



CBKA - September 2013



September 2013 Newsletter – Colin Marshall - Ed

Chairman – Mark Stott
Secretary – Joyce Atkinson
Treasurer - Tamar Devane

Extended Newsletter available on line

Apiary meetings this month are on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month ie 8th September and 22nd September (final regular meeting of the year) at 2.30 pm

Bee Temperament

There are many books about beekeeping but this piece taken from Kim Flottum's book about beekeeping seems to sum up that we all ought to be bearing in mind:

'Gentle bees are easier and more fun to manage. Due to studied, deliberate breeding programs, the bees you buy today are gentler than the bees available twenty years ago. Breeders and producers have selectively bred for gentleness for decades. Every line of bees is different though, and sometimes gentleness is more subdued. Experience is the best teacher when it comes to judging your bees' character, but here are some guidelines to look for when evaluating your bees for gentleness:

- Guard bees should not greet you before you get to the hive. They should stay in the hive or at the entrance. This doesn't include bees leaving to forage.
- In even a large colony you should not have many bees in the air after 10 minutes of having the colony open. A light puff of smoke should keep all the bees inside and between frames. There should be very few in the air when you remove the cover and inner cover.
- Bees should remain relatively still on top bars when you remove the inner cover.
- When a frame is lifted, the bees should remain calm, and should not fly away or become agitated.
- Slow, easy movements should help you avoid any stings. Being stung should be the exception rather than the rule.
- Bees should not run or fly out of a super when it is removed from the hive and set aside.
- After examining a colony no bees should follow you more than a few steps from the hive. In addition, you have to work with your bees in such a way so they'll stay gentle. Follow the guidelines below to keep your actions to a minimum, and to engage your bees as little as possible.
- Only examine your colonies on sunny, wind-free, mild days (temperature between 65°F [18°C] and 98°F [37°C]) so the bees can take advantage of the honey flow.
- Absolutely avoid working colonies when it's cool, rainy, windy, cloudy, going to storm, or just finished storming.
- Don't start too early in the day, or too late in the evening. Between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM is usually the best time because that's when the temperature is the warmest, the wind the least likely to be blowing, and most bees out foraging.
- Always be gentle when opening the colony. Quick movements and loud, snapping sounds irritate the bees.
- Use enough smoke to make working the bees comfortable, but don't overdo it. Too much smoke will 'overdose' the bees and soon they won't react to it at all.
- Keep your bee suit clean, and wash it often. The occasional sting on the suit will allow venom to build up, giving off an 'alarming' odour to the bees.
- A manipulating cloth, which is a canvas and wire device that covers all of the frames of an open colony except the one you are working on, keeps bees contained and in the dark.

If your bees are not very gentle, and they begin to sting people and cause trouble, you can re-queen the colony.'

Reference: **The Complete and Easy Guide to Beekeeping** – A fascinating reference with Recipes for Enjoying Your Produce. ISBN: 978-1-84543-302-4

Kim Flottum is editor of Bee Culture magazine – the magazine of American Beekeeping [see

www.beeculture.com]

Ed's Footnote: It is commonly experienced for (purchased) lovely gentle colonies to revert to quite vicious ones after first queen matings (supercedures) with local 'rif raf' drones. The phenomenon is thought to be the result of mixing different strains of bee; the resultant hybrid vigour can produce rewarding honey harvests but at the expense of having to cope with very defensive bees.

Things to do in September :

It's that time of year when you have to think about the end of the beekeeping season. Time to take the surplus honey if you have any, treat for varroa and make sure that the bees have plenty of stores. Now the books will tell you to make sure that the bees have around 45 lbs (20K) of stores, my rule of thumb is to make sure that they have a full super plus plenty of extra in and around the brood nest, I know its unscientific but its easy. Time to treat with Apiguard , MAQS or other treatment to get rid of the varroa. Personally I'm sticking with the old Apiguard (thymol), It's often been said that I do not know what I'm doing so my use of one thing over another does not infer any credibility to any particular product. If your thinking about uniting colonies then insure that weaker colonies are free from disease (Nosema etc). Last but not least when preparing for winter, ensure that adequate ventilation is present within the hive and that mouse guards are fitted.

Events

Apiary meetings this month are 8th September and 22nd September at 2.30 pm

24-26 Oct - National Honey Show, St Georges College Weybridge.

Mon 7 Oct from 6pm to 9pm - London Honey Show at Lancaster London Hotel including the Awards Ceremony with the Beecraft sponsored Beekeeper of the Year Award. Entry only £1 with all proceeds going to Bees for Development. Stalls will include food and drink; arts and crafts; beekeeping equipment; beauty products, and more.

7th Dec - Surrey AGM at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Claygate. Celia Davis, guest speaker on 'Doing Things Better'.

