



The magazine of the York & District
Beekeepers Association

June 2009

Issue No. 30

The Combings

www.ydbka.org.uk

Association News

PLEASE NOTE: THE BUS TRIP TO CHAIN BRIDGE HONEY FARM ON SATURDAY 6 JUNE HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF SUPPORT.

BBKA Basic Assessment

For the last two years David Aston and I have given assistance to those of you wishing to take the BBKA's Basic Assessment. We will do the same again this year. You need to have kept bees for a year to qualify. What we have done in the past was to sit with a candidate and go through the syllabus item by item followed by opening a colony of bees (weather permitting) taking best part of two hours about it. It is not a training course, nor is it compulsory. It is more of a polishing up exercise. You can get a copy of the syllabus off BBKA's web site, or failing that give me ring and I will put one in the post.

In mid March I received a revised basic Syllabus from Val Francis - BBKA Examinations Secretary. The new syllabus is almost the same as the old one except that emphasis is now being put on cleanliness - of the candidate, his apiary and of combs. Integrated pest management techniques for keeping varroa under control is now included.

Chairman David Gray sent me a letter in March giving details of sessions he is running to enable last year's new beekeepers to gain more experience. By the time you read this the sessions will be part over but you are still invited.

“Chairman’s Invitation” Apiary Meetings: April/May/June 2009 — *An invitation to 2008 Beginners to join in some practical beekeeping sessions in 2009.*

Last year (2008) if you attended either the eight-evening Beginners Course that Sue Hesp ran at

Murton, or the one-day event that Danielle Palmour and I ran in New Earswick. As a follow-up, I'm inviting you to join in my regular "weekly" inspections of my hives in New Earswick Nature Reserve. You don't need to have bees of your own yet, or to be a member of York & District Beekeepers. If you've veil/overalls/gloves of your own, please bring them: I shall have some to lend as well. Bring welly boots. No money, it's for free.

We will be looking to see if they have they enough food? Is the queen laying? Is she marked (if not, mark her with last year's colour, red). Signs of disease? Check/treat for varroa? Provide clean floorboards.

Later inspections will repeat some of the above, and searches for early signs of swarming. As summer warms up we shall need to do some swarm control, by destroying queen cells or shook-swarm or artificial swarming or splitting the colonies into nuclei. We may even have a swarm to catch and to hive. In other words, we'll be doing the regular upkeep jobs of a small apiary, seven colonies at present. If the weather turns bad, we may feed them.

No-one is expected to come to every session, or even most of the time.

Probable dates: Mon 1st June 10 am (or 6pm), Mondays 8th, 15th, 22nd 10am (or 2pm or 6pm), but please phone me, between 7pm and 9pm, the evening before each session, if you do plan to come on the following day. The programme will be weather-dependent of course. If rain, is forecast, I'll tell you (when you ring the previous eve) about alternative timings.

The half-yearly General Meeting was held at Murton on Wednesday 8th April. It followed the usual pattern with the minutes of the previous half yearly meeting being read out.

Treasurer Chris Robinson told us that our membership stood at 100 with more to join via the Beginners Course. Our finances are healthy with just over £8000 in the kitty. He also explained why

he has moved our accounts to the CAF account – it is Government sponsored bank for charities and pays more interest than high street banks.

Secretary Tom Robinson said that when he sent a copy of our latest Constitution to the Charities Commission, he was told that Clause 10 regarding the winding up of the Association - which had been there since 1993 should be removed. This will be put to the AGM in October for ratification.

Chairman David Gray reported that the Association is to purchase four colonies bees to give the Beginners Class a better chance to handle bees.

York Beekeepers are on the Murton Committee. Murton are very keen for us to more to advertise beekeeping there.

The subject of who shall use Association equipment came up and became quite heated at one stage. The discussion revolved round whether Association equipment should be available to any Member to use on request, or should it only be used at Association meetings. If you have any thoughts on the subject please contact David Gray.

It will be discussed at the next Committee Meeting and the decision will be passed to you via "Comblings". We have two observation hives in the pavilion. As more space is going to be required in the near future, it is thought that they are surplus to requirements. Have you any thoughts as to what should happen to them.

