



YORKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

January 2017



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Our First Attempt at Queen Rearing

by Gillian Thatcher

My sister and I have been keeping bees for 6 years, and are currently running 16 colonies. Spring 2016 hadn't been too good for getting our new queens mated; we had some colonies that were not the best to handle, and some that didn't build up well, so we decided to have a go at selectively breeding a few queens.

We keep reading about the importance of selective breeding but have never been able to get around to doing it in a controlled manner, leaving it up to the bees to select their queen. Then everything seemed to drop into place, I had a nice colony that was building up well, the bees were good to handle and foraged well, so we selected this colony to breed from. Jen had a large queenless colony that we could use to rear the queens.

The next problem was how to go about doing it? We wanted to use a system that we felt would guarantee a good degree of success at the first attempt, we were sure that grafting would not afford us that success at the first attempt, we haven't been able to get to any courses on grafting and it appears to be rather fiddly, so I had a look on the Internet and came across an article on cell plugging.

After reading the article I was certain that was the way forward for us, although the cell plug system suggested appeared rather complicated. We wanted a system that was simple, using everything that we already had in our possession. We realised that we would have to make our own wax cell cups using a simple mandrel and clean wax; we'd need wax cups not synthetic. As we wanted to warm the wax to push in the cut cells we then got an empty brood frame and added a couple of horizontal bars to hold the cell cups. The next problem was how to cut out the cell, there were several suggestions including using a bullet casing! Well not surprisingly we didn't know where to get bullet casings from so I turned to my engineer husband who managed to understand what I wanted - although he didn't understand what it was for! That didn't matter as he came up trumps and made a stainless steel engineered cutter. The diameter of the cutter is half an inch so actually only damages 13 cells, 7 on either side in the cutting process and 6 around the outside of the chosen cell, We felt that this was a small price to pay to ensure a good selected queen.



We prepared a brood frame with the two cell bars, the first bar an inch from the top bar and the second bar two and a half inches from the first bar. These are attached with a nail at each end which allows the bars to be rotated. A good bed of wax approximately a quarter of an inch thick is put on the cell bars which allows the wax cell cups to be attached to them.

We placed 8 cups on the bottom bar equally spaced apart, we dipped the cups into some molten wax and placed in position on the bars and then poured some more wax around the cups to secure them well.



Now we had our equipment ready, we took out a frame of young larvae from the chosen colony, we placed the frame on the tail gate of our vehicle, we gently warmed the cutter with a gas filled fire lighter (getting it too hot makes the cell plug too hot to handle) and carefully cut out the first cell. We chose young larvae all about 4 to 5 days old. Checking we were not too near the foundation wires, we gently pulled the cell out of the cutter; we then warmed one of the wax cell cups and pushed the cell into the cup. We made sure that only the chosen cell was viable for the bees to raise. When we had the eight cells done we put the frame into the centre of the queenless colony. We closed up the colony and although the colony was on a borage crop, we still gave the colony some syrup. The brood frame was returned to the parent colony, and although looks a bit holey, the bees did fill it in, and we soon couldn't tell which frame we had used.

After 48 hours we had a look to see what the situation was with the cells, we were thrilled to see that the bees were drawing out the queen cells. Six days after the cell cups were taken we checked the cells again, 6 of the 8 cells where viable, we were really pleased with the result at that stage.

Ten days after starting the process we decided to transfer the sealed cells to nuc boxes. We made the nucs up with a frame of brood, a frame of stores, two more frames and plenty of nurse bees. We left the nucs for a couple of hours, then we gently cut the sealed queen cells from the frame and popped them into a cell protector, and placed it between the brood frame and stores. We fed the nucs with syrup.

After 14 days from the start, we checked the queen cells, they had all hatched out and we now have 6 nice queens.

We are absolutely delighted with the outcome. To get 6 queens out of 8 cells at the first attempt was thrilling. We certainly will be doing it again next year, we will be looking into using a rearing colony rather than just relying on a queenless colony, we hope next season not to have any queenless colonies, as we will have now have some overwintered nucs to fall back on.

