

OLDHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

FREE Newsletter to Members

**Issue 108
Volume 21
February 2012**



**ODBKA IS A NON-PROFIT MAKING ORGANISATION
AFFILIATED TO THE BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
Federated to Manchester & District Beekeepers Association 2003**

OLDHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN: Paul Lythgoe

SECRETARY: Haydn Clough

TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:
Marian Gartside

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
Susan Stewart

WEBMASTER: Geoff Gartside.

LIBRARIAN: Jean Lythgoe

Association Microscopist:
*Correspondence
to Paul Lythgoe*

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Bob Holland
Vincent Thornley
Les Simpson
Garry OBrien

Honorary Member:
Tim Gausden

Northern Regional Bee Inspector Ian Molyneux
Phone/Fax +(44) 01204 381186 mobile : 07815 872604

The Oldham Apiarist is published free to members. Deadline for letters or articles (preferably as a Rich Text Format document either on disk or e-mailed) is the 14th of each month.

Disclaimer:

ODBKA and its committee take no responsibility for the accuracy of any advertisements in their publications. Opinions expressed either editorially or by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the Association, nor is the Association responsible for any claims expressed or implied in them.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES 2012

Adult membership £23

Junior Members £13.00

Family/ Household members £28.00

CONTENTS

Page	Title
2-4	ODBKA General information & 2012 Programme
5	Chairman's Remarks/Queen's colours
6 & 7	Spring Inspection/Flowers in bloom
8	Flight of the Zombees/Beekeepers' duties - February
9 & 10	Making frames for your hives/Honey bee tips

OLDHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

Next monthly meeting:

7.30 pm in

Springhead Liberal Club

On Friday 3 February

" Assembling Hives & Frames"



BEE THERE!

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2012 in its new format! This newsletter belongs to the members of ODBKA so please contribute from your own personal experiences from your apiary/photographs and articles and send any hot tips YOU may have to the editor!

ODBKA Monthly Programme 2012
Starting 7.30 pm

6th January	A.G.M.	All members
3rd February	Assembling hives and frames + Tommy's small hive Haydn Clough, Bob Holland and Tommy Gambles	
2nd March	First Inspection of the hive	Paul Lythgoe
13th April	Working with Bees Wax	Garry OBrien
4th May	Swarm Control	Haydn Clough and Paul Lythgoe
1st June	Bee diseases and treatments	Paul Lythgoe
6th July	Visit to Failsworth Community	Allotment Apiary Derek Clarke
3rd August	NO MEETING	
7th September	Cooking with Honey	All members
5th October	Closing down for winter	Paul Lythgoe
2nd November	Honey Show	All members
7th December	Christmas Party	All members



Chairman's Remarks

As in previous years I would like to open the February newsletter by wishing all the ODBKA members, their family and bees a happy and prosperous New Year.

At this year's A.G.M we discussed the programme of meetings for 2012. There are a few old favourites in there including, of course, our Cooking with Honey evening, but I hope we have included a few new topics to keep the evenings fresh and interesting to both new and old beekeepers alike.

We also recognised the fact that at present we do not have an Association Apiary. New beekeepers are at present introduced to working with bees by visiting member's Apiaries and then 'buddying up' with an experienced beekeeper for help and advice as required.

As the association increases its membership it would now seem appropriate to re-establish an association Apiary for teaching, beekeeping and introducing beekeeping to the community at large. Over the coming weeks we will investigate possible sites and funding sources. If anyone has any ideas or experience in making such funding applications please get in touch.

When Jean and I started beekeeping and joined O.D.B.K.A. we were given plenty of help and encouragement from the membership especially from Vincent Thornley and the late Alf Dawes.

I hope we continue to provide the same welcoming and helpful support and would encourage anyone thinking of starting beekeeping to join us.

Paul Lythgoe

THE QUEEN'S COLOURS

If it's ends in 2, think yellow! Any queens hatched during 2012 should be marked with a yellow dot.

It is used to identify those queens emerging in years ending in 2 and 7.

The complete list of colours and years is:

White years ending in 1 & 6

Yellow years ending in 2 & 7

Red years ending in 3 & 8

Green years ending in 4 & 9

Blue years ending in 5 & 0

SPRING INSPECTION



(I found this Spring Inspection article by Lynn Shiels on the web page of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT located in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Australia. Thought it may be of interest. Paul Lythgoe)

Now that warmer weather has come it is time to conduct the first hive inspection of the season. Choose a still day with a temperature about 15°. Examine all brood box frames for a laying queen. Check that the queen is laying a good brood pattern and is not placing drone cells randomly over the comb. If the queen is missing or seems to be failing take action quickly before the hive dwindles away. It may be too early to purchase a commercial queen but re-queening may be done by uniting hives to make one strong hive rather than two weak ones or it maybe possible to use a swarm to re-queen the hive.

