

# Beelines - October 2010

The Monthly Newsletter  
of the Melksham and District  
Beekeepers Association



**Melksham scoops the awards but  
there are dark clouds on the  
horizon**

Photos: Steve Summers

Beelines is the monthly journal of the Melksham and District Beekeepers Association.

It is free to members, £1 to non-members.

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This newsletter is set in 12pt font, which reduces to about 6pt when printed in booklet form. If you need a larger print, let me know and I will email or post you a full-size copy.

These newsletters are now on the Wiltshire site at <http://bit.ly/asXnXL>

If you're reading this as a PDF, you will find that the weblinks are live.



# From the editor

Pickwick

Corsham

25th October 2010

Dear Member, I went to my first County Honey Show on Saturday, and to my surprise, I enjoyed it (I spend too much of my life sitting and listening to want much more of the same).

Roger had pulled off quite a coup. Prof Ratnieks is a top bee man, and it showed. Although he covered familiar ground, he brought out nuances and new information that was relevant and interesting.

Adam Hart gave a very lively talk and Captain Tony Spacey made a challenging and knowledgeable plea for greater regulation in the honey business. I shall certainly be buying some more testing apparatus before next year.

And I failed to gain even an honourable mention for my entries into the three photographic classes. Having seen the quality of the other entries, I was suitably humbled and vowed to do better next year.

But onto the dark clouds ... a number of committee members are resigning this year, for various reasons. Some have "done their bit" and wish to step down, some have done more than their fair share and need to pay more attention to other parts of their lives.

So Jerry, Roger, Pete, Sue and Kay will take on less next year, which leaves the Branch at a turning point. I'm hoping that new members and long-standing members will step into the breach and carry the Branch forwards.

Please read Andrew Farebrother's "chat from the chair" on the next page.

Steve

PS. I had about three responses to my questionnaire about the frequency and content of Beelines.

I was planning a glorious graph showing your opinions in full technicolour....

I have interpreted the result as "every two months".

So be it.

# Chat from the Chair

How was your beekeeping year? Did you have successes, were your hives flowing with honey or was your harvest more modest? Or perhaps this was your first year and you were in receipt of a swarm and were putting your efforts into building it up.

Either way, many of you brought your harvest to our branch honey show at the end of September and the entries from both Novice and experienced beekeeper made an impressive display all laid out and ready for judging, while we were entertained by an excellent talk.

As my bees and I wind down for the winter months, I hope that my varroa treatment has been sufficient and they have stores enough to last - a pack of fondant on the top should make sure. I do need to add mouse-guards (when I find where I put them at the start of the season) and I again need to replenish the wasp traps I have had in place since July as I still see a number of wasps desperately trying to gain access to my hives, though hopefully the cold weather and frosts will sort that problem out.

This year has been a good year for the MBKA - successful training course, an extremely successful move of the Bee and Honey day to

Lacock Abbey, hosting of the County show, some excellent speakers for the meetings, the continued development of the apiary at Lackham and an increase in membership.

Many of these activities have been driven by our current committee and its through their dedication that these events have been so successful and enjoyable for us all.

But a number of the committee have been in the role for a while and now feel the need to step back.

You will have received this copy of Beelines at our Annual General Meeting on 25th October where you will have been urged to step forward and take a more active role in the club and I ask you to consider if you can make that commitment and take a place on the committee - or perhaps share a role?

After all, it is your club.

Please take the time to read through the article with regard to the committee.

**Andrew Farebrother**



# County Honey Show



The **Honey Show** was held on Saturday, 16th October.

At the AGM, there were 60+ names on the list of attendees, including 11 from Melksham.

Which means that less than 10% of our membership attended the county AGM, held on our turf.



The doctor will see you now. Just *pop* onto this couch...

Peter and Katie working hard on the show entries.

Professor Ratnieks talking about the Sussex Plan for Honey Bee Health and Well Being.

He donated his fee to charity.



A good entry in all classes, with novices classes receiving very favourable comments from the judges.

