



Southampton & District Bee Keepers Association

October 2009

Foragings

Newsletter

Contact Details

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Contributors this month

Kerry Davies

Andy Willis

Dates for the Diary

1st October

S&DBKA Subscriptions due

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*Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> October,*

*12:00 to 17:30*

**Pumpkin Festival**

Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley

Come along and see the Co-Op launch their 'Plan B' and visit the Bee tent promoting the art of bee-keeping.

Adults; £1.50 - Children over 5; 50p

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Thursday, 15th October,

19:30

Wax Purification

Lyndhurst Community Centre

Andy Willis will be giving a talk to the New Forest BeeKeepers about how to purify and maximise their wax harvest, the 'Andy' method.

All S&DBKA members are welcome.

POSTPONED

Honey Tasting Evening

The Four Horseshoes

An evening where you will be able to try several honey's and listen to someone talk about the different characteristics of each one.
(Unfortunately this event has had to be re-scheduled, a new date will be released soon)

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*Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November,*

*10:00 - 16:00*

Barton Peveril College, Eastleigh

**HBA Autumn Convention  
and Honey Show**

Advance tickets are available from our Association secretary at a reduced rate of £10.00. The format has changed this year.

Come along and support our County show and see if the change of venue and format is for the better.

## PESTS & DISEASE

In line with the CSL guidelines the Varroa count for October

| Level and Control Required | Average Mite Drop per Day | Proportion of Infested Drone Pupae |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Low<br>No Action           | 8 or less                 |                                    |
| Medium<br>Plan Action      | Between 8 & 9             |                                    |
| High<br>Take Action        | More than 9               |                                    |

### *A novice's review of honey harvesting*

*By Kerry Davies*

Now we've all heard the whisperings about Andy's honey shed - a sacred place, a mini temple and factory dedicated to the honey making process.

What everyone doesn't know, is that it's all true, I know, I've seen it and dare I say it, I've helped out in it. There are little gadgets in there - extendable double sieves, frame holders and special trays for draining wax cappings. It's the sort of room we who are starting out can only dream of one day owning.

How did I gain access to this special place? Well, not being a proud person, a little bit of pleading came into play. Having committed the sin of failing to do my weekly checks earlier this year, I was determined to be prepared for the honey season and asked for an audience with Andy in the honey shed. As always he graciously took pity on me and 8 hours after disappearing into the shed, I emerged feeling fully briefed on uncapping, spinning, sieving and jarring. I even learned a little something about how difficult it is to process heather honey, enough so that I shall never dare try it!

Anyway, the point of this article is to actually try and give a rough guide to honey making from the beginners point of view, to boast about my successes and try and skip over my shortcomings, so that some of you may be forewarned for your crops next year.

So, where to start? I guess removing the honey is the best place to begin, with the 'bash' method as I like to call it. This is where you take your super off, 'bash' it a couple times onto the upturned roof (where all the bees fall into the lid) and you move fast as grease lightening to then cover the super in a clean cloth so the bees don't fly straight back in. Like all beekeeping techniques, I've discovered this one requires practice, my discovery being made while driving home with my supers alongside 3 or 4 bees who decided to hitch a lift. One of the important

points to remember about removing your supers is timing - do it too late and like me you could find yourself cursing your (up till now) much loved bees for having started to munch their way into your honey crop - how dare they eat the products of their hard work before I get it spun, jarred and onto my toast!

Honey making requires prep work if you don't have a honey shed - lots of newspaper spread about everywhere, numerous sieves, sharp bread knives, wipe clean chopping boards, bowls for excess honey drips and of course the extractor and honey tank.

To get started and get the honey flowing you need to uncap the frames. A good sharp bread knife will do the trick just as well as an uncapping knife. Be careful though, the aim is to remove a THIN layer of wax, cutting through the air gap between wax and honey, not to become a machete wielding comb gouger (I did eventually get better the more I cut!)

Now if you're lucky you'll have an uncapping tray and frame holder to uncap all your frames at once and not lose a drop of honey. If you're like me, you have to do them one at a time, stick the cappings in a sieve over a bowl (work out what to do with those later?!) and try not to drip honey over the floor as you make a run for the extractor to put the frame in.

There's even a proper way to load the extractor (Andy did try to explain to me it was all about centrifugal forces?!) but here's the tip it seems - load one heavy frame next to one light frame on each side of the extractor - don't exactly know why, just do it, it works.

