



The HBKA

Buzzzz Word



JUNE 2016

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

The Perfect SWARM!



Hello! - are you wondering why this section is printed so that you have to read it with your head on one side? It's a c to help you remember that your very own HBKA Honey Show will take place at The Herefordshire Festival of Bees and Honey on Saturday 17th September. I've already got the Schedule (sent with last month, should soon be harvesting your first honey of the season - so how about entering a few jars of it in one or more of the Honey Classes at the Show? It's difficult so why not have a go? There, t-hoa dar' sit unbend your neck now and carry on reading the rest of the Buzzword.....

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 7 June - East LAN Apiary Meeting - Bannut Tree Cottage

Tuesday 7 June - South LAN Apiary Meeting - Pennoxstone Court

Wednesday 8 June - North LAN Meeting - Bush Inn, Bush Bank, Kings Pyon, HR4 8EH

Saturday 11 June - Hog Roast - HBKA Apiary, Holme Lacy

Fri-Sun 17-19 June - Royal Three Counties Show - Malvern

Wednesday 22 June - South LAN Apiary Meeting - HBKA Apiary, Holme Lacy

Thursday 23 June - East LAN Apiary Meeting - Lower Poswick

Thursday 23 June - North LAN Apiary Meeting - Dower Cottage

Tuesday 5 July - South LAN Apiary Meeting - HBKA Apiary, Holme Lacy

Friday 8 July - North LAN Apiary Meeting - Millcroft Farm

Saturday 16 July - HBKA Garden Party - Upper House

Wednesday 20 July - South LAN Apiary Meeting - HBKA Apiary, Holme Lacy,



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LAN REPORTS

NORTH LAN APIARY MEETING - TUESDAY 3 MAY

We had a pleasant evening in Almeley on May 3rd with David and his bees. The cold spring has inhibited build-up and Dave's bees were still rather behind in colony development. He had to move the hives from the rose garden last year and they are now in a narrow strip between the garden wall and a hedge. The entrances all face in the same direction. The colony nearest the garden was by far the strongest, possibly due to its collecting the flying bees from the other three colonies en route home. We thought that if the entrances could be positioned so that they are not all in alignment the furthest hives would be less likely to lose their flying bees.

Dave had fed his bees generously in the autumn and the boxes were still full of stores. In this situation the queen rapidly runs out of space for brood nest expansion, especially once nectar starts to flow. Dave was advised to remove some of the old comb and replace it with foundation between the brood nest and combs of stores. The bees seemed generally healthy and remarkably tolerant despite the cool conditions. There was some chalk brood, but no evidence of varroa damage. We found and marked two queens, but the other two remained elusive.

Afterwards, we enjoyed a cup of tea and some of Dave's speciality - home-made scones and jam! Thank you to Dave for his hospitality.

....and thank you too to Mary Walter for this report of the goings on in the frozen north (well, it was then!) (Ed.)



SOUTH LAN APIARY MEETING - TUESDAY 3 MAY

There was a magnificent turnout for the first south LAN practical session of 2016. On May 3rd the 'two Andys', (Tatchell and Spanjers) led a fascinating session at the teaching apiary in Holme Lacy with a total of 17 South LAN members in attendance, the largest turnout for a weekday practical event in living memory !

Hive inspections were undertaken, checking the bees had sufficient space and stores and looking for signs of imminent swarming. This was followed by a practical demonstration of how to move bees on old comb to fresh clean comb using the Bailey method, (a detailed description of which can be found in the March Edition of Buzzword).

As the Canada geese flew overhead, the evening was rounded off with delicious cake and tea; a great time was had by all.

Many thanks to Mike Johnson for this one and for the photo too. (Ed.)



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EAST LAN APIARY MEETING – TUESDAY 10 MAY



Once again, we (*i.e. Sue and Dave Garrett*) had planned this meeting around Queen Rearing but sadly, like last year, the weather beat us and we had to spend the evening in the big shed instead of in the apiary.

When everyone had assembled, Dave explained that, two weeks beforehand, we had taken a spare brood box and adapted it to hold just four frames in the middle with the rest of the space blocked off. This was to be the queen rearing box (the nursery).

This box was placed onto a very busy hive, built up as follows

- Brood box full of bees and brood
- Queen excluder on top of the brood box
- Nursery box on top of the queen excluder containing one frame of very young brood, 2 frames of pollen and food and one specially adapted frame with queen cell bars ready to accept the queen cups with eggs in.
- Existing supers on top of the nursery box.

One week before the meeting we put the queen into a Jenter kit with 100 cell caps for the queen to lay her eggs in. Twenty four hours later, the queen was let back into the brood box. Several of the cell cups with eggs in were put into the frame which has the queen cell bars in the nursery box. At the same time we changed the frame of brood which was now a week old for a new frame of 2 to 3 day old brood so that the nurse bees would rear the queen cells at the same time as looking after the fresh brood.