# More from the County Honey show



Chris Jackson wins cup for most individual points from Duncan Hames MP.

Pete accepts award for Melksham branch for the most points.



The hardworking and helpful judges.

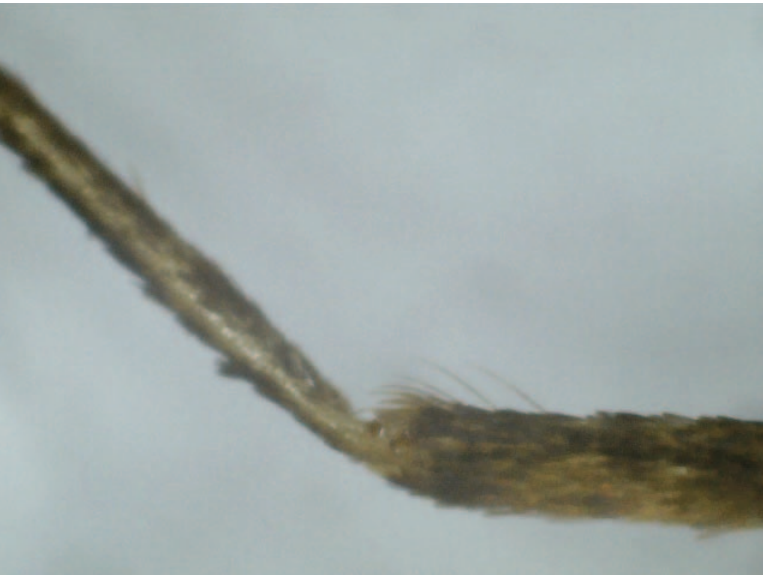


## Small Ads

Three WBC hives (still) for sale. Two are available now, the third will be ready late Spring 2011. Condition varies from almost new to rather old. Reason for sale: moving to polyhives. Contact the editor (details on Page 2).

Small ads are free to members.

# Product review

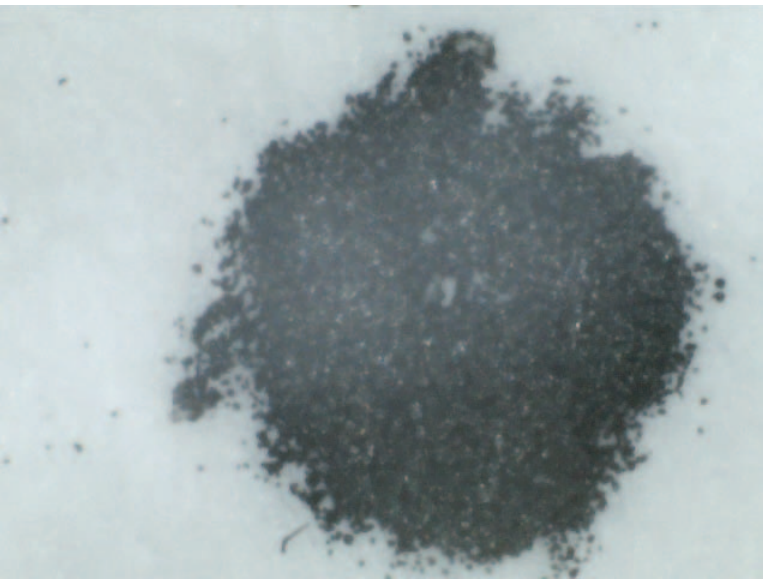


A fruit fly's elbow.

Inspired by **Martin Ellis** demonstrating his USB microscope last week, I bought one from Amazon for £39.99.

See [/amzn.to/axkP56](http://amzn.to/axkP56)

Here are some photos I have taken in the 20 minutes since I unwrapped it.



The fullstop on a laser printed page. You can clearly see the particles of carbon.

Installation was easy on my Mac - just copy the app to the apps folder, click and go.

Might be harder on Windows. Can't say.



A hair root on my face. Note the cut made by the electric razor this morning.

Looks good enough to illustrate an article about bee morphology.

I will try to get some pics of bees. See the next Beelines.