We found that it was really easy to do, when you have all your equipment ready, one person could do it very quickly. We could have produced more queens using both bars, but we only wanted a few queens, so only used the bottom bar.

Care must be made to check that any brood frames that are put into the nucs are free of unwanted queen cells, if this is not done, then all your hard work can be undone!

You can contact us at gillianthatcher@btinternet.com if you would like any more information or details about the cell cutter, we would be pleased to help.

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Peter Hewitt recited something from Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream to me today. So here's that taste of summer for you too. If bees could speak surely these would be the words of their waggle dance...

*I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
 Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
 With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
 There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
 Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight."*

YBKA Spring Conference 2017



YBKA is very pleased to announce the the dates and details for this year's Annual Spring Conference on Saturday 25th March 2017 at the Manor Academy in York.

08.30 – 09.15 Registration and refreshments

09.15 – 09.30 Welcome and introduction by YBKA Chair Phil Gee

09.30 – 09.45 Chris Coulson and Jim Pearson will explain how delegates can select the lectures, workshops and drop-in clinics.

09.45 – 10.30 Dr. Sara Robb **Turning beehive products into soaps & cosmetics.**

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break when delegates opt for workshops)

11.00 – 11.45 Yvonne Kilvington **Introducing children to beekeeping**

11.45 – 12.30 Dr Ravishanka Sargur **Managing bee & wasp sting allergies.**

12.30 – 13.45 Lunch & chance to shop

13.45 – 14.30 Keith Bartlem **Flying with bees**

14.30 – 15.15 Mark Patterson **Planting for pollinators - the importance of providing good quality forage**

15.15 – 15.30 Break

15.30 – 16.30 Beekeepers' Question Time

GO TO WWW.YBKa.ORG.UK FOR THE BOOKING FORM

CARRY ON BEEKEEPING

YBKA SPRING CONFERENCE

SPEAKERS & DEMONSTRATORS

Dr Sara Robb studied pharmacognosy and toxic natural products at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy & Science. Her ensuing PhD focused on the role of oxidative stress in aging. In 2003 Sara founded Bath Potions specialising in honey soaps and beeswax creams.

Dr. Ravishankar Sargur consultant Immunologist at the Northern General Hospital, has extensive experience in the diagnosis, management and treatment of allergic conditions including bee & wasp venom allergies. He is a member of the Venom Allergy Interest group in the European Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.

Keith Bartlem is a Captain with Thomas Cook Airlines and started his flying career whilst studying Ecology at Stirling University. His student summer job as a gardener's boy introduced him to bees. He is a Basic and General Husbandry examiner and a Master Beekeeper.

Mark Patterson of London BKA is an ecologist with 18 years experience and full time beekeeper operating as 'Apicultural'. Mark is a trustee of London BKA and seasonal bee inspector.

Yvonne Kilvington is the YBKA Education Officer and a teacher at Ashbrow School in Huddersfield.

Chris Coulson chairman of Beverley BKA will demonstrate how spare wax can be converted in to useable foundation for the hive.

Master Beekeeper Jim Pearson will run a drop-in clinic and will heroically attempt to answer ANY beekeeping related question. **Geoff Pearson** will demonstrate skep making.

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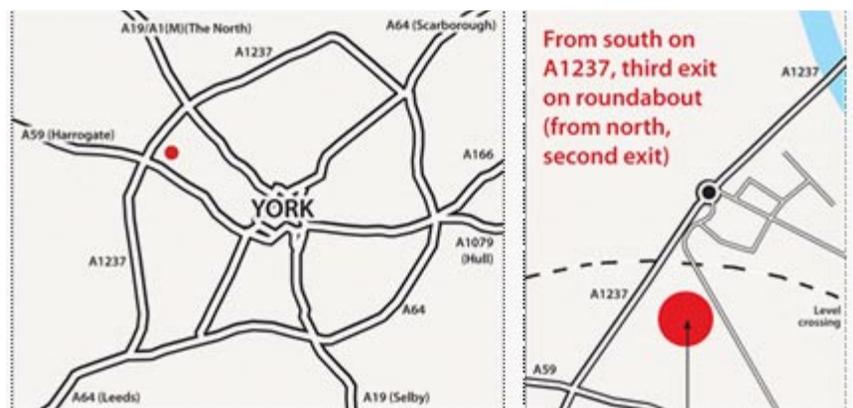
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Please remember to inform us if you have any special dietary requirements.

