



The HBKA

Buzzz
Word



Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association Newsletter

www.herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk

DECEMBER 2015

INDEX

Page 2-3

LAN Reports

Page 4-7

Events

Page 8-13

News & Features



DATES FOR YOUR 2016 DIARY

Tuesday 16 February 2016 - 7.15pm for 7.30pm
HBKA Evening Meeting - Three Counties Hotel,
Hereford

Saturday 5 March 2016 - Beetradox, Stoneleigh
Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG

Tuesday 15 March 2016 - HBKA AGM - Three
Counties Hotel, Hereford

BEES CONSTRUCT DIY MOUSE GUARD! - many thanks to Kath Carr (East LAN) for sending in the photo below. If anyone else can produce pictorial evidence that their bees also have DIY (or any other) skills worth publicising in the Buzzword, I'd be very pleased to receive it. (Ed.)





Page 2



LAN REPORTS

HBKA EAST LAN CHRISTMAS DINNER - FRIDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2015

It was a case of "No! It can't be possible!" But it was! November already and with it, our East LAN celebration at the Plough, Stoke Lacy.

We were welcomed in a very warm and cheery fashion by Marlene Hewitt and then we took our places for our choice of roast dinner. As always, there was plenty to eat and the food was tasty and good value for money. The young women serving were friendly and helpful so the whole experience was very pleasant.

It was a great opportunity to get together and chat about the close of the bee year. We tried not to be too boring; in fact we did talk about quite a lot of other things! It is a good way to socialise and have some light-hearted conversation...proving, we hope, to partners and friends, that Beekeepers don't always talk solely about beekeeping.

We noticed that the number of people present was fewer than last year - a shame because everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves.

After the meal we were treated to a talk given by Martyn and Cheryl Cracknell. Martyn is the County President of the Worcestershire BKA. He is the county's Examination Secretary and delegate to the BBKA. Amongst many other things, he has been keeping bees for over 40 years. Cheryl is involved at a professional level in working with beeswax in a wide variety of ways - encaustic wax painting, batik, making hand creams, soaps and running a candle making enterprise.

A substantial and impressive amount of experience for us all to learn from!

The focus of their talk was the Apimondia Conference which is held biennially in capital cities as diverse as Dublin, Kiev, Montpellier and Istanbul and they related to us their experiences at the Kiev Apimondia.

We were shown various bee products purchased there. They ranged from the interesting to the weird and wonderful! Martyn said that, not surprisingly, it was all the fringe activities and stalls selling their wares that were the most intriguing.



Page 3



I think what inspired me most was that Apimondia provides opportunities to go beyond the conference and meet and observe ordinary beekeepers working in their apiaries. Martyn and Cheryl found their visits to the Ukrainian countryside and contact with local folk, really worthwhile. If anyone is interested, the next Apimondia takes place in Istanbul in 2017. Now that really would be something, to meet with Turkish beekeepers and see how they keep their bees.

At the close of the evening a token of our appreciation was given to Bob Cross who does so much, so patiently, to help us all.

A big thank-you to everyone who was involved in the organisation of this event.

...and a big thank- you too to Ginny Holly whose willingness to produce reports at the last minute is a positive boon to newsletter editors like me (Ed.)

HBKA EAST LAN BRAINS TRUST EVENING – THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER

Alas, not a big crowd for this, the first winter meeting for East LAN made possible by the new budgeting system introduced earlier this year (see Buzzword June 2015, page 6, bullet point 3). But it was good to welcome several colleagues from other LANs and all those who did come along to Bishop's Frome Village Hall certainly gave some pretty positive feedback after the event.

This evening was a really good opportunity to revisit in greater detail some of the topics touched on in apiary meetings earlier in the year in order to clarify and explain things more clearly; and resident brains Bob Cross, Dave Garrett and Dave Sutton did a really good job for us all.

Topics covered ranged from winter feeding (syrups homemade and commercial, food additives) through varroa treatments and when to use them (MAQS, ApiVar Life, ApiBioxal, oxalic acid and icing sugar) to the grand finale (provided by Dave Garrett) of homemade driving irons for use with skeps.

After the final whistle, we all enjoyed a hot drink, some nibbles and a chat before departing through the lanes to begin thinking about Christmas!

