

Combings

The newsletter of the York and District
Beekeepers Association.

Issue No. 55

Autumn 2015.



York and District Beekeepers 2014/15

President Sue Hesp
Vice President Bill Bell

Committee:

Chair Bruno Hannemann
Vice Chair Paul Taylor

Secretary Patricia Miller

Treasurer and
Membership Sec. John Thompson
Equipment Officer Peter Crosby

Education Adrian Burnside

Web Master
& Publicity Bruno Hannemann

Other committee members:

Alan Johnston

John Fuller
Margaret Langstaff

Other post holders:

Apiary Manager
& Librarian Alan Johnston

Events and
Groundsman Janet Cole

Combings Editor Kate Wallace

Seasonal
Bee Inspectors: Dhonn Atkinson
Adrian Wilford

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

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

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

Combings Editor: Kate Wallace

Combings is published quarterly.

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

18th November 2015.

One Ed.

Anybody recognise the folks wearing a different sort of protective clothing as pictured on the front cover? They are members of YDBKA on the trip to the Beatson Clark glass factory! Do read Bruno's report on this trip on page 6.

The season is drawing to a close, but there is still a lot to do in the apiary: autumn varroa treatments to apply, feeding and whatever winter protection your particular sites need – and don't forget the mouse-guards.

We have a full autumn and winter programme to enjoy, so do make your way to Murton for the talks and a bit of bee-socialising.

Although it may not have been a bumper season for honey, why not put a jar or two in the Honey Show on 11 November? There are classes other than jars of honey, so bake a cake, make a candle or take a photo.

Poetry please.

Many thanks to Kath Perring for sending me this poem by Pam Ayres, who is also a beekeeper. I have used just part of it here, but perhaps we should put the full version on the reading list for the beginners' course, so they know just what they are letting themselves in for!

I miss my lovely wife, she's gone, I've lost her that's for sure,
Bees have tampered with her brain; she is besotted, she's a
bore,
She talks a different language; it's all gibberish to me,
With her Modified Commercial and her WBC.

My spouse was cool and fragrant; once we cuddled and we
kissed,

Before she took the veil and called herself an apiarist,
She drops her suit and doesn't care what anybody thinks,
It may be smoke or sweatiness, but either way she stinks.

Autumn is upon us; bleakly now the leaves are lost,
The hives are cosy in the cold no matter what the cost,
Varroa has been taken on with remedies assorted,
Mice are disappointed; Woody Woodpecker is thwarted.

My wife's on the extractor and the house looks like a slum,
She makes me wind the handle which in turn rotates the drum,
Thickly in the warming tank we watch the honey pour,
With hands stuck to the table and with feet stuck to the floor.

Now from our endeavour, see the product, see the fruits,
Of summer days spent sweltering in reeking gloves and boots,
By tanks of golden honey we are richly reimbursed,
I'd give my wife a cuddle ... if she had a shower first."

Pam Ayres

Job vacancy

Alan Johnston will be standing down as our apiary manager at our Murton apiary at the end of the season, once the bees have been "put to bed" for winter.

Any member/s interested in taking over this unpaid but fun job, should be willing to give up a few hours a week to manage between 3 and 6 medium sized colonies. They need to be kept ready for use by the tutors on the practical course each May - June, Murton open days and any other YDBKA event.

Further information can be obtained from Alan .

A hand-over period can also be arranged.

From the Chair

I hope you all had a busy summer. As I write this, summer is well under way, and after almost a week of bad weather my bees are hard at work, with the balsam now in bloom. It seems we had plenty of swarms around, and the members on the swarm collection list were almost overwhelmed with the number of calls.

The Association had a busy summer too, with successful events like the trip to Beatson Clark, where we had the opportunity to see some amazing manufacturing skills, with plenty of noise and heat as one would expect from a glass factory. After a delicious lunch, we had an informal chat with fellow beekeepers from Sheffield BKA.

Another highlight was the Bee Health Day, a full day of activities organised in partnership with the National Bee Unit. Plenty of important information about keeping our bees healthy was shared.

A special thanks go to Janet Cole, who did a stellar job at getting these two events organised, and all the committee that worked hard at the Bee Health Day.

