



YORKSHIRE
BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association Newsletter February 2021

Contents:

[Chair's Report](#)

[Beverley BKA Auction - 27th June 2021](#)

[February in the Apiary](#)

[BBKA Delegates Meeting - a first impression](#)

[Huddersfield BKA first honey bee art competition](#)

[Pam Hunter comments On Neonicotinoids](#)

[BBKA further prompt on neonicotinoids](#)

[Beekeeper Zoom Meeting – Free to Join](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Committee](#)

[Classifieds](#)

Chair's Report:



YBKA has spent a major part of 2020 working to develop a supportive structure to help members take the BBKA module exams within the constraints of social distancing measures. Clare McGettigan, our Education and Training Officer (and now our Zoom manager), has been instrumental in bringing these plans to fruition.

The take-up for the Modules tutorials to date has been impressive, and now, these are to be supplemented by talks from internationally renowned guest speakers. The committee has invested, on your behalf, in a monthly extended licence, to allow an increase in the number of participants attending each session from 100 to 500. So, no FOMO for any of our events! I would like to thank Clare, both personally and on behalf of all members, for her dedication to these projects. A thank you also to all our local volunteer speakers who have shared their knowledge and skills. Feedback to date has been excellent.

With the current government-imposed restrictions continuing and more experience of virtual meetings “under our belt”, we have decided to hold our first virtual YBKA Delegates Meeting on Saturday 27 March. Reports of all YBKA plans for 2021 will be circulated to district associations in late February, for committees and association members to see. We hope that districts will feel able to instruct their delegate(s) to raise any issues or concerns, that members feel YBKA should/could usefully address, at this meeting. Don't forget to let Linda, our YBKA Secretary, know who your delegates will be, and which attender is nominated to vote.

We hope you find our program of events both interesting and educational, and that you can continue to take advantage of what your virtual YBKA has to offer, until such time as face-to-face gatherings are safe to resume.

Dave Shannon
YBKA Chairman.

Beverley BKA's Annual Auction

Sunday 27th June

Our annual auction of beekeeping equipment and colonies of bees is to be held at the usual venue - Woodmansey Village Hall, Long Lane, Woodmansey, Beverley, HU17 0RN.

Viewing of lots commences 10:30, auction commences 11:00.

For further information please check the Beverley BKA website - <http://www.beverleybeekeepers.co.uk/2020/>

or Dave Hodgson on 07875 393588.

The Apiary in February

The past month has given some awful weather with more snow to come. There have been very few days during January where temperatures have risen sufficiently for bees to venture out on cleansing flights. But the days are gradually getting longer and signs of life appearing becoming more apparent; snow drops are beginning to bud and catkins are appearing on trees such as Hazel and Alder which will provide an essential pollen (protein) boost for colonies.

Queens will be starting to lay in the middle of the brood nest and the cluster temperature to rear brood will be maintained to temperatures of 33 to 35° C.

The number of bees within the colony are decreasing and the number of mouths to feed, in young brood, will be increasing so stores are vital for the survival of the colony as we enter the crucial months of February and March. On warm days bees will fly and it is not uncommon to see bees taking in pollen on their hind legs. As a beekeeper this is an encouraging sight indicating that the colony is rearing brood.

Bees returning to hive with pollen:



It is still vital to check the colony for stores by hefting the hive. If stores are low, then feed fondant directly above the bees to ensure it is easily accessible for them. As the brood population is slowly increasing it may be advantageous to provide a pollen supplement, towards the end of February, to give another helping hand should the weather conditions not allow foraging. Remember by feeding a pollen substitute this is a form of stimulus feeding that will encourage the queen to lay more eggs, so you need to be aware of weather conditions and the crops within your area. When stimulus feeding takes place you should be planning weeks ahead to build up a foraging force (3 weeks for development of egg to emerging bee, followed by 3 weeks house-keeping duties before foraging begins). In areas of autumn sown oilseed rape, an early honey crop is potentially available around April.

