

# Y.B.K.A. eNewsletter July



2012 Queen Colour = YELLOW

1st July 2012 : Volume 16 : Issue 7

## Chairmans Notes

What interesting times we live in; Chatting to a beekeeper in Bridgenorth we agreed that we might have to stop thinking about a honey crop for the year and concentrate on making sure the bees survive in the strongest possible colonies.

Swarming continues to be a joy because of the difficulties of finding a time to do beekeeping when it fits peoples daily schedule and and it isn't raining (While collecting a swarm recently I found some beekeepers who had not looked into their hives at all this year). We need to be careful not to end up with lots of small colonies - keep them big and keep them strong!

Members should also be very 'disease aware' in this summer when hives become more vulnerable to disease and when spread between colonies is more likely. On a good day why not do a specific disease inspection?

With this newsletter you should receive 2 other pdf files:-

You may be interested in the research article about CCD in Europe - the first verified occurrence!

The other file has been produced in response to a request by a district association where a dispute arose between new committee members and a member who had been secretary and chairman for many, many years. The file deals with the ownership of resources - where committee members have additional commercial interests (selling bees / selling beekeeping equipment / etc) disputes can sometime arise because of the conflict of interest. District are free to use this documents or not as they see fit.

The YBKA committee is also responding to the feedback from districts about our annual conference. Many have said that the reason their members do not attend in large numbers is that Bishop Burton is too far to travel - the committee are therefore looking at ways in which the conference can be moved around the county so that each year it would be in a different venue - hopefully venues that are near main arterial roads so that all Yorkshire beekeepers can continue to have the opportunity to attend this excellent event. If you have a suggestion for a venue in your area please let me know; price is important and the venue must have free parking but the most important thing is that the venue is easy to get to from most parts of the county - we don't want to replace one difficult venue with another.

I hope that even if beekeeping is difficult then you are at least having lots of fun doing other enjoyable things. A special message to our RBI - get well soon! Good beekeeping everybody !

Bill

## JOBS IN THE APIARY FOR JULY

Junes atrocious weather bringing rain, winds and regional severe floods have meant that not only could the bees not get out foraging but beekeepers in many area's are having to feed them again due to the total lack of food coming into their colonies now the O.S.R has finished. Vital beekeeping in some area's had not, or more to the point could not get carried out due to very adverse weather conditions and bees have been lost. The forecast does seem a little brighter on the horizon for July so let's hope it stays that way for some time to come with the summer flowers, lime trees, balsam and heather all still to come and hopefully boost our bees reserves.

I do have some concerns though whilst listening and speaking to other beekeepers from a variety of areas, along with my own personal experiences, the one thing that's been apparent to date this year is the amount of swarms of bees that have plagued our friends and neighbours over the past few months. I have personally collected over 20 from my own area of Doncaster and other beekeeping friends have collected similar. We have had a very large increase in the numbers of new beekeepers joining our associations over the past few years swelling our ranks and over 40% are or have taken the Basic Assessment. This is a great thing for beekeeping within the county and a great deal of interest has been generated by the thoughts of new members getting bees. We at Y.B.K.A have run courses at our headquarters based on the B.B.K.A module exams for all the full range of experienced and inexperienced beekeepers, covering every module exam, and about to start at the beginning again for the newest beekeepers. We have had great success at these exams and students have passed, and received their certificates swelling the general knowledge of beekeeping throughout the county, a credit to each and every one of you who have taken part even the ones that didn't quite make it. There is always next time now you know how much you have to prepare to have another go next year.

All this said though it would seem that the general basics of beekeeping are being forgotten or even simply ignored by beekeepers who should know better, and this is not just the new beginner beekeepers! Basic weekly inspections through the brood boxes are not being carried out and swarming has been rife as a result. I know the weather, as I stated earlier, has played a big role in why some members haven't been able to go through their colonies as often as they would have liked, but there have been several small opportunities in between the bad weather enabling a quick inspection to avoid a lot of these colonies from swarming, even if it had to be one colony at a time.

