



The HBKA

BUZZZZ
Word



MAY 2017

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

INDEX

Page 2	LAN Reports
Page 4	Events
Page 5	News & Features
Page 9	Advertisements & Notices

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 2 May - East LAN Apiary Meeting - Stone House
Thursday to Sunday 11 to 14 May - RHA Malvern Spring Festival
Saturday 13 May - Bob's Bee Day - Stone House
Saturday 20 May - Swarm Control Practical - Holme Lacy
Thursday 25 May - East LAN Apiary Meeting - Ullingswick
Tuesday 30 May - Highgrove Visit (apply via HBKA website)
Tuesday 5 June - East LAN Apiary Meeting - Stone House
Saturday 10 June - Hog roast & apiary visit - Ballingham & Holme Lacy

MANY APOLOGIES FOR THE LATE ARRIVAL OF THIS EDITION, EVERYONE - TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, I'M AFRAID, WHICH RESULTED IN THE NEED TO PURCHASE A NEW COMPUTER - OUCH!

THANK GOODNESS MY BACKUPS WERE OK - MAKE SURE YOURS ARE TOO! (Ed.)



Old Bramley apple trees blossoming near Bromyard.

LAN REPORTS

EAST LAN MEETING – SATURDAY 1 APRIL



Nigh on two dozen people attended East LAN's first apiary meeting of the season this year, hosted at Bob and Kath Cross's house.

Our first hive was a light one - we knew because we had the chance to heft it before opening it. Bob showed us the pollen patty already on there and he added a contact feeder of syrup. The next hive felt clearly heavier when we hefted it and, sure enough, on opening we discovered that it was brimming with bees. Time to add the first super of the year. We then split into groups in order to help (or interfere!) with other hives.

For the denouement, Bob explained that he had two colonies with drone laying queens. He and Dave Sutton showed us how to unite the two hives, two sheets of the Malvern Gazette serving as the temporary barrier, after one of the queens had been located and consigned to her fate. We learned that the other queen would follow in the footsteps of the first after which, once the hive was settled, a new queenright small colony would be introduced.

As we adjourned for tea the rain started. Over welcome tea and cakes, we chatted about winter survival rates, HBKA, BBKA, NBU and much else besides. We were all grateful to Bob and Kath for their wisdom and hospitality and even more grateful to learn that we would be returning regularly through the season to see how the colonies we had worked on prosper.

Many thanks to Roger Gill for this one and for the photo too. (Ed.)



Page 3



EAST LAN MEETING - THURSDAY 20 APRIL

On a very cloudy afternoon, 15 members of East LAN gathered to see a demonstration of a 'shook swarm'. A shook swarm is normally carried out to remove varroa infected comb and all the associated pathogens. In my case I had a mish-mash of different frames some of which were five years old that needed replacing. The shook swarm process is an easy way of replacing all the brood frames in one go.

The colony is moved a few feet from its original site. A new floor and brood box containing frames of new foundation are placed on the original site. The frames from the original colony are shaken or brushed into the new hive. When the process is complete and the hive assembled with a crown board, the colony should be fed with 2:1 sugar syrup – feeding should be continued until comb is drawn out and the Queen has started to lay eggs. (A more comprehensive description of the process can be found in the January 2017 edition of the BBKA News).

Everything was going fine with help from Bob Cross and Dave Garrett and we had replaced about half the frames. The bees were remarkably calm. It was Dave that suddenly noticed that there were no eggs on the old frames. Although the hive had many bees it seemed the hive had swarmed some days before! It looked as though the hive was queenless.



At this point we had a stroke of luck. There were a few queen cells on the old frames, some of which were well advanced. So advanced in fact that, with a little help from Dave, we had a couple of Royal births! Steve Parker, a new member, managed to capture the birth on video. The file is attached to this report. The weaker of the two Queens was dispatched and the stronger Queen (see photo below - she was remarkably large) was introduced into the new hive. As I had placed a Queen excluder between the base and brood box to prevent the Queen leaving (this was before we found the hive to be Queenless), I shall have to remove it in a few days' time so that the new Queen can make her maiden flight. After that it will be a waiting game to see if she has successfully mated.

Lastly, a bit of advice - having gone through the experience above, I would recommend that, if you intend doing a shook swarm in the future, don't do it on your own! One or two additional helpers make the process so much easier!

Many thanks to Graham Cook for this account - how exciting to be present at a royal birth! A short video of this special occasion accompanies this newsletter. (Ed.)





Page 4



EVENTS

COMING SOON...

BOB'S BEE DAY

Saturday 13th May

...see page 9 for details

FOLLOWED BY...

SWARM CONTROL PRACTICAL

Saturday 20th May

This will take place at the HBKA Apiary at Holme Lacy. Particularly useful for beginners

THEN...

