

# Y.B.K.A. eNewsletter September



2012 Queen Colour = YELLOW

1st September 2012 : Volume 16 : Issue 9

## Chairmans Notes

I have forced myself to come inside and to finish working on this newsletter - the sun has now been shining warmly into my garden for 3 whole days and Lyn and I have been able to have a go at taming the wilderness. It is a bonus that we can do this free of flying bees as all of the garden hives are on the heather moors - and that makes me happy too, the thought that they might actually be able to fly and gather nectar.

What a contrast to the day I delivered the bees to one of the heather sites - the rain so thunderous on the van roof that I couldn't hear what my friend was saying - though we both seem to have agreed that staying inside the van for another 15 minutes was a good idea. Visibility was so bad on the moor that I managed to reverse into a stream instead of going backwards over the bridge - no damage done though. Next time I'll try a site where I can turn the van around.

Away from the heather my other bees are working balsam like it is going out of fashion and I think that I might at last be getting some honey coming into the hives. The season seems to have varied a great deal for Yorkshire members - Some seem lucky enough to have their own little microclimate. Some members did well on the OSR while others got no crop at all; Some members got a good crop of tree honey while others got nothing and now some of us seem to be getting a good autumn crop. The lucky few have had a good crop of everything while most of us have been more worried about feeding bees to keep them alive. A friend in Scarborough tells me that they have had quite a good year. Perhaps we could have some reports from other areas about what sort of season you have had? Please do write in.

At YBKA plans are going ahead for more training events and continued development of the bee breeding theme. Details are included in this newsletter. The GPC are also moving ahead with the idea of finding new venues for our annual conference so that it is more accessible to members. Keep the date of 20th April free - the conferences are getting better and better each year.

I am sure that district associations too are well on their way to publishing some exciting programme for the coming year - don't forget that if you organise events for three or more districts to come together then you can apply for a small amount of funding from YBKA to help with the event. I would encourage all districts to 'invite their friends from nearby districts' to as many events as possible. We are all beekeepers together.

Best wishes  
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.

### **Editor**

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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 September

With September now upon us most of the hard work with the bees, and within the apiary, are coming to a close for another year. Only one or two very important tasks to carry out before tucking the bees up for winter once again and I will go through them within this short letter.

This has been a very dissatisfying year for most beekeepers, with very wet and cold spells of weather in the earlier part of the year and for some this continued right through most of the summer months also. The results of this have meant that queens have not got mated correctly and some colonies have had to be manipulated or re-queened several times throughout the season where as normally once is quite sufficient. This has caused a slow buildup of the brood within these affected not-queen right colonies that has gone on for several months, resulting in very little nectar and pollen coming into the hive due to the lack of adult foraging bees in the same abundance as they normally are within the hives in the middle part of the season due to this problem, and in a lot of cases no surplus honey to take off for sale this year whatsoever.

Instead the affected beekeepers have had to feed constantly to avoid the colonies collapsing. This season has been a nightmare for some of our more inexperienced beginner beekeepers who thought they had completed the seasons swarming manipulations earlier correctly, only to find a few weeks down the line they have lost their prime swarms due to poor first time matings and the colony producing queen cells for the second and in some cases third time.

Although this has not been the case throughout the whole county as this weather pattern has been very spasmodic all year with small areas getting a good share of reasonable weather and good honey returns especially in the spring, where as a few miles away the next door beekeeper has had nothing. The year of 2012 will I believe be a year lots of beekeepers will wish to forget and are hoping for far better and more consistent weather to come in 2013, let's hope the (13) is lucky for all and not another bad and unlucky year.

Back to the season at hand and what's on the agenda next for our bees and within the apiary. If you have any surplus honey on your colonies then now is the time to take it off, with the exception of those of you still on the heather moors. They will take it off when they return in a week or two. When the honey is off the first thing to do is treat your bees with a recognised varroa treatment if this has not already been done as time is now getting on and most of these treatments are temperature sensitive for the best results, the later you leave it the lower the temp usually. Ensure you follow the manufacturers instructions with regards to amounts required and time frame the treatment has to be left on the hive to the letter, as failure to do so will result in the treatment not been as effective as it should be and doing more harm than good. This will then ensure your bees go into the winter clusters virtually free of the dreaded varroa mite, that can devastate a colony over the winter months if left unchecked.

