

Comblings

The newsletter of the York and District
Beekeepers Association.

No 41. Spring 2012.



www.yorkbeekeepers.com

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Welcome to Combings.

We hope you like the new format.

Firstly thank you to John Fuller, who did a splendid job of producing Combings for 10 years and who has promised to continue to contribute to the magazine.

The new editorial team is:

Kate Wallace Editor

Alan Johnston Assistant Editor.

(When discussing our new roles and titles, Alan said his title should be Editor's Dogsbody. Those of you who know him will appreciate how unlikely that is...)

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

Kate Wallace

Combings is the Association magazine and contributions are welcome. Please send us your photos, jokes, anecdotes, beekeeping experiences, recipes etc. and please let us know what you'd like to see included.

We do not intend to include the Minutes of Committee meetings; these will now be available via the website or by application to the Secretary.

During swarming season, if all else fails you can always try this...

An Anglo Saxon Charm for a Swarm of Bees

Take earth with your right hand and throw it under your right foot, saying:

I've got it,
I've found it:
Lo, earth, masters all creatures,
it masters evil, it masters deceit,
it masters humanity's greedy tongue.

Throw light soil over the bees as they swarm, saying:

Sit, wise women,
settle on earth:
never in fear fly to the woods.
Please be mindful of my welfare
as all men are of food and land.

In case you missed this on Bee base

Recent NBU news

Change in Disease Alert Notifications

Following feedback, the radius of disease alert notifications has been reduced from 5km to 3km. This change is effective from 11/01/2012

COACH TRIP TO YBKA SPRING CONFERENCE AT BISHOP BURTON

SATURDAY 28TH APRIL 2012 – 09:00 to 16:15

A couple of AGM's ago, the members asked the Committee to arrange coach trips (at the Associations' expense) to Thornes in Lincolnshire, and the BBKA Conference in Stoneleigh in 2011. This we did, but take up was very low indeed – and the coaches aren't cheap.

This year the Committee are considering running a coach (probably a 16 seater) to the YBKA Spring Conference in Bishop Burton, which is being held at the College there the week after the BBKA Conference. You will be able to hear the same main speakers at this venue that will be at the BBKA Conference.

You may be aware that the BBKA Conference is moving venue to Harper Adams University College in Newport this year, and given the poor response to last year's trip, the Committee felt that the cost of a coach to this event is not really justified by the small numbers who make use of it.

To get a feel for the viability of this fresh proposal, would anyone who would like to come to Bishop Burton please let me know by 15th March 2012, and we will consider whether it would be justifiable to run.

I should point out that applications for tickets for the Bishop Burton Conference have to be submitted by you to YBKA by 15th April 2012 – I can supply a form if needs be. It's £25 including lunch, or £15 if you want to take your own.

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Fuller's Earth.

Our former Editor continues;

A look through the beekeeping sundries men's catalogue for hive tools usually comes up with two types—the "J" type in two sizes and the more common or scrapper type

Over the years I have accumulated no fewer than twenty-three hive tools—British, Danish, American and Polish.

Six patterns of the "J" tools, nine patterns of the bent tool and one flat which has a quarter inch long screwdriver-like tip.

Another pattern is a combination of the bent tool and the "J" tool. One has the "J" on the right side and other on the left.

The Polish ones have a short length of plywood riveted to the centre section of

the handle, I have three of that design. The shortest is the most comfortable to use, the other two are too heavy and ungainly. They range in length from 7 and a half and 15 and half inches, neither of which I consider to be usable.

Out of all of them I would use only nine, six bent and three "J" type. The rest are too long, too thin, too heavy or the spikes on them are too sharp—the Danish one even as a built in bottle opener, for opening Carlsberg, I assume!

John Fuller

Top tips:

During your Spring frame change, try coating the underside of the frame lugs and the frame runners with Vaseline. It will help the frames run more smoothly, and makes it difficult for the bees to deposit propolis.

Book shelf.

YDBKA librarian, Alan Johnston reviews "A practical manual of beekeeping" by David Cramp.

