

north staffordshire beekeepers association August 2011 Newsletter

www.northstaffsbees.org.uk

To The Members

next meeting
Wednesday 7th September
The Friends Meeting House
Miller Street, Newcastle-u-Lyme ST5 1JD
7.00 for 7.30
Guest Speaker Tony Jefferson from
Whitby and District BKA, "Breeding bees
which are tolerant to the Varroa mite"

The Queen Marking Colour for 2011 is WHITE



**Please read the
note about
Giftaid on Page 2**

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 7th September

Joint meeting with our friends from South Cheshire

Wednesday 5th October -Our 59th Honey Show

Open judging by Gerry Collins from Doncaster

– we need you to enter your products

Future meeting information to follow

"Chairman's Chat" August 2011

Dear Member,

September marks the start of our Autumn indoor meetings and we have an exciting speaker for our first meeting being held jointly with South Cheshire on Wed 7th Sept at the friends meeting house at 7.30pm.

Our speaker is Tony Jefferson B Eng C Eng FIEE. He is the Secretary of Whitby and District BKA, and will be speaking on the work of John Dews, one of his colleagues, who has recently died. John Dews has pioneered work with breeding bees which are tolerant to the Varroa mite, without using any chemical assistance, and has published many articles on this subject. I am sure Tony will be able to tell us much more, and this will be a meeting not to be missed!

IMPORTANT NOTE – RAFFLE CHANGE - At this meeting, rather than having a raffle to offset the costs of the evening, your Committee has agreed to support a raffle from the Whitby Beekeepers in aid of the Macmillan Nurses who were a great support to John Dews in his final days. **The tickets will be £5 each but in return you will have a chance to win the first prize of a special National Hive stocked with Bees bred by John Dews, a second prize will be a Nucleus also stocked with John's bees.** I do hope that you will support this special raffle for a very deserving cause. The tickets may be slightly higher than normal but who knows, you may be lucky and win a hive of very special bees.

I am looking for volunteers to help me man a stand at a Plant Hunters Fair at Sugnal Walled Garden, on Sunday 18th September. We will have our marquee and virtual hive, children's bee suits etc, along the same lines that we did at Trentham last year. We can sell honey, but I will be grateful if any offers of help are telephoned to me ASAP, or by telephone to 01630 647584.

Finally I hope you have all had a good season, managed to keep your colonies strong and queen right, and made lots of honey. I hope many of our new members have been able to get bees and learnt more about the practical issues of keeping bees. I hope we are going to be able to run more courses in the winter, not only for the beginners but also for the 'improvers'. More will be written on these in future issues of the newsletter, when we have discussed the practicalities at future committee meetings.

Hoping to see you on Wednesday 7th Sept.

Dave Cheek (davidcheek@talktalk.net) 01630 647584

Association News: NSBKA New Extracting Equipment

All NSBKA members can now hire this equipment at a modest cost of £5 per 24hrs at weekends and £3 per 24hrs for weekdays.

The equipment is currently being securely stored by David & Margaret Teasdale and arrangements to borrow the equipment can be made by contacting DT on 07971 013787.

The member borrowing the equipment is responsible for the equipment whilst it is in their care.

When borrowing the equipment, a cheque deposit of £50 is required (which will not be cashed) and will be returned providing the equipment is returned in clean and good condition.

Beekeeping Bits Buy & Sell or Give-away!

Have you have any items of beekeeping equipment surplus to your needs that you either want to dispose of though selling or simply giving away?

OR

Do you require some equipment?

**Then
place a free ad in your
NewsLetter with the Editor**

Improved NSBKA Membership Options

At present North Staffordshire BKA has two categories of membership:

- ⤴ Full – gives BBKA membership and insurance, and monthly BBKA news
- ⤴ Associate – does NOT give BBKA membership, insurance or BBKA news

Both categories receive the North Staffs BKA newsletters.

As a charity our meetings are open to anyone, so membership is not required to attend meetings.

Your committee has decided that Associate Members do not currently gain sufficient benefit from their membership, and has decided to replace Associate Membership with the BBKA category of 'Country Membership'. This has the benefits of:

- ⤴ BBKA membership and monthly BBKA news, but **NO** insurance

In most households only one person is a Full Member, though we have several where both are Full Members, which gives both partners the third party insurance, so that both can independently manage bees, for example both can collect swarms independently and be covered by insurance.

