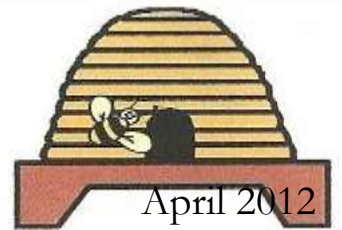




The HBKA

Buzzzz Word



MARCH 2017

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HEREFORDSHIRE BEE KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Three Counties Hotel, Belmont Road

HEREFORD, HR2 7BP

Thursday 16 March 2017 at 7.00 pm prompt

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

...plus...

*After the AGM, a talk entitled
"HOW PLANTS SOLVE CRIME"
will be given by Michael Keith-Lucas.*

INDEX

Page 2	LAN Reports
Page 3	Events
Page 4 - 6	News & Features
Page 7	Advertisements & Notices

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 4 March - Beetradox - Hall H3,
Stoneleigh Park, CV8 2LG

Thursday 9 March - East LAN Winter Meeting -
"Getting It Together" (including frame-making
race!) - Stanford Bishop Village Hall, WR6 5TT

Thursday 16 March - HBKA AGM - Three Coun-
ties Hotel, Hereford, HR2 7BP

Friday, Saturday & Sunday 7-9 April - BBKA

Spring Convention - Harper Adams University,
TF10 8NB





Page 2



LAN REPORTS

EAST LAN MEETING – TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY

East LAN's first meeting of 2017 took place at a new venue - Stanford Bishop Village Hall. The subject for the evening was The Asian Hornet and Dave Sutton, our resident advisor, started things off by introducing Justus Klaar and Colin Pavey who, as joint speakers, provided an extremely interesting evening's entertainment.

First we watched a short film of hornets stalking outside a beehive after which we were shown slides comparing our own European hornet with the Asian version for identification purposes.

We then learned how hornets have spread in France from the first sightings in 2004 until, by 2012, it had spread through much of France and on into Belgium, Spain and Italy. In 2016 it reached the Channel Island of Alderney and was then sighted in the UK near Tetbury.

The hornet's life cycle is similar to that of a solitary bee in that the queen overwinters and then makes a small nest in the following Spring. Worker numbers then build up and the colony eventually finds a new site in which to build a much bigger nest which can be ten times bigger than the ones made by our own European hornet.

Colin Pavey then spoke about last September's Tetbury sighting in which he was involved in his role as our local RBI. The eventual discovery of the nest was a mixture of things like the leafletting of local residents and the use of Beebase to identify local bee colonies. Hornet traps were set up and hornets were captured and then released in order to see in which direction they flew. This was done from a number of sites and after some triangulation to find the point where the different lines of sight converged, the nest was found high in tree. After laboratory analysis, the Tetbury colony was proved to come from the same strain as colonies in France which seems to suggest that a queen had somehow crossed the Channel and found her way to the Tetbury area to begin the nesting cycle there.

The Mendip sighting was also mentioned but Colin said that this was only a single dead hornet which appeared in a trap. No others were found, nor any nest, so this was a bit of a mystery which had yet to be resolved. However both these incidents underlined the need for beekeepers everywhere to be vigilant and notify the authorities if they see anything suspicious.

We then watched a video of a nest being destroyed in France – definitely a job for experts.

Justus and Colin then took some questions one of the answers to which revealed that there was no organization like the NBU in France which may have been a factor in the speed with which the Asian hornet had spread in that country. Dave Sutton then suggested that, if it was true that, in one year, a single colony can produce a hundred or so queens ~~which are mated inside the nest~~, it must give the Asian hornet a massive ability to spread exponentially.

With this thought hanging heavily in the air (rather like an Asian hornets' nest??), the evening ended and thanks were expressed to Justus and Colin for a very interesting and thorough coverage of the Asian hornet's progress to date.



Page 3



EVENTS

HBKA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

AGENDA ITEM 8 - SPECIAL RESOLUTION

Herefordshire Bee Keepers' Association (HBKA) is currently an unincorporated Charity. This means that the trustees, who are automatically all the Committee Members at any one time, are each personally liable for any debts incurred by the Association. In the past, the only way to avoid this unlimited degree of liability was to become a limited company with all the accompanying complications and cost of having to deal with Companies House and company law. However, recent legislation now allows for small charities to become Community Interest Organisations (CIOs). The main benefit of this for HBKA would be that, unless negligent, the trustees would no longer be financially liable and the whole association would have limited liability, whilst not having to deal with Companies House. It has been recommended that we adopt this new status, as it offers the whole association, and trustees in particular, more financial protection. This will not affect members' benefits in any way.