# Steamy stuff

A Branch member who prefers to be known only as H, sent me this.

I started to have thoughts about a wet beesuit competition at the next summer event.

In the hot weather it has been purgatory to wear a polyester beesuit and in desperation I paraded in front of my husband before going down to see to a swarm of bees in the village.

"Can you see I've got no trousers under this suit?"

Having been assured that this fact was not evident, I set off.

I was meeting a would-be beekeeper who was to take delivery of the bees and we collected them up and took them to his garden.

By this time it had started to rain and my beesuit was sticking to me.

We got the bees into the hive and my companion asked me in for a cup of tea.

At this point I had to admit I was pretty wet and hadn't got any trousers under the suit.

He said "I thought you were looking a bit cheeky! I've been looking at you in that suit!"

I said "Thanks, Pat! Always the true gentleman!"

I think it's time I invested in a cotton suit.

Thanks to **Mary White**, Treasurer, for the accounts summarised to the right.

# Finances

## Melksham & District Beekeepers' Association Income and Expenditure Account Year ending September 30 2010

£ 2,009.00	<b>Income</b>	£	<b>2,010.00</b>
	Subscriptions	£	1,172.00
	BDI premiums	£	193.75
	Donations /courses	£	20.00
	Capitation fees	£	1,470.43
	Profit Teas & Raffle	£	712.69
	Courses	£	1,488.00
	Honey day/taster day	£	1,680.15
	Refunds	£	38.75
	Honey sales	£	254.82
£ 5,573.29	<b>Total income</b>	£	<b>7,030.59</b>
	<b>Expenditure</b>		
	Beelines	£	532.10
	Insurance	£	78.97
	Apiary	£	1,784.70
	Postage	£	60.89
	Rental	£	345.44
	Capitation Fees	£	1,775.89
	BDI Premiums	£	265.10
	Speakers	£	195.00
	Misc expenses	£	27.39
	Refunds	£	250.24
	Catering costs	£	271.59
	Viewer/screen	£	480.69
	Honey day	£	456.32
	Course	£	65.38
	Gazebo	£	148.00
£ 4,203.98	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	£	<b>6,737.70</b>
£ 1,369.31	Profit/Loss	£	<b>292.89</b>
	Balance Sheet		
	Current Assets		
£ 3,647.94	Cash at Nat West Bank	£	3,940.83
£ 33.33	Cash in hand	£	33.33
£ 3,681.27	<b>Total</b>	£	<b>3,974.16</b>
	Represented by		
	Represented by		
£ 2,311.96	2008 B/F	£	3,681.27
£ 1,369.31	Surplus income	£	292.89
£ 3,681.27	<b>Total</b>	£	<b>3,974.16</b>

# Book Review



Go to [amzn.to/9LXAWI](http://amzn.to/9LXAWI)

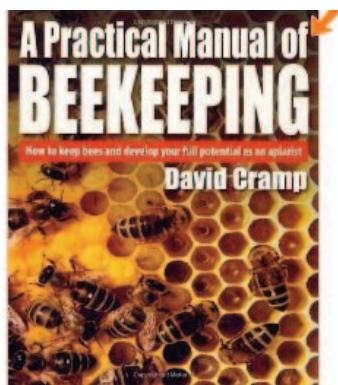
**Practical Manual of Beekeeping**

**David Cramp**

2008

£8.54 from Amazon.

*Editor*



On the plus side, it's very readable and easily as comprehensive as Hooper's "Guide to Bees and Honey". It's more up to date, dealing with Varroa and using non-sexist language. Beekeepers can now be referred to as "she"!

The David Cramp writes from experience and from the heart. I felt enormous sympathy for him when tells how his bee farm is wiped out by a forest fire - and is uninsured. There but for the grace of God...

He isn't dogmatic. He often gives three or four different ways of doing something - and then recommends what he thinks is the best.

He doesn't spend too much

time on the biology. I really don't care which genus or species a bee is, I just want to know how to keep them healthy and productive. If you disagree, there are plenty of books (like de Bruyn) that has more depth on that subject.