Seasonal Bee Inspector Alan Johnston told the meeting that AFB had been found near Scarborough.

David Gray and David Bough are to organise a working party to tidy up our pavilion at Murton.

Our Annual Dinner at the Swallow Hall Golf Club was held on Friday 20 February. I thought the venue was one of the best we have been to. It was clean tidy and spacious. The meal itself was a carvery with plenty of everything. On reflection I think the carvery format has a lot to recommend it – it certainly makes it easier for the Association organiser. The disappointing part was the number of you that attended. Beekeeping by its very nature is a solitary job so the Association has this event to try and get us together to meet other beekeepers. So what is the Association doing wrong? Why did you not attend? Please let us

know – if you don't, then little will change. Having said all that, I must give credit to Tom Robinson for organising it.

I told you in March "Comblings" of a one day course being organised by Yorkshire BKA for those of you wishing to take BBKA Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry. I have heard that the course is fully booked (first week in April). There are a lot of candidates for the Husbandry Assessment this year, and as there is a shortage of Assessors, they are having to be draughted in from "down south" to cover demand.

Last year only ten general Husbandry Certificate were issued (pass rate 71%) and only two Advanced Certificates (pass rate 50%). Only one Master Beekeeper Certificate was issued. There were 154 module passes (pass rate of 75%).

The Basic Assessment had the highest pass rate at 96%, second was the Microscopy Certificate with 76% pass rate. I think microscopy is probably the most difficult to acquire with work having to be done through spring, summer and autumn to obtain pollen samples.

With a membership of the BBKA in the region of 17,000 these are poor figures and ultimately reflect on the numbers of assessors available.

Tom Robinson sent me this email. It is self explanatory.

I have nearly 70 acres of organic farmland with sheep and deer. Having seen the frightening programme on BBC 4 last night (Thursday 23 April), it seems that there is a major problem in finding suitable areas for hives/colonies. If any of your members are interested in keeping bees on my land for a few jars of honey, I would only be too happy for them to call me on 01347 868464 and meeting them on site. This would be a permanent fixture and would love to have some bees buzzing about.

Yours sincerely, Paul Hodgson

Editors note: It is an ideal opportunity for new comers to the craft to get themselves a permanent apiary – one of the more difficult aspects of getting started. This is a generous offer – they do not come up very often.

Spring cleaning sessions at Murton

Cobwebs! Dead bees! Sticky work-surfaces! Grimy floors! Out-dated notices! Weedy paths! Flaky wall-surfaces! Rusty hinges! All of them normal and predictable, after a long damp winter at Murton Pavilion and Apiary...

At our Half-Yearly GM we called for volunteers for spring-cleaning work parties: "Thursday evening 11 April, and Saturday morning/afternoon 13 April. Your leaders, and slave-drivers, will be your Chairman and your Secretary!"

A welcome_response from Ken Barran, David Bough and family, Rob Coleman, Nigel Davies, Tim Giddings, David Gray, Mike Marshall and Tom Robinson. Tom and Tim cleaned all the windows inside and out, David B. scrubbed the kitchen floor, Rob measured up for woodwork jobs, Ken and Nigel trimmed shady branches and removed dead trees, David G and Mike raked up branches and leaves and cleared the slabs, and everyone cleaned out cupboards and sorted rubbish from valuables. We detached both observation hives and stored them in the shed, making a much bigger space to spread out chairs for the Beginners' Classes. Mike took a whole wheelbarrow of broken glass (from the skeps area) to the dump and David G dumped the two disintegrating skeps.

All very useful. But there is more to do! Next working party is scheduled for Saturday 30 May, morning and afternoon.

Our Auction held at Murton on Saturday 16 May was hardly worth putting on. We only had fifteen lots which auctioneer Martin Ainsley dealt with within 15 minutes.

The standard of items for sale was high. Five National solid floors went for £16.00. There were three lots of National hives comprising– floor, BB, QE, super, crown board and roof – these went for between £37.00 and £45.00. The item that caught my where two stainless steel buckets with lids of about 2 gallons capacity. One fetched £15.00 and the other £18.00.

