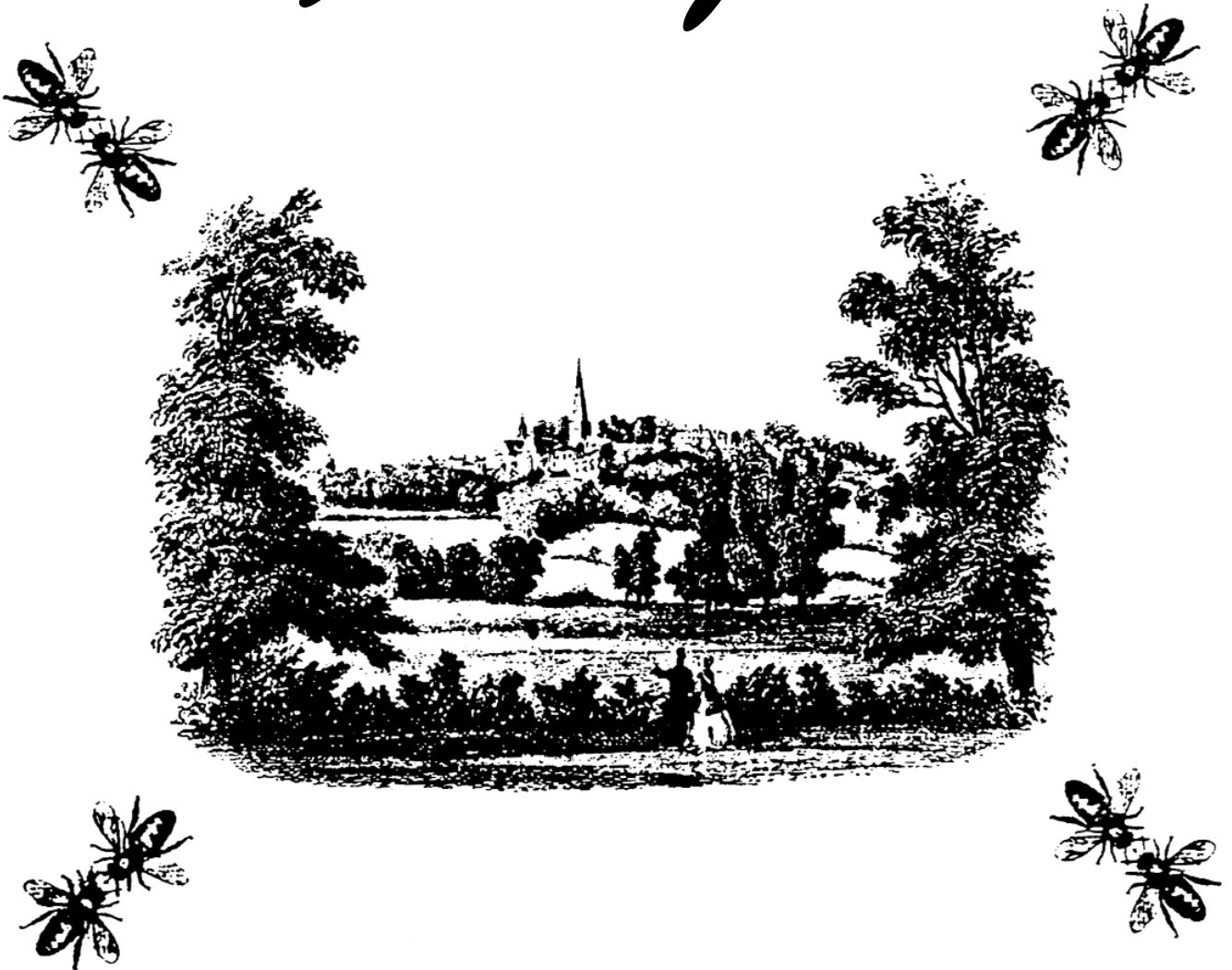


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Forager



The Magazine for the Bee-Keeping Association of Harrow

www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk

Forager

Published by the Harrow Bee-Keeper's Association
by whom this magazine was founded in the year 1946

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Editorial

Why do beekeepers smoke their hives? - a simple question, neatly answered in Beelines, t'keep 'em quiet, I would of said. Harrow notes is full of accounts of the summers activities, 'cheese and wine at the apiary, Harrow-in-Leaf and the 'Presidents Day'. And in The Federation 'Why shouldn't a woman keep bees?'

