

NLB

Annual Report 2009



Chairman's Report 2009

By John Hauxwell

How was your beekeeping year?
Had your bees read the books?
Have you kept up-to-date?

The answers are, perhaps, up to you, except my bees certainly had not read the books, not mine anyway! Beekeeping has become a moving scene with new problems and new remedies coming each year. Hence, national research is starting in earnest and we wonder how the researchers will start to try and work out why our bees' lives seem to be changing. If you are fund raising and want a good cause to sponsor, why not choose the research team at Sussex University, headed by Prof. Francis Ratnieks and Norman Carreck, both are world experts on honey bees and have talked to us in the past.

I consider that "urban" beekeeping avoids some of the worldwide issues, no pesticides, no migration and no mono-crops for a start. This year was not bad, except for the July/August weather which caused a lack of forage from mid July until the ivy kicked in, in the middle of September. Most of us were feeding the bees from early August after nearly all of the stored honey had been eaten.

Johan & Angela worked hard at the Kenwood apiary, keeping the colonies up to scratch. They have been trying to combat our usual pest – varroa – with a wide variety of treatments,

including 2 relatively new ideas, icing sugar and formic acid pads. There now seem to be so many ways to keep varroa at bay and to manageable levels. Let us hope that the National Bee Unit will keep us up-to-date on how effective they all are.

On the social scene, the "Summer Garden Party" was enjoyed by many of us. Huw & Martha opened their delightful and secret garden together with a sumptuous tea. Our thanks go to them for their great hospitality. The "Pot Luck Supper" was another event that brought together a full house of beekeepers enjoying the company and a lovely selection of food.



This year started with extreme interest in our beginners' course and there were many unsuccessful applicants. This coming year appears to be following suit! At least 9 members have commenced beekeeping this season and we know of 77 active beekeepers in the association. London is now a beekeepers' "Mecca" and I wonder if we might reach saturation point!

Our association tries to provide support to all its members and as we enlarge, we will be calling on you to assist in this, dependent on your skills. Help is also needed at our various attendances at shows and festivals when we provide guidance and education to many hundreds of the visiting public. All of this can be good fun meeting interesting people.

I wish you a happy New Year and look forward to a fruitful and interesting beekeeping season, developing and sharing skills. I leave you with a lovely quotation:
"I dream a lot. I do more beekeeping when I'm not beekeeping."





The Apiary Report

The beekeeping season this year began unexpectedly early at the beginning of April. The bees, of course were well prepared and already had brood on several frames. All ten colonies survived the winter and our bee inspector, Caroline Washington, declared them to be free of disease. Sadly, May was wet and cold and the fluctuating conditions caused difficulties throughout the summer. After the very poor season last year, the bees had obviously decided to increase their numbers by producing numerous queen cells and sending out small swarms headed by newly emerged queens - very much a 'wing and a prayer' response to the conditions. We bought five new queens but the dismal weather had an effect on their performance.

The dreaded varroa mite was not a problem at the beginning of the year, probably due to the previous cold winter, but sadly the numbers increased and despite treating diligently with icing sugar, the drop towards the end of this season was depressing. During the previous winter oxalic acid had been administered and formic acid treatments were given during Spring and Autumn. We can only hope that the colonies survive the winter. Next year Johan plans to use oxalic acid on colonies without brood, Apilife Var in the spring and frequent dustings of icing sugar during the summer season - the latter removes mites but is not a treatment.



Many pounds of honey were harvested by Johan and the adopt a hive group and prepared for sale by Margaret Jarvie - thank you for all the effort "Jars". Several pounds were gifted to the people who are not NLB members but are kind enough to help the apiary in many ways. Despite the pleasure in processing the honey harvest, the cold and rain were an ongoing problem this summer and sadly we had to start feeding in earnest. Farokh denuded the supermarket shelves of sugar and we spent many hours bent over a hot stove, making syrup!

This year Lisbeth and Angela made an effort to rear queens for both the apiary and our members but again the weather kept bees indoors and affected the programme - we will try again next year as the demand for nuclei is greater than the supply.

The Thursday afternoon work sessions attracted a dedicated band of volunteers and a huge amount of work was accomplished each week. Claire kept the workers focused by producing home baked cakes, and gallons of tea were consumed. Simon kindly volunteered to carry out an audit on the newts in the apiary pond! Johan, Angela and Claire are very grateful to you all, particularly Vic, Simon, Farokh and Rikke who have given their time for two seasons.

The apiary was used as a venue for the practical examination that many of our members studied for this year - and all passed, so congratulations to everyone. The observation hive enchanted hundreds of people whilst visiting festival and education venues and no doubt were responsible for the numerous requests to join the Association. Thanks to all those who volunteer to man the stalls and lose their voices explaining the secrets of honey bees to an endlessly fascinated public, and to Tony and Kate for taking responsibility for overseeing the smooth running of these events.

Foolish though it sounds, we all look forward to the new season, new faces and old friends.

Johan & Angela



NLB Honey Show 16th September 2009

There were a total of 39 entries from 17 exhibitors in Honey Show 2009 and our show judge, Moyra Davidson, was especially pleased that there were three entries in the novice class for honey. It was also satisfactory to find other new names amongst the entrants and prize winners. John Hauxwell was star of the show with entries in seven classes and awards in five of them. These were 1st prizes for set honey, beeswax, a frame for extraction and paired candles. With these he scooped all three trophies: the challenge cup for best honey in the show, the Marsh cup for beeswax and the Riley cup for a frame for extraction. He also won 2nd prize for his photographs. All entrants deserve congratulations for their entries and should feel encouraged to enter even more classes next year.

