

Swansea & District Beekeepers Newsletter Gwenynwyr Abertawe a'r Cylch

The Gower Show

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Editor: D. Salkilld



Mike Grinter presenting **Gill Lyons** with the **Blue Ribbon Award** at the Gower Show for her Medium Honey, Class 5, which was judged “Best exhibit in Show”.

Our congratulations to Gill on the award and our thanks to her for all her hard work in organising the event. On the day, hundreds of visitors came into the tent where they could try their hand at candle rolling, the ever-popular kiddies’ quiz, colouring for younger children, and, of course, see observation hives and have the Bee Experience. This year a group from the National Botanic Garden of Wales joined us and added a splash of colour with their display on pollinators.

As well as our own members, we had exhibitors from Worcestershire, Carmarthen and Cardiff, totalling over 150 entries. Our Honey Judge, Bernard Diaper commented on the high standard of exhibits on the benches.

The Best in Show award went to Gill Lyons, and the Dorothea Daniel-Jenkins Challenge Cup, for most points in show, was won by Rebecca Day, of Worcestershire.

During the presentations, Paul Lyons presented Jean and David Salkilld with certificates confirming them as Honorary Life Members of the Welsh Beekeepers' Association in recognition of services given to the Association.

Congratulations to the prize winners, particularly to those who entered the Novice Classes of honey and beeswax blocks. It was good to see new members trying their hand at showing. Gill has sent out a full list of winners by email.

Sales of honey and other bee related items went well; it's good that there is a local outlet for our honey and many visitors to the show like to take a souvenir jar home with them.

Our grateful thanks to the many members who helped during set-up on Friday and Saturday, and who stewarded on show day, and our thanks go also to all who entered exhibits in the show. Without you, it couldn't happen.

Success at the Welsh National Honey Show

which was held at the Royal Welsh Show, July 2019.

This year, two of our members, Martin and Karen, inspired by Claire Miller, decided to enter some exhibits in the royal Welsh Show. Both had had some previous success at our very own Gower Show, but the

Royal Welsh was to be a big step-up for them. Scouring the RWAS schedule they decided to enter a number of categories, including wax blocks, candles, show-frames, cut-comb and a beeswax craft item, in all 19 entries across 10 categories.

In their words: "We knew that the cut-comb was not up to the best show standard as it was slightly thin and therefore had to be cut quite large to squeeze into the cases to make the weight, so no surprises that we came away with nothing in that class". However, they were both surprised and delighted that they won awards for candles, blocks, a show frame and the craft item. The craft item being a wishing well, crafted from ice-cube blocks of wax (also shown at the Gower Show) which took a painstaking amount of time and several attempts to perfect.



Karen's "Best Exhibit in Show" (A Frame for Extraction)

As a testament to their efforts they were rewarded with a number of prizes. These included 1st and 2nd for sets of 5 wax blocks, 1st and 3rd for sets of 6 wax blocks, 1st for sets of 3 candles and a pair of candles, 1st for a craft item and 1st and Best in Show for Karen's Show-frame. The 1st place prize for the craft item was even more rewarding because they accidentally left it at home, needing a mad dash home by Martin to get it, just in time for judging.

Karen was fortunate enough to be able to attend the show on the Thursday and collect her award in person. Initially believing it to be a simple placard stating Best in Show, she was delighted to be awarded the Howard Davies Memorial Award.

Martin Davies.

Ed: My thanks to Martin for the two articles and the photographs.

“More About Bees” by Tom Davies

Not a very nice day today, high winds and heavy showers, blowing my bee garden about as well as my kitchen garden. I have a row of dwarf beans that have been battered to the ground by heavy rain.

Taking things as a whole, 2019 has been a varied year with a long cold spring, then erupting into very hot, sunny spells that affected my tomato plants in the greenhouse so much that you could almost see them growing!

At the Gower Show I asked about the yields of honey and it seems that most people have had a fairly good year. There were some lovely exhibits on the benches, giving our judge, Mr. Bernard Diaper, quite a task to come up with the winners. I had a chat with him and he was impressed not only with the exhibits themselves, but with the standard of the actual items on the benches. There were no outward faults and He felt that the show is getting better and better every year.

What impressed me most of all was the way that you all pitched in and got on with the job of getting the tent ready for the show. It takes quite a lot to take an empty tent and transform it into an excellent show. You succeeded, and it showed by the crowds that visited us during the day.

More next time, Tom.

Asian hornet identified in south Hampshire

In mid July, the National Bee Unit confirmed the sighting of an individual, female Asian Hornet in New Milton, Hampshire, after it was reported by a member of the public. Based upon visual examination, the hornet is likely to be a queen.

Monitoring is underway to detect any other Asian hornets in the vicinity and local beekeepers have been asked to be vigilant.

This is the first confirmed sighting since October 2018, when a sighting of an individual hornet was confirmed in Dungeness, Kent.

Bees at the Vale by Martin Davies

Once again, the Society attended the Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show, held on Wednesday August 7th. Setting up on the day, as usual, meant an early start for our intrepid trusty (or should that be rusty, given the weather conditions in the morning?) group of volunteers.

