



BUZZWORD

First prize, National Honey Show

The Newsletter of the
Norfolk Beekeepers' Association

Nov–Dec 2020

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About as festive as
we got this year!

Next issue in January

All articles, events and things of interest to the beekeeping world should be sent to the Editor by **4th January 2021** at:

buzzwordnbka@gmail.com

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Chairman's Buzzwords

Trevor Nash

Well another year is almost coming to an end. This year has certainly been challenging in many ways.

I hope most of you have had a successful beekeeping year although I know some have had a mixed result as far as honey production is concerned.

Most of you, I am sure, have been aware of the EFB & AFB outbreak in the north of the county. This has been a hard time for those beekeepers who have been affected by these diseases. I personally know the impact of this when, several years ago, I had EFB in my apiary. It is not a pleasant experience, especially when you have to kill bees and burn equipment. It is very important to understand EFB & AFB and report anything that looks suspicious of being symptomatic with either of these diseases. You do not do any favours to yourself or others by ignoring the possible signs of these diseases. We are very fortunate to have two very good bee inspectors in our county: Keith Morgan and Regina Nickel have both worked very hard during this outbreak. They are always happy to give advice and, if necessary, visit an apiary to check out any potential problems with the health of your bees. This service is free of charge.

I have asked Regina to give a talk to us about this outbreak on Tuesday 17th November at 19:00. I would encourage you to take part and join with us via the Zoom meeting we have organised. If you do not have the facility to connect via the internet, you can always phone in and listen. Details are in this edition of Buzzword (see p5).

There will be a provisional events calendar for next year in the Year Book which you will receive in the new year. Owing to the ongoing government restrictions for the foreseeable future, some of the events may not take place. We will keep you informed of any changes during the year. We are actively looking at events online and we will notify you when these become available.

Best wishes to you all (and Happy Christmas), Trevor
(chairnbka@gmail.com)



What to buy a beekeeper for Christmas

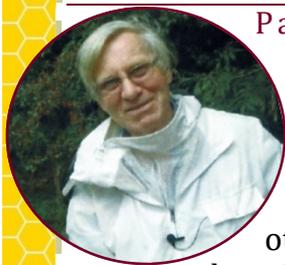
Members may be wondering what to give that special beekeeper in their lives for Christmas. Look no further. Nicola has on retention the car registration number B33 and says it's "not dissimilar to BEE". "The number plate belongs to my father", she says "who no longer has a car. It was the 33rd car in Lancashire, B being for Lancashire". Offers over £40,000 (yes, seriously) to Nicola Briggs, 07940 711697.

For someone on a lower budget:

A standard Norfolk registration is AP15. Our regular sleuth (Garry) has found some cheaper alternatives, AP15 MEL for example, is less than £400. Now we know what to get Garry for Christmas.

Beekeeping Problems through the ages

Paul Metcalf, NDB, President



Over time some of the problems that have confronted beekeepers have changed. Others have stayed in some form or other and, in other cases, the beekeeping practices of the past have influenced the beekeeping practices of today.

The story starts before the introduction of the movable comb hive. Skep beekeepers relied at the start on killing off half of the colonies at the end of the season. So a beekeeper who started the season with four skeps would hope to finish with at least eight, the increase coming from swarms. At the end of the season, those bees that were killed off were those that had not swarmed. So over a period of possibly 300 years or more, beekeepers perhaps inadvertently selected for bees that swarmed – a legacy that beekeepers today still struggle with.

Towards the end of skep beekeeping, the practice came in of driving bees from one skep to another to get the honey, and so preserving the bees. Beekeepers would travel the country offering the service of driving your bees for you, for a fee.

The middle of the 19th century saw great changes in beekeeping with the coming of the movable comb hive. Some beekeepers of the time struggled with the change of management, and it is reported that some colonies died of starvation as beekeepers came to understand the balance of taking honey and leaving enough for the colony.

