

Wealden Apiarist



Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the Sussex Beekeeping Association

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May - June 2016

Features



Spring foraging

High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary 2016

Date	Event	Address
Tuesday 31st May	Bee Banter	Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Saturday 4 th June	Apiary Visit: Top Bar Hive & Interesting Innovative Equipment	Nick Packham TBC
Tuesday 28 th June	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
Date TBC (probably in July)	Apiary Visit	Steve and Claire Adams
Saturday 16 th July	Summer BBQ 18:00 - 21:00	Yew Tree Lane, Rotherfield. TN6 3QP

EDITOR'S BUZZ....

A few words of thanks to our out-going editor John Lyte. John was one of the Magnificent Seven (well not necessarily exactly seven but it sounds good!) including Helen Hadley, Malcolm Wilkie, Amanda Savage and RoseMarie Riley who were all on the same beginners' course 6 or 7 years ago. Shortly after getting his wings John joined the committee and took on the role of editor sharing the role with Sam Bowles for a while. And now here we are a few years later and it is time for John to hang up his keyboard and stroll off into the sunset. Thank you John for your hard work producing the Apiarist every two months for the last few years. It has always made an interesting read.

This edition of your bi-monthly magazine has been a little delayed due to John handing over to me, so my first job is to apologise for that! I am quite new to beekeeping and to HWBKA, but hope I will be able to keep you all abreast of the HWBKA events and activities and I have introduced a few new ideas in this edition which I hope you'll enjoy. Importantly, this is your magazine and if you feel it needs more of this and less of that please get in touch, either via e-mail or directly at Bee Banter.

Debby Park

The mild winter has been something of a mixed blessing. Figures will probably show fewer lost colonies, but it is also being seen as a major factor in very high varroa numbers; unusual, so early in the season. It's important that every effort is made to reduce the level of infestation at this stage and there are chemical and organic methods available. Malcolm Wilkie outlines one method in this edition of the Apiarist, using dilute lactic acid, applied during an artificial swarm procedure. So get those inspection boards in and count the varroa drop. BeeBase have a very useful calculator, which you can use to assess the numbers and they offer advice on how to tackle the problem. It is early in the season, so best to act now and protect the health of your colonies.

Here is the link to the calculator:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm>

Other items covered in this edition:

- Bringing in the pollen
- Bee Banter
- Bee Hive Products
- HWBKA Taster Day
- Sussex Bee Festival
- Bee Search...a coffee break puzzle
- Cookery Corner
- Poetry Buzz

Bringing in the Pollen
Words and pictures by John Lyte



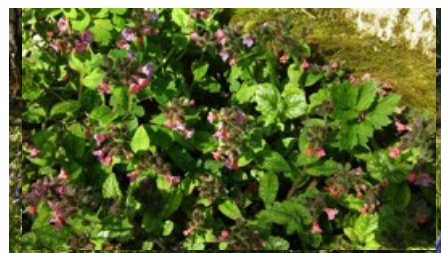
Picture by Helen Hadley



Following a rather unseasonal winter and hesitant spring, it's good to see that flowers and trees are at last providing pollen and nectar for the bees. This is especially important as now the queen will be laying in earnest and the hive population is expanding. It's thought that because of the mild winter, in many cases the queen may never have stopped laying and there is a real danger of starvation at this stage.



So even though the flowers are returning and the Hawthorn and Field Maple are starting to blossom, do check that the colonies still have sufficient stores and if any are light then give them a liquid feed of sugar syrup. A week of cold, rainy weather and they'll be using stores with very little coming in.



Bee Banter

Words and pictures by John Lyte



I'm sure everyone is aware of the association's regular 'Bee Banter' gatherings each month and what a valuable and enjoyable resource they are, both social and educational. Held in the convivial surroundings of a pub, the evenings begin with a very useful talk, or demonstration by one of the association experts. On the last Bee Banter of April, held in the Rose and Crown, Mayfield, Malcolm Wilkie demonstrated an artificial swarm and the use of dilute Lactic Acid as an effective method of controlling varroa. There are few classrooms where you can learn and enjoy a pint.

(For more information on Malcolm's talk you can refer to the article below)

After the demonstration and Q & A session, the evening becomes a social occasion, a chance to chat and exchange banter.

