



**NEWBURY
and
VALE & DOWNLAND
BEEKEEPERS'
NEWS.**



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In the Apiary in August Nigel Salmon.

- 1 **Clear supers and extract**
- 2 **Return extracted supers for bees to clean up**
- 3 **Remove cleaned supers/store/protect**
- 4 **Wasps/robbing**
- 5 **Unite weak lots/requeen using nuclei**
- 6 **Queenlessness**
- 7 **Begin varroa treatment THIS MONTH**



We should, by now, have reached the end of most meaningful nectar flows, although it is best to be prepared for anything! The bees should be busy ripening and sealing the last of any nectar/honey.

Once we get into the first week of August you should begin (if you haven't already) clearing supers and extracting honey – there are a number of ways of clearing bees from supers but bees vary in their willingness to leave their precious stores (they are very reluctant to leave unripe honey or pollen, and will not leave brood unless absolutely forced to). In the past I have found that a board with between 2 and 5 porter escapes seems to work as well as any.

Nowadays, I use a fume board sprayed with 'Bee quick', with excellent results so far, but be careful not to use too much as you will either immobilize the bees or drive them out of the entrance. The board needs to be warm for maximum efficiency (no good if it's cloudy) and I do find that you need to get the bees on the move first. Just select the supers you want to clear, and place them on top of the others, with the treated fume board above. Next raise the board slightly and give a good puff of smoke or a small puff of Fabi-spray, replace the board and wait up to 5 minutes. After the allotted time, lift the top super with the board still in place and place it temporarily next to the hive, then remove the board and place back on the next super, repeating this until all the supers are cleared. (You can only clear one super at a time, and 2 or 3 boards may be necessary if you have a large number of hives). Take the removed super away to a place inaccessible to bees as soon as possible. You may find half a dozen bees still left in the super, and these can usually be bumped off the frames or brushed off. The fume board and 'Bee-quick' are both available from Thorne's.

If you keep your bees in your back garden, what you shouldn't do at this time of year is try to brush all the bees from the frames - it might be OK if you are quick or have only one or two supers to clear (you know your bees better than anyone else), but any more and they can get very excited and other bees will smell the honey and try a bit of 'over-the-shoulder' robbing. This is best avoided as it can take a lot longer for bees to calm down at this time of the year. Once you have extracted the frames, then return the supers in the evening, preferably to the hives from which they came, but at least to the same apiary, for the bees to clean up and repair. A week later the supers can be removed and stored away for the winter, making sure they are protected from mice and wax moths.

Wasps can be a real nuisance at this time of the year. They start off by pouncing on bees that have failed to make it to the entrance, and especially on drones that are now being evicted from most of the hives, cutting up the bodies and carrying them off for food for their larvae. They next progress to trying to grab bees at the entrance for the same purpose. This, I believe, is when they work out which hives are not so good at defending themselves. Reducing the entrance will certainly help all colonies, but it is especially important with weak lots and late nuclei. These latter are better united to stronger lots, retaining the best queen.

Do not leave any honey, bits of comb, etc. lying around the apiary at this time of the year as bees (and wasps) will be on the lookout for free sweets and you could start a bout of robbing by being careless. Again, weak lots of bees are usually the ones to suffer if robbing starts. If the bees do find some honey, then try to remove most of it, leaving a small amount behind. Once the bees have cleared up the last drop, they should just return to their own hive - bees are used to 'flows' coming to a natural end - take all the honey away and they will keep searching for it.

Most, but not all, queen-right hives will quickly evict their drones at this time of the year. If a hive still has a *large* drone population, I would check them out - bees that are queenless or have an unmated queen will retain their drones. In the latter case, once the queen has mated they will then usually get rid of them. Queenless bees are likely to be less docile, more disorganized on the combs and you will usually find a lot of bees start fanning, scent glands exposed, when the hive is opened, setting up the so-called queenless 'roaring'.

If a check reveals no sign of a queen, brood or recently emerged queen cell, then either unite them to a queenright lot, so long as they are healthy, or beg or buy a queen from somewhere and introduce this.

