

HoneyBee Times

2010 Issue 4

Journal of the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



In this issue:

- County Honey Show results
- Wood preservers for beehives
- Books for your Christmas stocking

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Disclaimer. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of Wiltshire BKA or the Editor.

Front cover: Pam Clark receives trophy from Duncan Hames MP

Photo: Stephen Summers

Welcome to the latest issue of HoneyBee Times with news and views from around the county.

In response to my invitation in the last issue of HBT to send bees for a **free** examination for *Nosema* I had samples from only three beekeepers, two of these had colonies which were positive with very high numbers of spores. This demonstrates the importance of carrying out this check at the close of the season. If you didn't, there is a risk of finding dead colonies in the spring. Fumidil 'B' was available for treatment of infected bees at the Thornes stand at the National Honey Show for the equivalent price of 3lbs of honey which could save up to three colonies.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue - if your article isn't in the current issue it will be in the next . Please keep the articles and photos coming in so that everyone can enjoy your contributions.

A Happy Christmas to you all!

Sally Wadsworth, Editor

Chairman's Report

As my final report within Honey Bee Times, I have copied the report I prepared for this year's AGM.

Mr President, Members of the WBKA Council, members of the association, I want to firstly sincerely apologise for not being with you today at the County Honey Show and this Annual General Meeting. I am especially disappointed since the Melksham Branch has planned this event with care as well as providing some really interesting speakers and their input I will miss.

I am presently in Germany at this particular time and therefore I have asked our vice chairman Dennis Simpson to read this on my behalf.

Looking back over the last 12 months, the interest with bee keeping has continued unabated. All Branches without exception have increased numbers of members and each have provided a series of specific sessions to introduce new beekeepers into this fascinating past time. On behalf of all the students who have attended the myriad of sessions, I formally want to thank all of the members of Branches who have given up their time, over successive evenings and weekends to ensure that credible inputs are provided. Certainly from speaking to new starters the sessions are very much appreciated and valued.

About this time last year, the WBKA was asked to support the Twickenham and Thames Valley Branch in respect of a proposal they wished to again get before the Annual Delegates Meeting of the BBKA, concerning the ongoing use and reference of the BBKA logo by the agrochemical industry, and the proposal was seeking for this to be again debated, since there was the wish for the BBKA to alter their stance. At that time we supported Twickenham and Thames Valley in terms of allowing the proposal to be debated since this was the first hurdle to be jumped however we subsequently directed our delegate, after a long debate by the full Council, not to support the motion. Very recently the same association sought our support again to once more have the matter debated again, since this motion had been previously defeated. Unfortunately due to having not received a response from all five Branches in Wiltshire, I had to report that we could not support their attempt to re-debate the matter. I say unfortunately not solely from the point of the debate but more from the fact that two Branches did not register their intentions to me.

As you are all aware, whilst this meeting forms an integral part of the proceedings today, a significant part of the day is also dedicated to the Honey Show. The showing of honey and products isn't everyone's passion but thankfully we have a number of talented 'exhibitors' within our ranks. Members from this Association exhibited at the National Honey Show last year and came away with prizes and significantly we saw at the Royal Bath & West this year the clash of the counties in the form of Somerset and Wiltshire coming head to head to try and retain the county trophy. You might recall that in 2008 this was awarded to Wiltshire, after very many years in the possession of Somerset but in 2009, it once again went back to Somerset. I am pleased to say that this year, following a concerted effort by many members of Branches in the WBKA that it is again safely in Wiltshire's hands. It is also only right to point out the considerable contribution made to this by a number of members and notably Chris Jackson.

This summer saw what has been described as a good beekeeping period. Whilst August was a disappointment in terms of being overcast, nevertheless in many cases the bees have thrived and members report there being honey about! No doubt you will hear about the quality of the yield when the Show Judge reports on the findings. Remaining in the backs of our minds has to be the fact that things in beekeeping aren't the same and we must all be mindful of the underlying problems, in terms of disease etc. Certainly during 2011, your Council will be looking to host a bee husbandry and

disease session, in conjunction with our Bee Inspectors, but this isn't just for beginners as we all need to learn and take onboard new ideas and concepts. I therefore sincerely hope that this will be supported by the wider WBKA community.

This year also saw the issue of spraying coming to a head. I have personally kept bees for about six years and this year was the first time that I was advised that spraying was to take place and I should safeguard by bees. Having developed an understanding with a local agronomist he has advised that inevitably spraying would have taken place around the vicinity of my apiary. So the question has to be why I hadn't been advised? Certainly within the Council, the debate still continues and we need to get to the stage whereby we have a sensible and constructive relationship with the spraying fraternity whereas of late we have demonised them. It is my aim to carry on working with this representative to endeavour to develop that relationship.

An AGM is to round up the year and at the next meeting of the Council, your new officers of this Association are elected. Many of you might wonder what the Council does and WBKA and BBKA might sound a mystery in terms of their roles etc. However, at an Association level we are tasked with ensuring that we have a thriving beekeeping community. I can report that in Wiltshire we are a success story and I could discuss the merits of this all afternoon.

As Chairman, I have the responsibility of determining the recipient of the Howard Teal Cup. This cup is awarded to the Branch that has contributed most to beekeeping over the last year. The decision is never easy and sometimes courts controversy and this year has been equally difficult. However, in light of the wider publicity given to beekeeping across the national and local media relative to Ron Hoskins 'Bees biting back', and the ongoing work that the Branch undertakes, I am awarding the Howard Teal Trophy to Swindon this year. I would therefore like to ask our President to present this to Dennis Simpson on our behalf.

I mentioned that your officers are elected or re-elected shortly to take bee keeping forward through the remainder of 2010 and into 2011. The constitution requires that the Chair has a two year term of office and I have now completed this, so I would like to thank all members of the Council for the work they do and the support provided to me over the last year.