Good stuff.

I hope all your bees are nicely tucked up and de-varora'd, interesting article on a super-bee that can protect itself from the mite on page 6

Plus some recent news from the Daily Telegraph, a group of former members have split from the British Bee Keepers Association and criticised its 12-year- sponsorship deal with chemical companies.

Hope these articles keep you informed over the cold months ahead.

Jeremy Moore
Editor



Please note that all contributions intended for inclusion in the **Spring** issue of Forager must be with the editorial office by the **15th of December**, at the latest.

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Articles and Notes

HARROW NOTES

AUTUMN 2010

SUMMER

...has gone, and now the autumn mists are with us. Also irritable wasps.

The early part of summer was beautiful, with many warm and sunny days, but was followed by a fairish amount of rain and a September colder than usual. What the bees made of all this will be seen in the honey harvests.

CHEESE AND WINE AT THE APIARY

July 24th was a day of favourable weather. Clouds cleared, and the sun shone on happy beekeepers sitting at tables in the open air, sipping their wine and tasting a fine array of cheeses. It was a good time to chat. The table where I sat had a strong Austrian presence - there were three Austrian beekeepers, and we were joined briefly by a fourth.

All the jollity was made possible by the hard work of Moira Spiers and Alice Corrigan. Thank you.

If you didn't come to this event this year, put it in your diary when it's announced for next year.

HARROW IN LEAF SHOW

There were crowds of people at this show, held at the end of August, and although flowers, fruit, craft work and art all had their attractions, the honey show remained a focus of

interest. And justly so.

The sheer number of entries was impressive. So many jars of honey, boxes of cut-comb, frames of bees, wax exhibits - the cup cakes looked edible - photographs, pictures, writing. My favourite picture, by a young artist, gave a lot of information - the parts of a hive were shown - and the beekeeper was shown carrying out his tasks. In the last scene, he is lying back in his chair, exhausted.

The quality of entries was high, and Martin Buckle, the judge, was pleased with our display.

Once again, new beekeepers took many prizes.

THE PRESIDENT'S DAY

This was on the 19th of September, when Van Hinman and his wife hosted an afternoon tea in their garden. Sandwiches and lots of honey cakes were served, and the atmosphere was genial and relaxed. The Van Hinmans are expert at entertaining, and all those who attended had a very good time.

NEW BEEKEEPERS

...are not necessarily new to the art of beekeeping. Some have previously kept bees elsewhere, and have joined HBKA when they've moved into this area.

I have it on the authority of a neighbour that one such beekeeper was so skilled that, when taking a swarm, he was able to reach into the centre of it, remove the queen, and

place her where he wanted her, causing the rest of the swarm to follow.

THANK YOU TO:

1: Liam Kenny for giving the Association a honey bucket with tap

2: Mufeed for carving a beautiful wooden plaque with the letters HBKA on it, and giving it to the Association

3: Various people for donations, including Dennis Mack who has given us a very generous gift in memory of Dawn.

BUILDINGS

The Trustees supported the idea of using Dennis' gift to fund an extension to the existing HBKA building, which, with Gift Aid, would cover the cost, giving more space for educational purposes. This was discussed at the Committee Meeting of the 11th August. After a wide-ranging discussion, it was agreed that the project should go ahead.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Yes, it's that time of year. (Well, almost.) Aubrey Kutner will be sending out subscription reminder forms. When you receive yours, please do something about it, such as filling it in and returning it, preferably with a cheque.

Please do not: file it under 'pending', throw it away, lose it, shred it for compost, etc.

Remember that anyone not paying it by the 15th of November will not be able to receive the January issue of 'BeeCraft'.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It's on the 16th of November. Yes, a cold time of year to turn out in the evening, but well worth the effort.