So, if you haven't been already, do try and join in the next Bee Banter on Tuesday 31st May. You won't regret it.

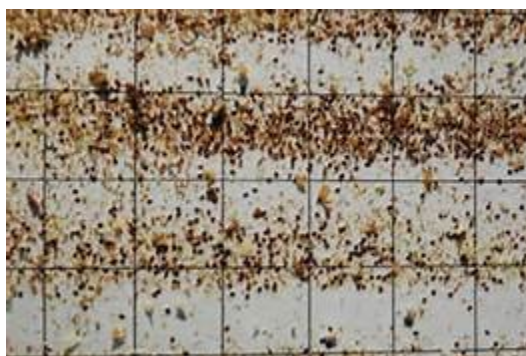
Biotechnical Cleaning and Dilute Lactic Acid

Words by Malcolm Wilkie

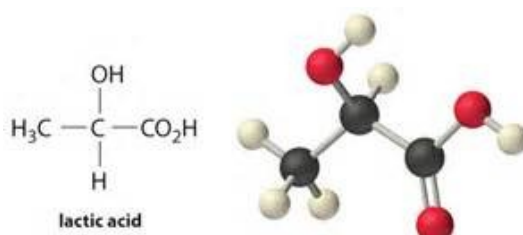
Many of the association members attended the session held at the Rose and Crown last week about swarming. All of us, even those who are more experienced, can always improve how we manage our colonies. I hope the session proved thought provoking and those who were present will now correctly carry out the artificial swarm technique. Beginners so often misunderstand what it is they have to do!

If you think that you have mastered what is required of you to do an artificial swarm, I will explain how you can use the artificial swarm technique to clean up your bees. To clean up the box with the old queen, the foragers and the fresh frames of foundation a simple Biotechnical method can be used (gosh that sounds complicated but it is so simple you will be amazed).

The technique to clean up the old brood box and all the emerging bees is a little bit more complicated however. You may only want to use this method if you consider you have a high varroa count. So, of course, you need to be monitoring your inspection boards now in order to make the decision about whether your colony has a high infestation or not (and you are all using the varroa calculator on bee base, I hope).



Inspection Board showing Varroa drop



I have been searching for the last year or two for something that I can do at this stage of the season which does not involve putting oxalic acid onto the bees. The reason for not putting the chemical on them is that the emerging virgin queen may somehow get damaged or be affected later in her life and that I do not want to risk.

The solution has come from an eminent beekeeper in Sussex called Jonathan Coote. If you think I have an attention for detail, you haven't yet met Jonathan. He is a bit of a maverick and taught himself beekeeping and has, in consequence, come up with really interesting ideas. He uses a solution of dilute lactic acid which he sprays on to the bees. This is quite a benign procedure. It certainly won't damage the virgin queen. The reason for this is that the dilute solution is so weak that you can even put it on your own tongue without it causing any problems. I am quite prepared to put it on my tongue for you! Jonathan says that it's acidity is like lemon juice.

The reason why it works is that the varroa mite has very delicate mouthparts. Once the solution has been sprayed onto the bees they evaporate off the moisture and this concentrates the acidity of the solution and damages the varroa. I will show you how to use this and Helen is going to bring up to bee banter several bottles of the dilute solution which will be sold at a very cheap price. Jonathan's Association all use lactic acid. However it is not a recognised product. Perhaps it should be, because it is such a weak, dilute solution that is actually sprayed onto the bees by the beekeeper.

The BeeBase Varroa Calculator can be found at this web address:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm>

Bee Hive Products – A HWBKA Event **Words and Pictures by Debby Park**

23rd March 2016 – Five Ashes Village Hall

Doubtless you all have wonderful recipes in which the crucial ingredient is the honey from your hives...but have you ever thought to use your bees' bounty for cosmetic or well-being purposes?

For some 4,000 years honey has been used for medicinal purposes. Whether taken internally or used externally honey has natural anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and anti-fungal properties. Its efficacy has been evidenced in modern medicine, for treating wounds and burns¹, seborrhic dermatitis and dandruff. ²



At this recent HWBKA Bee Event Helen Hadley, ably assisted by Malcolm Wilkie, demonstrated the making of soap, hand cream, balms and ointments using hive products and a few extras, which Helen assures us are readily available on eBay.



