Carmarthenshire Beekeepers Association
Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Sir Caerfyrddin

Quarterly Newsletter - April 2013

Forthcoming dates.

April 14 th 14:00 Club Apiary First Practical Session, and welcome to new starters.
April 28 th 14:00 Club Apiary Setting up the apiary.
Saturday may 4th 11:00 Pembrokeshire BKA Annual sale
Saturday may 11th 13:00 Teifiside BKA Annual Sale
May 12 th 14:00 Club Apiary.
May 18 th / 19 th Small Holders Show Builth Wells.
1st / 2nd /3 rd June Hobbies Weekend National Botanic Gardens. We will be there Sunday only, volunteers needed.
June 9th 14:00 Club Apiary Practical session
June 30 th 14:00 Club Apiary Practical session
July 14 th 14:00 Club Apiary Practical session
Date of next publication - Early July 2013

If you wish to verify that a meeting is taking place please call the Secretary on 01267 267 318

Some notes about our first practical session.

Unfortunately the cold winter has not been kind to the club apiary and two of the three colonies did not survive, this was discovered at the recent training day when we went to feed candy to the colonies to tide them over and encourage the queens to start laying. The reason appears to be that the hives were too weak and the cluster was too small to sustain themselves over the winter.

This means that there will be lots of equipment to clean. So if possible please bring a scraper of some sort. Also if you have any hive parts you want built bring them along as there should be lots of willing helpers.

We also intend to visit the apiary and mark the remaining queen this will be weather permitting so bring your bee suits and boots.

Contents:

Recent Events.

Last Evening Meeting Winter 2012/13 - Swarm Control and Hive Expansion Talk.

At the last winter evening meeting this year our president Maureen Macleod gave a talk on swarm control / increasing your number of hives. In the book 'Keeping Bees' by Pam Gregory (reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter), the basic principle laid out is to consider your hive to consist of three parts, the queen, the flying bees and the brood / nurse bees, the idea being that to prevent swarms you must remove one of these elements from the equation.

Maureen giving the lecture.

The Demonstration Hive

The method was demonstrated by using a nuc box and the training hive that the Association owns and is as follows: First setup a new hive more than three feet (remember the three feet or three miles rule) from the hive you wish to split / control. You then need to remove one element from the current hive. As you know a swarm consists of the old queen and a selection of the rest of the other bees not including larvae so first find the frame that has the queen on it and move to the new brood box (do not shake off any of the bees), then select a couple of frames of brood and move them too, making sure that there are no queen cells on them, finally move a couple of frames of stores.

Next check that there are queen cells present in the old hive, the general advice is to cut out all but two of these cells, but there are some camps that say you should leave all the queen cells intact and let the bees choose the one they want (although this does mean there is an increased chance of casts from the old hive which will weaken it).

Push all the existing frames together and surround them with fresh frames, add a feeder to both hives put the lids back on and leave for two weeks. The flying bees from the old hive that were moved to the new will return to the old hive, the nurse bees in the new hive will shortly become flying bees, and the virgin queen in the new hive should go on a mating flight with the two sets of drones and others after she is born.

In the magazine 'BeeCraft' this month this method is detailed but the old queen is left in the old hive, this will not work. The point of moving the old queen is that she and her scout bees will think they have swarmed and moved to a new hive so their desire to swarm is now suppressed. If you leave the old queen in the old hive then that desire still exists and your old hive will still swarm.

Maureen then answered questions from the audience.

Beginners Training Weekend.

Over the weekend of 14th and 15th March Sandra Eckford our training officer carried out a course for people who are interested in learning the art of bee keeping. Although classroom based with slides and handouts there was one practical demonstration when the bees in the club apiary were fed with candy. Unfortunately at this time two of the three colonies were found not to have survived the winter.

Sandra was ably assisted by her husband Les and various members of the committee who attended over the weekend to help out. Cakes were provided by Keridwen Bowering and refreshments in the shape of tea and coffee by Penny Reynolds the owner of the farm where the club apiary is based.

Annual Welsh Beekeepers Convention - Builth Wells.

The annual beekeepers convention at Builth Wells suffered this year from the unseasonably bad weather, the members from C.B.K.A. who attended had to find an alternative route up to Builth when the sugarloaf pass just north of Llandovery was blocked by snow.

On the way to Builth Wells.

The Showground meeting hall.

The pre-ordering system of equipment from the main suppliers was very effective and cut down the 'bun fight' that has occurred at certain trade stands in the past. Those of use that did manage to get there were able to stock up on some equipment and listen to three very interesting lectures.

The first was about swarm control and was given by Wally Shaw a very experienced bee keeper from North Wales he was a substitute for the first speaker who was unable to attend.

