The HBKA Buzzzz Word

April 2012

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

MARCH 2016

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

!! DON'T FORGET, EVERYONE !!

HEREFORDSHIRE BEE KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION AGM

Three Counties Hotel, Belmont Road

HEREFORD, HR2 7BP

Tuesday 15 March 2016 at 7.00 pm prompt

(N.B. AGM papers attached with this newsletter)

..plus..

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

(see overleaf for further information)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

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

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

Tuesday 22 March - 6.45 pm for 7.00 pm - East LAN meeting (but open to all HBKA members) - "Honey & Wax Preparation for Show" - Bishops Frome Village Hall, WR6 5AZ

Friday-Sunday 8, 9, 10 April - BBKA Spring Convention - Harper Adams University, 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 AGM - TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2016

HOW DO BEES LEARN?- a talk by Marin Anastasov

"Knowledge is power; this applies to honeybees as much as to humans. The learning ability and memory of the individual bee play a key role in the success of the colony.
In this lecture we will consider what information bees need about their environment so that they can orientate in space and be efficient nectar and pollen gatherers. What are the different types of learning and how do bees gain and share information? What is the importance of colours, shapes, scent and taste in memorising locations? Are some bees better than others when it comes to learning and retaining information? And how does the environment and what we do as beekeepers influence the ability of our bees to learn?"

Marin Anastasov is a member and vice-chairman of Gloucestershire Beekeepers. He recently became a Master beekeeper, and was elected to the BBKA Exam Board at the recent 2016 delegates meeting. He travels widely in his work as sourcing manager for Pukka Herbs. He has been keeping bees since he was 18 years old and now has about 25 colonies near his home in the Cotswolds.

... AND JUST ONE WEEK LATER ...

EAST LAN - FIRST MEETING OF 2016 - TUESDAY 22 MARCH
"HONEY AND WAX PREPARATION FOR SHOW"

Bishops Frome Village Hall, WR6 5AZ - 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! If you'd be good enough to email chris.stowell1@btinternet.com if you wish to come along, it would be of great help to us in gauging numbers.

FIRST ASSOCIATION MEETING OF THE YEAR - TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2016

The first association meeting of 2016 saw a good crowd of beekeepers gathering at the Three Counties Hotel. Our regional bee inspector, Jo Schup had requested publicity about the likely invasion of the Asian hornet. This alien species is poised in northern France, just a short hop across the channel. The NBU had produced a video of these insects hawking in front of a beehive, the bees are aware of the predators and cower at the entrance afraid to venture into the danger zone. Anyone spotting one of these insects is urged to note the location and to take a photo to allow identification. The sighting should be reported immediately (sending a photograph if possible) to: alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk the NBU and the regional bee inspector. There are examples of Asian hornet traps on the internet, (see the NBU website) but the entrance has to be restricted so that beneficial insects are not trapped, and there should be exit holes so that smaller insects can make their escape. The traps have been very effective in France at catching overwintering Asian hornet queens when they emerge from hibernation in late February or March.

Debbie Smith went on to discuss what to look for at your first inspection. A healthy laying queen is needed for colony development. Drone laying queens or laying workers are often found in the Spring when the queen failed during the winter. The queen also needs room for brood expansion, and old frames may have to be removed and replaced with foundation between the brood nest and any remaining stores. If stores are low, they may be needed to be supplemented with fondant. It is useful to have your marking kit in your pocket, as low number of bees at the beginning of the year make finding the queen comparatively easy.