Susan Kelly



From the Federation

September 2010

Hopefully your colonies have had all their resident varroa mites free accommodation terminated and your bees are heading into a mild winter with plenty of stores to carry them through. Even better if you have the same strains of bees that Ron Hoskins has now bred which do not have any mites on them at all!! It seems amazing that he has developed these when Prof Ratnicks has been undertaking this project along with finding 'hygienic bees' for the last few years at Sussex University.

It has been quite noticeable that there is a huge variation in the mite population fall out of each colony. Some, I must say seems quite paltry and in others a reasonable number but none this year has massive numbers as has been the case in previous years. When I say 'massive' I mean over 500 a week or too many to count! My main concern is though that the fall out or 'drop' on our insert boards only indicates the levels of mite deaths....not those that are still running around inside the hive

whether on the bees themselves or breeding now inside worker cells. Drones are not being reared at this late stage of summer.

I do hope many of you will attend the National Honey show at St George's College Weybridge, even better if you put in an entry to the show and boost Middlesex's chances of winning the Dr Gregg Cup. There are 2 novice cups to be won in Middlesex too for those who have never won a cup before in a Middx class. The show is free entry to all the new members who joined in 2010 and that have been registered to BBKA. You should have received some notification of this, otherwise it is £10 to enter plus class entry costs. There are great lectures, workshops, module classes to visit and lots of things to look at buy and of course chat about beekeeping. Check out the web site for details of lectures to attend and do book the workshops in advance if you can. www.honeyshow.co.uk

February 26th 2011.....yes it seems like a long way off but as Forager is only quarterly I do not want to miss the opportunity to remind you to put it into your diaries that this is the Federation day for next year. This is your chance to hear excellent speakers on your own foraging patch so to speak. Middlesex Federation of BKA pays for them to come to us. The programme is included on the web site and here. The Federation has a single Delegate, Pat Dutson, who will attend the Annual Delegates Meeting at Stoneleigh in January where propositions and nominations are addressed.

The BBKA recently put together a training package called a 'Course in a case', which was given to each Association. This meant that 1 only was given to the Federation for the use by our 5 associations. They can be bought at a discounted price for a short while until Oct 2010, at £50. The true price is nearer to £200 I'm told. Your 75p subs to FMBKA maybe an important contribution to each association having our own 'course in a case.'

A recent gift that came to me is giving much delight. It is the ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture by A.I. Roots who died in 1923. This is a heavy weight book full of charming pictures, huge swarms and no one wearing any protective gear. A particularly good section is on Anatomy with diagrams, (actually by Snodgrass) which are like those in Dade's 'Anatomy and Dissection of the honey bee' a must have book if you are studying for modules exams in beekeeping.

There is a reference to Beekeeping for women and a certain Mrs Comstock was invited to write this section, being the wife of a Prof. at Cornell University.....

Quote:- Why shouldn't a woman keep bees.....we are bound to confess that nowadays there is no effective reason why a woman should not do almost anything that she takes into her enterprising little head to do. But quite aside from the consideration of woman's prowess, there are one or two reasons that might deter some of the faint-hearted 'fair 'from undertaking beekeeping. There is no use trying to gloss over the fact that

there is a great deal of hard work and heavy lifting in the care of a profitable apiary. The hard work is really no objection, as most women of whatever class are doing it anyway.(I love that bit!!)

She suggests that if women are capable of moving cook-stoves they could move a hive of bees but the help of a husband , son or any man may be necessary and make life easier.

She then talks about the reasons ‘why women should keep bees’.

It is an interesting study in natural history, it cultivates calmness of spirit, self control and patience, it is a heap of fun; incidentally it may supply the home table with real luxury; and it may add a very considerable amount to any women’s spending-money.

She says that ‘there is something about the daily routine of housekeeping that wears mind and body full of ruts, even in the case of those who love to do housework.....’

A seminar run by our Regional bee Inspector was well attended by representatives from all over the S.E Region on 7th September. Hopefully a resume will be brought out about this by Alan Byham.

