

Y.B.K.A. eNewsletter May



2012 Queen Colour = YELLOW

1st April 2012 : Volume 16 : Issue 6

Chairmans Notes

If only the weather would make up its mind I would be able to plan my life so that I could do all the things I want to do in a sensible order - well as sensible as I ever get (Lyn laughs at the idea of my being organised).

This week I've been out at 9.30 p.m. twice sealing hives only to be told the next morning that the weather forecast was wrong and that they can't spray the OSR with insecticide while it is raining - so off I go in the morning to open the hives again. In a busy week I could do without this but despite the spray boasting that it is 'bee-friendly' I can't risk any colony losses. Queen rearing has been delayed and subject to disruption by rain so each colony counts.

We have also had two weeks of SWARM SWARM SWARM - once you weed out the bumblebees we still have the problem of collecting swarms - which if done properly often means that you are out in the evening to ensure that you don't leave any 'flyers' behind. Boxing a swarm in the centre of the city outside Thomas Cook and then returning later to collect it takes up more than two hours of the day. The good news is that nobody got stung and beekeepers were shown to be responsible citizens.

We also received the sad news that the bee disease research carried out at the University of Leeds will soon be moving to Sussex University. Good news for beekeeping that Dr Bill Hughes is to take up a Professorship working with Prof. Francis Ratnieks at The Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects. Their combined research profiles will undoubtedly result in useful outcomes for beekeeping. Bad news for Yorkshire that the research should move to the deep south. Luckily much bee research will still be carried out at Sheffield University and we have the good news that Ben, at the NBU, has just started a really useful PhD project

So - now that I've got that off my chest - things should be calming down now and we should all be able to work steadily towards a successful honey harvest with lots of good strong colonies - just as things should be. It does the heart and head good to be really positive about things to come. Have a good June.

Bill

Editors Note:-

Well done to the eagle-eyed amongst you who spotted that the issue number was wrong on the last few editions of the newsletter. This issue is correct - 16 years since the YBKA newsletter started hence Volume 16 and as it is June then Issue 6. Which means that I've been doing this for 13 years. Please will those of you who archive these newsletters forgive the mix up with the numbers. Thanks.

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JOBS IN THE APIARY FOR JUNE

After reading through the May edition of e-news again, I realised and would like to begin my June message with an apology to everyone for the omission of a vital paragraph missed off the swarming and manipulation procedure in last month's edition.

This should have been added directly after, (when you have removed the queen and selected the queen cell you wish to keep and marked that frame.), you should then after 5/6 days go through that same brood box again, for the bees may have drawn down more emergency queen cells from remaining eggs and larva to replace to ones you destroyed. Firstly check the cell you left in the hive and make sure only that cell remains on that frame, then as before methodically go through the rest of the frames and take down any small emergency cells the bees have produced in the 5/6 days from your last inspection. If this is not done casting will occur and you may loose a lot of your bees to the very thing you are trying to stop, swarming. After this time period no more queen cells can be made for the lava remaining are too old and there are no more eggs in the cells. That completes the procedure.

Now onto June, and we are still in the middle of the main swarming season for your bee colonies as I'm sure a lot of you out there have all ready discovered. We have had swarms coming from every direction over the last few days, accelerated by the addition of all this very hot weather. Its imperative therefore you keep up your weekly inspections until these manipulations are all completed and the new queens are laying once again. It is only when you go through your colonies again 3-4 weeks after you have left your queen cell to hatch, and you actually see eggs from the new queen in the cells that this queen can now be marked with a yellow dot for 2012. Never mark a new queen until you see she is definitely in lay, as this will hinder her possibly unfinished mating flights by putting off the drones by the distraction of this bright yellow blob.

The O.S.R in most areas now is fading fast and coming in some cases to its end. Honey is in the supers and must now be extracted straight away. Oil Seed Rape honey is unlike other honey's for it sets in the cells very quickly after being fully processed by the bees. With most other honeys you always wait until the cells are fully capped over before extracting the honey, not with O.S.R. If you leave this honey it will set in the cells and then it is inextricable. If you check through your supers and they are full, but not fully sealed, only around the top or edges then take one or two out and give them a shake over the hive in a sharp downwards motion. If no honey comes out this is or should be ready to be extracted now. A final check for you new beekeepers is your portable Refractometer if you have one, if not I'm sure you can borrow one from a member of your association. Place a small sample of honey on the opened sample flap at the front and close up the flap pressing down gently to express any air within. You then hold it to the light and look through the eye lens where you will see a sliding scale on the R/H side marked water, with OSR you are looking for a reading of between 17/20 max and anything above this is unacceptable. It requires further manipulation by the bees. But don't leave it too long before checking again and as soon as its within this range extract it. When taking off your honey go prepared and make sure you have full

