



# **WAX LYRICAL**

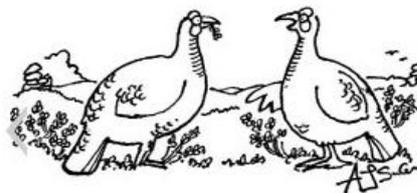
## **From The Chair**

My bees have taken precedence over Wax Lyrical since April but now the hives are on the moor, I can relax and catch up.

2014 has been a good year for the bees - so far. A mild winter meant many colonies were at swarming strength in April. The early spring nectar flow was good both on oil seed rape and elsewhere.

Surprisingly, given the weather, I then had some poor mating issues to deal with. As usual the summer honey flow was less than hoped for given the temperatures but more importantly I did get plenty of bees and after uniting took 6 strong colonies to the heather. There was a short strong heather

flow in early August but the heather has continued to yield nectar surprisingly well in the cooler weather.



*'I'll say this for heather, it's very moorish.'*

This summer varroa has been an issue for many, in part due to the mild winter meaning that brood rearing only ceased for a short period. I checked varroa levels starting at the end of June and found most colonies were fine. However one gave surprising results. The

drop was less than 5/day for the first week and then rose to more than 100/day, at which level the NBU calculator recommends immediate treatment.

Looking back at my records, this occurred almost precisely 3 weeks after the new queen started laying; the obvious explanation is that after the broodless period, all the varroa mites made a beeline (ouch!) for the first larvae to be capped hence the spike when their progeny emerged. There are lessons here for next year.

I look forward to seeing you at our first indoor meeting on Tuesday 9 September 2014.

*Keith Hall*

## Bee stings

No matter how careful we are, beekeepers get stung from time to time. For some, this is trivial but others are not so fortunate.

The first time someone is stung by a bee, the effect is minimal but on subsequent stings the reaction gets worse. After more stings the reaction usually subsides but in rare cases accelerates to alarming or even life threatening levels.



So what is happening.

After a sting, the body's immune system produces 2 antibodies, Immunoglobulins G and E (IgG and IgE) These 2 antibodies have different effects. IgG attaches to bee venom and neutralises it. IgE binds the venom to cells in the skin and causes histamine release leading to unpleasant effects: swelling, itching and heat, or worse.

The levels of IgE and IgG produced vary from person to person. The lucky ones produce only IgG and never have a significant reaction. Most people initially produce more IgE each time they are stung - hence a worsening reaction - but also increasing levels of IgG which, after a time, predominates and the reaction reduces. For the unlucky ones, IgE always predominates and hence they are always at risk of serious reactions.

Do not hesitate to seek medical help if a sting results in serious symptoms such as chest wheezing, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pains, palpitations, faintness

and confusion. The speed of the reaction is an indication of severity, if it occurs within minutes, act immediately - bee stings can cause death in rare cases. Even long standing beekeepers who

think they have full immunity can sometimes have a serious reaction out of the blue - so no one should be complacent. Desensitisation is possible but only attempted by specialists.

Beekeepers cannot be 100% certain of not getting stung while handling bees so always wear protective clothing. Rubber gloves allow sensitivity while reducing the amount of venom injected into hands. A veil is essential as the face and eyes are more sensitive to stings than other parts. Get the sting out as soon as possible, preferably by scraping. Be vigilant to the angry bee lurking in your equipment after you leave the apiary - it can inject more venom than a dozen when you are fully protected and alert.

I am not medically qualified, so will not give any advice on treatment. There is plenty of information, sometimes inconsistent, on the internet. BBKA advise you consult your own doctor before trying preventive medicines if you are having significant reaction to stings.

Some useful information can be found at: <http://www.insectstings.co.uk/>

*Keith Hall*

## A Tale Of Lessons Learnt –

### Reflections On Our First Year As Ryedale Beekeepers

When Keith Hall asked me to write a few lines for Wax Lyrical on our (in)experiences as first year novice beekeepers, I reflected on how this wonderful little creature, *Apis mellifera mellifera*, has taken over our lives and given me more sleepless nights than I care to remember. I hope that by relating a few of our failings/errors, other beginners will feel better about their own mistakes and wiser heads will find amusement reading about our early faltering steps in the fascinating world of beekeeping.



With storm clouds rolling through and rain that wouldn't be out of place in an Asian monsoon, last July seems but a dim and distant memory. After years of dreaming, a long held ambition to keep bees finally became reality with the arrival of 2 nuclei early one sunny morning. A chance encounter with David Hanson of Bayview Bees at the Duncombe Park Show, led to an excellent one day introductory course at his farm near Scarborough, learning the fundamentals of beekeeping including the chance to handle full colonies working oil seed rape. Rather frustratingly, the very wet early summer meant it was July however before our nuclei were ready.

