



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder

Summer 2024



World Bee Day at Gregynog

Editorial

In this issue you can read all about Lizanne's experience of making a demaree split. There is nothing quite like reading of someone's first hand experience and Lizanne has also provided a clear description together with helpful diagrams.

Learning is, after all, what beekeepers do every time they approach a hive for every colony is different and every day is different and we are fortunate to have Rachel Kellaway and Simon Anderson to take on the job of tutoring courses. Just read our Chair, Joy Sisley's story and you will see how training is such a good thing.

Rachel Kellaway is wearing another hat when she writes about the danger of the Asian Hornet gaining permanent residence here. The message is to be observant and help Rachel if you can.

Do read about our successful World Bee Day at Gregynog and the utilisation of the newly refurbished viewing shelter on the day. There are shows to come and if you can come along and help then do volunteer, you'll find all the details in this issue. Jill Hill has put together a programme of talks for the autumn and winter and I'd urge you to look at that too and enter those date in your diary.

Carolle

www.montybees.org.uk

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Gregynog's 'Room with a View'

When you visit our Apiary at Gregynog do take time to visit the old observation hut that has been completely and beautifully renewed and is now known by its original name, the 'viewing shelter'. Gregynog's CEO, David Chell officially reopened it on 2nd May by cutting a broad, green ribbon in front of Gregynog Hall staff and several MBKA members including the team that had worked so hard on the refurbishment.



Pictured here is a glimpse of the interior with its illustrated information boards that relate the entire life history of bees. Rachel Buckley, Rachel Kellaway, Jill Hill, Jill MacAloon and Joy Sisley took on this ambitious project and we also have graphic designer, John Larter to thank for turning the team's work into such a visual delight.



Keith Rimmer recounted the history of the viewing shelter which began life as a sketch drawn by himself and handed to Paul Edmunds who, providentially, was a director of the Welsh Oak Frame company. Not only had Paul's father been a beekeeper but his cousin was an architect. Paul handed over my sketch to his cousin and generously offered to turn his cousin's blueprint into reality. Gregynog provided the timber, felling a tree which Alan Jones then cut in half. It provided 80 or

90 sections of wood. Tony Shaw, Bill Gough and Dave Bennet were also very involved in the project, pouring the concrete foundation and seeing it through to the finished shelter.

The viewing shelter may have been ‘officially’ opened at the beginning of May but proof of its value came on 19th May when we celebrated World Bee Day, a report of which you will find in this issue.

Carolle Doyle



World Bee Day Celebrations

WBKA's World Bee Day was celebrated with much enthusiasm on the 19th June under the blazing sun at the picturesque, lush green gardens at Gregynog Hall.

One of the most delightful sights was children participating in the 'waggle dance.' Organised and led by Buzz (Carolle) the children waggled and buzzed, learning how bees share information about food sources with their hive mates. This interactive activity was both fun and educational, highlighting the remarkable ways bees communicate.

Another highlight was the face painting station, where Rhona Farley-Hughes, adorned children's faces with some stunning images of all kinds of bees. The little ones 'colouring-in table' was also a hive of activity, with every colour in the rainbow being used to decorate the bee themed pictures.



An informative stand about the Asian hornet drew considerable interest as visitors learned about the threats these invasive species pose to local bee populations. Meanwhile, a visit to the recently refurbished viewing shelter at the apiary, guided by Rachel B, was a hit. Simon and Rachel H inspecting at the Apiary were happy to answer any questions.

The honey tasting competition was a huge hit too. Run by Joy and Lizanne, participants sampled a variety of flavours, from light and floral to dark and rich, casting votes for their favourites. Not surprisingly,

there was plenty of agreement on their choice of the worst tasting honey but not on the best.

Complementing the tasting was a successful plant stall, offering a variety of bee-friendly plants. The stall saw brisk sales as people took advantage of the chance to support local bee populations by planting appropriate flora. Additionally, the stand sold gardening books, local honey and other bee-related products. Huge thanks to Jill H, Nicky, Russ, and Kate for looking after this part of the event. In addition, there were a number of different hives on display, including a Skep, a Warre and a Top Bar Hive. Big thanks go to Mal for explaining the 'ins and outs' of alternative beekeeping methods.

The World Bee day event had been a long time in the planning, and behind the scenes many willing volunteers, not least Mark who was there bright and early to help erect the two domes and tells us he booked the sunshine!



As we packed up, it was clear that World Bee Day had been a resounding success. Here's hoping for sunshine when we do it all again next year!