The complete list of awards is as follows:

Light honey:

1st Angela Dougall, 2nd Rikke Ravn, 3rd Joseph Schneck.

Medium Honey:

1st Huw Saunders, 2nd Nicky Faith, 3rd Joseph Schneck,
HC Claire Lehain.

Granulated or soft set honey:

1st John Hauxwell, HC Angela Dougall.

Novice Honey:

2nd Stephane Gueritte, 3rd Farokh Khooshi, HC Vic Godrich.

Honey cake:

1st Simon Hewitt, 2ND Jane Kember, 3rd David Greene,
HC Malcolm Balston.

Beeswax:

1st John Hauxwell, HC Joseph Schneck.

Cut comb or section:

VHC Nicky Faith.

Frame for extraction:

1st John Hauxwell, 2nd Stanley Rom & Mary Ogle.

Interesting or instructive:

2nd Elke de Wit, 3rd Jane Kember.

Pair of Candles:

1st John Hauxwell.

Photographic:

1st Simon Hewitt, 2nd John Hauxwell, 3rd Jane Kember, HC Stephane Gueritte, HC Malcolm Balston.

We thank Moyra Davidson for again coming as Judge and for her instructive comments.

Mary Ogle



The National Honey Show

Did you make it to Weybridge for the National Honey Show in October? If not, you missed a treat. The word is getting around that this is a 'must see' event. Visitor numbers to the show were up by 30%. With 1,180 exhibits on the show benches there was a lot to see. The Radio 4 Food Programme visited the show and devoted an entire programme to it. Great publicity for the show and for beekeeping.

A really encouraging sign for the future is that, compared to last year, the number of exhibitors increased by 22% to 202. World class speakers including Dr Jennifer Berry and Dr Jim Tew from the U.S.A. were a major attraction, the excellent series of workshops were full and the trade stands were busy.

North London Beekeepers do not often exhibit their products at this show, we seem to have a non-competitive nature, even though the Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers, under which we come, has its own set of classes. It is recommended that those who do well at our own show should have a go and bring home some of the silver cups that are awarded.

You can find out all about the show on the website – www.honeyshow.co.uk

Whatever you do, it really is worth going to the show, attend some of the lectures, check out the trade stands and see for yourself the exhibits.



The Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers' Associations

Bee Keepers' Day **Saturday 27th February 2010**

Broomfield School, Wilmer Way, Southgate N14 7HY

10.00 am a Welcome with coffee/tea on arrival.

10.30 am **Dr Beulah Cullen** NDB "How doth the busy little bee"

12.00 **Terry Clare** "A cooperative approach to bee conservation and improvement"

1.15 pm *Lunch:*

Refreshments will be available at a modest price. Sandwiches, cake, fruit.

Bees on site for those who wish to view them.

2.15 pm **Clive Cohen** "Swarm collection"

3.30 pm **The Annual General meeting will follow.**

Admission: £6 at the door

Broomfield School can be found just off the north circular road. Follow the signs to Southgate (A1004). The entrance to the school is on the right about 100m. Free car parking on site, available. The nearest tube station is Arnos Grove on the Piccadilly line.

Rehousing Bumblebees

In Queen's Wood is a café which has an organic garden. The Friends of Queen's Wood volunteers manage the garden and raise funds by selling plants from the garden. A colony of bumblebees prompted concern for a forthcoming Plant Sale in June 2009. The volunteers happily co-existed with the bumblebees but would the public be bothered, specifically, be stung? These particular bumblebees had a nest underneath some paving slabs where pot plants were all laid out on display ready for sale. It was thought wise to move them to protect the public.

Bumblebees sting but unlike honeybees they keep their stings. This has a positive and negative effect for them. The positive is that a bumblebee lives to sting another day. The negative is that no alarm pheromone is emitted as with a honeybee worker when she loses her barbed sting, so there is no co-ordinated defence with bumblebees.

On Tuesday 9th June our Chairman and I went to the garden with full beekeeping gear, various trowels and I also took a nuc box for collecting the nest. As advised, I had spread almost an inch of cat litter on the bottom of the box taking care not to block the entrance. Bumblebees, unlike honeybees who go out on cleansing flights, perform as and when.



Buff tail Bumble Bees



Carder Bumble bees

The entrance to the nest was easy to see going under a paving slab which was removed to expose a tunnel. In tracing the tunnel a second slab, a third and finally a fourth were removed. The nest consisted of a pile of pods like large wax marbles. Using trowels the pods were transferred to the nuc box and when the bottom of the nest had been dug out, the box placed exactly on that spot. There was obvious bumblebee activity around us but nothing like the response this sort of manoeuvre would cause with honeybees. We ended up with a wheelbarrow almost full of earth. A temporary “Closed” notice was put up at the entrance to the garden.

On Wednesday evening after dark I returned to collect the nuc box as the adult bees would then be inside. I found a few bumblebees having a night out; I hadn't realised that the garden was lit by street lamps. The nuc box entrance was closed, then the box transferred to my back garden where it was put beside a fence shaded from the sun with an entrance obscured with cuttings.

On Thursday I was pleased to see the bumblebees emerge from the nuc box in penny numbers, not a great surge. It was also “tidy-up” day back at the organic garden restoring the display area.

The bumblebees did not disturb us or our neighbours. With the coming of autumn their numbers began to subside; only the queens survive the winter. I looked in the nuc box occasionally. Eventually there were no bumblebees in the box, so it was emptied out, scrubbed and flamed. One lone bumblebee was seen on top of our bicycle shed in early November. Was she originally from Queen's Wood I wondered? The Plant Sale was a success.

Liz Jack