The day started bright and sunny but soon clouded over and the rain started. Those of us there had become resigned to a wet day, when the Manager of Murton offered to let us use one of the museums exhibition rooms – it was a bit crowded but we were all dry - what a kind man.

The auction put £55.80 into the Associations coffers. Thanks must go to Nigel Davies and Tom Robinson for organising it.

While at the auction I learned that Mike Langdale of Sheriff Hutton had died last November. Mike was an active member of the Association during the 1980's, being on the Committee from 1981 until about 1986 when he was Chairman. He was also our publicist.

I have an undated photograph from The Yorkshire Evening Press showing Mike Langdale with John Bowes doing a demonstration on making your own foundation at Askham Bryan – John looks a slip of a lad on it!

As part of our undertaking with Murton we are obliged to man the bee pavilion on Sundays during the summer. Volunteers are wanted for the following Sundays in August :- 2nd, 9th, 23rd and 30th.

Your attendance is requested between 14.00 and 16.00. You are there to speak to members of the public on bees and beekeeping in general and if you have any- to sell your honey.

Editor's Musings ...

We are always taught that, when introducing bought queens into a colony, we should remove her attendant workers first (this can be a long winded job, as it always seems to be the queen that wants to get out before her workers).

I have often wondered why, as the attendant workers will come with the smell of your new queen. I would have thought that it would be an advantage putting the queen and her attendants straight into your hive.

A couple of years ago, prompted by Alan Johnston, who in turn got the idea from CSL. I put the cage with queen and workers straight into a queenless colony. It worked well. I did the same this year with good results. Another idea to simplify queen introduction - in stead of putting your cage between frames of eggs / larvae simply put the cage on top of the frames. When the queen emerges she will quickly go down into the brood nest. To delay emergence wrap news paper over the candy end of your introduction page.

Something went wrong with your last "Comblings" in March. Somewhere between leaving my computer and arriving at Bill Scriven's (Bill does the printing for us), the font

size was reduced, making your newsletter look rather sloppy. Can any of you computer buffs out there tell me what went wrong?

There is such a demand for bees that Thorne's have closed their order book (late March).

The end of March/early April was a good week. The clocks went forward giving more day light in the evening. The first spikes of rape appeared in a nearby field and as there was a fine day I did my first inspection at one of my apiaries. Seven out of eight came through the winter strong enough for me to go back the following day and put a super of drawn comb on each one. The eighth had a queen in the autumn that looked a bit iffy. There was no brood, so I assumed she had ceased laying early. On looking through she was still there with only a small patch of sealed brood. She obviously had not got properly mated.

Lincoln Auction was held on Saturday 4th April – it is the first one in our area and always has much to offer. They seem to have bees for sale every time.

I did not go to the auction, but have heard that bees fetched high prices. Figures quoted to me range from £190 up to £240. You have to produce a lot of honey to get your money back in the season. If I am thinking like that I must be selling my honey too cheaply!

At the Beverley auction in April NUC's in good quality woodwork went for a more reasonable price of £130.

A Member phoned me on the 13th April telling me a swarm had issued from a hive. It is the earliest I have heard of a swarm coming out.

Prior to this it had been the last week in April.

I was talking to Alan Johnston about AFB in general. He told me that in speaking to beekeepers near to the out break in Scarborough, he was told there was an out break some 30 years ago. Is this a completely new outbreak or is it the old one that has laid dormant all these years? We are taught that AFB spores can lay dormant for many years and then when conditions are right the out break can flair up again.

An alternative to the uncapping knife

If you are a small honey producer or hobbyist beekeeper you do not have to go to the expense of an, uncapping knife. I for many years have been using and with great success an electric paint stripping heat gun to uncap my top box frames. It is a quick and simple method with no mess or waste.

Method: Hold the super frame vertically end up and with a quick waft, across the cappings you will see the cell cappings flash open. Twist the frame round and proceed on the other side, this exposes the honey ready for extracting. If you are careful the cell walls do not become overheated or the honey spoilt. A couple of drawbacks with this method are, you do not accumulate wax from the cappings because there isn't any and also the combs can become a little uneven, as you cannot level them off as you would with an uncapping knife.

