

# Beemaster

The Newsletter of the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association  
Founded 30 April 1884, Registered Charity No. 508171



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## In this issue

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- 4 Diary dates
- 5 From the Editor, *Stuart Humphreys*
- Local news and advice**
- 6 Notes from Norwell, *Griff Dixon*
- 8 View from the Vale, *Stuart Humphreys*
- 10 This month in your apiary, *Penny Forsyth*
- 12 NBKA auction, *Andrew Barber*
- 16 Recipe of the month, *Linda Jordan*
- 16-19 Advertisements

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*Please note:*

Beemaster is published monthly. Contributions by 25<sup>th</sup> of prior month, please, to the Editor. Copy received after this date may have to be held over to the next Beemaster. The Editor retains the right to amend submitted articles or to reject articles which appear, in his opinion, to be unsuitable. Views expressed in Beemaster articles are not necessarily those of the Editor and may not reflect the opinions of the Council of the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association.



## Diary dates

Some key dates for the next couple of months

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The **Nottingham region** holds its meetings on the first Monday in each month.

The **Newark region** meets on the third Monday of the month.

Meetings are now being held in person.

Monday, 20 June  
8.00pm

**Newark Region meeting**  
Ferry Inn, North Muskham NG23 6HB

Thursday, 23 June  
7.30pm

**NBKA Council meeting**  
Brackenhurst College, Southwell NG25 0QF

Monday, 4 July  
7.30pm

**Nottingham Region meeting**  
Eagle's Nest Community Centre, Gedling Road, Arnold NG5 6NZ  
**Queen rearing** with Marin Anastasov

Monday, 18 July  
8.00pm

**Newark Region meeting**  
Ferry Inn, North Muskham NG23 6HB

Monday, 5 September  
7.3pm

**Nottingham Region meeting**  
Eagle's Nest Community Centre, Gedling Road, Arnold NG5 6NZ  
**Varroa resistance** with Steve Martin

Members should keep an eye on the excellent **NBKA website**: [www.nottsbees.org.uk](http://www.nottsbees.org.uk)

The NBKA website contains back issues of *Beemaster*.

## From the Editor

**Stuart Humphreys** introduces this month's *Beemaster*

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With apologies for a Jubilee bank holiday-induced delay, welcome to June's edition of *Beemaster*!

I'll start by giving another plug for our forthcoming 400th issue in August. It would be fantastic if you could take the time to contribute an article on whatever bee-related topic you think members would find interesting.

In the meantime, my thanks go to this month's contributors:

**Griff Dixon** (or 'Friar Tuck' as we must now call him) sets up an apiary at Nottingham Castle in recognition of World Bee Day and garners a lot of favourable publicity for the Association. You might recall that he has taken on a college student who was foolhardy enough to be looking for practical beekeeping experience – the poor soul has now clocked up over 50 hours under Griff's tutelage!

In my 'View from the Vale', we find that our two 'shook swarms' are settling in just fine; meanwhile two swarms from our other colony were swiftly donated to the Association's apiary at Brackenhurst.

Our West Country correspondent, **Penny Forsyth**, has taken time out from preparing for the Royal Cornwall Show to provide her ever-helpful advice for the month of June plus the usual 'to do' list, of course.

**Andrew Barber** reports on the successful return of the annual auction at the Newark Showground back in April and has plans to make this even bigger and better next year.

And for those of you who haven't eaten enough during the Jubilee celebrations, **Linda Jordan** provides the recipe for an almond strawberry cheesecake. (This seems a bit easier to make than the Jubilee Trifle, but I'm not sure I'm qualified to say either way.)

I hope you enjoy the read – and don't forget to submit to me your contributions to the 400<sup>th</sup> issue. Thank you!

# Notes from Norwell

**Griff Dixon** gives some work experience to a student

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## In the apiary

Last year it was rain, rain, rain; this year it's been sun, sun, sun. Hardly any swarms last year; this May I must have collected over 15 – all mine – and still collecting one yesterday. It has been a complete turnaround as oilseed rape was back on the agenda and 22 of my hives were collecting that! It was nearly a catastrophe in leaving the OSR too late to extract but fortunately I just about managed to get it all off without losing that much (an odd frame or two). The first round of extraction has been completed and now I am ready for a second round hopefully of late spring (non-OSR) honey.

May was a month in which beekeeping could have been 24/7 for me – phenomenally busy with the Nottingham Castle apiary installation for World Bee Day, Sconce and Devon Park 'The Hole' installation, and pollination hive collections and hive/nuc sales... I have been all over the place! Plus trying to house the swarms has meant most of my old hives intended for later in the season are almost full.