Jill McAloon

Autumn, Winter and Spring Programme

23rd Sept	Bees For Development	Chris Harwood
21st Oct	Beekeeping in Mid-Wales- a look at some of the challenges and opportunities	Lynfa Davies
18th Nov	Planting for pollinators	Kristian Hickson-Booth
16th Dec	TBC	
20th Jan	First aid in the apiary	Russ Colman
17th Feb	AGM TBC	
17th Mar	Swarming	Jim Vyvain-Griffiths
21st Apr	Fun quiz, honey show, sharing bee products and crafts	Simon Anderson

We meet at 7pm at Plas Dolerw, Milford Road, Newtown, SY16 2EH.

Jill Hill

Volunteers Wanted

MBKA will be 'hosting' a stand at the following shows. The stand will be selling a number of different bee-related items and talking to members of the public about bees and other pollinators. We need help setting up the stall, 'manning the stand' and packing up at the end of the day.

If you can help, even if just for a short while, please contact Jill McAloon at equipment@montybees.org.uk or phone on 07786063857.

Events

10th August	LLanfyllin Show
24th August	Berriew Show
7th and 8th September	Newtown Food Festival

A journey to Demaree...

We are now entering our 4th year of beekeeping and for all new beginners I would say perseverance and patience are the most common words that spring to mind. It has been quite a journey learning about these beautiful creatures and their interesting and complex behaviours.

In our first year we embarked with so much enthusiasm with a lovely new apiary, sheltered, planted and secluded. The first nuc arrived in June but within a few days our first misfortune struck, we lost our queen. With a lot of coaching and mentoring from Rachel Kellaway and Mark Swain, we managed to get through the summer with a strong hive.



The second year we were on our way strong colony, good stores and supers full of honey. A frantic call from our builder informed us that “all hell had broken loose and a huge, black cloud of bees had disappeared over the fence across the road”. Even so, again with phenomenal guidance from our mentors, it was a good year and we even managed to harvest a few frames of honey for ourselves leaving plenty for our bees. We were chuffed, confident that our continuous training had paid off and the strength of our hive was paying dividends for the future. We had recovered well going into the winter with two strong hives.

However, going into our third year we were devastated to discover we had lost our bees to starvation. Both colonies...too much rapeseed and the honey had all crystalized, with a fair mix of bad weather it led to isolation starvation despite us having significant amounts of stores. We had to start again, obtaining another two nucs. One a very good queen, the other very aggressive, with as many as 11 stings per inspection and sprinting half way down the field to be rid of the chasers. We decided to requeen the aggressive hive by splitting. The colonies unfortunately did not strengthen and again we lost the two weaker hives with one strong remaining.

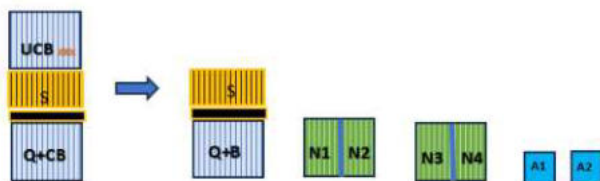
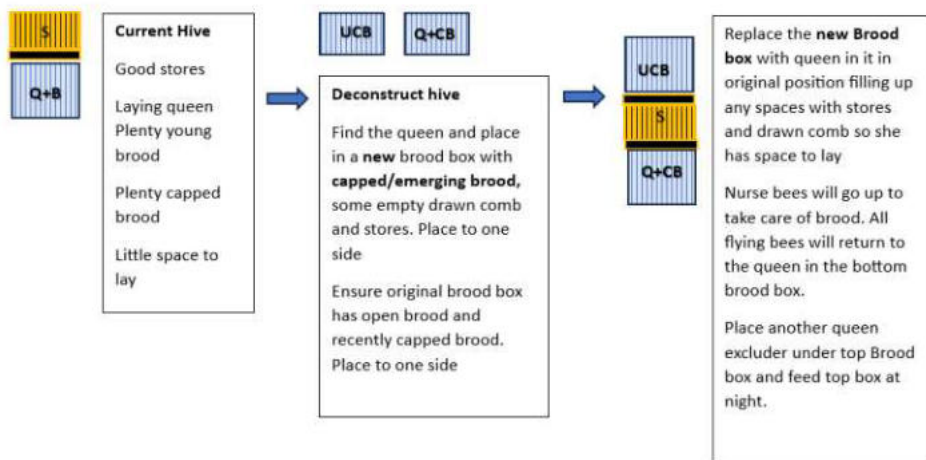


So here we are in our 4th year and I guess you are wondering why the long story to discuss Demarees. Well, quite frankly, what I am trying to demonstrate is that it has taken us four years just to learn and apply the basics of beekeeping, even with incredible support from the Montgomeryshire Beekeeping Association and that the journey to our first Demaree and apideas, required a good understanding of the trials and tribulations of beekeeping. Patience and trust to really learn and apply what our superb mentors are teaching us led to the fantastic reward of going from one hive to increasing our base to potentially include seven queens And this is how we did it on our journey to Demaree.