Collecting the bees and the trailer from Llys Nini at around 6.30 was to be a simple task as Mike had prepared the colony beforehand. Unfortunately, the bees had different ideas, as they were out and about when it was time to move them into the pick-up (many thanks to Peter Pulham for taking bees and trailer). Given the early time of day they were not the happiest of creatures. Multiple stings later, amid a large cloud of bees they were eventually relocated to the pick-up.

Travel to the Fonmon Castle Showground was uneventful and once through the queue and mud we were parked at our usual spot, just in front of the horticulture tent, replete with giant cabbages and marrows on a display table outside, the largest cabbage weighing in at a staggering 26 kilos and nearly 4 feet across!

With the help of the volunteers the tent was erected and “ship-shape” well before the opening time of 10 o’clock and we were visited by a couple of the other stall holders to pre-book sessions before the gates opened, so that they didn’t miss out on seeing the bees.

Always a popular attraction, we began the showings at 10 o’clock with almost every 30-minute session full to capacity, or more, until the final one at 4.30. Not even the frequent heavy showers in the morning could dampen our spirits. Some of the visitors commented that this was their 3rd or even 4th visit to the tent in as many years, such is its popularity.

The bees, unhappy at the start of their journey, performed admirably and were calm and collected with the queen only playing hide-and-seek for one of the sessions, where it took a few attempts to find and show her to the visitors. Mike had done an excellent job in selecting the colony, as it contained everything we like to show interested parties, plenty of nectar, honey, pollen, brood, and enough bees to reflect their activities but not too many that they obscure the honeycomb. The gasps from the children

when you pull out a brood frame full of bees provides a delightful backdrop to the talk you then provide and it never ceases to amaze how much the children already know, such is the emphasis of the importance of bees during their schooling.

Thankfully the afternoon was dry, so that the tent and equipment could be packed away dry. Suits were not too dirty but will be laundered ready for the final event of this year, The Heart of the Valley Show in Pontardawe, on September 7th.

Tallying up the numbers after the show revealed that, surprisingly, as it was busy all day, visitor numbers were down around 25% from last year, most likely due to the changeable weather in the morning, but donations and hive product sales were healthy.

A very big thank you to all of those that gave up their time to make the event the success it was and hopefully everyone enjoyed themselves.

Forthcoming Events

September

Saturday 7th Bee Tent Outing at the Heart of the Valley Show, Pontardawe.

Tuesday 10th Talk at The New Lodge Social Club, Gorseinon, 7.00 p.m. by Lucy Winters about new research on Pollinators conducted at the National Botanic Garden of Wales and giving advice on creating a wildflower area including perennials.

October

Tuesday 8th Talk at The New Lodge Social Club, Gorseinon, 7.00 p.m. “Hygiene” by Stephen Davies

November

Tuesday 12th The Society Honey Show at The New Lodge Social Club, Gorseinon, 7.00 p.m.

December

Saturday 7th The Society Christmas Dinner at the Rake & Riddle. Details to be advised later.

Black Queen Cell Virus.



My thanks to Claire Miller for sending me this picture.

I have to be honest, until Claire sent me this photo recently, I had never heard of Black Queen Cell Virus (BQCV) so this article has been put together largely with information taken from the internet.

BQCV was originally described in 1977 and is most commonly found in Australia and parts of South Africa. It visibly affects the pupae of the queen causing them first to turn yellow and then black, and eventually die. These pupae come from queen bees that seem healthy and show no symptoms of being infected with this virus. It only manifests itself with visible symptoms in the larvae.

Transmission occurs by a parasite called *Nosema apis*, which lives in the intestines of honey bees. BQCV can also be transmitted from nurse bees to larvae when they feed, and from hive to hive when the bees travel between them and when infected queen bees are distributed to other hives. No treatments are available for treating infected bees, therefore sanitation is the best way to prevent the spread. Sanitation practices include replacing the comb of the hive and requeening with a healthy queen. Let's hope it never reaches our shores. More information on Black Cell Queen Virus can be found on Wikipedia.

D.S.

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“When Bees Were Bees” by Tom Davies

In the last issue of our newsletter I wrote about the subject of observation hives in British Columbia, Canada, and thought it was a one-off.

Recently I have found it was not, I have found a note about one in a Glamorgan Beekeepers Association A.G.M. notice, to be held at the National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, on Saturday April 1st 1967.

It reads – The observation hive consists of a double-walled glass hive of 7 brood frames and a super, and the present stock was established from a 4 frame nucleus received in May 1966, and managed by members of the Eastern Branch of the Association.

The strain is a Dadant Starline Italian, bred in Jessup, Georgia, U.S.A. and was obtained from Messrs D. M. Jesper, Harrogate.

Within a month of establishment, the colony re-queened itself, as the original queen was injured in transit, but since then has settled in quite well, and gave a slight surplus of honey. 14 pounds of sugar syrup was fed in late Autumn, 1966.

The colony may be seen in the ground floor of the Zoology Gallery, mounted in an external window.

More next time, Tom.

In the next issue: An article about rescuing bees from under floorboards!

The next newsletter is due out on 1st November. Please let me have your articles / items by **21st October**. Thanks.