As the number of beekeepers is growing rapidly throughout all UK (900 registered on bee Base in the last 2 years in the SE alone)it concerns us all that diseases and exotic pests can spread like wild fire. We all need to be responsible beekeepers and not neglectful as EFB has been found in 101 colonies in SE this year which were in 42 apiaries. This involved 33

beekeepers.

You can all register on BeeBase and find out if EFB is in the same 10km square as your own apiary. Please take time to look at the www.nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk it is full of fact sheets, advisory leaflets and images which include those showing sick bees.

Plenty to be getting on with in the winter months!

Jo Telfer



British beekeeper breeds 'super-bee' that can protect itself from deadly mite that is wiping out colonies

MAIL ONLINE

A beekeeper has made a breakthrough that could halt the rapid decline in the global bee population.

Ron Hoskins has found a breed of the insect that protects itself against the parasite blamed for the alarming fall in numbers.

The 79-year-old made the discovery after realising that one of his hives had far fewer deaths from the varroa mite than others.

He found that the insects in that hive



'groomed' each other to get rid of the mites before they had the chance to do any harm.

Now he is attempting to spread his mite-resistant breed of bees by cross-breeding them with queens from other hives.

The staggering fall in bee colony numbers has led to warnings about mass starvation.

Without bees, crops and plants would not be pollinated and much of what we eat wouldn't survive, experts say.

The worldwide economic value of

their pollination is estimated to be £130billion a year.

The varroa mite entered Britain in 1992, killing millions of bees. By 2007 the UK's bee population had dropped by 60 per cent since 1970.

And a survey published in May by the British Beekeepers' Association revealed that beekeepers lost 17 per cent of their colonies in the past year alone. The mite has also become resistant to chemicals that have controlled it in the past.

Mr Hoskins, who developed an

interest in beekeeping at the age of 12 after he was evacuated to live with a beekeeper in Oxfordshire at the start of the Second World War, has spent 18 years researching a mite-resistant breed of bee.

The former heating engineer from Swindon has lost tens of thousands of bees to the parasitic varroa mite over the years.

During his research he found one of his 80 hives had suffered far fewer mite deaths than the others, he examined the insects and found tiny marks on the bees where the mites had been.

He realised this was because they had begun to 'groom' one another to remove the parasites.

He has now cross-bred his hives so they all contain the 'Swindon honeybee', as he has named it.

He said: 'What I want to do is redevelop the British bee so that it can protect itself against these varroa mites.

'If all the bees in the world die out then we die out - the situation is really that serious.

'Humans are completely reliant on bees for pollinating crops and plants which produce oxygen.

We are hoping that drones from my grooming bees will mate with wandering female virgin queens and spread the footprint across Britain.

'This is not a short-term solution and

it will take a lot of work but it could be our only hope of saving the bee.'

Martin Smith, president of the British Beekeepers' Association, said: 'The varroa mite is probably the single most important factor that has caused the reduction in bee numbers worldwide.

'It has now become resistant to chemicals we have used in the past so we are being forced to look into other methods.

'This could be the solution to the problem and it is exciting to hear about his progress.'



Bee keepers blame sponsorship deal over collapse in numbers

Daily Telegraph 4th Oct

Angry bee keepers have blamed companies endorsed by their own former organisation for allegedly contributing to a collapse in the numbers of the insects.

A group of former members have split from the British Bee Keepers Association and criticised its 12-year sponsorship deal with chemical companies Bayer Crop Sciences and Syngenta who produce pesticides that the group say are harmful to bees.

Bee numbers in England have tumbled by more than half over the last 20 years, and the situation is twice as bad in Britain as across the channel, according to Reading University.

The BBKA, a charity for the last 135 years, receives around £17,500 pounds-a-year in funding for their relationship with the chemical giants.

Phil Chandler, a former BBKA member who left the organisation last year and runs website Biobees promoting sustainable and chemical-free bee keeping, said: "This has been going on for years but has only come to light in the last few years.

"An organisation claiming to work on behalf on bees cannot be endorsing pesticides it is very clear and straightforward. Pesticides kill bees, to pretend they do not have effect is ridiculous.

