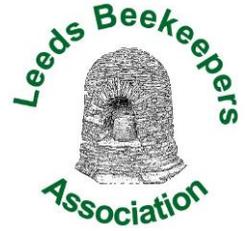




**THE LEEDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
BRANCH OF THE YBKA
AFFILIATED WITH THE BBKA**



“The Leeds Beekeeper”

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A couple of sunny days and the ladies are out in force taking advantage of the crocuses (croci?!). Plenty of pollen is being taken into the hive suggesting that Queen Camilla is back laying but I will resist the temptation for a peak in the hive until the temperature warms a bit. Fingers crossed the honey gods will smile kindly on me this year!

CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

Well at last by the numbers of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils that are out, dare I say that spring has arrived?! The spring flowers and plants should be appearing in all areas now and of course, the bees are aware of this. It is the appearance of these flowers that signals the end of winter for the bees.

Plants in the garden may just be beginning to show but in the bee colony things are well advanced. The queen has been laying since mid-January. The first newbies of the year are now appearing at the entrance of their own hives and learning basic orientation. How do you spot these? On a bright warm afternoon look around the hive entrance. If you watch you will see some bees hovering a short distance from the hive, say about 9 to 12 inches (20-30 cm for those metrics amongst us) and facing the entrance as they fly. These bees are fixing the pattern of the entrance, including its height from the ground before they venture further afield.

Beware of sudden cold snaps, winter is not yet over and it is still possible to have an extended period of sub-zero weather. This will make maintenance of the brood temperature at 30-34°C very difficult for the workers and they might need some help by being fed so keep an eye on those stores. And if you need to feed, feed with fondant.



Spring has arrived....

The weather in March will usually not be warm enough for a comprehensive inspection so if you have done your job properly at the end of last season it should not be strictly necessary to do a full inspection until sometime in April so please follow this golden rule. Keep out do not be tempted to have a look into the brood box.

Regards Duncan

WHOOOPS A DAISY

“Excuse me”, “Oops Sorry”, “Mind your wings” is what one imagines is going on most Monday mornings in the hive as the bees go about their daily business. With so many housemates it is inevitable that collisions will occur as the bees try to navigate around the comb and now scientists have been able to capture that noise. A “Whoop whoop” sound has been identified, which was previously thought to be a signal to other bees to stop what they are doing. However using accelerometers embedded in the honeycomb scientists now believe this is an expression of surprise often emitted by bees.



“Excuse me, coming through...”

foraging going on and thus this allowed the researchers to discount a previous hypothesis for the signal; that it was a way to communicate the location of nectar. In addition during the day there are fewer bees in the hive and thus with a lower bee density the chance of a collision is reduced and this the “whoops” occurrence rate is reduced.

Now obviously there is a video clip of [this](#).....

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0171162>

BBKA ON-SHOW

The BBKA will have a stand at the Spring Convention at Harper Adams in the RFA foyer, for further details please see their [flyer](#).

WAX GLANDS



Building materials at the ready! © Helga Hilmann

Neither the queen, nor drones, are able to make wax, whilst worker bees only produce wax for around six days (12 -18th of their 35 day summer lives). On the ventral side of the worker bee, on abdominal segments four to seven, are paired smooth areas, approximately oblong in shape, called wax mirrors. Each mirror area has a wax gland associated with it, which secretes a liquid through the mirrors which then hardens to a thin layer of wax on the wax mirror which builds up until a wax scale results. It should be noted that the wax scales produced by segment VII are smaller and a different shape than the scale produced by the other segments. An individual wax scale is around 3 mm wide and 0.1 mm thick with over 1000 scales required to make a gram of wax.

In order to secrete wax, the hive temperature must be in excess of 33°C, with each gram of wax requiring around eight grams of honey to be consumed by the bee. Wax scales begin as clear or white, but gradually begin to yellow as pollen and propolis become incorporated in it. In fact when it comes to beeswax over 300 individual chemical components have been identified in it, with monoesters contributing around a third of the weight.

Normally wax producing bees will concentrate on an area of comb, however the bee in the photo above has clearly strayed from the rest of her wax building friends and as a result her wax glands have continued to secrete and thus it looks like she is carrying 8 house bricks rather than the delicate wax scales you normally see.

Very much the ‘Ronseal’ of the bee glands – they do exactly as the name would suggest. Wax glands are responsible for producing wax to be used for construction within the hive. Now as modern beekeepers provide a handy template to build upon, in the form of foundation and structure within the hive in the form of frames, wax construction for bees should be an easy task?! However as every beekeeper will know where you want the bees to lay down comb and where bees choose to lay down comb are two very different things.....



