



# BDBKA News



Issue 13, January 2019

## Upcoming Events

**Members Meeting Date:** 19th January 2019

**Venue:** Whalebones

**Time:** 10.30am



A discussion meeting to share experiences, pass on tips and work out how to plan for 2019 beekeeping. The Session will include:

### **Winter Varroa Treatment**

What did you use? How did you apply it? And what can you do if the varroa drop is high in the spring?

### **Frames, Foundation + other kit**

What did you buy in the sales? Share tips on how to clean equipment effectively. We will

also discuss using sulphur strips and acetic acid.

## Planning for 2019

What are the threats and challenges for Barnet beekeepers for 2019?

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### Beginners Lecture 1- Meet the Superorganism

**Date:** 26th January 2019

**Venue:** Whalebones

**Time:** 10am

All our members are welcome to the beginners lectures. The first lecture will be given by Steve Leveridge. For more details scroll down.

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## Federation Day

**Date:** 16th February 2019

**Venue:** Harrow Arts Centre, Uxbridge Rd, Hatch End,  
HA5 4EA



There will be talks from Robert Carpenter about his experiences while working for the NBU, by David Bonner from Bees Abroad and by David Rutland about the uses of Nucs. This will be followed by the AGM of the Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers.

[Click Here For More Info](#)

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## Bee Tradex

**Date:** 9th March 2019

**Time:** 9am - 4.30pm

**Venue:** Hall H2, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG

[Click Here For More Info](#)

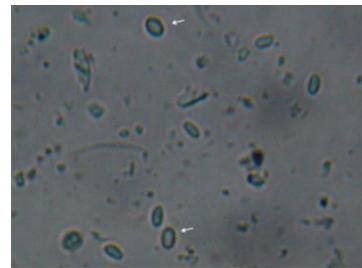
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## Nosema Testing

**Date:** 13th April 2019

**Time:** TBC

**Venue:** Whalebones



If you would like to check you bees for Nosema bring a sample of 50 bees to the session, we will show you how to dissect them and what to look for under the microscope.

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## Dear Members

I hope that by now the last of the turkey has disappeared and that 2019 was greeted with a lot of good cheer and optimism for your bees and this year's honey crop.

We wouldn't be beekeepers if we didn't discuss the weather and last year certainly had its ups and downs, starting with a wet cold late spring (anyone remember 'the beast from the east'?) warming to a very hot summer.

The weather contrast was reflected in the apiaries with some hives doing really well and others very poorly, sometimes in the same apiary. Overall, honey production for most members was up on the previous year.

The expectations are that we might see a replay of this in 2019 – but who knows?

BDBKA is in its 108th year; our membership numbers have remained around the 100 mark for the last few years and it's hard to believe that we were down to less than 20 members just 18 years ago. We currently have 5 Association Apiaries and 1 Training Apiary although we would always look at any others offered to us to help accommodate new members.

We have seen more instances of EFB and AFB getting closer to the Barnet area and it is thought that some of the outbreaks were caused by new beekeepers from outside of Barnet buying nucs from untested sources. Some known cases have also been traced back to bees collecting honey from buckets left open or discarded as empty by pastry / sweet producers who import their honey.

It is going to be important this year for all of us to be vigilant for EFB / AFB in our apiaries if we are to contain disease outbreaks in our area. We could also see the first Asian Hornets in London this year, so it's time to brush up on what you should do if you think you have seen an Asian Hornet.

We will be testing for Nosema on the 13th April, put the date in your diary and bring a sample of 50 bees along for testing.

The discussion of potential development at Whalebones continues, and we may see some movement on this later in the year. We will communicate any significant changes to you when we can.

Please try and attend our monthly member meetings which can be enriched by you sharing your experience and knowledge with new beekeepers. You may even pick up a few tips from other beekeepers on how to improve your understanding of the art and craft of beekeeping.

Here are a few words from the class of 2018 that are now beekeepers shared with me on what they would advise a new beekeeper to do and shown here as a welcome note to the 2019 class:

Get some training

Hygiene is important

You must be committed

Respect the bees

Be calm around the bees

Get a mentor

- Read, read, read
- Don't rush to buy a hive
- Remember your hive tool
- Join your local BKA
- Invest in time & effort
- Check your Personal Protective Equipment is being used properly

I would like to close this note by saying thank you for reading this. I look forward to meeting you at one of our monthly gatherings, and to getting your views on facing up to the challenges of beekeeping: how can we help our bees deal with our complex and changing environment?

