



BDBKA News



Issue 9, December 2017

Upcoming Events



14th January 2018

Beyond The Basic and Bee Health By Bob Smith, 2pm

Harrow Beekeepers invite you to an afternoon at Hatch End Suite 2 and 3 Harrow Art Centre, Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, HA5 4EA.

[Click Here For Booking Info](#)

3rd February 2018

**Asian Hornets And Herts Queen Rearing
Programme By Peter Fogle, 2pm**

Eastern region seasonal bee inspector talk on Asian hornets and the Herts queen rearing program, to improve drone bee stock.



An Asian Hornet nest was found and destroyed last year in Gloucestershire and Asian Hornets were found hawking hives in Devon in September this year, a nest was found and destroyed. A recent update from the National Bee Unit confirmed there has been no further sightings but it is important for us all to be vigilant.



24th February 2018

**Federation Of Middlesex Beekeepers' Day,
10am**

To be held at Ruislip Methodist Church,
Ickenham Road, Ruislip, HA4 7BZ.

Speakers on Honey Handling, Senses of the
Honey Bee and Bees in the city.

[Click Here For Booking Info](#)

3rd March 2018

Bee Trade Exhibition

Bee Trade Exhibition in Stoneleigh, Coventry, CV8 2LG. All of the major beekeeping equipment suppliers will be there.



Note From Chair

Seasonal preparations are now getting underway and I am sure you are all busy. Please spare time to make a note of the dates of future events, we should like to see a lot more of our members at our monthly meetings. They take a lot of effort to organise, they are informative and worth attending.

At the end of November we had our Honey Show, lunch and AGM. The day ran very well. Many thanks to Linda and her team for setting it all up. We had an excellent Show Judge who made constructive comments on all entries, not something we have had before and a great help. We hope Sue will be able to return next year. Only one thing, we needed more entries!

The lunch was enjoyable and thanks again to Linda and everyone who helped arranged it all. The turn-out was disappointing after all the effort. It is a good chance to meet up with fellow beekeepers. Do try to come along next year to support our association.

The AGM saw the formal adoption of our new Constitution and Rules. You will all have received a copy with your AGM papers and they were accepted unopposed. They now replace all previous versions.

Thanks to those who turned up and helped with the leaf clearing and clean up at Whalebones on the 9th. In the afternoon, Geoff Hood and Steve Leveridge also treated those hives with remaining varroa loads by Api Bioxal sublimation, setting them up for a healthy season next year. I hope you have all been able to give your colonies their winter treatment too. If you have any queries or problems with your treatments please let us know and we will help if we can.

I wish you all a Season's Greetings, a Happy Christmas and Good Health and Good Beekeeping for 2018.

Pat Morgan

Contributors

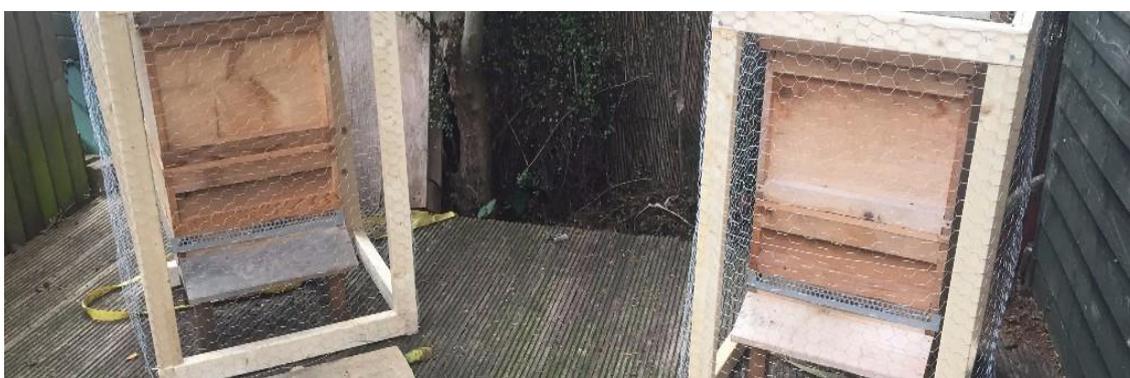
A big thank you to Wilf Wood, Geoff Hood and Martin Hudson for their contributions to this issue.