protection, for the bees at this stage can get very bad tempered with their main nectar source drying up and you wanting to remove part of their hard earned honey, aggression by the bees is not uncommon. Take a cloth with you and a spare box to put the honey in, when you have brushed off the bees place the frames in the box and cover it as soon as you place it in the box for removal. If you have your hives in pairs use the lid of the other hive to place your box on to avoid bending.

If you are a complete beginner and don't have an extractor yet, but have one or two full boxes to extract I'm sure one of your beekeeping pals with an extractor won't mind helping you out and showing you how to go on.

Space is paramount at this stage of the year within your colony and with most now reaching their max in size over the next few weeks additional supering is essential, especially until some of the honey has been removed allowing them more space.

This is also a great time for getting new foundation drawn out by the bees, with high temperatures and an ample supply of pollen and nectar available to them the bees soon draw out new combs from foundation to replace your older damaged or very discoloured ones. It's also a good time if you have a very strong colony to draw out new brood combs. If you place a brood box full of foundation on instead of two supers this should get drawn out in quick time by the bees. You can then extract it and use the drawn combs to replace old combs or use them in new season nukes. The only down side to this is the weight of the boxes and in some cases you may want an assistant to help you lift the full brood box as they can get very heavy, up to 50lbs+. With all this to contend with I think you will have enough on your plate for this month so.

Happy beekeeping
Dave Shannon

If Heath Robinson had been a beekeeper

YBKA sponsored annual talk hosted this year by
Airedale Beekeeping Association

If this had not of been such a side-splitting funny ha ha talk padded with understated genius and sheer lunacy then the other good reason for going to this talk would have been the cakes. Oh boy were they good! Good in the home baked, made with love and a little bit of showing off sense.

ABKA's sweet prelude was a worthy lure into the world of Graham Royle and his unashamedly absolutely fanatical delight of everything bee. He unravelled the complexities of his mind for our predilection. He has a thirty foot hose extension for his swarm collecting hoover. All I could do was imagine him wobble his way around the swarm site like a Ghostbuster-gone-crazy! He has a hive weighing machine, which needed a special light, and a then mirror and a then a fan to make it work. Exhausting – isn't that what hefting's for? And lots more brilliant ideas besides just these two.

Just like going to one of Ken Dodd's shows, Graham Royle probably could have talked, edified and delighted us all for much longer. He was easily as good as the cakes- a born entertainer who knows a lot about bees. What a great night.

Sue Chatfield

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The Birds and Bees

The first photograph isn't very clear so in the second I've lifted the brood box off so that you can see the surprise I got when inspecting one of my colonies. Nice nest - only one egg though.



Advertisements Page

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Joe Jacobs

Chairman Ryedale BKA

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A Beekeeper's Diary (May)

24th April

I had spent the last weekend attending the BBKA Spring Convention at the new venue, the Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire. The reason for going was to attend a workshop on the BBKA Advanced Husbandry Assessment that I have decided to give a go. I had mixed impressions about whether the move to Shropshire was a success. The weather was unpleasant and this made the drive across more difficult and the convention goers were more intent upon missing the heavy showers than enjoying the college environs. There was, without doubt, more space in the trade halls. The main lecture hall was large and not nearly full, but when I tried to go to another lecture venue it was not possible to get in. Maybe I was unlucky with the lectures or simply made poor choices but I can't say I got much out of those that I attended. Alan Bowman's talk was greatly disappointing. Most of the lecture concerned ticks and the punch line, the gene-knockdown approach to controlling varroa, was delivered so quickly without adequate explanation in the last minute that I was left totally bemused. The Swiss lecturer, Jochen Pflugfelder, seemed intent on scoring points against the other speakers and Dr Yves le Conte was difficult to understand and his hour long lecture seemed to have little content. The most disappointing talk, however, was from Richard Pickard, which I'd looked forward to all day. The title was 'The Evolution of the Honeybee'. The main theme was only partially covered and instead we were given an insight into Dr Pickard's rather unusual views of the future of human social evolution. It could be said to be thought provoking but if I wanted a political and social lecture I would not be attending a beekeeping convention.