Now with the spinning, more techniques for this too. We start off with a gentle hand spin, listening for the gentle rainfall patter of honey hitting the sides of the extractor. We spin gently until the patter dies down (it's easier if you take a peek while you're doing it)

and turn the frames over and repeat so that both sides are equally emptied.

Warning:- unless you want to be yelled at for sticking the extractor handle make sure you rinse your hands in cold water each time you turn the frames....

Next comes the power spin. Now, if you're like me and think you have relatively decent arm muscle so this will be a breeze - guess again. Apparently it's all to do with the wrist action(!). Basically power spinning is turning the little extractor handle as hard and fast as you can to get out those last drops of honey. Again we do this on both sides of the frame and in some cases, twice.

Hopefully by this time the bottom of the extractor should be filling up and it's time to filter it into your honey bucket.

Tips - Honey bucket should be clean. Valve at bottom of honey bucket should be closed. (tighten this valve only to finger tightness - don't get over excited and turn it too hard - they break. Sorry Andy - I still owe you a new valve.)

Your extractor then needs to be lifted onto a table/work surface and tilted towards your honey bucket (phone books hold it in place well) - be ready with your sieves *before* opening the valve. Not being a gadget geek I simply went with holding two different sized sieves over each other to take out stray cappings/bits of pollen, but you might have a double sieve already, but I'm going to defend my method and say it works well and gives you time to think while you hold them there!

For me, I found this to be the best part of making honey, as odd as it may sound.

I loved seeing the honey flow into the bucket, a slow drip and drizzle, and the satisfying sound of it hitting the bottom of the bucket. The colour of the honey, light golden as it leaves the

*A novice's review of honey harvesting continued*

extractor turning to dark gold as it gathers volume. Both relaxing and rewarding at the same time.

Anyway, back to the process. It's at this point your honey making hits a bump for the week as you have to let your product sit (lid on the bucket!) and allow the excess air bubbles to rise to the surface so you can skim them off. Tip for skimming - use a soup ladle and gently remove the 'scum' (nice term, I know) from the surface in a circular motion. Don't throw it away - it's still fine to eat.

While your honey sits and relaxes, this will give you time to wash and dry all of those jars you've bought in anticipation of making your millions. Wash-

ing up jars is, well, it's washing up really. The important part is that they dry upside down so no dust can get in and then bake them in a low temperature oven for about 5-6 mins (upside down again) to make sure they are REALLY clean. When you take them out, remember, keep them upside down and store this way until you use them.

Jarring was fun too, just like pouring a pint (not that I've ever done that, but after 64 jars feel I could give it a damn good go).

So we hold our jars up to the honey bucket valve, tilted so the honey hits the side and not the bottom thereby hopefully getting no, or few, bubbles into the jar of honey (bubbles are ap-

parently the enemy, especially for 'show' jars).

We open the valve, *slowly*, lest we be swept away on a tide of runaway honey (it does flow pretty quick) and as the jar fills, upright the jar. Simple, right?

Well after that comes the weighing of your jar to make sure they are all the same amount for each, grabbing a spoon, removing some honey from some, adding to others as necessary - this bit can all get a little sticky - be warned. Then we simply add a lid, wipe the jar down and add a label.

Voilà! - honey ready to sell and give away.

## *The winter feed*

*By Andy Willis*

2009 has again been a difficult year for our bees. The main honey flow was cut short in early July and since then nothing has come in on most sites in our area. As a result of this most colonies have been eating stores in the hives and many have completely emptied their brood boxes of stores (which would normally be enough to get them through the winter)

So, as I did last year I am feeding 1 gallon of thick syrup (8lb sugar in 4 pints of water) before applying the Apiguard when I remove the last honey supers. Once the 4 week treatment period is over I am expecting to need to add a further 2 gallons of thick syrup to each hive. Each hive will therefore require 24lb sugar in total (made into 3 gallons (24 pints) this year. I have already heard reports (not from

our area) of hives that had had the honey crop removed in July which are now dead through starvation!

This year (unlike last) there is brood in all my hives as the queens didn't go off lay in August/September, so things are better than last year. The bad news is that we are now in near drought conditions with very low moisture content in both the soil and air. The ivy which is in flower now requires the moisture in the soil and air, to be able to yield the most nectar for our bees, and in order to get that it needs to rain. If it does rain, our bees will be reluctant to leave the hives and work the ivy, also, the rain will wash out the nectar and pollen as the flowers are open and unprotected. So the

hope is that we will get some rain but then return to good foraging weather.

