



West Suffolk Beekeepers' Association

NEWSLETTER September 2020

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, nor of the Association

Notes from the Editor

Hello readers. We now revert back to the three-monthly cycle of Newsletters after a disconnected summer in two ways ie. the disruptions of the pandemic and the unusual weather patterns with extremes of hot and dry and wet and windy weather

The demand for honey (in my case) has been unprecedented this Summer. I wonder if anyone else has experienced this. My guess is that two factors may be involved, the healthy image of honey amidst a pandemic and the fact that footfall past my advertising sign has increased due to the number of people that have taken up walking during lockdown. A scientific review has been published on the potential benefits of honey in combatting the effects of Covid-19 which is possibly another factor. In fact, honey has been shown to have virucidal effects on several enveloped viruses such as HIV, influenza virus, herpes simplex, and varicella zoster virus. Thus, it could be beneficial for patients with COVID-19 which is caused by the enveloped virus SARS-CoV-2 through simultaneously boosting the host immune

system, improving existing conditions and antiviral activities. Several clinical trials of the honey on COVID-19 patients are ongoing. May be good news for us, the select band of honey producers.

This years' harvest looks to be good despite the very dry spells that lowered nectar yields for long periods in the summer. Close to my apiary local farmers have planted a few acres of land, in fact one area right next door (Plate 1) with pollinator or bird seed production plants including Blue Tansy (*Phacelia ceticolia*) and Buckwheat (*Phagopyrum esculatum*), presumably for its seed production.



There is also flax or linseed (*Linecum usitatissimum*) in the mix although honeybees are not interested in this plant. These fields have been buzzing, not just with honeybees, but also bumblebees, solitary bees and butterflies, a wonderful sight. I must say that apart from the awful death toll, the pandemic has had some potentially positive effects in that many more people have become interested in wildlife since the pace of life has slowed down, many more walking in the countryside. It remains to see if this continues.

I am looking into how we do a virtual programme of Autumn/Winter meetings (see the programme later) via ZOOM and will keep you notified of the outcome in Carol's Bulletins and hope that I will at some time see many of

Plate 1 Pollinator crop and a late nectar source for my bees

you in the flesh at a later date when we are able to operate in a more normal manner.

I have just extracted about four hundred pounds of second crop honey and many of the frames had a bright blue pollen dotted here and there, showing clearly that *Phacelia* had been foraged. I hope that you also had a productive year and that your colonies are well prepared for the winter.

Roger Merry

Chairman's Report

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well.

Pandemic apart this has been another "unusual" year. A dry spring, wet early summer and a hot August has meant that nectar flows have happened at unusual times. I usually take my honey off in mid-July but this year there was little to collect. Over the last few weeks my bees to the south of Sudbury have found some Borage (*Borago officinalis*) and *Phacelia* and supers that I left on more in hope than expectation have been filled. Elsewhere there's still honey coming in (no idea where it's coming from) so I'll be starting extraction in mid-August this year. Overall yields look to be similar to last year.

This year's queen matings have been the best yet with a success rate of 80-90%. Also, immediate supercedures haven't happened, suggesting that the queens have mated well. The early season nuclei are now in full hives and doing well. The heavy losses I had over the winter (unintentionally) seem to have helped as I've seen very little disease this year of any sort and very few signs of varroa.

Immediately after extraction I will be treating and feeding. This year I'm using Apivar on my full colonies (on Philip's recommendation) and Thymovar on my nucs as usual. I've been using a new bee feed this year - Apimix. As well as being a 2:1 syrup it contains all the essential amino acids the bees need in the right proportions and vitamins and minerals. This makes it like a syrup and pollen substitute in one. I will feed a small amount immediately on extraction to help the production of winter bees and a full feed towards the end of September. Hopefully I can get back to having minimal winter losses as in previous years.

A situation commonly experienced by all beekeepers is a period where there are no eggs or larvae in the colony. This can be for many reasons, the queen has swarmed, stopped laying or died. Usually the colony replaces a swarmed or dead queen in a few weeks but the interim period can be worrying, especially if you have few hives. Many less experienced beekeepers will assume that the colonies are queen-less and immediately order a new queen, with the likely outcome that the bees will simply kill her, wasting a queen and money needlessly. Many forget that there is a simple way of determining the state of the colony, which is to put in a frame of eggs and young larvae from another colony. If the bees make queen cells then the colony is indeed queen-less and you can either knock down the queen cells and introduce a mated queen, or let the bees raise a new queen. If the bees ignore the test frame you know that they have a queen and you need to be a little more patient. Either way the extra frame will boost the colony and give them more time. Of course, this can only be done if you have two or more colonies and I would recommend you that have two as soon as possible. The hardest thing in beekeeping is to keep one colony alive!

