THE LEEDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
BRANCH OF THE YBKA
AFFILIATED WITH THE BBKA

"The Leeds Beekeeper"

INDEX

Hunting for nectar

I may have had my arm twisted slightly but that was perhaps the prod I needed to get round to doing my Basic and so this weekend I (and five other lucky beekeepers) will be explaining the differences between AFB and EFB whilst trying to stuff bees in matchboxes (amongst other things). Meanwhile both Beeingham Palace and Beemoral continue to thrive with one of them likely to find itself on the heather moors come August.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Hello everyone how are you doing? So the swarming season is nearly over. How many of you have chased your own bees down the road and then lost them at the final bend.

Once again all sorts of things have been happening down at the apiary at Temple Newsam so for those who missed it, we had a very enjoyable weekend course where twenty-two prospective new beekeepers came down for a full Saturday and Sunday. The weather was good to us and the food that was provided was excellent; full marks to the Education Officer Chris Barlow and his merry followers. There has been great activity on a Wednesday night we have had the nucs arriving for the new members. Many thanks to the members who came down and acted as mentors to transfer the nucs into the new members hives.

The bees are still busying away in your hives and the number of bees in the hive is now at its highest but the Queen's rate of laying is now beginning to drop.

July is a sort of in-between month, most of the important management was done in May and June and July should, in theory, be the time when you sit back and listen to the constant buzz of your bees watching the nectar flood into your hives and enjoying the smell of honey in the apiary. Putting an

extra super on hive may be required, but careful assessments need to be made as specially towards the end of the month when nectar may slow or stop, too much storage space will result in the greater proportion of uncapped cells hopefully your supers will be full so be careful with your back when you lift them. Wasps usually reach their peak towards the end of July? So nucs should have their entrances reduced to a single bee way, keep your colony strong and the entrance blocks in so that the entrances are easy to defend by the guard bees. It is important to be ahead of the game and restrict all entrances before wasps discover a weak hive as a source of food. Once they attack a nuc or weak colony in numbers it is difficult to stop them. So with plenty of sunny days ahead enjoy yourself and hopefully I will see you at the apiary on a Wednesday evening.

Regards Duncan

BEEWARE

Now I am sure postmen (or should that be postpeople?), and the thin blue line are used to encountering guard dogs. But one French bailiff got more than he bargained for when visiting a farmer to make an inventory of his belongings. The farmer decided to release a swarm of bees as the bailiff arrived before locking himself in a different part of the farm. The bailiff received multiple stings and subsequently was admitted to hospital after suffering an allergic reaction. Meanwhile after a standoff with police the farmer was arrested and awaits trial for “armed violence” with the bees used ““in lieu of an actual weapon”.

http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/819322/farmer-faces-jail-swarm-BEES-bailiff-france

ARSON ATTACK KILLS BEES

A farm in rural Kent has been targeted and over twenty hives were burned or stolen in mid-June. This is the second attack in recent weeks in the area. Whilst Kent may not exactly be on the doorstep it does highlight the need for apiary security. As new beekeepers begin to take their hives away from Temple Newsam to their home apiaries it is a good time to think about where to site your hive and often security is overlooked. It is likely, unless you hive is at home, that it will spend a large part of the week unattended and thus a site that is unlikely to be vandalised is essential.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-40351718

BBKA info sheet Where to site your apiary

OAKWOOD SUMMER GARDEN PARTY

This a free event being held at the Roundhay Parochial Hall on Fitzroy Drive between noon and 5pm on Saturday 29th July. They are hoping to get a variety of local community groups to attend to help advertise what is going on in the local community. If you would like to represent LBKA at this event, please contact our secretary (secretary@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk) for more information.

GETTING READY FOR OIL SEED RAPE

I know what you are thinking the oil seed rape season has just finished..... but read on and you will realise that in order to get the best from this crop, preparation starts in the Autumn.....

Honeybee on Oil Seed Rape

Andrew, our editor, asked if I'd do an article outlining what I do to maximise my crop of oil seed rape honey. There's plenty of advice and books on how to prepare bees for the heather, but not much (that I've seen) for oil seed rape. I have made up my own methods, mainly by trial and error, over the years. These I'm happy to share:

1) Preparation starts in the autumn of the previous year.