One final warning - carefully watch those stocks that have very little in the way of stores in the broodchamber after you have extracted the honey - they could starve if there is no income during August, as a number of beekeepers found to their cost last year, either because of bad weather or lack of available forage. If in doubt, then feed a gallon of syrup. If this summer turns out to be like last year's then I would feed all bees small amounts of dilute syrup during August (once the supers have been put away for the winter) to try to keep the queens laying for as long as possible. The alternative is to leave the bees a super of honey - a good way of making use of any frames with unripe honey or that are only partially full, is to collect them into one super and leave this with the bees.

Lastly, as soon as you have removed the honey, you should be treating your colonies for varroa, by whichever method you prefer. I think *it is extremely important for ALL beekeepers to begin treating their bees sometime during August*, as then there will be an overlap of at least one brood cycle between different treatment times.

Because of the likelihood of mites that are resistant to Apistan or Bayvarol I would recommend using Apiguard for the autumn treatment. Just place the opened tray over the broodbox for two weeks then add a second tray and leave for the remaining 4 weeks, making a six-week treatment in total. There needs to be a gap above the tray so that the bees can gain access to it and the vapours can freely circulate round the hive. Also any top or bottom ventilation (not the entrance) should be closed off. Reducing the entrance might also increase the efficacy of the treatment. If you do decide to use Apiguard, then please remember this treatment is very temperature dependent, and the bees need a reasonable size broodnest or external temperatures above 15°C for the treatment to be effective; starting your 6 week treatment in the middle of September will almost certainly result in a far less efficient treatment. Monitor the knockdown with all of these treatments, and if it is less than you would expect, seek a second opinion, either from a more experienced association member or from the Regional Bee Disease Officer.

Association Notes.

Vale & Downland - Mike Taylor

The excellent weather in June and early July has been an encouragement to all of us, especially our bees. We have also found that our new members starting with nuclei a few weeks ago have already had supers full of honey to extract. The wasp season is imminent, when they begin to crave the sweet juices of plums and pears, but also honey. Wasps can clean the honey out of hives, so be prepared by reducing the width of hive entrances and close any gaps between hive parts that wasps might squeeze through.

If you wish to borrow the Association honey extractor, it will be at the Valentines' house during the first two weeks of August, but should otherwise be at my house in Childrey.

As is our custom, there will not be a monthly meeting in August, but our efforts go into manning a stall at the Uffington Country Show to educate the public and sell our produce. Offers of help on either day to Lilian please.

Our July apiary meeting on Sunday 19th July is at the home of Norman and Liz Maconochie.

The last of our monthly evening summer meetings for beginners and public is on Wednesday 5 August at 7.00pm at the Association Apiary. For details of the location please phone Lilian Valentine.

Newbury - Virginia Arnott.

July already! I am getting a fair crop of honey which is a pleasure, and very welcome. I hope others are also having a good year.

Our meeting at Englefield was well attended and a glorious day for bees. Our guest Margaret Davies expertly inspected Kieron's bees and we made up a nucleus using one frame of food, one frame of sealed brood, one frame of open brood and some shaken bees. The bees were then offered both a queen cell, secured in the corner of a frame of brood, and a virgin queen in a match box which was opened by one millimetre: the bees will feed the virgin through the crack in the box and eat away at the cardboard to release her (if they've read the book, that is). Either way, the nucleus should have a queen shortly. We finished with the usual delicious tea: thanks to Lesley and Oliver once again.

Now for the chairman's rant: I feel very strongly that beekeeping in 2009 is a very different 'sport' from what it was some years ago. We have varroa and CCD to contend with as well as regulations to take into account with respect to processing our honey. The effects of varroa mean sometimes queens are weak or don't mate properly, causing worrying queenlessness. All this is leading me to urge new beekeepers to be well informed when they start their beekeeping: do a course, read and seek advice. We hope that all our members will make an effort to attend our meetings as it is so much easier for the more experienced beekeepers to advise anyone with problems who they know. Experienced beekeepers: please urge new beekeepers to be well informed before they get their bees, and support them as best you can. The bees need our help more than ever. So, that said, it is wonderful to have so many keen and eager new beekeepers and I hope you will all find a warm welcome at our meetings.

Our next meeting, is our annual BBQ, which I regret I shall be unable to attend. Feel free to bring your family, bring your own meat/ substitute, and bowl of salad or a pudding to share. If in doubt, call Lesley and Oliver. The

Have a good summer and see you all in September at Jonathan's apiary in Great Shefford.