If you would like to comment on anything I have said or have any suggestions of subject matter for our monthly member meetings, please email me on [lester.doman@barnetbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:lester.doman@barnetbeekeepers.org.uk)

Do you have any beekeeping tips, information or articles for our readers? Please send them in to [editor@barnetbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:editor@barnetbeekeepers.org.uk)

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## Contributors

A big thank you to Simon Dovar for his great article on his beekeeping experiences as a beginner in 2018. Thanks to BarnetBeek for the suggested tips.

If there are any areas of beekeeping you would like to know more about, let us know and we will try to provide information on the subject. Also, if members would like to contribute any articles please get in touch [here](#). We have members who have been keeping bees for many years and some who have just started: we would love for members to share their ideas and experiences of the beekeeping year through this newsletter.

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# In The Apiary - January

By Adam Armstrong



January is a quiet month in the apiary and it's a great time to check if spare equipment is clean and ready for the new season and for swarming in spring. Many of the beekeeping suppliers have winter sales underway, Beekeeping equipment can be expensive so this may be a good time to stock up.

Continue to lift hives to check if colonies have sufficient stores. If you believe your colonies are low on stores get some fondant to put on the hives.

Varroa boards should not be left under the brood box for too long as this can reduce the air flow causing damp and mould in the hives.

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Beginners Course Lectures - January

## Lecture 1 - Meet the Superorganism

**Date:** 26th January 2019

**Place:** Whalebones

**Time:** 10am

**Lecturer:** Steve Leveridge

## How is your pet cat, dog, hamster, elephant (it doesn't really matter) like a hive of honey bees?

In the first Barnet Beekeepers Beginners' lecture, Steve Leveridge will explain this and other strange and amazing things about honey bees, like how they make decisions, their understanding of abstract concepts, and who's actually in charge (hint - it's probably not the biped in the bee suit!) Welcome to the wonderful, obsessive, infuriating, perplexing, logical, mysterious, beguiling, depressing, confusing (delete as appropriate) world of beekeeping. How hard can it be... after all, they're only insects, muddling through with a brain the size of a sugar grain, right?

Think again.

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# Learning On The Fly

By Simon Dovar



No matter how much you think you know, there's nothing like being face to face with reality, all 60+ thousand bees, to get a true education.

**The following is recounts my first year of bothering bees, making mistakes, making friends and making do.**

This started with a pretty viable yellow queen Jay had saved from the Whalebones training apiary during a unite. At that point, Jay and I decided that for our first year it was probably sensible to join forces to tackle all the challenges the beekeeping calendar had to throw at

us. It meant we could combine knowledge, time and really get to grips with the notion that not all beekeepers have the same opinion.



### ***Our Whalebones Nuc and Jay***

In the winter months that followed we ensured our nuc was fed, hefted and as best we could left well alone.

January saw a flurry of activity as equipment was sourced, purchased and pieced together. Fellow graduates all gathered (thanks Li for the use of your house) to set up a temporary woodworking factory. This was just the tonic to help us get over the slight frustration felt (perhaps by all beekeepers) during the cold months when fewer apiary visits were required.

As winter slowly spluttered into spring, preparations were made for the year ahead. Our chosen home would be Arkley. For those not familiar with the apiary, it's a beautiful gentle rolling hillside (some would say slope, which is not as romantic a picture) with a spot on the edge of the old orchard of Arkley Manor House. Before we could settle in, a posse of keen volunteers headed up by Pat set to work clearing, mending and making good a neglected spot at the top of the apiary. This was a good opportunity to really get to know the other folks I'd be meeting every Saturday and cement friendships from the course. With our designated clearing in order we were ready to relocate our nuc from Whalebones.

After a few weeks of letting them settle in, and what seemed like an eternity keeping vigil on the Met weather app on my phone, we had our break. The transfer from our now

brimming nuc into a proper hive could finally happen! This was welcome relief after constant worry that they would swarm as soon as the temperature allowed.



