

CBKA Newsletter October 2007

Volume 22 / 2
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It's just over a week since our last meeting, but I am having to make an early start on these notes as we will be away for about ten days next month on our Scottish tour. With snow forecast for parts of the Highlands we could be in for an interesting journey. The prospect of meeting so many 'new' beekeepers in so many different places is exciting, but we shall see whether they have many problems that are substantially different to ours, at this stage I think not.

The weather now (28th September) seems to be going downhill fast towards Autumn. The wind is very cold today, yet I feel sure this time of the year was once quite a warm time. I have managed to get my bees back from the moors and three of the four

hives are very heavy, though I have not yet had chance to open them. I like to wait for warmer days before opening any hive, for there's sure to be brood in them and there's no point whatever in possibly chilling it. Any brood in there will be the bees of the future and colonies require a considerable quantity of 'new' bees to survive the winter.

By early October, normal feeding should be finished. Bees will be seen collecting and returning to the hive with large pollen loads. Colonies that have been properly fed should have little room for storing all of this, but most of it is intended for immediate consumption by the worker bees. It is partly this consumption of pollen that helps these young workers to become 'winter bees'. It will encourage the development of 'fat bodies' and brood food glands. In addition the life of those bees is enormously lengthened, for it is those bees, produced from eggs laid in September that will still be alive to forage in the early spring, maybe even on autumn sown rape in April. This is why it is vital to encourage brood rearing in colonies by feeding in Autumn. Apart from ensuring that colonies have enough food there are a number of other ways in which the beekeeper can help bees to survive.

The apiary site. Very few apiary sites are perfect but all of them can be improved in ways to help the bees. One of the most important factors is to create a wind shelter. The best form of this is that provided by thick hedges or shrubs. A thick hedge will slow wind speed for forty times the height of the hedge along the ground. However, anything is better than nothing. It is not a good plan to allow cold winter winds to blow directly onto hives. Hives should be sited to take advantage of winter sunshine. Winter bees have an increased capacity to store faecal material in their rectums. Spells of winter sun which warm hives allow workers to take 'cleansing flights'. Faeces are voided in flight (generally on to your car or the household washing) allowing bees to face further confinement in their hives by cold winter weather.

Ventilation is also an important requirement in the winter time. Many of us now use

open mesh floors throughout the year in the fight against Varroa. Even so there is no harm done by placing a matchstick under the four corners of the crown board to give a free flow of air through the colony. This helps to prevent the build up of excess moisture on the frames, crown board and hive sides which can/may lead to the build up of mould.

Bees clearly benefit from being in a double walled hive during the winter time, for the



extra insulation created by the outer cover helps to keep the bees warm. But I believe the disadvantages of the WBC type of hive far outweigh its advantages. Bees in single walled hives can be helped considerably by the use of deep roofs.

A roof which covers the hive completely in the winter traps air inside it and in addition will never blow off in a winter gale.

Mice are also troublesome at times and people are urged to place mouse guards over the entrance to prevent them gaining access. Now it is quite normal and natural for many bees to die during the winter period and there is the danger of a build up of bees behind a mouse guard, so blocking off the entrance. At this time of the year, with no drones in the hive, I find it easier to place a queen excluder beneath the brood box. No mouse can get through it and it is far less likely to become blocked by dead bees. The wire 'Waldron' type of queen excluder is best for it does little or no damage to the worker bees wings. It must be removed in the spring when the queen begins to lay and the bees begin to fly freely again.

I am, once again, left to ponder as to why so few people entered the Stokesley Show this year. We almost always get a reasonable turn-out for the Cleveland Show, though sadly, due to flooding, (or was it foot & mouth disease), the show had to be cancelled this year. Why didn't the folks who may have shown at Cleveland turn up at Stokesley? Will

someone please tell me why. What do we have to do to get people involved? Those who did get involved



did a wonderful job, with several excellent exhibits. There is always a prize for the 'Best in the Show' and this year it was won by Unal Metti for one of the best examples of a 'cake of beeswax'

that I have ever seen, certainly good enough for the National Show. I feel sure that he could teach members of the Association the secret one of these days.