Garden Notes Aurie

Anyone growing hydrangeas or fuchsias should be feeling cheery about the weather at present; phlox too, just out, loves heavy rain. Another plant I bought at the Beekeepers' Annual Plant Sale a couple of years ago likes wet. Called Inula, it has bright yellow daisy type blooms with long fringes of delicate petals. When I first grew it there were maybe 4 blooms; now there are 12. It spreads by underground runners and loves damp conditions. It looks very good with orange crocosmia and I'm very happy if it spreads even more. Inula is also supposed to be a good butterfly nectar plant. But this weather is not good for butterflies wind and rain is not what they like.

Earlier this year, late May and June there was a magical event. Tens of thousands, (some write-ups say millions) of painted lady butterflies flew into our country, the largest number for decades! Aerial fly-pasts of hundreds altogether heading north - some reached Scotland - were apparently seen by scores of people. These butterflies come from the Atlas Mountains of North Africa, where they winter in high meadows. Early this year more rain than usual fell in N. Africa so more caterpillar food plants were around. Summer gets too hot near the Sahara so they all fly north. How amazing that they fly 1000 miles to reach us. While they are here they are not too fussy about their nectar food plants. They like thistles and many daisy headed flowers and of course sedum autumn joy, which is such an easy plant to grow. (Just grab a bit and pull and up it comes, a new single stalk bit with roots). Most butterflies like hebes and scabious and favourite of all of course is buddleia. This grows happily along lots of railway and motorway embankments. Possibly these areas provide good refuelling areas for butterflies on the move. Nectar to butterflies is like gas to cars so I read anyway; they can't go far without it.

Verbena bodariensis is another one butterflies like. Several people have given me this and I think those high wands look lovely in mixed beds but it doesn't take much in my garden; all it does is seed in the path though!! Peacock butterflies like phlox, and phlox likes heavy soil and rain so they do well with me. Hemp Agrimony is another one that likes rain and bogs and butterflies like it. It grows all round the canals and rivers here though so forget about putting it in the garden.

The holly blue butterfly is a strange one. It lays its first clutch of eggs on holly flowers and a much later lot on ivy flowers. Ivy flowers whenever it reaches the top of something supporting it, and of course bees love it too. So cut it down off your trees if you want but leave some clinging on the wall. Some days I have quite a lot of butterflies but today after heavy rain the only ones were some cabbage whites. Why are the most boring efforts always the ones around most?

Happy Gardening.

The Royal Berkshire Show - 19th and 20th September 2009

Jo Nickless

Busy extracting? Wondering what you're going to do with all that honey? Well wonder no more, because the Royal Berkshire Show is just around the corner and I'll be looking for honey and other related products to sell on the Newbury Beekeepers' stand.

As well as getting a half price ticket for the show, anyone who volunteers their time on the stand will also be eligible to sell their products. Please don't think that we'll just be selling honey - last year we sold a wide range of products including candles, wax figurines, polishes, beeswax cosmetics, honey fudge and preserves. Of course, products have to be of the highest quality and meet all of the legal requirements, including the labelling regulations (see March notes).

We'll have set prices for honey (to be confirmed nearer the time, but I think at £4.00/lb) but all other products will be priced by you and so will need to be supplied with individual price tickets. There is no pitch fee so 100% of takings will go to the suppliers, however in the unlikely event of any "shrinkage" the deficit would be split, as a percentage of sales, from the takings. Note that I'll need your honey and other products in advance, so that we can set up the sales stand before the show opens, prepare price list etc.

To make arrangements to sell your products please contact me. Finally, if you've not already volunteered your time on the stand, then please contact Serena.

Open Mesh Floors. Nigel Salmon

I have used open-mesh floors (and by this I mean with no collecting tray underneath) for 2 years but I am less than totally happy with some of the results. Firstly, and I know other beekeepers have found the same problem, bees with an open floor seem to fail to draw out foundation to the bottom bar, and often leave quite a large gap between the wood and the wax. This will restrict the space the queen has to lay, and could cause a rise in the incidence of swarming/supersedure. Secondly, if the weather is cool then bees may not forage so freely, feeling they need to stay at home to keep the brood warm. This I have seen in the hives I have in the garden. Lastly, I have found that bees seem to rear a lot of drones in the supers whilst on open floors - is it possible that they feel less inhibited by queen substance due to the increased ventilation; they certainly seem quick to raise queen cells - I even found a couple in the supers where the queen had no access. I have now replaced the collecting trays and will only remove them from November to February to keep the hive dry in the winter.

