

# The Suffolk Beekeepers' Association Newsletter for January – April 2010

The Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeepers' association edition

Hon Secretary & Editor for this edition: Jeremy Quinlan,  
The Old Rectory, Dallinghoo, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 0LA  
☎ 01473-737700; Email: [JeremyQ@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:JeremyQ@tiscali.co.uk)

Hon Treasurer, I&ESBKA (Designate): Dr John Kelly,  
50a High Street, Manningtree, Colchester, CO11 1AJ  
☎ 01206-395461

The County Secretary is: Ian McQueen, 643 Foxhall Road, Ipswich, IP3 8NE ☎ 01473 420187 Web Site: [www.suffolkbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.suffolkbeekeepers.co.uk)  
The Suffolk Beekeepers' Association is an Area Association of The British Beekeepers' Association. Web Site: [www.britisshbee.org](http://www.britisshbee.org)

The other member Associations of The Suffolk Beekeepers' Association are:

**Leiston & District BKA** [jandblakesley@googlemail.com](mailto:jandblakesley@googlemail.com)  
Secretary: John Blakesley, Westlea, Dunwich Road, Blythborough,  
Southwold, Suffolk IP19 9LY. ☎ 01502 478538

**Stowmarket & District BKA**  
Secretary: Susanne Haynes, Creeting Hills Farm,  
Creeting St Mary, Ipswich IP6 8PZ. ☎ 01449 722570

**Waveney Bee Group** [www.waveneybeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.waveneybeekeepers.co.uk)  
Secretary: Dr Mike Pawson, 3 Dickens Court, Blundeston, Lowestoft, NR32 5BA.  
☎ 01502 730108; [m-pawson@sky.com](mailto:m-pawson@sky.com)  
[Grange Farm Centre, Barsham NR34 8JN (Mike Learner): ☎ 01502-713630]

**West Suffolk BKA**  
Secretary: Barney Harrison, Appletrees, 4 Perkins Way, Tostock,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9PU. ☎ 01359 270247

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2009

It is very easy to think over the last year in terms of ones own beekeeping, but, I find that, during the course of meetings, there has been a multitude of experiences ranging from the very good to the not so good – I hope most of yours came in the former category.

It has been gratifying to see the fantastic support that you have given to the programme of events, which makes the effort that the committee put into the arrangements worthwhile. Especially pleasing is seeing the number of new beekeepers coming through from the beginners' course and the spin off sessions that have developed to discuss and clarify "bee things".

The money that has been donated for research has resulted in the funding of a student who will be carrying out investigations to ascertain why the bees do not notice the varroa mite on their bodies. If any of you heard Laurie Wiseman on BBC Radio Suffolk, he likened the size of varroa to a crab on the human body – how could you possibly ignore something like that? [See page 3]

It is always a pleasure, at this time of the year, to thank the committee and everyone who has helped for all their hard work and support particularly Valerie Hems, our Treasurer, and Jeremy, our Secretary for 15 years, both stand down at the AGM. Fortunately we have volunteers to succeed them. We propose that Jeremy continues in the Committee with Educational matters.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a good 2010 beekeeping year.

Jackie McQueen

## Propositions for the BBKA ADM

We have two Suffolk candidates for the BBKA Executive. They are our own Dawn Girling of Shotley [see her article on page 6] and David Bancalari of, among several Associations, the Waveney Bee Group; David is Editor of their journal and the person who leads and coordinates our East Anglian Research Student (EARS) initiative [see page 3]. We wish them both well.

There are two contentious propositions for this meeting.

The first is an attempt to stop the BBKA endorsing some pesticides in return for a contribution to BBKA funds. Much of the history of this issue can be found on the BBKA website:

<http://www.britisshbeekeeping.com>

After a long campaign a year ago, the ADM delegates voted by quite substantial majorities to allow the BBKA to continue to:

1. engage in dialogue with agri-chemical companies,
2. investigate the effects of agri-chemical products on bees,
3. allow its logo to be used as an endorsement for certain products which it deemed relatively "bee-friendly,"
4. accept payment for such endorsement,
5. use such funds in whatever way it saw fit.

The Twickenham & Thames Valley BKA wants to overturn these decisions and proposes that: "*The BBKA shall cease to endorse pesticides and insecticides as soon as contractually possible.*"

The BBKA Executive has replied that, in view of the strength of feeling of a minority of BBKA members, it will not consider any request to endorse any new pesticides beyond the current four products. The pesticides endorsed are synthetic pyrethroids; it does not endorse any neonicotinoids (which caused bee-deaths in Germany/Slovenia in early 2009) and has called (in the Research Concepts document) for more research into the possible sub-lethal effects of these products.

The other proposition is that "*This meeting expresses its regret at the action of the Executive in withdrawing from the (FERA) Healthy Bees Project Board. By the vote of this meeting, the Executive is instructed to rescind their action and rejoin the Project Management Board at the earliest possible opportunity.*"

The Executive's response is that it put much time and energy into trying to work with FERA on the Healthy Bees Project, but there is no point in participating in a process when the outcome has already been decided. Our withdrawal shows some signs of achieving its aim. To instruct the BBKA to rejoin would be to rob us of any prospect of influencing the management of the Project.

