



# The Beehive

## Birmingham & District Bee-keepers' Association

### FEBRUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER



**W**ell, I hope that this year will be better for your bees and honey production than last.



**T**he interest in beekeeping continues with a number of new members joining your branch, so welcome to you all. If you have joined or renewed your membership you will find in your envelope the BDI certificate of insurance. Existing members - no certificate? Then you had better do something about it ASAP!



**F**or the quiz organised by the Coventry Branch on 4th January, four of your members braved the cold to turn up at All Saints Church Hall in Allesley. It turned out it wasn't really a quiz after all as the questions focused on the opinions of the panel members. We were made to feel very welcome and remember that the return match is on January 29th, so be there to ask your question.



**Apiary News** From what I understand works will shortly commence on improving the surface water drainage problem in the vicinity of the at Apiary at Highbury Park. Although the ultimate ownership of the Park and Highbury Hall lies with the City Council there are differences as the Hall is administered by a trust and the apiary is on trust land, which has a different financial account (small). However, it seems that our pleas are being heard in the right quarter and the works may include our area. While one the subject of the apiary you will no doubt remember from the last issue the rules that have had to be introduced. I notice from some of the BDI certificates that some of you have more than one hive at £2.00/hive, so if you are in this category please conform to the rules and make way for the new members who might require a pitch. Contact the Apiary Manager, John Madgwick on 558 8623 or johnmadgwick@blueyonder.co.uk. Contact him in the first instance if you have any doubts on what to do.



**H**ere's a topical honey storey bearing in mind the recent attempt by an extremist to blow up a transatlantic airliner. An airport in California was closed for several hours after a passenger who was carrying honey in plastic bottles triggered a security alert. Police were unable to explain yesterday why two baggage screening staff at Meadows Field Airport had to be taken to hospital on Tuesday after they opened the bottles and were nauseated by the fumes. A police spokesman said the bottles had tested positive for explosives even though the contents were later confirmed to be honey.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Meetings at Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Hall, Oak Tree Lane, Bournville @ 7.30PM**

**January 29th** A return quiz night with members from Coventry. See article on the left for more information.

**February 26th** AGM with cheese and wine.

**March 26th** Mr & Mrs Hurst on buds, leaves, shoots and herbs.

There will be some herbs for sale.

**April 30th** Celia Davies "So, you want to keep bees?"

**Lunch date** 3rd February at the Hollybush 12.30. Phone Margaret on 449 0700 if you wish to go.

**H**ere's a recipe you can try if you've have any of that precious honey left for Banana and Honey Teabread. You will need 115g (4oz) unsaturated margarine, 115g (4oz) light soft brown sugar, 115g (4oz) set honey, 2 beaten eggs, imperial or metric, 225g (8oz) self raising flour, ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg or cinnamon, 2 large bananas and a squeeze of lemon juice.

Here's what you do.

Beat together margarine, sugar and honey, then beat in the eggs and finally fold in flour and spice.

Peel bananas and mash with a little lemon juice, then add this to the mixture. Grease or line a 900g (2lb) loaf tin and spoon in the mixture. Bake for

1-1¼ hours at 180C/350F or until risen, golden brown and firm to touch. By the way do you know how to peel a banana? Don't grab the stalk, try the other end where the flower has been, it's much easier, and even monkeys do it this way and they eat a lot of bananas.



**L**ike a bit of gardening do you? An edition of BBC Radio 4 Gardeners' Question Time is to be recorded on Monday 22nd February at Selly Park Technology College, Selly Park Road, B29 7PH. Tickets are £2.50 which also includes refreshments. If you wish your question to be considered, there is space on the ticket for the details and you should arrive by 5.30PM. If you don't wish to ask a question then 6.30 PM is your arrival time. Tickets available from 0121 471 1267.



**F**reya von Moltke. Not a name you would associate with beekeeping? Read on! She has just died aged 98 and was a co-founder with her husband of a group of German anti-Nazi activists. The group was not concerned with the overthrow of Hitler but with the economic, social and spiritual foundations of the new society which they hoped would come into existence once Hitler had departed the scene. Her husband was under threat from the regime and was subsequently executed but he had asked Freya to hide all the papers and letters relating to the group in safe place. Where did she hide them... in her beehives! So now you know.



**T**he bees worst enemy? HONEY bees are being wiped out because humans have damaged their immune systems by making their diets less diverse. A study of colonies in Avignon, south east France, found that those fed food that varied in pollen composition were healthier than those forced to stick to one flower source.

It is estimated that one in eight plant species is threatened with extinction and scientists say this decline is behind colony collapse disorder, which has devastated bee populations in Britain, the rest of Europe and the United States.

Cedric Alaux, of the National Institute of Agronomic Research in Avignon, said that if the decline in pollen biodiversity went unchecked it could weaken the health of honey bee colonies.



Know what this is?

