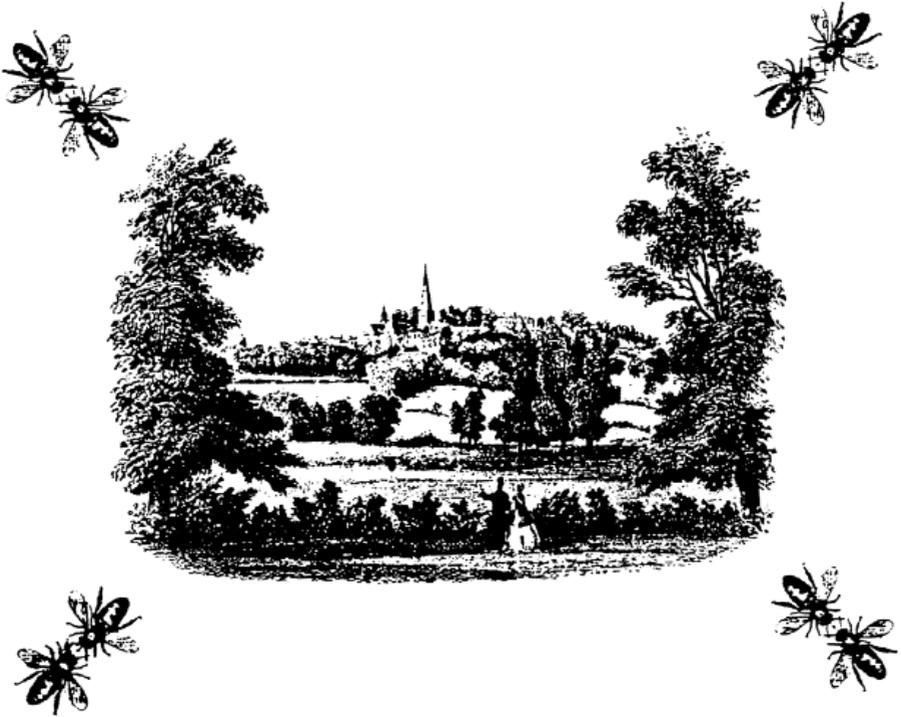


Volume 70 Autumn 2014

Forager



Magazine for the Bee-Keeping Association of Harrow

www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk

Forager

**Published by the Harrow Bee-Keepers Association
by whom this magazine was founded in 1946**

Editor

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Forager Diary Dates

All events are scheduled for Hatch End Apiary unless otherwise stated. For an updated diary and more details please see our website at:

<http://www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk>

Sunday, 7 December, 2014 - 11:00

[Apiary Work Party](#)

Apiary Work Party. Note reverted date - earlier in the year this was swapped with 'Quiz', but it is now back to the first Sunday in the month.

Oxalic solution available at 50p per colony for 50 ml. Bring a suitable plastic container.

Sunday, 14 December, 2014 - 11:00

[Quiz 'Mead and mincepies'](#)

Note earlier in the year this was swapped with 'Work party', but it has now reverted to 2nd Sunday in the month.

Oxalic solution available at 50p per colony for 50 ml. Bring a suitable plastic container.

Sunday, 11 January, 2015 - 11:00

[Alan Husbands on Shook Swarms](#)

Alan Husbands is Education Officer of the Pinner and Ruislip Association.

It has been the practice for PRBKA at their Ruislip apiary for a few years now to perform shook swarms. That is, the bees are transferred in one event on to fresh foundation in spring. This is in contrast to a more gradual approach like a Bailey comb change or replacing old brood comb on a three or four year cycle.

Shaking has proven advantages for disease control, removing existing pathogens from the hive on the old comb. It is one of the measures used by NBU Inspectors to treat EFB and produces a brood break that helps to control varroa mite. Forcing a colony into

swarm mode can also reduce the potential for swarms later in the season. Advocates say colonies that have been shaken are just as productive by the end of summer, and the loss of one brood generation is easily overcome.

Apiary Training Event.

