



CBKA NEWSLETTER

Available online at
www.teesbees.co.uk

Year 31/4
December 2016

JOHN'S JOTTINGS

I wrote the last newsletter in Nova Scotia. I may be able to give some insights into Canadian beekeeping in future Newsletters. We only got back to Middlesbrough on 30 November and the only beekeeping thing I have done since was a quick look to see if the hives were still upright and then hefting them. Fortunately all was OK.

I still have some winter tasks to do; final hygiene and cleaning, varroa treatment and adding fondant. Then it's sale time; I really don't plan to buy anything in the sales, but may be tempted at the Spring Convention in April.

Your association has some great talks planned for 2017, starting with one on the Tees Barrage, we must thank Ian Peacock, whose article is below, for his hard work in putting together our programme.

Best wishes for Christmas and a prosperous 2017. *John Canning, Chair*

BEES AT THE BARRAGE

As an urban beekeeper in 2015 I was facing a predicament, I had four hives in my back garden and it was like Heathrow, with three clearly defined flight paths around head height. I had no other place to put them and they were just itching to sting me, my daughter or my grandson (they never bother my wife).

After I had drawn a blank with local farmers and other persons with land, my wife suggested I contact the council and try to get a place on their land. It paid off, after a while I was contacted by the chap responsible for their open land. He did not have any safe place to put them, but did know an organisation which would probably accommodate me. It was the Canal & River Trust, a charity who operate the Tees Barrage to maintain the level of the river by controlling the weirs.

They have an environmental objective to maintain and improve the banks of the river, intending to accomplish this by providing a beneficial habitat rich with pollinators. A good fit was to have an apiary on their land. It made for a win-win partnership. As soon as we agreed upon the place to be used for an apiary they constructed a three-sided stockade with wood chippings floor. This provides protection from the prevailing wind whilst being open to the river. When I arrived with the first hive I found they had even cast concrete bases!



The apiary can comfortably accommodate eight hives, and there is an overflow area nearby should I need it. At present I have five hives there. Since the introduction of the bees they have begun to plant bee-friendly plants in an area of waste land about 200 yards away.

The benefits to me are great, I have a place not too far away from home, it is protected by CCTV with 24 hour cover by an operator in a nearby control room. The apiary itself is inside a restricted area on the river with access by persons wearing lifejackets, so vandalism is unlikely. It is surrounded on three sides by the river, so there is a plentiful water supply. The operators monitor the apiary during the course of their tours, so I have help to ensure the integrity of the hives during and after bad weather.

As for the Trust, they score well on their environmental objective and get free honey, as an association we also provided the barrage with the best attraction at their open day this summer, and have been asked to participate next year. Plus, I've managed to secure the services of their Environmentalist to speak at one of our evenings in 2017, it should be an interesting introduction to what the Canal & River Trust do on the River Tees. *Ian Peacock, The Barrage Beekeeper*

BEE INFORMED

The *at a glance* quick guide to local, regional and national beekeeping events and other important information.

Tees Barrage: Environmental Objectives Monday 16 January 2017 at 1915. A talk by Jonathan Hart-Woods, environment manager Canal and River Trust.

The Future of the BBKA Monday 20 February 2017. Margaret Murdin, Chair BBKA Trustees



POLLEN MITES

Bees collect pollen and bring it back to the hive where it is mixed with honey, nectar and certain secretions from the bees and packed into cells. Some of these secretions are different lactic acid bacteria from the honey stomach of the bee. After a few weeks the bacteria have fermented the pollen and honey into a nutritious mixture called bee bread, which is then consumed by both bees and brood. The action of the bacteria on stored pollen is similar to the production of yoghurt from milk.

Any brood frames stored for the winter are liable to have many old cells of pollen (or more accurately bee bread) which the bees didn't get to use in the summer.

In the interests of hygiene I try and change my brood frames regularly, but I do store some of the newer drawn frames over the winter, ready for use the following year. I take precautions against wax moths by storing them in tightly secured boxes. In the past I sprayed something called B401, or Certan, on the comb I wanted to store. This is a solution of a micro-organism called *Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies aizawai*, which is harmless to man and honeybees but kills the caterpillar stage of wax moths. As I am trying to reduce the amount of treatments that I introduce into my beehives I haven't used B401 for a few years. However I have often noticed that some stored frames with old pollen cells get invaded by a pinkish microscopic mite that I can just about see with the naked eye—the advantage of being short sighted!

I have tried to find out a bit more about these tiny mites, I think they are called *Carpoglyphus lactis*. There's not much information about them in relation to honeybees and pollen, but they are common on dried fruit where they feed on the yeast on the surface of the fruit. The mites burrow into the stored bee bread, consuming it and causing the pollen and the debris to fall out of the cells as a yellow/brown powder which smells quite stale, making quite a mess as it is slightly sticky. These are probably the same tiny mites often seen amongst the debris on soiled varroa boards. From what I have read the mites are not a problem for the bees.

The frames can be cleaned by shaking the dust out and then washing out with a very gentle spray of water from a watering can, repeating as required. Leave the frames to dry fully before storing again. *Sal Mancina*

Cleveland Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity 1168761

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Full details of our meetings are shown on our website www.teesbees.co.uk.

All are welcome

Why not consider learning more about Beekeeping and take

MODULES 2017

one or more of the assessment modules in 2017. There are 7 modules and it is possible to take more than one at the same time.

The dates and deadlines are:

- ◆ 18 March — application by 1 February
- ◆ 11 November — application by 15 September

More details are available on the BBKA Website and our local contact, to whom applications should be sent, is Tom Rettig t.rettig@btinternet.com.

When making beeswax products we mix it with oils, solvents and water. There are many good basic recipes on the

BEESWAX PRODUCTS

website so I

wanted to talk about the basics of these products, allowing you to produce your own. Making beeswax produce for your own use, or as gifts, should not be a problem, but before selling any products ensure you have complied with the law!

Oils come in two basic classes inorganic, most commonly liquid paraffin (FGMO) and organic, where there is a great variety, olive, coconut, rape seed etc. The major difference between the two when making creams is shelf life.

Inorganic oils have almost indefinite shelf life, organic oils rarely over a year. It is thus usual to add vitamin E oil (Tocopherol) to extend this. Simple mixtures of oil and wax produce something like Vaseline with a high oil content to boot polish with a low one.

Solvents are usually used in furniture polish and there are again a variety used, white spirit, natural turpentine and turps substitute being the most common. Sometimes an oil (usually linseed) is also added. Again the higher the solvent content the softer the result. Soft polishes being good for conditioning untreated wood and hard ones better for producing a good shine.

Water is added to a wax oil mixture to produce a cream. This has to form an emulsion which can be done mechanically, by whipping, or chemically, usually by the addition of a small quantity of borax. The chemical emulsions are much more stable and have a good shelf life. Mechanical ones will tend to separate over time.

Finally one can add colours and scents. Suddenly a simple product can have quite a complicated recipe but why not give it a try, weather you want a luxury hand cream or simply some "vaseline" to stop your hives being stuck together. *Graham Clarke*