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 and it would be great for members to share ideas and write about their experiences so far.

Adam Armstrong

In The Apiary - December

By Adam Armstrong



December is a quiet month in the apiary but there are some essential checks that need to be done to ensure a healthy colony going into the Spring. With the colder weather, colonies will have clustered and the queen will have probably stopped laying. Colonies are unable to defend the hive when in cluster so precautions such as mouseguards on hive entrances and wire cage to protect from woodpecker damage.

Colonies should not be opened but observations can be made at the hive entrance and hives should be hefted to check stores are adequate. If stores are low fondant can be placed over the feeder hole on the crown board.

By late December most colonies should have little or no brood. This is due to the day light hours rather than temperature. This is when some beekeepers use Oxalic Acid for varroa treatment. Remember that Api-Bioxal is the only

approved Oxalic Acid treatment, and suitable protective equipment should be used when administering. This treatment is most effective when the colony is broodless. Use the Beebase Varroa calculator to see whether treatment is required.

The Winter months are the time to make sure spare equipment is clean and weather proof. If not, repairs can be made ready for swarming in the Spring. Bee equipment can be expensive when purchased in season, so make the most of the Winter sales. When planning it is best to assume that you will have to conduct an Artificial Swarm on each colony, so make sure you have spare equipment ready.

The (Mostly) Ups And Downs of my Beekeeping Career

By Martin Hudson



I caught the 'beekeeping bug' about four years ago - alerted by the recent plight of our pollinators by removal of natural habitats, use of harmful pesticides and introduction of imported diseases. My wife and I obtained places on London

Beekeepers' weekend training course in April 2014. Most exciting was the willingness of three nearby beekeepers to show a crowd of total novices what a colony of bees looked like! We both went away from the course determined to get our own colony.

Angie and I started planning our garden layout to make a space (amongst her vegetables) for two hives (which turned out to be far too small!), and I bought a cheap plastic shed for the equipment (which also proved to be too small!) I purchased two fully made-up Maisemore National hives, suits and other equipment, and later that year, obtained a nuc of bees from an LBKA member, which was hived in the garden. They were beautifully calm, docile bees, and I spent many a long hour/day gazing through binoculars at the entrance (without my beesuit) from about 2 metres away - watching the interactions of the bees as they came and went, and seeing the occasional inspection of the colony by (luckily English!) hornets and wasps. I listened to the sounds they were making, and when I inspected, they were no problem at all. Generally, I did not need to use smoke.

They took some time drawing out the frames from just foundation, and only slowly moved into the one super which I put on to try to encourage them to store honey. But, as I am a long-standing Type 1 diabetic, I was not too bothered about taking a crop. By the end of August they had filled about 60% of the super, so I decided to leave that on the hive for the winter. I only took a spoonful of honey from one of the combs, and it tasted lovely! It was very light, clear, and tasted of - well - honey (I can never understand why wine-tasters say that their wine tastes of everything - except grapes!).

I treated them for varroa, and they took 12 litres of 2:1 inverted Ambrosia in late September/early October, with which they completely filled the super and much of the brood frames. I had a few more peeks at them in October, but then left

them to it for the winter - apart from treating in Christmas week with oxalic acid. I weighed the hive (with a digital scale) every couple of weeks throughout the winter, and the weight seemed to be reducing very satisfactorily by a kilo or two each time - fine, I thought.

We had a funny Spring that year! The bees were very active on warmer (> 10 C) days during January and February, and they were bringing in pollen by mid-February. Fine, I thought. However, I noticed quite a few 'followers' following me up the garden path each time I went to see them, and they would not leave me alone when I sat watching the hive. Because the temperature was staying doggedly below 13 C, I was resisting the temptation to open them up. But I was also concerned at what I might find when I did, eventually, open them up. This was not until the end of March, when I found lots of drone brood filling every available gap, and the bees were very agitated. So much so, that I did not get to look at the main brood chamber - basically I bottled out!

