



May I start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year and every success with your quest for honey, with your bees and your beekeeping in 2008, may your only problem be too much honey.

There is a general feeling that 2007 was not a very successful year, though success is a relative matter, and some folks did very well. I make the point over and over again that we get out of any project a direct measure of what we put in, i.e., little input means little output. For most folks beekeeping is a hobby and a very basic one at that. So long as they get a return of sorts they are generally satisfied. The more serious beekeeper is looking for a

greater return for his effort and though still a hobby he puts in a greater effort which, in the end, does pay off. Then there's the really serious professional kind who will be into beekeeping for a living, where mistakes and lack of effort cost time and money.

My travels, over many years, have brought me into contact with many beekeepers and I have concluded most fall between the basic hobby types and the more serious kind of beekeeper. There's those who are content with a few jars of honey each year, being all that they need to provide friends and family with a jar or two occasionally. They generally have one or two colonies, frequently in old worn out hives, have a superficial interest in their bees and do little to ensure their long term improvement or survival. They keep little or no records, wouldn't recognize disease if it stared them in the face, never read a book, won't take any exam and find extracting a chore.

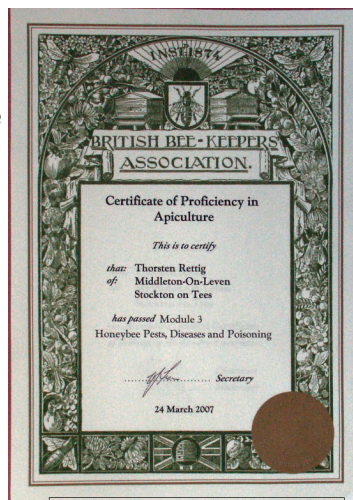
Greater effort generally means well maintained hives, better apiary hygiene, regular inspections, good record keeping, a determination to improve bee characteristics, an ability to recognize problems, a desire to increase knowledge and many more, all leading to an increased yield.

The greatest yields are obtained from the healthiest colonies, yet honey (for us) is not the principal reason for the honeybees existence. Whilst altruism may not be on many beekeepers minds when they start up, the need for bees has never been greater. Due to the ravages of varroa there's hardly any feral colonies around today and there's only about a quarter of the beekeepers that there was 50 years ago. However, the requirement of 'bees for pollination' is as great as ever. So it follows that those who manage their colonies efficiently not only succeed in more effective pollination of a wide variety of crops but also succeed in obtaining the highest yields. Think about it, work on it and 2008 could be 'your finest year'.

One way of improving and appreciating the finer aspects of beekeeping is to follow a course of study. The BBKA education and examination process is recognized worldwide for its qual-

ity and thoroughness. It has been in existence for very many years and is in fact older than the City & Guilds Institute. The Basic Assessment is regarded as the BBKA Driving License and as we all know no-one may drive a car without a basic license. Once the basic driving license is obtained drivers can go on to take higher qualifications. So it is with the BBKA examination system.

I am convinced that several of our members could (and should) be preparing to take the Basic Assessment this year. It takes about an hour, does not involve any written work and is a one to one test supervised by a (usually very friendly) examiner.



Decorate your walls with them.

Our very own Tom Rettig has gone on to sit several of the BBKA Modules and during 2007 obtained "The General Certificate of Beekeeping Husbandry" and prior to that Module 3, "Honeybee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning". Tom is to be congratulated for he has done very well indeed. I feel sure

though that there is more to come; Tom do keep up the good work.

Last January I referred you to the two BBKA leaflets on trees and shrubs for bees. A completely revised copy of both has been included in the December 2007 BBKA News. Anyone contemplating permanent plants for bees would do well to be guided by both leaflets. What is more, now is the time to be looking for and planting anything new and of course your bees will love you for it.

Your bees will also love you at this time of the year if you think about feeding them a top-up of candy. When the weather is warm enough, heft your hives and if there's any doubt about the food stores then feed them. You all have details on making candy but if you do not wish to make your own I feel sure our local suppliers will help.

