

# Y.B.K.A. eNewsletter August



2012 Queen Colour = YELLOW

1st August 2012 : Volume 16 : Issue 8

## Chairmans Notes

So July continues with poor weather and lots more swarms - how many of us are hoping NOT to get anymore telephone calls ? Collecting swarms may be a obligation that beekeepers accept, and a nice big swarm always makes you smile, but lots of swarms can start to be very expensive in terms of equipment and food. Swarms also use up equipment you need to carry out your own swarm prevention. On the bright side we are certainly getting lots of colonies of diverse genetic background. Lets hope the hybrids are gentle, friendly and productive. Above all do not forget to check swarms for disease before taking them into your main apiary. We commiserate with those fellow beekeepers who have found EFB in their colonies.

Thanks to the reader who said I wasn't old enough to have been editing a newsletter for 13 years - flattery and lies will get you anywhere.

Our thanks to all those YBKA members who worked so hard to get the honey show and display ready for the Great Yorkshire Show - Huge amounts of effort - well done and thanks everybody. We, at least, managed to get the judging completed and one day of action. Congratulations to all who did well in the competition - yet a fantastically high standard of entries.

Bob Hunter (YBKA Treasurer) has reminded me that all members need to be aware that he has sent information to all district treasurers about sponsoring some honeybee research at the National Bee Unit. This will be debated at the YBKA AGM in December so Bob has asked all districts to discuss it with their membership before this date. To ensure that all members understand what is being asked I've persuaded the editor (I promised him a drink) to include the details in this newsletter. I am fairly confident that most of us will see this particular research as being really useful to us, the average beekeepers, and will want to support it. And it is research being carried out in Yorkshire so the results will be particularly relevant to us. Make sure that you have your say at district level so that your representatives at the AGM can represent your views - it is also worth noting that each and every member can come to the AGM to have their own say. I'll see you there.

You'll also see that we have the opportunity to have some theatre in our apiaries. Sounds fun. The company have been going for a long time but this is the first time I've heard of them. Which reminds me - I'm off to outdoor Shakespeare so coat on and broly at the ready.....

I am still hoping that the sun will come out so that we can at least get a good balsam harvest. I hope you have a good month. Best wishes to you all.

Bill Cadmore

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Note that the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the the YBKA General Purposes Committee.

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Please Note:-

The change in layout to the enews this month is in response to a request from a member. Where possible we will seek to meet any requests members make about format etc.

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# JOBS IN THE APIARY FOR AUGUST

I know a lot of very eminent beekeepers who tell me that autumn is actually the start of the season for a beekeeper, and not spring time as most others believe. I personally feel this to be true as a good preparation at this time of year ensures a good, disease free, well fed colony going through to spring of next year. August is the time of year when most beekeepers take off the last of the surplus summer honey to be either stored away in container to be bottled at a later date or bottled straight away if the surplus isn't too great. This process follows through in some areas into early September. By this time of year the honey within the supers should have been processed by the bees and the water content reduced. This is done by the bees literally drying out the nectar by fanning and other methods, along with the addition of saliva the bees introduce to the nectar that contains enzymes, one of which is very important and called invertase, stored within the glands of the worker bees. This process converts most of the sucrose within the nectar into fructose and glucose and along with the drying out process ensuring the honey is ripe and won't ferment. The largest majority of the frames should be capped over and what's not shouldn't shake out of the cells when given a vigorous shake. It's ready then for extraction.

There is one thing then that must be done straight away after honey is taken off - Varroa Treatment. If on the other hand you are intending taking some or all of your colonies to an accessible heather moor, then now is the time to get those colonies ready for transport. Before this action is undertaken though there is one vital thing that must be done, after the summer honey has been taken off. As stated earlier treat each and every one before they are taken to the heather or not. If this is not done it is in most cases far too late when the hives return after the heather has finished producing to treat the colonies successfully as most of our current varroa treatments are temperature sensitive and only act effectively at 15°C or above so act now when the honey has been removed.

