



# Montgomeryshire Beekeepers Association

## The BeeHolder

Autumn 2018



### **Britain's smallest bee?**

The small scissor bee

(not the prettiest thing, and there is some debate on whether it is actually the smallest - see article on page 7)

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## We welcome as members ...

Note that for the public version (web site and eBees) I have removed personal details as far as possible, hence the new members' names do not appear here.

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

*“Give the BeeHiveMan a Buzz!”*

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## Editorial

Firstly I have to apologise to Dr Fred J Ayres and the Lune Valley Community Beekeepers for attributing their article on "The Native Black Bee" in the last BeeHolder to Lune Valley BKA. Lune Valley BKA are a quite separate organisation with no connection to Lune Valley Community Beekeepers.

Another year rapidly comes to a finish and one which has, for the most part, been kinder to beekeepers and bees than the preceding four or five. Probably the hottest, driest summer since 1976 (or possibly longer) has meant that most beekeepers have had a decent honey harvest - for some the first honey harvest at all in a few years.

But nature is a dynamic equilibrium, not some sort of man made production line, and so we can expect variation from year to year and sometimes in an extreme way. Let us hope we are entering a period where the elements favour the bee and those of us who have been losing colonies can get our apiaries back to strength.

And finally if you are interested in saving paper/production costs, would you like to receive BeeHolder as an electronic copy (pdf file)? If so, do contact me (editor@montybees.org.uk) and I will make the necessary arrangements.

**Chris**

	<p><b>BRIAN NORRIS</b></p> <p>FOR ALL BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT</p> <p>AGENT FOR THORNES</p> <p>DISCOUNT ON CERTAIN ITEMS FOR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS</p> <p>CATALOGUE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST</p> <p>Address: Little Garth, Garth Lane, Betws, Newtown, Powys, SY16 3LN Telephone: 01686 625250</p>
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## **Forthcoming Events**

MBKA are having evening meetings over the winter with a selection of interesting speakers coming to share their experiences for our amusement and education. Plus the hardy annuals - MBKA dinner and Annual General Meeting - coming up in January and February 2019 respectively.

### **28<sup>th</sup> November - The Mystery of Mating**

7pm at Plas Dolerw. Lynfa Davies will cast some light onto what goes on during the queen's maiden flight. Lynfa has a degree in Agriculture from Aberystwyth and continues to work in that field (fortuitous turn of phrase). She has much experience of both keeping and giving talks about bees.

### **20<sup>th</sup> January - MBKA Annual Dinner**

12:30 at the Lakeside Golf Club, Garthmyl. Continuing the trend of the last three years, we'll be having a family friendly lunchtime meal in the surroundings of this beautiful course. More details plus menu options will be sent out with the next BeeHolder. Bread and putter optional. Probably coffee and teas afterwards.

### **19<sup>th</sup> February - MBKA Annual General Meeting**

7pm at Plas Dolerw. Your chance to get up close and personal with the running of our association. As well as the business of the meeting, there will be a session of "Bee Keepers Question Time" with a panel of experienced bee keepers eager to listen to your problems and answer your questions. Not to mention the world famous bee hive raffle, one free ticket for each membership attending!

### **12<sup>th</sup> March - Queen Rearing and Breeding**

7pm at Plas Dolerw. Steve Rose will talk about the practical side breeding and rearing queens, both important aspects of bee keeping if we are to keep our colonies and hives productive and healthy.

### **?th April - Showing Honey**

7pm at Plas Dolerw, date to be confirmed. Meet your new bee inspector, Shane Jones, as he talks about showing honey for fun and profit.

See also the article on training sessions next year, page 14.

## Poetry corner

This was written last year, a few months into beekeeping, when I worked out who was in charge.

