



MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION

The BeeHolder

Spring 2015



Winter shutdown at The Wintles' apiary

(note the restraint system required for the hive - front left -
of "lighter than air" bees - *apis heliumbi heliumbi*)

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We welcome as new members ...

Rufus Fairweather (Montgomery), David Jones (Llandinam), Mark, Tracey & Sinead Howarth & Hegarty (Newtown), Ann and John Smart (Llanidloes), Marc Meredith (Llanerfyl) and Katie Pinder (Welshpool).

My apologies if you have joined recently and are not mentioned – let me know for the next edition.

Note that, to protect the innocent, the place names given are the post town rather than anything more precise.



Editorial

Happy 2015. Spring has sprung and the bees that survived winter (note of bitterness detected) are starting to do their thing. Make sure that you keep on top of things by calling by at the regular apiary training events. Phone or email Roger Stone in advance so that we have an idea of numbers. Or just keep up with the chat at the very sociable open hives meetings. There are few better ways to spend a sunny summer's day than looking at bees followed by a delicious pool tea and discussing what you just saw (or what you thought you just saw).

There are plans to prepare nucs for our members in the apiary at Gregynog. These will be ready by about June (subject to weather) and priced competitively. Together with the revenue from apiary honey sold in the shop at Gregynog, this will help subsidise apiary costs. Contact Roger ASAP if you are interested.



New equipment being purchased this year includes a storage shed for the apiary and a new display system for events. This will include two event shelters with walls, doors and display panels which will allow several configuration options. Most of the information we used to display is in poor condition, so we would like to make a fresh start on some new displays to attract new members and inform the public. Anybody interested in helping with this, or who knows of any useful sources of information, should contact Andrew Smart.



Hopefully we will be attending three village summer shows, plus the Coed y Dinas spring fair – a success in spite of the rain last year. These are a fair bit of work for the committee, and any help from members is gratefully appreciated, even if it is just the odd half hour explaining bee keeping to interested visitors. Do come along and join in – it is surprisingly rewarding to feel that you are “doing your bit” for the bees.

Event shelter of the style we are procuring

Finally, I'd like to mention that the new look committee just formed will make up for any lack of experience by their enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Your opinion counts, so do feel free to express it by contacting any of the committee members.

All contact details can be found on page 15, through the web site, or by collaring them at a meeting.

Chris Leech



Get well soon

Our swarm co-ordinator, Roy Mander, has recently suffered a stroke and has had to go into hospital for tests. Jo Bidwell has offered to stand in for him until he is recovered. Our sympathy and best wishes to Margaret, and a speedy recovery to Roy.



Forthcoming Events

Here is the list of events taking us through to November. This is by no means final; dates may change and more events may be added. An updated list will appear in each future BeeHolder, plus updates will be notified via the website and email. Some of the dates and times are place holders only, for example where we have booked the Plas Dolerw but not yet arranged a speaker. The annual dinner and AGM will be in January and February next year, exact dates to be confirmed.



Plastic hives at The Wintles' apiary

- April 12th**
Sun 10:00 am
Apiary Training Day (Spring inspection cont) **
at Gregynog Hall, Tregynon
- April 17th - 19th**
Fri - Sun
BBKA Convention
at Harper Adams University, Telford (see also page 9).
- May 3rd**
Sun 2:00 pm
Open Hives Kerry (TBC)
The Old Court, Kerry, SY16 4LU
Open Hives at Debby & Paul Gurden's apiary followed by pool tea.
Please phone (01686 670284) so that they have an idea of numbers.
- May 10th**
Sun 10:00 am
Apiary Training Day (Swarm control) **
at Gregynog Hall, Tregynon
- May 14th & 15th**
May 16th & 17th
BIBBA bee improvement course
Two courses, each two days long (see also page 9).
- May 16th & 17th**
Spring Festival
at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells (see also page 9).
- May 23rd & 24th**
Spring Fair, Coed y Dinas
MBKA will have a stall at this two day event at Coed y Dinas, Welshpool
- June 14th**
Sun 9:00 am
Bee Keeping for Beginners
Gregynog
Brian Goodwin will take beginners through the first steps of becoming a successful bee keeper (see also page 14).
- June 21st**
Sun 2:00 pm
A Midsummer Night's Bees – Open Hives Caersws
Beudy Clyd, Caersws, SY17 5SB
Open Hives at Keith Rimmer and Sian Jones's apiary followed by pool tea. Phone (01686 689061) so that they have an idea of numbers.