We went on to discuss the merits of the shook swarm. Dave Sutton had done large numbers in his time as bee inspector, as a treatment for European Foul Brood (EFB). The technique is simple - a brood box filled with fresh frames and foundation is placed on the original stand over a clean floor and queen excluder and an empty super box can be used to funnel the bees. A gap is made by taking a few frames out of the centre of the new box, then every frame is shaken in, the super is removed, a crown board fitted and the roof replaced. After a couple of days the bees need to be fed until they have completely drawn all the new frames, this may take 4 to 5 gallons of sugar syrup. There is a useful fact sheet on the technique on Beebase. To combine this with varroa control, one brood frame with eggs or open brood can be returned to the brood chamber (varroa mites will occupy these cells as they are capped). As soon as the cells are all capped, the frame should be removed and destroyed, this will remove most of the mites that were on the bees. Alternatively a chemical control (such as oxalic acid) could be applied before the brood nest is established. To reuse the frames, the brood can be killed by freezing, the comb removed and foundation renewed. Once the queen has stated laying, the queen excluder below the new box can be removed and cleaned. This is a very effective technique for changing all the comb in the colony, and gives the bees a fresh start with renewed vigour.

Mary went on to describe the techniques for setting up a small nuc. The polystyrene nucs available now are convenient to use and light to carry about. An overwintered nuc can be useful for dealing with the queen problems which may be evident early in the season. Nucs can be made with one frame of sealed brood with bees attached, and bees shaken in from two other colonies. If kept in the same apiary, the entrance needs to be blocked with grass for a couple of days to stop bees decamping to their previous home. A sealed queen cell can be carefully removed from another colony, or a frame with a queen cell in situ can be used. Feeding the small nuc is essential. The queen should emerge a week after the queen cell was sealed, and after a few days should be mature enough to take her mating flight. If the weather is suitable the new queen should be laying after two to three weeks; an indication of success is the presence of foragers bringing pollen loads into the hive.

Many thanks to Mary Walter for this report which clearly gets 2016 off to a good start (Ed.)

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NEWS & FEATURES

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2016

New Venue for the 2016 National Honey Show
We're pleased to announce that this year's National Honey Show will take place at **Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9AJ** on **Thursday 27th, Friday 28th and Saturday 29th October 2016**.

Sandown Park is close to Esher railway station and high street. It is a larger venue with plentiful free parking, wifi, cafes, and everything for our show will be under one roof. There will be space for more traders, so anyone interested should get in touch at tradestands@honeyshow.co.uk It will be different, will still, no doubt throw challenges for yourselves and your hard-working committee, but we're looking forward to being able to expand our activities and offer even more for both new and experienced beekeepers.

Lecture Programme
Our speakers for this year include:

- Sue Cobey - World lead on Instrumental Insemination and all things queen bee related
- Dave Tarpy - Professor of Apiculture, Texas USA
- Philip McCabe - Apimondia President
- A representative from the Bee Farmers Apprentice co- operative - the new voice and generation of bee-keepers (mentor is the BFA secretary)

The overall themes will be Queens, new generation and Honey Shows on a Global scale. As well as our usual programme of lectures, there will be the additional Bee Craft lectures on Friday, and lectures for those fairly new to beekeeping on Saturday.

2015 & past lecture videos on the National Honey Show YouTube Channel
The videos from 2015 are now available to view on the National Honey Show YouTube channel www.honeyshow.co.uk/videos where you can still view many of the lectures from 2013 and 2014 as well. We've been very fortunate in securing funding towards this superb educational facility. Everyone gains support from viewing and appreciating the videos and any ideas for charities we can approach for funding would be much appreciated.

National Honey Show Leaflets
If you would like National Honey Show leaflets for distribution at your local meeting, county show or other event in the lead up to this year's National Honey Show, please e-mail nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com and let us know how many leaflets, and raffle ticket booklets you can distribute, and the address for us to send them to. Alternatively you can collect them from Thornes or Northern Bee Books stands at Bee Tradex or the BBKA Spring Convention.

nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com
www.honeyshow.co.uk

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MAKING MEAD - Part 3: Racking and the Final Product.

Fermentation Progress: Allow fermentation to proceed until completion. This may take several weeks. Within a week of fermentation finishing, rack off. This is done by carefully siphoning the mead into a clean demijohn with the plastic tube. Take care to avoid too much aeration, or sucking up any of the residue (lees) from the bottom of the demijohn. Add a crushed Campden tablet and top up the demijohn with cold water.

Second Racking: Rack a second time as soon as a heavy deposit forms, or after 3 months, whichever is the sooner. Add another Campden tablet. Continue racking every 3 – 4 months, adding a Campden tablet each time. Top up the demijohn each time, so as to leave no large air space.

