

CHALFONTS BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Charity No. 1121231
www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER – February 2011

Editor: John Catton

Assistant: Richard Simpson

Bees continue to fascinate...

...if judged by the number of people who came along to the introductory session of this year's Beginners Course. Mary Chris enthused and intrigued a full house, touching briefly on each of the aspects of beekeeping that will be covered in the ensuing weeks. So, a **warm welcome to you all!** I don't suppose all 42 attending will end up keeping bees, but they will finish the course with a good understand of the bees' role and importance in our biodiversity and, I'm sure, help in their survival.

Just a reminder that by joining the Chalfonts you have also become members of the British Beekeepers Association and with that comes public liability insurance and BBKA News. This, somewhat dry bi-monthly publication, is to receive a facelift and will be re-launched at the Spring Convention. It will be printed in colour and issued monthly – and I'm assured its contents will be a little less formal!

We now meet at 7:30pm.

Please note that, with effect 22nd February, Members' Evenings will start at 7:30pm.

Members Evening – Tue 22nd Feb Beekeeping equipment.

We all need and use it...but have you ever wondered how a particular bit of equipment came to be invented or how, for instance, the dimensions of our hives and frames were determined?

Well, **Andrew Gibb** will be able to answer these questions when he gives us a short talk on the History of Beekeeping equipment.

After Andrew's talk you will have a chance to talk about equipment to Linda Evans from **Thorne's of Windsor** and a representative from **Bee Basic**, an on-line provider of protective clothing and basic bee equipment.

The meeting will be held on **Tuesday 22nd Feb, at the new time of 7:30pm** in our usual venue: **St. Joseph's, Austenwood Lane Chalfont St. Peter.**

Programme of Events

Full details of the monthly lectures and activities, Beginners' Course sessions and "must attend" national and county bee events will be issued to members in the next week / 10 days. The printer is busy as I write. Don't forget, members wishing to brush up on a particular topic are invited to attend any Beginners' sessions.

Not just Honeybees County Seminar Sat 5th March Book your place now!

This will be a thought-provoking day for both seasoned beekeepers and beginners alike, aimed to provide you with a broader understanding of current beekeeping issues. The three speakers and talks are:

Dr. Nigel Raine, University of London
Learning to forage in the floral supermarket

Dominic Dyer, CEO Crop Protection Assoc
Can pesticides and bees co-exist?

Stuart Roberts, University of Reading
The decline of our insect pollinators.

The event is held in the Memorial Hall, Wendover, HP22 6HF, and runs from 10:00am to about 4:00pm. It costs £12, which includes refreshments and a ploughman's lunch. Full details on our website:

www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

Pay at the door on the day, **but please register with John Catton on 01494 726616 or by e-mail: richard.catton1@ntlworld.com** The reason is quite simple; we need to know how many lunches to make!

Getting to know your committee: 30 second interview



In this, the second of our (probing!) interviews with committee members, we ask Mary Chris, who is running our Beginners Course, what makes her tick, what she wants to keep bees and what else she likes doing.

Q: How long have you been keeping bees?

MC: 35 years.

Q: Why did you start beekeeping?

MC: I was a Physics teacher. I have always been interested in God's creation, so when a priest friend of mine said 'You should keep bees' I thought 'Why not?'

Q: What type of hives do you use?

MC: WBCs.... I like the look of them!

Q: How many hives do you have and how many do you want?

MC: I have 7, but I'd prefer to have just 5.

Q: What's your worst beekeeping purchase?

MC: An inefficient wax can.

Q: Do you have a favorite beekeeping gadget?

MC: Yes, a warming cabinet that has a thermostat to warm honey or melt wax.

Q: What have been your best beekeeping moments?

MC: When new beekeepers are keen to take the Basic Assessment and pass it.

Q: Where do you live?

MC: In Chalfont St Peter

Q: Where do you keep your bees?

MC: At the end of our garden.

Q: Do you have a favorite beekeeping book / manual

MC: I like Ted Hooper's Beekeeping Encyclopaedia for reference and *BeeCraft* for easy reading especially as Claire Waring (the editor) is a friend of mine from way back.

Q: The next best thing to beekeeping?

MC: Gardening and travelling. I like growing things and seeing new places.

Beekeepers are great people

Mary Chris

"When I said I had to move my hives several hundred yards from where they were, immediately, I had plenty of offers from my beekeeping friends. It had to be done now while the weather is cold as they were not going too far. The great day arrived. John Roberts and Gordon Cutting manfully moved my 6 full hives, while Sue Carter and one of my sisters helped me with the nuc and accessories. It was all done in 2 hours. It would have taken me a month of Sundays to do it myself. Thank you all very much."

Mary Chris

Have you kept bees for more than a year?

If you haven't already taken it, think about taking your BBKA Basic Assessment this year. It is a straightforward short-ish practical assessment to demonstrate you have a basic understanding of the craft, and ability as a competent beekeeper.

It is something you really *should* take; it is the foundation to the rest of your beekeeping career and is a requirement if you wish to further your studies with the BBKA. Once you've received your certificate, you'll find it will give you a tremendous confidence boost!

Interested? Then contact Mary Chris on 07746 560280 or: holecrosssamson@yahoo.com

Success for Bucks at the ADM

Each January the BBKA holds an Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM), in effect their AGM. Full details of the day's proceedings can be found on page 19 of February's BBKA News, however I thought I'd pick out a few of the "interesting" bits to share with you.

- **Bucks County was awarded the George Knight Memorial.** This is a new award from the BBKA for outstanding results in examinations above the Basic Certificate... and Bucks County was its first recipient!

Frank Rickett, our County Chairman, accepted the award and a cheque for £100, to offset future training costs.

You may remember that last year Bucks County won the Surrey Shield for the area association with the highest number of passes (as a % of members) at the Basic Assessment.