Address for conference :
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Manor Academy York

Fracking and Bees

by Mick Johnston, Scarborough and District Bee Keepers Association

Will fracking affect bees and beekeepers? Should beekeepers be concerned about fracking? My answers as of now: Who knows, and most definitely.

One of the features of fracking is that it is complex and unless it comes to your neighbourhood the initial response of most people is to recognise potential environmental issues but broadly accept the government line that with good regulation there will be no significant risk. However, once the drilling test rigs threaten to grind down your local roads on the way to a drill site near you perceptions rapidly change. Fracking hasn't started yet in the UK and this leaves apparent room for debate in this country about the environmental impact. However fracking has been carried out on a large scale for twenty years in parts of the USA, ten years in parts of Canada and for shorter periods in a number of countries.

There is now a lot of evidence of the environmental and health impacts of fracking. The direct impacts are, very broadly:- risk of contamination to artesian water, gaseous escapes at various stages of the process principally methane but including a cocktail of other hydro carbon based toxins, risks in transportation and disposal of high volumes of contaminated water, generation of large volumes of HGV traffic, and more locally, noise, light pollution and visual intrusion. The consequent impacts vary depending on the nature of the area but include direct health impacts, depression of house prices, adverse effect on agriculture and tourism, congestion costs and unmeasurable impact on quality of life. Jobs will be created but they will also be lost.

The impact on bees and beekeeping has not been assessed and as with the impact of pesticides will probably be argued about for decades. There is research (www.nature.com/articles/02779) that shows that NO and NO², present in diesel exhaust, significantly impair bee foraging; they can quite radically reduce the bees ability to identify floral odours. But who knows what concentrations of NO & NO² will result from fracking how quickly they will be dispersed, how lasting the effect is and so on. Perhaps the BBKA or NBU should be commissioning some research.

On top of the above is whether the UK should be developing new sources of hydrocarbon based fuel when the world already has too much and we are supposed to be committed to reducing CO² emissions. (Not to mention that we just closed our coal industry condemning parts of Yorkshire to decades of poverty).

While the jury may be out for some time on the specific impact of fracking on bees and beekeeping, there is ample evidence of the broader damage that fracking can do to the environment let alone to human health - over 700 peer reviewed studies at the last count. And when it comes to bees, if their commercial value as pollinators is recognised by governments as sufficiently important to put the brakes on the agrichemicals business with the moratorium on neonicotinoids, why can't the same be done for fracking? At least have a moratorium until it can be proved that fracking will not damage the already fragile bee population.

In case you wondered, you are getting this diatribe from me because my bees are just a few miles from Kirby Misperton where fracking will be starting any day if Third Energy can get their drilling convoy past the demonstrators. However, if fracking goes ahead there will be a well head within half a mile of my house, and the odds are that there will be a well head within half a mile of you too as more than 60% of the surface area of Yorkshire is already licensed to frack. Check the map to see if you are licenced (www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/uk_fracking_map_41274.) The result will be up to 2,400 well heads across Yorkshire alone, each one of which could be fracked up to forty times over a fifteen to thirty year period.

Beekeepers are generally an environmentally aware bunch so I think that even without definitive proof that fracking will be bad for bees there is plenty for beekeepers to be concerned about. Personally I'd like to see the Yorkshire Bees Against Fracking banner produced now and raised at the Anti Fracking Camp at Kirby Misperton. Anyone interested?