The second lecture was on a research project involving RNAi sequencing by Scottish scientists. They are looking at it as a way of controlling Varroa Destructor mite and have now got it to the stage where it is successful but needs to be developed for the consumer market and made affordable. This method is already in use for controlling ticks on livestock and sea lice on farmed Salmon, they were very keen to point out that this is not a GMO (genetically Modified Organism) in any way but simply using the mites own protection within it's cells to fool it's immune system into destroying the cell.

The next stage of development is to make it affordable by the average consumer as currently the treatment would cost in the order of £200,000 per hive which is impractical for commercial honey farmers let alone us individuals

The third lecture was about the subject of Phenology this isn't the study of bumps on peoples heads that's Phrenology; this is the study of trends over time. Mainly made from records kept by amateurs who collect such data over long periods just for a hobby (There was an appeal, if you find such records in a relatives personal effects don't throw them away, give them to this group).

Several examples were given including the case of the brown tip butterfly. The butterfly's life relies on various wild mustard plants or the plant called lady's Smock, the butterfly lays its egg on the seedpod of the plant the caterpillars hatch and eat the pod before pupating to form a new butterfly.

Unfortunately the time that the butterflies hatch is becoming earlier every year but the seed pods forming on the plant has remained the same or is getting later, this means there will come a point soon where the overlap of the two trends will start to cause a problem.

Brown Tip Butterfly

Garlic Mustard

Lady's Smock.

The Beekeeping Year.

APRIL - Among your bees and DO'S and DON'TS

This has been a long and very cold winter and quite a few beehives will be lost, mainly because there were not enough bees in the hive at the beginning of the winter to generate enough heat to keep them going, then they gradually chill and die, in spite of having plenty of stores. You can either unite smaller colonies in the autumn or put dummy boards two or three frames in from the sides to act as extra insulation and making the area smaller and keeping in the heat. These dead hives can be re-used, clean them out of old brace comb and propolis dead bees and mouldy comb and the rest can be sterilized with acetic acid which will kill off any Nosema spores wax moth and other undesirable nasties.

April is the time of year to make your first inspection and if possible mark your queens, BUT one word of warning be very careful this year in this very cold weather, it depends very much where you live, so have an outside thermometer NEVER NEVER open you hive unless it is 16c or 60f degrees, you will chill the brood and either kill the bees or at the very least set them back by weeks

If you hive is going well and your queen is marked LEAVE THEM ALONE until the swarming season is on its way, and that wont happen until there is a flow of nectar about, usually May when it is warmer (bees cant make wax unless its 65-70f outside) don't meddle with you hive unless you have a definite plan in mind.

MAY

Is the time to sort out the swarming problem, decide what you want to do and plan you action carefully, do you want to divide your hive to make another, or just to stop them swarming?

Continuously cutting out queen cells throughout the summer is not a sensible way of doing things and it will upset the mood of the hive and not help it at all. Once you have queen cells, in order to stop more problems you have to remove the queen, then keep the two best queen cells, remove the rest and wait two or three weeks and look for the progress. If the queen cells are sealed the queen will have swarmed, so cut out all but two of the best and again wait two or three weeks to see how things are going. It can take up to six weeks before a new queen can come to lay, so don't panic.

JUNE

Should see the end of the swarming problems if you have sorted the hive out properly!!! many of us fail in this respect.

All your supers should be ready to go, if you hive is queen-right and in order. There is no need to upset them by digging them up to look and see what's going on, if there are bees on the crown board add another super. A glass quilt is a lovely thing to have as you can see how busy they are without disturbing anybody. Its for summer use only as it will cause condensation in winter.

This summer might be the summer we haven't had for years, so clean out your empty hives and nuc boxes ant put them every where and any where about 4 feet up if possible, if not, just facing south and catch all those passing swarms, if you get too many!!! there are plenty of members who would like them. Advertise them in the next newsletter.

JULY

LEAVE YOUR HIVE ALONE it should be THE FLOW so why interrupt a factory when its flat out. You want honey so now is the time not to upset the workers.

Something to think about if you intend to enter 'Cut Comb' in any honey shows this year.

Here's a brief guide to starting off in Cut Comb. We will cover harvesting and packing in the next issue.

1. Prepare relatively new wooden frames for a 10-frame shallow super, the box placed on top of the hive for the bees to make honey in,insert unwired foundation into the frame. This will provide a starting point for the bees to build new honeycomb within each frame.

2. Fill the super with frames. Use a 10-frame super to prevent the comb in the frames from being too thick to package later.

3. Choose a strong and prolific colony to produce the comb honey. Ensure that your pest management is up to par to prevent contamination from Varroa or damage from wax moth larvae.

