



Editorial :

When all else fails Do nothing !

I suppose that I am, by nature, an interventionist - that is, I can't stop meddling with things. But this year I have been taught a useful lesson by my bees - that they generally know more about beekeeping than I do, and I should sometimes just let them get on with it.

One of my colonies had produced queen cells in early May and, in text book fashion, I had split the colony à la Pagden, intending to combine them later once the virgin queen had mated. Problem was, she didn't appear to mate, as no eggs appeared. Two separate test frames of eggs confirmed her presence (no queen cells) but some 5 weeks from her emergence, there were still no eggs.

My problems were compounded by my constant failure to find the new queen which prevented me from combining the 2 colonies with the old queen. Despite my increasingly frequent and desperate attempts to find her, I had eventually reached the stage of having no new ideas. At that point, I decided to let them get on with honey collection, albeit as a doomed colony. I turned my back on them for over 2 weeks.

Ignoring them however seemed to achieve what all my frantic activities had not. Some 7 weeks from emergence of the queen, I was amazed to find eggs, subsequently followed by sealed worker brood.

What the queen had been up to over this period, whether she had mated early or late, gone on strike or had been abducted by aliens, I have no idea. Suffice it to say that, despite all my best efforts and constant attempts to resolve the situation, the colony has survived and is now prospering.

I am humbled by the wise words of the great Lord Utting, which I had forgotten.

"If you are not sure what to do, wait."

Kevin Tricker

Chairman's Notes

Dear All

I've been trawling through the endless documentation on the regulations for honey labelling and this is a summary of the current legislation.

If you pack, label and sell any type of honey to the public or via a retail outlet you need to read this:

The label must have -

- * the name of the food i.e. honey
- * use by or sell by date
- * name and address of the producer or packer

- * the country of origin, WHICH MUST BE STATED AS UK

(More specific locations may be included e.g. Devon Honey, but if you are less than three miles from the county border you could be deemed misleading!)

- * a lot number on the package.

This can be the Best Before date if it includes the uncoded day and month in that order e.g. 22.07.2016.

The label may describe the honey from one floral source if "Wholly or mainly" from that source, so it's illegal to describe honey as "Clover and Bramble" Honey but acceptable to say, "From bees visiting clover and brambles"

The Best Before Date must be near the name.

The form "Best Before" must be followed by a day, month and year or the form "Best Before End" needs only the year, although it must be more than 18 months.

"Best Before End" clearly cannot be used as a lot number.

NOTE !! Beeswax Handling Course now postponed until September - see article on page 2 for details.

(Continued from page 1)

The Weight Declaration must be in metric and one of the following: -

57g, 113g, 227g, 340g, 454g, 680g or a multiple of 454g.

Imperial units may be added after the metric unit but must not be larger.

The lettering must be 3mm high for weights between 50g and 200g, 4mm high for weights between 200g and 1000g (1kg), 6mm high for greater weights

All statutory information must be "easy to understand, clearly legible, indelible and not interrupted by other written or pictorial matter"

Honey sold at the beekeeper's gate or at Farmers' Markets has a relaxed version of the regulations and only requires the word "Honey" or a specific description e.g. cut comb honey, and the country of origin (UK)

Anyone selling Bakers' or Filtered Honey or honey blended from other countries, please note there are different regulations which apply and you will need to check them out. If anyone has problems with the regulations, feel free to contact me.

Take care

Chris

Information from:

Honey (England) Regulations 2003

Food Labelling Regulations 1996

Food (Lot Marking) Regulations 1996

Weights & Measures Requirements

Notes from the Branch Secretary Over 100 Members !

Our membership now stands at 101 and we are the biggest branch in Devon. We are also bigger than 25 of the 61 Area Associations that make up the BBKA. This includes Notts, Newcastle, Manchester, London, Isle of Wight, Huntingdonshire, Herefordshire, Gwent and Durham (according to the 2006 BBKA Yearbook). When I joined the branch in 1982 we had 140 members and after Varroa was found in 1992 the numbers slipped to 70. It has been my ambition to help to get to over the hundred and we did it!

Rosemoor Family Weekend 5/6 August

Again another branch stall will be promoting the craft and selling your honey.

