Combings

The newsletter of the York and District Beekeepers Association.

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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 editors.

Contributions and comments on Combings are always welcome.

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Two Eds.

Welcome to the summer edition of Combings.

A slightly different format this time as we have new publishers! One of our members, Tony, runs a publishing business, so we hope to keep it "in-house".

We extend a warm welcome to the following good folk who have joined our merry band of beekeepers:

Philip Eaves, Phoebe Clements, John Dickson, Michelle Russell, Pauline Chambers, Michael Stower, Adrian Burnside, Christopher Hufton, Jacqueline Hufton, Corinne Brown, Mark Whitelock, Catherine Copp, Alexander Marr, Pam Woodward, Philip Thwaite, Peter Young and Mike Coates.

It has been a strange start to the season – but it's always different from the previous year. The warm weather in March led to colonies building up early but then the weather changed. It's not often that we have to feed our bees when they are sitting next to fields of flowering Oilseed Rape (OSR) but it has been too cold and wet for the bees to get out. However, a look in the brood boxes over the May Bank Holiday has shown that the bees are doing what bees do in May and there are swarm cells being built. It seems that the unseasonal weather may well have concentrated the bees' efforts; there is no shortage of swarm cells!

Once the OSR and the early flowers have finished there is what was traditionally known as the "June gap", when few nectar bearing plants are in bloom. The timing is variable, rarely falling within June itself, so keep an eye on the stores that the colonies have available to them and feed with syrup as and when required. Resist the temptation to strip out all the honey from the supers at this time. The bees will need it more than you!

Kate Wallace Editor

Alan Johnston Assistant Editor.

We can be contacted by email: Combings@gmail.com

Top tip.

Before even thinking about knocking down queen cells – make sure your queen is still present, or your colony will have no queen and nothing to make a new one from.

The Inspectors say…

The latest available update as we go to press is: There are AFB outbreaks in Scarborough and in Brandesburton, East Riding and EFB has been found in Malton and to the west of Selby.

If you are thinking of moving bees from or to these areas, please check first with the Inspector.

Tom Robinson shares a method of queen rearing on a small scale, to raise 8 or 9 queens.

Select a colony from which you wish to raise more queens and wait until early or late May.

All that is required is a five or six frame nucleus box and a frame with unwired foundation.

- First Day

Take the queen and bees on a brood comb and put them in a Nucleus box about three feet away from the parent colony.

Take another brood comb and others containing food and pollen into the nucleus.

Add a fifth comb of unwired foundation, trimmed back on its lower edge in a zig zag shape and place it next to the brood frames.

Shake in bees from two other frames.

If the weather is cold or there is no honey flow, give a feed of syrup to the nucleus.

- Sixth Day

Go through the parent stock and take out any queen cells built by the bees.

Ensure all cells are cut out. Remove the foundation frame from the nucleus, which should be partly drawn and contain eggs and young larvae.

Trim back the lower edge in a scalloped fashion to where they occur. Place this comb in the parent colony.

- Eleventh Day.

Make another check of the parent colony to ensure there are no wild cells.

Scrutinise the inserted foundation and count the cells produced, leaving only the number you require, using, of course, the best ones.

- Seventeenth Day

The queen cells on the prepared foundation are now near to emergence. Distribute to more nucs or de-queen other colonies and insert the ripe queen cells in the brood combs.

The nucleus can now be united with its parent colony or a new colony can be made up leaving a ripe queen cell in the parent colony.

Remember.

- Drones influence docility more than queens.
- Introducing docile queens will produce better drones next year.
- Drones are haploid with only the genes from their mother and their grandfather.
- Change queens in July/August.

Did you know?

In India, it is an unhappy portent to have a dream involving honey.

Neonicotinoids, an explanation.

Dr Ken Thompson is a plant biologist with a keen interest in the science of gardening. This is an extract from an article he wrote in The Telegraph on 14th May 2012.

