



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder

Summer 2012



Take me to your leader

Gregynog Apiary Family Day, June 2012



www.montybees.org.uk

Forthcoming Events

- July 21st **MBKA** Member's Apiary Visit
Saturday 2.00pm John and Joy Shearer's Apiary Tregynon, Newtown
- August 26th **MBKA** Member's Apiary Visit
Sunday 2.00pm Tom Brown's apiary Melinbyrhedyn, near Machynlleth
- September 9th **MBKA** Apiary Training Day
Sunday 10.00am Preparing to take off the honey Gregynog Apiary
- September 30th **MBKA** Apiary Training Day
Sunday 2.00pm End of Season and Pre-Winter Preparation Gregynog Apiary
- October 17th **MBKA** Meeting - A talk on swarm control
Saturday 7.00pm to be given by Dinah Sweet (TBC) Plas Dolerw, Newtown
- October 25th – 27th **The National Honey Show**
Thurs, Fri, Sat see <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/> for details
St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey

For the latest information, check the website – www.montybees.org.uk.

If you would like to suggest a speaker or a topic for a meeting, or if you would like to have an apiary visit held at your apiary next summer, do contact a member of the committee (see page 19).

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We Welcome as New Members...

Martyn Hubbard [Welshpool], Jasper Meade [Meifod], Richard and Fiona Powell [Caersws], Rick Smith [Montgomery] and Jennifer Walsh [Meifod].

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

Editorial

I've had some feedback from readers that the line spacing, font size and failing eyesight are conspiring to make BeeHolder harder to read than ever. This is not an objective I was trying to achieve, and so for this issue I have slightly increased the line spacing. This has the effect that the lines don't blur together quite as much (even after several glasses of wine), but it does mean that we can not fit in as much BeeHoldery goodness as in previous issues. So if you feel strongly that you'd rather have a magnifying glass and more content, or that the new format is well worth the starvation of information, then drop me an e-mail.

The family day at Gregynog was a great success in spite of a terrible weather forecast. A very big thanks to **Vicky Farrington** for putting in so much time and effort in order to give all the kids such a great experience.

Chris Leech

Chairman's Chat

In her BBC 2 series “Bees, Butterflies and Blooms”, Sarah Raven talked of the devastation that had happened to the countryside and the dire consequences for the National economy. She did lay blame pretty lavishly, just falling short of using the word “criminal”. As a “carrot” rather than a “stick” person she tried to persuade farmers, Community and County councils, Town planners and corporations, that it was in their own interest to all do their bit to help save our precious pollinators, and bring their needs to the fore.

Some of the results of her philosophy of naturalness could be seen at this year's Chelsea Flower Show.

There were definitely bees at Chelsea this year. Naturalness and pollinator friendliness were so much the theme that the prizes could easily have been given merely by counting the number of bees seen on each exhibit. Many of the show gardens recreated “natural” landscapes. It was very clever. A small 6m x 10m plot

was evocative of a wild Yorkshire moor landscape, another was Cornwall. Some formal gardens had wild areas complete with artificial foot trodden paths where the dandelions and clover were stunted and compressed and the moss slimy. I even saw the special attachment for making the footprints of fox and moorhen. The public are voting with their cheque books for a return to wildness from the over-bred, pollen and nectar-free, multi-petalled showpiece specimens of previous years. The natural consciousness towards the wispy fluffiness of wild flowers was shown at Chelsea, and the increase in beekeeping is another aspect of this movement.

The national stock of managed Honey bee colonies has at last stabilised after many decades of decline. This has got to be a good thing especially since feral bee colonies hardly exist any more. However there are problems with the distribution of colonies. Too many in some towns, not enough in some country areas. It is pertinent to note that it was a paper's Crime Editor who flagged up that there are too many bee colonies in London (see article on page 13). Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a similar hint that criminality was responsible for the shortage of bees in rural areas? If the media can suggest that some practices within the banking community should be regarded as criminal, so too should they be saying that much of what goes on in the countryside is also criminal.