An advantage with this method is you can easily get your frames drawn out on wide spacers

CLARO BEES for all your beekeeping supplies

Large stock and very keen prices on all items.

Cedar National hive parts, frames (all in first and second quality), clothing, gloves, foundation, jars, spacers ,tools, smokers, medicines, straps etc, all normally in stock and at below list prices.

Advice on the selection and use of beekeeping equipment always available.

Open every Saturday morning 0900 hrs to 1230 hrs April to October inclusive.

Beside the Harrogate Arms, past the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens, Crag Lane, Harrogate, HG3 1QA, or by arrangement.

A map showing our location is available at www.hrbka.org.uk

enabling your supers to hold nine frames, ideal for a nine frame extractor as many are.
John Bowes (York)

Editors note :- I spoke to John about using a heat gun and suggested that a canister type gas blowlamp with a fish tail nozzle would also do the trick. He is of the opinion that it would be too fierce. Non the less, if any of you want to try using a gas torch, I would be interested to hear how you got on.

Disease Liaison Contacts

In your March "Combings" I included a copy of a letter from Ivor Flatman asking the Association to put forward names to become "Disease Liaison Contacts". I was offered one of these jobs and turned it down flat.

This idea raised its head a few years ago with a lot of opposition. I see it as an admission that there are not enough Seasonal Bee Inspectors and that Disease Liaison Contacts will become Seasonal Bee Inspectors on the cheap. It will also introduce another tier of bureaucracy with a consequent increase in costs.

No mention is made of remuneration. You may get a payment for fuel – no victualing? – no retainer?, you will be doing it for love.

Ivor states "or someone that beekeepers may wish to turn to first for advice and guidance before calling out the Bee Inspector. Such a person may spot something wrong in a colony that the less experienced may not".

As things stand less experienced beekeepers are able to call on more experienced beekeepers for advice – it is what you have available to you being in an Association. So part of what he proposes is already in existence and has been so for many a long year.

Hive Thefts

Beekeepers already struggling with declining stocks have recently been hit by thefts. In Shropshire 18 hives were stolen from a strawberry farm near Telford while in Whitby, Yorkshire, 12 hives were taken. Please contact police with any information.

My wife went to the supermarket and came home with a bag of "Half Spoon" granulated sugar. It claims to be twice as sweet as ordinary

sugar. Looking at the ingredients it contains aspartame and acesulfame K. Not being users of any sort of sweetening, I decided to look at the Silver Spoon web site for ideas. I did not come up with much, but did find with this next piece on genetically modified sugar beet, which may be of assurance to you.

GMO STATEMENT

The UK sugar beet crop, from which sugar is extracted and sold in the retail market under the Silver Spoon brand and to the food industry direct by British Sugar, has not been the subject of any genetic modification beyond the well established processes of selective plant breeding. Neither are there any plans to introduce genetically modified varieties in the foreseeable future. British Sugar is carefully monitoring the views of its customers and the end consumer towards this technology. It is also reviewing the progress of the new gene technologies in respect of the benefits and risks which may accrue and the legislative processes.

As genetically modified sugar beet is not cleared for food use in the UK, it is illegal to grow it for commercial purposes. It is therefore required that all experimental plants are destroyed, and it is the statutory responsibility of the trial "consent holder" to ensure that this happens. Although British Sugar has no involvement in such trials, in addition to these legislative controls, the company has its own rigorous monitoring procedures to ensure that plants grown under these circumstances are ultimately destroyed.

Editors note:- with it containing aspartame and acesulfame K which are unknowns to me I shall not be using it as feed for my bees.

This appeared in the Daily Mail on Wednesday 28th January.

Bees can count (but only up to 4)

They are famed for being hard workers. But it seems honey bees could also be rather good at maths. Scientists have discovered that the insects can discriminate between numbers at a glance. In tests, the bees could naturally tell the difference between patterns containing two and three dots and with a bit of schooling, how to distinguish between three and four. The scientists now plan to

test whether bees can, also perform basic arithmetic.

Dr Shaowu Zhang, of The Vision Centre and Australian National University, which conducted the study, said:

"There has been a lot of evidence that vertebrates, such as pigeons, dolphins or monkeys, have some numerical competence but we never expected to find such abilities in insects. So far as these very basic skills go, there is probably no boundary between insects, animals and us".