Saturday, 24 January, 2015 – 10:00 to 16:00

[Wax Workshop January 2015](#)

Learn about beeswax as a product of the hive and how to produce products such as candles, soap, polish and cosmetics. There will four groups of people each taking turns to learn a number of techniques and produce wax products. [More details available here.](#)

Cost: £25.00 for members of HBKA and £40.00 non-members
(space permitting)

Contact Bill Fitzmaurice (020 8866 6669) or the [Association Secretary](#) to book your place.

Whilst care is taken to verify the material published, the Editor does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of all statement made by the contributors, nor does she necessarily share the views expressed.

Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Forager – the 70th one! I'm still afloat following the various challenges I had taken on over the summer, and even managed to extract some 30 jars of honey as well as submit a few entries to the Harrow in Leaf Show. Talking of which, I understand there were lots of prizes won for honey and honey related products – see the short article I prepared following a visit encouraging you all to enter next year! And we had real success at the National Honey Show with Judy and Doreen winning the Display Class – well done all! *Special compliments to the ladies.*

Talking of articles, to ensure there is a variety of contributors I will be requesting each of you to provide one article each for future editions of the Forager. It doesn't have to be technical or detailed – it can be long or short, describe your own experiences of keeping bees in the UK or abroad and/or about honey production or wax making - whatever you like. As a community it is nice to hear about your varied experience and knowledge. In this edition we hear again from Peter Steele and, this time, about beekeeping in Rwanda – quite different challenges to those we face in Harrow. We hear from Simon and Aubrey about their experience of beekeeping and volunteering locally. We also have the return of Beeline thanks to Michael Davey – *enjoy everyone!*

Another plea from me - we are looking for good quality bee/honey related images for the HBKA calendar, if you have any please could you get in touch as we would love to include them in our 2015 calendar.

I hope you and your bees have all enjoyed a wonderful summer - weren't we fortunate with the weather? It gave the bees a chance to get out and do some good foraging. Isn't it amazing that they travel the equivalent of five times round the world to make one pot of honey; that's something to remember next time we pile the honey on our toast.

Another amazing fact is the amount of effort required to produce wax – which is excreted through special wax glands. I’m sure many of you have collected wax from your hives over the summer. For those who haven’t already attended the wax workshop, we will be running the next one in January – it comes highly recommended. It may inspire you to enter one of the many shows next year!

Enjoy the Christmas break and all the best for a healthy and productive 2015.

Anna Surgenor
Editor

<p>Please note that all contributions intended for inclusion in the Winter issue of Forager must be with the editorial office by 10th December at the latest.</p>	IN THIS ISSUE	
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Beeline

By Michael P Davey

It was grand to see the Forager again. Many thanks for the summer 2014 edition from Anna. Last year we had endless high temperatures in the Autumn that gave the bees plenty of time to adjust their winter stores. Rainfall in August last year was 63 mm (2.5 inches) and this year 79 mm (3.1 inches). This year's weather is a virtual repeat of 2013, which has been helpful and warned me it could be another year for wasp attacks. The garage rooftops hives have had entrances reduced to bee space and all the cracks blocked. Eight wasp traps made from plastic water bottles festoon the area. One trap had a lovely English hornet striding across the outside of the trap then on to my hand. No fear, in the BBKA News it says that a hornet sting carries <25% the risk that of the honey bee.

The first honey bee was very wasp like. In 2006, one was found in amber in North Burma.. It was about 2.54 mm (1/10 inches) in size and a million years old. No pollen baskets were present on the narrow legs. The bee developed during the Cretaceous era when plants and pollinating insects first evolved. One modern hunting wasp has been linked with our honeybee. Both have a unique pleurite cuticle plate just in front of the wing implants. This feature is not found in any other bee.

Today the beekeeper is mindful of all the diseases that can kill our bees, but we should be aware that one of the most basic killers is simply neglect - damp and wet hives, poor stores and/or wasp and bee attack can produce much the same result - a dead hive. Ten years ago chalk brood was common, but it has now been replaced with deformed wing virus. This can easily be spotted when inspecting your hive.