Every generation of beekeepers has its own key beekeeping book, the bible for beginners and experienced apiarist alike. In the 1970s/80s/90s, it was undoubtedly Hooper's' "Guide to bees and honey". Although still an important text, I find that it's starting to feel dated, despite revisions. Alan Champion's "Bees at the bottom of my garden", however readable, just doesn't seem to fill the gap but I've found something that, I think, does.

David Cramp's "practical manual" published in 2008, seems to have slipped past with little fanfare, but it's an absolute corker! At around 300 pp, it has the depth that Champion's book doesn't, and yet has detailed chapters on starting up for newcomers to the craft, and a season by season guide to managing bees.

Cramp runs a large-scale commercial operation, and this is evident in the chapters on queen rearing, honey processing and career opportunities in beekeeping!

At around £15 + P&P, it's excellent value, Available from Thornes/Northern Bee Books/Bee Books New & Old

Did you know?

The saying "Bees never do anything invariably" is attributed to an American, Mrs Tupper, in the 1870s.

YDBKA Oxalic acid demonstration in January.

Oxalic Acid (OA) is used as a winter treatment for Varroa, as at this time Varroa is phoretic – it is living on the bodies of the adult bees as there is very little brood available. Varroa breed in the brood cells; the adult female mites enter the cell just before it is sealed and the young female offspring mate with their brothers before the bee emerges, along with the Varroa, and so the cycle continues. OA is safe for the adult bees as their exoskeleton is made up of a hard cuticle but it will damage the soft body of the larval stage of development.

OA kills the Varroa mite by dissolving its soft mouth parts.

January 14th 2012 was really rather too cold for the Association demonstration of how to apply OA, at 10 AM it was -3 C, however, the show must go on, so Apiary Manager Alan Johnston and the erudite John Fuller discussed at length with over a dozen cold, but keen beekeepers, the whys and wherefores of using OA as a treatment for Varroa and they stressed the importance of keeping on top of Varroa control. Varroa is still by far the biggest threat to bee health in the UK.

Then it was out to the apiary, with frost still on the ground, the bees were not flying but were not in the tight clusters we had expected, they were feeding on the fondant which had been put on the top bars at Alan's last visit.

Everyone had a go at trickling the acid between the seams of bees of the strong colonies, most were 6 seams of bees, which is pretty good for mid January! By the end of the demonstration we all knew why we should apply OA, and when – and how to do it!

Another possible cause of CCD?

Recent research in the USA has found that the phorid fly *Apocephalus borealis*, which was a known parasite of some US bumble bees and paper wasps, may be turning its attention to the honey bee.

The full article can be found at the link shown.



The image of Phorid larvae exiting a bee is by John Hafernik

Honey bee colonies are subject to numerous pathogens and parasites. Interaction among multiple pathogens and parasites is the proposed cause for Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), a syndrome characterized by worker bees abandoning their hive. Here we provide the first documentation that the phorid fly *Apocephalus borealis*, previously known to parasitize bumble bees, also infects and eventually kills honey bees and may pose an emerging threat to North American apiculture. Parasitized honey bees show hive abandonment behaviour, leaving their hives at night and dying shortly thereafter. On average, seven days later up to 13 phorid larvae emerge from each dead bee and pupate away from the bee. Using DNA barcoding, we confirmed that phorids that emerged from honey bees and bumble bees were the same species. Microarray analyses of honey bees from infected hives revealed that these bees are often infected with deformed wing virus and *Nosema ceranae*. Larvae and adult phorids also tested positive for these pathogens, implicating the fly as a potential vector or reservoir of these honey bee pathogens. Phorid parasitism may affect hive viability since 77% of sites sampled in the San Francisco Bay Area were infected by the fly and microarray analyses detected phorids in commercial hives in South Dakota and California's Central Valley. Understanding details of phorid infection may shed light on similar hive abandonment behaviours seen in CCD.

Core A, Runckel C, Ivers J, Quock C, Siapno T, et al. (2012) A New Threat to Honey Bees, the Parasitic Phorid Fly *Apocephalus borealis*. PLoS ONE 7(1): e29639. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0029639

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Did you know?

