

Combing

The newsletter of the York and District
Beekeepers Association.

Issue No. 52.

Winter 2014.



www.yorkbeekeepers.com

"Combings" is the newsletter of the York & District Beekeepers Association. Views expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Association as a whole or of the editor.

Contributions to, and comments on "Combings" are always welcome. I would particularly appreciate your pictures for "Reader's Hives".

Please send any copy or comments to: Combings@gmail.com

Combings Editor: Kate Wallace

Combings is published quarterly.

Please note that the last date for copy for the next edition is:

18th February 2015.

One Ed.

The 2014 AGM was attended by over fifty members, who heard Dr Chris Coulson speak on the history of beekeeping.

The main business of the evening was discussion of the Committee's proposal to exit the Yorkshire County set up. After a lively debate, the proposal was defeated by 53 votes to 11.

Chris Coulson's presentation brought the temperature down a little. He managed to cover everything from Egyptian hieroglyphics to beekeeping in East Yorkshire and bee boles.

By the end of the evening we had a new President, Chair, Secretary and Treasurer but before welcoming each of these to their new posts, I would like to thank Ian Kibble for the many years of being YDBKA's unflappable President, a calming influence at heated AGMs over the years and a behind the scenes negotiator; both Ian and our new "Mr President", then-Chairman, David Gray were instrumental in keeping us at Murton when it seemed we needed to find a new home.

Thank you and best wishes to you, Ian.

Thank you also to the outgoing Chairman Paul Taylor, who remains on the Committee, Secretary Andre Scruton and Treasurer Tricia Miller, for all their work over the last couple of years. Long-serving committee member Nigel Davies is also standing down this time, after many years as a meticulous membership secretary, Association Microscopist, Honey Show and Auction organiser.

Ann-Marie Coulson and Paul Raven have also stood down from the Committee this time; our thanks to you all.

Welcome to new President David Gray, Chairman Bruno Hannemann, Secretary Tricia Miller, (who will be assisted by Janet Cole) and to John Thompson who resumes as Treasurer. Returning to the Committee after some years are Margaret Langstaff, John Fuller and Alan Johnston; our best wishes to them all.

A couple of reminders from John Thompson.

BBwear

Just a quick reminder, with Christmas approaching, that BBwear in Truro offer paid up Association members a discount of 20% off their clothing and 50% off their gloves. Have a look on their website which is bbwear.co.uk.

If you decide to order from them, send me an email and I'll confirm to them that you are a paid up member – then you will qualify for their discount.

Membership renewals

This is your final reminder that your membership will lapse on 31st December 2014 unless it renewed before this date. A renewal form can be downloaded from our website www.yorkbeekeepers.com

John C Thompson, Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

John.thompson@zen.co.uk

Annual Honey Show 12th November 2014

Congratulations to the winner of this year's Honey Show, Mary Ellwood.

Thanks to Janet Cole and John Thompson for this report on the Show.

Those who attended last year's show will remember that our judge made some quite pointed comments about our standards! This year's competitors left that last-minute jar at the back of the cupboard and submitted some serious entries.

Our judge, Ivor Flatman, thought the level and number of entries was very good. Amongst his comments were:

- The "Yorkshire pound" – in the squat pound jars, if you can see daylight between the top of the honey and the lid it will be a tad short of a pound of honey inside.

- Candles need to be in a holder so they can be lit safely.
- One candle was wet and Ivor couldn't light it, so it had to be disqualified. Its owner (you know who you are) put his hand up to this – he had washed the dust off it – much laughter at this!
- Martin Ainsley's winning heather honey was noted as particularly excellent in terms of stability – so that when the jar was tilted the honey stayed where it was within the jar. This proves that it was not "blended" with other nectars from the surrounding forage area.

The serious side of the evening was leavened with tasty refreshments - thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute - and by John Thompson's entertaining quiz. Congratulations to the winning quiz team of Tim Brenchley, Ann and Bob Parnaby and Paul Taylor, who well deserved something tasty in their stockpot.