Jerry Wickham

Branch Reports

Kennet

Looking back, it is amazing to see how Kennet has grown as a club. From almost-inevitable extinction, in three years we are now a thriving club of more than 60 members.

This year has continued to see growth in club membership, expansion of the club apiary and the introduction of weekly apiary meetings – though those seem like a distant memory now!

We are now actively looking for a new apiary site to allow that expansion to continue, both in the number of hives and the activities that we can undertake, not least of all is training and education. If anyone has a spare bit of land, we would love to hear from you!

This year also saw us attending the Lacock Honey Day, the Poulshot Feast and the Marlborough Apple Day. All great opportunities to promote bees and beekeeping, as well as allowing us to sell nearly all our honey harvest.

Our first winter meeting included a fantastic talk by Chris Rawlings on ‘Preparing for the Honey Show’ followed at the next meeting by the club Honey Show – for which we have to thank John Chamberlain for taking on the task of judging.

This inspiration and encouragement from two extremely experienced beekeepers must have had some influence as we had two first-time entrants take first prize in their classes. Congratulations to Stan Annis (jar light run honey) and Jeremy Pack (jar soft set honey).

Our AGM in October resulted in the following posts:

Chairman: Jeremy Pack

Vice-chair: Philippa Luscombe

Secretary: (Amelia acting till January)

Treasurer & Membership: Graham Newton-Cox

Library: Kim Seward

Apiary: Keith Hudson

PR & Events: David Beaton

Educational Officer: Fee Robinson

Meetings and Social Secretary: (vacant)

Website: Jeremy "two votes" Pack

Looking forward, there are some beginners courses in the planning – these include a one-day introduction course, a more lengthy beginners course and BBKA Basic revision sessions. This year, four members passed their BBKA Basic exam, hopefully quite a few more will achieve that honour next year, after getting the required twelve months experience under their belt.

We now look forward to some great winter meetings, and not least Christmas skittles party. Finally thanks to Terry for all his great work and enthusiasm, without which there wouldn't be the KBKA we have today.

Amelia Trevethick

Salisbury

Autumn has been relatively mild if a bit wet with the bees being able to fly most days. With the honey crop taken off and colonies prepared for winter our thoughts have turned to next season. Some members have taken the opportunity to go to the autumn sales to buy new equipment and others will be looking at attending courses to improve their knowledge.

The Branch Honey Show and AGM was held at Coombe Bissett village hall on 6th November with 24 members attending. Andy Willis gave a very interesting talk on 'Forge Through the Season' with some extremely useful tips on what plants, shrubs and trees to grow in our gardens which would be good sources of pollen and nectar for our bees. Our thanks go to Carol Drennan and Kath Wilks for providing tea and stickies. Carol sadly had to give up keeping her bees last year when she developed an allergy to bee stings and this has been her last year both as a member of the committee and Branch member. The committee wishes to thank her for her contribution and especially for all the delicious cakes she donated at Branch meetings over the last three years.

The Branch Honey Show was judged by Mike Duffin who praised the standard of exhibits and gave valuable tips on how to improve. Nine members entered a total of 32 exhibits. This year the ladies swept the board with Nancy Shering taking the Wain Cup for most points in show (18), the book token for the best photograph and another book token for best cake. Sally Nelson completed the hat trick by winning the Barter Honey Cup for the best jar of honey, the Sheppard Cup for the Novice gaining the most points

in show (9), and a Thornes voucher for the best Novice jar of honey. We should also congratulate Nancy Shering on her achievement at the Wilts County Honey Show where she was awarded the Blue Ribbon for Best in Show (medium honey), the King Shield for Best Honey, and gained 1st prize for her medium run honey, cake and photograph of hives and apiaries.

The AGM re-elected the President, Vice President and committee with two additions. Nancy Shering replaces Chris Wilks as Secretary and Tony Frewin joins as a committee member. Carol Drennan has withdrawn from the committee.

Your committee will be putting together a programme from January onwards which will include winter training events in addition to the normal winter meetings at St Georges Hall, Harnham. This programme will be published in the newsletter and on the website.

The next event on the Branch calendar is the Christmas Dinner which this year will be held at the Milford Hall Hotel on 8 December at 7.30 pm. If you have not already registered your intention to join us then contact the Treasurer, Rob Eardley (01725 519423).

Chris Wilks

Melksham

Melksham held a wonderful Bee and Honey Day at its new venue, the beautiful Lacock Abbey. We were blessed with good weather and this brought in a steady flow of people throughout the day. It certainly was our best ever event and the committee agreed that the move from the grounds of Lackham to Lacock had been the right decision. The amount of work that had gone into preparation (and there was a lot of it) really paid off as the day ran smoothly without hitch. This was due to the body of workers who gave their time to make it such a success. Thanks must go particularly to Pete Colegate, Roger Tilley and Den Matthews but also to the catering ‘army’ led by Mary Bradshaw who never seemed to stop all day. It was good to see newer members coming forward to assist and many remarked that helping out was the easiest and most enjoyable way of meeting others in the club. We are hoping to hold a similar event next August so we would welcome any new ideas for stalls and attractions.

Melksham also hosted the County Honey Show this year, which was a success not only in terms of the entries for the various classes but also for the excellent speakers.

In October we held our AGM and it was sad to say goodbye to three committee members who have done so much and worked so hard to make our club the success it is. Jerry Wickham stepped down as chair after four years. Roger Tilley who has been such a strong presence in Melksham decided it was time for a rest and Pete Colegate decided to take a break also. We will really miss their input at committee meetings and beyond. Thanks must go to other outgoing committee members, Sue Stokes and Kay Wakefield. Although not on the committee both Debbie Tilley and Julie Colegate have put in a tremendous amount of work so thanks to them also.

But time marches on and we now have a new committee who met for the first time this month and from the positive discussions we had there is no doubt that Melksham has a bright future with new ideas and enthusiasm being generated. So, with a healthy membership of over 130 it can only be onwards and upwards into 2011.

