

March 2013

BEE LINE



March is too soon to disturb your bees. Sue tells us to hold our horses!

We've moved!



photo by Awo Subris

BEELINE

Don't be fooled!

Last year we had amazing weather in March which brought out the flowering currant but it was a snare and a delusion! Cold weather was to follow. While it is so very tempting to “go through” the bees when the weather is like that, it really is not a good idea. Examination before April can cause the bees to “ball” the queen and kill her and if that happens and there are no drones about for a new queen to mate with you can soon end up with a queenless colony! Certainly, if the weather is absolutely beautiful in March and the bees are flying well you can change the floor for a clean one and have a quick peek in the hive to see that all is well, do not be tempted to have a full frame-by-frame examination too early in the year. After all what are you examining for? You need to see that the queen is actually laying but you can tell that by noting if the bees are bringing in pollen and you don't have to open the hive for that. Do they have enough stores? Well you can make sure they do by giving a liquid feed which will encourage the queen to lay. It is unlikely that they are planning to swarm so early in the year so really your only reason for an early examination is to satisfy your own nosiness! - and get back “in touch” with your bees; I know, I am looking forward to being back with the bees myself but I shall leave it for mid April before I go poking about too much in there! Try to contain your curiosity and leave well alone for a little while, otherwise you could be doing more harm than good.

Sue Chatfield



photo: Awo Subris

It's tough in Cyprus

In 2004 the beekeepers of southern Cyprus announced that their industry was condemned to extinction because the Government had announced, without any warning or consultation that Cyprus honey contained more HMF than was permitted by the relevant European directive. Several producers were named in the pronouncement, which didn't help their businesses at all, and all the others were included by implication.

However, a visit last summer found the shops full of various types of attractive local honeys, so it appears that the apiarists have redeemed the



situation.

This apiary was spotted alongside the busy A8 road from Troodos to Lemesos. The vegetation can hardly be described as lush, but the picture was taken in September and the flowering season is from January to April. There are plenty of hives so one hopes that all was safely gathered in.

HMF is hydroxymethylfurfuraldehyde and if you wish to enlarge your knowledge of this particular beekeeping hazard, search for it on Wikipedia. As was said of the Jaquard loom by the Overlooker, when it was introduced at Fletcher's Mill in Steeton, “*It's rurther complicayerted !*” I hope we can safely file HMF in the drawer marked ‘*Asian Hornets, Green Woodpeckers and Other Unlikely Nightmares*’.

Photo and article by Richard Hodgson

BEELINE

News from East Riddlesden Hall

ABKA's teaching apiary is now happily ensconced at East Riddlesden Hall. The final move was made on 24th Feb the day after about 20 volunteers rolled up to put the bee stands in situ on their slab bases. It actually took no time at all to do this job and we were all looking very gorgeous in our various overall/welly combinations. The session was rounded off with Mike Barlow's homemade flapjacks which he needs to practice more and then let us sample!

Suzanne has been working on a beekeeping beginner's certificate which has been put on offer to all of us and 15 people have signed up for this. (If it is something you want to do, don't worry you're not too late just let Suzanne know.) This will be taught at ERH.

The site has been planted with native hedging - again the work of our marvellous member volunteers and Bradford Forest volunteers and the donation of the saplings from our neighbours the Scouts. In 3 or 4 year's time Bradford Forest will come back out and show us how to then lay these hedges.



Hive stand base-building, welly-wearing, flapjack-scoffing lovely volunteers.

ABKA met with the people who live in the houses which back on to the apiary to talk to them about what we're doing. It all went so well that two of our neighbours are taking the beginner's course this year.

We have a licence to keep 18 hives on this site so the rest of the land will be turned gradually into bee friendly native habitat in the form of an ancient Spring meadow. This will mean the meadow flowers in June, the June gap, and will be cut for hay in late June. News on progress and requests for help will be issued through the membership email.

All very exciting don't you think?