Damp and cold hives were a feature of '*the good old days*'. In the late 1800s deep insulation was developed as part of hive design. The WBC hive was based on the view that bees need to be protected from the highs and lows of the prevailing weather. A barrier was established in the gap between the inner and outer boxes, filled with sawdust and a crown board from a square carpet added.

Several gadgets were sold to worried beekeepers. The Alton Temperature Control Floor board made in West Hartlepool (pat LO13/43) has a floor with a moveable entrance which was activated by change in outside temperature. A bellows mechanism pulled the flap open/closed. One was given to me by the late Mr Corbel from Pinner (*but I was never able to make it work satisfactorily*).

Another idea came from the USA. A super was fitted with a bee-tight gauze at the base. One wall of the super was hinged, and this could be opened and closed by a plunger purchased from a garden centre and used for opening greenhouse windows. It did reduce clustering on very hot days, but it was no use for over-wintering.

Beekeepers in Harrow have explored many novel ideas over the years including the use of thick polystyrene slabs as crown boards, in which the bees spent the winter chewing holes. Open floors or no floors help prevent mould. Some beekeepers – as expected – said their bees were much stronger in the Spring as a result; and the more bees available, the warmer the hive and the greater the winter survival rate

Karl Showler at Gerrards Cross wintered some of his bees in hives with glass walls, and they managed well. Hadlow College, however, reported that their bees did not see the winter through when kept in special bee houses. Perhaps this was the result of sheltered conditions that affected clustering. The reality, of course, is that you cannot beat plenty of food and plenty of bees.

The Collins Bible of Beekeeping suggests another explanation for the origin of '*Honeymoon*'. It is said that our Viking ancestors would

celebrate for a special wedding for a month or longer with large volumes of mead (with no watches the lunar month dominated). Perhaps it simply reflected the waning phases of the moon and the frailty of human love.

And a final note – *w'hy do bees hum?* – because they can't remember the words. Oh no, not another one – *'What is a D.Y.S honey pot?'* – one full of bees.

Harrow in Leaf Show 2014 review

By Anna Surgenor

What a wonderful show! I shouldn't sound so surprised, but I'd never been before. It was usually held on a bank holiday weekend in August and I was always away at that time of year. The show provided plenty of produce at which to marvel (*had you ever heard of cucamelon?*) and many prizes for all that hard labour in the garden during the year!

There were plenty of prizes all round with HBKA winning the Harrow in LEAF cup, being the society with the most points overall. Many familiar names filled the show prize winners chart for honey, mead and beeswax (*see the website for winners and their mug shots at:*

<http://harrowinleaf.org.uk/2014prizewinners.html>). And, much to my amazement, I (or rather my talented bees) also won a prize.. So with that

I would strongly encourage those of you who have never entered before to consider next year and aim to enter one item. You never know, you too could be the owner of one of the many trophies for the year. I am now the proud guardian of the

Gardner Cup which dates back to 1924 – if only that cup could tell stories from the 90 years of privileged location in all those many



living rooms. A huge well done to Sarah and Tilman for taking on the task of organising us all so successfully too! And also to the dedicated band of volunteers – without whom the show would never have happened. The result has been a much better informed community.

Real judges testing the produce



Simon's adventures as a bee keeper

By Simon Muwonge-Matovu

Completely clueless and with a long-held childhood fear of God's creatures, I took up beekeeping in 2012. Initially the interest was born through a friend who had been keeping bees in Scandinavia, but I had no idea how difficult it would be to actually keep them myself. Having been stung as a child several times by wasps, as you can imagine, I was afraid of anything that had the ability to sting or bite! However I was surprised to learn how well tempered the bees were, and how often wasps are mistaken for bees.

In my first year I spent time at a local apiary trying to learn as much as I could on the subject and Googling information whenever the opportunity arose. Eventually I decided that the only way I was going to learn beekeeping was to buy my own equipment and acquire a hive or two. So that's how my adventures began. With the backing of my family I was allowed to keep my hives in my mother's back garden and, without fail, it wasn't long before I had captured my first swarm. And what followed was the steep learning curve of the beginner.