### Bees Please Me

No, not beetles but bees are the things that please  
With all the weird stuff that they do  
I have no idea how they know it's the hour  
To switch from a hive bee to one foraging flowers  
Whether to swarm with the gang or just hang about  
Whether to tend to the queen or just take her out  
Those little leg pockets aren't just for the shopping  
They store a myriad of things  
Like tiny protractors for good tessellation  
To-do lists and spreadsheets and maps of locations  
And birthday reminders for all of their siblings  
And pollen charts, hive rules and notes of regal obligations  
But the thing I love most about the bee  
Is the time they devote to our training  
We are well and truly under their spell  
From the very first moment we peer into their cells  
I've been thinking long and hard about this  
And I've got a working theory  
They are bewitching us with pheromones  
And I think we should warn the unwary  
When you stand in a field on a warm sunny day  
And lift your first frame to the sun  
You're breathing in pheromones, honey and wax  
They've got you, and know just how to keep you on track  
It's the subsidiary stuff you may not have considered  
When you enter the world of the be  
Now you are a carpenter, botanist, bouncer and chef  
PA and sometimes GP  
You'll get them all of the latest inventions  
They may need a gym or sun-roof or extension  
You'll be digging them ponds and planting them food

Foreign holidays spent web-camming the state of their brood

So we sit in church halls and pontificate

About the best intervention

Four Beeks, four opinions equals hive tools at dawn

All with the best of intentions

Now, I've been stung, so I can't give objective advice

But if you are considering the undertaking

I'd say just surrender your fate to their chemical bait

And let them get on with the training

Rachel Knowles

HWBKA (High Wycombe Bee Keeping Association)

Thanks to Mal Shears for thinking we'd like this poem. He said "We recently had a visit from a friend who's a member of High Wycombe Beekeeper's Association. She has a theory that beekeepers have been captured under the sway of the bees' pheromones, and sent us a poem she'd written about it. I thought it was rather good."

Ed

## It's a wrap

Bees are, indirectly, doing their bit to help the plight of turtles and other wildlife under threat from plastic pollution in the environment.

Cotton impregnated with beeswax makes a healthy alternative for wrapping sandwiches, bread, cheese etc or to cover a bowl. Washable and reusable, they are the sustainable alternative to plastic wrap and cling film.



At this time of year Christmas present ideas are always welcome. Beeswax food wraps can be bought commercially or, for that extra personal touch, you can even have a go at making your own, see <http://myhealthygreenfamily.com/blog/wordpress/plastic-wrap-alternative-diy-beeswax-cotton-wraps/>

## Britain's smallest bee

*Chelostoma campanularum* (known as the Small Scissor or Harebell Carpenter Bee) is probably Britain's smallest bee, and measures just 4mm long (see the cover photo).

But there is talk on the internet of an occasionally observed bee called *Dufourea minuta* - a bee so small it doesn't have a common name. This was sighted in June 2007 by Michael Archer at a site near West Tilbury, Essex. Mr Archer was then president of BWARS (The UK Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society) - so he should know what he is talking about. Prior to that sighting it had not been observed since 1956, and prior to that just three times at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is, then, either a bee which has been extinct in the UK and subsequently re-introduced, or it is such a small and rare creature that chance dictates it is only spotted and identified very occasionally.

BWARS has only about 500 members, and I expect that most folk outside BWARS would have trouble telling a *Dufourea minuta* from a hover fly, so it would not be surprising if this latter explanation is correct.

But our smallest bee is a relative giant compared to either *Perdita minima* or *Quasihesma clypearis*. These bees are found in the Sonoran Desert of North America and north Queensland and the Northern Territory of Australia respectively. At around 2mm long they are certainly tiny bees.

As a side note, that last time that Mr Archer re-discovered a thought to be extinct species it was the bee wolf *Philanthus triangulum* (not to be confused with Beowulf from the old English epic saga). This is a solitary wasp, the females of which prey on honey bees to provide food for their



a bee wolf, *Philanthus triangulum* offspring after hatching from eggs. This species had not been recorded in mainland Britain since the mid-19th century, until Dr Archer came across it in East Anglia in 1976.

If you like the sound of BWARS and are interested in finding out more, they have a web site at <http://www.bwars.com>.

Chris



## Recent events

### Natural Beekeeping in a horizontal top bar hive

Our series of winter meetings kicked off on 24th October with a very interesting talk by John Vandy who travelled from Yorkshire to describe his experience with this method of bee-keeping. He has been keeping bees for a number of years but has never used conventional hives, and makes all his own equipment for himself and for other bee-keepers. He had an example of a horizontal top-bar hive on display and we were all able to look inside and inspect the components. Basically, it is a long box with the sides tapering downwards to a narrow floor, split into sections as required by wooden plates, with a series of wooden bars arranged on the top and covered by a roof. The



a top bar hive

bees build combs from the top bars, which hang down in sheets along the length of the box. Bees enter and leave by an aperture in the side wall, towards one end of the hive.