If you visit the website you will find details of all the winners, and also some excellent photographs posted by Bruno Hannemann. Do come to the Honey Show next year on 11th November - it is a fun evening but also a great opportunity to learn about producing excellent honey.

Manuka honey

We have all heard of Manuka honey and its medicinal properties, I don't know what I expected a Manuka tree to look like but I expected something rather more imposing than this!



Our usual roving photographer, Chris Swift, sent me the quality photos (front cover and the Manuka tree.) The pictures were taken by Henry Farrar, a relative of Chris' wife Carol, on his New Zealand holiday earlier this year.

Henry worked for many years at the BBC as one of their location camera men, spending a lot of time with David Attenborough, Alan Whicker, the Tonight team and many others in the 60s 70s and 80s.

Thanks to Henry and Chris for sharing these images.

Christmas Competition!

We all know the rhyme that starts, "A swarm in May is worth a load of hay". Variations on the verse, however, appear in many languages. Below is a French offering:

Jeton d'avril,

Vaut une brebis;

Jeton de mai,

Vaut une vache a lait

Jeton de juin,

Vaut un boisseau de grain.

Members are invited to have a go at translating the ditty. The best translation will be published in the next magazine and will receive of copy of Pam Gregory and Claire Waring's book "Green guide to bee keeping".

NB. The editor's decision will be tres bon and tres final!

From the Chair

From our new Chairman, Bruno Hannemann.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself as your new chairman. Some of you will have met me at different occasions, and I hope to meet many more of you during the course of my chairmanship.

With winter now well under way, we have less work with the bees, but a beekeeper's job never ends: it's time to plan for the next season, order foundation, build and prepare new hives and supers, etc. The overall feeling about 2014 is positive, we had a long and dry summer and colony losses were down from previous years. Many of the beekeepers I have spoken to were pleased with their honey production.

Despite all the optimism, there is the bad news about the arrival of Small Hive Beetle in Italy, which poses a serious threat to beekeeping in Europe. BBKA is working closely with Defra to ensure this risk is managed and our bees are protected.

On 4th November DEFRA published the National Pollinator Strategy, which sets out a 10 year plan to help pollinating

insects survive and thrive. This can only be good news, not only for honey bees but also other species of pollinators. It was widely publicised on different news media that Network Rail, Highways Agency and the National Trust have pledged to take actions that will support the Strategy, and the private sector is also involved with Waitrose and Co-op supermarkets distributing bee friendly flower seeds to their customers. With so much media exposure, we can expect the interest of the general public in bees and beekeeping to grow.

I thank the committee for their confidence in appointing me as chairman, and hope with their help I will be able to ensure our Association has another successful year. I strongly encourage all the members to participate in the Association's activities, it is a great opportunity to learn more about bees and share ideas with fellow beekeepers.

Wishing you all a great winter and successful beekeeping in 2015!

Fuller's Earth

John has some advice on feeding bees.

At our Annual General Meeting on the evening of Wednesday 16th October 2013, John Whitaker of Barkston Ash Beekeepers spoke to us. One topic he touched upon was feeders and feeding.

Think in terms of feeding by the gallon rather than by the quart when feeding full size colonies, he stated. This is what I have been saying to new comers for some time now. By doing so you reduce the number of trips to your apiary and reduce the risk of your bees running out of food. This applies to stimulative feeding in the spring, feeding during the summer,

when foraging is scarce, and even more so when topping you bees up for the winter.

The recommended rates for feeding are 2lbs sugar to 1 pint of water for winter feed = thick syrup and 2lbs sugar to 2pints water at other times = thin syrup,

I sometimes read of feeding thick syrup to swarms or after doing a shook swarm. The idea of thick syrup is for your bees to store it for use during the winter. Swarms and shook swarms take place early in the season when nectar is plentiful. Thin syrup is therefore to replicate a nectar flow and used for comb building.