On the minus side, it just doesn't have enough photos or other illustrations, which is unforgiveable in a book about a practical subject.

It could help the just-past-novice reader a bit more. The section on queen rearing is a bit skimpy.

# Caption competition



*Oh, Honey: This love was simply meant to "bee."*

suggests **Chris Jackson**.

I'm sure you can do better.

(I'm sure anyone can do better :-)

Answers by email please. Results in next issue.

# The bees knees

**Brian Wilson** provided this learned piece of research, based on information found at [www.phrases.org.uk](http://www.phrases.org.uk).

Meaning: - *Excellent - the highest quality.*

It's difficult to know if we need an etymologist or an entomologist for this one.

We all know that Bees carry pollen in sacs on their legs. It is tempting to explain this phrase as alluding to the concentrated goodness to be found around a bee's knee, but there's no evidence to support this explanation.

It is also sometimes said to be a corruption of 'business', but there's no evidence to support that either.

Nor is there any connection with another earlier phrase, 'a bee's knee'.

In the 18th century this was used as a synonym for smallness, but has since disappeared from the language.

'Bee's knees' began to be used in early 20th century America.

Initially, it was just a nonsense expression that denoted something that didn't have any meaningful existence - the kind of thing that a naive apprentice would be sent to the stores to ask for, like a 'sky-hook' or 'striped paint'.

That meaning is apparent in a spoof report in the New Zealand newspaper *The West*

*Coast Times* in August 1906, which listed the cargo carried by the SS *Zealandia* as 'a quantity of post holes, 3 bags of treacle and 7 cases of bees' knees'.

The teasing wasn't restricted to the southern hemisphere. The US author Zane Grey's 1909 story, *The Shortstop*, has a city slicker teasing a yokel by questioning him about make-believe farm products.

There's no profound reason to relate bees and knees other than the jaunty-sounding rhyme.

In the 1920s it was fashionable to use nonsense terms to denote excellence - 'the snake's hips', 'the kipper's knickers', 'the cat's pyjamas/whiskers', 'the monkey's eyebrows' and so on.

Of these, the bee's knees and the cat's whiskers (of those that can be printed in polite society ed!) are the only ones to have stood the test of time.

The nonsense expression 'the bee's knees' was taken up by the socialites of Roaring 20's America and added to the list of 'excellent' phrases.

A printed reference in that context appears in the Ohio newspaper *The Newark Advocate*, April 1922, in a piece on newly coined phrases: "You may wonder when, you hear flapper chatter in typical flapper language. 'Apple Knocker,' for instance and 'Bees Knees.' That's flapper talk".

Clearly the phrase must have

been new then for the paper to plan to take the trouble to define it.

Several U.S. newspapers did feature lists of phrases under 'Flapper Dictionary' headings. Although 'bee's knees' isn't featured, they do show the time as being a period of quirky linguistic coinage.

One tenuous connection between the bee's knees and an actual bee relates to Bee Jackson.

Ms. Jackson was a dancer in 1920s New York and popularised the Charleston, being credited by some as introducing the dance to Broadway in 1924.

She went on to become the World Champion Charleston dancer and was quite celebrated at the time.

It's not beyond the bounds of possibility that the expression became popular in reference to her and her very active knees, but 1924 postdates the origin of the phrase.



# The Herbert hive in use

This article from **Alan Stonell** and **Sally Wadsworth** follows on from **Tony Herbert's** talk to the Melksham Branch last January.

The Herbert hive is a fascinating hybrid between a regular hive with removable frames and a top-bar hive.

Inventing a new hive and having your name on it. How cool is that?

In my topbar hive, the bees have stuck the comb to the wall in several places.

They are not supposed to do that if the angle is right.

They haven't read the plan!

But they seem to be behaving in this hive.

I look forward to further articles on the Herbert hive.

*Ed.*

There are two schools of thought about modern beekeeping – the traditional line using standard hives and equipment and the natural beekeepers (of the barefoot variety) - both have their followers.