Examine brood closely for signs of disease. If you see something that you are unsure about ask an experienced beekeeper to have a look with you. Some diseases can be treated effectively if dealt with early. Examine and clean the bottom board, scraping away accumulated debris. Next check that the bees have sufficient honey and pollen for brood rearing activities. Most bees will be bringing in sufficient pollen but if not, pollen patties or pollen substitutes may be provided. If honey stores are low the feeding of sugar syrup will usually increase the amount of brood the hive can raise. Syrup should be made from one measure of white sugar to one of water and can be delivered in a variety of ways to each hive in need. Feeding should be continued until the bees are bringing in enough nectar to begin storing honey above the excluder. Hives with a strong queen and large

population may cause a different problem for the beekeeper, they may decide to swarm. Swarming is the natural way bees increase their species. Swarming reduces the parent colony's ability to produce a honey crop and, in town, may also cause problems for the neighbours. Signs that a hive may be considering swarming are that the brood box is full, either with brood and/or honey and pollen, so there is no space for the queen to lay more eggs; production of large numbers of drones; full honey boxes with no space for more storage; and building of queen cells. Destruction of queen cells alone will not prevent swarming unless the causes are addressed at the same time. Space can be made for brood-raising by removing frames that are full of honey from the brood box to the honey box and replacing them with empty frames. Another option is to lift one or two frames of capped brood to

the centre of the honey box immediately above the brood and replace them with empty frames. When the brood hatches the bees will normally fill these frames with honey. Another option may be to remove the two outer combs which are likely to be full of older pollen. Move other combs to the outside of the box and place two empty combs or frames with foundation in the centre of the brood nest. Do not move combs with brood

to the outer position at this time of year as the hive may not be able to maintain the temperature and the young bees will chill and die. Some beekeepers like to separate foundation frames placing them either side of a developed frame, believing that the bees will do a better job of building out the comb in this case. Frames can be rotated regularly with each inspection to allow extra laying space.

A strong hive may be split (artificially swarmed) to reduce the likelihood of swarming. Such hives may be used to increase hive numbers or later reunited when the urge to swarm lessens. This technique will still reduce the amount of honey crop especially if the hives are not later reunited.

If the honey box or boxes are full then another super must be added to allow for more storage space. If the frames of honey are about 80% capped they can be removed for extracting and the wet frames returned for refilling but keep in mind that the weather is changeable in springtime and the bees are using a lot of honey for brood raising. If you take away all their stores and the weather becomes cold or wet again you risk leaving them without supplies for the young. Make sure there is a reasonable store in the brood box around the brood or leave a frame or two of honey. A sensible precaution might be to put on an extra super and wait until it is at least half-full before removing the full one and extracting. A strong springtime hive will usually contain several hundred drones. Drone cells are not in themselves a problem but excessive numbers of drones become a drain on resources and reduce the amount of honey available for extracting later. If brood combs contain excessive

numbers of drone cells they may need to be moved above the excluder and eventually removed from the hive. Drone eggs should generally only be laid along the edges of the brood frames. If a queen is laying drones randomly over the frames it usually means she is no longer able to fertilise every egg and she needs to be replaced as soon as possible. The frames with extra drone cells may need to be lifted and replaced as well because a new queen may continue to lay unfertilized eggs in cells that have been enlarged to drone size. Management needs will vary greatly from hive to hive, location to location, season to season and within the season. The best advice would seem to be to examine your hives regularly, observe each hive's needs, consider the likely changes as the season progresses and act accordingly. Then cross your fingers and be prepared to change your plans and go to Plan B, C or D if necessary.

May this season be a honey-laden and joyous one for all!

FLOWERS IN BLOOM IN FEBRUARY

It really does feel that spring is on the way even though we haven't had a 'proper' winter with a snowfall this year but it could still happen! Snowdrops and crocus are

providing striking colour, soon to be followed by winter aconites. The hazel catkins are also due to bloom. Two other shrubs where the flower comes out before the leaves are the witch hazel (bright yellow) and Japonica quince (bright red). Both are in tight bud presently, but will be out by the end of the month, as will the Chinese honeysuckle and hellebores.

Do make sure that your bees have enough food stores. As the weather is relatively mild some bees are still flying which means food stores will be used. There will be a more comprehensive article on this in next month's newsletter.

FLIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES

Flight of the honey zombies PARASITI (flies that turn honeybee into night-flying zombies) could provide another clue to cracking the mystery of colony collapse disorder. Since 2007, thousands of hives in the US have been decimated and inexplicably go missing overnight.

The best explanation so far is that multiple stresses, perhaps parasitic mites and viruses or pesticides, combine to tip the bees over the edge. John Hafernik of San Francisco State University in California and colleagues discovered that hosting Apocephalus Borealis, a parasitic fly found throughout North America, makes bees fly around in a disoriented way at night, when they normally rest in the hive, before killing them. Although unlikely to be the sole cause of colony collapse disorder, Hafernik thinks the parasitic fly discovery may help explain why bees quit their hives. "They seem to leave their hives in the middle of the night on what we call the 'flight of the living dead'" he says. Since the discovery, the parasitic flies have been found at 77% of sites in San Francisco Bay, and in hives in South Dakota. Hafernik's team will now investigate whether the nocturnal flights occur because the parasites affect the bees' genes, which govern when they are active. It is also possible that contaminated bees are ejected to save the hive.