What I learnt from my first year of beekeeping was:

- Don't spend loads of money on fancy equipment which you can borrow from your BKA or which you will never use (I spent over £4,000 in the first 18 months, because I did not think first)

When I went back a week later, there were hundreds of drones, and the bees had become very aggressive. That was Easter weekend, and everyone was out in our neighbours' gardens on the glorious bank holiday Monday. We started getting knocks on the door from concerned neighbours - some from six houses away, whose kids, dogs and guests were being stung in their gardens. Just at this time, both our immediate neighbours had given birth, so I needed some

help! One new dad had to wear our beesuit while mowing his lawn! An LBKA beekeeper kindly came to assess the situation, and told me that she had never encountered such bad-tempered bees, and a decision was made after a few phone calls that they should be culled, because requeening would only have changed the temperament over a few weeks, and moving them away was too dangerous! Geoff Hood came to rescue later that evening, with a litre of petrol - thanks, Geoff!

The neighbours were remarkably sanguine about the action we took, and most said they were sorry that we had had to get rid of them. However, we decided that we could not continue to keep bees in the garden. Unfortunately we do not know why they became so aggressive, but I suspect that there was a dodgy mating of a superseded queen very late the previous year, and that she became drone-laying and without pheromones in the Spring.

- However tempting it might be, don't get a colony yourself until you have had a full year with an experienced beekeeper - you may think that you'll manage, but the chances are that you won't!
- Make sure that, when planning your own site, you leave yourself plenty of space on both sides of each hive you intend to have - and then double it. Then do the same for your storage facility!

Finally - to end of a good note - I was lucky to be in need of a site when one was offered by Bells Hill Allotments in Barnet, and I have had a very successful two years since I started with a new colony of Buckfasts from Exmoor Bees there - a happy end to a sorry saga - which I rounded off by passing my Basic Assessment in the summer of 2015!

Lifestyle of the Asian Hornet

By Geoff Hood



As expected, the Asian hornet has now reached our shores, with two 2016 sightings in the West Country at Tewkesbury, Mendips. October 2017 yielded a further sighting at Woolacombe, Devon, i.e. outside the search area based on the two previous 2016 sightings. This does not bode well: it could mean that there is a founder nest somewhere south of Exmoor. The Woolacombe nest was situated not in a high tree, as expected, but in a hedge a few feet from a very busy tourist footpath. No one had recognised this nest as a foreigner invader for six months, until it was traced by flight line from hives that were being hawked by the hornets. This illustrates how difficult it is to spot a hornet in the open, unless it is hawking a bee colony – let alone finding a nest in farmland in the west of England where the hornets might feed on a feral honey bee colony.

Out of Hibernation

The lifestyle of the Asian Hornet is similar to that of some of our wasps. There are, however, subtle differences. The Asian hornet queen hibernates, but wakes up slightly earlier than UK queen wasps. Initially, the Asian hornet queen requires sugar and, like our wasps, she begins to make a paper foundling nest of 35 to 40 cells. She then starts laying eggs, which means that as well as sugar she now needs to collect a protein rich diet of chewed insect larvae, insect muscles or carrion to feed her own larvae. At this time, the nest is very vulnerable and dependent upon the queen herself collecting sufficient protein. The queen warms her larvae by sleeping curled around them, and feeds on the sugary excretion from the larvae. Hibernated queens have a high failure rate, but a failing queen never starts again, but instead will try to usurp another foundling nest nearby.

Expansion Phase

Once the foundling nest is established, which takes 50 days, the new worker hornets will take over feeding the young larvae. Both workers queen are now rewarded by the sticky sweet substance that the larvae extrude when fed. Once the nest is sufficiently large the Hornets will scout for a food source sufficient to supply the nest during its expansion phase. If food is insufficient in the foundling nest area, the colony will up sticks and build a new nest closer to a food source. Usually this second nest is very high in a tree, and hidden from view. Its food source can be either a honeybee colony, a protein source such as a meat or fish market, or even a large wasp colony. The main protein source is said to be our beloved honeybee, however in a rural situation the Asian hornet will only get 20% of their protein from honeybees, with the other 80% coming from a range of wasps larvae, hawking of hoverflies, solitary bees and other protein such as carrion. This soon has a devastating effect on pollinators

in the countryside.