The bee's ability to discriminate between different numbers could help them to find good sources of pollen even when they are miles away from their hive, he added.

This appeared in The Times on Friday 6 February.

Hills are alive with the sound of ants talking to each other

— Lewis Smith Environment Reporter

Advances in audio technology have enabled scientists to discover that ants routinely talk to each other in their nests. Most ants have a natural washboard and plectrum built into their abdomens that they rub together to communicate using sound. Using miniaturised microphones and speakers that can be inserted unobtrusively into nests; researchers established that the queens can issue instructions to their workers.

The astonished researchers who managed to make the first recordings of queen ants speaking also discovered that other insect can mimic the ants to make them slaves.

Rebel's large blue butterfly is one of about 10,000 creatures that have a parasitic relationship with ants and has now been found to have learnt to imitate the sounds as well as using chemical signals.

The butterfly's caterpillars are carried by ants into the nests where they beg for food and are fed by workers. When a colony is disturbed the ants will rescue the caterpillars before their own brood.

Research several decades ago had shown that ants were able to make alarm calls using sounds, but only now has it been shown that their vocabulary may be much bigger and that

they can talk to each other.

Professor Jeremy Thomas, of the University of Oxford said improvements in technology had made the discovery possible because it meant that the ants could be recorded and subjected to play backs without becoming alarmed. When we played the queen sound, they did "en garde" behaviour. They would stand motionless with their antennae held out and their jaws apart for hours – the moment any one goes near they attack. He described how the ants would press their antennae to the speaker just as they would seek to greet another ant in the nest.

Professor Thomas said *"it remained unclear how much the ants relied on sound for language, but he suspected that further analysis would reveal a wider vocabulary than had been seen yet. The most important discovery is that within the ant colony different sounds can provoke different reactions"*, he said *"I would be very surprised if we didn't get different types of sound. It's within the power of the ant to play different tunes by changing the rhythm with which they rub"*

He added that the detection of the roll of sounds provided the final piece of the jigsaw, to explain how Rebel's large blue caterpillars survive in ants nest and should help guide conservationists in trying to save the endangered European Mountain species.

Editors note: If scientists are able to listen to ants talking, we should ask them run the same tests on bees. They will probably get similar results. If that is the case we will soon be carrying new equipment into our apiaries - a microphone to listen to the queen and a phrase book to interpret what she is saying to her workers!

Here is another article from "The Times" also dated Wednesday 4 March 2009.

Your country needs you—call goes out to invisible army of hobby beekeepers

— Valerie Elliott, Countryside Editor

The survival of honey bees is under threat because of an unknown army of 20,000 hobby beekeepers who lack the knowledge they need to spot and combat disease. In a hard-hitting report today the National Audit Office (NAO) suggests that unless these amateurs are identified and taught the skills they need to protect their hives, the country's food production capacity will be reduced. The urgency is reinforced by the growing popularity of the

pastime, with about 3,200 people a year investing in safety suits and veiled helmets. The pollination of fruit, vegetables and other crops is valued at almost £200 million a year and the biggest beneficiaries are English apples which are worth £104 million annually to the national economy.

Figures released by the Audit Office show that 90% of English apple production relies on honey bee. Unless government inspectors find out who keeps bees, and where, they will be unable to prevent the further destruction of bees.

The plight of honeybees was part of an investigation into whether the handling of animal disease control budgets by Defra represented value for money. About 30% of colonies were lost to disease during the 2007 – 2008 winter and the endemic varroa parasite now affects 95% of hives. There are an estimated 274,000 colonies compared with 400,000 in 1960. The audit office is concerned, however, that the control of varroa is being hampered by the lack of colony inspections by the National Bee Unit; part of Defra. It is also unhappy that control efforts to date have failed to prevent varroa, which was not seen in Britain before 1992, from becoming endemic in 2006.

