



CBKA Newsletter

March 2015

Year 29/ 7. Download our Newsletters from www.teesbees.co.uk

Chairman's Note

Last month I put my neck out and said I could be doing my first inspections by the middle of March. All I'm going to say is I was foiled by the British weather and looking at the long range forecast it's going to be May before it is warm enough for inspections, but that's probably going to mean a late swarm season.

Having said that I did manage to change a floor on Saint David's Day. It was an old solid floor that I had used in an emergency last year, but it had now rotted to the point where if I had touched it, it would probably have fallen



apart and as I need to move the hive it needed changing. It turned into a two and a half man operation. Me to lift the brood box, dad to pull the old floor out and my son Toby to put the new mesh floor in. It gave us a nice opportunity to examine the old floor. You could clearly see where the cluster was in the hive and I was also pleased to see there were very few Varroa mites on the floor.

A couple of months back I said I was trying poly hives for the first time in 2014 and that I would report back to members. I've been using polystyrene nucleus boxes for a couple of years now and have been quite impressed. I've used them for everything from overwintering small colonies to swarm catching. My only gripes were that the single sheet of Perspex used as a crown board was laid straight on top of the frames and the bees propolise it down, and that if the colony got congested they started building comb in the feeder. In fact I had one small cast that I caught in September which ignored the frames and moved queen and all into the feeder. I'm pleased to see the newer versions are supplied with a small queen excluder to stop her getting into the feeder. So in last year's January sales I decided to go the whole hog and bought two full size 14x12 polystyrene hives, with four supers and two feeders.

They cost less than half the price of the cedar equivalent. They duly sat in the garden until the spring when I was eager to get them full of bees. So far I've been mostly impressed with them. I've managed to hive a swarm in one and a split from one of my colonies in the other. The hives themselves are bigger externally than standard wooden hives, but internally they are the same size and take national frames, or 14x12 frames in my case. I wasn't happy with the plastic frame runners supplied, but that is my own personal preference as I prefer metal runners in brood boxes and 11 frame castellated runners in supers. The floor is of the open mesh variety and has a good sized landing board. It is supplied with a Correx Varroa board which is a snug fit and when inserted prevents any draughts. I was a little disappointed with the crown board and the queen excluder that was supplied. They were both essentially flat plastic sheets. I prefer my crown boards and queen excluders to have a 6mm rim on one side to provide a bee space otherwise the bees like to propolise them down to the frames. I have since modified both by adding thin strips of wood around the edge. My colonies are not normally prone to major propolis operations, but I found that both colonies seemed to propolise everything in the poly hives and I would recommend covering any joints and frame lugs with Vaseline.

I was also disappointed with the feeders supplied with the hives. They are a Miller type feeder with the bees entering via a central slot and the feed being either side. I had a lot of drowned bees in both feeders as the bees got under the partition and went for a swim when the syrup levels

dropped. I think I'm going to modify the ones I have with a piece of mesh so that the bees cannot get under the partition.

These hives are marketed with the promise that you can place standard wooden supers and brood boxes on the stack. I would agree with this but I would



recommend that if you placed a standard super or brood box on the top you should use a wooden roof because the poly roof is a lot wider than a normal wooden roof and would snap when the restraining strap was tightened. The hives are supplied with very long straps which holds the hive components together securely even when you are moving them. Moving them is probably the only thing that is stopping me buying any more and that is only due to personal logistics reasons. I can get four wooden national hives in the back of the Land Rover, but due to the size difference I can only get one poly hive in. So would I recommend them? I think for the most part I would endorse them as long as you were not planning on moving them, providing the queen excluder and crown board are modified which is really very easy to do, and if you are going to buy the feeder it will need modifying to prevent a lot of drowned bees.

by Steve Jacklin

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Bee Wear for Ladies



Fig. 74.
BEE DRESS FOR LADIES.

I found the picture in an old book about beekeeping. How things have changed! Man made fibres and plastics and changes in style make the picture look very old fashioned.

by Rob Andrews

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Cleveland Beekeepers Library

I'm sure that you are all aware of our library. Over the years it has been added to regularly and we have quite a few modern books available. To allow more people to read the books we are going to limit the time that they can be kept. From now on a book can be borrowed for one month, so if you take one at a meeting then it should be returned at the next meeting. Council libraries allow you to keep a book for three weeks, so a month is generous. Please make sure you fill in the library register with your name and other details when you borrow a book. To see the list of library books available go to www.teesbees.co.uk then the Resources page and find the Library section.

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In the Apiary

This is the time of the year when you need to become a long range weather forecaster. Or in beekeeping terms, do we continue feeding fondant or is it time to feed a 1:1 syrup (1kg of sugar to 1 litre of water) to stimulate the queen to increase her egg laying? Why is this important? One of the major crops in this area is Oil Seed Rape. To make the most of this early nectar we need a lot of bees, bees that are ready to fly when the flowers are at their best. So lets say that the Rape is going to be in full flower in mid-May this year, and worker bees take 3 weeks to develop from egg to adult, with another 3 weeks as a house bee before they start foraging. We now need to work backwards from the date of the expected nectar flow so that we have a lot of foraging bees ready. If my weather forecasting is correct then we need to start stimulating the queen with syrup starting towards the end of March. If your weather forecasting says otherwise then start feeding syrup 6 or 7 weeks before you expect the Rape nectar to "flow". 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.

"Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste. Know also that wisdom is like honey for you. If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

Proverbs 24:13-14