcome other suggestions - *Herts Bees* is your newsletter.

Many of us have access to the internet and would prefer to receive the newsletter on-line. At the moment it will continue to be printed and posted but maybe HBKA will soon be able to do its bit for the environment and only post it to those that do not use the internet. For members that are on-line, you can see current and back issues of *Herts Bees* in glorious colour on the website (www.beelog.co.uk/hbka). For those worried about personal details being on the web, the on-line version will not contain any phone numbers or email addresses unless you explicitly give me permission.

So as the new season approaches, we have a revised newsletter that I hope will provide you with up-to-date news and act as a forum for exchanging information. I look forward to your feedback and contributions.
Paul Cooper (hertsbees@googlemail.com)

HBKA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Saturday 18th March 2006 from 2:15pm
Welwyn Civic Centre, Prospect Place,
Old Welwyn*

*Speaker: Norman Carreck from
Rothampstead*

*Question Time: with Norman Carreck, Andy
Wattam & Oonagh Gabriel*

Please attend your AGM

Divisional News

North Herts news by John Hill

First of all as a contributor for a few years now, can I, on behalf of North Herts, express my thanks to Oonagh Gabriel who has suffered the many foibles and misspelling etc. from us and for being so patient with regard to e-mail with all the contingent errors that occur. Her editorship has been much appreciated, and, I should like to give a warm and sympathetic, welcome to Paul Cooper. I wish him lots of luck and hope that we can give him an "easy ride"!!!

Although we have had some rain by the end of February, I've got a feeling that the Spring yields of Nectar will be well down. The Winter Wheat crop is very short (in length) so far, and story has it that in Jersey the Daffodil crop is so short that, if they don't get more intense rain by end of Feb., then the growers will have irrigate their fields. The water shortage does not augur well for drinking water in the South either, even though in East Herts., the supply is via aquifers, the supply will be expensive and possibly rationed. Some reservoirs are only 38% of their normal level this time of year. Every year, we in Britain seem to suffer a different slant on each season. Maybe Varroa won't tolerate a cold Winter followed by a dry Summer? Let's hope something 'natural' kills them off. The organic acids we use don't seem to be very efficient! Why don't we try silicone compounds? They can be very slippery, and the Varroa might not 'get a grip'!!!! It's about time DEFRA sorted us out! (I wrote this on 15th Feb., since when we have had some heavy showers!).

Our February meeting was well attended by 17 members, and the two slide shows were quite interesting, i.e. "The Artificial Swarm", and "Meadmaking". There was plenty of discussion and Rosemary fed and watered us with home-made 'Chelsea Buns' and Sponge Cake. Fantastic!! F.E.'s projection equipment was very welcome, and Yours Truly read out the notes. D.R. also explained his method treatment with a specially thickened 'Crown Board'. Altogether, a well supported and informative event.

Our next meeting: the *AGM and Honey Tasting Evening* (with emphasis on the latter). Tuesday March 14th (yes 2nd Tues 14th!). Usual venue at The Friends' Meeting House, Sollershott East, Letchworth at 7.30pm. Members should please (all) bring a sample of Honey to taste. There should almost be a cup (prize), for everyone!!!

And now for the answer to last month's puzzle:

Since the pilot must be able to go in any direction from Buenos Aires without going out of his way, he could only be going to the antipodal point, i.e. the point opposite B.A. on the globe, which is Peking, China.

Here's another:

On a piece of paper draw a triangle, and then place the numbers one to nine, one on each vertex, and two along each side, so that each side adds up to seventeen.

Here's the poem!

*Well then: now I plainly see,
This busy world and I shall ne'er agree;
The very honey of all earthly joy
Does of all meats the soonest cloy,
And they, methinks, deserve my pity,
Who for it can endure the stings,
The crowd, and buzz, and murmurings
Of this great hive, the city.*

This is the first verse of a 5 verse poem by Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) called "The Wish".

St Albans news by Anne Wingate

No news this month from the St Albans division. They have been busy running their highly popular Beginners Course. A report will appear next month.

Bishops Stortford news by Alan Lewis

There is no general news from Bishop's Stortford this month but please remember the AGM at 7:30pm on Wednesday, 15th March 2006 at Alan Lewis's House.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION
One Day Meeting – 11th March 2006
Doors open 9am, lecture start 10am

Professor Francis Ratnieks: "Research into queen rearing, queen mating and stock improvement"

Rodger Dewhurst: "Behavioural adaptations of the Cornish honeybee to Varroa"

Dr. Juliet Osborne: "Exploring the flight patterns and navigational abilities of bumblebees and honeybees"

Trade stand and book stall.

Tickets (including lunch) £12 from Dr. D. J. Abson, 6
Ascham Lane, Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB2 4NT
SAE appreciated. Tel. 01223 834620

Welwyn news by Peter Mathews

I have had no feed back on honey jars, and assume that everyone still has sufficient stock. So a bulk order seems unnecessary this year.

