

CHALFONTS BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Charity No. 1121231
www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER – October 2011

Editor: John Catton

Assistant: Richard Simpson

Just what is the point of all these shows?

I know many beekeepers who simply want to have a quiet time enjoying looking after a few colonies and find the thought of “showing” a total anathema. I must admit I keep bees more out of fascination for the part they play in our ecosystem than the amount of honey they produce, but I do take part in our Shows and sell what little surplus I have. It is this last point, selling, that is the key. The old maxim goes: “what’s good enough to sell is good enough to show”. In other words, the same amount of effort we put into showing should be exerted when extracting and bottling for sale. This ensures standards are high and produces a more attractive local product that is becoming increasingly expensive.

Interestingly, the one criticism our very experienced County Show judge, Vivienne Brown, made during her end of show comments at the County Honey Show, was how many of the exhibitors in the “honey judged on taste and aroma only” class had failed to properly filter the honey, something that was not required for that class. However, she would not be happy with her name on the label had they been offered for sale. Class 18 of the National Honey Show “Counter Display of Extracted Honey” is judged, amongst other criteria, for quality and sales appeal.

And honey shows don't just encourage high standards for honey, but photographs too. Here is Sue Carter's winning entry from this year's Irish National Honey Show held at Gormanston in July.



Chairman: Bill Fisher, 07973 626464;

Secretary: Gordon Cutting, 07809 108397

Treasurer: Mike Leon, 01442 833665

“The Bees’ Magic Ingredient” **Tue 25th October**

What the ingredient is will be explained by Pam Hunter when she talks to the Society at our October meeting, **Tuesday 25th October**. Pam lives in rural Sussex and keeps several hives in her 1 acre garden. Although she has kept bees for about 17 years she says she is still learning! Pam is a biologist by training and her particular interests are, unsurprisingly, the foraging and pollination aspects of beekeeping.

The meeting will be held in our usual venue: **St. Joseph’s, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY** at the usual time of **7:30pm**

Subscription renewal

Somewhat belatedly you will find the subscription renewal form for the year commencing October 2011 on our website:

<http://www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk>

The form has been redesigned so you should find it a lot easier to complete now.

Please print one off, complete it as appropriate to your desired involvement, including any extras such as magazine subscriptions, and post it with a cheque to our Membership Secretary, Sue Carter.

There is a lot about County beekeeping in this issue, so you’ll be pleased to learn that, for the third year running, the subscription for membership of the County Association is £nil.

Bucks County AGM...plus.. **...a talk on Mead Making.** **Wednesday 2nd November**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Association will take place at **7.30pm on November 2nd, 2011 at the Chiltern Woodland Burial Park, Potkilm Lane, Beaconsfield, HP9 2XB**

The Bucks County Beekeepers’ Association is, amongst other things, the body which represents the views of Bucks beekeepers at national level and comprises representatives from the four local beekeeping societies: North Bucks, Mid Bucks, High Wycombe and the Chalfonts. The chairman is selected from each of the societies in turn and the organising of events is rotated around the four societies.

This year it is the Chalfonts turn to host the AGM and the new Chairman, subject to election, will be from High Wycombe.

Please note the date – Wednesday 2nd Nov, not a Tuesday! And the venue – **the Chiltern Woodland Burial Park**.

7:00 pm, doors open for tea and coffee

7:30 pm, AGM, followed by refreshments

9:00 pm, talk on **“Mead Making”** by **Dr John Gamble ***

10:00pm Close

* John is, of course, a Chalfonts member and has been making mead for many years. Consequently He has been winning Mead classes in Honey Shows for many years, e.g. County Honey Show; see page 3.

I urge you to attend and have your say on the running of the County Association plus vote for the committee nominations.

Sue Carter e-mailed the agenda and nomination papers to all members on 12th Oct. If you wish to stand for / propose someone for any of the positions, **the completed form must be returned to Beulah Cullen before the start of the AGM**.

CBS Annual General Meeting

This is formal notification to members that the **35th AGM** of the Society will be held on **Tuesday 22nd November** at **St. Joseph’s, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8RY**. Supporting and necessary documents will be e-mailed to all members prior to the meeting.

The County Honey Show

The County Honey Show continues to evolve. In 2009, after a gap of 7 years it was held in conjunction with Mid Bucks Honey Show, then last year as part of the Bucks Classes at the National. This year, on 24th September, it was an event in it’s own right, held at the Memorial Hall in Wendover alongside several “workshop” presentations.

