

# COMBINGS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE YORK AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NUMBER 37 MARCH 2011

YORK BKA website address: [www.yorkbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.yorkbeekeepers.co.uk)

Seasonal Bee Inspectors: Dhon Atkinson tel: 07775 119437  
Peter Allanson tel: 07775 119438

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

Queen marking colour for 2011 is **WHITE**

First the good news – Nigel Davies passed his microscopy exam – well done. He took a course held at Harrogate High School run by John Chandler, Dave Rennison and others. It is run every two years and is always over subscribed. If you are interested then it is a good idea to get your name down now. You can contact John Chandler email: [jachandler479@btinternet.com](mailto:jachandler479@btinternet.com)

Alan Johnston who is the co-ordinator again for this year for Yorkshire BKA's Foundation Offer told me that 24 Members spent £1,606 on foundation and other goods on offer. This is the highest figure we have known. 14 x 12 foundation was the highest value article – I suppose partly because it is the highest priced!

A Committee Meeting scheduled for the evening of Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December was called off because of the heavy snowfalls we had been experiencing at the time. So too was Yorkshire BKA's Annual General Meeting due to be held in their pavilion at Harrogate on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December.

There are 36 prospective new beekeepers on our theory course. This is the highest number we have had – I find this gratifying. Not all will take up the craft, but they are going about finding out the right way.

Secretary David Bough sent me this email - it is self explanatory. Unfortunately, by the time you read this, most of the classes will be over.

*"The York and District Beekeepers will hold a series of seven Beginner's Beekeeping Theory Classes in the Library of the Yorkshire Museum of Farming at Murton. The classes will be held each Tuesday at 7.30pm commencing on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2011 with the concluding class on Tuesday March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011. Any York+DBKA members who have previously attended the York+DBKA Beginners Course are invited to attend the 2011 course for a refresher at the reduced rate of £15 for 6 weeks of the course starting on Tuesday 15 February 2011"*

**Editors note:** There is a lot to learn when first taking up beekeeping, so a refresher course the next year is a good idea.

Another email I received from David Bough via Nigel Davies is good news indeed.

*"We are pleased to advise you that as a Member of York +DBKA you can now get a 20% discount on clothing items available from BBwear Beekeeper's Clothing supplier. You must advise BBwear that you are a Member of the York & District Beekeeping Association. BBwear will then check with Nigel Davies our Membership Secretary that you are in fact a fully paid up Member of Y+DBKA before you can receive your discount".*

BBwear, Beekeeper's Clothing, 1 Glyn Way, Threemilestone, Truro, Cornwall, TR3 6DT.  
Tel: 01872 273693 email: [mike.bb1@btinternet.com](mailto:mike.bb1@btinternet.com) [www.bbwear.co.uk](http://www.bbwear.co.uk)

**Editors note:** BBwear produce good quality bee suits – my last two came from them. Bee suits are an expensive item, so such a discount is well worth having. David is to be commended for getting it for us.

Your Committee have also secured a 10% discount for members from Yorkshire Beehives of Riccall. More details in their advert in the "For Sale" section of "Combings".

There is a copy of Yorkshire BKA Committee meeting held at the Normanby Pavilion, Harrogate on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February sent to me by Kate Wallace at the end of "Combings".

Another email came from Ivor Flatman via Nigel Davies asking to pass on to York Members his Annual Report. You will find it at the end of "Combings".

A further message from Secretary David Bough asks:

*"Is anyone willing to host an apiary visit in the future?"*

Do any of you have any pictures that you have taken of bees flowers, pollen, etc that we could use in the website gallery?

Do you have a request for topics that you would like to be covered in future – an apiary visit or evening meeting?

The minutes of the Committee Meeting held at Fulford Methodist Church Hall on Wednesday 8 December 2010 are at the end of "Combings".

The bus trip to Thorne's Open Day was a success, 11 people booked seats and 10 people travelled - the one non show due to illness.

I understand the bus returned well loaded with purchases. As this was a success, it will encourage the Association to put on similar trips.

The Association has one honey extractor to lend out to members.

If you wish to use it, the please contact Julia Mander 01904 704440. You will have the extractor for three days.

When you have honey to extract then it is likely that others will also have honey to extract, so use it – clean it and return it promptly to Julia.