Assessment Day

Seven members have submitted themselves to the scrutiny of BBKA Assessors, Glyn Davies and Mick Street. They all said that they enjoyed themselves and learnt a lot. It was the hottest day for nearly a century and the bees behaved immaculately. Beryl kept the drinks and nibbles going to keep people refreshed. Results are not out yet, so let us hope that they were all successful and will get the BBKA Basic Certificate in Beekeeping.

Beeswax Handling Course Postponed

This course is limited to eight and several members have indicated that they wish to attend. However, the original date of 29th July does not fit in with holidays etc. Jenny Buckle has agreed to change the date of the course to Saturday September 16th.

Contact Beryl to book your place.

North Devon Agricultural Show August 2nd at Huntshaw.

The Branch stall will be in its usual position in the Food marquee with a couple of observation hives to educate the public and promote beekeeping. Ten members have volunteered to run the stall.

Public lectures on our craft will be given by Ruth Neal and Kevin Tricker. If you have any hive products for sale get in touch with Dave Morris 01237 475 705.

Fancy Being Branch Secretary ?

After 24 continuous years on the committee and a total of seven years as Secretary, I have decided to retire from the committee at the next AGM and make way for a younger and fresher person. Do you want to guide the branch into new projects? Do you have some ideas on how things should improve? Do you want to make things happen? If so, get in touch for a chat. There is also a job description available.

I will still be around teaching the beginners.

Chris Utting

What to do with your Honey

For the new beekeeper who is at last beginning to reap some reward for the hard work and dedication, (not to mention the expense!) the first few honey crops bring much joy and satisfaction. Now that you have some of this wonderful stuff, you naturally want to treat it very carefully indeed, and to preserve its aroma and flavour.

From the extraction tank, a small crop of honey needs only to be run through a strainer and bottled, consumed or given to friends. For larger quantities, the strained honey can be allowed to stand for a day or two in a settling tank in a warm room, then skimmed and passed through a nylon fine-mesh strainer into 30lb white plastic honey buckets. The airtight (full) buckets of run honey are best kept at 14C until the first crystallization has taken place, then below 10C to prevent fermentation.

When you need to bottle a bucket or two, very carefully warm the honey in a warming cabinet for perhaps two or three days, depending on the coarseness of the crystals. Check that the temperature in your warming device stays around 35C. Then pour the honey from the bucket through a fine-mesh nylon sieve into a honey tank, and bottle into warm sterilised jars. Be sure the honey in the jar reaches a level which you have tested will give the correct weight. The jars can then be stored in a not-too-cold cupboard until used or sold.

I find that it is wise not to label your jars until you are going to use them, or sell them. Sure enough, if you label too soon, something will happen to your beautiful labels, and it is then very difficult to remove them and start again. There is a great deal to learn about storing and presenting your honey. It is well worthwhile studying the books and acquiring as much skill as you can.

Beryl

Microscopist - Change of Address

Due to a publishers error, my old address still appears in the current DBKA handbook. As a result, Branch members are, through no fault of their own, sending bee samples to my former home and by the time they have been redirected, these samples are proving difficult to work on and make it impossible to examine for tracheal mites. Please amend my address to read 9, DUNE VIEW, WESTWARD HO! EX39 1UH.

Brian Marchant.

Website of the Month

<http://pollinator.com/>

As the name suggests, this site is primarily concerned with plants used by bees and other insects for pollination. As it is based in South Carolina, it is unsurprisingly biased towards American flora. It does however have a wealth of other interesting information and pictures which are well worth a look.

Worthy of special mention :-

The Gallery Page

"<http://pollinator.com/gallery/gallery.htm>"

(or follow the link to *Gallery One*) contains some wonderful pictures. I particularly like the poignant "*High Mileage*" honeybee, and the informative "*Starving Bees*" series of pictures.

The Movie & Audio Files.

These are on a different site, but easily found from the "*Additional movies and sound files*" link at the top of the gallery page. You may need broadband and media player software to download and watch the movies, but the "*Queens Piping*" audio (.wav) file should be playable on most computers (well those with speakers !) and is well worth a listen. There are other examples on the Internet, but this is one of the best I have heard.

The link to the above will be added onto our own website in due course, so don't worry if you lose the address.

Happy Surfing !

