Carmarthenshire Beekeepers Association

Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Sir Caerfyrddin

NEWSLETTER 32 SPRING 2011 VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1

LEFT Hive and frame making at the Showground.

ABOVE Improvers class at the Showground.

ABOVE Bill Bradley in control.

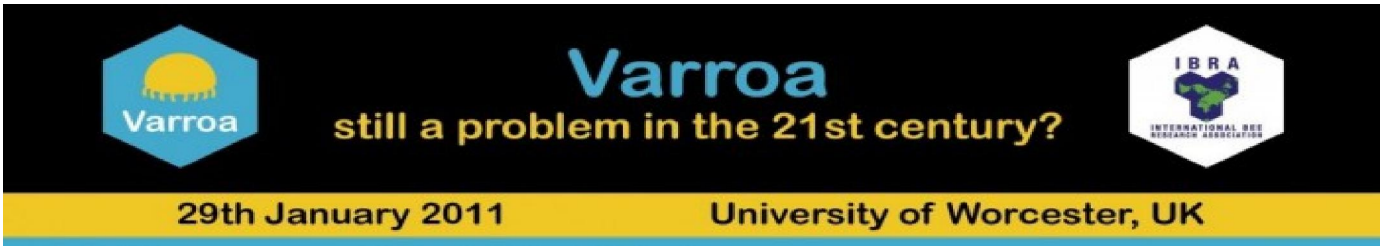
RIGHT Chris Phillips instructing framemaking.

NEXT MEETINGS

Apiary Practical Sunday 17th April 2.00 p.m. at Cwmoarnant Farm.

Apiary Practical Sunday 8th May 2.00 p.m. at Cwmoarnant Farm.

Apiary Practical Sunday 22nd May 2.00 p.m. at Cwmoarnant Farm.



OBSERVER AT THE INTERNATIONAL BEE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION VARROA MEETING

BY SANDRA ECKFORD

There were 7 speakers and my notes were far from comprehensive, in fact some of them went at such a speed that I got totally left behind. What I am offering here is just a few interesting points that were mentioned. I ordered the book of the meeting and when that arrives anyone interested will be able to borrow it.

The1st lecture by Dr Stephen Martin was "Varroa biology". He discussed the movements of bees around the world from 1622 onwards, and the leap made by Varroa destructor from its original host Apis cerana to our bee, Apis mellifera. Apparently mites that now live on A mellifera cannot now live on A cerana.

Photo from IBRA website http://www.ibra.org.uk

The question now is, why does A cerana tolerate the parasite so much better than A mellifera? One reason seems to be that with A cerana colonies Varroa destructor does not breed in worker cells at all – possibly the bees remove the mites from worker cells but this is not certain. Another reason is that in A cerana colonies the drone larvae do not survive multiple invasions by Varroa: if there are more than 2 mites in its cell the larva dies. Furthermore it seems that the house bees either do not or cannot remove the drone cell cappings to clean out the cells so the mites die along with the drone larva.

The V destructor genome has been sequenced. An interesting fact about male mites is that they are haploid when adult but they come from fertilized eggs and thus start their lives diploid. After a number of cell divisions half of the chromosomes are "thrown out" – this may be a mechanism by which the mite is able to get rid of harmful mutations.

The 2nd lecture by Dr Joachim de Miranda was "Varroa and viruses". There are many viruses which affect bees,

for example Sacbrood virus(SBV), Deformed Wing Virus(DWV), Slow Bee Paralysis Virus. SBV was discovered in 1917 and many more viruses between 1963 and 2000 by Bailey & Ball at the Rothamstead Research Station. Chronis Bee Paralysis belongs to a new family of viruses.

Viral transmission in bees takes place in 3 ways: "horizontal" directly from bee to bee; "vertical" from Queen to offspring; and "vectored" by mites biting bees. The first two methods are of low virulence but the third is of high virulence. Vectored transmission occurs mostly in pupae but can occur in adults bitten by phoretic mites (which are just mites attached to adult bees). Varroa mites do not transmit Black Queen Cell Virus or SacBrood Virus but they do transmit Deformed Wing Virus amongst others.

