



Supporting beekeeping projects
in developing countries

BEEES

ABROAD

NEWSLETTER

www.beesabroad.org.uk

No 18, April 2010

From the Chairman

How time flies! It has been a busy few months but I am pleased to welcome you to this latest newsletter, especially if you are a supporter or reading about Bees Abroad for the first time. Our apologies that this issue has been a long time coming but we do hope that you are inspired by the reports of our continuing efforts. The work of our project leaders continues to bring rewards to the groups with which they work in different parts of the world. It is particularly rewarding that beekeeping enables needy rural people to bring about their own development and pride through the projects we support.

In November, a group travelled on a Bees Abroad holiday to Nepal with one of the highlights being visiting the amazing cliffs which have huge natural bees' nests on them and watching the honey hunters bravely collecting both brood and honey. It is this part of the world where one of the first Bees Abroad projects was undertaken with others following. Very shortly there will be a further project in the area with the support of the Medway Beekeepers' Association.

The summer months are always busy with shows and events that Bees Abroad attends both to promote the work of the charity and raise funds for the projects. In spite of the recession we are encouraged that the financial income has remained good. We thank all those who support us with their time and enthusiasm without whom we would be unable to undertake this work and also thank those who invite us to attend these shows. Sadly, 2009 saw the last ever Royal Show, the highlight of which was a visit to our stand by the Duke of Kent who showed a great interest in the reality of our work. We were invited to the Great Yorkshire Show for the first time



John Home promotes Bees Abroad to the Duke of Kent at the Royal Show

Photo: Simon King

receiving a great welcome with lots of interest from those attending. After a break of a few years, we returned to the National Honey Show which proved to be greater than our expectations both financially and with useful contacts made.

A big thank you must go to the Bees Abroad team who suffered the rain and mud at last summer's Glastonbury Music Festival. It was good to be there as one of the chosen charities and it seems there is enthusiasm for us to be invited again. We raised £2000.

It is always a pleasure to meet people who wish to become involved in the work of our charity. Very recently we welcomed Stuart Andrews as a new trustee who brings with him particular skills and expertise which we will benefit from. In this Newsletter you will find a report of our successful Volunteer Welcome Day held in March. May I invite anyone reading this to enquire if there is something they could undertake within the work of Bees Abroad?

We continue to be grateful to our patrons from within the beekeeping industry and it is great to have their support in various ways. It has been a pleasure to visit Jimmy's Farm to meet him, his wife and the team who have all taken an interest in the work of Bees Abroad. Jimmy as our patron is inspired and enthusiastic to help us in promoting the sustainable way we go about our projects. We are delighted that Martha Kearney has also agreed to become a patron of Bees Abroad. In spite of having a very busy work schedule, she has assured us that she will promote the beekeeping work that we undertake in different countries.

It never ceases to amaze me the interest that is shown, by beekeepers and the general public alike, in the concept of the projects our charity undertakes. With ever increasing requests for help we need your continued support as we at Bees Abroad are all beekeepers determined to make a difference where we can.

John Home, Chairman

Reasons to be cheerful in Uganda

Roy Dyche

Thanks to the generosity of the States of Guernsey, spring 2009 saw the launch of the second 12-month phase of our Ugandan project close to the shores of Lake Albert. So for well over a year and a half now, the Emesco Development Foundation, our local NGO partners, has been working to make life a little more bearable for wretchedly poor farmers, most of them former residents of war-torn Congo or migrants from more densely populated districts.

Another 180 villagers sign up

I was certainly encouraged by what I found during my most recent monitoring trip. A further 180 villagers have signed up to the project and received training in various aspects of modern beekeeping. Each of the new groups has been issued with a smoker and has provided itself with protective veils, improvised cheaply from maize sacks and mosquito netting.

Now, using just sticks, bamboo and a dash of mud, they are turning out top-bar hives at a startling rate. Since the project began, close to 2000 of these modern hives have been produced and bees have taken up residence in most of those made during the first phase.

Family Pride Honey

To date, the beneficiaries have sold us well over two tonnes of their honey. Our small processing unit has bottled



A villager displays his handiwork



One of the new beekeeper groups at Lake Albert

nearly all of this and, so far, finding nearby stores and supermarkets willing to stock our jars of Family Pride Honey has proved relatively easy – which is hardly surprising: modesty does not prevent me saying that our product is cleaner, more attractively labelled and better tasting than that of any of our competitors.