I won't go into too much detail of preparing your colonies for the heather but they must firstly be queen right preferably with a vigorously laying young queen, very full of flying bees and wall to wall eggs, lava and young bees to replace the dead bees and sustain the ability of the colony to gather whilst they are on the moors. Some beekeepers unite two colonies prior to going to ensure a good stock within the hive keeping the better of the two queens. Usually only one super is placed on each hive as the flowers of the heather plant are very small and require a great effort from your bees to fill a super and cap it over, at the same time hopefully filling up the brood boxes with heather honey for winter stores. This saves on feeding liquid sugars to the bees. Newly drawn comb is very good as this saves precious time for the wax makers. On the other hand strips of super thin foundation can be used for cut comb. These are pinned into place on the top bar with drawing pins or stuck into place with molten beeswax. They are usually about 1 1/2 inch in depth or cut diagonally across the alternate corners to allow ease of access for the wax makers to draw them out fully.

You must also ensure you strap them down well before transportation; two straps per hive set in the centre of the hives diagonally should do the trick. On arrival find a nice sheltered spot if possible as heather moors can be a very cold and inhospitable places at times and the bees need all the warmth they can get. If the nectar flow on the heather moors is poor then you must check all your colonies for food so regular trips to check the colonies are essential all the time that they are there. Failure to do this has been the down fall of many beekeepers who only return at the flows end to find a host of dead and dying colonies through starvation. This is one of the pitfalls of cramming as many bees into a brood box as possible. If all these things are done and a successful heather nectar flow is produced both the bees and you will be happy and go into winter well stocked and disease free.

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To summarise:-

1. Take off all summer honey
2. Check each and every hive for diseases
3. Treat for Varroa
4. Check all colonies are queen right
5. Try to mark all outstanding unmarked queens
6. Check stores
7. Feed where appropriate.

Here's wishing you all a successful season.

Happy beekeeping  
Dave Shannon



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**Research into the nutrition and Honeybee Health**  
**Ben Jones – National Bee Unit - FERA**

Those of your members who attended the YBKA Annual Conference at Bishop Burton will have heard Ben Jones speak of his research project investigating the impacts of nutrition on honey bee health. This research is being sponsored by FERA and The University of Exeter and is being carried out locally in Yorkshire.

It is well known that honey bees are under threat from a number of factors including poor nutrition, habitat loss, changing weather and exotic diseases (as well as inexperienced beekeepers!)

One of the aims of the BBKA and the YBKA is to increase the knowledge and understanding of the honey bee and their importance in the environment.

As Ben Jones says in the attached leaflet, information obtained by the project will “provide beekeepers with valuable local knowledge when choosing apiary locations that will best enhance the nutritional status of their colonies and inform on the provision of the most appropriate pollen and feed supplements.”

The General Purposes Committee of the YBKA have discussed this project and would like to ask members, at the AGM in December, to support the proposal ‘that members of the YBKA be asked to make a voluntary contribution to sponsor this research’. This sponsorship would speed up the research and allow its possible extension and development.

Ben will be present at the AGM and will make a short presentation about his research project. He and the RBI will then be able to answer your questions about the project.

We would like to propose that in 2012/13 members are asked for a voluntary contribution of up to £3.00 each to be collected with their subscription. The YBKA would match fund this contribution from reserves and pass it together with any Gift Aid recovered to the project. (A member’s £3.00 voluntary contribution could then be worth up to £6.75 to the project).

We would ask that you discuss this in your district Association and with your friends with a view that a final decision be made at the AGM of the YBKA in December

Bob Hunter  
Hon Treasurer

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## Investigating the impacts of nutrition on honey bee health

**Ben Jones**

The development and maintenance of honey bee colonies depend on adequate nutrition. In order to maintain healthy honey bee colonies, it is essential that they receive sufficient nutrition of the correct type (nutritional value) to promote their continuous survival. Pollen is virtually the only source of protein naturally available to honey bees. However, different pollens have different qualities, e.g. plants in the family *Fabaceae* (such as white clover) show large variation in protein and amino acid content. Previous trials have demonstrated that the addition of pollen in the diet of adult honey bees enhances both individual and social immunity, suggesting a link between nutrition and immune function. However, the impacts of the components of dietary pollen on the honey bee immune system remain poorly understood.

A PhD is investigating this knowledge gap, joint supervised by Dr James Cresswell at the University of Exeter and Dr Giles Budge at the National Bee Unit.

Beekeepers have the ability to influence the type of pollen available to colonies. We aim to ascertain if certain 'pollen cocktails', will promote honey bee health by supporting the immune system.

Initial laboratory experiments will investigate the amino acid requirements of the honey bee immune system. We then propose to conduct a field experiment, to monitor the nutrition available in different landscapes and explore the impacts on honey bee health. Once the study is complete, the information obtained will provide beekeepers with valuable local knowledge when choosing apiary locations that will best enhance the nutritional status of their colonies, and inform on the provision of the most appropriate in-hive pollen and feed supplements.

