



SEHBKA Newsletter

November 2015

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Dates for the Diary

- Bee Awareness FREE talk. Wed 25th Nov. 7:30pm
- Association Meeting. Wed 20th Jan 2016 7:30pm
- SEHBKA AGM Wed. 10th Feb 2016

See

www.SEHBKA.co.uk
For more details

Reflections of a Beekeepers husband

When my significantly better half told me that she wanted to take up beekeeping I must confess that I enjoyed a rather soft focus fantasy of her rambling to some corner of a countryside that is forever England and returning soon after, laden with cloth-topped jars of sweet, golden sunlight,



This miraculously delicious nectar I would then slather on my slice of crusty bloomer with tongue dripping anticipation. Quite apart from the gourmet reward of endless supplies of honey I was already quite a fan of bees generally, knowing that they do a vitally important job sustaining British agriculture, which is more than the government seems to do, and was foggily aware that they are in dire straits from the effects of pesticides, herbicides, mites, viruses and the Black Death or some such. So I was delighted overall that the missus wanted to help and figured that there was the bonus of those golden jars. I also knew very well indeed that my lovely wife is a doer, a finisher, the complete completer, someone with heart and soul which she puts into any task she undertakes, so I was certain that she would do a grand job.



However, it was when she told me that she had decided that she wanted the hive to be in our back garden, not twenty yards from where I would be sitting on the patio, generally sipping my chilled summer evening glassfuls in a pair of shorts and a T-shirt (me, not the wine) that the swelling orchestral strings sound-tracking my bucolic daydreams came to a screeching, dissonant halt.

Hmm, I thought, and then vocalised, ‘I am not sure that’s such a good idea’. Firstly, I had no knowledge of bees that wasn’t gleaned from a Ladybird book, Winnie the Pooh, or, at the very best, Countryfile, and I immediately formed a picture of them angrily swarming about my head, possibly forming a bee-beard and then using my mug as a stage on which to perform the dance of a thousand stings. Secondly, I thought of our neighbours and imagined them being forced to flee from their gardens swatting furiously at the self-same swarm having had the temerity to open jar of Robertson’s jam within earshot of the hive.

And thirdly I couldn't see where the hive could reasonably go. Our garden is a bijou 25 yards by 15, from back door to rear wall and fence to fence, and quite open to our neighbours' gardens. And finally I could also see myself, I'll be honest about my laziness here, being roped in to help when all I want from a summer's afternoon in the garden is the aforementioned glass or two of wine and/or an uninterrupted view of any test match that was gracing our telly.

Unlike the swarms of my imagination my objections were swatted aside with common sense, reason and promises that we would see how it went, and so I gave way with milder misgivings, and she joined a beekeeping group and took a course. So, for the next few weeks I was regaled with amazing facts about bees and their ways, looked on as she looked far into the distance while picturing how this would all work, and then listened to more amazing facts.

And then one day she came home with a hive. My misgivings stirred but did not rear their ugly heads and fly from my lips because I could see that my beloved was profoundly affected by what was going on and what the future held and I knew that my doubts had no place in her happy, hopeful day. I did my bit by buying a notebook with bees on it for her to record important things in. Then I opened a bottle while keeping a weather eye on the newly installed hive and its denizens.

Very soon they became a part of the furniture. The missus dressed up like a biohazard cleaner and had the occasional look inside while I loitered on the patio, and the odd beekeeper came to check things over with a practised eye and everything else went along as normal.

As it happens having a hive of really rather beautiful bees in the garden has been a revelation and, generally, a delight. Seeing them go relentlessly about their business I have developed an admiration for them and their work ethic which I know is based largely on anthropomorphism of Disneyesque proportions but is nonetheless genuine. I now also realise that the bees are absolutely no trouble as long as you don't do anything drastically stupid and that they more important things to be getting on with than bothering me whether I am in shorts or not. This sets them several rungs up the ladder of popularity above midges and other nippy little bugs that seem to treat my legs as a cheap and cheerful buffet every summer, and even puts them almost on a par with our cats who contribute nothing to the household but are, admittedly, more welcome on my lap.



Sometimes I even wander down to the bottom of the garden and watch the bees buzz in and out of the hive like a demented, speeded up version of Heathrow in holiday season, hearing them sshhhzzz past me without the slightest interest in my presence. I have also now donned the weird white suit that reminds me of a scientist about to inspect a failing nuclear reactor, and watched as the hive is opened and examined, standing in the middle of the ensuing cloud of bees who instinctively and fearlessly set about to defending their home while

many of their sisters feverishly gather up the means to fly away and start again if necessary. In such circumstances it is easy to imagine the immense amount of effort and sacrifice that goes on so that we can enjoy their produce of their labours. It is a powerful, and strangely moving spectacle, and I have come to realise that the honey really is a bonus over and above the pleasure and fascination that these wonderful little beings provide.