Maturing: It may take a year, or 3 or 4, before your light, dry mead is at the peak of perfection. For the fuller types (ie; Sweet Meads), this may take even longer. However most meads can be drunk much sooner, but adequate maturing is essential if you are aiming for a superior mead suitable for the Honey Show.

Problems: One of the problems with mead making is that sometimes a haze forms which is impossible to clear in the finished product. This problem usually occurs in the initial stages, resulting from small quantities of wax and pollen in the honey. This can be avoided by dissolving the honey in hot water and stirring well; but do not overheat or you will destroy the bouquet of the mead. You will find that a scum will congeal on the surface of the honey and water so skim this off. Some recipes suggest boiling the water/honey for 20 or 30 minutes, but I do not recommend this, for the reason stated above. Dissolving the honey in water at 100˚F/120˚F should be sufficient. A haze, or cloudy appearance, in mead has no detrimental effect on its flavour, but is considered a bad point when being judged. Mead should be bright and clear, like a good white wine.

Clearing Mead: If a haze does form, there are other ways of clearing it. One way is to try filtering it though a wine filter paper, but this is unlikely to have much effect unless careless racking has caused the cloudiness. That is why this process should be done carefully. Another, better method*, is to use isinglass, or the white of an egg, whisked until firm. The white of one egg is sufficient for several gallons! Add to the mead in the demijohn and leave for 24 hours. If isinglass is used, dissolve in a very small quantity of cold water, using ¼ oz. of isinglass to the gallon. Add to the mead and leave for several weeks. I have not tried either of these methods, so I cannot comment on their effectiveness.

Alternative Additives: Last month I mentioned more superior Acid and Tannin additives. I will deal with these now:

- **Acid.** Acids play a big part in fermentation and the final flavour of the mead. The best acid combination is ⅔ malic acid and ⅓ tartaric acid. This is known as *Mead acid mixture*.
- **Tannin.** Meads that lack astringency lack character. Tannin is the main source of astringency and is best added to meads preferably in the form of grape tannin or tannic acid, 1/15 - 1.20th oz. per gallon.

You should be able to obtain the above ingredients from winemaking suppliers and over the internet.

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Alternative Recipes: If you feel a bit more adventurous, spurred on by your success (?) with your dry mead, you could try making Sweet mead** as follows:

Ingredients:
Acacia blossom honey, as required (see Method)
¼ oz. Tartaric acid
½ oz. Malic acid
1/15th oz. Tannin
Madeira yeast
Water to one gallon

Method: Prepare the must as before, using 3lb of honey. Ferment until the gravity drops to 5 (for this you will need an hydrometer, "Gravity 5 " being 1.005). Add a further ¼lb of honey, making sure that this is thoroughly dissolved. Repeat the procedure whenever the gravity drops to 5, until fermentation finally ceases, then rack. From then on, proceed as before.

Maturing: When your mead has finally finished its fermentation cycle, it is time to bottle the end product. Carefully siphon off the mead into clean bottles and fit corks. You can use ordinary wine corks, plastic corks, or plastic stoppers. The latter are good, provided that they are a good tight fit (bottle necks do vary). The best bottles to use are the 'Punted' type, that have an inverted 'Vee' in the bottom. Any sediment thrown (and there will be some) is collected in the base, which makes it easier to decant.

Storage: Store your mead in a cool place, preferably in a wine rack. Taste it occasionally to ensure that it is of the best "tastitivity"! Bottles should be topped up to replace any mead removed. It is therefore wise to keep a small stock – (if you can resist drinking it!!).

Good luck!

* Reference: 'Home Made Wines and Drinks', by Marguerite Patten, published by Hamlyn.
**Reference: 'Making Mead', by Bryan Acton & Peter Duncan, published by Amateur Winemaker.

Many thanks to John Harley for this and his other two excellent articles on Mead published over the last three months. What an great introduction to how it's done! Now, come on everyone - get some equipment together and have a go so that, come September, this year or next, we can all see the results in the vastly expanded Mead classes in the HBKA Honey Show! (Ed.)