June 28th
Sun 9:00 am

Bee Keeping for Intermediates

Gregynog

Brian Goodwin will take intermediates on to “the next level” to being a successful bee keeper (see also page 14).

July 12th
Sun 2:00 pm

Open Hives at The Wintles (TBC)

The Wintles, Bishops Castle, SY9 5ES

Open hives at The Wintles' apiary followed by pool tea. Phone (01588 630558) in advance so that they have an idea of numbers.

July 18th
Sat 2:00 pm

Disease Recognition

Gregynog

Regional bee inspector Frank Gellatly will present an informative 3 hour workshop on bee disease (see also page 9).

Aug 1st
Sat 2:00 pm

Trefeglwys Show

MBKA will have a stand at the Trefeglwys Show. Please come and help if you can!

Aug 8th
Sat 2:00 pm

Llangurig Show

MBKA will have a stand at the Llangurig Show. Please help if you can.

Aug 15th
Sat 2:00 pm

Carno Show

MBKA will have a stand at Carno Show. Any help most welcome.

Aug 16th
Sun 10:00 am

Apiary Training Day (Taking off honey)

**

at Gregynog Hall, Tregynon

Sep 13th
Sun 2:00 pm

Open Hives at Kerry (TBC)

Lower Brynllwarch, Kerry, SY16 4PD

Open hives at ine and Mervyn Evans' apiary followed by pool tea. Phone (01686 671085) in advance so that they have an idea of numbers.

Sep 20th
Sun 10:00 am

Apiary Training Day (Preparing for winter)

**

at Gregynog Hall, Tregynon

Oct 21st
Wed 7:00 pm

MBKA meeting

a talk (TBA) at
Plas Dolerw

Oct 29th - 31st
Fri & Sat

National Honey Show

at St George's College,
Weybridge, KT15 2QS

Nov 25th
Wed 7:00 pm

MBKA meeting

a talk (TBA) at
Plas Dolerw



Honey for the honey show?

** these Apiary Training days are weather dependent so please check latest detail with Roger Stone 01686 688562

See the website for updates and additions.

Chairman's Chat

Those of you who don't get email will not have seen Keith's regular updates on what is going on in the world of bees as seen from the Beudy Clyd, Caersws. Here are a few highlights. Ed.

1/1/15 Hello everyone

HOWS YOUR BEES...?

The bees in Caersws on Monday 29th Dec during a sunny couple of hours in the afternoon were out and buzzing about, it was still and about 8 degrees, all the hives where active, my black breather membrane wrapped around the hives was certainly attracting some solar gain. I felt the protective membrane and it was very warm to the touch. Cleansing flights and a few recent new bees were trying out their wings by hovering in front of the hives for a short spell and then, after finding their wings, gently dropping back on to the landing board and in they went.

Fondant is quietly being taken down on all hives I am on my second feed batch.

18/1/15 Hello All

Saturday night (MBKA annual dinner) at Maesmawr was a great success, nice relaxed atmosphere and 40 plus members and guests enjoyed the local cuisine, the Maesmawr staff were brilliant and the food was excellent. Loads of prizes in the raffle.

If you missed this one, there is always next year

Committee meeting next Monday at Plas Dolerw - as recently announced some places on the committee are still available - come and be an observer and see if you may be interested.

Also AGM on 25th Feb 7pm again Plas Dolerw do come along and see what's happening in the future within the association and have a chat.

30/1/15 Hello Folks

Bit of sunshine this afternoon.....??

Are your bees out...???

They will be taking in water after being stuck indoors during recent weeks.

It was lovely to see today, bees buzzing away from every hive in great numbers.