Vivienne Brown, (helped by Bob Hunter who judged the cake class), judged the 117 entries with steward (and show organiser) Beulah Cullen. Whilst the judging progressed Scott Rutland (Chairman, Wycombe Beekeepers) talked about swarm catching, Raymond Chamberlin focused several microscopes on the “Tools of the Bee”,

John Gamble focused us on pollen, and Gordon Cutting was there talking about queen rearing. Congratulations must go the following:

Blue Ribbon (Best exhibit overall):

Beulah Cullen

Tweedie skep (Assoc gaining the most points):

The Chalfonts

Peggy Cup (Member gaining the most points):

Sue Carter

Margery Parker Trophy (Best honey cake):

Ian Cochrane

John Raven Award (Best exhibit class 1– 5):

Beulah Cullen

Margaret Issias Trophy (Best beginner exhibit):

Eugenia Eagle

Class 1: Two jars of light honey:

1st Beulah Cullen 2nd Sue Carter

3rd Bill Fisher

Class 2: Two jars of medium honey:

1st Mary Chris 2nd Beulah Cullen

3rd Melvyn Dunne VHC Frank Rickett

Class 3: Two jars of dark honey:

1st Bill Fisher 2nd Sue Carter

3rd Jane & Phillip Butterworth

Class 4: Two jars of naturally set honey:

1st Beulah Cullen 2nd Bob Hunter

3rd Nick Fairweather VHC Mike Tucker

HC Frank Rickett

Class 5: Two jars of soft set honey:

1st Beulah Cullen 2nd Sue Carter

3rd Bill Fisher

Class 6: One jar judged on flavour only:

1st Sue Carter 2nd John Catton

3rd Jane Corcoran VHC Mary Chris

HC Beulah Cullen C Andrew Beer

Class 7: One frame capped honey:

1st Derek Atkinson 2nd Bruce Bosher

3rd Eileen Tanner VHC Frank Rickett

Class 8: one carton of cut comb:

1st Bill Fisher 2nd Beulah Cullen

3rd Frank Rickett

Class 9: One bottle of sweet mead

1st Sue Carter 2nd John Gamble

Class 10: One bottle of dry mead

1st John Gamble 2nd Bill Fisher

Class 11: One cake of beeswax (200 / 255g):

1st Simone Capell 2nd Sue Carter

3rd Bill Fisher

Class 12: Two identical beeswax candles:

1st Bill Fisher 2nd Sue Carter

3rd Mary Chris

Class 13: One jar of honey, beginners only

1st Eugenia Eagle 2nd May Tang

3rd Sally Morgan VHC P&J Butterworth

HC Irene Paterson C Caroline Windley

Class 14: One honey cake:

1st Ian Cochrane

2nd Ron White

3rd Sue Carter

VHC Sean Stephenson

HC Maggie Allen

All the trophies and certificates will be presented at the County AGM on Wednesday 2nd November.

Cooking with honey

I just wish I'd been forwarned about the amount of "samples" Katie and Giancarlo Caldesi would be handing out during their Cooking with Honey evening on 27th September, then I would not, indeed need not, have bothered to have a meal before leaving home!

Katie and Gincarlo gave a very funny double-act presentation peppered with anecdotes, tips and recipes. Rather than do a two page report of the evening I'll simply direct you to their website: www.caldesi.com and ask you to click on the Blog icon (second in from the right) to read all about it!



Gincarlo hands around some "samples"
photo: Sue Carter

Another "celebitary" beekeeper!

I don't know whether to laugh or cry, but I learned, via the inaugural "London Honey Show Awards Ceremony" held in London on 10th October, that Charlie Dimmock was there "...to launch her new DVD Beekeeping for Beginners"

If you really want to, you can learn and see more about it by going to:

<http://www.surreybeekeeper.co.uk>

Getting to know your committee

30 second interview

This month it's the turn of Deborah Campbell, our newest recruit to the committee. She was elected last year and took on the brief of arranging and co-ordinating the many fetes and shows we attend and it is, of course, Deborah who asks *you* to help at them. In the last of our interviews with committee members, we ask Debbie what makes her tick, what she wants to keep bees and what else she has time to do.



Q: How long have you been keeping bees?

DC: About five years

Q: Why did you start beekeeping?

DC: My son was interested and we went on the beginners' course together. He left to go to university and I was left with the bees!

Q: What type of hives do you use?

DC: Nationals.

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

DC: Never have more than four in the summer, as my garden won't comfortably take any more. I like to have plenty of time to potter and enjoy my bees - any more hives would take up too much of my time. I like to go into the winter with two hives (this year two and a nuc).

Q: What's your worst beekeeping purchase?

DC: A large contact feeder! It's messy, clumsy and, if you ask me, badly designed. I much prefer Ashforth's.

Q: Do you have a favourite beekeeping gadget?

DC: I have three! A twig with a few leaves to brush the bees off the frames, an old door wedge

to help me replace a heavy super without crushing too many workers and a butterfly clip queen cage to catch and hold the queen whilst I work through the hive.

