



CBKA Newsletter

April 2015

Year 29/ 8. Download our Newsletters from www.teesbees.co.uk

Chairman's Note

Well what a difference a year makes. I'm sitting here chomping at the bit ready to go and start inspecting hives, all my spare equipment is waiting to be occupied and the weather is letting me down. At the time of writing it's the 29th March and looking at the long range forecast it's going to be another two weeks at least before we get an inspection window.

When I look back at my hive records for 2014 by the 9th March I had done my first inspections of the year, 15th March I added my first super and by the 14th April I was carrying out artificial swarms. I can't stress the importance of keeping good records. If you have one or two hives you may get away without them and using the Mark 1 Human Brain, but any more and you soon lose track of which hive is doing what.

On the 28th March I attended the North of England Beekeepers' Convention held in Newcastle. There were three main speakers for the day split over four sessions.

As of 2015 the first lecture is to be dedicated to Colin Weightman who was a renowned Beekeeper from Hexham, who worked a lot with Brother Adam. Sadly he passed away last year.

The inaugural Colin Weightman Memorial Lecture was given by Dr Sue Cobey a bee breeder and geneticist from the USA on the subject of "Bee Breeding and Selection". She also gave the third lecture on the "Rearing of High Quality Queens". Her lectures really led on from one to the other. She gave details about how she selected her queens and drones. She uses grafting when she is rearing her queens and then artificially inseminates them. One of her big messages that she was pushing is that it doesn't matter about the queens, it's the drones that are important. We know where our queens come from but unless you are artificially inseminating them you have no idea where the drones she mates with come from.

She also mentioned that in the US, Varroa was now resistant to all the chemicals that they use and that they are in the process of getting oxalic acid licensed so that they can use that.

The second lecture on "Bees and Indian Balsam"

was given by Dr Rinke Vinkenoog, a lecturer at Northumbria University. His lecture was on the effect of Indian Balsam on pollinators. Working in the Tyne Valley he has been studying the effect of Indian Balsam on pollinators and other native flowers. One of the things he has found is that between late July and September the main source of forage for honey bees is Indian Balsam. He also concluded that providing that it isn't in an environmentally sensitive site we should not be destroying Indian Balsam as it actually helps the local pollinator population. He was a very entertaining lecturer and I think it would be well worth while getting him as a speaker for one of our future programmes.

The fourth lecture was given by Simon Croson, a bee farmer and photographer from Lincolnshire. He has been all over the world taking pictures of bees and has even won the Gold Medal at Apimondia a number of times for his bee related photographs. His lecture was about how to take photographs of your bees, what equipment you need and don't need. He also recounted the tale of how, while in America, he took some photos of small hive beetles on honey comb, and then sent them to his friend Andy Watham who also happens to be the chief UK Bee Inspector with the message "Look what I found in a hive!" You can imagine the ensuing panic. I shall be using some of his tips for my Cleveland Show photograph entry.

There were also a number of trade stands offering all the usual bits of beekeeping paraphernalia. I particularly enjoyed having a rummage through the Northern Bee Books stand and even got a free copy of the Beekeepers Quarterly. A company called Hivemaker had an interesting hive on their stand, it was essentially a double width national but with dividers to split the hive into four nuclei. I notice Abelo have stolen one of my ideas. They had a metal box for the storage of smokers - something I have had for years, theirs was a custom made galvanised box that they are selling for £40, mine is a 50cal ammunition box I acquired off eBay for £10. I also managed to get a look at the new Hybrid Hive that Mann Lake have developed. Looking at the pictures that I had seen in Bee Craft I had assumed it

was a normal National with the sides cut away and full of long lugged frames, but it was basically a Smiths Hive with the handles built so that they fit on top of a national. *by Steve Jacklin*

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Obituary - Ian Brown

Ian Brown, who died on 23rd December 2014, aged 86 years, was secretary of the CBKA from 1998 until 2010 and was subsequently made honorary member of the association.

Ian was born on 19th August 1928 and spent his early years in Pelham St, Middlesbrough. He was educated at Archibald Street school from 1939 to 1944, followed by service in the army, dealing with bomb disposal and camp clearance in Germany. Following demob Ian was engaged as a clerk at Dorman Long, South Bank until he joined the firm of Avery, selling weighing equipment. He was with Avery for 35 years until he retired in 1990 as their top salesman. A chance meeting with Georges Morpeth, general medical practitioner and keen beekeeper, at a wine-tasting, awakened Ian's interest in bees, despite the fact that he liked neither wine nor honey.

