



The HBKA

BUZZZZ
Word



FEBRUARY 2016

The Newsletter of Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association
www.herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk

!! ADVANCE NOTICE !!

The next Annual General Meeting of
Herefordshire Bee Keepers' Association
will take place at the

**Three Counties Hotel
Belmont Road
Hereford
HR2 7BP**

on

**Tuesday 15 March 2016
commencing at 7.00pm prompt.**

Nominations for Officers, members of the Committee, and any special proposals or resolutions to be submitted for the meeting should be sent, by Monday 29th February at the latest, to The Hon. Secretary:

Nominations for Officers may also be submitted at the meeting but in all cases this must be with the prior agreement of the nominee.

***After the AGM, a talk entitled
"HOW DO BEES LEARN?"
will be given by Marin Anastasov.***

More information about the AGM will be sent with next month's Buzzword everyone - meanwhile please do your best to book this important date in your diaries NOW! (Ed.)

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News & Features

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 16 February - 7.15pm for 7.30pm
- HBKA Evening Meeting - Three Counties
Hotel, Hereford, HR2 7BP

Thursdays 25 Feb and 3, 10 and 17 March
- HBKA Beginners' Course - WRVS Cen-
tre, Vicarage Road, Hereford, HR1 2QN

Saturday 5 March - 9.00am to 4.30pm -
Beetradox - Hall H3, Stoneleigh Park., CV8
2LG

Tuesday 15 March - 6.45pm for 7.00pm -
HBKA AGM - Three Counties Hotel, Here-
ford, HR2 7BP

Friday-Sunday 8, 9, 10 April - BBKA
Spring Convention - Harper Adams Uni-
versity, Newport, TF10 8NB

Friday - Sunday 17, 18, 19 June - Three
Counties Show - Malvern WR13 6NW

Saturday & Sunday 17 & 18 September -
HBKA Honey Show - venue tbc



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EVENTS

... coming soon ...

HBKA EVENING MEETING - TUESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY

Three Counties Hotel - 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm start

There will be plenty of opportunity for questions at this, the first Association meeting of 2016. We will discuss the first inspection of the season, what to look for, and what action to take. After the mild winter, stores may be in short supply, the bees need large supplies of pollen and honey once they start brood rearing in earnest. Last summer was not a good year for queen mating, so you may find a drone layer or laying workers.

A nucleus is invaluable to have on hand in case of queen failure. As is often quoted, there are few problems in beekeeping which cannot be solved by putting something into or taking something out of a nuc. We will give some hints and tips on making up a nuc and maintaining it through the season.

... coming later ...

HBKA HONEY SHOW 2016

This year's Honey Show will take place over the weekend of 17/18 September at an as yet unspecified venue. The judge for the Show will be Mike Duffin. Last year, the number of entries was only just over 100, down on the previous year by 27% - so it would be really exciting if we could all help to reverse this downward trend and contribute a record number of entries this year.

How about it then? You don't have to be an expert - all that's needed is a bit of time and some careful preparation to produce some honey or wax fit for show. And now is the ideal time to have a go before the new season really gets going. So if you're not too confident about how to set about it,, why not come along to get some informal advice from an expert? See below for details.....

... and coming a bit later than the first but well before the second ...

EAST LAN - FIRST MEETING OF 2016 - TUESDAY 22 MARCH

"HONEY AND WAX PREPARATION FOR SHOW"

Bishops Frome Village Hall - 6.45 pm for 7.00 pm start

After a short session of LAN business, Lyndon Corbett will give an informal presentation on how to prepare honey and wax for show. Lyndon has successfully entered The National Honey Show for several years and has been placed highly in many of the classes he has entered, most recently coming first in Class 13: 2 jars of Dark Honey and third in Class 1: 24 jars of Honey. (Just imagine producing 24 identical jars of honey!! Phew!)

Lyndon will be offering plenty of tricks and tips on how to go about producing excellent honey and top class beeswax and will be pleased to answer questions and give advice.

East LAN welcomes members of other HBKA LANs at all its events so please feel free to join us for this one so that together we can help boost the entries in this year's Honey Show to new heights!