Kind regards,

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Honey bee foraging on white clover

# A Beekeeper's Diary (July)

25<sup>th</sup> June

A day of highs and lows.

The association has been offered a site for an apiary on the grounds of a very large distribution warehouse in Sherburn. So this morning Greg, our apiary manager, and I visited the site and walked around the area with the supervisor, Phil. It ticks most of the boxes. Being within the fence it is protected by a security cordon, there is vehicular access, there is water, the proposed site is sheltered and there is a variety of forage for the bees on the 5/6 acres of rough land, covered in wild flowers, surrounding the warehouse. And beyond the boundary fence there is unimproved grassland and woods. In addition we would be able to put up a small shed at the site to keep equipment. And we could sell honey in the canteen. We see it as an apiary where we would try to encourage and practice the more advanced skills of beekeeping, including queen rearing. So we are keen on the idea. It may still be a few weeks before we get the go-ahead as the proposal still needs to be confirmed by the company's senior management.

And then in the afternoon I went round two of my apiaries. Many of the colonies that I been concerned about now have laying queens. So it was all quite satisfactory. But when I returned home there was a letter from the BBKA examination board telling me that I'd failed the advanced husbandry. This was not unexpected but nevertheless disappointing. There was a long and detailed letter setting out my failings. I will give it another go next year. There is much I can work on but I feel that there are fundamental issues with the way the assessment works which I'm uncertain how to overcome. By the end of almost five hours of intense examination I was totally exhausted, and only aware that I could hardly think straight, never mind giving sensible answers. Being a year older is not going to help.

30<sup>th</sup> June

Today I was on the other end of the assessment process, the basic assessment. I would like to hope that my own experiences make me sympathetic to the anxiety of the candidates. Conditions were far from ideal. For a while the process was delayed while there was a violent thunder storm and at the end I was concerned that we could be stranded as there was water lying on the track around the headland of the field containing the apiary.

1<sup>st</sup> July

The day of the association apiary picnic. The weather was disappointing, really cold for the time of the year and breezy, but at least it stayed dry. It was too cold to open any hives. But we had our honey show and Alan Woodward, with Janet, came along to judge. He said that it was one of the smallest shows he had been invited to, but he was kind enough to say that the quality was OK. Alan did exactly what we wanted and as he went through the exhibits explained what he was looking for. We haven't had a tradition of showing honey and so our members are still learning and, in this our second show, I think there was an improvement compared to last year. Then we had the food which was sumptuous. We do have a long standing tradition for many years of feeding ourselves well.

10<sup>th</sup> July

The first day of the Yorkshire Show.

For the first time I'd decided that I'd enter the GYS honey and hives show. So I'd spent considerable time in the previous week preparing entries and preparing honey for sale. Amongst other entries I'd prepared was what I considered a good nucleus, but this class had to be cancelled because of an outbreak of EFB in the Harrogate area.

As time goes by my attitude to honey shows has evolved. To start with I was not aware they even existed and then for a few years I couldn't see the point. Finally I was persuaded to enter the Countryside Live honey show and with a shrug thought, 'What the hell - someone has to make up the numbers'. Now a touch of competitiveness has raised its head – just a touch you understand, certainly less than in some quarters I could mention. But I have become convinced that showing honey is a spur to improving the standard of your product. And I was pleased with the outcome – three rosettes to collect dust in my study.

And though I say it myself my honey lemon curd was outstanding, amazing as it was the only batch I have ever attempted to make.

Despite the disappointing weather throughout the season there was a fine selection of honey for sale and the same customers appeared to make sure they were able to buy their real Yorkshire honey before it sold out. It just shows that we really do produce an amazing product. The day started dry, but after lunch the heavens opened. There were soon large pools of water lying on the grassed areas within the showground and the crowds disappeared. The show could have survived the rain on the showground but the carparks became quagmires and efforts to pull cars out with tractors churned the parking fields to the extent that they were no longer usable. It was very disappointing but understandable that the last two days of the show had to be cancelled. All parties have lost money, including YBKA. But I'm sure that by next year this disappointment will be forgotten and the show will continue as vigorous and vibrant as ever.