Scarborough and District Association will be discussing the issues at a Branch meeting on 27 March.

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Why one should or should not write about beekeeping or anything else for that matter?

by John Whitaker

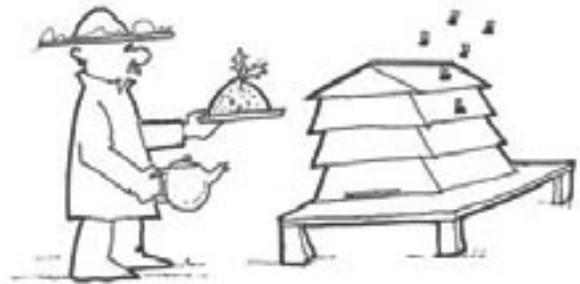
When one writes an article for a publication such as the YBKA Newsletter it could be regarded as a total waste of time. If you are lucky only one in five of the membership will bother reading it. You may worry that there may be a few ungenerous souls who find reasons to criticise your carefully crafted words. They could regard you as totally unqualified to have contributed to the esteemed publication, an upstart even and they could do so much better if they put their minds to it. In which case why didn't they? Maybe you are not confident about your grammar and spelling. Don't worry – that sort of error will be corrected by your excellent editor or MS Word. Maybe some of your readers will disagree with you. So what? You yourself probably disagree with half the things you have ever read and heard about beekeeping. And if someone disagrees with you it is a sort of compliment – it means they have read your article carefully and it has made them think, which above anything else is what you want to achieve.

In actual fact, ungenerous souls amongst your readership will be very few, and they will be far outnumbered by those who will appreciate what you have written and the effort you have made. No matter how modest you are about your experience, the very fact that you have set out to write an article will inevitably mean that you have spent the odd sleepless hour ruminating on the subject, that you will have read around the topic and discussed it in the pub. The very process of putting your ideas into words will have made you into much more of an expert on the subject than the vast majority of those that are going to read it.

So is writing an article an act of pure altruism? Of course not. There may be some who like the hubris of being in print. But that is not a good reason either. The best and very selfish reason in my view, is that it improves your beekeeping. Often as not, it's not until you make the effort to put your ideas in writing that you really sort out whether your ideas make sense. The logic or lack of it becomes obvious, new ideas occur to you and in the next season you will be keen to practice what you preached.

Feeding Bees

by Rob Andrews



Volunteering at the YBKA

Unpaid but rewarding opportunities if you've a mind to be on the YBKA team.

PR Officer - shout it loud for the beekeepers of Yorkshire. Can you do that?

Newsletter Editor from Jan 2017.

Membership Secretary - working with the Treasurer to ensure we're all paid up and insured

Please email the YBKA secretary for info - contact details on last page of newsletter.

Bulk Buy By Beekeepers

Once upon a time Yorkshire BKA used to be able to negotiate with those who made wax foundation and get special discounts if they bought enough to build a life sized version of the Titanic. This would then be sent to the poor soul who volunteered to receive it all and fill his sitting room to the rafters. He would sit in his fingerless gloves counting out packs and portions winter night after winter night. His missus who had put the Christmas tree up, would have completely forgotten it was there until the removed wax foundation packs revealed it in all its baubly splendour once again – in January!

YBKA no longer gets the deals it did because the internet, distribution and competition have changed the face of buying and selling. Now each association can negotiate the exact same deal as its big sister.

Some associations have taken this one step further. They now put in bulk orders for fondants and inverted syrups and receive these on pallets. Some BKAs then sell at cost to its members, portioning out the delivery cost pro rata which really takes the sting out things. Sorry!

You can go further and negotiate with suppliers over bee suits, poly nucs, frames etc. as being a member of a BKA gives you some purchasing clout and most are happy to offer further discounts if you ask. Expensive bee medicines can also be acquired with the same leverage so that all of a sudden you are paying for exactly what you need with no waste what so ever-which is great because it all has a very short shelf life.