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NEWS & FEATURES

REPORT ON THE BBKA DELEGATES' MEETING - SUNDAY 9TH JANUARY

David Aston chaired the meeting in his final year as President. John Hendrie (Kent) was elected President, Stephen Adkins, Simon Cavill, James Laughton and Margaret Wilson were elected trustees. Marin Anastasov, David Blower, Gordon Cutting, Celia Perry, Robert Smith and Alastair Welch were elected to the Examinations Board.

The proposition that the BBKA should have a standard set of Standing Orders for use at the ADM, was referred to the Executive Committee (EC), but the unconstitutional voting scheme added to the meeting's proposed Standing Orders was rejected by the meeting early on.

The new head of finance Mr Pool gave a clear assessment of current BBKA finances, and expressed a wish to close down BBKA Enterprises. The meeting voted in favour of ensuring transparency of BBKA Enterprises accounts to all Trustees and the Treasurer.

The proposed capitation increase of £2 was rejected, but as additional funding will be needed to host the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers in 2017, an additional £1 capitation was agreed which will go towards running this event. The budget for this event is £80,000. An amendment was accepted so that £30,000 of external sponsorship will be required before any BBKA funding becomes available. Surrey BKA has offered to donate £5,000 towards funding the event.

Delegates voted for publishing EC meeting minutes but decided against publishing individual association voting records. The proposition to allow a two part alternative to the General Husbandry Assessment was referred to the Exam Board.

There was an announcement of a new national online spray liaison scheme, which should send email warnings of planned spraying while keeping apiary locations private. Testing is due in the Spring, hopefully going live during this coming Summer.

The Young Beekeepers meeting referred to above is an annual event usually hosted by a European Country; although this year it will be in Israel. All costs are provided for the delegates apart from a little spending money. Last year there were only three applicants from the UK for the three places available. If any of our young Herefordshire beekeepers would like to take part, it would be a good idea to start preparations in good time (you have to be under 16 on the first of January of the year you wish to enter).

Many thanks to Mary Walter for a) representing HBKA at the meeting and b) for writing this digest for HBKA members. (Ed.)



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MAKING MEAD - Part 2: Basic Technique

Preparation: Before you start, you must decide what type of mead you wish to make – Dry or Sweet. This is dictated by the recipe, the type of honey and to some extent, the type of yeast you use.

Having washed and sterilised your equipment, the next step is the preparation of the 'must'. I suggest that you start with a basic recipe, which is more likely to ensure success with your first attempt. Dry mead is probably the best one to start with. So, what will you need? Well, assuming that you have already obtained your 3lbs of light honey, the other ingredients required are:

Water: Tap water is quite suitable as it has enough natural trace elements essential to ensure a good fermentation. However, it may be advisable to add a pinch of Epsom salts to ensure that fermentation does not "stick".

Yeast: For dry mead, Steinberg or Champagne yeast is generally recommended. However, you may find these difficult to obtain. Sauternes yeast is more easily available and this will do very well for your first attempt at making mead.

Acid: Acids play a big part in the fermentation process and in the final flavour of the mead. Lemon juice is quite adequate for us to start with, but there are other more superior Mead Acid mixtures that we will look at later.

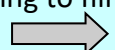
Tannin: Meads that lack astringency lack character. Cold tea has been used by amateur mead makers to add astringency, although there are more refined methods that we will go into later.

Nutrients: The main nutrient for yeast required in mead making is ammonium phosphate. This can be obtained from wine-making suppliers in the form of yeast nutrient tablets, two tablets being sufficient for a gallon of mead must. Vitamin B1 is also useful to assist fermentation. This can be also be added in tablet form (one 5mgm tablet per 2 gallons) or a ¼ teaspoonful of Marmite per gallon.

