



Quarterly Newsletter - July 2013

Forthcoming dates.

Sunday July 14th. Apiary Practical.

Monday July 22nd to Thursday July 25th Royal Welsh Show Builth Wells.
Incorporating the Welsh Honey Show.

Prince Charles visits on Wednesday the 24th.

Sunday July 28th. Apiary Practical.

Sunday August 4th. Apiary Practical. Extracting honey.

Sunday Sept 1st. Apiary Practical. Closing up the hives for winter.

SATURDAY 14th September. Honey Show and Barn Dance at the Apiary.

Monday October 7th New Stags Head Association meeting.

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

Sorry we made a mistake

As some of you may have noticed we got the dates of the hobbies weekend wrong.

So an apology to anyone who expected the hobbies weekend to be on the 1/2/3 June as it was the previous weekend.

We will be back next year. We may also have the use of the Bee Tent which is run by Swansea Beekeepers. For details of their show at the recent Welsh Game Fair at the Carmarthen Showground please see the report in this issue.

Contents:

Page One: Dates for your diary & Contents

Page Two: Editorial

Page Three & Four: The Beekeeping Year – July, August & September.

Page Five & Six: Welsh Game Fair and the bee tent.

Page Seven: Preparing a hive for a bee tent & Classified Adverts

Page Eight & Nine: C.B.K.A. Honey Show notes, Show schedule & Recipe.

Why am I receiving this newsletter I don't usually get it?

As this newsletter contains the schedule for the forthcoming club honey show, and as there were complaints last year that some people didn't see the schedule until too late we're sending it to every paid up member.

EDITORIAL

Some thoughts on the next few sessions and the Winter schedule.

We are currently lining up some guest speakers for the winter meetings at the New Stags Head. If you know anyone who can give a short (not more than an hour) talk on a subject that may interest beekeepers, it doesn't have to be about honey bees but of a natural history theme, or a demonstration on how to make a honey or wax related craft item then please let anyone of the committee know, we can provide a projector that works with a laptop and with sufficient notice we can usually find a loan laptop as well. We pay reasonable expenses but not a fixed fee.

We will let you know in the next newsletter what the subjects will be and when.

As the seasons are bit late this year the apiary practical's may not relate directly to how you should be looking after your bees. For instance we will be covering the subject of extraction at one of our remaining practical sessions but it should, if the flow continues as it seems to be at the moment be far too early for you to be considering extracting your own honey.

For those of you that do not own an extractor the club has a manual extractor for hire. The fee is usually five pounds for as long as you need it. The usual format is that rather than the extractor going to a member then back to the apiary every time it is simply passed on to the next member on the list that needs it. All will become clear after the extraction day as a rota / list will be made up with the names and contact details.

On the last meeting we should cover setting the hives up for winter however it will still be too early to actually do it for your own hives.

We also have our annual honey show and Barn Dance this September. The first time we held this it was in November which was a bit too late in the season and consequently was very cold in the barn. For that reason it will be earlier this year and because of the vagaries of our publishing schedule and the date of the event we're publishing the schedule for the honey show in this issue to give you plenty of time to prepare your craft items and think about what produce categories you wish to enter.

The committee has yet to decide if we will have a formal judge or a peer judging system as in past years. For this reason you should aim to show two jars of honey or comb in the relevant classes.

For those of you making the trek to Builth Wells for the Royal Show this month be sure to drop into the Welsh Honey show and have a look around.

Finally a brief note about what happened in the apiary on the 9th of June.

Looking back it was not one of my greatest moments as it could have resulted in the loss of at least one hive of our bees. As I'm sure you know the apiary along with many other in Wales suffered a loss of bees over the winter. Brian and I had decided before the session that we would split the remaining hive so there was already an expectation that this is what would happen. However when push came to shove there were no queen cells available to make a correct split, I was distracted by something

and agreed to the split as I misheard that there were queen cells in the hive (they were actually queen cups).

There then ensued two very fraught weeks and two inspections by myself and Sandra as joint apiary managers as we hoped that the hive would somehow re-queen itself, which contrary to what should've happened it did (the bees haven't read all the books that say what happened is impossible). So now we have two hives, one with the original large queen and one with a virgin soon to be mated but fairly small, very dark Carnolian type queen.

Steve Cox. (Joint Apiary Manager)

THE BEEKEEPING YEAR – JULY, AUGUST & SEPTEMBER.

The Flow.

Its July and for the first time in six years the FLOW is on at the right time and by flow we mean that all the flowers that the bees need to produce the best quality nectar are blooming at the right time, and it's all pouring into the hives, making the multifloral honey that we have in Wales some of the best in Britain.

DO NOT MEDDLE WITH YOUR BEES UNTIL THE WEATHER BREAKS AND THEN NOT FOR AT LEAST A MONTH. The bees need time to process the crop and store it and cap it off. No factory would allow even the BBC to go in and talk to the workers at a time when they are flat out. Just lift the lid from time to time, and if the crown board is covered in bees, very quietly, try not to use any smoke, add another super on top of the others, and then go to the beach!