The lecturer discussed diagnostic options for detecting virus presence. They were

1. Symptoms (not a very good method).

2. Microscopy (very sensitive but time consuming).

3. Nucleic acid detection (expensive).

4. Serology – Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) which is a method of multiplying up available material.

5. Lateral Flow Device. This is a new method which works in a similar way to the modern pregnancy test using immunochromatography. It detects virus presence below the level at which damage is visible. It is better than PCR because the latter can be too sensitive whereas LFD can be set to a level below which a positive result does not matter.

The 3rd lecture by Dr Max Watkins was on Chemical Control of Varroa. I found his talk less interesting than the previous two. He spent a lot of time explaining how difficult it is to produce a new anti–mite chemical – to be expected as he works for Vita – but said very little about other chemicals such as organic acids or Thymol. (I meant to ask how organic acid work on the mites but I forgot alas) Basically Lipophilic products are generally preferred over hydrophilic ones i.e. they tend to leave residues in the wax rather than in the honey. Trademarked products can be divided into three types; Amidenes, Pyrethroids and Organophosphorus. They all act on neurotransmitters in the mite, but the mite can switch to using different enzymes and become resistant – as we all know. As an after thought he did mention that because Thymol affects proteins generally including cell membranes it will be much more difficult for the mites to develop resistance.

The 4th lecture was entitled "Integrated Pest Management" by an American, Professor Keith Delaplane of the University of Georgia. He suggested that there are basically three ways to control Varroa infestations: 1. Attack the mite by disrupting its life-cycle. 2. Genetically modify the bee. 3. Use chemicals. He then went on to describe experiments done using what he called Integrated Pest Management. He used screen hive floors – that is what we call varroa floors – in conjunction with a particular breed of Queen and referred to this throughout as IPM as if there is only one type of IPM. I found this very odd as I thought IPM could be used to refer to any combination of methods as opposed to simply relying on a single method. He then pointed out that the keepers using IPM found it more time consuming because it involved counting mites, which of course you cannot do if your hive has not got a varroa floor. Perhaps when the book comes out it will all become clearer but he left me puzzled!

The 5th lecture was on "Biological Control of Varroa" by Dr David Chandler. He made an interesting statement that among social insects, including honeybees, selection by pests is a defining feature and they are very vulnerable to new pests. Apparently insects do not have an adaptive immune system such as we have but an innate immune system. This means they cannot develop immunity to a new threat or at least not as easily as we can. The way ahead for biological control of Varroa seems to be using "entomopathogenic" fungi.

The 6th lecture was "Breeding Bees for Varroa Tolerance" by Norman Carreck. His comment was that bee genetics are still poorly understood. In order to get an effective result the strain produced must be stable. There may be undesirable traits linked linked to the ones you want. Evaluation of breeding results is difficult and inbreeding can be dangerous. Various commercial strains are already available: "Minnesota Hygienic", "Russian" and "VSH" from USA. The "Russian" bee has reduced brood attractiveness to Varroa, increased grooming behaviour and increased hygienic behaviour. (These were the queens used by Prof Keith Delaplane in his IPM experiments.) However Mr Carrack did make the points that (a) hygienic behaviour is not always a good thing – see 1st lecture – and (b) not all bees in a "hygienic" colony exhibit "hygienic" behaviour, so it is important to identify the patri lines responsible for hygienic behaviour.

Finally the 7th lecture was "Varroa – the way forward" and given by Dr Jochen Plugfelder. He summarised the methods that had been discussed but added the comment that reinvasion by mites from other colonies was a big problem.

If you were unable to attend and feel you have missed out, At the end of April IBRA are publishing all the papers in a book titled "Varroa - Still a problem in the 21st Century".

This will be available from the IBRA bookshop for £13.50. includes p&p U.K. only.

