

June 2013

BEE LINE



Is this going to be the best year for beekeeping we've had in a while?

photo by Awo Subris

Monday 3 June: created artificial swarm. Queen and flying bees put into an empty brood box. One week later, Monday 10 June, they had drawn out all of the frames (three of which had no foundation in at all, to slow them down a bit) filled the brood box with brood and food and had started to make their way over the crown board and expand their empire. Horror and delight.

All of this in one week. Queen now starting to lay in the wild comb. The only creature not happy about all of this was, of course the beekeeper.

Remedy: Add another brood box (with no excluder; for Rose style beekeeping.) For conventional beekeeping add a super with excluder. Clean away all wild comb, ensure queen is secure. Reassemble the hive and wait a week. Maybe check sooner?

Finding the queen

Bumblebees - let's do our bit. Get informed to pass on good information to the public.

ABKA's new old meadow

Swarm time is (at last!)

upon us and if we are lucky we can catch one but we are, as ever, getting plenty of calls about bumble bees. If you get called out for a “swarm” or a “nest” of bees, asking a few questions may save you a wasted journey.

First of all, determine where the bees are, if they are under a shed for instance then they are almost certainly bumble bees. Similarly, if they are in a bird box or other small container they are probably bumbles. If there are “hundreds” of bees coming and going through holes in an old wall they are most likely to be mason bees which do not sting and are harmless. I usually find that if I ask what kind of bees they are I am assured they are “honey” bees and if I ask them to describe the bees, they will often say

that they don't know because they dare not get too close. So my method is to ask if they are the fat, hairy, stripy sort, and people can usually understand that a give me an accurate description.

The thing to do is to reassure the caller that the bees are perfectly harmless if left alone and will not “swarm out and attack!” and that in any case they will disappear as soon as the cold

weather comes. Usually people are reassured by this and everything is ok but occasionally they worry that children/dogs may get stung because the nest is on the ground. In this instance my advice is to place a very large upturned flower pot over the nest. The bees will quickly learn to use the hole in the bottom and everybody is aware of where they are and can leave them alone.

Of course our silly honey bees do like to get themselves into places where we can't retrieve them and in that case, sadly, the pest control people may have to be called. Hopefully though every swarm you get called to will be hanging from a nice low branch just begging to be caught! Good luck.

Sue Chatfield

The experimental old meadow that we're trying to create at East Riddlesden Hall is well underway. A small piece of ground about 9m/sq has been cleared of the terrible rye grass and was seeded with a wild grass and flower mix (5:1) on the 18th May (remember that hot day we had in the middle of the month!) and is now looking very promising indeed.

ABKA had its second grass and flower identification session courtesy of Bradford Urban Wildlife Group (BUWG) this month. We got some really great news. This piece of ground that we're keen to see revived as a forage area for our native pollinators is in fact host to a good variety of grasses and flowers – although it could be improved. It is not swamped with the dreaded rye grass and because we've let it get long it is now showing positive signs of being really great habitat. All of our pollinating insects are in seriously trouble and this is mainly down to loss of natural habitat which is because of human interventions. We spray, we tidy, we concrete, we mismanage and therefore we decimate insect habitat. This tatty looking, habitat rich piece of land below the apiary has a host of plants recorded by BUWG.

Grasses: Smooth meadow grass, Yorkshire fog, perennial rye, annual meadow grass, false oat grass, red fescue, cocks foot, meadow foxtail
Flowers: meadow buttercup, hogweed, dandelion, bush vetch, germander speedwell, white clover, broad leaf dock, common mouse ear, garlic mustard, spear thistle, clustered dock, wood avens, cow parsley, watercress, ox eye daisy, nettles, lesser celandine, wild garlic, bittercress, bramble, plantain ribwort, herb robert, and goosewort.
Each and every one of these has survival value to our struggling native insects, birds and small mammals.