#### The benefits of using a top-bar hive include:

- As the equipment looks very different from the usual hives used by conventional bee-keepers, it works as a thief deterrent as the top-bar hive is not recognised as a place for keeping bees. Sadly, thefts of colonies are becoming an increasing problem. The hives are heavy so this can also deter thieves.
- The hive is very easy and cheap to make (John has used pallets)
- Good for people with bad backs or who are wheel-chair users as the hive can be placed at the optimum height for the bee-keeper. Space is not increased by adding supers so no heavy lifting as the season progresses



- Foundation is not used so there is no concern about transfer of disease from re-cycled wax, accumulation of chemicals or cells becoming smaller as the foundation gets old.
- As the combs are more fragile than foundation, top-bar hives encourage a more “gentle” way of bee-keeping which has a calming effect on the bees.
- The lay- out of the top bars means one comb can be examined at a time but the rest of the combs remain in darkness so there is a lot less disruption to the colony than when the roof is removed from a conventional hive. Again, this helps to keep the colony calm.

**The disadvantages of using a top-bar hive:**

- There are very few commercially available hives so you usually have to construct your own equipment
- The hives are heavy and bulky so difficult to move if this becomes necessary
- If you are heavy-handed, combs break off the top-bars
- You cannot control the honey storage space (supers are not used) so your honey harvest will be smaller.(see note below\*)



John also described how to introduce bees into a top-bar hive (using a swarm is easiest), how to inspect the hive without breaking the combs (by sliding a knife down the side of the box to ensure they are not stuck on the walls, and to always keep the combs vertical), how to avoid swarming (simply by moving the wooden partitions and adding more top bars, even in the middle of the brood

nest) and how to harvest the honey (crushing the comb and straining the mush through a double sieve- you cannot use an extractor). He also described his method of varroa control: thoroughly shaking icing sugar over both sides of each comb every week for 3 weeks. He does not use

chemicals. Interestingly, he also does not mark the queen, instead assuming all is well if eggs and larvae are present and there are no signs of swarm preparation. He explained that looking for a “rosette of workers” on the comb is a useful way of locating the queen if needed.

As usual, there was much happy chatter over a cup of tea, catching up with old friends, and a chance to win something in the raffle.

**Jill Hill**

\* With some modification to the hive, supers can be used with top bar hives, though this is a compromise many natural beekeepers would not be prepared to make! There is an article about hive choice for natural beekeeping here <http://beekeepinglikeagirl.com/langstroth-vs-top-bar-hive/>

## **Summer Shows 2018**

This year, our show season started with the Royal Welsh. Montgomeryshire was the feature County for 2018, and MBKA was invited to attend. We were asked to present an attractive display but would not be allowed to sell any of our products. MBKA shared a stand with the WBKA who supplied a fabulous backdrop of meadow and woodland scenes which looked great behind our tables. The four days went very well with lots of interest and enquiries on becoming a beekeeper. Our volunteers enjoyed themselves and had plenty of opportunity to spend time looking round the show.



joint WBKA/MBKA stand at the Royal Welsh, 2019

The next show on the agenda was Montgomery on 18th August. This was a new one for us, and was a particularly nice show with a friendly atmosphere. We attracted a lot of interest not only from potential new beekeepers, but also in what we were selling. All in all, it was a very

successful day and we will return in 2019.

Berriew came next on 25th August. It was quieter than last year, but nonetheless we had a lot of interest, and again potentially some new members. Unfortunately, the heavens opened at annoying intervals in the afternoon, and it soon became apparent that our dome leaks, so I think most of us got a bit wet at some point! But it has not put us off, and we will return next year.



waiting for punters, Montgomery Show 2018

Newtown Food Festival was the first weekend in September and a huge success. We were situated between the French Village and Producers tent and this spot was ideal for the footfall. Enquiries were received from 15 potential new members, almost all of our merchandising, honey and plants were sold. The Association had purchased some of Pauline and Paul Aslin's lovely handmade products which proved popular, as was the wax bars and candles we had for sale. It was busy from the minute the show opened until the end.

