



BDBKA News



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Note from the Chair

I suppose we say every season is an odd season and they are all different, but this year it really has been difficult. After a greater than usual number of winter losses we had a long, wet, damp spring meaning colonies got off to a slow start and some queen matings were poor. Now that we are in the midst of a large nectar flow which mean supers on large colonies are filling extremely quickly, catching out those who have not got enough supers ready to store.

We have a number of members sitting exams: The Basic, modules and general Husbandry. We do not know all the results yet but send all our good wishes and hope that others will be encouraged to follow suit. We would be pleased to offer advice and put people in touch to set up learning groups if you are interested.

I recently emailed about the training session for queen clipping. This will be on Saturday 23rd July, 2pm at Whalebones when we will use drones to teach on. We would recommend your queens are clipped. It gives more time if needed between inspections, gives you the

Apiary Tips - July

Ants

Some members have been experiencing a problem with Ants entering their hives. Clive Cohen has been looking at Bee friendly ways to deter/repel the Ants.

There are three things that have been suggested-

1. Oil Traps

Put a bowl of cooking oil under the legs/stand of the hive, the Ants will not and cannot cross the oil.

Alternatively water has also been recommended. With this method you will need to clear any vegetation around the hive that may allow any Ants

chance to find the queen and collect the swarm if they do issue from the hive and cause less nuisance to neighbours. Come along on Saturday to hear more on the pros and cons and discuss concerns.

A small group of us are going to meet to discuss the possibility of a queen rearing programme locally. The aim would be to choose the best colonies to breed from in terms of temperament, honey production and swarming tendency. We would hope to breed good quality, local queens to make available to our members. This does not happen overnight or even in one season and would be a plan for years to come. Middlesex Federation are also planning some workshops on queen rearing and more information will be circulated about these soon.

This years honey show is going to be slightly different. Yields look variable this year, depending on the state of our colonies, and last year some of the classes in the show had pitifully few entries. We have therefore decided on a slightly different programme with an accompanying barbecue or similar event to be held at Whalebones rather than hiring a hall. It will still be a great competition and demonstration of what we do, so please keep those entries coming and lets have more people than ever entering.

For a more traditional event why not enter the National Honey Show. This will be the 85th such show and will be held at Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher 27th-29th October 2016. Some members do enter and we can arrange for entries to be taken over for you. Please let me know if you are interested. More details available from me or on-line: www.honeyshow.co.uk

A taster day is planned for Saturday 13th August 2016 with a short talk and apiary visit at Whalebones to encourage would be beekeepers. If you have friends or family interested in beekeeping but not quite sure, why not suggest they come along.

Pat Morgan

to climb up.

2. Ground Cinnamon

Lots of people recommend using ground cinnamon to repel the Ants. Sprinkle the Cinnamon on the top side of the inner cover or in a hive top feeder. You can also sprinkle around the base but will need to re apply after rain. [Click Here for online video.](#)

3. Peppermint or Spearmint

Another recommendation is to place a few leaves of Peppermint and Spearmint on the top of the frames.

If you have had problems with Ants entering hives how did you solve this? Have you tried any of the recommendations? We would like to know how you got on!

If there is anything you want to us to include in the next newsletter please let us know!

The Mysterious Cup...



A short while ago, BDBKA was surprised to receive a silver cup in the post. It is engraved as the Members Challenge Cup presented by C.L.Huggins Esq, Windmore Hall South Mimms. It only has 3 names on it: it was first awarded in 1928 to Mr Fred Ellis (who donated the Ellis Cup), then to C.W.Bowell in 1929 and then to Mr C Chandler in 1930, 1931 and 1932. We are not aware of the existence of this cup until a relative of Mr Chandler found it and kindly returned it to us. We have no record of what it was awarded for and why it disappeared for over 80 years!

If anyone has any information that can help solve this puzzle, we would love to hear from you.

We would also like suggestions of how we can now include this in our Honey Show and what it might be awarded for. We already have many trophies : **Ellis Cup** for liquid honey, **Davis Cup** for set honey, **Geoff Matthews Cup** for gift honey, **Joe Price Trophy** for best novice honey, **Tidmarsh Cup** for comb, **Tollington Shield** for beeswax, **Ralph West Cup** for mead, **Helen Wright Mead Maser** for 'cooked with honey', **Hedgecoe Cup** for the best set of hive records and the **Centenary Cup** for overall best in show.

Put your best thinking caps on and let us know what you think.

Linda Perry

Honey Show Organiser

Getting your precious honey into jars

So you have had a success and have gone through the messy job of taking the full supers off of your hives and extracted the honey. Now you have, with any luck, plastic buckets full of honey filling up your living room.

So what do I do now?

The answer is, you should have started several months ago.

I consider myself as still a novice when it comes to this task, so I am still working out the best system for myself so I can tell you about some of the mistakes I have made so far.