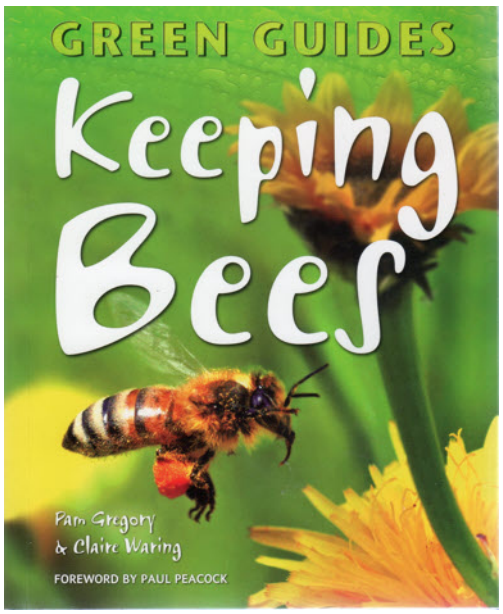
4. Place the super on the hive during a strong nectar flow and allow sufficient time for the bees to first create the honeycomb, then fill it and place a beeswax cap on each cell to seal the honeycomb.

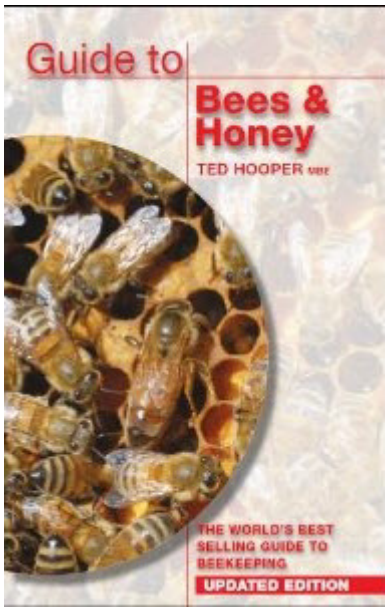
5. Inspect the comb, once filled and capped, to ensure that it is presentable as comb honey. Remove the entire super from the hive in preparation for harvesting.

Book Review.

Keeping Bees by Pam Gregory and Claire Waring.

Here at C.B.K.A. we have for many years recommended that if you only buy one book about beekeeping it should be 'Guide to bees and honey' by Ted Hooper, well now we would like to recommend another book it is 'Keeping Bees' by Pam Gregory and Claire Waring.





Pam, who has a National Diploma in Beekeeping and is a former Welsh chief Bee inspector, has lectured this association in the past and has long been associated with 'Bees for development'. Claire Waring is the current editor of 'BeeCraft' magazine.

The book gives a good basic guide to starting out with bee keeping where as Ted Hooper's book is a bit more technical. Both can be obtained from Amazon and various bookshops and the association also has some copies available via our treasurer Mr Bill Bradley, or our Secretary Mr Brian Jones.

We especially like the numerous checklists for all stages of beekeeping and also the 'Top Tips' sections scattered throughout the book, a particular relevant one for the moment would be 'As soon as flowering currant (ribes sanguinium) often called the beekeepers barometer is in flower, you should be able to inspect your bees'.

Flowering Currant.

Interesting facts - How do Bees grip onto flowers?

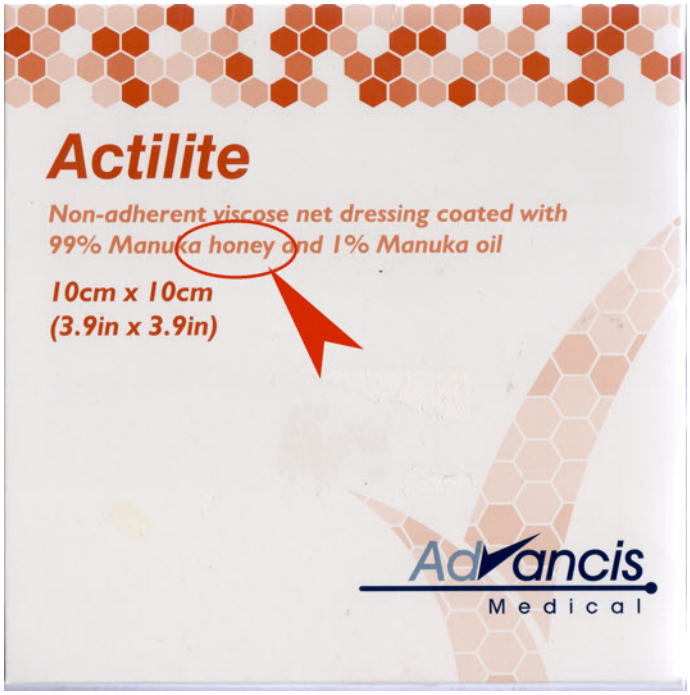
Each of a bees feet comes equipped with a suction pad, called an arolia, and a tarsal claw. Flowers depend on bees for pollination so it is in their evolutionary interest to make it easy for bees to hold on, even on windy days.