Beginner's additives (per gallon): To summarise the above, the following additives are suggested for your first attempt:

- juice of two lemons
- ¼ teaspoon of Marmite
- pinch of Epsom Salts,
- 2 nutrient tablets
- 1 tablespoon of very strong tea
- 2 Campden tablets

The Basic Procedure: Put ½ gallon of warm water in the saucepan and add the honey, stirring until it is dissolved completely. If you are using granulated honey, it may help if you heat it gently. Decant the liquid into the demijohn using the plastic funnel. The next step is to sterilise the honey and water mixture by adding two Campden tablets. It will help them to dissolve if they are first crushed between two teaspoons. Add the lemon juice, the tea and the nutrients and make up the volume by adding cold water to bring the level in the demijohn to about 2 inches from the top. You now have your 'must'. Fit the fermentation lock, not forgetting to fill it with water. After 24 hours, add the yeast to the must at the correct temperature (75 to 80° F).





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This can be checked with a wine thermometer, if you have one. A cheap alternative is the small thermometer sold for aquariums. If you do not have a suitable thermometer, check by hand – the must should feel just tepid to the touch. Temperature is quite important and fermentation should ideally commence at about 78° F and drop to about 65° F during the rest of the fermentation process. As this is the temperature of most modern centrally heated homes, any convenient out-of-the-way place will do. The air space left in the demijohn will allow for expansion during the initial fermentation period. However, it may be wise to stand the jar in a bowl, or small tray, just in case. When a steady fermentation is under way, top up the demijohn to the neck with more water. Ensure that the fermentation lock is fitted at all times and not allowed to dry out. Allow fermentation to proceed. This may take several weeks, but your first gallon of mead is now under way.

Next month I will deal with later care after fermentation has ceased, discuss possible fermentation problems, give you a few hints and tips and some more mead recipes. I do hope that these articles will encourage some of you to give mead making a try.

Many thanks to John Harley for this - part 3 follows next month, after which all readers should be well qualified to make umpteen gallons of top-quality mead to boost the entries in this years Honey Show! (Ed.)

MOISTURE IN BEEHIVES

The control of moisture within a hive is very important to the health of our bees, particularly during the winter. The common advice is that it is not cold that kills bees but damp conditions. So it is good to understand how to help your bees manage the humidity within their hive.

Live trees can provide remarkably sound nest cavities, because they actively draw moisture out of the hollows, provide good insulation, and leafy protection from the sun. The bee colony within a tree produces a rising stream of moist air which condenses on the fibrous roof and is absorbed by capillary action, then widely disseminated throughout the structure of the tree. What is interesting is that usually, the bees seal any openings at the top of the tree cavity.

So we need to consider what happens inside a hive. Any closed box with a heat source in it will create a convection current. If that box is roughly cubic in form and the heat source is in the centre, the air will rise up the centre and spread across the inside of the top like a mushroom, then fall down all outer surfaces before combining again at the bottom to replace the air that was displaced by the original rise.

If the roof of the hive is insulated the moist air will rise, but after a very minimal amount of condensation the temperature on the underside of the top will rise to close to the temperature of the rising stream of air and thus will not lose moisture due to condensation.





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Some condensation will occur over the large area of the sidewalls, but much will stay in suspension in the warmer air and will be exchanged with fresh air at the bottom of the hive. Water carried on these convection currents condenses on all the interior surfaces of the hive that are cold, stores and combs included, since the bees do not heat them. If too much water condenses on the upper surfaces of the hives and on the combs that hold bee bread and honey, the stores become mildewed, the honey may ferment, and cold water drips down onto the clustered bees.

It is therefore important to avoid cold temperatures and condensation at the top of the hive in the winter. This suggests that rather than increase the ventilation, such as by inserting matchsticks under the crown board, which will cause a temperature drop, it is better to insulate the roof. This enables the moisture-filled air to flow down to the base of the hive and be exchanged with fresh air.

Deliberate ventilation at the top of the hive will cause some of the moist air to be lost, giving the appearance of improving the situation, but it will destroy the natural circulation of air within the hive, replacing it with a chimney effect.

Even in the summer the bees need to continuously bring fresh air into the brood nest. So warmed air that is laden with water vapour and CO₂ constantly rises out of the cluster. If it cools down it will release the water it can no longer hold.

To assist the control of moisture within a hive the following is suggested:

- Use an open mesh floor to improve circulation and air exchange.
- Insulate the roof (and side walls in the winter).
- Insert dummy boards on both sides of the brood and super boxes to improve air flow.
- Possibly consider the use of insulated hive top feeders that create a moisture absorbing 'attic' in the hive.