We did have three extractors bought at the behest of members, for the use of Members but two have gone missing. Please cast your mind back to last season – if you borrowed one and did not return it please do so. It will still be available for you to use.

The Association is organising a free bus trip to Stoneleigh on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April. Those of you wishing to go should contact John Thompson on 01904 468466, email- [john.thompson@zen.co.uk](mailto:john.thompson@zen.co.uk) as soon as possible. The bus will not be arranged until some idea of numbers is known. For those of you who have never been, it will be an experience – any body who is any body in beekeeping will be there. Appliance dealers from the UK and Europe will be there. You will see equipment that you can only dream about. An email sent to me (and others), regarding the trip is enclosed at the end of "Combings".

There is a notice at the end of "Combings" from Treasurer John Thompson with the agenda for a Special General Meeting to be held in the library at Murton commencing at 2030 on Wednesday 20 April.

There is a further notice from Treasurer John Thompson showing the Associations accounts as of the 30 June 2010.

## **EDITORS MUSINGS**

In previous years I have gone through the British BKA's Basic Syllabus with prospective candidates, followed by a look through one of my colonies of bees. This is done on a one to one basis and covers every item in the syllabus. I look upon it as a polishing up exercise. A session lasts up to two hours. It is not compulsory. It is free to members. If you are interested, then your first move is to submit your request to take the assessment to Exam Secretary David Aston 01757 638758. Then contact me by Sunday 5 June. We will arrange a mutually acceptable date and time - either late morning or early afternoon.

When you go to out apiaries, tell your nearest and dearest where you are going and what time you anticipate returning home. If you have a mobile 'phone, have it on your person, fully charged and switched on ready for use in an emergency. Accidents by definition cannot be predicted,

Still on out apiaries, make a note of grid references of each of your sites, for they are often remote and possibly difficult to give any one directions to get there.

Also take your nearest and dearest to your sites occasionally so they are familiar with their locations.

## **YORK & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **12<sup>th</sup> Annual Auction of Bees and Bee Keeping Equipment**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

**at the Yorkshire Museum of Farming, Murton, York, YO19 5UF**

Bees must have been inspected and cleared by the Seasonal Bee Inspector three weeks or less before they are brought to Murton for sale, otherwise they will not be accepted.

Inspected and cleared bees should be brought to Murton the evening before the auction day, between 1900 and 2100 hours by prior appointment with Nigel Davies or Tom Robinson.

Lots will be accepted from 0900 on the day of the auction. They should be of reasonable quality, and will be scrutinised by the Stewards before being accepted. It is recommended that all equipment be sterilised before submitting it for sale. **Drawn comb, rusty tin ware, and items of poor quality will not be accepted.**

The vendor may fix a reserve price on any item by informing the Steward when booking in the items.

Viewing is from 1100 and the auction will commence at 1200.

## **A WORD FOR YOUR BEEKEEPING DICTIONARY – USURPATION**

Purely by chance this piece was given to me by Alan Johnston on **usurpation**

Recent articles in American Bee Journal described a hitherto unreported variation of the phenomenon known as "Colony usurpation".

Doctor Mangum in Virginia, has described seeing several instances where a homeless swarm of bees has chosen to move into an already occupied hive, rather than begin a new start.

This behaviour is known to occur in the USA where Africanised bees (so called "killer bees") invaded the nest of less aggressive bees of European ancestry.

It had not been reported as far north as Virginia – nor – and more importantly, where both colonies were of temperate European ancestry.

Briefly, the homeless colony targets an occupied, queen right hive, moves in killing the nesting queen and installs it's own. The two colonies unite, and continue as normal.

For Doctor Mangum, it has raised numerous issues involving – for example, the timing of natural swarms. Traditionally swarms occur in the spring or early summer, in order to give them selves time to re- establish before winter.

Usurpation does away with these time boundaries, and may result in much later swarming, with the inherent management problems for beekeepers.

There is no suggestion that it is likely to happen in darkest Yorkshire – it is something else to keep an eye out for.

## **BUCKWHEAT HONEY**

Late last season two colleagues collected small amounts of very dark honey, which they think came from buckwheat. Some enquiries have been made in the neighbourhood to determine if it was buckwheat and will any more be planted next year. So far they have drawn a blank.

It was probably planted as game cover and after dying back in the autumn was ploughed back in.

F N Howes' book "Plants and Beekeeping" devotes nearly two pages to the crop.