### ***Nuc transfer and our first queen***

By mid-April, the bees were in the hive and the hive was in place. Our first task was to carry out a Bailey Comb Change, the bees having tested positive for Nosema earlier in the month. Although the colony had a very low level of infection we were not going to take any chances. It also offered us an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary (for us anyway) and to replace the old comb inherited from the nuc. All went smoothly, bar not having a decent amount of drawn brood frames for the queen to move up into. We were to learn that this was to become something of a constant hindrance - and a definite advantage of having more years in the field.

Anyway, we were soon enough onto our next adventure... With the lower box depleted of brood and the queen happily laying on newly drawn foundation there was an immediate need for swarm control. They had space, the queen was young, healthy and a good layer (with room to lay), but these ladies just needed to split. Time for an AS! A mad dash ensued to gather all the necessary hive components and not long after a lovely QC was selected and marked. We now had two hives.



### ***AS with little helper Raffi***

Cut to a week later and things were not going to plan. On inspecting the new hive (with the old queen) there was a sealed queen cell and the old queen happily laying eggs (scratches head, looks puzzled) ?!?! For those that ask, YES, we had thoroughly checked the transferred frame with the old queen on for QCs, YES, we had probably done some alternative silly things we just won't talk about and will, if questioned, deny. After removing all the QCs and leaving the queen to her business, we closed up and made bets on what they would throw at us next...

...another week on and they did what they wanted to do last week: a cast swarm. An interesting one though as the old queen (clipped) was underneath the floor with her entourage. The colony wanted her out so certain fate loomed on what had been our very first queen.

May, and with our two hives in the clearing finally settled, one with an emerged queen and the other with a developing one, it was time to pick up another nuc we had ordered. Early one morning we excitedly headed out to collect what had been billed as some of the finest bees in London. Our new spot on the apiary was more exposed and ran alongside the orchard this time. A month on and with the nuc settled, hived and growing at an alarming rate, we soon found ourselves with another space issue. We also seemed to have bees unwilling to do any wax work. With room rapidly running out, what with 6 frames of standard brood inherited from the nuc and 5 liberally drawn 14x12s (yes, standard national frames in a 14x12, discuss) we were soon preparing for our second AS.



### ***Orchard and new hive spot***

June was a calmer month, with four hives to tend, happy bees all around and summer in full swing. Inspections became much more enjoyable. I could now appreciate the delights of holding frames covered in bees on fresh sunny mornings, something much needed as an alternative to a busy working week. I even took my four year old son to visit, in his mini suit, to marvel at his father's other obsession.

With the flow in full swing and others in the apiary visibly reaping the rewards we were acutely aware of the lack of honey being stored in our supers. All our hives were active and healthy but had a lot of catching up to do due to the Bailey, AS, cast swarm and brand new brood and super foundation. Trying not to get too disheartened at the prospect of no honey, I thought of next year and the better position I'd be in.

July and with little honey activity happening, we figured uniting the hives back down to two (one in the clearing and the other in the orchard) would make the most of the last weeks of the flow.

With bees doing what they were supposed to do I set to work revising for the Basic. Revision time was mainly reserved for commuting on the Tube. Lugging around bee text books earned me some baffled looks from other commuters. As it turned out, all the experiences and mistakes throughout the year, no matter how full on and stressful, proved a useful thing to draw upon for the exam. I passed: phew!

And now with my exam out of the way the only real major task ahead, before hitting full circle, was to take the supers super off and extract. Although our haul was small this was the finest honey I'd ever tasted and well worth all the hard work. Jay had to call time on me trying to remove every last drop from the extractor.

To conclude, I was initially apprehensive about my first year outside of the training apiary. I was confident around the bees and not afraid to get stuck in, but having to juggle family life with two young children and a demanding full time job meant that time was precious and scarce. Bees often took over my Saturdays. However, rolling with the punches and with an incredibly tolerant wife I made it through and even made it work (kind of).



