



Supporting beekeeping projects  
in developing countries

# BEEES

# ABROAD

# NEWSLETTER

www.beesabroad.org.uk

No 17, April 2009

## From the Chairman

Welcome to this newsletter where we look at what has happened recently and what we will be involved with in the future. We do value all of you, our supporters, and welcome others who will be reading this newsletter for the first time and asking if you might become involved in some way with the exciting and interesting work of our charity in seeking to alleviate poverty through beekeeping.

## Team Work

Fulfilling a great dream usually means having a great team. Great teams are made up of people with strengths and weaknesses where everyone is important with their various skills. Team members need a sense of belonging. The stronger their sense of belonging becomes, the greater is our potential to work together. Another important key to building a strong team is being open to new and different ideas. One of the great dangers as we become older is that our thinking can become institutionalised; which is just another word for 'fossilised.' We must honour what we've learned so far, build on it, but never stop asking 'is there a better way?'

## Project Successes

There are many success stories in the different projects which all indicate the importance of the work that we seek to do with Bees Abroad. As well as the projects we are already undertaking, the very fact that we receive some 30 plus new enquiries a year indicates that our work is known and valued. Sadly we are not in a position to undertake many of these potential projects. An important change we have made this year that pleases me is that all new

enquiries are being processed through a team of four experienced project leaders who evaluate and recommend the future course of action that the charity should undertake for these requests.

## Thank You

There is always the risk when mentioning by name certain people in the team that you can forget others. However, here goes – I take the risk.

It is good for you to know that our new administrator, Veronica Brown, and fund-raiser, Hilary Gilmore, have settled in and are bringing about some useful adjustments and improvements that have helped with the smooth running of our organisation.

Nick Bishop, our treasurer, is a young man with family and other commitments but is still prepared to give of his time and professional skills to look after the finances of the charity, so thank you Nick.

For many years, Pam Gregory, Brian Durk and others have been using their beekeeping experience to alleviate poverty by running projects abroad. Their skills and knowledge are appreciated and they have recently supported project volunteers Doris Fischler, Roy Dyche and Julian Willford who have been enthusiastically undertaking projects in West Africa and Uganda.

Claire Waring with her busy life still manages to use her many skills to benefit our organisation and we must not forget the valuable work that Adebisi Adegunle undertakes for the charity and her project work in Nigeria.

## Looking Ahead

Looking to the year ahead, plans are well in hand to exhibit once again with



Beekeepers in Cross River, Nigeria

the Bees Abroad stand at various shows and we are indebted to Jeff Bee, the past chairman of BA, for undertaking the organising and hard work that goes into these events. Thanks must go to all the helpers who so willingly give of their time to help on the stands at these shows.

One highlight of this summer's activities will be our participation in the famous Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts. We are extremely privileged to be chosen as a charity to benefit at this event. This unique opportunity to receive financial benefit and huge exposure to the public regarding the work we do will be an experience that the six volunteers will have lasting memories of and they may never wish to hear a pop group again! Our greatest wish is that the event will have fine weather in order that the TV coverage of people plodding through deep mud in past years will not be repeated this year.

Please can I take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work that everyone has been doing in helping the Charity and giving me much appreciated support through the past year. To you all, I say a very big 'thank you'.

*John Home, Chairman of Bees Abroad and project leader in Kenya*

## Kisoro Honey Producers: A Beekeeping Project in Uganda

Julian Willford

Walking through forests of banana and eucalyptus surrounded by stunning volcanic mountains in a very fertile valley, I felt a long way away from Exmoor. The Ugandan countryside and climate in Kisoro has given rise to lush vegetation and, with it, the perfect environment for honey production. The countryside is scattered with many small villages each with a resident beekeeper who has passed knowledge and traditions from father to son for generations.

My first contact with Uganda was made at the Southwest Festival of Bee Keeping in 2006, part of the celebrations of 100 years of the Somerset Beekeepers' Association, at which I met David Stearns, a resident of Entebbe. David had contacts with Beekeepers in Kisoro in the far south-west of the country, particularly Dan Ngirabakunzi who had started a producer group of beekeepers. His plan was to purchase honey at fair trade prices, process it and market it in Uganda. The money made would be



*A master beekeeper*

used to educate and train beekeepers' teenage sons and daughters in vocational skills, thus giving them a skill to earn a living.

I have been a beekeeper for 30 years and during 2006 I attended a course organised and run by Bees Abroad about supporting bee projects. I felt it was time for me to put something back into the industry. Pam Gregory, a Bees Abroad member, was very helpful giving advice and help with project proposals and ideas of how to proceed.