We then went on to discuss how to put a queen cell into an Apidea together with a cupful of bees, then strap the Apidea to a post and wait for the queen to go out and (hopefully!) get mated.

A view past two uncapped queen cells out into Dave and Sue's apiary

Finally, on a hygienic note - during the previous Apiary meeting we had gone through how to do a Bailey comb change with a National hive. Dave has WBCs and had a hive that needed a comb change so, as the rain was still falling, we talked this through, demonstrating with a spare hive. Several other members present had WBC hives too and found this very helpful.

Then it was time to adjourn to the house for a nice warm cup of tea and some refreshments before everyone made their way back home through the evening drizzle.

P.S. Four days later, with a break in the weather, we managed to open our hives and found that we had six good queen cells. These were transferred to Apideas with some nurse bees and put on a post to wait and see what happens. Let's hope we have some better weather so that the queens can go out and mate. We'll keep you posted.....



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EVENTS

SWARM CONTROL WORKSHOP - SATURDAY 7 MAY

There was a good turnout for the swarm control afternoon held at the apiary at Holme Lacy on the 7th May.

We were split into four groups to be shown how to check the hive colonies. Being new to beekeeping, we found the session very informative, about how to recognise pre-swarm activity and how to prevent it happening, or how to use swarming to produce a new colony.

It was also fascinating to see the different types of bee in the hive, and to know what their different cells look like.

Altogether a very useful and enjoyable experience.

Thanks to Guy and Sheila Puffer for this report (Ed.)

BOB' S BEE DAYSATURDAY 21 MAY

Unfortunately the weather on Bob' s Bee Day (Saturday 21 May) was not what we needed. It had been threatening to rain all morning and a total of only 16 visitors arrived in Bob and Kath' s garden in the afternoon, a pity because a lot of people were interested in the array of photos and bees on display. Those who did come along, however, were very happy with what they experienced and, before the rain began in earnest at about 4.00 pm, there were opportunities to have a look inside a few of Bob' s many hives and see what was going on. Pity about the weather but many thanks to Bob and Kath - for all those who came along, it was well worth the effort.



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.... AND COMING SOON

HOG ROAST - SATURDAY 11 JUNE

Holme Lacy Apiary – 5.00 pm onwards

Mike Healey and son-in-law are kindly arranging a Hog Roast at the apiary on June 11th. The cost will be £5 per person payable on the day. Partners and friends are welcome. If it is raining, this will take place in the Healey family barn at Hancocks Meadow Farm - so please look at your email before setting forth if the weather is bad, or phone Mike to confirm the venue. If you need directions to the apiary, email Mary (sandmwalter@btinternet.com). Please bring a small contribution of salad or dessert to share, and your own preferred drink and glass. If wet (or even if dry and you need a rest), please also bring a picnic chair to sit on.

To ensure we have enough food, please return the reply slip attached with this edition of The Buzzword to Mike Healey by **Monday June 6th**.

ROYAL THREE COUNTIES SHOW - FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, 17 TO 19 JUNE 2016

Herefordshire is the Lead County this year and we are putting on a display showcasing the importance of bees in our apple orchards. We will need help stewarding from about 10am until 5pm on all three days (June 17th, 18th and 19th). Volunteers will be sent a wrist band to give free access to the show on their chosen day. Please let Mary know if you can help.

Judging takes place on Friday and if you would like to assist as Judge's Steward please let me know. If you have entered the show but are unable to take or collect your entries please let a committee member know so that we can help with delivery.

Anyone entering four or more classes is entitled to sell their honey (£6/lb); we are responsible for the sales table, so we will probably have a busy weekend. The King's Troup Royal Horse Artillery will be performing in the main arena every day, the Red Devils Free Fall Parachuting Regiment will also be taking part, together with all the usual equestrian and livestock events. This is always a well-attended show with plenty to interest all the family - so do come along to join in the fun.

.... AND COMING LATER

Whatever this is, it will be getting closer every month from now on ...



.... AND EVEN LATER

MIDLANDS & SOUTH WEST COUNTIES' CONVENTION (MSWCC)

This year the convention is being hosted by the Swansea and District Beekeepers Society and held on the Gower Penninsular. The theme is "Meet the Natives" and it is taking place over the weekend of October 14th, 15th and 16th. There is an interesting programme of lectures and workshops- for more details see the website www.mswcc.org.uk. This is always an informative weekend, postal bookings are now being taken for the whole weekend or single days.



NEWS & FEATURES

WHEN A FLOWER IS NOT A FLOWER

by Celia Davis



Marigold (Calendula officinalis)

The plants in this article are not all they seem. Many of them are very common species with which we have been familiar since childhood, and some are important producers of pollen and nectar. Many are regarded as weeds by farmers and gardeners and most are instantly recognisable as belonging to the same family. The family I am talking about is the Asteraceae. The old name for this group was the Compositae, a good name, because it describes the 'flowers' perfectly because they are composites of many much smaller flowers, each called a floret. Accurately they can be described as inflorescences, a term which merely means a collection of flowers with their branching stems (where relevant) and their bracts (little leaf-like structures).