The full wording of the resolution itself appears on page 1 of the AGM papers and the Committee are hoping to see as many members as possible at the AGM to discuss and (hopefully) approve this important step forward for HBKA.

After the AGM, Michael Keith-Lucas will be speaking to us on the subject of "How Plants Solve Crime".

Michael was Senior Tutor in Plant Sciences at the University of Reading until he retired, and worked mainly on pollen in archaeological sites and woodland history; with many published works on the subject. Later during the last few years of his employment and in 'retirement' he took on a new, career using pollen to assist in solving crime.





Page 4



NEWS & FEATURES

THE ARTFUL BODGER

I have made my own beehive...!! You would need to be better acquainted with the degree of my manual ineptitude fully to appreciate the enormity of that statement. Given the choice between a slotted and a Phillips screwdriver, I would choose a hammer to encourage the screw in - a (not very) artful bodger - in fact, more ambisinistrous than ambidextrous!

Some weeks ago I spotted that Axminster Tools and Machinery were offering a two day course in making a beehive. Preternaturally mean, I viewed it with suspicion until I noted that you came away from the course with your own British national 14 x 12 hive. A quick calculation and I realised that the value of the hive exceeded half the price of the course. So, spotting a bargain I swiftly booked up the course for February.

Having been born and brought up on the Dorset coast, staying in seaside Beer in the depths of out-of-season was reassuringly homely. The course class size is normally only four, but on this occasion we were just three. Both of the other participants knew more than me about beekeeping (not difficult) and far more than me about wood working (even less difficult).

Our tutor, Ed, was a craftsman in wood who also happened to be an experienced beekeeper - or should that be he was an experienced beekeeper who happened to be a craftsman in wood. He swiftly took the measure of my ineptitude and explained stage by stage what we had to do without making me feel the cack-handed incompetent I knew myself to be. We worked with the table saw and band saw to cut up the wood, and it was first class cedar, none of your knotty seconds stuff. Then we finger-jointed timber to make pieces large enough to make the sides of the brood box. We used the router table to prepare other pieces for assembly, sawing and routing the tenons, sawing and chiselling the mortices. Stage by stage, we glued and clamped the pieces together. What a delight to work with good quality tools and machines! No more will I be buying the cheapest from the edge of town DIY sheds.

My two colleagues learned as I learned, although I had far further to go. At coffee and lunch we discussed beekeeping matters, shared advice and compared notes.

While the glue on the brood box was drying, we made the crown board, drilled and cut out the holes for the Porter bee escapes and cut to shape the wood for the roof. The latter was then assembled with the sheet metal provided. How proud I was of the elegance of the hand routed ventilation holes I made, admittedly with the benefit of the jig they had prepared. Finally the floor with varroa mesh and landing board was swiftly put together, almost nonchalantly easily by this stage, from off-cuts we had produced earlier.

Thus it was, at the end of the Friday afternoon that I stood gazing with pride at my very own, self-made (with considerable guidance), 14 x 12, beehive.

All I need now is the bees to put in it...

Many thanks for this one, Bodg.. oops, sorry, I mean Roger - top quality stuff as usual. By the way, the hive looks terrific... (Ed.)



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

This month another big family of plants with some important bee plants as well as the national flower of England and a group of plants that epitomise the English country garden as well as that same garden when it becomes completely neglected: the Rosaceae. The range of plant types in this family is huge: trees, shrubs, climbers, low-growing annuals and perennials, some of great economic importance, others regarded as weeds. The flowers are symmetrical in appearance (actinomorphic) and generally have 5 sepals and 5 petals with numerous stamens, and these parts are usually carried above the ovary.

The roses we grow in our gardens, though undoubtedly beautiful, are of little use to bees of any kind as they tend to carry double flowers which contain no nectar and may not even contain pollen. Even the single roses, which allow bees access do not contain useful nectar but produce pollen in copious amounts. So the wild roses of the hedgerow and single cultivated varieties are useful.

