



Leeds Beekeepers' Association



March, 2012 - Newsletter 12



This year's queen colour is YELLOW



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WELCOME

Snowdrops are everywhere at this time of year, but the particularly charming picture of an obviously very industrious honeybee on snowdrops was sent in by Steve Hoyle. Thankyou Steve. With Spring fast getting going, our Colony Manager, Robin Tomlinson, has written a special article about Testy Bees, which I am sure many of us will find extremely useful – see page 5. Chris has written a full report of the goings on at the recent Tree Trimming Party, and finally, just to prove that our members are not just beekeepers, but get up to all sorts of interesting things, Tony Yull has written about he exploits raising money for charity on page 8.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2012

Sat 3 rd	Apiary Day
Wed 7 th	Winter Course
Wed 10 th	YBKA Spring Conf
Wed 21 st	LBKA Committee Meeting
Wed 28 th	Winter Talk

April 2012

Wed 18 th	Apiary Meeting
Fri 20 th	BBKA Spring Convention
Sat 21 th	BBKA Spring Convention
Sun 22 th	BBKA Spring Convention
Wed 25 th	Apiary Meeting, Temple Newsam
Sat 28 th	YBKA Annual Conference, Bishop Burton College

NEWS ITEMS

1. Leeds Beekeepers Association Website

As you know, our website has been in need of an upgrade. Martin Evans, our Website Manager has been doing a lot of work behind the scenes and has now uploaded the new website.

I urge you to have a look at it – it's much more streamlined and user-friendly than the old one, and I think everyone will agree that Martin has done a splendid job.

2. FERA Guidelines for the Sale of Nuclei

Just to keep all our members in the loop, FERA has recently re-issued guidelines for the sale of Nuclei.

We are very happy to let you know that David Haigh has confirmed that he already meets all the requirements, and in fact exceeds them. He regularly requests inspections from the local Bee Inspector, to ensure that all the Nuclei sold through LBKA are up to a very high standard.

So we can be even more sure that our new members are receiving very high quality bees to start their beekeeping careers.

3. New Kitchen at Temple Newsam Apiary

I know that many of you will have noticed (but tactfully not mentioned) that the kitchen fittings and equipment left a lot to be desired.

Following recent discussions at committee meetings, Chris Barlow and David Haigh have been working hard in the BBKA Clubhouse in recent weeks. They have been to Ikea and bought new units and are in the process of fitting these. These are free standing units which means they can easily be moved. They are very open so hopefully less clutter will appear, they are made of metal so are hopefully easier to clean and will not rot or degrade as a compressed wood kitchen might in such a cold/damp building.

Watch this space for more details and some before/after photos next time.

4. YBKA Spring Conference

A council and Spring Conference meeting of the Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association will be held on Saturday 10th March 2012 at the Normanby Pavilion Great Yorkshire Show Ground Harrogate start 10:00 hours. Full details can be found at the Yorkshire Beekeepers Association Website.

5. Winter Talks

Ivor Flatman - 25TH January 2012

The January Winter Talk was given by Ivor Flatman of the National Bee Unit. Ivor talked about pollen/pollen substitute, varroa monitoring, how to calculate varroa levels, and if your calculation is over 1000 mites your colony is at danger level. Spring treatment icing sugar.

Ivor encouraged the use of the Beebase website – especially mentioning the recent article about Asian Hornets. He also encouraged the use of the Apiary Log in Beebase as a useful beekeeping tool.

Out of a total membership of about 150 beekeepers in the Leeds Association, only about 100 are registered on Beebase. It is very important to be registered, both for your own sake and for other beekeepers in the area. If the NBU do not know of the existence of your bees how can they warn you when there is a disease near you.

Phil Cunningham – 22nd February 2012

Phil Cunningham has been a beekeeper in Doncaster since 1948 and talked about his experiences during that time. He especially focused on a recent trip to Nepal, where he met and stayed with villagers who took him and his colleagues on a honey hunt, which involved climbing cliff faces to take honey and comb from wild bees. Very scary.

6. Sounds from the Hive

One of our members has sent in this link about the sounds you might hear from the beehive – really fascinating to hear what the differences are – and hear a queen bee ‘piping’ –

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-16114890>

7. Colony Collapse

Further thoughts on the causes of colony collapse are discussed in this article in the Economist –

<http://www.economist.com/node/21543469>

8. NBU - Advisory Leaflets, Training Manuals & Fact Sheets

When you are next on the National Bee Unit website, be sure and have a look at the many advisory leaflets and fact sheets that are available there. These cover a wide range of beekeeping subjects and will be especially useful to beginners, and can be found at the following link.

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=167>

9. Asian Honeybees

Asian honeybees signal to their enemies - bee-eating hornets - to let them know they have been spotted.

An international team of scientists watched the bees as they guarded the entrance to their hive. More details at the following link – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/16981702>

10. Volunteers

While on the subject of VOLUNTEERS – we would be thrilled if more of the members could get involved in any of the numerous events that overwhelm us every summer. If you would like to do your bit for the Leeds Beekeepers Association, please contact one of the Committee – we’d love to have your help.