The purpose of a Demaree

- To increase your honey production by strengthening your colony
- To potentially harvest queen cells for colony increase
- Swarm prevention

It is important at the start of the plan to decide what your objective will be as the two have different decision points. The purpose of our Demaree was to increase our colonies and not to increase our honey production.



After 7 days check top brood box for queen cells. Once sealed we decided to split into 4 half nucs and 2 Apideas going from 1 queen to potentially 7 therefore achieving the objective of increasing the colonies

Singing the Blues

I followed the buzz and it led me to the perennial cornflower, *Centaurea montana*. The bees were busy for this is one of the commonest flowers in my garden and its stained glass blue heads are in every bed and border. If you do not possess it, let me say that it is very well worth having for its leaves are a perfect foil being slightly felted with silver hairs and it will flower from late spring through early summer. If you cut the plant back after it has flowered it will give you a second burst of flower later in the season. A prolific self-seeder this cornflower also clumps up quickly, clumps incidentally that are easily divided. As far as I can see it is also pest free.

It goes without saying that *Centaurea* is beloved of bees as are most blue and purple flowers which are on the ultra-violet spectrum. But there is another reason that bees are buzzing around my cornflowers and that is because, like the blue flowered borage, they have the ability to replenish nectar quickly.

The blue pom-poms of *Echinops ritro*, the globe thistle are as attractive to bees as they are to us, so they are well worth looking out for and using in the border. The steel blue is complimented by silvery-grey leaves for this is a plant that makes its presence felt. Each flower head is composed of multiple nectar bearing florets as, indeed, are the heads of *Eryngium*, sea holly. The plant breeders have been busy and now you can buy cultivars such as E. 'Blue Hobbit' that possess heads of such a startling icy blue that they, together with their spiky leaves, are almost metallic. They do need full sun and very good drainage for they grow wild in sand dunes, a thought to bear in mind when planting.

Lavender, both the tougher English *Lavendula angustifolia* and the French L. *stoechas* also need a sunny spot and free draining soil. Prune after flowering to keep plants compact but don't cut down to bare wood and your plants should keep flowering for twenty years or more.

Carolle Doyle



Cornflower (*Centaurea montana*)



Globe Thistle (*Echinops ritro*)



Sea Holly (*Eryngium*)



Lavender
(*Lavendula angustifolia*)



Borage



Asian Hornet Latest Report

The Asian Hornet has become a credible threat to the UK. Last year saw a large incursion into the South East of England, particularly Kent. The NBU has been trapping in Kent, Portsmouth and North Yorkshire this spring, targeting areas where nests were found last year. So far six queens have been trapped in the Four Oaks area.

The BBKA, WBKA, NBU and APHA have a big publicity program. APHA won a gold at Chelsea Flower show with their stand dedicated to the Asian Hornet.

As an Association we can do our bit. I am the AH coordinator and there are six verifiers across our membership area. We are encouraging members and the general public to put the Asian Hornet Watch app on their phones. It is an easy to use way of reporting sightings. Taking a photo and sending it via the app to the NNSS (Non-native Species Secretariat.)

Also, some members are trialling various traps and bait so we can give advice to members.

Rachel Kellaway



Out and About



The two Jills from Monty Bees were happy to attend the Kerry Biodiversity and Engagement Event on the 30th June. Despite the chilly weather the occasion attracted a large number of visitors. Our main focus was providing information on the increasing threat to pollinators posed by the yellow legged (Asian) hornet; one nest can devour up to 11kg of insects in a year! It was lovely to see the number of children that were interested in providing biodiversity in their own gardens. They left the stand with a booklet full of information on planting for pollinators and a free packets of seeds and even a knotted bee!



A Bee in Your Bonnet!

Some people may have a bee in their bonnet but this person has the whole anorak.

We dug this image up from our archives. It's a recruitment poster although it's doubtful whether it would really encourage anyone to keep bees. Does anyone know who the foolhardy person wearing a swarm was?

Bees in the News

A fan of the Asian Hornet?

While the rest of us are concerned about the impending establishment of the Asian Hornet in the UK and its devastating effect on pollinator populations, it appears the insect may have one fan. Chris Packham describes them as “beautiful and brutal bover buzzers” and wonders what all the fuss is about. The European Hornet also devours bees, as does the Bee-Eater birds which now regularly nest in the UK due to climate change, yet these culprits are not demonised like the Asian Hornet.

Importantly however, he notes that there are far worse dangers to insect life and biodiversity, particularly from the use of pesticides, and laments that yet again the UK government has allowed the sugar-beet farmers to use a neonicotinoid which is banned by the EU.