"Victorian gardeners were familiar with the alkaloid nicotine as a pesticide, and very good it is too at killing almost anything that moves. Unfortunately that includes people – the nicotine in three or four cigarettes would kill you if you absorbed all of it. As a result, nicotine has not been available to amateur gardeners for some time, and approval for professional use was withdrawn in 2009. But in the Seventies, chemists developed a new class of insecticides that, although not closely related chemically to nicotine, share the same mode of action and were thus christened neonicotinoids.

Like nicotine, neonicotinoids are extremely effective nerve poisons, but unlike nicotine they are really only toxic to insects and are very safe to use. Neonicotinoids have several other desirable features.

Their mode of action is different from other major classes of insecticides such as pyrethroids or organophosphates, which means that even if insects had already evolved resistance to those earlier chemicals, they would have to start from scratch with neonicotinoids. They are also highly systemic, that is easily and rapidly moved around inside the plant. This means that they can be applied as seed dressings, which are then

absorbed by the young plant when the seed germinates, doing away with the need to spray and more or less eliminating the risk to non-target organisms.

This combination of effectiveness and safety, both to humans and other animals, has resulted in neonicotinoids becoming the fastest-growing type of insecticide in the world, worth 1.5 billion Euros in 2008. Nowadays, 99.8 per cent of maize seed sown in the United States is treated with neonicotinoids (the other 0.2 per cent is organic). Several members of the neonicotinoid family, such as imidacloprid and thiacloprid, are familiar garden insecticides in the UK. Thiacloprid, for example, is the active ingredient of Bayer Provado.

But no sooner was the crop protection industry congratulating itself on discovering the pesticide equivalent of the philosopher's stone than problems began to emerge. Because neonicotinoids are so effectively transported around the plant, they can turn up anywhere, including in pollen and nectar. Admittedly, the quantities involved are minute: in lab studies, the single LD50 dose (i.e. that kills 50 per cent of dosed individuals) is about 100 times the amount a honey bee might acquire from a day's nectar-foraging. But a single bee might visit a field of treated oilseed rape every day for several weeks, eventually consuming quite a large dose.

Not only that, there's always the possibility of so-called "sub-lethal" effects, reducing bee lifespan or impairing foraging ability; these subtle effects are much harder to detect than straight mortality."

Bombylius major

I spotted several of these back in warm weather in March and I am indebted to Ecologist Julie Bishop for pointing me in the direction of the Natural History Museum's Identification and Advisory Service (IAS).The large bee-fly, *Bombylius major,* has a long, slender proboscis and a single pair of functional wings. However, when I saw them darting about in my garden, they fooled me into thinking they were a type of bumble bee I hadn't seen before!

Car parking at YMOF

The public liability insurance at Murton has certain new conditions, to which all members of YDBKA **MUS**T adhere.

Car parking must be within the designated areas and extended field parking facilities only. Parking either around the turning island or through the gate towards the trains is no longer allowed.

A method of swarm control.

May and June are the most likely months for swarms to issue, although earlier and later are by no means uncommon. No conscientious beekeeper would want uncontrolled swarms to issue; at best, you may lose your bees; at worst, it's downright antisocial, and can bring the craft into disrepute. So we need to be familiar with at least one manipulation to use when swarm cells are seen.

There are many different systems, and variations of systems. The one here described is sometimes known as the "Pagden" system, after the

Victorian beekeeper who first recommended it (or something like it!).

Assuming that you inspect your bees on a weekly basis during the swarming season, then you should never be confronted with a sealed queen cell, as they take eight or nine days to produce. What you'll find are a number of partially-completed cells; similar in size and shape to a dimpled peanut shell, hanging vertically down from the face of the combs, and numbering anywhere from a couple to a couple of dozen. You'll need to satisfy yourself that they are **swarm** cells, rather than **supercedure** or **emergency** cells: any basic beekeeping book will explain the difference.