**For both these matters, the County Committee has instructed our Delegate to vote for the changes and so against the BBKA Executive.**

Please discuss these matters and let our County Committee representative, Douggie Paine (01473-610056), know your views so that these can be passed on to our ADM delegate, Laurie Wiseman (01728 454238). **The ADM is on 16<sup>th</sup> January so time is very short.** [Thanks to the Cheshire Beekeeper for some of this.]

## **Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA meetings**

### **Wed 20 Jan – Dr Pamela Ewan – *Bee Venom Allergy.***

Head of the Allergy Department at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, while her clinical practice covers all types of allergic disease, her main interests include anaphylaxis, peanut and nut allergy, general anaesthetic allergy, venom allergy and latex rubber allergy. Research has focussed on clinical aspects of anaphylaxis, the role of cytokines and mechanisms of venom immunotherapy. Particular areas of interest are the clinical features of nut allergy and the management of anaphylaxis, including guidelines for its management in schools. This is the 2010 David Little Talk & County Lecture.

### **Wed 17 Mar – Paul Metcalf – *Honeybee Anatomy with “Gertrude”, his giant bee model.***

When at school his parents asked what career attracted him, he replied “Beekeeping!” As this wasn't possible exactly, he trained in the parallel disciplines of horticulture and plant science and still lectures in all three at Easton College, just west of Norwich. The County Bee Lecturer for Norfolk 1974-1986, he maintains the College apiary of some 40 colonies and gives evening and one day

courses in all aspects of keeping bees. Formerly Secretary of the National Diploma in Beekeeping exam board, he has also been a member of the BBKA National Executive, its Technical Committee and its Examinations Board.

### **Wed 15 Apr - Mike Graystone - *How I keep bees.***

Mike started keeping bees in 1993 and now runs some 60 to 80 colonies assisted by his wife, Maureen. In particular, she keeps their records and manages the emails. They live in Troston, just north of Bury St Edmunds. As he can't buy those he wants, he makes all his own floors, crown boards, nuc boxes and stands; he also raises some of his own queens. Mike is a good source of nuclei for beginners (all promised for spring 2010), a Bee Farmer and President of the Suffolk Beekeepers' Association. Said by Andy Wattam to be one of the best beekeepers in Suffolk.

### **Sun 25 Apr – *Bee Health Day* – Keith Morgan, **Regional Bee Inspector****

At Dallinghoo Village Hall from 10am to 4pm. The key to beekeeping is keeping them healthy – learn how. *Places are limited so please tell Jeremy beforehand if you want to come.* Hot & cold drinks will be provided; bring your own lunch.

#### **Other events for your diary**

### **Suffolk Beekeepers' Association AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.30pm**

The County AGM is held in a different part of the county every year – this year it is the turn of the Ipswich & E Suffolk BKA to host the meeting in St Michael's Annex, Martlesham Heath. Please come and support our co-ordinating Committee and the other four Suffolk Associations. After the meeting, we will hear about The Suffolk Punch Trust.

### **Cambridgeshire Beekeepers' Association One Day Seminar Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March.** The proposed theme is “A world without bees?” Speakers and **provisional** titles are:

- Koos Beismeir, University of Leeds - “Food shortages from the lack of pollinators?”
- Professor Ted Benton, University of Essex - “Bumblebees in decline - or (partial) recovery?”
- Max Watkins, Vita Europe - “Why bees become sick, and what can be done about it”
- Dr Helen Crews, FERA - “Honey bee research projects – light at the end of the tunnel?”

### **Suffolk Nosema Check Day 27<sup>th</sup> March**

This is free! It will take place in the Creting St Mary Village Hall between 10 and 4. All you need to do is bring 30+ bees from each colony. The details accompany this Newsletter. If they don't reach you, please ask your local Association Secretary for a copy. If your bees are found to have Nosema, you will be advised what to do.



**16 - 18 Apr** – see the BBKA website or just read p.13 of the BBKA News Dec 2009.

Tickets from Christine Hayward 01728 832487.

### **Suffolk Show 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

Although this may seem a long way away, nearer the day we shall be busy beekeeping. The Great British Public likes to buy a few things to take home. Please consider what you could make **now** and bring to sell – honey? fudge? candles? wax blocks? polish? anything else bee related? Please get in touch with our Show Rep, Debbie Lacey 01473 735646.

### **Microscopy for Beekeepers 14–16 May**

Field Studies Council, Flatford Mill, East Bergholt – this course gets booked up well ahead; it is a really good one. 0845 3307368 [enquiries@field-studies-council.org](mailto:enquiries@field-studies-council.org)

### **Beekeeping Communications**

The editors of the national beekeeping journals have got together to consider how to improve beekeeping communications. How do you hear important information about honey bees, their problems and what to do about them? Do you hear but imperfectly or even not at all? If you can think of anything helpful to improve matters, please tell David Bancalari 01603 755105.

### **Know of any bee colonies in the wild?**

Catherine Thompson, a PhD student, writes: “The theory is that feral colonies don't exist or, if they are found, they are swarms from the current year. Anecdotally, however, this doesn't seem to be the case.”

She wants to analyse samples and use a new technique called RT-PCR for determining the level of disease; this entails taking a sample of 30-40 bees from the colony, once a year over the next 3-4 years.

Catherine is happy to visit any site she hears about, or if anyone would like to collect a sample, she will provide the wherewithal. [fs6cet@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:fs6cet@leeds.ac.uk) or 07929303208.