Our final show was at Bishops Castle on 22nd September. It was disappointing this year, rain and our out of the way location meant that we packed up early in the afternoon. Mark Howarth brought along a flow hive and a demonstration video which was great : it was such a pity there weren't more visitors to our stand to see it. He also brought a large tarpaulin which we draped over the dome! It was very much needed. Thanks Mark.

Honey sales went very well, people were very pleased and commented how nice it was to see it being locally produced from our own bees.

Finally, I would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who helped at this year's shows. I really do appreciate your time and hard work.

Anne Wren

*And a big thank you to Anne for co-ordinating all this effort. Ed*

## **Asian Hornet Alert**

### **Asian Hornet - What we can do to assist most effectively?**



You will have heard that there have been at least eleven confirmed Asian Hornet sightings this year, mostly on the south coast of England and in the

Channel Islands. But with Bath, Hull and Bury also on the list, we certainly can't afford to be complacent here in mid Wales.

The most effective areas at detecting Asian Hornets are where the beekeepers themselves and their Associations have been made aware of what they are looking for, the difference between the European and Asian hornets and who regularly monitor their apiaries and local forage looking for "hawking" hornets. This can be supplemented by traps, live traps where possible. Basic research indicates that the by catch (other insects trapped) of Asian Hornet traps is minimal and not a threat to the other species.



The other areas to monitor and, where their presence

has first been noted, are where there are late flowering species such as ivy or buddleia and possibly himalayan balsam. In these areas Asian Hornets may be hawking not just for nectar but also to predate on the other species of insect attracted by the nectar.

The Non Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) receive reports of many hundreds of "sightings" most of which are not actually Asian Honest but European hornets or Queen wasps. If you have concerns that you have Asian Hornets in your Apiary/area then it is important that you are able to provide a body or a photograph. It is also important that you do not kill every hornet that you see as the APHA teams will need to be able to catch/follow live insects back to their nest. Radio location is also being trialled to help with nest location.

If you do believe you have an AH problem then it is imperative that you contact the NNSS as quickly as possible. This can be done by uploading and using the iPhone and android app "Asian Hornet Watch" on your mobile phone or by emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).



The official AH identikit photo (though it isn't often that you will catch one asleep next to a tiny ruler Ed)

I appreciate that this guidance is short but it is intended only as an alert for beekeepers. Further information can be found on Beebase or on the Non-native Species Secretariat website. There is also an excellent fact sheet on the AH and information on other species with which it might be confused on the BBKA website.

For instructions on how to make your own Asian Hornet trap to hang up in your apiary, see BeeHolder, 2017.

If you don't "do the internet", contact Chris Leech for a paper copy of the fact sheet.

Chris

## **Training 2019**

Roger (Stone) and I have set the dates for training sessions at Gregynog next year. The sessions take place in the classroom and in the apiary. The cost for each session is £30, payable before the training date. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided.

### **Improvers - 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019**

Time 9.30am for the morning. This is for those of you who had bees last year and anyone who wants to brush up on the following topics:

- comb management
- brood position
- proactive and reactive swarm management
- how to catch and hive swarm

### **Beginners One - 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

Time 9.30am until lunch. This course is intended for members who have never kept bees and haven't got bees yet. Plus any member who has had a year or two off, or just wants a basic refresher. This course covers:

- siting your apiary
- personal equipment
- lighting a smoker
- making up a frame with foundation
- hive types and hive components
- castes of bees
- life cycle of the three castes
- pollen, nectar and honey
- the beekeeping year

### **Beginners Two - 17<sup>th</sup> March**

Time 9.30am until lunch. Too much information to take in on one day, so this second session completes the picture for the new or returning beekeeper. The course covers:

- planning
- where do I get my bees from
- how to inspect a colony
- honeybee diseases
- communication in the hive
- swarming
- practical session in the apiary
- feeding bees

## Basic Assessment

Last year several of our members joined up to form study group through the winter to increase beekeeping knowledge.

Some of us decided to take the Basic Assessment which is a practical and oral hour with an experienced beekeeper. The 4 who did this all passed and enjoyed the experience.

If anyone wants to join a study group and possibly take the Basic Assessment next year please get in touch with Rachel.