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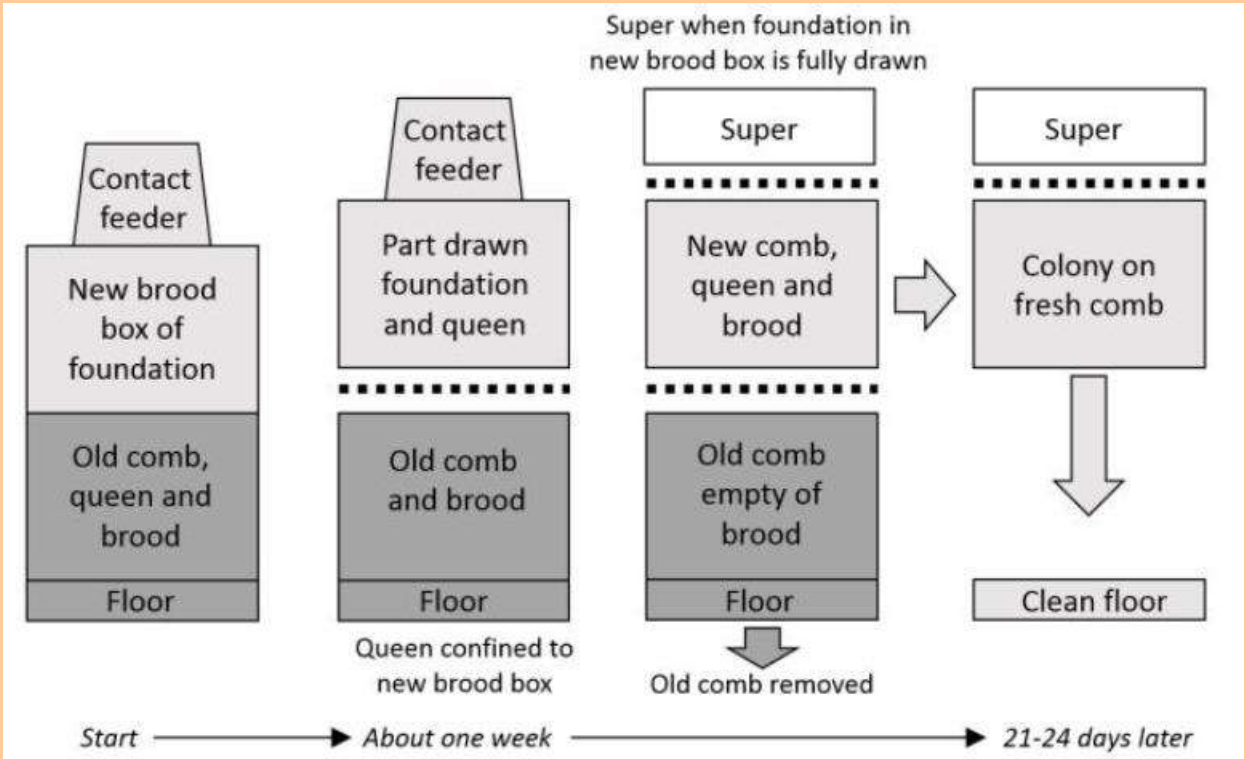
BAILEY COMB CHANGE

Spring is a good time to be thinking about moving any bees that are on old comb onto fresh clean comb to maintain colony health and reduce virus loadings. One of the least disruptive ways of doing this, should you wish or need to change all of the combs in a brood chamber at one time, is through a Bailey comb change, proposed and publicised by Lesley Bailey, the Rothamsted expert on bee diseases.

The method is as follows:
Prepare a clean brood chamber filled with frames of foundation. Place this chamber over the existing brood chamber. Unless there is a strong nectar flow, feed with winter strength sugar syrup i.e.1/2 litre of water to 1 kilogram of sugar. When the bees have drawn out some of the foundation, find the queen and place her on this comb. Put a queen excluder over the old brood chamber and under the new, thus trapping the queen in the upper chamber. If possible arrange a new hive entrance between the two brood boxes and close off the old. This helps to reduce the amount of pollen stored in the old lower combs. After three weeks remove the old brood chamber. The brood will have hatched and the comb can then be rendered to recover the beeswax if desired.