When this is completed you must then turn your attention to feeding the colonies where appropriate. The recognised feeding ratio at this time of year is approx. 1 pint of water to 1kg. of white sugar warmed and not boiled before hand until the liquid is of a clear consistency, allow to cool and then place in a contact feeder for the bees to take down into the brood box as quickly as they can. Its always best to take off any empty supers before this is done to allow the bees direct access to the feeder. This is best done of an evening time at dusk for all the flying bees are in house and they move the feed more efficiently. This for a beginner beekeeper can cause a problem as to just how to access the amount of food a colony requires. If in doubt then ask a more experienced beekeeper to help you access your bees for you and try to show you what's required. Failure to do so may result in the death of your much loved colony over the winter

months from starvation, a very common occurrence in the beekeeping world that can easily be avoided. When all these tasks are completed and your mouse guards are in place to avoid attack from mice over winter - attracted to the food source within, you can relax and await the forthcoming spring. Then comes the task of cleaning and preparing for the next season, all to be explained in the next edition

1. Take of any surplus honey for extraction
2. Ensure your bees are treated against Varroa.
3. Feed any light colonies with liquid sugar.
4. Secure your hives for the winter.

Very happy beekeeping  
Dave Shannon

[TOP](#)



Mark Quantrill and his daughter showing off their new hive and new hive stand - note that the stand has a frame hanger built in to the design - idea for taking photographs of hives or placing frames for people to see - and of course a place to put that first frame out - Mark is making single and double stands at very reasonable prices. Contact Bradford Beekeepers via their website for more details.

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- Plastic Miller style feeder

**Price £300 ono each**

These colonies are for sale because the research programme based at the University of Leeds is moving to Sussex University. The research institute will be taking 50% of their colonies with them but wish to sell the remaining colonies.

Contact Bill Cadmore to discuss details

Mr William Cadmore

01132160482

07847476927

[bill.cadmore@ntlworld.com](mailto:bill.cadmore@ntlworld.com)

The definition of a good talk

It should have a good beginning.

It should have a good ending.

And they should be as close together as possible.

[TOP](#)

## **Bee Breeding**

Thanks to all those who emailed me with requests to learn a bit more about this rather simple concept, but made complicated by all the confusing advice from peers and books.

As the YBKA committee are committed to responding to requests and to demonstrate to you that we are listening, we are proposing a bee breeding day in March. Wendy Maslin and myself copped the actions from our last committee meeting, to put a plan together to address the comments raised in your emails.

YBKA have had a series of excellent lectures over the last few years on breeding bees and the importance of drones – so we are basically proposing we continue this into 2013.

As a result and elsewhere in this newsletter there is further information and an outline plan of what we are putting together. The event is intended to cover a wide range of aspects both practical and theoretical and should make for a fine day out at a really modest cost to cover expenses.

My personal view is that, no matter how many colonies you operate it is really easy to select for improvement or for increase. Taking simple steps as well as working with other beekeepers, it does not need to be complicated.

To be honest, in my opinion, the only difficult part is getting new queens mated. This year in particular has been a significant “challenge,” due to the poor weather – that's really the only bit beekeepers cannot control !

Due to poor queen mating this year, I am fairly sure next spring will require all of us to concentrate carefully on selection – so now is the time to think about attending the event.

If we are oversubscribed for the event we are planning - we will put on further events to suit the demand.

It would be a good idea to use this theory and practical to link your spring association apiary meetings. In my area (Whitby) we organise our apiary meetings to focus on what is needed for the following month. This seems to cater for all abilities and with a good cross section of demonstrators it promotes a good exchange of ideas and methods.

Tony Jefferson

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### **COURSE IN A CASE**

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Email [beewendi@gmail.com](mailto:beewendi@gmail.com)

# A Beekeeper's Diary (August)

27<sup>th</sup> July

In the last three weeks the countryside around here has been transformed from a barren desert as far as the bees are concerned to a sumptuous feast. The brambles have been particularly forthcoming and for a time my home bees preferred them to the balsam which was out at the same time. But now the balsam is indisputably the prime source of forage. The warmer weather is now promising a honey flow at last. But there are only three weeks to go before varroa treatment must start and we call an end to honey production for this year.

With all this in mind my colonies are being sorted into one of three categories.

- a) Colonies that are to be taken to the heather
- b) Colonies that will hopefully produce some late summer honey
- c) Colonies containing new queens that are too small to produce honey this season.

My priority now is to prepare the colonies for the heather. A date has been set to take the bees up the moors.

Because of the cold and wet season this year I would expect that the heather will be at least a week later this year compared to last year. But because I live 40 miles away I must rely on estimation rather than observation.

The stages that the heather colonies will go through are

- 1) Strengthen the hives either by uniting or adding frames of brood. I aim to have about 10 frames of brood in each.
- 2) Add a fresh super containing unwired foundation above the brood box.
- 3) Clear the old supers of bees and transfer them to the colonies which I hope will produce my late summer honey.
- 4) Strap the hives ready for transport.