Anne, Rachel and Jill with their Basic Assessment certificates (Helen was AWOL that day)

## Apiary Training

We will have the usual apiary training sessions throughout the 2019 season. Each session will address matters appropriate to the time of year and they are approximately monthly depending on weather. The topics covered include:

- general inspection
- varroa control and treatment
- splitting a colony and making up a nuc
- taking off honey
- basic assessment training
- 'reading' a colony and deciding what action to take

Rachel Kellaway

## Mentoring

Currently we don't have a system to organise mentoring for new beekeepers. However most MBKA events have time for members to chat with each other over a piece of cake and a coffee or tea. Members are very often happy to come and check through your bees with you and give you the practical pointers that only come with experience.



## Our New Website ...



The internet is a constantly changing, dynamic environment and after ten years, the MBKA web site has been given a major rework to make it a much more useful resource. Our new webmaster, David Hughes, is responsible for this clean, new look, leaving Chris Leech to concentrate on BeeHolder, his dusty typewriter and collection of quills. So I urge you to take the plunge and have a look at the new site. If you have any suggestions or comments, your

feedback is, as always, most welcome.

## ... and Facebook page

Not out with the old, but in with the new...

Our trusty 'Beeholder' magazine is circulated three or four times year to just over 100 members - and has been a crucial part of our membership communication since the MBKA was formed! And long may that continue, as so many of our members look forward to each issue to catch up with old friends and new news! I'm sure that most of us will also be aware that communication for societies and groups like ours is constantly evolving, and many of us have taken to social media to keep up with friends, family and the hobbies and interests that we enjoy. Beekeeping is no different, and MBKA are using one social media platform, Facebook, to help keep members and non-members fully up to date with news, events, key industry research and our own bee-keeping endeavours. Our Facebook page has had great success in reaching a wider audience and new members are finding us through this route all the time. If you use Facebook, then why not hop onto our page and let us know what your up to. Please send in pictures, stories or any bee-related news that you'd like to see appear on the page. Follow the link from the website, or directly by typing <https://www.facebook.com/montybeekeepers/>



# Kraków Honey Harvest 2018

The Kraków Honey Harvest and Bee-keeping Festival is held every year during the first weekend of September in Wolnica Square in the old Kazimierz district of Kraków. This year was the 25<sup>th</sup> such festival which features live folk performances, contests, exhibitions of beekeeping



equipment, informative events, and the ability to talk with those who know everything about bees and their habits make the festival charming and informative.

The event was organized by the Kraków Association of Beekeepers and ran from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday

a tricky judging decision?

9<sup>th</sup> September.

For beekeepers it is an opportunity to exchange experiences and learn about innovations in the field of apiaries and beekeeping.

The Honey Harvest also provides numerous attractions for children and adults. The “Parade of bees”, an integral part of the event, is a parade of children and adults wearing costumes of bees. Since 2016, the Kraków Honey Harvest is accompanied by “Blood Harvest”. Not as morbid as it sounds, this is in fact an opportunity to donate blood for the needs of Kraków’s hospitals.

Kraków is the first city in Poland which decided to set up a coordinated group of apiaries. Pasieka Kraków consists of urban apiaries on roofs and in meadows in and around the city. Skilled beekeepers take care of them. The hives are placed e.g. on the roofs of



honey vodka

Nowohucki Culture Centre and Galeria Kazimierz shopping centre where they can take advantage of the city's parks and private gardens.

The 2019 Honey Harvest will be 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> September 2019, and if you don't fancy that, Kraków hosts more than 100 festivals every year, over fifty of which have international importance.

On a lighter note, one article mentioned "amazing handcrafted products made from beeswax". I thought a picture would be nice, but you try searching for Polish beeswax products on the internet and getting something other than furniture polish.

Chris

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

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## **BBwear offer**

BBwear still offers our members 20% off all garments in their clothing range and 50% off BB10 and BB11 Gloves and Spats. Free gloves are NOT included with the full suits when purchased with association discount.

To see the range of products, their web site is <http://www.bbwear.co.uk/>.



A full spectrum of bee suits is available from BBwear





Not a typo on the MBKA stand, but a stand at the Krakow Honey festival 2018

*“Give the BeeHiveMan a Buzz!”*

# BEEHIVEMAN



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