However, following Tony's visit and talk to the Branch last January, it inspired us to try to a half-way house (the best of both worlds).

The hive is a top bar hive and requires minimal input from Thornes (or any other manufacturer) after the initial outlay for the hive box itself.

The colony produces a nest of natural comb constructed as it would in the wild, but still enables the beekeeper to examine the comb on movable top bars.



*The Herbert hive without crown board or roof*

The top bars have gaps between them to allow standard or half supers to be placed on top and in the autumn for Varroa treatment and feeding to take place.

The drop down sides enable the progress of the colony to be examined with minimal disturbance and queen cells to be observed during the swarming season.

Another advantage is that standard National equipment may be used on this box, for example, crown board, queen excluder, supers and roof.

So, how has our colony fared?

We introduced a small colony into the new box in late July, treated it for Varroa and fed it well to build up for the winter. It has now developed to eight combs – see photo below



*Inside the Herbert hive*

Next year we hope to be able to apply a queen excluder and supers above and will be using it as part of our teaching programme (see [www.learnbeekeeping.org.uk](http://www.learnbeekeeping.org.uk))

An article appeared in the June 2010 Beekeepers Quarterly written by Tony Herbert and either plans or complete hives are available from [www.alanwadsworth.co.uk](http://www.alanwadsworth.co.uk) with a percentage of profits going to Tony's Tanzanian beekeeping project.



# Ads

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**BA14 9RQ**

**Find me on the A361 just past the 30mph sign on the right as you approach Southwick from North Bradley.**

**Alan Stonell and Sally Wadsworth** suggest the following books and journals to educate and while away those long winter months until you can get back to the apiary.

*"Keeping Bees, a complete practical guide"*  
Paul Peacock

*"Keeping healthy honeybees"* David Aston & Sally Bucknall

*"Honeybee Democracy"* Thomas Seeley

*"The Honey Bee Around and About"* Celia Davis

*"The Honey Bee Inside Out"* Celia Davis

Why not take out a subscription to Beekeeper's Quarterly (10 or more subscribers qualify for a big discount - contact Northern Bee Books) - or a subscription to BeeCraft - see [www.bee-craft.com](http://www.bee-craft.com).



# Beekeeper's Diary

**Brian Wilson** reports on his first year as a beekeeper.

## Autumn closing

I have written this about my first hive.

I read an article by Ian Douglas. Published: Daily Telegraph 13 Oct 2010 and thought I could develop the idea.

There's a steady stream of bees in the air, darting back and forth in the weak sunshine. It's well into October now, and they're taking advantage of what must be one of the last days that will be warm enough to forage this year.

I got my first swarm in July (thanks to all at MBKA - Roger and Pete et al); since then, we (the bees and myself!) have been fighting wasps, collecting food and building up the colony - but it still a bit on the small side.

So, careful attention is needed to ensure the colony comes through the winter.

The colony is a good one - they are quiet, varroa is absent (cross my fingers), combs are well built and there is little brace comb - so I will do anything to see a strong colony in 2011.

Going into winter they should really be filling all of the 12 frames but only 4 or 5 are completely packed - some still with brood - with others showing patches of activity.

During our training days we were told that a colony of bees spends winter in a ball with the queen in the centre. The workers shiver their wing muscles to generate heat, and they slowly work their way through the honey they tucked away in the flower-filled months of summer, converting sugar into warmth.

This means that I have to ensure that there is enough food stored away and insulation to keep them at around 35C they might well survive the winter, despite their small population.

So, during the bad weather I have been feeding my bees sugar solution - when it is cool/damp the solution is soon used up - but, as recently, when the sun shines the bees were very active working on the ivy flowers that surround my hive.

The "buzz" noise around the hive was audible from some feet away.

But I know that this honey often becomes hard - so I will have to keep my eye on this.

But I can see that my feeding of sugar solution has not gone to waste.

The honey stores are a beautiful sight, the wax pure white over the regular honeycomb, and the bees look big and healthy as they go about their business.

There are complete frames with honey stores, others contain capped brood and new grubs in the centre, with pollen and honey surrounding them.