I doubt that there has ever been a time when Beekeeping Associations (BKAs) were so involved with national and local politics. Many lobby for there to be a total ban on certain insecticides and the importation of bees into the UK. Some BKAs believe that all beekeepers should be registered and licenced. But progress is probably easier with lots of education and a big carrot. A big carrot, with just possibly a little stick. Our Fun Family day (see page 7) has probably contributed to a greater knowledge of bees and the environment than any compulsory biology class. And the incentive we gave toward buying local bees by undercutting brought in bees from beyond our borders has probably reduced the risk of disease and inappropriate genes into our area. We could never have legislated against buying queens for abroad. Nor could we really justify dampening the enthusiasm of those who want to take up beekeeping.

Tony Shaw, Chairman MBKA, July 2012

Reports on Meetings

May 13th - Swarm Control and Making Increase

This was an interesting meeting from the point of view that things which we plan does not always come to pass in the way that we expect! This report from John Beavan – with all his experience – just goes to show that the best laid plans of bees and men ...

One of the colonies in the Gregynog apiary had old comb, and it did not have any type of spacing method which meant the combs were difficult to check and would only fit together in a certain order. We felt this was a good colony to use as a demo for the “Bailey Comb Change” method. This manipulation is used to change the bees from one brood box of frames into another box of clean frames fitted with foundation, it is used as a simple way to replace old or diseased comb.

When we were demonstrating this method in the apiary we could not find the queen so went to plan b which was to shake all the bees into the top box and then assemble the set up with, from the bottom, old floor with entrance closed up, old brood box, queen excluder, new entrance adapter, new brood box with new foundation, feeder and roof.

After a few weeks you simply remove the bottom box and re-open the entrance in the floor. When we checked on progress we found two things; 1 – a hole in the queen excluder meaning the colony had moved back downstairs and 2 – the colony had swarmed!

So we were left with plan c – wait and hope the colony requeens itself, then have another go, with a new queen excluder.*

You can find a full description of the Bailey Comb Change on beebase with the factsheet on replacing brood comb -

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=167>

John Beavan

** A new queen, drawn from emergency cells, started laying on the 17th June.*

June 17th - Family Day at Gregynog Apiary

We've just got back from a brilliant afternoon at Gregynog hall apiary. It was family day and we went along with our five children ages ranging from 1 - 11. Our eldest Zoe (a MBKA member and regular to the training days) has written a bit about the day. So here it is.

"It was a very enjoyable day. There was a special hive with pictures and photos that Vicky showed us. This was very useful as we were going to see some real bees later on that day. So that all of the children knew what to look out for e.g. honey, brood, pollen, eggs, queen, drones and larvae. Then there was a quiz with questions on bees that was really fun. They also had a competition which was 'How many times does a bee have to fly to make one whole jar of honey?'. I put 70,000 times, which was the nearest answer. The actual answer was 1 million times! But I still won a prize of some felt tip pens. When we were getting ready to go to the real bees, some of the children didn't have a suit so they were provided with one. When we got to the apiary we were split into two groups. Many in the group had never handled bees before so it was a great experience for them. The bee hive we were looking at had just been set up and the queen was already laying eggs (a good sign!). She was marked in pink so it made it easier to spot her. The second hive we looked at was a top bar hive. They have one long box with the top of the frames in. It was right in front of the viewing hut that they have there. In a top bar hive the bees build a comb from the top of the frame so it is very delicate because it has no wire in it. The natural frame that they build is sort of triangular (the shape of the hive). Afterwards we all had cakes drinks biscuits and crisps. We had a really great time." **Zoe**

It was a really good turn out with about 15 children of varying ages and their families. And it's converted our four year old son who wouldn't go anywhere near our own hives. He kept on telling us he was having a fantastic time. He put on a bee suit for the first time and couldn't wait to join the other children eagerly lining up to see the bees. Nature's classroom at it's best. It was a real delight to see.

Hannah and Zoe (aged 11) Kuipers

See also photos on cover and page 10. Ed

Trefeglwys Flower Festival

Over the Diamond Jubilee weekend St. Michael's Church, trefeglwys, held a flower festival entitled "Circle of Life". Jane and Carol were asked to take part and chose to depict hobbies, and naturally enough - beekeeping.

We were given a large corner of the church and decided to create a garden scene, complete with tree and flower borders surrounding a bee skep. We added glass bees, wax candles, wax comb, a basket of fruit, jars of honey and a copper smoker puffing out "smoke". The flowers used were bee friendly and many of them were honey-coloured with complimentary blues and purples.

