



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS  
ASSOCIATION**

# **The BeeHolder**

**Autumn 2013**



Smiling through the stings: A contestant grins and bears it

(Picture: Canadian Press/AP)

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## Editorial

You will notice just how much the outbreak of American Foul Brood in Newtown has influenced our contributors. This edition could really have been entirely about the implications of AFB in Newtown, but that would not have been fair on the majority of Beekeepers who are not affected (and also perceived as alarmist : see Paul Aslin's comment, page 8). However all should take note of the article by Warren and Margaret Town on page 7. The Article about bringing back the indigenous Bee to Wiltshire (page 5) is particularly relevant to those of us (including me) who have had appalling losses over the last two winters. More strength to the elbows of those MBKA members who are working towards a similar goal right here in Wales!

Quite a bit of the emphasis in this issue is on the meetings and other events planned for the rest of the season and over winter. The Committee puts considerable effort into organising meetings and speakers, but as ever we are anxious that our members let us know what they would like to see in future.

**Chris Leech**

# Forthcoming Events

Some dates for the rest of the year and the start of next. See the Future Meetings on page 14 for more details.

- Sept 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Sat 2:00pm  
**Dual Members' Apiary Meeting**  
Aberhafesp  
Bill and Carol Gough (see article p 9).  
plus about 100m away  
Roger Stone  
A meeting spread over 2 members' apiaries – a first for MBKA.
- Sept 18 & 19<sup>th</sup>**  
Sun 2:00pm  
**Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference 2013**  
Bangor University, Bangor  
Developing Ecological Networks, planning, integration and delivery.  
See <http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/Wales-Biodiversity-Partnership-Conference> for more.
- Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>**  
Sun 10:00am  
**Apiary training – End of Season & Pre-Winter Inspection**  
at MBKA Apiary, Gregynog Hall, Tregynon  
Varroa treatment will be covered at this meeting.
- October 9<sup>th</sup>**  
Wed 7:00pm  
**MBKA Meeting Double Bill**  
at Plas Dolerw, Newtown  
What Powys is doing for Bees and Biodiversity with Dr Emma Guy,  
Powys Biodiversity Officer AND  
Bringing Back the Black Bee, a report on the efforts of some of our  
members to bring back *Apis mellifera mellifera* to Montgomeryshire.
- November 13<sup>th</sup>**  
Wed 7:00pm  
**2013 Analysed PLUS Thoughts and Advice for 2014**  
at Plas Dolerw, Newtown  
Paul Aslin, Seasonal Bee Inspector, shares his experiences of this  
year and plans for the future.
- 2014**  
**Jan 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>**  
Fri or Sat  
**Annual Dinner**  
at Maesmawr Hall, Caersws  
Returning to this venue by popular demand. The date has not been  
finalised yet – if you have a preference for Fri or Sat, do let Maggie  
Armstrong know (01686 630447).
- February 20<sup>th</sup>**  
Thu 7pm at Plas Dolerw, Newtown  
**Annual General Meeting & Apothecary Bees**  
After the AGM, guest speaker Jenny Hawkins from the Cardiff  
School of Pharmacy, returns as promised to give updates on her  
work.

Meetings at members apiaries involve a pool tea. Please phone the hosts in advance of the meeting so that they have an idea of numbers attending and so be able to coordinate sweet/savoury contributions to some degree. Apiary training sessions at our Gregynog apiary are not usually followed by pool teas, but there is a cafe facility on the site. Please let Dave know if you are going to attend so that he is prepared for the number attending (tel 01686 626872).

## Chairman's Chat

Along with Noel Eaton I represent MBKA on the Council of the Welsh BeeKeepers Association. We meet four times a year and it is good to touch base with Beekeepers of other Welsh Associations. At the last Council Meeting the talk in the bar, lunch table, corridors and even men's toilet was all about the effects of the wet 2012 and the late spring of 2013. It seems that the second very cold spell after a warm period in early March really upset colonies through Wales. The stories were too numerous to detail here but the one thing that stood out for me was that after each anecdote or observation was mentioned the speaker would always end by saying "... and I've never seen that before".