"A significant number of the membership does not know about this policy because it is buried in the small print."

Pesticides, also known as neonicotinoids, produced by Bayer are banned in France, Italy, Germany and Slovenia and the Soil Association of Britain have lobbied Government for a similar policy to be adopted.

A spokesperson for the campaign group said: "A third of UK bee colonies have been lost over the last two years and there have been many explanations given for this.

"There is strong evidence that neonicotinoids a class of pesticide first used in agriculture in the mid 1990s at exactly the time when mass bee disappearances started occurring are involved in the deaths.

"The evidence against these chemicals is strong enough that they have been banned or suspended in France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia but not yet in the UK.

"The Soil Association believes that there is enough evidence to justify an immediate ban on neonicotinoids today."

The BBKA does not endorse Bayer's neonicotinoid brand but does give its seal of approval to Decis another insecticide believed by the campaigners to be damaging to bees.

The BBKA claims the decline in bee numbers has nothing to do with pesticides and instead blame other factors such as the weather, loss of habitat, diseases and even bad bee keeping.

Bees also face a fresh threat this year with fears over an invasion of Asian hornets which target the species.

BBKA president Tim Lovett, whose organisation has seen its membership swell from 12,500 to 17,000 over the last 18 months, said: "There is no doubt that pesticides kill bees and there is no such thing as a safe pesticide.

"But trying to push water uphill is not easy - it is better to direct it. There is



Beelines

Now Summer has gone it is time to tuck up our bees for the winter. Several hives show there was a mini flow in August. The wasps seem less active this year, perhaps due to the five wasp traps surrounding the hives in the home apiary, these traps were made from cordial bottles cut down, they work well until the wind gets up. The traps provided an outlet for the duff mead/wine from yesterday years. It did rain on St Swithin's Day, which caused the very damp August.

July 1.1" of rain, UK average 2.5

August 5" of rain, UK average 2.5

Regret that records show since 1861 there has never been forty days of rain following a wet St Swithin's, although in 1985 it was a close thing in Luton with 30 days of rain. The daily Mail has several references to Beekeeping, on the letter page:

'Why do beekeepers smoke their hives?'

The answer given -

"Aroused bees produce an alarm pheromone, Isopentyl Acetate, which alerts other bees to join the fray. The smoke blocks the Pheromone. Also the bees are stimulated by the smoke to gorge themselves with honey. The bloated bee is made more content and diverted from stinging. The extended tummy prevents the bee from producing a 90 degree turn of its sting chamber therefore little venom for the beekeeper. We have to thank Quinby Moses USA 1875 for the practicable smoker used today. Some call him the father of beekeeping. The first commercial beekeeper who was able

to make a living from the honey crop. Some find that as they continue their craft, smoke is only used on major manipulations. This is helped with the ownership of thick sting proof gloves.'

Bees possess remarkable abilities to perceive many different pheromones which waft inside and outside the hive. Opening the hive, even for a short period, remove many of these sensory signposts that control the bees life. This is a major stress that we can give our bees. Humans seem to have lost the skill to detect many of the world's odours, though we are told we can still recognise 5-10.000 smells. A smell is a cloud of molecules suspended in air. These are drawn into the nose and trapped on a mucous membrane. This membrane is packed with nerve cells which respond to separate molecules. The nerves send separate signals to the brain which registered it to us as a smell. The BBKA News states that the bees have 3000 sensillum placedeum pore plates noses on their antenna. Surely the alarm Acetare could break through the smoke. Some male moths can detect female pheromones a half a mile away after travelling through an enormous volume of air.

Bee venom was in the news. The Daily Mail reports that it has been made up with anti ageing moisturising creams. The cream mildly irritates the skin to produce relaxed wrinkles and strengthen facial muscles. Used twice a day for twenty minutes the cream could knock off ten years of the appearance of a

middle aged woman or gent. Also another cure, mix Manuka honey, shea butter and rose and lavender oils, cream and smooth the lines away. No mention of some people's reaction to bee venom.