If you have varroa trays inserted, you can gauge the location of the colony by viewing the debris trail of capping's on the board. If you need to take a quick view under the crown board to do a vital check on stores, wait until the ambient temperature is around 10° C or higher. If the bees have moved to one side of the box, with stores available on the other, quickly remove any empty frames to the side of the cluster (do not disturb the cluster as this will do more damage than good) and slide the frames of stores closer to them. It is not unusual, when temperatures drop, for bees to anchor down in a tight cluster at one side of the box and starve to death when there are copious amounts of stores at the other side which they cannot reach. Remember to be quick and careful, replacing everything asap to minimise any disturbance.

As previously stated, on milder days bees will venture out on cleansing flights and to forage for pollen and water. Bees need water to dilute honey and fondant to make it digestible for them. It is a good idea to ensure there is a water source close by ideally in a sunny location to reduce the distance these foragers need to travel.

On milder days, it is helpful to observe colony entrances to see if the bees are flying. If you have more than one colony you can make comparisons. If there are no flying bees at all then you may wish to check within, to make sure they are still alive.

There may be lots of activity in front of a hive but look at how the bees approach the entrance. If you see zig-zagging activity in front of the entrance, there could be robbing taking place.

If a colony has died, you have a couple of options:

1- close the hive up and leave it to clean out later.

2- close it up and take it away there and then, to get it all cleaned out and ready to receive another colony later in the year.

Whichever you do, you must close it up to prevent robbing-out and any possibility of robber bees taking a disease back to their home colony.

If a colony dies over winter (and between 10 and 30% do) you can re-use the boxes provided you clean them thoroughly as outlined in last month's article. A sample of 30 bees could be taken to see if they were infected by Nosema. If you do not have a microscope or the knowledge to do this, there will be someone in your local association that could do this for you.

Remember, if you have not already done so, to continue preparing equipment for the new season, as spring will be here before we know it. All unused boxes should be cleaned, checked and repaired ready for use. You can paint/treat them in the apiary on a very cold day when the bees are not flying by just shutting the bees in for a little while and painting the outside of the hives with a suitable product. Wait until the treatment has dried, re-open the hives and all is done.

You can build frames, ready for the coming season but I don't recommend putting foundation in now. Keep the foundation flat, fresh, and full of aroma until nearer the time it is needed.

Plan your aims for the coming season and try to stick to them.

Finally, there are many online tutorials and events available which are great to join as lock down continues. The vast majority are free and really help to improve knowledge about the craft of beekeeping.

Mark Millard

A first "stab" at the BBKA Delegates Meeting

As a result of the restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 situation, the 2021 meeting was arranged to be held online. It was recommended that Area Association Delegates should be "under studied" by a reserve candidate in the event of a broadband outage or the like. Not wanting to

see our YBKA Delegate Tony Jefferson unsupported, I undertook to be second fiddle!

Have to say, from the outset, that if I were ever to write a stunning Trip Advisor review, it would not be for the BBKA ADM! But the opportunity to “attend” without having to drive the round trip to/from Warwickshire was a bonus. Given that this was the first virtual meeting of its size that BBKA has hosted, the preliminary training for delegates and reserves was very good.

There were a series of training dates on offer and you could attend one or more. Sadly, having attended two (the very first and then one later in the sequence, to see whether earlier glitches had been ironed out), it was pretty apparent that some people had not bothered to read any of the initial guidance as requested, causing them problems during the session. Inevitably, this caused “problems” for those who **had** read/followed the guidance too! Hats off to Martin Smith who dealt with all queries, however fatuous, in a much cooler, calmer, and more collected manner than I would ever be capable of.