First, order your jars in advance when the association does the bulk order, but how many jars do you order and of what size when you don't know how much honey you might or might not get.

Size and shape is a personal preference, I went for the standard squat 1lb jars in my first year with gold metal lids, I filled about 60 jars with honey so it was an easy calculation that that year I produced 60 lbs of honey, 90% of which was given away to family and friends. However I noticed that the association was using a hexagonal jar of a smaller size when selling its honey at the various events that we attended and also that there was a preference from the customers for this style of jar over the standard round jar. So the next year my order was for the 12oz hex jars, having learned my lesson on the value of honey I sold a lot more that year rather than giving away most of it and soon it was all gone. BUT one thing I forgot about was the Honey Show. An important event in the association calendar but with no 1lb jars I had to swap some of my hex jars for the standard 1lb jars so I could show off my years hard work, and even maybe do the walk of glory at the AGM later in the year to shake Rogers hand and get that coveted bit of silverware.

So to round three, 12oz hex jars for selling 1lb jars for showing plus some larger honey buckets (another story) so I am now almost ready for this year's crop.

How to get the honey from the bucket into the jar without going via every surface in the kitchen

You know it's going to happen, a short laps of concentration, the cat jumping up to have a look, the phone ringing, or the front doorbell going. Cover everything in plastic sheeting and put cardboard or newspaper on the floor, wear shoes or clogs that you can slip off when you leave the sticky zone so you don't transfer the mess to the rest of the house, get your washed and oven sterilised jars lined up for the amount you want to jar up then, oops, I forgot that last year when I filled jars with a spoon and it took ages, I was going to buy a honey tap to put into a bucket, so next best thing to hand was a small measuring jug, next year I promise myself I will have that honey tap (it's in the post right now) So after filling 30 or so jars with honey, lids tightly on, labels stuck on, they look glorious and are ready for the next stage, selling or giving to family and friends.

Now the legal bit.

1. Jars can be re-used but you must make sure that they have not been used for storing anything with a strong smell or toxic, they must be clean and sterilized before use (buy new it's easier)
2. Lids cannot be re-used.

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3. 1lb jam jars are NOT the same size or capacity of 1lb honey jars so only use designated honey jars
 4. Fill the jar to the right level, do not under fill or you may fall foul of trading standards. You will probably get away with overfilling but if you are doing a lot, a set of accurate, calibrated, scales are a good purchase, kitchen scales are not suitable.
 5. Labels need to conform to various regulations, buy a pre-formatted one from Thorns with your details added, is the easiest way to comply. Brown sticky paper with 'Honey 2016' written in your best scrawl is not suitable.
 6. Only put honey into the jar, leave the bits of bee, pollen pellets, wax capping's, pet hairs behind.
 7. Where you put the honey into the jar should be very clean and hygienic, typically this is the kitchen so make the effort to clean the surfaces and floor before you start, lock the pets out (before you clean).

And finally, keep working on refining your process, make a note of what went wrong and what went right, you will be doing it all again next year if not next month.

Wilf Wood

The Basic Assessment

I completed my Basic Assessment last year and It was a great opportunity to put all I had learnt on the Barnet Beekeepers Beginners course into practice and see how much I could actually remember. It actually made me feel more confident about my knowledge and handling of my own bees, knowing I was doing the right things and realising just how much I have learnt in the last couple of years. The examiner was very supportive and I didn't feel under too much pressure. The only requirement for the assessment is to have managed a colony of bees for at least one year. The assessment takes about an hour.

The Practical - Manipulation and Equipment

Perhaps the most important part of the practical assessment is to prepare carefully. These are basic but important things to put into practice as Beekeepers like cleaning equipment in soda water and have a well lit smoker in arms reach and ready to last the duration of the inspection, its easy to be so focused on the inspection that it may just slip your mind. The Examiner gave me an extra point as my smoker was choking!

You will be allocated a hive in the beginners apiary to inspect and you will need to be to explain the reasons for opening a colony and what you are looking for, the importance of stores and keeping records of each inspection. During the inspection try to be gentle when releasing frames to help keep the bees calm and make sure you take out an end frame to give you the room to manipulate the frames without rubbing or crushing bees. You will need too be able to identify brood in all stages and demonstrate the

difference of drone cell, worker cells and stores.

An extra tip is to keep your hive tool in hand throughout of the inspection this got me an extra point. You will also be asked to make a frame but by now you will have made enough of these to be frame building experts.

Oral Assessment - Beekeeping

In the oral Assessment you will be asked to describe the development of Queens, Workers and Drones, the different stages of their life and their roles within a colony. You will also be asked to name local flora, and give a simple description of nectar.

Describing a method of swarm control is a key part of the oral Assessment and there are some good tutorials online using small models and a great article on Artificial Swarming by Steve Leveridge in the last newsletter if you need to recap.

