

Swansea & District Beekeepers Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch



Oh, the fun of beekeeping!!

No prizes for seeing what went wrong here, but can you see why it happened. It's a lesson we all learn the hard way, but sometimes the right equipment just isn't available and needs must, as they say.

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Editor: D. Salkilld

When Bees Were Bees by Tom Davies.

Continuing on from my last article about queen mating, taken from "Gleanings in Bee Culture", May 1930, about the methods used by Mr. Allen Latham of Norwich, Connecticut, Mr. Smith was present when some of the small box type mating hives were brought back to the home apiary of Mr. Latham.

By now, some two and a half weeks or so after putting the bees in, the queen would have mated and they would have built their own combs since no foundation was put in with them to draw out.

Mr. Smith wondered how Mr. Latham was going to find the queens in these little hives. Mr. Latham showed how easy it was by taking off one of the little hives and giving it a shake, the bees and the queen falling on the ground, making it easy to find and cage the queen. The rest of the bees were allowed to disperse and enter a hive of their choice, while a photo in the magazine showed some combs the bees had drawn out while at the mating apiary.

This drawn out comb was not wasted, another ripe queen cell was put among them a fresh cupful of bees added and the whole process repeated. A sort of conveyor belt system.

A remarkable system, Mr. Latham was well up on his knowledge of bees and had put a lot of thought into what he was doing, no doubt helped along a bit with more steady periods of weather and thousands of acres of forage available then. A bit more on Mr. Latham in the next issue.

Tom.

Christmas Dinner ~ Forward Planning

On Saturday 2nd December, the Society will hold its Christmas Dinner at the '**Welcome to Town**' in Llanrhidian, North Gower. 7p.m. for 7.30p.m. 2 courses will cost £19.00, 3 courses will cost £22.50. Coffee and mince pies included with both options.

Please email Gerti on gerti.axtmann@gmail.com if you would like to reserve places. Gerti will ask for your menu choices later in the year.

Bees on You Tube

My thanks to Claire Miller for sending me a link to a fascinating set of videos she found on You Tube. She writes:

“It may be that a lot of people have already found this series of videos on youtube, but just in case anyone has missed them, they are well worth watching! A series of eight videos, ranging from twelve to twenty-odd minutes long.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2IjNBbLESY&list=PLYXeJt7IvbsPfyUS0CehTWrMo9oGKnXFO>

Ed: I watched one about a German beekeeper preparing his skep hives in readiness to pollinate fruit orchards. I can thoroughly recommend them.

What the Papers Say

Insect-friendly plants. The Daily Mail, on Saturday May 13th, had a disturbing article relating to a study carried out at Sussex University and shortly to be published in the scientific journal Environmental Pollution.

It concerned plants designated as ‘Insect-Friendly’ and sold by garden centres and by well-known national retailers. The study found that of the 29 plants tested, 27 contained chemicals that could endanger bees. Those which tested positive contained traces of neonicotinoid insecticides, including three which are banned in agriculture across the EU due to their threat to bees. These were in the pollen and in the nectar at levels similar to those found in the pollen of treated agricultural crops.

Dahlias, foxgloves, lavender, crocuses, allium, salvia and bluebells were among those tested. Over half of the samples tested bore the RHS logo “Perfect for Pollinators”; tempting gardeners, in good faith, to buy them for their gardens.

The scientists who carried out this study are now urging gardeners to either grow plants from organic seed or swap plants with fellow gardeners. According to the article, retailers have been made aware of the situation and are taking steps to ensure that future plants are not contaminated by the pesticides.

Some Notes from the WBKA Council Meeting

On Saturday 24th June, Paul Lyons and I attended the WBKA Council Meeting held at Llanbister in central Wales. These meetings are held three times a year and representatives from all 19 affiliated Associations are invited to attend to discuss beekeeping matters in Wales.

The first business of the day was to appoint a Chairman and John Bowles, of Anglesey BKA, was elected to the post. We wish him well in this new appointment.

Among the subjects discussed at the meeting were guide-lines for safety at basic certificate assessments. This came about because of an incident in England where a candidate suffered anaphylactic shock during the assessment and only he and the assessor were present. The WBKA management team is considering the matter and will probably be issuing recommendations along the lines that an independent observer is always to hand in case of emergency.

Two related subjects were tabled. The first was that queen losses from each association are reported back to WBKA. The aim of this suggestion is to get better information on the health of bees in Wales. If it is taken up, a co-ordinator from each association would need to collect and send in information each year. The other related subject was a proposal that all associations do a hive count each year. When BREXIT occurs, bee-related funding from the EU will stop, so in order to put the best possible case to the Welsh Assembly for continued funding, it will be necessary for the WBKA to know numbers of beekeepers and hives in the Principality.

This of course, raises more questions than it answers, for, as we know, hive numbers change up and down throughout the season with winter (and spring) losses and swarms collected. Numbers change year on year. Also, only about 80% to 90% of beekeepers in Wales belong to associations and counting the missing ones will only be an estimate. However, the subject is being looked into.

Frank Gellatly reported that Asian Hornets had been found in the Channel Islands. There was discussion on the best ways of dealing with them. Frank recommended that we put traps out for them early in the year to catch hornet queens before they have a chance to nest, and keep the traps out through the season. Details of the traps were previously sent out by the NBU and are easily made from old lemonade bottles. He also advised that we keep an eye open during August and September, as that is the time when they will be at their highest numbers and are most likely to attack colonies.