Bee Beer

Microbiologists from Cardiff University visited Namibia as part of a partnership for sustainable environmental development, and became interested in the Africanised honeybee (aka “Killer bee”). Brewer’s yeast or *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* to give it its scientific name, is found in the gut flora of honeybees. The yeast found in killer bees which had died naturally was harvested and used, with yeast from Welsh honeybees, to make beer.

Conventional beer manufacturers do not need to worry about a new competitor. Small batches of the beer are produced, to be used along with other bee-related products, to produce compounds which can tackle challenges such as antibiotic resistance.

...And Beer for bees

Some lucky bees were the recipients of “Bee-rs” produced by Lidl. Packs of 6 small bottles of inverted sugar syrup were given away in a prize draw by the supermarket chain to mark World Bee Day on 20th May. The winners of the packs were advised to pour a few drops of the liquid in front of tired, sad-looking bees, to revive them.

Lidl also donated £10,000 to the British Bee Charity to fund BeeBombs4Schools, a school education project intended to help children appreciate the importance of pollinating insects. Shops will also be selling bee-friendly plants.



Underwater bumblebees

A disaster in a laboratory at the University of Guelph in Canada led to the discovery that hibernating queen bumblebees may be able to cope with the increase in flooding caused by climate change.

Four soil-filled tubes containing hibernating queen bumblebees kept in a fridge became accidentally filled with water. To the surprise of the investigator leading research into the common eastern bumblebee (*Bombus impatiens*), all the bees emerged alive when the tubes were drained. She then submerged 21 queens in water for seven days and found 17 survived.

Hibernating bees reduce their metabolism rate considerably, allowing them to require very low levels of oxygen which can be found in the air contained within their bodies. As queen bees hibernate in the ground, the discovery that they are physically adapted to survive flooding is good news.

In the Frame - Joy Sisley

Joy Sisley's seven hives lie at the edge of a meadow that is thick with clover and orchids. Joy watches the bees as they come and go, for one of the greatest pleasures of beekeeping is to simply observe the colonies at work and the more she observes the greater her understanding. For Joy studying the theory of beekeeping through modules and practical experience in the apiaries at home and Gregynog go hand in hand and it is fair to say that she is deeply involved with Monty Bees.

In Joy's young world, growing up in East Africa, bees were housed in hollowed out logs suspended from trees. An image imprinted on her seven year old mind is of her mother holding a bucket filled with honeycombs oozing with dark honey. It was a present, a present which attracted the local bees that rapidly filled the room.

Joy's next significant encounter with bees was at the food festival in Garthmyl where Monty Bees had a display stand where you could see bees at work through a glass window. She had plenty of space for someone to keep a few hives she ventured in a discussion about beekeeping. If someone had come forward this would be a very different story but no-one did and so years later she jumped in with both feet and completed the MBKA Beginners Course in the spring of 2019.

20th June will always be regarded as a red letter day when Rachel Kellaway turned up to help install the bees in Joy's very first hive. Russell Davies who provided invaluable support and advice kept a close eye on proceedings so that with some mistakes and some help Joy and the colony came through their first year. Alas, her first colony had superseded and come her first Spring inspection she found a drone laying queen. Undeterred, she started over with a new colony.

There are, I suppose, different ways of jumping in with both feet and I think that Joy found them all, for our Chair joined the committee in that

first year, began studying Rachel Kellaway's courses on all things bee, joined the Apiary Team at Gregynog and when Pete Elvis, who was the Chair at that time, sadly died she took over as Interim Chair.



Go along to Gregynog on almost any Sunday and you will find Joy with other members of the Apiary Team amongst the Association's 12 hives. Joy says that her time on the team has been a massive learning experience for, as each hive is opened and examined problems arise which have to be addressed. The most dramatic of which was undoubtedly the discovery of European Foul Brood and the long day where each hive was emptied of its adult bees and each shook swarm relocated in a new hive as the old frames were burnt in a pit.

It was the practical lesson that every beekeeper would rather not face but for Joy, who had studied and taken the BBKA Module 3 exam and the practical assessment on 'honey bee health' it demonstrated how important the modules were. Together with a little group of five others she is working her way through the BBKA modules and thus far has also completed two practical assessments, Module 1 on 'honey bee management' and is working on Module 6 the fascinating world of 'bee behaviour'.

Carolle Doyle

MBKA Committee

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APIARY VIEWING SHELTER	Rachel Buckley
SWARM COORDINATION	find a beekeeper near you on the WBKA swarm collection map: https://wbka.com/swarms-heidiau/

Please feel free to contact any member of the committee with any questions, or if you can volunteer time to help with any aspect of the association.

For website input or issues contact David at webadmin@montybees.org.uk