

CHALFONTS BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Charity No. 1121231
www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER – August 2010

Editor: John Catton

Assistant: Richard Simpson

Honey Show – Saturday 4th September

Judging by the number of times the Society's three extractors are being used (free of charge) and by just talking to members, I get the feeling that 2010 could turn out to be a good year for honey yields. So, as you extract, remember our annual Honey Show on Saturday 4th September. Put aside your clearest honey and best worked frame for showing. The schedule, along with entry instructions, was included in July's newsletter. It can also be found on our website - see address above. Simply click "What's On" on the Home Page, then "Chalfonts Beekeepers Honey Show". Also see Sue Carter's e-mail of 6th August and look out for future e-mails.

A note to our large number of enthusiastic "beginner" beekeepers: we have increased the number of classes just for you from one to three (classes 14, 15 and 16), so do have a go. The "one black jar" class, for instance, is judged purely on flavour, so if you haven't quite perfected all that filtering you can still win!

Mounting the Honey Show takes time and effort and the committee would welcome volunteers to help set up the show and assist on the stand during the day. Newer members may be shy in stepping forward, but you will get full guidance and support from more experienced members as well as finding it sociable and enjoyable. You will also learn a huge amount. So do give it a try.

*Success at our Honey Show is but a stepping-stone to bigger shows. The **National Honey Show is held from 28th to 30th October** and within it are eleven classes open only to members of the four beekeeping associations in Buckinghamshire. Whilst Mid Bucks Beekeepers very kindly hosted the **County Honey Show** in 2009, it will be these 11 classes at the National that will form the 2010 County Honey Show. Full details of how to enter and get your exhibits there will be in September's newsletter.*

*And I think here is the appropriate place to congratulate two of our members, **Sue Carter** and **Bill Fisher**, on their success at the **Irish National Honey Show***. Sue won first prize in three classes: 6 small honey biscuits, 2 round sections of floral honey, and colour print photography, whilst Bill won first prize for his 3 jars of naturally creamed honey.*

** The "Irish National Honey Show" was held during the last week of July at Gormanston College, County Meath, just north of Dublin. It is an integral part of the Federation of Irish Beekeepers annual summer school.*

Our next members evening is.. ..Tuesday 28th September

I know this seems rather a long way off, but I'm highlighting it partly to remind members that there is **no evening meeting in August**.

Our first speaker in the autumn will be Ian Homer, who retired from being our Regional Bee Inspector a couple of years ago and is now an Extension Learning Officer. He is an extremely entertaining, and a highly knowledgeable speaker. More details in September's newsletter.

Society "Open Day" – 24th July

I'm delighted to see that several members took advantage of Mike Leon's invitation to "bring along your swimming kit" at the Open Day he and his wife Jill hosted on 24th July.

"It was a lovely afternoon on Saturday 24th July", writes **Mary Chris**, "when we were invited to look at the bees of Mike Leon and Brian Bradnock.

Over 30 members and friends enjoyed the event including some children who were allowed to use Mike's swimming pool – how is that for a bonus?

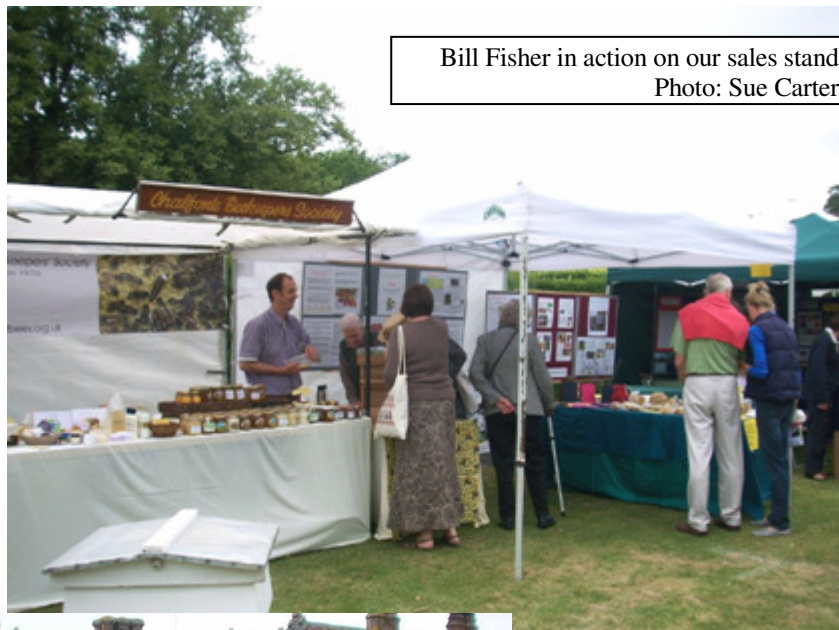
Beulah ran the afternoon colony inspection, which was eagerly watched by beginner beekeepers and those with more experience. What better way of spending an afternoon than talking about bees? We enjoyed both Brian's and Mike's lovely gardens. Brian showed us his lilies and his well. Jill provided a tasty tea with delicious sandwiches. Mike showed the beginners how he extracts his honey and also demonstrated his solar wax extractor. As there were so many he moved into their dining room! There were Dartington hives to see, but I think time ran out. Thank you Mike, Jill, Beulah and Brian for a very pleasant few hours".

