



## WEST SUFFOLK B.K.A. BULLETIN SEPTEMBER 2007

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The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this Bulletin are not necessarily those of the Editor nor the Officers of the Association

### WSBKA Apiary At Horringer

I'll first start off by thanking Mike (and Maureen of course), on behalf of West Suffolk Beekeepers, for managing our Association apiary and extracting/bottling the honey which is sold in the Cathedral shop in Bury and the various shows we attend to raise funds. We all know what a time consuming exercise this is.

Numbers at the last meeting were low, no doubt due to holidays, which was a shame as many pairs of eyes were needed for finding and marking a number of queens. The colonies are looking good, at last, following many supersedures this year. The use of oxalic acid and Apiguard as a defence against varroa were also covered in depth.

Despite a good start to the season with the nearby rape, the weather turned against us and as a consequence the honey crop this year has been poor. In the middle of May Mike extracted 135lb with a further 56lb later in June. I believe a further 60lb odd was taken off in August.

It is the last outdoor meeting of the year on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September at 2.30pm.

### Extractor

The Association extractor is available for hire to West Suffolk members at £3 a time. Please contact Ken James on 01284 752942

### WSBKA Honey Show – 17<sup>th</sup> June

There were 17 entrants in the honey show this year, with 119 entries. The results are:

- Class 1 One Section - No entries
- Class 2 Two 454g jars of light honey - 1<sup>st</sup> S Gray 2<sup>nd</sup> P Blakey
- Class 3 Two 454g jars of medium honey - 1<sup>st</sup> S Gray 2<sup>nd</sup> K & B James 3<sup>rd</sup> B Denny
- Class 4 Two 454g jars of dark honey - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 2<sup>nd</sup> M Graystone 3<sup>rd</sup> B Walker 4<sup>th</sup> B Walker
- Class 5 Two 454g jars of naturally crystallised honey - No awards
- Class 6 Two 454g jars of soft set honey - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 4<sup>th</sup> B Denny
- Class 7 Two 454g of chunk honey - No awards
- Class 8 Two 227g containers of cut honey - 2<sup>nd</sup> T Bird
- Class 9 Three 454g jars of different honeys - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 2<sup>nd</sup> M Graystone
- Class 10 One shallow frame of honey suitable for extraction - 1<sup>st</sup> K & B James 2<sup>nd</sup> T Bird
- Class 11 One cake of beeswax 227g approx - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> B Denny
- Class 12 One cake of beeswax 454g approx - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> B Denny
- Class 13 Six 454g jars of matching liquid honey ready for sale - 1<sup>st</sup> M Graystone 2<sup>nd</sup> S Gray
- Class 14 Six 454g jars of matching soft set honey ready for sale - No awards
- Class 15 Honey cake made to the given recipe - 1<sup>st</sup> D Shave 2<sup>nd</sup> S Gray
- Class 16 Honey biscuits to the given recipe - 1<sup>st</sup> K & B James 2<sup>nd</sup> D Shave 3<sup>rd</sup> S Reed
- Class 17 One bottle of dry mead - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> G Greenwood 4<sup>th</sup> G Greenwood
- Class 18 One bottle of sweet mead - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> B Denny 4<sup>th</sup> B Denny
- Class 19 Gift class, 454g jar of liquid honey - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 2<sup>nd</sup> M Graystone 3<sup>rd</sup> K & B James
- Class 20 Gift class, 454g jar of soft set or granulated honey - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 2<sup>nd</sup> B Walker
- Class 21 Novices class two 454g jars of liquid honey - 2<sup>nd</sup> S Reed
- Class 22 Any item of which honey is an ingredient - 1<sup>st</sup> K & B James 3<sup>rd</sup> B Denny
- Class 23 Any item of which beeswax is an ingredient - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> G Greenwood 4<sup>th</sup> G Greenwood
- Class 24 Two matching beeswax candles - 1<sup>st</sup> B Denny 2<sup>nd</sup> K & B James 3<sup>rd</sup> B Walker
- Class 25 Children's class drawing depicting beekeeping split age - 1<sup>st</sup> Esther Gray 1<sup>st</sup> Joshua Gray
- Class 26 Photograph(s) of beekeeping interest - 1<sup>st</sup> B Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> K & B James 3<sup>rd</sup> T Bird

The following trophies were presented:

- The "Aubin" Challenge Cup - B Denny
- The "Small Beekeepers" Challenge Cup – S Gray
- The "Cayley" Challenge Cup – S Gray
- Cake Basket – D Shave
- The "Padmore" Trophy – B Walker
- The "Ernest Josling" Salver – T Bird
- The "Joyce White" Mazer – B Walker
- The "Caswell" Candlestick – S Reed
- The NHS Blue Ribbon – S Gray

I would like to thank all the entrants and those of you who gave up time to assist on both the Saturday evening and the Sunday. Without your help, our show would not be a success.