Assuming that they are swarm cells, then you need to decide whether you are going to risk just destroying the cells in the hope that this will discourage the colony from swarming, or whether you're going to "Pagden" straight away. The former strategy sometimes works, but perform it only once with each colony; if they throw up cells a second time, you must implement "proper" swarm control. More often than not, however, the removal of the cells does not deter the colony from swarming and may lead to them departing the hive before your next weekly inspection. Many books state that swarms won't depart until queen cells are sealed over (8^{th}/ 9^{th} day) but this is not so; a colony frustrated by the destruction of the first batch of queen cells, will simply get the queen to lay a few more fresh eggs and then swarm away, leaving the bees to develop those eggs into queen cells after they've gone. When you go back a week after destroying the cells, you will find a half empty brood box, a few new queen cells and your swarm long gone. If swarm control was as simple as knocking down queen cells every time they appear, it wouldn't have been the most keenly debated issue in beekeeping since the invention of the moveable frame hive in the 1860s! So…. cut this out and keep this in your beekeeping tool box.

Pagden method.

When you see queen cells, you need to move the hive a short distance away – 4 to 6 feet will suffice. Ideally, this is a job for two people but if

you are by yourself then you can ease the job by removing the roof (which is heavy) and/or strapping the hive up to keep the floor and boxes together, and move it by the straps.

At the spot where the original hive was sited, assemble a new hive (it doesn't need to be brand new but if the floor and box have been used before then they must be scraped clean and blow-torched before re-use). Place the new floor and brood box on the original site and straightaway you will see returning foragers going into the empty box.

Now for the tricky part! You need to go into the original hive and find the queen; its' much easier if she is already marked. When you have found her, carefully move her and the frame she is on into your new hive, now standing empty on the original site. Fill the remainder of the new hive with frames of foundation, except a couple of frames from the original hive, containing honey and pollen. If the queen has come across on a frame of brood into the new hive, leave it in the new hive: if not, then you should move a frame of brood into the new hive but you must ensure that this brood frames has no queen cells on it. Bees already out foraging, and flyers leaving the original hive will return to the original site to find a new brood box, the queen, plenty of foundation to draw out and a frame of brood, which they will be reluctant to leave, conditions which largely replicate the environment which a swarm would encounter if it had issued.

Return to the original hive (now minus its queen, a frame of brood and a couple of food frames), which will over the next day or so lose many of its flying bees back to the new hive on the original site. It will end up, predominantly, with nurse bees and one or more queen cells; conditions which would pertain in the hive had it swarmed. Fill up any spaces with foundation.

There is debate about the number of queen cells to leave in the original hive. I was taught to leave two - "an heir and a spare" – in case one should be damaged. One runs the risk, however, if both cells develop properly that the first queen to hatch will not kill the remaining one as

the books say she will. In a "swarmy" season, she herself will swarm, taking half the bees with her, leaving the second queen to hatch out into only a few remaining bees – essentially only a "nuc", and a swarm lost, too. If you leave only one cell to hatch, then it's all eggs in one basket. You pays your money…!

The cell or cells left in the original hive should be handled very carefully, to avoid damage. Ideally they should be unsealed ones, if they are sealed there is no way of knowing with absolute certainty what's inside them (they could be empty!). With unsealed cells, you can carefully look into them to ensure that there is a larva inside, with plenty of royal jelly: pick the biggest and best one (or two) and destroy the rest. Don't shake them about as queen larvae are fragile and easily damaged. Mark the frames with the cells in some way e.g. with a drawing pin, so that you remember their location should you re-open the hive. Try and resist the temptation to go fiddling about, however, as cells are easily damaged and virgin queens are notoriously skittish and flighty. Far better to wait until she is mated and laying, some two weeks or so after the cells are sealed.

And that's just about it. Ensure that both hives have sufficient stores: the queen-right colony usually gets a gallon of syrup to help them draw the foundation quickly; the queen-cell colony gets the supers or syurup due to their shortage of foraging bees. Easy-peasy!!