In 2007 I invited Dan to England to look at UK beekeeping. He stayed for six weeks and received a comprehensive view of beekeeping in this country. He



*Julian with a beekeeper and his family*

returned the favour in 2008 when I spent February in Uganda, exploring the idea of working with beekeepers to help improve the quality of life for them and their families.

For the first two weeks Richard Bolton, a fellow bee farmer, joined me and together we visited many beekeepers around Kisoro. Even though the area produces a good quality honey, they have very little or no money to pay for education and medical supplies.

The beekeepers are very good at the basic beekeeping skills so introducing western methods must be done with great care and thought as more expensive equipment must be used throughout the process. Protective clothing and smokers would be essential additions and these could be made locally and cheaply.

As regards to introducing European hives, I am not altogether convinced. I presented some Langstroth hives to some progressive bee farmers and will make a judgement on their success during my next visit. The one hive I did see was colonised by very angry bees. They followed us for about three quarters of an hour! My feeling is that top bar hives will be the best option as they can be made from local materials and are very cheap.

My main concern before I arrived in Uganda was that I would not be able to contribute anything constructive as I am a farmer and beekeeper in England, with all that entails. However, after immersing myself into the Kisoro Producer Group, I felt as though I made

some positive contributions, such as:

- \* bee proofing the honey shed
- \* introducing a honey melter
- \* better filtering
- \* fresh ideas on bottling and labelling
- \* five new honey outlets
- \* arranged meetings with other producer groups to stabilise the price for honey
- \* holding training meetings with local bee farmers
- \* setting future objectives.
- \* meeting other project leaders and making many useful contacts.

My purpose in going to Uganda for a month was to gain a better understanding of the country and its people. This I did and, after seeing the effect more knowledge, skills development and support can have on the community, I have decided to devote time and effort to this project over the next few years.

To help me make a truly sustainable impact on the lives of these communities, please feel free to make a donation to Bees Abroad. Visit [www.beesabroad.org.uk](http://www.beesabroad.org.uk) for more information or call me on 01643 841555.



## A Beekeepers' Course in Congo

Major Paul Latham

Congo is generally in the news for all the wrong reasons. What doesn't get in the news is that beekeeping is a very successful means of earning a good living. It is also protecting the fascinating tropical forest in the area that is catastrophically threatened by felling for charcoal-making for the 5 million inhabitants of the capital, Kinshasa, who need cooking fuel. In its 20-year existence, this project has trained around 10,000 beekeepers, 3000 of them women, who are producing and selling honey to support their families. We saw some people who had even managed to build new houses from their honey money.

In July I was asked by the Salvation Army in Congo to find someone who would run a beekeepers' course for key staff and those involved in training beekeepers. The main purpose of the visit was to identify and help to resolve limiting factors, raise trainers' beekeeping standards and offer advanced training in order to generate new enthusiasm. I managed to find Pam Gregory, of Bees Abroad, who, though based in Wales, has a lot of practical experience in African beekeeping. She was prepared to run the course at no cost, even paying her own visa and insurance costs, etc, which were quite considerable. Bees Abroad sponsored her air fare.

### Harvest Appeal

I had no idea what running the course would cost but the minister at Dunkeld Cathedral in Scotland suggested that this year's harvest appeal could be used to fund it. The figure for the projected costs from Congo came to just over £1000, so when the total for the harvest appeal of £1212 was announced, I just said 'Praise the Lord'.

Just hours before we were due to leave, we discovered that Air France



Deforestation at Mwilila



A group discussion on making beehives

pilots were going on strike and our flight to Congo was cancelled. However, refusing to allow that factor to get in the way, we both turned up at the airport: Pam in London and me in Edinburgh! After a long wait, we were re-routed on different airlines. I had to travel via Paris, Casablanca and Cameroon while Pam went via Nairobi. We both landed in Kinshasa the following day, exhausted but just 8 and 16 hours late, respectively!



Hive at Kasangulu

We spent the first week meeting beekeepers and looking in beehives in various villages so that we could get an idea of the problems people faced. The main difficulties were the cost of timber for making hives, invasion by ants and the loss of forest trees on which the bees depend for nectar and pollen. Fortunately, varroa and the disease problems we have here don't appear to be present in Congo.