Keeping records of when you did your last inspection enable you to calculate when you need to go through them again and if you get a small window in the weather, go through and do your inspection and avoid loosing all or most of your valuable bees. Don't mind if there's a slight drizzle just be precise and get those inspections done at all cost, if necessary get a colleague to help by holding an umbrella over you whilst this is done. If you are a beekeeper who has lost his or her bees by this mishap you have my sympathy, but I would be reluctant to supply bees to you again if you had told me as I have heard from others this season, (I can't understand it I only looked through them 10 to 12 days ago) and they were fine. Just because you have completed your basics or other exams or even if the weather is a little inclement you must not forget the basics. Inspections must be carried out

From early April to the end of July and sometimes beyond it is imperative you carry out your weekly examinations through the brood boxes to avoid your colonies performing their basic instinct to multiply and swarm. This is what good beekeeping is all about, manipulating your bees to do what you want; and not allowing them to do what they want. You must catch them before this swarming occurs and this is done by a regular weekly inspection through your brood boxes looking for the first signs of a loaded queen cell, and then acting upon by carrying out one of the several procedures, as I described in an earlier edition; splitting or the use of nuke boxes.

It is when the weather is not so good and things don't always go how you want them to, that a good beekeeper stays on top of their colonies and gets those inspections carried out. You cannot buy a colony of bees and simply leave it to its own devices or wait two or three weeks between inspection and having an impromptu look at them through the glass quilt, you will lose them and what's more you don't deserve to keep them if you can't find the time to look after them properly. Beekeeping is a job or country pastime that requires dedication to all aspects of the craft to allow you to enjoy the fuller benefits, and if you can't give the time then don't get the bees. This will also then save the time of other beekeepers, having to go out to sort out or collect up your problem swarms.

Let's all try to get to grips with this next time by remembering the basics of beekeeping, this will save you digging into those very deep pockets that beekeepers have, to once again buy more bees when losing the last lot could have been avoided by paying more attention to the basics of the craft.

Vital things to remember for this month.

1. Keep up those weekly inspections, and manipulate where and when possible.
2. Keep a close eye on the colony stores, and feed if appropriate, or even if you think there is insufficient food for them. Better to feed than have them starve.
3. Do Varroa checks, and treat where applicable with a recommended Varroa treatment when honey flow has ceased.
4. Keep a close eye on your newly produced Nukes, as when they get full they require hiving up or they will also swarm out and you will lose them.
5. Start and prepare your exhibits for this year's summer honey shows, taking particular care to filter your honey well and allow it to settle back in a warm place afterwards. Likewise with your beeswax exhibits, clean is good little bits on or in both are bad
6. Come along and see us all at the Y.B.K.A headquarters at this year's Great Yorkshire Show, 10<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July at Harrogate a great day out for all the family.
7. Don't forget the Y.B.K.A honey show held on the Great Yorkshire Showground Harrogate on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of Oct. @ (The Countryside Live event) Open to any Y.B.K.A member with experience or as a novice. Or open classes if your from another district all are welcome Great trophies and prizes awarded. For an entry form and schedule contact me from beginning of Aug at [dave@aprilcouthapiary.co.uk](mailto:dave@aprilcouthapiary.co.uk)
8. If you have a holiday booked and have bees, get a beekeeper friend, or bee buddy who knows what they are doing to help out by inspecting them for you whilst your away and don't lose those precious bees.



Happy beekeeping  
Dave Shannon

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# A Beekeeper's Diary (June)

26<sup>th</sup> May

I was on duty at the association apiary in the afternoon. There was a good turn out . I had a look into the queen cell raiser colony. The percentage of grafts that have been taken was not very high, but the exercise is not a total failure. I console myself with the thought that I would be embarrassed as to what to do if all twenty had taken. As they were sealed I protected the cells with 'hair roller' cages.

28<sup>th</sup> May

The time has come to extract honey. The extended period of hot weather is coming to an end and this is coinciding with the end of the flowering of the bulk of the OSR fields. I drove round the apiaries and put clearer boards in place. I noticed that some of the swarms in nucs are already laying nicely.

30<sup>th</sup> May

Another round trip to the apiaries, this time to collect honey supers. In most cases the clearer boards succeed in removing the majority of bees, but for the last year or two I take with me a petrol powered leaf blower to blow off the remaining bees.

31<sup>st</sup> May

I spent the day extracting eleven supers. Its hard work but fortunately it has become much cooler. There will be repeat performance next Thursday. It must be a Thursday as my wife goes to work that day and so I have a reasonable chance of returning the kitchen to normal before she returns. My small number of queen cells have been transferred to mini-nucs.