Mary White

West Wilts

The Branch Committee organised a meeting on preparing hive products for sale and show on 6th September, in the hope that many more members would learn how to do well at shows – and so be encouraged to enter our Branch Honey Show. This did not result in much of an increase in the number of exhibitors as some of our strongest contenders at past shows did not exhibit this year. The number of exhibits was about average but we were pleased to see some good entries from some of our newer beekeepers. Nevertheless, the show was well received by the members of the public who came to see it and we had a good write up in two local newspapers. The show was very competently judged by Ross Gregory.

We hoped that we would be able to accumulate enough points in the County Honey Show to retain the Applegate Cup but Melksham Branch just pipped us at the post.

Our Treasurer is hoping that the discount, which full members can claim if they renew their subscriptions before the AGM, will eliminate the extra work which late payers cause him. This year the discount has been increased to £10! With the onset of winter, we have our Branch AGM this month and we are looking forward to our Annual Branch Dinner – which will be held at the Bell at Standerwick again. There will also be some good talks at Branch meetings in the New Year.

David Newell

Swindon

The apiary training sessions have now finished for 2010 and thanks are due to our senior trainers, Ross Gregory and Ron Hoskins who, with their support team have been kept busy all year. This has led to an increase to our membership and possibly to other Branches as some of our participants came from 'far and wide'.

Ross somehow managed to fit in time to study for the BBKA written exam modules himself, passing modules 3 and 4. Ross's other exam success was getting all his students through the BBKA Basic Certificate. Congratulations to Stephen Greenaway, Chris Park, Gloria Sims, Bridget Sinclair, Gary Smith, Marilyn Sweet and Sissel Thomassen. Ross is already seeking students for the 2011 Basic and written modules.

Our Honey Show in September was the first of our indoor winter meetings and we were entertained to a 'live' judging by Hazel Blackburn, ably assisted by our Ron Hill. Hazel managed to point out the positives of our exhibits without too many negatives. Well done to all exhibitors. Best in show went to Peter Hinton for his 'light run honey' which contributed to Peter gaining most points. Best novice award was shared between Dave Gibbs and Avril Earl for their 'six bee products'. Lu (Alison) Haynes's cake took top prize in the honey cake class. Congratulations to you.

Both the number of exhibitors and entries were nearly double that of 2009, which is a great achievement and reflects on how the Branch is expanding both with increased membership but also with the members' participation. Hopefully this level of participation will be continued across all our meetings.

At the recent WBKA Autumn Lectures and Honey Show we managed to gain third place in the Branch points with a lower entry than 2009. Well done to those that entered. Although our member entries were down we shouldn't forget the two stands managed by Chris Park with his skeps and Ron Hoskins, representing Swindon Branch with his display of the work he and the 'Swindon Honeybee Conservation group' have achieved over the last few years. With his recent features in the press and TV, he has given several interviews that have gone from local to national and as far away as Australia, so it was rather apt that he was spotted during the day in deep discussion with Professor Francis Ratnieks, himself an authority on breeding 'grooming bees' at Sussex University. We were also honoured to receive the Howard Teal Cup, in recognition of the work Ron Hoskins has done for publicising beekeeping in Wiltshire

and for the ongoing work our branch undertakes. Congratulations Ron, I'm sure we'll hear more about the 'Bees biting back'.

Ron Hoskins was elected Vice President of Wiltshire Beekeepers Association.

Melksham Branch must be congratulated for putting on an excellent event that included three top-class lecturers.

Professor Francis Ratnieks, UK's only Professor of Apiculture. Lecture on 'Bee research' at Sussex University. Started slowly with a lot of basic information before getting to the really interesting stuff.

Dr Adam Hart, Scientific Director of the Global Bee Project. Lecture on 'Honeybee Communication'. Excellent presentation with easy and sometimes amusing sketches.

Captain Tony Spacey, Littleover Apiaries. Lecture on 'Regulations in Honey Production'. Started by asking who would welcome regulations in honey production- not one hand went up. At the end of his lecture, several had changed their view. He was very controversial.

Following our AGM Ron presented an update on his work and how members could participate with this important work in 2011. Ron will be breeding queens from his 'grooming' colonies to put into a 5 frame nucleus hive with bees. One frame will be drone foundation to allow as many drones as possible to spread their genes in the area. These nucs' will be distributed to create as large an area as possible, thereby saturating the area with drones from 'grooming' colonies and increasing the 'gene-pool' area.

Initially seeking up to 20 beekeepers, with certain conditions eg, you must live in the Swindon area, you must be a competent beekeeper, the nuc has to be in the garden, you will need to carry out regular checks of the debris (using equipment provided) and record the findings.

I do not apologise for mentioning Ron Hoskins several times during the report. His work has warranted this amount of reporting and hopefully with our increased membership in the Branch we could be writing of other achievements by some of our not so 'famous beekeepers' who have something to shout about.

Officers elected at the AGM in October:

President: Ron Hoskins

Chairman: Dennis Simpson

Vice Chairman: Paul Vickery

Secretary: Sue Harris (temporary until a replacement is found)

Membership Secretary: Sue Harris

Treasurer: Clive Harris

Training: Ross Gregory

Swarm Coordinator: Ron Hoskins

Spray Liaison: Ron Hoskins

Publicity Officer: Clive (Tomo) Thompson

Committee Members: Bryan Hopper, Peter Hinton, Alison (Lu) Haynes

Branch meeting programme can be found at the back of this issue. Visitors, and members from other branches are always welcome. We meet at the Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Haydon Wick, Swindon, SN25 1JD (not far from Morrison's, West Swindon).