However, we have set ourselves the ambitious target of buying at least another three tonnes before the end of May 2010 and we realise that if we are to dispose of such a quantity, we must do much more to search out additional retail outlets in towns further afield.

Rewards of modern beekeeping

The latest recruits bring the total number of farmers now participating in the project to 430. Each of them represents a different household and each household has, on average, six members. So, over 2500 of Africa's neediest citizens should be starting to enjoy the financial rewards of modern beekeeping.

The actual extent to which we are alleviating their poverty does need to be quantified and this is something I shall try to do during my next visit in April 2010.

Sustainability

As with all our projects, sustainability is the key. If everything were to grind to a halt as soon as the villagers are left to their own resources – as left they must be when, inevitably, the funding ceases – then nothing truly worthwhile would have been achieved.

Since it is the buying and marketing operations which will ensure the venture's long-term viability, our beekeepers are already preparing themselves to take these over. They are now assuming more managerial responsibilities and it will not be so very long before they have the confidence and capacity to run a registered producer association to which the whole enterprise may be transferred.

Sincere thanks to the States of Guernsey

However, we cannot expect to reach this point until late in 2010, which is why we are so grateful to Guernsey for agreeing recently to support the project for a third 12-month period.



The field officer tests honey before buying

Welcome to Bees Abroad

Jane Frank

Are you one of those people who just can't help volunteering for things, no matter how busy you are? Well, I'm one of those people! Fascinated by the talk that Pam Gregory gave to our local beekeeping association a couple of years ago about Bees Abroad, when I heard about the volunteer day that the charity was holding this March at Stoneleigh Park, I just couldn't resist going along. Just as well, as it turned out, as I was the only person there from Wales (aside from Pam, of course). I also seemed to be the only person who didn't already have some connection with Africa, or with development projects, so I feared I might be a little out of my depth. But Bees Abroad needs help in lots of different areas, so I was reassured that there were things with which I could help.

About Bees Abroad

For those of you who haven't heard of Bees Abroad, it is a small UK-registered charity, dedicated to supporting beekeeping projects in developing countries. It sends volunteer project managers to work with local community groups to develop beekeeping projects which will become self-sustainable. Using indigenous bees and techniques appropriate for each location, Bees Abroad offers training and support in beekeeping including making hives and protective clothing from local materials (we were shown photos of some very imaginative uses of maize sacks, for example), managing bees, collecting and storing honey, and getting it to market.

Bees Abroad advises on the production of honey and other saleable goods from the byproducts of beekeeping, together with marketing and business skills. Its projects are normally self-sustaining after around five years.



Pam Gregory led the day



Jane Frank (centre) and her discussion group

Bees Abroad abroad

There were about 20 potential volunteers and several of the Bees Abroad project leaders at the volunteer day. It began with an introduction by John Home, the Chairman, who is also a project leader in Kenya, supported by his wife Mary who works with the women, helping them to make cosmetics and set up small rural businesses.

Then we were given a lightning tour of what Bees Abroad does in the various countries where it operates – Pam Gregory spoke about her project in Malawi; Brian Durk showed us some hair-raising photos of the route to his project in Cameroon, which made us realise quite how remote some of these projects are; and Claire Waring, in between organising a delicious lunch and the biggest mound of chocolate biscuits you've ever seen, showed us photos of the projects in Nepal.

Work groups

Next we divided up into workshop groups to discuss what is needed to make a project sustainable. My group consisted of Brian Durk; Ronald from Uganda, who works as an accountant in this country, knows nothing about beekeeping, but is already running a chicken-raising project in Uganda; Keith from Southport who intends to set up a beekeeping project in northern Cyprus; Sally from Shepperton who has been a beekeeper for 20 years and makes cosmetics (as I do); and me.

Being such a disparate bunch of people, we came up with some varied and interesting ideas, then gave feedback to the rest of the group.

Bees Abroad at home

After lunch we were given a description of what Bees Abroad does in this country, by the aptly named Jeff Bee. He explained that they give talks, have stands at shows, do fundraising, sell bee-related items, Christmas cards, etc. They need help in all these areas, especially in developing internet sales.

