

Combings

The newsletter of the York and District
Beekeepers Association.

Issue No. 63

Autumn 2017.



York and District Beekeepers 2016/17

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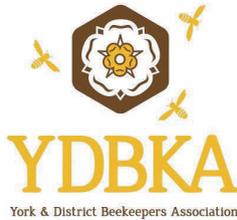
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“Combings” is the newsletter of the York & District Beekeepers Association. Views expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Association as a whole or of the editor.

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

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Combings is published quarterly.

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

18th November 2017.

Two Eds.

The picture on the front page is of baby Freddie and his Mum, Steph at a recent members' event at Murton – Freddie is starting young!

The season has had its ups and downs, as is usual. Those of us with bees on the oilseed rape saw a good return, the summer honey has been extremely variable throughout the area, the balsam is ever-reliable, and although the heather moors have yielded a good crop, its seems in some places it has been "diluted" by rosebay willowherb, which has run and run this year.

For a quick guide on autumn management, please see pages 5-8.

Hopefully lots of members will have enough honey to contribute towards this year's Honey Show, on 15th November. We have a forthcoming event at Murton on 27th September, which should help us all in our preparation.

The Honey Show Schedule will be circulated after the selection of the new recipe for the standard honey cake.

Top Tip

If you don't want to make candles with your beeswax, some of the larger suppliers will exchange clean wax for foundation.

Did you know?

Bees are poikilothermic (cold-blooded).

A concise guide to autumn management

Hive population

Queens:

- Try to replace any queens which have already worked for two full seasons.
- An autumn replacement provides young bees to aid overwintering and/or give a boost for late-season crops.

Bees:

- Over-winter fewer, but larger colonies, rather than more smaller ones (12-14,00 bees is a decent size) as these colonies will have a better chance of surviving the winter months.
- Unite colonies to achieve the number of bees required.

Give protection

From pests, predators and disease:

- Undertake a specific disease check.
- Monitor for varroa and treat as appropriate.
- Employ mouse guards, wasp traps and woodpecker-proof chicken wire hive surrounds.

From hunger:

- Aim for 45-50lbs of stores; feed syrup as necessary.

From weather:

- Use only weather-proof hives; which are on stands; find a good wintering site, not in a frost pocket or liable to flooding with gentle ventilation, as damp, not cold, kills bees.

To mix autumn syrup

- The mixture should be what the textbooks describe as “thick”.
- The table below gives a sugar/water ratio for a range of required syrup volumes.
- Use **only** white granulated sugar

Weight of syrup required	Sugar required	Water required to mix
Imperial		
5lbs	4lbs	2 pints
10lbs	8lbs	4 pints
15lbs	12lbs	6 pints
20lbs	16lbs	8 pints
25lbs	20lbs	10 pints
30lbs	24lbs	12 pints
Metric		
1.25 kgs	1kg	630 mls
2.5 kgs	2 kgs	1260 mls
3.75kgs	3 kgs	1890 mls
5.0 kgs	4 kgs	2520 mls
6.25 kgs	5 kgs	3150 mls
12.5 kgs	10 kgs	6300 mls

Varroa monitoring

- Try to obtain a copy of “Managing Varroa” from the National Bee Unit website www.nationalbeeunit.com
- At this time of year, varroa populations would usually be increasing whilst the bee populations are decreasing. It’s crucial to know the scale of any problem, and treat accordingly.

Drone brood monitoring

- Even though the drone population is reducing in autumn, examining the mite numbers in drone cells can give a useful indication about whether treatment may be required.
- In August, uncap as many drone pupae as possible. Don’t count the actual mites, but calculate the proportion of cells which have mites as a percentage.

- Less than 5%: a light infestation, no action is required
- 5 – 10%: a medium infestation, you should consider action
- More than 10%: Urgent action is required

Uniting colonies

- Larger colonies have a greater chance of over-wintering successfully than smaller ones.
- Uniting two colonies through newspaper is the most reliable way of achieving this.
- Ensure that both colonies are healthy before uniting them
- Gradually, bring the two colonies together. Dispose of the unwanted queen.
- Scrape any wax/propolis from the top bars of the hive which is to be on the bottom of the united pair, scrape clean the bottom of frames of the hive which is to go on the top. This will prevent any unwanted tearing of the newspaper.

- Place a large sheet of newspaper between the two hives, making a few small slits in it with a hive tool. This should encourage the bees to start chewing through the paper and allow the colonies aroma to begin to mingle.