Dennis Simpson

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Swindon Branch: Ross Gregory (Training Officer) and Dennis Simpson (Chairman) with some of the many students having completed the 'Introduction to Beekeeping' at the TWIGS apiary earlier in the year (when it was warm and sunny)

Photo: Dennis Simpson



Swindon's display at the WBKA Honey Show and Autumn Lectures

Photo: Dennis Simpson

Wood preservers for beehives

In recent weeks, a few other beekeeping association newsletters have identified that the formulation of certain Cuprinol products has changed. A quote from the Cuprinol website (accessed 5 November 2010) states that: “Due to EU legislation Cuprinol has had to change the active ingredients which are used in its wood preservers. New formulations have not been tested for use on beehives and as a result Cuprinol cannot recommend any of its wood preservers on beehives.” These new products have the initials BP at the end of their name.

The Cuprinol Technical Advice Centre have also given the following further information:

- ◆ Products with names ending in BP are not suitable for beehives.
- ◆ The BP formulation is currently under testing. They hope to have the results in 2011.
- ◆ Until then, the only products which are suitable for the exterior surfaces of beehives are as follows:
 - Cuprinol Garden Wood Preserver (DP) Red Cedar (Brush Apply)
 - Cuprinol Trade Decorative Wood Preserver (T) Red Cedar (Brush Apply)
 - Cuprinol Trade Low Odour Wood Preserver Clear (T) (Dip Apply)

However, these products have been discontinued and only BP formulation products are being produced. It should be noted that Cuprinol stress that products which are suitable for beehives must only be applied to the outside surfaces.

Editor, via eBees (Stratford-upon-Avon and others)

Beekkeeping terms explained - a short series

Frame

An open rectangle usually of wood into which a sheet of foundation is nailed. The bees use the foundation as a template to build their comb across the hive. The discovery of beespace in the mid 1800's made modern beekeeping possible as removable frames with exactly the right distance apart enabled the beekeeper to examine and manipulate the colony.

Courtesy of Nottinghamshire BKA via eBees

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Members successful in the 2010 BBKA examinations

Modules

Ross Gregory Modules 3 and 4
Sally Wadsworth Module 5

Basic Certificate

Elizabeth Glover
Stephen Greenaway
Jeremy Pack
Christopher Park
Fiona Robinson
Ben Seward
Kim Seward

Gloria Sim
Bridget Sinclair
Diane Sleigh
Gary Smith
Marilyn Sweet
Sissel Thomassen

Bishop's Cannings Village Hall has been booked for the BBKA Module examinations on 19th March 2011: please let Alan Stonell know if you will be entering.

NOTE: BBKA Basic Certificate entries should be sent to Alan: module entries direct to BBKA

Beekeeping courses in 2011

Why do beekeepers come to Wiltshire from Stirling in Scotland? Haverfordwest in Wales? Kent in England? To attend one of our courses. This will be our third year of offering practical and theoretical beekeeping courses and workshops open to all.

A really enjoyable and very informative day led by trainers who were very approachable and clearly know their stuff!

Student on Introduction to Beekeeping course, 10 April 2010

Date	Course Title	Duration	Cost (£)
5th February	Microscopy for beekeepers	Whole day	30.00
22nd February	Introductory course at Urchfont Manor (also on 2nd April)	Whole day	Contact College 01380 840495
12th March	Introduction to beekeeping	Whole day	25.00
30th April	Introduction to Swarm Control	Half day	15.00
7th May	Early Spring Management	Half day	15.00

To book a place on any of the courses or for further details, look on our website, phone 01380 859052 or email courses@learnbeekeeping.org.uk for a booking form.

Alan Stonell and Sally Wadsworth

www.learnbeekeeping.org.uk



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Books for your Christmas stocking

Queen Breeding and Genetics by Eigil Holm

Published by Northern Bee Books, price: £20 including p&p

This is a large soft-backed book of 93 pages, which was originally published in Danish in 1995, followed by a German edition. This English edition is hot off the press and has many coloured diagrams and photos. However, it is let down by the quality of the cover which is very thin and has already creased on my copy.

The book covers the production of queens including grafting, along with the use of mating nuclei and mating stations. How to improve your stock is also covered – what do **you** want from your bees? More honey? Gentleness? Hygiene?

Making a pedigree is also described, along with the necessary cytology and genetics including a very good description of meiosis. Mendel's laws are introduced in a very readable and understandable way – the use of colour certainly helps here. There is also a chapter on instrumental insemination with some useful photos.

This book is ideal for those contemplating rearing their own queens and wanting to know more about the genetics involved or those of you who are tackling the BBKA module 7 on the selection and breeding of honeybees. Highly recommended!

Keeping Healthy Honey Bees by David Aston & Sally Bucknall

'Keeping Healthy Honey Bees' was published early in 2010 in soft-back. It is readily identified by its cover being a photograph of pollen loads from a number of plant species and hence ranging in colours from white to dark brown.

The authors, David Aston and Sally Bucknall, are based in Yorkshire, and the contents of the book reflect they are experienced instructors in the art of bee keeping in their kind of environment. The key object of the book appears to be to promote the concept of 'Integrated Bee Health Management' (IBHM) which is more holistic than IPM and encompasses the numerous aspects which interact and will affect the health of bees. The authors state that beekeepers are the key to the establishment and maintenance of healthy colonies and they require the knowledge to understand and care for their needs. Careless and ill-informed beekeepers can cause considerable damage and stress to the

bees. It appears that the book is intended to help beekeepers with the knowledge they need.

I suspect the book might have taken some time to be published from when it was first drafted. This is because although the authors appear to be writing with respect to a situation that varroa management regimes do not have to recognise that varroa populations are dominated by pythroid-resistant varroa. The authors have also inserted a number of statements to give the book more relevance to beekeeping outside the UK.