Many thanks to Marlene Hewitt for manning the kitchen, Charlotte Evans for sorting out the booking arrangements - and of course to Bob, Dave G and Dave S for sharing a little of their vast beekeeping knowledge and experience with us mere mortals. **(C.S.)**



Page 4



EVENTS



PRESIDENT'S CHOICE EVENING – TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER

This event, introduced by our current President, Jim Oliver (right of picture), took place at The Three Counties Hotel on Tuesday 17th November. The speaker was David Viner (left of picture) of The Canal and River Trust, who happens to be a beekeeper himself in The Forest of Dean. His particular role in the Trust is that of Heritage Adviser for the South West. He explained how, in the late 1700's, the canals, which unlocked the Industrial Revolution in this country, had been the principal means of transporting goods, particularly coal, around the country. However the advent of the railways in 1840 had led to the demise of the canals as a transport system because of their relative inefficiency. For example, a single railway engine could pull 700 tons of coal while a barge could only carry 20.

The first canal engineer was James Brindley who was responsible for building many canals, initially the Bridgewater Canal in 1766. Thomas Telford and John Rennie were other notable engineers of the time and both the Pontcysyllte aqueduct, made of cast iron, and the Dundas aqueduct, made of limestone, on the Kennet and Avon Canal were the result of their engineering genius. Interestingly the word 'navvy', which we associate with road repairers, comes from the word 'navigator', the name given to the labourers who actually dug out the canals at that time.

The 'Canal Mania' of 1805 resulted in a network of over 4000 miles of navigable waterways at its peak and the area around Birmingham was said to have more miles of water than Venice! Many of the canals were very twisty and winding because they followed the contours of the land, obviating the need for the locks that are necessary if boats are to change water levels i.e. travel up and down hill. In our area, Gloucester was an important inland port due to the 16 miles of canal linking it with the docks at Sharpness on the Severn estuary and many canals in our area linked up with it. Some Railway Companies actually bought up canals to take advantage of their relative lack of sharp inclines by filling them in to lay new railway tracks in the period 1840 - 1920. The dereliction of the canal system continued into the 20th Century and in the severe winter of 1963 they were totally unusable because they all froze up.

However, in 1946 a man called L.T.C. Rolt started an organisation called "The Waterway Recovery Group" and they embarked on a programme of cleaning out silted-up canals and repairing locks. This made possible a whole new phase of life for the canal system and a new leisure industry was born. However, there were still working barges and whole families would live on a barge in a tiny section at the stern with the women steering the barge and the men pulling them along from the towpath - if one still existed! During the war these barges became important because the railways were considered to be very vulnerable to enemy bombing. At this time, salt was one of the principle cargoes. The building of the M5/6 motorways did much to further the discontinuation of those canals that ran east to west because it simply cut them in two. However, a good deal of present-day Lottery Fund money has made it possible to reconstruct many of these canals, particularly the locks, the gates of some of which weigh several tons and have been in use for up to 200 years.



Page 5



Currently the canal system has 2,000 miles of waterways, 35,000 boats and 12 million visitors annually. The trust is the 3rd largest owner of listed buildings in the country. It also has 50 monuments, 5 world heritage sites and 20,000 historic structures, the Anderton Lift in Cheshire and the Falkirk Wheel in Scotland being two of the most spectacular. The maintenance of 1,569 locks, 53 tunnels, 3,112 bridges, 370 aqueducts and 74 reservoirs is a demanding task, not to mention the preservation of many sites of special scientific interest, the canals being very rich in both flora and fauna.

The whole of David Viner's talk was illustrated with many photos and it was fascinating from a historical and a social perspective. It was much appreciated by all of us.

The final part of the evening was given over to the presentation of the 2015 HBKA Honey Show Awards (see list below) which was conducted by past-president Dave Sutton.

Many thanks to Dick Hailwood for providing us with yet another excellent report for The Buzzword (Ed.)

2015 HBKA Honey Show Awards

Debbie Smith was awarded the BBKA Blue Ribbon

Home Guard (Novice) Cup	Andy Tatchell
Harry Gardner Memorial Trophy	Louise Sheppard
Tom Bradford Perpetual Trophy	Louise Sheppard
Maidstone Cup	Mary Walter
Perpetual Challenge Cup	Debbie Smith
Eaves Cup	Debbie Smith
John Harley Cup	North LAN



Page 6





Page 7



VISIT TO THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW - 28-31 OCTOBER 2015

Debbie Smith writes:

The show, with almost 2,000 entries was most impressive. There were the expected shining arrays of honey and mead, and the 'Wax Room' with wax blocks and models carved from wax smelt wonderful. Some of the wax models and displays were particularly spectacular. A carved Celtic Cross was made by an Irish visitor, Paul Boyle, using 7lb of wax. One display was topped by a wax lighthouse, flashing light encased within! The artistic classes included a fine statue of St Ambrose, patron saint of beekeepers, carved from lime wood (see pictures on previous page).