Waggle dance

Forager bees scout out flower resources and return to the hive to perform a detailed dance made up of "waggle runs" on the honeycomb that communicate direction and distance.

The angle the waggle is performed at communicates the position of the flower relative to the sun, while the duration of the waggle tells nest mates how far away the flower is from the hive. Foragers repeat these runs in a figure of eight with the number of repetitions signifying the quality of the resource.

Dr Margaret Couvillon, a researcher at the University of Sussex told BBC Nature that bees dancing vertically on the honeycomb made few "errors", repeating identical runs throughout the dance. But bees dancing on the horizontal had more scattered runs. "They have a hard time when they're dancing horizontally - the angles that they dance repeatedly are very different," Dr Couvillon suggested that the inconsistencies could be attributed to gravity; when the bees are vertical on the comb they are aligned with the downward force but dancing horizontally requires more effort.

Extraction of honey demo.

John Fuller and Alan Johnston demonstrated honey extraction at the Bee Pavilion on Saturday 5th May. It was an entertaining and informative session by two prolific honey producers – and YDBKA's answer to Morecambe & Wise…

Washing up bowls and cheap and cheerful kit were the order of the day.

A few people have asked me about Kevin, the glass jars man who was mentioned. Kevin Naylor is Mr GPC (Glass & Plastic Containers, he also does honey buckets). Contact him by email:
kevin_naylor@btconnect.com

Reader's Hives.

This was one of the Editor's colonies last year, a double 14 x 12 brood box and four supers made it taller than me.

Send us your pictures!

Combings@gmail.com

Thank you to David Gray, former Chairman of YDBKA, for this article.

Balling the queen.

It seems such suicidal behaviour! If you open a hive in bad weather, the worker bees may "ball" their queen. They form a ball (about the size of a walnut) around her, and then tear or sting her to death. Matricide! All the bee books that I have read mention it: none of them offers a clear explanation of why it happens.

In summer 2011, while doing my weekly inspections during the swarming season, I saw it happen in three of my 10 colonies. On each occasion I had to inspect in poor weather. Once the workers have got into matricidal mode, it is very difficult to stop them.

But in each case I did manage to stop them. And each of my three marked queens survived and were happily there at the next weekly inspection.

How did I stop them? As soon as I saw what was happening, I kept hold of the brood frame on which the queen was being balled, removed the frames on either side, revealing the hive floor which was covered with bees. I shook all the bees off the "balling" frame onto the heads of the floor bees. This broke up the ball. The floor bees didn't attack the queen, and she crawled away into the darkness below the other frames. Whew!

Quote:

"If you really want something in this life, you have to work for it. Now, quiet: they're about to announce the lottery numbers" **Homer Simpson**

Top Tip:

If you have a newly mated queen following swarm control measures, try and have her heading your main honey-producing colonies. This will, hopefully, reduce the likelihood of further swarming, increase honey-yields and improve the chances of successful overwintering.

Jobs to be getting on with in the apiary…

June is still the swarm season, so keep making weekly inspections for queen cells and for brood diseases.

If you have taken off the sealed rape honey make sure the hive has enough honey to take them through periods when nectar is not available. If in doubt, feed your colonies with sugar syrup, as long as there are no supers on, or you will end up with syrup where the honey should be – you can't sell sugar syrup!

Check any bait hives to see if you have new occupants; if so, feed them to help draw out the foundation.

Don't forget about Varroa treatments; swarms can be treated with oxalic acid before any brood is present, otherwise icing sugar treatment can be administered. Apistan strips can be used, provided that you haven't used them for some years, as although the Varroa can build up a resistance to the Pyrethroid in the strips, resistance will have decreased if Pyrethroids have not been used for some time. Apistan is very convenient but must only be used as part of a variety of treatments – Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

July will usually see a quieter time for beekeepers, but this year, who knows! Your colonies will be at their population peak this month so ensure they have plenty of room available in those supers. There may be honey to spin off.