It is a grain crop in many parts of the world on light land – in Britain – Norfolk, Suffolk and the Fens are where it is most frequently found.

A most interesting paragraph is:

*"Buckwheat is one of the few plants that offer possibilities of being sown as artificial bee pasturage on an economic basis, the value of the resulting grain crop offsetting cultivation costs. As bee fodder, three or four successional sowings at fortnightly intervals, commencing in early May or as soon as the danger of frost is past, is the best procedure. This ensures a long flowering period of two to three months. The young plants are very susceptible to frost and may be killed outright by even one light late frost".*

## **PAST EVENTS**

### **Saturday 8 January (Murton)**

Alan Johnston gave a demonstration on the use of oxalic acid to a dozen or so Members – some old and some new. Alan explained the reasons why we use oxalic acid when we do. What equipment is needed. What concentrations and quantities of acid to use and method of application. The meeting was held on a warm day just after the long cold spell. This gave the bees a chance to have a cleansing flight for the first time in weeks – those who attended left with tell tale marks on their suits!

### **Wednesday 19 January (Murton)**

Clair Waring was our speaker this evening – her topic was "Big Bees, Little bees and Stingless Bees" which was illustrated with slides taken on her trips overseas. She spoke about *Apis cerana*, *Apis dorsata* with its single comb hanging from the under side of a tree branch with several other colonies on the same tree.

*Apis laboriosa* at high altitudes with a large single comb hanging - with others - from the under side of an over hanging cliff. Clair showed pictures of men suspended on the flimsiest ladders cutting comb and lowering it to the ground. This is done when the bees are about to migrate. Any brood is eaten – it may not appeal to our tastes but it is very nutritious.

Another single comb bee was mentioned – *Apis florea* – the little honey bee- smaller than *Apis dorsata*, then the sting less bee *Melipona beechii* from Tanzania whose nesting habit are similar to our bumble bees.

Claire finished with a gem of wisdom – elephants are afraid of bees – apparently they get up the inside of their trunks!

### **Wednesday 16 February**

David Allen, a member of BIBBA recounted how he started his beekeeping career with four colonies – two of which were stropky. He soon after joined the Village Bee Breeders Association founded by Beowolf Cooper with a view to improving the temperament of his bees.

The Black Bee Brigade maintain that black bees are well mannered – it is hybridisation by imported bees that is the cause of our problems with bad temper and following. Citing photographs of male and female beekeepers in the 1910's and 20's with short sleeves, no gloves and wearing only the flimsiest of veils. Not the armour plating we have to day. I think he has a good point.

Hive record cards were handed round showing the points to look out for when selecting colonies for raising queens. I think the columns are too narrow to write in if you are wearing leather gloves.

One tip David mentioned while on the topic of following bees – they should be re queened – but which hive did they come out of? Spray them with aerosol paint, then watch your hive entrances – easy!

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **Wednesday 16 March (Murton 1930 hrs)**

David Aston will be our speaker this evening on. His topic will be “Bee Health”.

### **Friday 25 March**

Our Annual Dinner. This is to take place at the Bay Horse at Murton Contact Sue Hesp for more information. More details to follow.

### **Saturday 2 April - Lincolnshire Auction**

At the County Showground, Scampton a few miles north of Lincoln on the A15. It will start earlier this year at 1100. More information from Alan Campion.

### **Saturday 9 April**

Yorkshire BKA's Annual Bishop Burton Conference.

### **Sunday April 10**

Beverley BKA Annual Auction. The same venue as last year, Woodmansey Village Hall. Auction starts at noon, entries in by 0900. Details should be on our revamped website when it soon returns to viability. [www.beverleybeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.beverleybeekeepers.co.uk)

### **Friday 15, Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 April**

British BKA's 34<sup>th</sup> Spring Convention at Stoneleigh. It is planned that York BKA will run a free bus to the convention.

### **Wednesday 20 April (Murton 1930 hrs)**

York BKA Special General Meeting then Wendy Maslin from Beverley BKA will talk on the BBKA's Exam process.

### **Saturday 14 May (Murton)**

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Auction. Organised by Nigel Davies. Items accepted from 0900. Viewing from 1100. Auctioning will commence at noon. Bees for sale will be accepted the previous evening **MUST BE EXAMINED** by the Seasonal Bee Inspector prior to arrival.

### **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**

Bee husbandry day.