- A new queen of that year to head the colony into winter. Young queens not only start to lay earlier in the New Year but they lay more than would an older queen.

- Bees thrive better during winter on honey rather than on syrup. Honey is loaded with pollen - vital for bee health. Syrup has none. So I'm not greedy. I don't take off vital stores only to replace with syrup. If one colony is short of honey I'd rather "steal / transfer" some from a colony that has more than enough to donate to a more needy colony than feed syrup. Of course feeding syrup is better than them starving if there's really no alternative, but honey is best.

-If it's not too contradictory to the above, I do given every colony a "stimulating feed" mid-September. This is a weak sugar syrup (two bags of sugar to 4 litres of water) which is designed to excite the bees / the queen into thinking that there's a flow of incoming nectar. I believe that this stimulates a queen into a fresh bout of egg laying. This will produce the late born, long lived, "winter bees" which are so important to successful overwintering. This feed is likely to be used up in feeding this new brood rather than been laid down into winter stores. And even if some were stored, the amounts involved would be negligible.

- I've started overwintering on double brood boxes. Bees seem to build up more successfully, and come through winter stronger, when they have plenty of room. In spring, prior to OSR flowering, I reduce down to a single brood box. This is outlined later.

- I've gone away from mesh floors altogether. I know that this breaches FERA advice re varroa - but I think that open mesh floors are just too draughty. The cold and wind must hinder brood production. Yes you lose the advantage of varroa mite drop, but I'm not convinced that this is particularly significant. I acknowledge that I'm "swimming against the tide" here - but so be it.

- Sticking with varroa treatments. These are key to healthy colonies in spring. I treat with thymol in September and oxalic acid in December / January. This seems to keep it under control. I also put in sacrificial drone frames (fitted with 1/2 sheets of standard brood foundation (see photo) during the summer months. The empty space at the bottom is filled with drone brood by the bees. Once capped (and having attracted lots of varroa mites) it's removed and destroyed. The bees then repeat the process. This helps keep varroa numbers down during the active seasons.

Half brood frame with void which bees will fill with drone comb

2) Spring preparations

- In early February I remove the mouse guards and replace with entrance blocks. This is to help keep/ boost internal temperatures. This will further encourage the queen to lay as its warmer, but will also help the bees keep the brood warm and alive if/when temperatures fluctuate.

- Some advocate boosting colonies by adding pollen patties from Feb/March. These are readily available from suppliers. I've never tried this, my thinking is that " the bees know best" and will already have plenty of pollen stored. However users are evangelical about the boost that these patties bring about - so I'm going to give them a try next year.

- On an early inspection I reduce the double brood boxes to just one. Unless the colony is particularly strong, a simple realignment of frames is possible. If it's too strong for this i.e. more than about 8 or 9 frames with brood, then I leave it on a double. Having reduced to one brood box the bees are then going to fill the supers with OSR honey rather than the spare space in the brood box.

- On the first spring inspection I note the strength of the colonies. It's a simple fact that strong colonies with more bees produce the most honey. Colonies, using my system, are categorised as weak, middling or strong. The strong I leave alone. Others though are merged to create strong colonies, just as the OSR comes into flower. Again I'll try subsequently to reduce to a single brood box (easy if merging two weak or a weak with a middling colony). But it's not possible when merging two middling ones - I don't even try. But why merge colonies before OSR crop attempt all? Surely it's counterproductive to reduce the number of colonies? But that's not true. It is though true that strong colonies get the most honey. If two "middling" colonies were to produce 'X' honey each - then these same two merged to create a strong colony will get you 3 'X' or more honey. Yes you'll have to watch them for swarm preparations, but in terms of honey yield, it's worth it.

- Finally, and it's easier said than done, I try really hard to prevent them wanting to swarm. Breed from non or late swarming stock. Give them plenty of super space for incoming nectar. Wider entrances once the crop is in flower to make it easier for them to create air circulation to reduce the water content of nectar. But once they produce queen cells I don't "mess about", I artificially swarm them. By "messing about" I mean that I've tried things like destroying queen cells once or twice if the queen is still present; two queen colonies; Demaree with top entrance to get top queen cell into a mated queen; etc etc. None have worked consistently well for me to continue the practice. So as and when they want to swarm, I bite the bullet and artificially swarm.

