

# North Staffordshire Beekeepers Association

([www.northstaffsbees.org.uk](http://www.northstaffsbees.org.uk))

## SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

News Sheet Editor:

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### Meeting's Reminder-All Welcome!

September 2009 marks the start of our Autumn/Winter season of meetings that we hope **ALL** members will make an effort to attend and join us at the meetings on the basis that the more attending, the better the debate and exchange of views and information. Please make the effort to attend the meetings and ENJOY yourself. Additionally, if you know of anyone who is interested in beekeeping or taking-up the craft, tell them about the meetings and invite them along.

**REMINDER of the forthcoming meetings for your diary are:**

**Wednesday 2nd September 2009 - Celia Davis – "Bees, Plants & the Environment"**

This is a joint meeting with our friends from South Cheshire with an exceptionally knowledgeable speaker

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009 - NSBKA – Annual Honey Show**

Please see other information in this Newsletter

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009 – NSBKA - Annual General Meeting & Talk**

Following the AGM, there will be presentations about some topics of beekeeping aimed specifically at new beekeepers.

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009**

**John Clews RSPB – "Action for Birds"**

This talk will be followed by our Christmas Social but more of that in future issues of your News Letter

**All meetings unless otherwise stated are held at the Friends Meeting House (see map on last page). The doors are opened 7.00pm to enable access to the library books and the meeting commence at 7.30pm**

### Communications with members

I hope that no one would argue that communicating with you (our members) is one of the most important tasks that your Association does. We aim to keep you informed of your Associations activities, provide updates, important information or events as speedily as is possible. Thanks to the investigatory works and actions of Nick Mawby in future we plan to communicate with members monthly via a black & white News Letter which can be of varying content including any submitted articles/pictures and size with a larger colour Combing publication at least once per year and these will be supplemented by any other communications when needed.

**Electric or Paper based communications?** – Whilst much can be achieved using electronic computer communications, you do not need to have a computer to keep in touch and therefore whilst this issue of your News Letter is being printed and distributed via the postal system, we need to know from you which method of communication you would prefer by indicating your preference (or both) when you complete your Membership Renewal Form. Printing and posting communications does have financial and timing implications and we would ask you to consider that when you make your decision, however, those who opt for electronic communications can be assured that all or parts of our publications can be printed on your local printer.

On the rare occasion that we need to contact you urgently, we will use whatever methods we can to achieve that task and whilst that might result in many telephone calls being made, you can assist us in that task by providing us with all of your contact details i.e. telephone number, mobile telephone number or Email address which will enable us to use the most cost effective and timely method.

We maintain that communications are the most important function of your Association and every effort will be made to achieve that objective. Your Association still undertakes to maintain the privacy of your information regardless of the method of communication you chose.

**If you have any views or comments on this or any other subject, please let us know.**

## Members News

Members will be aware that both Bill Woodward and Phil Hulme have not been enjoying good health recently and the good news is that they are back on the road to recovery and we hope to see them amongst us soon.

On a sad note, we are sorry to have to report the deaths of two of our members Bob Parsonage and Harry Taylor and an ex-member Eddie Barnett. A fuller tribute to these three very knowledgeable beekeeping stalwarts will be published in a later issue suffice to say that Bob, Harry & Eddie enhanced our beekeeping experience through their help and friendship it is a great loss to the beekeeping fraternity. Many members and ex-members attended their funerals and our condolences were conveyed to their family. May they rest in peace, they will be missed by all of us.

## North Staffordshire Beekeeping Association - 2009 Honey Show

North Staffordshire Beekeepers have held Honey Shows for over 50 years or so I believe! They were, in the past, quite formal affairs with several nationally known Show Judges arriving and being secreted away with the exhibits and a chosen few show stewards. The rest of us listened to a talk on a beekeeping subject in another room and after that tucking into a delightful spread of food, listen to the judges words of wisdom on the standard of the years produce. It was all a bit scary and off putting for new beekeepers/beginners.

As the association has reduced in size we have held fewer shows and more recently have adopted a less formal approach to the process (not the standards) with the view that the more we understand about improving the quality of our honey products the better they will be.

We are planning to hold a small honey show again this year; hopefully enough of you will have produce to enter an item in at least one class. Our judge Jim Orton has agreed to do open judging which many of us have found helpful in the past.

You do not need masses of honey to exhibit in the Show and even if you do not have any honey, you will find that there are other classes in the Show that you can enter. However, please read the Show Rules carefully because failure to follow the rules can result in show exhibits being disqualified by the Judge.

The documentation is enclosed and we hope that you will make an effort and enter **your** Show to help make it a success and please contact me if you need any help.

