

CHALFONTS BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Charity No. 1121231
www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER – November 2011

Editor: John Catton

Assistant: Richard Simpson

Success at the National Honey Show!

(Sue Carter)

Greg Cole, Bursar of St
George's College, presents:

the Candlestick Trophy to Beulah Cullen



the Millenium Punch Bowl to John Gamble



the Lawrie Webb Shield to Sue Carter



the Burnett Cup to Bill Fisher



Members of the Chalfonts have, yet again, had considerable success at a major Honey Show. Bill Fisher and Sue Carter took members' entries to both the Main (open) section and the Bucks section of the National Honey Show held, as usual, at St. Georges School, Weybridge. Chalfonts dominated the prizes in the Bucks section - see page two for the results.

Four members, Beulah Cullen, Margaret Roberts, Sue Carter and Bill Fisher all won 1st Prizes in the Open Classes: that is competing against all comers, from both home and abroad. But the star of the show, so far as the Chalfonts are concerned, was Bill Fisher who was awarded Best Mead in Show with his *first attempt* at mead making! If this doesn't provide encouragement to enter, nothing will (Ed). As a county, Bucks came second to Yorkshire in the Smallholders Cup – something we plan to improve upon next year!

It is not just a Honey Show; there was an excellent series of workshops on a variety of subjects, from skep making to honey judging and some outstanding lectures, for instance by Tom Seeley, author of "Honey Bee Democracy" and "Wisdom of the Hive". There was also a hall with trade stands and various charitable organisations supporting beekeeping. Several CBS members attended the three days of the show, participating in the various activities and a good time was had by all.

This time it's *Your* AGM. Tues 22nd Nov at 7:30pm

On **Tuesday 22nd November** we hold our 35th Annual General Meeting at our usual venue: **St. Joseph's, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY** and at the usual time of **7:30pm**

This is the time of year when practical beekeeping is at a minimum and, in the space of a few weeks the calendar seems to be dominated by Shows and AGMs! On the 2nd November we hosted the County AGM (see report on page 3), now 20 days later we hold our own.

The formal part of the evening, to include the election of the committee, will be kept to a minimum, but it is important that if you have any strongly held views (good or otherwise!) on the running of the Society you do have the chance and time to express them.

Chairman: Bill Fisher, 07973 626464;

Secretary: Gordon Cutting, 07809 108397

Treasurer: Mike Leon, 01442 833665

Then, cups and certificates celebrating success in both apicultural exams and on the show-bench, will be presented.

Finally there will be time to socialise, take part in a light-hearted quiz and enjoy a buffet.

The formal but necessary “small print” will be e-mailed to you all from our Secretary, Gordon Cutting, before the event.

National Honey Show results.

Below are the Challenge cups and Trophies won by CBS members in the **Open Classes**:

Burnett Cup: Bill Fisher

(Two sections of honey Comb)

Candlestick Trophy: Beulah Cullen

(Three non-moulded beeswax candles)

Millennium Punch Bowl: John Gamble

(One bottle of dry mead)

Millennium Mead Coaster: Bill Fisher

(One bottle sweet mead)

Jean Blaxland Memorial Prize for Mead: Bill Fisher (Best Mead In Show)

We must not omit **Margaret Roberts** who was awarded a 1st in Class 43: “A Honey label”

The above are just the major awards presented to four of our members. The full NHS results can be found on: <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

In the **Buckinghamshire Classes**, open to members of the Bucks County Beekeepers Association only, top awards went Sue Carter and Bill Fisher.

Lord Cadman Cup: (the member gaining the most points in Bucks Classes)

Jointly won by Sue Carter and Bill Fisher.

Lawrie Webb Shield: Sue Carter

(Best “two jars of light honey”)

The full Buckinghamshire Classes results:

Class 221: Two jars of light honey

1st Sue Carter

2nd Michael Bensley

3rd Beulah Cullen

Class 222: Two jars of medium honey

3rd Michael Bensley

Class 223: Two jars of dark honey

2nd Michael Bensley

VHC Derek Taylor

Class 224: Two jars of naturally crystallised honey

1st Nick Fairweather

2nd Mike Tucker

3rd Beulah Cullen

Class 225: Two jars of soft set honey

1st Bill Fisher

Class 226: One jar of liquid honey – judged on taste, aroma and viscosity

1st Sister Mary Chris 2nd Beulah Cullen

3rd Phillip Butterworth VHC Melvyn Dunne

Class 227: One frame for extraction.