Isle of Wight disease

The start of the 20th century saw the rise of the Isle of Wight disease, later thought to be caused by the Acarine mite (*Acarapis woodi*). It was called the Isle of Wight disease because it started at the Isle of Wight and gradually spread further north until about 90% of the bee population died. The mite infected the first pair of thoracic trachea causing symptoms such as bees crawling and endeavouring to fly. It is diagnosed by examining the first pair of thoracic trachea under a low-power microscope or hand lens. Over time a number of treatments for Acarine were devised with the first being Frow mixture, a mixture of petrol, nitrobenzene and safrole oil. This was followed by revised formulas and, later, the use of a specific acaricide, marketed as

Folbex. Today no specific controls for Acarine exist. However, it is possible that some of the materials used for varroa treatment will have an effect. It was later suggested that the mite itself was not the cause of the problem, but that it transmitted viral diseases.

Following on from the decimation of the native bee population by the disease, bees were imported from the continent, quite a lot from Holland, to replace those lost. This led to the dilution of remaining native stock, the British Black bee. However, in recent years it is said that it has survived. Acarine in the East of England was and is a relatively rare problem, being much more common in the west of the country, where higher rainfall aids the spread within the hive. In the 1990s Acarine showed up in New Zealand Italian bees imported into this country. This strain of bee whilst amazingly docile proved to be very susceptible to Acarine.

A land of milk and honey

The period of the 1920s and 1930s was probably the heyday of English beekeeping. It was a land flowing with milk and honey, well honey anyway. There was a large amount of flora available in hedgerows and weed population in arable crops, as well as hay grown for livestock and horse feed, which would have been such plants as the clovers and sanfoin. There is a report of a beekeeper in the 1920s, close to the Norfolk/Suffolk border, taking over 400 lbs from one hive.

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Advert for Frow mixture (1946 yearbook)

All things foul

Diseases have always been present in honeybees. Two of them that occupied beekeepers' minds very much in the past were the two foul broods, American and European (AFB, EFB); so much so that the British Beekeepers' Association prevailed on the government of the day to bring in legislation to control them. The first Bees Act came into force in 1942 with the Foul Brood Disease Order, which allowed the government to appoint people to inspect colonies for disease. If foul brood was found then the colonies were destroyed. At the time American Foul Brood was the major problem. Of the colonies inspected in 1952, 1.2% were infected with AFB, and 0.1% with EFB. In 2004, 0.3% were infected with AFB and 2.7% with EFB. There are a number of possible explanations for this re-



“The middle of the 19th century saw great changes in beekeeping with the coming of the movable comb hive.” Edwardian beekeepers (left) compared with modern beekeeping in Norfolk (right) — note the use of protective clothing and the absence of skeps



versal, but the fact remains that EFB is a more serious problem today. Treatment for AFB has always been destruction of the colony but in 1968 the treatment for EFB was changed to antibiotics in certain cases. Later still, this was changed again to treating by shook swarm. It is interesting that shook swarm was a recommended method in the 1920s.

Following the Second World War, beekeeping began to change in that much of the forage started to disappear. As horses were replaced by tractors, hay fields disappeared, herbicides reduced the forage in arable crops and, later, hedgerows were removed to give larger fields. So sources of honey such as white clover and red clover have gone, charlock has been replaced by oil seed rape, but sources such as prunus, pyrus, early spring hedgerow plants, blackberry and sweet chestnut are still to be found.

The winter of 1962/63, one of the coldest and most protracted recorded, had a significant effect on honeybee populations, with many colonies being lost. To make up these losses package bees were imported from the United States in 1963 and 1964, mainly Dadant Midnites and Dadant Starline. They were very docile, but had a propensity to eat food and swarm.

In the 1960s and 1970s it seems that spray poisoning of bees became more of a problem and in the late 1970s and 80s oil seed rape presented particular problems with spraying. With production of safer insecticides and a code of conduct for crop spraying, cases reduced.

Oil seed rape presented other difficulties for some beekeepers. The rapidity with which honey granulated from brassica crops, which beekeepers had never come across before, caused problems with extraction. Interestingly, in the 1970s it was a “nicer” crop than today as it flowered about 3 weeks later, meaning that the bees had more chance to become established after winter before foraging on it.

Nosema

Nosema disease (*Nosema apis*) was widespread through the 1960s and 1970s. It was a disease that had always been about and was referred to in earlier literature as “spring dwindling” because the symptoms of the disease are that colonies rapidly dwindle in the spring.