HIGHGROVE VISIT

Tuesday 30th May

Always a popular outing so book now via the HBKA website at

herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk

AND NOT FORGETTING...

THE THREE COUNTIES SHOW

16TH-18TH JUNE

MALVERN

Honey show schedules for this have already been emailed to you. Why not have a go at entering this year?

NEWS & FEATURES

A GARDEN IS A LOVESOME THING, GOD WOT!

Having attended the HBKA beginners' course last year I spent the quiet days of the winter thinking about how I could make my garden more 'bee friendly'. As with most things connected with beekeeping there is no shortage of advice available. (Perhaps it is bored beekeepers whiling away the long winter evenings writing advice when they have nothing else to do). I discovered plenty of lists of bee friendly plants available, plenty of websites with recommendation (many by vendors trying to flog their seed and plants) and I even borrowed "The Bee Friendly Garden" and "Plants and Beekeeping" from the HBKA library. The RHS 'Perfect for Pollinators' selection was clearly going to be the gold standard.

My view of the garden for 2017 was going to be radically different. After decades of battling against the dandelions, I even wondered whether it is possible to buy dandelion seed. (It is.) The self-seeded buddleias I had tolerated because of their attractiveness to butterflies (and which made the garden slightly reminiscent of a 1950's bomb site) would have to be depleted once I read that honey bees can make only limited use of them because their tongues are too short. In their place would be planted eucalyptus, not any old eucalyptus but hardy ones especially attractive to bees such as *E. Bridgesiana*, (named after the education officer of New South Wales in late Victorian times) *E. Cordata*, *E. Moorei* (named after the late 19th century Director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens) and the wonderfully named *E. Mount Bogong*. I also discovered that one of the UK's best specialist eucalyptus nurseries is to be found just the other side of Worcester.

As I spent my evenings going through the books and the lists I began to notice that, as with much other advice to beekeepers, there was a degree of disagreement amongst the advisors and the advice. Then the vestiges of the scientific training I had received many years ago led me to question whether any of it was based on evidence, or merely supposition.

At this point I stumbled upon a paper by a couple of chaps at the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (LASI) at the University of Sussex and called 'Listmania: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Lists of Garden Plants to Help Pollinators'.* In 2014 they had similarly had the same doubts and had analysed 455 recommendations across 15 lists. The results? *"...there was rather little overlap in the recommendations ...the lists often included poor recommendations, omitted many good plants, lacked detail, and were almost invariably based on their authors' general expertise rather than on empirical data."*

Discouraged I wondered where to turn to next. Then I discovered that the same two chaps had run experiments in 2011 and 2012 laboriously counting insects arriving on specially planted plots of potential pollinators at the university. One immediately obvious finding was that, as we all know, things vary from year to year. Nevertheless there were some clear favourites for honey bees. This can be seen in Figure 3 (*overleaf*) of the paper they published on the experiment:**