## The EARS Project Takes Off!

David Bancalari and I travelled to Sheffield University on 23<sup>rd</sup> November to meet Ricarda (Ricky) Kather, our EARS research student, and to talk to her about her four-year doctorate on “The effect of Varroa mite viral diseases on the honeybee recognition system”. Like the NASA space programme, Ricky has had to do much before her practical work can begin. At present she is carrying out a “literature review” of studies of similar bee parasites, whether bee and wasp recognition chemicals have always been present or have evolved for particular or general behavioural activities in colonies or solitary bees and to bring herself up to date with the latest Varroa research.



She is producing a list of experiments to be carried out as she wants to discover how varroa mites adapt themselves to particular honeybee colonies and avoid detection. She also wants to discover whether the mites use their own chemistry to mimic the colony’s recognition chemicals, or use the bees’ own substances.

Ricky said that it has been found that the varroa mite has not mutated genetically despite its inbreeding method of reproduction. This trait will make it easier to design a treatment as all mites are related. To discover how the bees produce their recognition materials, it is proposed to ‘radio mark’ particular molecules in their food, find where they go and how they are used and manipulated. Healthy bees’ recognition behaviour will be studied, then these same bees will be infected with mites and their behaviour patterns compared. It is thought that infected bees are more attractive to mites than healthy ones and are a source of viral spread.

*Laurie Wiseman....Suffolk Beekeepers’ Association*

## New Initiatives

Dr Steve Martin at Sheffield has bid for some of the £10million pollinator initiative money (so have another 60+). He has passed "Round 1" of the bidding process so is engaged on a more detailed submission and, if successful, would like our help. There is no financial commitment but a need to make hives available for researchers (but no need to change beekeeping methods).

The project will look at the spread of pathogens on a 'landscape' scale - keeping track of hundreds of hives in an area and analysing the incidence of disease. The research would be over several years and would take samples of bees from time to time & analyse more closely if a colony fails (one of the few times a failing colony can contribute to a better understanding of bee health).

*David Bancalari*

## Can you help?

Volunteers are needed for a Defra study of beekeeping and education.

Email: [alan.worley@peoplescienceandpolicy.com](mailto:alan.worley@peoplescienceandpolicy.com) or phone 020 3102 8137.

## The benefits of ‘Shook Swarm’

Until 2008, I had changed my brood comb annually using the Bailey method, but with the discovery of pyrethroid resistant varroa in Southampton in August 2007, a more robust, proactive stance on varroa control was required. I had used the shook swarm technique before, but only when EFB had been discovered and with the Bee Inspector’s assistance and supervision. I was always impressed with the colonies recovery and at how quickly it would get back into honey production. So I thought it would be interesting to see how a healthy, strong colony (apart from varroa) would respond to this procedure that is regarded by some as rather drastic and ‘against the grain of traditional beekeeping’ with the sacrifice of both drawn brood combs and brood ( see the ‘How do It’ section at [www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk/index\\_files/how.htm](http://www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk/index_files/how.htm)).

In the spring of 2008 I had 20 colonies of bees ranging in strength from very strong (brood & ½, National) to quite weak (3-4 frames of brood). The strongest colonies were shook swarmed at the end of March and fed sugar syrup whilst the very strongest were shook onto a close spaced super of spring honey from that hive, with a brood box of foundation above, i.e. brood and ½ and not fed. The weaker colonies were allowed to build up until the bees filled the brood boxes, they were then also shook swarmed and fed heavily.

Of the 20 colonies I shook swarmed I would have expected most, if not all, to have wanted to swarm at some point in the season. What actually happened was that only 5 (mostly the very strongest at the time of shook swarming) showed signs of swarming and so I therefore divided these colonies. The remaining 15 colonies showed no signs of wanting to swarm and grew into huge colonies, requiring between 3-5 supers each to just hold the bees. As a result I was able to harvest a substantial honey crop, while the divided colonies struggled due to the poor weather even on the same sites. Signs of wax moth were very much reduced (almost none were seen all season), varroa levels were reduced, the new frames were clean and easy to move, a shallow frame inserted at the time of the shook swarm provided drone brood for easy culling throughout the season, enabling even more varroa to be removed. These un-swarmed extra large colonies also showed an increased tendency to supersede and some, two queen colonies (mother and daughter), running for a month or two were also noted.

The honey harvested was bright and clean and has won me prizes at several shows. The old brood comb and brood was rendered down using the Thorne’s Steam Easy giving a yield of 1½ lb per brood box. This recovered wax will be used to exchange for more foundation at minimal cost.

The overall results for 2008 (which was a difficult year for our bees at best) using the shook swarm technique was very favourable, the colonies were strong, healthy with reduced pests and diseases (when Hampshire and surrounding counties were awash with EFB, I had none) the honey crop was impressive and probably higher than I would have got, when most beekeepers got very little or no honey. The quality of the crop was high, and the bees had increased vigour and seemed extra content and happy to draw the comb. The only ‘extra’ was feeding the sugar syrup immediately after doing the shook swarm, but the honey crop more than paid for this. I will certainly be doing shook swarming again as part of my annual IPM management.