All of the Assessment syllabus would have been covered in the beginners course so you will know most of the answers but I had to revise some areas such as disease and pests, you will be asked to describe the signs of EFB, AFB, Chalk Brood, Varroa etc. It is important to be able to spot the early signs of disease in our own colonies and to treat to stop the spread of the disease to treat accordingly so we can have healthy, strong and productive bees. I recommend going to the disease lecture on the beginners course for a recap if you decide to do the basic.

As well as answering the questions from the examiner, I found myself asking at least as many questions in return and it actually felt much more like a discussion than an assessment.

I hope many more Beekeepers are keen to take the basic, it is always encouraging to be told you are doing the right things.....

If you are interested in doing your Basic Assessment please let Pat Morgan know and this can be arranged. The pass mark is 50% and 75% will earn you a credit. You will need to complete the Basic to meet the requirements to undertake more advanced assessments.

Adam Armstrong

[BBKA Basic Assessment Syllabus - Click Here](#)

Beyond The Basic, General Husbandry Certificate

The perception is that the assessment for General Husbandry Certificate is very difficult and that you need years and years of experience and knowledge under your belt before contemplating this assessment. However BBKA News recently said it is “EASY” and all you need is three production colonies for the assessment to be undertaken on, a nuc capable of bringing on to a full sized colony, the kit for performing the practical tasks, spare kit for operating your set up and overcoming any reasonable obstacles (eg swarming). You also need to show your extraction and bottling kit (though you could borrow this). An extra that most urban beekeepers don't do is that you also need to have a small queen rearing programme underway (perhaps raising five queen cells being reared to re-queen your three or four colonies but you will need a larger programme if you have more hives.

So as I took my GHC in June what is it really like doing it? First, what you also need is the relevant bits of underlying knowledge to support your practical work. The knowledge level is that contained in Ted Hooper's 'Guide to Bees and Honey' and the APHA Disease and Pest publication. You don't need to be an expert, just have an understanding, so that you can recognize and respond appropriately to problems (and their questions). The Mid Bucks BKA blogs on Module 1,2 and 3 are a good source of information (and are free), you don't need all the information in the blog but you need to know the honey Regulation and label regulations etc.

If you only have few hives I would say you will really need to have looked in more hives than just your own. It's having the hive hours and experience of other beekeepers' practice and manipulations that you need so that you know when things are being done well and when they aren't. Knowing what a strong and healthy hive looks like and what calm bees are like to work. So Helping out at the training apiary or mentoring one or two beginners gives you that added insight because you need to tell assessor just the things the beginners need to know what to do.

I would also suggest you need five hives going into winter not three to ensure that by June/July you have three production colonies, I started in the winter by sorting out the shed where I kept all my spare kit. I really found some horrors hidden in its depth such as an unused bottle of deep orange coloured oxalic acid that expired 2013, an empty tub Fumidill B that is (now banned) and my first beesuit that was useless and moth eaten. This all went in the dustbin. All of those other bits that were scattered around were organised into small plastic tubs, hammers and nails, frame side bars, queen rearing stuff, hive tools (lots of other things that I thought I had lost!). It now all looked quite smart. Rather than the usual pile of assorted top bars and frame side in a large box, I could actually see that I needed to order, say, more brood frames but had enough super frames for two or three years.

Everything has to be clean so I spent several sunny winter days scraping and blow torching brood boxes, queen excluders and supers. Not that I don't do that normally, but I never do it in advance usually in a rush just before things swarm or a heavy flow. I spent hours cleaning the cones and under sides my

English Feeders and bleaching my poly hive, I sterilised my extractor, buckets and filters, then I made my 25g wax blocks for sale as you need to show you can make products of the hive, what more could I do?

So by mid march, spring had sprung and I opened up my first hive and did a shook swarm on the hive that needed a complete frame change, it being a serial propoliser. Mid April and while inspecting during a warm spell I found queen cells and did a Pagden Artificial Swarm. The weather did not play ball; 2015 marked and clipped queens appeared to have superseded, two queens in one hive, a bent Queen excluder giving brood in first super, meant I was fighting a losing battle!

The GHC assessment day came and I set up my extractor in the kitchen, displayed wax and on the dining room table with my jarred-up (and labelled) honey, hive records, honey sale records, photo of queen rearing and my 1st prize certificate at the London bench of the national Honey show. I had three colonies with supers on and queen cells being raised in a breeder colony. My wife took the dog to work for the day. I was ready.