A little mental maths (approximately 2kg of honey per frame) tells me that they have a little more than half of what my colony needs to feed itself, so my small nucleus will need further supplies before spring.

I'll be glad of an excuse to come back, if I'm honest I will miss the bees over winter.

So now, once the weather has turned our training reminded us to fit a mouse guard, use insulation around the brood box (whilst ensuring a good air flow), guarding against woodpeckers - but most important of all, ensuring there is sugar solution available now and then moving onto fondant to support my hive over the winter.

I'll return to give them their Christmas present of hard sugar paste, but for now they're on their own.

# Beekeeping on a budget

The third part of a great series from **Chris Jackson**.

Chris says that this episode is mainly for beginners.

You have probably already collected a few 'bits and pieces' of beekeeping equipment and it is sensible to keep them all together.

You can use a basket, a trug or a cardboard box but later you may want to invest in a proper toolbox.

You may find one at a car-boot sale for a pound or two or you can buy one from 'FOCUS' or similar DIY shops for less than £10.

Two essential items are a smoker and a hive-tool but you will soon collect a few more 'bits and pieces'.

There are no firm rules but the list below may be useful.

Also, look in other beekeepers' toolboxes.

You don't want to load yourself down with a 'shed-full of stuff' but some of them may be really useful.

At the top of my list: drawing pins, duct tape, foam rubber (for closing up the entrance), a queen cage, a notebook and a pencil.



You may also want a few Porter escapes, some perforated zinc, a cigarette lighter and some matches and of course a supply of smoker material.

A small spirit level is useful to set up the hive, especially if you use Ashford feeders.

A small bucket or two is useful - one to contain a strong washing-soda solution and perhaps a handy container in which to save all those scraps of brace-wax and propolis, perhaps the bottom-half of a 4 pint milk bottle.

A few other nick-knacks can be seen in the photo.

Many beekeepers have their own favourite smoker fuel and most of these are free and readily available.

For starting the smoker you could use some old 'J' cloths

once they are dried and shredded.

I use vine clippings in a tin bucket, dried on a radiator or an Aga.

These vine clippings will keep for years in the shed and it makes a nice cool smoke; it is said that it pacifies the bees. Ian Homer, former our regional bee inspector, recommends citrus peel, dried until crisp.

Roger Tilley prefers old rotten wood that is dust-dry.

# Honey show results

Thanks to **Debbie Tilley** for these results and all the hard work that they represent.