In an urban environment, the hornets turn to scavenging on takeaway fried chicken, other food waste or market food stalls, which all offer an ample source of protein. But due to the higher density of honeybee colonies in urban areas, the proportion of the hornet's diet from honey bees increases to 50%.

Reproduction Phase

Hornets are more likely to be seen hawking around hives in September /October, during the nest's reproduction stage. The nest now requires additional proteins to produce a large number of drones, whereas other food sources (such as other pollinators) have long since gone. The hornet queens that emerge will mate and then stay in the area of their mother's nest, feeding for a period of two or three weeks before dispersing over a radius of between 50 miles and 60 miles. This means that if Asian hornets are indeed already established in the West Country, then we can expect the Asian hornet to reach London within five years. Keep a watch, using the pictures below for reference.

The Honey Stall

By Wilf Wood



After a year of being absorbed in the hobby of beekeeping, a by-product of your fascination of keeping bees will be one, if not many, buckets of honey.

I think we all remember our first year of keeping bees and the first crop of honey we harvested, it was probably the best honey you have ever harvested and so pleased with ourselves we were, we had to pass this on to all our friends by giving them a jar of this precious substance, and didn't we have a lot of friends that year!

In year two, we have just realised how much this passion of ours costs in time and money. Hence we resolve that this year, we will sell the honey. Not all of it, we will still give family and a few friends the odd free jar, but this year the circle of friends is smaller.

Many beekeepers who have been keeping bees for some time have established a network of buyers, plus an established local presence, and therefore do well with doorstep sales. For a relatively new beekeeper, I count myself as one, where are the best opportunities to sell your honey?

One of the easiest to access, which also provides good sales potential, is a stall at a market or event. As an association, we attend several events with the purpose of promoting our association, talking to people interested in bees, and to sell the honey produced at our association apiaries. There is always an opportunity for other beekeepers to not only join in and support the events by

helping out on the stall, but also to use the opportunity to sell some of their own honey and other products as well.

Selecting an event is the first step. As an association, we get many invites to attend events throughout the year, and there are several that are fixtures in our calendar. Why do we get invites? There is a constant stream of information and programmes about bees, issues with bees and other pollinators, in the mainstream media. This makes having a 'something about bees' on the agenda attractive for many event organisers, as it will attract people. However, we do not attend every event we are invited to, for several reasons:

- What time of year is it? Will we have anything to sell?
- What type of event is it? Is it compatible with our association aims.
- How much will we be charged? Will we make a return on this investment.
- Is there likely to be enough people that will be interested in buying our honey and other products?
- Do we have enough volunteers to run the stall?

So you have agreed to attend, filled out the form, paid the fee, downloaded your public liability insurance form from the BBKA web site, so you are all ready for the day – not.

Here are my top tips for a successful day. A small amount of preparation can make a big difference to how successful you are in selling your premium product.

1. Make sure the organisers have included you in their publicity program, not just the layout of the stalls in the organisers chart but in any

promotional material that they have produced and distributed so that everyone attending knows that there will be 'local' honey on sale from the beekeeper.

2. What type of stall is it, will you be under cover or in the open. If you are in the open do you have any weather covering such as a gazebo, sun can be as bad a rain.
3. What are you going to have on your stall, just honey or do you have other items to sell like candles, beeswax blocks, soap or other cosmetics (make sure you can prove you have complied with all labelling and safety standards for all relevant products) make up price labels for each product.
4. Have some business cards printed up so that anyone buying knows how to contact you for more.
5. Are you going to offer bags? If so what type of bag and then get a sufficient stock.
6. A taster jar for each type of honey you are selling.
7. Taster sticks (I recently purchased 1,000 5" wooden stirrers from Amazon for less than £5 for this purpose).
8. A jar for the clean sticks and a bowl for the used ones.
9. White table cloth. There is a reason that all honey shows use a white cloth on the stands, as do many food displays: your honey will stand out much better against white. Don't fight it: many organisations have spent a lot of money discovering how best to show off their products.
10. Some boxes or other method (I use the lids off a Nuc) to be able to tier the jars of honey on the stall.
11. A box or tin for your takings and a float: if you are selling jars of honey at £7 then make sure you can give £3 change on a regular basis. It is best to just keep a small amount in the tin and regularly transfer folding money into a zipped pocket. If you run short of change, there will be

other stalls that are selling at £1 or less who will be happy to swap paper money for coins.

