

**Swansea & District Beekeepers
Newsletter
Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch
20th
Anniversary Issue**



A rather unusual view of Mike using the Oxalic Acid Vapour System at Llys Nini in January
Photo by Stephen Davies
See article on page 6

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Editor: D. Salkilld

Twenty years on

It's hard to believe but this issue marks the twentieth anniversary of this newsletter. It started back in 1998 when Paul Wainright had stepped down as Secretary and the then Chairman, Mike Cram, and I thought we should start a regular bi-monthly newsletter to keep members informed about meetings etc. 120 issues later I can hardly believe it is still going.

With beekeeping journals, the main difficulty is that, with the exception of varroa, nothing much has changed in over one hundred years, so finding something different to write about is the biggest hurdle to overcome. However, with Society information and contributions from members, snippets from newspapers and some good old-fashioned gossip, we have managed to keep it going.

Having mentioned contributions from members, my heartfelt thanks go to Tom Davies who has regularly written in each of the newsletters except the first issue. Had I had the sense to ask him at the time, he would have written something for that first newsletter too. Thank you Tom for your contributions over the years.

Looking back at some of those old issues, certain things jump out as milestones, notably the getting the Bee Tent, setting up the Apiary, getting our microscopes and education equipment and, of course, running Conferences as part of our commitment to the MSWCC.

Along the way we enjoyed apiary visits to people's home apiaries and had regular "overseas" trips to visit Rita Cunningham on Caldy Island. We even had pub meetings and on one notable occasion, failed miserably at the pub quiz, even though our combined ages must have reached nearly eight hundred years. I guess our scant knowledge of sports and pop music didn't do us much good.

In those far-off days, the Society attended three honey shows each year, the Swansea Show in Singleton Gardens, a two day affair held on the Spring Bank Holiday; the Gower Show, held in August on Fairwood Airport and our own Society Honey Show, held in October at Gowerton Church Hall. Showing honey was very popular with good competition from people who regularly took part in major honey shows such as the Welsh National Show at Builth Wells. In 1998, there were so many entries in the Gower Show that two judges were needed, one for the closed classes and one for the open classes. Closed classes were for Swansea & District members only but anyone from far and wide could enter the open classes.

On the subject of showing, 2003 was the year in which two Swansea & District members each won a First Prize at the National Honey Show in London, myself for a bottle of 'Dry Mead' and Claire Miller for a 'Shallow Comb of Honey Ready for Extracting'. That same comb also took Best-in-Show at the Welsh national Honey show the next year.

In those early newsletters, varroa was a regular topic, not least because different treatments were coming on the market and by 2002, news was heard of varroa mites developing resistance to pyrethroids, the chemical used in Apistan and Bayvarol strips. By 2006, resistance was widespread throughout Wales. Until that time, the strips had been about 95% efficient in killing varroa mites.

At one of the MSWCC Conferences around 2000, I happened to be standing in the dinner queue in front of Brian Cramp, a beekeeper from Leicestershire, who had a photo of their unique Bee Tent which he was showing people. Somewhat cheekily, I asked him if he could bring it to Swansea and, to cut a long story short, he agreed. It seemed that his daughter lived in Cardiff and his wife was glad of the chance to visit her, so the trailer full of tent equipment came to the Swansea Show on 2nd June 2002. It was a star attraction at the show and won a beautiful rosette for "Best Stand of Interest to Children". In those days we didn't count visitor numbers but later, guessed that about 160 to 170 members of the public went through in the two days.

Then, sometime about 2005, at one of the home apiary outings, Claire Miller saw our Woolworths' gazebo, and went out and bought one for use as a DIY Bee Tent. This was used for the first time at the Swansea Show on Spring Bank Holiday, 2007. It was, needless to say, a great success and continued to be used till the WBKA Spring Show in 2009.

During this time we were applying for a grant to purchase our present equipment. The grant was approved and the first two Gala pop-up tents bought. Then we had some fun finding how to erect them without getting our fingers caught in the cross bracing. Next came the task of sorting out the netting, which after much head scratching, our son Richard said that the best way was to get it all sewn together as a one-piece netting so there would be no gaps left for bees to escape. He then drew up the concept of the netting we now have. The rest, as they say, is history. The new Bee Tent was premiered at the Gower Show in 2009 and has been going well ever since.

In the July / August issue in 2009, we also congratulated Ade Bowen on his appointment as a Seasonal Bee Inspector, which as reported at the time, was for a two year period. Nine years on it's great to see that he is still in that post.

