

north staffordshire beekeepers association March 2011 Newsletter

www.northstaffsbees.org.uk

next meeting
Wednesday 2nd March 2011
The Friends Meeting House
Miller Street, Newcastle-u-Lyme ST5 1JD
7.00 for 7.30

The Queen Marking Colour for 2011 is WHITE

"Chairman's Chat" March 2011

Dear All,

Tim Waye really came up trumps with our speaker for the meeting in February. Well done Tim! John Goodwin from South Cheshire spoke on 'Beekeeping my way'. His presentation on PowerPoint was of interest to everyone, from the newcomers, to us oldsters. He covered his beekeeping year dealing with winter feeding using syrup then fondant, to make sure his bees came through to the spring strongly. He tried to keep all of his 30 odd colonies about the same strength. Rather than try for maximum honey yields John concentrated on raising nucleuses for sale. In recent years John has used imported Queens from Greece, but now uses his own reared queens, using the "Jenta" system by selection from his own stock. The interest in the talk was evident that afterwards, during the coffee break, John had a stream of people asking him questions. A really good evening!

The newcomers training course being organised by Nick Mawby is going well, and already Nick has had enquiries from several other interested people asking for a further course, - watch this space. This current course is due to finish on 9th March. Thanks must also go to the speakers from our ranks, and not forgetting Ray and Linda Day who have organised the half-time refreshments.

Our next meeting at the Friends Meeting House will be held on 2nd March when another speaker from South Cheshire, David Buckley, will talk to us on "Queen rearing in a production colony". I'm looking forward to this one, hope to see you all there!

Dave Cheek (davidcheek@talktalk.net)

Dates for your diary:

Wednesday March 2nd 2011

We welcome **Dave Buckley** from South Cheshire Beekeepers Association as our guest speaker and John will be talking to us about the way he keeps his bees with an aptly titled talk entitled '**Queen rearing in a honey production colony**'

Thursday 7th April 2011***

Joint meeting with South Cheshire Beekeepers Association at:

**Bradwall Village Hall,
Bradwall Road,
Bradwall,
Near Sandbach
CW11 1RG**

(Please note date and venue)

If you need accurate directions or a lift, contact David Teasdale on 01782 502495 to help arrange to get you there.

Wednesday 4th May 2011

Speaker/talk details to be announced

A though for the new season:

At the start of the season, this is when you start to use muscles that might not have been used since last year.

**So take care when you lift, carry and move heavy boxes and equipment and more importantly –
Mind Your Back!**

I don't need one of those!

A Bee Brush

I find it amazing that beginners are so often told that one of the basic pieces of equipment that they must have is a bee brush (at one time it would have been a goose wing, but we seem to have moved on - goose wings were free, brushes cost money: £4.06 +VAT + postage!).

But I hear you say: 'How can I take honey by the shake and brush method if I do not have a bee brush?' The answer is simple - learn to shake frames effectively over the open hive and then use a twist of grass to gently remove the very few remaining bees!

So what is wrong with a bee brush? Firstly, bee brushes are a good way of spreading disease because beekeepers use them on several colonies and across several apiaries and a problem in one apiary/hive can quickly be spread to other colonies and other apiaries. Secondly, (if the first reason is not reason enough, not to use bee brushes), almost all combs will have some open cells of nectar or honey and super frames that are removed may have broken pieces of brace comb oozing honey. The brush and bees quickly becomes sticky and the bees become entangled in the bristles - making them very unhappy. On the other hand, a twist of grass is free and can be replaced frequently.

In my view, there is only one use for a bee brush and that is to remove bees from a frame of finished queen cells - so the need is virtually restricted to those grafting large numbers of cells, i.e. professional queen breeders and even then a gentle brush with some grass can do just as well!

Adapted from an article via Ebees by Peter Edwards



**BBKA Spring
Convention**

Stoneleigh Park

**15th - 17th April
2011**

The BBKA Spring Convention is the premier beekeeping event in the UK and this year it is even larger! With more than 50 lectures, workshops and courses in the programme, it will offer something for everyone.

The full details have been published in your BBKA News but in summary: The convention takes place over three days and brings together very eminent beekeeping speakers and the majority of the companies who deal in beekeeping products. It is an opportunity to enjoy very interesting lectures which take place in different locations on the site or just browse around the trade stalls and purchase all of your beekeeping requirements for the season, usually at very competitive prices.