Q: What have been your best beekeeping moments?

DC: The first time I tasted honey from my own bees.

The first time I could confidently say I could see eggs (and wasn't guessing)!

The first time I spotted, caught and marked a queen.

The first time I sat and watched a colony march into a hive.

Q: Where do you keep your bees?

DC: In my garden - I can see them from my kitchen window.

Q: Do you have a favourite beekeeping book / manual?

DC: Again I have three...

"Guide to Bees and Honey" (Ted Hooper) - a reliable reference book

"The Honey Bee Inside Out" (Celia Davis) - an accessible account of the anatomy of the honey bee... and...

"Form and Function in the Honey Bee" (Lesley Goodman) - for the exquisite illustrations.

Q: The next best thing to beekeeping?

DC: Apart from the obvious answer it has to be: the novels of Iris Murdoch, opera and, without a doubt, chocolate.

Seasonal thoughts

As I write this we are "enjoying" the hottest start to October (according to which source you believe) *ever* and my bees are busy working the ivy, asters and michaelmas daisies, which will continue to flower until the winter frosts set in. But don't be lulled into a false sense of security, you *should* have prepared your bees for winter by now. Read "Beekeeping Notes For Beginners", pages 7 & 8 in October's BBKA News. The weather won't stay warm so it's too late to give them any more syrup feed.

Here is a cautionary tale from Richard Simpson: "Several years ago, in my first season, the ivy just seemed to go on and on, the weather was warm and the bees were flying vigorously. Having read that "the best food for bees is honey" (a statement that I have since seen disputed), I left them to forage naturally. Then,

in mid October, when the ivy was going over, I thought I'd better complete that feed. Result: my strongest colony passed away the following February.

When it came to identifying the causes, we did not have far to look. The brood frames were stuffed full of what seemed to be honey, yet a lot of bees had died with their tongues extended and their heads in a cell as though starving and looking for food. Where the "honey" was exposed it was bubbling, and smelled a little vinous. The full sealed combs had a purplish haze and grey mould spread across some of the cappings and the crownboard. It was not an outbreak of a deadly infection such as AFB or EFB, it was a case of wetness, despite being on an open-mesh floor. Wetness had caused mould and fermentation to set in, even though it was an almost new and certainly weatherproof hive.

Wet stores induce dysentery. Dysentery can lead to an upsurge in nosema, which has a similar effect on bees, although a different causal agent. The result is usually death".

If you do feel you've under-fed a colony the best plan is to place an empty super above a queen excluder then simply cut a block of fondent in half (leaving the plastic covering on) and place it, fondant side down, on the queen excluder allowing the bees to access it as required. The great advantage of fondant is it won't, like under-ripe syrup, ferment during the winter.

For those who wonder "who is Richard Simpson?" you will be used to seeing his name on the Newsletter heading, but rarely see him in person. That is because he started his beekeeping with Chalfonts and was our Secretary before Gordon Cutting (and after me, Ed), but now lives in East Devon. He remains an Associate of CBS and pops in at our meetings when in the Bucks area, as well as sub-editing this newsletter.

National Honey Show

Yet another show to enter! The **80th National Honey Show** is being held from Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th October at St Georges College, Woburn Hill, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2QS

Even if showing is not your thing it is well worth a visit (it's less than an hour's drive) as there are lectures, workshops and trade stands to visit and learn from.

Danish queen rearing expert Keld Brandstrup, Thomas Seeley from Cornell University, USA and Eric Osterlund, editor of the Swedish beekeeping journal 'Bitidningen' will be among

the international experts presenting lectures. Speakers from nearer home include Michael MacGiolla Coda, Professor Robert Pickard and Dr Nigel Raine.

Full details are available on-line and this year you will even be able to book workshops on line.

www.honeyshow.co.uk

If you wish to enter please contact Bill Fisher, who will explain all and take your exhibits to and from the show. As with the County show, I know several members have already done this.

John Crick

I'm afraid I have to report the sad news of the death of another longstanding member of the local beekeeping community. John Crick died on the 27th Sept aged 75. He was Chairman of High Wycombe Beekeepers and on the County Committee for many years. Whilst on the County Committee he served both as Treasurer and Chairman and, when illness forced him to stand down some 6 years ago, he was its President.

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 25th October

The Bees' Magic Ingredient

A talk by Pam Hunter

Thur 27th to Sat 29th October

National Honey Show, St. George's College, Weybridge, Surrey

Wednesday 2nd November

Bucks County AGM. We will be hosting this annual event – see above.

Tuesday 22nd November

Chalfonts AGM and social

Full details next month.

December

No Meeting

April 2012

Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd April

BBKA Spring Convention:

Note New Venue: Newport, Shropshire

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**