



wsbka@yahoo.co.uk

West Suffolk Beekeepers' Association

NEWSLETTER June 2018

WSBKA Officers and Committee for 2018

President	Philip Draycott	01440 820328	p.draycott@btinternet.com
Chairman	Kevin Thorn	07557 418418	kevinthorn@me.com
Secretary	Carol Williamson	01449 736362	wsbka@yahoo.co.uk
Treasurer	Mark Moore	01638 604275	marklamoore@gmail.com
Vice-Chairman & Membership Sec.	Tim Easting	01787 371921	timeasting@aol.com
Committee	Gordon Chapman-Hatchett, Jane Corcoran, Mike Graystone Apiary Manager 01359 269652 mq4mike@btinternet.co , Sylvia Pettitt, Ray Robinson, Mike Shave, Alan Wren		

A Note from the Chair

I hope everyone is having a good Spring, although I hear of much higher than usual losses this Winter. Many beekeepers have lost around 1/3 of their hives and I know that I also have many colonies that have just scraped through.

Spring has sprung and while many colonies are not strong enough to put honey in supers they are at least recovering on it and those that are strong enough are filling two or three supers. It's time to take off the Oil Seed Rape containing honey as soon as the crop has gone over and the honey passes the shake test. Oil Seed Rape is usually ready when only a third is capped. Any longer and it can be very difficult to extract. Also, it's best to extract as soon as it's been taken from the bees.

I've been starting my Queen Rearing and have taking one or two combs from each of my very strong colonies to supply the bees to do this. This has the double effect of slowing them down from swarming, without harming honey production.

Giving plenty of super space is important too and I have been caught out a couple of times with the strong flow!



Plates 1 and 2. Queen Rearing



The classroom training for beginners and basic training is complete and we have moved into the Association apiary. Although we have suffered some losses there too, I was pleased to see the five colonies doing well and needing supers adding. The bees are very calm as you would like in a teaching apiary and are a credit to Mike Graystone, our apiary manager.

The date for our bee Safari has been set so please put it in your diary – Sunday 15 July. I'm grateful to Philip Draycott, Sylvia Pettitt, Jane Corcoran, Jon Steggles and Marion English for agreeing to be our hosts for the day. This is a really enjoyable and sociable way to see how others keep their bees and I would recommend getting along to it.

In my "spare time" we have been having our first apiary sessions of the Abberton Native Bee Project which have been well and enthusiastically attended. The first 16 princesses are in mating nucs and another 20 have been grafted and will be put into nucs on the coming Saturday. We are meeting every Saturday, taking more grafts and distributing the queens from the previous weeks' grafts. I hope to have 50-100 daughter queens mated and distributed to beekeepers within three miles of the base apiary by the end of the season. The support from local beekeepers and Colchester BKA has been overwhelming. We already have beginner Beekeepers, who don't yet have bees, successfully grafting!

Anyone who is interested in learning more about raising queens is welcome to join me as I do this in my own Apiaries and you can contact me, kevinthorn@me.com if interested.

Last week I spoke at the Norwich and district BKA, which is Chaired by Stewart Spinks, about the Abberton project and we hope to be able to set up a Bee Improvement group there. If you haven't seen his videos please do have a look at the Norfolk Honey Company videos on You Tube by Stewart, which cover a whole range of topics.

We have changed the way we communicate which I hope you will notice in coming months. I'm grateful to Roger Merry for taking on the role of producing what will be a quarterly newsletter and to Carol Williamson for producing the monthly bulletin. Contributions to these will be appreciated on anything you think will be of interest to members. The monthly bulletin will include events, items wanted, items for sale, BBKA news etc. The newsletter will include items of general interest to members, useful tips and information, recipes etc. The aim is to communicate regularly without bombarding our inboxes. If you have anything for Roger or Carol, please contact them.

I hope everyone has a successful season and I hope to see many of you at the Bee Safari and the West Suffolk Honey Show on Sunday 9th September at Pakenham Mill which will also be an enjoyable occasion.

A note from the Editor

I had intended to get this Newsletter out a bit earlier, but the arrival of a new family member a puppy called Archie, and the start of building works on a Garden Room plus the honey harvest and trips to Jerez in Spain (sherry tasting!) and Cornwall, have all conspired to delay the release date. I apologise to the Committee and members for this but life has been rather hectic.

