



CBKA Newsletter December 2013

Year 28/ 4. Download our Newsletters from www.teesbees.co.uk

Chairman's Note

As the year comes to an end we look back on the past beekeeping season and start to look forward to next year and think how we can possibly make changes to improve our beekeeping skills and improve honey yields. 2013 started off slowly and colonies were quite slow to build up but as the year progressed and the weather improved so did our bees and although honey yields were not spectacular most colonies seem to be going into Winter with good numbers of bees and plenty of stores. It now remains for us to keep an eye on them to make sure they remain dry, mouse proof, and with extra food in the form of a block of fondant over the cluster if required. My motto is usually if in doubt about the amount of stores they may have, put some food on. Much better to be on the bees than in the shed. A list of our 2014 committee officers are listed below. Unfortunately due to work commitments our treasurer Derek Passmore will be unable to continue as treasurer after January next year and if any member would like to volunteer to take on this important position please let any of the committee know.

Finally may I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Best regards *Rob Andrews, Chairman*

CBKA Officers

Chairman	Rob Andrews	01642 781639
Vice Chairman	Steve Jacklin	01642 866240
Secretary	Steve Jacklin	01642 866240
Membership Secretary	Sal Mancina	01642 701638
Treasurer	Derek Passmore	01642 724652
Apiary Manager	Billy Ellerington	07516 341420
Show Secretary	Julie Saxton	01642 701711
Newsletter	Sal Mancina	01642 701638
Technical Officer	Tom Rettig	01642 596158
Exam Secretary		
Librarian	Billy Ellerington	07516 341420
Website Editor	Graham Clarke	web@teesbees.co.uk
Diary Secretary	Graham Clarke	diary@teesbees.co.uk
Equipment Hire	Unal Metti	01642 786243
Programme Secretary	Rob Andrews	01642 781639
Delegate to BBKA	Barrie Bloom	01287 634567
Publicity Officer	Peter Rowland	07501 455075
	Ada Newman	01642 634567

In the Apiary

It has been particularly mild so far this winter, I'm sure all of us have been enjoying it. I went to check my hives at about 1pm on Sunday the 1st of



December, with the car thermometer showing it was 9C outside, and I was surprised to see some bees flying around. I checked the nearby hives belonging to another beekeeper and all his

hives had bees flying. While it proved that the hives and bees were ok it also showed that the mild weather is preventing the bees from settling down and tightly clustering as they should. The bees were probably on cleansing flights on that day, but the mild weather has continued. This means that they are consuming their food stores at a faster rate than they should as they continue to be so active.

I hefted my hive and it was still very heavy - and so it should be after a month on the heather and heavy feeding afterwards. But it is important that we all keep on top of things and make sure that they continue to feel heavy. As Rob says above, if there is a doubt then add some fondant. The sharp eyed will have spotted some dead bees on the slab under the orange strap - there were about a handful of dead bees there and it is perfectly normal. Bees will continue to die as the winter progresses, and they are unceremoniously dumped outside by their sisters. Two things to watch out for:

1. That there aren't too many bees dying - it might mean they are starving.
2. That the entrance/mouse block isn't blocked by dead bees as this can cause the bees inside the hive to be trapped.

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Is My Honey Ready?

The question should really be - "Is my honey ready for sale?", as if you do not sell it you can do whatever you wish with it.

The simple answer is that if you have a full frame that is completely capped it is ready (however this



is rare enough that you may wish to keep it for entry to a honey show). In technical terms this means the honey has 17% water or less and is thus

stable and will not ferment. The second easy test is to hold a frame horizontally and shake it, if anything comes out it is definitely not ready.

There are however many times when we have part capped frames that we want to remove - what to do then? Most people would say that a 2/3 -3/4 capped frame produces acceptable honey - any less than this and the water content is likely to be too high. If you still wish to spin this honey out (eg. so the bees can clean the frames ready for storage in the winter) do it after you have spun and removed all your good honey, and use the resulting watery honey either for mead or to feed back to the bees. If you still have concerns about your honey you can measure the water content with an instrument called a honey refractometer. This instrument uses the differing refractive index of sugar solutions to measure the water content of a sample of honey. Refractometers need calibration and can be quite difficult to use.

The last concern we all have is in the spring when the rape is in flower. If you have put your bees on the rape you will definitely need to remove these frames quickly to prevent crystallisation in the comb, keeping them warm, and spinning them as soon as possible. When the honey is in the settling tank it will need to be watched carefully so that at the first moment you see crystallisation, you can begin whipping to produce soft set honey. You

should however be aware that even if you have not set out to collect rape nectar your bees might have had other ideas and taken just enough to affect and set your whole batch. There are few things worse than jarring your whole batch only to have it set like a brick a few weeks later when in the jar.

By Graham Clarke

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Treasurers report

After far too many nights slaving over a very strange spread sheet, we have finally received our first tax rebate under the Gift Aid scheme. On 20th November we received £441.74, this represents the rebate for financial year 2011-2012. Coincidentally a couple of days later we purchased a new honey spinner for use by CBKA members at a cost of £478.30, so the money has been put to very good use.

As you will now all know subscription for the coming year are due. Thank you to all of the members who have renewed, a special thanks to the people who used the BACS system, it makes life so much easier! If you have not renewed, please don't forget that after December the 31st a late payment fee of £5.00 is added to the subscription, ie £30 instead of £25.

Without boring everyone with too many figures we like to keep our books as open as possible to members, and although we present the books annually at the AGM, I also issue updates on a monthly basis to the committee. If at any time any member has a query please don't hesitate to contact me. *By Derek Passmore, CBKA Treasurer*

I'm sure you will all want to give a big thank you to Derek as he has done an outstanding job for several years but is shortly standing down from the role of Treasurer. If any member would like to be considered to be the new Treasurer please let anyone in the committee know.

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Happy beekeeping!

Secretary: Steve Jacklin, 34 Juntion Rd, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1PL Tel: 01642 866240

Winter meetings (September to April) are held on the 3rd Monday of the month at 7:15pm in the:

Middlesbrough Bowling Club, Cornfield Rd, Middlesbrough TS5 5QL (Near the Little Theatre). Visitors and new members welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES

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