The book is organised in sections including ones titled ‘Approaches to Bee Health Management’, ‘Honey Bee Diseases and Conditions’ and ‘The Essentials of Good Bee Husbandry’. There is no index at the back of the book but the contents listing at the start includes all sub-headings. The authors make no references to published sources but do list at the end of the book a number of others for ‘selected reading’. The authors give a number of check-lists, versions of some of these one finds in other sources. However, a number of these lists will be useful to other instructors and beekeepers preparing for some of the BBKA module exams.

There are various things that I find irritating about the book, especially as someone who has done much writing, editing and peer reviewing. In general the text is reasonably well phrased and written, but occasionally there are some odd uses or lack of punctuation. The book is supposedly by two authors yet in the text they refer to ‘I’. At least 16 times they have used the word significant (or significantly). In a scientific or technical document it should be used only in a statistical context. It is a word extensively misused in common English. It is often used simply, and unnecessarily, to add emphasis to a statement, or is used when it would be appropriate and relevant to use such words as more, greater, larger, distinct, etc. The authors have also succumbed to almost consistently referring to ‘high/higher’ or ‘low/lower’ and the use of ‘level’ when such phrases as ‘greater concentration’, ‘increased quantities’ or ‘smaller amounts’ would be more appropriate. There are other things that irk me but I do not want to put you off reading this book and applying at least some of the advice the authors give. It is a book that should be in club libraries and novice, and not-so novice, beekeepers should read it, perhaps getting their own copy as a book to keep referring to. I hope the book goes to a second and improved edition.

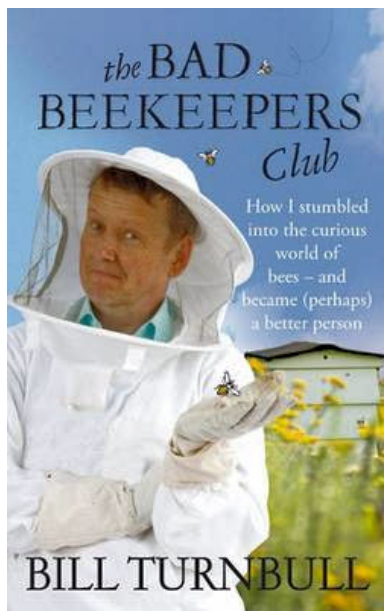
Ross Gregory,

Swindon

The Bad Beekeepers Club - How I stumbled into the curious world of bees – and became (perhaps) a better person by Bill Turnbull

Published by Sphere 2010, price: Amazon £6, WH Smith £8

"Hello. My name is Bill and I'm a bad beekeeper. A really bad beekeeper."



Both a brilliant introduction to the world of beekeeping and a must read for anyone who enjoys a well written memoir with a chuckle or a chortle on almost every page.

Despite many setbacks – including being stung on the head on his first day of training – beekeeping somehow taught Bill a great deal about himself and the world around him – fascinating and hugely engaging.

He writes so well that you feel you are right there in the room - chatty - charming and comfortable. He describes the pitfalls and mistakes that you meet along the beekeeping path and the humour shines through with just enough of the technical stuff. A light hearted account of 'what to do' as well as learning 'what not to do'. I did find that

his accounts of 'Strictly Come Dancing' (2005) rather lost the plot for a few pages but he was soon enough back to his bee duties.

One reviewer offers "Only a few pages in and the tears were coming down my face from laughing and in this vein I finished the book."

I have a bookcase full of learned dry tomes of the technical stuff but I can promise that you will really enjoy *The Bad Beekeepers Club*. Get a copy for yourself or better still put it on your Christmas wish list – it is a real 'cracker'. A copy should be in every branch association library.

Chris Jackson, Melksham

A code of conduct for beekeepers

For the first time in 25 years, I am going into winter without a hive. It's a bit like a bereavement. What makes it worse is that with a little communication, it could have been avoided.

We had two colonies, one fine, the other small. I was watching their progress closely with a view to uniting them. I'd taken the normal precautions against wasps, narrowing the entrances so that there was just a small gap at each end; clearing the windfall apples from near the hives, and putting wasp traps on the hives (from which I couldn't resist rescuing the occasional hornet). Then disaster. Unbeknownst to us, a beekeeper whose hives are about 250 yards from ours as the bee flies had taken off all the honey from 10 hives, leaving them unfed. After a couple of very rainy days, we returned from a family party to find the air thick with bees and carnage outside the hives. Too late, but we did what we could – left just one bee hole in the entrance block, put a sheet of glass across the front of the hive, and even moved one hive right away.

Had we known, we could have protected the bees better. I would have enjoyed standing guard with a hose, drenching the marauders. I could have removed the honey stores, if only temporarily, as we always winter the bees on a brood box plus a full super of honey.

I realise that part of the problem is a culture clash, between a highly managed style of beekeeping and my more bee-centred approach. I also realise that we are lucky to have our bees in our own garden, and to have had no neighbouring hives for so many years. And over those years, I have spent time just watching them, virtually every day. I've seen them develop mutual grooming, which I hope and presume is their response to varroa. I've observed things I've never heard about, such as the way the workers sting the drones in the eyes, when they turf them out of the hive at the end of summer. Presumably the bees can retract their stings from the soft tissue of the eye without damaging themselves, but cleverly blinding the drones so that they can't get back in the hive.

So what I am suggesting is that if any beekeeper is going to do something that is likely to have an impact on neighbouring beekeepers, they should inform them. I'm sure we are all agreed that bees need all the help they can get.

Lindy Paramor, Salisbury

A handy checklist

Over the last month or two, I have had a number of calls from new beekeepers phoning to check about problems which they have encountered with their bees this season. As always, my advice is to get to know what normal healthy bees and brood look like and check if you are unhappy or not sure about what you see in your colony - quite often Sally or I will go and have a look at them with the beekeeper.

Inspecting the brood combs of a honeybee colony is the only way to determine the health and general condition of the colony. However, you have to know what you are looking at and what it means in order to make a diagnosis.