Now it is time to think about winter, making sure your colonies are strong and healthy, but more importantly have plenty of stores to see them through. For those who ordered the Apivar strips, now is a good time to treat to ensure the varroa levels are low, as this will ensure the bees that will overwinter are healthy.

Despite a very positive season, with general trends for EFB and AFB going down, we still need to remain vigilant for diseases. A couple of outbreaks in the region highlight the risks to us all.

Most of you will have noticed a growing interest from the general public in bees and beekeeping; we have received a large number of visitors to the website, email enquiries and other forms of contact. I see all members as the Association's ambassadors, playing a vital role in disseminating information about the importance of bees and other pollinators in nature. I invite you all to participate actively on the upcoming Association activities and help supporting the other members.

With parts of the UK reporting a bad summer and very little honey to be harvested, I consider myself lucky to have got a few jars of delicious honey from my hives. Hope you all had a productive summer, and look forward to seeing what you will bring to the Honey Show on 11 November!

Bruno Hannemann – YDBKA Chairman

Can you help?

I am going to embark on a Queen Rearing project next season 2016. This is the first time I will have attempted this and would like to work with an experienced beekeeper so we can work together and breed good local queens. If you are interested please contact me

Margaret Langstaff

Did you know?

In John B Free's book "The Social Organization of Honeybees", the eviction of the drones from the hive in autumn is described as being a slow process; the drones are denied access to food so they become too weak to fly. Then the workers cling to the drones, pulling and biting their wings and legs. When the

attack has ended, the drone runs off; however this behaviour seems to be related to age, with older drones being attacked, but at the same time, the younger drones on the comb are still being fed.

Preparation for winter

As we near the end of what is generally being regarded as a poor season, it is important to remember the necessity of sending your bees into winter ready to face whatever spring and summer 2016 have to offer. The list of autumn tasks remains fairly constant but is repeated here in bullet-point form as an aide-memoir for beginners and old-hands alike.

- Ensure that queens are mated and laying properly. A lot of this year's queens have gone drone-layer already due to poor mating conditions.
- It is false economy to try and get small colonies through winter. One can get colonies no bigger than nucs through winter, but it is a skill most of us don't have. Better to unite them into larger units, get these through winter, and then split them in spring to get your numbers back up. The old adage that the best packing for bees is more bees, still holds.
- Give an autumn varroa treatment, paying attention to whether it can or cannot be used if you intend to take off autumn honey.
- Remember to leave a **minimum** of 40lbs of stores – honey or liquid syrup – for the bees. As a guide, a National brood frame holds about 5lbs; a super frame holds about 3lbs. Removing dummy boards provides room for one more frame of stores. Leaving the bees with rock-hard rape honey is less than ideal because of the difficulty they encounter in processing it whilst semi-dormant.

- If you're making up syrup for feed, do so at the ratio of 2lbs sugar: 1 pint water (thick syrup).
- If you intend to over-winter on more than one box (double-brood or brood and a super) remember to remove the queen excluder.
- Set up wasp traps as soon as is necessary.
- Close full-width entrances down to a couple of inches to reduce draughts and help keep the wasps out.
- Don't forget to fit mouse-guards. Ensure that you don't already have one in when you put the guards on; you're trying to lock out the mice, not lock them in!
- Ensure boxes and roofs are in good order and weatherproof. If your sites are windy, strap up your hives to prevent roofs coming off or boxes blowing over.
- Use mesh floors. They allow better ventilation than solid floors. It is damp, not cold, which is the bigger threat to overwintering bees.
- Make early arrangements to obtain fondant and oxalic acid for use in a couple of months.
- Keep fingers crossed! Good luck.

Alan Johnston

Top tip

Before storing supers and any drawn comb over the winter, remember to put it in a freezer for 24 hours first, which will kill any wax moth already present. The comb will be very brittle until it is fully defrosted so be careful with it. Once the wax is fully defrosted and dried, store your supers in stacks, with layers of newspaper in between the boxes, which should slow down the progress of any wax moth infestation and don't forget to check the stack during the winter to prevent a spring disaster!

Coming up at Murton

There is a busy winter programme of events coming up, thanks to our events organiser, Janet Cole. See your programme card or the website for details.

A must is the AGM on 14th October, when we have the renowned queen-breeder, Ged Marshall as our guest speaker. If you would like to join our hard-working committee, this is your chance, as places will be available at the AGM; have a word with one of the current committee (contact details are shown on page 2) if you would like to know what's involved before you commit yourself.