With the rape coming into bloom so early these days it helps to build up your colonies early too. As a 'for instance', just two days ago (9th January) I was talking to a beekeeping colleague in Dorset; the snowdrops and daffodils are open down there - something is happening to the climate. (*Snowdrops are open here in Grindon too, spring is on the way, 17th Jan.*) If you do make candy to feed your bees there is always some left in the saucepan when you have poured the rest into moulds. Scrape out the remainder and mix it with a little peppermint essence, it makes lovely peppermint creams. Roll them in molten chocolate and they are even better.

I discovered this little gem while cleaning out some old files recently and it's true:-

A true story of the inter-relationship of ecological systems.

This parable is a good example of how problems arise in the world, The story is told by ecologist C.S. Holling about the Dyak aborigines of Borneo, the worlds third largest island, located in the South China Sea. Some years ago the Dyaks were plagued with malaria and the World Health Organization (WHO) decided to do something about the problem. With the conventional wisdom of the day, it decided to spray the offending mosquitos with copious amounts of DDT as the most effective way of killing the little beasties. The mosquito population declined almost immediately and the incidence of malaria went down.

Unfortunately, the roofs of people's houses started collapsing. The DDT not only killed the mosquito but also the parasitic wasp that ate thatch eating caterpillars. Without the wasps, the caterpillars proliferated and ate the roofs.

Then the WHO found another problem. The DDT poisoned insects were eaten by little lizards which were eaten in turn by local cats. As the DDT built up the cats all died, the rat population flourished and there was an outbreak of the plague.

The WHO had to parachute live cats into Borneo to eat the rats and control the outbreak of the plague which it had caused.

There's no doubt, the world is a delicate place.

The Christmas Party was, once again, a success with 24 people attending. The Falcon



Richie, Len and Guest

at Hilton was a good venue with the table set out in true Christmas tradition. The service was good and on time, only delayed slightly by some of our party getting lost on the way there. We

must thank Sal and Trish for arranging it all. It's good to get together socially at least once a year without finding too many bees or jars of honey under your feet.

Ian Brown, our secretary, has sent me the following note:-

"The Beekeepers Quarterly Magazine's subscription is due shortly. For those members of CBKA who do not know this publication I can highly recommend it. It is a glossy full colour magazine with approximately 56 A4 pages. The contents usually cover all aspects of beekeeping from around the world. Besides the editorial and a very good letter page, it has at least a dozen articles on beekeeping, for example some titles are queen rearing; pests and diseases; apitherapy; honey massage; Innovations and lots more.

The subscription for this magazine if purchased privately is £25-00, if ordered in bulk through CBKA it is only £15-00 posted direct to your door. Cheques should be made out to me, Ian Brown, and I will send the total amount to Northern Bee Books. In passing I would just like to let you know that Durham BKA have asked if they can join in."

Durham have asked "if they can join in" and that is one of the things we can all do later in the year when we can all 'join in' with other beekeepers from all over the country by attending one of the many Beekeeping Conventions arranged for your benefit. The first in this region will be the North of England Convention which is to be held, as usual, in Grey College, Durham during the weekend of the 29th/30th of March. Our speakers will be Philip McCabe from Ireland, Dr. Geraldine Wright from Newcastle University and Mrs. Liz O'Neil from Richmond beekeepers. The weekend is always friendly and the subjects aimed at everyone from the beginner to the highfalutin. Come and join us, you will not regret it and Grey College is a wonderful setting for it. I stress again that a lot of effort by many people goes into the preparation of these events and they can only succeed if you support them. If you book before the end of January it will be at a discounted price. Please see me for details and an entry form.

Kindest regards to you all,

bryan@hateley.me.uk

The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything.  
*Theodore Roosevelt*

**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.  
Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment.  
Honey bought and sold.

**John R. Allen**  
**LONGNEWTON GRANGE BEEKEEPERS SUPPLIES**  
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BACK LANE, Fax: 01642 585896  
LONGNEWTON, Home: 01642582460  
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