

# Swansea & District Beekeepers Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch

[www.swanseabeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.swanseabeekeepers.org.uk)

## Congratulations Steve!!

We recently heard that  
**Steve Davies passed his Advanced Husbandry exam  
and has now become a  
MASTER BEEKEEPER**

Well Done!! It's great to hear that Steve has attained this award.



**Our thanks to Chris Bown for this photo of the  
honey sales counter at the recent Gower Show**

**It's time to book for the Conference, see page 2.**

**Issue No. 111 September ~ October 2016**

Editor: D. Salkilld

### **The Gower Show**

The weather held fine for this year's show and the crowds came out in their droves. From early on, the marquee was crowded and those of us stewarding talked non-stop till the end of the day. The Honey Show looked good and the judge, Bernard Diaper, with one exception, was complimentary about the quality of the exhibits (see page 3). He had a great time and asked me to pass on his thanks to you all.

Sales of honey and related products went well and the sales counter was busy the day long. Cakes and honey lemonade were particularly popular and almost all the honey sold out. The Bee Tent handled many visitors who greatly enjoyed the experience, indeed some had been in last year and come back for another session. Mike Grinter ran a small raffle on the day which raised £179.02 towards our MSWCC funds, with local prizes including a hamper kindly donated by the Killay Co-op. How he managed to get the 2p remains a mystery as the tickets were £1 each.

The Dorothea Daniell-Jenkins cup, for the competitor with most points in show, was won by David Salkilld, as was the Blue Ribbon for Best Entry in Show.

The Novice Class, class 9, was won by Dexter Ford with two jars of medium honey. Among the rewards was a card giving him two free passes into the National Honey Show at Sandown Park later this year. Well Done Dex.

We must say a big THANK YOU to Gill Lyons for her organisation of all aspects of the show. She has been working closely with the Gower Agricultural Society since early in the year and her efforts were well rewarded.

Gill has asked me to pass on a very big thank you to all who helped in set-up, who entered exhibits, who stewarded, and who helped her on the sub-committee. Without you, it couldn't have happened.

Next year's show will be the 100<sup>th</sup> Gower Show and we are hoping to do something spectacular to celebrate the event. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on how we could improve things in our marquee, please pass them on to Gill.

**The Bee Conference  
14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October  
King Arthur Hotel**

[www.mswcc.org.uk](http://www.mswcc.org.uk)



It's time to book your place at the Conference. Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the programme, a booking form, a list of workshops and a list of speakers.

This information can also be found on the [MSWCC website](http://www.mswcc.org.uk)

Please note that it is essential to book for this conference.

This is due to the hotel needing to know in advance how many people to cater for, so we regret, you won't be able to pay at the door.

The Conference is open to all. You can attend as a day visitor on any of the days or on for all three days as best suits you. Alternatively, you can come as a residential visitor and stay at the hotel for a two-night break whilst attending the whole Conference with everything included.

The fees for residential visitors and for day visitors are shown on the booking form. The price include the lectures, teas / coffees and a meals as indicated on the booking form. The Saturday programme has a series of workshops in the afternoon. Note, the cost of the Conference dinner, followed by a lecture, is £25.

It's a great opportunity to hear speakers on a range of practical and theoretical beekeeping topics and to dabble with some hands-on workshops. Do have a look at the programme, the list of speakers and list of workshops.

Hope you will enter the Honey Show, see the schedule on the website or ring us.

## The COLOSS Survey

Last year, for the first time, the WBKA took part in a colony loss survey, COLOSS, which covers 30 European countries. This year the WBKA again took part and members were chosen at random from each of the 19 affiliated associations in Wales, in approximate proportion to the number of members each association had. In Swansea & District, 5 members were picked at random and asked to fill in the survey questionnaire. It asked simple questions such as: how many colonies before winter, how many survived into spring, what treatments were used and the timing of the treatments.

Preliminary results are now available and have been circulated on email by Julian. They show an overall average colony loss of 11.9% with the Welsh losses running at 22.4%. This number is at the higher end of the loss percentages. The highest, at 29.5% was Ireland and the lowest, at 6.4% was the Czech Republic. It's quite an extreme variation and is difficult to explain, though perhaps weather conditions are a major factor.

Strangely, the BBKA, i.e. English beekeepers, do not take part in the survey, though Scotland 18% and Ireland and Northern Ireland 28.2% do.

## Creamed Honey at the Show

Those of you who went to the Gower Show will have noticed that the judge, Bernard Diaper, did not award a prize for Creamed Honey, Class 8. After the show, I had a long chat with Bernard about this and his reason was that none of the exhibits were actually creamed honey!

