



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2014

Dates for Your Diary.

Sunday 13 th April	Association Apiary	Assembling Equipment & Beginners Inspection	2pm
Sunday 27 th April	Association Apiary	Comb Management	2pm
Saturday 3 rd May	Pembrokeshire BKA	Annual Sale, Park House Building, Withybush Airfield, Haverfordwest	11am
Saturday 10 th May	Teifiside BKA Coed-y-Bryn Apiary (Grid ref: SN354443)	Annual Sale	10am viewing – 1pm sale begins

Saturday 13th April 2014

This date is to be our usual Sunday meeting, however the beginners who came on Cathy's course are coming to the Apiary to be shown around and, if the weather is conducive, Cathy will be talking them through how to make the first spring inspection of a colony in the Associations Apiary. If any of you are new to beekeeping, or just want a recap you will be more than welcome.

April in the Apiary

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, you have to take into consideration many outside influences when it comes to making the decision to check the colony for the first time. On the morning of the first of the beginners bee classes I was holding (15th March), I received a notice from Fera to say that we should be checking our colonies to make sure they aren't starving and feed accordingly. I had actually been humming and haaaring over whether I should open my hives for the beginners that weekend, the previous day had been cold and foggy and I had near enough made up my mind not to look, but the Fera notice made me change my mind especially as the weather on the Saturday was lovely and warm. We had a quick look, checking stores (I had plenty left) and whether the queen was laying – there were eggs and brood in all stages. One of the colonies was on an open mesh floor, so I was able to check the board beneath for varroa (there wasn't any), but there was evidence of wax moth larvae and plenty of earwigs wandering around the crown board!! I have made a note that I will make my first real hive inspection in April, weather permitting, and by having had this quick look I will be able to get together all the equipment I need, so that I can change floors, start changing comb, put on the queen excluder and maybe even remove some honey as one colony in particular had quite a bit.

Before you start this first hive inspection make sure any equipment you are putting on the hive is thoroughly cleaned. If it is wooden (boxes, queen excluder, open mesh floor, re-used frames before wax is added) make sure you have given them a blast with the blow torch, paying particular attention to edges where wax moth can burrow in. Any plastic parts (queen excluders, frame ends) should be washed thoroughly in washing soda. Also wash in soda all hive tools, buy new washing up gloves and if you haven't already done so, wash your bee suit – it all sounds obvious, but cleanliness in the apiary is important if we are going to fight infection. It is probably also worth saying that if you visit other peoples apiary's or come up to the Associations and are therefore looking in other hives, you should be using different gloves for each, so buy a

few pairs of washing up gloves and keep each for that particular job – or just use disposable gloves (but I am a bit of a chicken when it comes to being stung on my hands so prefer a stronger covering!!)

Also, get your hive record started for each hive you own – the more hives you acquire the more difficult it becomes to remember what was going on during the previous inspection, so by keeping a hive record for each hive you can easily see where you are and take the appropriate equipment along.

I also make up a bucket with a lid and store my hive tools, queen marker, queen catcher, drawing pins, tooth picks, anything I use for Integrated Pest Management (IPM), matches and anything else I think might be useful. Keeping everything in one place and easily at hand stops a lot of rushing around, trying to find that vital piece of equipment, whilst the hive is open.

Choose a warm day and ideally wait until most of the flying bees are out and about i.e. not first thing in the morning or last thing at night before opening the hive.

So what are you looking for?

1. Is the queen present?

Finding eggs will give an indication that the queen is home and has been in the last 3 days, so even if you don't find her on this occasion, you can be 95% certain that she is there. Whilst you are looking for eggs also check the larvae on each frame to ensure that it is purely white and curled in a "C" shape in each cell. Any capped brood should have nice flat, buff brown cappings – not indented and not perforated (other than when a bee is emerging), the hive smell should be honey / waxy so no foul smell.

2. Is there enough room? This is going to be a key question for this year in particular, as the weather has been warm and colonies will be building up quicker than they did last year. Space is one of the key triggers for swarming and it is felt that many beekeepers will be caught out if they haven't sorted out space, within the brood box area, early enough in April. If your colonies have overwintered on a brood and a half, then it might be prudent to take along a clean super with frames to this first hive inspection. Before putting on the queen excluder sort the half brood and honey super frames out, taking any frames with honey and put in the honey super and any frames with brood leave in the half brood, fill the gaps with empty frames, reassembling the hive with the queen excluder between the half brood and honey super.