This system is ideal for replacing all the combs at once and is best performed in early spring. Often with clement weather, March is suitable but remember to keep feeding so the bees can build comb.

More information is available from the NBU FAQ No. 5 at www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=170 - or on Dave Cushman's web site at http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/baileychange.html



Something to do a bit later on this month, perhaps as part of your varroa management regime? I'm certainly going to have a go with one of my hives because it really does need a spring-clean. (I find the diagram here particularly helpful taking account of time as it does as well as the sequence of changes).

This article comes courtesy of Essex BKA via eBees – many thanks to all concerned. (Ed.)

PESTICIDE PROBLEMS IN HEREFORDSHIRE

At the end of May, beginning of June last year John Robinson noticed a problem with his bees. There were very large numbers of dead bees outside the hives, near the entrance. There are usually some dead bees to be found in this area but not numbers in the thousands! John called in Seasonal Bee Inspector, Colin Pavey, to investigate. There was no obvious sign of disease, but they noticed that returning foragers dropped down in front of the hive instead of entering. They either turned around or sometimes landed on their backs. Pesticide poisoning was suspected so samples were sent for analysis under the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme. This is a collaboration between the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (responsible for regulating pesticides), the Wildlife Incident Unit (sample analysis) and Natural England, who manage the Scheme. Full details can be found on the National Bee Unit's Beebase website. Oil seed rape had finished flowering, but there were still some cider orchards in bloom together with field beans.

Analysis of the corpses confirmed presence of several chemicals, including a range of fungicides, the neonicotinoid thiacloprid (not one of the currently withdrawn compounds), and relatively high levels of chlorpyrifos. This is the active ingredient of the insecticide marketed as Equity and is an organophosphate approved for use in the EU. It is highly toxic to honey bees, but its application is allowed once per season for dessert and cooking apples, and four times per season for cider apples. It should not be applied when bees are actively foraging, when flowering weeds are present, or to fruit crops during flowering, although it can be used pre-blossom up to pink/white bud or post-blossom after petal fall. It is used as a contact insecticide to control a wide range of insect pests such as moth caterpillars, aphids, sawfly, weevils and capsids.

Because of its high toxicity and prevalence in pollen and nectar, bees are considered to have higher risk from chlorpyrifos exposure via their diet than from many other pesticides. When exposed to chlorpyrifos in the laboratory at levels roughly estimated from measurements in the hive, bee larvae experienced 60% mortality over 6 days, compared with 15% mortality in controls. Adult bees exposed to sub-lethal effects of chlorpyrifos (0.46ng/bee, similar to the levels found in John's bees) exhibited altered behaviour: less walking, more grooming, difficulty righting themselves and unusual abdominal spasms. In some states of America it is recommended that chlorpyrifos products should not be applied to flowering plants such as fruit trees within 4–6 days of blossoming to prevent bees from directly contacting the residue.

John eventually lost all his home colonies, but intends to restock, especially as his proximity to the Wyevale Garden Centre has led to his apiary being selected by the National bee Unit as a sentinel for monitoring the possible entry into the Country of various exotic pests. He has approached his local landowners and tried to instil the importance of keeping to the guidelines when using pesticides.

The spray liaison scheme should ensure that beekeepers are notified before insecticides are used but this has not been functioning well recently. The BBKA are working on a new online scheme which is hoped will go live in the summer. In the meantime, keep an eye on your colonies and report any unexpected losses. Your first step should be to contact Colin Pavey, who will discuss the details and make an initial visit. A 'cooks matchbox-full' sample of freshly dead or dying bees is what is required. Plastic bags or plastic containers are no good as the bees decompose too quickly. Do not freeze. Investigation and analysis is not a quick process and in John's case the analysis took so long to complete that the summer was over before the results came in.