This **honey and lavender soap** is courtesy of Dr Sara Robb and would be perfect to use after a day in the garden or if your hands are dry or cracked.....

<i>Ingredients:</i> 200g mineral water 112g sodium hydroxide 468g coconut oil 150g olive oil 125g sunflower oil 175g palm oil 15ml honey (1 tablespoon)	<i>Method:</i> Make the lye – slowly add the sodium hydroxide to the water. Stir with a wooden spoon to dissolve. It will heat up as you stir. Put aside. (NB this is a smelly process so best done in a well-ventilated room) Warm the oils and honey until melted. Slowly mix in the lye. Continue to mix until traces
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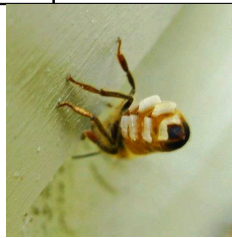
1

2005 [study](#) published in the British Journal of Surgery

2

2001 [study](#) published in the European Journal of Medical Research

<p>½ tsp lavender essential oil (or of your choice) You can add cosmetic fragrance oil if you wish</p>	<p>are left on the surface...like a thick batter Pour into moulds. Wrap in cling film and towels to keep warm until it cures.</p>
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We also learned a few facts about beeswax:



Young bees aged 10-16 days are able to make wax – as bees get older they find it more difficult



For every 1lb of wax made, bees need to consume 6-8lbs honey



Each 1lb of wax requires ½ million scales



A bee takes 12 hours to produce 8 scales...so it takes 10,000 workers 3 days to make 1lb of wax!



Wax melts at 63-65°C; it's a natural fuel and highly flammable



Wax is insoluble in water...so it makes a great waterproofing material.

Here's a lovely **First Aid Balm** which you can have to hand for bruises, scrapes, burns and inflammation...and it smells so much nicer than Savlon!

<p><i>Ingredients:</i> 60g olive oil 30g beeswax 30g shea butter 10g comfrey oil 10g st. johns wort 10g calendula oil ½ teaspoon vitamin e oil (optional) 20 drops lavender essential oil 10 drops manuka oil (tee tree essential oil)</p>	<p><i>Method:</i> Melt all the ingredients excluding essential oils in a double boiler (bain marie). Remove from heat and stir in the essential oils. Pour into containers, label and leave to set for 24 hours</p>
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Additionally beeswax (175g), mixed with turpentine (450ml) and essential oils of lavender or orange makes a **luxurious polish** your furniture will thank you for.

And if all that hefting hives has left you exhausted and in need of a quick 'Pick-Me-Up', then why not try a tot of

Honey and Orange Vodka.

Simply simmer the rind of an orange in 100g of honey, leave it to cool and then add to 350ml vodka. The protein in the honey will separate giving a cloudy drink so for a clear liquid strain it through a coffee filter into a sterilized bottle. Helen suggests it's consumed within 6 months, but I doubt it will take you that long!!

Fancy turning your hand to some homemade crafts? Try the above for great Christmas or birthday presents - or just use them yourself around the home!

For lots more ideas on how to use honey and beeswax for other household purposes try "Dr. Sara's Honey Potions" or "Beauty and the Bees" both by Dr. Sara Robb or "Forgotten Ways for Modern Days" by Rachel Blondel.

Alternatively if you are planning to attend the Honey Show why not sign up for Dr Sara Robb's popular workshop.



Thank you to RoseMarie Riley for organising the event, to Helen Hadley for her expert demonstrations and Malcolm Wilkie for keeping his cool when the heat was turned up!

HWBKA Taster Day
Malcolm Wilkie 25th April 2016

On 24th April, Malcolm Wilkie hosted a Taster Session at Rotherfield Trout Farm. Here he recounts how the day went.



The taster day was attended by seven adults and a child. I had chosen 24 April as a good time to look at the bees. However temperatures were only 7° and I was nervous about inspecting the bees given the chilly Arctic wind.