A technique for dealing with the disease was devised by Dr Bailey at Rothamsted Experimental Station, which involved transferring the bees on to clean combs now known as the Bailey comb change. Old combs, if worth saving, are sterilized with the fumes from 80% acetic acid. Fumidil B, an antibiotic, was used in the autumn feed, but Fumidil was withdrawn long ago, and now Bailey comb change is the recognised way of dealing with this disease.

Equipment

Little has changed in equipment. The use of plastic/polystyrene in hive construction does seem to have become established. However, the biggest changes that have occurred are in extraction equipment. Into the 1950s most extraction equipment would have been tinned metal, which was prone to corrosion. So after extraction it had to be washed off thoroughly with cold water to get rid of the wax and honey, then washed with hot water, and then dried and smeared with liquid paraffin to prevent corrosion, remembering to wash off the liquid paraffin before use next time.

Current and future problems

Today new problems and difficulties present. Varroa arrived in this country in 1992 and changed beekeeping in that there was no place for “leave alone” beekeeping, varroa has to be managed in some way or other. Since 1992 the number of treatments available has increased and beekeepers have learned to live with it. The biggest problem that varroa seems to cause is transmission of viral diseases.

There are also a number of alien pests that might arrive at some time such as the Tropilaelaps mite, small hive beetle and Asian hornet. The Tropilaelaps mite, Asian in origin, is still a notifiable pest and was supposed to have come to the UK before varroa but so far has not. It will probably cause similar problems to the varroa mite. The small hive beetle, a quite devastating pest, seems to have established itself in Italy and Australia (which had thought itself lucky not to have varroa). We all know about the sightings of the Asian hornet in the UK.

Honey is good for you

Venetia Rist



Oxford University researchers have proved what every beekeeper knows – that honey is often the best treatment for coughs, blocked noses and sore throats. Honey has been known for centuries as a home remedy for upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs), but now research has shown that it is more effective than antibiotics at relieving symptoms.

“With the global spectre of antibiotic resistance looming, new treatments for URTIs that are effective and that doctors can recommend now are more important than ever,” said Hibatullah Abuelgasim, the Oxford medical student who completed the study at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences.

She and two other Oxford University researchers – Dr Joseph Lee and Dr Charlotte Albury – analysed studies that compared the effects of taking honey as teas, neat, or mixed with other ingredients, to those taking antibiotics, over-the-counter cough syrups and medications and medically inert placebos.

They found that honey provided the best relief of symptoms, specifically cough severity and frequency.

“Honey has long been known as a traditional treatment for URTI symptoms, such as coughs and sore throats,” said Dr Lee, who is a beekeeper and GP. “Since 2018 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England (PHE) have recommended the use of honey to treat the symptoms of acute coughs in adults and children five years or older. However, this is based on a review of just three randomised controlled trials. Our work adds to this evidence base and focuses specifically on URTIs.”

Dr Albury added: “Doctors often prescribe antibiotics for URTIs, even when they could be fairly certain that they might offer no clinical benefit. This research gives us good quality evidence that can help doctors be confident when suggesting that people use honey.” It is recommended that honey is not given to children under the age of 12 months.

March 2021 Exam News

There is hope after all. The BBKA believes that they will “be able to hold the spring module exams on the weekend of 24th and 25th April 2021 using online invigilation, so people can take module exams online in their own homes.

The final application date for Module exams will be 31st January 2021 and candidates will be able to sit a maximum of two modules.” For more information: <https://bit.ly/2Iik1LK>

Any queries please contact Venetia for further details: examsecretarynbka@gmail.com

A bit of a mix up

Alvan Parker



Autumn has passed and spring is just round the corner. Both of these may mean making sugar syrup to feed the bees, either for winter stores (thick syrup) or spring feeding to build up a colony before the main flow (thin syrup). If you only have two or three hives, a pan on the kitchen stove will probably suffice. If, however, you have hive numbers that are approaching double figures you may need to scale up a bit.

