

NHBKA March 2016 Newsletter



I saw a queen wasp this morning looking for a suitable site for a starter home. The season has started, game on. The weather has changed for the better over the past week or so and honey bees, bumble bees and butterflies are suddenly around. I saw several Brimstones last week and yesterday, a Peacock butterfly. It's a difficult time of year for the bees, with the queen starting to lay, but there's little nectar available, so don't neglect the need for feeding. There's plenty of pollen, with hazel and pussy willow catkins, crocuses are still about, flowering currant, forsythia and blackthorn coming into flower. You should have a plan of some sort for the forthcoming season, and have stock in hand for when the season starts in earnest.

We have several new members this year; Harvey Reeves, Shaun Burton, Chris Saunders, and Dylan Morton. Welcome to you all.

We held our AGM on 22nd March with a modest attendance of twenty members and a small but excellent set of entries for the Annual Honey Tasting Competition. The voting was very close with the first and second places being decided through a count back. The winner was Michelle Nancarrow; with Gary in second place and Anne Harvey in third. Congratulations to the prize winners and thanks to all the members who supplied honey for the competition. The requirements for the Herts Honey Show at the Herts AGM changed this year, so that the individual branch winners were not automatically entered; this year, all entries accompanied with a payment of 50p were accepted.

The AGM provides a chance to look back over the year and it was a busy time for North Herts. We were responsible for the organisation of Bee World at the Herts Show and the Bee Disease Course at Knebworth. Both events were very successful.

The Hillbrow allotment apiary site has gradually been transformed (mostly by Gary & Chris Mercer) from several adjoining overgrown plots to a very pleasant apiary site with great views out towards Ickleford, hosting about a dozen hives, a pond and a shed. Gary sourced some saplings from The Woodland Trust for the apiary site boundary. We've just taken charge of another overgrown site at the Norton allotments and hopefully we'll see hives located there this season. I suppose in current terminology, this is apiary bombing.

Gary continues as Chairman but now has Suze Phillips as Vice-Chairman to help. Chris Mercer stood down as Interim Treasurer after taking over from Sharon Moat who stood down at the end of 2015. Lynn Monaghan takes over as Treasurer. We are still short of a Swarm Co-ordinator, or to put it another way, the office of Swarm Co-ordinator remains unfilled, or perhaps, an opportunity exists for someone wanting to improve their Swarm Co-ordination skills. All committee positions are listed at the end of the Newsletter.

Once again we give a big thank you to Pat Veasey, and Gary for organising the apiary meetings last year. These are ideal opportunities to relax and sample the delicious refreshments, and boast about the size of your honey crop.

The Herts AGM was on Saturday, 2nd April in Welwyn. The meeting included trade stalls, a woodworking corner with Gary providing a kit building soundscape 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. The trade stall holders included Peter & Barbara Dalby from Pebadale Apiaries, Peter Folge of Herts Honey Bee Supplies, and Jen Ellison of L.E. Services from Wyboston. Jen is a Thorne's and a BBWear agent.

Peter Matthews was reelected Herts chairman, John Palombo, Herts secretary, and Malcolm High, Herts treasurer. The outgoing president, Diane Bruce, said she enjoyed her year as President and wished her replacement, John Dockerell, well.

There were three absorbing talks; the first from Doug Brown, an ex-Chairman of BBKA with some insights into the workings and possible future direction of BBKA. Liz Samuelson, a PhD student from Royal Holloway, talked us through the progress of her research on the effects of urbanisation on honey bees, and finally Wally Thrale from Beds BKA brought us up to date with the various EARS projects.

The Herts Honey Competition was won by St Albans, with Michelle Nancarrow, our branch winner, coming joint second. Very well done, Michelle.

We have just completed the classroom sessions of a Beginners Course which ran on five Sunday afternoons. I think the most entertaining session was the frame and hive construction practical; it was like the Halls of the Dwarves under the Misty Mountains. Each of the attendees received a rather splendid certificate for staying the course.

Dave Fewell continues his BBKA Module madness and he awaits the result of his final Modular Examination, Module 8!

Make sure you book a place on the Healthy Bee Day (previously entitled Bee Disease Day) at University of Hertfordshire, Bayfordbury Campus on Saturday, 28th May. North Herts have been allocated 7 places; there are still a few places left. This year it is being organised by South East Herts. And a final reminder of the BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University in Newport from Friday, 8^h – Sunday, 10th April; there are full details in this month's BBKA News.