Apple (*Malus pumila*)

Apart from the rose itself the most familiar member of the family is probably the apple, and bees are vitally important as pollinators of apple crops, as each individual tree needs pollen from a tree of a different variety in order to set fruit. In commercial apple orchards a proportion of a different variety called a 'pollenizer' is planted along with the variety being grown to ensure that pollen is available for cross-pollination. Sufficient bees are needed to do the job effectively, usually between 2 and 3 colonies per hectare. Other bees such as many solitary bees and bumble bees, also use apple as a source of pollen and nectar but, within commercial orchards, there may not be sufficient wild bees, hence the need to transport honey bee colonies to them. In a garden setting neighbours' trees usually provide the essential pollen and it is not so important to consider varieties.

Varieties of crab apple (*M sylvestris*), provided that the flowers are single, are just as attractive to bees as the fruit trees. The apple flower is typical of the family.

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) and **Raspberry** (*Rubus idaeus*)

What an important plant blackberry is. There are more than 300 varieties of wild blackberry in the UK and flowering extends from June through until October. They are deep-rooted plants, as any gardener will tell you, so that drought rarely affects their ability to produce nectar and they are totally unfussy as to soil, growing just about anywhere. All nectar and pollen feeding insects seem to love them and bees are no exception. We grow two cultivated thornless varieties in our garden: Helen and Oregon Thornless which flower at different times and produce pounds of fruit each year. My bees love them.

Raspberry is very similar in many ways to blackberry and honey bees can collect a lot of nectar from it. Pollination, however, seems to be more efficiently achieved by bumblebees. Because raspberry flowers hang down the nectar inside them is less affected by rain than erect flowers such as apple.

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

This is the normal species of Hawthorn, but there is a second species, which, although not common, can be found if hunted for. This is *C. laevigata*. For all practical purposes they look much the same although they can be easily distinguished by close inspection of flowers and leaves, and they also form hybrids. It is a strange plant as far as honey bees are concerned as it seems to be an intermittent provider of honey. The usual term applied to Hawthorn is 'fickle'. There is no clear answer as to why this should be. The honey is beautiful, thick and amber, with a lovely aroma, but I have only obtained it once in any quantity, despite living in an area full of Hawthorn trees and hedges.



Page 6



Other members of the family

Cherries, pear, rowan, strawberry and meadowsweet are a few more examples from the Rosaceae and there are many others. Meadowsweet often has very pretty pale green pollen and is rarely an important plant although in some damp areas it can be very abundant. Strawberry is not very attractive to honey bees but insect pollination is necessary to produce well-shaped fruits as large numbers of pollen grains are necessary to produce all the little seeds and, if they are not all pollinated, the fruits are misshapen. This can happen in other fruits with more than one seed in them.

The Rosaceae is a diverse family which is important both to honey bees and beekeepers, on a commercial, as well as a small, scale. As long as the fancy double varieties are avoided, many are very useful for both pollen and nectar.

Yet another of Celia Davis's knowledgeable articles that comes courtesy of Warwickshire BKA via eBees (Ed.)

BOB'S BEELINES FOR MARCH

The weather has improved! Our bees are now out on warm sunny days and are bringing in pollen from snowdrops and pussy willows. BUT please still make sure they have plenty of stores as the brood nest will be expanding fast and more food will be needed. If in doubt put a pack of Candipolline Gold on the top of your brood frames.

For beginners – take a bit of time on a warm day to watch the bees coming back to the hive. If they are returning with pollen it's a good sign that the queen is laying and everything is OK. if in doubt ask advice.

On warm days when bees are bringing pollen in through the mouse guards, some pollen is bound to be knocked off. I would advise you to take the mouse guard off during the day, then replace it late in the evening.

Also keep a look out for the Asian hornet. I have made some traps if anyone would like to see them, please get in touch.

THINGS TO DO IN MARCH

- Resist the temptation to open up your hives for a full inspection until the weather is warm enough (circa 15C).
- Check stores and feed if necessary (normally candy but OK to use syrup if weather has eased).
- A lot of pollen going into the hive is a reassuring sign that the colony is continuing to build up nicely.

That's all for now.

Bob and Kath Cross





Page 7



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Page 8



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Bob & Kath Cross
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www.honeyshop.co.uk

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

At present, we do not have a local RBI as Jo Schup is no longer working at APHA.

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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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