

Handling Bees:

An NDB Short Course will be held in Pontarddulais Comprehensive School and at a local apiary on 12th & 13th May 2018.

This will be a theory and practical course on 'Handling Skills'. It will be run by Tony Harris NDB and Alistair Welch NDB. The course will be advertised on the NDB website in the New Year.

Ed: National Diploma in Beekeeping. This Diploma is the highest beekeeping qualification recognised in the United Kingdom and its holders are generally well-known figures within beekeeping education.

Equipment Available

Cathy Tansley writes:

I have decided to give up beekeeping, due to personal reasons, and so have second hand equipment for sale.

I will be putting together an inventory and prices over the winter and will let Julian know early in the New Year, but in the meantime if anyone would like to rummage in my shed and buy before I compile my list you are more than welcome. Please contact me at:

The Old Forge Pumphouse, Carmarthen Road, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire SA17 5AH
Tel: 01554 891452 / 07796265364 or catherinetansley@btinternet.com

What the Papers say

Pesticides in Honey. On October 6th an article, entitled “75% of the honey we eat contains pesticides”, by the Science Correspondent of the Daily Mail, reported on findings of a study carried out at the University of Sussex and published in the journal Science.

In essence, the study had tested 198 honey samples from around the world and found traces of neonicotinoids in a large percentage of them. These chemicals, the article said, have proved highly effective in protecting crops from pests, especially aphids and root-eating grubs. However, they are known to have detrimental effects on honey bees.

Dave Goulson, Professor of Biology at the university, said, “Beyond doubt ... anyone regularly eating honey is likely to be getting a small dose of mixed neurotoxins. This is unlikely to result in any meaningful harm but it was impossible to know the long-term effects of human consumption”.

The article went on to say that the research published comes as the EU discusses extending a pesticide ban on crops that attract bees.

[To read the full article - <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-4953114/Not-sweet-75-percent-honey-samples-key-pesticide.html>]

Insect Populations Falling. Also in the Daily Mail, October 20th, reported that studies by the Dutch ecologist, Caspar Hallmann, of Radboud University, had shown that the European insect populations had fallen by three-quarters in the last 30 years.

The article went on to say that insects are integral to life; some are prey for a variety of wildlife, whilst others are predators or decomposers of organic matter, and are, of course, pollinators.

Worryingly, if pollinating insect numbers were to decline below an unknown tipping point, plants would go unpollinated and die without being able to produce seed, a major problem for food production.

During this time, habitat has declined and weather changed; however, a major culprit in the decline may well be the use of neonicotinoid chemicals, which were virtually unknown twenty years ago.

[To read the full article - <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4998832/The-flying-insects-planet-depends-plumets-75.html>]

Asian Hornet Update by Ade Bowen

Hi, I thought I'd update you on the Asian Hornet situation that happened on the North Devon coast recently. Please note:- on the map (see front Page) the apiaries are shown as red triangles and the star is the hornet nest site (not the actual site) to preserve beekeeper and site confidentiality!

It started near Woolacombe, North Devon, when a beekeeper rang her local SBI saying she suspected that a hornet was in her trap! SBI turned up, photographed it and sent the photo via I/phone to National Bee Unit, who confirmed it but asked for the actual insect to be sent to the lab in National Bee Unit for additional confirmation.

Then another beekeeper found hornets hawking around colonies and the same response happened there.

A team consisting of three RBIs and ten SBIs was immediately set up with headquarters at Ilfracombe Fire Station. The SBIs were sent out to get sight lines and reference angles the hornets were on as they flew away from apiaries.

Within two days the nest had been found and was destroyed that evening. The nest was then cut out of the bush and sent for examination at the lab in York.

I can tell you that the DNA has NOT matched the nest found in Tetbury last year.

WHERE NEXT ?

Happy hunting, Ade Bowen

Ed: Our thanks to Ade for this update on the hornet situation and his 'adventures' in Woolacombe. It reinforces the message that we should all be putting traps out in our apiaries next year, hoping, of course, that we don't actually find any Asian Hornets. Remember, Woolacombe is only 20 miles away as the crow flies and hornets have been known to fly 30 miles.

Topical Tips

Hopefully by now, you will have taken your honey off and extracted it. The debate is whether to store your supers dry or wet. Opinion is divided but the good news is that both ways work.

Wet storage is best done by wrapping each super with a couple of layers of newspaper and stacking them in a cold place. When you come to use them next season the likelihood of wax moth attack is low because the honey residue will have made life difficult for the moth. The newspaper will have absorbed some honey and be a bit messy but just discard it.

Dry storage allows the wax moth free reign over the comb. Theoretically wax moth is more likely to be on brood comb but my experience is that they can ruin super comb over a winter. If you go for this option, think about a wax moth treatment such as Certan or sulphur strips, both available from beekeeping suppliers. Another way is to pray for a cold winter and let the frost deal with wax moth. Alternatively, if you have access to a chest freezer, pop the supers in for 24 hours and the cold will do the job.