The task for today was stage 1.

1<sup>st</sup> August

Today, three days before the move to the moors, I added a new super, each containing a set of frames with unwired foundation, to each of the heather colonies. And above this super I placed a clearer board below the existing supers. The aim is to take five colonies full of bees with ten frames of brood and a fresh empty super ready to receive the heather honey.

4<sup>th</sup> August

An early start. The van had been loaded up with the bees the previous evening. It's been a difficult season and so there was only one other member taking his bees up to the moors. We met at Lockton and drove together to the site. It was a beautiful morning, still, sunny and remarkably warm. Because of the distances involved I hadn't been up there previously to inspect the state of the heather. We were a week later than last year but still too early. Most of the heather had still to come into flower, but there was enough there for the bees to work. It was noticeable how much more lush the grass around the site is compared to last year. We put in an hour of hard graft carrying the bees and stands over to the selected site and setting everything up. A pot of tea beneath the splendid spreading lime tree at the centre of Lockton was not just a treat but an absolute necessity to replace lost sweat.

7<sup>th</sup> August

Eric Durham has died. He started beekeeping as a teenager and still had his bees when he died, aged 97. He was a big and gentle man, and was well known throughout the area as the beekeeper. He was one of the founder members of our association. It's a sad day – the end of a chapter.

10<sup>th</sup> August

The bees are working well, but the surpluses of honey I'm getting are modest, so I'm having to rein in my optimism of a week or so ago. There are large areas of balsam and great willowherb available and bees are starting early in the morning. I am fascinated to observe how the foraging patterns consistently change as the day progresses. In the early morning the honeybees have the balsam to themselves and ignore the willowherb. But by midday the majority of insects on the balsam are no longer honeybees, and in the main their place is taken by bumble bees, and the honeybees are working the willowherb.

14<sup>th</sup> August

After the funeral service for Eric Durham, which quite rightly was a celebration of a full and good life, I spent the afternoon doing basic assessments. The apiary where they were held was one of those wonderful spots, forgotten by the wider world and now occupied by beekeepers. The site had been a walled garden, Victorian I would guess, and long deserted, probably since the first world war. The red brick walls were about three metres high, crumbling in places and enclosing at least an acre of land and there were foundations of large cold frames. Now silent, it must have once echoed to the toil of scores of gardeners. It was apparently a wonderful spot for bees, situated on a south facing slope of a major river valley. The day was hot and sultry, far too hot to be confined in a beesuit for five hours. Afterwards I called in to my own apiaries and loaded the van with supers that had been cleared of bees. They are needed for a master class of extracting which our most experienced beekeeper, John Fuller, is running tomorrow for our beginners group.

18<sup>th</sup> August

It was Varroa day for our beginners at the association apiary. Most of our beginners were present and led by our association apiary manager we went through the colonies putting in place the first tray of Apiguard. There was little honey to remove in advance, but all colonies were in good condition. The way we look at it the programme needs to start now or during the following week. Apiguard treatment should take four weeks which takes us up to 15<sup>th</sup> September and this gives just two weeks to ensure that the bees are adequately fed before the end of September. This year it is quite evident that many colonies will need extensive feeding to provide them with adequate stores to survive the winter. While it still feels like summer and we have just had the warmest day of the summer it hard work to persuade people that we need to start winter preparations now. But the last poor summer in 2008 resulted in 20 – 30% of colony losses during the winter, largely through inadequate preparation in the late summer.

In the pub afterwards we discussed our approach to Nosema. Again, the weather we have experienced must leave our bees vulnerable. We really need to test and then, if necessary, treat. But the Fumidil B treatment is no longer being manufactured. There are two treatments being promoted, Nosevit and Hive Alive. Both seem expensive, but work out at about £2 - £3 per colony which I suppose is not too bad. The real problem is that there is no real evidence as to how effective they are. It would be good to think that BBKA are investing in a scientific investigation to test their efficacy. I am reluctantly persuaded that we should at least be willing to try these treatments. Again there is little time. Feeding starts in four weeks and by then we need to have assessed the Nosema infection and if necessary procured a treatment.

22<sup>nd</sup> August

There is some summer honey to extract. My optimism of three weeks ago has proved unfounded but at the same time my extreme pessimism of two months ago has not been justified either. I extracted a batch last week and this week I'm bringing home enough supers for a second session. At the same time, during the course of this week, I'm treating all my colonies with Apiguard. It's a chore, especially as the bees seem abnormally tetchy this year. I have done a few spot checks on mite drops and levels are quite low, but everything I have read, worked out for myself and observed leads me to believe that a prophylactic approach is the wisest. I put down the low levels of mite down to the success of our IPM regime over the last few years rather than any change in the honeybees ability to live with varroa.