### **Saturday 4 June**

Apiary meeting.

### **Sunday 3 July**

Craft of Beekeeping open day at Murton.

### **Saturday 9 July**

Summer Barbeque. Our hosts this year are Doreen and Gordon Griffin.

### **Tuesday 12 – Thursday 14 July**

The 153<sup>rd</sup> Great Yorkshire Show at Harrogate.

### **Wednesday 20 July**

Driffield Show.

### **Saturday 6 August**

Tockwith Show.

### **Saturday 13 August**

Heather meeting

### **Saturday 27 to Monday 29 August** (Bank holiday weekend)

Cawood Craft Festival.

### **Friday 16 to Sunday 18 September**

Harrogate Autumn Flower Show.

### **Wednesday 21 September**

Bees for Development

### **Wednesday 19 October**

Annual General Meeting.

### **Wednesday 16 November**

Annual Honey Show.

## **WORDS FOR YOUR BEEKEEPING DICTIONARY**

### **PHOTO PERIOD**

Hours of daylight. As the length of day increases in the spring, so does colony activity. As the length of daylight decreases in the autumn, so does colony activity

### **and finally ...**

Kate Wallace sent me this during the cold weather – it made me chuckle.

**Subject: Cold weather warning:** *The Government have issued a warning due to the cold weather. They suggest that anyone travelling in the icy conditions should make sure to have the following: Shovel, Blankets or sleeping bag, Extra clothing including hat and gloves, 24 hours of food, De-Icer, Rock Salt, Tyre Chains, Torch or lantern with spare batteries, Road Flares or Reflective Triangles, Extra Gas Canister, First Aid Kit, Jump Leads, Mobile Phone*

I looked a right twerp on the bus this morning!

## FOR SALE

### AMBROSIA FONDANT

Boxes of Ambrosia fondant is available at £15.50 each as opposed to Thorne's price of £25.85 for the same item so it quite a considerable saving.

The fondant is packed in 12.5kg boxes with five 2.5kg packets of sealed fondant in each box.

If you are interested please contact David Bough, email: [david@thecottageholtby.co.uk](mailto:david@thecottageholtby.co.uk)

### 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. 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 09.00 to 12.30 April to October inclusive.

Beside the Harrogate Arms, past the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens, Crag Lane, Harrogate, HG3 1QA,  
or by arrangement: 01423 567 315.

A map showing our location is available at [www.hrbka.org.uk](http://www.hrbka.org.uk)

### YORKSHIRE BEEHIVES

offer a 10% discount to York BKA members

Yorkshire Beehives manufacture in three types of timber, Cedar, Idigbo and Redwood (pine) and carry a stock of National and Commercial hives and their components in all three timbers.

We also manufacture WBC, Langstroth, Dadant, Top Bar hives, Twinstock boxes etc, etc, to order and will manufacture to customers own designs and ideas.

In addition we currently keep a small stock of the following items: Framed wired queen excluders, Plastic queen excluders, Glass quilts, Porter bee escapes, Metal frame runners, castellated spacers, Mouse guards, Pre-formed roof metal and Varroa Mesh.

Contact: Paul Snowden, Unit 5, Milners Yard, Riccall Grange, King Ridding Lane, Riccall, York,  
YO19 6QL

tel: 01757 248821 or 07777 691782

website:- [www.yorkshirebeehives.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirebeehives.co.uk)

email [yorkshirebeehives@btinternet.com](mailto:yorkshirebeehives@btinternet.com)

## 34 BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh – 15/17 April 2011

The Committee has agreed to put on a free bus to the Convention for those of you that might like to attend. They have asked me to organise the trip.

The tentative plan at present is to leave York around 06:30 hours on **Saturday 16 April 2011**, returning the same day. Rendezvous details with the coach and other information will be forthcoming nearer the time.

At this stage, I want to prepare a list of those of you who would wish to come, so that I can make enquiries as to the size of coach that will be required.

The coach will be **free** to paid up members of the Association. If any non-members want to come, there will be a non-refundable charge – perhaps £10 to £15 – but this will be subject to spare capacity on the coach, and will need to be paid to me prior to departure. At this stage however I will accept just the details of non-members and we'll see what we can do for them. But members will get priority if demand for seats exceeds supply.

Please contact me if you would like to book a place – I would prefer an email or letter if possible, rather than a telephone call. Please give me an email address if possible and a telephone contact number so that I can let you have further information as we go forward.