2nd Bruce Boshier

HC Eileen Tanner

Class 228: One bottle of sweet mead

1st Bill Fisher

2nd John Gamble

3rd Sue Carter

Class 229: One bottle of dry mead

1st Sue Carter

2nd John Gamble

3rd Bill Fisher

Class 231: One piece beeswax 200-255g

1st Sue Carter

2nd Bill Fisher

3rd Simon Capell

Class 232: 2 matching beeswax candles

1st Beulah Cullen

2nd Bill Fisher

3rd Sue Carter

VHC Michael Bensley

HC Eileen Tanner

Class 223: One honey cake

1st Ian Cochrane

2nd Sue Carter

The miracle food – pollen

Pam Hunter was the speaker at our October meeting. She spent the entire evening talking in great detail about that most vital of food for our bees: pollen.

Bees need both carbohydrates and proteins. The carbohydrates come from nectar, but as bees are essentially vegetarian wasps, they cannot get the proteins they need from the aphids and caterpillars’ their carnivorous cousins eat. Pollen provides this.

But the protein value and amino acids in pollen differ between plants, so bees need a good mix of pollens to survive, as indicated by the range of colours seen in our brood boxes.

Whilst the pollen itself is resistant to degradation (it has a tough outer wall, the “exine”), the nutritional value of pollens degrades rapidly - up to 75% pa; so late autumn and early spring flowers are essential forage to the bee colony.

A colony needs 35 / 50k of pollen each year to ensure normal colony development and, vitally, successful brood development. An average pollen load on a foraging bee varies between seasons and forage available, but is in the region of 10mg. She will make 6 to 8 return trips to the colony with pollen each day.

Swarms and “ley lines”

(Desmond Oswald)

An article in August’s BBKA News (Bees and Ley Lines, p25) prompted Desmond to look deeper into why he had such difficulty in collecting a swarm.

In late July, at about 7 pm, I was asked to collect a swarm at Haselmere. The swarm was in a low tree about 10 feet above the ground in the front lawn of the house. The owner provided me with a ladder and I knocked the swarm down into a skep that I then placed above a sheet on the ground below the tree. I told the householder that I would return in about an hour when the bees would have all moved down. Some were already fanning with their nasanov glands exposed, so I assumed that the queen was in the skep. When I returned, the bees were all back in the tree. I knocked them down again and when it looked like they were mostly in the skep I folded the sheet over and took them home to Gerrards Cross. Because it was dark by this time I decided not to run them in but instead placed the skep upside down under the crown board in the top of the hive I had prepared for them.

The next morning about 10:00am I had a call from the same householder to say that he had another swarm. I went to my apiary to collect the skep and found it empty, and so was the hive. Not a bee in it. I returned to the same swarm site and repeated the procedure collecting the swarm. I returned in the afternoon and brought the swarm home. This time I ran them in on a board in the front. There was a brood chamber and a super of drawn comb in the hive.

Next morning I got a call again from the same householder. It just seemed that this swarm preferred Haselmere to Gerrards Cross! I realised then that I should have placed a queen excluder under the brood box. Since Haselmere is actually in High Wycombe Beekeepers area I called them and advised them that there was a swarm in their area. I was told that there was also another swarm only four houses away.

It seems to me that in each case it was the same swarm. The early morning calls were earlier than I would expect for a swarm to have left a hive. The distance from my apiary to the swarm location is 8 miles as the bee flies. How would they have found their way back each time?

I believe that when a swarm issues from a hive it frequently goes only a short distance, sometimes less than 30 metres. It settles for a while and then scout(s) go out to find a suitable new location. The scouts go out, find a ley line and follow it (see BBKA News – No. 192 – August 2011. Bees and Ley Lines). I would like to call this a “swarm line”. Where they

settle on that line may possibly be related to the crossing of another ley line, producing a node on the line. I have no evidence that this is the case, but I think it would be a reasonable assumption. I dowsed the swarm area and found strong evidence of a ley line. The swarm location is not the final resting place, but only the temporary location from which scouts will go out again to find a hollow tree or other cavity which will be their final home. This home location will probably be along the same or another ley line. Being a geologist, I wondered if there could there be some subsurface presence producing this effect. I had recently completed a seismic survey over an area in which there were a number of faults identified by the survey. I went to the area and walked along the road where some of these faults crossed – I got the same reaction as I had got in the swarm area at all of four locations of fault crossings. This does not mean that the ley lines associated with the swarms are an expression of the presence of a subsurface fault, however it does mean that they give the same reaction.

This requires further investigation that I hope to carry out. I would be interested to know whether any other beekeepers have carried out similar investigations and got the same results.

