



**THE LEEDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
BRANCH OF THE YBKA
AFFILIATED WITH THE BBKA**



“The Leeds Beekeeper”

INDEX

Swarms Welcome Here.....2

BBKA Spring Convention...4

Diet Pollen.....5

Bee Dance.....5

It’s Only a Bee Sting.....5

You’ve Brought a Bee In...6

Cleverer than you think?...7

Bumblebees.....8

But Why did they die?.....8

Living History Weekend...9

Masterclasses.....9

Auctions.....10

Forthcoming Events.....11

Click on an index entry to jump straight to an article.

Bahar is a gnarly old bee, having overwintered in the hive, feasting on the delicious honey left in the hive by "the yellow gloved one" now is her time to shine. There is propolis to be collected, gaps to be filled, draughts to be stopped, it isn't an easy task keeping TYGO at bay. Every week the hands return, undoing all Bahar's hard work from the week before, but she will not be beaten – this bee is made of tough stuff!

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

By now you'll have been down to the apiary on a Wednesday night I hope. We're properly up and running for the Season, so don't be strangers. In spite of the disappointing weather, we've managed to do the remaining three practical sessions with the Winter Course members, so we look forward to seeing their beekeeping exploits in due course. The weather has been appalling. Spring has been very slow getting going, so let's all hope for better things as the summer progresses.

You'll have heard that we've got American Foul Brood and European Foul Brood in the area already, and Dhonn Atkinson, our Bee Diseases Inspector is already rushed off his feet trying to get on top of things.

That in mind, I want to remind you of a couple of things – you already know them but just in case:

Make sure all your apiaries are properly registered on Bee Base, so that the Inspector can contact you if necessary.

And be sure to exercise stringent apiary hygiene. This coming Wednesday there will be a master class in apiary hygiene, presented by Andy Gowdy. For more information you can read the [Apiary Hygiene and Quarantine](#) factsheet, issued by the bee unit.



Honeybee drone © Sue Boo

On a lighter note, we're in need of some volunteers for the Ledsham Countryside Live event. This is a two day event, run specifically for primary school children and is run in conjunction with the Barkston Ash BKA, on 18th and 19th May. It's been very successful in the past and I'm sure if you can spare a day, you'd enjoy it immensely, so get in touch with our Secretary, Cath if you can help out.

Happy beekeeping.

Katey Slater

SWARMS WELCOME HERE

Yes it's the swarm season coming up. The tell-tale early signs are that drones appear in colonies. There can be no swarms until there are mature drones in colonies to mate with the new virgin queens. Swarms can emerge, in this part of the country, in April. That said, given the cold weather we've been experiencing, my guess is that it'll be May before things get going.

There has been loads written on this subject. Artificial swarms, Heddon and Snelgrove and his complicated boards etc etc. LBKA has arranged ever popular talks on the subject - both the basic stuff and the more advanced techniques. If you're in any doubt just ask at any apiary gathering or read up on the subject. I'm hoping/ expecting the colonies in the apiary will need artificially swarming this year so we can demonstrate doing it "for real".



Bees Welcome Rent Free

But I thought I'd write a bit on "Bait Hives" - offer a different twist on swarming. After all why go chasing swarms if you can get them to come to you? A bait hive is simply an empty hive which is set up to attract the swarm. Colonies preparing to swarm have bees which switch duties from looking for nectar and pollen to scout bees looking for a new home. These scout bees return to the hive and perform the waggle dance to communicate, not the distance/ direction / quality of food sources but the potential of new homes. The distance and direction being the same but the quality this time isn't for sweetness of nectar etc but quality of the cavity found. We know that the bees walk (pace out) the cavity to determine the volume. It's also thought that they can take account of its dryness, size of entrance (small is easier to defend) and height. All these are taken into account by individual scouts and communicated to the soon to swarm hive bees. Of course different scout bees will find different cavities and will therefore perform different dances. Hive bees will judge from the various dances being performed, as they do for forage, which is going to be the best. Having formed that collective judgement, off they go!

So what can you do to convince the scouts, and through them the hive bees, that your bait hive is best??? Well you give them what they want:-

The Cavity - An empty hive. Dry of course, with a narrow entrance and solid (not mesh floor) if you have one available.

Scent - A previously used brood box would naturally smell of bees. To add to the aroma add frames with fresh foundation BUT add an old brood frame - one that's ready for scrapping - as they find these irresistible. Of course you'll need to remove this as soon as your swarm has taken the tenancy or the queen will soon lay eggs in it.