11. Summer Apiary Meetings

A reminder that the regular Wednesday Apiary evenings will commence this year on the 18th April, 2012. A date for your diary and an opportunity to visit the excellent LBKA shop again.

12. NSPCC Plant & Gift Fair Saturday June 9th @ St. Edmunds Hall, Roundhay

We have been contacted by Susan Davidson who is organising the above event, wondering any beekeepers may be interested in taking the opportunity to sell some hive products – the cost of a trestle table is £20 and the event is open from 10.0am to 1.1pm on Saturday 9th June. Please contact Susan direct if you are interested on 0113 2666203

BEGINNERS' CORNER

Unfortunately, Juliet is away this month; she will be back next month in good time to resume her advice to beginners before we need to start going into our hives.

In the meantime, a few words of seasonal advice:

1. Do not go into the hive too soon.
2. Bees are very protective of their stores in the cold months, so whatever you do suit up!
3. If you haven't already done so, heft the hive and if it seems light, feed them.
4. Observe them on warmer, flying days, and if they are bringing in pollen, that is a good sign that new brood is being raised.
5. Put a tray under the mesh floor to count varroa mites – 1-2 mites per day indicates about 500 mites in the colony.

SPECIAL ARTICLE – GENETICALLY TESTY BEES

We probably lose more people to the craft of beekeeping due to testy bees than any other cause and I do not mean just beekeepers, but their families, relatives, friends and neighbours as well as people who may come across an apiary where a beekeeper is or has been manipulating bees and is keeping testy bees, leading to acrimony, distress, injury and on occasion bad publicity, sometimes with the consequence of litigation.

How do we assess what are testy bees? The best standpoint to start from is all bees are testy until you find out differently. In other words, err on the side of caution.

When you walk into your apiary on a nice day and the bees are flying whether from one hive or any number, do you get attacked?

I always walk around my apiaries of about ten colonies without a veil on, (I'm not suggesting this is a good idea), before I start any beekeeping. If bees start having a go at me, usually getting in my hair, where I can deal with them easily with a thumb and finger, I can usually, after a short time establish which colony/s they are coming from. The colony/s in question need an external look over to make sure nothing has been thrown at them, there are no animal hairs attached and woodpecking has not taken place on any of the boxes. The entrance should receive close inspection to see if any fighting or discord is taking place, by now I will probably have a veil on! However, it does cloud your vision a bit

over distance when you wish to see where the bees are flying from and going to. Having decided there is sound reason why the bees are testy, for any one of the reasons I have mentioned then I leave them till the last to inspect.

When looking at the entrance, an important feature is to establish pollen is going into the hive and other bees are not trying to rob the colony. If pollen is going in, the chances are the colony is queen right, but like most things in beekeeping not necessarily so! This is a subject for another time. If all is well, after your external inspection, then the chances are you may have a genetically testy strain of bees in your colony/s. You need to be cautious and consult or take advice, preferably from a beekeeper who has had experience of genetically testy bees.

In the meantime, you will need to do some self-edification. Ask are you going through your bees in the right weather conditions? i.e. warm, still and humid, ideal, but not always achievable. A good benchmark is are the bees flying well and if the temperature is comfortable for you, then the chances are it will be all right for the bees. Are you relaxed? Even mild tempered bees can switch onto adrenaline. If you're not relaxed, why not?

Handle your bees gently, avoid shaking and scraping, try not to crush any, only smoke them when closing the colony down, keep boxes exposed covered and as you work through the colony leave the frames at the front (the warm way) till last if indeed you have to remove them at all; the guard bees will be adjacent to or on these and if any bee/s in the colony is going to sting it will be from one or more of these frames.

If, after all this, the bees are still giving you a hard time and you are still not certain what is wrong, make sure you have checked they are queen right' plenty of eggs well distributed and a good brood pattern. If the colony is queenless or waiting for a queen mating it will be in a state of insecurity and will be anxious and protective so do not be surprised if it kicks off, a normal reaction!

In 2007 at Temple Newsam over thirty members of the public that we know about, how many others I dread to think, got stung while a manipulation was taking place in the Association apiary. Leeds Beekeepers had developed a reputation, if you want a good stinging go to LBKA and you've a good chance of getting one. The bees in the Apiary were genetically testy and had been for a few years. The incident described was the final straw and it became apparent something had to be done.

I had some well tried stocks of bees; in fact, most of the time, instead of dressing up I could go through them with just a veil on and my shirt sleeves rolled up. It was decided by the Association to purchase my two year old queens and requeen all the LBKA stocks after we had removed them from the Apiary. The requeening was a success, the colonies brought back to Temple Newsam and there have been hardly any incidents since. I and David Haigh have handled the bees with just veils on, our shirt sleeves rolled up and occasionally with latex gloves on due to propolis. Yes, we have had the odd sting for all sorts of reasons but the bees are not ranging and going on the rampage like they used to .

The best advice I can give, is do not put up with testy bees. If you're not sure what to do, consult somebody who does. Obtain some well tried queens or stocks. David Haigh has some lovely bees and I may on occasion be able to help out. Avoid purchasing foreign imports, they will be alright for the first couple of seasons, but you may be introducing serious problems down the mating line.