Do not skimp on feeding – you never lose out when you feed.

Did you know?

Beeswax candles have been used in the Christian Church for centuries. Produced by virgin bees, the wax symbolises the body of Christ, the Light of the World. The wick through the centre of the candle represents the soul of Christ, and the pure flame is the Holy Spirit. Just as the burning candle is consumed, so Christ died on the Cross.

Book Review – A Christmas cracker!

Thank you to Alan Johnston for his Christmas reading recommendation.

“The Bee – a natural history” by Noah Wilson-Rich et al. published by Ivy Press. £15.99 Amazon.

I stumbled across this little gem about a month ago in a West Yorkshire bookshop. It looked American, but turned out to be a joint USA/UK venture, printed only a few months ago.

At one level, it could be regarded as just another coffee-table bee book: pretty pictures and Einstein being misquoted yet again about the end of the world as we know it. Certainly, the photography is spectacular, but there's much, much more to it than that. The lead author's name meant nothing to me but one of the UK contributors was Norman Carreck, the Science Director of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA) and the Senior Editor of their publication, the Journal of Apicultural Research. This promised to be half-decent.

It comprises seven chapters – evolution, anatomy, social behaviour, mythology, basic beekeeping, a directory (photos, of 40+ bee species) and challenges faced by bees and beekeepers. Each chapter is divided into up to a dozen subsections, most only two or three pages long, but crammed with the most up-to-date scientific information available. There are bite-sized summaries of the bee's immune system, the honey bee genome, dance language, on-going scientific research and dozens of other "hot topics".

I cannot recommend that you buy it to improve your basic beekeeping skills; there are dozens of other books available for that. I can however unequivocally recommend it for its scientific summaries and cross-species comparisons, and if you are too full of Christmas pud to absorb the detail of the resource-defense polygyny of the male wool-carder bee, then you can just relax and enjoy the superb photos.

Winter care

Even in the depths of winter there is still a varroa treatment you can apply in the form of oxalic acid; there will be a demonstration of the application method at the Association apiary during (probably) late December or early January. The date will be circulated via email as it is weather dependent.

In the winter it can be too easy to neglect your bees, especially when the weather is foul and daylight in short supply. However

do remember to check your hives every couple weeks, watch out for weather, woodpecker or rat damage, and ensure the hive is still sound. It's a good idea to remove the mouse guards every so often and with a stick, gently clear out the dead bees which can clog the entrance; it can be difficult for the house-bees to clear the bodies through the mouse guards. Wear a veil though, a sting on the end of the nose is not a glamorous Christmas party look!

And remember to put the mouse guards back on...

It is very important to keep an eye on supplies in the hive; many colonies were larger than usual going into winter, due to the good summer and the long, mild autumn kept them active. Big, active colonies get through a lot of food so be ready to provide fondant before they need it.

If any of your sites are inaccessible in bad weather think about how you can manage this.

Winter is a good time to move hives: If you move in late winter after a no-flying spell of 10 days it should be possible to ignore the 3 yards or 3 miles rule.

Honey bees use maps!

This article appeared on the BBC Nature website.

Honeybees navigate using internal maps as well as the sun, new evidence shows.

Honeybees use mental maps to find their way home in a similar way to birds and mammals, researchers say.

Bees are known to use the sun in order to navigate, but scientists have debated the other methods they use.

A team of researchers "confused" a group of bees so they misinterpreted the position of the sun. They found these bees returned to the hive with a similar speed and accuracy of non-disorientated ones, suggesting the additional use of "mental maps".

The results are published in the journal PNAS.

Mammals continuously build "cognitive maps" in their brains of familiar places, helping them recognise landmarks and judge directions and distances.

"The argument is usually that the very small brain in insects will not be able to perform such a demanding task," said Prof. Randolph Menzel from the Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany - part of the international team of researchers.