Other swarm lures can be bought from suppliers (of course!!). But these all smell of lemon. If you read the old beekeeping books they recommend you rub lemon balm leaves inside a bait hive. Gerry Collins recommends lemon grass oil (£5 odd on line) and I'm going to give it a try. Anything to attract the scouts in the first place. But old, smelly, comb is probably the best.



Cardboard bait hive

enjoy a 50% + success rate.

The picture is of a dense cardboard "hive" that I was given at Christmas. It's designed for fixing to a tree with wire. I'm going to melt and daube the inside with old comb (as well as apply lemon grass oil) and give it a go.

I recall telling a beginners class one Wednesday about bait hives. One lady put her new hive, new frames all fitted with foundation (ready to receive a nucleus), out that night on her return from the course. When she got home from work on Thursday it was full of bees. She'd succeeded in attracting a swarm.

Good hunting!

Dave Barrett

Plenty of Space. They look for plenty of room. A single brood box will do, but a double might just tip the balance.

Height. A difficult one. Ideally it would be 6 to 10 foot off the ground. I have had them on my son's flat garage roof - but getting them down once it was occupied by a swarm wasn't easy! I now settle for hive stands.

Where to put them? I have several of these bait hives dotted about. There's one in each of my apiaries. Some family and friends are happy to accommodate them and are as pleased as I when they get them filled. I usually

BBKA SPRING CONVENTION VISIT 2016

Well it is that time of year again; to head off to the BBKA Spring convention at Harper Adams University. Saturday 9th April, we met up at the cinema at 7.30 am and drove down in one car. Mr Haigh, Mr Brearley, Mr Utting and myself, two hours later we arrived. With all the online sales this year at Thornes, Mannlake, Maisemores and Paynes bee farms, no one really had any shopping lists, however we all went down with an open mind (eyes peeled for a bargain).

Once we got down there, none of us had tickets, so it was £5 on the door. The stalls were set across two large rooms and there was a lot of trade stands in attendance. Lots of people were present including familiar names (and not so familiar) including BBwear, Sherriff, Thornes, bee basic, Abelo, Mannlake, Donegal bees, Payne's, Northern bee books to name but a few. It is really good to see how much kit you can get for beekeeping although I constantly wonder how much of it is any good, useful, relevant or indeed value for money.



Spring convention

On one stall I saw a specialist hive that used national frames but was a brood box deep and on top had a second box used purely for making comb honey. This second box could be inverted over winter creating a double walled hive, from what I remember. It had a very large apex roof, the price was not bad at around £110. I just thought it seemed like quite a complex solution to a problem that I didn't have. When that chap at the stall explained to me how it worked and he was a very pleasant, helpful chap but he kept saying how simple it all was and I kept thinking, no it isn't!

I know I am getting old when I see an item for sale and in this case it was a hive tool that must have been 18 inches long, nicely painted and looked like it could be very useful indeed but I walked away thinking £22 is too much to pay for just a hive tool. When you get home and you're still thinking about that hive tool, thinking I should have bought it. Heck I am still thinking about it a week later. It really did look like a good hive tool. Maybe I am taking my hobby a little too far.....

You name it, it was there, extractors of every make, poly hives, Langstroth hives, WBC hives, national hives, hybrid national hives, CDB hives, frames, drone foundation, small cell foundation, coloured foundation, frames, hives of every shape and size, queen cages, queen rearing equipment, wax processing equipment, nuc boxes, books covering every aspect of beekeeping, honey processing equipment and bee ornaments. It's just interesting to walk around and have a look at what is on offer.

Chris Barlow

DIET POLLEN?

Research by scientists at Purdue University has shown that rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide has led to reduced protein in goldenrod pollen; a key late-season food source for North American bees. Over the period 1842–2014, atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased from around



Canada Goldenrod

280 to 398 ppm. Using samples from the Smithsonian Natural History Museum it was shown that over the same period pollen protein levels dropped by around a third. The steepest fall in pollen protein levels was observed between 1960 -2014 during which time the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide was greatest.

The researchers also conducted a two year field trial during which Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) was grown on a carbon dioxide gradient between 280 to 500 ppm, this experimentally confirmed the reduction seen in the historic pollen protein samples. Bees are already facing many pressures such as pesticides, Varroa, lack of pollen/nectar sources, a decline in the nutritional value of their food is just another to add to the list.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/04/160413113420.htm>

ANYONE FOR A BEE DANCE?

Another “don’t try this at home” disclaimer..... Now for me I am not sure that meditating and calm thoughts are things I would associate with being covered with bees? However, Sara Mapelli can often be found performing her healing, meditative bee dance as part of her alternative medicine practice. In order to attract the bees to her she covers herself with bee pheromone like the one the queen bee emits, but equivalent to what a hundred queen bees would give off! Further details [here](#)

IT’S ONLY A BEE STING.....