Keith had kindly already visited our garden to advise on a suitable site for our apiary. We had started to build up a veritable library of beekeeping books that were feverishly consulted resulting in an ever increasing level of confusion. However much we tried to meet all the

requirements (south east facing, early morning sun, protection from the wind, shade at mid day, nearby water, away from public footpaths/horses etc etc), clearly nowhere was going to be perfect and in the end, a spot was chosen that suited our needs as much as the bees. One year on, neither the horses in the adjoining field nor any walkers using the nearby public footpath appear to have been troubled. The water source purchased specially (intended for chickens but modified with gravel) has been studiously ignored by our bees but the 1.8m mesh screen placed around the hives, has successfully sent the bees skywards and over the heads of anyone in the garden.

***Lesson 1 - The bees will do their own thing and are less fussy than you think.***

We debated which type of hive to choose but in the end common sense prevailed and a couple of second hand modified National hives were purchased, along with other essentials such as bee suits, hive tool and smoker. What more could we possibly need? One year on, the garage has barely room for a bicycle never mind a car what with the number of brood boxes, supers, frames, not to mention the extractor; our kit has grown like Topsy. What is it about keeping bees that you never seem to have enough boxes? We found the choice of frames very confusing, not least as we had acquired a selection of different types with our second-hand hives. New frames had to be ordered but which to choose? SN1,2,3,or 4, DN1,2,3,or 4, not to mention Manley's and indeed which type of foundation to buy. The net result was rather a hotchpotch of different frame styles.

***Lesson 2 - You never seem to have enough kit.***

Reading tales of winter colony losses, our number one priority was to get the bees through the cold winter months. With David's words ringing in our ears that you couldn't feed bees too much as they would only take down what they needed, we set about the task of building them up for winter. Weeks seemed to revolve around inspections, where we frankly had little idea of what we were looking at but expected American or European Foul Brood to appear at any time. In August our worst



fears were confirmed when our previously brown/black bees started to develop a nasty looking white growth

over their thoraxes. Despite best efforts, we could find no reference in any texts on bee pathology to this bizarre, possible fungal infection. In desperation we sent a photograph to a bee inspector fearing the worst; visions of the hives having to be burnt within only a month of the bee's arrival. What a relief to find this was nothing more than the start of the Himalayan Balsam flowering.

*More beekeeping lessons from Bruce and Ann's first year in the next edition of Wax Lyrical*

Weekly inspections were interspersed with frequent trips to clear the local supermarket of its supplies of sugar and then feeding the bees at a rate that French *foie gras* producers would be proud of. Clearly either our bees had insatiable appetites or they hadn't read the same books as us. As kilo after kilo was dissolved and fed, it eventually dawned on us that the brood chambers were by now full of sugar, leaving nowhere for the Queen to lay. By this stage, with the nights drawing in, attempts to provide more space to lay eggs proved unsuccessful with no drawn foundation available. We had little choice but to seal the hives for winter and hope the bees

would be able to survive long enough to reach spring.

***Lesson 3 - Don't overfeed leaving the Queen nowhere to lay.***

Having managed to join RBKA, the regular meetings proved a great opportunity to seek advice and slowly gain a better understanding. Perhaps the most memorable evening was the joint meeting in February with Ryenats. Arriving promptly at Wombleton village hall as usual, we were surprised to see so many unfamiliar faces, mostly senior ladies but we put this down to never having met members of Ryenats before. As our orders for mid-evening refreshments were taken and raffle tickets purchased, we settled down in the front row, confident of an entertaining evening ahead, given the selection of beekeeping paraphernalia on display. Unsure quite why the ladies chairing the meeting kept staring at me and whispering, we finally recognized a familiar face when Stuart came across to speak to us. He asked how long we had been members, which seemed strange considering how often we had spoken to

him at previous RBKA meetings. When I expressed surprise, he sought to clarify his comment by explaining

that we were sitting in a meeting of the local WI where he was giving a presentation on beekeeping. The meeting with Ryenats was being held in Kirkbymoorside at the same time on the same night. As you can imagine, we beat a hasty, if somewhat embarrassed retreat, thrusting our raffle tickets into Stuart's hands and leaving before having to explain our presence to the good ladies of Wombleton WI.