After all that though it's the weather that is by far the biggest determinant to your getting a bumper crop :-)

Hope this helps

Dave Barrett

If bees were paid the minimum wage for each standard jar of honey they produced, a jar of honey would be worth £800,000

BEE SWARM

B(ee)MW?

Yes it is that time of year again when the clamour for the annual "novelty swarm of the year" awards begins, and it looks like a lady in Hull may be heading for first place. Last month her car was invaded by a swarm of around 20, 000 bees who took up residence in every nook and cranny on the bonnet.

"We will try to entice them away with larvae and young bees but that could take up to 12 hours..... but the bees are already producing wax and comb." Chris Coulson, Beverley Beekeepers

Fortunately Beverley Beekeepers were on hand to try and remove the swarm from the car, but as the bees had already begun to make comb and the queen was deep within the many recesses of the car, their job was not an easy one!

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-40252990

WHEN A SKEP ISN'T ENOUGH…..

Now I am sure when you get a phone call from Duncan asking if you would mind collecting a swarm and giving you the details, surely he would only be ringing you if it was a nice easy to reach swarm ready to go straight in a skep?! But what if you are unlucky enough to get one that is a little tricky to reach, what if it is a swarm in the middle of a hedge, or wrapped around a fence post just above the ground? – well the answer maybe to take your Dyson with you (*other vacs are available) as Andrew Lane explains!

Easy to get in a skep?

Research on existing swarm vacs.

I discovered from other swarm vac users, on the internet, that if a gentle suction was used, the bees suffered no harm, no more harm than dropping them into a skep, or into a box twice. I initially thought this a dubious claim, but I went on to prove this for myself with my own swarm vac.

There are always a few casualties when collecting swarms, but it's difficult to assess how many when using traditional methods however, using the swarm vac you see the casualties on the mesh floor and, amazingly the count has been zero a few times. Normally its 2 or 3 bees per swarm, depending on the swarm size.

Other people's swarm vacs – general design

The first swarm vacs I saw on the internet were purpose built 12v vacuum devices and the bees would still need dropping, from a box (the vac body), into a hive later. This double handling was cleverly reduced, by one bloke in the U.S. who made a standard five frame nuc into the vac body of his swarm sucker, so that the bees went directly into a hive.

I liked his idea but went one further and built the vac around standard national hive parts so the body of my vac is a national brood box, (or a national super if you prefer). I did this for the following reasons:

- Single handling: the brood box will be their final new home
- Some swarms are bigger than a nuc.

The basic design of a 'National' size swarm vac is as follows:

All components are 'National' size i.e. 46cm x 46cm wide so that they sit neatly on top of one another.

There are four basic components, two are standard pieces of hive equipment, and two which can be made according to your own design using my descriptions and diagram as a rough guide.

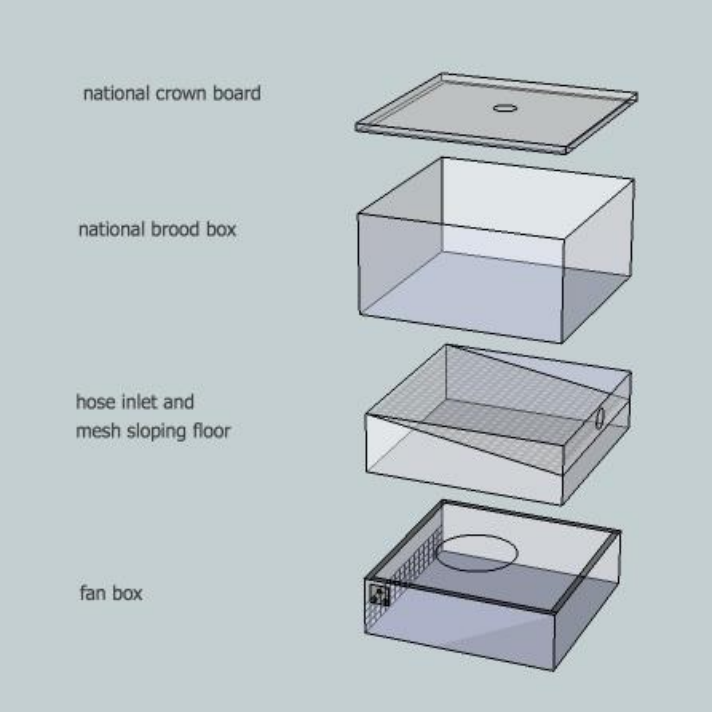
The four main components of the body of the swarm vac are:

1 – Fan box (at the bottom)

2 – Hive floor (sloping mesh)

3 – Brood box (standard)

4 – Crown board (standard)



1 – Fan box

The fan box is at the base of the equipment and its purpose is to safely mount the fan which creates suction through the mesh floor above, and to house the 12v electrics which supply it.