*Andy Willis, Hampshire Bee Talk June 2009, courtesy of BEES*

**The December issue of The BBKA News tells you how to carry out both a “shook swarm” and/or a Bailey Frame Change.**

## “Half a bucket-full” of black shiny bees - dead from virus!

John Stebbings, a new beekeeper, writes: It was all going so well.....I had been on Graham Owston's Otleigh College autumn bee keeping course, visited the Stoneleigh national Convention, purchased some equipment and was almost ready for bees. At the Suffolk Show I went into the bee tent and met an ex-colleague who turned out not only to be a beekeeper, but also had a 5 frame nucleus that I could purchase.

I collected this on 1<sup>st</sup> June and the bees were duly installed in my garden at Holbrook that evening. The bees got off to a good start and were busy foraging from the field beans nearby. They quickly drew the foundation, the queen seemed busy and all seemed well, so good in fact that after a month and before going on holiday for a week, I put a super on. On returning from holiday the super frames were in the process of being drawn and there were three frames of honey sealed. I was getting used to the weekly inspections and growing more confident with handling them.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> July inspection, the bees seemed a bit restless and it was the first time I had got stung, once through the marigolds and even through my suit onto my legs, but no matter. However, waking up the next day I found that there were hundreds of dead bees outside the hive and more dead and dying bees being ejected. When I returned from work I started to ring round and seek advice. I phoned other beekeepers in the area to see if they had experienced anything similar and was given lots of good advice. For example:

- Collect three samples of at least 250 bees in an envelope – not a plastic bag – and freeze two of them.
- See if any farmers had been spraying crops locally.
- See if the local authority had been to destroy any bees' or wasps' nests locally,
- If known, check that the bees' drinking source was not contaminated
- Don't open the hive
- Contact the local bee inspector

Having done all this – there was nothing obviously wrong – the bees seemed to stop dying. The bee inspector, Keith Morgan, visited a few days later, the day before we flew to Turkey, and on inspection found that the queen was dead, no drones and there were lots of new queen cells. His advice was to destroy all the queen cells and order a new queen for our return, harvest the honey and treat for varroa – luckily I had taken the day off!

So off I went quickly to Richard Martin to purchase some Apiguard, ordered my new Hawaiian queen and called a local beekeeper at Shotley to see if he would kindly help me harvest the honey in the supers. Later that evening I managed to clear the super and take the frames to Shotley for uncapping and spinning. This, given the hectic day, was most rewarding and I left with 6 ½ pounds of honey!

On returning from Turkey the new queen had arrived and was duly installed in the hive – having checked for any new queen cells. We were back on track.....

However, one week later at around 4pm, for whatever reason they swarmed, over the fence into my neighbour's garden and decided they liked the look of the shrub immediately outside his conservatory! We went round quickly to find the family watching fascinated and taking photos. I got a spare brood box and with advice from Jeremy tried to position it above the swarm, some did go up – but some missed and went up the outside. Later that evening I put the brood box on a sheet on the ground and scooped the remaining bees out of the shrub and put them on the sheet where they duly walked up into the hive. By 8am the next day they were all in and I decided that both colonies should be relocated to my Dad's allotment at Shotley.

When inspecting both hives later that week no queens could be found – although I had paid extra to have the Hawaiian queen marked! I used all the techniques – putting the frames in pairs and even using the queen excluder - but no joy. The next week – we tried again – and this time my eagle-eyed son spotted her – we quickly marked her; her wings were clipped but the original marking must have worn off – but still no sign of a queen in the original brood box. As the original hive was weak, we decided to combine the two and if there was a second queen let them sort it out for themselves! We combined them using newspaper and on the next inspection all seemed well – the marked queen was easily spotted and had started laying.

I have now treated again for varroa and have been feeding – so hopefully they will be in a good position to survive the winter.

Lessons learnt:

- Although I had asked the neighbours if they were happy I kept bees and they were very understanding – as a beginner my small back garden, with houses all around, increased the pressure.
- You can't have too much equipment – luckily I had two complete hives so was able to manage the swarm and keep them separate until I could unite them
- Beekeepers are very helpful – everyone I spoke to was sympathetic and helpful, offering good advice. I always felt they were giving me positive support.

So what caused my very steep learning curve, where I had to deal with emergency honey harvesting, introduce a new queen, catch a swarm and unite two colonies in the space of a few weeks? Well, the only explanation seems to be that they caught some sort of virus.

So much for this relaxing, therapeutic new hobby of mine .....

---

Maureen Graystone writes about their Colony 28:

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May Mike noticed dead bees at the front of a hive in the home apiary. He has twenty-five colonies there, some Nationals, some Commercials and, during the mid bee season, some nucs of both sizes being brought on.

Out of all these in front of just one, a Commercial, there were a lot of dead bees; I mean a lot, half a bucket-full on a couple of occasions in a 10 day period, and there always seemed to be much activity in front of that hive, more so than all the rest. At first Mike

thought it had been targeted for robbing but found this difficult to believe as it was such a strong colony, 9 to 10 frames of brood every time they were checked over a 10 week period, lots of bees needing 2 or more supers for space as well as for stores. We have had 97 lb of honey from this colony so far and there are 2 more supers waiting to come off. So they have a virile queen, are not weak, they are good producers, yet all those dead bees!!

