



# Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association January 2016 Newsletter



During the winter, check regularly that the entrance to the hive is clear. Sometimes there can be a build of dead bees which blocks the entrance.

## Winter was Here Last Week!

Winter arrived albeit briefly! The recent cold patch should not be all doom and gloom for Beekeepers. For those of us looking to apply Oxalic Acid to our colonies the recent run of cold weather should mean that there is little or no sealed brood within the colony, which is the ideal situation for a successful application of Oxalic Acid. Again, the cold weather has meant that the bees have not been flying. In my apiary this has been the situation for over two weeks which has opened the opportunity for me to move colonies around within my apiary whilst ignoring the 3ft or 3 mile rule. Honeybees, on emerging, after a long period within the hive re-orientate themselves, so if the hive has been relocated the orientation will be to the new site thus the new site can be any distance within the apiary. When moving a colony in the winter, care must be taken not to jolt the hive as this can cause the tight cluster within to fall from the frames, causing injury to the bees and the possibility that the colony will not recover. If a colony needs to be moved to another apiary, close up the entrance and fit the appropriate straps. Initially move the hive to a warmer location such as a garage for a minimum of a day so that the cluster within can expand. Then the colony can be moved with less chance of a fatal collapse of the cluster.

### Education Programme 2016

We have an exciting education programme planned for 2016. Prospective candidates have started attending Study Groups for BBKA Modules 1 and 3. There are two County lead training courses; Practical Beekeeping and Microscopy Study Group. The Practical Beekeeping course is open to all members who have attained their BBKA Basic Assessment, it aims to introduce more advanced Beekeeping practices through a hands-on approach. The Microscopy Study Group is working through the syllabus for the BBKA Microscopy Assessment which will take place in November. On the 9th May we will start the course for the BBKA Basic Assessment, there is an article on the Assessment overleaf. Finally this year's New Beekeeper course starts on 8th February, this course takes a lot of organising and help from our members is always welcome. For further information on any of the above please go [here](#), or contact Sue Bogue at [education@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:education@mbbka.org.uk)



### The Winter Bee by Frank Rickett

At our next Association meeting on 17th February Frank, a past Chairman of the MBBKA and current President of the Bucks County BKA, will be presenting a new talk on "The Winter Bee". This talk describes the important changes that take place in the bodies of worker bees in preparation for winter, explaining how they enable the bees to survive hard winters and how they can begin raising new brood early the following spring. The way bees behave in the cluster and how they utilise their winter stores are also important for their survival.

### Programme of Events

**8th February 2016**

**New Beekeepers Course Starts**

Organiser, Caroline Windley

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

**17th February 2016**

**Association Meeting**

Frank Rickett, Winter Bees

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

**20th February 2016**

**Bucks County BKA**

**Spring Seminar**

10:00am

Memorial Hall, Wendover

**15th March 2016**

**Association Meeting**

Julian Parker, Asian Hornet

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

**2nd April 2016**

**Practical Beekeeping Course**

9:30 am

Butlers Cross Village Hall

**19th April 2016**

**Association Meeting**

Beekeeping It's a Knockout

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

## Bucks County BKA Spring Seminar

This year the Bucks County Seminar is being held on 20th February, a little earlier than usual to avoid date clashes with other Beekeeping events around. For those who have not attended the event before it is an excellent way to kick start the season. There are two well known speakers presenting on topics that should make us think and help us understand a bit more about what makes our bees tick. Margaret Thomas, who among other things is a Moderator of the BBKA Examinations and Assessments, will be giving two talks. The first is titled "Pollen, the Bees and the Beekeeper", pollen is a key driver of the success of a colony and particularly during Spring when the colony looks to make up for its winter losses. Margaret's second talk "What Motivates the Bee to Act like it Does" should be something that interests all as with knowledge of how a colony works can only help us in achieving a successful outcome. The ability of the honeybee to learn and adapt to circumstances is key to the success of the colony, Marin Anastasov's talk will give us an insight into how Honeybees learn. As well as the talks and a hearty lunch there will be several stalls at the event including a second hand beekeeping equipment stall where you sell as well as purchase items. Full details of the day and how to book, discount for advanced bookings, can be found [here](#). Otherwise please contact Fiona Matheson at [fiona.matheson.fm@googlemail.com](mailto:fiona.matheson.fm@googlemail.com) or on 01923 285637.

## Some Bee Numbers to Think About this Summer

The available area of comb for a queen to lay on a standard national brood frame is 199 square inches, with 11 frames in a brood box this totals 2189 square inches and with approximately 25 cells per square inch there are available 54,725 cells. If we assume that the queen lays on 80% of cells then we have 43,780 (9 frames of brood) which is a lay rate of 2,000 per day if the cells are "refilled" every 22 days.

For a queen to achieve this lay rate there would have to be a sustained flow over a 4-6 week period (a rarity in recent times).

If we now assume that all our emerged bees live for 6 weeks in the summer but there are 15% losses due to various reasons e.g. disease, then at 2,000 emerging bees per day we would have 71,400 bees split 50/50 house and foragers bees. If we used a lay rate of 1,500 per day we would have about 7 frames of brood and a total of 53,550 bees. As the 7 frames are assumed to be 80% occupied I would suggest that in reality there would be brood on at least 9 frames (if the colony had not already swarmed). This begs the question, how many bees are in the hive on a sunny day?

## MBBKA School Visits

As many of our members will know, throughout the school summer term (April till July) Vanessa Rickett organises visits to local schools to promote Beekeeping. The visits generally link in with the Mini-Beasts curriculum followed by junior schools during the summer term.



A typical visit involves setting up several table displays manned by volunteers from our Association. Each stand reflects a different aspect of beekeeping such as an observation hive with live bees, products of the hive including tasting honey, wild flowers and how they are pollinated.

Each event normally lasts a morning and is very busy as up to a hundred students can be involved. It is extremely rewarding to be involved in something embraced so enthusiastically by the students and their teachers alike. Vanessa is always in need of volunteers to help with the visits, the level of beekeeping experience is not critical, rather a willingness to be involved is all that is required. Please if you are interested please drop Vanessa an email at [var@fairholme.me.uk](mailto:var@fairholme.me.uk). A copy of our flyer for the school visits can be found on the education page of the Association [website](#).

## BBKA Basic Assessment

The BBKA Basic Assessment is an opportunity for any of our members who have kept at least one colony for a period of 12 months to consolidate their beekeeping experience. The Assessment is a practical/oral session where the Beekeeper demonstrates and discusses aspects of everyday beekeeping.

The Basic Assessment is the required qualification by the BBKA for a Beekeeper wishing pursue further practical Assessments or written Examinations.

We are running a course starting 9th May which is open to any member who has kept a colony for at least 12 months. The course is an excellent way to share experiences with other beekeepers. It runs over a period of 5 weeks, covering all aspects of beekeeping from frame building to swarm control and disease recognition.

Attendees can choose at the end of the course whether or not they wish to sit the BBKA Basic Assessment.

Further information on the Assessment can be found [here](#). Please contact Susan Bogue at [education@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:education@mbbka.org.uk) if you would like to attend or require further information on the course later this year.