17<sup>th</sup> July

A day of beekeeping. There are more signs of improvement. The weather forecasters are now reporting that the jet stream, that has stubbornly remained in a much more southerly position than usual, is now edging north, opening up the prospect for areas of high pressure building over southern Britain, a precursor for warm settled weather. And there is suddenly much more forage for the bees and they are responding by becoming more active. This I can observe as a colony of honeybees has taken up residence in the wall cavity with an entrance just below my study window. Around here the bees are exploiting the blackberries, bringing in the pale green pollen, and the balsam and willowherb are coming into flower. This year there are vast areas of meadowsweet on the fens, more than I've ever seen before. My mother loved the smell of meadowsweet and I've inherited this preference. Meadowsweet is probably not a source of nectar but can be exploited by the bees for its pollen. And then the bees are generally improving, new queens coming into lay. There is still the time for a summer honey flow. It only requires one or two weeks of ideal conditions to fill up a couple of supers. You cannot be a beekeeper if you are not an optimist.

20<sup>th</sup> July

The next beekeeping milestone is taking bees to the heather. The association has a site up on the North Yorkshire Moors on National Trust land. The bees did well there last year but whether that will be repeated this year remains to be seen. My old and departed friend Eileen always maintained that taking bees to the heather was victory of hope over experience. Having said that, if we are to take bees to the heather then it needs to be done properly and preparations need to be made and suitable colonies need to be prepared. The colonies need to be strong, with a new queen and at least ten frames of brood, and heaving with bees. To achieve this I will be uniting colonies, or converting two medium colonies into one strong colony plus a nucleus. Supers need to be prepared with new unwired foundation and I need to make up more hive stands. These were the tasks for today. A date has been set for the convoy up there. In the evening we had a committee meeting of the association. We've set up a 'dropbox' for the association. This was one of the few occasions when the younger generation has turned out to be useful rather than exploitative, as I was advised about this facility by my daughter-in-law. With 'dropbox' we are able to keep all the files relating to the association in an internet cloud, so that all members of the committee can access the association data, making it much easier to work as a team and spread the workload. It costs nothing. So we all sat round the chairman's dining table, each with a laptop and a glass of wine, and set it up.

John Whitaker  
Barkston Ash BKA

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## **Considerate Criminals**

I heard recently of a beekeeper who, on inspecting a colony, discovered that 6 frames of brood and bees had gone from the hive to be replaced by 6 frames of foundation placed either-side of the remaining frames with brood on. The bees were happily making queen cells on a couple of the remaining frames.

Any beekeeper would immediately start to think “have I taken out a nuc and then forgotten about it?”. As some of us are getting on a bit and have too many hives anyway this is a possibility. However when the beekeeper consult his records, as being more useful than memory, he find that the colony was fit and health and **FULL OF BEES AND BROOD !!!!**

So - what is going on here ?

Do we have a friend who decided to help prevent swarming ? Perhaps somebody was doing another beekeeper a favour but did it on the wrong hive ? or Do we have considerate criminals ?

If this was a theft it is certainly preferable to the ‘person’ who made off with some of my nuc mating colonies. Out of the selection available they helped themselves to the ones with mated queens in as shown by a nice patch of brood on the middle frames.

I hope it was a case of ‘mistaken identity’ - we have to conclude that whoever did the deed they were a beekeeper!

[TOP](#)

## Remember to Feed Your Bees

During spells of poor weather during the summer, like those we've experienced this year, it is important to check for stores in the colony and if in any doubt feed your bees with thin syrup, fondant or frames of honey stores if available.

Particularly at risk:

- Bee colonies where supers of honey have been removed earlier in the season
- Splits/ artificial swarms and nucleus colonies made up this year
- Newly collected and hived swarms which have not been fed following 24 hours after hiving
- Populous stocks of bees which haven't swarmed this year and weather has precluded them gathering sufficient food

What should beekeepers do?

Firstly, check all colonies feed levels by 'hefting' the hive – lifting the hive from below the floor sufficiently to see how much it weighs. Where the hive is light liquid feed should be applied directly above the bees. If there are empty supers above the brood box with few or no bees in them, then remove to feed, otherwise the empty super may act as a barrier to the bees getting the food quickly

Feed can be sugar and water mixed at 2:1 ratio or one of the proprietary ready mixed syrups available from beekeeping equipment suppliers

Fondant can be used in an emergency if nothing else is available, but liquid feed will be more appropriate at this time of season

Large starving colonies of bees can take 1 gallon (approx 5 litres) of syrup very quickly. For smaller colonies half this amount may be sufficient. After feeding heft hives again and check weight, if in doubt feed some more in a few days time.