Here's hoping you have a productive harvest and get your bees well prepared for winter and then we can all catch up on all things not bee related for a while.

Kevin Thorn

Our Stalwart, Ken James

Continuing my series of pen portraits of senior members of the WSBKA.

Many of you will know Ken as a stalwart of the WSBKA, a Lay Member of the Committee or as he put it 'a general dogsbody' and many of you will have purchased honey jars from him at some point (Plate 1).



I met Ken at the home in Bury St Edmunds where he and his wife Bridget have lived for 35 years. He is a scouser from Birkenhead, where he trained for five years as an apprentice photographer in Chester. As training exercises he had to take photographs of the Cammel-Laird docks and the excavations of the Roman sites in Chester. He later signed on for four years in the photographic section of the RAF and ended up serving for twelve years.

Plate 2 Ken with an excellent frame of honey

He was stationed in Germany for 5 years but eventually came out and worked for an American engineering company Barber-Green based in Bury St Edmunds and settled there. His role was in operational services, using his photographic background to help in developing and building new asphalt-laying machines which were used for road and runway laying.

Ken later went into the NHS in the Estates Department at West Suffolk Hospital. During that time he met Roger Bruton, an ex-Secretary of the WSBKA, who offered to let him help keep his bees and learn with a view to keeping his own. Some of you may remember Roger. This interested Ken who had always been fond of wildlife, growing up near the Wirral and was looking for a hobby to take up in his retirement. At this point he was reading books on beekeeping, particularly his bible, Ted Hooper's **Guide to Bees and Honey**; a well-thumbed copy stuffed with markers was on view. Ken had always had an appetite for wood working and like many of us of that era, were taught woodwork at school, so he set about building two National Commercial hives out of cedar planks bought at the annual Ickworth timber sale, which continues to this day. He reminisced about Mr Studd, his woodwork teacher, and the coffee table that he had made. He constructed Commercials as they have straight sides with no handholds.

Ken met Bridget in 1976 and they married in the next year. She from a family of beekeepers and the call from both father and grandfather had always been 'I need help with the smoker' in her formative years so it was a cult that she grew up with and naturally fell into it as a joint enterprise. They have always worked as a team and first kept the two Commercials in their garden at home in York Road, but since

then the number has crept up to around twenty on five sites, including Chevington, Saxham and Risby and they used to take hives to the borage at Lavenham. They also kept bees at Ickworth until recently, when Jane Corcoran took over the apiary.

They have used mixed hive types over the years but mainly Langstroths which they came across when visiting New Zealand during a holiday taken in celebration of their 25th Wedding Anniversary. They met two beekeepers who convinced them to convert. These hives have the advantage that they produce more honey per super. Indeed, Langstroths are almost exclusively used in NZ and all over the world Ken said, except for the UK where the British National Standard hive predominates. Nevertheless, Ken advocates the National for teaching and mentoring, which he still loves doing (Plate 3).

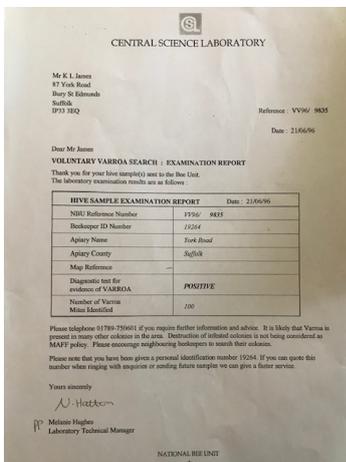


I also sought his views on swarm control and ‘topping and tailing’ as advocated by Mike Graystone and mentioned in the July Newsletter. For the former, he generally takes out the swarm cells a couple of times and produces some nuclei and then if the bees persist with swarming he does a Pagden type artificial swarm. At the end of the season he always gives one super of honey back to the bees. It goes

Plate 3 Ken with one of his students

under the brood box, the obvious advantage being the stores provided, but with open floors nowadays it makes it less draughty and the bees are warmer.

Ken is a meticulous keeper of records and very interested in science. He pulled out two items that illustrate this.



At the start of varroa problems in the UK in around 1994 and Suffolk in about 1996 he was invited by Central Science Labs (CSL) to take part in a survey of the incidence of the varroa mite in his colonies by recording mite drop and his data is shown in a letter from CSL (Plate 4).