The big day dawned and having charged two laptops to be prepared to both follow the virtual meeting on one, and leap into the breach to vote on the other, should Tony temporarily lose his perch, I was ready to go. Of course, I had also read and annotated the 87-page document that had been issued in advance of the meeting. Signing into Zoom at 9.30am for a 10am start made for a long lead in. The fact that the meeting only began at 10.18am was probably due, to some extent, to Martin Smith being caught up in an M6 traffic jam for more than 3 hours. With all other candidates on “mute” it was the prerogative of a somehow “unmuted” Roger Patterson to make various quips about delegates, wonder aloud why no one else was speaking and give a brief update advertisement about BIBBA training sessions in the pipeline!

Tony is going to give a factual report, so I don't need to trouble myself about sticking to facts, here. Just a few observations from the day itself. I was most perplexed by a noise throughout that sounded as if the meeting was being held in the middle of an eider duck colony (think Frankie Howerd, and you'll get the gist). Eventually realised it must be the sound of an automatic door closer! One poor delegate tried to speak on several occasions, but clearly had problems with his microphone, causing him to give a more than passable imitation of Sweep (you know, Sooty's mate?). Delegates were really hot-off the shovel in asking office staff to comply with social distancing. At one point, the Chair presented wearing a face guard, but this was soon disbanded. Alas, some of those who hadn't read the guidance for the training were equally unprepared for the meeting proper. All that said, the business of the meeting was completed much more smoothly than I would ever have imagined possible.

Having survived the full session (finally wound up at about 4.50pm), I have to say that my appreciation of Tony's efforts in representing YBKA at these meetings over many years knows no bounds. It was good to exchange quips and comments throughout by email and text. I can, however, only endorse Tony's last comment: "Glad I don't have to drive 280 miles home after this"!!

Linda Schofield

Huddersfield District Beekeepers Association Art Competition: "The Wonder of Bees"

Towards the end of last year, I teamed up with our Chairman, Derrie O'Sullivan, and two other committee members to arrange our first ever Art Contest. As we couldn't hold our annual Honey Show we thought it would be an opportunity for our members and their families to take part in something creative.

Through weekly Zoom meetings and regular Whatsapp messages we were able to launch the competition with rules of entry, categories and online entry forms. The timing couldn't have been better as we were plunged into "lockdown 2" at the beginning of November so had time and opportunity to get creative.

We had a great response as we encouraged entries from members, their children and grandchildren around the theme "The Wonder of Bees". We had drawings and collages sent from the south of England and even California! Our varied entries included songs, limericks, poems and photographs, as well as paintings, homemade crafts, drawings and screen prints.

Judging was never going to be easy, so we enlisted the help of 4 local creative artists to judge each category: a musical choir director, a contemporary fine artist, a newspaper photographer and a poet.

All the entries were sent to a drop box for the judges to make their decision and we awarded prizes to the winners just before Christmas.

You can see our winners' gallery on the HDBKA website:

[Arts Contest Results – HDBKA.](#)

Neonicotinoids and Sugar beet,

Why the concern re derogation?

Pam Hunter BBKA, January 2021 (from a virtual talk given to Leeds BKA, kindly shared by Cath Graham)

An outline of various points concerning sugar beet, how it is grown, why it is treated with insecticides, what impact the derogation of the use of thiomethoxam may have on bees and the environment.

The plant:

Sugar beet – *Beta vulgaris* – related to beetroot and chard (Family Amaranthaceae). Roots similar in appearance to parsnip, contain high concentration of sugar

Grown widely in Eastern England, near the few (4) UK factories. Grown for many years in Norfolk but only last couple of decades more widely

Previously beet for sugar imported – Russia, Europe

Not particularly easy crop, long growing period

Biennial but harvested before flowering during first year.