Notes -

Champagne and Bees Garden Visit to Chelsea Physic Garden, Fortnum and Mason and the Garden Museum 05/09/13 - [an offer which will grant your members £40 off the advertised price. To book, contact \[jo@gardenmuseum.org.uk\]\(mailto:jo@gardenmuseum.org.uk\) and use the code 'beepromo'.](#)

For Sale:

1]Members on email will have been circulated about second hand equipment available: Robin & Julie Lynch are contactable on 0208 2406021 if you would like to find out what is still available.

2]We do not have the facilities for running a division shop (like one or two other Divisions) but we have a large number of unused **honey jars** that are available to members; also we have purchased some large sheets of **4mm correx** which we have cut to size and is very useful for using as varroa trays or top insulation. Contact David Shepherd or Mark Stott.

3] We heard recently of a very large amount of second hand equipment being available: unfortunately it was being sold as a job lot, if you have a couple of thousand pounds handy and room to store it!

Local Agent for E.H. THORNE (Beehives) Limited

RICHARD PALMER Tel: 0208 679 0401

Email: palmersbees@hotmail.co.uk

Beekeeping in Bermuda or not?

We recently had a holiday in Bermuda arranged by SAGA which is generally thought for old people. The sea at 83F was acceptable to most oldies there. Prior to going there I looked on the internet for any information on beekeepers there and all I found was that they produce about 150 lbs honey per hive per year!

Our hotel as most are, was biased by American influence with large breakfasts which we enjoy. They like waffles as do I smothered in Maple Syrup, as do I. However this year the syrup looked different and after sniffing the spoon found it was honey. About 10 lbs at least in a large bowl, the Maple Syrup was found hiding round the corner. Honey was not all that is great on waffles for me, as it gets everywhere and in hot weather a bath is needed after breakfast.

We decided on a trip to the Aquarium. No cars are available to hire only scooters, there is no driving test and a significant mortality rate from biking accidents even with a speed limit of 25mph!!!!

So off we went on a bus, free with a hotel pass (from SAGA). The aquarium was also a zoo-not too keen on them! But in the area for insects I saw a Styrofoam Beehive, guarded by a young helper. I engaged him in a chat and he thought there were bees in it. Can I try I asked, he gave me an odd look as I knocked on the side of the hive and stuck my ear to it. Nothing alive in here I said. What's it doing here? Waiting for the beekeeper to take it outside he said. She will be here in 30 mins. Came back in 30 mins and the hive had vanished, but found the lad and lady skulking in an office with it! I reintroduced myself and offered to help, they were just opening it! Lo and behold, large frames longer than National and only 9 per box. There were millions of wax moth larvae and that is what the zoo wanted, for feeding other insects. A bit of an anti climax really? Not as it turned out.

The the lad's uncle was a beekeeper, although the lad was keen, he was not a beekeeper. We returned later on the bus and having asked him to write his name on a bit of paper, put it on a copy of Beecraft plus where we were staying with my e-mail address, hoping for an invite to their Sunday afternoon meeting. Regretfully nothing was forthcoming, maybe in the future it will? Should we go back to Bermuda?

Pauline & Colin Whitfield

Study Groups :

For those who are interested I was proposing to re-start the Study group in September.

The purpose of the group is to help those who want to learn a bit more of the theory of bees and beekeeping with a view to taking the BBKA Modules.

The modules are open to anyone who has taken their Basic Assessment.

The Modules are

Module 1 - Honey bee Management

Module 2 - Honey bee Products and Forage

Module 3 - Honey bee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning

Module 5 - Honey bee Biology

Module 6 - Honey bee Behaviour

Module 7 - Selection & Breeding of Honey bees

Module 8 - Honey bee Management, Health and History

The dates of the exams are:

Examination Dates 2013

Modules 1,2,3,5 & 7, 9th November 2013 (Applications in by 30th September 2013)

All Modules, 22nd March 2014 (Applications in by 10th February 2014)

All Modules, 8th November 2014 (Applications in by 30th September 2014)

Previously we have met on the first Monday of the Month. However Mondays are a problem for me this year. I can not make this year so suggest we could move to the first Tuesday or Wednesday of each month. So can anyone who wants to attend please email me with their preference for a Tuesday/Wednesday. So the first meeting would be either the 3rd or 4th September.

Also if you have a particular module you would like to study. We can then focus on the most popular subject.

Regards

Mark Stott

Beekeeping Disasters 1

Most beekeepers who have been plying the trade for a few years usually have a few anecdotes to tell about when their beekeeping has not gone completely to plan. I have probably had more than a few episodes over the years which come into this category and occasionally account them to friends when I think they may be kind enough to not laugh too loudly!

You would think that a long standing member with all his experience would be able to avoid the many pitfalls that occur– but you would be wrong!