Bees' brains do not have the same structures as mammals for making these mental maps. But the study has revealed new evidence that honeybees recognise landmarks such as hedgerows and other, smaller features, "very much... as we experience or draw a map", explained Prof. Menzel.

It has previously been thought bees rely mainly on the position of the sun as a compass in order to know where they are.

Honeybees are found in nearly every part of the world. It is thought they exchange information with others in the hive about the locations of flowers in relation to the sun, using movements known as a "waggle dance".

Prof. Menzel and colleagues from Germany, New Zealand and the US wanted to test how honeybees (*Apis mellifera carnica*) found their way home when released in a large open field 400m (1,312ft) away from their hives. To see if they relied on the sun to navigate, the team disorientated the bees by putting them under general anaesthetic for six hours to "shift" their biological clock. This would cause them to "misinterpret" the

position of the sun and potentially become lost on their journey home. Instead, the insects arrived at their hives with the same speed and accuracy as the bees that had not been "clock shifted", proving honeybees must use their remembered internal maps, as well as the sun, to find their way.

"We proved the existence of a cognitive map in honeybee navigation," said Prof. Menzel, adding: "They must retrieve the information about their own location, and the location of the goal, only from the geometric relation of landmarks which they have learned before."

The team's discovery was made using new technology in bee navigation: a "harmonic radar". The radar can track the flight of a single bee for up to 1km (0.6 miles) using transponders attached to the insect's thorax. This allowed the experts to observe the honeybees' natural navigation.

The honey bee in superstitions of the British Isles.

As we approach the festive season, here's a chance to see how the honey bee has woven its way into the sacred mythology of England, Ireland, Scotland & Wales.

England: In many parts of England, bees were said to buzz precisely at midnight on Christmas Eve. There is a suggestion that the story came about as a reaction to the attention to the Church calendar in 1752. Proponents of both the old and the new dates each claimed that the bees buzzed in support of their position.

Ireland: One story about a young St. Peter goes that his nurse complained that he never brought her any honey, as the other boys in the village did for theirs. "And so he went to the water, and sained (blessed) it, so that it became honey, and relics

were made of that honey and it was used to heal every disease.”

Scotland: there was a superstition in Perthshire which claimed that when a person died, whether naturally or by an accident, the soul, or spirit was visibly seen to leave the body in the shape of a little creature like a bee.

Wales: The birth of Wales’ patron saint, David, was said to have been foretold to his father thirty years earlier by an angel, who said, “on the morrow, thou shalt find a stag, a fish and a honeycomb, Thou shalt part of these to thy son, who shall be born thirty years hence. The honeycomb proclaims his honeyed wisdom.”

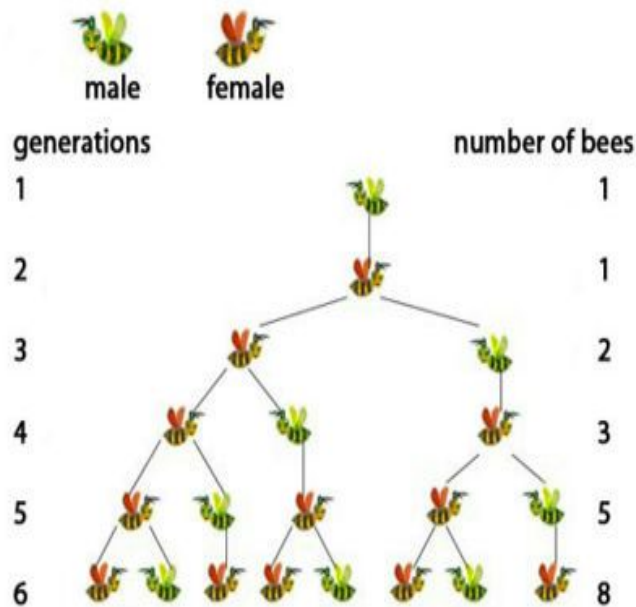
Thanks to Paul Taylor for this article.