We are now able to offer a second person, living in the same household as a Full Member, the option of the BBKA category of 'Partner Membership'. This has the benefit of:

- ⤴ BBKA membership and insurance, but **NO** copy of BBKA news.

BBKA News has recently been changed to a monthly colour publication, a vast improvement on the old version; this should be a real benefit to those who were previously Associate Members.

The Partner Membership will save money for the second person in a two member household, where both want insurance but do not need two copies of BBKA news.

These options will be available when your renewal is due on 1st October.

- ⤴ Full Membership - £27 (Insurance and BBKA News)
- ⤴ Partner Membership - £13.50 (No BBKA News)
- ⤴ Country Membership - £14.00 (No Insurance)

If you have any questions, please get in touch.

Nick Mawby

NSBKA General Secretary 01538-387506 or nick@mawby.net for those members who have access to Email

Giftaid – Are you a TAXPAYER – IF YES please read this and act NOW

We have had a favourable response from members to "sign-up" for Giftaid but we do need every eligible taxpaying member to sign-up NOW and help YOUR Associations finances.

It cost you NOTHING and provides additional income to your Association which helps our finances. If you have not already signed-up, please give Ray Day (NSBKA Treasurer) a call on 01782 867352.

It costs you nothing and saves YOU money – what more could you ask?

Topical Tips – Wasps and Robbing

Sad to say but the "Summer" (if we had one), is coming to an end and with it brings the need to ensure that all of your colonies are ready to survive the Winter.

Before I deal with that subject, we have to address the perennial problem of a very prolific but unwelcome insect which, having nothing better to do at this time of the year and will decimate a colony of bees especially if the colony is weak or not adequately protected.



The insect that I am referring to is the Wasp which, this year in some areas, appears to be a very big problem.

One suggestion which does work is to use narrow necked bottles or honey jars with a hole pierced in the lid. Smearing some jam around the hole and put some water mixed with jam in the bottom of the bottle/jar and then place the jar/bottle near the hives and whilst the wasps will be attracted to the mixture, your honeybees will not be – then watch the massacre.

Whilst Wasps can be a problem, other honeybee colonies will also attack and rob a weaker colony so some useful thoughts are:

- Ensure that your hives are in a good state of repair with no holes or gaps where wasps or other bees can access and rob the stores or attack the bees in the colony.
- Ensure the roof is fitted correctly.
- If you have a weak colony and you see masses of dead bees outside of the hive or bees fighting, suspect "robbing" by Wasps or other Honeybees and take immediate action either by reducing the hive entrance to one/two bee spaces or move the colony at least three miles away. A weak colony will not survive the onslaught of a large colony of honeybees or Wasps to prevention is better than the potential result – a dead colony.

Winter Preparations

To survive the winter, your bees need to have at least 40 pounds of stores accessible to the colony within the hive.

Some beekeepers will only now be removing the surplus honey for extraction and that task provides the opportunity for the beekeeper to assess the stores level and decide what (if anything) is going to be removed for extraction and what, if any feeding has to be undertaken to ensure the required amount of stores for the Winter. As a rough guide, a full super of honey weighs about 30 pounds but rough guides are no replacement for accurate weighing. Remember that winter feed syrup strength is 2 pound of sugar to one pint of water.

Leaving too much honey on your hive(s) or over feeding them is not a problem providing that drawn comb exists for storage and it will never be wasted but bees dying of starvation is a problem so feeding (if required) should commence now.

Bookers for sugar

To repeat the phrase – all beekeepers have short arms and deep pockets – they do not like wasting (or in some cases) spending money so at this time of the year if potential feeding might be required, we all look at the prices of sugar in the supermarkets.

One option that is available is purchasing sugar in bulk from Bookers Trade Suppliers in Stoke. Whilst normally, only retailers can use the company, the BBKA negotiated access/membership for beekeepers. All you need to do it go along and present your BBKA Membership Card and they will issue you with a Bookers Access Card. I have confirmed that with the store.

Comb Storage

When you have extracted your honey or removed boxes of combs from your colonies, remember to store them away safely and protect them from vermin and wax moth. Beekeepers are ingenious new ideas but either stacking the boxes and taping around the seams or storing the supers in sealed plastic bags does work and as was is more valuable pound for pound than honey, the extra time is a useful investment for next year.

If you are in any doubt about what to do or generally, just need some help, all you have to do is ask because the strength and one of the best attributes of your Association is that there is always someone who will willingly help or advise you.