Queens may be balled by the colony if they are not happy with her for any reason; they suddenly form a ball around her, all trying to sting her or pull off her legs and wings. A few bees will start the attack and dozens more will join in. The queen may not be stung to death, but may suffocate or die of fright.

Balling of the queen is liable to take place immediately a hive has been opened, if it has been done without due care, or if there has been some other disturbance. It seems the bees "blame" the queen and begin the attack. If she is a newly introduced queen they may attack her as she does not belong.

My thanks to Richard Ogden for sharing this experience:

The smell of ripe bananas—An encounter with a bee and my immune system.

In May 2011, I went to the Healthy Bee day workshop at Murton. We finished our morning by looking at the hives in the apiary, then we sat outside and ate our lunch. I was innocently eating my banana, when a bee stung me on the chin, another couple of bees stung the person next to me. I know that I swell up badly and look like I have a tennis ball stuck in my mouth. So I took out the sting, and uttered a few choice words.

At the afternoon talk I started to feel rather itchy; I **ignored** it. There was a talk with slides, but I couldn't pay attention; My eyes were feeling rather dry, and I couldn't really see properly. My hearing got bad, and my concentration worse. In the end I realised that I was probably experiencing an allergic reaction to the sting, and left the room, accompanied by my other half Malcolm.

We called an ambulance, five minutes later a paramedic was sitting with me. She pointed out that I was covered with a rash About half an hour after the

sting, an ambulance arrived . By now I was feeling very detached from the rest of the world, still itching, with terrible tinnitus, and not really able to see properly. They inserted a cannula into my hand, in case they needed to give me intravenous drugs and attached me to an ECG, which made me realise how seriously they were taking my reaction.

By now I was feeling tired and weak and I couldn't sit up properly, I was overwhelmed by a very frightening sensation as I felt my blood pressure fall, breathing was difficult: shallow and not enough air coming in. I heard a voice telling me to 'stay with me, Richard', and felt very afraid that this was it: the lights were going out. Suddenly, the sensation changed, and I was buzzing with pins and needles through my whole body – the effect of strong antihistamines. I came round, and was feeling very high and silly. And very cold! They wrapped me up, and then took me to the hospital, where I was observed for four hours to make sure I was safe.

The sting's effect was worse than usual, because it was on the face: the venom gets into the nervous system quickly and the body has a stronger reaction. I now carry an epipen with me, in case I ever need to administer drugs myself.

I thought very carefully about whether to carry on keeping bees. I decided to continue, but I need to be very careful. I make sure I am well wrapped up and I have someone check me over well away from the hive before I unzip anything. I never work with the bees by myself. I make sure my mobile is with me, on, and well charged. I don't travel with bees. I only work with them if I am within a short drive of the hospital. I take antihistamine medicine with me in case.

Although it was quite a frightening experience – the physical reaction was very sudden and very dramatic, and it's as close as I've ever come to dying – overall, I'm glad (and lucky) that this happened at a place where it was easy for the ambulance to reach, and I'm glad that I learnt of my allergy now, and not at some less convenient time or place. While it's a bit more of a challenge (psychologically) to be around bees, it's better to know how I have to manage it than to be ignorant of it.

A week after the event, I read Jürgen Tautz's book "The Buzz About Bees". I laughed aloud as I read this:

Should the sting, with the attached poison gland, small muscles, and nerve cells, be ripped out of the bee, the stinger will die from a massive wound in her

abdomen... The barbs drive into the tissue, and an alarm pheromone is released rallying the bee's hive comrades to attack. The main component of the alarm pheromone is isopentylacetate, a chemical responsible for the smell of ripe bananas. For this reason, it is not recommended to eat bananas in the direct vicinity of a beehive, unless one wishes to test the effect — on oneself — of alarming the bees.

Jobs to be getting on with in the apiary

March

During early March continue to monitor the hive entrance for damage by weather or pests.

Pay close attention to the weight of the hive if weather is warming up. The colony should be growing quickly and food consumption will increase considerably.

Replace fondant when it is consumed.

Later in the month consider giving Ambrosia or thick syrup instead of fondant if you wish to continue feeding because food is short or to stimulate the colony into early growth.