A mesh covered air outlet is required and is shown on the diagram above as being on the side of the fan box however my outlet is in the base plate (simply because I had something which would do, a crown board with multiple holes in it, part of a job lot at a bee auction). Mesh is desirable to stop bees entering the fan box when the fan is switched off. A power inlet (plug) for the fan is also required. The fan I used is an efficient, low energy, 12v motorcycle radiator cooling fan, mounted horizontally.

2 – Sloping Mesh Floor

Although built to 'national' size this isn't a standard national floor because it has a circular entrance (for the suction hose), and a sloping mesh bottom. In all of the swarm vac examples I had seen elsewhere the hose inlet was in the top of the vacuum body (or nuc box), often through the feeder hole of a crown board, and simply for convenience. This top entry meant the bees experienced maximum vertical impact upon arrival, hitting the floor, or the top of the frames at speed. My sideways base entry, and sloping mesh floor, provides a much gentler, sideways, rolling arrival, and the slope on the mesh encourages the bees to crawl upwards and away, onto the welcoming frames above.

3 – Standard 'National' brood box.

A standard brood box goes on top of the modified floor, (which is of national floor dimensions).

A standard brood box, with frames, goes onto the special floor

4 – Standard 'National' Crownboard

A solid crownboard is more air tight but most have feeder holes in them so I made a simple plug to cover the hole. A standard hole cover might slide off in moving vehicle, so I made one which cannot. I like to use a transparent crownboard so that I can see what's going on, but also to attract the newly captured bees upwards towards the frames.

5 – Power source – battery and solar panel

I use a small (dimensions?) 12v, 35Ah battery which is good for 3 average swarms before it needs a recharge. I have a solar panel which can re-charge the battery whilst in use though in reality I have never been that desperately low on power, or far away from a mains charger.

6 – Hose

I use a hose from a full sized mains operated vac which was destined for the tip, and it works fine. The hardest thing is to modify the floor entrance to accept the hose end fitting and if I'd been a bit sharper I would have taken the hose plate from the vac as well, screwed it to the floor, and saved myself a lot of bother. You need the largest diameter you can get, so the bees don't block it. Commercially made 12v vacs always have small diameter hoses which are unsuitable.

So what are the advantages?

✓No double handling/dropping, the brood box is their final home.

✓The bees immediately find themselves on bee ready frames, (I usually provide some drawn comb).

✓It utilises standard 'National' hive parts enabling you to collect more than one swarm per day, by simply switching the floor. The brood box lifts off onto a standard floor leaving the special sloping vac floor free for another lucky swarm.

✓Considerably less wobbling about on step ladders, plastic chairs, picnic tables, wall tops, etc.

✓A much reduced need to trim branches, cut holes in hedges, fight through brambles, or decimate gardens or allotments.

✓Quick, clean, easy (It usually takes about 30 minutes for an average swarm, if there are no complications e.g. two virgin queens).

✓Multiple virgin queen swarms are not a problem, they all go in the box, rather than splitting into two happy clusters, one in the box, one outside. (See Swarm Vac video below for an example of two virgin queens).

✓Tetchy bees end up safely inside before they do any harm. They leap at the hose end as it approaches, and get sucked inside where they can be as bad tempered (and bewildered) as they like.

Disadvantages

- ✗ Weight of 12v battery
- ✗ In your bee suit you look like a ghost buster……

So if you are looking for a Winter project ready for next year's swarm season this could be right up your street?