Throughout this time our Society has been affiliated to the Midland & South Western Counties Convention of Beekeepers, a group of beekeeping associations across the UK that holds an annual

conference in rotation. As the name is quite a mouthful, we normally abbreviate it to MSWCC. In the past, Swansea & District BKS have hosted the Conference on many occasions but during the twenty years of this magazine, three conferences have been held in Swansea. The first two were at the North Gower Hotel, 2003 and 2010, and the most recent at the King Arthur Hotel in 2016. They gave an opportunity to meet beekeepers from all over the UK and hear some excellent speakers too. Ours always had a good set of workshops on the Saturday afternoon, an idea, which incidentally, has since been picked up by all the other affiliated counties. At MSWCC conferences there is always an inter-county honey show and our Society has won the silver challenge cup only once to my knowledge, at the Gwent Conference in 2008.

In the distant past the Society had an apiary in Clyne Gardens, but it went into disuse about twenty five years ago. Then in 2012, we had the opportunity (and enthusiasm) to start a new one on the RSPCA site at Llys Nini, near Penllergaer. Newsletter 84, March / April 2012 has a front page photo of Stephen, Ian and Ade with chain saws clearing the dense trees, bushes and undergrowth. What a job it was but well worth it. The Society's hives were later moved there from Pontlliw where they had been kept previously. Since that time the apiary has proved its worth as a training ground and regularly holds practical meetings as part of the beginners classes. They also demonstrate such important aspects as handling techniques, varroa treatments etc.

Over the years, beginners' classes have been the mainstay of introducing people to the craft of beekeeping. I ran them for a long time but in more recent years, Nicola and Stephen have taken over and expanded them with the addition of practical training at the apiary. They also introduced higher levels of theory through the modules and it is good to see a number of our members passing the exams with distinction.

In the early days, meetings were held at members' home apiaries. These were great fun and we always had tea and snacks to follow our inspection of other people's bees. More recently, regular monthly meetings, with speakers, have been held at New Lodge Social Club.

Throughout the past twenty years, people have been writing letters, articles, sending me photographs and sending cuttings from newspapers about bee related subjects. Let's hope this continues as it gives a much wider perspective for members, after all, we don't read the same newspapers and each of them gives a different view on science and wildlife topics. Photographs too, have been invaluable during this time and many people have kindly let me use their photos in the newsletter. They make my job as editor so much easier because they reduce the amount of writing I have to do. My grateful thanks to all who send me photos and these items of interest; please keep them coming.

If I have rambled somewhat through these last twenty years, please forgive me. Reading some of the 120 magazines and trying to piece it all together has been quite a task. Likewise, if I have not mentioned all those other things that went on during the last twenty years, or the people who did them, my apologies for the omissions. However, in going through the old copies, I realised that there were some good articles which bear repeating, so selected ones will be featured in future newsletters.

My gratitude to all. David Salkilld

“When Bees Were Bees” by Tom Davies.

I was intending to write about something else, but thought that with our not-so-good weather, something cheerful would be nicer.

I have a booklet published by Warwickshire B.K.A. with honey recipes in, not dated, I've had it a long time, picked it up somewhere years ago.

Honey Baked Chicken Joints: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange juice ~ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey ~ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salad oil ~ $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper and paprika ~ 1 teaspoon salt and mustard.

Mix to form a sauce and marinade the joints overnight in it. Bake for 1 hour (gas mark 5) baste now and then with sauce.

Honey Roast Lamb: Mix 1 teaspoon dry mustard with 4 tablespoons honey, spread over the lamb and roast.

Pork With Honey (serves 2): 2 thick slices shoulder pork ~ 1 cooking apple ~ 1 onion ~ 1 tablespoon honey ~ 1 gill stock or cider (1/3 pint) ~ salt and pepper.

Slice onion and layer in bottom of casserole dish, lay pork on top, add salt and pepper to taste, add sliced apple spread with honey, pour stock or cider down inside of the dish, then cover and cook slowly approx. 2 hours, 200 – 300 F.

Quick Honey Fruit Cake: In a large mixing bowl put 6 oz soft margarine ~ 4 oz caster sugar ~ 3 standard eggs ~ 6 oz mixed dried fruit ~ 4 tbs milk ~ 2 oz glace cherries ~ 12 oz s. r. flour ~ 1 level teaspoon mixed spice ~ 2 tablespoons honey. With a wooden spoon mix all ingredients for a few minutes until well blended, place mix into a prepared deep 8 inch cake tin, bake in centre of oven for 1¼ to 1½ hours at 350 F (gas mark 4). Tom Davies.