Receipts

Tame that moustache with moustache wax

Invaluable for an unruly moustache, moustache wax will tame the rowdiest of whiskers. Recipes for homemade wax can be very basic to more involved. The simplest is equal parts beeswax and petroleum jelly. Just gently melt in a double boiler, it can also be done in a microwave, just be careful to not overheat. For a stiffer wax use 60% bees wax and 40% petroleum jelly.

I know I'll be trying it!!

Very easy bees wax soap

4 oz unscented, clear glycerin soap

1 tsp grated bees wax

About 10 drops of essential oil of your choice

Best done in a double boiler to ensure even heating. Melt the soap until liquid. Grate bees wax and add to the melted soap. As soon as it is melted turn off the heat. Stir thoroughly. Now add the fragrance. Stir thoroughly again. Pour into a mold and let it set overnight.

Et voila you 'ave been introduced to ze wonderful world of ze soap making! (*Did you know that all essential oils have natural anti-bacterial properties.*)



photo: Awo Subris

If you possibly can get hold of a copy of 'At the Hive Entrance' by Storch I can really recommend it. This lovely little book gives you a real insight into what is going on INSIDE the hive by making observations of what is happening OUTSIDE the hive month by month, it is a really valuable little tool and one I wouldn't be without.

Sue Chatfield

Jake Newiss found a legal & legitimate free download web site where you can download this little booklet: <http://archive.org/stream/AtTheHiveEntrance>

BEELINE

Dates for your diary

23rd March Welsh Beekeepers Convention at the Showground in Builth Wells

27th March ABKA's Beekeeping certificate info seminar

Leeds BKA winter talk

28th April Beverley BKA auction

May 4th Halifax & District beekeeping auction. @ Brickhill Fm, Cleckheaton BD19 6LY

For more auction dates go to <http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping-buzz/events/>

9th May Bradford Urban Wildlife Group to do 1st site survey of meadow at ERH

20th May Nottinghamshire BKA auction

6th June Lincolnshire BKA auction

21st June Bradford Urban Wildlife Group to do follow up survey of meadow at ERH

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?

Perhaps you've forgotten that you borrowed it and it's still in your shed? If you have it please tell Sue Chatfield NOW.

Just like your hubby, the drone is useful for more than just doing the washing up! The drone contributes SIGNIFICANTLY to its species' genetic diversity and therefore the species' health, vigour and longevity. We need more drones. Unfortunately they get a bad press because of the way Varroa predaes them so we squish our 'extra' drones. New approaches to Varroa management are being developed all of the time.

Is it time we regarded drones with more value in a healthy normal hive and start to understand that their 50% contribution to the gene pool is prerequisite for survival?

A HUGE thank you to everyone who turns up when requested to help with various jobs on behalf of the association's bees and the committee's next bright idea. We have a lovely active membership and that's what makes it all possible. So **THANK YOU ALL**.

Queen rearing nuc and equipment plans can be found here courtesy of Minnesota University. <http://www.centralohiobeekeepers.org/resources/plans.htm>

If your bees did not make it through the winter do not be too disconsolate. You are not alone. Many of us lost some or all of our colonies this year. Start talking to other beekeepers, use the members forum on email and let it be known that you're ready to receive a split or a swarm. Then while you are waiting give your hive a thorough clean. Steam it all down with a wallpaper stripper or singe the wood down and get rid of grotty or mouldy comb. (Some advocate now that we replace all of our comb every year.) Wash your suit and gloves. Get a feeder cleaned up and buy sugar or other feed in to be ready to go (1:1 water:sugar dilution for spring build up - outside temp. **must** be 10C and above). Most of all try not to make the same mistakes, whatever they were, this year..

Is it just me...

My Dad, who is very handy, has been knocking me some extra brood sized boxes up. This is because this year I'm converting to the Rose/Cheapo-Hardy method of beekeeping. Now I know Mr Rose of west Cork's boxes are generally smaller because when they are full of honey they are too heavy for him to carry. I say 'wimp'. Oh lordy give me the strength for the struggle.

My queens will have the freedom of each added box to lay her thousands of eggs unfettered by a queen excluder like a teenager who's had no one to ever say no to her. This year I will have honey. I will....

Cheers Ed
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