

Swansea & District Beekeepers Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch

Basic Assessment Certificate Successes



Photo by Stephen Davies

Our hearty congratulations go to (from left) Rupert Kett-White, Sue Lawrence, Jeff Dulong, Gerti Axtmann and Rod Sewter seen here after receiving their certificates at the New Lodge Social Club in November. Well done to you all and many thanks to Nicola and Stephen for all their work in preparing them for the exam.

Issue No. 113 January ~ February 2017

Editor: D. Salkilld

Honey Show Results

On 8th November, we held the Society's Honey Show at the New Lodge Social Club where our members brought their honey to be tasted and judged by other members. Some 20 honeys were on the show bench and the winners, by popular consent, were: 1st Jonathan Bowen (for the second year running!!), 2nd Gerti Axtmann, and 3rd Ian Algie. Jonathan's honey must be really special to have been picked out two year's running. It was pointed out to me (by someone who lives in Uplands) that the first two winners keep their bees in the Uplands area! This is in easy flying distance of Singleton Park which makes me wonder if there is something special about the forage there.

In all there were over 20 honeys entered in the show. One of them was rather unusual, a lovely tasting heather honey, the first I've seen from this part of South Wales. I have to think that most people would not have known what it was, otherwise it might have had better recognition. Well done to everyone who entered and a big thanks to Ade for organising the show.

What the Papers Say

Relating to Asian hornets, the Daily Telegraph had an interesting article on 5th November headed "Prawns protect bees from killer hornets". It certainly grabbed my imagination! Apparently, during their breeding season hornets are partial to protein-rich foods and prawns provide just such a diet. They can be used as bait in home-made traps. Tim Lovett, public affairs director of BBKA said, "There are times when they are breeding like mad when they need protein, such as prawns and carbohydrate".

Hive Thefts in our Area.

For the first time that I can recall, a theft of hives has happened in the Swansea area. Julian has put out an email on the subject, alerted by Alyson from the Swansea Community Farm where a polynuc of bees was taken. Be vigilant of your colonies, particularly of lighter poly hives and if someone you don't know offers you a polynuc, take their contact details and let Julian know.

Topical Tips by David Salkilld

On Thorne's website recently was an interesting discussion entitled "To insulate or not" written by their 'expert' who lives somewhere in the south of the country. This statement is important because winter temperatures are generally somewhat higher in the south. It is well worth reading and, as with so many things in beekeeping, is one of many opinions. In a nutshell, he states that bees can withstand extreme low temperatures and their real enemy is damp conditions. He goes on to say that we need to keep our bees dry as possible, to make sure they have plenty of stores and to encourage them to cluster. If it is too warm in the hive, bees might venture out to forage and are unlikely to make it back to the colony.

Encouraging the cluster, the writer says, is best done by allowing plenty of ventilation through the hive, which also helps to reduce dampness. He suggests that the corex board be left in and checked from time to time to monitor cluster movement without having to open the hive. The changing pattern of wax cappings on the board will show where they have moved.

The article on Thorne's website went on to cover some aspects of spring management and I will continue this article in a later newsletter at the appropriate time.

Hive temperatures were mentioned at a lecture given by Derek and Elaine Mitchell at the 2015 MSWCC Conference in Cirencester and reported in Newsletter number 106 last year. They advocated cladding hives with thermal jackets in winter to better simulate natural hive temperatures which would occur in nests in a hole in a tree.

These nests in trees have much better insulation due to the thickness of the wood, which is so much thicker than a modern hive. Even double walled hives such as the WBC do not reach the thermal properties of a tree. Derek Mitchell went on to say that nests in holes in trees allowed the bees to start raising brood earlier than was possible in a modern day hive, solely due to the warmth.

As I said earlier in the article, with beekeeping, there are many, many different opinions. We just have to make a judgement as to which we will follow.

Oxalic Acid Vaporiser

In late December, for a few days after Christmas, the temperature fell sharply and I took the decision to use my new oxalic acid vaporiser to tackle varroa.

Preparation was the key. Being somewhat reluctant to buy a new 12 volt battery which would have been both heavy to handle and rather expensive, I decided to use the one in my car instead. That entailed using an extension lead with some home-made attachments to reach from the car battery to the hives while the car was parked nearby in the drive.

At the car end, these attachments allowed me to clip onto the battery and plug into the extension lead. The extension lead was then run out to the hives. By the hives, another attachment, with terminals, allowed the vaporiser to be clipped on. It was relatively simple and I had previously tested it out in the garage.

Instructions, which came with the vaporiser, said that it had to be in the hive for three minutes, then have the entrance blocked with foam for 15 minutes. They also stressed the use of safety equipment. A face mask FFP2 rated, eye protection and gloves. These precautions are necessary because contact with the crystals or inhalation of particles or vapours is extremely damaging. Gloves and eye protection I had but needed to get the masks which were available locally from Screwfix.

The crystals have a melting point of 101 - 102°C and a boiling point of 149 - 160°C.