Email is the way to do this and maybe, if someone is able in your BKA, set up a Google excel-like spread sheet so that each beekeeper can edit their own order on line. Some have set up a shop and add a small surcharge which is used to fund beekeeping activities. Turnover has to be carefully monitored if you do this or the Charities Commission will start to get grumpy.

There only needs to be a handful of interested individuals to get the bulk buy deals; one of you must be organised and willing to put in the order and make sure the Treasurer's cheque-signing hand is warmed up ready to sign cheques.



A bit of biology: Oily feet

Honey bees have special glands in their 6 feet. As is usual in beekeeping this gland has more than one name – tarsal gland, Arnhart gland, footprint gland - they're all same thing. Bees' legs have 5 sections below the knee called tarsomeres. The extremity or foot is called the 5th tarsomere and it is here that this very important gland resides.

The queen's feet all leave oily chemical footprints which are pheromones (a chemical messaging system) telling the workers that she is present in the hive and they do not need to make another queen. It's generally accepted that when a hive is jam packed with bees the strength of her footprint pheromone does not reach all the nest edges. Importantly this lack of pheromone can then inform the workers to make another queen (or 10!!). So if the beekeeper damages his queen's feet he'd better watch out!

The workers' chemical footprints are left on flowers and amongst other functions, can tell other bees that the flower has been depleted of nectar for example. Along with other messages, the secretions from this gland are also all over the inside of the hive and at the hive entrance - it kind of says 'this is home'.

The role of drone footprint pheromones is still vague to humans but some believe it helps workers know the difference between the younger drones which can't feed themselves and the older independent ones that try it on a bit!

If you want to read a little more then try these: www.bee-culture.com/a-closer-look-tarsal-glands-footprint-pheromone and www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK200983/

Bee biology is part of BBKA Module 5. It's great fun to learn. Ask YBKA Education Officer Yvonne Kilvington for more info.

The Phyrronist: Neonics, what happened to the CEH report and when speculation can become fact

In September, Freedom of Information requests obtained hitherto secret studies by Bayer and Syngenta, conducted as part of the regulatory process, which detailed harm neonics cause to honeybees at over 50ppb neonic concentration. On being 'found out', the companies asserted in their defence that these concentrations are never seen in the field, but independent researchers noted that pollinators in real environments are continually exposed to 'pesticide cocktails', rather than to single chemicals for relatively short periods as in regulatory tests. Moreover, these concentrations are also often found in soil, water, and guttation fluid. (Indeed, Health Canada has just banned imidacloprid, due to high residues in soil and water) Interestingly, Bayer/Syngenta testing used sucrose-dosing of bees: precisely the method they have repeatedly denigrated independent researchers for employing in an attempt to undermine those researchers' results.

A just-published Scottish study shows reduced pollen-collecting ability in neonic-exposed bees, while another new study shows significantly reduced weight, longevity and sperm viability in neonic-exposed drones, which the researchers suggest, could be at least partially responsible for problems with queens. And, in a no-news flash, we're still awaiting results of the CEH neonic field study.

Finally, a recent survey found that 81% of the UK public support neonic ban, but will Bee-rexit wreck it for bees? The NFU continues to lobby against the ban, but will need public support for increased UK taxpayer subsidies once EU

At a beekeepers' event last month we got onto the hot potato of neonics and oilseed rape. Luckily for me I am nowhere near any rape, winter wheat and not particularly close to golf courses (these decorative amenity sites are one of the big non-agricultural users).

A couple of experienced beekeepers were asked if they had noticed any difference in their bees as they were foraging on rape. I took the question to imply negative difference: were their bees worse off? To this they both answered without hesitation, no they had noticed no difference.