Chenies Manor Plant & Garden Fair

As you know the Society takes its stall to several fetes and fairs during the summer. One of the biggest, and most interesting, is the "Plant and Garden Fair" held each July at Chenies Manor. This year we were one of 75 exhibitors.

It is an event that attracts huge numbers of keen gardeners with stallholders coming for all over the country. We do sell a lot of honey and related products (marmalade, mustard, fudge, biscuits, candles, fir-cone firelighters etc) but the reason the organisers* like us there is because we look after the bees, which are part of the ecosystem that produces the wonderful flowers we see in our gardens.

And we are there to answer questions - with the aid of, amongst other things, an observation hive and some highly informative display posters produced by Sue



Bill Fisher in action on our sales stand
Photo: Sue Carter



John Catton talking to visitors at Chenies Manor Plant Fair
Photo: Sue Carter

Carter. Such is the interest in gardening-for-wild life we teamed up for the first time with the Chorley Wood branch of the RSPB, who had their stall on the adjoining pitch. Again we must thank Sue for producing some excellent display posters for the RSPB, which linked and highlighted the importance of the birds and the bees.

*Our hostess, Elizabeth MacLeod Matthews kindly waived the usual pitch fee for us; in lieu of this we were able to make a donation to the Iain Rennie Hospice who run a plant crèche there.

And congratulations to....

Jayne Corcoran on passing her Basic Assessment in beekeeping. Circumstances meant that she had to take the assessment a couple of weeks after the others, so we are proud to add her name to the nine mentioned in July's newsletter.

The apiary in August winter preparation 1: your bees

So far as the bees are concerned, August is, unless you are taking them to the heather, generally a quiet month.

But is August, the end or the beginning of the beekeepers' year? You extract the fruits of the girls' labours (not only honey, but for me, a bounteous crop of blackberries) this month. The traditional day for harvesting your honey is St.

Bartholomew's Day, 24th August. *And*, in August you start preparing for next year. How well you do that influences how well your colonies will fare in 2011.

- Remove all supers by the middle of the month and extract. There is the urge to leave them on for just a few more weeks, just in case of an Indian summer. Norman Hughes, ex Chairman of the BBKA, who came and spoke to us a couple of years ago, urges us otherwise.

A friend of his ran scaled hives for many years, (that is hives kept on weighing scales, so the weight of stores can be accessed at any given time) and concluded that the major surpluses we rely on to fill our supers occur on only 15 or 16 days each year, ending in July. See also "Thoughts of Winter" page 5 of August's BBKA News.

- Treat for *varroa* in August **before feeding**, carefully following the instructions for whichever method you use. If you use Apiguard remember it works best in warmer weather (i.e. during August). If you have an open mesh floor, you must place a cover board under it to prevent the vapours being lost.
- Feed in September, completing it by the middle / end of the month. But how much to feed?

Each hive will need an optimum of 45lbs of stores for winter so you will first have to estimate the stores already there, then feed to make up the difference.

A full BS brood frame holds approx 2.5lbs honey on each side. Estimate the proportion of cells filled with stores on both sides of each frame and add up the total. For example:

Frame 1 Side A 80% cells full x 2.5 = 2.0lbs

Side B 40% cells full x 2.5 = 1.0lbs

Total stores on frames = 3.0lbs

Continue through all 11 frames (or 10 if you have WBCs). Suppose the total comes to 29.25lbs, the extra stores needed to bring the colony's winter reserve to 45lbs is 15.75lbs (45 - 29.25).

At 20% water 2.5lbs of honey equates to 2lbs of sugar, so the final calculation in this example is:

$$15.75 \div 2.5 \times 2 = 12.6\text{lbs sugar}$$

The syrup for winter-feed is made up by dissolving 2lbs of white sugar in 1pt of water (or 1kg in 1/2l)

The reason why you must complete feeding by the end of September is to allow time for the bees to evaporate and ripen the syrup before the cold nights set in.

If you are treating *nosema* with Fumidil B, or Vita Gold, add it to the feed as directed.

There will be more tips on preparing your bees for winter next month.

Bee inspectors never retire

(Mary Chris)

Beulah and her husband, John, were having a short break in the North of England when friends suggested that they visit a particular garden centre. Whilst there they saw a section labelled 'Plants good for Bees', so Beulah said to the owners that they should have bees to go with the plants. When told they did have bees Beulah replied: 'Would you like me to have a look through them?' Thereupon a bee suit was produced and Beulah did just that! Well how else would she spend a holiday?

What's in flower?

August is the time when beekeepers take their colonies to the heather. For the less energetic there are many garden varieties of heathers for the bees to forage upon.

Another couple of plants the bees love are ones you would not wish in your garden, Himalayan balsam and rosebay willow herb.

Lavatera is still in flower providing lots of pollen and some nectar. Some hydrangeas attract bees, but to be honest the ones in my garden only seem to have hoverflies on them!

