

north staffordshire beekeepers association



www.northstaffsbees.org.uk

next meeting
7.30pm Wed 4th November 2009
[The Friends Meeting House](#)
Miller Street, Newcastle-u-Lyme ST5 1JD
The Annual General Meeting
this is your chance to put forward suggestions on
how you would like to see the association run
followed by a
Question & Answer Session
for new beekeepers to put forward their queries to
a panel of our experienced members

November 2009 Newsletter



Officer's Notes

by Nick Mawby

There has been a national upsurge of interest in beekeeping and we have increased our membership significantly. Many of the new beekeepers have taken advantage of the apiary in Longsdon and we hope to continue with talks suitable for newcomers during the winter.

A number of newcomers have already helped the association in various ways, and we are keen to encourage others to step forward. The association needs people with a range of skills, and new members breathe fresh life into the organisation. Please consider putting your name forward for the committee at the AGM, or simply let us know that you are keen to be involved.

Our treasurer would like to remind those members who have not renewed, that all benefits of membership, including insurance, expire at the end of October. You can renew online by **PayPal** or credit card, or download a subscription form, by visiting our website. If you have any queries on membership or giftaid, please contact **Ray Day** on 01782 867352.

Our programme secretary asks members for feedback on this year's programme and also for last minute requests for topics for next year's indoor programme. He had some positive ideas from the Meetup appeals on which he is still working. If we could guarantee sufficient entries for the honey show, we could book a larger venue with two rooms maybe on a Saturday and invite a speaker to talk during closed judging as we did previously. Contact **Tim Waye** on 01782 611890

We would be delighted to receive articles, photos, ideas or snippets of information, for inclusion in future editions of the newsletter or for publication on the website. Please email editor@northstaffsbees.org.uk



Dave Magnier writes:

Property Book: For many years our association has been involved with all areas of this fantastic craft. Coming along to the winter speakers meetings, or the practical meets at the apiary, are great places for new beekeepers to ask any questions they may have. Having only starting keeping bees this year, I had lots of questions and with this regular contact I decided to offer to run their property book.

There are a growing number of items that the group has bought including the new virtual hive, which is a great asset for illustration or shows. All these items are used to encourage the hobby and support various activities over the year.

As keeper of the book I would like to request that should any of you loan a club item, please make sure you contact me so I am able to keep track. Email: property@northstaffsbees.org.uk

If you have any questions, suggestions or ideas about this hobby please come along to any of the meetings; the members are always keen to help.

First Blunder: Six months has seen me acquire my first three colonies, the first purchased and the next two created from rearing queen cells and producing nucs. I'm quite pleased with this success but winter can be a hard time for the bees.

During July when the nucs had raised their queen and started laying I invited my son to kit up, and come and help me find the queens and mark them. The first colony went well but the second proved difficult; we started our second pass of frame removal when we got sight. She looked good but did she move quick, ducking and diving round the edges of the frame. Queen cage ready, we carried on chasing her until I realised she had flown. Disappointed, we closed the hive, and confirmed their state by observing new queen cells days later.

The good news is that after returning from our holiday they were queen right with brood, but I will leave newly created nucs a lot longer before checking next time!



Apiary Report

by Dave Buckley

Our seasonal work with the colonies has come to an end. Hive maintenance and a watching brief on good flying days, to get an indication as to what is happening inside the hive, will be the extent of our tasks over the coming weeks. A visit after stormy weather is always worth undertaking just to check that everything is as it should be. If any of you have problems or questions with regards to your own bees please get in touch and we will try and help. In essence this is now the time to plan for the Spring season and maybe think about studying towards the BBKA Basic Assessment to take next year.

We are considering trying to make improvements at the apiary with regards to access and levelling out of both the bee stands and the areas which we use most (to improve footing). Your suggestions as to how we can improve the site will be most welcome. Also if there is anything you think we can do to improve the practical sessions at the apiary please feel free to make suggestions.

Nick, Emma, Doug and I would like to express our thanks and gratitude to everyone who has attended the apiary this year and given both their time and shared their bee keeping experiences with us. Likewise, we hope you have all enjoyed your visits and that it has helped you in your management of your own colonies. We look forward to seeing you all next season.



Runaway Bees Returned to Mum and Dad

by Lily Lynch

On the 12th of May the phone rang at 10.00am. It was my neighbor, who told me to look through the upstairs balcony window. It looked very dark, but I soon realised that it was a big swarm of what I thought were wasps.

They seemed to swarm for ages and made an incredible noise and then everything went quiet and when I looked out they were like a carpet on the front of my balcony. The neighbour wanted something done and so I rang the ant man. He comes most years to sort out the usual ant problem. He said that they weren't wasps - they were bees. I was amazed as I always thought that bees were the fat ones in stripy jerseys. He said that bumble bees were just one of many kinds of bee. He said the bees were looking for a place to build a hive and prophesied that they would be gone by 7 00pm. He said that their hive was probably too full and another queen had been created and taken half of the drones and left their hive and thought that my balcony seemed a nice nesting place.