15/3/15 Hello

We have our first guest speakers of the year coming up Peter Blake and his `partner in crime` have offered to come along and present a talk on bee genetics on Wednesday 25th March @ 7.00pm start in Plas Dolerw.

"Oooooo" you may say, "What's all that about?". Well so did I, so I gave Peter Blake a call and ended up an hour on the phone talking to him about .. bee genetics..... and it's got me hooked!

On the night there will be a Powerpoint presentation by Mike Saunders followed by a demonstration of how the equipment is used by Peter Blake and an open

question and answer session throughout the presentation. These two clever chaps do not venture our way very often so MBKA is taking the opportunity to say "Yes, come along and educate us please".

Bee honest we all want to have a go at bee development and creating our own queens.

Its the first talk of the season, but there is more to the get together as we know, so do come along and meet new members that have joined this year and show them how we are growing from strength to strength. 24 bee keepers attended the spring inspection today with also families in the observation hut, what a great start to the year.

Do come along, bring buns, have a good old chin-wag and if you have any questions on the night re your bees, just ask. I am sure we will have the answer somewhere amongst our experienced bee-keepers.

22/3/15 Hello All

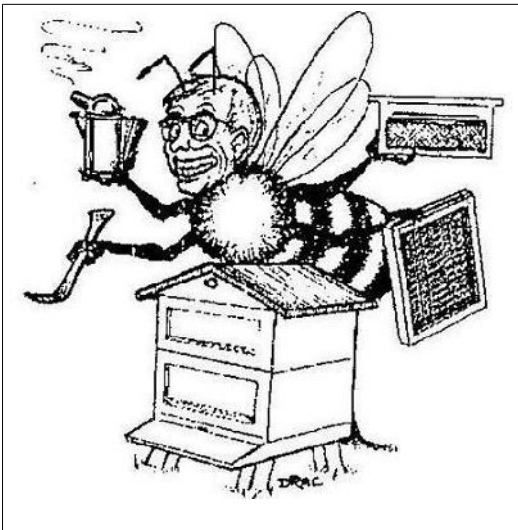
Perfect weather for your first real spring inspection.

Take your time and really look into the colony. We are in the transition period from candy feed to a light weak syrup, each hive will have its own unique requirements.

On inspection of my apiary today one queen was seen to have a stiff rear back leg, she was having a bit of difficulty, but could get about. The workers were inattentive and she was slightly smaller than other queens seen on the day. No doubt the workers will either support her or she will be replaced. Such is the life of the colony.

If you have any interesting observations do let me know.

Keith Rimmer, Chairman



BRIAN NORRIS

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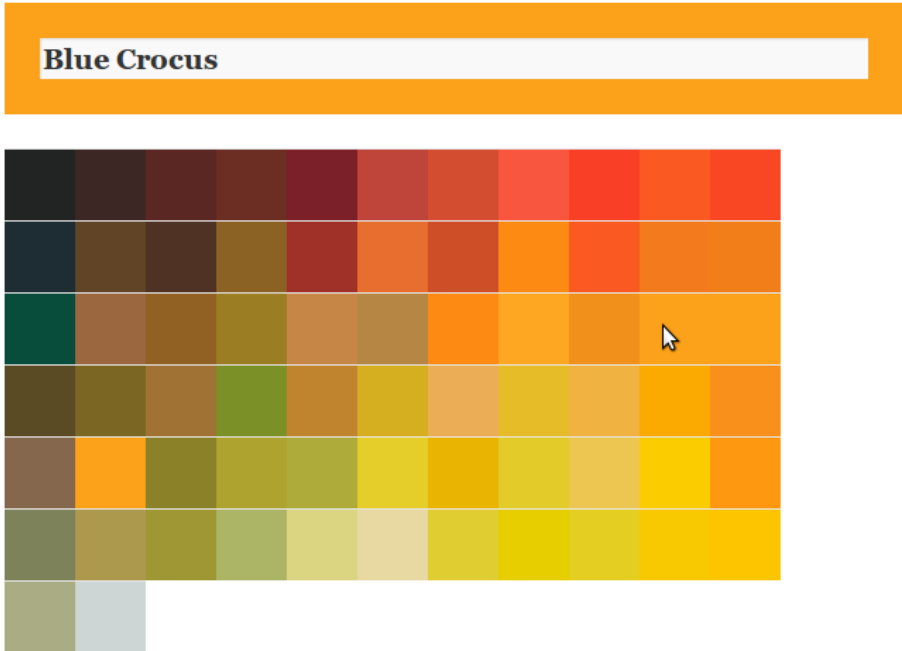
CATALOGUE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Address: Little Garth, Garth Lane,
Bettws, Newtown,
Powys, SY16 3LN
Telephone: 01686 625250

