



Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association May 2014 Newsletter



Buckfast worker

Wendover Celebrates

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Mid Bucks will be running a stand at the Wendover Celebrates event on Sunday 25th May. The stand will be themed on Beekeeping in Medieval times. As a member of the Association there are several ways you can get involved:

- Help man the stand
- Dress the part of a Medieval Beekeeper, costumes have been made
- Supply honey for sale on the stand

At the previous Wendover Celebrates event our stand was very popular and we sold out of honey very quickly. To get you in the mood for Medieval Beekeeping attached is an article written by Liz Tice on the subject.

To be involved contact Karen at kdadswell@gmx.com

If you would prefer to just attend the event, full details can be found at www.wendovercelebrates.org.uk. Parade starts at 11:00am and the gates open to the public at midday.

Nucleus For Sale

At this time of year there is always a demand for nuclei of bees, primarily from new beekeepers looking to start out on their first season.

If you are looking to produce a Nucleus Colony for sale or a new beekeeper wishing to purchase one, please email me at chairman@mbbka.org.uk so that I can refer purchaser to seller.

As a buyer or a seller please take some time to read the article written by the BBKA concerning advice on Nuclei, it can be found [here](#).

Ken Gorman's Apiary Visit

There are still places available for the visit to Ken Gorman's Apiary on Saturday 17th May. Ken came out of the winter with 62 colonies and I imagine after splitting has more now. The visit will start at his apiary at the [Milton Keynes Museum](#) and will no doubt give further insight into his article in the May BBKA News. This will be followed by a visit to Ken's honey preparation room. New and experienced beekeepers are welcome. Email Sarahamturner@onetel.com to register for the trip.

First Summer Meeting

John Dadswell will be running the summer meeting on 21st May, starting at 19:00. Because it is still early in the season and the weather is unpredictable we have not planned to do anything specific other than carry out a full inspection of all colonies. If due to poor weather the evening is cancelled a notice will be published on the [Blog](#). Hope you can make it.

Colony Loss Survey 2014

So far we have had only 25 responses (out of 113 beekeepers) to the Colony Loss survey published last month. So if you have yet to respond please do so by emailing chairman@mbbka.org.uk with your answers to the questionnaire attached to last month's Newsletter. The full results will be published in next month's Newsletter.

Apiary Sites

We have been offered 2 further potential out apiary sites; near Tring and Bishopstone. Both offer good season long forage. Contact me for further information on these and other sites.

Equipment for Sale

An established beekeeper has a range of National equipment for sale as well as a couple of colonies, please email chairman@mbbka.org.uk for contact details.

Programme of Events

17th May

Association Visit to Ken Gorman's Apiary

11:00am Milton Keynes Museum

21st May

Summer Apiary Meeting

7:00pm Association Apiary

25th May

Wendover Celebrates

Midday John Colet School Grounds

18th June

Summer Apiary Meeting

7:00pm Association Apiary

16th July

Summer Apiary Meeting

7:00pm Association Apiary

Different Approaches to Swarm Control

When starting beekeeping we are taught only one effective way for swarm control and that is the Pagden method of Artificial Swarm. With experience, beekeepers will develop their own approach to swarm control which best suits their situation. To be clear, tearing down queen cells is **not** swarm control, it is just putting off the inevitable swarm as bees are very crafty at hiding queen cells. Apart from re-queening, which again I would not consider a proper method of swarm control all the methods adopt similar principles. A swarm is the Honeybee colony's method of reproduction so is generally lead by a productive queen, poor or failing queens are more likely to be superseded so before tearing down queen cells always take an overview of the colony's state and history. A successful artificial swarm will fool the colony into believing that it has swarmed without affecting honey production. Below are some common swarm control methods and spookily the one which is least practiced in this country is closest to a natural swarm, the Taranov Board. With this method the "swarm" comprises the queen and young bees, leaving the foragers and queen cells in the hive. Personally I prefer the Demaree method because it buys time, uses least hardware and gives good opportunity for splitting and making increase. The best method will always be the one the beekeeper has most success with.