MELKSHAM BRANCH HONEY SHOW RESULTS 2010		Held at Bowerhill Village Hall on Monday 27th september 2010		Judge: Tom Salter, Steward: Pete Colegate, Show Secretary: Debbie Tilley				
CLASS	No of entries	FIRST	PTS	SECOND	PTS	THIRD	PTS	HIGHLY COMMENDED
1. LIGHT RUN HONEY	12	ROGER TILLEY	3	MARK BURNELL	2	BOB NEEDS	1	NOT AWARDED
2. MEDIUM RUN HONEY	11	BOB NEEDS	3	NOT AWARDED		PHILIP BROWN	1	DEN MATTHEWS
3. DARK RUN HONEY	NIL							
4. SOFT SET HONEY	4	LIZ TAYLOR	3	COLIN TAYLOR	2	NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED
5. NOVICE HONEY	13	A.FAREBROTHER	3	JAYNE RANGER	2	MARK BRUNELL	1	ELIZABETH GLOVER
6. CHUNK HONEY	1	NOT AWARDED		MARY BRADSHAW	2			
7. 1 LB SECTION	NIL							
8. CUT COMB 7 - 9 OZ	1	NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		MARY BRADSHAW	1	
9. FRAME FOR EXTRACTION	1	NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED
10. BOTTLE OF DRY MEAD	3	BOB NEEDS	3	PHILIP BROWN	2	JON NEWSAM	1	
11. BOTTLE SWEET MEAD	3	BOB NEEDS	3	COLIN TAYLOR	2	JON NEWSAM	1	
12. BEESWAX POLISH	2	COLIN TAYLOR	3	HAZEL SIMONS	2			
13. FURNITURE CREAM	2	BOB NEEDS	3	NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		
14. BEESWAX BLOCK 7 - 9 OZ	4	NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		NOT AWARDED		(ALL OVERWEIGHT)
15. PAIR OF CANDLES	4	NOT AWARDED		MARY BRADSHAW	2	COLIN TAYLOR	1	NOT AWARDED
16. CANDLE IN SURROUND	4	LIZ TAYLOR	3	COLIN TAYLOR	2	NOT AWARDED		RACHEL DUFFETT
17. 6 BEE PRODUCTS	4	HAZEL SIMONS	3	PATRICK PINEAU	2	COLIN TAYLOR	1	PATRICK ANDERSON
18. SIX HONEY BISCUITS	11	MARY BRADSHAW	3	PHILIP BROWN	2	BOB NEEDS	1	A. FAREBROTHER
19. SIX HONEY SWEETS	4	MARY BRADSHAW	3	COLIN TAYLOR	2	ROGER TILLEY	1	PATRICK ANDERSON
20. HONEY FRUIT CAKE	12	PATRICK ANDERSON	3	RACHEL DUFFETT	2	MARY BRADSHAW	1	SHONA WILLIAMS
21. PHOTO BEES	5	RACHEL DUFFETT	3	SUE DRINKWATER	2	JAYNE RANGER	1	SHONA WILLIAMS
22. PHOTO BEEKEEPERS	6	PHILIP BROWN	3	KAY WAKEFIELD	2	ROGER TILLEY	1	NOT AWARDED
23. PHOTO HIVES	5	RACHEL DUFFETT	3	PHILIP BROWN	2	SHONA WILLIAMS	1	ROGER TILLEY
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ENTRIES</b>	<b>112</b>							
POINTS AWARDED SUMMARY								
BOB NEEDS	14	LIZ TAYLOR	6	MARK BRUNELL	3	PATRICK PINEAU	2	
MARY BRADSHAW	12	HAZEL SIMONS	5	A. FAREBROTHER	3	SHONA WILLIAMS	1	
COLIN TAYLOR	11	ROGER TILLEY	5	KAY WAKEFIELD	2			
PHILIP BROWN	10	PAT ANDERSON	3	JON NEWSAM	2			
RACHEL DUFFETT	8	JAYNE RANGER	3	SUE DRINKWATER	2			
BBKA BLUE RIBBON AWARDED TO ROGER TILLEY CLASS 1 LIGHT RUN HONEY								
TOTAL NUMBER OF EXHIBITORS = 29								

# From the press

**Chris Smart (Via Chris Jackson)**

provided this article from the New York Times. (Edited for space)

Since 2006, 20 to 40 percent of the bee colonies in the United States alone have suffered “colony collapse.” Suspected culprits ranged from pesticides to genetically modified food.

Now, a unique partnership — of military scientists and entomologists — appears to have achieved a major breakthrough: identifying a new suspect, or two.

A fungus and a virus have apparently interacted to cause the problem, according to Army scientists in Maryland and bee experts in Montana in the online science journal PLoS One.

Exactly how that combination kills bees remains uncertain, but there are solid clues: both the virus and the fungus proliferate in cool, damp weather, and both work in the bee gut, suggesting that insect nutrition is compromised.

“Together we could look at things nobody else was looking at,” said Colin Henderson, an associate professor at the University of Montana’s College of Technology and a member of Dr. Bromenshenk’s “Bee Alert” team.

One perverse twist of colony collapse that has compounded the difficulty of solving it is that the bees do not just die — they fly off in every direction from the hive, then die alone. That makes large numbers of bee autopsies problematic.

Dr. Bromenshenk’s team at the

University of Montana and Montana State University in Bozeman, working with the Army’s Edgewood Chemical Biological Center northeast of Baltimore, said in their jointly written paper that the virus-fungus one-two punch was found in every killed colony the group studied. Neither agent alone seems able to devastate; together, the research suggests, they are 100% fatal.