Whilst the mass of traders with savings on offer, the program for the convention looks very interesting and tickets can still be purchased in advance to save you money. For those members with access to the Internet, the details can be found at: <http://www.britishbee.org.uk/>

If you are unable to attend but would like some beekeeping items purchasing, give me a call and arrangements can be made to obtain good for you

David Teasdale

Beekeeping Basic Assessment and Improvers training

Within the BBKA members services, there exists an excellent education and training service and any member who would like to learn more can do just that via the various BBKA courses and more information can be provided, all you need to do is to have a word with William Kirk.

Fundamental to the whole education and training process and the confidence and knowledge building for new beekeepers is the beekeeping basic assessment examination. This important assessment is the foundation award for competence in beekeeping and helps to improve knowledge and confidence and is available to anyone who has kept bees for a year. The assessment is entirely practical and oral and has always been "enjoyed" by those who have taken the assessment in the past, however nervous initially. For those members who would like to find-out more about bees and beekeeping, the basic assessment is a pre-requisite of all the other BBKA assessments and examinations. Everyone can benefit and all members who have not taken this assessment should be encouraged to tackle this important first qualification.

William Kirk, at the AGM offered to arrange appropriate training for members who would like to take this practical assessment and all you need to do is contact him and make him aware of your interest.

Equally, William recognises the need and interest from more experienced members to find out more and consequently, he would be interested to hear from any members on this subject. Given the expressions of interest, he can then make suitable arrangements.

Main Points from the meeting:

BBKA News

This is to become a monthly publication with more colour and the expected launch date is April 2011. This was news to many of those present and really showed-up during the debate about the financial reports where the costs of the BBKA News were shown to have a large increase in costs. The Treasurer pointed out that the budget had been approved last year so why raise the question now – basically tough. However, I cannot recall that being mentioned last year and I have checked my notes and they show nothing about it. Having said that, the delivery of the Treasurer's report last year caused everyone to fall asleep or pray for an early death so I am not surprised about anything that was slipped-in or missed! Some Delegates did comment/object to this change and increased costs but they were in the minority. Beecraft was also mentioned as this is also a monthly publication and is supposed to be the voice of the BBKA but we were assured that it was different and was not subscribed to by all members whereas the BBKA News was received by all members.

Examinations

The BBKA are trying to encourage more people to undertake the examinations to gain more knowledge and gain more confidence but linked with this is the need for more basic assessors.

Financial Report

- The BBKA is financially strong but they are expecting to lose some income from the pesticide scheme.
- The Adopt a beehive has raised a reasonable amount of money but the costs of achieving that are high
- The financial reports were fulsome and had been approved but the fact that some figures were "netted up" meant I had actually to look deeply into the figures over several pages to actually get the facts. Whilst it was strictly accurate and proper, the figures could have been more easily presented.

Election of Executive Trustees

There were only five nominations for five places (four for 3 years and one for 1 year) therefore all the nominated persons were elected. However, in view of the adverse publicity relating to pesticides and the persons who had put their names to it, concerns were expressed and it was confirmed by the President that when persons are elected to the Executive, whilst they still had links to their own Associations, upon election, they partook and agreed to the corporate responsibility to the BBKA.

Propositions for Consideration

- **Increase in capitation by £1 from October 2011**
Executive proposal to increase the capitation fee in respect of registered members by £1 to £15 with effect from 1st October 2011 was accepted but some Associations did have reservations.
- **Exec Prop about pesticides & Twickenham "stop any support of pesticides"**
The two propositions relating to the BBKA position on chemicals and pesticides were passed without the anticipated controversy. The Executives proposition was passed with 80% support. Martin Smith, the BBKA President gave an assurance on behalf of the Executive that BBKA will cease endorsement of certain pesticides as outlined in BBKA statement dated 16th November 2010.
Twickenham and Thames Valley with Mole Apiary Club proposition: "That the BBKA cease any commercial relationship with agrochemical or associated companies relating to the use of the BBKA logo including all endorsement of pesticides (for money or any other form of remuneration) as soon as possible."
The proposition was amended by deleting the words "including all" and replacing them with "for the"; the amended proposition was passed almost unanimously.
Prior to the ADM, there had been a great deal of disagreeable and outrageous adverse publicity undertaken by some elements within the beekeeping and non-beekeeping fraternity which had resulted in abusive phone calls to the BBKA office and inappropriate Emails to officers and those actions were unanimously deplored by the delegates.
- **Other propositions were debated and voted on.**

