



October NEWSLETTER 2017

Ormskirk & Croston Beekeepers Branch

Chairman Margaret Wilson 01772-339936 Email: Margaret@sector-security.net
Secretary Penny Oakley 08445-867841 Email: penny.oakley@ormskirkbeekeepers.co.uk
Treasurer Mark Oakley 08445-867841 Email: mark.oakley@ormskirkbeekeepers.co.uk

Website: <http://www.ormskirkbeekeepers.org.uk>
News Articles: <http://blog.ormskirkbeekeepers.co.uk>



Comments from the Chair, Margaret Wilson.



Dear Members,

Well the Honey Show is over for another year and although the entries were down, as was the attendance, those who did support it had a good day. My thanks go to John Hewitt who took the Microscopy workshop and to Vicky Cuthbertson who stood in at the last minute to cover the cosmetic workshop. Both were successful ventures, more than we have ever done before.

Ivor Flatman congratulated all those who had entries and it was a close run for the trophy awarded for the most points. There were two contenders and we had to scrutinise the show rules to reach a solution. The determining factors were, how many classes did they compete in, both the same, how many first prizes, both the same, how many second prizes, both the same, how many third prizes, both the same, then the clincher, how many exhibitors in each class did they compete against and that was the decider. You might say it was a very close run race, Ray Dowson being the winner! Best in show went to Elaine for her superb honey chocolates.

The speakers were excellent and put a new light on queen rearing, something we may be able to take advantage of in future years. We were given lots of references to look up, enabling us to improve what we do. The second talk was on Double Brood and was most explicit, certainly food for thought if you only use a single brood box. I do have a couple of hives on Double and I know that my Honey Harvest is much better on those hives. I've not had a problem with swarming either, so plenty to think about. They

are heavy to lift, especially the supers, so you may need help if you are not particularly strong.

Lunch was excellent; the Earl of Sandwiches certainly excelled in that all that remained at the end of the day was one tray of fruit. The Ragtime Rascals entertained us through the day and brought a smile to many faces. My personal thanks go to those who helped on Friday night and Saturday in getting everything ready, Vicki, Robina, Ian, Rose, Jim, Eddie, Paul, Barbara, Ray, Penny and Mark. Without them there would be no show for you to enjoy.

Best wishes to you all,

Margaret Wilson.



Comments from a committee member, Paul Roberts.

The Honey Show



I have detailed below, for information, a behind the scenes look at what occurs in the production of a Honey Show and what the Judge is considering during his deliberation in awarding prizes.

Prior to the show, all application forms would have been collated and the details placed on a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet would have the following columns:

Entry Number

Name

Class entry and how many items per class

Total entries for each class

In addition, columns for the prizes will be listed so the relevant winner can be identified as :

1st

2nd

3rd

Highly Commended

From this spreadsheet individual Class sheets are produced, which are completed by the Steward as the Judge assesses each Class. The sheet will be signed and dated.

On the day of the show all entries, with labels, are placed in their respective Class. The Judge will be given the show schedule, which will indicate the criteria for each Class and against which the Judge will reference.

For each Class the Judge will consider the following:

Honey

- > Judge checks correct type of jar/weight and lid (as per schedule)
- > The judge checks they are in the correct class by reference, if necessary, to the grading glasses.
- > Light is shone through to check for crystallisation or foreign matter.
- > Aroma, viscosity (Refractive Index taken if honey seems thin)
- > Check for scum on surface and lid
- > Taste using glass rod with sample placed on finger
- > If crystallised or soft set, it needs to be a firm surface and not run

Frames of Comb / Cut Comb

- > Light shone through to see if honey has crystallised or any pollen, etc in cells
- > Comb surface viewed to see if surface flat and away from frame to easily cut with knife
- > Sample of honey taken from a cell with glass rod
- > Frame checked to see if clean or for amount of propolis
- > For cut comb the weight should be correct as per schedule, dry container

Candles

- > For the wax cake its size, the surface, particularly any indentations and aroma are checked.
- > For candles, its length, if wick in centre, if wax clean not old, uniform. Aroma of wax
- > Candles then lit, checked later to see amount of wax running down candle. If none then good wick choice
- > For decorative candles, how perfect the moulding and complexity (not lit)

Mead

- > Bottle and cap correct and correct volume as per schedule
- > Clarity, no sediment or foreign objects
- > Smell, taste and correct alcohol content
- > In correct class: Sweet, Medium, Dry, etc

Cakes

- > The Judge checks recipe so they know what they should be seeing / tasting
- > Cakes meet specification / size
- > How it looks, if burnt or sunken
- > Cut in half and see if cake mixed correctly, even spread of fruit
- > Slice taken from bottom (in wedge) to taste and check texture
- > If a decorative cake then its presentation and difficulty in creation

Art / Flowers

- > The art meets the criteria of the schedule
- > Complexity and expertise in creating the art
- > Correct flowers for bees and how presented

Preserves

- > Jar and presentation as per schedule
- > If set
- > Taste and texture

Pictures

- > Correct size of paper and subject matter as per schedule
- > How the picture has been composed and clarity of subject

The main duties of the Stewart after the Judge has assessed each class is to:

- > Record 1st, 2nd and 3rd, if awarded and sign/date the form and have the Judge sign.

- > Pass the completed form to another Steward who will record the results on the relevant cards.

- > The steward will take any used glass rods in the jar of water and clean using cloth

- > The Steward will turn all jars so labels face forward and put covers on cakes, etc.

- > At the end of the judging the winning cards will be placed for each Class.

- > If any awards or Best in Show are allocated these should be placed next to the entry or labelled.



Editors note.

It sounds to be a highly complex process and worth doing for what can be learnt.

Paul's account also gives us all an insight into what we need to do when preparing our entries next year. Thank you Paul.

Comments from a club member, Barry Williams

AN ODD YEAR OF BEEKEEPING



I suppose you could ask when is it not an odd year for beekeeping, as colonies continue to refuse to read the books. But for us in our eighth year of beekeeping it has been funnier than usual.

January seemed a good time to tidy up around the hives as all was quiet. However, a particularly vigilant guard bee obviously thought otherwise and sallied forth to sting me on the head. I should have realised this was an omen, but not necessarily a bad one.

We thought we would have a go at overwintering four colonies in polynucs. Three were in pretty good shape and one we thought was a long shot, however, all four thrived and were sold on, most to beekeepers who had lost colonies. For the first time ever this meant we just about covered our annual beekeeping costs.

As the swarm collector for Southport I usually get a large number of calls about bumblebees, but this year there were surprisingly few although we did get a nest in our own garden for the first time. I had only one actual honey bee swarm to collect as a result of a call (which is doing really well). Of course I still had the experience of hearing a noise, thinking "what is that?" and looking out the kitchen window to see the sky full of bees. Alas they landed fifteen feet up a neighbour's tree and could not be retrieved.

One hive was a complete puzzle. There were no sign of eggs or brood in the brood chamber but the colony seemed to be doing extremely well. Eventually I had a brainwave and looked in the super - which was full of brood. Somehow the queen must have crept into the super during an inspection and been trapped there by the excluder. I would say all is now well except that the queen buzzed off with a swarm in September.

Bee base sent out an alert for excessive varroa in the North West but, again, our bees were contrary in having the lowest mite falls we have ever experienced. Looks like this is going to be the first year we have not had to treat going into the winter.

Oh well I expect next year will be back to normal, whatever normal is!

Barry Williams



Editor's Note

This sounds very much like the "Ups and Downs" of beekeeping and made me smile. C'est la vie!