Aubrey's introduction to beekeeping and treasurering

By Aubrey Kutner

The busiest time for me as your treasurer is when the next year's subs are paid during November, the very month that we are in as I write this. Everyone who has email gets the notices on line and the very small handful who haven't made digital yet receive it in the post. A deadline is given for payment and just under half the membership pay by then. The other 55% seem to have a problem paying up and have to be chased a bit – some even have to be chased a lot. That's my job though and on the handsome salary you give me, namely zilch should I complain?

No I can't complain since I made a few blunders like sending a reminder when that member has already paid and the money's banked and, after all, I did volunteer. So how did I come to be treasurer in the first place? What's more surprising how did I become a beekeeper of all things. Well, I'll tell you. I was in Kenton library 11 years or so ago and noticed one of Jo's notices to the public asking if I want to learn more about bees and knowing it is a most interesting insect I went along to the Arts Centre. There was no ABC hut then. HBKA had half the number of members than we have today and most were elderly – not like today when we have so many young members – and what do older retired people ask each other? Have you retired? What did you do? I replied that I was an accountant. An accountant they screamed. Our treasurer is leaving and we are desperate for an accountant. So that's how it all started. Some of the committee were then determined that I should take up the hobby and suddenly I was at the top of that year's swarm list. Then passed the basic exam and today I have 7 hives. Must be mad!

P.S. I am still waiting payment from thirty of you. Come on now. Pay up.

Rwanda –Challenges for small-scale beekeeping producers

By Peter Steele

Keeping a handful of hives in urban Pinner is one thing, but imagine the challenges of being a beekeeper in Rwanda - poorly educated and little in the way of commercial and/or technical support and dependent, like the other 90% of the population, on subsistence agriculture with an income of less than £1/day. Great potential into the long-term, but the country is only just reaching the levels of economic performance of 20 years ago and before the devastation of the civil war/genocide. The resilience of beekeeping has kept many families fed and paid school fees for local children.

What's happening?

With plentiful and varied crops and flora throughout much of the year, Gicumbi District in the north of the country is already a producer of honey, some of which is of reasonable quality. Production is typically undertaken by individual beekeepers or by groups of beekeepers working together in producers' cooperatives. The CAR Cooperative, for example, represents the majority beekeepers in the District and regularly collects and transports honey to Gicumbi Town the main administrative centre.

Two types of beekeeping are followed in the District – with use of modern hives (i.e. Langstroth and Kenya Top Bar hives) and more traditional practices using locally-made bark hives. Honey hunting is also undertaken by some communities. The majority beekeepers follow traditional practices, and have neither understanding nor access to the funding/technologies required of modern practices. The industry has little or no external support, and there are few improved honey collecting and processing centres available.

Notwithstanding the potential for improved honey industries in the district – given the resilience of existing small-scale producers and a

surrounding countryside which offers good bee foraging resources - yields are low and quality remains mixed.

Gicumbi District borders on Uganda, and much of the honey produced or harvested from wild bees is sold informally to traders from Uganda. Added value processing is thus lost to domestic industry. Domestic purchases/sales are dominated by the CAR Cooperative which, at time of reporting a couple of years back, purchased honey from producers at RWF1,000/kg, and sold to the Rwandan Association for Integrated Development and Mutual Investment for RWF 2,000/kg. (GB£1=RWF1,163).

What to do next?

Local bee industries remain undeveloped and under-exploited, and more could be done to help beekeepers to become commercially viable. This begins with encouraging them to join their local honey producers' cooperative and, if there is none available close by, then to form one in their community. Cooperatives are recognized and supported by the state and provide those essential technical skills together with commercial assistance. This helps raise standards of production and quality.