August is time to gather in honey and start think about your autumn Varroa treatments; these can be administered towards the end of August, unless you are taking bees to the heather or have access to Himalayan Balsam, which gives a good, reliable crop at the end of the season. Autumn feeding may begin at the end of the month so plan to buy in your supplies of Ambrosia or sugar to make up thick syrup.

Did you know?

In Christian lore, bees were considered holy because they swarmed out of Eden in disgust at the Fall of Man.

Fuller's Earth.

Taking the BBKA Basic Assessment.

YDBKA's John Fuller, who is an examiner for the BBKA Basic Assessment, gives a guide to what is expected.

The Prospectus and Syllabus for the Basic (and all the other BBKA examinations) can be downloaded from the BBKA web site.

The BBKA Basic Assessment is aimed at beekeepers who have been managing at least one colony of bees for a minimum of one year. The assessment sessions take place from early May until early August, often at Association apiaries or at your Assessor's apiary.

Great store is put on apiary and personal hygiene; clean suits and disposable gloves. If you use leather gloves then cover them with disposables.

The assessment is practical. The first task will be to put a frame together, then light the smoker and keep it alight throughout the assessment. You will open a hive, take combs out of the brood box and identify drones, queen and workers and their respective cells and identify brood in all stages.

Candidates will be expected to know the function of the principal parts of a modern hive and will be aware of bee space and frame spacing in brood boxes and supers.

Questions will be asked on how to set up an apiary, the hive conditions leading up swarming, how to collect and hive swarms, uniting colonies, queen-less colonies, drone laying queens, laying workers and what to do if these problems are encountered.

Diseases are given prominence; AFB, EFB, chalk brood, sac brood and Acarine and nosema. Candidates should know the difference between nosema and dysentery and be able to take a sample of bees for microscopic examination.

Candidates will be expected to know about Varroa - it is still the number one enemy.

The fee for the Basic is £15.00. The good news is that the Association will pay this! If you decide to have a go, once you have put your application form in to David Aston, I am prepared to have a "dummy run" of the assessment on a one-to-one basis, should you so wish.

Once you have a Basic Certificate, you can then progress to further practical and written assessments, if you wish. As you improve your beekeeping knowledge, you get more enjoyment out of your bees, and there is less mystery involved.

YDBKA runs apiary visits during the course of the summer. I would strongly advise newcomers to beekeeping to attend these meeting as they are hosted by experienced beekeepers. You can learn a lot by watching and listening to them.

John Fuller email: japlusja@btinternet.com

Quote:

"There are two classes of beekeepers; those who don't know, and those who don't know they don't know" after JK Galbraith.

The Practical Course - update.

The start date for the Practical Course has been put back 2 weeks due to the poor weather. It will now start on Tuesday 12th June 2012.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 26th May	Apiary Meeting
Saturday 9th June	Apiary Meeting
Saturday 23rd June	Summer Barbeque
Sunday 1st July	Craft of Beekeeping Open Day at the YMOF, Murton

Saturday 14th July	Apiary Meeting at Acaster Malbis.
Saturday 4th August	Beginner's Apiary Meeting
Sunday 19th August	Heather meeting (see below for details)

The Heather meeting will take place at 2pm on Sunday 19th August 2012 **(not Sunday 26th August as initially expected)** at Peter Schollick's apiary at Herontree near Leyburn.

Peter and Janet Schollick exhibit each year at the National Honey Show and have both won cups and trophies for honey, hive products and cookery and we may sample their cooking at our Tea! We expect to be back in York for 6pm.

Rendezvous is at 12.30pm at the Rawcliffe Bar Park & Ride on the York north ring road A1237 junction with the A19. We can car-pool and David Gray will lead a convoy via A1237, A59, A1, A684 to Leyburn. David will be waiting in blue Peugeot Partner YK08 XCW and will lead everyone to Leyburn, (road maps will also be provided).