We are back again to the trials and tribulations of Mr Schmidt and the Schmidt Sting Pain Index as he has compiled his 10 most painful stings and as a beekeeper you will be glad to hear that the honeybee only comes in at number five. On his scale of 0-4 the honeybee scores an intermediate value of 2. So the next time you get stung whilst looking at your bees just think yourself lucky it wasn’t a bullet ant.....

Honeybee sting: “The sensation is like a matchhead that flips off and burns on your skin” Justin Schmidt

For the full list please see <http://www.planetdeadly.com/animals/painful-stings-schmidt-pain-index>

YOU'VE BROUGHT A BEE IN WITH YOU.....

I'd just popped into my out apiary on my way home - to add the very first honey supers of the year. The bees will be busy working the oil seed rape and dandelions. Back at home I got the customary "look over" from my wife. She scans me for bees that I've accidentally brought home with me (she's really not keen on them).

This time she found none but obviously heard something that I'd missed as there came the warning "you've brought a bee in with you". I wasn't too worried and took the mobile out of my pocket. Yes I found the bee, deep in my pocket. It stung my finger, of course, and I jumped and swore at the same time.

"Found it then" came the laconic response! No sympathy.

Here's a picture of the culprit.



Cardboard bait hive

Dave Barrett

Ps. The photo is a late addition. At the time I was pre occupied and forgot to take a picture. Can't think why..... Fortunately I succeeded in persuading David Haigh, at the Wednesday apiary meeting, to not only get stung but to stand still while I took the picture. Don't know whose daftest, him or me! Answers on a postcard....

BEES: CLEVERER THAN YOU THINK?

Two recent studies have shown that bees are in fact brainier than we give them credit for. Consciousness in humans comes from a structure called the mid-brain which brings together external experiences – from our senses – with inner experiences. Whilst insects have very different brains to humans they do have a similar structure offering the same function as our own mid-brain. As a result bees don't just act on their immediate sensations but are able to make subjective choices.

As beekeepers we are aware of the remarkable navigational skills and spatial memory bees have. They are clearly able to organise their behaviour with respect to more than simply their immediate sensory environment. They will perform targeted searches in appropriate locations and at appropriate times for resources they have experienced previously. This is not unique to bees; several insect species have been shown to be able to plot novel routes based on learned landmarks and goals (see issue 60 regarding bumblebees), evidencing a spatial relation of landmark information. Then of course there is the honey bee dance communication system which requires a dance follower to determine a flight vector relative to celestial cues from symbolic and stereotyped dance movements.



Buzzing the target © Jet Meul

“The honey bee particularly is held up as an insect with cognitive capacities that rival those of many mammals.”

Separate research by Dr Vallejo-Marin has shown that bumblebees are able to moderate their behaviour over time to more efficiently extract pollen from flowers. Captive bumblebees were exposed to flowers that need vibrating in order to release their pollen and it was observed that almost immediately the bumblebees began vibrating to cause the pollen to be released. Over time and with practice the bees were able to tune down their vibrations allowing them to remove pollen with a lower energy cost. The bumblebees initially tended to vibrate the flower petals but after several visits to the flowers focused in on the area from which pollen was released. This shows the insect's ability to master complex motor skills in order to most effectively collect pollen.

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10905-016-9553-5>

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2016/04/13/1520084113.full>

BUMBLE BEES

Have you noticed the numbers of big fat bumble bees that are flying about at the moment? There seems to have been a sudden emergence of them doesn't there?

Well these are all queen bumble bees. They were raised last autumn and they mated before winter set in. They found a nice, dry spot - perhaps a hollow tree or compost bin or under a shed or paving stone.

These queens that we now see will have emerged from hibernation in February or early March. Once they'd found food then they'd have set about finding a new nest site. Again they would look for somewhere dry, but big enough this time for them to start and then expand a nest in the months ahead. Then the queen would have laid a few eggs and nurtured them until they had hatched. Hatched is a particularly apt description as she will have sat on and warmed these eggs/ larvae until they had emerged as fully grown bumble bees (a bit like a hen hatching her eggs). Again she will lay eggs, more than before, leaving these newly hatched baby bumbles with the tasks of feeding and keeping them warm. This "frees up" the queen (and there is just the one for each nest) to go out and explore, and feed herself some food. And that's why we are now seeing so many of them flying around. She's completed the first part of creating a new bumble bee colony and it is safe to leave that nest under the control of others while she "stretches her wings" as it were.