The NAO suggests a new campaign by inspectors to persuade all beekeepers to join a national register. So far only 17,000 have done so. If that fails, it suggests that ministers should examine the viability of a compulsory scheme, similar to those in Belgium, France and New Zealand. It is also anxious that the Government should organise training for beekeepers to help them spot signs of disease and to notify inspectors who can then prevent further loss of colonies. At present inspectors identify about 80% of hives with disease. Only a fifth of beekeepers report possible disease problems in their own hives.

Another problem highlighted by the report is that the varroa mite, which feeds on bees and spreads viruses, is resistant to treatments that tackle the infestation. Some beekeepers are therefore buying supplies of oxalic acid via the internet. Its use is widespread within the European Union but is not licensed in Britain. Enforcement authorities have turned a blind eye to this unlawful activity because they recognise that the substance needs to be approved for use.

There are concerns that if beekeepers dilute the crystals with excessive water it may cause a risk to human health and a burning sensation to the eyes and skin.

Edward Leigh, the Conservative MP and chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, is particularly concerned that disease controls are being undermined by the enormous number of beekeepers unknown to the government.

“Action to stem the very high losses of honeybees in recent years crucially depends on a regime of comprehensive inspections and treatments of colonies. At the moment, this isn’t being done” he said.

In January Hilary Benn, the Rural Affairs Secretary announced an extra £4.3 million to be spent over the next five years on bee protection and disease research. Martin Smith, the chairman of the British Beekeepers Association, who keeps eight colonies in Skelmersdale, Lancashire, said he was concerned that the extra money would be spent on leaflets and campaigns to persuade beekeepers to join the national register instead of vital scientific research into the underlying causes of the decline in colonies.

Editors note: This is the sort of half information / half speculation fed to the populace by correspondents that only have a vague knowledge of the subject. One thing for sure is that if registration becomes compulsory, you will pay for the privilege and again every year. You will become bogged down with form filling.

This article makes us sound like a bunch of half wits that only Government regulation can sort out.

Past Events

Friday 20th February

Our Annual Dinner was held at the Swallow Hall Golf Club, Wheldrake. It was a pleasant event with only twenty three Members, their spouses attending.

Wednesday 11th March

A Committee meeting was held at Fulford. I have no information as to what was discussed

Wednesday 18th March

The meeting started with Bill Bell giving thanks for the certificate he received recently to celebrate his 50 years in beekeeping. Then followed our speaker - David Aston. David has the ability to stand in front of an audience and speak with little preparation (I do admire people who can

do that) and in a short period has full participation from his audience. He covered many topics – there are few sources of pollen in early spring so bees can be short of protein. Pollen from wind pollinated trees such as pussy willow and hazel yield poor quality pollen. Protein deficiency makes bees more susceptible to disease. When the time comes to put your first super on – if you have it, then use drawn comb – early in the season there may not be enough young bees able to produce wax fast enough to store large amounts of nectar coming in from rape. This is then stored in the brood box causing congestion which in turn can lead to early swarming. Your second super can be foundation. Put it under the first super over the brood nest. The heat from the brood nest then helps the wax makers in their task. When moving bees to forage crops such as borage or heather. There is a tendency for two or three beekeepers to congregate in one area and swamp it – the out come – none get a decent crop of honey. This can cause stress on your bees.

Saturday 21st March

With the Murton management taking more interest in our beekeeping activities, eleven Members of York BKA met with Harrogate and Ripon BKA at their facility adjacent to Harlow Carr Gardens to see how they give public demonstration and run their beginners classes with Mike and Judith Rowbottom, Judith Hart and another gentleman whose name I forget where our hosts. We were shown their observation hive situated under a substantial timber shelter and the initial problems they had when first setting it up. We were shown their teaching apiary, the site where public demonstrations were given and their classroom. (Where incidentally BBKA written exams are held. Judith Hart had been the invigilator to a session that morning). The classroom has a kitchen and toilet facilities. We ended the afternoon in the classroom with tea and biscuits. The Harrogate Association is a large Association with in excess of 200 members with a large number of doers - something we lack at York. Their facilities are second to none. It was a nice afternoon out. We were blessed with fine weather and good hosts.

Wednesday 1st April A Committee meeting was held at Fulford.

Wednesday 8th April

Our Half Yearly General meeting was held at Murton.

Wednesday 13th May

A Committee meeting was held at the Bee Pavilion at Murton.