We found time to sit and watch and the guard bees were not letting in some of the dark coloured bees but killing them. Other bees were dragging out dark coloured bees and dumping them over the edge, the alighting board was a place of carnage. Sylvia [*Pettitt, Bee Inspector*] came over to check that colony and a few of the other colonies on that site, she sent off some bees for analysis but as yet we haven't had any results back; they did write and ask us to pay for the analysis but Sylvia said ignore this. It was discussed with Andy [*Wattam, the National Bee Inspector*], who says it sounds like a virus problem. What a problem! We have bees that identify infected bees and kill them, yet remain strong and produce a reasonable amount of honey. Maybe we have bees that can cope with at least one of the viruses themselves and we should breed from them!!

23 Aug 09. They continue to be fussy which bees are allowed entry to the hive and continue to throw out what they consider they don't want. We still have dead bees out the front of the hive but the wasps have a good feed, so really all we are left with, if you don't clear them away most days, are heads. Of course, the bees being so aggressive on the flight board, the wasps have no chance of getting into the hive. There are still a lot of bees in the colony, she is now running on 7 frames of brood but all our colonies are running down for winter and this is an average amount of brood for a strong colony at this time of year. It will be interesting to see, with all this killing going on, what state the colony is in come spring, that's if it survives the winter.

---

Celia Davis wrote in *The Nottinghamshire Beekeeper* Nov 2009:

**Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV)** This virus was discovered in 1961 and it is probable that it was one of the main contributors to the deaths of many colonies during the Isle of Wight epidemic which occurred during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It manifests itself in 2 slightly different ways:

**Type 1 Syndrome.** Bees have trembling wings and bodies, are unable to fly so crawl about on the floor. The wings of the crawling bees are held like a letter K with the forewing held below the hind wing and the bee's body forming the straight part of the K. Because there is a build-up of fluid in the gut, the infected bee appears bloated and often shows signs of dysentery. The individual bees die and the colony may collapse very quickly.

**Type 2 Syndrome.** The affected bees look black and hairless. This is because the other bees nibble at the hairs. The guards refuse to let the affected bees into the hive so they dodge about in front of the hive, trying to get in and look like robbers. After a few days the affected bees start to tremble and then die. Both syndromes can occur together but usually one predominates. If you refer to my March article on acarine you will see that the symptoms for the Type 1 syndrome above are very similar to those for acarine. Unfortunately there is no way that we, as beekeepers, can positively identify CBPV and there does not appear to be any direct connection between CBPV and acarine. Requeening with a different strain seems to be the only method of control.

Jeremy Quinlan writes:

What John Stebbings did not say was that, on hearing his first report, I concluded that his bees were suffering from the effects of pesticide spray – hence the advice to take three samples of 250 bees and freeze two of them. I also advised

him to alert the NBU using the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme “hotline” for reporting pesticide incidents - this really got the Defra alarm bells ringing! Once Keith Morgan had had a look, it became clear that the problem was not pesticide but virus. On speaking to other beekeepers, I learned that at least another was suffering similarly (see Maureen Graystone's report above). While the Bee Inspectors are clearly aware that virus damage can have this effect, I think many others are not. While I concluded that both John Stebbings's and the Graystones' bees were suffering from Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus, probably brought on by varroa, I was not quite correct.

---

Andy Wattam comments:

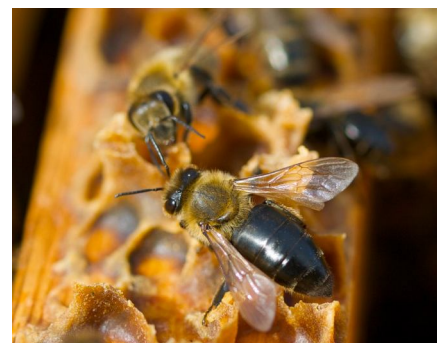
Where possible, a field diagnosis should take place. Personally, I always try to take photographs and ask questions. Where samples of bees are submitted to the NBU in circumstances which fall outside of the Statutory Work, then they are streamed and may either:

1. Go for pesticide analysis if this is suspected, or
2. An attempt will be made to put them through for virus analysis as a 'bolt on' to a research project; sometimes this is not possible and the beekeeper may be asked if s/he wishes to pay for the analysis. At present there is no financial provision for the analysis of bee samples outside of the Statutory Workload.

For pesticide incidents it is only necessary to alert the National Bee Unit via your Seasonal or Regional Bee Inspector. By going directly to Defra it set in motion a long series of e-mails and telephone calls which essentially were going in reverse order and were eventually passed to the Bee Inspector to kick off the preliminary visit and, where necessary, sample taking. Where pesticide damage is suspected then in the early stages we inform Natural England whose Field Officers start going around local farms and asking questions.

CBPV is not strictly associated with varroa like the other viruses, but is a confinement spread virus, ie: bees rubbing against each other, which cause scratches and lesions and the virus is transmitted predominantly that way. This I feel is the reason why we saw so much of it in the poor summers of 2007 & 2008, but to a lesser degree in 2009.

I do, however, strongly subscribe to your advice about controlling varroa and hence viruses. Advice about CBPV is simple - they will either recover or they will die; you will have to wait and see.



CBPV Type 2 (shiny hairless abdomen)  
In the NBU Home Apiary 2009  
Photo: Simon Croson  
<http://www.sicroson.com/>

## Bee Basic

Jeremy's suggestion that I take the Basic in 2008 met with a point-blank refusal. But in 2009 I caved in to his doggedness.