By definition, creamed honey should not only have an ultra fine crystal structure and be able to spread like a soft peanut butter yet, at the same time, be a **set honey** with a smooth, dry surface. At the show, all those entered in the creamed class were semi liquid and able to be poured from their jars. Some also had a profusion of air bubbles on top as though they had been stirred.

The conversation then went on to discuss what had gone wrong. Was there enough seed honey in the mix? Would the honey set, given time? Were the seed crystals broken down finely enough? Was there too high a water content? Was the temperature too high for perfect setting? All these were discussed.

Bernard said that when creaming honey, it was advisable to work the creamer for twice as long as you think necessary, then do it all again to ensure that the crystals are really crushed / broken down to their finest. Also, use a base honey with as low a water content as possible. As to proportion of seed honey, he said that he had used up to 20% in the past. He indicated that, in his experience, it was only necessary to cream it once providing that it was done thoroughly as mentioned above. Literature on creamed honey advises that 14° C is the ideal temperature for crystallisation. Let's hope that our future batches turn out right.

## What the Papers Say

Yet again, bees seem to turn up in the newspapers with something different to report each time. I have been writing this newsletter every two months since May 1998 and, when I first put pen (or was it quill in those days) to paper, wondered just what new items I would write about. You see, with the exception of bee health, parasites and some improvements in equipment, nothing much had changed in the hundred previous years. So, I asked myself, what would there to write about?

Thankfully the newspapers come to the rescue and give a different slant on beekeeping things, personalities, equipment and many other aspects that I can paraphrase without breaching copyright.

In the **Daily Telegraph**, on 6<sup>th</sup> August, who should turn up in an article written by Naomi Slade but Natasha de Vere who heads up a group of scientists at the National Botanic Garden of Wales and who will be speaking at our MSWCC Conference in October. She and her team are studying the

feeding habits of a wide range of pollinators at the garden in an effort to see which plants they prefer. In studying honey bees, the team has an advantage because the source of forage leaves a trail of different pollens in the honey which can be analysed. Other species are reported on by a team of volunteers and students who observe them in the Garden. A surprising result is the quantity of wind-blown pollens and fern spores found in honey samples. Of course, it could be accidental

that these are there but both are known to be good sources of proteins for bees. The Gardens has around 8000 different plant varieties so bees are offered a vast variety to choose from. The article also mentioned factors involved in the decline of bees, including the widespread use of neonicotinoid pesticides and changing land use.

As mentioned above, Natasha will give a lecture on this fascinating subject at our Conference in October.

In the **Daily Mail** on 17<sup>th</sup> August, Alexander Ward wrote an article under the headline 'Pesticide is the cause of falling bee population'. In the article he drew on recent research carried out by Dr. Ben Woodcock at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrography, who offered further evidence from large scale studies that neonicotinoid use, particularly as seed treatment on oilseed rape, added to the decline of wild bees. The study found that, on average, neonicotinoids caused species that foraged on oilseed rape to become 10% less widespread. Other factors mentioned as causes of pollinator decline included habitat loss, pathogens, climate change and other insecticides.

### **“The Summer Ball”**

A Big Big THANK YOU to Mike for organising this event at the Pontardawe Golf Club on 20<sup>th</sup> August. It was a great evening with good fun, good food and good company.

We would like to thank the members and friends of the Pontardawe Golf club for coming along and supporting our Society's fund-raising evening for the forthcoming Conference.

The evening also included a raffle, an auction and a disco. Everyone from our Society and the golf club mingled and mixed so well and generously supported our cause.

Our thanks to all who provided prizes, bottles, pictures etc. and items for the raffle and auction.

### **Topical Tips** by David Salkilld

This year has been a strange one with some having reasonable honey yields whilst others have little or none. I fit squarely into this second set!! Perhaps the unseasonably warm weather in the winter and spring put some of the bee's body clocks out of kilter and it may have affected the trees and flowers too. I have heard of daffodils blooming before Christmas and some plants in gardens seemed to be on the late side.

There have been warning notices from the Bee Inspectors about starvation and, I for one am feeding some colonies in the hope they will survive the winter. If they don't build up sufficiently, it will be a case of uniting weak ones to give them a better chance to survive the winter.

To put it in perspective, in July, my colonies were at a stage I would normally expect them to be in May and, unless there is a miracle or late honey flow, I don't expect to harvest any honey this year.