April

The colony should be growing very quickly now so food supply will need to be maintained if the hive is light. Feed with Ambrosia/syrup if the hives are light.

On a warm day remove the eke, entrance block and mouse guard.

If the weather is mild brood box inspections can begin.

Late in the month remove the feeder and put on a queen excluder and at least one super to give space for the growing numbers. If your bees can reach oil seed rape (OSR) they will start foraging on it when it flowers and will need the storage space.

Be vigilant. Swarming can begin in April!

May

Begin thorough and regular inspections of the brood comb.

Work old comb to the outside so that it can be removed and replaced. Old comb harbours disease and should be replaced systematically as good practice. Aim to change at least one third of the frames each year or consider a Bailey comb change or a shook swarm.

Place new frames and foundation either side of the brood nest, do not place new frames in the centre of the nest as the queen may be un-willing to move across foundation and this will break up the nest, leading to congestion on one side of the brood box - congestion can

cause swarming! Remove outside frames to make space for the new frames but ensure enough food and pollen remains.

Make the first super one with drawn comb in it, if you have one, as this will encourage the bees to go up and through the queen excluder

If your bees are making honey from OSR remove and extract the supers as soon as they are full, as OSR honey will crystallise very quickly in the comb

Additional supers may now be required.

Consider one or more 'bait hives' in the apiary to catch swarms.

Do you need a bit of help with that first inspection?

It may be useful for the 2012 second season beekeepers to have an experienced beekeeper to hand for the first inspection, as this can be a daunting prospect.

If you think you could use an experienced assistant, please contact [Combings@gmail](mailto:Combings@gmail.com) and we will put you in touch with a local beekeeper.

BEE-ware the Ides of March!

If the forecast is correct and we get the mild weather that has been predicted for early March, your bees will be out and about. Although there will be pollen for the brood in the early flowers, there will be no nectar for the adult workers, so make sure they have plenty of stores available and if in doubt, feed fondant

How to...

Do a shook swarm and a Bailey comb change.

Shook swarm

Although a shook swarm was at one time only used as a treatment for European Foul Brood (EFB), it is also a way of drastically reducing the levels of Varroa on bees and providing clean comb for the colony. Timing will vary from year to year, but the weather needs to be warm and there must to be enough young

bees in the colony to draw out all the new foundation. Don't leave it later than the end of May or you will destroy the brood that would be the foragers for the summer honey.

When the colony has 5 or 6 frames of brood, remove the hive to one side of the site and replace with a clean new hive body and floor for which you have a full set of new frames of foundation.

To ensure the colony does not abscond from their new home, place a queen excluder between the floor and hive body.

It is **essential** to remove this queen excluder as soon as the queen starts to lay again and certainly no later than 7 days after the transfer.

Put 5 frames in the new brood box with 3 at one side and 2 at the other with a wide gap between them.

Find the queen and place her in a queen cage for safe keeping, she will not need any attendants as the process will not take long. Then take each frame in turn from the old hive and shake the bees into the new hive body.

Try to avoid shaking debris from the old brood box into the new hive, and let the bees that remain in the old box make their own way into the new one. The reason for doing the shook swarm is to get the bees into a clean accommodation and reduce the levels of pathogens, so try not to re-introduce any!

Once the shaking is complete, put the queen back to the colony, place her between the centre frames of the brood box. Any supers that were on the old hive can be transferred across to the new hive. Replace the top excluder to prevent the queen getting into the supers.

Unless there is a strong flow of nectar on you will need to provide the young, wax producing bees with enough energy to do their job, so feed to colony with 1:1 sugar syrup or Ambrosia and keep feeding until the bees have drawn out at least half of the new comb, unless there is a flow on.

The remaining brood must be destroyed. It can be melted down in a wax steamer, or the comb cut out and disposed of, or feed it to your hens. Around 80% of the Varroa in the hive would have been in the sealed brood so by destroying the brood you set back the Varroa population significantly.

Bailey comb change.

This can be performed between April and June, but the earlier the better.