Pollen identification

There is no substitute for the accuracy of a professionally printed pollen chart as the fidelity of colours displayed in computer monitors is quite variable and hence unreliable. Take a look at the chart on the website of the Sheffield BKA website, <http://www.sheffieldbeekeepers.org.uk/tools/pollen-chart/> Hover over a colour on the chart and the name of the corresponding pollen is displayed above, surrounded by a box of the same colour.

Whilst this is probably not the best tool for, say, your PhD research into the antibacterial effects of honey (see article on Jenny Hawkins research, BeeHolder Spring 2013), but it is a great way to interest kids in bees via a bit of technology. It would be easy to use this in the field using a tablet or phone.



snipped from the page on Sheffield BKA website, the mouse pointer is over Blue Crocus pollen

A nice additional feature are the controls below the chart which allow you to turn off and on the colours available in the different seasons in order to narrow your search.

Thanks to Jo Bidwell for spotting this interesting approach. There are a lot of useful articles, tools and ideas out there on the internet and they all serve to spread interest and support for the craft.

Editor

Events in Detail

17th – 19th April - BBKA Spring Convention



Spring 2015 Convention

The British Bee Keepers Association Spring Convention takes place just over the border at Harper Adams University in Newport, Shropshire. It is a major event in the beekeeping calendar and probably Europe's biggest national beekeeping event. With

more than 30 lectures from international and leading UK speakers and well over 40 workshops and courses during the 3 day event, there is something for everyone, expert, improver, beginner and non-beekeeper. Book online at http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php (or use the link on our website), or apply by post to British Beekeepers Association, National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warks, CV8 2LG. Contact Chris Leech if you don't have internet access and need help getting the forms or information.

14th – 17th May - BIBBA bee improvement courses

The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association are holding two bee improvement courses, one on May 14th and 15th (Thu – Fri) and the other on May 16th and 17th (Sat – Sun). The venue is Glan-yr-afon, Corwen, Denbighshire, LL21 0HA, and tutored by Roger Patterson and Steve Rose. The cost is £85 (£10 discount for BIBBA members) which includes refreshments and buffet lunch. This course will cover many of the topics and techniques that will suit the “ordinary” beekeeper, with a large practical element that is easy to understand. It is intended to be fun, not intense technical information. See also Ian Hubbuck's report on page 10.



16th & 17th May – Royal Welsh Spring Festival

The number one event for smallholding, gardening and sustainable living, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Spring Festival will this year be held on 16 and 17 May and is already proving to be a very popular weekend-long event in the spring show season. More info here : <http://www.rwas.co.uk/spring-festival/>.

23rd & 24th May - Coed y Dinas Spring Fair



A celebration of all things outdoors with food, drink and activities. We had a stand here last year which was well received in spite of poor weather conditions. So much so that Coed y Dinas would like us to set up a small apiary on the premises. If you are interested in

helping with the stall, or maybe with the mini out-apiary, make yourself known!

July 18th – Bee disease recognition course

Frank Gellatly will present a three hour workshop on bee disease recognition, prevention and treatment. This is essential knowledge for any beekeeper. Contact Rachel Hills (see page 15) for more information and reservations.