I was wondering how they had been monitoring for the impact of neonics specifically on their bees. These studies are highly specialised, incredibly difficult to set up and interpret – then once analysed the authors have to jump through the hoops of peer review. Against all of the white noise that is Varroa, weather, seasonal variability in notifiable diseases, warm winters etcetera, realistically neither of them could answer neither yes or no, but chose to answer no - implying that there was no deleterious effect. The answer should have been: I do not know.

Neither did either of them appear to acknowledge that there were any data on the deleterious effects of neonics on pollinators – despite the ocean of data out there in the public domain. For two heavy weight beekeepers to deny the science is not good teaching. Science is a light that should illuminate and inform, which in the main it does. Yet from the mouths of those we respect, opinion easily becomes fact.

Similarly at last year's Spring Conference FERA gave an entertaining Top Ten count down of the worst things that do our bees in. The hit parade went like this: at 10 Nosema, 9 pesticides, 8 Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus, 7 EFB, 5 AFB, 4 wasps, 3 Varroa and DWV, 2 weather, 1 management. Perhaps FERA's conclusion had been arrived at exactly because the study was massive in breadth and scale. Perhaps it was based on a lot less. Once again the positioning of the facts was worryingly vague.

I noticed many beekeepers nodding vehemently in agreement. Because we like what we hear? But do we understand what we hear? Over simplified lists of ingredients in the name of science – I need more salt with that!

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Frame Thissen! Yer've gotter larf

by *Asmall B. Wrangler*

Perhaps it's the venom in the stings? Or maybe the heady propolis fumes as you raise the roof... but beekeeping does seem to bring more than its fair share of amusement (if you're that way out).

I keep my hives on the same land where I keep my chickens. A couple of winters ago, I was puzzled to find a metal mouse guard hanging off a single drawing pin at a hive entrance. Replacing it, with both pins firmly pressed into the wood, I would return next day to the same crime scene. The mystery was solved, when I found one of my bigger birds, Tilly Mintus, pecking away at the mouse guard fastenings!

I help at our Association apiary, on a National Trust site, which is always busy with visitors on high days and holidays. I offered to check on the progress/stores of a colony that we had united with another during our usual session, the following week, when both my experienced colleagues would be away. It happened to be a Bank Holiday Monday.

Being vertically challenged, I had realised that the configuration of boxes on the united colony stand made it rather high, but it wasn't until I was ready to re-assemble the tower, with lots of bees and heavy frames, that the true challenge of the task presented itself. As I strained upward with a laden brood box in my hands, wondering if I would ever manage to get it back onto the stack of boxes below, I was suddenly overcome with the most desperate urge to pee...

As the years go by, various bodily changes may serve to make beekeeping and other hobbies rather more of a challenge and require us to modify the way we used to do things, to accommodate aches and pains, or worse. In this, I feel very privileged to have recently been blessed with the means of doing more, rather than less, in this, my second childhood, with the addition of an exceptionally large, third, hand! I had no idea I was gifted with this benefit, until a colleague took this photo and there it was, huge fingers peeping over the bottom of the frame, allowing me to keep a firm grip on one of the lugs and my hive tool with my other hands. Wow! Steam Punk beekeeping or what?



New Trophy for Whitby Beekeepers Annual Honey Show

by *Tony Jefferson*

To encourage more beekeepers to exhibit at our local honey show at Egton - always on the 3rd Wednesday in August - Martin Hogan and his Dad John had an Eureka moment and decided to make a bespoke trophy.

Martin's skill with woodwork is legendary in the Whitby area, as is his passion for finding things *that may come in handy one day*. The ebony and the stainless steel handle of the trophy are examples of his recycling skills. The award was used for the first time at the Whitby Beekeepers' final indoor meeting of the year, otherwise known as the Christmas social. Following this meeting it will go to the next Egton Show where it will be a nice addition to our trophy collection.

It will be awarded for the 'blacked out jar class' which is an excellent way of starting to exhibiting honey as it is judged on taste alone. We do get fantastic service and support from the show committee so we thought it is time to award an additional trophy and offer the prize money from our activities.