What sounds the more glamorous side, though Claire assured us it was very hard work, is organising Bees Abroad holidays. She showed us photos of some of the holidays that have been organised – to Nepal to see the honey hunters in action, to Cameroon, Thailand, the Yucatan, Cambodia, Romania and to Chile where there's a commercial operation harvesting organic active honey (similar to manuka honey) which is being sold in Waitrose.

After this we again broke up for workshop discussions about how to raise the profile of Bees Abroad in this country. How about running a marathon dressed as a fluffy bee?

What are you going to do?

So – whilst running a marathon might be beyond me – what am I going to do for Bees Abroad? Well, I've written this account for a start, which might generate some interest and possibly a response. I will volunteer to help at the Shrewsbury Flower Show. And, who knows, maybe I'll develop a line of beeswax and honey soaps especially for Bees Abroad. As a certain famous retailer is fond of saying, every little helps.

Why don't you volunteer to help them too? Find out more by visiting www.beesabroad.org.uk or ringing 0117 230 0231.

MEET LENSON AND BLESSINGS

Lenson Simumba runs the SBDARA/NHPC project in Malawi. His wife Blessings has just had twins, a brother and sister for their first little boy, Precious, who is now about three years old. This means that Lenson's job, created by Bees Abroad, is very important to him and we really need to make sure it keeps going.

Lenson is now 30. He has been with the project from the beginning, coming to Nkhata Bay from a tiny village in the very far north of Malawi (in one of the remotest parts at the northern tip of the country only a few miles from Zambia and Tanzania).

Initially, he was to become an electrician's apprentice with John Harawa, the then project leader, but the beekeeping project took over and gave them a more reliable living (at least initially). After John left, Lenson has taken over as chief executive of the co-operative and has run it honestly and carefully for the past four years. He is a very bright young man, educated to A level standard, and has the capacity to take a degree if funds could be found. I have already managed to find some funding for him to take a business based diploma. However, his generous sponsor died before he could get to university. I couldn't expect a single person to take this on fully but if 15 people would commit to about £100 annually for the next three years, this could happen. His education will enhance the Bees Abroad SBDARA project but, whatever happens to the project, he will have a more secure future for his family.

Pam Gregory



Lenson and Blessings Simumba

MONEY FOR SWARMS?

Do you get asked to collect swarms? Why not follow Bernard Diaper's example and use this opportunity to collect money for Bees Abroad?

When called to a swarm, Bernard does not charge a fee but gives out a Bees Abroad leaflet and says he expects a donation as thanks. If asked how much, he comments that 'most people don't go out at short notice to give advice for less than £20'.

Only once has Bernard not received a donation. If the swarm collection draws a crowd, he passes the hat round and finds that the public are very interested in our work and are very generous.

Last year, Bernard collected £460. Perhaps you could do the same (or better?) this year?



Beekeepers receiving start-up training in Machakos, Kenya

CAR DRAW SUCCESS

Everyclick ran a draw for a Fiat 500 car last year and tickets were sold at the various shows that Bees Abroad attended as well as online. A total of 294 tickets were sold, raising £559.77 for Bees Abroad. The funds raised are very welcome.



Congratulations to Brian Durk and his friends who completed the Cheltenham Circular Challenge, raising £1169.10 for Bees Abroad



Stephen Adams had a beard for 20 or more years and, being a supporter of the beekeeping work that Bees Abroad undertakes, came up with the plan to have a sponsored charity shave during a social event run in the Parish Church of Southam. Besides being great fun and revealing the real face of Stephen after so many years, £500 was raised which is most gratefully appreciated.

AT THE SHOWS WITH BEES ABROAD

As in previous years, we will be flying the Bees Abroad flag at various agricultural and other shows throughout the summer. We would welcome your help at any of the shows across the country.

Please contact Veronica Brown (see below) for further details.

EXPORTS FOR CAMEROON HONEY

Cameroon's residue monitoring plans have now been accepted by the European Union so the exportation of Cameroonian honey can now begin – starting from early 2010 with a container leaving from Adamawa Province to Tropical Forest Products Ltd in Wales!

DON'T FORGET EVERYCLICK

You can give to *Bees Abroad* at no cost to yourself. We are registered with **everyclick.com** so supporters can raise money for us simply by searching the web! Each mouse click generates a donation at no cost to yourself; the money comes from advertising on the site. The everyclick.com logo on www.beesabroad.org.uk (and click on 'How you can help') links to the search page that benefits the charity. The total raised to date is £793.95. Help us to make it more!



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