The Bees are out Foraging

As I write this, 25th Feb, temperature 5° C maximum, I can report that my bees have been foraging in their masses on heather in our front garden. It is great to see them with their pollen baskets heading back to the hives but surprising that they fly in so low a temperature. I'm sure someone out there will tell me that their bees have worked in colder conditions. D. S.

The Society's History

To my knowledge, there are only a few people who have been members of Swansea & District since its foundation. Tom Davies is one of them, so I took the liberty of asking him to pen a few words about how the Society came into being. Tom told me that in those days the Glamorgan Beekeeping Association had three branches, South Glam. (Cardiff), Mid Glam. (Bridgend) and West Glam. (Swansea). They used to hold their meetings in the middle, at Bridgend. At one time, Tom was Secretary of the West Glamorgan branch.

Swansea & District Beekeepers' Society By Tom Davies

I have been asked about the origins of our Society and sadly all literature of when it actually started has been discarded due to my moving three times since it was formed, and my memory is not too good.

It would be around early to mid 1980's when it came into being in this way: The subject of a queen rearing outfit came up in a meeting of West Glamorgan beekeepers, (I was a member at that time), and we approached a meeting of all three branches of Glamorgan Counties with a plan to set up such a unit in West Glamorgan.

The plan was not acceptable, so at a later meeting of West Glamorgan, someone suggested that we form a small group to raise queens, initially for West Glamorgan members, but if successful, to widen the range. I was all for the venture but had limited time to help out due to shift working at my railway job, quite often working 12 hour shifts.

The original intention was to keep the group small, not to form a new society, but once people knew of it, they wanted to join, not taking very long to become a fairly large unit, and even some coming from outside Swansea, so it was decided to call it the Swansea & District Beekeepers' Society and it has never looked back since, and has grown into the excellent society it is today. I feel that with the members it has now, it is in safe hands for many years to come.

Tom Davies.

At the AGM

At the recent AGM, held on Tuesday, 13th Feb., the following people were approved as Officers:

Chairman	David O'Carroll
Vice Chairman	Paul Lyons
Treasurer	John Gale
Secretary	This post is vacant.

The following members also make up the Committee

Nicola Oulton,	Jean Salkilld	Sue Lawrence
Gerti Axtmann	Gill Lyons	Karen Squires
Martin Davies	Paul Lyons	Ian Algie
Stephen Davies	Mike Grinter	

Society Roles:

Apiary Manager	Mike Grinter
Bee Tent Lead	Martin Davies
Education Officer	Nicola Oulton
Events Secretaries	Gerti Axtmann
	& Karen Squires
Gower Show Secretary	Gill Lyons
Librarian	Paul Lyons
Membership Secretaries	John Gale
	& Sue Lawrence
Newsletter Editor	David Salkilld
Spray Liaison Officer	Martin Davies
Webmaster	Selina Taylor
Delegates to WBKA	Paul Lyons
	Robert Jones
Delegates to MSWCC	Paul Lyons
	David Salkilld

At the meeting, the posts of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer were filled by the incumbents, but nobody at the meeting came forward to fill the post of Secretary which is being vacated by Julian Caruana, due to his forthcoming move away from the Swansea area. In the short term he has agreed to continue while the Committee find a replacement. If you would like to nominate someone, or put yourself forward for this post, please have a word with our Chairman, David O'Carroll.

Two proposals were passed by the membership:

- 1.) That the Society uses some of its funds to acquire additional equipment for use by members. *The Committee welcomes suggestions from members as to what equipment should be considered.*
- 2.) That the Society sponsors one of the lectures at the WBKA's forthcoming 75th Anniversary Event. The sum agreed was £250. *The Committee has been in contact with the WBKA.*

In questions from the Floor, Eric Thomas asked if some members could be formed into action teams in the event that Asian Hornets are found in our area. This was readily agreed by members and the Committee will draw up a plan to deal with the situation when it arrives.

