



CBKA Newsletter

February 2015

Year 29/ 6. Download our Newsletters from www.teesbees.co.uk

Chairman's Note

Well here we are in February and its starting to get exciting with the prospect of a new Beekeeping season ahead. This time of year finds my beekeeping activities starting to ramp up. I'm busy making up frames, hive components and cleaning equipment. The tally of equipment built so far this winter is:

1. 10 Commercial Brood Bodies
2. 8 Commercial Supers
3. 8 Roofs
4. 10 Glass Quilts
5. 200 frames
6. 16 Floors
7. 6 Nuc Boxes

So it been a busy winter.

This time of year I'm also avidly watching the weather forecast. Looking for a time when I will be able to get in and check my bees. I never inspect when temperatures are less than 13°C and then it will only be a very quick look to make sure the queen is laying and the colony hasn't died. I'll also be looking to change the floors. I have a thermometer in each apiary that I use to check the local temperature before I carry out an inspection. I have two apiaries where I over-winter bees, one in Norton and the other at Thorpe Thewles, I've found that the Bees are always further ahead in the Norton apiary and I think it is just because the urban environment is a couple of degrees warmer. At the time of writing this article the long range weather forecast seems to indicate that temperatures will be in the right area mid March to at least have a quick look.

by Steve Jacklin



drones that were being evicted from the hive in preparation for winter but I also saw a lot of stunted bees in front of both the badly affected hives and wondered if they too had been evicted as not being strong enough to last the winter.

Monitoring the drops in early September showed a daily drop of 25 mites which was far higher than what was acceptable. In late September I used Apistan strips on all hives. This seemed effective, reducing the mite drop for all but two particularly badly affected hives. Perhaps two of the colonies were pyrethroid resistant, or perhaps the strains weren't as hygienic as the others.

I read the very interesting article in Decembers 2014 BBKA News by the BBJ which had determined that Oxalic acid was particularly effective if applied by sublimation using an acid vapouriser which fills the hive with fumes. I thought this sounded a good way to fight varroa with minimal interference to the clustering bees, and was keen to try it. The best time to use Oxalic acid treatment is when there is minimal brood present, usually just before and just after Christmas, depending on temperatures. Also the temperature should be above 4°C otherwise the bee cluster becomes too tight to allow for the vapour to come into contact with the bees.

I was put off somewhat (being a Yorkshire man) by the price of the vapouriser from the on line bee suppliers, so set about making one. I bought a



12volt soldering iron for £13 as the heat source and a 22 mm brass end stop from Screwfix for £3. It was

simple to drill a hole to fit the two together and to fit two crocodile clips for the battery.

The vaporiser was intended to be simply pushed into the entrance and sealed to allow vapour circulation. On trying this I found the hot end was precariously close to the brood frames. Also having

Oxalic Acid Vapouriser for Varroa

Last year seemed to be a good year for varroa mites. Many beekeepers reported an increase in mite numbers. All my hives seemed to be affected more than I had experienced before, two of which were particularly badly affected.

Seeing stunted bees and deformed wings was a wakeup call. I had treated all the hives in spring with Apiguard as usual and I was remiss in not regularly monitoring varroa drop until late summer when signs of damage were becoming obvious.

I noticed in late summer that it was not only the

Varroa mesh floors there was a need to seal the underneath of the hive. So I mounted the device onto the floor insert with plastic tie wraps, using a piece of aluminium foil



as a heat shield. The unit will not slide on the floor rails but sits on the hive support legs below the hive. As it runs on a 12 volt battery I asked at a local garage and got a good second hand battery for the price of a jar of honey!

After the treatments I checked for any noticeable drop of bees and there wasn't any. Hive 1 and 4 (there isn't a hive 2) were the ones I was worried about the most and they had the highest drop so I was pleased to see that it works as way of killing varroa. It was not as spectacular as I might have wished for but I think it is useful as a means of zapping varroa during the winter.

Hive 1 treated on 20th Dec 14

Drop: 25 on 21st, 200 on 27th, 80 on 30th Dec 14

Hive 3 treated on 23th Dec 14

Drop: 25 on 24th Dec, 75 on 5th Jan 15

Hive 4 treated on 23/12/14

Drop: 100 on 24th Dec, 95 on 5 Jan 15

Hive 5 treated on 26th Dec 14

Drop: 20 on 27th, 75 on 30th Dec 14

by John Baines

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Handling Bees

I was browsing through some old bee books, as you do, and came across the following bit of advice regarding the handling of bees which although well over a hundred years old still applies today. I quote:

A Firm and Gentle Hand Necessary.

It is known also that bees resent roughness; have a deep-rooted objection to jarring of their combs; fly into a passion if any of their number be crushed in the hive; will not tamely submit to being rubbed the

wrong way; are provoked to violence, when one sting has been inflicted, by the mere smell of it; and will often attack a hand for no other reason than that it has been suddenly and quickly moved adjacent to them. Sometimes bees noted for their peaceable disposition, will be found in an angry humour, some unaccountable influence having disturbed their wonted calm. Therefore bees should always be handled with the utmost deliberation and care. A firm and gentle hand is necessary. There must be no jarring of the combs, no swiping of the handkerchief at a threatening bee. Coolness gained by experience, together with the precautions already, and yet to be described, will usually render the manipulation of bees as safe as the driving of a flock of geese. Should bees at any time show marked signs of vindictiveness, it is better, instead of attempting to fight them, to withdraw in a manner as quiet and dignified as possible. They will probably be found, next day, in their normal condition of amiability. To start in and fight them may render them un-manageable for the remainder of the season, and will certainly lead to a precipitous flight. Ref. The Practical Bee Guide by the Rev. J G. Digges, M A. *by Rob Andrews*

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Flying Bees in Winter

Those of you who have visited your bees around lunchtime will no doubt have been treated to bees



flying around on sunnier days throughout the winter. As I write this my bees are bringing in small amounts of white pollen, so spring is on its way. One of our members, Ian Peacock, sent me this photo of lots of bees at the entrance of his poly hive on the 27th of January. Ian

reported that the bees were flying freely, exploring his garden. *by Sal Mancina*

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Happy Beekeeping!

Secretary: Steve Jacklin, 34 Junction 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.

Cleveland Beekeepers

Visit our website at www.teesbees.co.uk. You will find our programme for the coming year and all our past Newsletters.

"A bee is never as busy as it seems; it's just that it can't buzz any slower."

Kin Hubbard