A shame it isn't possible to sample some of those honeys and meads... although it is possible if you volunteer to act as a Judge's Steward which is extremely interesting - I can highly recommend it. Details of how to apply for Judge's stewarding (or for general stewarding, which is also very rewarding) usually appear on the National Honey Show website and in the BBKA magazine a few months before the show.

There was a wide variety of talks and workshops to attend. I did some mead sampling, but could also have made a skep, candles, or honey beer, or learned aspects of microscopy among the other practical workshops. I didn't make it to any of the talks or research lecture series as I found too many interesting and knowledgeable people to talk with in the show and trade areas, where I stocked up on discounted supplies!

It is well worth anyone entering the National Show - our own HBKA Honey Show has a very high standard and has many entries which could do well in a national context.

Just before I left I asked one of the equipment sellers how his few days had gone. The answer was 'Really well, lots of interesting conversations, there's a really good buzz about the place'.

Which sums it up nicely!

As implied in the article, Debbie's visit to the NHS did have a purpose, namely to act as a Judge's steward but she also won some prizes which is a great achievement at national level. So congratulations Debbie, and many thanks for this contribution to the Buzzword (Ed.)



Page 8



NEWS & FEATURES

A BIT OF THE OTHER FOR CHRISTMAS

John Harley writes:



In response to Chris's plea for contributions to fill the pages of the Newsletter, I thought that I would dip into one of my favourite old Bee Books – Tickner Edwards' "Lore of the Honey Bee" - to see what he had to say about mead, this being the season that we (well some of us) tend to imbibe a bit more than usual. Mead has declined in popularity over the years and not many beekeepers seem to bother to make it any more which is a pity because a good mead is as good as and certainly more potent than its equivalent from the grape - so let's see what Tickner Edwards has to say about it:

"There were three kinds of liquor brewed from honey in Anglo-Saxon times. The commonest, or mead proper, was made by steeping in water the crushed refuse of combs after the honey had been pressed from them. This would be strained and set aside in earthen vessels until it fermented and became mead. And, the longer it was kept, the more potent grew the liquor. Another kind, made from honey, water and the juice of mulberries, was called Morat. This, presumably, was the beverage of the more well-to-do. A third concoction, known as Pigment, was brewed from the purest honey, flavoured with spices of different sorts, and received an additional lacing of some kind of wine.

If it may be supposed that the reign of Harold marked the summit of popularity for our good old English honey-brew, it is equally certain that with the coming of the Normans it began its slow decline in the national estimation. Following in the trail of Duke William's nondescript army came the traders, with their outlandish liquors from the grape; and wine must soon have taken the place of the Saxon mead, first among the foreign nobles, and later among the native thanes. From that day mead has steadily declined in vogue, and today mead making is practically a lost art, surviving among a few old fashioned folk, in remote country places (*like Ross-on-Wye?! - JH*).

But it still is to be obtained; and those of us who have the good fortune to taste good old mead, well matured in the wood (or in our case, the odd demijohn) are sure to feel a regret that no determined effort is being made to rehabilitate it in the national favour. Perhaps there is no more wholesome drink in the world, and certainly none requiring less technical skill in the making. All the ancient books on beekeeping give receipts (sic) for its manufacture, differing only in the variety of foreign ingredients for its improvement or, as we prefer to believe, its degradation. For the finest mead can be brewed from pure honey and water alone (*my mentor's advocated method – although I never found it successful - JH*), and any addition of spices or other matter serves only to destroy its unique flavour. Some of the sixteenth century bee-masters were renowned in their day for their mead brewing; and one of the foremost of them claims for his potion that it was absolutely indistinguishable from old Canary Sack. This mead, when kept for a number of years, froths into the glass lined with sparkling air-bells. It is of a pale golden colour, and has a bouquet something like old cider; but its flavour is hardly to be compared with any known liquor of the present time."

Perhaps this extract, written around about the turn of the last century (1900), will encourage some of you to have a go at making mead – it is well worth the effort – and we could do with more entries on the Show bench to compete with the odd lonely bottle or two that currently appear in the Mead Classes.

Have a good Christmas - even if you have to celebrate it without a glass of mead!

Many thanks to John for this and you'll be hearing much more from him on his favourite subject in future editions of the Buzzword - brace yourselves! (Ed.)



Page 9



BBKA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY - IMPORTANT!

