



## NEWSLETTER

March 2022

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

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

All articles and photographs, items for sale etc are welcome.

## SPRING CALENDAR 2022

***Please note:** It is disappointing if only a handful of members attend the talks which are put on at some cost in terms of time and money (not least the time and effort which speakers such as Tony Jefferson spend) and, without exception, they are always entertaining, informative and thought-provoking. We would appreciate any thoughts members may have to improve this and any other service which your committee provide on your behalf.*

**Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> (7pm – 9pm):** **Speaker: Tony Jefferson (Whitby BKA):** **Dealing with SWARMS.....** Tony will talk about dealing with swarms with the help of some practical demonstrations and how best to prepare bees for increase. Tony is a very well respected beekeeper with over 50 years of experience practiced in the Whitby area. He'll probably go of on different tangents and there'll be plenty of opportunities to ask questions. **Another talk not to be missed.** Oak Leaf Sports Centre

**Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> March: Equipment preparation day at the Eco-Centre (10am – 4pm)**  
Even if you can only spare an hour or so, please come along (with tools) and help us construct boxes, stands and frames in preparation for the new season. There'll be some painting to be done too.

**Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> March:** First practical session at the St. Oswalds Apiary (weather permitting).

**April 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> :** BBKA Spring Conference, Harper-Adams University, Newport

**Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup> :** OPEN DAY at the Eco-Centre (2 – 4pm)

**May 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> :** Beginners Course : (Eco Centre/St. Oswalds Apiary)

## **Jobs in the Apiary - March**

March can be a varied month weather wise and a critical time for beekeepers in respect of colony loss. One of the main reasons is the lack of food stores i.e. honey and pollen. However, we are still having near or below freezing night temperatures and harsh ground frosts. Most colonies should have gone into winter quite strong: partly the result of last year's very warm summer and partly due to stores building up very late into the season. These same stores are now depleting at a rapid rate. Therefore, it is vital to check the food supplies in each hive, on a warm day, and if they are low, to add a good-sized patty of fondant and possibly consider giving the bees a pollen substitute. You could even mix the two together before giving it to the bees. As recommended use an 'eke', (a 1 to 2inch x 18inch square of timber, the same dimensions as your brood box), placed on top of the brood box, creating a space to place your fondant & pollen patty directly on top of the cluster of bees, taking care not to crush them. Quickly replace your super, crown board and roof, and don't forget to add a heavy stone to weight the hive down against the March winds. It may also be an idea to consider feeding the bees with a weak sugar syrup (1:1) as this stimulates the bees and particularly the queens to greater activity and will help accelerate the build-up of the colony.

Other possible causes of colony loss at this time of year include queen failure and isolation starvation when the bees have a good supply of stores but for reasons beyond our control they refuse to move up or over onto new, full, food frames within the hive. Check food stocks every 10 days from now until you can see bees actively taking nectar and pollen into the hives. If you do find a colony that has died out, don't just leave it – it's best to remove it from the apiary site to clean it out immediately or close-up the entrance, to remove the hive later. This will prevent robbing and the possible transfer of diseases. Generally, it is better to take it away and clean it up immediately, to prevent further deterioration of the contents.

Now is the time of year to begin getting extra and replacement frames assembled in readiness for the season ahead. It's best not to put the wax into the frames until the frame is needed as fresh wax is by far the best. Older wax goes hard and loses its aroma and pliability making it harder for the bees to draw out well. It's vital to keep good hive records so make sure your systems are in place and in good order - all inspections should be noted throughout the season. This allows you to follow the progress and problems of a colony accurately. The information is crucial particularly if you are planning to choose the best colonies from which to rear good queens. Record everything: egg laying capacity; foraging ability; temperament etc.

On behalf of the Aycliffe BKA team we wish all our members a fantastic 2022 and don't forget, help is always at hand from our experienced beekeepers so don't hesitate to ask if you have a question.

