



CBKA Newsletter

March 2013

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Chairman's Note

There was a good turnout at our last meeting where the speaker George Eames talked about the Basic Beekeeping Assessment and we now have several members who have shown interest in taking this year's assessment. This is not a difficult exam and its main objectives are to encourage beekeepers to read the books and become more knowledgeable about bees and how to handle them competently. It is a practical exam with some verbal questions as well, there is no written part to this exam.

Due to cancellations there are still two places available on the May trip to the National Bee Unit at York. If you would like to go please let me know as soon as possible. The cost of the trip is £15.00. Our speaker next month (April) is Mr. Gerry Collins from Doncaster, a Master Beekeeper who will be talking about Queen Selection and Rearing. As swarm co-ordinator for CBKA I will be compiling a new list of members wishing to be on the swarm call-out list for the area and who agree to comply with the new BBKA Swarm Collectors Protocol. You must be an experienced beekeeper willing to travel and collect swarms in your area - do not ask to go on the list just to get one or two swarms! A copy of the BBKA Swarm protocol will be sent to those who wish to go on the CBKA Swarm Collectors list. The old swarm collectors list will be scrapped. Please contact me via email at robandrews574@gmail.com or phone 01642 781639 as soon as possible.

The committee have agreed to award Mr Alan Jefferson an Honorary Associate Membership of the Association in recognition of his long and valuable contribution to CBKA.

Here's hoping for a good Spring and a good build up of stocks for the Summer.

Best regards, *Rob Andrews (Chairman)*

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In the Apiary

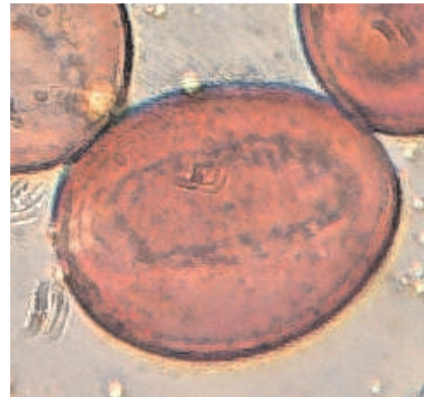
The calendar might be saying it is Spring, but the weather is still definitely wintry. The short warmer interlude is over and the temperature has plummeted again, Graham Clarke's article below was written when Spring appeared to be making an appearance. The snowdrops and crocuses seem to have lasted for ever, just as well as there are no other bee friendly

plants in bloom. Now is the time when you need to keep a close check on the food stocks in your hives. Usually the brood would be expanding and there would be lots of different blossom around to provide nectar and pollen for the growing colony. After such a long winter you still need to provide a supplement if the bees are running out of food, and because of the cold that still means fondant rather than syrup.

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One Sunny Day

It's Saturday in mid February and for the first time the sun is shining and the temperature is over 10C. Not only are my bees flying but they are bringing in



pollen. Big yellow pollen sacks. So what is out there for them in February? One way to find out is to look at the pollen and this is what it was like. No prizes for

guessing that this is snowdrop. I was surprised that there was enough around in the middle of town to make it worth their while but given their activity this was clearly so. It would seem that encouraging members of the public to plant flowers for bees really does pay off. *By Graham Clarke*

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Back to School?

There's a lot about education, exams and assessments this month. Rob's article above talks about the Basic Exam, which is a reassuring standard to achieve. It's a bit like passing your driving test, you don't stop learning after passing it, but it proves you have met a certain standard. If there is sufficient interest we might be able to organise some tutorial classes for those wishing to sit their Basic Exam this year, please contact a member of the Committee if you are interested. You may not be aware of it, but there is a CBKA training course going on at present. Seventeen keen people are going through the BBKA approved Beekeeping for Beginners course, turning up on a

Saturday morning to learn about bees, hives and swarms and they have just had the second of six theory classes, with two practical classes at the end. Tom Rettig, our Exam Secretary and Technical Officer writes: The BBKA are keen to get more beekeepers to take the General Husbandry exam. To this end they are planning regional courses. If there is sufficient interest, a course, which will probably be a weekend in Durham, will be organised. Contact Tom Rettig for details. Note: If you want to do the General Husbandry Certificate you need to have kept bees for three years and have passed the Basic Exam. More details on the BBKA website at www.bbka.org.uk

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Nosema

If you are eating then perhaps you might want to read this later....

As the cold weather continues more of us will lose colonies of bees, and while some will be lost due to starvation or other causes, there is the possibility of the problem being due to Nosema. Nosema has no outward signs, but the colony will fail to thrive and will eventually die out. You may have seen some "spotting" at the hive entrance and on top of your frames during the last month or so. This is associated with Dysentery, which can be made worse during prolonged spells of bad weather when the bees cannot fly out for cleaning flights, especially in the Spring. Dysentery is not caused by Nosema, but it allows Nosema spores to spread quickly if present. If some bees foul the frames then other bees will attempt to clean the mess up and so the contagion spreads. There are two Nosema species in the UK, *Nosema apis* and more recently the Asian species *Nosema ceranae*. They are both parasitic microsporidian fungal pathogens which invade the digestive cells lining the mid-gut of the bee, there they multiply rapidly and within a few days the cells are packed with spores, the resting stage of the parasite. When the host cell ruptures, it sheds the spores into the gut where they accumulate in masses, to be later excreted by the bees.

The best diagnosis is to prepare some samples to view under a microscope. Catch 25-50 bees and grind their abdomens up in a pestle with a mortar, prepare a slide using a drop of the "soup" then look for rice shaped grains at a power of x400. You might want to ask permission before using the kitchen mortar and pestle....

However there is a much easier, though not as accurate, means of diagnosis which is useful if you don't have access to a microscope. One of our members had a hive which had died out, so we decided to carry this test out, taking the photos you see here.



In this case all the bees were already dead, but it is better to catch half a dozen flying bees as they return to the hive entrance, you don't need many.



Decapitate them to sever the gut. Grip the abdomen gently and delicately pull the last segment of

the abdomen out, the hindgut and midgut will follow. You may need a few practice runs to get this



right. A healthy midgut will be tan or light brown with a distinctive ringed appearance (similar to the segmented body of an earthworm), an infected midgut will be off white and swollen. After examining a few bees we decided that they hadn't died due to Nosema. *By Sal Mancina*

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Happy beekeeping!

Secretary: Derek Herring, 8 Wardale Avenue, Acklam, Middlesbrough. Tel 01642 282030

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.

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