Prepare a clean brood box filled with frames of foundation, and place it over the existing brood box. Unless there is a strong nectar flow on, feed with Ambrosia or thick syrup (1kg of white sugar to half litre water). When the bees have drawn some of the foundation, find the queen and place her on this comb, putting a queen excluder between the old and new brood box, thus trapping the queen in the top new one. Keep feeding, so that the bees continue to draw the foundation. After three weeks, when all the brood in the old brood box has emerged, the old box is removed and the new one is placed on the floor with the queen excluder above, ready for supering.

The old comb should be rendered or burnt.

NB Foundation should be fresh as, when old it becomes brittle and the bees are reluctant to draw it out, preferring to chew holes in it! Old foundation can be restored in part by warming, in the airing cupboard for instance, which releases the oils.

Combs at the ends of the brood box tend not to be well drawn out especially on the outer face, as the bees cannot cluster there to make wax. Turn it around and/or move it nearer to the brood nest and the bees will oblige.

Training event:

BETTER BEEKEEPING THROUGH GOOD BEE HUSBANDRY

The National Bee Unit and Beverley BKA in participation with York & District BKA

Saturday 12th May 2012 10:00 am to 4:30 pm

At Murton Museum of Farming YO19 5UF

Programme

09:45 Arrival at Murton

10:00 Welcome & Introductions

10:05 Talk 1 – Apiary Hygiene and Barrier Management

10:30 Talk 2 – Recognition of Bee Diseases and Common Disorders

11:10 Coffee Break

11:30 Practical 1 – Apiary hygiene and Colony Inspections.

12:30 Lunch

13:00 Talk 3 – Deramee, Bailey Comb Change and Shook Swarm techniques

13:30 Talk 4 – Varroa, Monitoring and Control

14:00 Talk 5 – Swarm control and nuclei

14:30 Practical 2 – Varroa control and Shook Swarm.

15:15 Practical 3 – Swarm control and Making Increase

16:00 Tea and Discussion (close at 16:30)

Better Beekeeping

THROUGH GOOD BEE HUSBANDRY

The National Bee Unit and Beverley BKA in participation with York & District BKA Present a Training Day for Beekeepers

Saturday 12th May 2012 10:00 am to 4:30 pm

At Murton Museum of Farming YO19 5UF

Talks and practical demonstrations provided by staff from the National Bee Unit aimed at helping beekeepers maintain healthy and productive colonies of bees.

Topics will include:

- Inspecting bees for brood diseases
- Varroa monitoring and control
- Good apiary hygiene
- Comb changing techniques
- Making nucs and colony increase

This event is particularly suitable for newer beekeepers with one or more years experience but is not intended for complete beginners.

Please bring your own clean protective clothing and a packed lunch. Refreshments will be provided.

This event is being sponsored by the NBU and is free of charge. However, places are limited and must be booked in advance with David Bough (York members)

tel; 07713 256522

e-mail:

david@thecottageholtby.co.uk

Beekeeping masters

In the first of an occasional series, Alan looks at famous beekeepers, their contribution made to the craft, and why they should be remembered today.

Annie Dorothy Betts was born into a world where educational and career opportunities for women were severely restricted; her contribution to science in general, and beekeeping in particular is, therefore, nothing short of extraordinary.



She graduated with a science degree just after the turn of the 19th century, and when war broke out in 1914, worked on aerodynamics and other aeronautical research projects for the fledging Air Force.

Ron Brown records that she went to her work on a motorcycle, and remained a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society until her death.

Even before the war, she had developed an interest in "scientific beekeeping" and produced a paper on fungus in beehives, which was to lead to the later identification of chalkbrood. In 1972, she was honoured posthumously, when the

fungus which turns pollen mouldy was re-named *Bettsia alvei* in recognition of her earlier work.

In 1919, she became a founder member of the Apis Club, an organization which promoted an international exchange of beekeeping information, and wrote extensively for its house magazine, "Bee World". In 1923 she wrote the first of two bee books "Practical anatomy" and the sections on bee flight reflect her aeronautical background and training. Her second work, "Diseases of bees" in 1934 (reprinted 1951) still repays reading today.