I would like to receive your booking by Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 – so don't delay - **Book today!!**

There will be a limit on numbers, so don't be disappointed!!

### NOTE:

This notice will also appear in the next "Combings" – so if you respond to this there is no need to do it again when you receive your copy.

John C Thompson, Treasurer, email: [john.thompson@zen.co.uk](mailto:john.thompson@zen.co.uk)

**NOTICE** is hereby given that the Special General Meeting of the York & District Beekeepers Association will be held on Wednesday 20 April 2011 at 8.30 pm in the Library at the Yorkshire Museum of Farming, Murton Park, Murton to transact the following business:

### Agenda

1. Attendance
2. Apologies
3. Correspondence
4. Minutes of Half Yearly Meeting on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2010
5. Matters Arising
6. Approval of the 2009/2010 Accounts
7. Annual Subscription Rates
8. Membership of the BDI
9. AOB
10. Date of next meeting:

Annual General Meeting Wednesday 19 October 2011

Half Yearly Meeting Wednesday 18 April 2012

## YORK & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

### Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 8 December 2010

1. Attendance: Peter Allanson, David Bough, Nigel Davies, Sue Hesp, Tom Robinson, John Thompson, Julia Mander. Apologies: Peter Crosby, Hugh MacPherson, Paul Taylor.
2. Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November: The minutes were approved as a true record.

- Matters arising: The bus trip to Thorne's was reported as a success, 11 people booked seats and 10 people travelled, the one non show due to illness.

The Honey Show exhibiting clause was revisited and it was proposed by David Bough seconded by Sue Hesp and carried unanimously that from 2011 that a clause in the Honey Show would state that only products from the exhibitors own hives that had not been exhibited in the Y+DBKA Honey Show before would be allowed to be exhibited. Action Nigel Davies.

- Correspondence: Four emails which have already been circulated to our Members by email advising of a the Yorkshire BKA Annual General meeting, a Bee Symphony on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at York University, Ideas for Christmas from the BBKA and a Beekeeper Training event at FERA on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011. A further email was received from the British BKA advising about the Course in a Case update and also the launch of the new Novices Course in a Case.

David Bough raised a concern that we could not inform all of our Members about these events because they do not all have email addresses. It was agreed that we would continue to inform as many Members as we could by email as soon as we received the information and include it in Combings for the rest of the Membership.

- Treasurer's Matters: John Thompson advised that he was now happy with the accounts and that Garbutt's had now re-audited and approved the accounts. It was proposed by John Thompson and seconded by Nigel Davies and agreed unanimously that we only pay one audit fee of £25. John Thompson advised that internet banking had not yet been completed for our accounts and gave us an update on income and expenditure since the last Committee meeting as follows:

- Income:

Membership subs via Nigel & Standing Orders	£1002.50
Other standing orders treated as donations	£66.00
Fulford Primary School collection	£139.63
Alan Johnston – re foundation purchase	£1606.80
Expenditure:	
Alan Johnston – postage	£38.40
Yorkshire Museum of Farming – room hire	£50.00
Nigel Davies – stationery expenses	£23.38
Mike Marshall – petrol for strimmer	£6.51
John Thompson – stationery expense	£5.19
Compass Travel – bus hire to Thorne's	£170.00
Yorkshire Beekeepers Association – foundation	£1606.80
Nigel Davies – honey show expenses	£22.55

Tom Robinson proposed, seconded by Nigel Davies and agreed unanimously that the remainder of the grant money from the Coop (£950) be ring fenced in order to purchase and set up a fully functioning observation hive in the entrance of the Yorkshire Museum of Farming. The various hive options to be researched and brought back to a future meeting. Action Tom Robinson and Pete Allanson.

- Beginners Theory and Practical Courses: Tom Robinson advised that 34 people plus representatives from Queens Ethelburga's and the Young Offender Institute have registered an interest in attending our 2011 beginner's course. Sue Hesp advised that the theory course would start on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2011 and run for 7 consecutive weeks and that the attendance fee would remain at £35.

Sue Hesp proposed and it was agreed unanimously that we would invite Members who had previously attended the York + DBKA Beginners Course to attend the 2011 course for a refresher at the reduced rate of £15 for 6 weeks of the course starting on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011. An application form for the refresher course would be emailed to all previous Beginners' Course attendees. Action Sue Hesp, David Bough and Nigel Davies.