- The apiary visit on 14th July will hosted by the Editors at Stub Wood, Acaster Malbis, by kind permission of the landowner Mr Roger Raimes and the farm manager, Mr Roger Kaye. We have been asked to park at a location in the wood, so we must all travel in together. Please phone the Editor for directions closer to the date.

Asian hornet

There is much press column space devoted to the Asian hornet. The Independent carried this article on 22 April.

Kill on sight! Fire at will! Battle plan to defeat deadly hornets heading for UK

An emergency battle-plan has been drawn up to protect Britain's bees from marauding killer hornets that are poised to cross the Channel.

Government experts have developed measures to defend Britain against the aggressive Asian hornet, which has caused havoc in France. Experts say it is "highly likely" to spread across England and Wales in the near future.

Vespa velutina nigrithorax, which grows to 3cm, can destroy a bee colony in two hours. Officials have warned that the devastation could cost £440m per year.

But the Asian Hornet Response Plan concludes that the UK has little hope of stopping the creatures entering the country – either by crossing the Channel or in imported goods such as soil, wood products and fruit. The document being sent to beekeepers, landowners and local officials warns that hornet colonies should be poisoned, smoked out – or even shot down.

Those of you who are registered with BeeBase will have received the following information:

Developed by the Food and Environment Research Agency (Bee Health Policy and the NBU), in consultation with Defra (Non Native Species Policy, and its Non Native Species Secretariat), the Response Plan was finalised in April 2012.

Its objectives are: Early detection, interception and prevention of establishment, nest destruction to eradicate localised outbreaks (if within a limited geographical area or areas), development of longer term management plans where eradication is no longer possible due to the extent and number of outbreaks, provision of advice to beekeepers and all other stakeholders.

Please visit the Asian hornet pages on BeeBase to read updated guidance for beekeepers, including information on early monitoring and trap design. You can also access the full Response Plan through these pages.

Across the Pond

Sparing no expense, YDBKA now has an American correspondent to keep you abreast of wider beekeeping issues, across the pond. Her first report touches on the annual almond pollination event.

"As you folks in Yorkshire read this, our annual excursion to California to help pollinate the almond trees will be over, and the hives will be stacked on the rig, awaiting the next contract. A million hives are brought from out of state, to join the half million already there, and with each hive attracting a fee of $150 (£90), it is becoming an increasingly important part of the income for our commercial beekeepers.

Since C.C.D. first hit hard round 2004, the price of renting an 8 frame hive almost trebled, with growers outbidding each other for our services. The income has helped us to replace many lost colonies, although there are still significant annual colony losses for commercial operators. They often have to replace half or two-thirds of their colonies each year with a significant proportion of their rental income being spent on medication, pollen supplements and replacement queens. Entire outfits remain viable solely on the strength of almond pollination income.

The almond growing business is continuing to expand at some 30-40,000 additional acres per year, and so the beekeeping industry will be called on to provide further 60 – 80,000 8 frame colonies to service them. But not everyone's happy with this kind of beekeeping. Animal activists have been damaging out transporters, saying that our commercial beekeeping is unnatural and cruel. More education required, I guess!

Good luck for the forthcoming season, and I'll speak to you soon. "Goodbye y'all!"

Did you know?

The threshold of a Croatian bridegroom's home was always lined with honey before his bride first crossed it.

I am grateful to Sheila Webster for her account of a first experience of a **Bailey comb change,** done in March, with help and advice from YDBKA Secretary, David Bough.

David came yesterday and was very kind and helpful. He recommended we didn't do a shook swarm but a Bailey frame change - so that is what we did. We saw the queen - she is definitely still with us and working away! It turns out we still had honey stores in the hive, so that explained why the fondant wasn't popular.