Desmond can be contacted on 01753 884697 or: canukexpl@aol.com

Bucks County AGM

Over 40 members of the four Associations comprising the County Association attended the AGM, hosted by the Chalfonts and held at the Chiltern Woodland Burial Ground, on Wed 2nd November. Because of the way the committee is composed / elected I do not yet have a complete list. The President and Officers plus two are nominated and voted for at the AGM and then each of the four Associations nominates two members to represent them; a total of 14. I’ll publish the full list in December’s newsletter.

After the AGM and an excellent buffet John Gamble gave us an insight into, or should I say, step-by-step account of, how to make mead. He’s good at it; he won a handsome trophy in the Open section of the NHS – see page one.

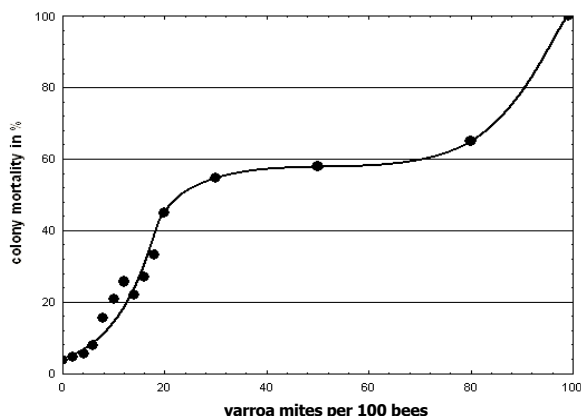
November’s topical tip

(Richard Simpson)

November is a time when one can do nothing in beekeeping and get away with it. As ever, though, doing nothing now can lead to regrets later. Could one have been better prepared? Prepared for what?

Winter is when the majority of colony losses occur. The main risk factors are varroa infestation and starvation. Both are manageable.

Varroa: German research reported at http://www.nassenheider.com/files/nachrichten/bien_enmonitoring_genersch.pdf (written up in English) establishes that the risk of colony loss over winter increases in step with the varroa population, measured in October. At 6% infestation (i.e. 500 mites in a colony of 8,000) the average loss rate is 10%.



The NBU suggests that colony collapse is very likely before the end of the season if average daily mite drop for a normal colony exceeds 0.5 mites in winter/spring and no action is taken. It is therefore vital to estimate your varroa population before unnecessary losses occur. If you are below the threshold you can either treat all colonies prophylactically, or do nothing. If above, the decision is yours. Personally, I do all mine. At this time of year, the usual method of control is dribbling oxalic acid sugar solution along the seams of bees. This should coincide with the impending broodless period, usually December. Both ready-made solution and dry crystals for making up at home are available from bee suppliers.

Starvation: with the prolonged mild weather the bees are still quite active. The ivy is finished, any early winter forage will be sparse at best, so an active colony will be consuming food quite fast and *you* need to monitor their stores. This can be done by hefting the hive, i.e. tilting the colony forward slightly so that you can gauge the weight. If concerned, a good dollop of fondant should be given. Putting it in a wrapper or carton such as a margarine tub will slow down its dessication. Make holes in the lid, approximately the size of your finger, and then invert the tub over the feed hole in your crownboard. A polythene bag will do too, again with access for the bees. If the bees need the extra food and are still mobile, they will come up and take it. Monitor consumption, replenish if required. Fondant can be ordered from many craft bakers. Bespoke bee feed products are, of course, available through bee suppliers. So, the watchwords are: “be prepared”.

This and That

Another celebrity beekeeper:

For those of you who don't have time to keep up with the lives of “celebrities” you'll be pleased to hear that the Cambridge graduate, actress cum model, Lily Cole, has taken up beekeeping. She keeps her “urban bees” on a London rooftop. The one shame is that the interviewing journalist misreported (hopefully) Lily: “How does the scout bee know he's the one born to dance?”

Christmas Gifts

Two general-reading bee books I have come across lately impress. Both are targeted at the Beginner but with enough to make them useful to Improvers too: Haynes Bee Manual, and Beekeeping for Dummies. The first is full of colour photographs illustrating almost every aspect of the craft and authored by Adrian and Claire Waring.

The second started out as an American publication but has just received a makeover by David Wiscombe (50+ years experience, beekeeping adviser to River Cottage, and President of East Devon Beekeepers), and Ian Homer. All are respected beekeepers and Adrian, Claire and Ian are quite frequent visitors to our Society.

And finally, congratulations...

...to our Assistant Editor, Richard Simpson, who has just been elected as Chairman of East Devon Beekeepers!

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 22nd November

Chalfonts AGM and social

December

No Meeting

January

Details in December's newsletter

February

Equipment: discussions about the multiplicity of equipment that is available to beekeepers and which is best?

Unless otherwise stated all our monthly meetings and the Beginners course are held at: **St. Joseph's, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY** and start at **7:30pm**.