- **The BBKA are to launch a new website in April.** It will be easy to navigate with new search facilities to a much larger database of “seasonal” bee management topics.
- **Adopt A Hive**, sponsored by Saga, raised over £32,000 towards bee research in its first year. A new 3 year sponsorship deal has been signed with **Burts beeswax** the company best known for its home-made beeswax lip balms and hand salves, see: www.burtsbees.co.uk
- **Spend a pound, save a bee**, another fundraising initiative from the BBKA making use of WBC styled collecting boxes.
- **BBKA News** to get a facelift – see page 1.
- **Norman Carreck** was presented with the BBKA’s **Service Award** in recognition of his achievements to bee research.

Science and Beekeeping

Just two weeks after Norman was presented with the BBKA’s Service Award he came and spoke to members at our first meeting of 2011.

This was his third visit and his topic was somewhat esoteric - never underestimate the value of pure research. He took us through landmark scientific discoveries (over the centuries) which, at the time, perhaps seemed to have little practical application. However this accumulated wisdom now provides us with an understanding of the biology of bees so we are now better able to tackle new situations as they emerge.

Gormanston Summer Course Sun 24th to Fri 29th July 2011

(Deborah Campbell)

Gormanston, writes Deborah Campbell, is about 20 miles north of Dublin and each year hosts a summer school devoted to beekeeping.

The 5-day course allows you to immerse yourself totally in the subject as you choose between workshops ranging from furniture polishing to

microscopy, lectures aimed at all levels of experience and practical sessions.

I first went as a complete novice and found it a wonderful way of building up my knowledge, as well as gaining useful tips. I met experienced beekeepers – all with an opinion and all eager to express it.



There is always an eminent guest lecturer and this year it’s Professor Robert Pickard. Professor Pickard is an international authority on the biology of honeybees and President of the Cardiff Beekeepers' Association and the Central Association of Beekeepers.

It’s not all work, the school and surrounding area offers swimming, tennis and golf, but most of us go down the pub. You will never be short of someone to talk to and I guarantee you’ll be warmly welcomed.

A few of us from the Society are going this summer and would like more to come along.

If you are interested, please speak to Bill Fisher, Sue Carter or Deborah Campbell – all of whom have attended.

For more details you can also go to:

<http://www.irishbeekeeping.ie/>

Gormanston - Post Script

The *Irish National Honey Show* is run each year in conjunction with the annual Gormanston Summer School. Whilst there last year with Deborah, Sue Carter and Bill Fisher entered several classes and between them won four first prizes! Can’t you help increase our tally?

The apiary in February

February is yet another month when management of your bees is very much dictated by the weather. It is only the third week in February and, so far, we have experienced sub-zero temperatures and howling winds. From here it might dry out and be a bit warmer – but don’t hold your breath!

On fine, still days the bees are flying, so using up stores. Gently heft (lift) each hive to assess the level of stores and if low, feed. Cut two holes in the side of a bag of fondant (to line up with the two holes in the crown board) and place on the crown board – the bees will feed from it as needed. And think about the coming season:

- Start to keep hive records.
- Do you have sufficient equipment, frames and foundation in particular? If not contact Bill Fisher. And come to the members evening on 22nd Feb!
- This is your chance to clean your spare equipment and wash your protective clothing, before you need it urgently.

Looking out into the garden it really does feel that spring is on the way. Snowdrops and crocus already provide striking colour, soon to be followed by winter aconites. The hazel catkins look incredibly dramatic having no leaves to compete with. Two other shrubs where the flower comes out before the leaves are the witch hazel (bright yellow) and Japonica quince (bright red). Both are in tight bud as I write, but will be out by the end of the month, as will the Chinese honey-suckle and hellebores.

The Seminar season!

As well as our “local” seminar on **Saturday 5th March**, other nearby Associations hold seminars at this time of the year. Here are two you may like to attend:

Saturday 25th February:

Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers’

Cost: £6.00 (excl lunch)

Speakers: Dr. Adam Hart: *Conflict in the hive*

Dr. Juliet Osborne: *What is happening to Honeybees and Bumblebees?*

John Hendrie: *From blossom to jar*

Full details: <http://tinyurl.com/33e9ezm>

Saturday 12th March:

Cambridgeshire Beekeepers’ Association

Norman Carreck: *Varroa resistant bees*

David Aston: *Queen rearing*

Roger Patterson: *Bee improvement.*

Cost: £17.50

Full details: from David Abson 01223-834620.

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 15th February

Equipment and frame making.

Beginners Course 3

Tuesday 22nd February

Members’ Meeting:

What equipment will you need in 2011?

See page 1.

Saturday 26th February

Middlesex Federation Beekeeping Day

See details above.

Tuesday 1st March

The Beekeeping Year

Beginners Course 4

Saturday 5th March

15th Annual Bucks County Seminar.

Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover, HP22 6HF

10:30am to 4:30pm – see page 1

Tuesday 8th March

Plants and Pollination

Beginners Course 5

Saturday 12th March

Cambridgeshire Beekeepers’ seminar

See details above.

Tuesday 15th March

Queen Rearing and Swarming

Beginners Course 6

Friday 18th to Sunday 20th March

The Edible Garden show, Stoneleigh.

Full details: www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk

Tuesday 22nd March

Ian Homer, Eureka Moments in Beekeeping

Fri 15th, Sat 16th & Sun 17th April

BBKA Spring Convention: Stoneleigh.

Full details on www.britishbee.org

Tuesday 19th April

Members’ Meeting: Varroa – the fightback

Dr Alan Bowman, Aberdeen University

Unless otherwise stated all our monthly meetings and the Beginners course are held at: **St. Joseph’s, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY**. All meetings start at **7.30pm**