I have tried various methods for making sugar syrup, including using a cricket bat as a mixing paddle. I have also tried an electric drill with a mixing blade; this coated me and the garage in sticky syrup. The method I use that works the best for me, and I think is very quick and not too messy, is the use of a 30-litre water boiler, which I purchased new for around £70. That may seem rather expensive to just make syrup, however, it does have a very important second use to sterilise old frames with a soda solution before fitting new foundation.

When mixing sugar syrup I use a honey creamer with a plunging action. Any stirring action can leave undissolved sugar at the bottom of the tank. As you push down on the creamer, sugar is forced up from the bottom of the boiler and will dissolve very quickly. I measure the sugar and water by volume because it takes too long to weigh sugar from a sack. I use a 2-pint jug to measure both sugar and water, so 1 to 1 for thin and 2 to 1 for thick, it works out near enough for the bees not to mind.

Start with the water hot but not boiling, about as hot as you can bear your hand in. If you agitate as you add each jug of sugar it will take about as long to scoop sugar from the sack as it will to dissolve it. When you have mixed the amount required leave a few minutes for bubbles to clear, at this point you should be able to see the bottom of the boiler to check that sugar has dissolved.



The 30-litre water boiler, which Alvan purchased new for around £70

The Secretary Matters

Garry Bowler

Only a few words from me for this issue.

A quick update on my colony with suspected Paralysis Virus. Last issue I was part way through a series of 3-weekly shake outs, as suggested by Regina Nickel, our local Bee Inspector. For the third shake out I had learnt from the previous two. I went to the apiary and only did the shake out then went back the next day to inspect the rest. It was much less stressful.

I inspected this colony over the next 3 weeks and after this time could find no shiny bees at all. It would seem that, for now at least, any bees with the virus had been removed or left the hive. My aim will still be to do a full comb change in the spring but it will be interesting to see what I find when opening up next year. The colony is going into the winter looking quite strong though.

Association business

As you might expect, any live events continue to be on hold, any member events will be online. The 2021 Yearbook is being printed and will be sent out to members as you renew for next year. We are continuing with plans to get the Association apiary site up and running, although 12 months later than we hoped. We had our most recent Executive Committee meeting on 13th November and any news from that will be in the next issue or via email.

As I mentioned, online events with Zoom talks and meetings looks like the way to go for a while yet and we look forward to seeing you at these – although no need to worry, your own video will not be visible to others, unless I make a mistake and allow it to happen. Therefore, you can wear whatever or as little as you like on

Talk on EFB/AFB

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, **Regina Nickel**, Seasonal Bee Inspector for Norfolk, will give a talk on the recent EFB/AFB outbreak in the county on Tuesday 17th November at 19:00. All NBKA and WNKLBA members are welcome. Please register before the talk to gain access on: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMkd-CprDkoG9RIFV95pT5A5rIPfOdniZwb>.

Apiary sites offered

Sombra Cross (sombracross@tiscali.co.uk) has a small paddock adjoining their back garden and was wondering if any beekeeper in the area needed somewhere to place their beehives. The paddock is located in Syleham, a small village that adjoins Wingfield and is behind their house so access would be through their garden. Behind the paddock are fields which have the normal crop rotations and in front is their garden which has a plentiful supply of flowers.

these occasions.

I am hopeful that we now understand how Zoom works but when you join one of these talks if there are a few glitches then I hope you won't mind too much. I have become a little conscious about what can be seen over my shoulder when I am 'Zooming' so it has had the benefit of prompting a bit of a tidy up in the room I use.

As you will have seen, from recent email circulations, we are attempting to arrange interesting talks via Zoom and there is one coming up very soon.

On 10th November we had a talk arranged by WNKLBA given by Bob Smith, an experienced beekeeper, former Bee Inspector and member of the Central Association of Beekeepers.

On 17th November Regina will be giving us an update on the EFB/AFB outbreak centred around the Fakenham area. This could affect any of us though, for example, swarms caught around Fakenham did get moved around the area before the outbreak was picked up. Registration is requested for Regina's talk before you will be given the link for access, so don't forget to do that (see below, left).

I hope that all your colonies are set up for the winter and make it through successfully (I am still never sure I have done everything I should and I will worry about mine until the spring). It seems a little early to say this but I also hope that you all have a very pleasant Christmas. It promises to be something of a strange one this year.



Assistance?