- AOB: Nigel Davies advised that to date he had received subscriptions from 56 Members.

David Bough has spoken to Mike Marshall about a strimmer for the club apiary and Mike is collating some information for a future meeting. Mike also asked that we take some health and safety

precautions and consider purchasing a helmet with face guard and ear defenders for anyone using the strimmer in the future.

Julia Mander raised the issue of the auction so that she could promote it to other Associations. Pete Allanson proposed seconded by Sue Hesp and carried unanimously that there would be no seller's fees for our 2011 auction.

It was proposed by Sue Hesp and carried unanimously that a free bus trip be organised for Association Members in order to attend the Saturday of the Stoneleigh show 2011.

Nigel Davies suggested that we consider Dunnington Church Hall for our future committee meetings since we will no longer be able to meet at the Methodist Chapel Schoolroom in Fulford after our January 2011 meeting. Action David Bough.

9. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011 | the Methodist Chapel Schoolroom starting at 7.30pm.

## **Annual Bee Report – North East Region. December 2010**

### **The 2010 Season – An Overview**

I am starting these notes on the 1<sup>st</sup> December and looking out of the window for inspiration onto trees and rooftops laden with snow and with more falling, rapidly adding to the accumulation of 6 inches over the last few days – small beer I know compared to some other parts of the region. Wintery conditions have returned early and no doubt the statisticians will revel in telling us of yet more records broken – I heard on the national news only last night of three for the small North Yorkshire town of Linton-on-Ouse, the warmest day, the coldest night and highest snowfall in 24 hours ever recorded for the month of November.

I would be quite wealthy if I had a pound for every time I have heard the question 'Whatever happened to global warming?' but I think that we are in an era when we should expect more extremes in our climatic conditions – be it cold, wet or even a return to the glorious summers that I seem to remember from early childhood (well, you have to be an optimist to be a beekeeper!).

The big question is what this will mean for our bees and beekeeping – personally I am quite sure that together with Varroa and associated pathogens, weather conditions and the challenges they have brought have had a part to play in the decline in colony numbers that we have seen over the last three or more years.

None of us, I am sure, need reminding that last winter saw the worst weather conditions in over 30 years and such a long period of confinement resulted in many colonies showing signs of dysentery, particularly those that had been to the heather.

Perhaps there is some truth in the view of some of the older beekeeping authors that bees do not winter well on heather honey, at least in hard winters. Not surprisingly, Nosema was evident causing a rapid decline in the number of bees resulting in many colonies coming through in a weakened condition, some even dwindling away altogether. Results from the first year of the Random Apiary Survey (June 2009 to May 2010) have shown that Nosema is present (though not necessarily at a damaging level) in about half the apiaries sampled. What is more surprising is the high incidence of *N. ceranae*, either in isolation or in conjunction with *N. apis*. The Random Apiary Survey will continue through to May 2011 and will provide a wealth of information on the geographic and seasonal incidence of many of the diseases and pathogens that affect our bees. This is a research project and techniques to detect these pathogens have had to be developed along the way. There have also been the inevitable delays due to reliance on automated equipment but beekeepers that are self-registered on BeeBase will be able to view their individual test results as these are added to the data base.

Cold, damp conditions persisted right into May once again and despite the ravages of winter and pigeons delaying flowering of winter sown rape by almost a month, many colonies had not built up sufficiently to take advantage of this crop. Attempts to raise queens early in the season were also thwarted by poor mating conditions.

As in 2009, summer came suddenly but favourable conditions persisted much longer, covering the period of flowering of many of the trees and early summer flowers. Those in arable districts did well from spring sown

rape and field beans, limes were reported to yield well in parkland and blackberry seemed to do well almost everywhere. In some districts colonies expanded rapidly, honey seemed to be pouring in and beekeepers were running out of supers! Consequentially perhaps, a sudden surge in swarming occurred, but on the positive side new queens raised at this time were generally quickly (and I assume well) mated leading to a hope that fewer problems will be experienced this winter with drone laying or failed queens.

The hope that many (optimists again) cherished that June was to herald the return to those halcyon summer days of the past was dashed by a return to indifferent conditions in July and August and the early flowering heather in Derbyshire and the lower Pennine moors gave just a moderate yield. Some higher regions where the ling was a week or two behind saw a late flow during the few days of fine weather in early September. In the lower regions, particularly the Yorkshire river valleys, the Himalayan balsam flowered from July right through to October but didn't yield as well this year, except perhaps in the upper Calder valley where more rain had fallen in early summer.