MINUTES OF CARMARTHENSHIRE BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION AGM HELD AT NEW STAGS HEAD, CARMARTHEN on Monday 3rd January 2011 at 7.30pm

Present:

Chairman:	Andrew Bowering	Vice Chairman:	Chris Phillips
President:	Maureen Macleod	Vice President:	Keith Thomas
Treasurer:	Bill Bradley	Secretary:	Brian Jones
Assistant Sec:	Cathy Tansley	Librarian:	Stephen Cox

Members of Carmarthenshire Beekeeping Association
Apologies: Phillip Johnes
Marie Gardener

CHAIRMANS WELCOME: Ladies and gentlemen I can report that it has been a good year for the association, with increased membership, finances ok (although I will not steal the Treasurers report).

PRESIDENTS OPENING REMARKS Greetings: Thanks for new support and to Penny for all the facilities which will be continuing for another year. We have seen a massive increase in numbers which is wonderful.

Prize to Cathy Tansley for her success in not only attending but completing the City and Guilds course in Swansea and for her ideas on how we should progress with the beginners courses.

Prize to Keridwen Bowering for her enormous support in the apiary with cakes for Sunday afternoon teas; when she brings a cake the contributions for tea money go up dramatically and when she isn't there the money drops like a rocket! Many thanks.

Education for all levels will be expanded this year, with many more and varied classes available and the first group of 5 will take their primary exam this year, to be followed by preparation classes for units 1 to 4 next year . In a few years time we should have our first ever NDB's in this association.

MINUTES OF 2009 AGM Approved

MATTERS ARISING To be covered in Any Other Business

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT The apiary has gone from strength to strength with a second colony, making demonstrations and "hands on" experience easier. We have also had well attended monthly sessions here in the pub. Thanks as ever to Brian for his well researched and delivered presentations.

Well attended apiary practicals with an increasing amount of confident and knowledgeable discussion and yes arguments between members going on in the background – a very healthy sign.

Intermediates have been catered for with an excellent and fascinating microscopy workshop.

The association has continued to build an excellent working relationship with the regional bee inspector and this can only be to the advantage of the association and to individual members alike. Even if he did chair the quiz between ourselves and the East Carmarthen Association where it was our turn to lose.

The association had a well attended and successful presence at the garden open day, plus Builth Wells WBKA conference and the Botanical Gardens.
The focus has continued to be on teaching the beginners how to look after bees – wherever possible without the invasive use of chemicals and with the welfare of the bees a priority.

So a successful year, but like any well run organisations the activities of our association do not run themselves. So I hope you will allow me to say a few thankyou's.

Personally I would like to thank Maureen for her leadership and her uncompromising approach to both beekeeping and to the welfare of the bees that I believe underpins the philosophy of our association. We are indeed fortunate that we have a wealth of experience within the association – just Maureen, Brian and Keith alone have been keeping bees for more years than they would wish to mention – but we all benefit from their willingness to

share their knowledge, experience and expertise with the rest of us. I have already mentioned Brian's well researched presentations but we all benefit (those on the internet anyway!) from his regular emails highlighting what's going on in the bee world; this in addition to the production of regular newsletters where he has been supported by Cathy.

Cathy is also going to be our focus for the new, nationally produced beekeeping in a box training scheme – the next crop of beginners will no doubt see the benefit of this over the coming months.

We have all benefitted from the knowledge and advice of Chris, our vice Chairman. Certainly his queen rearing activities saved my colony and my pride last summer. But the membership really benefitted from a resident QM to provide the right equipment – at a fair price – when needed.

Our librarian Steve, also produces our annual calendar – invaluable if like me you can never remember what you should be doing at any one time.

I do not forget Bill our hard working treasurer who will tell us what state the coffers are in shortly. What I would point out – before he reminds you to pay this year's subs – is that, as you will all no doubt agree, we get phenomenal value for money belonging to this association.

Finally it would be remiss of me indeed not to mention Penny who has allowed us to use the excellent facilities of the apiary throughout the past year for which we are all very grateful.

