

Swansea & District Beekeepers Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch

www.swanseabeekeepers.org.uk



Saturday's Lunch break at the Conference

My thanks to Nicola Oulton for the photo.

See page 3 for the Conference Report

Membership Renewal

Membership runs from 1st January to the end of December and, if you renew before that date there is a £5 discount. For those on email, the form will be transmitted some time in December (or sooner) and will be downloadable from the website. For those without email, we will send you a form as soon as it is available.

The membership fee includes BDI insurance for 3 colonies but if you have more, or think that you might increase during the year, then additional payments are necessary to give proper insurance cover.

Also on the form is a space to pay for Bee Craft Magazine, available at a reduced cost through the Society. If you intend taking it, please note that the deadline for ordering is January 25th.

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Editor: D. Salkild

Joining the Classes or the Society

Steve & Nicola start their new beekeeping course at Pontarddulais Comprehensive School in late February. If you know of anyone who wants to join this class, please get them to contact Nicola or Julian.

Likewise, if you know anyone who wishes to join Swansea & District Beekeepers' Society, get them to contact Julian. Contact details are on the back page of this newsletter.

The Society Honey Show, 8th November

Once again, Ade will be running the Society Honey Show. It will be held at the New Lodge Social Club, Alexandra Road, Gorseinon on Tuesday 8th November, starting from 7.00 p.m. Details of the show have been sent out by email. Bring a jar of honey in a clean, unmarked jar, presented as if for showing.

As we won't be holding a Christmas Dinner this year, a buffet supper will be laid on at this event instead, for which a small contribution of £2 per head will be collected on the night. Please let Julian know if you are going to be there. Again, full details are in the email.

The Bee Conference

Well, it's over, and what a great conference it was! The hard work of the last 18 months has paid off handsomely with good attendance, great lectures, friendly atmosphere and a feeling of achievement for the sub-committee who have worked so very hard to bring it all together.

We had beekeepers from all over Wales: Anglesey, Aberystwyth, Swansea, Ammanford, Carmarthen, Powys, Gwent, Neath, Pontarddulais, Bridgend, West Glamorgan, and the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Folk even attended from Gower!

From England, there were visitors from nine counties spread from Derbyshire in the north through to Southampton in the south and Somerset in the south west. Our speakers came from Wales, England and Minnesota, U. S. A.

Bees for Development sent two Commonwealth Fellows to attend, one from Uganda and the other from Ghana, and both gave presentations at the Conference.

As well as the lectures, we had a Honey Show - see the photo on the page 3 - and a great set of workshops on Saturday afternoon. The Conference started on the Friday afternoon with three good lectures, interspersed with a buffet supper. It continued on Saturday and ended on Sunday after lunch with hand-over to Gloucestershire who will be hosting the Conference next year at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.



Attendance at a Lecture

Photo by Nicola Oulton



The Conference Honey Show

Photo by Nicola Oulton

This year's Honey Show was the best there has been for a long time. We were much obliged to Gill Lyons for organising this and Mike Hunt for the loan of his show stand.

The conference lectures gave us a lot to think about. Over the next couple of newsletters I will try to give you some flavour of the talks. They were all interesting and we learned a lot from the speakers.

As a venue, it's hard to beat the King Arthur Hotel. The lecture space was perfect for our needs and the hospitality was top rate, as was the accommodation for our visitors.



At the National Honey Show this past week, Jean and I bumped into more than a dozen people who had attended our Conference. They all spoke of how much they had appreciated it, the wide variety of speakers and subjects, the location, the hotel and hospitality of its staff.

Our grateful thanks go to all those members who helped in so many ways, such as on the organisational side, raising funds, selling and buying raffle tickets, running workshops and, most of all, attending on the weekend. Those of us on the sub-committee would like to say a VERY BIG THANK YOU to you all.

Conference Visitors

Photo by Gerti Axtmann

The Asian Hornet

It had to happen eventually, after all, with so much freight crossing the Channel, it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the hornet would arrive. I guess you've all read about it in the press and seen emails on the subject so I won't elaborate on it here. Just remember to keep an eye open in your area in case they manage to reach our part of Wales.

After the first sighting near Tetbury, many Bee Inspectors were drafted into that area to search for other nest sites. Only one nest was found and that was destroyed.

Later, there was a report of a sighting in Somerset and Bee Inspectors went there too, though no nests were found. It may have been a case of mistaken identity with the European hornet.

The Bee Sauna

Yes, bees have saunas too. This one, however, has recently been patented in Germany by Herr Richard Rossa who was awarded a German Innovation Medal last month for his work on this design.