Between these two publications, Annie Betts took over the Presidency of the Apis club, and the editorship of "Bee World", until the late 40s/early 50s when the Apis Club morphed into the Bee Research Association (later IBRA), which was to be led by yet another female scientist/beekeeper, Dr Eva Crane.

Due to severe hearing difficulties in later life, she was to lead a fairly solitary later life, communicating mainly by letter.

She died in 1961.

... and she also wrote poetry! A woman who writes poetry, edits an international magazine, produces first-rate research and goes to work on a motor bike is ok by me!

The first and last verses of a poem about the selfless life of a bee, written in 1924, are shown below.

"Not for herself, emerging from the cell,
She draws her strength from the communal store
For two days' passage is her childhood's knell.
And all her life is toil for evermore.
Thus is she reckoned with the things that pass
(While o'er her goes the never-ceasing hum);
She finds at length a refuge in the grass
And light is darkened, and swift wings are dumb."

Thanks to Mike Marshall, YDBKA's Groundsman at Murton, for these encouraging words.

Never give up!

After what to us has been a relatively mild time, the winter comes to an end in a flurry of snow. Contrary to popular belief, a warm winter for the bees may not be so good an idea. A continuously cold and frosty winter is often better than a prolonged mild one which may encourage active bees to consume stores too quickly.

This year's hesitant and unusually mild conditions have had this very effect.

Bees are house-proud and will try not to defecate within the hive. Only small increases in temperature encourage them to explore the locality with the intention of lavatorial excursions. Don't stand too near your hive in a clean bee suit during these flights. The splattered effect is not high fashion.

Despite bees being so clever in so many ways, they sometimes fail to find food stores, either in the frames or nearby fondant. They can be within inches of stores, and still die of starvation.

Therefore, please, **don't give up** should they die on you despite going into winter strong and healthy. Disappointment is understandable but don't give up. None of our experienced beekeepers can claim never to have lost colonies over the years. It's a question of percentages. A beekeeper with two hundred colonies can afford the odd loss; a new beekeeper who loses both of his/her hives sees it as a disaster and can question their ability. Don't give up. The effort is worth it.

Top tip:

If you do find that a colony has died out, close the entrance completely, until you are sure of the cause of the loss. If it is down to Nosema or EFB, you don't want the disease spread by robbers stripping out the dead hive.

I read this in Clive de Bruyn's book, Practical Beekeeping.

What Keeps Bees Happy?

Warm, still weather

Nectar and pollen available (a flow)

The presence of a laying queen

Stores with open honey cells

Deliberate, calm movements

Smooth light clothing

QUEEN MARKING COLOURS

The queen marking colour for 2012 is yellow - this mnemonic may help.

Will colour white for years ending 1 or 6.

You colour yellow for years ending 2 or 7.

Raise colour red for years ending 3 or 8.

Good colour green for years ending 4 or 9.

Bees colour blue for years ending 5 or 0.

Annual BBQ Saturday 23rd June 2012

From Doreen and John Thompson.

This year's BBQ is being held at our house. I thought we'd start about 12:30 hours.

It would be helpful to know how many of you are planning to attend. For logistical reasons, I'm afraid that there will have to be a limitation on numbers who can attend, as we will have to move indoors in the event of bad weather, and we only have so much room! Also, it will be helpful for catering purposes.

I will provide canapés, salads, pickles, buns and sausages but if you want something else please bring it along. Please also bring any refreshments!

Would you let me know by 15th May 2012 if you will be coming along? I must apologise in advance if we have to turn anyone away.

Directions:

Take A64 from York towards Malton. Pass the FERA Central Science Laboratories and in about 1 mile turn right down Whinny Lane – note that Newitts Mail Order Company premises are opposite this turning. The address is Springwell House Main Street. Claxton.

Come into the village and turn right on to Main Street at the cross-roads beside the village green.

Our house is first on your right – there is a red BT phone box outside, and a caravan on the drive.

Please park carefully on my side of the road and consider my neighbours. Beware – vehicles regularly travel along Main Street well in excess of the 30 mph limit!