I came across Fibonacci and drones recently in a book called the Secret Code. I have included a diagram from Wikipedia.

Fibonacci and Drones

When I see the spiral of my Christmas sprouts on the stem I am reminded of Fibonacci. His name is associated with a mathematical sequence of numbers in which the next number is the sum of the previous two numbers. Starting with 1 the next number is also 1. Then it is 2, then 3, then 5 and so on.

The same sequence is found in the parentage of unrelated drones. A drone has only 1 parent since he comes from an unfertilized egg. But the drone’s parent has 2 parents, a queen and another drone. Now that queen also has two parents but the drone she mated with has only 1 parent. The diagram of the family tree helps to explain this. As you will see, the number of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great grandparents follows the Fibonacci number sequence.



The Fibonacci sequence of numbers is also found in the florets of pineapples, sunflowers, daisies and strawberries, never mind pine cones and the sequence of leaves on some plants. It can even be found in our DNA.

Top tip.

Get your kit checked and cleaned during the winter, when a swarm is hanging in a tree is not the time to start thinking about scorching brood boxes. Plan for what you need to buy for the new season and make the most of the suppliers' winter sales days.

Remember that every season is different and plan for all types of weather.

CLARO BEES LTD.

For all your beekeeping supplies

2014 opening times: Saturday mornings from 9am – 12.30pm
on the following dates:

Beekeeping Season March 29th to October (inclusive)

Fondant & Oxalic Acid Winter Special Dec 6th

- Very keen prices on all items.
- Comprehensive stocks of hive parts & accessories,
- Foundation, tools, smokers, clothing, queen rearing equipment, medications, jars & lids, candle making equipment and books.
- Ample FREE parking adjacent to shop.

Knowledgeable beekeepers are always present to offer impartial advice on suitability of equipment prior to purchase as well as beekeeping problems. In order to keep our prices low, **CLARO BEES LTD.** continue to handle payments by cash and cheque only.

Find us: first left after the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens, Crag Lane, Harrogate, HG3 1QA e-mail: ClaroBees@hrbka.org.uk

East Riding Honey and Bee Supplies

We are the local bee supplies people for the East Riding. We always stock a good range of hive parts, frames, foundation, jars in a range of sizes, protective clothing and much more. We also supply Queens and Nucs during the season.

We're based in Dunswell between Hull and Beverley, just off the A1079, the main York to Hull road. It's always best to ring before calling to make sure that we are home and have the items you are after.

Tel 01482 859324, email lester@quayle.karoo.co.uk

456 Hull Road, Dunswell, Hull HU6 0AS



Agent for

Thorne Beehives

Top tip

Always follow the label instructions when applying varroa treatments. Don't use more than the recommended dosage, or leave it in longer than the instructions recommend, it will not be more efficacious but will build mite resistance to the product. Use of a variety of treatments (Integrated Pest Management – IPM) will help to avoid resistance.



The Beekeepers Quarterly



see a sample copy at
<http://beekeepers.peacockmagazines.com>

all this, and more at...



Northern Bee Books

Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5JS (UK)

Phone: 01422 882751 Fax: 01422 886157



Dean's Garden Centre



Your local, family run Garden Centre

Stockists of Beekeeping Equipment since 1978

Thornes agents, stocking over 130 of the most popular lines plus 1lb square & 12oz hexagonal honey jars and lids

Open 360 days a year. From April to June open

Monday - Saturday 9am – 7.00pm

Sunday 10.30am – 4.30pm

Stockton-on-the-Forest, York. YO32 9UE

Tel: 01904 400141

www.deansgardencentre.co.uk

Reader's hives

Dohnn Atkinson sent me this picture of weird coloured honey he found in one of his colonies; he assures me that this won't be on sale at his usual outlets, as Willy Wonka has bought the lot!



Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