Leaving the apiary a few weeks ago, at the last moment we noticed one of the hives becoming rather frisky: thinking that I had better do a quick check I spotted what I thought was ‘Bee Quick’ (wasn’t wearing my specs) on the shelf in the shed. At this junction I think I had better explain (to those that may not know), ‘Bee Quick’ is a commercial blend of natural plant oils with a very pleasant smell (well I think so) which can be squirted onto a pad and then used to clear honey supers ready for extraction – it is not an aroma the bees appreciate, but it seems to be harmless. I always intend using the sure but slow method of using ‘porter bee escapes’ to clear my supers but usually leave it to the last moment and find myself brushing the workers off the frames and then carrying each individual frame far enough away to be temporarily clear of bees. Others in such haste may use the ‘pong’ technique, but I personally have never used it to clear supers: however I do keep ‘Bee Quick’ in a spray bottle, as an emergency ‘stand by’ just in case my smoker goes out (usually because I’ve been talking too much).

On this occasion I grabbed the plastic bottle off the shelf, attempted to unscrew the top only to find that the flat bit of the lid had broken off and I was trying to unscrew the thread part which was still on the bottle – of course the bottle was designed to squirt the liquid and by the time I had discovered this I had sprayed my hands and all the front of my trousersand it smelled horrible! It certainly worked where the bees were concerned: I squirted a bit on two undrawn frames at one side to check the bees’ reaction and quickly closed up when I had satisfied myself that all was well where the hive was concerned.

The same could not be said of me: the inside of my thigh started to burn and it was at that time that I discovered that my trousers were saturated with the evil smelling liquid. I drove home as rapidly as I could with a shopping bag stuffed down my trousers in an attempt to alleviate the by now intensive burning on my leg and quickly dived into the shower. The smell permeated all my clothes so they ended up in the washing machine, my house keys stank so much they ended up in a bucket of water. The following morning the large red patch on my leg was just as sore. I resolved to attack the smell in the car so I pulled my veil out of the car boot and in its pocket was a second bunch of keys: the brass one had turned green and the steel padlock key was a rust red - both colours are indicative of quite a strong acid, - and of course the car stank.

Extremely concerned that I had squirted acid into the hive I dashed back to see whether the bees were OK; and of course (without any smoke) there they were, all quite happily getting on with their own business as peaceful as ever. However the strange thing was, that unlike **my** car and clothing there was no trace of the ghastly smell! Armed with my spectacles I tracked down the offensive item to find that it was ‘Bee-Go’ not ‘Be-Quick’ and of course no hazard warning label.

I later ‘googled’ the chemical to find that ‘Bee-Go’ is indeed used to clear supers and seems to still be readily available in the States: it is Butyric Anhydride which when mixed with water turns to Butyric Acid (Butanoic Acid) ‘Product of anaerobic bacterial action in the gut, has an unpleasant odour and acrid taste, notably found in rancid butter, parmesan cheese, and vomit’.

Vomit: so now you know what my car smells like!

Three weeks later I still have a scab on my leg; I’ve scrubbed the car boot, scrubbed my car keys and all the upholstery: everything I touched still smells of vomit.

But the bees are doing really well!

Footnote:

1] A quote from Kim Flottum’s book, Complete & Easy Guide to Beekeeping: ‘Beware of Foul Fumigants (Bee-Go & Honey Robber)... they work and will not taint honey but they are toxic, flammable and the foulest concoctions ever created....spill them on your bee suit, in your car, or the house and you will be sorry for ever or until you move or destroy the fouled items’

2] I haven’t sold the car yet but am having limited success after spraying everything with Bee Quick – a much nicer smell!

3] My wife says the house still smells!

David Shepherd

Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA)
in conjunction with West Sussex BKA

“Bee Improvement for All”

A one day course to help and encourage beekeepers of all abilities to improve their bees using simple methods.

Sat 16th November 2013

At:- Pulborough Village Hall, Lower Street, Pulborough, West Sussex. RH20 2BF

<http://www.pulbvh.org.uk/>

Application Form. Please fill in and send/email to Daisy (details below)

Name Adult/Under 18. (Please delete)
Under 18s must be accompanied by fee paying adult.

Address
.....
.....
.....

Postcode

Tel No Mob No

Email

Additional attendees:-

Name Adult/Under 18. (Please delete)
Name Adult/Under 18. (Please delete)

Course fees:

Adult £15. No's £.....
Under 18 £8 No's £.....
Total £.....

Please make cheques payable to **BIBBA** and send to:-

Daisy, 23 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex. RH13 0SQ. Tel 01403 790 637 or 07980 280 852
wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk

No receipt will be issued.

Attendances may be accepted on the day, but only if the venue hasn't reached capacity. A fee of £20/head will apply to all.

If telephone or email bookings are made and full payment has not been received by 7 days in advance (unless by arrangement) it will be assumed the booking has been cancelled and the place may be re-allocated.

Details of the event can be found on <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/beeimprovementforallday.html>