This is not to say that there is not a downside. We have had a minor run in with a neighbour stung by a bee that may have been one of ours. Tansy has been stung several times (an accepted hazard of beekeeping I am told and accept) and I have been stung three times (an accepted hazard of being a beekeeper's idiot husband I am told). But do you know what? I forgive the little buggers, regardless of what I shouted at the time. It would have been the blooper reel to end all blooper reels had it been filmed, and was the result of an ill-fitting suit that pushed my face against the mesh and gave the little charmers the chance to vent their fury in the traditional manner. I didn't think I would at the time but I have forgiven them entirely. They had not invaded my space. I had very much invaded theirs. An Englishman's castle has nothing on a bee's.

I have tested the shorts and white wine theory many times now, and have never been in the slightest bit bothered by the bees that come and go at the end of the garden in an endless stream until dusk slows the traffic and darkness sees the landing strip shut down for the night. It is true that we no longer sit on the small patch of pebbles that prior to the hives arrival we used to visit to catch the last of the sun's rays, but that is a small price to pay for the presence of these little miracles. I even find myself acting like a right know it all when people hear that we have bees in my garden, indulgently explaining what the bees do, how far and how high they will go, how long they live and how much honey a single bee will make in its lifetime. It is encouraging that almost all the listeners who hear me blather about it are genuinely intrigued and often shocked by the life cycle and production capacity of a bee. I would like to think that my small scale evangelism on their behalf has spread a little of the respect that I have developed for them.

And of course we have now enjoyed the jars of golden sunlight that I had dreamed about. It was, and is, definitely worth it.

(Many thanks to Steve Farrow for this article)

APIARY MEETING AT BAYFORD HOUSE

On Sunday 25th August, the rain started to fall from 12 am and continued, but when Peter & I arrived at Bayford Church, the rain stopped and blue skies appeared. 15 members arrived and we decided to visit the bees. Many of the new members were surprised at how lovely the gardens are and that peacocks plus guinea fowl roam around. Roy who is our apiary manager, explained to the newcomers that the hives were National, Commercial and a WBC, and promptly organised the newcomers in going through the hives. I'm sure many found the experience of going through other types of hives interesting. After the inspection, members walked back to where Gill was providing the

Teas and Coffee. Alan's wife Janet, had very kindly, made a Ginger & honey cake which was a real treat. Whilst we were there, Jennifer Rowly who owns the house and gardens, came over for a chat, followed by her son. I've known Jennifer for 41 years and her father Neville Woodward was my mentor and the chairman of our association for many years.

(Article by Derek Driver.)

Microscopy – October Association Meeting

At our October meeting, Roy Cropley kindly brought along six microscopes and after we had tea & coffee gave a talk on the different types of pollen which we then had a chance to see in close up via his microscopes. Later, we examined bees close up, looking at the complexity of the two sets of wings along with the hooks which join them together. Richard Mode brought along a box of slides of bee parts, which his father had given him when he was a boy which he shared with the group for us all to enjoy. Derek Driver on behalf of the members, thanked Roy for his talk and the use of his equipment.

If any member has an idea or subject they wish the committee to consider for our winter meetings, please contact Peter Cairns.

Emergency First Aid for Beekeepers



This event, organized by Hertfordshire Beekeepers Association, was attended by about 15 beekeepers from across the Hertfordshire associations. It was an extremely useful afternoon as the highly experienced nurse trainer, (Andrea Wooley – who has written articles for Beecraft on this topic), explained exactly what happens to the body in anaphylactic shock from different stings and the body's allergic responses. She reassured participants that only 4 people die per year from venom anaphylaxis in this country, and these are more likely to involve wasp stings than bee and usually these involve other complications, such as stroke or heart attack, or asthma, or choking. Also not every emergency at the apiary will be due to stings, it could be an allergic reaction to some foods, medicines or contact with animal allergens, heart attack or stroke.

IT IS GOOD TO BE AWARE OF ALL POTENTIAL RISK BUT IT WAS STRESSED DURING THE AFTERNOON THAT REAL EMERGENCY INCIDENTS ARE RARE.

Andrea engaged every participant, taking questions and 'myth busting' some of our out dated ideas, based on up to date research.

Here are some of the more useful ones with practical tips should anyone become involved in an emergency at the apiary;

- Repeat experience of receiving stings does NOT guarantee immunity nor resistance to anaphylaxis. Research demonstrates that the chance of becoming less reactive to stings is about 50:50 with most people's reactions worsening with repeat stings, although there will always be exceptions.

