

north staffordshire beekeepers association

(www.northstaffsbees.org.uk)

JANUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 6th January
2010

The Friends Meeting House

Miller Street,
Newcastle-u-Lyme

ST5 1JD



Introducing our new Chairman

Our editor has asked me to write a few notes about myself for those of you who do not know me

I am married to Jean and live in Woore. We have two grown up children, Peter who manages an organic farm in Somerset (his wife Pip is a beekeeper as well), and Lisa who is single and a senior nurse in London.



I have been retired for some 11 years, I was the local secretary for the NFU for 21 years, and retired from my second occupation as a local Magistrate last year after 20 years.

I met Phil Hulme who introduced me to beekeeping some 30 years ago and we have been keeping bees for about 30 years together, calling ourselves P&D Apiaries. My new job is as your Chairman of NSBKA.

If you have any questions for me I can be reached by phone on 01630 647584 or by email on davidcheek@talktalk.net, just give me a little time to get bedded in.

Finally may I wish all of you a happy Christmas and a successful and happy New Year.

Dave Cheek

Memories of our Christmas social



Phenomena that you might not see again! Especially, Nick demonstrating how to clean up

Dates for your diary:

Wednesday 6th January

Are you simply curious about the honeybee or you have a serious intention to keep bees? Whichever the case, the first meeting 'Keeping Bees' on Wednesday 6th January is for you.

We take a look at the role of the honeybee, drawing on media footage and the experience of existing members to explore the mysteries of this fascinating insect.

This provides an opportunity to ask the panel all the questions you already have (and some you may not have previously thought of).

Wednesday 3rd February

January's meeting prepares the ground for a more detailed study on Wednesday 3rd February lead by Nick Mawby with a more scientific and practical approach.

Again, experienced beekeepers will contribute a handful of short topics in 'A Beekeeping Miscellany'.

Our retiring chairman Bill Woodward

I would like to wish Bill all the best in his new post as our President, and to thank him most sincerely on your behalf for all his service and endeavours during his many years as our Chairman.

Bill, as you may know, hasn't enjoyed the best of health of late, so I hope you will wish him all the very best and hope he soon recovers back to his former fit self. I might add that he has insisted on coming with Phil and myself to do our annual oxalic acid treatments, which we hope to complete next week.

Cheers Bill you are a marvel!

David Cheek



Bee vacuum?

Kevin Long writes:

Earlier this year I was inspired to make a bee-vac after seeing a photo of vacuum made by Graham Royal. It was a simple affair; my wife's vacuum cleaner, a hose and a wooden box.

I drilled two holes in the box and pushed in the vacuum cleaner's hose on top to provide the suction and another hose out the front to suck up the bees with. I sealed the joins with duck tape.

Simple - Or so I thought.

What I had made was not a bee-vac but a high-powered **Honeybee Extermination Device** (HED).

I discovered its wicked effectiveness when cleaning up the dregs of my first swarm.

Fortunately I brushed the majority of the bees into a bucket and housed them into a hive before I then set about collecting up the remaining bees with the HED.

I was initially worried that there would not be enough suction.. but i needn't have worried...On this occasion everything was being sucked up, bees, grass clippings, leaves, soil.

After I poured out the decapitated and mangled contents of the box I contemplated the necessary adjustments.

I lined the interior with foam cushion. I drilled a hole in the box to provide a degree of control on the power of suction. I have my doubts. Besides the vacuum can only go as far as the extension cable will reach. Perhaps its best to stick to brushing the bees into a box whenever one can.



Nick Mawby asks: "Have you got your Varroa under control?"

We have been encouraging members to adopt a system of Integrated Pest Management to control Varroa. This means the use of several different methods in rotation. Some have used formic acid in the late autumn, which may give adequate control.

However, if you used Apiguard or thymol in early autumn, then the mites may be building up now and could reach dangerous levels by early spring. The warm autumn will make this worse by prolonging brood rearing.



Oxalic acid is a very effective treatment if applied when the colony is broodless. December to early January is the ideal time.

We treated all the colonies at the Longsdon apiary with formic acid in the autumn. On December 13th we checked the mite drop over 4 days; most had none or only one mite drop but one colony dropped 35. We immediately treated this colony with oxalic acid.

Winter stores:

I am concerned that colonies may be using up their food stores more rapidly than usual; this seems to be the case at Longsdon. It is important to keep checking that they are not running low, and if in doubt you may need to resort to emergency feeding with candy or fondant.

Don't bury your head in the sand; you must take action to keep on top of Varroa.

All the fun of the Christmas Social

The evening started with a fascinating talk from John Clews of the R.S.P.B. whose "patch" includes many counties of the UK and he appeared to meet his match with some of his audience when he challenged them to identify the pictures of birds.

Once again, the food and drink organised by Pat Twigg and provided by her and the members was magnificent and I am certain that everyone present went home having enjoyed a magnificent evening. Thank you Pat and thank you everyone who made the evening such a success.

It was a good start to the Christmas season's activities.