In general, a healthy brood comb simply 'looks healthy'. The brood cappings have a 'digestive biscuit' colour; the larvae are white, glistening and 'fat'. The cappings of the brood cells are uniform and the overall pattern is solid, with few holes. A good queen will start laying eggs in the lower centre of the combs and radiate out from there. Once the oldest brood emerges, the queen lays in those cells, and the youngest brood on the comb will now be in the centre. Once the brood-rearing cycle gets underway in the spring or following the introduction of a new queen, all stages of brood should be found at each inspection.

I came across this check list recently which would be helpful when inspecting your colonies. Here are some conditions you may observe during your brood inspections and their possible causes:

No eggs, no brood present

- (a) Not brood-rearing season.
- (b) No queen.
- (c) New queen not yet laying.
- (d) Extended shortage of pollen.

No eggs, but brood present

- (a) Brood-rearing ceased - end of the season.
- (b) Queen has died or colony is preparing to swarm.
- (c) Lack of pollen curtailed brood-rearing.

Test for Presence of a Queen

If there are no eggs and you can't determine if there is a queen present, put in a brood comb with young larvae from another colony. Check back in three days; if the suspect hive starts queen cells, it has no queen.

Eggs present, but no brood

Brood-rearing has just resumed after being halted for some reason.

Wet-looking pollen - in the centre of the broodnest

If there is no queen and during the off-season, pollen may be stored in the centre of the brood nest and can take on an unkempt look - wet or glazed over. When the workers anticipate needing the pollen to feed brood, they move the pollen and freshen it up and it has a dry look.

Clean, empty cells - in the centre of the broodnest

The opposite of the wet-pollen look. When the workers anticipate that brood cells will be needed for eggs, they move nectar and pollen out of the way and give the cells a polish.

Too many eggs per cell

- (a) Young, inexperienced queen, usually settles down quickly to laying one egg per cell.
- (b) Something happened to queen and laying workers developed.

Scattered brood

Same-age brood scattered over the comb, not in adjacent cells, means:

- (a) A failing queen running out of sperm.
- (b) Something is killing the brood. In early spring, cold nights when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm can result in chilled brood. Sometimes pesticides or poison pollen can cause scattered patterns.

Clue: Is only one colony showing the symptoms, or are several?

Raised cappings on worker cells

The cappings look like the ends of bullets. Cause: Drone brood is developing in worker cells, because:

- (a) Queen has become a drone-layer. Usually her sperm reserves are depleted, due to her age.
- (b) Laying workers; lay only infertile eggs, resulting in drones.

Raised cappings in drone cells

Normal drone brood has a 'bullet' look, but not as pronounced as when it is in worker cells. Normally, queens lay unfertilized eggs in the larger (both in circumference and depth) drone cells. These are frequently found around the bottom edges of the brood comb and in areas where the comb has been damaged. The presence of some drone brood indicates a vigorous, well-nourished colony.

Queen cells

Queen cells are constructed along a vertical plane, as contrasted with the horizontal plane of worker and drone brood cells. They somewhat resemble peanuts (in the shells).

- (a) Queen cells near the centre of the comb, growing out of worker brood cells - these are replacement cells the workers have developed in emergency loss of queen.
- (b) Queen cells everywhere, particularly near bottom of comb. This is swarm preparation - the old queen will soon depart with about half the bees (called the 'prime swarm').

Tip: For a quick check of swarm preparation, in a hive with two brood boxes, break the boxes apart and look along the bottom bars and bottoms of the combs in the top box. Most colonies preparing to swarm will show cells along comb bottoms.

Dead larvae (not white)

- (a) Chilled due to cold snap (usually in spring) when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm.
- (b) Died due to lack of care for some reason.
- (c) Disease: Sacbrood, American foulbrood, European foulbrood. Call the Bee Inspector.
- (d) Pesticide damage.

Mummified larvae

Older stage larvae turn white and hard . This is probably Chalkbrood.

Mouldy pollen

Soft, white stuff in pollen cells - probably due to insufficient hive ventilation.

What about mites?

After some training, you can pretty easily identify *Varroa* mites on adult bees' abdomens and on your open mesh floor tray. Also, you can uncap pupae and pull them out of the cells and check for dark *Varroa* attached to the white pupae. *Varroa* are especially attracted to drone brood and can often be found in the bottom end of the cells from which drone pupae are extracted. They may run out of the cells as pupae are being extracted.

Adapted from the Beehive, published by Northwest Ohio Beekeepers Association.,

Alan Stonell

Kennet

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2010 County Honey Show results

Class	First (3 points)	Second (2 points)	Third (1 point)	Highly Commended
1. Jar light run honey	STAN ANNISS (KE)	ROGER TILLEY(ME)	PETER HINTON (SW)	NANCY SHERING (SA)
2. Jar medium run honey	NANCY SHERING (SA)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	ARTHUR GOODHEAD (WW)	PAM CLARK (WW)
3. Jar dark run honey	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)	PAM CLARK (WW)	
4. Jar soft set honey	JEREMY PACK (KE)	PAM CLARK (WW)	COLIN TAYLOR (ME)	LIZ TAYLOR (ME)
5. Novice run honey	DEBBIE PEARCE (WW)	SUE DRINKWATER (ME)	JAYNE RANGER (ME)	ROGER FROUD (ME)
6. Jar chunk honey	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)	MARY BRADSHAW (ME)	
7. Section comb honey	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)			
8. Cut comb 8oz	ROSS GREGORY (SW)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)	MARY BRADSHAW (ME)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)
9. Frame for extraction	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	DIANE SLEIGH (WW)		
10. Bottle dry mead	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	BOB NEEDS (ME)	
11. Bottle sweet mead	PAM CLARK (WW)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	COLIN TAYLOR(ME)
12. Beeswax polish	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	DEBBIE PEARCE (WW)	HAZEL SIMONS (ME)
13. Beeswax cream	PAM CLARK (WW)	DEBBIE PEARCE (WW)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	BOB NEEDS (ME)
14. Beeswax mould 8oz	PETER HINTON (SW)	MARY BRADSHAW (ME)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)
15. Pair of candles	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	MARY BRADSHAW (ME)	NOT AWARDED
16. 6 Bee products	DEBBIE PEARCE (WW)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	NANCY SHERING (SA)
17. 12 honey biscuits	ROGER TILLEY (ME)	BOB NEEDS (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	GERALDINE LENERT (WW)
18. 12 honey sweets	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	LIZ TAYLOR (ME)	PAM CLARK (WW)	COLIN TAYLOR (ME)
19. Honey cake to recipe	NANCY SHERING (SA)	PAM CLARK (WW)	CHRIS RAWLINGS (WW)	BOB CUNNINGHAM (WW)
20(1) Photo: Bees & Bees on Plants	RACHEL DUFFET (ME)	SUE DRINKWATER (ME)	CHRIS PARK (SW)	JAYNE RANGER (ME)
20(2) Photo : Beekeepers	SHONA WILLIAMS (ME)	ROSS GREGORY (SW)	DAVID NEWELL(WW)	ROBIN HEREWARD-ISAAC (WW)
20(3) Photo: Hives or Apiaries	NANCY SHERING (SA)	SHONA WILLIAMS (ME)	CHRIS JACKSON (ME)	RACHEL DUFFET (ME)