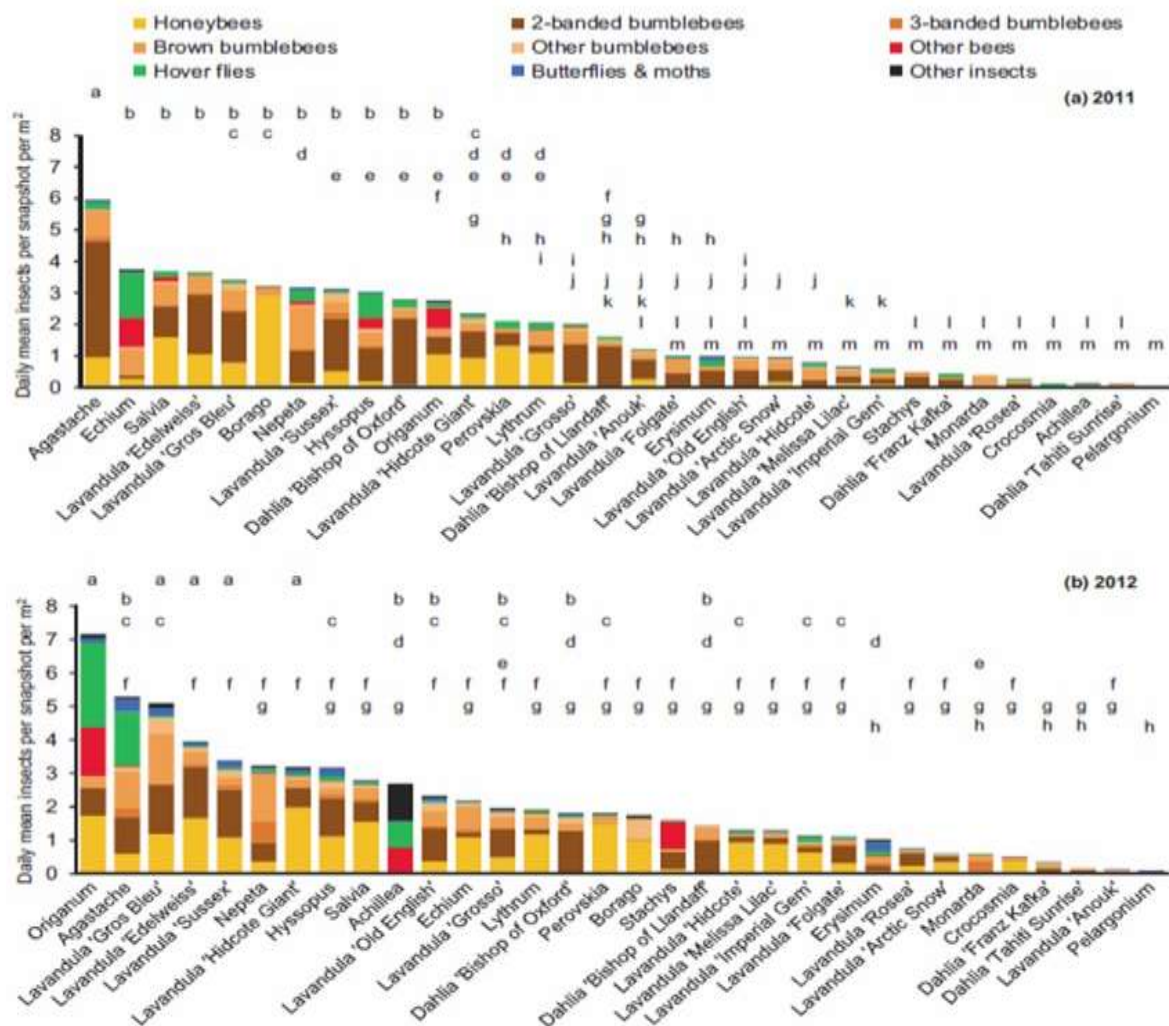


Fig. 3. Daily mean numbers of insects per snapshot per 1×1 m patch recorded on 32 garden plant varieties at the University of Sussex in 2011 (a) and 2012 (b). Letters above bars represent significant differences based on Tukey's HSD test, where varieties sharing a common letter are not significantly different from each other at $\alpha = 0.05$. Full plant names are given in Table S1.

So oregano, borage and salvias look like a good bet. Lavenders seem to vary by type. *L. 'Hidcote'* is good but not as good as *L. 'Hidcote Giant'*. *L. 'Edelweiss'* looks reliable. With Dahlias you take your pick - and pelargoniums are clearly a waste of garden space from the bees' point of view. It is not comprehensive, but a good starting point.

What of those enticing labels at the garden centres? In correspondence with Professor Francis L. W. Ratnieks, head of LASI and one of the authors of the papers, he kindly tipped me off about their latest research in the area, published just last month.*** After visiting some garden centres and comparing the number of insects on various, variously labelled plants they concluded:

"...there were many recommended varieties that were unattractive or poorly attractive to insects, and some non-recommended varieties that were very attractive...Thus, the use of the word "perfect" by the RHS list is inaccurate and presumably was chosen for marketing reasons."

Page 7



Nevertheless, on average the recommended plants were 4 times more likely to be attractive to insects than the plants that were not recommended.

As with so much to do with beekeeping you listen to everyone and then you make up your own mind. There are hard data out there, but henceforth I will be asking “why?”, “on what basis?” and “can you prove it?” a lot more. And I will be looking for bees on what I have chosen to plant this year.

REFERENCES

*Garbuzov, M and Ratnieks, F.L.W., 2014, ‘Listmania: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Lists of Garden Plants to Help Pollinators’, *BioScience*, 64 (11): 1019-1026.

**Garbuzov, M and Ratnieks, F.L.W., 2014, ‘Quantifying variation among garden plants in attractiveness to bees and other flower-visiting insects’, *Functional Ecology*, 28, 364–374

***Garbuzov, M., Alton, K. and Ratnieks, F.L.W 2017, ‘Most ornamental plants on sale in garden centres are unattractive to flower-visiting insects’, *PeerJ*, DOI 10.7717/peerj.3066

Many thanks to Roger Gill for another erudite and entertaining contribution. Roger, please could you clone yourself so that we can have more of the same more often? (Ed.)