What do you want from the Society's website?

You can't have failed to notice how our web site has grown and improved in recent weeks. This is due in no small measure to the amount of work our new Web Master, Derek Atkinson, has put in.

Anything, he tells me, is possible. I find it easy to navigate and it contains a lot of practical day-to-day information. But is there anything else *you* would like to see on it: for instance, a month-by-month beekeeping diary, or a review of newly published books on beekeeping?

I'm thinking in terms of newer members as it is inevitable that whoever writes for the website (and indeed the newsletter) subconsciously assumes a level of knowledge the reader may not have, but equally, it should have something useful, and hopefully interesting, for all.

So please give it some thought and let Derek have your ideas, via the "contact us" link on the website of course.

Adam Whitbread is in the news

(Bruce Boshier)

One of the Society's younger, and busier, beginner beekeepers is Adam Whitbread. He already has pigs and rare breeds of chickens to look after on a smallholding. If that, and school work, was not enough to keep him occupied think again. As the Summer 2010 edition of the "Dacorum Digest" reports:

"Adam Whitbread is a schoolboy with a mission. The 16-year-old Kings Langley School pupil has a passion for all things Fairtrade and has set up his own enterprising business to bring Fairtrade products to his fellow pupils and the wider community.

Adam says, "I have been a Fairtrade rep for two-and-a-half-years. It started with a one-off stall at a school event, selling sweets and chocolates. We

took over £300 and I enjoyed the event so much that I decided to hold stalls at a few local venues selling cards and crafts. Now we have a regular Fairtrade stall at school as part of the eco-enterprise group. We currently have over 50 volunteers to help run the shop every Friday lunchtime. It has been a great success; we sell over £80 worth of Fairtrade products each week.”

‘Well done!’ Adam.

Look out, there’s a thief about

I recently purchased a colony from Ken Gorman, who many of you will know from the visit to his apiaries last year.

When transferring the (very gentle) bees from Ken’s brood box I noticed it was branded: HD7KG; very sensible, especially as all his colonies are in out-apiaries. Regrettably, with the decline in bee numbers, there is an increase in the number of thefts being recorded.

According to recent reports beekeepers in Germany are suffering too, where, according to the Daily Telegraph, “beehive banditry has outstripped robberies of colour television sets and cars in some rural regions.” But here enterprising beekeepers are installing satellite-tracking systems in their hives and larger apiaries are being guarded by CCTV.

Recipe of the month

Did any of you receive an e-mail from Rowse Honey to “celebrate their new look” website? Well I looked through it, ignoring their offer of an eco-bag, but came across an excellent recipe for honey and almond flapjack, so, with acknowledgement to Rowse Honey Ltd, here it is:

Ingredients:

75g (3oz) Rowse* set honey

125g (4oz) unsalted butter, cut into pieces

50g (2oz) light brown sugar

200g (7oz) jumbo rolled oats

40g (1½ oz) blanched almonds, cut into slivers

30ml (2 tbsp) sesame seeds

2.5ml (½ tsp) mixed spice

*Or substitute *your* honey, to provide a local flavour.

Method:

1) Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4. Grease and line a shallow 18cm (7 inch) square cake tin. Place the honey and butter in a saucepan and heat gently until melted. Stir in the sugar to dissolve. Remove from the heat.

2) Add the oats, almonds, half the sesame seeds and mixed spice and stir until evenly coated. Turn into the prepared tin and level the surface. Sprinkle over the remaining sesame seeds.

3) Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden. Leave to cool for 5 minutes, then cut into squares. Leave to firm then transfer to a wire rack to finish cooling. Store in an airtight container.

Corn Cobs

(With thanks to Libby Culshaw- NBBKA)

Many of you must have problems with muntjac munching their way through garden plants you have so lovingly tended. Jayne Corcoran is one; the muntjacs in her garden head straight for the sweet corn.

All is not lost though. If the remains of the corncobs are dried they make a wonderful gentle smoker fuel. Mixed with old wood from fallen trees, it provides a slow burning, low ash, low tar smoke that will last for hours.

Try dried rosemary as well. (Ed)

Dates for your diary

August - No evening meeting

Saturday 4th September

Chalfonts Honey Show – part of the Chalfont St. Giles Country Show

Tuesday 28th September

“It’s funny you should say that!” – a talk by recently retired Regional Bee Inspector, and current Outreach Officer, Ian Homer.

Friday 22nd October 7.30pm

Bucks County Beekeepers’ AGM.

Hosted by High Wycombe Beekeepers, followed by talk “How I keep my bees” by Bob Hunter.

To be held at The Environment Centre, The Rye, High Wycombe, (off Bassetbury Road, which is off London Road).

Tuesday 26th October

Science and Beekeeping – a talk by Norman Carreck.

Thur 28th to Saturday 30th October

79th National Honey Show.....and.....

Bucks County Honey Show – St. Georges College, Weybridge, Surrey

Unless otherwise stated all our monthly meetings, and the Beginners course, are held at: **St. Joseph’s, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY.** **Members Meetings start at 8:00pm.**