2010 County Honey Show results continued

Branch contributing the most to WBKA (Howard Teal Cup): Swindon BKA

Most points individual (Methuen Cup): Chris Jackson (Melksham)

Branch most points (Applegate Trophy): Melksham BKA

Best in Show (Blue Ribbon): Nancy Shering (Salisbury)

Best mead (Norman Lovegrove Memorial Trophy): Pam Clark (West Wilts)

Best honey (King Shield): Nancy Shering (Salisbury)

Best frame for extraction (David Wicks Cup): Chris Jackson (Melksham)

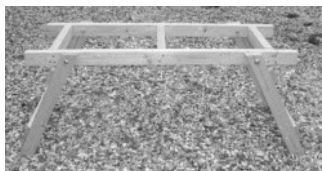
Total Number of Entries = 174 (140 in 2009)

Total Number of Competitors = 38 (26 in 2009)

Debbie Tilley

Melksham

Alan Wadsworth - Beekeeping Equipment



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Moving house

Like so many people these days, I'm a new beekeeper. I'd seen a demonstration at the Royal Show in 2008 which led me to go on a taster day at a city farm in North London. The touch paper was lit. I attended my Branch training course in the winter of 2009 and was looking forward to getting stuck in, oh and very nervous.

My over wintered (thoroughly nurtured) nuc was ready for collection, probably one of the slowest and funniest car journeys I've ever made. The hive was lifted onto the stand, the pyracantha in a pot was put in place to attempt to slow the girls down a bit on the first foray, and the sponge was removed. A trickle of bees appeared, lovely. The first few took off, whizzing out and then the circular funnel of bees were having a look around, what a delight to watch. The first couple of weeks of beekeeping were a nervous joy.

The phone call from my tutor, 'I've collected a swarm, they're in a hive, you need more bees don't you, is tonight ok for you to collect them?' Umm, 'yes, ok, what time?' Another slow, not quite so funny but more nervous journey with a colony of bees in the car, am I ready for another colony, can I keep track, will I look after them properly? Second colony in place in the garden at a jaunty angle

from the first, well you don't want to encourage drifting.

I had a look at number two before leaving for work the next morning, plenty of girls out and about taking advantage of the early summer warmth, great, all seems to be ok, another successful introduction. 6pm, home from work, what a lovely warm evening, glanced over at number two, no bees, hmm. The first colony (number 9 there's a story) were out and about in their hundreds, bright yellow legs, all seemed as it should be. I put my suit on, lit the smoker, best have a quick look to see what's happening in number two. I took the lid off, talk about Marie Celeste! There was one bee, I was so disappointed, they had upped and left. I gazed into the hive for several minutes interspersed with glancing around, in case they were coming back?!

About a week later, still nursing injured ignorance, yes I should have put a queen excluder underneath the brood box, I was walking near a small copse where I live. There are three derelict hives in this copse which I had a look through about a month before with permission from the landowner. The only obvious living creatures being a mouse and a lot of snails, a lot of wax moth damage to the wood and the whole lot ready for the bonfire.

Well, you know what was coming and going this time, honeybees. I watched for several minutes, bright yellow legs, lots of activity in the dappled sunlight. The minxes, they must be my absconded bees, it's only a field away, rather have a disgusting old box like that than the lovely new linseeded box in the garden, there's no accounting for taste.

I needed help. My tutor came along and we started to take the hive apart. It was disgusting. Did I mention the part where I ran across the clearing because I'd forgotten to light the smoker and these bees were busy? No, oh, well let's just say at least four got to me.

As the bees had made a good start at building comb across the frames, we couldn't lift any out without breaking the comb. So we cleaned the top of the frames off, gave them a new, open mesh

floor, see old floor above and decided to put a clean brood box on top to see if they'd come up of their own accord.

We retreated with a wheel barrow of old comb in bags, a couple of supers that might be enticed back to life after a good scrub with soda crystal solution and scorching. I went back the next day, filling the brood box with frames, adding an eke with a tray of honey in comb (from a reputable source) to entice them up into the new box. I waited - patiently - for three weeks. I lit the smoker, I'm learning! Roof off, no honey in the comb, good so they've been upstairs. I looked in the upper brood box, a couple of bees but the rest were still in the horrid old box down below. Cheeky girls have had it away with the honey and stayed where they were.