The Show results were as follows:-

Class 1, Cake of beeswax,

- 1, Unal Metti and Best in Show
- 2, Unal Metti
- 3, Tom Rettig

Class 2, Frame of honey,

- 1, Rob Andrews
- 2, Ian Brown

Class 3, Light Honey,

- 1, Rob Andrews
- 2, Unal Metti
- 3, Jackie Harnett

Class 4 Heather Honey, - no entries

Class 5, Granulated Honey,

- 1, Sal Mancina
- 2, Unal Metti
- 3, Tom Rettig

Class 6, Dark or Medium Honey,

- 1, Rob Andrews
- 2, Unal Metti
- 3, Ian Brown

Class 7 Sections, - no entries

Class 8 Cut Comb,

- 1, Unal Metti
- 2, Unal Metti
- 3, Rob Andrews

We must thank everyone who entered the show and congratulate the winners. Thanks must also go to all the folks who spent a very arduous day talking to the public on the display stand; it's always a very tiring day explaining the ins and outs of our pastime along with the details of the observation hive. The interest shown by members of the public is never ending, and the reaction of children is always a pleasure to behold.

There was a good turnout for our own honey show in September and many folks showed a distinct interest in showing their honey in the future. I have received the following comments from Sal:-

"Last months' internal Honey show was judged by Bryan Hateley aided by Dorothy Matthews. Bryan explained how to jar each type of honey that had been brought in by members, with hints and tips such as how to avoid air bubbles and to select good jars with few flaws in the glass. The information on producing cut comb was very useful to those who want to show and sell their honey in this manner. He also told us how to be careful with the labels, as in competitions they are required to sit squarely and to a reasonably precise position on the jar. The inside of lids are expected to be clean and dry when inspected, so an excellent tip is to put cling film across the mouth of the jar before putting the lid on for taking to the show, and removing the cling film as the jars are put on the display stands. An obvious mistake to make is to enter your honey into the wrong class, so be sure that you know if your honey is best described as light, medium, dark, or granulated and then you won't run the risk of disqualification. An important point is that the honey should be clean without specks of wax (or worse).

A very informative session as Bryan gave an insight into what a honey judge is looking for, and it was interesting to see so many different honeys we in CBKA produce, from a very clear runny borage honey, to a white soft creamed oil seed rape honey."

I thank Dorothy for her help and all those who brought honey to the show. I can only hope that you have all seen just how easy it is to prepare honey for show, for as I said "if it's good enough to sell, it's good enough to show."

Well we are back from Scotland and what an enjoyable time it's been, though the travelling was a bit tiresome; some 1,150 miles in ten days, and a different bed each night; and yes it did snow. The weather, on the whole, was kind enabling us to see the Scottish scenery to the full, and to stop at the occasional bird sanctuary to see the thousands upon thousands of migrating geese, so spectacular. Beekeepers clearly had much the same 'high's' and 'low's' where-ever we went, with varroa and colony collapse high on their list. They do not have 'visiting' bees officers as we do but must call them out if they feel the need to. I was told 'we are fortunate'. Everyone was always most welcoming and thoughtful and it was a joy to meet so many new people in so many different places. We will never forget it.

Kindest regards to you all,

bryan@hateley.me.uk

Education is about having your ideas changed, not about having current ignorance and half truths polished up.

Secretary; Ian Brown, 48, Thames Avenue, Guisborough, TS14 8AF. Tel: 01287 632851

Meetings held, from September to April, in Lingfield Farm, Countryside Centre, Middlesbrough, on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7.15pm
Newcomer's are welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES
Allan, Tony & Richard Jefferson;
Tel. 01947 840723 or Tel/Fax 01947 893811
Email:- tony@stoneleabees.wanadoo.co.uk
Stonelea Apiaries, 1, Dalehouse Bank, Staithes,
Cleveland. TS13 5AN.
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John R. Allen
LONGNEWTON GRANGE BEEKEEPERS SUPPLIES
THE GRANGE, Phone: 01642 585896
BACK LANE, Fax: 01642 585896
LONGNEWTON, Home: 01642582460
STOCKTON-ON-TEES. TS21 1BN Mobile: 07814 576785
EMAIL: beekeepingsupplies@longnewton.fsworld.co.uk