On the subject of colony losses and Spring build-up and honey harvesting, I must concur with the Chair. I experienced a loss of two of my four colonies. I don't like going into the winter with less than six, but this year was an exception and the early season cold and damp weather resulting in slow build-up and some very strange activity in the hive nearly caught me out in terms of honey production. I had also hoped to set up a few nucs using swarm cells but my bees have yet to produce any and although I have taken a couple of small swarms, very few in our area having been reported. Our President, Philip Draycott, has also lost 30% of his colonies this winter and endorsed my thoughts that it was a very strange season and that he has also yet to see a swarm at the time this was written. In his 50 odd years of beekeeping he had never experienced this by the time that we were taking in the first honey harvest. We harvested and extracted together last weekend and despite the season so far I have had six or seven supers on my hives and had reasonable yields, in fact I have taken off 180 pounds from the two hives, much the same sort of yield as I had last year.



It would be interesting in the next Newsletter to hear from others about their winter and Spring 2017/2018 experiences.

I hope that all of you have success in 2018 and please keep on coming up with articles etc. for your Newsletter. As Kevin suggests a few recipes would be good. Thanks very much for those of you that have contributed already.

Roger Merry rogermerry6@gmail.com

Plate 3 My Hives

Bee Safari 2018

Please make sure that you put Sunday 15th July in your diaries as this is when we will hold our annual Bee Safari, for more details on the apiaries being visited see the Chairs' Notes above. We shall meet and park at Philip's (Ashfield Green Farm, Wickhambrook, Newmarket, CB8 8UZ), where tea or coffee will be waiting, before departing in the minimum number of cars to the next apiary.

Observations from a Rural Beekeeper

I have been up some scaffolding whilst re-plastering my house, about 16ft. above ground, and have been much entertained by the local wildlife who do not see a person at that height as a threat. I have been serenaded by a chaffinch on a branch about 10ft. away who only moved on when I stared at it! I have also seen the muntjack deer who eats our shrubs, cheerfully wandering about the garden without a care in the world.

However, it is the behaviour of our bees which interested me. As I was working an occasional bee would pass me by, some bumbles but mainly our bees on a mission to somewhere, and then, very occasionally a squadron of them would blast past together! I did not see whether they were flying in formation as they

were gone before I could turn around but they were definitely our bees. Has anyone else observed this behaviour, or is it just our crazy colonies? If you have seen this happen, please let me know.

Article contributed by Gordon Chapman-Hatchett

Swarm collecting experiences

Following a substantial luncheon on a very hot afternoon at May Bank Holiday Eve, would not have been my first choice for a swarm call out. But when you hear an anxious voice say, "I've been told you're the local bee man", what can you do?

This was not my first Ghost Buster moment. The first had been the day after my discharge from Addenbrooke's from an anaphylaxis collapse in 2014. That one was easy, textbook even. It had been the size of a rugby ball, hanging shoulder height on branch of a magnolia grandiflora at the bottom of a garden. There was even a paved path that led back to the front drive. Even the small fact of my car being currently in pieces at a local garage was no obstacle. For when I explained, the gentleman kindly drove over to my house to collect me, and all my paraphernalia. Even more conveniently, he allowed me to return very early next morning [in my own car] to collect the obedient colony.

I was naturally flush with this success when my next call came a year later. I was on the road in a matter of minutes, with all the kit.



Unfortunately, my information about this 'bee problem' was second hand. Consequently, I found myself having to explain to a very disappointed lady house owner that the many hundreds of mason bees (that had taken up residence in the countless plastic weep vents with which her new-build house were peppered) were: a) not dangerous to her children b) not honey bees and c) not collectable by me. I drove away disappointed for the both of us; it was a valuable lesson learnt.

So, this third time, when my caller identified himself as a Manager at a local steel yard, hope punched through my post prandial torpor. These beauties, he reported, had gathered in a ball and been swirling around his yard since late morning. Asking for guidance about briefing his yard workers, I suggested he set up an exclusion zone as best he could till I arrived.

