



NHBKA March 2015 Newsletter

Last year in March we were hoping for an end to the interminable rain, but at the moment the rain seems to be in short supply despite the recent spell of stormy weather. The spring weather seems to be appropriate for the time of year and although the weather forecasting has improved so that we can accurately predict the UK weather a few hours in advance, the long range forecasts tend to be more uncertain. I find it's best to Google the forecast and find one that you like.

There seems to be an abundance of pollen available at the moment with the bees regularly bringing in fully laden pollen sacs from hazel, pussy willow, flowering currant and crocus. Don't be caught out by the bees, last year our first swarms were in April. If bees start running out of space, they'll start sowing the seeds for propagation. As the colony starts to expand at this time of year, keep your eye on the amount of stores available as nectar is in short supply.

It's early spring so you should plan to monitor your varroa levels with a view to treatment if necessary. There's an interesting article about varroa control, part of a series entitled 'Varroa and Beekeepers', in this month's BBKA News.

Our logo is gradually working its way into our literature, and is prominent on our web sites. Our initial attempt at a web presence used the rather restricted format offered by BBKA (<http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/northherts/>) and this has served us well for a couple of years but is looking rather dated. Gary and Ray have used the functionality offered by Wordpress to develop a more sophisticated design at <https://nhbka.wordpress.com/>. (This is hosted for free if you use the Wordpress address). Have a look and let us know what you think. Alongside the redevelopment of our web site, we have standardised the email addresses of the Committee members, using the @nhbka.org.uk suffix, All the addresses are at the end of the newsletter.

We have several new members this year; welcome Stephen Westcott, Dawn Brooks, Michelle Nancarrow, Roger Greenwood, Martin Talks, Stephen Ten-Hove, and Timothy Thurstan. Beekeepers are a friendly bunch and always keen to offer advice, so don't worry if there's something that confuses you or you think you are doing wrong, someone in the membership has been there already. Remember, beekeeping is a journey, albeit on a B-road.

We held our AGM in March with a good attendance of thirty members and had an excellent set of entries for the Annual Honey Tasting Competition with a dozen jars of honey entered in total; the best three jars of clear honey to be entered in the Honey Competition at the Herts AGM at the end of March. In fact, we had one clear winner (Roman Gorski), and three entries with the same number of points in second place (Chris Mercer, Anne Harvey, and Derek & Cherry Carter), so these four jars were entered for the Herts event. The North Herts honey was from Preston, Knebworth, Stevenage, and Great Wymondley. Congratulations to the prize winners and thanks to all the members who supplied honey for the competition. I'll keep you in suspense as to the result of the Herts competition if you don't know, and tell you later in the newsletter.

The AGM provides a chance to look back over the year and also provides a springboard for moving forward, a bit like the clocks on the last Sunday in March. We have had to relocate our training apiary for 2015 and vacate the site at Odyssey we have used for the last couple of years as plans are finally being made for development. We have found an excellent location in the allotments at Hillbrow with great views across open fields towards Ickleford. All the members with hives at Odyssey have successfully relocated elsewhere and we have options to place hives at several other sites if necessary.

We managed to achieve some continuity with the Committee members this year compared to last year with only our treasurer, Vince Wright, standing down; Sharon Moat has kindly stepped up to the cheque book.

Once again we give a big thank you to our members who hosted apiary meetings last year, Pat Veasey, Peter McKenna, and Robin Dartington. These are ideal opportunities to meet socially and most importantly enjoy the delicious refreshments.

The Herts AGM was on Saturday, 28th March with about 50 people turning out. The revamped meeting included trade stalls, a woodworking corner with North Herts' Barry Bucknell (aka Gary) knocking out frames, a microscopy exhibit, and other stalls selling foundation, literature, and handy bee keeping stuff, and of course an abundant supply of tea, sandwiches, and cakes. Peter Matthews was reelected chairman, and John Palombo, secretary. The post of treasurer remains vacant. The outgoing president, Peter Folge, our seasonal bee inspector, had some words to say about the Small Hive Beetle. As mentioned at our AGM, the government seems reluctant to impose any restrictions on bee imports from affected areas in Europe. This seems rather at odds with the response when Small Hive Beetle was detected in Hawaii in 2010 and the importation of queens was banned. Peter mentioned several methods of control including an oil reservoir under an open mesh floor. We wait and see which of the traps becomes the recommended method of control; BBKA asks all beekeepers to be vigilant.

And the result of the Herts Honey Competition? It was won convincingly by North Herts of course, with Chris Mercer and Anne Harvey taking joint first place. Very well done to both of you, I guess you'll have to take it in turns cleaning the trophy.

Make sure you book a place on the Healthy Bee Day (previously entitled Bee Disease Day) on Saturday, 30th May, details have been sent to all members. And a final reminder of the BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University in Newport from Friday, 17th – Sunday, 19th April; there are full details in this month's BBKA News.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, April 21st 2015 at 19:30. Frank Everest will be guiding us through the preparations to deal with swarming, and Amy Judges and Debbie Searle from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust are attending. Debbie is a toad lifter at Redcoats pond and Amy will give a talk entitled 'Where the Wild Things Are' - perhaps we'll see a transformation of our meeting room at Howgill's. Hope to see you all then.

The Committee email addresses are

chair@nhbka.org.uk – Gary Hammond
chairman@nhbka.org.uk – Gary Hammond
secretary@nhbka.org.uk – Malcolm Todd
treasurer@nhbka.org.uk – Sharon Moat
diseaseofficer@nhbka.org.uk – Chris Mercer
swarms@nhbka.org.uk - John Murphy
training@nhbka.org.uk - Gary for the time being
webmaster@nhbka.org.uk – Ray Wilcox
info@nhbka.org.uk - Malcolm and Gary
executive@nhbka.org.uk - Chris and Gary
committee@nhbka.org.uk – all the above

Also...

Geoff Feary is interested in splitting an order of 50 DN4 frames if another member is interested. Contact Geoff at geoffrey feary <fearysg@yahoo.com>.