How much water a bee colony can produce inside its nest depends mainly on its size. It is easy to calculate that a decent-size colony may generate one half-cubic foot of water between December and the end of March from its stores and the nectar it may collect in early spring. This is the equivalent of almost four gallons (eighteen litres) of water or five inches (thirteen centimetres) of water that rains down onto the bees and combs of a colony that is overwintering on seven frames per

box!

This article comes courtesy of Dave Cushman and Reigate BKA via eBees - many thanks to all concerned. (Ed.)

COMMITTEE CORNER

The main items discussed at the last meeting of the HBKA Executive Committee on 8 December 2015 were as follows:

- Health & Safety - the Committee decided to run a First Aid Training Day on Saturday 20th February 2016. The course would be organised by Holos Health Care and the cost to participants would be £10 per person, a considerable saving on the price charged to the Association (£57 pp).
- Three Counties Show 2016 - it's Herefordshire's turn to be the lead county this time and the chosen theme for the Show is "Bees in Cider Orchards". The Committee agreed to the formation of a sub-committee to oversee arrangements, this to be led by Mary Walter.
- HBKA Honey Show 2016 - the Committee also agreed to the formation of a sub-committee to make recommendations for the organisation of this show - subcommittee members are Bob Cross, Nick Hall, Louise Sheppard and Chris Stowell.
- Finance - despite some fairly substantial capital expenditure this year and the initiation of LAN budgets, the Treasurer reported that the Association's finances were still in good order - more on this at the AGM!

When the Committee meets again, any items of note will find their way into this corner of The HBKA Buzzword.





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BEEKEEPING IN MEXICO

HBKA member Elly Ingram recently visited Mexico and has sent in these photos of local beehives, seemingly made from large logs. Apparently the bees inside are stingless (very handy) - so it's little wonder then that 90% of the local Mayan population work in the honey industry!

Elly couldn't find out

a lot more because she was on her way to swim in an underground river at the time (as you do!) but she did say that the close up picture at the bottom of the page shows the guard bee - only one, presumably because, having no stings, the bees have

hardly any enemies so guarding isn't a much needed occupation in their world.

Many thanks to Elly for this brief glimpse into the Mexican bee world.





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AROUND THE INTERNET

The National Diploma in Beekeeping website has recently been upgraded making it much easier to navigate, with a lot of additional information and a much easier method of booking short courses. The new website can be found here: <http://national-diploma-beekeeping.org/>

Honey isn't the only powerfully anti-microbial fluid bees are capable of producing. Now new research has revealed that the seminal fluid of drones can destroy the fungal spores of Nosema, one of the most wide-spread bee pathogens. You can read more about this at <http://abc.net.au/news/7100104> (thanks to Ellen Davies for this one).

Also, if you have a bit of time to spare (ha-ha!) how about having a look at some of the "webinars" available on the BeeCraft website at www.bee-craft.com/hangout ? The most recent one was entitled "Beekeeping with Children" and the next, on Wednesday 17 February will deal with the BBKA Examinations.

BOB'S BEELINES FOR FEBRUARY

- I check my bees and their varroa trays every 14 days. When I checked on January 10th, very few mites were found out of 33 hives. 17 had no mites at all and, on the other 16, a total of only 120 mites were found. One hive had 30, another had 20 and the rest had 10 or less.
- As we have now had about 10 days of colder weather which will make the bees become less active and cluster closer together, I will soon treat about 20 hives with Oxalic Acid at 3.2%. The remaining hives will be treated with Apilife Var in about the 2nd week in March.
- Because this winter has been so unusually warm and colonies have remained fairly active, please remember to keep a check on the stores of your own bees and feed candy if necessary.
- Over the last month or so, I have been stocking up with bee keeping equipment and am looking forward to seeing you all very soon.



That's all for now.

Bob and Kath Cross



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Marlene Hewitt (Burley Gate)	

Newsletter Editor Chris Stowell

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

The deadline for inclusion of material in any

edition of the Buzzword is the 24th day of the preceding month unless otherwise notified. While care is taken to verify the material published, the Editor does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of statements made by contributors or necessarily share the views expressed.

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