The design was much appreciated by the visitors and created a lot of interest in the subject (see page 11 for a photo).

The festival raised £720 for the local Dial-a-Ride and a further £500 for the church. We should like to thank the Montgomeryshire Beekeepers' Association for their kind sponsorship of our venture and we were very happy to fly the flag for our very special hobby.

Jane Wood and Carol Gough

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,
Scout Bottom Farm, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5JS (UK)
sales@recordermail.demon.co.uk
<http://www.groovycart.co.uk/beebooks>

Gregynog Apiary Report

As of 14th June, the apiary was up to 11 colonies, including the Warre hive. We have had to do a lot of feeding, and there is no honey to report, nor is there likely to be any if the weather carries on like this! Not only has the very poor weather not helped, the bees do get a hammering at the apiary, being open for too long and being handled by lots of people. Such is the trade off between training and bee husbandry. This is also a good reason for increasing the number of hives.

If we are going to do a successful honey extraction at the apiary meeting in September, a couple of hives will be set aside not to be opened so that the bees can “get on with it”. If needs be the supers will just be full of sugar from feeding, but it would not be wasted as we can feed it back (but only to the same hive to avoid communication of diseases).

So far we have got 500 slates donated of the 1,500 that we need. There is a builder lined up to do the actual work, so if anybody out there has slates to donate, then please do get in touch (we can collect!).

Dave Bennett
Apiary Manager



Toby's Top Tip

Always be careful when capturing a swarm in your garden or near your apiary because they may not be from your hives and may be viscous or even carry disease.

Toby Beavan



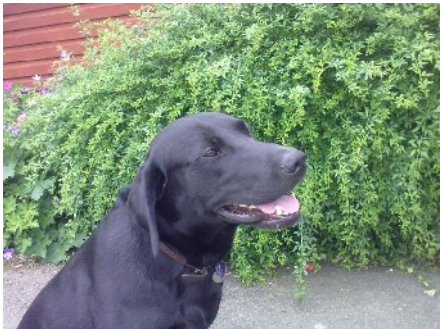
Family Day - A tentative start - will it rain?



Family Day - Vicky gets them all involved



Jane and Carol at Trefeglwys flower show



Janet Peacock's dog, Guilty.



Never give a dog the command "Heel"

Celebrity beekeepers told to buzz off

For many years I have been jealous of my beekeeper friends in London and Birmingham. Their bees get to work earlier in the year, stay productive longer and give a greater amount of honey. Urban Beekeeping always seemed easier than country beekeeping in Rural Wales. First the biodiversity is greater in an urban environment and the amount of insecticide used per hectare is probably less. Now we learn from the London Evening Standard's Crime Editor, Justin Davenport, that London's bees are under threat of starvation and disease because of a boom in the number of urban beekeepers. Experts say there is not enough food or forage in the city's parks and gardens to sustain the huge and growing number of hives. They blame celebrity beekeepers and big city firms for setting a trend which has driven a surge in the number of people keeping bees.

Angela Woods, secretary of the London Beekeeping Association, said: "There is simply not enough forage to go around. A square kilometre of forage is enough to sustain five colonies. If you take a square kilometre around the Royal Festival Hall, there are now 156 registered colonies while there are likely to be many more which are unregistered."

She added: "It has almost got out of control in London. It has become fashionable to have bees, partly I think because of the recession. People are going back to nature and there is a celebrity aspect to it as well."

There are thought to be 3,200 apiaries within the Greater London area, though only about 75 per cent of beekeepers register their hives. Campaigns to halt the decline in bees and celebrity enthusiasts such as TV presenters Kate Humble and Bill Turnbull have recently boosted interest.

Ms Woods says there is also concern about a growing trend for businesses to site hives on high rooftops. She said ideally hives should not be higher than a two-storey house, otherwise bees spend too much energy flying up and down to the hives. Ms Woods did not name any companies but a number of well-known London businesses and corporations have installed rooftop hives (see photo back page),

including Fortnum & Mason, the London Stock Exchange and the Royal Lancaster Hotel next to Hyde Park.