***Lesson 4 - Check the venue more carefully before setting off to meetings.***

*Ann and Bruce Nelson*

## Hives through History...

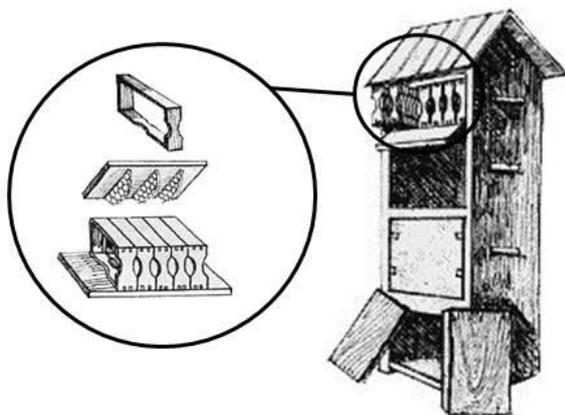
As we saw in the last edition of *Wax Lyrical*, modern beekeeping had its origins in 1768 when **Thomas Wildman** [1734-81] fixed a parallel array of wooden bars across the top of skeps. This was only the beginning however, and in 1814 Ukrainian-born **Petro Prokopovych** [1775-1850] led a revolution in design which resulted in the variety of hives we know and take for granted today, now read on...



Prokopovych was born in Ukraine in 1775, and after completing a career in the army retired in 1798 to spend time at his brother's apiary; by 1808 he had 580 beehives!

He studied the biology of bee colonies and strove to improve the then existing methods of beekeeping. His main intention was to develop methods that allowed the least disturbance and damage to bees.

Considered by many as the founder of modern commercial beekeeping, among his most important inventions were frames in a separate honey chamber and a crude queen excluder between brood and honey chambers; this made it possible, for the first time, to harvest pure honey from the frames. By 1814, this, combined with other design ideas, resulted in the first frame-based hive [see illustration].



Prokopovych's inventions represented a landmark in the history of beekeeping. His scientific work resulted in more than sixty articles in newspapers and magazines.

He also set up a beekeeping school that trained more than 700 beekeepers [we have a bit more to do there]. As a beekeeper, Prokopovych owned 6,600 colonies and became wealthy [must have been different in 1814!], he died in 1850.

If you should ever travel to Kiev [and why not] there is a beekeeping museum named after him. It is intriguing and interesting,



and has a quirky collection of beehives in an external exhibition, many of them showing carving skills and great flair with paint and brushes. There are tree hives designed to deter bears from stealing the honey and hives which look like large sculpted faces with the mouth acting as the hive entrance. Alongside the wacky, wonderful and unique hive designs there is also a serious exhibition of ancient artefacts used in the honey gathering process.

In the next episode of this exciting tale, we will move further into the nineteenth century away from Ukraine, and see how beekeepers, including Dzierzon, Langstroth, Quimby and others, continued their pursuit of an easier and more productive beekeeping-life in Europe and the USA!

*Ivor B Sting*

## Honey Recipes

### Honey Nut Cookies

150g butter, room temp

50g caster sugar

75g honey

250g plain flour

100g flaked almonds

Oven 180c (160c fan)

Beat butter, sugar and honey together until light and creamy.

Add flour and nuts and mix until a dough forms.

Chill for 30 minutes (10 minutes if you are baking with an impatient 2-yr-old!)

Shape a teaspoonful of dough into a ball and flatten slightly onto a lined baking tray with a fork or your thumb. Makes about 20.

Bake for 10 mins.

### Quick Honey Pudding

125g butter

8tbsp honey

100g light soft brown sugar

2 large eggs

125g SR flour

Butter a microwaveable pudding basin. Put two tbsp honey in bottom of basin.

Beat sugar and butter until creamy. Add 2 tbsp honey, beat well.

Add eggs and 1 tbsp flour, beat well. Fold in remaining flour.

Put in basin, cover with clingfilm and pierce several times.

Microwave on high for approx. 4 mins. Stand for 2 minutes.

Warm remaining honey and drizzle over.

Serve immediately with cream or ice-cream.