Edward Franklin has written to the Association asking for anyone to help in his family researches.

"I am writing to you regarding my Uncle Frank Franklin, who we believe was a member of your Association after the First World War. We also think he was recorded by the BBC in a series of beekeeping tutorials. I have written to the BBC archive to see if the recordings exist and if possible they can be shared. These maybe of some interest to you and a good comparison with modern practice. I have in my possession some boxed medals depicting the Norfolk Beekeeping Association. I hope you can confirm some of the family history please."

If anyone can help Edward, please get in touch with him at edfranklin1867@gmail.com

Lowering the tone! Anon*

"I've just had one of my customers arrive for 6 jars of honey. She is 86, slim, very fit but very deaf. I asked if she would like runny or soft set. She laughed and said "Ooo! For a moment, I thought you said running or soft sex!" She had 3 of each!"

(*I cannot tell a lie, it was Venetia who sold the honey, Ed)

Things 'For Sale'

A beekeeper wishes to sell two brand new nucleus boxes and a 9-frame electric extractor (see photos for details); sensible offers accepted. If anyone is interested please let **Trevor Nash** know and he will pass on the details: chairnbka@gmail.com.



Because of a leg injury and a house move **Brenda Barnes** needs to downsize and sadly give up beekeeping. She has for sale 2 colonies, which, although they do have varroa, she believes are otherwise healthy with laying queens: one 2019, the other 2020. Please see the list below.

She would also like to extend her thanks to all at 'Norfolk Beekeepers' with whom she trained and who helped her through her early years with sound advice and assistance when required. Brenda can be contacted on bbarnes4tcb@aol.com or 07867 524010.

5 Complete National cedar hives (hive stand, open mesh floor, brood box, dummy board, plastic queen excluder, two supers, crownboard, 4" roof, entrance block and mouse guard); two contain bees, but not checked since August. Offers please: individual hives or job lot;

1 lot miscellaneous beekeeping equipment to include hive tools, smokers, plastic feeders etc. £50 ono;

1 Honey refractometer, boxed, as new, £25;

1 Hanna pH meter + solution, boxed, as new, £10;

1 lot cold uncapping tray, frame stand, uncapping fork, double stainless steel strainer, large settling tank with valve, all as new, £60 ono;

1 Thornes Universal Heavy Duty 9 frame Electric Radial Extractor (heavy duty plastic) including stand, as new, £350.

John Dixon has for sale 2 brand new top bar hives. The 48" one is in Douglas fir (very heavy) from Sandringham sawmill and the nuc hive is all in pine (please see photos below). Ill health forces sale. Enquiries and offers to John on wendy_john_dixon@hotmail.com or 07847231882; he lives near Gaywood, Kings Lynn.



Janet Wickings has some National hive parts for sale, some Thornes, some home-made "but fine".

2 brood boxes; 4 supers;

2 roofs; various ekes;

2 floors (one solid, one varroa);

1 Canadian clearer board;

2 queen excluders (one metal, one plastic);

3 feeder buckets;

4 crownboards.

Also some drawn frames, or they can be stripped. £300 the lot

Please contact Janet on 07741470070 or jwickings@btinternet.com.



Local suppliers listing

Please bear in mind the advice of Public Health England for social distancing and essential journeys for everyone in the UK when buying or picking up supplies.

Applebee Apiary, Rockland St Mary

John Everett, Master Beekeeper

Large range of beekeeping equipment from Thornes and other suppliers. We breed and sell honey bees. 01508 538231 everettapplebee@hotmail.co.uk <http://applebeeorchard.co.uk/>

Closed Sundays

Don Cooper, Roughton NR11 8QP; 01263 761517

5/6-Frame BS nucs available from £150

30lb Buckets of honey; advice on "all things bees"

Glebelands Apiary, Rocklands St Mary NR14 7BX

Peter Beckley, Thornes agent (reportedly the longest serving in the UK). 01508 480262; orns@btconnect.com

Stephen Crowe, Lingwood NR13 4BL, 01603 712101

Sell 1lb jars of local Norfolk honey, bees and nucs from £150. Also have 30lb buckets of honey for sale.

Forthcoming Events

All future events are being held online until further notice because of COVID-19.