“It’s chicken and egg in a sense — we don’t know which came first,” Dr. Bromenshenk said. “They’re co-factors, that’s all we can say at the moment,” he said. “They’re both present in all these collapsed colonies.”

Research had already identified the fungus as part of the problem and several RNA-based viruses had been detected. The Army/Montana team, using a new software system developed by the military for analyzing proteins, uncovered a new DNA-based virus, and established a linkage to the fungus, called *Nosema ceranae*.

The Army software system is designed to test and identify biological agents. The system searches out the unique proteins in a sample, then identifies a virus or other microscopic life form based on the proteins it is known to contain. The power of that idea in military or bee defense is immense, researchers say, in that it allows them to use

what they already know to find something they did not even know they were looking for.

Scientists in the project emphasize that their conclusions are not the final word. The pattern, they say, seems clear, but more research is needed to determine, for example, how further outbreaks might be prevented, and how much environmental factors like heat, cold or drought might play a role.

They said that combination attacks in nature, like the virus and fungus involved in bee deaths, are quite common, and that one answer in protecting bee colonies might be to focus on the fungus — controllable with antifungal agents — especially when the virus is detected.

Still unsolved is what makes the bees fly off into the wild yonder at the point of death. One theory, Dr. Bromenshenk said, is that the viral-fungal combination disrupts memory or navigating skills and the bees simply get lost. Another possibility, he said, is a kind of insect insanity.

In any event, the university’s bee operation itself proved vulnerable just last year, when nearly every bee disappeared over the course of the winter.

Meetings are held at Broughton Gifford village hall on the last Monday of the month except when this is a Bank Holiday when meetings will be one week earlier. Meetings start at 7.30pm, apiary visits start at 6.30pm

# Diary

<b>October</b>	25 Branch Meeting	19:30	Branch AGM
<b>November</b>	28-30 National Honey Show		St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey
<b>December</b>	29 Branch meeting		Skittles evening
			No meeting

## The MBKA is at a turning point and needs your help to head in the right direction.

As usual with voluntary organisations, a few people shoulder most of the responsibility and hard work of keeping the branch going.

Eventually, those people feel that they have contributed enough and it is time to pass the baton on to the next generation. For some of them, changed circumstances (such as a greater demand on their time from work or family) mean that they can no longer put in the hours that the Branch needs.

Unfortunately for the Branch, three of our stalwarts have decided that they will have to cut back. They are: Jerry Wickham (Chair), Pete Colegate (Secretary) and Roger Tilley (Meetings Organiser). Replacing any one of these would be difficult, but replacing all three is a real risk to the continuity of the branch.

Between them they do a

large proportion of the Branch's work: collecting and distributing swarms; chairing meetings; booking speakers; organising Bee and Honey Day; organising the Branch honey show; etc; etc; etc.

So you can see that when they step down, it will leave a huge void. Which is why I am writing to you now and asking for your support.

Here's what you can do.

Volunteer to take a job. Whatever suits you: weeding the paths at the apiary; giving training courses; delivering swarms to new members; collecting swarms.

Be "second in line". Offer to shadow someone if you are unsure if you can take it all on right away.

Volunteer to be a committee member. Not all committee members have fixed assignments. It's very useful to have several extra pair of hands.

In case it all sounds too gloomy, some committee members and branch members will continue with

their current involvement (subject in the case of committee members to re-election): Andrew Farebrother (Vice Chair), Mary White (Treasurer and Membership); Den Matthews (Apiary); Steve Summers (Beelines); Jon Newsam (Logistics), Martin Ellis (ad hoc support). Mary Bradshaw will continue her great work on catering, although not on the committee.

To sum up, the Branch is bigger than ever before. Over 120 members now. There is a wealth of untapped talent there.

So please step forward.

Don't worry about not knowing enough (I edit Beelines and what I don't know could fill volumes).

All you need is the will to help the branch live on.

It is your Branch and your Branch needs you!

*From the Editor and Jerry Wickham and Andrew Farebrother.*