12. Think about how you can attract people to come and find you, rather than rely on passing traffic. As an example, for the association we use a WBC hive in a prominent location, sale signs that stand out from the other stalls, a large banner sign that can be hung over the stall or placed high up above people's heads. Print out some signs you can place around the venue.
13. On the day, arrive in plenty of time: your day start well before the doors open to the public. Make sure you have brought plenty of stock, more than you hope/intend/fantasise about selling, as a depleted stall half way through the event is not attractive. If this is your first time of using some of the equipment you have brought along, make sure you know how to use it or set it up: a practice the day before is always good. If at all possible, have more than just yourself on the stall, so you are able to take a break and deal with the times when there are several people keen to ask questions and buy at the same time.

Tips for the day.

1. Arrive early to set up and give you time to meet and talk to other stall holders, they will be a mine of information for the day, a useful source of change when you run out, and can look after you stall whilst you nip to the loo or get a cup of tea.
2. Bring a marker pen, paper, Sellotape, string, scissors, knife, so you can make on-the-fly signs or price information, hang up banners, fix the wonky trestle table leg.

3. Have at least two people on the stall. Just sitting behind a table with your goods on is not good. The table acts as a barrier between you and the customer, you need to be in front of the table with the customer. But you do need someone behind the table keeping an eye on the stock and probably your cash box.
4. Don't just sit and read behind the stall – just don't do it. Have a chair there so you can take a break but not when there are customers.
5. Talk to anyone and everyone, if they take a sideways glance at your stall just say hello and offer a taster, then when they have the taste of the honey in their mouth you can talk to them about how local the honey is, the location of each apiary the honey is produced from, the flowers the nectar is gathered from, making it personal is even better “this honey is from my back garden”.
6. Keep your stall topped up, with labels facing the same way and prices clearly shown. Empty the used taster sticks into a bin, and keep the stall neat and tidy.
7. Regularly go to the front of the stall to check the presentation and layout, replenish or re-arrange items if they are running low.

If you club together with some other bee keepers not only will you be sharing the costs and the work involved but you will most likely sell more honey, people are attracted if there is more than one option and after tasting the various types you have on the stall, may well end up buying not just one jar but several. The other benefit of having other beekeepers supporting you is that it becomes a bit more of a social event so you can talk about your favourite subject 'Bees', the disasters you had this year and the success you are going to have next year.

Honey Show



Well done to all the winners! Thanks to Linda and everyone who helped.

Barnet Beekeepers On Social Media

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



On The Lookout For New Sites

With the uncertainty of the future of Whalebones site we are on the lookout for new sites for our members.

Even if we can continue using Whalebones as a training in apiary in the future it will not be suitable for hosting bees when any development starts. We are always looking for more suitable sites for Association apiaries. If you do know of sites that are available and could be suitable please get in contact with one of the Association committee members.



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.

Committee Members

Chair: Pat Morgan

Deputy Chair/Bee Disease Officer: Geoff Hood

Second Deputy Chair: Wilf Wood

Treasurer: Lester Doman

Committee Secretary: Ann Songhurst

Membership Officer: Mary Block

Social Secretary: Linda Perry

Publicity Officer/Newsletter: [Adam Armstrong](#)

Education Coordinator: Lorraine Patel

Queen Rearing Programme: Ripal Parekh

Association Apiary Managers

Arkley Apiary Manager: Pat Morgan

Cat Hill Apiary Manager: Geoff Beresford Cook

Mill Hill Apiary Manager: Lester Doman

Shenley Apiary Manager: Steve Leveridge

Whalebones Apiary Manager: Wilf Wood

Willows Apiary Manager: Geoff Hood