Nucs should be looked at as they will build up fast and once the box is nearly full they should be hived before they swarm. Weak colonies that didn't over winter well, will quickly recover now so make sure they have plenty of room, but once again don't go through them.

BREEDING GOOD HIVES

"A bull is Half the Herd, A Drone is half the Hive"

M.M.

To breed good hives you need to think about the two aspects of mating. It's not just about getting good queens you also need to have a stock of good drones. So if you have a placid good natured and highly productive hive (you are keeping records so you know which is which aren't you?) you can flood the apiary with drones from this

hive, they will then mate with the virgin queen to produce a hive of bees with the desired characteristics.

QUEEN BEES

The last three months has been talk and more talk about Queens, so many failed to mate properly last year. It started in May, where could you get a queen in Britain in May! NOWHERE, unless it was in an overwintered nuc. But there were some for sale on the internet! Where in the world had they come from? Abroad somewhere, what quality? What diseases did they carry? How would they do in Wales? And what a price they were charging!

The lesson to be learned here is that the beekeeping year actually starts in the autumn. Bees need to be put to bed at the end of the year in very good order, with a good Queen plenty of brood and masses of bees, and stores galore of course. Or sad to say disappointment ensues in the spring.

If you are going to buy queens, buy them at their best, when the breeders have a supply of good quality stock. The breeder nearest to you is the best, a Welsh breeder who knows what he is doing. Our local proper breeder is Ricky Wilson (page 5 in the WBKA mag.) At £25 each p&p free is good value. He breeds dark queens towards Mellifera / Mellifera (it's very hard to breed them pure so he doesn't claim to) But the darker the bee the better it copes with the Welsh climate.

“Buy them not too far out of their air
For change of air may put them in despair”

(Hartley 1954)

If you have the right bee in a good box on clean frames you should do well and if on a warm evening you can hear them humming, when you put your ear to the side of the hive, you will have honey to take to the show this year, and make some mead, and make a cake etc, etc.

SOME NOTES ON OUR CURRENT APIARY

When the Association apiary was at the Museum, one visit a year was all we had, then the hives got vandalised and we were so lucky that Penny offered us a home on her farm where we now have regular meetings tuition and demonstrations.

With all the older generations of experts passed away we have difficulties finding good tutors, so when mistakes are made and mis-information passed on we must make allowances and be thankful that we have this apiary and all the facilities that go with it.

GARDEN PARTY

We haven't had a garden party for a year or two, so if you think you might be able to cope with the parking, we all make contributions for the table, or are running a charity event, we would love to come. If you don't have bees or don't want us in your hives we have a demonstration hive we could bring. You never know the hot summer days might last all through till autumn this year.

SWANSEA & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS SOCIETY BEE TENT AT THE WELSH GAME FAIR

At the recent Welsh Game fair held at the Carmarthen Showground Swansea and District beekeepers exhibited their bee tent. This is a novel device that allows members of the public who wouldn't usually be members of a beekeeping club to experience what it's like to see into a hive and handle bees in an as near to normal environment as possible. To this end there is a two chamber net tent that houses a specially prepared hive (see note at the end to read how it's done), the next chamber is an air lock to prevent the bees escaping and other facilities include a changing area and an office / booking in area.

As the Game Fair this year was quite wet and windy all of these took place in a series of Gazebos, with only the net bee tents being open to the outside air and with suitable fencing to prevent spectators getting too close.



The way it worked was a participant (or a parent or guardian) would sign a waiver that they accepted there was a very small chance of being stung. This was particularly important as a lot of the participants were children under 16 then into the changing area to be fitted with a bee suit gloves and Wellington boots, there were various helpers around to check that the suits were bee tight and to guard participant's bags etc.



They were then led into the antechamber by one of the experienced beekeepers running the show who would give a short briefing about what to do if you didn't feel comfortable and how to behave and then it was into the bee tent. A standard inspection of the hive was then carried out with participants being invited to hold frames and see if they could see the queen. An explanation as to what was going on in the hive was given.

At the end of the session there was a visual inspection inside the net tent to make sure no bees were on the backs of bee suits then they were let out again and the suits returned for the next session.



All youngsters were given a certificate indicating that they were assistant bee keepers and a sticker saying they had seen the queen.

Also given out were details of clubs in the participant's local area should they wish to take things further.

So how do you prepare a hive for a bee tent when the flying bees would cause lots of problems?

The special preparation of the hive involved treating it as though you were artificially swarming the hive. The hive used in the exhibition was moved away from its usual location in its home apiary and replaced with a new hive with drawn comb and plenty of stores. This then means that the hive for display now has the queen, all the brood, and all the nurse bees but the flying bees are allowed to return to the original hive location and can carry on foraging for the two days of the show. They may not be very happy as they have no queen to guide them but they don't have any brood so can't swarm and they have plenty of stores to keep them fed.

