



CBKA Newsletter

October 2011

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Next Meeting

November 19th, Southlands Centre
Bee management Tom Retting

Honey Without Stickiness

Well almost. I'm also only talking about spinable honey so rape and heather are still a problem.

I store my super frames in plastic storage boxes and it is these that I use to collect them from the hive. Whether you use a clearer board or just shake your bees out I find the task much simpler if I place the frames immediately in the plastic box and replace the lid. This means you do not have to chase the bees off a second time and you can place the plastic box straight into your car without worrying that honey will drip all over it. Likewise when I have spun the frames the stickies go straight back into a plastic box for return to the hive for the bees to clean.

When working I cover the surface with a black bin bag opened up - don't use newspaper it's more trouble than it's worth (any honey spilt soaks in, it cannot be wiped down, it tears ...). Uncapping is done with a heat gun, this takes a little practice but since the wax just shrinks back there are no messy capings to deal with, no loss of honey and warm honey to spin. You also end up with better drawn comb (see you tube <http://youtu.be/RL7vbrJ6Pvw>).

After spinning the frames I run the honey straight out of the spinner through a double sieve into a honey bucket with a honey valve. The spinner and any implements I have used go outside to get a thorough jet wash.

For bottling I think a bucket with a valve is essential - I have found no way of pouring honey without getting very messy. I also have a small cheap digital scale which has a tare setting (to offset the weight of the jar) which fits into a plastic bag. With one jar to be filled and one waiting it should be possible to fill to the nearest gram without a single drip. If there are drips wipe with a damp cloth immediately, even small quantities of honey have an almost miraculous way of spreading. The honey bucket and implements go outside for a jet wash.

Lids and labels on - job done.



Stokesley Show

As with the Cleveland Show there were not as many entries as I would like to have seen, and the number of visitors was also fewer than last year.

Our stand put on a good show and attracted a lot of interest, especially, as usual, the observation hive, where there is always a great urgency to 'Spot the Queen'.

The weather was quite good apart from two very heavy showers, the second one about noon towards the end of judging time, when once again everyone had to dash for cover. How very convenient it was then that at the time of that deluge three of our stewards found themselves right outside the Beer tent and so had no alternative but to rush inside! and there they had to stay until the rain subsided. (Names have been withheld due to possible embarrassment!)

It was quite hard work on the day, but I think that we made a good impression on the General Public regarding Beekeeping and its importance in the great scheme of things.

Ada Newman

Peter Barrats Pollination Weekend

Billy Ellerington demonstrates our polystyrene hive to garden centre staff



Bee Bay

A place for you to buy and sell beekeeping and all related equipment

Ian Johnson has 6 National hives, solid floors, each with 2 supers and roofs all in cedar.

Contact Ian on

01642723941

Experimenting with a top bar hive
by Bill Arnold

I have been interested in bee-keeping for many years and have done a course and helped bee-keepers in the past but always stopped short of doing it myself. I was fascinated by the bees but I didn't want to get into honey extraction, swarm control, miticides and equipment purchase, storage and maintenance. I wanted to keep bees for the pleasure of learning about their behaviour, to help conserve them and to enjoy the occasional jar of honey or beeswax candle.

Then in February this year I heard about bee-keeping with a Kenya type horizontal top bar hive. The hive resembles a metre long trough on legs about 60cm above the ground. It is about 45cm wide at the top, 30cm deep and 15cm wide at the bottom which is covered with mesh but has no floor. Wooden bars lay across the top without gaps to form the roof. A wood frame quilt containing wood shavings and a roof cover keep the weather out. Bees enter by up to three holes in the middle of one side. (Free plans are available on the internet – see below.)

Like bee-keeping with a Warré hive, the idea is to allow the bees to do their own thing as much as possible like building comb to their own shape and cell size, maintaining the hive atmosphere conditions and raising brood (including drones) wherever they like. Artificial swarming can be carried out to permit the colony to reproduce but in a controlled way – all done in the one hive if required! The hope is that bees will be better able to deal with the stresses of diseases and pollution in the environment. In the spring, when the bees are safely through the winter, surplus honey stores can be taken by removing whole combs. Obviously honey production for the bee-keeper is reduced and I can't see this approach working for commercial bee-keepers.

I made a hive out of scrap wood which was not too difficult and required only hand tools and a circular saw to cut the bars (not necessary if you buy the wood the right size). I also made a bait hive and put them both out in the hope of catching a swarm. I bought a bee suit, gloves, hive tool and a powder blower for dusting the bees with powdered sugar. A bread knife from the kitchen and a water spray bottle, previously used for cleaner, completed my equipment. I joined CBKA and Derek Passmore kindly agreed to be my mentor. I went on a course given by David Heaf about Warré bee-keeping and researched online. I was ready to begin!

I waited but no bees came to my hives. In early May Derek and I tried to catch a prime swarm in a neighbour's hedge but we failed and it flew away. Then Derek heard of a swarm a CBKA member had caught. It turned out to be an acquaintance of mine who very kindly gave me what turned out to be a secondary cast. I took the bees home and put them into my empty hive restricting them to a space of four bars width to help them keep warm. The next evening I observed them through the mesh floor with a torch and saw them forming a cluster about the size of a grapefruit. I fed them syrup over the next two weeks but little was taken so I removed it to avoid robbing. They built four small straight combs on the bars just as they were supposed to and were busy bringing in nectar and pollen so I was confident the queen was laying. Everything seemed fine over the next few weeks and I did not open the hive but looked in from below and spent time at the hive entrance.

In late June, six weeks after I collected them, I opened the hive and found the bees starving so I resumed feeding immediately. They quickly recovered and I kept on feeding them 1:1 syrup to help them build up. In July I was visited by two bee inspectors who were interested to see this type of hive and we were able to lift out the nine bars on which the bees had by then built beautiful combs. They gave me lots of advice and suggested treating for Varroa with "Api life var" as they had spotted some chalk brood. I did this and I was pleased to find that the mite count was very low. The colony has now built up to a good population occupying about 15 bars and is doing well. Towards the end of September I fed loads of 2:1 syrup to give them plenty of winter stores and I am hopeful the colony will go into winter in good condition.

I have learned a lot since May, making bits and pieces as the need arose and working out new ways to do things. I am very grateful to Derek and Billy Ellerington for all the help they have given me and I look forward to continuing the experiment if the bees survive the winter!

(for more information go to www.biobees.com)

Secretary: Derek Herring, 8 Wardale Avenue, Acklam

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Meetings are held in the Southlands Leisure Centre, Ormesby Road, Middlesbrough,

TS3 0HG on the third Monday of the month from September to April at 7:15pm. Visitors and new members welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES

Allan, Tony & Richard Jefferson

Stonlea Apiaries, 1 Dalehouse Bank, Staithes, Cleveland, TS13 5AN

Tel 07749 73 1945 or Tel/Fax 01947 893811

tony@stoneleabees.wanadoo.co.uk

Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment

Honey bought and sold

LONGNEWTON GRANGE BEEKEEPERS SUPPLIES

John R. Allen

The Grange, Back Lane, Longnewton, Stockton-on-Tees TS21 1BN

Tel 01642 585896 or Tel Home 01642 898073

beekeepingsupplies@longnewton.fsworld.co.uk

Suppliers of beekeeping equipment.