The Annual General Meeting will held at 8.00pm on Tuesday 21st March at The Mannings, WGC. The agenda is included with this newsletter.

West Herts news by Andy Clavey

Just a reminder that the area we serve covers Watford, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Chorleywood, Sarratt, Chipperfield & Kings Langley.

We also have the following events planned that are open to all HBKA members:

21st Feb - AGM

1st April - First Apiary meeting of the year at Croxley Green

15th April - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green

6th May - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green

20th May - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green

Barnet news by Kaye Hoggett

Our 2006 Basic Course started in early January and we are happy to welcome to our ranks Maria Hodson, Andrew Jarvis, George Kidd, Dee Mansi, Rachael Mitchell, Janice Nicholson, Diane Randall, Peter Ridehalgh & Scott Clabburn. Incidentally Scott is a junior member, so all being well he has a whole lifetime of beekeeping in front of him. Lucky fellow.

We have been given two colonies of bees that seem to have been looking after themselves for some time. They were successfully installed in the apiary on 21st January with the loss of two or three bees.

Looking forward, we are holding an IPM session on 25th February commencing at 3:00pm which will be attended by our Regional Bee Inspector. Enfield BKA has indicated that they wish to attend and of course any member of the Herts BKA is most cordially welcome. This will be particularly useful if you missed Andy Wattam's excellent presentation last year. If you are a conscientious beekeeper, keeping up to date with this subject is a must.

Barnet Association Programme for 2006

25 Feb 3:30pm Integrated Pest Management - Roger Hedgecoe & Alan Byham
25 Mar 3:30pm Mead making & tasting - Ronald Hunter
15 Apr 3:30pm The Beekeeper and the Law - John Van Issum
22 Apr 3:30pm BBKA Stoneleigh visit
13 May 3:30pm Basic Assessment tutorial - Oonagh Gabriel
20 May TBA BBKA Basic Assessment - Oonagh Gabriel
24 Jun 2:00pm Regional Bee Inspector's visit - Alan Byham
22 Jul 3:30pm Association meeting
26 Aug 3:30pm Practical honey extraction. Bring your frames to be extracted.
30 Sep 09:00am / 12:30 pm, Honey Show / Members Lunch

All meetings are held at The Stable Room, Whalebones Park, Wood Street, High Barnet. Commencement times as indicated. The first fifteen minutes are devoted to answering any questions put by members.

South East Herts news by John Mumford

The AGM was attended by just 9 members. The committee's proposal that subscriptions be raised to £19.00 with a £2.00 discount if subscriptions are paid before the 31st March was passed unanimously. Those who were not at the AGM will find a subscription remittance slip enclosed with this Newsletter together with a copy of the Accounts for 2005. We managed to increase our funds by £128.45 mainly due to the work of the few. The officers and committee were re-elected with the exception of our County Executive representatives, Richard Ludwell retired after, I don't know how long, and Tony Beach has taken his place. We owe Richard a big thank you for his long service as our County Rep. The committee were given permission to run a series of lectures and demonstrations aimed at New, and Beginner beekeepers, and anybody just interested in learning about beekeeping. Oonagh Gabriel reported that she had found a source of bakers fondant Kulman & Balter 01992 704000 (ideal for emergency feeding of bees) in Waltham Cross who will supply it in 12.5kg boxes at £9.00 per box. If kept in the plastic wrapper in a cool dry environment it should keep for years if necessary.

March is without doubt the most crucial month of the beekeeping year. Colonies are expanding their brood nest areas and using up increasing amounts of stores; at the same time colonies are losing their

overwintered bees foraging for water and pollen. It will be a few weeks yet before the first of this year's brood starts to emerge in sufficient numbers to make up for their daily losses. It happens every year. Will our bees survive and get us some honey? You bet they will!

During the last month I have been asked by several beekeepers what they can do to help colonies that have dwindled down to almost nothing, or are on the point of starvation. It's a bit like the visitor to Ireland who was lost and asked a local for directions to get to Tipperary. After some thought the local replied that if he wanted to get to Tipperary he would not start from there. The same applies to keeping bees; attention to detail in the Autumn so that these problems don't arise. A small colony is not necessarily a weak colony. I have again got 4-frame nucs through this last winter. Most important nowadays is to ensure that the Varroa Mite count is as low as possible, and that the Queen continues to lay well into the Autumn so that the colony goes into winter with lots of young bees that have not been worn out feeding brood. Overfeeding in the Autumn seems to be a common cause of colony demise, bees can't help but store sugar, sometimes to the extent that the Queen has nowhere to lay (it's in the bees genes, they don't know why they do it, they just do), and then when the weather does turn cold the bees are forced to cluster between frames of sealed stores rather than form a more solid cluster in and between empty cells.