So, a successful year fully supported by a hardworking dedicated committee. Before we vote them all out of office, I am sure you would like to join me in thanking them for all their hard work on our behalf.

TREASURER'S REPORT The year ended in a good financial position mainly because the outgoings have been low.

We haven't had to buy much in the way of equipment as Keith had donated a hive of bees. Membership had increased by 30 and we had an increase in fees, but this also included the calendar.

We did however pay Penny for the use of the facilities - £300 for the year.

We will be increasing the number of hives in the apiary in the coming year, but we have kept the fees the same and hope that the increase in membership will cover this cost.
A note about the bee insurance – if you join at the beginning of the season you can make a claim straightaway if your colony has to be destroyed, however if you join later in the season you will have to wait the 30 days before you are able to make a claim.

APPROVAL OF THE ACCOUNTS: Proposed: Maureen Macleod Seconded: Cathy Tansley

SECRETARY'S REPORT Pleased with the increase in membership and the association is in the best condition now than it has been in the last 40 years .

Thanks to Maureen and the rest of the committee. Special thanks to Steve for his work on the calendar and Chris for is research into breeding bees, especially morphometry – do you have black bees – if you think you might have, get in touch with Chris and he will check them.

I have managed to get 3 newsletters out this year, but Cathy has filled in the gaps each month with an interim one.

It is essential, that if you use email that you put your address on the membership form. It saves the association a lot of money, plus you get the extra bits.

Subscriptions have stayed the same, but it is good value. You get your BDI (insurance) which covers 3 colonies, the newsletters', Welsh beekeeper magazine and all the knowledge from the association.

Thanks to Bill for his fantastic job as Treasurer.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Nobody has come forward to stand in any of the positions on the committee. However Keith has written a letter to say he would like to stand down as Vice President, and that he no longer wants to be a member of CBKA due to other commitments and the fact he no longer keeps bees. Chris Phillips no longer wants to be Vice Chairman, but has asked to be Apiary Manager and Steve no longer wants to be Librarian but will fill any other position should it be available.

President	Maureen Macleod	Proposed	Brian Jones	Seconded	Chris Phillips
Vice President	To be confirmed	Proposed		Seconded	
Chairman	Andrew Bowering	Proposed	Brian Jones	Seconded	Chris Phillips
Vice Chairman	Stephen Cox	Proposed	Chris Phillips	Seconded	Brian Jones
Treasurer	Bill Bradley	Proposed	Stephen Cox	Seconded	Cathy Tansley
Secretary	Brian Jones	Proposed	Geoff Bazin	Seconded	Cathy Tansley
Assistant Secretary	Cathy Tansley	Proposed	Maureen Macleod	Seconded	Chris Philips
Librarian	Kathy Start	Proposed	Maureen Macleod	Seconded	Cathy Tansley
Apiary Manager	Chris Phillips	Proposed	Maureen Macleod	Seconded	Brian Jones
WBKA Rep	Chris Phillips / Andrew Bowering	Proposed	CathyTansley	Seconded	Maureen Macleod
Swarm Co-ordinator	Maureen Macleod	Proposed	Brian Jones	Seconded	Kathy Start

PROGRAMME FOR 2011 Stephen Cox is organising the calendar, and once printed will have the dates for 2011.

We are holding a beginners course, starting in February, for people interested in becoming beekeepers. They should contact Cathy if they wish to join.

Stephen Cox will be organising guest speakers for later in the year.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS Kathy Start wondered whether there was anyone local to her that had more beekeeping experience than herself, that she could ask for assistance or be shown how to do things (bee buddy). Maureen felt is was best to keep things within the apiary, so ensure good practice, but had no objection for beginners to work together to help each other out.

Dawn Reed asked that she might go swarm collecting to see how it is done. Maureen said she had no objection, but wanted members to realise that the process of collecting swarms could be quite lengthy and so to give themselves plenty of time.