So now when the display hive is used in the bee tent it doesn't have a lot of flying bees wanting to come in and out of the hive all of the time so it was relatively easy to control the rest of the bees. As they had the queen with them they were docile and although some of the nurse bees would mature into flying bees over the course of the weekend, it was a very small number and they were removed from the folds of the bee tent on the Saturday night and returned to the hive by means of a vacuum cleaner.

At the end of the show when the hive was returned to its apiary the hive swap would take place in reverse and all the flying bees would be re-united with their queen.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTS

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Your Advert could be here. So long as the items you want to sell or swap are vaguely bee or honey related there is no charge. Please send all adverts to the editors at Pen-Y-Maes, Ostrey Hill, St Clears, Carmarthenshire. SA33 4AJ or telephone 07906 515 996 to dictate an advert. Next publication date is mid October.
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TOP BAR HIVE FOR SALE.

Complete with 20 top bars complete with wax foundation strips. Call Tony on 01269 593671 for further details. £15. One year old. Ammanford area.

RECORD KEEPING IN THE APIARY

As was mentioned in the Beekeeping year section about queen mating it is essential that you keep records of what your hives are doing and what you see in them when you do your inspections.

Now I'd be first to admit that the club apiary's record keeping hasn't been the best. For the past few years we've had record cards, and example of which is attached to this article. Now I don't know about you but I find this card to be a bit bland, okay it records all you need to know but it's not the most interesting form to fill in.

So this year we are trying out the 'narrative' type of record keeping. There is a copy of the record card in the front of the log book so we know what sort of information needs to be collected but it can now be contained within the narrative.

We will keep an eye on how well this works this year but so far it seems to be working okay. The back of the book is being used to keep notes on the day and then the narrative is written up at a later time.

We would be interested to hear from you as to what records you keep and what method you use so write in to the editor (the address is in the Classified Adverts section).

We would also be interested in what other records you keep, for instance do you record the weather, or who was present at the inspection?

Lets' see if we can make a system that everyone is happy to update on a regular basis.

Hive Record Card

Date of Inspection: _____
 Hive Reference: _____

Queen Details		Year of Hatch	Marked
Observation	✓ / X	Notes	
Queen Seen			
Eggs Seen			
Larvae Seen			
Sealed Brood Seen			
Disease			
Sufficient Stores			

Number of Frames of Brood: Brood Box Half Brood

Number of Supers:

Comments

Inspected by: _____

SCHEDULE FOR THE HONEY SHOW 2013.

NOTES:-

The judging format for the honey show has yet to be decided, a judged honey show will require TWO items for each of the following categories. So for the moment we will say that you will need two jars of honey for classes 1,2,3,4,5 but only one jar for class 16. Two containers of cut comb for class 6, two blocks of wax for class 9.

If we go for the usual format of peer judging then only one item will be needed in those categories but the judging format will not be decided until after this newsletter has been sent out so we will either let you know at a later date or on the night but come prepared to show two jars

CLASSES.

Class 11 LB JAR OF LIQUID HONEY DARK

Class 21 LB JAR OF LIQUID HONEY MEDIUM

Class 31 LB JAR OF LIQUID HONEY LIGHT

Class 41 LB JAR OF CREAMED HONEY

Class 5.....1 LB JAR OF GRANULATED HONEY

Class 6.....A CONTAINER OF CUT COMB

Class 7.....BEGINNERS HONEY CLASS (For those that have not entered a honey show previously)

Class 8.....HONEY CAKE From the recipe provided overleaf.

Class 9A BLOCK OF WAX. ANY SIZE (8oz is the usual standard)

Class 10.....FRAME SUITABLE FOR EXTRACTION (in a display case)

Class 11.....ANY ITEM FROM BEESWAX (Craft item such as a candle etc.)

Class 12.....BOTTLE WINE RED, WHITE OR BOTTLE OF MEAD OR BEER

(Clear bottles with easily removed stoppers.)

Class 13.....PHOTOGRAPH BLACK AND WHITE OR COLOUR Max A4 (Beekeeping Theme)

Class 14.....CRAFT ITEM A MODEL, A TOY, ETC, (Beekeeping Theme)

Class 15.....ARTWORK A PAINTING, DRAWING, ETC. (Beekeeping Theme)

Class 16.....BLIND TASTING (Jars will be covered and judging will be on taste only)

RECIPE FOR A RICH, MOIST HONEY CAKE.

INGREDIENTS

170g/6oz clear welsh honey

140g/5oz butter

85g/3oz light muscavado sugar

2 eggs beaten

200g/ 7oz self raising flour sieved

FOR THE ICING

55g/2oz icing sugar

1 teaspoon clear honey

Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 3,

Butter and line the bottom of a 7in/18cm cake tin.

Measure the honey, butter and sugar into a large pan.

Add a tablespoon of water and heat gently until melted.

Remove from the heat and mix in the eggs and flour.

Spoon into the cake tin and bake for 40-45 minutes until the cake is springy to the touch and shrinking slightly from the sides of the tin.

Cool slightly in the tin before turning out onto a wire rack.

While the cake is still warm, make the icing by mixing the sugar and honey together with 2-3 teaspoons of hot water. Trickle over the cake in whatever design takes your fancy.