The Assessors arrived on time and we had a cup of tea but due to a forecast of rain we then went directly to my apiary. On arrival at the apiary my hood zip stuck and took five minutes to fix. After that, things only got worse! The first task was find the queen, mark her, clip her wing and make her safe in a queen cage. I found her, marked her without flooding the pen and then reached for the scissors to find the queen was now half way up my arm. Retrieving her I clipped her and popped her in a cage. I then had to do a Pagden artificial swarm, but halfway through it started to drizzle. They then said ok, now do a disease inspection and I had wet bees everywhere as the rain got heavier. They helped put the hive back together then asked me to demonstrate a shook swarm on the next hive. Now under large umbrellas due to heavy rain, I checked my hive records before I started the shook swarm and found my notes were now wet and unreadable, it took some time to find the queen and make her safe and I was asked to add five workers to the cage as if I wanted to keep her longer out of the hive. It then started to hail, which my normally docile bees DID NOTICE (the hail was bouncing off the roof and top bars) so I got a sting, but stoically I did not scream (or swear as I normally do).

As the thunder rolled around Mill Hill the assessors decided they'd seen enough and we decided to go back to my house, but before we did upped sticks, I had to show my queen rearing. I had to resort to grafting in my Ben Harden method starter/raiser colony which is something I find hard to do. I opened up just as lightning flashed but I had four out of five perfect Queen cells just about to be capped.

We all hurried back to my house and after a general discussion at home over another cup of tea, we then moved on to look at honey extracting and bottling facilities. They asked a few set questions, "What you need to make your jar label legal?" "What temperatures you would heat the honey to and for how long, the significance of HMF, how you check jar weights, etc?" They then looked at my storage facilities for honey and whether spare hive equipment was sufficient and clean, including four queen mating nucs. Finally we had general discussions on other topics or practical activities that one might undertake in the apiary, extracting room and wax recovery; which made for a nice, gentle wind-down.

They left after four and a half hours, telling me that the result would come through in six weeks. I went direct to the pub, I was exhausted.

A letter that arrived ten days after the assessment with a Sheffield postmark raised no suspicions. I opened it to find it was from Val Francis at the BBKA to say that I had passed the General Husbandry Certificate.

Geoff Hood

[BBKA General Husbandry Syllabus - Click Here](#)

Varroa Treatment Dates Autumn 2016

The date agreed by the committee for this year's autumn varroa mite treatment is for treatment to begin weekend 13th-14th August right through to the end of the month. This includes the bank holiday weekend to help those with work commitments.

This may seem rather early but the treatment recommended at present is Apiguard, a thymol based product which needs a daytime temperature of 15 deg C to be effective. A later start date risks reduced efficacy.

Apiguard comes in small foil trays and each hive needs two trays put on at two week intervals. If the first tray is not emptied, it can be left in place along the second. The treatment should be left on the hive for up to 6 weeks. The trays are best placed on the top bars of the brood box using a shallow eke to raise the crownboard so the bees have good access to the medication, and positioned directly above the brood nest. Counts of natural mite drop should be done before, during and after treatment to ensure counts are kept at acceptable levels. Failure to do this may mean you miss a persisting high count which would need further, different treatment.

All honey supers must be removed before treatment since thymol will taint the honey and the smell will be absorbed into the wax of the frames. It should not be necessary to feed during treatment unless the brood box is noted to be low on stores. Indeed with feed on the bees may not touch the Apiguard and distribute it properly through the hive. Also, feeding a hive in the same apiary as others without feed may cause robbing. If the robbing bees have supers on you may cause contamination of their honey with syrup and thymol.

If your hives are on Association apiaries your Apiary Manager will be in touch to advise of the days on which treatment will be put on in their apiary. Where possible hives at the same location should be treated at the same time.

Pat Morgan

Apiarist Suit Discounts

B.B.Wear are offering a discount to association members. The discount is for 20% off of all of our clothing so suits, jackets, smocks, trousers, and gauntlets, and then 50% off of gloves (free gloves is a retail offer only as associations don't like members in leather gloves at the apiary).

[B.B.Wear Discount 20% Click for more details.....](#)

B.J. Sheriff bee suit sale finished in April but we have negotiated a deal for a 10% discount for Barnet Beekeepers. The 10% Discount code to be used when purchasing online is barn10bee, but does have limited usage. Customers can claim a pair of Free GL2 Gloves which is not possible over the telephone as it is an online offer only.

[B.J.Sherriff 10% Discount Code - barn10bee \(online only\)](#)

Diary Dates

2016

23rd July - Queen Clipping and Marking

We will be showing how to Mark and clip Queens to help manage swarming without damaging the Queen. This will take place at Whalebones.

13th August - Taster Day

A taster day is planned at Whalebones to encourage would be beekeepers. If you have friends or family interested in beekeeping but not quite sure, why not suggest they come along.

13th - 14th August - Varroa Treatment at Association Apiaries.

To help get the best results with our varroa treatments we ask all of our members with hives on association apiaries to treat hives on the 13th - 14th August.

2017

25th February - Middlesex Federation Day.

The event will be held in Ealing and so far there are three speakers booked.

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