Winter Stores & Mouse Guards. It is time to put mouse guards on entrances and make sure the colonies have enough stores to over winter. Traditionally we used to recommend at least 40 lb. of honey or a sugar equivalent. Heft the hive to judge the weight. If you are in any doubt, feed any colonies that feel light. Someone once told me that if the hive feels as though it is nailed to the floor, it has enough stores for winter. If it moves, it needs feeding.

Varroa. Check varroa mite drop and if there are any present, decide on winter treatment. Of recent years we have recommended a pre-made oxalic acid solution trickled on the cluster at a rate of 5ml per seam. This is no longer available but has been replaced by Api-Bioxal, an oxalic acid based powder which can be used either in a vaporizer or made into a 4.2% solution for application with a syringe. Remember that trickled solutions must be warm, as cold solutions applied in the depth of winter would upset cluster temperature and likely kill the colony. Other treatments are also available from suppliers. When using oxalic acid, always treat when no brood is present.

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. We look forward to seeing you there.

November

Tuesday 14th 7p.m. The Society's Honey Show. See the email (22nd Oct.) from Gerti for details of entries etc. There will be a buffet supper during the evening, cost £2 each.

Saturday 11th 11.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. approx. Microscopy Session at Pontarddulais Comp. See details on Stephen's email. 27th Oct. Cost £5.

December

Saturday 2nd There has been a slight hitch with **Christmas Dinner** arrangements. Unfortunately the Welcome to Town restaurant closed down at the end of October, so our booking had to be cancelled. The GOOD NEWS is that Gerti has now booked for the same date at the **Rake & Riddle**, Berthlwyd, Gowerton Road, Penclawdd. 7p.m. for 7.30p.m. Please see Gerti's email dated 27th Oct which gives full details and a booking form.

January 2018

Tuesday 9th 7p.m. Talk on How to Make Mead, by Sue Black

February 2018

Tuesday 13th 7p.m. The Society A.G.M.

Saturday 17th Skep Making, See the article on page 1.

Thursday 22nd 7p.m. to 9p.m. Beginners' Beekeeping Classes start at Pontarddulais Comprehensive School. Contact Nicola for information.

March 2018

Tuesday 13th 7p.m. Talk on Remote Hive Monitoring

May 2018

Weekend of 12th & 13th Handling Bees. See article on page 2.

When Bees Were Bees by Tom Davies.

A beekeeper, Mr. H. E. Champion, of Ulverstone, Tasmania, Australia, sent in to "Gleanings in Bee Culture", for August 1933, a report on his honey crop for 1932.

His main honey take was from blackberry and usually lasted four to six weeks. The blackberry was reckoned to be the worst weed, and while farmers on the island of Tasmania, despaired of trying to eradicate it, the plant was of benefit to beekeepers.

He described this blackberry honey as water-white, with a very mild flavour, and when granulated, a fine white grain (my mouth is watering!) and went on to describe the climate as mild there. No snow in winter except on the hills in the distance.

He went on to describe the eucalyptus species of trees, which apparently at normal times flower simultaneously, giving an extended season of about three months or so following his blackberry season for 1931.

The eucalyptus boosted his honey take for 1931 to 3¾ tons from 60 colonies. He did not say how much blackberry he took, but if his normal crop was taken from blackberry, it must have been fairly good to be able to afford 60 colonies.

More next time, Tom.

WBKA 75th Anniversary

By now you will all have had your Autumn issue of Welsh Beekeeper magazine. Have a look at the notice on page 5 about the 75th Anniversary celebration of the WBKA, which will be held as a Residential Summer School at Aberystwyth University. This will be a mixture of lectures, workshops and social activities, as well as amenities to engage non-beekeeping partners.

It will run from Friday 13th to Sunday 15th July 2018. Some basic information is given on the notice and more details will be available early in 2018.

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

Coming up to Mid-October and our weather is still as unpredictable as ever. A very up and down year for me in the garden, a lot of extra work with weeding. A good job to keep up with it, as the short spells of good weather were not long enough to catch up with whatever needed doing.

At the moment I am busy tidying after the last flowers in the bee-garden. Some dahlias and the Michaelmas daisies are still attracting bumblebees, butterflies and the odd honeybee, but there are very few wasps about, in fact, very few all year.

In the bee-garden I tried out some extra flowers from free packets with gardening magazines, but they proved a disappointment as they did not attract any bees or butterflies. They were godetia, petunia and lavatera. I watched them a good many times both in good sunlight and not so good light, but they seemed to be attractive to the odd fly, similar to the house fly, so in future I will stick to my dahlias, Michaelmas daisies and the agastaches because they have proved excellent.

Some of my Michaelmas daisies are a bit too tall and have needed a good staking in the winds we've had, so when I get to replanting for 2018 I will stick to the shorter ones that won't suffer too much at windy times. All the best for next year, hope you all do well as I'm sure you could with a good season.

Till next time - Tom.