- Wasp and Hornet venom is very different to Bee and Bumble bee venom – so if you have been stung, and badly reacted to one type of insect it won't necessarily mean you react badly to the other!
- Take an anti-histamine tablet from over the counter pharmacies prior to attending your apiary. They take approx. 20 minutes to get into the system.
- As apiaries are often in remote places, it is best to access bees and apiaries in pairs. If you go alone, reactions to stings can happen very quickly before a person may have time to phone for help. If this isn't possible tell someone how long you will be. **Always call 112 from a mobile which you keep accessible at all times as the emergency services can find you by GPS.**
- Make certain your mobile phone has a signal at your apiary and a fully charged battery each time you visit. Can you use it with your gloves on? Can we get bee gloves that are touch screen sensitive these days?
- Carry a contact card/emergencies card with allergies/medicines taken and contact numbers on it in your bee suit pocket.
- Ensure you don't block emergency access with your own vehicle – park so that they might still get access if necessary. Consider placing an emergencies numbers sign up at your apiary so members of the public know who to call?
- Signs/symptoms can vary – so watch out for breathing problems, loss of consciousness, dizziness, fainting, pale skin, hives, flushing, or sudden changes in skin colour, slow or very fast heart-beat, runny nose, vomiting, swelling around tongue and lips and throat. Often accompanied by a feeling of dread/high anxiety. Reaction can occur within 2-10 minutes or can sometimes take several hours and do not always occur immediately, so continue to monitor someone even if they appear to be ok and recover from stings quickly at first. A second EpiPen can be administered while waiting for emergency services if a person deteriorates after 2-5 minutes of receiving a first dose of adrenalin from the EpiPen. This suggests that if required, it may be best to carry two EpiPens.
- If anaphylaxis is suspected - Call emergency services immediately on 112 and get away or get them away from the bees as quickly as possible and when safely removed from apiary, remove the person's veil, any tight clothing around the neck and ask them to lie down. Be ready to place them in the recovery position. Andrea gave participants training in CPR (resuscitation - see NHS site <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/accidents-and-first-aid/pages/cpr.aspx> and we were all given the opportunity to practice this with 're-sus' dummies.
- Andrea suggested having perhaps a wheel barrow at the apiary in case the person collapses and you have to get them away from the bee colonies? It is best not to get stung yourself and emergency services will not endanger themselves, so it is best to get away from angry bees immediately to an area where help can be administered quickly and

safely.

- If anyone carries an Epipen, (it administers an adrenalin dose), please do place it in an accessible pocket and tell the person you are with where it is and how to use it. Most have instructions on the side – make sure you don't try to administer it through a seam on the bee suit as it can go through clothing but may not administer the full dose if it has to go through several layers.
- Epipens carry an adult dose but Andrea said if a child is in anaphylactic shock the adult dose could possibly be administered, as the dosage would cause less harm than potential death from anaphylaxis. There is a national register with a good website, with reminders of expiry dates given to the public, www.epipen.co.uk which it was suggested anyone carrying an Epipen reads and signs up to.
- If you have to administer an Epipen and the person seems ok emergency services must still be contacted and will attend as this is always a medical emergency and the person needs to be monitored for potential complications.

It was an extremely good afternoon in all and the trainer stressed it is always best to be prepared although as mentioned earlier incidents are extremely rare! We are hoping to invite Andrea along soon to give a similar training to SEHBKA members. Any feedback on this topic – please give to our committee. Thank you
(Article by Tina Rawlings)

Recipe of the month

Sweet Potato and Honey 'Healthy' Chocolate Brownies

This isn't as sweet as ordinary brownies as it is sweetened only with our gorgeous honey, the sweet potato adds moisture, the cacao is a wonderful superfood and there's no wheat!

Makes 8

125g rice flour – *you can substitute this with any plain flour*

75g raw cacao powder – *one of the most amazing superfoods, rich in antioxidants which help our immune systems fight winter viruses!*

¼ teaspoon baking powder

175g sweet potato, cooked and mashed to a puree

250g Honey – *best is runny!*

175g butter, melted – *I use unsalted*

1 egg

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees C/350 degrees F/gas mark 4. Sift the rice flour, cacao powder and baking powder into a bowl. Place the potato puree, honey, vanilla extract, melted butter and egg into another bowl and mix together well. Then stir in the dry ingredients. Pour the brownie mixture into a rectangular shallow cake tin lined with baking parchment and bake for 20-25 minutes, until set on top but gooey in the middle. Cool in the tin, then cut into 8 pieces. Serve with cream or crème fraîche and a few mint leaves.

Notices

Bee Awareness Evening

A talk has been organised by SEHBKA with the aim of giving non-beekeepers an insight into life in a honey bee colony together with an overview of honey production. This FREE event is for those who have a passing interest in bees and beekeeping but would like to know a bit more. The event has been organised for Wednesday 25th November starting at 7:30pm. The location is the Methodist Church Hall, Middlefield Road, Hoddesdon EN11 9ED. Please pass this message on to anyone you think may be interested.

Introduction to Beekeeping Course 2016

The South East Herts Introduction to Beekeeping Course 2016 will commence on 28th February 2016. Further details are available on our website and bookings are being taken now.
