

HALIFAX AND DISTRICT
BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016

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Hello to all members! This is my first newsletter as HBKA Secretary and as I'm still getting used to the position you must forgive me if I miss anything that should be included.

I wish to thank Dianne for all her sterling work over the last 5 years - I never appreciated all the jobs to be done to ensure the smooth running of the Association.

I also wish to thank Betty, who has stood down from the Committee, for all her cups of tea and wonderful cakes and her untiring enthusiasm and cheerfulness. Jackie Haigh has joined us and become Exam Coordinator. Tim Plant has stood down as Chairman and become Vice Chair and we welcome Roger Pool as the new Chairman. I wish to thank all those members, committee and non-committee for all their voluntary work.

Honey production seems to have varied wildly from apiary to apiary. Despite having a reasonably warm and temperate late summer my honey harvest has been very low this year. The long cold Spring following on from a mild, wet winter when the bees never seemed to hibernate left my hives at a very low ebb. Indeed, despite feeding them from before Christmas onwards I still lost 2 hives out of 5 in March - they seemed to lose strength. The bees spent the whole summer using stores to regain numbers and vigour rather than producing a surplus of honey. Let's hope for a more normal cold winter and a better year to come, weatherwise.

The Apiary at Northowram has 4 Association hives that produced 48lbs of honey which has already been sold, with a profit of £192 going to the Association. There are a further 11 members' hives kept there. The work on the pylons at the site and its ensuing disruption and mess is almost at an end. Dianne says there is a possibility of either shrubstock or money to buy shrubstock for landscaping being given - it would be great to put up a shelter belt of appropriate and bee-loving shrubs.

We are looking forward to the new Marquee, I'm sure the space and protection it will provide will greatly improve Association Apiary meetings.

The first winter lecture by Gerry Collins 'What's going on in my hive' was excellent. Gerry is a great raconteur and his talk together with an excellent series of slides proves you're never too old to learn something new. In the manner of Sherlock Holmes, the beekeeper looking at clues on the tray and the entrance and on the frames can deduce much of the health and behaviour of the bees,

The next meeting is Wednesday 12th January 2017 where the Committee members will give short talks on a variety of subjects. This is the first meeting to be held at our new venue,

St Paul's Methodist Church, Tower Hill, Sowerby Bridge HX6 2EQ. (If you're unsure, look at Google maps for directions)

Also, for those members attending the Skep making day course with Geoff Pearson - Saturday 21st January, your materials for the course will be ready for collection at St Paul's on 12th January.

I rambled on earlier in this report about the mild winter playing havoc with the bees. One consequence of this was I never got to treat them with Oxalic acid for Varroa, the queens hardly stopped laying eggs - whether this contributed to the March hive losses I don't know, but I've been determined not to miss this year. There is some evidence that the earlier the bees are treated the more efficacious it is - with this in mind, my friend Meg and I waited for the first really cold spell for the queens to stop laying and then treated all the hives this weekend past.

Like all beekeeping practices there are differing approaches to the same problems. There is a very interesting report in this month's BBKA news 'Varroa has lost its Sting' intimating from his limited study that winter losses seemed to be less in non-treated hives. Whatever your view on treatment for varroa the BBKA and YBKA still advise to carry on with winter treatments to avoid varroa build-up.

I will be forwarding the Yearly Report by Ivor Flatman, our Regional Bee Inspector and APHA representative, straight after this newsletter. It makes very interesting reading and is a wonderful summation of the weather this past year and its effect on Yorkshire Beekeeping.

If you have not got your Oxalic winter treatments yet we have 2 excellent shops within our area. Please telephone before visiting.

Gees Bees, Woodland View, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge HX7 5TB www.geesbees.co.uk

J Jones, Limetree Apiaries, 15 Lime Tree Ave, Elland HX5 9BE www.limetreeapiaries@hotmail.co.uk

Can I take this opportunity to remind those that have yet to renew their membership that the 25% discount of £10 offer runs out at the end of December, after that the cost rises to £40, so don't delay, apply today!

Finally, can I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and New year and we all wish for a great beekeeping year to come.