Next day I rushed downstairs, opened the door a couple of inches and there they were, in a big ball, attached to the masonry at the front of the balcony and (as in the picture right) hanging over the front door! I rang a friend who used to keep bees and he said to ring the local bee keeping association. He said they would come and get them and be delighted. I tried but there was no number in the directory for this area. I went onto the internet and could only find a couple of numbers in Shropshire. They were helpful but lived too far away. One did find an old bee keeping yearbook and rang back and gave me a local number. Guess what - it was a Burslem number - my area! Wow! I rang and the woman who answered lived virtually round the corner. Not only that but she thought they were her bees!

She arrived about half an hour later with her husband in full spaceman-like protection gear and a big box. The bees had already started to construct the hive and were nicely positioned behind my climbing rose. He carefully started brushing them down the wall into the box and suddenly it was dark again and the bees swirled around them. After about half an hour the swarm started to go into the box as the queen was now in there. The husband came round to my back door and said that, while they could take the box away immediately, about 2000 of the bees were probably out at work collecting pollen. He asked if he could leave the box open all afternoon and come back at 8 00pm to make sure that they all got back. I asked if he was sure that the others would stay in the box and he said he was certain that they would as they just wanted to protect the queen and keep her warm. He also explained that the reason they swarm is to keep track of the scent of the queen until they can gather round her. He said that bees would only sting if their honey was in danger or if they were scared (possibly by someone waving their arms about). All went well and everything was quiet by about 6 30pm and the bees were collected at 8.00pm nicely snuggled down for the night. I have been promised a jar of honey as soon as any is produced.



The whole thing made me wonder how many bees must be confused with wasps and many hives must be destroyed as a result. The bee population was seriously depleted last year and so they need to be protected. Via the internet I learned a lot about bees those two days and found them fascinating little creatures. It almost made me wish they'd stayed.....**well almost!**

Thanks to Lily Lynch, of the North Staffs Accordion Group, for sending in this article.



Letter from our Secretary

by Gill Woodroffe

I find myself at not only the end of my first year as a member of the NSBKA and a beekeeper, but also as your secretary. It has been a baptism of fire but I don't regret it for a minute.

This time last year I tentatively took over from Janet, with only a vague idea of the responsibilities which came with the post. It was far more complicated than I could ever have imagined and my thanks go out to Janet and all who have helped and guided me along the way and apologies to anyone who has not been able to get in touch by email, a technical problem which hopefully has now been rectified.

I collected my bees from Lesley Doorbar of SCBKA at the end of April and I quickly learnt that there is no such thing as entry level beekeeping! Thanks must go to Nick, Dave, Emma and all who give so freely and generously of their time at the apiary and again to Nick for the fascinating Queen rearing course held in early summer. Thanks also to William and Dave who put on a fantastic two day course at Keele. The speakers who have come to the monthly meetings have both challenged and inspired me. Some of the information initially went straight over my head, being highly technical but there was a definite sea-change when I realised I actually understood what they were talking about and then to go home and witness the theory in practice in both my own hives and others. I cannot recommend these meetings and the courses enough to anyone interested in taking up beekeeping.

I love pootling around my hives and spend far too much time just watching the comings and goings of the bees. I didn't have a honey crop this year, my inexperience left them with only enough stores for themselves and I felt their need was greater than mine. My goal now is to get them through the winter. However, I was left speechless (yes, really!) when I won the honey cake class. My husband was also completely stunned and has now stopped making jokes about my cooking! My thanks to Pat and Margaret for encouraging me to have a go and for not entering themselves as I'm sure I wouldn't have won if they had. I also want to thank Jean Edwards of Blythe Bridge W.I. for advice on cake class etiquette as I had never done anything like this before.

Although this sounds like a bit like a speech at the Oscars, I am genuinely grateful to all the above for their support. However I cannot close this piece without saying a few final thanks to those who have not yet been mentioned: Our chairman, Bill Woodward, Phil Hulme, Dave T, Ray and Linda for advice and finally John Bullivant and others for swarm identification and collection.

Please forgive me if I have missed anyone, I am dashing this piece off when I'm supposed to be working! At least it is genuinely straight from the heart. Finally, (yes, this really is it!) I felt and I suppose others may have too, that volunteering to be secretary might not have been appropriate as I had only just joined and hadn't got any bees. But I thought it was a way I could contribute to the association since, as a new beekeeper, I was taking so much out. Please don't let inexperience or lack of time put you off volunteering, it's a great way to learn and to get to know people in the association and even a small contribution of time and effort helps us all.

Hope to see you soon, Gill