I mentioned in a previous newsletter that the centenary of the North Herts Association is in 2018. If any members have archive material hiding in the loft that they would like to share, please send it to Gary or me.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, 27th April 2016 at 19:30 at the Mrs. Howard Memorial Hall in Letchworth. Chris Mercer will explain the intricacies of the Pagden method and Snelgrove method of swarm control and for all of you with a competitive streak there is a quiz. Please note that it is on Wednesday not Tuesday. There will be a reminder, nearer the date.

Hope to see you all then.

The Committee members and contact email addresses are

chair@nhbka.org.uk – Gary Hammond
chairman@nhbka.org.uk – Gary Hammond
vicechair@nhbka.org.uk – Suze Phillips
secretary@nhbka.org.uk – Malcolm Todd
treasurer@nhbka.org.uk – Lynn Monaghan
diseaseofficer@nhbka.org.uk – Chris Mercer
swarms@nhbka.org.uk - TBA
training@nhbka.org.uk - Gary Hammond
webmaster@nhbka.org.uk – Ray Wilcox
events@nhbka.org.uk – Anne Harvey
committee@nhbka.org.uk – all the above
info@nhbka.org.uk - Malcolm and Gary
executive@nhbka.org.uk – Chris Mercer (Herts Exec)

NHBKA information is available at the following shortcuts

nhbka.org.uk
[Facebook.com/nhbka](https://www.facebook.com/nhbka)
OnTwitter @NHBEEKS

And last but by no means least, a few words about our elder statesman, Derrick Richardson, who is off to Herefordshire. Derrick used to frequent the Hitchin Market Square on Saturdays, selling honey and passing on his encyclopaedic apiarian knowledge to anyone who stopped by and wanted to know something about bees. He was the catalyst that got me interested in the craft and I imagine I'm not alone in that. You can ring Derrick about any bee problem and he will always be able to give you at least one answer, generally more. In a lifetime of beekeeping in the County, Derrick has been Herts President, and Herts Chairman and Executive member for North Herts for a number of years, as well as Chairman, and member of the North Herts Committee. The breadth and depth of his knowledge is legendary and his advice and guidance will be very much missed. I asked Frank Everest for a few thoughts about Derrick and I include his response below.

'I have known Derrick for many years, but his beekeeping and personal history go back much further. As a young man, he was a pilot in the Second World War and spent most of the war as a pilot trainer in Canada.

He started beekeeping after the end of the war when he moved to Walkern and built and ran what is now the village stores and Post Office. He also delivered milk in the area. Doubtless his experience running the businesses was a factor in developing his shrewd business acumen and liking for saving money wherever he could. However, at one stage he had two tons of honey stored in his loft which he saw as "an investment", but the thought of it falling down eventually persuaded him to sell the bulk of it off.

Most of his beekeeping equipment is homemade. He has an extensive and well-equipped workshop in three garages behind the Walkern Post Office, which house different machines and prodigious quantities of surplus wood – to such an extent that access to the machines can be a problem.

Derrick has always favoured Smith hives with short top bars, being unduly – yet amusingly - critical of alternative arrangements. Nevertheless, his beekeeping knowledge and experience built up over the decades is second to none, and is tempered with a worldly-wise scepticism arising from having "seen it all before". His thrifty and humorous approach to the craft is famed throughout the County.

Latterly, he has been winding down the scale of his beekeeping operations. He is moving to Ross-on-Wye but, sadly, will not be continuing to keep bees there. We hope to hear that he has joined the Herefordshire Beekeepers, to stay in touch with the craft, and to offer his knowledge and good humour to a new group of beekeepers. The North Herts beekeepers wish him all the very best for the future and assure him that he will be sorely missed by us.'

Frank Everest

Of course, we must let Derrick have the last word, because he has some final pieces of kit to sell...

- 3 Smith (Standard National) with supers, without bees £50.00 each
- 3 Commercial (16 x 10) with supers, without bees for £50.00 each
- all boxes are fully populated with frames

If you are interested in any of these, please contact Derrick (evenings only) on 01438 861227

From all past and present members of North Herts and from your many friends and acquaintances in Hertfordshire, good luck Derrick, and best wishes from us all.