Plenty of wax here! © Debbe Krape

“ON MI ‘EAD”



She shoots....and scores.....! © Iida Loukola

I am not sure it is a sport that Sky will be bidding for the rights to in the near future (or perhaps it is more up BeeT Sports aisle?), but Scientists have been able to get bees to play a rudimentary form of football. Now whilst Messi and Ronaldo have nothing to worry about at the moment, scientists believe that this shows bees are capable of sophisticated learning.

Buff tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*) have a brain about the size of a poppy seed, but that doesn't stop them from learning from others. In the experiment a bumblebee had to drag a small ball into a 'goal' area. Once the ball was in the goal the bumblebee was rewarded with a drop of sugar water. A second spectator bumblebee was then added who by observing 'learned' how to receive the reward, however the newcomer was not merely copying its teacher.

Buff tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*)

“It sure looks like what would be called goal emulation,” or actions in pursuit of a goal rather than rote imitation, he says. If so, “that’s fairly sophisticated” Ken Cheng, Macquarie University

To test the skills of the instructor bee and pupil, the instructor bee was presented with three balls, two of which were glued to the surface, whilst the one furthest from the goal was free to roll. The instructor bee dutifully rolled the farthest ball to the goal and received her sugary reward. The procedure was then repeated with a pupil bee introduced to allow the pupil to learn from the more experienced bee. The pupil bee was then presented with a pitch with three balls on it (none of which were glued down) and rather than blindly copying its teacher and going for the same ball furthest from the goal, the bumblebee instead rolled the nearest ball into the goal to get its sugary reward. This is the first time a complex skill has been learned by watching fellow bees rather than incremental training.

<https://gfyat.com/TenderSpottedBluegill>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/item/1942bcd3-b142-4a04-9b1c-eba6a99fbd6c>

BEES ON THE BOX

Mary Berry

Some of you may have seen Mary Berry visiting an apiary in Hertfordshire, for those who missed it see the link below (about 10 mins in).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08hv2v4/mary-berry-everyday-series-1-2-hearty-and-wholesome>

Back to the Land

Meanwhile Kate Humble visited Nick Tonkin a small scale honey producer on the Pembrokeshire coast who also raises queens to help supplement his income (about 15 mins in). Incidentally we eat around 25 000 tonnes of honey in the UK every year but only produce around 1500 tonnes in Britain.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08hvmb1/back-to-the-land-with-kate-humble-series-1-1-pembrokeshire>

Only Connect

And finally The Beekeepers continue their quest to win Only Connect, find out if they make it to the next round....

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08hwdg2/only-connect-series-12-33-beekeepers-v-korfballers>

MARCH APIARY DAY

Bonfire day came early on the Saturday meet up, Ian Ramsbottom had been kind enough to cut down the hedges during the previous week as long as someone else cleared up the clippings. Here we can see Dave Barrett and Stuart Wall burning the clippings. This was going on in the nucleus apiary. Of course, the kettle was on and biscuits were munched whilst beekeepers discussed any winter losses. The hives were only visually checked and the store was open with David Haigh helping out.



Smoke signals were the order of the day

SWARMS

Well with this period of warm weather, thoughts begin to turn to swarms and once again I am asking you to step up to the mark to help in this very busy and important time. The only way we can collect these swarms is with your help. For the uninitiated this is how it works:

I will ring you with all the information as to where it is postcodes etc you pick a time convenient for you to collect and then you go and retrieve it. I will have sorted the donation of £30.00 before you go which you get £10.00 for your out of power expenses, the remaining £20.00 goes to LBKA and of course you keep the bees so really it is a no brainer. All you need to do is e-mail thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk with your contact phone number and the postcode you wish to collect from and I will do the rest.

The one rule I have is that you must have kept bees for at least 12 months. If you have never collected a swarm before don't worry as I will get an experienced beekeeper to show you and make sure the swarm is easy and accessible (No cherry pickers required).

Looking forward to hearing from all of you.

Duncan Brearley – Swarm Coordinator

HONEY SELLING OPPORTUNITY

LBKA have been contacted by Battenburg Events who are running a series of Christmas Fairs towards the end of the year, the nearest of which to us, will be held at Harewood House (3rd – 5th Nov). If anyone would be interested in selling honey (or related bee products) at the event please contact Val, our secretary (secretary@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk).