Needs neutral to slightly acidic soil

Seed planted late February, roots harvested autumn (before flowering)

Sugar extracted from roots, pulp used as animal feed

Susceptible to range of pests and diseases

Controlled by Sugar board, monopoly. NFU have Sugar board, set prices

The crop:

Harvested in autumn – very dependent on weather

Wet weather this autumn (2020) had adverse effects on crop

Growth affected by dry spring, late uneven emergence

Summer drought reduced growth, yields down

Sugar content poorer – 2020

There are claims that the crop damages the environment – so much soil is removed when harvesting, gets washed away

Comments also that should the Government be supporting a crop that harms health – they have just brought in a sugar tax!

The pests:

Major pest – beet yellow virus, lesser pest – beet mosaic virus

Transmitted by peach potato aphids, *Myzus persicae*

Overwinters peach and apricots

Wide range of summer hosts

Migrate late March to sugar beet
Can reduce both health of plant and sugar content
FERA have used traps to estimate numbers

Control:

Some resistance to pyrimicarb and to pyrethroids used as sprays
Neonicotinoids used until the ban to coat seeds prior to sowing
Taken up by the growing plant (i.e. systemic)
Protects whole plant from insect damage; i.e. Is a prophylactic treatment
Found in nectar, pollen and guttation fluid
initially thought to be an advance on spraying plants
Assumed less damage to environment

Problems with Neonicotinoids:

Seed coating includes bird antagonist but still a risk to birds
Compounds leach into surrounding soil
Can contaminate waterways
Residues last in soil – months, possibly years (literature variable)
Other plants can take up the compounds – following crop or wild plants
Affect all insects to varying degrees
Shown experimentally to be harmful to bumble bees and honey bees
Now recognised that use results in general environmental damage
Their use banned in the EU 2018
Michael Gove, who was then environment secretary, said: “The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators which play such a key part in our £100bn food industry, is greater than previously understood. We cannot afford to put our pollinator populations at risk.”

Derogation for thiomethoxam:

Points made for the emergency use are the authorisation appears necessary because of a danger which cannot be contained by any other reasonable means (the case for need)
use of the product will be limited and controlled
there are special circumstances
These are all highly debatable

Statement is made that seed will only be treated if aphid levels are high – this means that they cannot buy seed until the levels have been determined – is this really likely? It is probable that treated seed will already have been purchased

There is an admission that ‘risks could be posed to bees from flowering weeds in and around the crop’ but the mitigation proposed is ‘with the use of industry-recommended herbicide programmes to minimise the number of flowering weeds in treated sugar beet crops. This was considered to be

acceptable' – on the contrary this will increase the environmental damage.

They then say 'no flowering crops are planted as following crops for a period of at least 22 months, with an extended period of exclusion for oilseed rape (of 32 months), to minimise the risk to bees.'

Again reduction of flowers for a range of pollinators for a prolonged period is a backward step

Reactions to this:

Numerous complaints including

MP Caroline Lucas has written an excellent letter (January 12th) together with 35 cross party MPs making points noted above and also highlighting that in 2018, the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides concluded that "on the basis of the evidence presented, particularly in relation to the potential degree of environmental risk, the case has not yet been made to grant an emergency authorisation. The evidence has not changed. She concludes; 'We call on you to immediately reverse this deeply damaging decision.... and instead pursue agro-ecological policies to protect and restore wildlife

George Eustace replied on January 15th. He claims that this was 'to provide emergency protection against viruses which have significantly impacted yields of the 2020 sugar beet crop, He goes on to say 'Sugar beet crops have been severely affected and 2020 yields are forecast to be down by 20-25% on previous years.'

Cambridge's MP Daniel Zeichner, Shadow minister with national responsibility for pesticide use, has called for a Parliamentary vote (vice-president of Cambridgeshire BKA, a species champion for the ruderal bumblebee),

Several calls in the Lords for 'the publication of the NFU application and any detailed advice from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides and English Nature, so that we can have full transparency to understand the decision-making process?'

Major Flaws in the Government's approach:

It is probably true that yields of sugar beet are reduced this year – George Eustace states 20-25% - but they have totally ignored the fact that yields of virtually all crops have suffered badly from what is apparently one of the most extreme weather- pattern we have had for a long time. Late 2019 there were floods in East Anglia, then a very dry spring, summer droughts and excessive heat followed by a very wet autumn. These reductions are thus not entirely caused by virus infection.