According to BBC news on 10 August 2015: **Bee-killing Asian hornets spreading across Europe now face a natural enemy that lures them to destruction - a carnivorous North American plant, French experts say.**

The head of a botanical garden in Nantes, western France, says the pitcher plant *Sarracenia* devours Asian hornets - but not European hornets. Nor does it eat bees or wasps. Romaric Perrocheau recently found a *Sarracenia* stem full of dead hornets.

Asian hornets are a menace to beehives.

Mr Perrocheau, quoted by AFP news agency, said *Sarracenia* had "invented a very selective trap" for the aggressive Asian hornets. The hornets are apparently attracted by *Sarracenia*'s nectar and pheromones on the plant's tubular leaves. Once the hornet crawls inside the rim at the top it easily slips and plunges into the pitcher, to be digested by the plant's juices.

The trap appears to be a European adaptation, as Asian hornets do not exist in *Sarracenia's* native Massachusetts, in the eastern US. The plant can be grown easily in Europe and is not considered a threat to native flora.

Mr Perrocheau and an entomologist aim to study the contents of 200 pitchers, hoping to identify the chemical secret of their attraction for Asian hornets.

Did you know?

The compound eye of the worker bee has around four thousand lenses. Queens have slightly fewer but the eyes of a drone have even more, between seven and eight thousand lenses per eye.

Members without internet access

There are still a few members of the Association (5) who do not have internet access. Their only access to the Association's activities and knowledge of what is happening is through "Combings", the Events Calendar and word of mouth from other members. A great deal of information from BBKA, Beebase, Bee Inspectors, YBKA and other local Associations and from the YDBKA committee now comes only by electronic means. This could mean that a few members are unaware of lots of information and advice.

The committee agreed that we would photocopy important emails for a nominal sum and the cost of postage if this was requested by members without internet access. There are so many of these emails that it is not feasible to do this regularly.

At the Half Yearly Meeting I asked members if there was anyone who would like to take up this offer. No one present at

the meeting wanted hard-copy of emails that are sent to all other members.

I did ask that if members knew of any members without email access that they could offer them time to read key emails on their PCs/ tablets. Please can I request this again; if you know of a beekeeper near you who does not have internet access, then offer them the chance to read beekeeping emails. If there are any members who would like me to copy key emails, such as BBKA news and the YBKA newsletter please let me know by phone and I will do this.

Patricia Miller Secretary YDBKA

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2015

Enclosed with this issue is a copy of the audited accounts for the last financial year for the Association – 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. You will see that we had a very successful year financially, and the Association is in a strong financial position.

Since I had these accounts audited, I have received a Gift Aid Refund from HMRC amounting to £2,125.77; further strengthening our position. I will comment on these accounts in more depth at the AGM on 14 October 2015 at YMOF Murton.

If anyone has any specific questions on the accounts, perhaps you'd contact me, so that if needs be I can research the answer and provide a meaningful response at the AGM.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

On 1 October 2015 your membership subscriptions are due for payment, and I enclose a form for this purpose. It has a new look, and you will see that you can now pay your subscriptions by direct electronic transfer to our HSBC account, however, I still require a hard copy of your form for my records. Do please remember to show your name on the remittance to the Bank so that I can tie your payment to your form. You can of course continue to pay by cash or cheque ("YDBKA") as in the past.

APIVAR OFFER 2015

Thirty-seven members participated in the Apivar offer which Matt Brash very kindly ordered for us from the manufacturers in France, at a considerable saving (around 40%) on the price being asked for on the internet. Many thanks Matt for your efforts.

FOUNDATION OFFER 2015

As you know, Alan Johnston has organised this offer from Yorkshire Beekeepers Association (YBKA) in the past but has decided to have a break this year, so I will be taking it over. I will circulate the details of the offer to you when I know anything. For the benefit of newer members, YBKA place one bulk order for all Associations and substantial discounts are passed down to the members.

Anyway, watch out for my circular and act quickly – there won't be a lot of time in which to order, and you could miss out on some decent savings.

John C Thompson

Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Ambrosia for sale

Alan Johnston has 12.5 kg containers of liquid Ambrosia for sale at £19 each.