Brian said that the Welsh Beekeeper had organised last year a “have a go” weekend for new beekeepers. We felt the issue of beginners was covered in the beginners course and so have decided not to take them up on it.
Brian also has a “bee in his bonnet” about health and safety issues at the apiary meetings. It was felt that we should get someone in to talk to us about it. We do have equipment available, but do need to keep an eye on the epipen to make sure it is in date.

The attendance book, which was previously looked after by Keith, will now be looked after by Stephen Cox.
The meeting was ended at 8.30pm Reported by Cathy Tansley

MY FIRST QUICK INSPECTION IN MARCH

Well having been promised some clear blue skies and temperatures exceeding 15^{o}C I thought it a good idea to have a quick inspection of my bees. I looked at Aldaniti (my husband names everything after grand national winners or jumps!!) first and here is what I found.

The bees had over wintered in a brood box with a super of honey left on in August; they had been topped up with some sugar syrup in September then left to carry on collecting Balsam nectar and then ivy.

During February and early March I had given the “girls” some candy and they had taken it down eagerly, in fact so eagerly I had even given them a 3rd lump the day before for good measure!! Imagine my surprise when I looked in the super and discovered it chocker with honey!

I wondered what was happening down below in the brood box, and as the “girls” were happy with my interference, I decided to take a look. There were 2 frames of brood in all stages but the rest of the frames, except one right on the edge, were completely full of stores – the queen was struggling to find somewhere to lay.

I wondered whether I could actually kill the bees with kindness?
So what did I do?

I believe I had 2 options, one would have been to take out some of the frames of honey and put on one side just in case I needed them later and fill the gap with new frames; the other was to fill another super with frames and put it above the brood box, putting the super back on top, still with no queen excluder as I wasn't doing a full inspection and did not know where the queen was. I opted for the second choice – I could always take out some of the stores later, but if we did have some bad weather then I knew the bees had plenty to eat. I also moved the one frame that hadn't got any stores / brood in, just one place towards the middle, to encourage the "girls" to start using it.
My second hive (Bindaree) was a little better, even though full of stores, still had some space for the queen to lay so I left them to it for the time being.
Needless to say, I took off the candy – I think they have enough to keep them going for a while!
I wondered whether any of you had the same experience this year?

Cathy Tansley.

BEGINNERS CLASS FEBRUARY 2011

I put an article in the Carmarthen Journal about the beginner's course, Brian flagged it on our website, and Stephen Cox put notices around St Clears, and I was staggered at the response – 15 people signed up within no time at all. The class was already full when Maureen's article in the Carmarthenshire Community News came out and then another 10 people contacted us!

We met in Penny's small barn (the bull pen), which was made cosy with a fire, and on Sunday afternoons for 6 weeks we went through some of the theory behind beekeeping, stopping half way through for tea and cake.

It is difficult to go though theory without it becoming too boring, so on each occasion we would try and do a little bit of practical. So on one occasion we went down to the apiary to watch the pollen coming in – the bees obliged by stuffing their little legs with dark yellow snowdrop pollen. On another afternoon we looked at the varroa floor and could see the seams of cappings, along with a few varroa, pollen and bits of bee. We lit a smoker, had a honey tasting and finally made a few frames.

The subjects covered included the differences between bees and other foragers, the life of a honey bee, types of hives, disease / pests, swarm control, queens and ancestry.

I surprised the class on the last afternoon with a quiz and was delighted that they had all taken so much on board – in fact we had to hold 2 tie breaks so that we could get a clear winner who took home a prize of Brian's honey.

We had a lot of fun on our Sunday afternoons, the class all forged friendships and it gave me a huge amount of pleasure to bring them through this first stage – roll on the warmer weather so that we can look in beehives and we can teach the practical side of beekeeping.

Cathy Tansley.

Carmarthenshire Beekeepers Association
Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Sir Caerfyrddin

CARMARTHENSHIRE BEEKEEPERS WEBSITE www.carmarthenshirebeekeepers.org.uk

NEWS, CALENDER OF EVENTS, PHOTO GALLERY, LINKS TO OTHER WEBSITES.