He also got involved in artificial insemination of queens where the main objective was producing bees exhibiting hygienic behaviour by attending a course run at Stoneleigh in 2001, but although finding it interesting did not pursue it further.

Plate 4 Letter from CSL



Plate 4 Letter from CSL
 A recent passion of Ken's is the ukulele (Plate 5), initially encouraged by his son who is in the international music business and he plays in a band that was formed at the Risbygate Social Club.

Like many of us Ken and Bridget have had a very good year for honey. They both still enjoy good health and love beekeeping.

Plate 5 Ken playing the ukelele

I am sure that we would all like to wish them well for the future and thank them for their dedication to the Association over the years.

Offered Articles

Beekeeping for the elderly, decrepit, and other frail people!

I guess that most members of WSBKA scarcely glanced at the article in BBKA News, August 2020, 'Beekeeping as You Get Older'. Being past the first flush of youth myself I decided to glean any pearls of wisdom.

The author recognises that 'more help is needed as we age'. I was rather forcibly reminded of this when earlier this year three of us, beekeepers in Drinkstone, were helping each other introduce purchased queens. Separately they took me by the (metaphorical) elbow and hinted, in a kindly fashion, that senior OAPs should not be working double brood boxes.



'Using my super stool when opening up a hive. As a bonus it provides a rack for a walking stick'

The author, quite reasonably, advises we should reduce lifting and bending - but his brood boxes are virtually at floor level! (Plate 6, copied from the BBKA article). When opening a hive he suggests placing a stool alongside to put supers on. His stool is made of stout timbers and, if he moves it from hive to hive, must weigh almost as much as a super itself. One of my problems is bending: as a youth I patronised M&S 'Tall Slimfit'

Plate 6 From September BBKA Article
 racks of garments for sale. Now, due to subtle changes in girth, bending makes me

breathless and twinges my back. My answer is to have my hives on stands and I place the supers on a highly portable luggage rack of the sort seen in hotels (Plate 2).



Plate 7 Hotel luggage rack

I have two of these in my main apiary and one in each of my out-apiaries. It is important for stability that the feet of the rack extend to at least the width of the platform - I had to reverse the scissor of the legs of this model so that its toes pointed outwards - but a later purchase is better (Plate 3).

I hope you have all had a bounteous honey crop. Maybe your best hive was surmounted by four full supers? If so, the hive roof was at shoulder height.



Plate 8 Abelo poly roof on hive

On a boiling hot day, with you wearing full PPE, each super had to be lifted off and a clearer-board placed beneath. The four then had to be lifted back. Last of all the roof needed replacing. My roofs were made, twenty years ago, of softwood covered with galvanised steel, by our past honorary secretary, the late Terry Bird who made hives on a commercial basis. Each roof weighs 5.3 kg. Thus, I have replaced most with 2.1 kg poly-roofs by Abelo (Plate 2).

Maybe the Editor could invite further labour- saving ideas?
Good idea Giles, send them to me for the December edition. **Ed.**

Giles Youngs

Other items

Winter Meetings

The committee decided that all our winter meetings should be held online following the Zoom format as I said before. It would be too risky to assume that everything will be back to any sort of normality by the autumn, so we have decided to try this method instead. Instructions on how to access the meetings will be provided a few days before each session. There will be a dry run before the first one which may

include our members, as this is a new experience for many of us. If so, I'll let you know in good time. The dates of our meetings will be the second Thursday of the month as usual and Carol has booked the following speakers

October 8th Professor Steve Martin School of Environment and Life Sciences, Salford University

November 12th Ged Marshall, Bee Breeder, British Honey Producers Ltd.

January 14 Margaret Murdin Trustee and 2017 Chair of BBKA

February 11 AGM + Steve Riley of Westerham BKA on finding varroa-tolerant bees

March 11th Professor Norman Carreck has been invited and we await his response

April 8th Elli Leadbeater Professor of Ecology and Evolution at Holloway University

Reminder

Asian Hornet week is from 7th - 13th September. See link below)

[Asian Hornet Week 2020 - 07/09/2020 00:00:00](#)

WSBKA Library Access

As all of our meetings will all be online this winter, there won't be the usual opportunity to browse through our range of literature. To make up for this, we have a list books which will shortly be on our website. If you'd like to borrow any, Richard Burns, our current librarian, has kindly offered to take email requests, delivery/ collection at your mutual convenience taking, he hopes, no longer than three days. Please email Richard at rtb5x5@gmail.com