She added that the association did not want to discourage people from keeping bees, but urged Londoners and the city's parks to grow more bee-friendly food. The lack of forage — nectar and pollen from flowering plants — has resulted in low honey yields. Experts say the annual yield for a hive should be a minimum of 35lb of honey, which allows keepers to take some and leave the rest for the bees. Now a typical yield for London hives is only 31lb.

Ms Woods said: "Beekeeping is a fantastically rewarding hobby but we are getting really worried about the future. People do not realise that the more bees they introduce to London the more they are contributing to their own demise. There are a lot of people jumping on the bandwagon without realising the risks."

Adapted by Tony Shaw from an article by Justin Davenport in the Evening Standard

Obituary - John's Wellies

When I started keeping bees I bought myself a white bee suit and some nice, matching, white wellingtons. I didn't realise it at the time but it's really just dairy farmers who wear white wellies and beekeepers just wear anything. Despite the jokes I kept on with my wellies until I joined the NBU in 2009 where the beesuits are green and the wellies needed to colour co-ordinate.

After a quick check of the records I can see that my faithful green wellies have accompanied me on 493 apiary visits and I have spent countless hours lovingly disinfecting them. The green wellies met a tragic end recently when I left them unattended for 2 minutes and Janet Peacocks dog nibbled a quick hole in them.

My initial horror at the loss of such an old friend subsided when I saw that the dog has got a very special talent. When he is told off for eating something, and he eats all sorts of things, he smiles sweetly. Who could stay angry at such a talented dog?

He isn't doing his toothy smile in the picture (page 11) because Janet has to tell him off before he will do it.

John Beavan

Getting back to tradition

Remember the old days when an apiary visit meant going round to somebody's apiary on a balmy summer afternoon, having a bit of a chinwag before donning the garb and going and poking into their hives? Then a sumptuous pool tea during which there is an autopsy on the hive inspection plus a chance to bring up personal (yet bee related) problems and stories? Well, the next meeting will be just like that (weather not guaranteed) at the home of John and Joy Shearer, near Tregynon.



Members who have joined in the last twelve months or so will not have experienced these delights, and you are strongly urged to come along and enjoy

it for yourselves. As usual, spouses and family also welcome. Who knows, you might be inspired to share your own apiary with the members next year?

These events usually had a theme, but bear with me, this one may have two. One aspect of the visit will be a comparison of what is a very successful and productive apiary of some twenty or so hives within flying distance of the MBKA apiary at Gregynog which, so far at least, has not produced honey in more than teaspoon quantities. Perhaps this is due to the amount of interference the Gregynog bees get when the whole of MBKA descend upon them for what are usually lengthy and intrusive inspections, not always in the ideal weather conditions. Discuss. Plus we have been promised a mystery event by our two Bs*, John and David. Apparently wet suits are not required, but I can say no more.

* Beavan and Bennett respectively.

Finally a note on the pool tea. For many this is the highlight of an apiary visit with the chance to tell your best bee stories and tuck into the selection of (mostly homemade) sandwiches, pies, cakes, buns, biscuits and general picnicky. The

MBKA tea urn and coffee jugs will also be dusted off and brought out of retirement. If you are intending to attend, please do phone the host in advance to notify numbers and also check whether to bring sweet or savoury (note that early callers will have a more open choice!).

So, look forward to seeing you there and fingers crossed that the summer weather does finally arrive.

Mead Judges and what they really mean ...

Good presentation	OK, you can polish a bottle – now work on your mead
Good Condition	Shame about the taste
Thin	Use more honey next time, you tight-fisted ...
Aggressive on the palate	I choked on this one
Peppery	Needed a pint of water afterwards
Slightly over-acid	Burnt a hole in the show bench
Good farewell	Sorry to say goodbye to this one
Good body	Still had parts of bees in it
Full-bodied	Still had whole bees in it
Cloying	Stuck my lips together
Harsh palate	Stripped the roof off my mouth
Acetic	Best with chips
Well-balanced	I could still stand afterwards
Harmonious assemblage	I want to marry this one
Gorgeous	I get a bit affectionate after tasting all the entries
High alcohol	Try using it as paint stripper
Chemical flavours	Recommend you use it for clearing the drains
Out of class	What part of “dry” don’t you understand?
Medicinal flavours	Reminded me of the cough mixture I had as a child.
Second opinion required	Sent to lab for analysis. Report warned "Your horse has diabetes!".