Adapted from an article by Andrew Lane

www. queensandbeans.uk

BEES ON THE BOX

Gardener's World

Some of you may have seen both Monty in his own hive at Longmeadow and a visit to the National Botanic Gardens of Wales looking at the research going on there into bee's preferred pollen types. If you missed it follow the link below. A further report on the pollen work undertaken by the Botanic Gardens will follow in a future newsletter.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08wqzp2/gardeners-world-2017-episode-15

BEES OF MANCHESTER

Manchester's Coat of Arms

In the wake of the recent terror attack in Manchester the "worker bee" became the symbol of the city but where does the link to the humble bee originated from? Actually its links can be traced back over 170 years to 1842 when the city's coat of arms was created. The classical heraldic shield design has a globe of bees at the top representing the "industrious nature" of the city. Indeed what could be better than a hive of bees to represent hard work and togetherness? *Incidentally at the bottom of the coat of arms is the latin phrase Concilio Et Labore, which means 'by counsel and work'*

SWARM AT SKELTON GRANGE

A celebratory exhibition and installations at Skelton Grange Environment Centre

Daily, from 19th August to 16th September, free entry.

Skelton Grange Environment Centre in Leeds is celebrating its 25th birthday this year with some artistic flair! Skelton Grange is a popular community and education hub managed by The Conservation Volunteers charity. Just two miles south of Leeds centre, the beautiful Skelton Grange eco-building is set in a 10 acre nature reserve reclaimed from a formerly industrial site. The centre has large, natural-lit spaces looking out onto a fruit orchard and vegetable gardens, apiary, ponds, woodland and wildflower meadows. This has achieved over 25 years by, and for the Leeds community, connecting more than 150,000 people with their local environment and its story.

The Swarm exhibition and installations have been inspired by bees, wildflowers and our natural environment, using materials reflecting Leeds' industrial heritage.

Laney Birkhead's inspirational Swarm installation will be at the heart of the exhibition, and visitors will be able to walk inside a 'hive' of 50,000 hand printed bees. This magical experience was explored and enjoyed by so many people at Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley last year, and we are delighted to be able to bring this opportunity back to Leeds. A documentary film produced by Paul Harris will also be screened, which tells the story of how hundreds of people from all over Yorkshire helped print the 50,000 bees, and turn them into an art installation.