3<sup>rd</sup> June

Over the weekend the YBKA ran a couple of workshops to prepare candidates for the BBKA husbandry examinations. On the Saturday there was the general husbandry workshop attended by about eight members and on the Sunday was the workshop for the advanced husbandry, which I attended along with three others. I totally support this initiative by YBKA. It is absolutely essential for the good of beekeeping in Yorkshire that a reservoir of expertise is built up and maintained . It is easy to believe that because you get a few pounds of honey you have the craft mastered. It is only when you start to stretch yourself and develop your skills by attempting these assessments that you become really aware of the deficiencies in your skills – I'm certainly speaking for myself and suspect the other attendees felt the same. It is easy to criticise the syllabus and suggest that some sections are irrelevant to your beekeeping. I am finding the acarine dissection particularly difficult, blaming poor eyesight and inadequate tools but with hours of practice, many dozens of sacrificial bees, lots of bad language and advice and support from the tutors and fellow beekeepers I have managed a few successful dissections and when it goes right you'd imagine I'd just won the Olympics 100m by my victory celebrations. So many thanks to those who have helped me.

7<sup>th</sup> June

More honey extraction, hopefully the final session until I deal with the main crop in August. The countryside has suddenly become very drab, just green and white and around here there is very little forage for the bees. So for the next fortnight or so, until the brambles flower, I will be keeping an eye on the quantity of stores as I check on the colonies.

I rang a beekeeper I know. As I wanted to ask a favour I started with a social nicety 'How are things?' The reply was 'I'm sick of bees and I'm sick of honey'. I knew how he felt but I'm sure it's only temporary.

14<sup>th</sup> June

The YBKA, this year as for the last few years, have provided a demonstration at the Schools Day on the Yorkshire Show Ground. On the second day I joined the team, and my task was to demonstrate candle making. In addition there was honey tasting, microscopes, an observation hive and a demonstration of beekeeping equipment. It's a demanding day. There were lots of questions to answer. But it must be very

worthwhile and we can only hope that in those young brains a seed is sown that one day will develop into the desire to keep bees.

17<sup>th</sup> June

For the last week I've prepared for advanced husbandry assessment. Yesterday I drove down to Stoneleigh and stayed at a local B&B and today was the assessment. At least the weather was marginally better than the previous day. The precipitation could be described as a light drizzle rather than torrential rain. It was a gruelling day. The assessment is divided into five sections, each lasting a nominal three quarters of an hour, but it was almost five hours before I was finished. The first section was an interview, friendly but very demanding, and certainly going up to and beyond the limits of my knowledge. The second section was a lecturette which at least could be prepared in advance, though the question following it were more difficult to anticipate. The third section was adult honeybee diseases and microscopy. I'd spent hours preparing for this and to some extent I felt that the preparation paid off, though my acarine dissection was far from perfect. There was a very short break for lunch and no time to rest. The fourth section was bee breeding. The theory side I was happy with but the grafting is difficult especially under examination conditions. And then the fifth section was hive manipulation. The conditions were grey and there was a slight drizzle. At least the colony I was given was well behaved. It didn't go well. At the same time as going through the frames we were expected to give a running commentary. This was difficult as in the poor light I needed to really concentrate to see the queen, eggs etc. And I was getting pretty tired.

I drove the two and half hours home feeling far from confident. In all honesty I could appreciate that the examiners would have valid reasons should they wish to fail me. So did I feel it was worthwhile, paying out good money to put myself through a very difficult day? Despite everything the answer is yes. I learnt a lot in the day and it was a reminder that no matter where you stand there are always higher standards to strive for. Now I must wait for the judgement.

18<sup>th</sup> June

A bright, warm and sunny day. Apparently we are forecast three days of summer before the rain and wind resume. I spent the day travelling around the apiaries and went through about twenty colonies. There are several new queens that have started to lay, but there are still several colonies that have had no brood for several weeks. Where the colony is calm and there are polished cells at the centre I am optimistic that a virgin queen will start to lay soon. In most cases there are ample stores for another week. It was restorative to get back to ordinary beekeeping.