Saturday 16th May

Our 10th Annual Auction was held at Murton.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 6th June

A bus trip has been organised to visit Chain Bridge Honey farm near Berwick as part of the summer Programme. In order to arrange a bus to take our party, we require to know how many members are interested in visiting this interesting venue. Please let the secretary know if you intend to go, either at the half yearly meeting on 8th April or by telephoning Tom Robinson.

THIS TRIP HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF SUPPORT.

Sunday 7th June, Hardcastle Crag (0930 hrs)

The National Trust is having another "Balsam Bash". The idea being to rid the area of the Himalayan Water Balsam that we as beekeepers get a good crop of honey from.

Thursday 11th & Friday 12th June Countryside Days (schools day for 8-11 year olds) Great Yorkshire Show Ground Harrogate.

Saturday 13th June

Yorkshire BKA Field Day. Your host this year is Leeds BKA at their apiary at Temple Newsam. More details in June's "Comblings"

Saturday 20th June

Queen raising at Sheriff Hutton. Meet in the Highwayman's car park in Sheriff Hutton at 14.00. Tom Robinson will be our host.

Wednesday 24th and Thursday 25th June—Lincolnshire Show

At the Lincolnshire Showground on the A15 just north of Lincoln.

Saturday 11th July 2009 (0900—1600 hrs), Wragby

Thorne's Open Day. Free entry. Workshops commence 1100 hrs.

Tuesday 14th to Thursday 16th July

Great Yorkshire Show, Great Yorkshire Showground Harrogate.

Saturday 18th July (1600 hrs)

Nigel and Fiona Davies are to host this year's barbeque at their home. Salads and sweets will be provided. Bring your own main course. Ring to confirm attendance.

Wednesday 22nd July—Driffield Show

At the Kellythorpe Showground to the south of Driffield.

Wednesday 22nd to Sunday 26th July

Royal Horticultural Society's Tatton Park Flower Show.

Saturday 1st August—Tockwith Show**Saturday 22nd August.**

Visit to Peter Schollick's heather site near Leyburn. Peter is a master at producing heather honey and has won prizes at local and national level. Meet at Rawcliffe Bar park and ride car park at 1300 hrs. We will be going in a convoy of cars.

Saturday 29th to Monday 31st August

Bank Holiday Weekend—Cawood Craft Fair.

Wednesday 16th September Murton

The first of our winter programme is "Preparation of colonies for winter and varroa control". David Aston is the speaker.

Tuesday 15th to Sunday 20th September

Apimondia in Montpellier, France.

Friday 18th to Sunday 20th September

North of England Horticultural Society's Autumn Flower Show at the Yorkshire Showground.

Wednesday 21st October. Murton.

Annual General Meeting.

Thursday 29th to Saturday 31st October

The National Honey Show will be held again at St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey.

Wednesday 18th November. Murton

Our Annual Honey Show and social evening. Bring and share supper. Entries for the honey show from 18.30.

Saturday 15th May 2010

Proposed date for York BKA's next auction at Murton.

What you all wanted to know ...

Honey bees wings beat up to 15,000 times per minute, to give her a speed of up to 15 MPH. During flight large quantities of sugar must be consumed. The bees blood contains as much as 2% sugar; if the sugar content falls below 1% the bee can hardly fly and below 0.55 she cannot fly at all.

On a full stomach she has a duration of only 15 minutes and a range of 4 miles.

I read an article some time ago that said a bees flying range was four miles – any nectar collected at this distance was used to give her energy to get back to her hive, which meant that she put in a lot of effort for nothing!

Read Dade for the full storey. He also mentions that a bee's wing contains a few nerve fibres.

One method of swarm control is to clip the queen's wings – if nerve fibres are cut she must feel pain!

FOR SALE

Acetic acid for fumigating combs. £30.00 for 5 litres.

Contact Kevin Welby on 01904 693626.

Kevin will deal in smaller quantities if you bring your own container.

12oz/340gr Hexagonal Honey Jars

in boxes of 84 with lids at £23.50

Ambrosia syrup at £16.00 per 14kg tub.

Contact Colin Hattee on 01430 860972.