So what can we do? The important thing is to get them safely through the winter and this means checking their health, with particular emphasis on varroa, and feeding them to ensure there are enough stores to see them through. In past years I have aimed for 40 to 50 lbs. of honey left in the brood chamber but this year it will have to be invert sugar instead, so get your stocks in as feeding will almost certainly be necessary. Our local supplier is Ian Roberts of Old Castle Farm, Tonna, phone No. 01639 644127

## **The National Honey Show.**

The National Honey Show this year is being held at a new venue, Sandown Park Racecourse, Surrey on 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October. For those interested in showing their honey, this is one of the best places to see how it should be done. Exhibits at the show come from all parts of Great Britain and from abroad too.

### **When Bees Were Bees** by Tom Davies.

More on the article by Mr. A. H. Bowen in "Gleanings in Bee Culture", May 1931, dealing with out-apiaries in the Vale of Evesham.

Mr. Bowen's brood chambers were 14 comb size, and used two different strains of bees. One strain was described as three banded (Italian?), prolific, and a second brood chamber added to them. The other strain described as dark hybrid or black, these used just the one brood chamber.

Every seven or eight days examinations were made and should a colony be about or near swarming Mr. Bowen would remove two combs of emerging brood plus one of pollen together with the queen into a nucleus box. If the queen cells on these combs were on the point of being sealed, all but one healthy cell would be removed.

A variation was to use the top brood box of a two storey colony after placing the queen in the bottom box with the youngest brood, providing the removed box with a healthy cell, and both these upper boxes and any nuclei formed were taken away to queen mating sites.

No mention of honey yields was given but even when I was young the Vale of Evesham was said to be among the finest areas of Britain for agricultural produce, so I think that given tidy weather honey takes would have been very good.

More next time, Tom

### **Honey Wanted**

We were in the Killay grocer's shop, George Chaplin & Sons, the other day talking about the Gower Show. They had kindly given us a £10 gift voucher for our show-day raffle and we let them know how Mike had done.

Whilst chatting, they asked if we knew anyone in the Society with local honey to sell to their shop. We didn't off the cuff but said we would put a note in the newsletter, and here it is. If anyone does have any honey and would like to sell them some, just pop into the shop and ask for Mr Chaplin or Emma.

### **Forthcoming Events**

**Informal meetings** are held on **2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays** of every month at the **Con Club, Church Street, Gowerton**, from 7.00 pm onwards. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

#### **SEPTEMBER**

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> **There will be a change of venue to the Gower Golf Club, Cefn Goleu SA4 3HS**, for this meeting. 7.00 p.m. for 7.15. Our speaker will be Emyr Jenkins who will talk on "Beekeeping in the Kingdom of the Clouds." We hope to see you all there.

## **OCTOBER**

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> There will be a social evening without a speaker at the Con Club on this occasion as preparations will be on-going for the MSWCC Conference.

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> – MSWCC Bee Conference, to be held at the King Arthur Hotel, Reynoldston, Gower. The programme and booking form are included with this newsletter. (Those of you getting the email edition, please go to [www.mswcc.org.uk/](http://www.mswcc.org.uk/) ) Please note that pre-booking is essential for this event.

## **NOVEMBER**

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> Society Honey Show at the Con Club, Gowerton, 7.00 p.m. Come along and judge the honeys on show.

## **DECEMBER**

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> 7.00 p.m. The Christmas Dinner. Venue and menu choices to be advised shortly. Please reserve this date in your diary.

## **JANUARY 2017**

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> Programme to be advised

## **FEBRUARY 2017**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> The AGM Details to be advised later.

### **Contact Numbers**

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### **“More About Bees” by Tom Davies**

Mid August already, this year has seemed to be flying by, and has been a difficult year for most with the on / off good weather periods that we’ve had.

Nice weather at the moment though, and if it lasts for a while, there are plenty of weeds and blackberries flowering, and ivy not very far behind, so perhaps colonies can build up a bit.

Down at the Gower Show on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August to lend a bit of a hand, I was impressed with the standard of the exhibits that came in, making it a good all-round show. The classes for preserves and chutneys must have given the judge a hard time with the numbers of entries in them. Even the weather relented, allowing a good number of visitors into the showground.

My bee garden has come on well after such a poor start to the season, a mass of flowers at the moment, with quite a mixture of bees and butterflies on them from time to time, although one type of bee can be a bit destructive on dahlias, the leaf-cutter bee, which can also do damage to roses, especially the more expensive ones.

The past two seasons having been not so good, a good season next year would be a great help keeping the momentum going in respect of getting new members into our Society.

More next time, Tom.