The nettles were hosting 'the best colony

of tortoiseshell caterpillars' that'd been seen in a long time. They create a type of long dense cobweb and emerge as lots of tiny caterpillars which then much away on the tender nettle leaves. Two peacock butterflies were spotted and a pair of male and female banded demoiselle damselflies were working the stream.

It's early days yet and some might say that I haven't got much to report but it could be argued that that is exactly my point. There's not much to say because the land has been sanitised by intense grazing. As ABKA manages this piece of land for pollinating insects we'll start to see lots more variety inhabiting this natural refuge. What could be more beautiful than seeing a host of butterflies emerging from a grotty old patch of nettles? Thanks to Susan Stead, Martin Taylor, Joan Dobson and Val Shepherd of BUWG for sharing their expertise and enthusiasm. If anyone wants to go and have a look you're more than welcome or if you want to meet up there and be shown I'd be delighted to point these things out.

Chris Hardy (oldsalmon@gmail.com)



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Book review by Awo Subris

Thinking outside the box

I recently attended a course on how to rear bees and came away with an unexpected gem. In this case it was '**The Jefferson Beekeeping Guide**'. I found this booklet such a good and interesting read that I felt that I had moved on from being just a beginner at beekeeping. The author, Tony Jefferson attributes his knowledge to his father's 65 years of beekeeping and some of his own innovations.

In my opinion this is an excellent booklet for the beginner as it bridges the gap between the hard core, no nonsense beginners text book and Ted Hooper's *Bees and Honey*. The key to Jefferson's guide is that he challenges the status quo and offers alternatives to existing beekeeping methods which are always supported with a logical explanation. When the beginner has finished reading it, he will feel immediately more experienced and begin to sense that he could start to think outside the box. It is a nice easy read for the novice to recap on the plethora of information that he needs to acquaint himself with.

Where Tony challenges the established methods of beekeeping he gives the reader plenty of warning: *"Queen Excluders. These are badly named they should be called "Queen Restrictors" as their purpose is to restrict queens from places in the hive that you do not want her to lay in. Most people convince themselves that they should be placed above the brood box and under the super. This practice can result in smaller colonies with a greater tendency to swarming, due to congestion of brood and young bees in a single brood box. Consider carefully when and where you use them and WHY".* A full explanation follows. His father always believed the best place for an excluder was hanging on a nail in a shed. Nevertheless, he does justify when to use an excluder or restrictor effectively.

If that is too radical an approach there are many other general practical tips on simple devices to make and management techniques. Experience at your fingertips

You can buy it from Thornes – Jefferson Beekeeping Guide, £5

Receipts

Honey, lemon and rosemary marinade
(suitable for lamb, chicken, fish or tofu)

4 tbsp olive oil
1 large shallot peeled and chopped
2 cloves garlic peeled and chopped
2 tbsp wine vinegar
4-5 sprigs rosemary
2 tsp (or more to taste) honey
grated zest and juice of a large lemon
salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat 1 tbsp oil in saucepan and fry shallot until soft and transparent.

Add garlic and fry for further 2 mins.

Add remainder and simmer for 2-3 mins.

Allow to cool before using as marinade.

Pink grapefruit and ginger preserve

4 pink grapefruit
9 oz (250 g) honey
1 ¼ cups (250 g) sugar
½ oz (15 g) fresh ginger

Grate zest of one grapefruit

Remove flesh of 4 grapefruit and pull off all skins from pulp

Grate ginger very finely

Blanch zest

Boil water in pan over high heat

Scald zest in water for 3 min

Cool in cold water and drain

Chop zest very finely

Pour honey and sugar into a pan over moderate heat. Bring sugar and honey mixture to a boil without stirring until sugar crystals are fully dissolved.

Add grated ginger, grapefruit pulp and grapefruit zest. Crystallize over low heat for 30 to 40 min until mixture thickens. This preserve never thickens a whole lot. The consistency you're looking for is between marmalade and jam. Pour into previously sterilized glass jars.

Both recipes from <http://www.honeyrecipes.org.uk>

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So you still haven't managed to find the queen to mark her...