Ian joined the beekeeping class run by the late Bryan Hateley at Grindon, Thorpe Thewles. Ian kept his bees in a field behind his home in Guisborough.

He was a lover of the outdoors and the natural world and a keen runner and swimmer. He was also a member of Guisborough Men's Forum.

His wife, Stella, survives him, as do his four children, one of whom is now keeping Ian's bees in Leeds.

by Bill Wilkinson

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CBKA Polo Shirts

I am about to order some CBKA polo-shirts - they are unisex and come in the usual sizes -



S, M, L, XL, XXL. They cost £12 each. They are Royal Blue and have the Cleveland Beekeepers Association logo.

If you would like one please contact me with numbers and sizes. As this is a bulk purchase it will take a few weeks to deliver. Email Graham Clarke at web@teesbees.co.uk

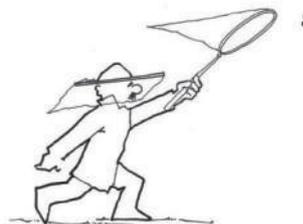
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In the Apiary

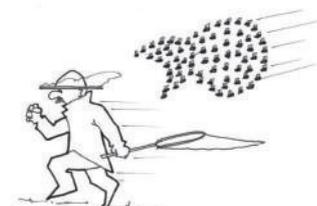
If you haven't inspected your bees yet then you should take the opportunity on the next fine day to see how your colonies are doing. If they have enough food then stop feeding, there's lots of blossom around and unless it is a very weak colony they'll be fetching fresh nectar and pollen now. I trust you have checked the varroa drop count and treated if necessary? It is important that you do this to avoid high varroa levels later on in the summer, and of course most treatments must not be applied with honey supers on.

Most people I've spoken to in the last week say they are starting to put supers on, spring is here! The rape fields near me are now fully in flower, though "the flow" (when the nectar starts to flow in large amounts) may be some way off. A long gentle shower would help enormously as the ground is quite dry. Two of my hives have the first drone brood, a sure sign that I will need to do regular checks on the colonies as queen cells may not be far behind.

CHASING A SWARM



CHASING A SWARM



As the swarming season approaches you should plan in advance the swarm prevention measures you will take when you spot the first queen cells. Research the Pagden method on the internet as it is a fairly foolproof system, though it does require you to find the queen - you do have her marked, don't you? If you don't have her marked, now is a good time to do it as there are less bees in the hive. Ask the help of an experienced beekeeper to do this if you're not sure about doing it on your own. Don't forget that you will also need another complete hive or a nucleus to house your artificial swarm. If you don't have spare equipment then order or make the equipment now before you need them, there won't be time when you find the first queen cells.

by Sal Mancina

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Making a Skep Workshop –July 12th 2015

Instructor: Unal Metti

The straw skep is a familiar part of the beekeeper's equipment. Nowadays they are used primarily to gather swarms but in the past skeps were used to hive bees all year round. Some of you who attended Barry Bloom's talk last November should have been inspired to have a go at making your own skep. I know I was and I decided, for the first time in 38



years of beekeeping, to make my own skep. The picture shows my very first attempt. I was pleased with the result which prompted me to help organize a workshop so that those interested in this ancient craft would have the opportunity to have a go at make their own skeps. Before we can get started we need to get the tools and materials that we shall be needing on the day. There are hundreds of web sites about skep making. I looked at several but settled for Martin Newton's instructions. They are simple and easy to follow. They are also clearly illustrated. For in depth instructions go to:

<http://martinatnewton.com/page6.htm>



It is best to start the preparations now, well in advance, especially if making your own tools or acquiring the basic materials such as straw, rush or reeds and bramble. Preparing the bramble binding is worth doing now. Instructions on how to do this are very clearly given by Martin Newton but

should you need any help please do see me and I shall show you how to do it.

If you are interested in attending the workshop please let me know so that I can get the straw ordered for those who can't get their own supply. I used rush that is available locally if you know where to look. I have included a picture of what it looks like. It can be found mostly along the riverbanks, on the edges of ponds or marshy land. Alternatively you can use long barley straw or rye. You will also need a needle or fid. I made my own from a piece of small bore copper tubing.

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Bee Disease Insurance (BDI)

Your Committee recently discussed whether Cleveland should consider joining the BDI scheme to insure against loss of colonies from disease. BDI only pays out for a notifiable disease, at present that is American Foul Brood or European Foul Brood (AFB or EFB), but this will include Small Hive Beetle when it arrives and presumably also *Tropilaelaps*.