We are all familiar with the concept of flowers being aggregated into inflorescences and have only to think of foxgloves and hedge parsley, but these do not concern us here. The inflorescence of the Asteraceae is a specialised one called a capitulum (found also in the Dipsaceae, Teasel family) where the individual florets are packed tightly together in a usually flat head, the whole surrounded by the bracts, which are small and green and often in more than one layer. Common examples are the daisy, dandelion, sunflower and dahlia. So far so good, but those observant ones among you will notice that the inflorescences of a daisy and dandelion do not look the same as one another. This is because there are two different kinds of florets, a small round one called a disc floret and an elongated one called a ray floret. (They have posher names but those will suffice.).

So the daisy and sunflower have both kinds, disc in the centre and ray round the outside, whereas a dandelion has only ray florets and Tansy has only disc florets. To add to the general complexity (or confusion?) some florets, or individual capita, may be single sex or may contain both sexes. This depends on the species. Obviously all female ones will contain no pollen at all. There are no hard and fast rules and it is a huge family.

Now to the Asteraceae and bees:

- **Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*) is always considered a quite important bee plant as it flowers so early in the year and colonies can really benefit from it. It may sometimes produce a crop, although this is unusual as it is so early, but the honey is quite strongly flavoured and not to everyone's taste. The pollen, a deep golden yellow, but often appearing orange in pollen loads, is produced in huge amounts but is not a perfect food for honey bees as it is low in the levels of some essential amino acids. It is quite oily and can impart a yellow colour to the wax. It is a very pretty pollen when seen under the microscope. It is also much loved by students studying pollen because of its distinctive structure. However, it is quite similar to some other species in the family so care must be exercised.



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- **Sunflower** (*Helianthus annuus*) is grown as a crop in many countries but not on any scale here, as our summers are not sufficiently long and hot. A few years ago quite a number of fields appeared in our area as trials but they were not repeated. Commercially it is grown for seed, from which oil is obtained. It is frequently grown in gardens where it is avidly worked by honey bees but, again, the pollen is somewhat less than perfect in composition.
- **Common Ragwort** (*Senecio jacobaea*) is regarded as a noxious weed. It contains chemicals known as pyrrolizidine alkaloids which cause liver damage, particularly in horses. They rarely eat fresh ragwort but are unable to detect it in hay, where it poses a particular danger. The effects are cumulative and very serious. Ragwort seems to have proliferated in recent years particularly on grass verges and traffic islands, with no-one making much effort to reduce its spread. When bees are working ragwort, the wax becomes deep yellow and the honey, which is a golden yellow colour, has a very strong, rather unpleasant aroma and taste. It improves on keeping and after granulation. The alkaloids were found to present no problem to human consumers.
- **Many other species**, both wild and cultivated, occur but space precludes mention of any more.



Hawkweed (Hieracium) is closely related to the sunflower and dandelion.

Any good flower book will help with further investigation. Probably the best is 'Wild Flowers' by Blaney, Fitter and Fitter (Second ed. 2013) which is up-to-date and has excellent pictures.

Another fascinating article that comes courtesy of Celia Davis and Warwickshire BKA via eBees - many thanks to all those involved. (Ed.)



The soon-to-be ubiquitous June Daisy



BOB'S BEELINES FOR MAY



At last a bit of good weather for our bees. This year, the oilseed rape crop is over very quickly and you should certainly be thinking of taking your early honey off now as it will quickly crystallise in the comb.

Our bees have been swarming this last two weeks and some very large swarms have been reported in our area.

We're into June now and with it comes the so-called June Gap, the time between when the spring flowers die down and the summer ones begin to bloom. It may not happen and it may only be brief if it does - but it would be a good idea to keep a check on the stores in your brood chambers just in case.

That's all for now,

Bob and Kath Cross.



French beehives in the Jardins du Luxembourg, Paris



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ADVERTISEMENTS & NOTICES



ONE DAY EVENT ONLY AT **MAISEMORE APIARIES** ON **SATURDAY, 25th JUNE 2016** **8am - 1pm**



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QUEEN REARING

This course, arranged by South Staffordshire and District BKA, will be led by well-known author and lecturer, Clive de Bruyn. It should be a great opportunity to get to know other beekeepers and a flyer containing all relevant information is attached with this edition of The Buzzword.



WYE VALLEY BKA SUMMER TRIP

On Saturday 19th June, Wye Valley Beekeepers are organising a visit to The National Botanic Gardens of Wales near Carmarthen. The flyer attached with this edition of The Buzzword gives all the information you need to book a place on what should be a very interesting day out...





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CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

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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