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 21st March	Mike Rowbottom Clearing Bees
Friday 23rd March	Annual Dinner
Saturday 7th April	Beginner's Apiary Meeting
Wednesday 18th April	Half Yearly Meeting
Fri 20th – Sun 22nd April	BBKA Spring Convention
Saturday 28th April	YBKA Spring Conference
Saturday 5th May Murton	Apiary Meeting; Honey Extraction Bee Pavilion,
Saturday 12th May	Bee Husbandry Day, YMOF

Saturday 19th May Annual Auction YMOF

Items accepted from 9am viewing from 11am, Auction starts at 12 Noon. NB Bees accepted Friday **MUST BE EXAMINED** by the Bee Inspector prior to arrival

Saturday 26th May Apiary Meeting

Saturday 9th June Apiary Meeting

Saturday 23rd June Summer Barbeque

Re: Surplus hive packages for sale – PERHAPS!!

For the second year now, we have put together a "starter" hive package for the Beginners Course. This provides most of the kit that a Beginner will need during the first year of beekeeping. Please see below for the hive specification. The price for each hive package is £165.00

As we have made bulk purchases of some components, and with the help of one member who has been able to obtain favourable discounts for us from his suppliers, the package represents very good value for money.

This year's take-up, and indeed attendees on the Theory/Practical Courses, has so far been disappointing compared to the last couple of years, and it looks like we will have a surplus of these hives. It seems only right that our members should have first refusal to buy this surplus, before we put them into our May auction (with a reserve of the cost of course); as beekeepers belonging to other Associations would then have the opportunity to buy them, and reap the savings.

Obviously, at this stage I do not know how many hives will constitute the surplus, as the Beginners have until the 20th March 2012 to apply for a hive for their Course.

Accordingly, the Committee has agreed for me to use the following equitable procedure:

1. Any member who wishes to bid for a hive (or hives) should send me a cheque (payable to YDBKA) for £165.00 **for each hive that he/she wants – before Sunday 15th April 2012.** So if you want 3 hives send me 3 cheques.

2. If members bid for more hives than we have available as a surplus, the cheque(s) will be entered into a ballot, drawn by a non-member of our Association. Successful cheques will be cashed and the member will be contacted to arrange collection of his/her hives(s) from my house.
3. Unsuccessful cheques will be returned un-cashed to the member by post.

4. I will declare my interest that I shall be bidding for 2 hives

The specification of the hive package is as follows:

1. The National Hive is manufactured and assembled by Yorkshire Beehives and comprises:

Stand

Mesh Varroa floor with entrance block and slider tray

Brood box with metal runners

2 x Supers with metal runners

Plywood crown board with 2 x Porter escapes

100mm tin covered ventilated roof

2. Other components are:

Plastic queen excluder

Foam entrance block

Strap

4 pint rapid feeder

12.5kg can Ambrosia syrup

10 x brood frame components DN4

20 x super frame components SN4

Packet of pins

10 sheets wired brood foundation

20 sheets wired super foundation

If any member would like to view the hive package prior to parting with their "brass" I would be happy to oblige here at my house – I recommend that you phone first to make sure that I'm in.

John C Thompson

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Honeybee hotspots!

The thermoregulation of the honey bee.

On 18th January around 25 members attended the talk by Richmond Master Beekeeper, Keith Bartlem.

Keith's subject was the thermoregulation of the honeybee, which made for an interesting and thought provoking talk, illustrated with some excellent images. (From Tautz's book "The buzz about bees")

Keith, who is a self-confessed bee keeping fanatic, stressed the need to take very good care of your bees, especially in the winter months.

He also put himself in the good books of the YDBKA "14x12 mafia" by declaring himself in favour! He uses 14 x 12 brood boxes for his own bees.

I have a copy of Keith's PowerPoint presentation. If you would like to see it, please let me know and I'll email it to you. It's well worth having a look, just to see those infra-red images of bee hotspots.

One of our members, who will remain anonymous, said to me after the talk that he didn't think he was very interested in the subject but only came to the meeting to catch up on any gossip, and then found the talk absolutely fascinating!

The Association holds some excellent winter lectures, but they are not always well attended. Can anyone tell me why?

If you have an area of interest that you would like to see covered in a future winter lecture, please contact YDBKA Secretary David Bough.