BDI requires all members of the local association to be covered at a cost of £2/year per member for up to 3 hives with additional premia of up to £18.10 for 40 hives. The Association would also be required to pay a one off joining fee of £50.

I had assumed that any pay-out would cover bees and hive, but that is not the case. Bees are not covered, nor are hive bodies, with payments only for frames and some other parts and a small allowance for honey. Payments are also reduced according to the Bee Inspector's assessment of the condition of the equipment, and few of us have 'as new' equipment. BDI was last discussed by the committee a number of years ago and was not considered to be a good option in the CBKA area. The committee took the same view this time as the benefit of the scheme in an area of low foul brood incidence was considered to be poor value relative to the cost.

More details are available at

<http://www.beediseasesinsurance.co.uk/about-1>. If members have any questions they should speak to one of the committee. *by John Canning*

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A Show Virgin's Experience

I only started beekeeping in 2013 and had a shaky start with that year's terrible spring, followed by a drone-layer in August, but I didn't want to give up and kept looking for new challenges. I therefore decided to take my chances at the Cleveland Show. I sent off my entry money and then thought I was a fool for wasting it.

The biggest challenge was the wax; I had no idea what to do, but the internet is a mine of information

and I warmed, filtered and repeated this numerous times to produce a block of wax which looked OK to my eyes; the honey seemed easier and the photograph perhaps an outside chance. So on the day I went early to the tent, left my entries then went off for the day to return just before the close to see who had won prizes. To my amazement I was first in Wax and Photography with a second and third in the Novice Honey sections. I was hooked, so there had to be some entries to Stokesley Show. Sadly I dropped the wax the morning of the show, but did come away with a first, third and Very Highly Commended for light honey.

For me this was an unexpected pleasure in keeping bees and I would urge other members who haven't yet entered a show to take the plunge. Not only is it fun, but it encourages high standards for your own honey production and promotes honey and hive product to the public. Local show dates: Cleveland, 25 July; Osmotherley, 1 August; Bilsdale, 19 August; Stokesley, 19 September. Contact our show secretary Julie Saxton for more details if you want to enter. *by John Canning*

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Bulk Purchase of Honey Jars

Last year Cleveland Beekeepers made a bulk purchase of 1lb and 1/2lb honey jars at a very good price. A lot of members took advantage of the low prices. Perhaps you were lucky and managed to fill all your jars or perhaps you still have a lot waiting for this year's honey. If there is enough demand we will make a bulk purchase again this year, please let one of the committee know if you are interested and approximately how many jars you will need.

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Membership Number

As usual at this time of the year we have lots of new members, please make them welcome.

I was recently asked by a few of them why we have membership numbers and what the various digits mean.

Your membership number will be in the format

75.0.XX. As an association affiliated to BBKA we were assigned as region 75. Some of the big regions, such as Kent or Devon have numerous branches, so for example Canterbury Beekeepers is 36.14, with Kent having a region number of 36 and Canterbury being branch 14 within it. As Cleveland Beekeepers has only one branch we are 75.0. The last digits are your unique number within the association, and increment with every new member. The latest numbers issued for CBKA are in the 75.0.280's... but we don't have 280 members! It's just that numbers do not get recycled so new members get higher numbers. You are re-assigned your original number if you leave the association and rejoin later. Renewal membership cards for 2015 will shortly be issued by BBKA. Your unique membership number will be on the card. You will need that number and a password to access some areas of the BBKA website, the default password being "bbka_yoursurname". Leave the quotes out and that's an underscore, not a hyphen. When you log in for the first time change your password to something unique to you.

If you have forgotten your membership number and don't want to wait for the 2015 membership card, please let me know, I will send you it.

by Sal Mancina, membership secretary

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Summer Events

It may not feel very summery, but this is the last Newsletter of the winter/spring. We have a full programme of outside events during the coming months, starting with the assessment of the association hives at our apiary in Coulby Newham on Sunday 17th of May at 2pm. Bring your suits and wellies, we will be diving into the colonies. If you don't know where the apiary is then ask.

As John Canning has said above, please consider showing some of your hive products at the various shows. You only need one jar of honey to enter the Novice's section at Cleveland Show.

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Happy Beekeeping!

Secretary: Ian Mackinson, Tel: 01287 634995

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.

“The bee's life is like a magic well: the more you draw from it, the more it fills with water”

Karl Von Frisch, *Bees: Their Vision, Chemical Senses and Language*

Cleveland Beekeepers

Visit our website at www.teesbees.co.uk.

You will find our programme for the coming year and all our past Newsletters.