At the meeting the results of the National Bee Unit survey of winter losses was given; 38% for England, 43% for Wales. But these figures were taken before the second cold snap in April which certainly, in Montgomeryshire, did kill off significant numbers of colonies. Delegates guessed the losses in their area: none gave an estimate less than the 43% and many gave a figure of over 60%. Many association apiaries had losses of over 60% as had ours in Gregynog. I think that probably 60% losses for the whole of Montgomeryshire would be nearer the mark.

I hope that there is a big attendance at the Meeting with the Biodiversity officer of Powys Dr Emma Guy. She needs feedback and ideas from the public so that the verge cutting policy of Powys Council can be improved. Remember that it wasn't so long ago that Councils sprayed herbicide over the first 4' of verges. Public pressure stopped that. 30 years ago my children drew a sketch of a Council verge mower that collected the cuttings in a trailer that digested the organic matter and produced methane to power the whole machine. Is that such a child's fantasy? My own view is that the cuttings should be blown over the adjacent hedges or dumped at intervals down the road so that the verges can have areas of high and low fertility. Down the lane leading to my house there is one section of 200m that is a slight embankment. It doesn't get fertilised by spilled manure being washed onto it. And for 40 years it has been mown and all cuttings removed. Each year the plants and grasses got more interesting. The scalped poor soil produced a wealth of lichen and mosses and a profusion of small moths and ants... I was delighted. Then came the tourists and dog walkers enjoying the profusion of wildlife. The dogs did what doggies doo and all was ruined. Great verdant patches a month after a dog visit. I have lost the lichens and many moths. "Get a life" I hear some say, but is the life of some rare lichen not as important as my own? (*or even more so? Ed*).

**Tony Shaw (Chair MBKA) September 2013**

## Black Bees return to Wiltshire

An abandoned village that was commandeered by the army during the war has its first new residents in 70 years - colonies of rare native honey bees. The deserted village of Imber on Salisbury Plain has been picked as the ideal location for a project aimed at boosting the population of the endangered British black bee. About 95 per cent of bees in the UK are non-native and were introduced into the UK in the 1920s after Isle of Wight disease virtually wiped out the indigenous honey bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera*.



With help from the MoD, the decline in population of native bees may be reversed. Beekeeper Chris Wilkes, a 61 year old retired army major from Salisbury, has been given special permission by the MoD to set up 14 colonies of black bees on their land (photo page 20). Mr Wilkes said: "Imber is a very isolated area with not a lot of feral bee colonies about, in fact there isn't one in a four or five mile radius. It is very difficult to

breed pure lines of bees because it only takes a few feral ones to give you a mongrel breed. But Imber gives us a great chance to breed a pure strain of British black bees."

Black bees can easily survive British winters – unlike the non-native varieties that are vulnerable to prolonged harsh and cold weather as we had last winter.

The isolated hamlet of Imber is surrounded by a wealth of untapped, nectar-rich wildflowers on the vast Salisbury Plain. The area is very rich in wild flowers. Eighteen of the 22 top nectar producing plants in the UK are there, including clover, sainfoin, viper's bugloss, knapweed and melilot. There is also no interference from the public which will give the black bees a chance to breed a pure strain. If successful, this could be repeated all round the country.

British black bees are much darker than their golden-coloured cousins that originate from southern Europe and have thicker and longer hair. Mr Wilkes said: 'Black bees make up about four per cent of the bee population of Britain. It is a shame because they are ideal for the British climate because they survive our winters very well.'

"It is the native bee and the one that has been selected by nature to be the best type for this

country. Southern European bees need a lot of feeding up in August and September to get them through the winter but they really struggle when you have harsher, prolonged winters. A lot of bees did die out last winter which means there is a reduction this year in honey production and produce that depends on being pollinated by bees.”

**Arthur Finlay, adapted from Suzannah Hills (Mail-on-Line, 19 August 2013)**

## **The Antiques Road Show**

The Antiques Road Show came to Gregynog on Thursday 4th July this year. It was a lovely day, and the thousands of people attending seemed to enjoy themselves. Of the thousands of people who attended the show, quite a number found their way to the apiary area in spite of the fact that the signs tended to take them directly from the parking areas to the house. Fortunately Eric Franklin was happy to stand near the gates and point people our way!

**Chris Leech**

## **The Care Of Bees**

In 29 BC, Virgil (70 - 19 BC) published “Georgics” - a poem in hexameters about Agriculture. It was a poem in 4 books, with book 4 being about bees. Poet laureate John Dryden (1631-1700) translated the work into English in 1697. His was probably the best attempt at getting the hexameter rhythm of classical Latin poetry. Here are some lines about a topical subject, taking off the honey. Read it out loud to get a sense of the style of the poetry of the Romans.