Please see the booklist below on pages 9 and 10:

Date 11/02/2019

Book Name	Date Author
Anatomy & Dissection of the Honeybee	1977 Dade - HA
Archaeology of beekeeping - The	1983 Crane - E
Asian Hornet - The	2018 Martin - S
BBKA Guide to Beekeeping	2015 Davies & Kenyon
Bee Friendly Garden	2016 Purdie - D.
Bee Genetics and Breeding	2008 Rinderer - T
Beekeepers Handbook - The	1983 Meyer - O
Bee Keeper's Problem Solver	2015 Tew - J.E.
Beekeeping	2007 Brown - A
Beekeeping	1989 Melzer - W
Beekeeping - A practical guide	2015 Patterson - R
Beekeeping - A seasonal guide	1985 Brown - R
Beekeeping for Dummies	2002 Blackiston - H
Beekeeping Study Notes Basic etc	1980 Yates - J D & B D
Beekeeping Study Notes Modules 1 2 3 4	1995 Yates - J D & B D
Beekeeping Study Notes Modules 5 - 8	2010 Yates - J D & B D
Bees and Mankind	1982 Free - JB
Bees of the world	1991 O'Toole - C
Bees: their vision, Chemical Senses and Language	1950 Frisch - K von
Beeswax	2015 Brown - R
Better Begining for Beekeepers	2004 Waring - A
Biology of the honeybee	1987 Winston - M L
Book of Honey	1980 Crane - E
Buzz about Bees - The	2008 Tautz - J
Collins Beekeepers Bible	2010 Heller - J
Colour Guide to the Pollen Loads of Honey Bees	2006 Kirk - W D
Communication among Social Bees	1961 Lindauer - M
Complete Guide to Beekeeping - The	1988 Morse - R A
Complete Handbook of Beekeeping	1976 Mace - H
Dancing Bees - The	1954 Frisch - K von
Encyclopedia of Beekeeping	1985 Morse & Hooper
Ethics of Beekeeping - The	2018 Whitaker - J M
Feeding Honey Bees	2017 BBKA
Form and function in the Honeybee	2003 Goodman - L
Foulbrood Disease of Honeybees	2017 NBU
General Husbandry	2017 BBKA
Get Started in Beekeeping	2015 Waring - A & C
Guide to Bees and Honey	2003 Hooper - T
Having Healthy Honeybees	2012 McMullan - J
Haynes Bee Manual	2011 Waring - C
Hive and the Honeybee	1976 Dadant and Sons
Honey	2008 Fleetwood - J
Honey Bee Anatomy	2016 BBKA
Honeybee Around & About	2014 Davis - C F
Honeybee Democracy	2010 Seeley - T D
Honeybee Ecology	1985 Seeley - T D
Honeybee inside out	2004 Davis - C
Honeybee Inside Out	2011 Davis - C F
Honey Bee Pathology	1981 Baily - L

Sheet1

Honey Bee Pests Predators and Diseases	1977 Morse and Flotum
Honey Potions	2009 Robb - S
Imprtant Operations in Bee Management	1978 Johansson
Insects	1989 Zahradnic & Chvala
In the Apiary Month by Month	2016 BBKA
Keeping Bees	2011 Gregory & Waring
Managing Bee Health	2016 Carr - J.
Managing Mininucs	1998 Brown - R
Managing Varroa	2017 NBU
Medical Aspects of Beekeeping	2000 Riches - H
Oilseed Rape and Bees	1986 Calder - A
Pheromones of Social Bees	1987 Free - J B
Planting for Honeybees	2018 Wyndham Lewis S
Plants and Beekeeping	1979 Howes - F N
Plants and Honey Bees - their relationship	2014 Aston and Bucknall
Plants for Bees	2012 Kirk - D J
Practical Beekeeping	2011 Bruyn - C de
Practical Microscopy for Beekeepers	2016 Maurer - B
Principals of Bee Improvement	2015 Widdicombe - J
Principles of Practical Beekeeping	1972 Couston - R
Queen Bee Rearing & Breeding	2014 Woodward - D
Queen Rearing Simplified	2010 Cook - V
Small Hive Beetle	2017 Nbu
Starting Right With Bees	2017 NBU
Sweetness and Light	2005 Ellis - H
Tropilaelaps	2017 NBU
World of the Honeybee - The	1974 Butler - C G