Which hive goes where? A general guide

- Uniting a queen-right colony with a queen-less colony; put the queen-less colony on top.
- Queen-right nuc with a full sized queen-less colony; put the nuc on top.
- Moved colony to colony remaining on its original site; put the moved colony on top.

Additions to the library

The list of the association library books is now on our website and has its own dropdown menu in the "For Members" section. It is a work in progress and will be improved over time. New books will be added to the list as they are acquired; donations always welcome.

Recent additions to the library are:-

Practical Microscopy for Beekeepers - Maurer B. donated by Anthony Day.

A Scanning Electron Microscope Atlas of the Honey Bee - Erickson E., Carlson S., Garment M. donated by Tom Robinson.

If members have any unused books they would like to donate to the library please contact the librarian. Email library@yorkbeekeepers.com

Paul Appleton
Chairman & Librarian

Many thanks to Anthony Day for this report on his hornet trap purchase.

Stung by a Hornet (Trap)

I missed the workshop on hornet traps so I decide to invest in the ApiShield from Vita. (<http://www.vita-europe.com/products/apishield-hornet-trap/>). Thorne would not supply - they said it was not up to their quality standards.

I got mine from Paynes. It was made of light softwood and needed treating before I used it. It also needed a bit of sanding to make sure that the drawer would slide in and out.

The picture shows a back view.



At the front there is a narrow and easily-defended entrance, and this leads upwards into the hive so no mice could ever get in. The ApiShield replaces a mesh floor and has a drawer with a mesh cover and entrances at each side. Hornets are supposed to avoid the defended entrance and go for the side entrances which lead only into the drawer. The side entrances are fitted with plastic cones, so the theory is that once in, hornets and other pests won't get out. (The holes at the front of the drawer are covered with mesh.)

The first problem was that the rain made the drawer stick - more sanding and planing. I didn't catch any hornets, wasps or wax

moths, although the odd bee got trapped. Then each time inspected I began to find more and more bees stuck between the mesh cover to the drawer and the mesh floor. They weren't getting out and were just dying. I gave up and replaced the ApiShield with a standard mesh floor.

I'll have a look and see if I can do something to stop the bees getting into this area, but I haven't done anything for the moment as I don't fancy heaving a fully-laden 14 x 12 back and forth to see if it's working. I believe that September is the time to trap Asian Hornet queens, so I may put the ApiShield back as part of my preparations for winter.

Or maybe I'll get a lemonade bottle. At least I'll have a drink!

Neonics update

The results of the latest, and largest, field trials into the effects on bees, of neonicotinoid seed coatings has recently been published, and appeared first in the American journal "Science": Vol 356, Issue 6345 30 June 2017.

A short piece about the findings featured on the BBC's "Countryfile" a month or so ago.

The issue tends to be a divisive one, with most beekeepers understandably adopting a precautionary principle in respect of the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, and people will undoubtedly focus on parts of the report which support their position. Most of the popular reporting has tended to focus on the negative effects of neonicotinoids shown in this report but the findings are far from conclusive.

Whilst in no way being an apologist for the use of neonicotinoids, the report did present the following conundrums:

- The trials were carried out in the UK, Hungary and Germany. For honey bees, both negative (Hungary) and

positive (Germany) results were recorded. No explanation was given.

- In the UK, the trials were conducted on nucleus colonies, rather than full-sized hives. Only 23 of the 72 colonies survived, most likely due to varroa damage, rather than to the neonicotinoids. (Even the control colonies which weren't near the neonicotinoids treatment area suffered 58% mortality) making reliable conclusions difficult.
- The Hungarian colonies were infected with a significant fungal infection, which confused the findings.

... and so it goes on. Certainly any new information is welcome, but this latest report is far from definitive, and the scale of colony losses casts doubt on the entire experimental set up.

My own backside presently remains firmly on the fence, regarding the effects of neonicotinoids and bees!

Alan Johnston

Did you know?

The ideal temperature for storing honey is below 10° C (50° F)

Communication

Thanks to Bruno Hanneman for this reminder.