Now, when thou hast decreed to seize their stores,  
And by prerogative to break their doors,  
And then pursue the citizens with smoke.  
Two honey-harvests fall in every year.  
First, when the pleasing Pleiades appear,  
And, springing upward, spurn the briny seas:  
Again, when their affrighted choir surveys  
The watery Scorpion mend his pace behind,  
With a black tram of storms, and winter wind,  
They plunge into the deep, and safe protection find.  
Prone to revenge, the bees, a wrathful race,  
When once provoked, assault the aggressor's face,  
And through the purple veins a passage find:  
There fix their stings, and leave their souls behind.

**Virgil (translated J Dryden)**

## American Foul Brood, what we can learn

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

American Foul Brood (AFB) is a Notifiable disease throughout the European Community and therefore has legal implications. You are required to contact your Bee Inspector directly if you are suspicious of any foulbrood disease in a colony. The colony will be inspected by a Seasonal Bee Inspector who will test on the spot or send a sample to the NBU laboratory for confirmation. Colonies infected with AFB have to be destroyed and equipment sterilised. A Standstill Order will be placed on the apiary, bees and equipment.

It is a sad fact that nothing in this life is simple. If we are not dealing with summers that fail to materialise, a spring that is so short that blink and you miss it, then just when you think that you have full control of your colony 'the mite that shall not be named' reappears to test your patience and your nerve. Now we are faced with another threat that has the potential to decimate our hobby for years to come (*see comment \* next page. Ed*).

The presence of American Foul Brood [AFB] in a colony in Newtown is not trivial and the threat to all of our colonies in the area must not be taken lightly. This is a disease that has no realistic cure other than vigilance and diligence. We must be vigilant in identifying the presence of the bacillus in the young cells of our colony so that it can be dealt with at source and diligent by constantly observing good aseptic practice when we inspect our own hives or when visiting other apiaries.

This is a disease of the young as it is transmitted by the nurse bees when they feed the larvae. However larvae cannot be infected later than 53 hours after the egg has hatched. The disease is caused by a species of bacteria (*Paenibacillus larvae*) which actively divides in the larvae and which also produces spores. It is the spores which are most likely to be transmitted between colonies. How and when the disease appears in the first place can be difficult to determine and can often be present without the apiarist's knowledge. Brood that are affected will die after the cells have been capped. The capping will sink inwards and become moist and discoloured: usually chocolate or purple in appearance. Some of the capping will be uncovered by the nurse bees in an attempt to remove the dead brood : but now spores can be spread the infection around the hive. Spores germinate in the gut of the larva and the

vegetative form of the bacteria grows, taking its nourishment from the larva. The vegetative form then dies, but not before it produces millions of spores in each dead larva. There are no precise measurements but in a single infected hive an approximate average of just 35 spores per larvae will result in the death of 50% of the brood. We have to remember that whilst the active bacillus can be dealt with, the spores are highly-resistant to desiccation, heat, and chemical disinfectants. If left untouched at least 95% of hives will weaken quickly and eventually die. We also need to appreciate that the spores can remain virulent for more than forty years in combs and honey, in stored hive bodies and other equipment.

AFB can be transferred from one hive to another by spores attaching to the bodies of mature bees (which are not be affected by AFB) when they clean the cells. The bees then spread the disease by drifting to new hives, or indirectly through contaminating common foraging sites. The overall effect of the disease is to deplete the young in the colony which weakens the brood and exposes the hive to robbing by other bees in the area. The problem is then compounded because spores from the bacillus will be present in the honey they rob and once this is transferred to a neighbouring hive, the whole cycle starts again. The general view is that all hives within three kilometres of the infected hive are at most risk. The only real cure that exists is to burn infected comb and scorch the hive (not an option if you have poly units) or preferably burn everything in a pit and start again. It is considered that the most common source of cross contamination is the beekeeper. We inadvertently spread the disease by not following a set pattern of infection control or failing to identify contamination and swapping infected combs in the apiary.