So, the day came and, with the help of John Gale, we went about it. The temperature was about 5°C and no bees were flying at the time. Nevertheless, we kitted up with veils and gloves, put a scoop of powder in the vaporiser, put it into the first hive and switched on. Needless to say, this was fumbled and handful of bees poured out to see what was happening. Anyway, once the shield was in place, the bees were kept inside and we counted the three minutes required. Towards the end of that time, vapour started to come out of the cracks and it seemed to work well.

With the second hive, we knew what to expect and it went much more smoothly.

The vaporiser fitted easily through the entrance block on the second hive but had been a tight fit on the first. Perhaps that's why the bees were more inquisitive on the first one.

After treatment, instructions were to block the entrances for 15 minutes with foam to keep the vapours in the hives. On removing these, the bees hardly bothered with us.

A mite count the next day showed very few mites, not surprising because there had been hardly any mite fall previously. However, I think it likely that the bees will start next season with a lower number of mites than has been the case over the last few years.

We learned a few lessons during the exercise, the main one being that timing three minutes whilst wearing your watch under a bee suit with gloves is rather difficult. Our advice is to use a simple kitchen timer.

D. S.

Best Wishes for the New Year.

It just remains to wish all our members a happy, healthy and productive 2017. Let's hope the bees behave themselves, swarm less, mate well and store plenty of golden honey in the supers.

When Bees Were Bees by Tom Davies.

The Welsh Beekeeper Magazine, an excellent magazine, was called The Bulletin in its early days and I have a copy, issue No. 3, for July-August-September 1968 which contained details of a farmer-beekeeper's will, dated 2-8-1577.

David ap G..... of H.....

Soul to God, body to be buried in the Church of "Hiope", to the poor men's box there – 6d, to my wife Augnes verch David, five kine, two oxen and all hay, corn and growing and housed, and one mare, also all household stuff except a pot, a coffer, and a "maushing vessel" which I give to Gilbert ap David my son. To my daughter Catherine two yearling heifers.

To my wife Augnes, all my bees and their appurtenances, and my house where I dwell, with the barn, for life, also a tenement of land called Keven Coch, for life, and after her death the tenement to remain to Robert Gilbert my sons son. To Helen verch Jeuan one cow, rest of goods to my wife Augnes, whom I ordain my executrix. Witnesses present Mathewe ap Meredith, Hoell ap Jeuan, Morgan Edwards, Thomas ap Morgan Cogh, and others. Inventory follows -

3 Oxen £3.0.0.	6 Kine £6.0.0.	1 Mare £0.10.0.
2 Hogs £0.5.0	2 Yearling heifers £0.10.0	
4 Heyves of bees £0.6.8.	Poultry £0.2.0.	
Household stuff £1.0.0.	Hay and corn £1.10.0.	
Total £13.3.8.		

The editor of the Bulletin at that time, a Mr. J. H. Ball of Wrexham, welcomed this unusual item as an insight into the past.

More next time, Tom

Whilst chatting with Tom we got onto the subject of the archaic language used in this will. 'Kine' is a plural noun for cows. A 'Maushing vessel', we think, is a vessel used in brewing, i.e. mashing, to convert malt or grain into a mash. A 'Coffer' is a strongbox or chest.

We liked the spelling of 'Heyves' and wondered if they were wooden hives or, more likely, straw skeps.

Forthcoming Events

Change of Venue

Please note that it has been decided to hold future meetings at [The New Lodge Independent Social Club, Alexandra Road, Gorseinon.](#)

Meetings are held on **2nd & 4th Tuesdays** of every month from 7.00 pm onwards. On the second Tuesday we aim to have a speaker or demonstration. There is plenty of parking space - drive around to the back of the club. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

JANUARY 2017

Tuesday 10th at 7.00 p.m. - a talk by Matt Carroll on *Woodland Crafts & Management* at the New Lodge Social Club.

FEBRUARY 2017

Tuesday 14th at 7.00 p.m. - The Society's AGM will be held at the New Lodge Social Club. Following the AGM, Ade Bowen will give two short talks - the first entitled "*A Starvation Check*" - *February is the most likely month for our bees to starve*".

The second is entitled "*Hornet Awareness*" - *what you can do about a very real threat*".

Old Bee Craft Magazines Available

I have a large stack of old Bee Craft magazines at home and am giving them away to anyone who wants to read them. For further information and to arrange pick-up, call David Salkilld on 01792 205822.

“More About Bees” by Tom Davies

It's the 7th December already. This year has gone quickly for me, a very strange year with the changeable weather we've had. With what I've heard, very little honey to show for the work put in, but beekeepers must always be looking ahead and getting ready for the next season.

While the weather has been nice recently I have been tidying my garden, most of my dahlias are now in store, just a few more to finish up with and then left until the next season, a wonderful display from them this year despite the poor spring.

I wonder what will happen to the craft in the next ten years, varroa seems to be declining, talk of the small hive beetle has died down for the moment, world governments are now aware of the damage to bees and other pollinating insects by pesticides and weedkillers.

Life was a bit simpler when I had bees. Varroa had not yet arrived although Bee Inspectors were around putting inserts of paper in the hives, removing after a few days for inspections, nothing found at the time, turning up almost two years after I had parted with them.

Around this time of year I used to make candy for putting on the hives mid to late January as a back-up in case of stores running low and very rarely was any wasted. These days fondant saves a lot of work.

Good luck for 2017

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