 Editor / Hon. Sec. Carmarthenshire Beekeepers Association BRIAN JONES. CWMBURRY HONEY FARM , FERRYSIDE, CARMARTHENSHIRE TEL: 01267 267318 Email: beegeejay2003@yahoo.co.uk

WHAT TYPE OF HONEY BEE FEEDER IS BEST?

Many types of honey bee feeders are available. None are perfect; each has its own drawbacks, and beekeepers are quite opinionated on the subject. It seems that every hobbyist I know uses a different kind, so I'll go through them one by one. Personally, I've tried just about every style out there and ended up squarely in the "baggie feeder" camp, but more on that later.

- **Open air feeders:** Feeders constructed out in the open should never be used. They attract all types of wildlife besides bees—including wasps, birds, raccoons, skunks, possums, bears—whatever is around. Also, bees using an open feeder can easily share diseases and parasites with each other. In addition, bees at an open feeder tend to fight, leaving weak hives even weaker.
- **Entrance feeders:** Entrance feeders have two basic parts—a feeding tray that is inserted into the hive entrance and an inverted syrup container that fits into it, but remains on the outside of the hive. They make it easy to see how much feed is left and are easy to refill. On the other hand, they hold almost nothing and do not perform well in cold weather because the liquid may freeze or the bees may not be able to get to it. Many beekeepers feel that they induce robbing because the food is right at the entrance where it is hard to defend. I sometimes use one with a nucleus, but only with a much-reduced entrance.
- **Division board feeders:** These feeders are roughly the size of a brood frame, are usually made of plastic, and are actually inserted into the hive in place of one of the frames. These are clever designs that don't work very well. They are good because they are completely inside the hive where they are less likely to induce robbing, they are fairly easy to fill, and they hold a surprising amount. However, they can create significant problems. Most are designed so bees can crawl out easily and not drown, but bees drown anyway. Even the ones with rough sides, ladders, or floats drown lots of bees. Also, if you let the feeders go empty the bees will build comb inside, or they will propolize the floats to the bottom or sides of the container. The black plastic ones get wide when you fill them, making it difficult to move other frames, and the glued-together yellow ones invariably leak. I love the idea of division board feeders, and I *want* them to work. Still, I've given up on them.

Internal hive-top feeders: These fit on top of the brood boxes but beneath the cover. They can hold *a lot* of syrup and are extremely easy to fill. Each model comes with clever ways to keep the bees from drowning, but mine were always filled with dead bees anyway. Also, if for any reason you have to move the feeder off the hive when it is still is full, it is *heavy* and the syrup will slosh everywhere, giving the word "sticky" a whole new meaning. Another downside is that if you don't use some kind of **mould inhibitor** (such as essential oil), you can get a mouldy-sticky-dead bee sort of paste that is difficult to describe.

- **External hive-top feeders:** These are containers that are inverted over an entrance hole in the inner cover. Sometimes they just sit on top of the hive, and sometimes that are enclosed in an empty super. Covering is recommended, especially if animals or high winds might dislodge the container. The containers are often quite large, so they hold a lot of syrup, and the syrup usually doesn't mould because it's not exposed to the air. The negatives are that the containers can be very heavy. A one-gallon glass jar of 2:1 syrup, for example, can be dangerously heavy, slippery, and awkward especially if you're working on a rainy day. The plastic pails are much easier to use. However, I found that I never had enough empty supers lying around to use as covers, and I don't have room to store them even if I did. Many of the commercial beekeepers use this method of feeding, however, and I think it is an excellent choice for them. It's the method I would use if I had many hives.