Editor

Bee Improvement for All – 12 October

Ian went on the bee improvement course last October and thoughtfully prepared this report.
Ed

Roger Patterson is a beekeeper of some 50 years, and we were lucky enough to get him to spend a day presenting his methods of beekeeping in Mid Wales. Roger was keen to encourage beekeepers not to take all the advice on beekeeping at face value and stressed how beekeepers need to understand the life cycles of bees, be able to recognise what was happening in the hive (for example the difference between swarming Queen cells, supersedure and emergency), and continuously assess the bees (temper and quietness on the comb were his two priorities). He argued that there were many causes of bad tempered bees, and the beekeeper can easily be responsible, but that also there was evidence of what he called F2 aggression – where the 2nd generation of pure bred crosses could be very vicious. He is also a big advocate of not using thick clumsy gloves when handling bees, and of clipping and marking Queens.



Supersedure cell - looks a bit like a peanut shell



Emergency cells

Beekeepers can choose to keep prolific or non-prolific bees. He favoured non-prolific, as the bees and the queens live longer, they only need a single brood box, they need less feeding, winter well and suit the local conditions. He pointed to recent reports that have found that bees selected for native characteristics (or near native) do better. Roger isn't a fan of feeding bees and argues persuasively that if you have the right bees for your environment, they should need less feeding and hence should be better able to survive a poor season.

Think of Queen cells as an opportunity. To do that it is crucial that we can identify the different types of Queen cell. He introduced us to the concept of the Peak Queen Cell Number. If a colony produces more than 10-12 Queen cells then he would consider it "swarmy" and favour breeding from hives that produced less than that. He explained that between 4-30 Queen Cells would be swarm cells and could be found anywhere on the comb. Between

1-3 cells indicate supersedure and emergency cells aren't made from cups but from worker cells.

A useful technique that he ran through was the "patch" method of testing a Queenless colony by just cutting a small section of comb (with an apple corer) with larvae and inserting that into the comb in a broodless/queenless colony,

rather than a whole frame. Usually one Queen cell is produced on each side of the patch (if it is Queenless).

All Queen cells could be used as an opportunity to re-Queen a poorer colony, and by doing this it was possible to actively influence the quality of our colonies. Roger ran through how to remove Queen cells and how to introduce them into other hives.

At the end of the session Roger showed us how to breed Queens using fairly simple techniques. This didn't involve anything like artificial insemination but rather various techniques for removing larvae (or using a cage for the Queen to lay in) and then placing these larvae into a Queenless colony on a frame to be developed into Queen cells. He produces up to 10 Queen cells at a time using this method, and made it look relatively easy.

Huge thanks to Roger for travelling to Mid-Wales to give his talk, and thanks to BIBBA who subsidised the event for us - without them we couldn't have offered it at such good value. We were a much smaller audience than Roger is used to, and consequently he had to answer a lot more questions than he normally gets. He does have a book available: *Beekeeping: A Practical Guide* by Roger Patterson (2012) Pub. by Right Way. This doesn't cover all the techniques mentioned above - more on that on Dave Cushman's page, www.dave-cushman.net.

Ian Hubbuck

Yet another hive

This is probably familiar to many, but it is a new one on me. The inventor of the attractively named Rose hive claims that it has led to the development of a whole new approach to beekeeping - the 'Rose Hive Method' - and that is arguably the healthiest and most natural way of beekeeping there is.

The obvious difference between the Rose hive and the conventional National hive is that the Rose hive is made up of boxes that are all the same size.

But you don't have to take on a whole new beekeeping method to get some of the benefits of Rose hives - you can just use them in the conventional way, but with the advantage that you only need to keep one size of box, frame and foundation. Also if you are a DIY enthusiast, the boxes are easy to make for yourself.

See <http://www.rosebeehives.com> for more info.

Chris Leech



A Rose hive

Powys Montgomeryshire WI strike the pose

The Powys Montgomeryshire WI calendar picture for December 2015 features WI members as bee keepers who make up for their lack of protective clothing with their disarming smiles. The calendar is a nod to the famous “Calendar Girls” nude calendar made in 1999 by Yorkshire WI members to raise money for Leukaemia Research.

The Powys WI version is to raise money for Wales Air Ambulance, but I don't know how bee keeping got to be in the month of December! This is not the actual picture as it was taken on my iPad and so there are slight differences.