Please give feedback on this matter as it is a very important subject and we all want to do what is best for our bees.

Let Alone Beekeeping. Don Philpott

A friend and neighbour has kept bees for about eight years. Some five years ago his stock was down to one colony and since that time this colony have never been inspected. No work of any description has been undertaken in or around the hive, which is a WBC by the way, during that time.

I looked around that area in good warm weather about two weeks ago (June/July). The hive has a rendered wall behind it and open to a field on the other sides. Now grass and other greenery has grown all around the hive to a height of about 5 feet so that it is difficult to see the hive. However plenty of bees were observed flying in and out of the grass surround on their way to and from the hive.

Leave them alone and they will thrive or just plain luck, we will probably never know.

Queen Excluder Problems. Jonathan Barman

One of our colonies has given us more trouble than most. At the end of April Bridget and I were carrying out the standard artificial swarm procedure. The queen was marked with a nice red spot so we had no difficulty locating her. Just as I made to pick her up she flew off. After much searching Bridget cleverly saw a bee with a red dot walking in the front door of the hive. We picked her up successfully this time and put her back into the brood box with a queen excluder underneath so she could not get out. First potential disaster averted.

A week later there was no sign of queen and none of the brood comb had been drawn out, although there were masses of bees. We decided to put in some eggs just in case she had scarpered. One of the other colonies was laying well and we put in a superb frame of newly drawn comb where pretty well every cell on both sides contained an egg.

At the next weekly inspection we found that nothing had happened to the frame of eggs. There were virtually no bees in the brood box and no comb had been drawn out. Queen was obviously in one of the supers and lo and behold inspection showed eggs and larvae upstairs. We could not find the queen on this occasion so we brushed every single bee into the brood box.

Another week later we found that all the bees had migrated back into the super, including the queen as there were yet more eggs and sealed brood upstairs. Not a bit of comb had been drawn out in the brood box and the lovely frame of eggs was untouched. Serious measures were called for. Again we could not find queenie so all bees were brushed into the brood chamber but this time the supers were removed. As they had now got no food at all we fed them. The supers were quite heavy but rather annoyingly the nectar was completely liquid so no honey could be extracted.

They did not really take down any syrup, but when we looked a week later most of the comb had been drawn out and there were eggs. Amazingly, the original frame of eggs was now a solid mass of sealed brood. Could these have been the original eggs, or did the queen replace all the eggs? George Butler told me that eggs could last a considerable amount of time, but 3 weeks does seem to be an unusually long time.

Finally, at the next weekly inspection we found the queen which still had a very faint red mark. All that pushing through the queen excluder had obviously taken its toll.

The colony now doing quite well. The brood box is filling up nicely and, greatly daring, a queen excluder and super has been added. Hopefully, queen will stay downstairs with her brood.

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David and Mo Cox,

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You can save carriage and transport costs when you get beekeeping supplies direct from your Thornes agent in Pangbourne in Berkshire. Please give John or Joan a ring, in or out of office hours, for all you need direct from stock throughout the season

Vale and Downland Beekeepers polo shirt. Green polo shirt (XL) with the embroidered VDBKA logo. £8.50. Please contact Jo Nickless

FOR SALE (having had to give up beekeeping)

WBC - 1 roof, 2 brood boxes, 4 supers

National - 1 brood box, 4 supers.

Telephone Pauline Saunders. .

FOR SALE 10 new 14" x 12" frames fitted with foundation purchased in error £20.00,
Phone Den.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NEWBURY

Sunday August 9th at Rushall Manor Farm,

12.30 BBQ. Please bring something you want to cook. In addition also bring one item, either salad or sweet that you are prepared to share.

2.30 see the bees with Cliff Marriot and Pam Goddard. Cliff will be showing us round the farm and opening the bees. He has bees in various hives: a traffic cone, a top bar hive, and of course, the association observation hive. No talk but lots to see.

VALE & DOWNLAND

Wednesday 5th August at 7.00pm

The last beginners' and public evening apiary meeting at Fyfield Wick

Sunday/Monday 30/31 August - Uffington Show

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