Healthy Bees Plan Newsletter

[TOP](#)

## Hive Carrier

This is an easily made two-man hive carrier that we have been using for over twenty years.

Construction is from two 54" lengths of 2" x 1" for the side rails and two 9" lengths of 2" x 1" for the cross member, together with three steel backflap hinges. The cross-member is hinged in the middle so that the carrier can be collapsed for easy storage. The lugs are made from two 15" lengths of 2" x 1" screwed and glued to the side rails and the ends of the lugs are cut at 45 degrees so that they fit into the handholds easily.

The lugs are offset from the central position by 5" for two reasons. In use, the person with the longer handles walks at the front and the extra length prevents the hive from catching their heels; it also shifts some of the load to the person at the back, making it easier if there are two people of varying strength.

The handles were shaped for comfort using a plane.

The lugs can be engaged in any of the boxes and we usually find that, with a single brood hive, it is more comfortable to lift from the first super - although over very rough ground it may be better to lift from the brood box to get more ground clearance.

We have moved hives weighing a good 150lb very easily with this carrier.



Peter Edwards

12/05/2003

[TOP](#)



“Mighty Mikron” The Guardian

New for 2013 – Mikron Theatre Company present...

## **Beyond the Veil**

### **Hives...Honey...Homicide**

CSI meets Camberwick Green in a tale of sleuths and bees in this murder-mystery with a buzz.

The gardeners of Thistledale Allotments feature in this lively show full of music, fun and facts about bees and beekeeping. After a year of shenanigans with the council, Thistledale allotments are safe, but the fragile peace in this idyllic setting is about to be shattered.

A body is discovered on and foul play is suspected, Detective Starkey has plenty of suspects but just can't find a motive. The allotmenters give him beekeeper April's advice; “talk to the bees”, but will understanding the bees and their ways really lead him the clues he needs?

Mikron Theatre company are unique, the only company in the world to tour professional theatre by narrowboat, bringing performances to places that don't often see theatre; pubs, village greens, canal basins, and this year, to allotments and apiaries.

Beyond the Veil is a gentle comedy with larger-than-life characters, live music and a fascinating insight into bees, beekeeping and all things apicultural.

Marianne McNamara, Mikron's artistic director explains why she was drawn to this subject, “Deborah McAndrew, wrote our 2012 show “Losing the Plot” and set the show on Thistledale Allotments, she wrote such a fabulous script with such colourful characters and one of them, April, is a bee keeper. We got a glimpse into the art of beekeeping and I just wanted to develop that, I wanted to know more! Deborah is a beekeeper herself, so it seemed like a natural choice. Of course, bees are in the news at the moment, as they risk becoming an endangered species, so I am hoping that the show will fire some people's enthusiasm and help people to understand what vital little creatures they are!”

Beyond the Veil will tour nationally from May to October 2013 and the company are keen to hear from any allotments or apiaries that would like to host a show.

Marianne McNamara says, “this time last year, we asked allotment sites if they were interested in hosting this year's show, “Losing the Plot”. We were completely unprepared for the amount of responses we got, we could have run the tour twice over and we were sorry to have to turn some allotments down as we simply didn't have enough time to get to every site!

“We are going to be performing the show on more than 50 allotments this year. So now we are really pleased have the opportunity to offer more allotments and some apiaries the chance to host a show next year.”

If you are part of an allotment or an apiary and are interested in having Mikron Theatre perform “Beyond the Veil” at your site, please get in touch with Marianne on 01484 843701

“Beyond the Veil” will tour nationally throughout 2013, keep an eye on the company's website early next year, to see where there's a show near you. [TOP](#)

# 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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## SPECIAL NOTICE

If any Yorkshire district, or member, wants YBKA to submit a proposal to the BBKA delegates meeting in January then the proposal needs to be lodged with YBKA before the end of September.

The GPC will need to discuss the proposal before it needs to be submitted to BBKA in October

All members and districts are encouraged to consider how BBKA might be enabled to support us in our hobby and represent us to government and the business community.

Our delegate to the BBKA meeting is Tony Jefferson - please contact him if you wish to discuss any possible proposal.

# Yorkshire Beekeepers Association

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Web site: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/>

### 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 ?