The calendars cost £5 each and half of all the profits go to Wales Air Ambulance – a very worthy cause. They are available through retail outlets, or at this stage of the year

you may have to contact Powys Montgomeryshire WI direct (tel: 01938 552071 or by email to: info@pmfwi.org.uk).



Careful with that smoker, mate.

Joy Shearer

be informed, be up to date, be entertained
it must be
THE BEEKEEPERS QUARTERLY
the 64 page full colour magazine in its 25th year
view a sample at <http://www.bkq.org.uk>

£26 per year from Northern Bee Books,
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sales@recordermail.demon.co.uk
<http://www.groovycart.co.uk/beebooks>

Reports on Meetings

The Annual Dinner – January 17th

The annual dinner was held at Maesmawr Hall, Caersws, and they did us proud for the third year in a row. After a drink at the bar and the compulsory group photograph, we sat down to a nice meal. A spontaneous party popper sculpture competition was won by table 5, though it probably wouldn't have amused many fire officers. After the food people mingled between tables before calling it a night. Thankfully the weather was kinder than it has been in previous years and everyone got home without incident.



The Annual General Meeting – February 25th

This year's annual general meeting was focused on establishing a new committee to take the association forward in the aftermath of several long serving committee members stepping down. This was largely achieved through some new faces putting themselves forward (with varying degrees of arm-twisting encouragement). We welcomed Peter Elvis, Rachel Hills and Andrew Smart onto committee but, even with a bit of re-shuffling, are left with a vacancy in the position of secretary. If anybody is interested in tackling this role, please contact a member of committee (see page 15).

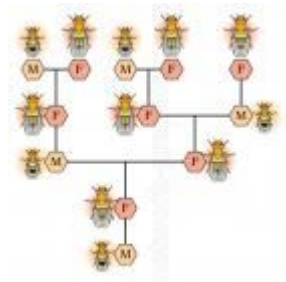


33 people were in attendance and the meeting closed at 7:52 pm. Following the meeting we were given an interactive talk by Jim Crundwell on the history of beekeeping, bee diseases, and insights into the vast experience he has gleaned from his prodigious beekeeping career. This was followed by a second trencher of refreshments.

The free draw for a hive was won by Howard Morgan.

Bee Genetics – March 25th

Although billed as bee genetics, in the event Mike Saunders and Peter Blake gave a talk on queen breeding techniques, illustrated by a Powerpoint presentation and some of the specialist equipment used. This was followed by a question and answer session which would have gone on longer but that we ran out of time. It was a relatively low attendance of sixteen, but the subject was made interesting and understandable by the presenters and so hopefully some of the methods described will find their way into the MBKA repertoire of bee keeping skills.



Editor

Bee Keeping courses

Once again Brian Goodwin will be giving two courses, one for beginners (on 14th June) and one for beekeepers who have successfully got through at least one year of keeping bees (on 28th June). They are being held later in the season this year so that the information is still fresh in your mind when that first nuc/swarm arrives!

Courses run from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, and they are densely packed with information, so bring along a notepad and a relaxed brain ready to be filled. There are plenty of opportunities to ask questions, and the breadth and depth of Brian's bee keeping experience is staggering, so do take advantage of it. The feedback from attendees of Brian's courses has always been positive.

Brian has a fair bit of equipment to get out and put back into his car, so if you can get there a bit earlier to lend a hand, that would be much appreciated. The course fees include coffee and tea, but please bring along lunch (or use the Gregynog café).

These courses are subsidised by MBKA and so are open to members only. They fill up quickly, and so early booking is advised. Contact Rachel Hills (see page 15) for more information and reservations.

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
SBI Peter Haywood	tel: 01758 721349	peter.haywood@fera.gsi.gov.uk
SBI Paul Aslin	tel: 01341 251340	paul.aslin@fera.gsi.gov.uk
SBI David Coles	tel: 01497 820419	david.coles@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Also useful to know 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

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MEMBER AT LARGE	Peter Elvis tel: 01686 640917	committee1@montybees.org.uk

Have you thought about joining the committee? The role of secretary is vacant at the moment.

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