From the Eke (produced by Stuart Ching), courtesy eBEES

Recipe Corner - Vicky's Honey Bee Buns

Those of you who want to do something a bit special for the next meeting might like to take some inspiration from this recipe for some wonderful bee buns made by Vicky Farrington for a pool tea (back in 2009). Or come up with a bee related recipe of your own?

Ingredients to make 18

250g/9oz plain flour

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

125g/ 4 ½ oz butter, softened

125g/ 4 ½ oz soft brown sugar

1 large egg, separated

125g/ 4 ½ oz runny honey

4 tbsp milk

Decoration:

100g/4oz plain chocolate

1 small block golden marzipan

Flaked almonds



1. Preheat oven to 200°C/ 400°F. Line bun tin with paper cases.
2. Sift flour into large mixing bowl with cinnamon and bicarbonate of soda.
3. In a separate bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolk then gradually add honey.
4. Vicky's honey bee buns Fold in flour mixture and enough milk to give a dropping consistency.
5. In a clean bowl, whisk the egg whites until stiff then fold into cake mixture.
6. Divide mixture among paper cases and bake for 15-20 minutes or until firm and golden brown.
7. Break the chocolate into pieces, place in a heatproof bowl and melt over a pan of hot water.

8. To make the bees: roll small pieces of marzipan into bee body shapes. Make a piping bag from greaseproof paper and spoon in a small amount of melted chocolate. Pipe stripes and eyes onto the marzipan bees. Push a flaked almond in on either side to make wings.
9. Spread the rest of the melted chocolate onto the buns using a wide-bladed or palette knife. Sit a bee on top and leave to set.



Chemical News

Monsanto's Mon810 corn, genetically engineered to produce a mutant version of the insecticide Bt, has been banned in Poland following protests by beekeepers who showed the corn was killing honeybees.

Poland is the first country to formally acknowledge the link between Monsanto's genetically engineered corn and the Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) that's been devastating bees around the world. Many analysts believe that Monsanto has known the danger their GMOs posed to bees all along. The biotech giant recently purchased a CCD research firm, Beeologics, that government agencies, including the US Department of Agriculture, have been relying on for help to unravel the mystery behind the disappearance of the bees.

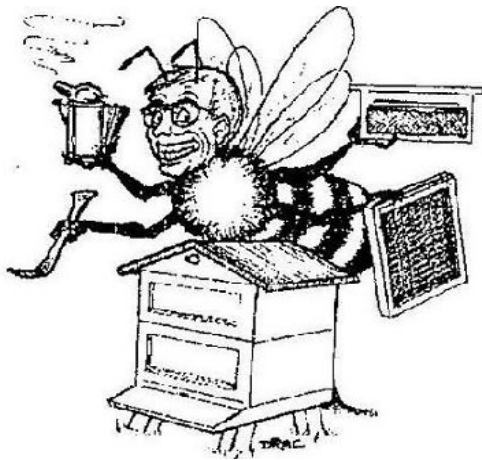
Now that it is owned by Monsanto, it is very unlikely that Beeologics will investigate the links, but genetically engineered crops have been implicated in CCD for years now.

More information on the web :

<http://defendfreedomsite.wordpress.com/2012/05/10/beekeepers-win-ban-on-monsantos-gmos-in-poland/>

Reproduced from Bournemouth and Dorset South newsletter, courtesy eBEES

More info on their web site, www.bads-bka.org



BRIAN NORRIS

FOR ALL BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT

AGENT FOR THORNES

HIVES IN DEAL AND CEDAR

DISCOUNTED ON CERTAIN

ITEMS FOR ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS

The Bee Inspectors

There are three seasonal bee inspectors covering Montgomeryshire. Their areas overlap with other counties, so it isn't as though Montgomeryshire has three bee inspectors all to itself! To arrange for a visit by a Bee Inspector contact the regional bee inspector, Frank Gellatly, who will make the necessary arrangements. There contact details are as follows.

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 John Beavan tel: 01824 707286 john.beavan@fera.gsi.gov.uk

SBI David Coles tel: 01497 820419 david.coles@fera.gsi.gov.uk

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

CENTRAL SCIENCE LAB: 01904 462510



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Celebrity bees with Grand Designs?

Family Day
Looking at bees



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