Mary Walter writes:

The BBKA has recently launched an online survey of its membership, which can be completed via a link from the members' area of the website. If you are a full member of the Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association (or, for that matter, of another BBKA affiliated association), you will also be a member of the BBKA through its system of capitation, your BBKA membership subscription being paid out of your membership fee. This entitles you to third party and disease insurance, and also to receive the monthly BBKA newsletter.

The BBKA is a charity which represents beekeepers who are members of affiliated associations. Each association is represented by a delegate who attends the annual delegates' meeting (ADM) (usually in January every year). The ADM is equivalent to an Annual General Meeting. At this event a financial report is presented by the treasurer, and this is followed by discussion and votes on propositions sent in by member associations or the BBKA trustees. Propositions are voted on by each delegate, but an association can request a membership vote, in which case the number of members represented by each delegate is taken into account, (for example Yorkshire's delegate would have one vote, but over a thousand if the number of members is taken into account, whereas Herefordshire would have less than 200 membership votes).

The BBKA is an 'unincorporated charity'. This means that it doesn't have legal personality, so cannot hold property or enter into contracts in its own name. The personal liability of its trustees is unlimited. Recent legislation has allowed for setting up of 'incorporated charities' i.e. ones that have a legal form which makes the charity itself a legal entity. This is called 'legal personality', and means the charity can own property or enter into contracts in its own name. Incorporation gives trustees more protection from personal liability. Some incorporated forms can limit trustees' liability to third parties. The law places duties on board members to prevent the abuse of limited liability. In future, grant awarding bodies are likely to recommend that any recipient of funds has this latter structure. In view of this requirement it would seem sensible for the BBKA to alter its constitution and become an incorporated charity.

Recent events have highlighted difficulties within the organisation of the BBKA. There have been allegations of financial mismanagement, and serious doubts over the response of the trustees to the use of agricultural pesticides. Membership subscriptions only cover about half of the ongoing financial commitments, although there is a considerable reserve fund earmarked for rebuilding costs of the headquarters at Stoneleigh. The last ADM voted on a proposition to examine the possibility of changing the date of the ADM or the accounting year, so that the budget could be discussed and approved before being implemented. The annual report contains audited accounts up to the year end in October, and if these are to be presented to the delegates, there seems no easy answer to the conundrum of the budget being a third of the way through the year before it is discussed by the delegates.

The difficulty with the current structure is the mismatch between the role of the trustees, and that of the delegates. Delegates resent being presented with "fait accompli", while the trustees have difficulty implementing any change. The final question on the survey asks for an opinion on whether the BBKA should become a membership organisation (e.g. like the RSPB). I am not sure that this would be beneficial since the local connection would be lost, and presumably members would need to enrol with both the national and local bodies. It is also questionable as to how sensible voting might take place, as well as knowledgeable and constructive discussion on any proposals.

I would urge our members to complete the questionnaire and make your views felt. It is important to maintain the educational role of the BBKA, to support its representation to government and to express environmental concerns on behalf of the members.



Page 10



BEE BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

John Kinross of Bumble Bee Books (new and old), our resident bee book expert (see advert on back page) offers a selection of six "good reads" for the festive season.

The first, and just out, is the third edition of **"A Manual of Beekeeping"** by E.B. Wedmore (Northern Bee Books / paperback / £22). This book first appeared in 1932 and has 312 pages. Wedmore covers all aspects of beekeeping briefly but fully with a brilliant cross reference system that leads you effortlessly through a subject. All the new paragraphs are in purple and most of the book is as before without the black and white photographs.

Secondly, Ron Brown's classic **"Great Masters of Beekeeping"** (Northern Bee Books / paperback / £11.95). has been reprinted, slightly larger in format than before with the same black and white illustrations (looking a bit grainy now!) including my favourite showing the Rothamstead staff of 1957 – fifteen of them including Colin Butler, John Free, Tony Griffin and Peter Tomkins, all friends. As you cannot find hardbacks of this book now, it's a very welcome reprint which all bee historians should have on their shelves.

For bumble bee enthusiasts, Dave Goulson's **"A Buzz in the Meadow"** is now available in paperback (Vintage Books / £8.99). It covers not only bumblebees but also death-watch beetles, bugs and anything else that turns up on the author's 33 acres of French meadow. There is much on disappearing bees but nothing (fortunately) on hornets. Last time I was in France, our hostess in Angers discovered three of these huge creatures in her drawing-room curtains and quickly showed them the window. It quite put me off my Pernod et Fromage!