Of the four colonies that I have at the moment in Rotherfield two are strong. I have 14 x 12 brood boxes and these two hives have seven frames of brood. So I made the decision that it was only these two colonies that we were going to look at. The previous week I had put inspection boards on the four colonies and this gave all of those present a picture of what was going on in the colonies.

Initially it took some time to kit everybody out and make sure that the Bee suits fitted well. Then I showed them an empty hive and we named all the parts and I talked about how it is that we obtain honey using a super above the queen excluder. After that in pairs they each had a smoker and I taught them how to light it and keep it alight. We then went up to the apiary and I opened up one of the boxes of bees. I tried to describe the brood pattern and point out the difference between workers, drones and of course the Queen. This Queen is marked with a blue dot and we were able to find her. We probably had the beehive open for only seven minutes.

After this initial look at one of the hives I talked to everybody about varroa and how it spreads viral infection among the bees and shortens their lives considerably. Then while they had a short walk around the trout farm to look at the bluebells and wild garlic coming into flower I set out a lunch of quiche and salad. The head Gardner at Mount Camphill had given me chard and so I had made a chard quiche with cream cheese and nutmeg. I had also bought some speciality cheese and bread and apples. John was helping and provided tea and coffee.

After lunch we once again got the smokers going and went back up to the apiary site. This time I promised them a feistier box of bees. I was surprised how prolific this Queen had been and the bees were running all over the comb. The sun had come out and I was able to pick out a drone and hand it

to Oliver (the young boy). Each of the participants lifted out one frame and we had a look at the brood pattern and the bees. No Queen this time but the bees were obliging and no one got stung or was nervous.

We took off the roofs of two other hives but participants were only able to see the bees working underneath the crown board through the holes in the crown board.

After this, back down to build super frames. Each participant had been asked to bring a small hammer and I provided them with the frames and wax. I will now need to undo some of the work that they have done for me! Participants had been asked to bring a notebook and I then got them to write down my summary of the beekeeping year so that everyone was clear about the amount of work involved if you launch into keeping bees. I encouraged everyone interested to sign up for our beginners course in 2017 and, if possible, buy a flat packed hive and build it this winter. Deborah Park came and shared her experience of being a new beekeeper. I think they enjoyed meeting her and this underscored a lot of what I had said about the initial difficulty of getting bees and understanding everything that is involved. An enjoyable but tiring day.

Ed's note: Speaking as a beginner, HWBKA is a fantastic place to start beekeeping through the Beginners' introduction and main courses that run throughout the season. The introduction of the one day taster event means there is something for all levels of prospective beekeeper. A further taster session will take place in July 2016 so if you have friends or neighbours keen to know more about beekeeping put them in touch with HWBKA.

Sussex Festival of Bees



This year's festival was well attended – the main talk covering apiculture and the use of pesticides. HWBKA ran a very popular plant stall and exhibited the bee observation box to promote the association. Helen would like to extend her thanks to all those who volunteered and helped to make the event successful.



In addition to the auction of bees (a nuc sold for around the £130 region) and equipment there was a range of trade stands selling beekeeping equipment, bee hotels and bird boxes and bee product based cosmetics. One interesting find was a Waggle Wedge (see below) produced by Two Brooks Bees. It is an “elegant solution to avoid bees being crushed while manipulating the hive during inspections”.



It is balanced, has an integrated stopper to ensure correct positioning, and maintains a gap between the boxes on three sides. The wedge is then removed by slowly ‘wagging’ it from side to side with one hand, using the smoker as required with the other, enabling the top box to be gently lowered onto the box below without that awful sound of crushing bees! Has anyone tried to use one? If so why not share your experience with us.

BEE SEARCH....

great practice for focussing the eyes to find the elusive queen!
Identify the 25 bee related words in the word search. (Answers in next issue.)