Fortunately, incidents like this are unusual and although there are sometimes unexplained colony losses, we have not had a confirmed pesticide poisoning loss in Herefordshire for quite a few years.

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The Wildlife Incident Unit monitors all UK cases of suspected honeybee poisoning, and has found that the number of incidents reported declined from over 100 in 1988 to about 30 in 2003. Of these only about one third were caused by pesticides, so thankfully it is a rare occurrence, though possibly under reported. Not all events are due to careless or misuse of pesticides by farmers or landowners, there have been cases caused by beekeepers, such as inappropriate wood preservative on hives, wax moth control and ant treatment in an apiary.

Note: There is a fairly rare virus – Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (details on the Beebase website) – where some of the symptoms can be similar to poisoning; bees on their backs, legs moving and bees unable to fly, dying in large piles outside and sometimes inside the hive.

Many thanks to Mary Walter and Colin Pavey for collaborating in putting together this interesting article about local issues that could concern us all at some time or other. And if you'd like to help find out more about the action of neonicotinoid pesticides, please have a look at the advert reproduced here (see right) and do as instructed to participate. It would be interesting to know how many HBKA members decide to take part in this survey so, if you do, please let me know at (Ed.)

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Are neonicotinoid pesticides ending up in honey?

The problem: Neonicotinoid pesticides have been widely used as a seed treatment on mass flowering crops like oilseed rape. Traces of these pesticides can be found in the pollen and nectar on which bees feed, so there is a risk that they may end up in honey. Although there is currently an EU moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on oilseed rape, they are still widely used on cereal crops. However, recent evidence suggests that neonicotinoids can persist in soils and be picked up by wild flowers growing on the edge of arable crops, thus providing a further risk of exposure.

What we are trying to do: We want to analyse samples of locally produced honey to see whether any traces of neonicotinoid pesticides are present.

What we need: We are looking for small samples of honey that can be linked to a location (i.e. an Ordinance Survey grid reference of where the hives were placed) and collection date (e.g. month or at least year).

If you are interested in participating please e-mail Ben Woodcock at bawood@ceh.ac.uk.

We will send you a small sample tube for the honey, a short questionnaire and pre-paid return packaging. If you have more than one potential honey sample (i.e. you have hives in lots of locations) let us know and we will send you more tubes. We will treat all information as strictly confidential and no results will ever be linked to specific individuals. If you are interested in the results for your honey we will be happy to provide them. This project is run by Prof. Richard Pywell from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) which is the UK's Centre of Excellence for integrated research in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

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BOB'S BEELINES FOR MARCH

Not a lot to say this month everyone.

In the last 2 weeks we have had colder weather with quite a few frosts - so winter is not over yet. The bees are becoming more active on sunny days but there's not much out there yet in the pollen line for them to bring back.

Make sure you keep checking your hives for stores and feed ordinary fondant or Candipolline Gold (fondant + pollen), both of which we have in stock. I'm certainly feeding my bees this way at the moment.

I carried out a varroa check recently. One of my hives had 10 mites on the tray on January 24th. Then, on January 31st I used oxalic acid 3.2% treatment and a week later on February 7th a total of 100 mites were found on the same hive. So the varroa mites you normally see are only the tip of quite a big iceberg!

That's all for now

Bob and Kath Cross

APOLOGY

In the report on The BBKA DELEGATES' MEETING on page 3 of last month's newsletter, it was stated that the meeting agreed that Executive Committee minutes would be published. In fact, the original proposition lacked a seconder so it lapsed. This was incorrectly printed in the Buzzword edition circulated to members but was corrected in the edition later filed on the HBKA website. Apologies to everyone concerned for this error.

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ADVERTISEMENT

FOR SALE

National hive (brand new last season) complete with strong colony of bees and other accessories (e.g. extra frames, smoker, beesuit, hive tools etc.)

£200 for the hive + bees - £250 for everything

.

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If foul brood is suspected, contact
contact our SBI, Colin Pavey on 07775 119471/ email colin.pavey@apha.gsi.gov.uk

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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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