Notice for 2017 YBKA Area Delegates Conference

This is to give advance notice that this meeting will take place on Saturday 25th February 2017 at the Normanby Pavilion, Harrogate commencing 10am.

Under the terms of the constitution each affiliated district of the YBKA should appoint at least one delegate, up to a maximum of three as their nominated spokesperson(s). Preferably, I would like to have the names of your delegates at least 3 weeks prior to the meeting but the GPC are happy to be flexible in this respect. Only one of your delegates is eligible to have voting rights equal to the number of recorded paid up members in your district association. Please note that any member of the YBKA may attend the conference. The intended aim of the conference is to provide *"direction and guidance to the trustees and the GPC on the policy, future plans, budget and activities of the YBKA"* and, as such, it is felt that this should be very much a working group. Further information will be given in due course, once the GPC has met to discuss the management of the conference in more detail.

District Associations are invited to submit PROPOSITIONS for discussion at the conference and these proposals must be received by me in advance of the conference (i.e. by the beginning of February). Details of the Agenda will be provided immediately after the next GPC meeting which is due to take place on January 13th. Thank you

Regards

Roger Chappel (General Secretary YBKA)

The 60th Northern Beekeepers' Convention Saturday April 1st 2017

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YBKA CALENDAR 2017

January	Friday 13 th	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
	Saturday 14 th	BBKA ADM (10.30 am) Kenilworth
February	Saturday 4 th	Module Tutorials 10am till 3pm
	Saturday 25 th	Spring (Delegates) Conference (Harrogate) 10am
March	Saturday 5 th	Module Tutorials 10am till 3pm
	Saturday 18 th	BBKA Module Examinations.
	Saturday 25 th	YBKA ANNUAL CONFERENCE (Manor Academy, YORK)
April	Saturday 1 st	GENERAL HUSBANDRY COURSE (Doncaster)
	8 th , 9 th & 10 th	BBKA Spring Convention (Harper Adams, Newport)
	Friday 22 nd	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
May	Saturday 6 th	GENERAL HUSBANDRY COURSE (Huddersfield)
June	Saturday 3 rd	GENERAL HUSBANDRY COURSE (Darlington)
	Friday 9 th	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
	TBC	YAS Schools' Days
July	11 th – 13 th	Great Yorkshire Show (Harrogate)
	Friday 21 st	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
September	Friday 1 st	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
October	Friday 6 th	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
	Saturday 7 th	Autumn Delegates Meeting (Provisional)
	21 st - 22 nd	Countryside Live & YBKA Honey Show (Harrogate)
October	26 th – 28 th	National Honey Show (Sandown Park)
November	Friday 10 th	GPC Meeting (Harrogate) 6pm
	Saturday 11 th	Module Exams
	Saturday 25 th	YBKA AGM 10am - 4pm

FINAL WORD: Phil Gee YBKA Chair



Following my appointment at the AGM on 26 November 2016 I have been racking my brains as to what words of wisdom you would like to hear from me in this and forthcoming editions.

The first thing that I would like to say is a big THANK YOU to our retiring Chairman, Tony Jefferson. When I say retiring I don't mean that he is shy in any way, just that he has stepped down at the end of his three year tenure. I have had the pleasure to act as his Vice Chairman during that time and a mark of his commitment and dedication is that I have only had to stand in for him on three occasions.

I am very much looking forward to my tenure as your Chairman and hope to meet as many of our members as possible in the coming months.

So come along and say hello to me and the committee who will be at the Spring Delegates meeting at the Normanby Pavilion, Harrogate on 25 February and at the Spring Conference at the Manor Academy, York on 25 March. By meeting and greeting we can all discuss our plans for the future of YBKA, our 22 local associations and our 1,900 members.

Without feedback from our membership we cannot know what you are looking for to assist you with your beekeeping. So please don't be afraid to ask, suggest or criticise because we are all here to look after bees and make our whacky hobby even more fun.

Best wishes Phil Gee.