Have you looked at your bees' faces recently. Work by Dr E Tibbetts on continental paper wasps has shown that the more facial spots present the more aggressive the wasp. Paper wasps are divided into three groups. Orient and Australia, Europe and yellow jacets and hornets. The European wasp was used in the experiments as its nests are open, thereby easier to observe. Dead wasps were placed on lumps of sugar with different degrees of face paint. The more spots the more aggressive the attackers were on the plain faced wasps. Leaving the spotted wasps alone. Robin Edward's book, Social Wasps, on page 332 shows the faces of our common wasps all very different. Have you noticed any differences between the faces of the inmates of different hives.

May I suggest a detour after picking up someone from Lutono airport. Stockwood Park or now named The Discovery Centre is only 5 minutes away from the roundabout below the airport. Six million were spent on a complete revamp of this Bedfordshire museum. The free car park leads to a brand new centre with excellent eating facilities, gardens, riding school, history of the area plus the best horse carriage collection in the UK. Luton Crest motto - due to knowledge and labour. The bees are on the emblem representing industry. The hive - the straw plating industry, thanks to the local supply of wheat straw. This is marked with a wheat sheaf. The Bedford Beekeepers

established in 1996 a bee gallery. This takes the form of a long leanto greenhouse against a 16th century garden wall. At one end the live demo separated from the visitors. On show straw skeps, Stewarten hive and the general run of bee keeping. The people in Luton 1086 used honey as part payment of tax. Wall boards show Assyrians hand pollinating fig bees were symbols of fertility and prosperity in all major religious books: Bible, Koran, Torah and Talmund. Harold Hempself's medals from the BBKA can be viewed in the well stocked shop. Available is a Bee DVD made by a Beds Beekeeper. Gill Sentinella 'Honey' lasted 43 mins in very fine definition and welcome commentary. Nice to watch various queens strolling over the combs in the comfort of your armchair.

History in a hundred days described a clay tile with crustform writing of medical practices. Written 1800 BC first record of medical treatments. An open wound was bound with linen soaked with oil (anti bacteria), cedar oil (anti fungal) and honey (anti bacterial).

A beekeeper from Tring was called out to a swarm at Whipsnade Zoo. After a long detour around the cages he was shown the swarm. In the middle of the white Rhino enclosure. Retrieving the bees would expose a large expanse of his lower back which could encourage the animal with its two horns to investigate. He refused the offer of the swarm. The Zoo Official then revealed that the swarm was in a poultry run.

M.P.D.

The Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers' Associations

Bee Keepers' Day

Saturday. February 26th 2011

Holy Trinity Church Hall, Medway Drive, Perivale UB6 8LN

10.00-10.30 am Welcome tea/coffee on arrival.

10.30 am **Dr Adam Hart.** Gloucester University.
' *Conflict in the hive* '

12.00 **Dr Juliet Osborne.** Leader of Pollination
ecology group at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden.

' *Honeybees and Bumblebees:
What is happening to them?* '

1.15 pm Lunch.

Refreshments will be available at a modest price

2.15 **John Hendrie.** Master Beekeeper

Member of BBKA Examination Board & previous
member of BBKA Executive.

' *From Blossom to jar* '

3.30 Annual General Meeting

Contact **A Pedley** 020 8578 7997 to book your place. Admission at the door
£6. Nearest tube stn is Perivale or S. Greenford . Parking free at the hall
or road.

no way the BBKA is going to stop the use of pesticides.

"I am afraid there are a number of people with an axe to grind who would rather throw bricks than engage in some kind of debate and discussion.

"They come on our online forums with their silly names and prefer to distance themselves but this is not our primary source of income and I am sure the day will come when the relationship comes to an end."

Dr Julian Little, spokesperson for Bayer Crop Science, said BBKA members have discussed the funding previously and members are happy with the situation.

He said the charity can spend the money how it wishes.

"We do support BBKA but there are absolutely no preconditions on that money," he said.

"We are very happy to support beekeepers in the UK and there is absolutely no evidence that insecticides are having any impact on bee health in the UK."



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