On arrival, I was whisked through reception, an orange hard hat and Hi-Viz vest thrust into my hands, then marched for what (to my little legs) seemed like half a mile to the very end of the last concreted plaza in the vast yard. There sizzling in the afternoon heat, in aisle upon aisle, were stacked length upon length of steel girders.

Both my heart and confidence sank when the H&S guy suddenly directed my attention upwards to the top of one of these stacks. It was one of those 'Jaw-dropping moments. You know the one; when you think to yourself, 'you're gonna need a bigger boat'.

Happily, after a few minutes of observation, I realised that this was no rugby ball of bees, or even a tennis ball's worth. In fact, there were perhaps no more than 700-900 bees on the top, or else flying wildly around, the flat area of a steel plate. Probably a small cast, I thought with both disappointment and relief in equal measure. So not really a viable colony.

I realised too that there was little likelihood of getting them onto a cloth or into a box. Not least because you cannot shake steel, but also the fact that they were about 25 feet up in the air!

So there I was with the site Manager, looking up at the bees when two yard workers suddenly appeared with an HSS telescopic Boom Caged Lift, or cherry picker to you and me. 'We can get you up there with this, no problem', said the helpful H&S guy. I gulped. They had gone to the trouble of bringing over a

cherry picker for me to go up and get them. How could I refuse? I walked thoughtfully to my car for my bee suit.

Returning manfully a few minutes later in full bib and tucker, I ascended in the cherry-picker with my smoker. Helpfully, the bees began to disperse, with less than a quarter returning to this high perch after 5 minutes. Their sisters were clearly gathering somewhere else.

When, finally on *terra firma*, I suggested to my little audience that this was either an offshoot from a bigger group or else a smaller transient group with a virgin queen. Frankly, I didn't have a clue why so few bees were clustering, but I said something as much for assurance as anything else. They seemed happy. I offered to return when the yard reopened if the little dears were settling in a larger group elsewhere on site. Personally, I thought they would move on. Sadly, the firm did not call me again the next day. A disappointing outcome for me perhaps, but hopefully good PR for Beekeepers.

Article contributed by Mark L A Moore [Newmarket]

News from the BBKA

Bee Positive – April 2018

Schools Project

At the last EC meeting we had a presentation from Howard Towl. One of the Trustees had set off to get to Stoneleigh at 4am that morning and was understandably rather weary by the time we had the presentation. To give an indication of how good it was, he said to the group that it was worth getting up at 4am just to listen to the work being done with the schools.

It is surprising how many schools have apiaries and how they are willing to share their experience with other schools. There are many schools that want to get bees and ask for help from the BBKA. One important factor is that some children with learning or behavioural difficulties become better at managing after getting involved with beekeeping. I know that a schoolteacher who only taught 'difficult' children had a stand at the National Honey Show and was showing how the bees improved the lives of the children in his care. As one disruptive child reported, he learned about the bees and had to keep calm and quiet when he was with them. This taught him some self-control and from a boy who had been excluded from five schools he is now at college and wants to go to university.

If the bees can do that for children with special needs how many potential Einstein's may there be at standard schools with the help of bees?

Queen Breeding

We have been asked to prevent the importation of bees into the UK. It would be great if we could, but I do not believe it is something that we could do. However, an alternative would be to breed our own queens locally and to set up queen breeding centres. I know there are a few already but if we need to provide queens to meet the demand and thereby prevent imports we need to be better at it. BIBBA do have a programme for queen rearing and we will look at this in the coming months. We are also looking at setting up courses for queen rearing at Stoneleigh as part of the GH training, but also encourage beekeepers to get involved in their local branches and start to raise their own queens.

One thing that was mentioned to me about importation was that the queens are needed in early spring. My thoughts are that if we raised them in summer and overwintered them in nucs, then they would be raring to go in the spring and could be sold on as early as the weather permits.

To do all this we need you, the beekeepers out there to help to drive this forward. I believe that we would all like to have no imported queens, but we have to work at it together. If you are interested in taking part, I would be glad to hear from you, it is all in its infancy but 'from little acorns, mighty oaks do grow'.