*Tested and recommended by Claire Mortimer's grandson*

## Ryedale Show Results



*Alice Cussons Trophy for most points by a Ryedale resident*      *C Smailes*

*Alan Jefferson Bowl for best entry in show*      *S Fairweather*

Class	First	Second	Third
2 1lb jars honey (light)	D Mead	C Smailes	T Jefferson
2 1lb jars honey (medium)	T Jefferson	T Jefferson	C Smailes
2 1lb jars honey (dark)	T Jefferson	T Jefferson	C Smailes
2 1lb jars honey (granulated or soft set)	D Mead	T Jefferson	R Sutherland
2 1lb jars heather honey	C Smailes	T Jefferson	T Jefferson
3 jars honey labelled as for sale	C Smailes	T Jefferson	D Mead
1 section in wood or cut comb 1lb or less	C Smailes	C Smailes	D Mead
1 comb of honey standard or shallow	C Smailes	T Jefferson	D Mead
1 cake beeswax approx 1/2lb	C Smailes	T Jefferson	D Mead
A picture Photograph (print)	S Fairweather	T Jefferson	D Mead



## Reports of recent meetings

### **18 February 2014 Kirkbymoorside**

*Ryedale Naturalists joint meeting  
Paul Evans ~ Buglife*

Paul talked about the B-line project that aims to create a wildlife corridor across North Yorkshire for the benefit of bees. There was a good turnout of RBKA members but we were outnumbered by Naturalists.

### **12 March 2014 Malton**

*Malton BKA joint meeting  
Dr Mike Brown ~ Director NBU*

Rather than speak about Beebase as announced, Mike talked mostly about his time with commercial honey producers in France and queen breeders in California and how this knowledge was applied at the NBU. Jack Wilford one of his staff and a member of Malton BKA, kept him straight on what really happens! Unfortunately few RBKA members were able to attend.

### **8 April 2014 Wombledon**

*Mike Rowbottom ~ Harrogate BKA*

In recent years we have programmed an outdoor meeting in April but poor weather has intervened. This year April was warm and dry but around 20 members arrived for this indoor meeting. Mike has much beekeeping experience from running over 50 colonies of bees - amended by his wife to 70. The talk focussed on early season management with a simple step by step explanation of the steps that can be taken for swarm prevention and control.

### **11 May 2014 Great Edstone**

*Host: John Leckonby and Les Peckitt  
Demonstrator Adrian Wilford*

Despite an appalling forecast, the meeting went ahead and the weather was kind. Adrian focussed on apiary hygiene: a bucket of soda and bleach to wash tools and gloves between hives. John uses plastic Langstroth hives and plastic frames which many present had not seen before.  
16 members attended.



### **June 8 2014 Swinton**

*Host: Martin Smith  
Demonstrator Joe Jacobs*

All Martin's colonies had been split by the time of this meeting. One artificial swarm had been hived in a brood box with 6 frames



and a dummy board but had refused to use them and had instead drawn wild combs on the other side. There was considerable debate as to what Martin should do next!  
14 members attended

### **July 12 2014 Nawton**

*Host: Bill Harrison  
Demonstrator Adrian Wilford*



Another fine afternoon despite a poor forecast. The bees were happy until, despite being warned, Adrian dared to venture into Bill's nemesis colony. Members quickly decided it was time for a walk around the field and a cup of tea.  
17 members attended

### **Bilsdale August 10**

Finally our luck ran out and the meeting was cancelled due to the arrival of the remnants of hurricane Bertha

***Many thanks to members who have hosted apiary meetings this year and to them and their wives for looking after us so generously.***

## ***Ryedale Beekeepers Association***

### **Dates for your diary**

Tuesday 9th September	Wombledon Village Hall 7pm	Open Forum—Swarms; how did you do?
Tuesday 14th October Joint meeting with Malton BKA	Wombledon Village Hall 7pm	John Chandler—Pollen.
Tuesday 11th November	Wombledon Village Hall 7pm	AGM

### **Officers**

<i>Chairman</i>	<i>Keith Hall</i>	<i>Honeyholme, Main Street Harome YO62 5JF 01439 771874 <a href="mailto:honeyholme@gmail.com">honeyholme@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:keith@thehalls.prestel.co.uk">mailto:keith@thehalls.prestel.co.uk</a></i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Claire Mortimer</i>	<i>Lundholme, Malton Road, Swinton, Malton YO17 6SQ 01653 694261 <a href="mailto:cjmortimer@yahoo.co.uk">cjmortimer@yahoo.co.uk</a></i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>John Sutherland</i>	<i>Orchard House, The Terrace, Oswaldkirk YO62 5XZ 01439 788140 <a href="mailto:john.a.sutherland@btinternet.com">john.a.sutherland@btinternet.com</a></i>

*Wax Lyrical is edited by Keith Hall who would be delighted to receive information or articles for future editions at:*

*Honeyholme, Harome, York YO62 5JF  
01439 771874  
[honeyholme@gmail.com](mailto:honeyholme@gmail.com)*