Once again the bees and beekeepers in the North West of the region fared worst though most did at least get a little early summer honey this year. However, many colonies had consumed their remaining stores by early August and had to be fed in late summer to prevent starvation.

Overall honey yields in the region have been better this year though varying greatly from district to district. Migratory beekeepers in South and West Yorkshire and parts of Notts and Derbyshire have done particularly well with yields averaging up to 130lbs per colony. A more realistic average for the whole region is probably about 60 to 80 lbs depending on location – two to three times that for 2008 and 2009.

Varroa levels were generally low during the season, particularly where beekeepers had followed a late summer 2009 thymol treatment with oxalic acid in mid-winter.

Perhaps a longer broodless period due to the extended winter also helped reduce build-up. Many beekeepers however reported an increase in natural mite drop during the early autumn, even in colonies that had an earlier thymol based treatment, suggesting that the mild weather in October was allowing re-infestation through robbing of wild or neglected colonies. Monitoring is the key – easy with an open mesh floor – so that suitable treatment can be applied to prevent damage to the winter bees resulting in late winter losses.

### **Colony Losses 2009-10**

Some winter losses were weather related – some colonies starved, either because the beekeeper was unable to gain access to the apiary to give an emergency feed of fondant, or because the bees had consumed all the food around the cluster but were prevented by the cold weather from moving to food available elsewhere in the hive (isolation starvation). Other colonies, perhaps weakened by disease or Varroa infestation may have had enough bees to survive a normal winter but were just not strong enough to endure such an extended cold spell.

However, information on colony losses obtained by Bee Inspectors during apiary visits suggests that, if it is assumed that reported losses are replicated across the counties, then despite the hard winter colony losses overall were very similar to those in the previous winter of 2008-9. It may be significant that North Yorkshire, the County worst affected by the winter conditions, reported much higher winter losses.

<b>Region Colony Losses (%)</b>	<b>2007-8</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
Derbyshire	31.2	34.4	21.1
East Yorks	50	19.8	14.6
North Yorks	34	11.7	29.9
Nottinghamshire	48.3	15.7	12.6
South Yorks	56.5	30.7	36.8
West Yorks	35.7	21.6	19.1
County average	42.6	22.3	22.4

These figures were obtained from a survey of just over 200 beekeepers in the region managing 2100 colonies. This is just under 10% of known beekeepers in the region and nearly 17% of colonies managed. It is hoped to be able to obtain a larger sample in future years so as to give more confidence in the results.

The number of dead colonies observed nationally during apiary inspections has been monitored for several years and supports a general reduction in colony losses over the last two years. As reported last year, this is a

reversal of the trend observed since the advent of pyrethroid resistance and may indicate that beekeepers generally have a better understanding of Varroa control.

It remains essential that beekeepers monitor Varroa levels throughout the year and learn to use a combination of alternative methods of control in an Integrated Pest Management approach. For further advice on Varroa control please see the free NBU booklet 'Managing Varroa' and information on the NBU web site: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>

### **Foulbrood Diseases and Inspection Statistics 2010**

We were sorry to lose Alan Johnston and Martin Dilks from the North East NBU Inspection team at the end of 2009 but welcomed Pete Allanson from York and Neil Pont from Egmanton, Newark onto the team from the middle of May.

A total of 4001 colonies in 933 apiaries were inspected in the North East Region. 32 colonies in 18 apiaries were found to have European Foulbrood (EFB), a significant reduction from last year although some new areas were affected.

The incidence of American Foul Brood (AFB) was also much lower with just 5 colonies in 3 apiaries affected. It is hoped that the outbreak first detected in 2009 in the Scarborough district is now completely under control.

The location of foulbrood disease by 10km squares are in the table below.