After an excellent buffet supper (thank you Gerti and Karen for arranging it), Ade Bowen ran a workshop to teach us how to make an Asian Hornet Trap using a design which is able to be taken apart so that insects aren't killed. He brought materials and tools necessary for construction and patiently showed us how to make one. It was a bit like a Blue Peter session but very informative. Lots of members were involved and went home with their traps. Details of this design are available

on the National Bee Unit web site. I typed 'Asian Hornet Monitoring Trap' into Google and it came up top of the option lists. Note that it is the Mk 2 version of the trap that is recommended.

Varroa Treatment at Llys Nini

At the vaporiser demonstration in January, the Apiary team treated the Society hives and showed members how to use the equipment. Although it's difficult to see, the picture shows the wand connected to the 12v car battery with a small oxalic tablet in the pan. Look closely and you will see that Mike is wearing a face mask because of potential fumes. In use, the wand is connected to the battery and put into a hive entrance for three minutes while the oxalic acid turns to vapor and permeates through the hive

My thanks to Stephen for the photo with a request that next time, he asks Mike to stand up and smile before pressing the button.

Forthcoming Events

March

Saturday 10th WBKA AGM at the Elan Valley Hotel, Rhayader .

Tuesday 13th 7.p.m. Talk on Remote Hive Monitoring, by George Clouston.

Saturday 24th WBKA Spring Convention at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells. Speakers include Susie Hill, Dr. Paul Cross and Kirsty Stainton. As always, there will be trade stands, refreshments and exhibitions.

April

Tuesday 10th 7.00 p.m. Talk on the Ecology of Bats, by Matt Carroll.

May

Tuesday 8th 7.00 p.m. To be arranged.

Weekend of 12th & 13th A short course on Handling Skills will be run by the NDB at Pontarddulais Comprehensive School. This is an intensive two-day course tutored by Tony Harris and Alistair Welch. According to the NDB website, these courses are aimed at beekeepers with some experience of the craft; they are not aimed at novices. I understand that there will be both theoretical and practical beekeeping involved. See the NDB web site for details of booking etc.

Weekend of 19th & 20th Spring show at Builth Wells, this is a Bee Tent Outing.

June

Saturday 9th Bee Tent outing to 'Go Wild'. More details later.

Tuesday 12th Talk by Bernard Diaper, What a Judge is Looking For on the Show Bench (in preparation for the Gower Show).

Saturday 30th Bee Tent outing Pontarddulais Show.

July

Tuesday 10th To be arranged.

Weekend of 13th, 14th & 15th, WBKA 75th Anniversary Summer School
To be held at Aberystwyth University. Information on the programme, costs and booking form is expected to be available on the WBKA website in March

Monday 23rd to Thursday 26th Welsh National Honey Show, to be held during the Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells

Tuesday 31st Pre-Gower Show meeting at New Lodge.31st July

August

Friday 3rd Start set up of marquee at Gower Show ground, Penrice.

Saturday 4th Continue set up. Stage exhibits and Judging starts

Sunday 5th Gower Show day

Wednesday 8th Bee Tent outing Vale of Glamorgan Show, Fonmon Castle

September

Tuesday 11th Talk, Preparing for Winter by Stephen Davies

October

Tuesday 9th To be arranged

Saturday 20th Second Skep Making day course

November

Tuesday 13th The Society Honey Show

December

Saturday 1st (Provisional) Christmas Dinner

Contact Numbers

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

Secretary: Post vacant see page 5

Treasurer: John Gale **07855 451 781**

“More About Bees” by Tom Davies

With the impossible weather we've had this winter, my garden is looking very rough. All I have been able to do is a little bit of tidying here and there. I would like a nice period of sunny weather so I can get on to things in preparation for the new season.

I wonder whether losses of colonies will be up as a result of all the rain we've had in the last few months. The cold, damp and windy conditions can't have helped much.

I hope that my dahlias are alright as I left them in the ground, just covered all of them with a large pot upturned, and a large stone or brick to hold them down. I will check them in a week or two to see how they are. I'm bound to lose some, but I can split up some of the surviving ones and buy some more if needed.

Watching a farming programme some weeks ago, there was a visit to a farm where soya bean was being test-grown as an alternative to oil seed rape. Apparently the pollen beetle is now almost out of control and if the soya is accepted, we could see an end to the many fields of oil seed rape, as well as perhaps making a big difference to bee farmers who supply bees for pollination.

One thing about our weather though, I can't see the Asian hornet doing very well on it, although we will have to wait and see. Hopefully it won't succeed like varroa did. On that note, hope you all get a nice honey year!

More next time, Tom

In the Next Issue: Article on Skep Making.