The Judge, Mr Peter Bashford, was very impressed by the standard of the exhibits.

For me, this has been a mixed year of success; I didn't win anything at the Suffolk Show; if I had there would have been a few complaints as I had the privilege to judge it!

Since then, I have managed to gain 2 blue ribbons; one at Stowmarket and the other at Sandringham (Sandra – beware next year!)

Also at Sandringham, West Suffolk were awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the East Anglian Federation Cup competition. This entry was put together by Mike Graystone and myself. I also managed to get Prince Charles to roll a candle!

I am now looking forward to October to the National Honey Show and perhaps we will have a few more entries from our own West Suffolk Beekeepers!

Thank you

Barry  
Hon Show Secretary

On a personal note, it was a very hot day and very busy due to the number of visitors and lack of helpers. Thank you, Pat & Joss, for setting out a magnificent lunch to keep the helpers satisfied during a much needed break. Being a new member, I have only been to 4 events to help, but I have to say it's always been a very satisfying day imparting bee knowledge to the public who have specifically visited us and are interested in finding out more about what we (or, more importantly, our bees) do. All help for future events would be much appreciated, even if it's only an hour or two and sometimes free entry to events can be given. Sam.

### **Harvest Supper 2007**

As mentioned in the last bulletin, the Harvest Supper will be on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm. We have secured a larger venue this year at Great Barton Village Hall as last year was very "snug". There is a much better kitchen here and extensive parking. The ticket price has not increased, remaining at £5 each, which includes beverages. All spouses/partners and (well behaved!) children are welcome and trophies from the West Suffolk Honey Show will also be presented.

As last year, it would be appreciated if members could please bring some food and this year Sylvia Pettitt has kindly agreed to co-ordinate ticket bookings and food supplies. Please can you get in touch with her and let her know how many tickets you require and what food you wish to bring. Sylvia's e-mail is [sylvia.pettitt@lineone.net](mailto:sylvia.pettitt@lineone.net) or you can contact her on telephone number is 01638 500378.

### **Safari**



Photograph courtesy of John Pettit

The safari was a very successful day again this year and again very hot (what has happened to the summer now?) Andy Wattam led the day and covered various topics including updated information relating to varroa management. We started at one of Sandra Gray's out-apiaries, at which Andy was very impressed with the level of Sandra's housekeeping. Nevertheless, the persistent varroa were still to be seen dancing on the wax!

A picnic lunch followed at Terry Bird's house and thanks should be passed on to Sue for the refreshments and various cakes provided and eagerly devoured. After Terry demonstrated the various bits of machinery in

his honey house we proceeded to Mike, Terry and Ken's hives which have been moved to the borage near Lavenham on which there was still plenty of forage. This is also where the case of the blue nectar was uncovered. Mike had previously checked one of Ken's hives when he went to inspect his own and to his astonishment discovered blue honey in one of the frames in the super, which he had never come across before – this was a new phenomenon! The explanation was simple however; Ken has been experimenting with plastic foundation, which is black, and it was this colour which was shadowed through the honey! It goes to show we can all still learn something new!

Using a super frame in the brood box encourages the bees to build drone cells in the gap below, which the varroa slip into just before the cells are sealed. This section at the bottom can then be cut off and destroyed.



Photograph courtesy of John Pettit

### **Treatment For Varroa Mite**

Apistan is still available and has not yet shown resistance by the mite in this area. It has shown resistance in the Cambridge and Ipswich areas of which we must be aware.

Andy Wattam has recommended the alternative use of Apiguard. This is simple to apply but the temperature must reach at least 15°C during the day to be effective. It is a measured dose in a little fairly flat dish, the lid is peeled back and stood directly on the brood frames. A small space must be allowed for above the dish which is achieved by some form of eke or empty super. After 2 weeks a second dose is given and when this has been taken up by the bees this completes the treatment. Monitoring of the drop is useful.

A follow on treatment in December which is very effective entails the use of 5% oxalic acid which comes previously diluted in a sugar solution. The roof is lifted and a measured 5ml dose is applied to each seam of bees. This may sound fiddly but it is not.

We, as an association, have purchased a purpose made light back pack linked to a triggered injection nozzle. One squeeze of the trigger administers the correct dose for each seam. Simple!