Please note that the April Apiary Day will be the 1st and not the 8th.

The Shop will be open, no doubt selling tartan paint and long stands.....



Can you catch a swarm?

THE PALMER CUP

This month we are delving back into the archives to look at the origins of the Palmer Cup. The Palmer Cup is a silver rose bowl that until recently was awarded at the annual honey competition, but how did it come into existence?

Donated by Gillian Palmer to the Leeds Beekeepers' Association at the 1950 AGM in November in memory of her husband George who had died earlier that year. Mrs Palmer was thanked for her gift by the then President Alfred Hebden who said "that he was sure that future contestants for its possession would raise the standard of honey production amongst its members". At that time the AGM was held at the YMCA in Albion Place, central Leeds. The Association's 5th Annual Honey Show had been held earlier that month at the now demolished Belgrave Central Hall, Belgrave Street. Incidentally the first LBKA honey show was held in October 1945 at Chapter Hall, Leeds Church institute, with a special prize of a year's membership presented to the most outstanding exhibit and exhibitor gaining most points.

George and Gillian Palmer were founder members of the Leeds Beekeepers' Association and were originally from Doncaster, both were very keen honey exhibitors at both local and county level. George was a very good beekeeper and an expert in exhibiting honey to boot. Following George's retirement from the railway industry they moved away from their native Doncaster, with George helping to run the newly issued "Yorkshire Beekeeper", sadly he was to die only a few months later.

Mrs Palmer herself died in the summer of 1954. The Associations' president Alfred Hebden recorded the following homily at the 1954 AGM "Mrs Palmer will be remembered by this Association for her many personal qualities which will be ever enshrined in the beautiful Palmer Cup which she presented to us some years ago in memory of her late husband, George Palmer to be awarded annually to the exhibitor gaining the most points at our annual honey show". It is over 50 years since Mrs Palmer passed away but her legacy to LBKA lives on.

Adapted from an article by Michael Badger

BEES FOR SALE

Leeds Beekeepers are always looking at ways to further support our beekeepers and indeed preserve honeybee colonies within the Leeds area. Following discussions amongst the committee, LBKA members who can no longer keep their bees due to a change in circumstances or perhaps as they are retiring from beekeeping will be able to advertise their bees for rehoming via the LBKA newsletter. This will be subject to the regional beekeeper (Ivor Flatman ivor.flatman@apha.gsi.gov.uk Tel No: 01924 252795) certifying that the bees are free from disease prior to an advert being made. If you would like to take advantage of this please email newsletter@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk

COLONY WANTED FOR POLLINATION

As a member of the LBKA David has been asked by a friend (not a beekeeper) if it would be possible for an LBKA Member to place a colony (perhaps more than one) in his back garden in West Park, Leeds. This is envisaged as a short term arrangement during the spring fruit blossom period. This person is also involved in the planting of fruit trees on public ground nearby, so there should be good potential nectar/pollen sources nearby to this particular garden. Any member interested should contact David Haigh on 07821 252958 or haighd@sky.com for details.

WINTER TALK – FEBRUARY

The February winter meeting at the Newman Centre was excellent, we were fortunate enough to have Ivor Flatman the permanent regional bee inspector talking to us about preparing bees for Spring. Ivor spoke extensively about pests and diseases and how



February meeting was well attended



Homemade hornet trap

treating for Varroa was paramount. He

discussed the invasive species Asian Hornet and how it had been sighted last year down South. We all hope APHA managed to exterminate this foreign invader originally from North East China which had arrived via France. It was a well-attended talk with around 50 turning up to listen to Ivor talk.

The picture shows a homemade Asian hornet trap, the design can be found on the NBU website. Ivor discussed how APHA has identified the Asian hornet and then tracked it back to its nest and then poisoned the nest hope fully before any hornet queens could leave.

Amongst some of the tips Ivor came out with was Spring feeding if required, Spring varroa treatment and making sure strong hives have their swarming tendency managed early on.

HONEY REQUEST

Yunus is looking for local honey, about 50 jars, preferably from the Batley/Wakefield area. Anyone with honey to sell please contact him on: Mob 07877 441977 E-mail: yunusm@hotmail.com

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 March.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March

Saturday 11th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 25th – YBKA Conference

Wednesday 29th – Winter Talk – Beekeeping in Israel and Palestine – Margaret Goddard

April

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

Wednesday 5th – Apiary Meeting with Masterclass – Swarm Control – Pagden Method