

Melksham Beekeepers Newsletter



June 2009

Chat from the Chair

Jerry Wickham

No doubt by the time you read this article, you will all be aware that our long standing secretary Roger Tilley has given notice of his intention to resign both from the committee and as a member of the Branch at the October AGM. I received this news with real regret and to some degree surprise. Roger has been an integral part of MBKA for many years and his imminent departure has caused many of us to think carefully.

Some of you, when reading this, might think that people resign often from committees etc so what's the issue? Those of you who were at the AGM last October might remember me talking about the Branch being at a cross roads. This related to the changes at Lackham but also concerned both the size and makeup of the Branch. I foresaw that we had to look carefully at the direction of the Branch in terms of what our aims were. For example, are we there to encourage new people into beekeeping or improve the knowledge of the more mature beekeeper? Or are we there to entertain beekeepers through informative talks and presentations? I personally believe it's a bit of all of these.

Another issue is that the Branch has 120 or so members. We have become the victims of our own success and your committee are having to devote more and more of their own time, sometimes to the potential detriment of their own beekeeping hobby, to run the Branch. Most of this occurs behind the scenes and is unobserved. I suppose life is very much like this with a few essentially working feverishly whilst the majority sit back and think no more of it. I am not suggesting that this has been necessarily a conscious process by the majority of members but I am afraid that there is a need for more involvement by the 'rank and file'.

With Roger's departure, there will be the need for a new general secretary and I would suggest we need also to appoint a separate membership secretary. We need people to come forward, outside of the existing committee, who can take this important role on. In addition, Pete and Julie Colegate spend a great deal of time looking after the maintenance of the Apiary at Lackham. Whilst they've had some help it hasn't been from more than a handful of people! We still don't have an individual who has dedicated responsibility for looking after the Branch bees. At Branch meetings, everyone enjoys a tea or coffee and biscuit but who provides this and washes up cups etc? Significantly, Lackham will require a MBKA attendance at events they stage. Who will do this? The list goes on and on!

Certainly I feel that at the next AGM, there are likely to be several vacancies amongst the general committee as well as your 'officers' and now is the time to start thinking about who will take these roles on. Each and every one of us is only there with your agreement since we represent your interests. We do however all acknowledge that each of our roles is 'up for grabs' each year and if there are people willing to take roles we will step aside. We currently have vacancies on the committee and our rules allow us to co-opt people on, so please give some thoughts to this request and come forward to do your part in running the MBKA. Should anyone wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to speak to me.

Lastly, please don't leave this until the AGM since I fear that there could be some awkward decisions to make if we haven't thought this through and acted in advance.

Don't forget - **Better Bee Husbandry Day** - Bromham Social Centre - 11th July, 10:00 - 16:00
Contact Sally on 01380 859052 for further details and to book a place.

Monthly Meeting Programme

29th June	Branch apiary visit - followed by "Beekeepers Question Time" in S18
27th July	Annual Branch barbeque at Sandridge Tower. SN15 2JN - see order form on page 3
24th August	Apiary visit and al-fresco supper
28th September	Branch honey show
26th October	Branch Annual General Meeting
30th November	"A History of Wiltshire beekeeping" David Charles
December	No meeting

Meetings are held 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

Branch Barbeque

Roger is asking for volunteers who are willing to prepare a salad or pudding for the Branch barbeque. All costs will be reimbursed by the Branch. If you are able to help, please contact Roger at rogeranddebbie@blueyonder.co.uk

Tea Rota

Sheila Parker has requested volunteers to make tea at forthcoming meetings. Please contact her at sheilagparker@hotmail.com

Food for thought

Pete Colegate

I have just returned from a holiday in Austria where I met a local man collecting a swarm of honeybees. I stopped to ask if Austrian beekeepers were experiencing the same problems that we are having. His English was better than my German and he explained that they have varroa, controlled by using drone brood culling. He was not aware of any of the problems that wiped out whole colonies. When I suggested that it was believed that pesticides were a factor in honeybee losses, he replied that they do not spray the fields and meadows. Perhaps it is time for us to move away from treating our bees with chemicals, and treat bees in a more natural way encouraging newcomers to use more sustainable methods.

Apiary sites available

Roger has been contacted by three people who would like bees on their land at Corsham, Slaughterford and Marshfield. Please email him at rogeranddebbie@blueyonder.co.uk

Honey from Tregothan

sent by Den Matthews from Daily Mail, 18 May 2009

They live in £5000 designer hives and produce some of the world's most expensive honey. And today, the bees of Tregothan, Cornwall will be exposed to the sort of market their elite existence merits. Two 6 ft three-storey hives created by garden architect Robert Myers are expected to attract huge interest at the Chelsea Flower Show.

The bees are the first in Britain to produce Manuka honey, which costs around £7 per teaspoonful. The Tregothan estate has its own Manuka bushes, imported from New Zealand, which are said to give the honey medicinal powers. Mr Myers said he built the hives on the principle that "an English bee's hive is its castle".

**The MBKA Annual Barbeque will take place on Monday 27th July 2009
at Sandridge Tower, Sandridge, Bromham, Chippenham. SN15 2JN
(by kind permission of Mrs. Ruth Woodhouse) starting at 7.30pm**

Menu

Chicken breast marinated in a barbeque sauce
with either
Wiltshire Pork or Salmon steak or Vegetarian burger and sausage

All served with buttered local new potatoes
Rice, pasta or vegetable salad and homemade coleslaw

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Selection of desserts including:  
White chocolate cheesecake  
Fresh local strawberries with whipped cream

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Glass of wine or fruit juice included with meal

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Tea/coffee

**Cost per diner is £10.00**

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Please complete this order form and send with your appropriate payment to

**Roger Tilley, 32 Bader Park, Bowerhill, Melksham. SN12 6UF**  
(Make cheques payable to **The Melksham Beekeepers.**)

**Please return your order to the above address before Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

**Diner One**

**Diner Two**

Name .....

Name .....

Your main course choice  
(Pork or Salmon or Veggie option)

Your main course choice  
(Pork or Salmon or Veggie option)

.....  
Choice of sweet from the dessert table

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Choice of sweet from the dessert table

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