This will be available to West Suffolk Beekeepers by phoning Ken James on 01284 752942 who is the custodian of the equipment. Book with Ken, use it and, for the success of the scheme, return it as soon as it is finished with. The oxalic acid solution will be available with the equipment with a small charge by the association of £1 for its use. Beekeepers with a number of colonies should make a donation. A £5 deposit for use of the equipment is required.

Terry Bird

### **From Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered Of Brockley Green – Jane Forsey**

As I sit here, typing left handed and nursing a hand resembling an inflated rubber glove and about as useful, I wonder – am I mad? I picked up a sting at the apiary meeting yesterday and am suffering the consequences of not wearing thicker gloves!

Mad I may be, but the bees have me hooked and I won't be put off.

The bee safari this year was a brilliant day, with valuable time given for free, by Andy Wattam, Mike G, Terry, Sandra and Ken, their bees and assorted family members!

The only problem was picking up all the information that was coming from all the various discussions going on around the hives. Andy was, as usual, full of useful stuff and very helpful on the subject of varroa treatments that we all need to be getting on with.

The weather was sunny, the fields of borage were stunning, and Sue Bird's cakes were a bonus, although I still need the recipe, Terry!

As has been said before, you should have been there; it is a great day and an easy way to learn more and we can all do with that!

It's coming up to the end of my first year with bees of my own and I have been 'bewitched, bothered and bewildered'; at least I think that's how the song goes. I am mildly reassured by every beekeeper I speak to saying it's been an odd year, but have a nasty feeling I have done a lot of things wrong, or at least not quite right. At least I have had plenty of practice at trying out techniques!

Having started with one colony in the spring, the situation has fluctuated through the year. Rape honey was my first adventure; I took it off successfully but when I wasn't looking, they went and got some more and it crystallised.

My white queen walked out 5 times and had to be collected from various parts of the field with her retinue, and rehomed. I went to do an artificial swarm, and couldn't find the queen. I did it again, successfully, but then the queen walked out again!

Sylvia and John kindly donated a swarm, very exciting (in the dark!), which at least has been behaving, and looks like the books say it should, when inspected.

I ended up with 4 colonies and a nuc; 3 colonies appeared to go queenless, so after taking advice, (Terry and Mike must dread my calls) I put in test frames. The bees ignored them and built queen cells elsewhere! In the end, eggs and larvae were seen in two and it seems as if we are on course again. I have united the remaining queenless with another. I think that a couple of the colonies may be too weak to survive alone and will unite them, if only I can find the queens!

I have the supers off, the apiguard on, and am looking towards the bedding down process. I hope September is a good month so they can build up a bit, and I'm looking forward to next year and the new excitements it will bring!

### **Bees Glorious Bees - From Mike Graystone And Geoff Greenwood**

At the Honey show I was approached by a visitor who said that he had inherited a hive of bees, that he did not know a thing about them, but thought that the hive needed replacing. I offered to visit his home to check the situation but owing to the vagaries of the weather and his work commitments it was a fortnight before we managed to get our diaries to coincide.

His house is on a fairly new, quite select development on the outskirts of Bury and, for a newish house, had a reasonably large garden well stocked with shrubs and young fruit trees. He showed me the hive, which was backing on the dividing fence half hidden by weeds, long grass and overhanging fruit tree branches.

At first sight it looked a bit like a sort of National with a roof similar to a WBC. The roof was really dilapidated with the ventilation cone missing, the fascia board nearly detached from the roof timbers and bees happily entering and leaving through the cone opening and the gaps in the roof. At some time, someone had put two roof tiles on the roof either to keep the weather out or to stop it deteriorating further. Anyway, I decided that it was going to be a two man job and that a spare hive would be required.

I eventually managed to borrow a National from Pat Blakey who had cleaned it up, scorched it and supplied the foundation for the brood chamber and a super. He also provided a spare super. I enlisted the help of the long-suffering Mike and we went along one Sunday afternoon and got to grips with it.

Now, in the past I have seen inside some neglected hives, but this one beat them all. We had to prise off the roof and as soon as the first half came free we found copious lumps of comb hanging from it, some with a small patch of brood and some with honey and stores. Naturally, as soon as we tried to move it away from the hive chunks of comb fell off and we collected up as much as possible whilst keeping a look out for the queen. We assumed that there was a queen as the householder said that the bees had swarmed earlier this year and Mike remembered collecting a swarm from near to the house.