Diary Latest

AUGUST 2nd - Sunday

North Devon Agricultural Show
Branch Stall all day

AUGUST 5th & 6th – Saturday/Sunday

Rosemore Gardens, Torrington.
Branch Stall for Family Weekend

AUGUST 13th – Sunday

Open Day at Horestone Apiary from 2.00pm
Topic : Honey Processing.

SEPTEMBER 11th – Monday

Branch visit to Quince Honey Farm, South Molton,
7pm.

SEPTEMBER 16th – Saturday

Wax Handling Course, Ashburton (see item on page 2).

SEPTEMBER 17th – Sunday

Open Day at Horestone Apiary from 2.00pm
Topic : Autumn Preparations.

Apidea Mini Nuc

On the very hot Sunday of 15th July, Chris Utting gave a very informative talk with slides on this “bee keeping in miniature” He introduced us to the Apidea - a small polystyrene cubical box (a little bigger than A5 paper and about 5” high). Developed in 1982, it is used for queen mating, queen introduction and as a queen bank.

Its advantages are that it is lightweight, well ventilated, easy to transport, has a transparent crown board with introduction flap, a total comb area of less than ½ a national brood frame and only needs half a pint of bees. However it can only be disinfected with washing soda (heat would melt it), it is easily damaged by mice, wasps and wax moth and it can be blown about.

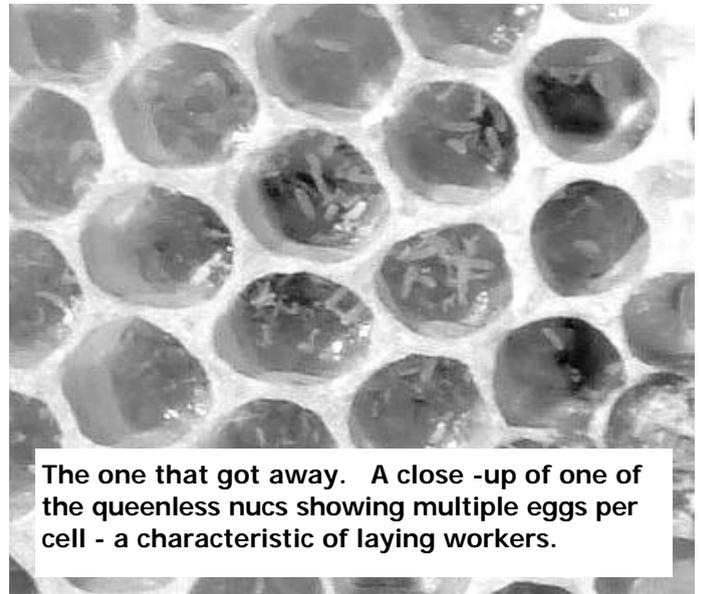
The apidea is assembled by applying vaseline around the edges. 3 frames are inserted with unwired foundation cut with scissors and glued with molten candle wax. The feeder is a plastic cut comb container perforated with holes and filled with fondant.

To stock the apidea, shake some young workers from



a super into a bucket and spray with water to control flying. Scoop less than a mug full into the inverted apidea and close the floor and put in a dark cool area for 3 or 4 days so that the wax can be drawn out. Spray a little water in the vent daily. Suspend the sealed queen cell with sellotape or a cocktail stick when filling or during the 3 – 4 day period, or run a virgin queen into the entrance. Site ideally on a post at easy handling height plus a weight on top.

Check for a laying queen up to 33 days maximum. If no queen is present after approximately 21 days laying workers are produced, evident by seeing more than



The one that got away. A close-up of one of the queenless nucs showing multiple eggs per cell - a characteristic of laying workers.

one egg in the cell.(see picture above) If the queen is not mated she will produce drones.

The mini nuc can be introduced to the queenless colony or nuc by placing the apidea with the floor open over the hive with perforated newspaper in between.

Question time was interrupted by the familiar buzz of a swarm emerging and flying off into the next field !

Chris opened up some of the apideas he had filled 5 weeks ago. They were really cute and easy to handle and good practice for spotting queens. 5 had mated laying queens and 2 had laying workers making a success rate of over 70%. As the mini nucs were opened, he caught and marked the queens – making it look all too easy!

Liz Wilson (newly reared potential beekeeper!)



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