North Staffordshire Beekeepers Association – 59th Annual Honey Show

We have again planned a small honey show this year at the October meeting. Hopefully enough of you will have some produce to enter in at least one class

Our judge this year is Gerry Collins, who is a very experienced beekeeper from the Doncaster area and he has agreed to do an open judging evening which many of us have found helpful in the past to help us with for the general production and presentation of our own honey and hive products.

Even if you do not have any honey, you will find that there are other classes in the Show that you can enter. The cake class proved to be well supported last year and has been included again.

A copy of this year's Show Schedule and other documentation plus some advice on showing preparation is available on our website for you to view and/or download.

For those members who do not have computer access, please contact me and I will post you a printed copy. As usual there will be copies available on the night and entries accepted up to 7.20pm on the evening of the show but it would help me in planning, if you would phone me and let me know about your entries in advance. The Show Rules are also available so please read them carefully because failure to follow the rules can result in show exhibits being disqualified by the Judge.

We hope that you will make an effort and enter your Show to help make it a success and please contact me on 01782 502495 if you need any help.

Margaret Teasdale - Honey Show Manager

North Staffordshire Honey Show 2011 – Schedule

Class number & details:

- 1 Two jars of Light, Medium or Dark Honey Only open to members who have not previously won a first prize at a honey show
- 2 Two jars of Light Honey
- 3 Two jars of Medium Honey
- 4 Two jars of Dark Honey
- 5 Black jar class One jar of honey with glass covered as the honey is judged on flavour but not appearance
- 6 Two jars of Heather Honey (Ling)
- 7 Two jars of Chunk Honey - (Must consist of approximately 50% comb).
- 8 Two jars of Granulated Honey
- 9 Two containers of Cut Comb Honey. Displayed in standard white or clear commercial
- 10 8 oz containers (230gms approx) with a transparent snap on lid.
- 11 One cake of Beeswax. 250gms weight or a decorative beeswax candle
- 12 One standard Bottle Mead - (Dry)
- 13 One standard Bottle Mead - (Sweet)
- Photographic - Prints or transparencies 35mm size, of any subject connected with beekeeping. The exhibit can be titled or displayed in mounts for projection. Up to three may be submitted as a single entry.
- 14 The photographs must have been taken, but not necessarily processed by the entrant. Honey cake recipe available beginning of September



HAVE YOU GOT EMAIL? – Email & Your NewsLetter

Being typical beekeepers, your committee is constantly striving to minimise costs of running your Association whilst trying to ensure you the maximum benefits and value for money for your membership fee.

If you have chosen to receive you NewsLetter by post but would prefer to receive future NewsLetters by email and save your Association money and save a few trees, Email info@northstaffsbees.org.uk and tell us.

The NewsLetter is produced in a printable format to enable you to print your own copy – part or whole.

We would like your views, suggestions and ideas about our NewsLetter. and your views about what we could do to make it better. **One important question is – DO YOU READ IT?** – please let me know your views – **David Cheek Chairman NSBKA**

The New BBKA Website Swarm Collectors List

Firstly, let me pose you a very simple question, why do beekeepers collect swarms or provide an advice service to the general public?

Unfortunately, there is not a simple answer but fundamentally:

- Beekeepers provide a valuable public service,
- As we deal with swarms rather than pest control people, bees are not destroyed
- Collecting a swarm of honeybees is always useful to a beekeeper or a new beekeeper insofar as it gets them started.
- It is good PR for beekeeping and beekeepers.

What ever your thoughts about the reasons for providing advice or collecting swarms, the general public panic when they encounter masses of flying insects in/on their property, they need some urgent help because fundamentally, swarms of honeybees need to be safely and effectively dealt with.

As a result of my involvement with the creation of this new beekeeping facility, members have asked me questions relating to the new swarm list because they have heard rumours about disgruntled members of some other Associations. This article is an attempt to answer some of those questions by expressing **MY personal views**.

The first thing to say is that it was **not** designed to replace any local swarm collection arrangements. It was developed to replace the old BBKA swarm listing (which had been in place for several years) which was unsatisfactory in a number of ways.