**Margaret Teasdale - Honey Show Manager**

## Membership Renewal – due October 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 for 2009/2010

This is to remind you that your membership of YOUR Association is due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 and the documentation is enclosed and in order to remain members of it should be paid by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009. Full membership not only includes your Association, it also includes membership of the BBKA and your insurance cover so in order to maintain that status, please deal with it promptly.

Members should note that **AFFILIATE** Membership is intended for members who do not have any bees yet want to remain members of your Association. Affiliate membership only provides membership rights for your Association so in order to receive the excellent publication BBKA News and have insurance cover, you do need to be a **FULL** members of your Association.

To make the task of paying easier for you, whilst Ray will welcome your cheques, for those members who have access to a computer and the Internet arrangements have now been for you to renew your membership and make the payment via the PayPals system and that facility is accessible via the NSBKA website.

**Gift-Aid** – many of you will have heard of this system of Charitable giving where charities can reclaim the value of tax for your subscription which applies to those who pay tax. Previously, it was difficult to administer this system even though it was beneficial to charities and cost the members nothing but thanks to the work of Nick Mawby, the process has been made very simple so we would encourage you (if you are a tax payer), to sign-up to this facility for the benefit of your Association.

## Thank You!

Thanks are due to Dave Magnier for organising and providing refreshments and the use of his home after the Apiary meeting in June and to Cherry & Brian Tomkins for the use of their home for our Summer Social. Both events were a tremendous success and everyone who attended them expressed their thanks for Dave & Cherry's magnificent efforts.

No Summer Social would be a success without the involvement of yourselves and Pat Twigg's efforts in pulling it all together for which we are very grateful and express our thanks for her sterling work. For this year's Social, we were not only blessed with excellent food, drink and good company we actually had good weather.

**Thank you one al ALL and also to whoever arranged the sun to shine upon us.**

## Winter preparations & feeding

Yes it is that time of the year and whilst I am not trying to push the calendar forward, but you now need to ensure that your bees have sufficient stores to sustain them through the winter. No stores means **NO** bees next year!

Ensure that you store your unused boxes and combs in a dry protected area that mice cannot get to i.e. no gaps because mice can get through the smallest of holes and they do like making a mess of honey comb and don't forget to fit mouse guards for your colonies.

You will appreciate that the weather this year has been variable for us and our bees and we all need to ensure that our honeybee colonies are sufficiently fed and have sufficient store to last them throughout the winter.

Ideally, there should be a minimum of 40 pounds (in old measurements) of store available on each colony for winter stores. If your colonies do not currently have that amount of stores available now, start to feed them immediately

To calculate the amount of stores currently in your colonies, the process is very simple insofar as you need to assess the amount of stores on each colony and whilst accuracy is preferable through weighing hives etc. As a rough "rule of thumb", for British National frames each full frame of stores will weigh approximately 5 pounds and a full super frame will weigh 3 pounds. If the total is less than 40 pounds, feed NOW using a two pounds to one pint of water syrup.

For ease for the two to one solution, use a one-gallon container and make two marks on the container i.e. one at the four-pint level and another at the eight-pint level. To produce the syrup solution, fill the container to the four-pint mark with very hot water and then pour in sugar until the eight-pint mark is reached. When that level is reached, put the stopper on the container and then "shake" the container to ensure a complete mix. When it is cool, feed your bees using an appropriate type of bulk feeder. If you do not have a suitable container or for larger amounts of syrup, a clean plastic bucket can be used but this will require you to measure the volumes before putting them into the bucket and stirring the mixture until it has dissolved. Using very hot water does not effect the quality of the solution and does make the task easier but do take care when using either of these methods

If you have any questions or problems with this article contact either David Teasdale (07971 013787) or Nick Mawby (01538 387506).

## Beekeeping Tip for winter feed

We add the following to the winter feed for our bees.

- Make up additive 30 grams thymol crystals dissolved into 150ml surgical spirit.
- Add 1.6ml to 1 gallon of 2:1 winter-feed, 3.2 ml to 2 gall and 5 ml to 3 gallon.

Advantages helps to stop fermentation of the syrup in the comb and helps with prevention of Acarine.

We have used it for two winters now with no obvious side effects. In fact they came through last winter very strong on the whole.

**Dave Buckley**

## Beekeeping Contacts

Every year, our Secretary gets many telephone call from the general public about bees, wasps, bumblebees and requests for beekeepers to give talks to local groups etc and whilst Gill is the main contact for our Association, she can only help people if she has the resources available.

Whilst Dave Teasdale provides list of willing beekeepers to the all of the local Councils in respect to swarms and usually all other insect problems and he can with your permission add your name and contact details to those list if you let him know (07971-013787), the system is not foolproof or comprehensive.

