



CBKA Newsletter

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Autumn is always regarded as the start of the beekeeping year. It's then that we have to make sure our bees are in the right condition to see them through winter and successfully into the following spring.

Though not more than an hour ago I had one of our beekeepers on the telephone saying "that he had lost all his bees while on the heather". I know that he is not the only one, for I was at a meeting in Gateshead last night only to be told that beekeepers in Northumberland have lost several stocks. The largest bee farmer in the north told me two days ago that he expects to get no more than 10lbs of honey from any of his hives that are on the heather. So what's the problem? Well I wish I knew, though the weather during the year, including the heather season, has been simply appalling. It is vitally important to realise that bees do not collect honey for you and me - Oh no, they collect it to feed their brood and to feed themselves. Only if there's a healthy surplus may we be able to take some for ourselves. With the weather conditions preventing successful foraging for almost all the year, the bees have not been able to breed and increase the stock of new young bees sufficiently to build up a viable colony. Colonies with insufficient new young bees cannot build up a surplus, and cannot gather sufficient nectar, particularly on the short cold days on the heather moors and so are vulnerable to starvation, robbing by other bees or wasps, or diseases. Just which of these factors have caused the losses is difficult to predict. But it is from this base that we have to make a start for the year to come.

Anyone who has managed to get a small surplus on the heather should think twice about removing any of it. Leave it for the bees to help them through the winter. Few of us depend upon our bees for our livelihood so to acknowledge that, for this year at least, leaving the bees with all they have gathered can only help them to survive the coming winter. We

are all told to feed sugar about now and it's a good idea but it is no substitute for properly capped and stored honey. Yes, feed sugar, a one kilo bag of granulated sugar to 0.7ml of water, until they can take no more - and it will cost a lot of money, but it will help your bees survive the winter. And remember, feeding **must** be complete by the end of September. Remember too to treat your bees for varroa as you feed them; treat too late and the treatment is ineffective. Varroa infested bees stand little chance of making it through to next year. With a little thought and a considerable amount of TLC your bees will make it through the winter but they need your help more this year than for several years past.

Tips for winter survival;

- a, Unite weak colonies. It's better to get through to spring with one colony than two dead ones. The best insulation for bees is more bees
- b, Reduce the entrances, there's still wasps or robber bees about. Fit mouse guards.
- c, Ensure your hives are water proof, damp kills more bees than the cold.
- d, Ventilation is important to help prevent build up of damp. I have used mesh floors for many years along with match sticks under the four corners of the crown board to help give a flow of fresh air through the colony.
- e, Don't stand your hives under dripping trees or in frost pockets.
- f, Do not clean snow off the roof, it helps to keep them warm.
- g, Never open a hive during the cold winter weather, just leave them alone, you can do nothing for them at this time.

Do all I have said and you stand every chance of coming through the winter with a viable colony and, this time next year, a honey surplus.

One bright event of the year was the Cleveland Show. As usual CBKA played a significant roll with members of the

public vying with each other to ask questions, and grateful for the information they were given. As usual many people did not know what a honeybee looks like and lots of folks had never even tasted honey. So the honey



tasting was a particular success and not just with young folks, several older people had never tried it too. The sight of real bees that you can almost

touch without being stung is a never ending wonder, so that the observation hive had to be manned continuously - a very



tiring 'pastime'. But it's the displays of honey, wax mead etc that really gets folks talking. The variations in the colour of honey never fail

to amaze folks. Questions like "which is the best honey", crop up each year, as does "these bees look like wasps to me, so what are the big furry ones then". It's a day of enlightenment, for not just for members of the public, for us beekeepers too. The public learn something of what bees are about and we beekeepers realise there's a lot of work to be done out there on the education front.

Special thanks must go to all the CBKA members who spent their time at the show helping on that very hot day, and to those who submitted entries for without them there would be no show.

The show results are as follows:

Observation Hive: 1st Barrie Bloom, 2nd Unal Metti
Light Honey: 1st Unal Metti, 2nd Barrie Bloom, 3rd Barrie Bloom

Medium or Dark: 1st & 2nd Barrie Bloom, 3rd Unal Metti
Heather: 1st & 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Granulated or Soft Set: 1st & 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Chunk: 1st & 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Frame: 1st Rob Andrews, 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Cut Comb: 1st Rob Andrews, 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Cake of Wax: 1st Barrie Bloom, 2nd R. Patterson (from Scarborough), 3rd Unal Metti
Bottle of Mead, Sweet: 1st & 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Bottle of Mead, Dry: 1st & 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Plain Honey Cake: 1st Tricia Mancina, 2nd & 3rd Barrie Bloom
Display: 1st Barrie Bloom, 2nd Judy Wilkinson
Novice, 1lb Non Granulated: R. Patterson (Scarborough)

Novice, 1lb Granulated or Soft Set: R. Patterson (Scarborough)
With so many winning entries it's not at all surprising that Barrie Bloom went home with most of the Presentation Cups. Congratulations Barrie, we must acknowledge that without all your entries it would have been a much smaller show.

And in addition we managed to get a total of nine enquiries for membership of CBKA and 90 signatures for the BBKA Research Appeal.

In direct contrast the turn-out at Gateshead Flower Show was abysmal, with just two entries in total and it turned out they were both from the same beekeeper. That from the whole of the North East of England, I am sure we can do better. As I have said many times "the show is the beekeepers shop window - a great opportunity to increase our membership".

We must hope that we can do better at the Stokesley Show next week-end; please do all you can to support it.

Finally, this years Rachel Lowther Lecture will be held once again at Wall Village Hall, in Northumberland on Sunday morning the 5th of October. Anyone wishing to go should contact Robert Furnace of Hexham beekeepers, 01661 842903. I don't have the exact cost this time but it is usually about £8-00 and includes a very good lunch.

Kindest regards to you all,

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What we anticipate seldom occurs.
What we least expect generally happens.

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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Bee Facts - Did you know?

ACARINE DISEASE

Is caused by a mite that infests the large tracheae or breathing tubes of honey bees.