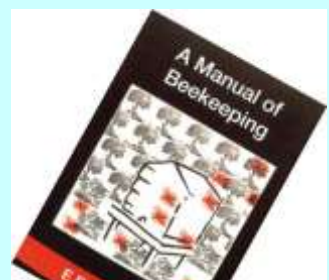
From Southern Ireland comes Ben Harden's excellent book **"Some Alternative Pathways for the Hesitant Queen Rearer"** (Northern Bee Books / 8.95). which has much on mini-nucs. One query Ben – how does your daughter manage grafting in comfort with no sign of any bees?

Bob Hawker has written **"The Earliest Record of Beekeeping in Northern England"** (Northern Bee Books / paperback / £9.95). He lives near Newcastle-upon-Tyne and, like Wedmore, was an electrical engineer. I note he uses the old measurement of pecks (3 pecks are 0.96 cubic feet – nothing to do with the sisterly kiss I get on each cheek when I visit my older sister in Cornwall!) and maybe we should bring them back - plus chains and perches. The illustrations aren't brilliant but the book is most interesting and ideal for beekeepers who go north for their Christmas (or any other) holidays.

Lastly, for young children (5-7 year olds) I recommend Asli Ozkirim's **"The Honey Bee Castle"** (IBRA / paperback / £4) which has some delightful colour plates. There are nine chapters in which we learn how the bees go about their daily lives, share pollen with the flowers and protect their castle and honey from the bears. There is also a moral tale that runs through the book which encourages us to appreciate the need to work together, and to share and understand the world around us.

We have all six of the books above in stock here at Bumble Bee Books so do get in touch if you wish to buy. There are of course many, many second-hand books on our shelves too, but I think most present-givers out there like something new for a Christmas gift.

Wishing all of you much happy winter reading and a very Happy Christmas and New Year.





Page 11



BOB'S BEELINES FOR DECEMBER



Not much to say for this month as you'd expect. I hope you've put your mouse guards on – also remember to protect against woodpecker damage.

- In the past 5 weeks or so the weather has been very mild, mostly between 10C and 15C. The bees have been out working most days bringing in pollen and, if you look inside your hives, you might still find 3 or 4 frames of new brood.
- Please be aware that, again because of the overly mild weather, the syrup the bees stored in September for use during the winter will be used up very quickly. So keep checking your hives for stores by hefting. If they feel light, feed fondant now or certainly put some on during December as a matter of course.

- Finally remember that, during the winter months, bee hives are very easy for thieves to pick up and steal. Ten hives were stolen from Pembridge last year – so beware of vehicles like vans and estate cars and unknown people looking into gardens and places where beehives are kept. Note registration numbers if possible and report them.

That's it for now – have a good Christmas and all the best for 2016

Bob and Kath Cross



Q: Who is the bees' favourite singer?

A: Sting!

Q: How does a queen bee get around her hive?

A: She's throne!



Q: What does a queen bee do when she burps?

A: Issues a royal pardon!

BEE HIVE LOCATION OFFER

Would any HBKA member be interested in putting some bee hives onto 18 acres of organic land including an apple orchard? The land is just outside Much Marcle.



Page 12



BEST MEAD CAKE EVER



Ingredients:

1 or 2 qts of mead	1 tsp baking powder
1 cup butter	1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp sugar	lemon juice
2 large eggs	brown sugar
1 cup dried fruit	nuts

Before you start:

Sample the mead for quality. Select a large mixing bowl, measuring cup, etc. Check the mead again, it must be just right. To be sure the mead is of the highest quality, pour one level cupful into a glass and drink it as fast as you can. Repeat.

Method:

- With an electric mixer, beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl.
- Add one seaspoon of trugar and beat again. Meanwhile, again make sure that the mead is of the highest quality.
- Try another cup. Open a second quart, if necessary.
- Add two arge leggs, 2 cups fried druit and beat till high. If druit gets stuck in beaters, just pry loose with a drewscriver.
- Sample the mead again, checking for tongsicisticy.
- Next, sift 3 cups of pepper or salt (it doesn't really matter).
- Sample mead again.
- Sift pint of lemon juice.
- Fold in chopped butter and strained nuts. Add one babblespoon of brown thugar, or whatever colour you can find.
- Mix well, grease oven and turn cake pan into 350 gredees. Pour the whole mess into coven and ake.
- Check mead again – and boo to ged.

Thanks to John Harley once again for providing us with this innovative cake recipe - I was looking forward to trying it out myself but my wife caught sight of it and has forbidden me to attempt it - ever! Bah! Humbug! (Ed.)

And finally, from the President, Officers and Committee of HBKA to all members, here's wishing you a very...





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North LAN:	Mary Walter (Leominster)
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Newsletter Editor Chris Stowell

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Items for the Newsletter should be sent to the Editor - Chris Stowell,

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