Repeat of the Competition

It has been suggested that we cover one of the walls in the hall at BBKA HQ with photographs of people working in an apiary. So, if you have someone at your branch who is good at photography, get some pictures of what you are doing there. It can be an opening of a hive, an inspection, bees on the landing board, bees on top of the frames anything that has a connection with your apiary. We will collect the pictures and then ask a photographer to judge them and the winner will get a prize of £300, the runner up will get £150 and the third will get £50.

You will have to agree that we can use the photographs and the intention is to enlarge them to poster size with the name of your branch under your photograph. I have to say that we will not be able to return the pictures.

The closing date for the photographs is the 31st August 2018. Hopefully, by then you will have had a few good days where you can get some excellent pictures.

The Spring Convention

This was very good. Traders and visitors alike commented favourably on the set up and attendance. I know on the BBKA stand we very often were overwhelmed with requests for goods. I believe that the lectures were well received and the traders were happy with the turnout. The BBKA News launched its latest special edition booklet on Swarming and the booklet on Advanced Husbandry was also launched. Glancing through them they look really good, so if you want some for your branch, ask your Link Trustee, this will save on postage and you will be able to order enough for your branch requirements.

The Schools back pack was also available. Sue Webster has assembled 100 ready for the convention. Getting them there was not an easy task, however it was achieved. Those at the convention were sold for £25.00 but future ones will be £45.00, which is still less than cost price. They work wonders if you are going into a school. There is everything in it including a sheet of instructions on its use.

At the Convention we were privileged to have the Master of the Wax Chandlers, Arthur Davey at the dinner. The Wax Chandlers support the BBKA in many ways and it was good to see them represented. The dining room was packed and he was quite impressed by the number of beekeepers attending. Let's hope that our good relationship with the Wax Chandlers continues.

The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

The CEH is running a Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) which beekeepers can take part in. The CEH had a stand at the Spring Convention which also detailed their honey monitoring scheme. You can take part in the PoMS by agreeing to monitor a 1km survey square and checking the various insects that visit it, they are recruiting volunteers. Email poms@ceh.ac.uk to sign up.

Their website has all the details and you can do a 10 min FIT count, this is great fun - see the YouTube video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luTiPEJI8rQ>

Are you aware that the CEH is also setting up a National Honey Monitoring Scheme? They need 500

beekeepers to give them two samples of honey in specially provided pots - they will use advanced analytical techniques to identify plant DNA and measure environmental contaminants. You will get your own result back but it will be used anonymously in any research. They have 250 beekeepers but need another 250 to sign up for the spring harvest.

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/national-honey-monitoring-scheme>

Margaret Wilson
Vice Chair of BBKA

The British Beekeepers' Association registered charity no: 212025

Our mailing address is:

The British Beekeepers Association
National Beekeeping Centre
Stoneleigh Park
Kenilworth
CV8 2LG.

Anyone wanting swarms

Can anyone who wants a swarm please email wsbka@yahoo.co.uk and Carol will put them on her list. Give your nearest village/town plus permission to forward your contact details on to the swarm-possessor, it would make Carol's life a lot easier!

Please note - from Helen the BBKA Secretary

COLOSS would like to invite all English bee keepers to complete the hive loss survey for 2018; in particular, we would like to get better handle on data for the Ipswich and East Suffolk region.



A summary of COLOSS hive losses survey work over the last 8 years can be found on the International Bee Research Association face book

link. <https://www.facebook.com/IBRAssociation/posts/1275974155838967:0>

Pollen Supplies – Can you Help?

Carol has been asked for a pollen supplier by a local lady who's looking into the health benefits and to try it out herself for various health issues. It would need to be of food quality as she will be ingesting it: about two teaspoons per day, so small jars regularly would probably suit her best. Please contact ninaspage@hotmail.com if you can help her.

Potential for Out Apiaries for Members

- A lady with a large beautiful garden in CO10 7AB, just over the river in Essex, would very much like a beekeeper to keep some hives there. Primary contact is Kevin's wife Julia via wsbka@yahoo.co.uk
- Another lady from Haverhill commented: 'We have a large plot of land behind our house and garden, which was formerly a private allotment. We've spent three years

clearing the land and planting wild flowers and fruit trees. We were wondering if any local bee keepers would be interested in placing a hive on our land. It's approximately 1.7 acres altogether and is surrounded by houses with gardens full of flowers, and has access from the road. Perhaps you could let us know if any of your members would like to make use of our space'.