Cooperatives typically have access to trainers and training facilities. Well-managed cooperatives nurture and encourage their members - they install confidence. Cooperatives provide a logical starting point for organized production and sales of bee products - they are capable of marshalling the funds required for purchase of equipment, materials and expertise for buying, handling, processing and packaging bee products. Cooperatives provide members with standing within the socio-economic framework of the community.

Members need to support their cooperative but, equally, prices have to be established that will provide competition from tenacious cross-border traders - that the cooperative is able to capture the bulk of local honey and wax produced and harvested.

1. Bees and flora. Hives stacked and protected against annual seasonal rains up to 1,500 mm and from exposure to the sun, but they remain susceptible to attack by ants or honey badgers. Or theft. Notwithstanding a land area of only 26,300 km² (a little larger than Wales) and population density >350/people/km², the country is home to a rich diversity of flora - >3,000 plant species with new plants continuing to be discovered.



Photo credit: FAO Rwanda.

2. Landscapes and lifestyles rural Rwanda. The local country is characterized with steep hills that have been extensively terraced or provided with contour bunds to reduce the risk of erosion to agricultural soils. Rural communities are given responsibilities by local authorities for the maintenance of terraces.



*Photo credit:
umuhinzi.com.*

In The News

Why pesticides are so harmful to bees.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/agriculture/farming/11239764/Why-pesticides-are-so-harmful-to-bees.html>

New concerns have been raised on tests of pesticides that are harmful for bees. We explain the importance of this issue.

Age matters: young larvae boost pollination activity in bees.

<https://asunews.asu.edu/20141119-young-boost-pollination-activity-in-bees>

Toddlers and tweens have different food and nutritional needs, which influence how parents provide for them. The same is true of honey bees, but instead of communicating their needs via language, honey bee larvae emit chemical signals called pheromones that influence the behavior of their care-givers.

Nine extraordinary facts about North America's native bees.

<http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/stories/9-extraordinary-facts-about-north-americas-native-bees>

From invisibility cloaks to incubating eggs like a hen, bees are a lot more diverse and a lot more incredible than most of us ever realize.

How young bees order a kid's meal

<http://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/10455/20141118/young-bees-order-kids-meal.htm>

Infants, toddlers and tweens all have different nutritional needs. For people, motherly intuition certainly helps, but a large part of getting a child what he or she needs comes from the recommendations of doctors.. Bees, however, don't have pediatricians. So how do larvae get the right nutrition when they need it? A new study investigates.

New laboratory launched to protect bees & improve food security

<http://www.scidev.net/sub-saharan-africa/farming/news/lab-launched.html>

- Bees help about 70 per cent of major crops to bear fruit, but they are constantly threatened by pests..
- A new laboratory in Kenya hopes to boost food security through high quality beekeeping.
- The laboratory is being used to analyse honey from farmers in

46 African countries.

Doctors and nurses call for ban on pesticides that many say are killing bees.

<http://globalnews.ca/news/1676332/doctors-nurses-call-for-ban-on-pesticides-that-many-say-are-killing-bees/>

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) have launched a campaign to ban a group of pesticides linked to bee deaths in Ontario and Quebec.

Entrepreneurs create effective methods against bee harming pest <http://phys.org/news/2014-11-entrepreneurs-effective-method-bee-pest.html>

A group of entrepreneurs in Veracruz have designed a "smart" system to contain larvae growth of the varroa mite destructor among the bee population, which reduces the productivity of honey bees by as much as 50 percent in infected hives.

Can urban architecture save bees?

<http://sourceable.net/can-urban-architecture-save-bees/#>

A growing architectural focus on housing bees in urban areas is demonstrating the danger and risk of bee colony collapse.

And finally, we have been contacted by Combined Academic Publishers who are offering a discount of 25% to our readers for a recently published book by New York University Press called *"Buzz: Urban Beekeeping and the Power of the Bee"*. They say it is: 'A fascinating account of urban beekeeping in New York City, and also examines the role of bees in popular culture'.

For more information about the book, please visit www.combinedacademic.co.uk/buzz. If you are interested in receiving the discount please get in touch with the Editor.