It is imperative that after you have visited your hives, or anybody else's, that you sterilise anything that you used during the inspection. This will include the hive tool, gloves and boots. A weak solution of household bleach should suffice for tools - but remember to rinse with clean water before using again. If you use leather gloves, try wearing 'marigolds' over the top so that you can clean them between sessions. The bee suit can be more of a problem as many do not have the facility to remove the veil. If you can then it should be cleaned between visits. If not then you may wish to seriously consider isolating your hive equipment and protective clothing and keep it close to the boundary of the apiary so that when you leave you do not spread contamination. Importantly, try defining a small area of your shed/garage/house where your kit 'lives' and does not come in contact with any other clothing. If you can manage it, this should include a pair of wellies/shoes that are only used for visiting your apiary.

You should also consider your route to the hive(s) and if possible create a set path to and



from the area. You can put down an absorbent mat loaded with disinfectant so that you will automatically step on the mat and sterilise the bottom of your boots. More detailed information about cleaning and sterilisation is available from: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/>

### **Warren and Margaret Towns**

*\* I think the last sentence of first para, "decimate our hobby for years to come" is a bit too strong and alarmist. The incidence of Foulbrood around England and Wales in recent years can be seen on Beebase. Although it's been rare in Mid and North Wales it is quite frequently found in some other areas and I don't think most beekeepers in those areas consider themselves "decimated". The point is that with more awareness and better hygiene we should be able to limit or prevent reinfection and spread.*

*Paul Aslin, SBI*

# Bee Keeping with a change of Attitude Altitude

*This article refers implicitly to pictures of Bill and Carol's hives which follow. Ed.*

Our stock of bees has built up over the 6 years that we have lived here, from an original acquired swarm of uncertain provenance.

This particular hive was amalgamated from 2 colonies last Autumn, so a lot of bees went into the Winter. The hive is a WBC with a solid floor, so this probably kept them warmer than a National with a mesh floor.

They were treated just with Apiguard in Autumn, with NO oxalic acid treatment. So from that you can probably draw your own conclusions!! They started off on a single brood in Spring, and as you can see, they had built up to a double brood by June 1st.

Another factor could be that they were moved from a height of 850 feet above sea level down to below 400 feet in Spring.

Having said all this, our other colony in a National hive with a mesh floor, having had the same treatment, started off in Spring on a single brood and again by June 1st was a very strong brood and a half. Currently (July 24<sup>th</sup>) it has 4 supers on, 2 off which are full. Of the WBC hive that was split into 4, the nuclei are all now back up to full broods with supers on.

Summary – a good colony of bees going into Winter with ample food supply, minimal treatment and disturbance during cold weather, and each time they are inspected they are dusted with icing sugar and have no varoa problem. The bees have done far better at this lower altitude than ever they did before. I have never introduced any different strain of queen or bees into the apiary, always retaining swarms or producing nucs.

**Bill Gough**

*See the hives at the apiary meeting Sat 14th Sept, part hosted at Bill and Carol's apiary. Ed.*

The outbreak of American Foul Brood in Newtown has been a wake up-call to many, a reminder that we must take biosecurity very seriously. There has also been a case of AFB in Tywyn in Meirionnydd. Although the origin of the two outbreaks has not yet been determined, it has been remarked that in both cases the infected colonies were very close to buildings in which imported honey was being processed. The lure of unwashed jars, bins and barrels of honey is just too tempting for the bees. Please wash all honey containers as soon as you have finished with them.



WBC hive full of bees ...

... or should I say “overflowing”?



# Basic Beekeeping Assessment

On 12 August at the Gregynog Apiary, a small band of brave Montgomeryshire Beekeepers took their Basic Beekeeping Assessment. The results aren't in yet, but even without knowing the outcome I already know that I learned a lot by preparing for the assessment. Even learning how to clean all my beekeeping equipment properly was a bonus, especially now we are even more aware of the importance of apiary hygiene. (I found washing soda got the bee suit really clean, and also the hive tool and smoker). And it was a good excuse to read all those books that have been languishing on the bookshelf.

Our instructions for the day were simple enough – turn up with a clean bee suit, disposable gloves, hive tool, smoker, and parts of a frame to make up. The assessment is then in two parts – a practical and a question and answer session – and takes about an hour altogether. Both were relatively relaxed sessions, thanks to Dinah Sweet and her husband.