Humans are the main threat to plants through habitat loss, the introduction of alien insects or animals, over-exploitation, pollution and disease. Climate change is also recognised as a major problem. In 2007 almost a fifth of Britain's honey bees perished - double the acceptable level. The previous year nearly a third of hives did not make it through the winter. By feeding bees diets that varied in pollen composition, the researchers showed for the first time that pollen nutrition could affect immunity. They tested a bee's immune system, fat body content and glucose oxidase activity, which enables them to sterilise colony and brood food, and found that those provided with a diverse diet scored highest. Dr Alaux, whose findings are published in *Biology Letters*, said: "This work emphasises the importance of diet diversity and underscores the need for further studies to test different blends of proteins and identify protein 'cocktails' essential for developing normal immune function." The honey bee is essential for agriculture and is thought to contribute £200 million to the British economy by pollinating crops.



**A** piece from the pen of member Bernard Luscombe.

We have just had the coldest extended winter period for 30 years, or so the Met office experts tell us. I wonder if the bees were cognisant of this useless fact, well useless to them any way. As responsible beekeepers we must all have been wondering how they were coping with the cold! Most of us have now adopted the open mesh varroa floor as part of our IPM (Integrated Pest Management) programme. Some of you will have taken pity on the bees and slid in the inspection boards to maybe cut down on cold air updraft, which you think may make them uncomfortable. I did not go down this path, working on the theory that they have evolved over thousands of years living in holes in trees and many other cold and draughty places without giving them any major problems. (that is with the exception of arctic areas of course)

Today 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010, I went with some trepidation to check that all was well with my bees, the temperature had risen to 2° C and a slow thaw had set in, I was in for a pleasant surprise. There were quite a few very fat bees flying just a few metres away from their hives and returning very quickly looking very much slimmer. They had of course been on a classic and evacuation flight, not having had a "poo" for 2/3 weeks it must have come as a big relief to them! As we all know bees do not defecate in their hives. As they flew it was actually possible to see them evacuating their tiny bowels? There was still a covering of snow in front of some of the hives; this was quickly becoming a yellow carpet. Proof if proof were needed that much was well indoors and that they were feeding ok, and an indication that the autumn feed was adequate for their winter needs. But they may still require a little bit more help over the next two months, as the brood starts to expand and food stocks get depleted at an increasing rate. I remember a short poem. "One two three four five candy keeps your bees alive" As a

safety first action I shall be giving them all a block of candy in the next few days. Tough little critters aren't they?



**S**ales of retail honey have fallen for the first time in six years following the collapse of British bee colonies. A third of hives failed to survive the the winter of 2007 and a fifth of bee colonies were wiped out by disease and bad weather in 2008, forcing prices up, which in turn put off consumers. The *Grocer* magazine disclosed that sales in the 12 months to October 2009 were down 5.4% while prices rose by almost 18%.



**F**or those of you with hives at the Highbury Park apiary, read on but don't let that put off the others. You might know that the apiary is actually sited on Highbury Hall Trust land and a meeting has been organised on 24th February at 7PM in the Council House. The historical details are:- One of Birmingham's most famous parliamentarian's, Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain MP built Highbury Hall as a family home in 1878. The Highbury estate was transferred to trustees in 1919 by the eldest son of Joseph Chamberlain and the estate was finally gifted to Birmingham City Council on trust for the benefit of the citizens of Birmingham in 1932. The estate comprises of Highbury Hall, Chamberlain House and land that is now forms part of Highbury Park.

The Council, as Sole Trustee of the Highbury Trust is looking to identify how charitable activity can be maximised at Highbury to satisfy the objects of the trust together with the commercial opportunities that can be developed in order to finance and sustain the charity into the future. The Council is currently using part of Highbury Hall as a successful conference and events centre.

Initial proposals and expressions of interest from individuals and/or organisations are requested to be submitted by 15th February.



**A**nd for those of you who have embraced the modern age the latest Friends of Highbury Park newsletter is available to view at <http://is.gd/6WzdY>



**T**he usual Warwickshire BKA honey show won't be at Stoneleigh but at Hatton Country Park on 2nd October, and while I'm on about dates there is a possibility that there may not be a Gardeners' Weekend Show at Kings Heath Park this year. A decision is expected soon. For new members this has been the venue for our own honey show which is both a competition and sales outlet for your excess golden nectar.



**S**ugar? Yes dear? 25Kg bag works out at 56p/Kg at Bookers Cash & Carry in Stirchley. Too much a quantity for you? Share a bag with someone else. Don't know how to get in to Bookers, as you will need a store card? Ask me, I'll tell you. And finally... an elderly Polish beekeeper who passed out after being stung woke up inside a coffin. Jozef Guzy, 76, from Katowice, was pronounced dead from a heart attack, covered in a white sheet, collected by undertakers and taken to a funeral parlour. It was then that Mr Guzy woke and shouted for help. "He was shouting and banging on the coffin - he made enough noise to raise the dead so we couldn't miss him," said Dariusz Charon, the undertaker. Mr Guzy was taken to hospital and released after a few days. "The undertaker saved my life," he said. "The first thing I did when I got out of hospital was take him a pot of honey."

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