



# Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association March 2016 Newsletter



Crocus flowers provide a good source for early pollen for the bees, the petals close at night sometimes trapping the bees.

## Winter Feeding

Despite the cold weather over the last couple of weeks, honeybee colonies are beginning to become active within their hives. Now is a vital time to ensure that your colonies are well fed. Feeding the bees fondant at this time of the year seems to give good results. There are several proprietary fondant products on the market, however I have found the bees are happy with Bakers Fondant. When feeding your colony with fondant it is vital that you do not expose it to the cold air as it will go hard. Two methods of applying fondant are shown in the adjacent pictures. Both rely upon getting the fondant as close to the honeybee cluster as possible.

Remove the queen excluder, orientate the crownboard so that one of the holes is above the cluster. A freezer box with fondant or fondant in cling film is placed over the hole. Monitoring progress is as simple as lifting the roof of the hive. A strong colony will devour 1kg of fondant in a week.



## Asian Hornet

### A Beekeeping Armageddon

Julian Parker the Southern Region Bee Inspector will be presenting at our next monthly meeting on 16th March at The Church of the Good Shepherd. His talk draws upon first hand experience from a field visit to Bordeaux last year. It will take a look at the UK response and contingency measures and offer advice to beekeepers on how to prepare and remain vigilant for an incursion of the Asian Hornet. There will also be some discussion about the hornet's viable range within the UK and recent reports that show possible evidence that the hornet may be starting to show signs of inbreeding. I hope to see you at the meeting.



## Beekeeping It's a Knockout

For our Association Meeting on 20th April we are going to try something different. We are looking for 5 teams of up to 6 members to participate in a competition based upon various aspects of beekeeping. There will be 5 tasks for each team to complete on the evening:

- Frame making
- Honeybee health
- Products of the hive
- Colony manipulation
- Beekeeping general knowledge

The emphasis of the tasks will be on fun as well as a bit of education.

As well as team members we require volunteers to help the evening run smoothly. If you would like to participate in the evening please drop me a mail at:

[chairman@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:chairman@mbbka.org.uk).

## Programme of Events

**16th March 2016**

### Association Meeting

Julian Parker, Asian Hornet, A Beekeeping Armageddon

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

**2nd April 2016**

### Practical Beekeeping Course

9:30 am

Butlers Cross Village Hall

**10th April 2016**

### Apiary Opening

11:00 am

Association Apiary

**16th April 2016**

### Woodwork Day

9:30 am

Drywick

**20th April 2016**

### Association Meeting

Beekeeping It's a Knockout

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

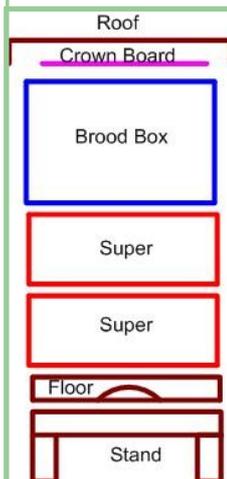
**4th May 2016**

### County Museum Resource Centre Tour

11:00am and 2:00pm  
Organiser [Sarah Turner](#)

## Preparing for Spring

By Sean Stephenson



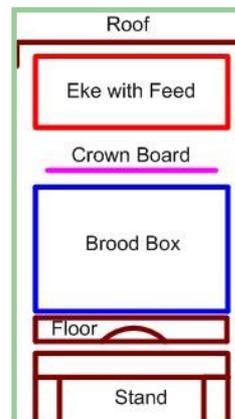
I overwinter my colonies with the brood box above the supers (I have shown two in the diagram but it could be one super). The bees consume the stores in the supers first which for me in most years is ivy honey and move up the brood box. Having the cluster just under the crownboard makes applying Oxalic Acid simpler. Feeding the colony is also easier as the cluster is generally visible. Hefting the colonies on a regular basis gives an indication of the level of stores. Since the middle of January I have been feeding all my colonies fondant, some are on their 4th kg.

Early in March after a couple of warm days I will remove the supers. If the super is full I will store the box with the honey marked for use on that hive during Bailey Comb Change. The supers that have mainly been consumed I extract the honey that is left and use it for mead making.

At this stage the colony is still being fed fondant. Only when we get to consistent warmer weather do I move to sugar syrup. Bees are reluctant to climb up to feed on cold syrup whereas fondant is accessible plus is being kept warm and moist by the heat from the cluster. When the bees start flying daily I will start to tweak the

apiary layout to accommodate for any colony losses, making sure I have the required space for the coming summer's activities.

Ideally I am looking for the colonies to build up to at least 5 frames of brood, hopefully this will be the case by the latter part of March, before starting my Bailey Comb Change. See [March 2015 Newsletter](#) for details. I will carry out a Bailey on as many of my colonies as I have equipment for. The comb change is not only good for the health of the colony, it seems to spur them on. Once brood is on 7 new frames, it is time to stop feeding and super up. HAPPY DAYS!



### Visit to Bucks County Museum Resource Centre

Following on from the successful beekeeping exhibit at the County Museum last year we have arranged a tour of the County Museum Resource Centre on 4th May.

The Resource Centre is located in Halton in an old school building. It houses all the Natural History items not on display at the County Museum in Aylesbury. The variety of objects from insects through to historic records of activities in Buckinghamshire will make for a very interesting tour.

In fact, in order to keep the group size down there will be two tours, one in the morning at 11am and a second at 2pm, with the opportunity for both groups to meet up for lunch in Wendover.

There will be a charge by the Resource Centre of £5 per head for the tour. If you are interested in attending, please email Sarah Turner who is organising the day at [Sarahamturner@onetel.com](mailto:Sarahamturner@onetel.com)

### Tutors for Beginner Practical Sessions

The Practical Sessions for the Beginners Course get underway in May. If you have passed your BBKA Basic Assessment and would like to help by being a Tutor at one or more of the sessions please email Susan Bogue at:

[education@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:education@mbbka.org.uk).

### BBKA Module Exams 19th March

Good luck to all our members sitting BBKA Module exams on 19th March. There will be 9 members sitting 4 different modules, some will be sitting two modules on the same day.

Sitting exams is not something that suits everyone, but continual learning is a feature of beekeeping. We strive to provide a good balance of opportunities for practical and theoretical learning. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our activities please contact Susan at [education@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:education@mbbka.org.uk).

### Equipment and Foundation

Again this year I have a stock of Caddon Hives, seconds frames and foundation. I will bring along frames and foundation to the monthly meetings. Prices with a couple of exceptions are the same or less than last year. I will shortly be placing a bulk order with [cwynnejones.com](http://cwynnejones.com), if you would like to add to the order and save on the shipping please email me at: [chairman@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:chairman@mbbka.org.uk)

### Apiary Opening Day

We will be opening the Association Apiary on Sunday 10th April at 11:00am. As well as helping tidy up the equipment and site we hope to look at the colonies and possibly start Bailey Comb Changes on appropriate colonies. There will not be a BBQ this year. All members are welcome. Further details from [apiary@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:apiary@mbbka.org.uk)