John Whitaker  
Barkston Ash BKA

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## YBKA Training Weekend

At the beginning of 2011 It was suggested to me that it was time to organise a training workshop for beekeepers wishing to take either the British Beekeepers (BBKA) General Husbandry or Advanced Husbandry Assessments.

In April of that year, at Stoneleigh, John Hendrie agreed to come up to Yorkshire in 2012 and run the workshop with Gerry Collins and Ivor Flatman of the National Bee Unit. The weekend decided upon was in June, it turned out to be the same time as the Queens Diamond Jubilee weekend and the Thames Regatta. Flaming June, gorgeous weather for practical beekeeping - NOT!! The temperature struggled to get above 10 degrees and on the Sunday the rain was heavy and relentless.



During Saturday the students huddled around the hives and the bees huddled inside. The weather was disappointing but the tutors rose above the Yorkshire mist and implemented the wet weather plan.



The participants on both days learnt much about both the theoretical and practical aspects of undertaking these assessments and went away with a fuller understanding of the requirements, plus a few tips, for example, be careful that a member of your family doesn't sell the jars of honey you have prepared for the exam!!!



On the Sunday the advanced candidates treated us to lecturesses on a variety of interesting topics. Thanks to David Allen who guided us through the nuances of grafting larva which is a requirement of the advanced assessment.



We were very grateful to all the tutors who gave generously of their time and expertise, to Gerry also for providing hospitality to John and to Dave Shannon and Simon Maslin for transporting bees to the site for the practical manipulations. Thank you all very much.

Good luck to those doing the assessments this year and for those planning for next year the closing date for applications will be sometime in February 2013 – watch this space.

Wendy Maslin

Examinations and Training Officer

## **Weather, Swarms and a view from the North East**

Beekeeping in the NE is a bit frustrating at the moment - I took 4 days off work to sort out bees in an attempt to try and get a head start but due to no decent weather have not been able to take off a roof. I do hope the extended bank holiday Monday and Tuesday will be better.

On the positive side, at least the phone has stopped ringing (for the time being) about swarms !

I cannot understand why so many have gone into walls - I have visited 5 and had another 4 calls that were not worth visiting - and - only one call about bumble bees, which makes a change

The notable call was for a swarm in the car park at Whitby hospital was an interesting one, plenty of public interest - it had been there 3 days and was right in the middle of the tightly packed bush and only 12" off the ground - there is not much left of the bush now ! apart from a pile of snapped off twigs. It is worth reminding all - that it is important to tell the owners that there will likely be some "pruning" of the bush, but I think my pruning of this one may have gone a bit too far, I may have vandalised it. As the swarm had been there a while and comb had been built, I bet another one will go there soon.

I have had to stop counting how many nucs we have made up - am praying for some decent mating weather now

The NYMNPA nuc hives have been invaluable to our members - at the beg of June, 18 are out in use at the moment - so there are 12 still available - they are for anyone in the association to use

The weather must change soon - as there is a fair bit of honey to remove before it granulates. At least the bees confinement should be giving them time to ripen and cap some honey

Tony Jefferson

[TOP](#)

## Dr Eva Crane

The blue plaque to Dr Crane was unveiled at noon, 12th June 2012. The plaque is on the wall of 55 Newland Park, Hull. Yorkshire Beekeepers Association donated £150 to the funds needed to site the plaque.



It was nice to see so many people there.

Well done to all concerned with the organisation and drive needed to make this happen.

[TOP](#)

## Bee Breeding (~~not queen rearing~~) where are we now?

If you recall Bill Cadmore and myself started a theme of bee breeding during our period of YBKA Chair and Vice-chair, we are still keen to progress this theme as we both feel passionate about breeding and improving our local bees and assisting others to do the same. Confession time; we are both busy earning a living, trying to manage our own bees and Bill's BBKA training role takes up a lot of time as well – so it is fair to say we have not progressed the theme as we set out to do.

A major aspect to the program, was a plea to members, to suggest ideas coming from the members or district associations – we have not had a great deal of suggestions coming forward – please shout up your ideas or wants. Some local associations are more fortunate than others and have good skills in their area, some may need more support.

My own beekeeping is based upon a fairly sound concept of never destroying a decent queen cell.