The advanced husbandry workshop met my expectations. It was led by John Hendry who is such a pleasant and well meaning man that it is impossible not to be charmed. It could be said that I didn't learn anything that could not be gathered from a careful reading of the syllabus, but it fired the starting gun for my preparation and has made me more aware that I need to seriously devote time to preparing myself. It could be thought that it would be wiser to keep quiet about it all so that should I fail, and that is a realistic possibility, it would not be widely known. But I'm lazy and I need a spur to take it seriously and I calculate that the prospect of a more public failure will concentrate my mind.

This afternoon the sun shone and it felt pleasantly warm. I could hardly believe it – it was possible to do some beekeeping. I drove the van across the paddock and through the windscreen I could see that the activity was frenetic. A stream of thousands of bees were heading to the OSR fields 300m away. So I went through all the nationals on the site, 9 in total. I was pleasantly surprised. All were queen right and on average they had about 15/16 sides of brood comb. But the level of stores was low and hive weights had hardly changed in the last three weeks. In view of the weather we have experienced I was quite satisfied. The two Warre hives had also built up nicely and, looking through the hive windows I could see that the two boxes on each that had been brought through the winter were full of bees, and so I added a third box to each. With Warre hives the extra boxes are inserted below those that already exist, just above the floor. Unfortunately the air temperature remains low and so as the sun became lower in the sky it was not possible to continue.

29th April

Attended Bishop Burton Conference yesterday – it will take me a while to get accustomed to its new name. Having been to the BBKA Spring Convention last week the comparison was absolutely stark. This was so much better. The lectures were better and truly relevant to us as beekeepers. 'But', you might say 'there are no trade stands'. Not true. The important ones were there. NBU and Northern Bee Books. And there, there is time to properly browse and discuss the books. And the best hive manufacturer in England was there with his stall. OK – I should declare my interest – Paul Snowden is a friend. So back to the lectures. The overseas guest speaker was Prof Deborah Delaney from the University of Delaware. She was very good, professional, engaging and relevant. And then from Wales there were, Wally and Jenny Swaw. Wally was earnest and quietly spoken and it was so evident that he thinks deeply about his beekeeping, trying to reconcile the compromises that modern beekeeping imposes with the natural needs of the bees. I

always enjoy and appreciate speakers that I largely agree with - not entirely of course – that would not do. And then there is the midday meal. No half measures there. The talks and stalls create the environment for what is probably the most valuable part of the day, the opportunity to talk beekeeping with friends and strangers, including the speakers themselves, over tea coffee and biscuits. There always has to be a downside - I continued my ten year long losing sequence with the raffle!

1st May

Called in to see Paul Snowden. As a follow up to Wally Shaw's lecture at the weekend I have asked Paul to make me a brood box, leaving the inside surfaces rough sawn. Wally had pointed out that bees in natural cavities line the inner surfaces with a film of propolis, producing an antibiotic coating for the nest. He had suggested that this does not happen inside hives as the inner surfaces are already planed smooth. So we'll see.

5th May

We started the practical apiary sessions for beginners in the afternoon at the association apiary. It was an encouraging turnout. These will go on throughout the spring and summer, the mentors being on a rota so that they are not involved every time, spreading the load, but it was my day on duty on this occasion. This first opportunity for people to view what goes on within a colony of bees and lift out frames and examine closely what is on them is always an exciting occasion.

7th May

This was the final day to prepare the bees before going to Cyprus to view the blessed child. I use the word in its traditional way. She has as much chance of living a good life as any baby brought into the world, with reasonably sensible parents and overly indulgent grandparents. But there is an issue here for family planning in that no account was taken of bringing the child into the world in the middle of the swarming season. In the last week, when the weather has cooperated, I've checked all my colonies for queen cells, made artificial swarms and added supers as necessary. But as there will be a gap of almost two weeks before they can be checked again I will be losing lots of swarms.

17th May

Back and exhausted. We arrived home at 9pm two days ago. I walked over to the apiary and from a distance I could see two swarms. There were eleven messages on the answer phone. We don't have that many friends so I suspected swarm reports and couldn't bear the thought of listening to them. And so in the last two days I've taken seven swarms, and from what I gather from other beekeepers this is not that unusual. My early spring preparation in making up racks of frames with foundation is proving inadequate and I'm running out of brood boxes. The examination of the bees which should be done to prevent swarming is being put off to deal with swarms and make up kit.