The result of last years heavy syrup feeding with my hives was that out of 25 hives taken into the winter, I only lost one from isolation starvation. Most beekeepers had much higher losses than this. To get through the winter a colony of bees will require 40lb of stores in the brood boxes (not in the supers). This equates to 6-8 fully capped frames in the brood box of a national hive. This needs to be present before the season closes in November.

P.S. Only use white granulated sugar for feeding and not brown as this upsets the bees' tummies.

## *Hampshire Honey Show and Convention*

14th November 2009  
Barton Peveril College, Eastleigh

Advance tickets at £10 each available from Diane Burrows [secretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:secretary@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Morning Lectures

10.15 - Dr Dave Chandler - Fungal control of Varroa  
11:30 - Clive de Bruyn - What the hobbyist can learn from the Commercial Beekeeper

## Harrod's Sale, or is it?

By Kerry Davies

For those of you who haven't given up reading and are still awake, I was asked by Andy to give a hint as to what I did with the cash I made from selling my honey this year, being the first time ever I've done it.

Firstly, I was surprised by the amount of interest local honey created amongst my friends and work colleagues. Shortly after producing 32 jars of honey (and being in shock there was still lots left in my honey tank) I saw the jars disappear within 2 days and had to buy another 32 just to get rid of the rest as I don't actually eat it.

In total I made a little over £120 and retained about 10 jars to give away as Christmas gifts.

This money I had already decided to plough back into my bees and what better way to do so than the Thornes Sale Day in Stockbridge. I promptly made a list of what I wanted to buy, again being desperate to be properly prepared for next year.

My list contained 1 new hive, 2 supers, a feed bucket and 50 frames.

Oh, what a naive person I was.

I convinced my mum to come with me to the sale day, she also thought it sounded like good fun and I wanted to bring her more into the beekeeping family as she had actually helped me with my honey making and enjoyed it - two pairs of hands certainly were worth it!

I told her there'd probably be about 20-30 people there, a bit

crowded but we'd only be there about 20 minutes, I had my list after all.

We turned up to the sale about quarter of an hour early, I wanted to be there in good time, and got my first shock - there was a queue into the farm from the main road and I could see the farmers field next to the shop was chock full of cars - what was going on?

As I parked I could see a marquee had been put up in the normal car park and there was a hoard of people there - not a small crowd, a hoard! People had brought carts and wheelbarrows with them, and I'm sure there were even some dressed in tracksuit bottoms looking like they were about to enter a race.

Little did I know.

As we got closer I realised there were pallets full of equipment - roofs, floors, supers, frames, a tent full of gadgets and gizmos all laid out, and a rope line preventing mad eyed beekeepers from ram-paging through the scene.

This is when I started to have my doubts. It was going to be chaos, I wasn't prepared for this at all.

However, it seems my mum had other plans. She turned to me and asked which bits she should be running for when the rope dropped. That's when the wheels came off.

Suddenly the list went out the window, well if we're here we may as well get a good supply of stuff right?

So I quickly started pointing out where she should go, she'd be in charge of the hive itself (try explaining what a flat-pack roof and mesh floor looks like to someone who's only seen a hive once!) and I went for the supers and frames.

We'd reconviene with our stash in the top corner of the car park.

Then the rope dropped and all hell broke loose - people running everywhere, carts and wheelbarrows bearing down on the pedestrian shoppers, I swear I even saw a man leap for a pallet and cover it with his body screaming 'It's mine! It's all mine!'

It was a people swarm.

And when the dust had settled, I went to find my mum in our corner to count up our winnings - 2 complete hives, 4 supers, 150 frames, 2 packs of spacers, a feed bucket, nails/runners and a pack of those funny round dipping sticks used for getting honey out of jars (my mum had gone a bit mad by then and thought they'd go nicely with the honey jars as Christmas gifts).

We got home about 3 hours later - it took us some time before we managed to procure a cart (I know better for next year!) and make our way through the till line (Thornes *really* need more staff). I also managed to spend at least double what I had made from my honey but kept reassuring myself it would all be worth it in the end.

Complete and utter madness - but wow, what a ride! I'd recommend it to anyone, just so you'd believe it.

## 100% cotton Association Polo Shirts At only £19.00 each

The shirts are made from 100% combed ring spun cotton and come in various colours including grey. All will have the Association Logo on.

If interested contact Janice Roper by phone on (023) 8084 5875 or by email at [jan.roper@rya-online.net](mailto:jan.roper@rya-online.net)