From the Inspectors

We are finding lots of colonies on the verge of starvation at the moment, so we are advising beekeepers to look in the hives for stores, and feed if necessary, There has also been a break in the egg laying of some queens, probably due to lack of income We would like to remind anyone who has obtained a nuc this summer to feed it until it fills the brood box. We see lots of colonies with foundation in the brood box and supers on, the natural behaviour of bees is to work vertically rather than horizontally, so if you want to get that foundation drawn, leave the supers off to force the bees sideways.

Due to an outbreak of EFB in the York area I would like to ask members to inspect for disease and report anything that looks suspect.

Dhonn Atkinson

Alan explores the life and times of "WBC" – William Broughton Carr 1836 – 1909

William Broughton Carr is best known for the decorative hive which bears his initials, but is less well known for the valuable work he did during the formative years of the BBKA.

He was born in 1836 in the north-west of England, and became an apprentice engraver in Liverpool, a job he held for 25 years. The eye for detail required by his employment seems to have

transferred into his later beekeeping, where his skills as an expert hive manipulator and demonstrator were in great demand nationally. Carr was heavily involved in the north-west beekeeping scene, and was a founding member of the Lancashire and Cheshire BKA, one of the earliest county associations. At the same time, in the early 1880s, he wrote for and edited their county magazine, the "Beekeepers Record". He was also writing regularly for the British Bee Journal, the main national publication, and formally joined its staff in 1890. He was promoted to joint editor, alongside Thomas Cowan, a post he held until his death in 1909.

He also held a position on the recently-formed BBKA executive council for many years, and helped devise and standardize beekeeping equipment throughout the UK. He designed the push-on spacers which fit on to frame lugs: nowadays they are made of plastic, but until quite recently they were made of folded tin plate and were widely used and cursed as the cause of many cut finger ends! But he is best known for the double-skinned telescopic hive that carry his initials. The original design and prototypes were, apparently Cowan's, but it was Carr who modified it, resulting in the unmistakable slope-sided silhouette. It is still widely used by hobbyists and at least one large-scale Yorkshire operator over-winters National hives inside WBC casings as extra protection against his elevated moorland micro-climate. The iconic design has stood the test of time and will continue to do so. Those interested in further research should be aware of a contemporary to WB Carr, living in nearby Manchester, annoyingly called William Carr – no relation.

Top tip

Cappings honey, that which is left in the uncapping tray, can be used to make mead or fed back to the bees as part of the winter preparations.

East Riding Honey and Bee Supplies

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

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

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

456 Hull Road, Dunswell, Hull HU6 0AS



Agent for

Thorne Beehives



The Beekeepers Quarterly



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

all this, and more at...



Northern Bee Books

Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5JS (UK)

Phone: 01422 882751 Fax: 01422 886157



Your local, family run Garden Centre

Stockists of Beekeeping Equipment since 1978

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

Open 360 days a year

Summer (March – September) **Monday – Saturday 9.00am – 6.00pm**

Winter (October – February) **Monday – Saturday 9.00am – 5.30pm**

Sundays 10.30am – 4.30pm

Stockton-on-the-Forest, York. YO32 9UE. Tel: 01904 400141

www.deansgardencentre.co.uk

CLARO BEES LTD. for all your beekeeping supplies

2015 opening times:

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

Beekeeping Season March 21st to October 31st (inclusive)

Fondant & Oxalic Acid Winter Special Dec 5th

- Very keen prices on all items.
- Comprehensive stocks of hive parts & accessories, foundation, tools, smokers, clothing, queen rearing equipment, medications, jars & lids, candle making equipment and books.
- Ample FREE parking adjacent to shop.
- Knowledgeable beekeepers are always present to offer impartial advice on suitability of equipment prior to purchase as well as beekeeping problems.

In order to keep our prices low, **CLARO BEES LTD.** continue to handle payments by cash and cheque only.

Find us: first left after the RHS Harlow Carr Gardens, Crag Lane, Harrogate, HG3 1QA

e-mail: ClaroBees@hrbka.org.uk

Reader's Hives



Not a hive, or even a bee this time! YDBKA's very own non-beekeeping roving reporter, Chris Swift sent me some lovely pictures of brightly painted beehives in Greece, but in the same batch was this excellent shot, so I used my editorial discretion!

Anyone know what it is?