



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014

Dates for Your Diary.

Monday 3 rd March	New Stags Head	Speaker TBC	7.30pm
Saturday 8 th March	Seedy Saturday, St Peters Civic Hall, Carmarthen		10am – 3pm
Sunday 16 th March	Association Apiary	Assembling Equipment	2pm
Saturday 22 nd March	Welsh Beekeepers Convention, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells		9am – 5pm

CARMARTHENSHIRE BEEKEEPERS BEGINNERS COURSE - Saturday 15th March & Sunday 16th March 10am to 4pm

A beginners beekeeping course has been organised this year at Cathy Tansley's house in Kidwelly. If you would like to come, or know someone who is interested in beekeeping, please give Cathy a ring on 01554 891452 or send an email catherinetansley@btinternet.com for more details. The course covers the bee keeper's year, the honey bee – roles and yearly activities, beehives and equipment, swarms, bee health and products of the hive. This course will be followed by a trip to the Associations Apiary on Sunday 13th April 2pm, where you will be given a tour of the apiary and hopefully look in a hive.

MARCH IN THE APIARY

Well, what a wet and windy winter we have all had, hopefully your beehives are still standing upright and roof's are still in place. It has however been a warmer winter and so bees will have been out on cleansing flights more often, picking up water and also if they are really lucky some fresh pollen. As I write my snowdrops are again making a spectacular display on the edge of our woodland and where woodland used to be. They have clung on amazingly on the river bank and have often been submersed in rushing water, but their little white flower heads seem to withstand all that nature throws at them. Snowdrops are a good nectar and pollen source for our bees. The hazel catkins have also opened and these produce a good pollen source, should the weather remain warm enough (8°C) for a quick flight.

If we are really lucky March can see the beginning of hive inspections, but I do say this with a cautious note - the weather really has to be warm enough. The midday temperature should be at least 15°C as temperatures below that (around 12°C) can chill the brood, thus hindering spring build up; plus the bees could cluster too tightly around the queen (balling) and kill her. This of course could be disastrous at a time when there are no drones around and would see the end of your colony. If there is a lovely warm day (the weatherman has confirmed the temperature) and your bees are out flying then carry out a quick inspection to make sure all is ok. It is probably best to leave your first true clean up / inspection until April, when there should be longer periods of warmth and the air / ground temperatures are a few degrees higher. Temperatures can drop quite rapidly when the sun goes behind a cloud!

It is really important to work with the outside influences (weather and area) and not just keep to the text book as each year is of course is different – 2013 saw a long winter and we were unable to look into our hives until May. As the weather was cold the bees were unable to get out much to bring in early nectar and pollen to support any new brood and therefore were keeping the colonies small until the warmer weather came later in May. The colonies were thus very slow to build up as summer progressed and many just didn't get around to even thinking about swarming and went straight into honey collecting mode. As 2014 has in fact been warmer (albeit wet and windy), our bees will have ventured out more often, collecting what they can. It will also probably mean that the colonies are beginning to build up and therefore it is of the outmost importance to ensure they have enough food. Now is the time to think about hefting (lifting) your hive to check that you have enough stores – if it is still heavy, then you can leave it be for the time being and check again in a couple of weeks, if it light or easy to lift then you must put some candy on the crown board, over one of the two holes so that the bees can find it easily. DO NOT give a thin syrup yet as the bees can't digest it and you will give them dysentery.

There is still plenty to do in March to prepare ourselves for the forthcoming busy period. Mouse- guards can be removed towards the end of the month; new boxes can be made so that you are prepared for an artificial swarm, or a bumper year of honey (we live in hope!!); old boxes should be inspected to make sure they are clean and fresh; make up frames for brood boxes and supers and store in a dry shed. Get your hive records ready so that each inspection can be recorded.

Finally, take a good look at your garden / site – are there any areas you can make more bee friendly? I have recently found one in ours – over the last year or so my husband Paul has cleared some brambles and nettles in a flat open space. Last year bracken came up, so this year I want to work with the bracken and am thinking about putting sunflowers in. The bracken should support the sunflowers as they grow and as it is an open space they should do well. Sunflowers of course are not only good bee plants but the birds love them too.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR – Cathy Tansley

It has come to our attention that many of you would like to receive a newsletter more regularly so I have decided to take over writing it, like I have done before, once a month in order to give the committee members more time to get on with their duties. I want to add that I am helping Carmarthenshire Beekeepers, not as a committee member, but rather as a member who enjoys teaching about bees. I cannot though come to all the apiary meetings throughout the summer or winter due to my family and other commitments here on my smallholding, but would rather help in this way, slightly in the background and quietly helping wherever I can. If any of you would like to do the same, give a little bit of your time, I am sure Carmarthenshire Beekeepers committee would welcome any help, however small and inconsistent.

With this in mind, maybe if you have any beekeeping experiences / problems you want to air in this newsletter, please drop me a line. Also, if you have anything to sell, recipes, etc etc these can also be added. I am trying to keep the format for the newsletter as, each month in the apiary, with a slant on the environmental issue and also other problems we, as beekeepers, may be experiencing at that particular time of the year, so anything you can add would be a wonderful help.

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 for inclusion in the next newsletter.