David thought our colony wasn't really big enough for a shook swarm. He explained it's a very harsh treatment as it results in lots of work for the bees as they must start with fresh frames.
It was such a lovely warm, still, afternoon, the bees were very calm and didn't seem to mind being switched about - I think it must have been David's magic touch!

As we did a Bailey frame change, rather than a shook swarm, it wasn't necessary to isolate the queen, we simply moved the frame she was on into the middle of the new brood box previously prepared with new frames. The old brood box was left below the new one - with the queen excluder between them. In 3 weeks time we will need to remove the old box, this will give enough time for any brood present to hatch. After this we will be able to revert to having a brood box, queen excluder and a super. It was very reassuring to hear David say the colony looked healthy although not strong enough for a shook swarm.

The bees are now being fed syrup solution, to help their work load and to encourage them to draw out the new foundation wax. Our local farmer has planted a field of Oil Seed Rape, so we won't have to worry about nectar for much longer. In 3 weeks time we will retrieve the old brood box and be able to really examine the frames and decide which need replacing. They are just one year old so I expect we will be able to clean the frames and re-use, although some will need new wax foundation.

Martin (my neighbour and co-beekeeper) and I are so grateful for all the good advice and encouragement we have received from various members of York and District Beekeepers Association. Surviving our first

winter feels like a milestone and, fingers crossed, we may even get some honey from our hive this year.

For this issue's book review, Alan revisits an old favourite.

"A manual of beekeeping (for English-speaking beekeepers)"

By EB Wedmore. First published 1932.

An eighty year old book would not appear to be an obvious choice for review and recommendation, so I'll disclose my bias at once and say that I personally think that it's the greatest English beekeeping book of the 20th century – fit to accompany the Bible and the works of Shakespeare as my Desert Island choices.

But it's not for the faint-hearted, or for those looking for a "Dummies" guide. Like the craft itself, it requires patience, determination and application: Wedmore was an engineer by trade and his meticulous eye for order and precision shows itself in both the format and content of the book. Had he been a fell-walker, he'd have loved the Wainwright-guides and recognized a fellow obsessive. The original edition has 1,776 numbered, cross-referenced paragraphs, each a gem of elegant prose: later editions were reduced to about 1,500. On the "down-side", the chapters on disease and treatments is outdated, and he obviously wrote pre-varroa, but the sections on the three castes, queen rearing, honey, seasonal management and general manipulations are outstanding. He gives detailed instructions about things you've never thought of.

The book is still in print, but is often bought and then left on the bookshelf as an historical document rather than a practical read, like Ted Hooper's "Guide". It should not be so. I understand that a further revised version of it is being planned, removing the sections for example, which recommend the use of chloroform and ethyl chloride for subduing bees (health & safety!!). To focus on these few out-dated practices, however, is to miss the point: its precision, depth, and elegance still make it core reading for those with a few years in the craft.

You wouldn't throw away the Wainwright guides because a few paths had changed over the years; no more should Wedmore be shelved because some of the science has moved on. It's a demanding read, but there again nothing worthwhile is easy.

Monsanto buys leading bee research firm after being implicated in bee colony collapse

Amid all the controversy over genetically-modified (GM) crops and their pesticides and herbicides decimating bee populations all around the world, Monsanto has bought one of the major international firms devoted to studying and protecting bees.

According to a company announcement, Beeologics handed over the reins to Monsanto on September 28, 2011.
http://www.naturalnews.com/035688_Monsanto_honey_bees_colony_collapse.html#ixzz1usDZNMe7

The Monsanto Company is a multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation. Monsanto is also the second largest producer of genetically engineered (GE) seed (source: Wikipedia)

Did you know?

Honey stone is the name given to melanite, which when broken into pieces and soaked in water, will sweeten it.

In this picture, Tom Robinson, (left) former YDBKA Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer (and just about everything else!) has removed a wasp nest for his neighbour.

Not much protective gear on view…