***Bottled, labelled and ready to go.***

*(Thanks to Jay for putting up with me, also thanks to my wife Philippa for dealing with all my bee antics, and an ever grateful thanks to Pat and Geoff for constant advice and support.)*

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# Contribution sent in by BarnetBeek

## **Tip 1:**

Don't clear away snow from the hive entrance as the bright light reflected from the surrounding snow will draw the bees out and they will easily chill and die; the Open Mesh Floor will allow enough air to circulate in the hive.

## **Tip 2:**

The warm weather has had many bees flying around with very little or no forage available and as a result some hives may already be too light of stores to see them through the winter; so, check your hives and if necessary feed with fondant.

## **Tip 3:**

Never eat yellow snow

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# Winter Sales



Keeping Bees can be an expensive hobby so if you need any beekeeping equipment check out the sales, Click on the links below.

[Click Here For The Thorne Winter Sale](#)

[Click Here For The Paynes Bee Farm Winter Sale](#)

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BDBKA News

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## Barnet Beekeepers On Social Media

Like us, Follow us and get keep up to date with Association news and events.



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## Apiarist Suit Discounts For Our Members

Discounts are available from two of the most popular brands in protective suits for Beekeepers to members of Barnet Beekeepers Association. Both BB Wear and BJ Sherriff offer discounts.



Please email our [Membership Secretary](#) who will confirm your membership with Barnet Beekeepers to the supplier you wish to purchase from.

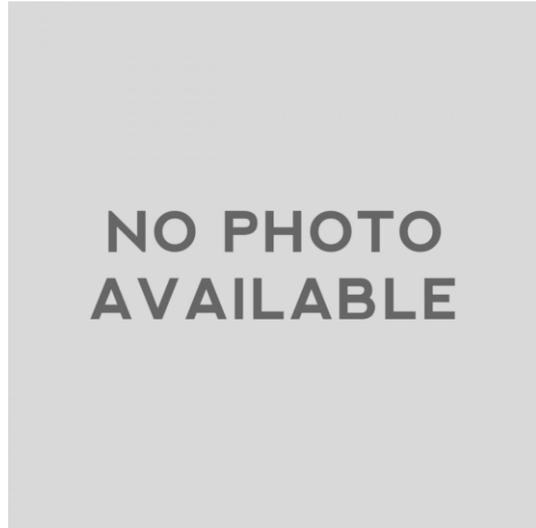
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# Barnet Committee Members and Apiary Managers



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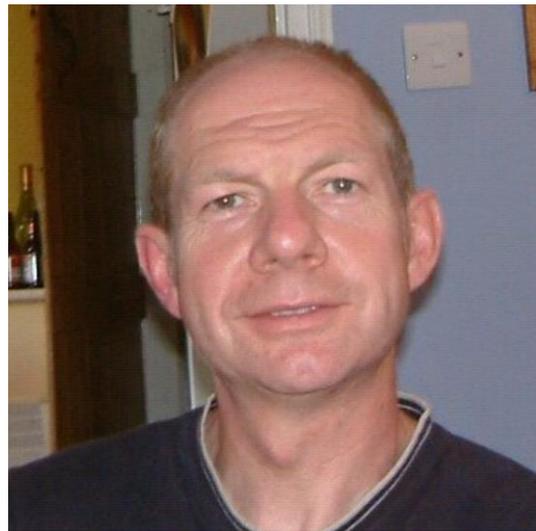
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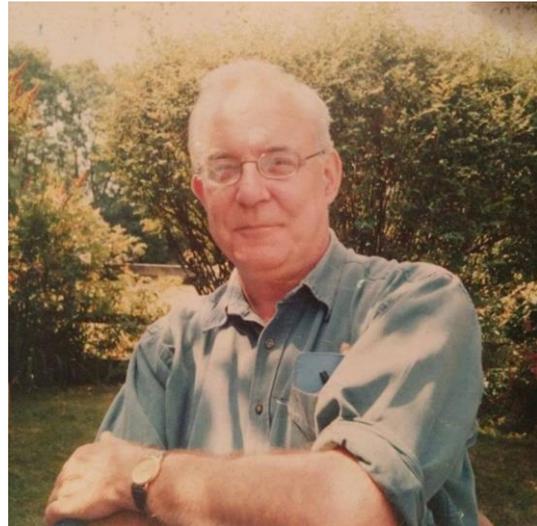
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