Baggie Feeders: A baggie feeder is nothing more than a spacer rim (think of a three-inch deep super) that gives you a place to lay a plastic zipper bag filled with syrup. Once the bag is in place, you slit it with a utility knife and the bees drink the liquid through the slit. Often these are completely sucked dry with no (I mean zero) dead bees. Sometimes 3 or 4 crawl in under the plastic and die but, overall, the bees do well with these. Heat from the cluster keeps the syrup from freezing, even in fairly cold weather. I like the size of the rims because they provide a place to put pollen patties, grease patties, or even mite treatments in addition to the syrup. I also use the space to add sugar cakes in the winter instead of making candy boards. The downsides? Once a syrup bag is slit open it is impossible to move, and the plastic bag is a one-use throwaway—which is expensive and environmentally unfriendly.

Rusty.

Permission has been granted to reproduce this article. See other articles on Rusty's website

"The Honeybee Suite" "A Better Way to Bee" http://www.honeybeesuite.com

Honey Bee Suite is dedicated to honey bees, beekeeping, wild bees, other pollinators, and pollination ecology. It is designed to be informative and fun, but also to remind readers that pollinators throughout the world are endangered. Although they may seem small and insignificant, pollinators are vital to anyone who eats. Rusty. Washington. Pennsylvania. USA.

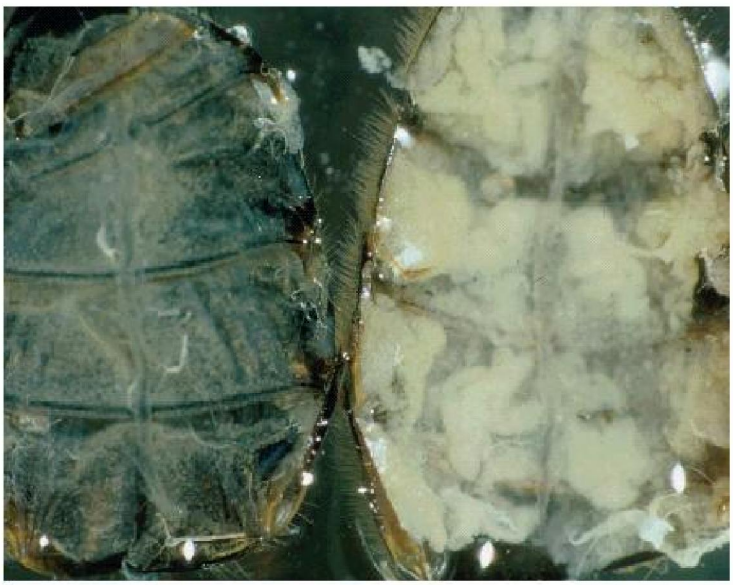
WANTED There are a number of new beginners looking for various items of equipment. If you have anything that is surplus to your requirements, send details to Cathy or myself and we will put you in contact with those members. If you have any specific requirement yourself we can put the information in the next newsletters.

Brian Jones Tel 01267 267318 email beegeejay2003@yahoo.co.uk

Cathy Tansley Tel 01554b891452 email cathytansley123@btinternet.com

SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS

You may have seen the article in The Welsh Beekeeper about Winter Clustering of Bees and I thought you may be interested to see the difference in the body fat content of a summer foraging bee and a nurse or Winter bee. Full article by Keller in Bee World March 2005 International Bee Research Association magazine.



Fat bodies in the abdomen of a forager (left) and nurse or winter bee (right). From Keller (2005).

The other illustration reminded me of Maureens ability to make swarms descend from their flight to settle near the ground, referred to as "Tanging."

Now we have some news that due to medical advice Maureen has decided that she is unable to participate in so much of the CBKA activities. This is a sad blow, as she is one of our expert beekeepers who has a wealth of beekeeping experience. Her help at meetings will be sorely missed. I am sure though that if you need any advice over the phone she will be more than willing to help. We wish her all the best and hope that she will be back to see us all soon.

The last meeting was at the Showground in Carmarthen. Not quite as many members as we expected but those that did come along were very busy making frames and hives. Improvers ha d to put up with a presentation on the bee year which was good revision. The syllabus for WBKA exams part 1 I could not access due to technical difficulties. So we will do this next time.