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Remove the queen	Destroy all queen cells, remove the queen and re-queen	Queen quality is managed Honey crop not impinged No extra hardware	Colony size remains so could still be chance of swarming Need an available supply of new queens
	Remove queen and destroy all bar two queen cells and leave colony to re-queen		Colony growth and crop disrupted New queen might not mate well
Artificial Swarm (Pagden Method)	Queen, fresh foundation, foragers and supers stay in place, brood and young bees moved to side	Honey crop maintained Can re-queen through uniting with "swarmed" colony if desired	Requires additional hardware (essentially 2 hives)
Shook Swarm using Taranov Board	Ramp placed in front of hive with 4 inch gap to hive. Bees on frames shaken onto sheet over ramp. Foragers return to hive and brood with 2 x Queen Cells, queen and young bees cluster under board. Cluster is the "swarm" which is hived.	Splits colony into a swarm close to real composition 	Needs good weather and space to work well
Snelgrove	Same as Artificial Swarm except the existing colony is placed above Snelgrove board above supers, flying bees are bled from parent to swarm colony.	Control over flying bees and maintain foraging activity less hardware required simpler to reunite	Timing is crucial Never seems to go to plan
Demaree	Similar to Snelgrove except board not used, queen, frame of brood and new foundation in bottom box, QE, then supers and 2 nd QE, original brood with QCs torn down, as brood emerges it will go down to bottom box	No special hardware required Simple No loss of crop Gives beekeeper time to plan colony future	Only prevents colony swarming for 14-21 days

Beekeeping in medieval England by Liz Tice

It is thought that the Romans introduced domestic beekeeping to Britain. There were wild bees in nests still to be found in woodland areas when the Romans were in occupation. There are later medieval illustrations showing where a hollow has been cut into a tree trunk, replicating a natural nest, and then a door fitted over the hollow nest allowing access to the honeycomb. These log hives were known as 'rusca' and The Domesday Book records these in Suffolk. This does give some indication that wild bees and their produce were still important at this time.



During the early medieval period if a person found wax or honey then they were entitled to keep them. Under Welsh laws the finder got one penny or the wax. If a landowner had a swarm on his land they could keep the swarm or four pence and dinner or all the wax.

It was only in the 19th century that man started using wooden hives with frames. Before that a variety of hives were used, principally those made of wicker or straw. Those made of wicker could also be covered in clay to make them more substantial.

The word 'skep' which is still used today comes from 'sceppe' in Old English, 'skeppe' in Old Norse (meaning bushel). Skeps are still in use, mainly for catching swarms. They are usually made from long straw and are simply constructed.

The size of the hives seems to vary – the use of small hives or skeps would encourage swarming. The worth of swarms is also documented in the early Welsh Laws. The first swarm was worth 16d, the second 12d and the third 8d.

Abbeys certainly kept bees and there is evidence that hives were kept in gardens of royal palaces.

Bees kept in a domestic environment during the medieval period produced a lower yield of honey compared to modern hives. Two gallons (32lb) was an average yield compared with around 25-60lb of today (depending on weather conditions). There are lots of documentary references to honey in legal documents. Ten hides of land furnished ten vessels of honey and honey certainly made up part of food rents.

Mention is made in Old English of 'huniges teares' or runny honey, which is the honey produced after the cappings have been removed. Strained honey was known as 'asweones honey'. Honeycomb at that time would have consisted of the comb including all the brood; eggs, larva and pupae. Straining the honey would get rid of all the brood.

Mead had great importance to the culture of the Anglo-Saxons. The Sanskrit for honey was 'meth' and the Greek word for alcohol was the same. The modern word metheglin is still used for mead flavoured with spices or herbs.

In the early medieval period the 'beo ceorl' (Bee churl – beekeeper!) was the same rank as the swineherd i.e. the lowest rank of freeman. The beo ceorl paid his tax in honey. The beekeeper was also known by the Latin term 'custos apiari'.

There is no evidence of any protective clothing until the 1400's. Gloves and hoods were possibly worn before this but there is no evidence of this.



This charm is from the mid 11th century.

'For a swarm of bees'

Take earth; throw it with your right hand under your right foot and say:

'I catch it under my foot, I have reclaimed it. Lo, earth prevails over all creatures, and over malice and over jealousy and over the spell of the powerful person.

And from above cast the soil over the bees when they swarm and say: Settle ye, war-women, sink to the ground! Never should you, wild, to the wood fly. Be ye as respectful of my welfare as is every man of food and shelter.'

Personally I think I'll keep to the Artificial Swarm method!