21st May

A queen rearing day. Quite early in the morning while it was still cool I made up the cell raising colony in my new swarm box. No queen and lots of bees, mainly from swarms. At this point I put in two frames of honey, one of pollen and two frames with foundation. One space was left. In addition I gave it a pollen patty. The entrance was closed but additional ventilation has been left in the sides and floor. And the later, the cell raiser now roaring nicely, we grafted up 20 larvae in cupkit queen cups that were placed on bars screwed into a brood frame. The frame was then quickly inserted into the vacant space in the swarm box. The colony was fed and has now been left in the cool of the apiary shed where hopefully the queen cells will be raised. That's the theory anyway.

May 22nd

I've never known a day like it. The phone never stopped. There seem to be swarms everywhere and nobody either willing or able to deal with them. Most potential swarm takers are either exhausted or have run out of equipment, me included. And after twenty years of keeping bees, a swarm has found a cavity

in the house walls and taken up residence. Not everyone in the household is delighted with this development. Nevertheless it was a beautiful day and we did get a private display from the red arrows.

John Whitaker
Barkston Ash BKA

Dr Eva Crane

Proposed Blue Plaque, Kingston upon Hull



Proposed Wording

The blue plaque to Dr Crane is being unveiled at noon, 12th June 2012. The plaque is on the wall of 55 Newland Park, Hull.

Yorkshire Beekeepers Association has donated £150 to the funds needed to site the plaque.

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Swarming

We are pleased to note that BBKA have taken on board the comments made by YBKA committee member Simon Maslin and have changed the wording on the BBKA website so that we beekeepers are no longer committed to definitely collecting the swarm - we can now point out that some swarms just cannot be removed. It was nice to think that beekeepers could do the impossible but the reality is that we cannot do everything. It was well worth a face to face chat with a member of the BBKA executive at our Bishop Burton Conference.

Swarms and the various ways in which groups delegate the collection of swarms can get members very upset. Each year YBKA receives complaints about the ways in which different districts organise swarm collections, the most common complaint being that the same few committee members are always the ones that get the swarms. As each district is autonomous it is difficult to do anything about these comments especially when those complaining ask to remain anonymous. It is very upsetting for a member to see a committee member who lives ten miles away collecting a swarm two streets away from where they live. Our best advice is to discuss the issue at the district AGM. Even more worrying is when a beekeeper from one district travels across two other districts to collect a swarm twenty five miles away - have they never heard of the telephone ?

These problems are reflected in the list of swarm collectors on the BBKA website. Some areas list just the committee member who acts as swarm officer while others list all members experienced enough to collect swarms. Again I suggest that we could take a lesson from our bees and move away from centralised control.

The swarm season certainly seems to bring out the best and the worst in members of the public and in beekeepers.

Recently, while removing a swarm from a main shopping street in Bradford we were asked to sign a disclaimer saying that any damage we caused was my fault - We were sorely tempted to walk away and leave the travel agency with their swarm. They made things even worse by not even thanking us for the work. On the other hand we gained a member - one of the staff was so interested in what we were doing that they have joined the association even though they have no bees.

By contrast a householder supplied tea and cakes and a cash donation in return for picking up 3 cup-fulls of bees - I've yet to find out if the queen is mated and laying but the bees are nice a calm and friendly so things look promising.

Beekeepers themselves can also be a little less than friendly. When I lost a swarm from the research hives a fellow beekeeper was keen to let me know that he had picked up a swarm with one of my numbered queens in it. As I was very keen to preserve that genetic line I offered to exchange another colony for the return of the swarm - the beekeeper refused !

In contrast beekeepers in the new Bradford association have committed themselves to donating the first swarm collected by each of them to the association. This will allow the association to build a stock of colonies from which they can select and breed the best for training and to produce nucs for new members.

With the cost of bees being so high at the moment this is one way a new association can build up stocks. In the meantime one member has loaned the association colonies for use in training and to raise queens from.

It just serves to illustrate that each of us has a different take on how things should be.

Why not write about what your association is doing ?

Electronic Hive Inspection Record Keeping

Something that we're all told to do, but seems to be fraught with difficulty, is to keep hive or colony records. I must admit I've been struggling to

- a) Decide what information I need to collect and
- b) To find a satisfactory method of keeping and accessing my records

A key issue is what data to record. The problem here is that there are numerous examples of hive records – just about everyone seems to have their own idea as to what it's important to record. And this is quite alright of course since we all have differing requirements. Are we trying to maximise our honey production, or raise new queens or breed in varroa resistance? Or all of the above?