Frank stated that there is a full compliment of 10 Bee Inspectors in Wales. This year they found 14 colonies with AFB and 28 with EFB. Their locations (in 10k squares) can be found on Bee Base but none of these are in our area.

Wally Shaw related that his colonies on Anglesey have extremely high numbers of varroa mites, more than he has ever seen. This has been followed up with a recent email alert from the National Bee Unit which recommends that beekeepers check mite levels and use the varroa calculator to see if treatments are necessary. The calculator can be found on:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm>

The discussion on varroa continued with a report that Prof. Ratnicks had suggested removal in December of any brood that was in the hives. Thus, when treatments are done in winter, there would be no sealed cells where varroa could escape the effects of treatment.

It was reported that the WBKA Spring Convention at the Royal Welsh Showground made a profit of £800 and was attended by 466 paying visitors. WBKA will also have a presence at the Royal Welsh Show in July.

There was a plea from the Welsh Beekeeper editor, Nigel Daley, for items of interest for publication in the magazine. If anyone has an article, photo or similar, please email it to him at editor@wbka.co.uk DavidSalkilld

The Centennial Gower Show - Sunday 6th August

Stewarding. Gill needs stewards to be available in the marquee throughout Sunday. If you can **steward for half a day, you will get a free pass into the showground.** Gill is organizing stewards into two shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon with a small overlap at change-over.

Please let her know your preference for a morning or afternoon session, also for stewarding in the marquee or in the Bee Tent. Also let her know if you have no preferences but are willing to be available for either. Contact Gill Lyons on 01792 233169 or gillml@btinternet.com.

Set-up. As usual, the marquee will be set up on Friday 4th Aug and on Saturday morning 5th, ahead of the show. This entails putting the tables up, covering them with paper and hessian, putting the Bee Tent up, etc. etc. Your help on these days will be much appreciated.

Judging. Remember, judging takes place on Saturday afternoon starting at 2.00p.m., so exhibits need to be staged and the marquee cleared of people by 1.30p.m. During judging, only those people involved will be allowed in the marquee. This year's judge will again be Bernard Diaper of Sutton Coldfield.

Entries. Please get your entry forms to Gill at the earliest possible time. She has a lot of clerical work to do with numbers etc. and late entries just add to her workload on the day. Entry forms were sent out with the last newsletter and are also available to download [here](#).

Gill will be at the Tuesday social events on 11th July and 1st August to help anyone with their entries and answer any questions.

Blue Ribbon. Other than the Welsh National Honey Show, the Gower Show is the premier honey show in South Wales. Lets make it special again this year with plenty of high quality entries. After all, someone has to win the coveted Blue Ribbon award.

Forthcoming Events

Meetings at the New Lodge Independent Social Club, Alexandra Road, Gorseinon, are held on **2nd & 4th Tuesdays** of every month from 7.00 pm onwards. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

July

Tuesday 11th - Mid-year buffet. Contribution £2.00 each. Gill Lyons will be present to answer questions regarding the Gower Show.

Also '**Question Time**' – A panel of our experienced beekeepers will answer any questions you may have on beekeeping related subjects.

Saturday 15th - Ammanford Carnival ~ Bee Tent event. See Martin if you are able to help.

Monday 24th to Thursday 27th - Welsh National Honey Show at the RWAS Showground, Builth Wells.

August

Tuesday 1st - Gill Lyons will again be at the New Lodge Club, from 7.30p.m., to answer any questions and receive any entry forms for the Gower Show.

Friday 4th & Saturday 5th - Gower Show set up.

Sunday 6th - The Centennial Gower Show. Honey Show & Bee Tent event. See above.

September

Tuesday 12th - Talk on “Wax Moth and the Damage they can do” by Stephen Davies.

Friday 15th to Sunday 17th - MSWCC Conference, hosted by Gloucestershire BKA at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.

Further details and booking form can be found at www.mswcc.org.uk.

October

Tuesday 10th - Talk and demonstration on hand creams, soaps etc. by Catherine Clarke (“Honey Bee Beautiful”).

November

Tuesday 14th - The Society’s Honey Show. More details later.

Contact Numbers

Chairman: David O’Carroll dsocarroll@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary: Julian Caruana 07985 328 910
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Treasurer: John Gale 07855 451 781

“More About Bees” by Tom Davies

Looking out of the window at the moment. It could be thought that we were back in late October with a gale blowing, heavy rain, and not at all warm, and at the time of clover blooming, not too good a prospect for bees.

On the good side though, my bee garden is not looking too bad, my dahlias are on the point of flowering, the Michaelmas Daisies are looking exceptional, and I have filled in with a few annuals here and there

A bit of sunny weather would be nice about now, I don’t know what the forecast is, but I hope it will improve soon as I can’t imagine that our bees have much stores on hand.

On the other hand, I have heard about a couple of swarms lately, so there must have been some good sources of nectar and pollen in some localities for hives to build up, allowing the swarming. In rough periods of weather such as we are having, I made it a practice to check on my bees more often, not full inspections, just to make sure they were keeping well. I have seen bees bringing in pollen between showers of rain, perhaps they are able to dry it in the same way as ventilating the hive; maybe for using it straight away, rather than stored pollen, as I don’t think they would store damp pollen. Some research on stored damp pollen would be useful and might answer some of the problems we have with our bees.

Tom.