Conclusion

The meeting was much better organised and managed than some in previous years and that in some way was due to the good chairing by the President and Chairman and the use of an electronic voting system which was being used for the first time and worked very well. However, the unacceptable actions of one person (in my opinion) brought beekeeping into disrepute in the eyes of the uninformed general public and tarnished what should have been a very productive day's work.

The member Associations elect the Executive Committee/trustees to undertake the work on our behalf and the people do not gain financially from the vast amount of work that they undertake for us – the member Associations. Undertaking lobbying is a fair way of enlisting support for propositions but those who acted for Twickenham were several steps too far!

I represented NSBKA and spoke when I felt it was necessary but it is a shame that the majority of the Delegates just sat there and said nothing even when there were things which needed to be said or teased-out for debate.

David Teasdale

North Staffordshire Beekeepers Association Delegate

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What to do NEXT?

February

Not much actual work can be done until the weather warms up, but there are interesting observations to make at the hive entrance. On a milder day of about 10C, the bees will emerge for a cleansing flight, clear out any dead bees on the floor and then rearrange themselves on the stores frames. Any hive that shows no action at all on a mild day, should have its crown board lifted up gently, to see if there is a cluster of bees visible. If the colony has unfortunately died, deal with it immediately, or block the entrance until you can- you don't want any robbing happening if you don't know the cause of death. If there is a cluster, disturb it as little as possible.

Check the stores, and make sure there is a stores frame right next to the bees. Some insulation over the crownboard might help a small cluster maintain its core temperature. If you use an open mesh floor, put the Varroa tray in, to retain heat, but clean it regularly. Stores in any hive should still be adequate, but the queen will have already started laying, and from now on stores will be used up at an ever increasing rate, to feed all the hungry new mouths. Spring is when most colonies starve, not the winter. Heft the hive to gauge its weight, if you think you can, otherwise be more accurate and weigh it, using the widely available digital, spring luggage scales. A single brood box hive, including frames, bees and roof (but not the stones on the roof!) weighs about 30 lbs. Subtract this from the total weight and you have the weight of the stores (A double brood hive weighs around 42 lbs, brood & a half is 40lbs). Simple! Do this fortnightly and be prepared to make up any shortfall in stores with fondant, a bag of sugar with water or sugar syrup (if it is warm enough).

On mild, flying days, you may see pollen being taken into the hive. This is always a heartening sight, as it means there is new brood being fed in the hive. Try and work out what pollen it is-wild cherry, willow or crocus? Maybe snowdrop or aconite? Bees gathering around a water source is also a good sign. The water is needed to dilute honey to feed to the brood. You could give the bees a drinker, to save them having to fly too far- they easily get chilled, carrying a load of cold water. A shallow bowl, filled with gravel to avoid bees drowning, is as good as anything. Put it a little way from the hives, not right next to them- bees seem to prefer having to fly a bit to water. If you do this early in spring, you may deter the bees from using your neighbours pond or fountain instead. This can cause as much trouble with neighbours as swarms and yellow spots on the washing!

March.

Brood rearing will be well underway by now, so keep checking the stores. It is too early to do an inspection, but you can change the floor board on a nice, mild day. Gently lift the hive to one side, change or clean the floorboard, and replace the hive. You can do the same with the crown board if it is damp or dirty, Look at the cluster and count the seams of bees, but do not move the frames at all. Now that the bees are more active, the mouse-guard can be taken off. Make up any spare equipment you might need, for swarm control or increase. Swarming comes early in good weather, and you don't want to be caught with everything still flat-packed or needing to be sterilised when you need to use it!

Now is also the time to make new/replacement frames or put new wax in cleaned/sterilised empty frames. The reason why it is not recommended to be done during the winter period is that wax is brittle during cold weather and can easily be damaged. When you have built or re-waxed the frames, keep them warm and safe

Thanks to Ebees H&R