John Whitaker  
Barkston Ash BKA

[TOP](#)

## **LEARNING MORE**

### **MODULES CLOSING DATES FOR EXAMINATIONS**

Modules 1,3,6 and 8 will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2012.

Anyone wishing to sit these examinations must complete the application form and send this with the fee of £20 per module to the examinations secretary before the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

Examination Secretary: Wendy Maslin, 36, Packman Lane, Kirk Ella, Hull HU10 7TL

### **Bee Breeding, Queen Rearing and Making Increase**

A one day event will be held in the Normanby Pavilion on Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup> 2013

The programme will include a morning of talks covering selection of queens for breeding, the all important drones, the value of nutrition and the use of cell builder colonies.

It is envisaged that the afternoon will be spent in groups with an expert looking at practical ways of raising successful colonies. Details are yet to be confirmed but this is aimed at the hobbist beekeeper with a small number of colonies or associations wishing to learn more about improving stocks and raising more.

The cost is £10 per head which will include lunch.

Book your place by sending a cheque for £10 payable to Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association to Wendy Maslin 36, Packman Lane, Kirk Ella, Hull HU10 7TL.

### **Winter Tutorials for Module 1 and Module 6**

To be held in the Normanby Pavilion, Harrogate.

I am in the process of arranging tutorials to support **Module 1** and **Module 6**.

Please let me know if you are interested. These will be held on a Saturday morning. There will be 5 sessions for Module 1 and 3 sessions for module 6. They will be held at about 4 weekly intervals. These tutorials are free to Yorkshire members. However, there needs to be sufficient people to make the sessions viable, so please get in touch and let me know.

## **COURSE IN A CASE**

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## **SWARMING**

There was an article in the June YBKA newsletter about swarms. It advocated\* moving away from centralised control of swarming to one where individuals registered on the BBKA site individually. We in Leeds would beg to differ. We favour having just one willing volunteer to co ordinate ALL swarms. There remain now just a few of our members who still self promote but the overwhelming majority are happy with these arrangements. It is our nominated swarm controller whose number appears on the BBKA web site on behalf of us all. He receives the calls, screens out the wasps and bumble bees and inaccessible swarms. The remaining swarms are allocated to the nearest available beekeeper on his long list of our members willing to take part. We accept volunteers at any time, but the call goes out each year for more in our March newsletter. It works exceptionally well. Easy for the public. They aren't faced with a long list of numbers to try at random , getting no reply, or not interested, or too far, or even a promise to visit but then fail to turn up. One number and it gets sorted. Easy for our members, a valued (and fair) sifting and distribution of swarms.

We also have excellent relationships with Leeds City Councils disinfestations team. We worked with them to improve their web site so the public could better determine the insect and the threat it poses before even calling. We then trained their staff on insect identification ( including a trip to our teaching apiary to inspect the colonies with us) to improve the quality of referrals to us from the

Our latest innovation is to work closely with Leeds City Councils private sector partner (contractor) for pest control. There will always be swarms that we beekeepers can't collect. I'm thinking of course with those in roofs, or cavity walls etc. Householders obviously want them dealing with and if we can't remove them they go to a pest control company. Now there are scores of these about , advertising their wares. We beekeepers have a huge vested interest in how these colonies are dealt with. Most are poisoned of course. But we ( and the householder)then want all bee access points then sealing. We don't want our bees robbing out a poisoned nest and taking that poison back to our hives.The householder doesn't want another feral swarm re occupying that (poisoned) site at a later date. We met with this companies MD to thrash out these issues and concerns. They gave us comprehensive reassurances. Indeed earlier that day they had run a training session for their operatives on this very topic. Their charges are fair at about £50 per call out. So we now pass on their details ,with confidence , to those callers whose infestation we can not deal with. We don't like killing bees, or any insect come to that, but if it has to be done we'd rather it was done safely with us beekeepers in mind.

We are very proud of our swarm service and would be willing to share our experiences (good and bad) with other associations. Indeed Beverly BKA recently visited the Leeds Council team to see if there were things they could introduce in their area

Dave Barrett  
Chairman LBKA

\* The article is reproduced below for easy reference - as you can see the article invited people to write about what their association does - please write in with your own ideas.