The heater is an anti-varroa device which raises the hive temperature to more than 39° C, a temperature hot enough to kill off the varroa mites but not too hot for the bees to handle. Apparently, this type of treatment has been known about for the past 30 years but, with the development of various chemical treatments, was not acted upon.

We understand that the device is powered by a 12 volt battery and is inserted into the hive entrance. At this time we don't know how long it is left there. Herr Rossa recommends two treatments per year, one in winter and the other after the honey harvest in August.

From what the article says, the bees are in a state of relaxation whilst the temperature is raised and are strengthened and fitter after the treatment.

My thanks to Gerti Axtmann who found this fascinating item in a German magazine.

What the Papers Say

It's surprising just how much is written about bees in our national press. It seems that not a week goes by without some article appearing, though often they are re-hashing old stories yet again. To me, that's good. It means that there is less bad news to fill the pages!

In both the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail an item appeared on a new use for Manuka honey, namely cleaning medical equipment in a solution containing it.

The study, carried out by researchers at Southampton University, under the direction of Bashir Lwaleed, Associate Professor of Health Sciences, found that Manuka honey reduced by 75% the ability of bacteria to accumulate on surfaces. Honey was diluted to create a range of concentrations from 3.3% to 16.7%.

Results showed that the honey strongly inhibited the "stickiness" of the bacteria and therefore helped the development of a biofilm that could adhere to medical equipment.

This will be of particular benefit to patients such as those using catheters where urinary-tract infections affect as many as one in four and cost the NHS over £1 billion per year.

Air Pollution

Earlier in the year an article appeared in the Daily Telegraph about air pollution affecting the honeybees' ability to find forage. Studies at Pennsylvania State University, under the direction of Professor Jose Fuentes, showed that even moderate levels of air pollution break down floral scent chemicals which are used by foragers. Chemical interactions reduce both the scent molecules' life span and the distances they can travel.

My thanks to those of you who regularly send me snippets from the papers.

Steve's Column!

Oxalic Acid Demo

In the depths of winter, Steve Davies will be running an oxalic acid demonstration at the Society Apiary. As most will know, the application of oxalic acid is weather dependent; hives need to be treated in cold, dry weather when there is no brood present for the mites to hide in. Notification of date and time will be made by email at fairly short notice, so keep an eye open in late December and early January.

Ascetic Acid Demo

Likewise, Steve will be doing an ascetic acid demonstration at his home in Pontarddulais, where he has the chemicals and safety equipment necessary to handle these rather toxic chemicals. Again, information on time and date will be sent out by email.

Basic Assessment Exam

If anyone would like to take the Basic Assessment Exam next year, they should contact Steve Davies who will be organising training days prior to the exam. This exam is open to anyone who has been keeping bees for a couple of years and is a great way of honing your beekeeping skills.

Husbandry Training Course

In the summertime of 2017, Ken Basterfield and Marin Anastasov will be running a two day Husbandry Training Course in South Wales and Ken has asked Steve & Nicola to assist in finding a suitable location for the event.

Currently, only one course will be run in Wales (in Gwent), other similar ones will be run in England. For details, see the email Julian sent on 23 October. The course will be subsidised by the National Bee Unit and is open to beekeepers who have passed their Basic Assessment and, at the time of the Husbandry Assessment, have kept bees for 5 years. The cost is expected to be £50 per person. The number of places on the course will be limited to 12 and will be filled on a first come, first served basis so, if you are interested, follow the instructions in the email.

Topical Tips by David Salkilld

It's time to think about closing your hives down for the winter. In fact, many will already have done so. Make sure they have plenty of stores. Ideally there should be at least 20 kg (40 lb) of honey or feed in the brood chamber. If not, feed them before the weather gets too cold. Personally I feed mine with invert sugar, either from Invertbee or Ambrosia, the former of which is available in 14 litre containers from Ian Roberts at Old Castle Farm.

If you are leaving a super of food above the brood area, remember to take the queen excluder away so that the colony can have the run of the whole hive.

In the dead of winter, usually sometime just after Christmas, Steve Davies will be demonstrating the use of oxalic acid as a treatment against varroa mites, see page 5. Keep an eye on emails to members for dates, times etc.

This is an important treatment as it eliminates the majority of varroa mites and, thus gives the bees a far better chance when colony building begins again in spring. As Steve will tell you, the oxalic acid must be warmed so as not to chill (kill) the colony when it is applied.

The depths of winter is chosen because there is usually no brood in the hive at that time, so the varroa mites have nowhere to hide during the treatment. Choose a cold day when the bees are in cluster and apply the treatment to the seams between the frames.

