



# CBKA Newsletter

## January 2015

Year 29/ 5. Download our Newsletters from [www.teesbees.co.uk](http://www.teesbees.co.uk)

### Chairman's Note

Happy New Year Everyone.

First of all I had to include this picture in my article



this month. I took it at my brother's house on Christmas Day. You can clearly see the Oil Seed Rape in flower behind my

sister in law's hive.

This month I am celebrating. After three years and nearly fifty injections I have completed my Bee Venom Desensitization treatment. Its been a long road, but I think overall it has been worth it, and I would recommend the course at the RVI in Newcastle to any of our members who find themselves in the same predicament. Although I won't be going out of my way test my immunity! This time of year I'm hefting my hives and checking the fondant levels every couple of weeks. I also like to keep my inspection boards in over winter and pull them out for a look. I keep them in for two reasons:

- 1) It reduces the draught but still means the bees get some air circulation.

- 2) From the debris collecting on the board you can tell roughly where the cluster is in the hive and whether they are still alive.

If we get any bad weather forecast try and get to your hives beforehand and make sure they have plenty of stores. Trudging through thick snow to go and feed your hives is not pleasant.

A lot of our members don't realise that twice a year (March and November) three stalwart members of our Association gather around a convenient kitchen table, normally Tom Rettig's, and undergo an hour and a half of hell. I am of course talking about the BBKA module exams. I count myself amongst this unfortunate trio. One of this heroic trio will, with luck, leave this group after the March exams, as through no fault of his own he has run out of modules to take. I talk of our Membership Secretary, Sal Mancina. That will leave just myself and John

Baines to examine the grain on Tom's kitchen table. So why do I do it? I'd be the first to admit that I am not the most academically minded person in this world, but I think the studying has certainly improved my beekeeping. It makes you think about what and why you are doing with your bees. See Tom's article below for further details on all the education options available to all our members. Finally, we will be starting anew with our Swarm Collectors list for 2015. Any of our members are welcome to join providing they are willing to abide by the BBKA's Swarm Collectors Protocol and have the necessary experience. Further details are on our website. I find Swarm Collecting one of the most rewarding aspects of Beekeeping. Not only do you end up with a few extra colonies, you also have an opportunity to educate the general public about bees. If you wish to be on the CBKA Swarm Collector list please let me know and also what areas of Teesside you would like to cover. We are especially short of Swarm Collectors in Hartlepool and Central Middlesbrough.

*by Steve Jacklin, Chairman.*

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### In the Apiary

#### **Homemade fondant recipe**

We have so many new members that I make no apologies for repeating this recipe for fondant. I have had some feedback from some of our members that this works well. One member has found that adding just half the quantity of glucose in the recipe works well for him, it produces a firmer fondant. Into a stainless steel pan add:

1kg of sugar

250ml of water

23g of liquid glucose

Bring the mixture to the boil, stirring all the time.

Caution: Hot syrup scalds!!!

Stir and boil until the mix reaches 117C (use a cooking thermometer)

The temperature will not rise to 117C until some of the water has evaporated off.

Take off the heat and float the pan in a sink of cold water, stirring as the mixture cools and starts to crystallise into a white paste.

Measure the temperature every so often while

stirring. When down to 40C mix the fondant with your hands until it feels smooth.

Break into two lumps and wrap each piece in cling film until you need it.

To use: Pack a lump into a margarine tub and invert it over the feed hole in the crownboard or open up the cling film package a little and put it hole down over the feed hole.

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### **BBKA Exam Assessments**

The system starts with the Basic Assessment. The syllabus can appear daunting at first glance but closer inspection will show that it merely lists the basic things which all beekeepers should know. This locally held, wholly practical and oral exam aims to ensure that beekeepers understand and can perform basic beekeeping tasks such as lighting a smoker and going through a colony. The exam has a high pass rate and beekeepers who have kept bees for a couple of years should pass without problems. It normally costs £15, but CBKA will pay half (for first attempt only). Candidates can contact me by the end of May so that I can arrange dates. Around twenty members of CBKA have passed this exam, that's just under 20% – in itself this is good, but I would like the rate of Basic Assessment Exam holders amongst CBKA up to around 50%!

After the Basic Assessment has been passed there is a choice of two paths. One leads to sitting seven written modules, each of 90 minutes. These test the theoretical knowledge of the beekeeper. If you are interested in seeing the type and level of questions asked then past papers are available on the BBKA website and some are in the association library. The next exam date is March 21st. Applications need to be with me by 10th February. The exams are demanding, but three CBKA members are happily wading through them at the moment. Passing the first three Modules plus a further one from the remainder leads to the award of the Intermediate Theory Certificate. Passing all the Modules leads to the Advanced Theory Certificate. At the moment all these exams can be sat in March or November.

The more practical path leads to two assessments, the General Husbandry followed by the Advanced Husbandry exams. The General Husbandry exam is carried out at the beekeepers' own apiary. The candidate will have to show that they have been queen rearing and producing honey and wax for sale. An inspection is made of the records the candidate keeps and inspections are made of the candidates' colonies. Four queenright colonies are required. The Advanced Husbandry exam is taken at Stoneleigh and the beekeeper must work a number of colonies at the same time whilst giving a running commentary to the examiners. Quite an undertaking! When both the Advanced Husbandry and the Advanced Theory are achieved the candidate is awarded the Master Beekeeper certificate, with a badge to sew onto their beekeeping suit.

The BBKA also awards certificates to candidates passing the Microscopy and Show Judge exams. The first step to all of these exams is the Basic Assessment exam, so why not give it a try.  
*by Tom Rettig, Master Beekeeper, CBKA exam secretary*

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### **Oxalic Acid Vapouriser for Varroa**

One of our enterprising members has built an oxalic acid vaporiser from a 12v soldering iron, a cheap plumbing copper stop end and a second hand car battery. John Baines reports very good results with



lots of Varroa dropping off with no adverse effects on the bees. Due to problems getting the vapouriser end into the hive entrance and fear of damaging the bees, John experimented with

delivering the Oxalic Acid fumes from under the varroa mesh floor. John has written a comprehensive article on construction, use and results for the next Newsletter.

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### **Happy Beekeeping!**

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**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.

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### **Cleveland Beekeepers**

Visit our website at [www.teesbees.co.uk](http://www.teesbees.co.uk). You will find our programme for the coming year and all our past Newsletters.

“I was part of a sting operation. We busted some bees.”

Jarod Kintz,