None of the examples I found gave what I was looking for. The card index forms had too little space on them and relied on a complex set of coded abbreviations that you either need to keep in your head or on a “handy” reference card. The spreadsheet versions weren't developed enough and I wanted to avoid double entry – first onto paper and then transfer to the computer.

My main criteria became:

- Spreadsheet based record
- Entry through selection from a list wherever possible in order to avoid typing
- Use of low cost Android tablet or Smartphone

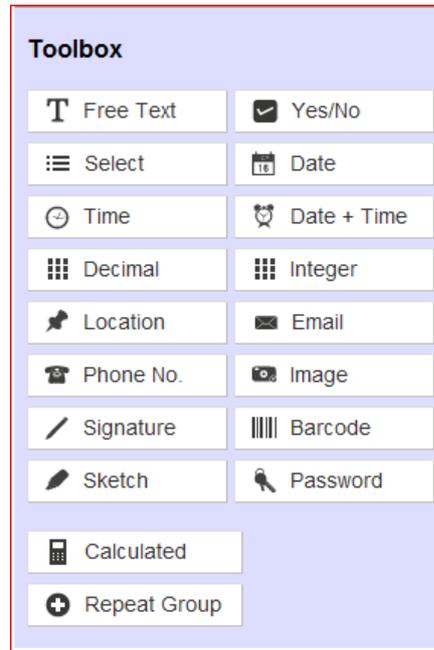
Google Forms nearly gave a workable solution. The only thing that disqualified it and kept me searching for a solution was the limitation that you have to have internet access while you're entering data. Fine if you're in your garden within range of your wi-fi, not so good if you're in a remote out-apiary without access to the internet.

The answer came eventually from an app that will work on a variety of tablets or Smartphones. Mobile Forms by Device Magic is designed for the survey market; it will use a form to collect data and then populate a spreadsheet with the answers. Best of all it will work off line. If your device is not connected to the internet you simply save your results on your device and upload to the internet later.

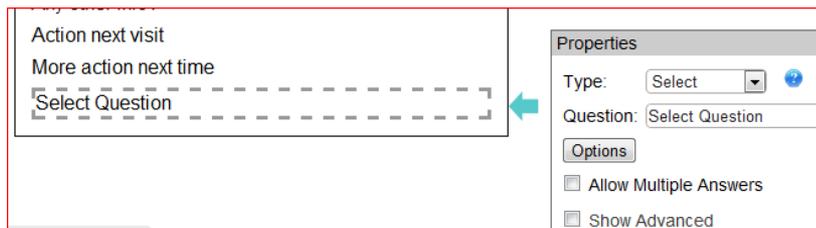
I found that most of the data you would enter could be presented as multiple choice answers. Instead of writing down 1, 2 or 3 litres of light syrup, you choose to put a tick against 1 litre, 2 litres or 3 litres light syrup. You may ask what happens to 1½ litres – well you can be more precise if you wish but then is it really important to be that precise? (You can be if you wish).

It took me a few hours to set up the form to my satisfaction and I'm looking forward to my record keeping rather than dreading how to organise numerous pieces of paper.

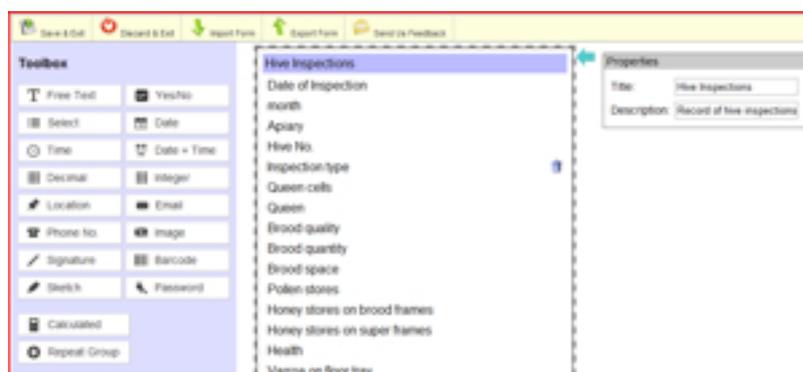
See the screenshots for examples of form design. You start with choosing the question type from a toolbox:



Then, you establish the properties of the answers to suit – by entering data validation parameters, listing the multiple choices, or whatever. You can have calculated answers – so that a varroa calculator is included in the form design – you only have to enter the raw data.