I found the practical session more stressful as I am used to handling the hive with someone else – it is much easier to keep the smoker going and move the supers with another pair of hands, plus it takes at least both of our heads to work out what the bees are up to and what we should try to do about it. So anyway, my smoker did go out during the assessment, and I noticed that Dinah smoked the bees a lot more than we normally do. I had to name the parts of the hive, talk about why I was using the smoker, and identify the bees, brood, pollen and honey, as well as shake a frame clear of bees and talk about what would be the signs of various diseases. It was interesting handling a strange hive – the frames were lined up the “warm” way, which threw me a bit, but the bees were very good.

The Q& A session was more enjoyable. Some things you can learn – like the lifecycles of the Queen, workers and drones, and some things you had a choice about answering (for example how to avoid either Woodpecker or Moth attacks!). I did wish I had read up more on diseases – though the new disease recognition cards from WBKA were really helpful. Assembling the frame proved there are many different ways of doing things – but it was interesting to see how everyone did it and the reasons why.

So all in all – well worth doing, not too stressful, and lots to learn from doing it. I hope more beekeepers take the exam next year. Contact me if you are interested in doing it so I can get in touch as soon as we have dates ([training@montybees.org.uk](mailto:training@montybees.org.uk)). And finally thanks to everyone that helped get the apiary ready for us.

**Julie Pearce**

# Gregynog Apiary Report

We have made reasonable progress in Gregynog so far this summer,

We have increased the number of colonies to eleven, some by artificial swarm and some by colonies bought in. Some of the colonies purchased were not exactly top quality, and several of these colonies which had been divided into smaller nucs in July had to be reunited at the August training meeting. Not the ideal result.

Appalling weather caused our first three training sessions to be cancelled. It is just not fair on the bees to open hives in bad weather, so the only training meeting so far this year was on August 18th – a good turnout of approximately 30 members always makes a busy morning! The meeting was billed as "Preparing to take off the honey" which, after last years meeting, was modified slightly by demonstrating clearing empty supers rather than supers with the bees in them. As this demo was quite short, it left us with more time to inspect some of the colonies in the apiary.



*Biosecurity at the apiary : this device disinfects the feet of people as they enter and leave the apiary. Thanks to Ian Hubbuck for installing this useful system complete with lid.*

On a more serious note all of the members who attended the meeting will have not escaped the biosecurity which has been kindly installed by Ian Hubbuck. In view of the recent case of AFB in Newtown we must be seen to be proactive with our hygiene in Gregynog and indeed in our own apiaries.

On a final note we hope to see you all at the next apiary training meeting (depending on the weather!) Sunday 22nd September at 2pm "Preparing for Winter".



**Dave Bennett**  
Apiary Manager

# Future meetings

## Open Hive Meeting at Aberhafesp, Saturday 14th September.

The meeting, which starts at 2pm is in Two Apiaries situated about 100m apart in Aberhafesp. Bill Gough will be leading the meeting as he did with the last Open hive event in July at Bwlchyfridd an event hosted by Anne and Jim Wren. Bill has been close neighbour and mentor for both Anne and Jim and Roger just a few miles away, but a world apart as far as beekeeping is concerned. Those who attended the July meeting will have remembered Bill's comment that he didn't realise how hard beekeeping was above 800' until he moved down to the balmy Severn Valley. There will be MBKA signs out along the road.

The meeting has been arranged for Saturday so as to give members an opportunity to meet the new Bee Inspector for East and North Montgomeryshire, Paul Aslin. Paul could not manage to come on our usual Sunday. Paul has been busy with the extra intense hive inspections caused by the recent outbreak of American Foul Brood in Newtown. Paul is inspecting all hives within a 3 and then 8 kilometre radius of Newtown. He kindly fitted in an inspection of Bill and Roger's hives some weeks ago even though they are outside the immediate danger zones. See the bees, meet the new SBI, talk AFB and happier things and enjoy the tea and chats

There will be a pool tea and members are reminded to phone the hosts to let them know they are coming. A vital piece of information for assembling the cups and teabags!

## MBKA meeting, Plas Dolerw, October 9th

Milford Road, Newtown, Wednesday at 7pm

The first of our MBKA winter meetings this year is a "double bill". Dr Emma Guy, Powys Biodiversity Officer will talk about **What Powys is doing for Bees** with special reference to Powys Verge cutting policy.