## Swarming

We are pleased to note that BBKA have taken on board the comments made by YBKA committee member Simon Maslin and have changed the wording on the BBKA website so that we beekeepers are no longer committed to definitely collecting the swarm - we can now point out that some swarms just cannot be removed. It was nice to think that beekeepers could do the impossible but the reality is that we cannot do everything. It was well worth a face to face chat with a member of the BBKA executive at our Bishop Burton Conference.

Swarms and the various ways in which groups delegate the collection of swarms can get members very upset. Each year YBKA receives complaints about the ways in which different districts organise swarm collections, the most common complaint being that the same few committee members are always the ones that get the swarms. As each district is autonomous it is difficult to do anything about these comments especially when those complaining ask to remain anonymous. It is very upsetting for a member to see a committee member who lives ten miles away collecting a swarm two streets away from where they live. Our best advice is to discuss the issue at the district AGM. Even more worrying is when a beekeeper from one district travels across two other districts to collect a swarm twenty five miles away - have they never heard of the telephone ?

These problems are reflected in the list of swarm collectors on the BBKA website. Some areas list just the committee member who acts as swarm officer while others list all members experienced enough to collect swarms. Again I suggest that we could take a lesson from our bees and move away from centralised control.

The swarm season certainly seems to bring out the best and the worst in members of the public and in beekeepers.

Recently, while removing a swarm from a main shopping street in Bradford we were asked to sign a disclaimer saying that any damage we caused was my fault - We were sorely tempted to walk away and leave the travel agency with their swarm. They made things even worse by not even thanking us for the work. On the other hand we gained a member - one of the staff was so interested in what we were doing that they have joined the association even though they have no bees.

By contrast a householder supplied tea and cakes and a cash donation in return for picking up 3 cup-fulls of bees - I've yet to find out if the queen is mated and laying but the bees are nice a calm and friendly so things look promising

Beekeepers themselves can also be a little less than friendly. When I lost a swarm from the research hives a fellow beekeeper was keen to let me know that he had picked up a swarm with one of my numbered queens in it. As I was very keen to preserve that genetic line I offered to exchange another colony for the return of the swarm - the beekeeper refused !

In contrast beekeepers in the new Bradford association have committed themselves to donating the first swarm collected by each of them to the association. This will allow the association to build a stock of colonies from which they can select and breed the best for training and to produce nucs for new members.

With the cost of bees being so high at the moment this is one way a new association can build up stocks. In the meantime one member has loaned the association colonies for use in training and to raise queens from.

It just serves to illustrate that each of us has a different take on how things should be.

Why not write about what your association is doing ?

[TOP](#)

## Swarm Photograph

As Chairman of YBKA I was recently approached by a householder wanting help to identify what type of bee she had in her garden.

As soon as she said 'lots of bees in a compost heap' I assumed that the bees would be a type of bumble - however she went on to say that she had sent, via their website, a photograph of one of the bees to the swarm officer of a her local beekeepers association who had said that they couldn't tell what sort of bees it was - so could I help ?

My answer was "I'll have a go" so "please send me the photograph".... this is what arrived on my phone



You will be happy to know that I was able to identify what sort of bees they were.

Two nice white combs hanging from the underside of the lid went into the swarm box very neatly - thank you very much.

# Y.B.K.A. Calendar

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

September 14th 2012	Closing Date for entries to Countryside Live
September 21st 2012	GPC Meeting
October 6th 2012	Module 1 Tutorials start
October 13th 2012	Module 6 Tutorials start
October 20th & 21st 2012	Countryside Live: The YBKA Honey Show
November 23rd 2012	GPC Meeting
December 1st 2012	Yorkshire Beekeepers Association AGM
January 2013	BBKA ADM
March 16th 2013	"Bee Breeding, Queen Rearing & Making Increase" Tutorial
April 12th, 14th & 14th 2013	BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University Campus
April 20th 2013	Yorkshire Beekeepers Association Annual Conference

[TOP](#)

## 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.

YBKA Honey Show  
as part of  
**Countryside Live.**

Entries to be in by **Friday 14th September.**

Members should be concentrating their attentions on entries into the **county classes** as this section is the YBKA section.

Copy of schedules and entry form can be downloaded from YAS Countryside Live website:

<http://www.countrysidelive.co.uk/en/livestock-entries/>

Hard copy of schedules and entry form available from:

Amanda West  
YAS Livestock and entries  
Tel: 01423 546231

# Kettlewell Scarecrow



Great to see this as one of the super scarecrows to be found as part of the Kettlewell festival.

Brilliant !

# Yorkshire Beekeepers Association

## General Purposes Committee

### Chairman

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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 ?