



## NEWSLETTER

June 2022

[www.aycliffebees.com](http://www.aycliffebees.com)

For all newsletter items: Contact Roger on 01325 315741 or  
[aycliffebka@gmail.com](mailto:aycliffebka@gmail.com)

All articles and photographs, items for sale or wanted are  
welcome.

### CALENDAR (Spring & Summer) 2022

<b>Mondays (6pm)</b>	<b>Regular Apiary Sessions at St. Oswald's</b>
<b>19<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Open Garden Display at Highbank Farm #</b>
<b>25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Q &amp; A session at St. Oswald's (10 – 12) #</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> July</b>	<b>Show at the Garden &amp; Studio @67 #</b>
<b>31<sup>st</sup> July</b>	<b>Demo at St. Cuthbert's Hospice #</b>
<b>17<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>Hurworth Country Fair (10 – 5pm)</b>

**# Times: 11 – 4 pm. Addresses will be provided.**

**THIS IS AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO PROMOTE BEEKEEPING TO THE WIDER PUBLIC. IF ANYONE CAN HELP RUN OUR STALL, EVEN FOR AN HOUR OR SO, PLEASE CONTACT Cheryl Blakey (Tel: 07747 731202 or 01325 310811) or email [cherylblakey@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cherylblakey@hotmail.co.uk) or any committee member.**

- Please note that the regular Apiary sessions every Monday evening at 6pm go ahead but, if conditions are not suitable, the colonies will not be disturbed. Please bear this in mind when deciding whether or not to attend. If you wish to double-check you can contact either Roger, Stuart, Steve or Chris.**

### ABKA APIARY SITES at St. Oswald's Allotments

Weather conditions and other factors unique to honey bees have caused our bees to behave in unpredictable ways and this can cause aggravation to local plot holders. We all must be vigilant and be ready to step in to help whenever a situation arises (i.e. swarms) to minimize the disruption it will inevitably cause to allotment users. As always, colonies are checked regularly but still manage to swarm but we are doing everything possible to communicate the difficulties to people on the site and to local councillors.

## **THE COMPOSITION OF A SWARM**

It's a common myth that creating an artificial swarm to recreate a natural prime swarm by isolating the old queen and flying bees will succeed in stopping bees swarming. In actual fact, up to 70% of the bees in a prime swarm are less than 10 days old...in other words the majority emerged and joined the colony after the queen cells were started ! Bees less than 4 days old have even been found in a swarm.

If we were to think about it rationally we'd begin to realize that even after the swarming bees have found a new nest, built some comb and the queen starts to lay it then takes 3 weeks before new recruits are produced.....by which time, if the bees are all 'flying bees' (hence into the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of their lives) most of them would be dead by that point. Consequently, the behavior of an artificial swarm can be quite disappointing. It doesn't have anywhere near the energy of a natural swarm and even if it doesn't swarm again (it often does) it usually makes only slow progress.....the queen doesn't lay many eggs; there's very little comb building and therefore a new generation of bees takes longer to get established. Basically, it's seriously unbalanced and not fit for purpose. By contrast, the natural swarm has exactly the right mix of bees to enable it to rapidly establish itself in a new nest.

## **Pest Watch**

**Varroa** is obviously here for the foreseeable future but there are signs of hope. Diligence is the key and with the sensible use of the various remedies which are around i.e. Apilifevar, Apiguard and Oxalic treatment together with regular use of a Hive Clean-type solution to keep the mite in check. This year, we have not seen any significant varroa in any of our hives and we are optimistic that the bees are slowly getting the hang of grooming each other. This (unnatural) action is encouraged through the use of a Hive Clean-type solution and eventually we can hope that it will become instinctive which should ultimately mean that we won't have to use any chemicals at all.

**The Asian Hornet.** As everybody knows this large insect has decimated colonies throughout France and is moving ever closer to these shores. Hopefully, our Northern climate should give us some protection from it but we shouldn't be complacent. Any sign, however fleeting or speculative should be reported immediately.

**Small Hive Beetle.** The primary route is most likely to be via imported bees. Stringent health certificate requirements are in force to prevent infected bees being imported to the UK. It is illegal to import bees from countries which are known to have SHB – the exception being Australia. Any suspect infestation should be reported immediately.

**The June Gap.** At the point Spring flowers come to an end and the Summer flora is yet to bloom this is the phenomena known as the “June gap”. Once the Spring crop of honey is removed colonies can find themselves without enough food and beekeepers need to be aware of this and make the necessary provisions. During the main part of the season when colonies are large they will need around 5kg of food per week. Some years the June gap is virtually non-existent but in others it can be very pronounced – this is purely down to our fickle and variable weather patterns. Try to do what you can to help the bees through this period and if there looks to be a shortage of food in the hives supplement them with a feed of syrup (1kg sugar to 1 litre of water). If the bees are really desperate syrup can be sprayed directly over the frames before applying the feeder – the bees use the syrup as though it was nectar and rarely store it. If you have supers still on the hive feed with fondant or use damp sugar bags to avoid contaminating the honey.

**Prime swarms, castes and Supercedure.** A prime swarm occurs when approximately 50% of the bees leave the hive with an (old) Queen. Steps should be taken to prevent the bees swarming : refer to the various methods of swarm control. As is commonly known, the trigger which sets off the swarming instinct is when Queen cells start to be built at the bottom of the frames. You must take action **before** the Queen cells are sealed (after about 9 days). When the first Queen hatches out it will normally kill any other Queens which are about to emerge so maintaining the norm of one queen per colony. Sometimes, however, the bees will protect the other queens and prevent the first new queen killing them. When this happens the (unmated) virgin queen will leave the hive to create a second swarm called a caste. The first caste is the only one with any value. There may follow more castes as each queen hatches but they will be smaller and smaller clusters of bees and these are virtually useless.

When catching a primary swarm it is often a good idea to (a) insert a frame of brood so that the bees have something to look after and (b) fit a Queen excluder above the floor to prevent the Queen absconding – this should be removed after a few days. If it is a caste do not fit a queen excluder as this will prevent the queen leaving for her mating flight. If the bees have built the queen cells halfway up the frame this is known as **SUPERCEDURE**. These are not swarm cells and are usually built toward the end of the season. Once the first queen hatches out the bees will allow the old queen to continue functioning normally alongside the new queen – the bees will not normally swarm. Once the new queen is mated and starts to lay eggs the bees will then decide the fate of the old queen and will either kill her or remove her from the hive. If it is right at the end of the season the two queens may be allowed to operate together right through the winter – the situation being resolved in the Spring.

## ABKA COMMITTEE (2022)

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### SWARM COLLECTION

We're planning to set up a What's Ap group in order to simplify communications. Please let me know if you aren't happy about being on this. As previously mentioned, it's important that collectors be easily contacted...if you are on the list please keep your phones active at all times during the swarming season.....May to July. If, for any reason, you aren't available (due to holidays etc.) please let Roger know.

*The most trouble is caused by those who don't produce anything.*