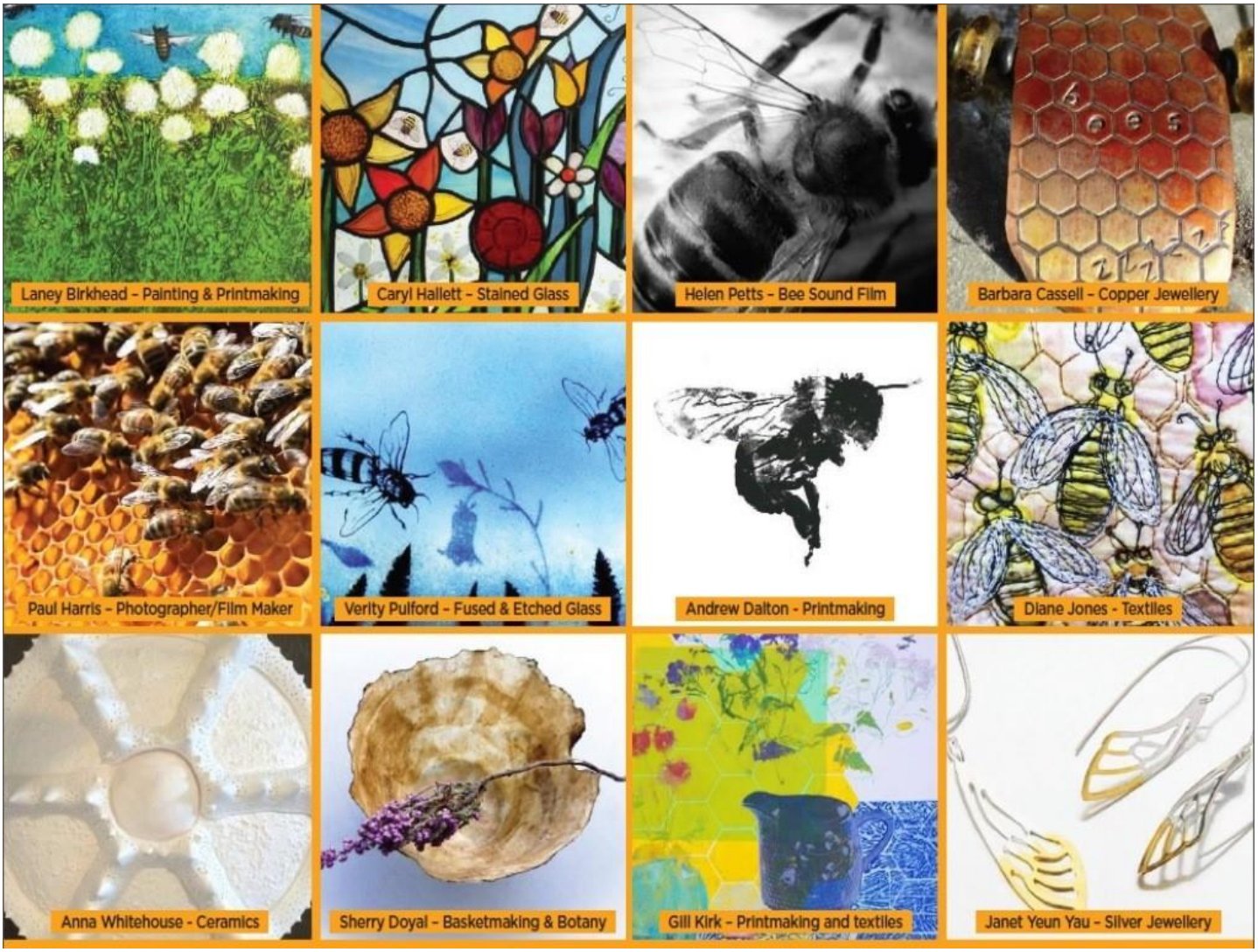
This event is extra special as it will also feature new permanent willow, wood, ceramic and beeswax artworks made for Skelton Grange with support from Leeds Inspired and Grow Wild. These new artworks have been made by Leeds schools and community groups, and will include a ceramic wildflower meadow inspired by the Tower of London poppies, carved spoons made of wood harvested from the Skelton Grange nature area, and a record of the site's wildflowers through the seasons preserved in natural beeswax.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy and buy beautiful art and craft work created by the Swarm collective of twelve local artists and makers in response to the plight of the honeybee and other pollinators - their range of prints, glass, jewellery, prints, film, ceramics and textiles are truly inspiring to see. Interesting pieces to listen to will include the Be One soundscape from the 'Hive' exhibition at Kew Gardens, featuring sounds of the beehive. There will also be talks from Peter Reasbeck on beekeeping (19th August 1pm) and Buglife's Andrew Cutts on making Leeds a 'Buzzing City' (23rd August 6pm). Teas, coffee and gorgeous cake from friendly vegan Leeds bakery, That Old Chestnut will be available, and you can also wander around Skelton Grange's beautiful nature area….

More information can be found at www.tcv.org.uk/skeltongrange

or 01132430815 or skelton@tcv.org.uk

12oz Hexagonal Jars



Some of the exhibits at Skelton Grange Swarm event

COUNCIL ERROR KILLS BEES

Officials at Anglesey council were left red faced when called out to deal with a swarm of honeybees. instead of their usual procedures been followed – which involved a beekeeper been called, the bees were instead killed by council workers. An investigation is now under way into the incident.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-40416265

ASK THE BEEKEEPER

Have you got a burning beekeeping question that you want an answer to? Then please send it to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk and we will do our best to find you an answer!

12OZ HEXAGONAL JARS

Hopefully your bees have been busy and you now have lots of honey and not enough jars to put it in.... fear not LBKA have the answer! 12oz (340 g) hexagonal jars with lids are available in the shop at a bargain price of 23p each, they come loose so you can buy as many as you require. Please bring a cardboard box to carry them home in. If you require a large quantity, please email Duncan thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk or ring him on 07855 308143

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk by 31st July.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July

Saturday 1st - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Tuesday 11th – Thursday 13th – Great Yorkshire Show

Sunday 16th – BBKA basic assessment

August

Tuesday 1st – Yorkshire Day Event – Lotherton Hall 11 am – 4 pm

Saturday 12th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 26th – Sunday 27th – Temple Newsam Open Weekend