The householder told me later that he moved in about a year ago, the hive was already there but nobody had looked at it for at least a year. From the state of the hive, I suspect that it was probably put there as a garden decoration but no-one thought to block off the entrance and a swarm took up residence. There was more random comb in what was the super, which had not contained any foundation as far as we could see. Similarly in the brood chamber there were frames but again without foundation. We removed the hive parts from the stand and put the National in place, leaving as much honey filled comb as possible in the empty super on top of the hive. The remaining comb we removed.

The old hive appeared to be a Langstroth, so the frames would not have fitted a National in any case. We had kitted out the householder and his wife so that they could see what was going on as they had shown interest in keeping bees, and when I first visited, said that they would even consider a second hive. For the time being we had done as much as possible and departed.

A week later we returned to check on progress and to our dismay found that there was a small gap in the empty super and the bees (used to a high rise entrance) had used it, bypassing the brood chamber and super and busily making new comb where it was not wanted. So once again we decanted them, sealed up the gap and left them for a couple of days to settle down before giving them a good feed, which we did later that week. Mike gave them a complete feeder full which they had taken down when we returned a week later. However, they had drawn out very little comb and it did not appear as though there was a queen there to spur them on.

We shall go back soon and if there is a swarm available in the interim we might well consider taking it along and chucking it in if the queen is missing.

### 10 days later

Mike and I re-visited the hive fully prepared to find it empty and at first sight there was not much activity, just one or two bees desultorily mooching in and out, but when we opened up the brood chamber there was quite a number of bees present.

They hadn't drawn out much more foundation but they had stored quite a bit of nectar and pollen and we saw one or two small patches of larvae. We didn't find the queen, nor see any eggs and at first suspected a laying worker, but the brood pattern was too regular. Even if there is a queen she will have to lay prodigiously to ensure that the colony is strong enough to survive the winter. Mike put on a large drip feeder to help stimulate the comb drawing and we shall do another inspection in a week or so.

On reflection, I remember that when Geoff Messenger's hives were vandalised on New Year's Eve the two queens went off lay for a very long time and only recently have they shown any reasonable laying rate. In view of the two bouts of, frankly brutal, handling we gave this colony I would not be surprised if the queen there has been severely shocked and is off lay.

Watch this space!

### What's On

Date	Event	Contact
9 <sup>th</sup> September	WSBKA Meeting at Branch Apiary, Horringer	West Suffolk – just turn up. On the BI066 ¼ mile on the right from BSE end. Direction signs on edge of road on the day
9 <sup>th</sup> September	Barnham Village Fete, 1pm	Any volunteers to help man the WSBKA stall please contact Mike Graystone
17 <sup>th</sup> September	Don Cooper, his visit to Australia, Grange Farm Centre	Fred Willis, Waveney Beekeepers
19 <sup>th</sup> September	Forum and 10 minute talks, St Michael's, Martlesham Heath, 7.30pm	Jeremy Quinlan, Ipswich & East Suffolk
10 <sup>th</sup> October	Open Forum, 7.30pm United Reform Church Hall, Saxmundham	Joyce Taylor, Leiston Beekeepers Association
12 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>WSBKA Harvest Supper, Gt Barton Village Hall 7.30pm</b>	<b>Sylvia Pettitt 01638 500378 or <a href="mailto:sylvia.pettitt@lineone.net">sylvia.pettitt@lineone.net</a></b>
17 <sup>th</sup> October	Operation Bumblebee, Geoff Coates, Syngenta Crop Protection	Jeremy Quinlan, Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeepers
19 <sup>th</sup> October	Social Evening, Wilkins Haldane Room, University College London, 6.45pm, tickets £21 each	Central Association of Beekeepers. Sam Reed has further details and booking form
18 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> October	National Honey Show, RAF Museum, Hendon. Lectures and trade stands. Free parking.	As for last year limited transport will be available on 20 <sup>th</sup> . Bookings to Mike Graystone 01359 269652.
20 <sup>th</sup> October	Waveney Honey Show, 7.30pm followed by Fish & Chip Supper	Fred Willis, Waveney Beekeepers
15 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>WSBKA, Fornham St Martin Village Hall</b>	<b>Talk given by Margaret Thomas, covering the nucleus to include making up, maintaining and using a nucleus</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> November	Oxalic Acid Training with Andy Wattam, Regional Bee Inspector at Dallinghoo, 2.00pm	Combined event Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA and Leiston & District. Contact Jeremy Quinlan for further details
19 <sup>th</sup> November	Paul Metcalf, Talk, Grange Farm Centre	Fred Willis, Waveney Beekeepers
21 <sup>st</sup> November	The Work of the County Ecologist, Andrew Murray-Wood	Jeremy Quinlan, Ipswich & East Suffolk
23 <sup>rd</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> November	Stratford Reunion Weekend, Falcon Hotel, Stratford-Upon-Avon	Central Association of Beekeepers. Sam Reed has further details and booking form
8 <sup>th</sup> December	Oxalic Acid Training with Andy Wattam, Regional Bee Inspector at Bob Spruce's apiary	Fred Willis, Waveney BKA
15 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Social	Fred Willis, Waveney BKA
10 <sup>th</sup> January	Andy Wattam, Regional Bee Inspector, Integrated Pest Management	Terry Bird, WSBKA