My work experience student Devin Murphy is up to 50 hours hands-on and has learnt to collect swarms like a professional. I was complaining last year of over-winter losses: while I had a couple this last winter, this year's queen cells have flourished and nucs and splits have been so easy to generate. I have had to double up on super frames and the 400 super foundation sheets are almost gone!

I have begun to set up my queen rearing area based on over-wintered queens from BHP (British Honey Producers) Queens. Two out of three survived and are building up really well. I have one queenless hive full of bees to start things off and I am looking forward to not having to buy any queens this year and see if I can keep up the strength of all my colonies' under my own steam. 'Griffin' Queens may get active as a new area of business this year – famous last words! The Queen Rearing motto is: "learn to accept failure!"



Returning to World Bee Day we installed four hives at Nottingham Castle on 11 May, a rare day when it was actually raining. You'll note in the photographs Devin and I doing our impressions of Friar Tuck and Little John!

Apart from the pouring rain and Nottingham Castle staff taking pictures and asking a lot of questions about beekeeping it was a very simple installation. There is a sheer drop the other side of the fence so hopefully the bees will understand the variations in topography quite quickly.

I was asked to return a few days later for a formal photograph session and to meet with Nottingham Castle's external publicity company. I was also informed that ITV may call by but alas this did not happen. I explained fully the role of the NBKA in respect of beekeeping education and the role of bee farmers in providing sustainable pollination services and their contribution to the UK economy.

We also discussed the issue of adulterated honey sold in the UK and pollination drawbacks under Brexit with the importation of bees now banned. I think some of this is now on the Nottingham Castle website and appeared on Nottingham Live. I did my best to hail the Association's contribution to beekeeping in Nottinghamshire and the substantial increase in membership both locally and across the country as the UK needs more beekeepers!



Whilst ITV News could not make it I was informed that the ITV weather presenter Des Coleman is working on a bee project and may want to use the bees at Nottingham Castle as part of this. We will wait to see if this happens. I am visiting the Castle every Wednesday lunchtime for their regular inspection. It's surprising how many passers-by stop and want to know about the bees. An information board is being prepared so that visitors can be kept informed about honey bees in Nottinghamshire and the UK.

The installation of two hives at Sconce and Devon Park Newark also went smoothly with the local park ranger, Simon, making use of some old enclosure netting with some Heras fencing. These will also be inspected on a Wednesday. The Park have also purchased some bee suits and are hoping to encourage other local park members to participate in basic beekeeping education at some point but as yet we have not discussed on how this might work.



The photographs show the area of the Park being prepared with the other two photos of the two hives installed on 26 May. These are established colonies which have already honey cropped once at an orchard location.

It has been a very busy month and I am sure June will be the same, although – as Penny reminds us – don't forget the June gap and keep an eye on stores.

That's it for now!

## View from the Vale (of Belvoir)

How bees are faring in the south-eastern corner of Notts by **Stuart Humphreys**

May was, of course, a busy month. Thanks to two swarms in the first couple of weeks of the month, both re-captured, our apiary temporarily increased from three to five colonies. Fortunately, both swarms alighted on the same branch of the nearby plum tree and were easily shaken into a skep. Although we've done this more times than we should admit to, it remains fascinating to see the bees march one by one into the skep housing the queen.





The swarms – prime plus a cast – had come from our colony No. 3 (on the right in the picture above). Naturally, this was the one that we hadn't shook swarmed. Upon inspection it had probably 20 queen cells; we removed all but one. As for the two colonies where we had carried out the shook swarm procedure, we were delighted to see comb drawn out on the fresh foundation and frame upon frame of eggs – in fact, we had never seen so many. The colonies were evidently in the process of quickly recovering from the disruptive procedure, exactly as Alec Thomson has always said they would.

Anyway, as we only wish to keep 2-3 colonies, Andrew Barber was more than happy to take a couple off our hands for the Brackenhurst Apiary. And then there were three...



## This month in your apiary: June

**Penny Forsyth** reminds us that this month can bring both abundance and anxiety

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June should be a beautiful, sunny month with plentiful forage to help our colonies build up well and fill supers... time to book the extractor and order extra jars and labels!

Well yes, but so much depends on the weather and foraging patterns we experience during the spring months: periods of cold, wet and windy weather or dry spells and unseasonable heat all hold back growth and flowering and inhibit nectar production, meaning poor foraging conditions for our bees and the risk of starvation: we have had numerous early starvation warnings from the NBU in recent years. A record of the forage crops and plants available to your bees in your area and the dates they come into flower each year is an invaluable reference and can serve as an early warning of troubles ahead.