I knew I had absorbed many things about bee behaviour in the balmy days spent with mentor (and now friend) Barrie, as I followed him around his apiaries on the Shotley peninsula... so many colonies; so many different temperaments (the bees, not Barrie); such a range of responses to the various strengths of stings (verbal as well as physical)...but what had I *actually* learnt?

Out came the books... and yes, I was nervous on the day.

The examiner proved to be a gentle soul and so too were the bees I was allotted. I chose a smoker and fuel which behaved perfectly, lighting easily and staying alight for the duration. Most of the questions I was able to answer with ease, and otherwise I could justify my level of knowledge and utilise my common sense based on my experience in the field. Jeremy's crib sheet summarising disease recognition was particularly helpful.

I was surprised it took over a month before Jeremy was able to inform me of a pass... but I was delighted nonetheless! As I left the examination site, the beekeeper who managed the apiary, with many, many, many years of valuable experience, suggested it was perhaps time he took his basic... he will remain nameless... but I don't think so... Exams are no substitute for experience and years of good practice. Sometimes old dogs do know better and we would do well to remember it!

*Dawn Girling*

## CHUFFED!

Eighteen months ago I decided to become a beekeeper. I would get a hive read a book and buy some bees - as simple as that. I was then invited to a meeting of the Bee Association at Martlesham. That opened my eyes to a whole new world and I realised what a complicated but very, very interesting hobby I had embarked on.

My next decision was to attend all the meetings and buy the books that were recommended (and a few more). Right from the start I knew I wanted to do it and the meetings and talks simply confirmed it; I loved them and I am very grateful to the people who work so hard to run them. My mind then turned to equipment which can be very expensive so I contacted Gill Smith at Thorne's. She introduced me to their *Bees On A Budget* line and I bought two complete National hives flat pack. Now I am no carpenter but slowly and surely they took shape. Meanwhile, I took the course that Jeremy and Roy Ramsey run and it was fantastic.

In May I had a telephone call from John Forbes who offered me a swarm; of course I accepted and set off to his home to collect them in the pitch dark. It was a bit scary driving twenty miles with thousands of bees in the car. We were successful but a few days later they swarmed again and so few were left we were downhearted but carried on. The middle of June I purchased a nucleus from Mr & Mrs Dorling and they turned out to be very gentle. So by now we had given up on extracting this year.

However we are lucky - we only have eighteen pounds but to us it is a river of gold. The colour and flavour smell and thickness is magical and it turned out our small swarm produced the most.

So it is a massive and heart felt "Thankyou" to everybody who in any way taught, advised or helped me in any way in my quest for the liquid gold.

*Kevin Vince*

## First trip to the Spring Convention at Stoneleigh - The good and the bad!

Well, I was told that the queue would be very long and a scrum was likely to develop at the Thorne's stand so I set off early on and arrived at Stoneleigh around 7.15 [It's a 3 hour journey for most! - Ed] to find the car park didn't really exist, but some vague directions from the stewards guided me towards the building housing the BBKA event. I parked as close as I could to the front doors and went off in search of the infamous queue, not having been to this site before it was a bit of a mystery so I asked a couple of people standing at what seemed to be a side door, lo and behold I was then the third person in the queue. Still an hour and a half before the doors open. Oh well, better than missing the bargains! (Which, incidentally, lasted all day).

The first priority was to do the shopping so, when the doors opened, I headed off to the Thorne's stand and, as the stewards only let in a few people at a time; it wasn't quite the scrum I had envisaged and nothing like the chaos at the Thorne's sale event in Wragby I went to last summer. Having managed to purchase the hive parts on my list, it was then time to settle down and see what was really on offer at this event. From a wooden honey server to a complete extracting line, it was quite overwhelming to see such an array of equipment from so many vendors, from the ordinary to the specialized, numerous kinds of microscopes for example.

So much to see yet the lectures were starting and somehow choices had to be made - I wanted to attend three of them, which all happened to be in the afternoon - so a few errands for other people completed and with lunch time approaching, I made my way towards the restaurant but so did everybody else it seemed. I'm not one for a queue particularly when I can't see the front of it so skipped lunch, remembering that the lectures are always fully attended I went off to get my seat and have a nap whilst waiting for Norman Walsh. Norman talked about how his association had a queen rearing programme whereby each member could obtain good quality queens at a nominal sum, and get involved with queen rearing. Could we do that in our Association?

The next lecture on my list just happened to be in the same theatre, this was by Norman Carreck and covered CCD - it was interesting to see the wider picture and how *Nosema ceranae* is implicated in the recent problems.

Two down one to go, only this time the seats were all taken 30 minutes before the lecture started. Somehow the timing didn't quite work so next year I will go to the lecture before the one I want to hear if it is in the one of the smaller theatres, just to ensure that my seat is reserved. So it's back to the Wolfson theatre to hear Murray Reid talk about re-queening without de-queening. This is the practice used in New Zealand for commercial keepers who don't have the option of removing the queen before adding a new one, simple yet effective.

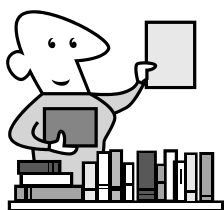
Altogether a completely overwhelming day with so much learned and the realisation that there is still so much more to learn. I am considering going for the weekend next year to take advantage of all that is on offer. Even if you only go once, it will widen your beekeeping horizons.