The Farming press is full of reports of reduced yields, BBC's Country File in October in a round-up of the harvest commented that the wheat crop was approximately 40% lower than average and there were major reductions in

both spring and winter barley as well as OSR and beet.

A few examples from the farming press in East Anglia on other crops

It follows a 25% drop in his wheat yields this year, and a 15% fall in spring barley

said both his winter barley and wheat crops were down by 30%. It's his worst harvest since 2011 - and that was a disaster, he said.

expecting overall his winter wheat and barley would be below his five-year average on yield and his spring barley either average or slightly above. So far his harvests had been either "very ordinary" or "disappointing".

Some of Suffolk and Essex farmers' worst fears have been realised as their main cereal crops come in to reveal some disastrous yields.

Not all beet crops were especially bad this year–

Early yields from the sugar beet harvest are higher than expected after a tricky growing season hit by a spring drought and aphid-spread virus yellows disease.

One Suffolk farm was seeing initial yields close to its five-year average, although sugar content was generally low, reflecting dull weather in July and August.

said his crop - not yet harvested – looked "average" at the moment but felt the early summer drought had no doubt had an effect. "We have seen a bit of virus yellows but the crop seems to have grown through it," he said.

A worrying point are comments like this made by some farmers who clearly don't understand the widespread problems with neonicotinoids

he argued that neonicotinoids on beet seeds – as opposed to oilseed rape crops – should not harm bee populations as they were non-flowering.

Pam Hunter BBKA, January 2021

Neonicotinoids Derogation for use – a further prompt from our BBKA Link Trustee

The BBKA ADM passed an emergency resolution requiring BBKA to oppose this derogation for the use of a neonicotinoid on sugar beet.

The BBKA has written to the appropriate Secretary of State for DEFRA and the Prime Minister putting forward BBKA views.

The BBKA Executive Committee has provided links to various petitions that can be signed, links to enable members to write to their MP and help in completing the Pesticide Consultation Document (due to close on the 26th of February) **however, there is something missing.....**

Unless members of Associations use the details sent to them to object to this derogation of the regulations banning the use of these persistent and harmful chemicals, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient impetus in the government or relevant responsible departments to review this decision.

Can all members please:

- 1. Sign the petitions**
- 2. Write to their MP**
- 3. Complete the Consultation on Pesticides which closes on February 26th.**

Pollinators of all sorts need to be protected from the unwarranted use of persistent pesticides. Sugar beet this year.....

All the links you need are on this page on the BBKA website

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/news/letter-on-neonic-licence-and-what-you-can-do-to-help>

Richard Bond
BBKA link trustee

Three top talks for your diary! Open to all YBKA members

Thursday March 4th, 7-9pm: David Tarpy and Diagnosing queen problems: is it the queen, the colony, both, or neither?'

Register at:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcpcu2srz8rG9U3WtPeGrOuHdHTxRljNtBm>

This talk-which offers practical advice based on empirical research-looks at

different symptoms and deciding whether or not the problem is the queen's fault. A lesson in showing how we blame the queen way more often than is actually her fault!

David has been a Professor of Entomology and the Extension Apiculturist at North Carolina State University since 2003. His research interests focus on the biology and behaviour of honeybee queens to better improve the overall health of queens and their colonies. His work has provided some of the best empirical evidence that multiple mating by queens confers multiple and significant benefits to colonies through increased genetic diversity of their nest mates, particularly through increased tolerance to numerous diseases.

Thursday, March 18th, 7-9pm: Dr Jamie Ellis and Mating biology of the honeybee

Register

at: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcrfu2vqz0uHtOowabI7tRjyAKor_M4Xodx

Individual honeybees and honey bee colonies both reproduce. In this lecture, you will learn about the mating and reproductive habits of queen and drone honeybees. The reproduction of individual bees will be placed in a larger context with that of colony-level reproduction, a feat accomplished by the swarm.