My Varroa mite counts have continued to fall, but over the last 10 days one that had been treated with Oxalic Acid was still dropping over 1 mite per day, which according to Richard Ball (RBI South West) BBKA News Dec '03 p6, suggests that they could still have some 400 mites. This colony will need extra treatment before their supers go on in six weeks time.

Our next Winter Meeting is on Thursday 16th March when the topic will be swarm control.

The next committee meeting will be on Tuesday 14th March, Cheshunt.

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Tel/Fax 01480 217887

Annual Delegates Meeting

14th Jan 2006 by John Brooksbank

The meeting took place at the National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh, as usual. It was attended by John Brooksbank as delegate and Robin Dartington as HBKA secretary. The meeting was well attended and organised. The quality of the meeting was slightly better than hitherto, with less nit picking and more-to-the-point than usual.

A few interesting points emerged:

- The classification of "non curative medicants" will disappear, so formic and oxalic acids will become veterinary medicines. On the Continent, vets play a far more important role in bee keeping, so our EEC counterparts can't see why the UK is so concerned about this change of classification.
- BBKA News will have a colour instead of just being black & white. The colour will be the queen colour, but this year will be violet - a clever choice since white has an ultra violet content as far as the bee's eyes are concerned.

As to election of committee members, there was little choice since there were fewer applicants than positions for most positions - where there was a choice, HBKA preferences were secured.

Two associations applied to join the BBKA and were accepted.

Executive committee proposals

The propositions presented at the meeting were listed in the December BBKA News and are not detailed here.

- 1/06 After discussion of problems that could be caused by the new Constitution, it was decided 45:11 to pass on without taking a vote on adopting the new draft. The BBKA will need to present a new version.
- 2/06 was passed 53:3.
- 3/06 Raising current capitation to £11 was approved overwhelmingly, with a recommendation that the capitation is increased slowly and continually, rather than large steps.
- 4/06, 5/06, 6/06, 7/06 All executive committee proposals regarding fees charged to specialist associations, were accepted
- 8/06, 9/06, 10/06 Executive committee proposals were withdrawn as they required prior acceptance of the constitution.
- 11/06 That BBKA should campaign to increase membership was passed.
- 12/06, 13/06 were withdrawn
- 14/06, 15/06, 16/06 Were referred to the executive to consider, as all required compulsory registration of beekeepers. Regarded by all as completely unworkable.
- 17/06 "That Bee Craft should cease using the words 'The Official Journal of the BBKA' in order that BBKA News could use it" was the last item. It was argued that Bee Craft now have no right to proclaim itself 'Official Journal of the BBKA' since BBKA News has been produced). A few individuals felt strongly about this issue and showed some passion - the rest of the

meeting did not particularly care who was called what, and thought it didn't matter. It was voted out.

The whole process of an Annual Delegates Meeting is still cumbersome and expensive. A lot more, if not all, could be done by e-mails. More members (in fact nearly all) could participate, at very little cost. Perhaps we should put forward a proposition for next ADM in January 2007.

Bee Science

I hope this will become a regular column of interest to those that sometimes ask "why?" I am looking for volunteers who are prepared to contribute articles that will be of interest to readers of *Herts Bees*.

As a start, why not participate in a bit of science yourself. Roger Patterson is trying to raise support for a research grant into a worrying increase in failures in queen rearing. Roger has found evidence of increase in queen larvae dying in their cells and of virgins emerging but being deformed and unable to fly. He is asking beekeepers to keep notes of their own experiences in 2006 and to pass them to him. This is a call we should respond to both at association level (perhaps through a survey run by the Executive Committee) and directly by individual beekeepers who raise queens. Roger's contact details are:

[contact hertsbees@googlemail.com for details]

Bees in the News

Bees reared in the town are healthier and produce more honey than their counterparts in the country, according to a study by the Union of French Apiarists (UNAF). Urban bees enjoy higher temperatures and a wider variety of plant life for pollination, while avoiding ill-effects of pesticides, the study said. At the same time they can filter out city pollution such as exhaust fumes. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4621184.stm>



**The England and Wales Draft
Contingency Plan for Exotic Pests and
Diseases of Honeybees**

www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/disease-bees

Consultation period ends on 12th May

Feedback

To start this new column off, here are some words of appreciation to Oonagh:

Thanks, Oonagh. I'm sure you deserve a rest after all those years as Editor

Marged Phillips, Wales

Just a line of appreciation for 13 years of excellent newsletters, have enjoyed every one.

Peter Mathews, Welwyn, Herts

I am sorry to hear that you are 'retiring' as editor of the Newsletter, but welcome to the club - as they say!

No doubt that, like me, you will still be writing bits on occasions?

Best Wishes for a happy retirement.

John Hartley, Herefordshire

You lucky thing – how did you do it? I need advice!