About 80 per cent of flowering plants have special cone shaped cells on their petals. These may have initially evolved to focus light onto the petal, to make the flower appear a brighter colour but their size (about 0.02mm across) and spacing also creates a Velcro like material that makes it particularly easy for bees to wedge their claws in place. Flowers with dense clusters of petals like roses don't need very big cone cells but on wide open flowers like petunias, the cone cells are so long the flower feels almost velvety.

(Article taken from September 2012 Science Focus Magazine, all copyrights gratefully acknowledged).

At last!

It's nice to see the medical profession has finally caught up with what beekeepers have known for thousands of years and are now using honey in the production of dressings.



Bees aren't the only pollinators.

We've all heard how a few years ago the bees were in crisis and the number of bees in the countryside was falling, well with the sterling efforts by people such as yourselves that crisis has been averted and there are colonies of bees everywhere but now the focus must shift to other insects particularly Butterflies.

On the back page of this news letter you will find pictures of common British butterflies, look out for them as they eat the same sorts of things as your bees do so plant out the seeds you were given with your membership pack to encourage the butterflies into your gardens. If you can't plant the seeds in your own garden see if you can plant them somewhere in your community or in your local church yard.

Small Ads.

Out Apiary Available.

Chris and Carol Howard attended the recent training course and have said they have some space available for bees. I'm sure they would appreciate an experienced bee keeping having their hives in the space so they can learn from you. So please contact them on 01267 272 355. If you're interested and discuss it with them. They're in Llangyndeyrn, near Carmarthen.

Help needed.

As I'm sure you're aware the club is planning to move our apiary from it's present location to a warmer area higher up the hill. For this to happen we need to build steps, clear the land again and build a fence. If you are available to help out with this task on a weekend to be decided please contact Brian the club secretary on 01267 267 318 so that we can all arrange a mutual time to do this.

Alternatively if you know anyone who can do this for us on a professional basis and they would be willing to quote please also get in touch.

Next Quarter's Issue.

We hope to be able to publish an early copy of the C.B.K.A. Honey show schedule so you can all start making those craft items and considering what classes to enter any honey you have. There will also be a brief guide to the various types of honey that can be entered, and what you need to do to enter the 'cut comb' or frame for extraction classes.

The beekeeping year series will continue, as will the event reports.

If there are any articles you want to see published or are feeling the need to see your own article in print please get in touch with the Editors. Also send us any small ads and letters or poems.

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Contacting the editors.

You can contact the editors either by post or email:

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Painted lady


Small tortoiseshell


Common blue


Red admiral

Painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*), a migratory species, reaches Britain in most years.

Small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) is probably the UK's best-known butterfly. As the name suggests, its larvae feed on nettles (*Urtica*).

Common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) is quite widespread and prefers grassy places. Males have good blue coloration on the upper wings.

Red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) is a strong flyer, and is often seen on larger shrubs. Adults can be found in gardens as late as October and November.

Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) can be active as early as March, then disappears in June and July.

Meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*) visits gardens from June onwards, sometimes in numbers; may be the only butterfly actively flying in dull weather.

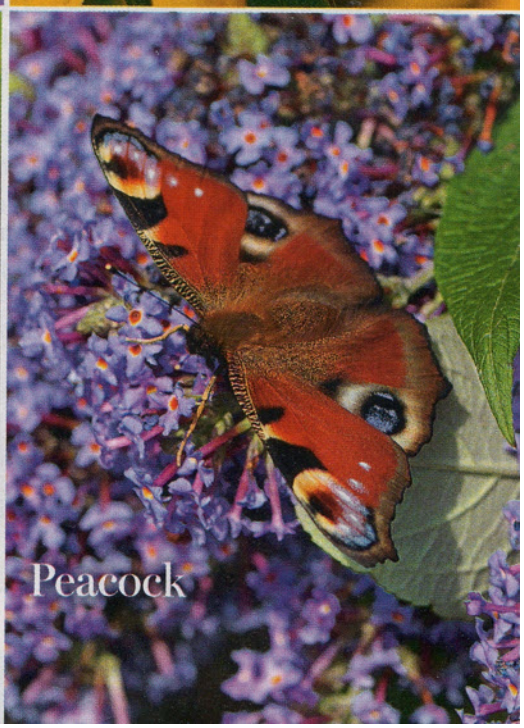
Speckled wood (*Pararge aegeria*), an increasingly common sight in gardens, feeds on honeydew.

Peacock (*Inachis io*) hibernates over winter and lays its eggs in spring, making it one of the first butterflies of the year to appear in gardens.


Brimstone


Meadow brown


Speckled wood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