Dr Jamie Ellis is the Gahan Endowed Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida. He has a BS degree in Biology from the University of Georgia (USA) and a PhD in Entomology from Rhodes University in South Africa. At the University of Florida, Jamie has responsibilities in extension, instruction and research. Regarding his extension work, Jamie created the UF, South Florida, and Caribbean Bee Colleges, and the UF Master Beekeeper Program. As an instructor, Jamie supervises PhD and Masters students. Currently, Jamie and his team have over 30 active research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination

Thursday, April 1st, 7-9pm: Randy Oliver and Reading the combs - Understanding bee biology over the course of a season

Register at: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlIf-6rpjkuHNWqKB-MJtFf7cveUg-VOJ62>

By acquiring a better understanding of the biology of bees, nutrition, parasites, and pathogens over the course of the season, and by learning to "read the combs," the beekeeper can then make better informed management decisions adapted to his/her particular situation.

Randy runs the not-for-profit website Scientificbeekeeping.com with the aim of providing evidence-based and scientifically-verified explanations of the biological processes occurring in the hive, as well as the effects of various management options allowing the beekeeper to make informed practical management decisions. Based in California, Randy has been a regular contributor to the American Bee Journal since 2006 and aims to provide beekeepers with a resource of readable and straightforward information on how to practice good bee husbandry, and exercise environmental and community responsibility.

Clare McGettigan: Education and Training YBKA
(education@ybka.org.uk)

YBKA CALENDAR 2021/22

Friday 8th January: GPC Meeting 6pm (Zoom)

Saturday 16th January: BBKA virtual ADM 10am

Sunday 31st January: Closing date for new entries for BBKA April exams

Friday 12th March: GPC Meeting 6pm (Zoom)

Saturday 13th March: Beetradox (Sandown Park – postponed, watch website)

Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st March: Training for invigilators and candidates for BBKA on-line Modules Exams (details tbc)

Saturday 27th March: YBKA Delegates Meeting 10am (Zoom)

Friday 16th to Sunday 18th April: BBKA Spring Convention (virtual event – see BBKA website)

Saturday 24th April: BBKA Modules Exams (on-line only)

Friday 14th May: GPC Meeting 6pm (venue/medium - tbc)

Tuesday 13th to Thursday 15th July: Great Yorkshire Show (Harrogate Showground- tbc)

Friday 16th July: GPC Meeting 6pm (venue/medium – tbc)

Friday 17th September: GPC Meeting 6pm (venue/medium – tbc)

Friday 15th October: GPC Meeting 6pm (venue/medium – tbc)

Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd October: National Honey Show (Sandown Park – tbc)

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th November: Cosmetics Workshops with Dr Sara Robb (tbc)

Saturday 13th November: BBKA Modules Examinations (venue/medium tbc)

Saturday 27th November: YBKA AGM (venue/medium - tbc)

Committee Details

Dave Shannon is Chair of YBKA

Mark Millard is Vice Chair

Norbert Cooper continues as Treasurer

Kirit Gorhandas is Examination and Assessments Officer

Clare McGettigan is Education Training Officer

Linda Schofield is Secretary

Tony Jefferson is the YBKA Delegate to BBKA.

Chris Barlow continues as Newsletter Editor

David Lamont continues as YBKA Webmaster

Classified Adverts

Do you have anything bee related for sale or are you wanting something bee related? If so, please email newsletter@ybka.org.uk the editor for a free sale or wanted listing

Thorne's large, stainless steel steam wax extractor complete with steam generator. Used a couple of times and in very good condition. A bit small for my setup sadly. I'm looking for £250 or very near. On Thorne's site at £430. Call Rich on 07801 847487 to view in Strensall York if interested.



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