



Registered Charity No. 1121231

Newsletter

November 2020
Jones

Editors Gwyn Marsh and Dorotheie

Virtual National Honey Show

What a (hopefully) unique achievement for the National Honey Show! Lectures, workshops, quiz and a trade show - the only thing missing was the social aspect.

If we thought beekeeping through winter was trying, the Canadians who often have several feet of snow from October are not be able to access their hives until May!!! Mike Palmer took us through how he manages hives in such extreme conditions, watching the blossoms rather than the calendar.

Dr Medhat Nasr, also from Canada, gave an insight into the techniques used to ensure colonies survive the harsh winter conditions and emerge healthy and viable. Some very interesting ideas to think about.

Dr Jeff Pettis addressed the problem of failing queens. It was very interesting, as a recurring theme through several lectures I've watched recently. Basically, the message seems to be - don't import - raise locally adapted queens to ensure queens are strong and their progeny are adapted to their local environment. Perhaps this is something we could think about as a supportive beekeeping community group.

Chris Park showed us how to make a skep from the selection of materials to stitching it together, with a generous smattering of historical notes, Fascinating. Sara Robb gave us a demonstration and recipe for soap that can be made in one day. Her recipes are simple to follow and give good results. She also gave us details of how to get your products ready for sale. And I did my wax wrap demonstration.

If you enter honey into a show in the future, then John Goodwin's demonstration of preparing honey for showing, is a must. Hints from a judge's perspective. Not often we get the inside story! So, no excuses for under par entries from now on!!

All lectures and demonstrations are available on the National Honey Show website:

<https://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

Main Meeting

Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey



Clare Densley and Martin Hann

Clare and Martin gave us a fascinating insight into the life and beekeeping practises of Brother Adam at Buckfast Abbey. His work to produce a healthy, gentle, less swarmy bee is still highly regarded by beekeepers, many of whom feel a Buckfast Queen is still the best.

The apiary at the abbey continues the research tradition looking at bee health and behaviour.

Details of Brother Adams life and work can be found here:

<https://honeybee.uoguelph.ca/buckfast-breeding/history-of-buckfast-abbey/>

One of the areas Clare and Martin are researching is Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus. At the moment they think one reason might be stress caused by over-crowding. Space can be achieved by providing a 'chill out' space with an empty super. They also use garlic syrup and fondant which are thought to be an alternative to thymol treatment and help counteract Nosema. There are recipes available at

Fondant

<https://chalfontsbeekeepersociety.box.com/s/hu2qahwfrce55jcnuyn6mhotfnifsjra>

CBPV

<https://chalfontsbeekeepersociety.box.com/s/rucyyz74yb6cj3o9z10o2p6ylxm1rbv>

Clare has also written a guide about Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus. It's too long to include in the newsletter and is also available on the above link. It is well worth a read.

If you consider using unregulated, unlicensed treatments on your hives, please read reputable sources before you do and also record in your notes exactly what you do, amounts/concentrations you use and treatment times and durations. If these alternative treatments are proven to be effective, then your information and results could be a useful.

Microscope for Sale

Graham Burford has an antique dissecting microscope which he no longer needs. It was made by Charles Baker, London, a noted microscope maker.

It's a binocular microscope with a single objective lens with an integral (working) lamp and has been serviced. There is also an additional lamp for further illumination possibilities.

Offers over £80 (it is a working antique!!). Contact Graham on 07704 327690



News from the Apiaries

Chesham Bois

Earlier in the season we combined 10 of our smaller colonies into 4 double brood National Hives.

The uniting process went really well and the benefits going into winter with strong healthy colonies should bear fruit in the spring. The main objective of the double brood of the 4 colonies at Chesham is to enable us more easily to run Queen rearing and bee skills development at the Apiary next year.

The colonies are now all set for winter. The late pollen and nectar from the Ivy has reduced the amount of feeding require.

The varroa treatments are all finished until they get a treatment of Oxalic Acid in the early weeks of the New Year.

Please let me know if you would be interested in helping at the Chesham Apiary.