To improve the communications with Association Committee members and allow continuity when the committee changes after the AGM, we are encouraging all the communication by email to be directed to the official Association emails. Please take notice and keep for future reference:

Role	Current officer	Email address
Chairman	Paul Appleton	chairman@yorkbeekeepers.com
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Secretary	Patricia Miller	secretary@yorkbeekeepers.com
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Events	Janet Cole	events@yorkbeekeepers.com
Publicity & Website	Bruno Hannemann	publicity@yorkbeekeepers.com
Library	Paul Appleton	library@yorkbeekeepers.com

BBKA exam success

Congratulations to Adrian Burnside, Alan Johnston and Hugh McPherson on their recent exam success.

Honey Show 2017

A reminder taken from Janet Cole's recent all-member email.

Our Honey Show will be on November 15th this year, and we have a session on 27th September, at Murton, entitled "Preparing for the Honey Show".

Those of you who have entered the show before may have noticed that our official "Honey Cake" recipe could be improved upon. We are going to use the talk as an opportunity to choose a new recipe, and we will do this by eating cake - perfect!

Please dust off your favourite honey cake recipe - it should be a plain one, without added embellishments, as there is another class for freestyling. Bake a cake according to your recipe and then bring it to the talk: we will conduct a blind tasting and then vote to select our new "Official" cake.

As we will all then need to bake the cake for our Show, please also bring the recipe, which should contain:

- Exact metric ingredient measures
- Size of tin, and details of lining/greasing
- Accurate cooking time and temperature

I think this will be a really fun and fair way to update the recipe, and am hoping that as many members as possible will give it a go.

From the Inspectors

Thanks to Dhonn Atkinson for this round-up of the Bee Inspectors work during this season.

This year there have been a couple of cases of EFB and an AFB case within the York postcode area this year, but these were all well outside the city.

The Yorkshire area inspectorate is currently short-staffed and this means Ivor, Adrian, Nick and myself are covering much larger areas than normal.

Due to the incursion last season of Asian Hornets in the South West region, we have been asked to up the surveillance for exotic pests around high risk areas. This has taken us away from

our usual rounds and consequently, I haven't spent much time in the York area. Also, the early finds of EFB in the Harrogate, Leeds and Doncaster areas have taken up lots of my time. I intend to rectify this absence throughout August and September, weather permitting.

Adrian Wilford has been inspecting in the Northern YO area and other than the two already mentioned cases has nothing to report.

If members could familiarise themselves with the foulbrood leaflets available on Beebase and report anything they are suspicious of, I would appreciate their co-operation.

We are still doing registration visits and colony checks for anyone who would like to have colonies checked before purchase/sale in an attempt to stop the transfer of diseased colonies into and around the area.

YDBKA members who would like to book a visit from the inspector can contact me on 07775119437 or via email at dhonn.atkinson@apha.gsi.gov.uk, or Adrian on 07775 119 444 email: adrian.wilford@apha.gsi.gov.uk .

Top Tip

Be generous when feeding your bees. Live colonies with too much food in the spring can be given more room for brood-rearing by replacing combs filled with stores with drawn comb. Nothing can be done for colonies that have starved to death.

AGM 2017

Do make a note in your diary; this year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 11 October at Murton.

Fondant and syrup for sale

David Bough has plenty of syrup and fondant in stock as usual: syrup is £18 per jerry can and fondant is £19 per box.

David is in Holtby. Contact him via email at: david.bough@wardstheflorist.co.uk or by phone 07713 256522

Alan Johnston also has syrup and fondant for sale at the same prices. Alan is near Selby, his phone number is 01757 633202. For the one-hive beekeeper, Alan will sell a single 2.5 kg pack of fondant at £4.

Etymology of "honey"

Linguists have determined that the word for "honey" in Proto-Indo-European was "melit". This evolved into the Greek "melis", Latin "mel" and Sanskrit "madhu". The Chinese "mi" may also have the same origin. Latin evolved into the contemporary French "miel", Welsh "mel", Italian "miele", and Irish "mil".

The Latin root, mel, is the root of numerous English words – melodrama, melody, melon, mellifluous and mellow (rich in flavour). The Greek gave the name Melissa, meaning honey/bee.

Ejection of the drones

You may still see and hear (it's a noisy affair!) the drones being ejected from the hive after the summer, this is perfectly normal behaviour as during the winter the drones have no purpose and are merely extra mouths to feed. Larger colonies may however maintain a few drones overwinter, this is thought to aid colony morale.

Reader's Hives



Many thanks go to Peter Crosby, for this image of a queen introduction. The picture was taken at the Editors' recent apiary visit at Acaster Malbis.