People are always complaining about verges: they are cut too often, too widely or not enough. Nobody seems satisfied. But go back 40 years and the policy of the then Montgomeryshire Council was to spray herbicides everywhere several times a year.

No one can doubt that the verges in Midwales are some of the best in the UK. But things could be better. The cutting policy does not favour small flowers throughout the year. And in mid season our verges are becoming dominated by docks and bracken. Little for the bees

there.

The problem is that the council's cutting policy is increasing the fertility of the soil and cutting out the light from small plant species. Modern hedge cutting practices exacerbate the problem. Hedges are no longer cut and pledged (laid) every 5 to ten years and the cuttings removed, recycled into staves or just burnt. Nowadays they are flailed and the pulverised organic material falls on the verges to add to their fertility.

What can be done? Dr Guy needs feedback and ideas from the public to back her case for Biodiversity with Powys County Council. The Council will always claim that cost constraints are forcing the present policy. If you are interested in the wildlife of verges and especially if you want them to be a resource for the Honey Bee then please come, learn and put your comments and ideas to Dr Guy.

And the other half of the double bill will be a short report from a small group of MBKA members who are **trying to bring back the indigenous honey bee** (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) into Montgomeryshire. Those who have suffered heavy winter losses may be interested how this scheme could help them to have a greater survival rate in the future. (See Black Bees return to Wiltshire on page 5).

### **MBKA Meeting, Plas Dolerw, November 13th**

Milford Road, Newtown, Wednesday at 7pm

### **2013 Analysed PLUS Thoughts and Advice for 2014**

The speaker is Paul Aslin. I'll let Paul give his own CV : " My wife, Pauline, and I run a 10 acre smallholding on the Mawddach estuary near Dolgellau with pigs, ducks, chickens fruit, veg and woodland, but our main focus is beekeeping. We've kept bees for just 12 years and now manage about 25 colonies in four apiaries around Dolgellau. Trading as "Trees and Bees", we attend a few farmers' markets and shows and use our beeswax to produce skin creams, soap, candles and polish for sale alongside our honey. We provide beeswax workshops for the National Beekeeping Centre, Wales and I run a beginners course for Meirioneth BKA. As SBI, I am employed 3 days per week from April until September each year, covering an area which includes most of Montgomeryshire and most of Meirioneth. David Coles continues to cover the area south of Newtown and Llyn Clywedog. I'm also a member of the Aberdyfi Mountain Rescue team, covering Cadair Idris and the Arans. Pauline has worked for BeeCraft magazine for about 10 years as advertisements manager and recently also as website editor.

"Before moving to Snowdonia in 2011 I worked for 20 years as Department Manager for the



Astronomy Department at Cambridge University and prior to that I spent two years in Antarctica as a field scientist studying aurora and then as Base Commander. Since studying Physics at Exeter University I've always worked in a research environment, including now with the National Bee Unit. The work of SBIs is not just disease inspections, we also help with NBU research projects, beekeeper education and training."

This is an opportunity to discuss your problems in 2013 and to seek advice for 2014. Bring your problems and discuss (*and a javelin, if you have one Ed.*).

### **Annual General Meeting & Apothecary Bees, February 20th 2014**

Milford Road, Newtown, Wednesday at 7pm

As usual we will be raffling a National hive. All those members attending get one free draw. In past years this has proved a big incentive to attend and the event has been jolly and informative. We keep the AGM business to a minimum, but we do have some important posts to fill. Maggie Armstrong is stepping down as Secretary in order to be able to spend some time in the USA and Tony Shaw is stepping down as Chairman as being over-ripe in age. Jenny Hawkins, from the Cardiff School of Pharmacy, will talk to us on her work with bees, pollen and honey and draw the various raffle prizes.

**be informed, be up to date, be entertained**  
*it must be*

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## **Annual Beard Competition**

Having a bit of facial fuzz can make a fashion statement, but these beards are enough to make even the most ardent hipster's skin crawl – or at least come out in hives (see photo on cover, Canadian Press/AP). Contestants at an annual 'bee beard' competition in Canada allowed their heads and upper torsos to be covered by up to 16,000 insects.

Each facial bee colony weighs about 1.8kg (4lb) and has to be sculpted into shape before competitors take to the catwalk. 'It's itchier than you think it would be,' beekeeper Chris Hiemstra said.

