



CBKA Newsletter

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I was recently invited to look at some beekeeping gear that had been unused for a long time. The beekeeper had long passed into the 'other world' and the present owner wanted rid of it all before moving house.

There were several very dusty National hives complete with frames, stored at the back of a barn - I was told they had been there for "maybe 20 years". I had to say that none of it was of any use and only fit for burning.

The frames still had wax (of a kind) in them and a host of wax moths, but many mice had found them a desirable 'des-res', so much so that they were reduced almost to sawdust.

The smell was atrocious, the mess appalling. The hives were riddled with woodworm and nothing could be saved.

I recommended that they not be moved too far, for that would simply spread the woodworm far and wide, and that they be burned just outside the barn.

Now I realise that most beekeepers don't let their equipment get into such a state, but it is amazing how un-used boxes and frames soon deteriorate if left 'un-attended' for even a few weeks. Un-attended can clearly mean un-used over a winter period and this is the time when wax moth, above all, gets a hold. Any stored frames containing used wax is a target for wax moth at any time of the year. They will find their way into the slightest cracks and once inside wreak havoc very quickly. The lesser wax moth, (*Achroia grisella*), seems to be able to squeeze through the smallest of gaps. The joins or cracks between a column of stored boxes is where the lesser wax moths will find their way in, but they can be deterred by placing several sheets of newspaper between each box. Even if moths manage to get into one box the interleaves of newspaper will prevent them moving through the vertical column and lessen the damage. Stored brood comb is particularly at risk and a brood box can be reduced to a mass of silken threads in less than a month.

The lesser wax moth has a wing span of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, is a silvery colour and has no patterned markings. They run about very quickly so making them difficult to catch. The larvae are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and a pale creamy colour. The eggs are invisible to the naked eye. The larvae collect in large numbers producing a web of silk which gets larger as the comb is quickly devoured, thus rendering it useless.

I have never set eyes on the greater wax moth, (*Galleria mellonella*) in this area, though I am told it has been seen by some people. It is a serious pest in the warmer south of the country, so with the prospect of global warming maybe we will see it some time soon. Stored wax is a precious commodity and there is nothing more disappointing than to go to your store of comb in the spring only to find it is ruined with just the wood and the wire left. Try to do all you can to protect it.

With Christmas almost upon us, now is the time to drop the odd hint here and there making it clear that you have enough pairs of socks to last a lifetime and that (say) a new hive tool would be much more appreciated. (I saw a screwdriver being used in the summer just gone, and there's no surer way of ruining your hives than the use of one of those). A new bee-proof overall, a better veil, proper beekeeping gloves, another nucleus hive or perhaps a good beekeeping book all make useful presents. Beekeeping should be a pleasure and it is made so if the right equipment is available. So don't wait another 365 days to drop the right hint, and it makes life so much easier for the folks who say "I don't know what to buy him".

All your bees should be tucked up safely by now and quite prepared to face the winter. There's nothing you can do for them, so don't be tempted to go near for even walking on hard frozen ground near the hives can disturb them. Concentrate on what you can do to make your beekeeping and bees happier

next year. Look at your records to see what you might do differently next time round. Give particular attention to how frequently you open your hives. Many new beekeepers tend to open their hives far too often so disturbing the colony environment for some considerable time. Minimal interference retains the natural scent and heat of the colony. Think in terms of how you would like frequent disturbance in your own home life - not much I guess. Very, very rarely is it necessary to open a hive more than once a week and the ideal is once every 14 days. During the coming cold nights read the books, find out how it's done, practice it in your minds eye and above all be prepared to ask questions. The less disturbance there is the better your bees will work, with less risk of disease and with more honey for you at the end, and what's better than that.

I have received the following Apiary report for 2008 from Rob:-

"Of the two hives we started with last year only one survived the winter and came through strongly in the spring.

We were given an old commercial hive with some bees inside on very old black combs but bees good tempered.

As we had three students for the basic exam two additional second hand hives were purchased from John Allen and the bees from the old commercial hive were transferred to one of the new hives and two nucleus from our original hives were made up to make four hives. Unfortunately during our spring meeting our original queen was lost and another nucleus had to be made up from the existing stocks.

Similar to other beekeepers there was no honey to extract this year and any stores has been left on and supplemented with sugar syrup.

All four hives have been treated with Apiguard and when checked on 16th October 2008 all four hives had flying bees and taking in pollen.

Three hives are being wintered on brood box only and one with brood+super. Inch

thick Polystyrene squares have been fitted under roofs for insulation".

I guess we just have to hope for better luck next year.

Many years ago I attended a meeting where a lecturer described the use of Fungi as a treatment for Varroa. At the time the research was in its infancy though even then it looked promising. It is, of course, a biological means of mite control which means an escape from some of the dreadful, but necessary, chemicals that have been used recently. I see that DEFRA are now funding research at Warwick University into the possibilities of fungi as a method of control of varroa. Some 50 or so fungi have been studied though researchers are now "focusing on four that best match the conditions found in a beehive". The need is to find a fungi that is an effective killer of varroa, has low impact on the bees, and works in the warm dry conditions typically found in a beehive. The method of application of the treatment is now being considered and various devious means are under consideration. I feel sure we will be hearing more on this subject in the not too distant future.

Spring will be upon us sooner than we think and I know that many folks will then be conscious of not checking their hives to see if they need repairs etc. Pay particular attention to roofs to ensure they are truly waterproof, and your boxes robber proof.

Do note that the December meeting will take the form of a dinner. It is on December 15th, the same night as mentioned in the programme, so there will be no meeting at Lingfield Farm. Details of the dinner and booking arrangements can be obtained from Sal, telephone 01642 701621.

There's just room left to hope that Father Christmas brings you all you could wish for, and that you also have a very Happy New Year, with a bumper honey crop. Kindest regards to you all,



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An enemy takes up more space in our head than a friend in our heart

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.

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Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment.
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Bee Facts/Did you know?

YOU LOOK FOR ACARINE by removing the heads and collar of several bees & examining the tracheae for mite damage, using a magnifying glass.