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L A S S U P B R O H H O N K L P O O D W
R A O A S D G H J O R T Y R O B N M X A
O B N R V Q W E R N T E O L U I Q I D X
Y Q D G R K L P O E M L L Q P B R O H M
A F G E S A S S M Y I E S U H N Y F F O
L Y E A N T V P R C N R T E D O O R B T
J L F E M O R S T O W Y X E Z B N E M H
E J G L D B W O B M I E L N B B E B B B
L E H L L E B B T B B W B S W A R M B A
L L I K D B R B W H B H C O L T F A R N
Y Z J R R A O A S D G H O B B B B Y B T
M W O S K E P B R A T C E N L B B N B B
D N I D G H J O R T Y R O B E A B O B E
E G H N B B E E B A N T E R B Y Y L B A
F R B Y G M O N D A Y R B B F V B O B D
B C B L R O B N M X E S U P E R B C R Y
B V B L K L P O Z K B J Z B W X A R F E
N O S E M A B B R B H B Z O S E M A V X
B C B J X A W O X A B E I L L E X I B Z
D R O O P W W T T O P B A R R B H O P E
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BEE
BEE BANTER
BROOD
BUZZ
COLONY

DRONE
FEEDER
HIVE
HONEY
HONEYCOMB

LANGSTROTH
NECTAR
NOSEMA
POLLEN
QUEEN

ROYAL JELLY
SKEP
SUPER
SWARM
TOP BAR

VARROA
WAX
WING
WORKER
WAX MOTH

COOKERY CORNER

It's official! Following the last two weeks of positively wintery winds and the odd flurry of snow we can expect more summery weather this month so I thought I'd tempt you with a couple of honey recipes.



Crunchy Honey Mustard

Ingredients

50g white mustard seed
50g black mustard seed
150 ml white wine vinegar
3 level tsp. clear honey
¼ tsp sea salt
1 clove garlic
¼ tp grnd cinnamon (opt.)

Method:

Place mustard seeds in a bowl with vinegar, cover and leave for 36 hours.
Put all the ingredients into a blender and blitz until thick and creamy, adding a little extra vinegar if too thick.
Jar up into sterilized jars and label.

Use as is, as a salad dressing, stir into a Cauliflower or Macaroni Cheese or marinade pork steaks for the BBQ.

Honey and Vanilla Cheesecake

Serves 8



Ingredients

- 175g speculoos biscuits or any cinnamon/spiced biscuit
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- For the filling
- 400g full-fat cream cheese
- 200ml full-fat crème fraiche
- 400ml double cream
- 2 vanilla pods, seeds removed
- 75g honey
-
- For the topping
- 500g mixed berries
- 1 tablespoon icing sugar

Method

Put the biscuits into a food processor and blitz, until they become crumbs. Sprinkle them into the base of a 23 centimetre loose bottom tin and spread them out evenly.

In a bowl, whisk together the cheesecake filling ingredients until thick and creamy, pour it over the base and allow to chill for 1 hour. Remove from the tin, place the berries on top and sprinkle with icing sugar.

Enjoy!.....and send me a favourite recipe for inclusion in July's Apiarist.

POETRY BUZZ...

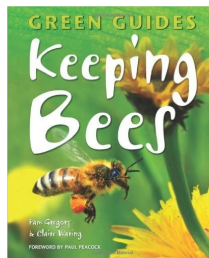
I came across this poem and thought to share it with you. Do you have a favourite bee related poem or extract you would like to share?

The Hive

The colony grew in my body all that summer.
The gaps between my bones filled
with honeycomb and my chest
vibrated and hummed. I knew
the brood was healthy, because
the pheromones sang through the hive
and the queen laid a good
two thousand eggs a day.
I smelled of bee bread and royal jelly,
my nails shone with propolis.
I spent my days freeing bees from my hair,
and planting clover and bee sage and
woundwort and teasel and borage.
I was a queendom unto myself.

Jo Shapcott

Advertisements & Requests



Keeping Bees (Green Guides)– An illustrated paperback written by respected keepers Pam Gregory and Claire Waring with foreword by Paul Peacock ; ideal for those starting out or wanting a simple format reminder on key issues.

See Helen Hadley at Bee Banter for limited stock at discount price of £5.

Special Call OutIf anyone has any child size bee suits that they no longer have use of please consider donating them to the Association. This would then give us the flexibility to be able to kit up youngsters for our Taster Days and Introductory Course. Contact the HWBKA secretary.

**IDEAS, PHOTOS & ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER
ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!**

**You do not have to be a budding writer. Just drop me a line and I'll happily talk
over the phone or catch up with you at Bee Banter**

**Contact the Editor at apiarist@hwbka.org.uk
Next newsletter out early July**