- It was totally self electing
- Those on the list didn't need to be members of BBKA
- They didn't need to be beekeepers (how could BBKA know?)
- Those on the list could be unsuitable, incompetent or too inexperienced to represent the BBKA or beekeeping in general
- Local Associations had no say in who was on the list

The new system addresses these objections by

- Ensuring that only BBKA members can be on the list
- Asking the Associations to nominate Collectors and Coordinators
- For those applying to join the list online there will be retrospective reports to the relevant Association allowing objections to be raised against any individual

When somebody is trying to find a swarm collector they are asked to enter their postcode. The system then finds and shows all Collectors within a 10 mile radius and displays only the persons name and contact telephone number. It also returns the nearest 2 Coordinators within a 25 mile radius. The reason for this is to always try and return the contact details of somebody who can help them in their hour of need.

For the system to be effective, it relies upon being fully populated for all parts of the UK. Fully populated means more than one person or one coordinator for an Association because if that person is not contactable, the system fails. Being on the list simply signifies that the person is willing to be contacted when available to collect and/or coordinate swam problems, which is why a number of names is required for each area. Difficulties arose with this new system, mainly because there has been a lacklustre support from some of the Local Associations in providing peoples names which resulted in poor coverage in some areas.

Within our Association, Nick Mawby (on behalf of your Committee), ensured that every member was fully informed and asked everyone if they wished to have their name submitted but I suspect that the same process of information passing to all members did not occur in all Associations. Thus, when the website went live and members had a look, they discovered the swarm list facilities and because the options existed, if they wanted to, they volunteered to be involved and opted in.

The actions of the individual beekeepers had two effects, one good insofar as they swelled the ranks of the volunteers and dramatically improve the coverage but downside was that the number of volunteers swamped the proposed system that the names would be referred back for Association approval.

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Therefore, a decision was taken to undertake some checks and because the people were actually members, allow them onto the list and provide updated information to the local Associations at the end of July. Whilst I feel that the original procedure was the correct way to progress, judging by the timeliness and responses from the local Associations, we would have been waiting until next year for the names to be approved!

Some difficulties have arisen with a small number of Associations and Branches relating to what I would consider to be petty local decisions or practices and if they were not so serious, they would be amusing. If an Association's members at an AGM agree a policy for swarms or what happens to them after they have been collected, that is their decision democratically taken and the swarm list does not interfere with that policy.

However, some examples of discontent have been:

- An Association representative asks by what right the BBKA allows members to have their names included and that they seem to believe that all swarms in their area somehow belong to them and not the person providing the service doing the collecting.
- The Association/Branch only allow a small group (clique) of people can collect swarms in their area
- Insistence that only experienced beekeepers should collect swarms - but how do new beekeepers get experience?
- Indignant attitudes stating that the Association or Branch has a person (please note A person for a large geographic area) who deals with all swarms – to which my response is what happens if the person is not available?

If a beekeeper cannot be contacted easily or quickly, the member of the public will resort to a fly spray and result in dead bees or worse, an injured member of the general public.

The system is very simple and it does work which has been aptly demonstrated by the thousands of website contacts and it must have helped to reduce the number of false swarm calls to all beekeepers because clear pictorial and written information/advice is available to view on the website. Whilst the members of the public don't really care who collects the swarm as long as it is removed from their vicinity and no longer capable of causing them alarm or actual harm, we have a slightly different view that the person undertaking the task must know what they are doing and more importantly, work safely which is why the initial need to have Association approval was requested as the people in the local Association are the only ones who know the person and their capabilities (in theory).

A Warning

I must warn all members that other systems have been developed and launched on the U.K. Internet about swarm collecting "volunteers" and this has nothing to do with the BBKA or any Association and its operation is possibly insecure!

I say insecure because some systems use software called Google Maps and beekeepers locations are displayed on a map so using this system and even though the beekeepers address is not displayed, it is very easy to actually find/identify a persons address and even obtain a picture of the beekeepers home. This is especially worrying as there have been several incidents of colony "rustlings" - thefts this year and it has become so serious that Tim Lovatt on behalf of the BBKA spoke on national radio and television about the risk whilst recognising that it had to be persons with beekeeping knowledge or persons with death wishes who were undertaking the thefts. So providing a potential thief with a map and pictures of a beekeepers home area where there might be bees or beekeeping equipment that could be stolen might not appear to be a very good idea! We looked at the idea but Nick Mawby quickly discounted the idea when the thefts in Derbyshire were reported in Beecraft.

The system will be reviewed at the end of the swarm season but with many thousands of visitors to the swarm associated website sections since the site went live, it seems to have proven itself very useful to the public and beekeepers but, **this is only ONE facet of a very big beekeeping website project and I commend the whole site to you – just have a look! DT**