Competitors at the annual event at Clovermead Adventure Farm in Ontario lure swarms by placing a caged queen bee around their neck. More experienced contestants are known to use petrolatum, a substance bees avoid, to sculpt their beards. Beekeepers minimise the risk of contestants getting stung by keeping the colonies fed with sugar water. They also ply the bees with smoke before they are allowed to join the beard.

Marenda Schipper, 20, was crowned this year's bee beard champion with Justin Hiemstra named as crowd favourite on Saturday August 10th

The beards are judged by their weight, which is determined by placing the contestants on the scales before and after the bees settle on their faces. Brazilian-born Miss Schipper, 20, had a beard weighing 2.2kg (5lb) and contained about 20,000 bees. She is not a beekeeper but a student specialising in agriculture business. It was her first time with a bee beard and she has only been stung once, which was a few years ago.

Judges also evaluate the beard's style and each competitor's performance in front of the audience. Past contestants have even managed to hula hoop for the crowds while covered in bees.

**Matthew Champion and Nicole Le Marie, writing in Metro**

## **New Equipment**

MBKA has recently acquired a shiny new four frame honey extractor for use by members. Just the jolly job for relieving your bees of their hard earned honey. To borrow this piece of equipment, contact equipment officer Bill Gough (see page 19).

**Editor**



## **BRIAN NORRIS**

FOR ALL BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT

AGENT FOR THORNES

DISCOUNT ON CERTAIN

ITEMS FOR ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS

CATALOGUE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Address: Little Garth, Garth Lane,  
Bettws, Newtown,  
Powys, SY16 3LN

Telephone: 01686 625250

## **The Bee Inspectors**

The Government recognises that bees are a vital national resource and hence take helping bee keepers very seriously. There are three Seasonal Bee Inspectors (SBIs) covering the county. Their areas overlap with other counties, so it isn't as though Montgomeryshire has 3 bee inspectors all to itself. Bee Inspectors are there to help you and should be called in at the first suspicion of any problem with your bees. The SBIs work from April to September.

If you know the name of the bee inspector for your area please contact him direct. You can find who your SBI is through Beebase (see link on our website). Just type in your post code. Otherwise contact the Welsh Regional Bee Inspector, Frank Gellatly, who will make all the necessary arrangements.

RBI Frank Gellatly tel: 01558 650588

[francis.gellatly@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:francis.gellatly@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

SBI Peter Haywood tel: 01758 721349

[peter.haywood@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:peter.haywood@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

SBI Paul Aslin tel: 01341 251340

[paul.aslin@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:paul.aslin@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

SBI David Coles tel: 01497 820419

[david.coles@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.coles@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

Also of possible use is the phone number for the central science lab, 01904 462510, where any samples of bees taken by inspectors are sent for testing.



## **The MBKA Committee**

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<b>Jim Crundwell</b>	tel: 01386 424930
<b>CHAIRMAN</b>	<b>Tony Shaw</b>	chairman@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 412140	
<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>Heather Venis</b>	treasurer@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 0789 4796262	
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<b>Maggie Armstrong</b>	secretary@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 630447	
<b>MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY</b>	<b>Michelle Boudin</b>	membership@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 413968	
<b>MINUTES SECRETARY</b>	<b>Maggie Summerfield</b>	minutes@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01938 810906	
<b>'BEEHOLDER' EDITOR</b>	<b>Chris Leech</b>	editor@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 413968	
<b>SPRAY LIAISON &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>Bill Gough</b>	sprayliaison@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 623108	
<b>STAGE MANAGER</b>	<b>Noel Eaton</b>	stage@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 630447	
<b>APIARY MANAGER</b>	<b>David Bennett</b>	apiaryman@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 626872	
<b>SWARM. CO-ORDINATOR</b>	<b>Roy Mander</b>	swarm@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01938 555834	
<b>NEW MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	newmembers@montybees.org.uk
	tel:	
<b>WEB MANAGER</b>	<b>Chris Leech</b>	webadmin@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 413968	
<b>TRAINING AND EXAMS</b>	<b>Julie Pearce</b>	training@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 625430	
<b>MEMBERS AT LARGE</b>	<b>Doug and Jane Wood</b>	committee.1@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 623154	
<b>MEMBERS AT LARGE</b>	<b>Graham Winchester</b>	committee.2@montybees.org.uk
	tel: 01686 623154	



Mr Wilkes, a major bee keeper

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