Other Member Association Contacts for Events:

Leiston & District BKA Secretary Joyce Taylor, Ridge Cottage, Glevering Hill, Wickham Market, Suffolk, IP13 0DG Tel 01728 746155

Stowmarket & District BKA Secretary Susanne Haynes, Creeting Hills Farm, Creeting St Mary, Ipswich, IP6 8PZ Tel 01449 722570

Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA Secretary Jeremy Quinlan, The Old Rectory, Dallinghoo, Woodbridge, IP13 0LA Tel 01473 737700 e-mail [jeremyq@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jeremyq@tiscali.co.uk)

Waveney Bee Group [www.waveneybeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.waveneybeekeepers.co.uk) Secretary Fred Willis, 29a Grayson Avenue, Pakefield, Lowestoft, NR33 7BB Tel 01502 586511.

### **National Honey Show**

If anyone is interested in entering the National, but cannot get there, please contact Barry Walker and he is sure he will be able to assist in getting entries there and back. E-mail [barrythebee@btinternet.com](mailto:barrythebee@btinternet.com) or telephone 01263 511420.

### **Ousden Update 2007 – Sylvia & John Pettit**

March - Only 2 hives didn't make it through the winter; I died out and I was a drone laying queen. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> we topped & tailed, bees already being strong with one hive well into the super

April - Mike Graystone came to help us mark and clip the queens on April 20<sup>th</sup>. This was a fantastic experience and we completed 17 hives. Mike was so efficient in showing us what to do John and I went on to do the remainder. It proved to be time well spent.

May – The bees were very strong, The hive that was into the super in March grew at an amazing rate; it needed 5 supers to house the bees and gave us 4 supers of honey by May 15<sup>th</sup>. 22 out of 26 hives gave us honey by this date, which was quite an exhilarating experience for us. The 4 hives that were on holiday have since re-queened and sorted themselves out and decided to make a bit of honey after all. We did have a lot of hives preparing to swarm regardless of going in every 8/10 days to check for cells. We did various methods of swarm control, but some of the bees were hell bent on leaving one way or another. This was where the queen clipping really came into its own (thank you Mike).

June - We hived several swarms and gave some to fellow members. Then we had the rainy season which was fairly disastrous for the bees in some ways. With all the flowers and blossoms early there was nothing really left and the bees were left at home twiddling their thumbs and keeping the varroa mites cosy, we think.

July - We were quite concerned that the bees were perhaps not finding enough food so we decided to give them all a gallon of syrup. This was well received and they did buck up and then we had early blackberry blossom and things looked a bit better, but no honey flows to speak of really. We have experienced a couple of hives going queenless and drone laying queens a couple of times and some hives were quite slow to requeen. By end of July we thought that there was evidence of varroa mites on some of the bees, and some hives had bees with deformed wings and a little bald brood here and there. The more you know, the worse it gets.

August - All hives have been gone through and the bees are looking quite strong, considering the unusual weather and seasonal change. We have now taken our supers off and have decided after some considerable thought to treat all hives at Ousden with Apiguard. Our 4 queens that we purchased from Jed Marshall have

arrived and are now out in nucs, 2 at Ousden and 2 at Cowlinge where we have started a small apiary. One queen was quite weak on arrival, so that may not take, and the 2 nucs at Ousden were soon being robbed so we reduced the front entrance to 2 bee spaces and hope we have rescued the situation.

The year has been great fun, at times worrying but always interesting. We hope everyone has had a successful year and most of all we hope everyone has enjoyed it as much as we have. Many thanks to everyone for all their help and sharing their wealth of experience with us

John & Sylvia

### For Sale

Mr R Clifton-Brown has 4 buckets of honey for sale at £1.50 per lb. It has been filtered and some of it is partially crystallized. You can contact him on 01440 783562 (Little Bradley).