Thinking of your own beekeeping since the beginning of May - can you recall how many queen cells you have disposed of? With a bit of effort these could have easily been turned into colonies.

I also struggle to understand why people think it is difficult to raise queens – our efforts from beg May to end of July are mostly trying to stop this happening. Also the various beekeeping books seem to complicate the natural concept of queen cell production and make bee breeding or queen rearing into an extremely complicated process – why is this ?

Bill and myself are practical, busy people and beekeeping has to fit in around other personal commitments – we still manage to raise good colonies despite not having a great deal of spare time. We both like to keep things simple and those who have heard me lecture know I keep banging on about “simple beekeeping”.

I hope you agree with me that creating queen cells is simple – the bees do it very well indeed ! and even if you only have a few colonies, it is easy to expand your numbers or produce new mated queens for your own use or to set up new starters, so why is queen rearing difficult?.

The problem is getting effective mating, that is where selecting and breeding drones becomes important – focus on producing good quality drones certainly helps with efficient mating.

We are encouraged to fork out drone larvae to check for varroa – but just be a little cautious in the spring as every forkful is around 50 drones that you may need to mate with queens. By all means fork them out later in the year – but stop and check in the spring.

Select your best colonies to be your drone rearing ones and put in drone frames in the spring to flood the area with well fed drones. I don't personally think it matters greatly to many beekeepers where the queen comes from – its more important how they get mated.

To get good drones in the spring why not put drone foundation in your super frames and when spun out you will have drawn drone comb next spring for your drone rearing? Even a couple of shallow frames into a selected colony in the spring will produce some good drone brood. Better still if you can use a deep “super” of drone foundation.

Hoffman spacing is not good for drone rearing as the spacing does not give the optimum dimension for having drone cells raised head to head – the spacing is too close together, spacers are fine – or just give your Hoffmans a little more space for drone brood and you will get better or bigger drones.

Basically, the idea is to flood your mating area with good well selected drones, team up with your beekeeping neighbours and further improvements will be made. Or set up your association Apiary and take queen cells in nucleus hives there to be mated. This would really help those beekeepers with a couple of hives to reduce the risk of in-breeding or apiary matings.

In my area (Whitby) we applied to the North York Moors National Park Authority (LEADER scheme) and were successful gaining 30 National Nucleus hives which are available to our members – these nucs have been invaluable in the last couple of years, perhaps it is worth investing in some for your own association use?.

YBKA will be doing a bit more next spring to try and help members de-mistify the confusion regarding ~~queen rearing~~ – sorry Bee Breeding !

Please – if there is something that you would like YBKA to arrange, such as a workshop or technical/practical demonstration – please shout up. An outline program will be sorted soon for next spring and hopefully your local Secretaries or program arrangers will be able to link the YBKA sessions with your own programs, perhaps arranging demonstrators to link into your apiary meetings.

Tony Jefferson  
YBKA Vice-Chairman

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## UNSUNG HEROES

Once more few members send their views  
Or contributions or their news.  
Anew the job has lost it's fun.  
But yet again the task is done.

Within our rooms we toil alone  
Not hindered by the telephone.  
Tempus fugit – month end's near  
Unfilled news sheet - that we fear.

Behind the scenes we scan the Net  
Looking for copy but we get  
The same old stories, yarns and jest  
But nothing new we all protest.

So you out there, content, at ease  
Who listen not to frequent pleas  
It's time to a give a big ovation  
To EDITORS throughout the nation!

## Y.B.K.A. Calendar

We hope to see many more members at our events in 2012.

August 3rd                      GPC Meeting

September 21st                GPC Meeting

November 23rd                GPC Meeting

December 1st                  YBKA AGM

DO YOU HAVE DATES THAT COULD USEFULLY ADDED TO THIS CALENDAR ?

ARE THERE DISTRICT EVENTS AND TRAINING EVENTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO INVITE BEEKEEPERS FROM NEARBY DISTRICT TO ?

LET ME HAVE THE DATES SO THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE BEEKEEPING IN YORKSHIRE A REALLY DYNAMIC AND HAPPY THING TO DO.

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### BEEBASE

Have you visited BeeBase recently ?

Look at the record keeping system available to you. Well worth considering as a place to keep you own colony and apiary records. Why not build its use into your beginners and basic exams courses ?