Ian Beaty, Bedfordshire

Many thanks for all your work as editor of the HBKA newsletter, and for including me in its circulation. Happy retirement.

Clive De Bruyn, Essex

Oonagh, I am sure I speak for many members in saying how much I enjoyed reading the newsletter and through your efforts it kept me in contact with what's happening locally and in general in the bee world. A BIG THANK YOU from

Charles Hammerson

Bee Which?

This section is intended to contain short reviews of beekeeper's equipment, tools, etc. If you have a personal view on, for example, the best bee suit, hive tool, source of hive parts, or even the best type of hive, then please submit your review here.

All reports are personal and do not reflect the views of HBKA or BBKA.

Tips for the Month

Robin Dartington (Hon Sec)

March – the bees are now flying, whenever the weather allows. Crocus are the first flowers in my apiary – others will be waiting for hazel and willow.

Now is the time any colonies that are short of food will starve – the pollen from those first flowers stimulate brood rearing but such early flowers produce very little nectar. Frames of sealed honey are essential – and a colony should never have less than two full frames of sealed honey at *any* time in the year or it will slow brood rearing.

A colony low in stores in spring cannot be cautious, it has to take the gamble – for if it does not raise brood

to replace the bees that have died out during the winter, it will dwindle and die. So the beekeeper must heft hives to check if any are too light.

Be very careful if any hive seems to have many more flyers than the others. It is tempting to think this is the strongest often this will be in fact very weak (or even dead) – and it is being robbed. If so, it is unlikely to be worth saving – but do stop the robbing (by moving the hive and closing the entrance down to room for only a single bee, or totally if it is dead) in case the hive was weakened by disease.

The traditional way to feed colonies at this time is with candy, it is still too cold for the bees to break away from the cluster and take down sugar syrup. But candy takes time to make and can easily turn out too sloppy or too hard. So if a colony is starving, just cut a cross through one side of a bag of sugar, pour in a cup of water and invert the bag over the feedhole once the water has been absorbed – and follow up with a gallon of syrup once the bees are flying freely in warmer weather. When hives can be opened (without the beekeeper getting too cold), move frames of sealed honey from strong colonies to weaker – but never leave a donor hive with less than two full frames of stores as already said.

By the way, this year's queen marking colour is white so check your bottles of 'correction fluid'.

Wanted and For Sale

For Sale

I have been offered a quantity of recycled (used once for yoghurt supplied to the catering trade), food-grade buckets with lids and handles. 10 litre capacity (approx 30lbs of honey). **Only £1 each.** Some members of Barnet BKA use them and consider them very good value. They are white with black printing on them and a cow's head in a circle. It would be nicer if they had a picture of a honey bee but for the money they are good value and serve the purpose of storing honey. One week's notice required. Limited supply but repeatable. Contact hertsbees@googlemail.com for details.

Diary of Events

February

21st – West Herts - AGM

25th – Barnet - Integrated Pest Management - Roger Hedgecoe & Alan Byham (3:30pm)

March

14th – North Herts - AGM and Honey Tasting

14th – South East Herts - committee meeting at Cheshunt

16th – Bishop's Stortford – AGM
16th – South East Herts - Winter Meeting "Swarm Control"
18th – HBKA Annual General Meeting - Welwyn Civic Centre. Speaker: Norman Carreck from Rothamsted. (2:15pm)
21st – Welwyn - AGM. 8pm at Welwyn Garden City
25th – Barnet - Mead making & tasting - Ronald Hunter (3:30pm)

April

1st – West Herts - First apiary meeting of the year at Croxley Green
15th – Barnet - The Beekeeper and the Law - John Van Issum (3:30pm)
15th – West Herts - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green
21st - 22nd BBKA - Stoneleigh Spring Convention and Exhibition (www.bbka.org.uk/convention.php)



May

6th – West Herts - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green
13th – Barnet - Basic Assessment tutorial - Oonagh Gabriel (3:30pm)
20th – West Herts - Apiary meeting at Croxley Green
20th – Barnet - BBKA Basic Assessment - Oonagh Gabriel

June

18th – Bee Inspector's Workshop - Robin Dartington has further details
24th – Barnet - Regional Bee Inspector's visit - Alan Byham (2:00pm)

July

22nd – Barnet - Association meeting (3:30pm)

August

26th – Barnet - Practical honey extraction. Bring your frames to be extracted. (3:30pm)

September

23rd – Bee World - Capel Manor
30th – Barnet - Honey show. Members Lunch (09:00am/12:30pm)

Publication Details

Herts Bees is the newsletter of the Hertfordshire Beekeepers Association (Registered Charity no. 289398). Please send all contributions to the new email address hertsbees@googlemail.com.

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As stated in the editorial, this and all future newsletters will be on the website. Only those people that have given their express permission will have their contact details included in the version on the website.