Diane Sleigh, West Wilts



Old comb
Photo: Diane Sleigh

Beeswax handcream

Ingredients:

1 oz clean beeswax
5 fl oz almond oil
1 oz coconut oil
30 ml rosewater
¼ teaspoon borax

Method

Heat together the beeswax and oils in a water bath until melted.
Heat the rosewater, add the borax and stir until completely dissolved.
When both mixtures are just warm, mix together and stir well until fully emulsified.
Pour into pots or jars.

Please be aware that this recipe uses beeswax which is very flammable.

With thanks to L&DBKA and eBees

Honey beer

So, you have extracted your honey and now have a whole load of wet cappings to deal with. What will you do with them? Well, you could heat them to recover the honey - or you could wash them and use the washings to make mead - or you could try this honey beer:

Ingredients

1 lemon
1½lb dark honey
½ oz hops
1 teaspoon granulated yeast (a beer one would be best - or bread yeast)
1 gallon water

Method

Peel the lemon rind, avoiding the white pith. Squeeze the juice and strain to remove pips. Dissolve the honey in 2 pints of the water in a bucket. Put the rest of the water into a large pan with the hops and lemon rind. Bring to the boil and boil gently for 30 minutes. Strain the hop water into the honey solution and leave to cool. Discard the hops and lemon rind. Add the activated yeast and lemon juice into the cooled mixture, cover over and leave for 3-4 days in a warm place to ferment. When fermentation has ceased, siphon into sterilised 1 pint beer bottles, leaving an air space at the top. Add half a level teaspoon sugar to each bottle. Seal with plastic pop-off caps and leave in a warm room to ferment in the bottles for a few days. Store for at least 2 weeks in a cool, dark place before drinking.

With thanks to eBees – courtesy of Stratford on Avon BKA

Calendar of Events 2010-2011

December 2010

6th West Wilts: Beekeeping Question Time

8th Salisbury: Christmas Dinner, Milford Hall Hotel, Castle Street, Salisbury

9th Swindon: Skittles at Haydon Wick Club

January 2011

7th Kennet: Robert Carpenter-Turner, Other people's bees

19th Salisbury: Members' meeting

21st West Wilts: Annual Branch Dinner: The Bell at Standerwick

27th Swindon: Jo Trussler, Coleshill NT

February

4th Kennet: TBA

23rd (Wed) Swindon: Dinner at the Tawny Owl

March

3rd Swindon: Sally Wadsworth, Management of the Long Hive.

4th Kennet: Tony Herbert, The Herbert Hive and his African project

14th West Wilts: Tony Herbert, Swarm Control

31st Swindon: Nigel Semmence, Regional Bee Inspector

April

11th West Wilts: Ian Homer, How to keep your bees healthy

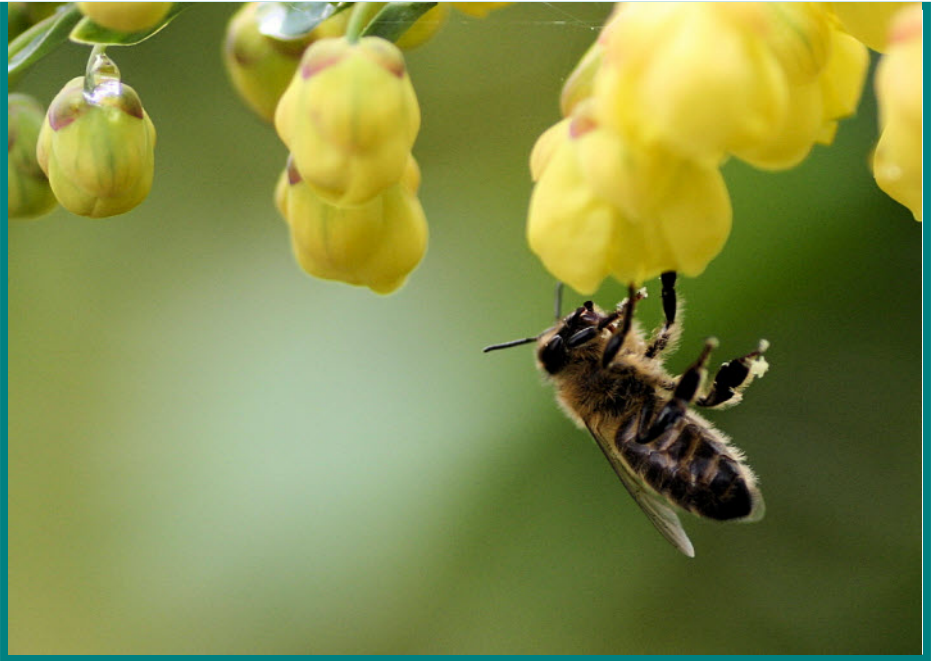
Topical hint - using oxalic acid

Oxalic acid may be administered to your bees as a treatment against *Varroa* during the broodless period, that is, mid-December to early January. It works by damaging the mouthparts of the mite so that they are unable to feed. It is not registered by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate as a product for use against *Varroa*, but can be used as a hive cleanser.

It is available either as crystals which have to be added to sugar syrup at the appropriate concentration or as a ready made 3.2% oxalic acid in sugar syrup solution in a trickle bottle. The method of application is to trickle 5 ml of the solution along each seam of bees, up to a maximum of 50 ml per colony. This can be done very quickly, especially if two of you work together, thereby minimising the time that the hive is open. As with all medicines, always read the label before use!

Oxalic acid should not be stored for very long as it changes colour and there is an increase in the HMF level - so use fresh solution every year. Finally, for all medicaments administered to your bees, you should keep a record of the medicine bought, the batch number, the date of purchase, the supplier and the date(s) of application.

Sally Wadsworth



November 6th 2010 *The light was falling and I saw this solitary bee on a Mahonia bush right by the apiary. I wondered if she was taking nectar but she was collecting pollen - a lovely pale primrose yellow, almost Cornish cream. The plant is now in full flower - a rich and heady perfume and the flowers will bloom right through the winter. **Photo:**Chris Jackson*

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