### More pearls of wisdom :

1. Use a voice-activated recorder to keep accurate records of hive inspections.
2. Use coloured pins on the side of hives to indicate the state of the Queen in each colony i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> pin : queen is clipped; 2<sup>nd</sup> pin : queen is marked : 3<sup>rd</sup> pin : indicates the year (yellow for 2012 etc).
3. In order to assist the safe handling of queens, put her to sleep using CO2 (from a soda stream). This gives enough time to clip and mark the queen without damaging her.
4. Provide a ladder in front of hives which contain a clipped queen – this enables her to crawl back in to the hive.
5. Cull queens which run colonies demonstrating the following characteristics :

Regular tendency to swarm  
Follow  
Poor egg production

Sting aggressively  
Chalk brood present  
Use too much propolis

Generally angry  
Nosema present

One final tip. To encourage swarms to take up residence in your apiary squash old queens on an old post. This transfers the queens' pheromones to the post and attracts drones and swarms to the post. Bait hives should also be placed on the edge of the apiary.

### **EDUCATION.**

PLEASE CONTACT CHRIS IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO PREPARE FOR ANY BBKA COURSE OR WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW TO APPLY FOR ANY ASSESSMENT OR MODULE. CHRIS IS TAKING NAMES OF ANY MEMBER WISHING TO ENROL FOR THE NEXT WEEKEND COURSE WHICH IS DUE TO TAKE PLACE ON THE WEEKEND STARTING SATURDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY. ANY MEMBER WISHING TO COME ALONG FOR A REFRESHER DAY IS VERY WELCOME. PLEASE LET CHRIS KNOW OF ANYONE YOU KNOW WHO WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS INTRODUCTORY COURSE.

**Contact : Chris Barker for more information.**

**training.aycliffebka@gmail.com Tel: 07421 471581**

### **ST. OSWALD'S APIARY**

**Regular sessions will start on MONDAY, MARCH 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm subject to poor weather restrictions. Sessions will take place throughout the summer on a Monday evening. Beginners will be allocated a hive to look after (with the help of a mentor) so please let either Chris (07421 471581), Roger (315741), Stuart (320236) or Ian (07921 239603) know if you would like to do this. Any member who hasn't got room for a hive at home can apply for a space at St. Oswald's if you wish to keep your hive there. This is usually done on a first-come-first-served basis. Please let us know as soon as possible if you'd like to take advantage of this facility.**

## REARING VARROA-TOLERANT BEES

1. The use of Bayvarol seriously affects the sperm production of drones and reduces longevity.
2. The use of Formic acid destroys drone eggs therefore leading to the drastic reduction in the drone population.
3. For every 100 Queens successfully mated, 6,000 drones are required.
4. Colonies are quickly reduced to 60% normal size if varroa is left unchecked.
5. A regime involving non-toxic treatment is recommended.
6. More gentle treatment, such as icing sugar, is difficult and expensive because the bees have to be dusted copiously at every visit.
7. Bees have been observed attacking varroa mites and evidence seen of damaged mites.
8. In some colonies 60% of the varroa mites retrieved from the varroa floor had bite marks. This compared with only 4% from other colonies.
9. Proof has been provided that this behaviour is genetic and initiated via the pheromones that the queen emitted.
10. A phenomena known as the “Swindon Bee” was established for colonies exhibiting this behavior.
11. In order to replicate this phenomenon we need to set about breeding Queens from eggs produced by the Queen which have induced this behaviour.
12. Successful production of such colonies means that chemical varroa treatments are used to the absolute minimum.

### Beekeeping Equipment and Supplies

Stuart Fawcett, our Equipment/Purchasing Officer is always available to enable members obtain low-cost beekeeping equipment. You can contact Stuart by phone: **01325 320236** or email **equipment.aycliffebka@gmail.com** to order/enquire what equipment/resources we have in stock and what is available for members to hire. The List of equipment and prices is attached for your convenience.

*An enemy takes up more space in our head than a friend in our heart!*

## ABKA COMMITTEE (2022)

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