We look forward to running some interesting bee development skills workshops - which I hope will be led by the needs and wishes of the society.

Alan Roberts

Stampwell

Queen Rearing

When I first looked at queen rearing, I thought it looked very complicated and was something for an experienced beekeeper to do. But then I attended a weekend course with Sean where we grafted some larvae and put them into an Apidea. I realised then that raising queens is something that we all do most summers. I would think that every beekeeper who has kept bees for more than one summer has raised a queen. Well in truth, their bees have - either by swarming or by supersedure, a new queen will have been raised.

I think the consensus is that too many queens are being imported, and local bees are well adapted to their locality. We can and should raise our own queens. So why not think about it over the winter months?

Most people only need 1 or 2 new queens every year. Maybe get together with another beekeeper, forget grafting, and choose a simpler process like the Miller method. You don't need to buy any queen rearing equipment, maybe just a Nuc Box to put your new queen into. And if you were very successful and raised more than you needed, they could be offered to other club members. I bet you already know which is your best colony - the one you would raise a queen from.

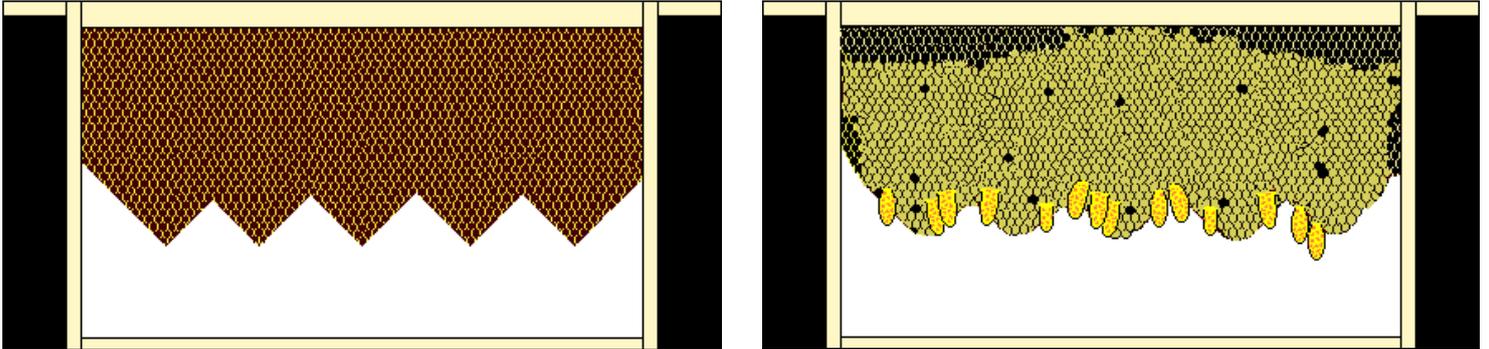
Sean from Mid-Bucks gave an online demonstration using the Miller method earlier this year and it can be viewed online,

[Youtube video](#)

As a club, I think, we should be raising sufficient Queens for all of our members, but it needs more members to start doing it.

Jim Liness

<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/millermethod.html>



Last month Stampwell reported their uninvited visitors. For awhile I've been keeping a lookout for the green woodpeckers. We have a pair nesting every year in an ash tree. Usually they only become interested in the hives when the ground is frozen and they can't reach the ant grubs or anything else edible in the ground. A few days ago, I saw a woodpecker sitting on the landing board of a hive happily collecting bees as they landed! Unfortunately, my efforts to grab the camera disturbed it, and off it went. Hastily netted the hives with landing boards but I'm not sure this will really help; we'll have to see if the birds can work out how to get around that!

Over the next few months our work with the bees is mainly checking store levels and taking any appropriate action. It's an ideal opportunity to clean and repair spare kit ready for the spring.

Gwyn

News from the Committee

Dorothie Jones

AGM Tuesday November 24th 7.30pm

Further details will be emailed shortly.

Please attend on Zoom if you can. There will be a chance to chat to other members as well as the committee.

December No club meeting

January Topic/speaker to be announced
Please let any committee member know if there is anything you would particularly like to hear about in future sessions.