3. Has the colony got enough food until the next inspection?

If your colony does look short of supplies and the weather is warm, then feed with a thin sugar syrup. However, if the cold weather does return you will need to put candy on again.

What else should you do?

1. Clean the floor – either replace the floor completely with a nearly cleaned one or give the existing one a jolly good brush off
2. Scrap off any surplus wax from the tops of frames, crown board etc, but put in a container and take away from the apiary after the inspection.
3. Start your Integrated Pest Management programme – whether it is dusting with icing sugar, putting in a super frame to the brood box to encourage drone brood or trickling hive clean down the seams – it is important to keep vigilant in the fight against varroa. My own counts have been low and even non-existent in the past year, however I mustn't sit back on my laurels and believe that varroa is a thing of the past for me – I just don't know where my bees go and who they brush wings with and therefore varroa could easily be brought back into my hives.

Maureen has asked me to advise you that as the Winter and Spring so far has been warm (and wet) that there is a strong possibility that colonies will swarm early – this could even be as early as April in some cases. Therefore, get your nuc boxes and bait hives ready, you never know what is going to fly over the hedge!

NOTES FROM THE BEGINNERS CLASS HELD SATURDAY 15TH AND SUNDAY 16TH MARCH 2014

We had 7 beginners and 1 re-capper on our course in March. The group immediately “gelled” and we spent a very happy weekend going over 6 modules and discussing bee keeping problems – along with eating homemade cake and biscuits etc!

The modules covered were:

1. Bees and their roles in the hive – we looked at the queen, drones and workers, looking in detail at their roles within the colony
2. The bee keeping year and setting up an apiary
3. Hives and other equipment
4. Swarming
5. Pests and diseases
6. Products of the hive

We looked in my hives, briefly, on Saturday, checking that there were enough stores and that the queen was laying – I haven’t managed, due to the weather, to do this before and I think it really helped the theory come alive having a brief look inside a colony, after we had discussed the first two modules.

I am hoping the group will keep in touch with each other and be supported by other members of the association – so the “more the merrier” on Sunday 13th April, so come along, meet our new members and see if you can help them with their first year of bee keeping.

Class of 2014



We have had a plea from one of our members – if you can help, please contact Stephen Cox steve_p_cox30@hotmail.com (07906 515996) or ring Brian on 01267 267318

"I wonder if either of you or anyone else at CBKA might be able to help us out? I've had an accident resulting in 8 broken ribs and a broken shoulder blade, and probably also a lengthy recovery before I will be able to do any practical beekeeping to look after our three colonies. Helen, my wife, has volunteered to go through them but she doesn't have any experience of beekeeping and wouldn't know what she should or shouldn't be seeing at a particular time, and I can't really talk her through it while I'm in hospital!

Do you think anyone would be prepared to look after them while I can't? Either by visiting our place as necessary (in Dryslwyn), or moving them to their own apiary or the CBKA apiary at Cwmoernant Farm? They are in three Smith hives, and we have plenty of spare Smith equipment available, and three trays of fondant at the ready. Last time they were hefted (a couple of weeks ago) they had enough food, and checking again was on my task list for the weekend I had the accident.

I can't really communicate directly by phone or email from hospital, but Helen is monitoring my emails so I can get her to send replies on my behalf within a day or two.

We know it's a huge thing to ask, and we could only offer our gratitude, and help in return in the future (and some bulk Hertfordshire honey!).

Yours in need"

Wanted a beekeeper to look after hives near Talog in return for half of the honey crop. There is beekeeping equipment for the person to use, so an ideal opportunity for someone with limited means to start beekeeping. Some colonies have died out but Mark is prepared to purchase more bees. Possible chance to place some of your own hives at the location. For further details contact Mark Thompson.

mark@thedoghouseonline.net or tel: 01994 484737

Site for beehives near Llanstephan: Contact Alun Cole, Stable Cottage, Ferry Farm, Llanstephan, Carmarthen SA33 5EX email: aluncole@eversheds.com

Did you lose your hive / hives in the floods? If so contact Apiary Manager Steve Cox steve_p_cox30@hotmail.com

If you have something you would like to put in a newsletter, something to sell, some recipes for later in the season, foraging material or just a beekeeping experience please send it to Cathy –catherinetansley@btinternet.com for inclusion in the next newsletter.