*Nigel McKean* [Apologies to Nigel - this was to have appeared earlier]

**See: [www.nativegardens.org.uk](http://www.nativegardens.org.uk) - a local beekeeper initiative.**

## Library Notes

To all who use the library, thank you for your continued support. Come the New Year I will be buying some more books for the library, does anyone have any recommendations of brilliant bee books for us? Any suggestions gratefully received.



The library has had to take a back seat for me because I have been engaged in other activities this last half year, but I will be back at the meetings from January. Thank you to my able assistant Nigel for taking the 'library' to meetings when I have been unable to attend.

Welcome to any new members and if you wish to borrow library books, please feel free, but remember that it would be most useful to have them back after a couple of months or so, to keep the material circulating. If you see a book that you want to borrow and want it in between meetings please make a private arrangement to come and get it from me. The library is kept at my house in Burgh and my phone number is 01473 735646. You can also let me know if there is something you want to borrow and I can bring it to the meeting. You should have a list that tells you the up to date state of the library and what is available.

There have been some donations of books this year and thank you to those who have kindly donated books and newspaper articles. I'm a bit behind pasting the articles into the collection, but will be able to catch up in the next few months. It's one of those jobs that's so easy to put off and yet is very rewarding when you finally sit down and do it. The article collection is available to borrow as well, for anyone interested. Have a look at the big blue folder on the library table at meetings.

...And a quick reminder about filling in the book. Some members fail to put contact details and that makes it very difficult for me to chase you up about books, so please write your FULL name and phone number in the book LEGIBALLY. Thank you very much. Nag over!

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Let's hope the bees were well clustered before this cold snap occurred otherwise some of us may be unfortunate enough to loose them. There is nothing more heart rending than opening up a dead colony. Good luck with the Oxalic treatments, remember to wear those gloves!!

Deborah Lacey

## Bee Mortality and Bee Surveillance in Europe Project praises FERA's National Bee Unit

In response to European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)'s questions, the Agence Francaise de Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments (AFSSA) set up a consortium of 7 European bee disease research institutes. The project sought information on both the losses of honey bee colonies and the bee surveillance systems in 27 EU countries. Its very recently published conclusion (mid Dec 09) was that only in Denmark, England, Finland, Germany & Wales was there a valid system. The best system was in England & Wales.

Trends were difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, the project noted a baseline colony loss rate around 10% each year at the European level and a higher rate of colony loss in some countries during the years 2003 and 2008.

Full report at:

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa\\_locale-1178620753812\\_1211903101123.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211903101123.htm)

## TASKS FOR THE WINTER

Winter is the best time to consider tidying up the apiary or moving your bees to a nearby new site.

Choose a cold and frosty day as this will ensure that you are not interrupted by flying bees. Cut back any long growth that has grown up during the year and lop back any branches that may be over-hanging the hives and impeding the working space behind the hives. It is essential that the hives are positioned well off the ground to allow an air flow below the hive floors. This will avoid dampness creeping into the hive and help alleviate one of the main causes of hives dying out during the winter months. At the same time, consider raising the hives to a height that will help to avoid having to stoop so much when manipulating the brood nest during the active season.

One of the secrets of success in beekeeping is to be well prepared. Now is a good time to clean those spare brood chambers and supers, exchanged frames and the queen excluders. Cleaning the latter will ensure they fit evenly when they are put on in the spring. If the brace comb is not removed then the excluder will rock with the risk of the wires becoming distorted creating a gap for the queen to pass through and lay in the supers.

From *Beelines*, the newsletter of the Taunton BKA Nov 08

## Clive de Bruyn recommends these websites:

1. Denmark: Control of Varroa in English:

[http://www.biavl.dk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=39&Itemid=50](http://www.biavl.dk/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=39&Itemid=50)

2. Australia:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/honey-bees>

3. New Zealand: Download a copy of: *Control of Varroa - A Guide*

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/animals/varroa/paper/varroa-treatment-options.htm>

4. USA: Tom Sanford's Newsletters:

Old: <http://entomology.ifas.ufl.edu/sanford/apis/>

and current: [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_beekeeping](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_beekeeping)

## Are you registered on BeeBase?

This is the National Bee Unit website and so a source of much good information [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com).

There have been complaints that when the NBU reports foul brood since it does so only to the nearest 10 km square but, if you go to their BeeBase maps, these show the locations much more precisely. In any case, your bees getting one of the foulbroods probably isn't your fault so there is no need to feel guilty – guilt would only be right if you didn't tell anyone if you suspected that all was not well.

**New Members** A very warm welcome to our new members: Jane Bird, Linda Wood, Chris Stephens, Elizabeth Littlewood, John Nayler, Peter Jones, Diane Pryke, Kay Andrews and Pam Whitcher. If I have overlooked anyone, please forgive me. It is really good that there are so many of you but, again, please forgive me if I do not know your name straight away.