If anyone has lost bees and would like samples tested bring along about 30 bees and we will have a go. Frank Gellatly will be attending later in the year to help you get your stocks through next winter and show you how to test

PURCHASING BEE EQUIPMENT AT THE WBKA CONVENTION

I know you write a news letter and having written newsletters for clubs in the past I know how nice it is to get a contribution from someone else; so here goes.

As a (very) novice bee keeper I attended the recent bee keeping event in Builth Wells, mainly to buy some of the essential equipment and clothing for bee keeping. As I needed a lot of advice I chose my supplier by listening to how they responded to other customers and how much advice they offered me. The best, by far, was a company called Bee Basic and a gentleman called Alan Loveday. He talked me through all the options for smocks and suits and explained the pros and cons of each. He offered special prices on items and made sure I had everything a novice would need to get started. We added it all up and it came to over £80 - then came the problem. He only took cash or cheques and I only had a credit card! He said it was no real problem and it had happened before and what he would do is let me take everything away that day and I could put a cheque in the post when I got home. He asked for my name, wrote out an invoice and handed over the goods. I asked if he wanted my home address or telephone number and he said no; he had done this before and had never been let down. He then shook my hand, looked me straight in the eye and said "And you aren't going to be the first, are you?" What a gentleman. Needless to say the cheque was in the post that evening.
On the bee keeping course we heard about which company to avoid - well here is one I recommend - BEE BASIC. They will certainly be getting more of my business in the future. Check them out on www.beebasic.co.uk
Gareth Davies

WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE HIVES THAT DIED OFF IN WINTER

First try to determine what killed the colony. Was it starvation due to lack of stores. Insufficient bee numbers to keep up an adequate cluster temperature. Disease such as Nosema or Varroa. Outside predators such as mice, badgers, other livestock or woodpeckers.

If the colony is suspected to have been infected with Nosema then the brood combs should be sterilised with acetic acid. Any combs that are more than three years old and dark should be replaced anyway as routine.

Place all suspected infected combs in a spare brood chamber, or a polythene bin bag. For approx 10 frames apply 150 ml Acetic acid either on a pad 22 -30 mm square or I use a butter or margarine container with a small cloth wick, anything that will allow the acetic acid to evaporate. Seal the bag or the brood box and leave for at least seven days. The whole thing smells like a chip shop. After this the combs should be thoroughly aired before using in hives. Also take care that bees do not rob out the combs if they have any honey stored in them.

SAFETY ISSUES

Always wear gloves goggles and handle the acid in the open air or wear a suitable mask.

Acetic acid can be purchased as an 80% solution “Technical Specification” ready to use. If you use Glacial Acetic Acid which can be 96% dilute by adding Acid to Water not the other way round. Dilute I part water to 4 parts acid.

Fumes are heavier than air so apply acid from the top.

The acid is corrosive so remove metal ends, castellations and runners or cover them with Vaseline (Petroleum jelly)

For colonies that are alive and are suspected to be infected with Nosema they can be fed with about two gallons of syrup solution containing the antibiotic Fumidil B (Fumagillin). Read the instructions supplied with the product. This will not kill all the spores in the bees gut but will allow them to gain strength as spring progresses.

Then hope for a fine spring and a bumper honey crop. Brian Jones April 2011

USEFULL INFORMATION

SPRING SYRUP 1LB SUGAR TO 2 PINTS WATER.

QUEEN MARKING COLOUR FOR 2011 IS WHITE.

WATCH OUT WATCH OUT THERES A THIEF ABOUT !

THERE ARE STILL INCIDENCES OF HIVES BEING STOLEN. HIVES WITH BEES ARE EXPENSIVE ITEMS AND CONSEQUENTLY ARE PREY TO THE UNSCRUPULOUS. IF YOU ARE OFFERED HIVES CHEAP AND ARE NOT SURE OF THEIR ORIGIN CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION WHO CAN MAKE FURTHER ENQUIRIES.