At the National Honey Show last week, Prof. Francis Ratnicks gave a lecture on oxalic acid treatment and, although I didn't attend it, I later had a conversation with Peter Tomkins who did. In a nutshell, Prof. Ratnicks advised use of an oxalic acid vaporiser in the winter time and indicated that a single treatment at that time was so successful at reducing mites that an autumn treatment was not necessary. So, as we were there and beekeeping suppliers had them available, I went to buy one. Everyone else had the same idea; the last one was being sold as I got there, so I ordered one and expect it will be delivered shortly. It will be used this coming winter.

We will be putting an order together for oxalic acid (liquid and crystals) and maybe even vaporisers - watchout for an email!

David Salkilld.

When Bees Were Bees by Tom Davies.

A bit of a mystery story now, which comes from "Gleanings in Bee Culture", published in July 1930.

The writer of the story, sent in to the magazine, was a Jay Smith, of Vincennes, Indiana, U.S.A., who described the outcome of visits to smaller apiaries as a guest of Apiary Inspectors in Southern Indiana.

The visits were in the April of that year, and 200 colonies housed in single brood chambers were examined and not one strong colony was found, although there were more than enough stores on hand. Some of the colonies had died out although food was available.

Some 30 colonies were housed on double brood chambers and all these were found to be in the best of health and brimming over with bees. One of these had been pushed off the bottom board and was on the earth yet managed to find a way out to survive, while another had soil covering the way out and the bees had made holes in the earth to get out.

All the hives were described as 10 framed, very popular at that time, and Jay Smith stated that there were drought problems at the time, as if it had forgotten to rain. How to explain the massive difference between the two sets of colonies is a mystery. Would all the bees be better off on double brood?

More next time, Tom

Unusual Prizes

The other day, Tom Davies dropped by and handed me several copies from his collection of the old American beekeeping magazine, "Gleanings in Bee Culture", dating from 1930 to 1933 and asked that they be given as prizes at next year's Centenary Gower Show. It's a very unusual prize to compete for, meanwhile, I get the opportunity to read them!!

Forthcoming Events

Change of Venue

Please note that for the next meeting we are changing the venue from The Con Club, Gowerton, to **The New Lodge Independent Social Club, Alexandra Road, Gorseinon**. This will be the future venue for the first social meeting/talk/demo each month and at that meeting, members will be asked if this would be the preferred venue for the other monthly social meeting.

Informal meetings are held on **2nd & 4th Tuesdays** of every month from 7.00 pm onwards. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 8th at 7.00 p.m. Ade Bowen will be running the Society Honey Show at New Lodge Social Club, Gorseinon. See page 2 and emails from Julian for full details. Come along and taste the honeys on show. During the evening, Basic Assessment Certificates will be presented to those who passed the exam earlier this year. A Christmas Buffet supper will be provided - again see page 2 and emails.

DECEMBER

No meetings will be held during the month of December.

Keep an eye out for emails regarding Oxalic Acid and Ascorbic Acid demonstrations being run by Steve Davies. These will be weather dependent and will be held any time from late December to early January. See article on page 5.

JANUARY 2017

Tuesday 10th at 7.00 p.m. Our first talk in the New Year will be given by Matt Carroll on Woodland Management and Crafts. The Venue will be the New Lodge Social Club, Gorseinon.

FEBRUARY 2017

Tuesday 14th The AGM. Details to be advised later.

“More About Bees” by Tom Davies

Coming to the end of October and my bee garden is beginning to run down. Although this year has not been good for honey yields, it has been very good for flowering plants.

A slow start in the spring, but plants caught up and since mid-June onwards I have had a good display of flowers, bringing lots of bees and butterflies, except the Cabbage White, which meant that my kale plants came on nicely.

I enjoyed the Convention Dinner at the King Arthur in Reynoldston, a very good crowd, and the food was excellent. A good choice of venue for events of that kind and not difficult for strangers to find.

2016 will no doubt go down as a weird year for beekeeping in general because of the difficult weather conditions, more inspections were needed to make sure they were alright, not needing food and the weather also keep the grass down in front of the hives. Extra work yet less honey!

When I was at an outdoor meeting in my second year of keeping bees, the weather was not all that good. There did not seem to be much nectar coming into the hives and an old beekeeper told me that bad years will come now and again, and when poor seasons turn up, to make sure that you keep your bees safe until the next season in case of a better one to come.

More next time, Tom.

Contact Numbers

Chairman: Nicola Oulton	01792 88 58 47 nikoulton@yahoo.co.uk
Secretary: Julian Caruana	07985 328 910 sdbks.secretary@gmail.com
Treasurer: John Gale	07855 451 781