Finally, do not believe the old wives tales, testy bees get more honey, rubbish, probably because they are robbing other colonies. Testy bees deter predators and vandals, rubbish. Ask anybody who has

had their hives vandalized or taken over by wasps and damaged by woodpeckers and who have had testy bees.

Testy bees have greater fecundity and do not swarm as much, rubbish. They have strong colonies yes and do swarm because the beekeeper hardly dare go into them, not just because he is ill at ease with them, but because of other people/animals getting stung, so most of the time he does not really know what is going on; the only certainty being he and possibly others will get a good stinging.

Testy bees and beekeepers who keep them do beekeeping no good at all.

Robin Tomlinson
Colonies Manager, BBKA



A beekeeper had invited the local primary school pupils to visit his apiary. The beekeeper had told the teacher that, although he had small beesuits, the pupils must wear their own boots and gloves.

One boy was having difficulty in putting on his boots. He asked his teacher for help and she could see why. Even with her pulling and him pushing, the little boots still didn't want to go on. Finally, when the second boot was on, she had worked up a sweat. She almost cried when the little boy said, "Miss, they're on the wrong feet."

She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as together they worked to get the boots back on – this time on the right feet. He then announced, "These aren't my boots."

She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?" like she wanted to. And, once again, she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off his little feet. No sooner they got the boots off he said, "They're my brother's boots. My Mom made me wear 'em."

Now she didn't know if she should laugh or cry. But she mustered up the grace and courage she had left to wrestle the boots on his feet again. Helping him into his beesuit, she asked, "Now, where are your gloves?"

He said, "I stuffed 'em in the toes of my boots."



The Tree Trimming Party

What a storming day, the sun was out, no rain in sight - just a few clouds and not even windy. A perfect day to trim trees, bushes and hedges and all. At 10 am on the 28th January at Temple Newsam everything was looking bright and glorious in the apiary. The first job of the day was getting the water boiling and from that moment on there was always a kettle on the boil. Tea and coffee were flowing and plenty of biscuits kept morale high. Chocolate covered, chocolate chip and digestives, what more could you ask for.

From around 10-ish everyone started turning up and the association was not let down, everyone brought something - Colin with step ladders, Bruce with a petrol hedge trimmer and Ronnie with loppers. To say I have no organisational skills whatsoever, we had nearly 20 people and everyone was doing something. Colin and Russ were really cutting the back hedge down to size from on top, Ralph lopped off the bits they missed. Keith trimmed it back well from the side. Myself and Bruce were cutting back the hedge near the paddock, it all started shrinking very quickly. Dave Barrett and Robin were fire raising. Vanessa, Lance and Keith were clearing away hedge trimmings from all over the place. It was a real team effort and it worked really well. Of course there were plenty more helping out. Cath was dashing around making sure everything was going like clockwork. The shop was also open selling fondant and other bee goodies which was staffed by Duncan and David Haigh. Ronnie did a sterling effort making brews for every one.



Everything was done and dusted by 1pm with everyone except Dave Barrett having left. Dave kindly stopped behind to keep an eye on the by now smallish fire. The apiary hedges have been cut down and back and finally look well maintained. The day was a success and can I just say thank you to everyone that turned up, it would not have been the success it was with out great teamwork.

Chris Barlow
Apiary Manager, BBKA

LBKA Member Cycling for MacMillan Cancer Support

One of our new LBKA members, retired Knaresborough man Tony Yull, having previously completed cycle challenges across Peru in 2006 with his wife Sheena, and across China in 2008 and Mexico in 2011 with his daughter Helen, is again preparing to get on his bike and cycle more than 600km in Africa to help raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

The challenge, which takes place from 20 to 31 October 2012, will see Tony and Helen joining a group cycling for 7 consecutive days covering around 75 – 100 kms a day. It promises to be an extremely testing physical and mental challenge, cycling from Nairobi in Kenya to the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania. The group will be rough camping along the way so will be completely removed from all the luxuries of modern life.



Tony says “Helen and I are looking forward to the challenge of cycling through some amazing landscapes whilst also doing our bit for such a worthy cause. We have to raise at least £3,750 each to

take part in this event but we will be covering all trip costs ourselves so that 100% of money raised by sponsorship, donations and fundraising events will be of a direct benefit to Macmillan Cancer Support.”

If you would like to support Tony in this worthwhile cause please visit his Just Giving fundraising page at <http://www.justgiving.com/Tony-Yull-Africa> . Donating through this site is simple, fast and totally secure.



A motorist leaving an apiary hit and destroyed a nucleus of bees. The driver went to the owner of the nuc and explained what had happened. He then asked what it was worth. "Oh, about £50 today," said the beekeeper. "But in two years it would have been worth £200. So £200 is what I'm out." The motorist sat down and wrote out a cheque and handed it to the beekeeper. "Here," he said, "is a cheque for £200. It's post-dated two years from now."



As usual, many thanks to those who have contributed – and PLEASE send your contributions (articles, anecdotes, photos, etc. for the next newsletter to Katey.slater@ntlworld.com