June can bring abundance and anxiety in equal measure: we have all heard of the 'June gap'. This refers to the possible gap in flowering between the spring flowers such as sycamore, blackthorn, hawthorn and oilseed rape, and the start of the summer flowers such as lime, clover, blackberry and sweet chestnut. This can be a dangerous time for our bees as colonies are at their most vigorous and stores can be less easily replenished. This is a particularly important consideration when deciding to take off honey: colonies can easily starve if there is both sparse forage and poor weather after the oilseed rape honey harvest.

The June gap is by no means a constant but we must nevertheless be alert to the risk and be vigilant, as always, that there is sufficient food in the hive to carry the colony through. Please be mindful of forage and weather conditions and leave some honey for the bees!

Expanding colonies mean more brood to host varroa so be sure to monitor any drop and treat as required: MAQs can be used with honey supers on the hive.

Spells of poor weather that confine the bees in increasingly crowded hives mean a greater risk of disease transmission and swarming so be alert to the signs when carrying out inspections. Despite our best efforts to prevent or control swarming our colonies may still swarm if we haven't at least kept up with the need for more space for the bees to deposit nectar during a strong flow. Remember, nectar takes up more room than honey.

If there has been any appreciable acreage of oilseed rape in the vicinity of your hives you will need to extract the honey before it sets in the comb. You'll need to act quickly as setting seems to begin the moment you remove the supers from the hive!

Everyone on the swarm collectors list will need to have their skeps and swarm collecting kit permanently in their vehicles. June's a busy month...

## Jobs for June



Continue weekly inspections and undertake swarm control if required.



If inspections reveal that food stores are low, feed 1:1 syrup in a contact feeder if there are no supers on, or fondant. Remember to only feed in the evening and to reduce the hive entrance to avoid robbing. Try to avoid spilling syrup in the apiary for the same reason.



Add another super when the current one is almost full of bees, not honey.



Continue to replace old or damaged comb, especially in the brood box.



Extract oilseed rape honey as soon as the bees start capping it and if no droplets fly out of uncapped cells when you quickly shake the frame; return the extracted frames to the hives you took them from, in the evening to prevent robbing.



Mark any new queens – yellow is this year's colour.



Monitor for varroa: an average daily mite fall of 10 or more means the colony is in trouble and needs treating. MAQS can be used with honey supers on.



Continue monitoring for Asian hornets in your apiary: baits should now be protein-based and offered in an open dish to avoid bycatch; weight the dish with a pebble.



If you want bees, order a nucleus or sign up to receive a swarm.

And finally, enjoy your beekeeping and be ready to learn from the bees. Remember the Green Cross Code? Stop, look and listen! It's a good one to apply each time you visit your apiary. Stop and ask yourself what your intention is today... Have you got the right equipment with you? Enough time and the right conditions to carry it out?

Look at your hives, your bees and the surroundings. Does everything look normal, are the bees flying, taking in pollen, forming a blanket on the front of the hive? Listen to the sounds – contented humming or angry buzzing?

Time spent observing your bees is even more valuable than reading about them. As any experienced beekeeper will tell you, the bees don't read the books! All the more reason then to look on the bees as your books and study them well.

## NBKA auction

**Andrew Barber** reports on the successful return of the annual auction

On Saturday, 16 April we held the Nottinghamshire annual auction of bees and beekeeping equipment. We took the bold step of holding it later than usual and wondered if that would make a difference to the number attending – this didn't seem to be the case.

In the past we have always followed the Lincoln auction. Being a week later this meant that I had to always wait until they had booked their auction before I could book ours. Having attended the Lincoln auction, I was surprised how few lots were there and, indeed, how down the attendance seemed to be. Perhaps people were still worried about COVID.



Usually, it is freezing cold at our auction and we have had to have supplementary heating for the office staff, but the day itself proved to be surprisingly warm. The venue at the County showground at Winthorpe, Newark has been improved over previous years as the building (usually used as the cattle lines during the County Show) had been used as a waiting area for people post-COVID injection, the showground having been used as a vaccination centre, so they had had to put in decent flooring and smartened up the place.



I was there from 8 o'clock in the morning, closely followed by Pete Bull. There is always someone waiting, some people having travelled many miles to get there. They set about unloading their items. We had already made a start the previous day, as David Chase had kindly brought over some hives and equipment which had been donated by the family of the late, much-lamented David Kemp. Also, we had already had some bees arrive the previous day. These had had plenty of time to settle down in their new, albeit temporary home.

We logged the sale items and gave them a lot number. These have to be inputted onto the computer, this job being done by my wife, Janice, and Pete's wife, Arlene. I must say the pace was relentless. Lots were rolling in thick and fast. These all had to be logged in on paper then transferred to the computer system, so that they were all on file.