The most useful question type, in order to save typing in data, is a multiple choice. The app lets you choose whether only one answer is allowable (say, apiary name or hive number) or whether you can choose several items from the list (say, hive configuration where you build up the components list)



Queen

Brood quality

Brood quantity

Brood space

Pollen stores

Honey stores

Honey stores on brood

Health

Varroa on floor tray

Varroa: Q1/3 No. of

Varroa: Q2/3 Sam

Varroa: Q3/3 Estim

varroa population

Temper

Supers added

Type: Select

Question: Queen

Options

Options: Queen

Text

Queen cells

Queen

Brood quality

Brood quantity

Brood space

Pollen stores

Honey stores on brood

Honey stores on su

Health

Varroa on floor tray

Varroa: Q1/3 No. of

Varroa: Q2/3 Sam

Varroa: Q3/3 Estim

varroa population

Temper

Options: Health

Text

Text

Text

Text

Text

Text

Text

Specify custom identifiers (advanced) ?

Brood space

Pollen stores

Honey stores on brood

Honey stores on su

Health

Varroa on floor tray

Varroa: Q1/3 No. of

Varroa: Q2/3 Sam

Varroa: Q3/3 Estim

varroa population

Temper

Supers added

Supers removed/ h

Feed given

Hive configuration

Weather

Any other info?

Options: Supers added

Text

Text

Text

Text

Text

Specify custom identifiers (advanced) ?

Limitations? You design the form to your exact requirements – you don't have to have questions that don't mean anything to you and you can add whatever questions you wish. There is no need to worry about saving space on a paper form. The questions can be quite explicit, as can be the answers.

You can try out the form for a while and adjust it to your exact needs. All the data is kept safe on the Google workbook but a new sheet is created every time you amend the form.

	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	
1								Honey-stores-on-brood-frames	Honey-stores-on-super-frames	
2	Inspection-type	Queen-cells	Queen	Brood-quality	Brood-quantity	Brood-space	Pollen-stores			Health
3	External observation									
	Partial	no answer	Not seen - signs bad (poor pattern no fresh larvae etc)	poor brood pattern suspect drone laying queen	one side/face of frame of brood or less	8 or more sides/faces of frames available for brood	some pollen	very little honey or none	equivalent 3-4 sides/faces of super frame with capped honey	something not right

The app is free if you keep to one device. With a little ingenuity it should be possible for people to collaborate on their data collection and still be able to use the free version. If, for example, the association's apiary management is shared by two or more people, each person would fill in the inspection report on his/her form which only populates their own specific spreadsheet. But, once there, it is easy enough to copy & paste the data into a common spreadsheet.

If anyone is interested, please feel free to send me an email and I can send you the form I've designed to import into your app.

Phil Khorassandjian
Secretary Sheffield BKA
sec@sheffieldbeekeepers.org.uk

Editors Wish List

Wouldn't it be nice to have an App that put your records directly from your phone into your apiary records on Beebase ?

Lets hope that the National Bee Unit at Fera can produce this App soon.

And while they are at it...

A Disease App would be nice - smart phone recognition photos and info on the major bee diseases

A varroa calculator App...

and

any ideas for the wish list ?

Bill

Y.B.K.A. Calendar

We hope to see many more members at our events in 2012.

June 2nd	General Husbandry Training
June 3rd	Advanced Husbandry Training
June 15th	GPC Meeting
June 23rd	'Basic' Train the Trainers Event
August 3rd	GPC Meeting
September 21st	GPC Meeting
November 23rd	GPC Meeting
December 1st	YBKA AGM

DO YOU HAVE DATES THAT COULD USEFULLY ADDED TO THIS CALENDAR ?

ARE THERE DISTRICT EVENTS AND TRAINING EVENTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO INVITE BEEKEEPERS FROM NEARBY DISTRICT TO ?

LET ME HAVE THE DATES SO THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE BEEKEEPING IN YORKSHIRE A REALLY DYNAMIC AND HAPPY THING TO DO.

[TOP](#)

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BEEBASE

Have you visited BeeBase recently ?

Look at the record keeping system available to you. Well worth considering as a place to keep you own colony and apiary records. Why not build its use into your beginners and basic exams courses ?