Other available talks

There are many online talks about beekeeping available to join in on Zoom these days.

There is now a handy website run by BIBBA which lists most if not all talks which are available;

<https://beekeeping.events/beekeeping-events-a-one-stop-shop/>

Also, if you go to The National Honey Show website, you will find recordings of all their lectures going back several years. So, plenty to occupy you in the long winter evenings!

BBKA Study Modules

These are beginning to start up again online for those interested in further study. Some of those currently run by Chalfont's Beekeepers are in the advanced stages, and we are waiting to hear from the BBKA about when and how the exams will be running.

Fiona has started Module 2: Honey Bee Products and Forage and it is not too late to join in so if you are interested email her at fiona.matheson.fm@gmail.com

Mid Bucks Beekeepers have just started running the following modules. Chalfont's members are allowed to participate and it's probably not too late to join.

Module 3: Honey Bee Pests Disease and Poisoning
Module 5: Honey Bee Biology

Both run by Sean Stephenson. Contact education@mbbka.org.uk

Fondant

Mike now has plenty of fondant in stock in 12.5 kg blocks and 1.0 kg packs
Contact him on trading@chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk

The Beacon School Project

Early in September the committee received a request from Kim Rowland, the Head of Cookery and Nutrition Department, at The Beacon School in Chesham Bois for advice regarding having some hives at the school.

Gillian got in touch with them and after discussions and consultation with Alan Roberts at our Chesham apiary, a decision was made to approach the Head Teacher, Will Phelps with a plan to keep 2 hives up at the apiary and to have them managed by Alan.

The project needed to be self-financing, so after preparing a detailed spreadsheet of outgoings for hives, hive parts, bees, jars and labels against income from honey sales, it was decided the school needed to sell 800 jars of honey, purchased from us in advance to raise funds, which would have to be supplied by us! Gillian talked them into only having 1/2lb jars of liquid gold!

More than a little daunted by this task Gillian rang round and Graham Burford kindly agreed to provide 500 jars worth of the honey needed and Alan Roberts the remaining 300. Jars were ordered but took some time to arrive.

Whilst Graham and Alan were up to their knees in honey and jars, there were still no labels. The school wanted to design their own with their logo, but the draft they prepared had none of the essential requirements and was the wrong size! So Gillian re-designed the label with the logo items requested and approached a local web design office that had just started to offer a print service. Four days later we had 800 labels for the school to stick on!

Kim asked if we could also provide 45lbs of bakers honey to the company running the school kitchens, plus 18lb for her own department. Also some wax. More phone calls and trips to collect.

The school were also very interested in introducing as much information about bees, pollinators, environmental issues and sustainability into their lessons over the next year as possible. The best solution to this was for the school to join our club and then gain access to the BBKA's fabulous selection of educational resources. Three days after joining, the teachers were thrilled to see what was on the website and are now in full planning mode to use this material.

Thanks to Helen for speeding their membership through the system.

Exactly two months to the day since we received the original request, 800 half-pound jars of best Chalfont's honey, along with labels and bakers honey and wax was delivered to the school.



Later that week the Head Boy and his two deputies, along with Kim and Andrea, the school's marketing coordinator came to interview Alan and Gillian at Chesham Apiary. The questions asked by the boys were of a very high level and their understanding impressive. The response indicated that there could be a greater level of integration of beekeeping, and environmental issues into their studies. The plan is to have groups of boys visit the apiary in the future to learn more about beekeeping.

Finally, one week after the honey was delivered, over half has been sold and the school has also produced some excellent marketing material encouraging the boys and parents to assist bees by planting more bee friendly plants. A pdf copy of Sarah Wyndham Lewis's booklet 'Planting for Honeybees' was sent out.

A press release issued by the school to local radio and press, which is soon to be sent to targeted national press, included a quote from Chalfont's Beekeepers and the committee has welcomed our second school to the club.

It's going to be an exciting year of collaboration and we will keep you updated on how the boys are getting on.

by Gillian Jones Club Secretary



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