Then more bees arrived, so someone had to direct the seller round the back to where the other bees were. These new bee colonies then had to start relocating themselves, generally swirling round in an undisciplined manner. Coincidentally there was also a dog show on site. Despite us having warning signs up saying CAUTION LIVE BEES, and them having about 90 acres in which to exercise their dogs, their chosen path seemed to be right past the bees. Someone had to stand near and tell them of the dangers, most of them being totally oblivious.



Anyway, none of the dogs, or handlers, seemed to have been stung – unlike some of the punters who came to buy the bees! I always wonder about this, and it seems to be true of other beekeepers' auctions I have attended. Whether it's a herd thing or not, people crowd around open colonies without any protection at such sales, something they would never do with their own colonies.

Anyway, I digress. In all we had 14 colonies for sale. This is unusual for our sale as we seldom have more than four or five. The bees made reasonable prices of between £150 and £180. Not vast by any means, but the sellers were pleased. It seemed a bargain, and they well might have been but you can never be sure what sort of bees you are buying. They were all OK from the health point of view, as they had been checked by a bee inspector prior to the sale; but as for temperament, you can never be sure.

In the end we had about 300 lots for sale. There were many bargains. Also, people think that there will only be ancient tin plate extractors and the like but there were a lot of brand-new items for sale. At the other end of the spectrum was an old WBC hive – I had to caution people not to cough too loudly near it, but amazingly it still sold, the buyer having a specific use for it... possibly a present for someone he didn't like very much!



In all, the day went extremely well, we attracted people from all over the country, possibly Northumberland being the furthest. One person brought his wife over for a birthday treat as a diversion from their annual holiday. He certainly knows how to give a girl a good time!

There were a few glitches, but as they say in the media, lessons have been learnt and we are constantly trying to improve year-on-year. I think that this year's auction was one of the best we've had. It was quite stressful and incredibly hard work, but enjoyable at the same time.

The whole event wouldn't happen if it wasn't for the people who help, some of whom are not even members of our Association. Many thanks to my wife Janice, to Pete and Arlene Bull, Rob Jarvie, once a member of ours but now living in Staffordshire, David Chase, David Chambers, Stuart Humphreys, Gary Woods, not a member, who was a prominent member of Thornes staff for many years – he came to sell and buy but ended up being my steward – and any others who I may have forgotten to mention. Overall, the auction raised over £600, the best ever result!



Next year's auction is already booked, it will be on Saturday, 15 April 2023. I am planning a few changes. Subject to confirmation, I am going to enable people to bring sales items in on the Friday before and also to start the auction earlier, possible midday or earlier. Watch out for details in *Beemaster* nearer the time.

## Recipe of the month: Almond strawberry cheesecake

If you've got room after the Jubilee Trifle, this recipe from **Linda Jordan** serves 6 people

### Ingredients:

110g (4oz) chocolate chips, melted  
1 ready-made 22cm (9in) pie shell  
80ml (3 fl oz) whipping cream  
3 tbsp honey  
2 tbsp almond flavoured liqueur  
½ tsp vanilla  
Pinch of salt  
1 punnet fresh strawberries, washed & hulled  
110g (4 oz) redcurrant jam  
225g (8 oz) cream cheese

### Method:

1. Spread the melted chocolate over the bottom of the baked pie shell.
2. Beat the cream cheese with the whipping cream, honey, almond liqueur, vanilla and salt. Spoon over the chocolate and chill for 30 minutes.
3. Combine the strawberries with the melted jam to coat the berries.
4. Arrange these over the cream cheese filling.
5. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

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### EXTRACTORS

Members may borrow the NBKA extractors - 4-frame, hand driven kept at Brackenhurst and hired from Maurice Jordan. An electric one (with settling tank) is held by Glenis Swift 0115 9538617. The EasyBee extractor which is useful for extracting frames that hold honey that has granulated is held by Frank Chambers in Calverton (0115 965 2128).

### ADVERTISEMENTS

NBKA accepts no responsibility for advertisements appearing in this newsletter. Please mention **BEEMASTER** when replying to advertisements.

### ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Advertisements free to paid-up members but 10p per word – minimum charge £1 to non-members. Circulation approx 300 throughout the UK & abroad. Short adverts may be paid for in First and Second Class postage stamps which should be sent directly to the Editor. Cheques should be made out to NBKA and sent to the Treasurer.

## Beekeeping Equipment at The Honey Pot

The Bees have been very busy building up over the last few weeks, so I hope you're ready for the early swarms and nectar flow? But be aware that the bees might be low on stores at this time of year. At The Honey Pot we have most of the equipment needed to get you started and to keep you going throughout the year.



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