Try to do this on a warm day

Step 1 Put an excluder on the floor of an empty brood box-it will form the new base of the colony in which you can't find the queen. We'll call this box A.

Step 2 From the original brood box (box B) shake off any bees which are NOT on frames of eggs into box A. Then brush off any bees which are on frames with eggs or queen cells on into box A. (Harshly shaking frames with brood on them, especially queen cells could damage them.) Replace these now beeless frames back into box B, in their original order.

Step 3 Then put a queen excluder (QE) on top of the box you've just shaken your bees into, box A.

Step 4 Put brood box B on top of box A and put the hive back together. It should be in its original site.

The order from the bottom up is: QE - box A - QE - honey filled super if you have one - box B - crown board - roof

The young nurse bees will make their way back up through the excluder to attend the brood, as will the foragers.

Step 5 Half an hour later go back in to box A and the queen will be much easier to find.

Step 6 Once the queen is found and marked reassemble the hive back to its original format.



Bumble bees often mistaken by people as honey bees. If you get asked to move one that is above ground and causing aggravation then this can only be done after dusk when they are all in the nest. Bumblebees unlike honey bees are not aggressive and the only kit advised for wear to move them is a pair of rubber gloves and a head net.

If they have set up a nest in a really awkward place and you really cannot see any other way to cope then move the nest to a safe and relatively similar site **ONLY** after dusk. Remember their predators are birds and small mammals. If it's in a disused bird box then resite it to above 5ft. If it's at ground level then ditto.

Above all **DO NOT DESTROY** the nest. Bumble bees are in demise and we must do our best to conserve and protect them. For more information go to

<http://bumblebeeconservation.org> and another very useful document is

http://bumblebeeconservation.org/images/uploads/Resources/BBCT_Bumblebee_Factsheet.pdf

Photo of carder bee on geranium by Awo Subris



You must commence your artificial swarm before any queen cells are capped. The prime swarm will leave when the first queen cell is sealed. Queen cells are sealed on the eighth day

BEELINE

Dates for your diary

Great Yorkshire Show 9-11 July Honey & Hives Show

If any members would like to volunteer to help on the YBKA stand at the Great Yorkshire Show would they please contact: Dave Shannon Tel: 01302 772837 Mbl: 07907856515 e-mail: dave_aca@tiscali.co.uk
Members who attend as volunteers can sell their honey at the show.

11th August East Riddlesden Hall Open Day. We'll have a stall
Keep an eye out for the announcement of ABKA's Barn dance....

WHO HAS THE HEATHER PRESS? We're still looking for it. If you have it please tell Sue Chatfield.

For sale

Superior beehive and a nuke (not in picture). Both are new, with frames and have been tried and tested through several harsh winters and recent bad weather. They are made from treated sustainable timber, with a robust metal roof and are proving very successful. They come complete with a stand.

£160 for the hive and £75 for the nuke
Please call David Inskip on 07810056678 or
inskipdavid@hotmail.com



60 used super frames without foundation -£30 the lot. Chris 07824620889

ABKA has a wax melter which makes very easy work of cleaning up old comb. It can be borrowed by any of our members. It's a great piece of kit, I can't see why I struggled for so long using an old pan and sieve when I could have used this.

Our very effective and prudent treasurer, Richard Hodgson will sadly retire at the next AGM. Our lovely Jackie Town has volunteered as treasurer. We would like to thank Richard for all of his work and his particularly good honey cake.



Emerging bee by Jake Newiss

Thanks to Awo Subris and Jake Newiss for their great photos.

Is it just me...

This summer I've been scything with Richard Law in the apiary at ERH (you may know him as the Bodger at Strid Wood). We have trimmed a path in the long grass by the hives. It did not seem to particularly bother the bees and they were out flying on that fine sunny mid morning - no petrol stink from 2 stroke machinery and no vibration. It's a very satisfying job and very quick and easy with a super sharp blade. Is it just me and Richard or would anyone else be daft enough to have a go? Let me know.

Cheers Ed
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