<b>County</b>	<b>10km Square</b>	<b>Colonies with EFB</b>	<b>Colonies with AFB</b>
Notts	SK54	2	
Derbyshire			
East Yorks			
North Yorks	SE35	2	
	SE45	5	
	SE52	2	
	SE54	2	
	SE56	1	
	SE63	1	
	SE64	3	
	SE65	9	
	SE66	1	
	SE69	1	
	TA09	1	5
South Yorks	SE50	1	
West Yorks	SE02	1	

### *Dead colonies Observed During Inspections in England and Wales 5*

Details of disease incidence including maps and disease trends are regularly updated on BeeBase, the NBU web site: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>

All beekeepers are welcome to register on this site and will be able to access personal inspection records, information on the Healthy Bees Plan, research projects, bee health, legislation, news and a wide range of advice and general information.

All beekeepers for whom a current e-mail address is held will receive an automatic alert if a new case of foulbrood is found within 5km of a registered apiary. It is essential that apiary records are kept up to date so that we know who to notify of disease found in the area. Please either use the self-registration pages or notify me directly if any apiary information needs updating or to add your e-mail address.

You can also sign up for NBU e-mail updates, such as the recent advice on wintering of bees and information about the Asian hornet. Again, let me have your e-mail address and I will add you to the circulation list.

## Education and Advisory Services

2010 saw a second group of beekeepers attending the two-day Disease Liaison Contact course at the NBU. We now have 37 beekeepers from District Associations throughout the region that have been trained in disease recognition.

Other North East Region events included a one day Bee Health Forum which was attended by nearly 70 representatives from District Associations and the Bee Farmers Association and two very successful Bee Husbandry Days at Richmond and Chesterfield. One more Bee Husbandry Day is already planned for York in May but there is probably room for another one or two in my diary if suitable venues can be found.

The Food and Environment Research Agency is also supporting the BBKA 'Train the Trainer' events being held during the winter period. The one for the North East will be held at Fera, Sand Hutton on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February. Further details are available from Bill Cadmore, the BBKA Regional Training Coordinator.

My team and I also attended or helped at various local beekeeping events, demonstrations and a Safari day at Richmond. If your Association are planning such events for 2011 and would like me or one of the Seasonal Bee Inspectors to be involved, please feel free to contact me. I am also available for talks, mainly on bee health or bee husbandry, during the winter period.

## North East Bee Inspectors

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors for the North East Region and approximate areas

covered are as follows:

Dhonn Atkinson – Central North and West Yorks  
Sandra Kinchin - North Yorks and Teeside  
Pete Allanson – East and North Yorks  
Tim Roper – Derbyshire and South Yorks (Sheffield)  
Neil Pont – Nottinghamshire

To confirm who your local SBI is during April to September you can use the post code search function on the BeeBase contacts page or contact Ivor Flatman.

## Postscript

Another 5 or 6 inches of snow has fallen during the day as I have written this report and extremely low night-time temperatures forecast for the remainder of the week.

We will just have to wait and see what the future brings for our bees but I wish you all a good winter and a Happy Christmas and look forward to meeting many of you again in the coming year.

Ivor Flatman Regional Bee Inspector – North East Region. Email [ivor.flatman@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ivor.flatman@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

## Yorkshire Beekeepers committee meeting 4 February 2011 (Kindly sent to me by Kate Wallace)

- Report from BBKA ADM – NB a full report on the ADM will be published in YBKA e-news.
- There is to be an increase in BBKA capitation of £1.
- Cleveland BKA have been accepted as a full member of BBKA
- BBKA newsletter will be produced as a full colour, monthly periodical.
- David Aston was elected for a 3 year term
- YBKA Spring Conference to be held at Normanby Pavilion, Harrogate on 12 March 2011
- Bishop Burton conference to be held on 9 April 2011.

- A bee breeding day will be held at Normanby Pavilion on 26 March 2011. Details will be sent to Association Secretaries ASAP. Places will be limited.
- Mead & honey judging workshop to be held 21 May 2011
- YBKA (honey show) judges merit award was agreed
- The proposal to join with a group of Northern Associations to sponsor a research student will be included in the Spring Conference papers and Associations will be asked to mandate their delegates to vote on this proposal at the Conference.
- NBU will carry out a survey of winter colony losses.
- The Great Yorkshire Showground is to be redeveloped and YAS have proposed moving the Honey Show from its current location in the flower hall to the Normanby Pavilion but the meeting agreed this was not a suitable venue and discussions with YAS will continue.
- The new YBKA website has been launched

[www.yorkshirebeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.yorkshirebeekeepers.org.uk)

It was agreed that requests to place adverts on the website will be assessed on a case by case basis.

- DONM: 12 March 2011.