Have you spotted the queen bumblebees?

Keep your eye out for them in the weeks ahead and perhaps rejoice in nature's optimism for the seasons ahead.

David Barrett

BUT WHY DID THEY DIE?

On the theme of unexplained colony loss please see an informative article by Meghan Milbrath, based in Michigan which offers some possible explanations for colony loss during the winter.

<https://beeinformed.org/2016/03/08/why-did-my-honey-bees-die/>

HONEY SALE OPPORTUNITY – LIVING HISTORY WEEKEND

Temple Newsam is running The Second Annual Time Travellers Living History Fair weekend on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24th July 2016. The event will be within the Home Farm complex, in buildings on the Farm and in the Oval Paddock and Ha Ha Paddock. LBKA have been asked if any of our members would like a stall.

Traders can set up on either Friday afternoon after 5.00 pm or on Saturday morning before 9.30 am (but not before 7.30 am!). Spaces are available within the Farm complex in buildings as well as in the Ha-Ha Paddock so you don't necessarily need a tent or gazebo to keep dry.

This year the Oval Paddock will be used by La Garde Imperiale – who are bringing two horses and their encampment to re-enact 18th century French mounted cavalry and the longer Ha Ha paddock opposite will be available to traders with tents. Spaces on the Farm include the front half of the Limestone, the Stone Masons and the Farm Office – so if you want to just bring stock to sell in a small van or car with tables, then you could have one of those spaces (others will also be available – you just need to ask.)

There are CCTV cameras on the Farm and the Paddocks are locked each night. There is a security guard stationed overnight in the Stable Courtyard and two Officers will also be on site each night. Individual buildings on the Farm are locked each night. Some other stall holders will be camping on site - another option for the brave hearted?

The pitches for stalls and tents will be free – there will be no charge.

For further information please contact Julia Thorpe: (Julia.w.thorpe@leeds.gov.uk) or ring her on 0113 3367559.

A flyer and further details can be found [here](#) and [here](#)

LBKA MASTERCLASSES

April saw the return of last year's popular masterclasses with members braving the April showers to listen to an informative talk by Duncan on the Pagden method of swarm control. This month will see Andy talking about apiary hygiene – particularly relevant with the outbreaks of AFB and EFB in the area.



First masterclass of the season © K Slater

LBKA IN THE NEWS

Some of you may have already seen the article in the Yorkshire Evening Post regarding LBKA and Chris' bees on the roof at the Queen's Hotel, for those who haven't.....

<http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/your-leeds/bees-on-their-knees-honeybees-come-through-worst-winter-in-decade-in-leeds-1-7847442>

YORK BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL AUCTION

Sunday 22nd May 2016 - Bees and beekeeping equipment

At the Museum of Farming at Murton, York YO19 5UF

Items accepted from 9.00am with viewing from 11.00am. Auction starts at 12 noon. Bees accepted Sunday morning (9.00am) – MUST BE EXAMINED by the Bee Inspector prior to arrival.

Payment for items purchased at the Auction can only be made with cash or by cheque more details on York's website (www.yorkbeekeepers.com)

Refreshments available

AIREDALE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION BI-ANNUAL AUCTION

Sale of bees and beekeeping equipment Sunday 5th June

Scout HQ, East Riddlesden Hall, Bradford Road, Riddlesden, Keighley, BD20 5EL

Auction day programme 9.30am -11.30 auction entries accepted 11.00 viewing and administration of entries 13.00 auction commences

Commission: 10% on *all sales and purchases no bees will be accepted for sale unless they have been checked by the NBU*

Enquiries e-mail : suebeebuzz@tiscali.co.uk auction guidelines, forms, direction and parking information from <http://airedalebka.org.uk/>

GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW "HIVE AND HONEY SCHEDULE"

The Show Schedule for Great Yorkshire Show Hives and Honey Show Classes is now available. I would encourage members of YBKA to enter exhibits in the Show. There are plenty of classes to choose from including confectionery, cakes and mead. There is the added bonus of entry to the Show should you exhibit. The closing date for entries is 20th May.

It would be good if we could have a significant number of our members showing this year to support the Yorkshire Agricultural Society. Entry forms available online from http://greatyorkshireshow.co.uk/entries-results/entry_forms_and_schedules

Michael Badger

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk by 31st May

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May

Wednesday 4th- Apiary Hygiene Masterclass

Saturday 14th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 14th – LBKA Taster Day

Wednesday 18th – Thursday 19th -Countryside Live

Sunday 22nd – York Bee Auction

June

Saturday 11th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th – Weekend Course