Twenty beekeepers attended the course, which was held at the mission station where my wife and I had lived at in the 1980s. We made beehives from local materials – bamboo and raphia palm. Pam taught trainers how to

divide colonies and how to make candles and creams from beeswax. Together we worked out lesson plans for teaching new beekeepers so the trainers could put a standardised training course in place and discussed the best trees to plant for bees. We looked at how policy makers might be approached so that some of the more wanton tree felling might be halted. The number, perceptiveness and complexity of the questions asked, in sessions that ran late into the evening, showed the beekeepers' skills in the subject and their thirst for more knowledge that isn't easily available to them in Congo. We were also able to take the first steps in setting up the British Beekeepers' Association's African Examination scheme to formally assess the trainers' capabilities and show up the areas where training might be improved.

From the comments we got during the course things seem to have gone well. The folk even wanted to build Pam a house so that she could stay on and work with them. So a very big 'Thank you' from the beekeepers in Congo for your help in making the course possible. Because of it many families will be better able to support themselves.



Pam Gregory with Pastor Mundele and friends at Mvululu

## BEES ABROAD WELCOMES JIMMY DOHERTY AS PATRON



We are extremely pleased that Jimmy Doherty of BBC2's *Jimmy's Farm* has agreed to be a Patron of Bees Abroad. We feel we have a special connection with Jimmy, who was seen recently taking part in the honey hunting on the 'Bees Abroad Bee Cliff' that several groups have visited and which featured in our video, *The High Mountain Home of the Honey Bee*.

In a statement, Jimmy said:

*'I am interested in everything in nature; how it all fits together and relates to food production, which is so vital to mankind.*

*'My enthusiasm for nature and natural food production fits in with all that Bees Abroad seeks to do. As a keen beekeeper myself, I visited the honey hunters in Nepal and joined them in harvesting honey from the three-metre-long nests on sheer cliff faces.*

*'I have accepted the invitation to become a patron for Bees Abroad, which has developed a beekeeping project close to the Nepal cliffs which I visited. The project provides a more manageable intermediate technology approach for the local people, providing them with honey for nutrition and income generation. The Nepal project has now been mirrored in other developing countries with volunteer UK project leaders working with marginally poor rural people developing sustainable beekeeping with the indigenous bees and utilising affordable local materials for these projects'.*

### At the Shows with Bees Abroad

As in previous years, we will be flying the Bees Abroad flag at various agricultural and other shows throughout the summer, not least of which is Glastonbury. The number of stewards for Glastonbury is limited by the organisers but we would welcome your help at any of the other shows across the country.

Please contact Veronica Brown (see right) for further details.

### NEW LEAFLET

For copies of our brand new leaflet promoting Bees Abroad get in touch with Veronica Brown.



### SOMETHING FOR NOTHING!

If someone offered you money for nothing how would you react? Perhaps you would be suspicious, thinking that this sort of offer always has a hidden catch? Perhaps you would be curious to find out more? Well, we can't offer you something for nothing but you can give to *Bees Abroad* at no cost to you or the charity.



Bees Abroad is registered with **everyclick.com** so supporters can raise money for us simply by searching the web! Each mouse click generates a donation at no cost to yourself; the money comes from advertising on the site. Bookmark the Bees Abroad everyclick.com page or, better still, make it your homepage. The everyclick.com logo on our website ([www.beesabroad.org.uk](http://www.beesabroad.org.uk)) links to the search page that benefits the charity.

So far we have 38 fund-raisers who together have raised a superb total of £598.33 – at no extra effort. The more supporters we have the quicker the total will rise. Let's make it more. Can we raise £650 by Christmas? Bertrand Olivier has raised £4586 since 13 January 2009! Go on – give it a go. Every click counts!

### Holidays with a Difference!

Bees Abroad is planning two exciting and unique holidays in 2009. Why not join us for a holiday of a lifetime?

#### 14–23 July: Bees & Monasteries

Visit beekeepers and see the famous painted monasteries of Romania. Further details from Jeff Bee (01454 615845; [jeffbee@hivehq.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:jeffbee@hivehq.eclipse.co.uk))

#### 22 November – 6 December: Honey Hunting in Nepal

Visit the cliff that Jimmy climbed and witness this fascinating tradition in the Himalayan foothills.

Further details as soon as available from Claire Waring (01933 650297; [claire@backlane.demon.co.uk](mailto:claire@backlane.demon.co.uk))

### CONTACT BEES ABROAD

**Administrator:** Veronica Brown, PO Box 2058, Bristol BS35 9AF. Tel: 0117 230 0231; e-mail: [info@beesabroad.org.uk](mailto:info@beesabroad.org.uk)



*Bees Abroad* gratefully acknowledges the generous support from National Bee Supplies for the production of this Newsletter

Tel: 01837 54084; e-mail: [info@beekeeping.co.uk](mailto:info@beekeeping.co.uk)  
[www.beekeeping.co.uk](http://www.beekeeping.co.uk)