Bluebells near the British Camp on the Malverns



Page 8



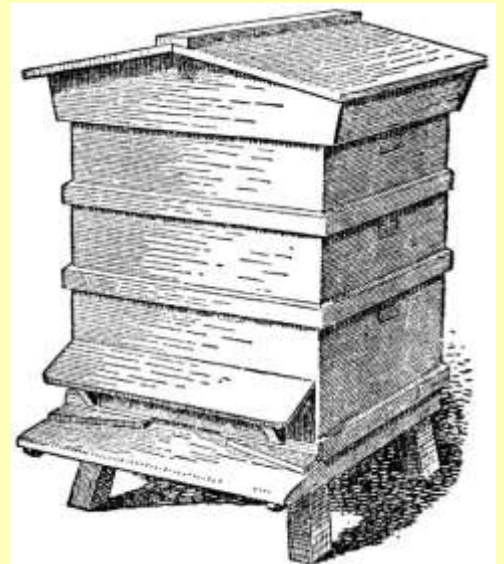
BOB'S BEELINES FOR MAY

April started off very good weather-wise but now things seem to be going a bit colder again. The brood is getting very strong and will require quite a lot of food, so make sure there are enough stores to keep everything going. Some bee keepers have reported swarms already, especially at Holme Lacy apiary (joke!).

Bobs Bee Day is on the 13th of May at 2:00pm, hive opening, bee keepers equipment, tea and cakes supplied hope to see quite a few of you, if you can make it.

THINGS TO DO IN MAY:

- With colonies expanding rapidly, regular weekly inspections will be needed to prevent swarming.
- Add supers when necessary to give the colony some extra space.
- Is oilseed rape (OSR) growing near you? If there is some within the bees' normal foraging range of 3 miles, be warned! OSR honey crystallises rapidly in the comb and then can't be removed by the bees so it needs to be harvested early.
- If there's a lot of traffic at the hive entrance, consider removing the whole entrance block for a month or two to ease the congestion.
- Keep monitoring for varroa
- Remember to maintain the area around your hives. Make sure long grass doesn't grow up in front of them and obstruct the bees' take-off and landing area.



That's all for now,

Bob and Kath Cross.



ADVERTISEMENTS & NOTICES

Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association

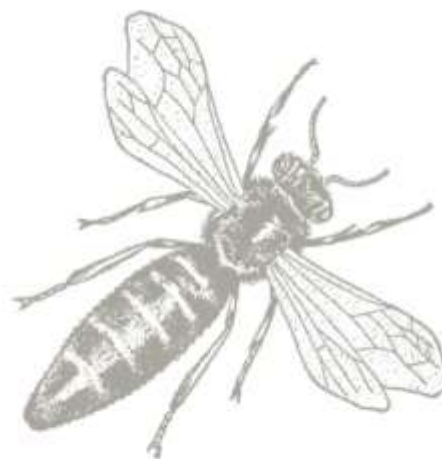
BOB' S BEE DAY

SATURDAY 13TH MAY 2017
2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

AT

STONE HOUSE,

- Hive openings
- Bee equipment sales
- Demonstrations
- Questions answered
- Light refreshments



BEGINNERS WELCOME...

There are still no responses to any of the ads on the opposite page as far as I know - so here's a little ditty that might jog somebody out there into action ...

ARE YOU AN ACTIVE MEMBER?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed?
Or are you just contented that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the flock?
Or do you always stay at home to criticize and knock?

Do you take an active part to help the work along?
Or are you simply satisfied to only just belong?

Do you work with your committee and get right in and mix?
Or leave the work to just a few, then talk about the cliques?

Think it over, reader – you must know right from wrong!
Are you an active member – or do you just belong?



Page 11





Page 12



Hill House Apiaries Honey Jars

All sizes from 1lb/454g to mini jars, always in stock, including jam and pickle jars

Bob & Pam Mendy
Hill House Farm

For all your local bee-keeping supplies and equipment, contact....



Bob & Kath Cross
Stone House Apiaries

Bumble Bee Books (new and old)

22 Bumble Bee Poster

£3.50
(£7.75 in tube by post)

www.honeyshop.co.uk

**If foul brood is suspected, contact our new RBI, Colin Pavey (congratulations Colin!)
on 07775 119471 - or email colin.pavey@apha.gsi.gov.uk
At present, we do not have a local SBI.**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

President	Peter Furneaux
Chairman	Andy Tatchell
Vice Chairman	Debbie Smith
Secretary	VACANCY
Treasurer	John Robinson
Membership Sec.	Mary Walter
Committee	Robert Cross
Committee	Mike Healey

LAN COORDINATORS

South LAN:	Geoff Blake
North LAN:	Mary Walter (Leominster)
East LAN:	Chris Stowell (Bringsty)
Marlene Hewitt (Burley Gate)	

Newsletter Editor	Chris Stowell
Examinations Sec.	Louise Sheppard

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.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Whilst there is no charge for advertising in this newsletter, we welcome donations towards HBKA funds. Please contact Chris Stowell or any committee member, if you wish to advertise. Full or Associate members of HBKA only.