Public relations activities are useful in spreading the word about beekeeping, demystifying the myths about beekeeping and hopefully attract people to the craft which we all enjoy. Therefore, if we are able to assist the general public with information or advice or give talks it all helps to raise the positive profile of beekeeping and your Association. Providing advice is reasonably straight forward and usually relates to Bumblebees and you would be very surprised at the relief that people express when they are better informed or advised what to or not to do.

Whilst giving talks is a little more demanding, these events are usually very enjoyable and **not** exhausting to the individuals and we have the resources available to assist in the task and make us look very professional but the whole things falls down if there are no people to talk to the public.

The events are usually local within the area and the time commitment is small. The important part is that you are able and willing to talk to people about beekeeping. You do not have to be a genius, not many of us are, the general public simply want general information. However, we need more people to volunteer their help to ensure the success of these PR activities.

If you are able to offer your services, please contact Gill. More information relating to swarms, wasps and bumblebees will be published in a future issue of the News Letter in time for next years "glorious weather" and swarming season.

## Beekeeping Buddies (Mentors)

One of the wonderful aspects of beekeeping is that fellow beekeepers are always willing to help other beekeepers and we have all been there! So consider the situation where a new beekeeper (or experienced) has a problem and is uncertain about what to do next, would you consider being available to offer telephone help and advice to a beekeeper in your area?

If you are willing and able to offer your services, please provide your details to Gill Woodruffe our Association General Secretary on 01782-399379

## Meeting Topics for Next Year

Tim Waye is undertaking the work of planning next years program of meeting talks and would appreciate your views on the subject matter to be covered and if possible suggestions of possible speakers who can be contacted. Tim wants to address the needs and interest of all members and especially those new to the craft and he would value your involvement.

**If you have any views, ideas or thoughts, please contact Tim on 01782 611890 or Email him at [tim@microwayes.net](mailto:tim@microwayes.net).**

## Varroa Treatment

Many members will remember the excellent talk given to us in January of this year by Nick Mawby and whilst the full impact and benefit of the talk can only be appreciated by those who attended the meeting, I am hoping that the overall content of the talk can be published in a future issue of the News Letter and perhaps produce it (and other articles) in a way that they can be filed for future reference.

This is important and needs to be addressed **NOW**, and I make no apologies for repeating the information published in July's bulletin.

### Apiguard

Colonies should be checked for Varroa levels and unless they are insignificant, should be treated as soon as the honey is taken off at the end of July. The efficacy of Apiguard is dependent of correct use:

- Varroa floor inserts should be in place, and any gaps sealed with tape
- The entrance should be reduced
- Any holes in the crown board must be sealed
- There needs to be space above the Apiguard for it to evaporate, either by use of an eke or empty super
- Some people recommend spreading the gel over a wider area, such as a 15x20cm piece of plastic, placed directly above the brood nest
- The temperature must be over 15C to be effective
- After 2 weeks, add the contents of a second pack and leave for another 4 weeks

The colony will need a more effective treatment, to ensure low Varroa numbers in spring. Most beekeepers seem to be using oxalic acid during the brood free period in December. We will include details on using oxalic acid in a newsletter later in the year.

## NSBKA and Computers

Whilst not having access to a computer and the Internet is not a mandatory resource to become a beekeeper, there are some added benefits to be obtained through the access to these services. In future issues, more useful site information will be provided but currently have a look at our Association website and follow the links to other interesting aspects of your Association.

## This is YOUR News Letter

News Letters and other communications are produced and distributed for the benefit of all members and to that end, please **tell us** what you would like included. Suggestions for article topics/subjects that we can commission are most welcome because only you know what you want or what can be helpful/useful or better still, please submit your own article or photographs for publication and I am very willing to help if required. Interesting, useful and stimulating articles are especially important to new beekeepers and also very relevant to existing beekeepers because the process of producing articles or reading them causes all of us to re-examine our thought and views and update ourselves.

The only rules applying to communications are the same which apply to any publications i.e. legal, decent, honest and true and within those wide limitations, anything goes! For example, we have, in the past included a section of beekeepers needed and for sale and that is still available and anything else if you simply make the request.

Your views do count for without you reading this News Letter, being involved and reflecting your needs, the document is worthless so please give me your ideas and do not worry that they might be contentious. My contact details are Contact 01782 502495 or 07971 013787 or Email [david.teasdale@ic24.net](mailto:david.teasdale@ic24.net). The only proviso is that we do not access the Email system every day so if you need to contact either Margaret or myself urgently, please use the telephone.

**Thank you, David Teasdale**