(Article sent in by Peter Tilston).

BEEKEEPING DUTIES – FEBRUARY

Management of our bees in the winter season is very much dictated by the weather and temperature. On fine, still days the bees are flying, so using up their food stores. Gently heft (lift) each hive to assess the level of stores and if low, feed the bees. Cut two holes in the side of a bag of fondant (to line up with the two holes in the crown board) and place on the crown board or use an eke and place directly above the frames – the bees will feed from it as needed. When not attending the apiary, think ahead and plan for the coming season:

- Start to keep 2012 hive records regarding tasks you have done, dates for work still to be done and the dates/results of your various treatments.
- Check to ensure you have sufficient equipment, frames and foundation in particular? If not, see Bob's advert in the newsletter to see if he can help. It is a real advantage to have beekeeping supplies so close at hand.
- Put ODBKA's new programme dates in your diary!

- Read 'bee books' and brush up on your knowledge. There is a very good library of useful books in ODBKA's library.
- This is your chance to clean your spare equipment and wash your protective clothing, before you need it urgently.

Honey Refractometer
less than half the price at most bee suppliers



£36.50



£34.00

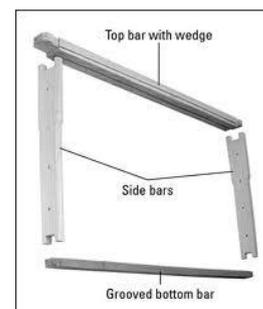
Test the water, baume (density) and brix (sucrose) content of your honey with confidence

For sales or enquiries contact garry.obrien@yahoo.co.uk

MAKING FRAMES FOR YOUR SUPERS

Langstroth was the first person to make practical use of Huber's earlier discovery that there was a specific spatial measurement between the wax combs, later called "the bee space", which bees would not block with wax, but kept as a free passage. Having determined this "bee space" (between 5 and 8 mm, or 1/4 to 3/8"), Langstroth then designed a series of wooden frames within a rectangular hive box, carefully maintaining the correct space between successive frames, and found that the bees would build parallel honeycombs in the box without bonding them to each other or to the hive walls. This enables the beekeeper to slide any frame out of the hive for inspection, without harming the bees or the comb, protecting the eggs, larvae and pupae contained within the cells. It also meant that combs containing honey could be gently removed and the honey extracted without destroying the comb. The emptied honey combs could then be returned to the bees intact for refilling.

Frames for supers can be bought in packs, ready made or self assembly from all beekeeping suppliers. Be sure to get the frames that are suitable for your hives as not all frame sizes fit all hives!



The job of putting together frames should not be rushed as the excellence of your handiwork will be proved during extraction when a centrifugal force is applied! The whole thing may just fall apart. If self assembly packs are bought it is basically a matter of having gimp nails, a hammer and wood glue and, of course, your super foundation to put into the frame when built.

DON'T MISS OUR FIRST MEETING OF THE NEW YEAR with Haydn and Bob as they show us how it SHOULD be done – straight from the mouths of experts!

HONEY BEE TIP

One reader of the Daily Mail reported this. “Working in my garden in summer of last year I noticed a bee staggering along the path in a state of exhaustion. I went on with my work and then suddenly remembered a question I heard on QI.

On TV’s QI programme, Stephen Fry asked this question of the panel “What do you do if you see a bee staggering around in a drunken fashion on the ground?” “Tread on it” was one immediate reply which brought howls of derision from the studio audience. Other suggestions were made before someone said “Feed it”. “Correct” said Stephen. “But what with?” “Fish and chips” said someone “Beef burgers” was another of the suggestions.

Honey was, in fact, the correct answer. Stephen explained that if bees don’t find enough nutrients when they are looking for pollen they lose their energy and die, so they should be fed with their natural food. I dashed into the kitchen and put some honey on the tip of a golf tee and rushed back to the bee, which was lying on its side with wings akimbo. I thought that I was too late. Not expecting any response I put the honey under the bee’s nose and, to my surprise, the bee folded its wings and began to move. After a few minutes it stopped feeding on the honey, cleaned itself, spread its wings and flew off at great speed.

So I would like to say from the bee and me “Thank you QI!”
(Article submitted by Bob (from Daily Mail 12.1.12)

WANTED

Articles, photos, hints, tips, and ideas associated with bee keeping that might help others to learn more about the craft. If you have knowledge that would help those with less experience, please let the Editor know by emailing thepliedes@yahoo.co.uk or post to 22 Bamford Grove, Ashton under Lyne, OL6 9BE