If interested please contact them via Carol W, on wsbka@yahoo.co.uk. Your details will then be forwarded on.

We Want Your Wax!

Beeswax wanted: James Jenkins of Mabel & Co who is looking to source Suffolk beeswax for candle making. See the letter below:

Dear Beekeeper

Mabel & Co is a small Suffolk based designer maker studio focusing on sustainability and traditional craft practices. Using local, natural and recycled materials we create handmade products, with a contemporary British utilitarian aesthetic.

We are currently developing a range of beeswax candles and want to use as much local beeswax as possible. Indeed, if we can get enough we will only use local wax, to help make our candles as sustainable as possible.

To do this we need your help!

We are looking to purchase beeswax, hopefully on an ongoing arrangement, but also on a one off basis as beekeepers have it. We are offering £10 per kg and will agree to purchase a minimum of 10kg of wax if you have it, or less if you only have a smaller amount. As an alternative we are happy to swap for candles made from your own wax, or a mix of cash and candles, as you wish.

Even if you do not have any wax available at the moment, please do send me an email to register your interest, you will then be included when we send out requests for wax in the future.

If you have any questions or would like to know more, please do email me at james@mabeland.co

Kind regards,
James Jenkins



E-MAIL ADDRESS: ENQUIRIES@MABELAND.CO

BLACKSMITH'S FORGE SUDBOURNE PARK SUFFOLK IP12 2AJ

TELEPHONE: 01394 459415

WWW.MABELAND.CO

Suffolk Beekeepers' Association Bulk Feed

The price of bulk feed this year is likely to be cheaper than last year as the price of European sourced sugar products is down and considerably cheaper than Thornes' bulk price. We ask you to complete the [order request form](#) so that we can correctly gauge the bulk requirement. A payment request will be sent to you by email mid-July once we get confirmed final prices from the supplier.

The current prices are:

Invertbee bulk feed syrup (bring your own cans) 60p/kg	
14kg cans of Invertbee syrup	£13.65 each
(£0.98 per kg)	
Fondabee fondant 1 box of 5 x 2.5kg	£12.60 each

The order can only be in kg (rule of thumb – a bulk feed syrup can when over full holds about 14 kg or 10 litres but we suggest you just fill to 13kg). The quantity of stores required by a colony is about 18 - 22 kg of honey or feed substitute to get it through the winter. Larger hives headed by prolific queens may require more. When full a BS brood frame contains about 2.2 kg of honey, so assess the existing colony stores and feed the required balance.

The collection of bee feed is from Deben View, Back Lane, FALKENHAM. IP10 0TL is either Sat 4th or 18th August 2018 between 9.00am to 3.00pm (except for big orders over 200kg where we ask you to make a separate arrangement with David Adams to pick up).

For Sale or Wanted

I apologise if I have missed any requests for this, but I can't trace anything. If I have missed any please send them to Carol who will put them in the next Bulletin.

Stop Press

BIBBA Conference. Sept 6th-9th 2018. Cirencester, Gloucestershire

"Improve Your Bees and Beekeeping"

Three days (or less if you prefer) of exciting beekeeping topics.

Three simultaneous lectures, with seminars and workshops.

Over 50 presentations from more than 30 presenters, many having over 30 years of beekeeping experience, some well over 50, so they are telling participants what the bees have told them, not something straight out of books.

Scientific and practical topics.

The three lecture streams are themed as follows:

"Bee Improvement". Queen rearing, bee breeding, genetics, queen mating, mini-nucs and their management, overwintering queens, etc.

"General beekeeping". Management techniques, overwintering nucs, comb honey, marketing, bee communication, treatment free beekeeping, etc.

"Beginner and beyond". Forage and feeding, wintering, swarming, bee space, nutrition, mystery of mating, colony cycle, simple management techniques, colony health, etc.

If you are fairly new to beekeeping stream 3 is just for you.

Check the programme <https://bibba.com/>. Tell your local beekeeping friends and why not fill a car for an enjoyable break where you can mix with beekeepers from other areas?

Booking is open, with early bird discounts. Don't miss it.