# Programme – see Branch contact details on page 1

Thu 14 Jan	<b>John Raynor</b> Fornham St Martin Village Hall	West Suffolk Barney Harrison
Wed 20 Jan	<b>Pamela Ewan: Bee Venom Allergy</b> The David Little Talk & 2010 County Lecture St Michael's, Martlesham Heath 7.30	<b>Ipswich &amp; ES</b> Jeremy Quinlan Details page 2
Thu 11 Feb	<b>Clive de Bruyn</b> Fornham St Martin Village Hall	West Suffolk Barney Harrison
Wed 17 Feb	<b>I&amp;ES BKA AGM</b> and DVD 7.30pm St Michael's, Martlesham Heath	<b>Ipswich &amp; ES</b> Jeremy Quinlan
Sat 20 Feb	<b>Leiston &amp; District BKA AGM</b> URC Saxmundham 2.30pm	Leiston & District
Thu 25 Feb	<b>Beginners' Course</b> & other dates URC Saxmundham 7-9pm	Leiston & District
Thu 25 Feb	<b>Training for Beginners</b> 7 – 9pm Creeting St Mary Village Hall	Stowmarket & District
Wed 3 March	Suffolk Beekeepers' Association <b>County AGM</b> 7.30pm St Michael's, Martlesham Heath	Suffolk BKA Ian McQueen 01473 420187
Mon 8 Mar	<b>Beekeeping for Beginners</b> & other dates. Course fully booked.	Ipswich & ES Jeremy Quinlan
Mon 8 Mar	<b>Short course for beginners</b> Troston Village Hall	West Suffolk Mike Graystone
Thu 11 Mar	<b>Martin Buckle</b> Fornham St Martin Village Hall	West Suffolk Barney Harrison
Sat 13 Mar	<b>Cambridge BKA One Day Meeting</b> See page 2	David Abson 01223 834620
Wed 17 Mar	<b>Bee Anatomy</b> 7.30pm Paul Metcalf and "Gertrude" St Michael's, Martlesham Heath	<b>Ipswich &amp; ES</b> Jeremy Quinlan Details page 2
Thu 25 Mar	<b>Nosema check</b> Free!	Leiston & District
Sat 27 Mar	<b>Suffolk Nosema Survey</b> Creeting St Mary Village Hall 10-4 <b>FREE!</b>	Suffolk BKA Jeremy Quinlan 01473 737700
Sat 2 Apr	<b>Teaching Apiary</b> Every Saturday from 2.30	Leiston & District
16 - 18 Apr	<b>BBKA Convention, Stonleigh</b> See page 2	Christine Hayward 01728 832487
Wed 21 Apr	<b>How I Keep Bees</b> Mike Graystone 7.30pm St Michael's Martlesham Heath	<b>Ipswich &amp; ES</b> Jeremy Quinlan Details page 2
Sun 25 Apr	<b>Bee Health Day</b> Keith Morgan, Regional Bee Inspector, at Dallinghoo 10 - 4	<b>Ipswich &amp; ES</b> Jeremy Quinlan Details page 2

**All members of the five Suffolk Beekeepers' Associations are welcome to attend any or all these meetings**

## Congratulations on passing BBKA Exams!

**Basic:** Tony Rainbird, Waveney.

**Microscopy:** Bob Curtis, Peter Sunderland, Lewis Woolnough and two others of the Icenimicroscopy Group [www.icenimsg.co.uk](http://www.icenimsg.co.uk).

## Beekeeper selling up before going abroad

Paul Harty 01473 785449; [beemanuk@googlemail.com](mailto:beemanuk@googlemail.com) has a quantity of National and Smith equipment for sale – it includes wood & bucket feeders, nuc boxes and much else.

**Offers invited** for unwanted gift! TWO WBC HIVES, BROOD BOXES AND FRAMES, SUPERS AND FRAMES plus other bits of miscellaneous equipment (not all WBC but not quite sure what they are) All items getting on a bit and some in need of attention but if anyone is interested they are welcome to come and have a look. Contact: Jane.Slade@btinternet.com; 01728- 723707.

## New WBC Cedar Hive & Small Extractor for sale

Apply Di Protheroe: 01394 460294.

## Be an ambassador for bees!

Aztec Events asks if a Branch or individual would put on a display in the main marquee at their Spring & Autumn shows at the Suffolk Showground 2-5 April & 3-5 Sept. A stand with some plants as a 'garden' with bees & bee information and products for sale is suggested. No cost, but a refundable £50 deposit against no show. Contact Sandra Gibson, 01702 549623, [www.aztecevents.co.uk](http://www.aztecevents.co.uk)

**Meads & Honey based wines.** I particularly enjoy the recipes in *Making Wild Wines and Meads* by Pattie Vargas & Rich Gulling (ISBN 1-58017-182-6). It is full of interesting and unusual recipes with clear instruction for carrying them out. Home made wines can be a real pleasure.

When making mead, it is always best to start with a strong tasting honey. I was lucky enough to be the Judge's Steward at the Bath and West Show last year and had a chance to taste the winning meads. The winner had a really powerful honey flavour. The judge took a small sample into his glass. He sniffed its bouquet, and took a sample and passed it around his mouth in a most professional way. Having savoured all aspects, he turned ready spit out. At this point an elderly farmer rushed over in some agitation, fearing an act of sacrilege, and told the judge: "Ere, don't you go wasting it, mind!"

Do have a go over the winter, it really is great fun, and put your results into the next Show.

*Joe King* [From the Somerton (Somerset) Newsletter for May 08]

**H**ead on Radio 4 in early August 2009. A woman enthusiast for architecturally rare gents' toilets mentioned, as I recall, that in Wigan Technical School, the gents' urinals have a bee as an aiming mark because the Latin for a honey bee is Apis!

**S**ign up for BBCT's free eNewsletter about bumble bees at: [e-newsletter@bumblebeeconservation.org](mailto:e-newsletter@bumblebeeconservation.org)