

Whitehaven Beekeepers Newsletter, August 2021

Apiary News

The bees at our teaching apiary at West Lakes Science Park have had a good year, with plenty of fine weather after the cold weather and late spring. During the summer we have been able to let more people attend the teaching sessions as the COVID restrictions have relaxed.

In future all our apiary visits will take place on Saturday afternoons instead of alternating between Saturdays and Sundays. These are the dates for visits in September;

Saturday September 4th

Saturday September 11th

Saturday September 18th

Saturday September 25th

All meetings start at 13.00, meeting at the overspill carpark.

We currently have 10 hives at the apiary, though 1 hive of aggressive bees (the notorious Hive 5) is being moved to our out apiary near Egremont where it will have less opportunity to sting people. Five and a half supers have been taken off for extracting, and for the first time since the apiary was set up we have produced some honeycomb sections in wooden frames. Since starting this newsletter, the honey has now been extracted, thanks to Steve Sullivan for the following article.

A Sticky Situation

Despite W&DBK apiary being primarily for teaching purposes, summer 21 has been a good year for honey production.

All very well having full supers – more than 5 -but the honey needs extracting.

On Friday 27th August two old hands from the committee, (Richard and Val) and one old hand from the friends of W&DBK group (Steve S) were joined by three “ Newbies” -pun appalling but nevertheless intentional, at Brackenwray to harvest this year’s crop.

Both manual and electrically driven extractors were used, and it soon became apparent which one was easier and superior! Decapping was achieved using an electric heated knife as well as a “hedgehog” accompanied by an electric paint stripper.

Spinning by both methods ensured a steady supply of honey dripping into the bases of the extractors. And then this was drained through various fine sieves allowing drip by drip the honey to settle into sparkling new honey buckets supplied by Richard.

At half time Richard proudly showed off and offered tastings of beautiful section honey produced at the Apiary ,for the first time in it’s history. This honey is a rarity these days,

relying upon an exceptional spell of good weather and reported to be selling for £40 each at the Cleator Moor Co-op- sorry that should read Fortnum and Mason.

All in all, at weigh in, 120lbs of beautiful, light, Cumbrian honey is now settling in sealed honey buckets. Any one for bottling?!

Steve Sullivan

As well as our National hives (some wooden and some polystyrene) we now have a top bar hive which was installed in July. The bees in it are doing well, and it is fascinating to see the comb that they draw from the top bars, giving a glimpse of what honeycomb looks like in wild colonies.



The garden has become somewhat wilder over the last 2 years, but is still providing plenty of forage for the bees. Our most exotic specimen is a *Eucryphia cordifolia* tree, and Val Sullivan has kindly written the following article about it.

The Tale of W&DBKA's Eucryphia tree

Chile, on the far side of South America and the longest country in the world, with 4,300 km of coastline and 17 different climates, protected by the Andes Mountains, the Pacific Ocean, the Atacama Desert and the ancient ice of Patagonia, is a thriving honey producer exporting a variety of honeys to the rest of the world.

In the South of the country a tree known as Ulmo or Eucryphia cordifolia grows in great abundance in the vast forests particularly around the Chilean Lake District. It is evergreen and bears lovely lightly scented white flowers which are a magnet to honeybees. Ulmo honey is light in colour with a glorious scent.

When first introduced to the United Kingdom in 1851 (to Kew Gardens) Eucryphia was thought to be a delicate tree which would not stand hard frosts. However, because of it's beauty it was adopted by tree specialists and nurseries and gradually spread northwards being grown in RHS gardens with success.

Several years ago I was contacted by a lady in Egremont who was concerned that she had a lot of bees coming through her small bungalow's open windows, apparently from a tree in her tiny front garden. She had bought the tree from a local market as a little sapling having been told it would bear lovely flowers. It grew rapidly, flowered profusely and attracted masses of bees. When I went to see her, I was amazed to find her tree now overshadowing

all else in her garden, was a Eucryphia cordifolia and it was this which was enticing the pollinators to the bungalow.

Although it was causing her problems she was loathe to have it destroyed, so W&DBK hatched a plan to move it to our, at that time, fairly new Apiary garden. We bought a dwarf cherry tree as a replacement for the Ulmo and then armed with picks, shovels and spades we dug it up, loaded it onto a pick- up and relocated it to the West Lakes Apiary garden. We installed it in a deep pit we had dug at the far side of the garden where it languished for a couple of years looking more and more unhappy, with leaf loss, dying branches and very few flowers. The bees were not impressed.

After a bit of thought and a lot of sadness we dug the tree up again and moved it across the garden to try it's luck in another border. It has put on some growth in the three years since and this Summer is flowering profusely. The bees love it so perhaps some of our bumper 2021 honey crop will be Ulmo honey. Try it and see what you think.

VS Aug 21

Feeding the bees for winter

The association has plenty of Invertbee syrup available for members to buy at £16.00 per container. Val Sullivan kindly stores this at Brackenwray. If you want to buy some, please email her at brackenwray@aol.com to arrange collection and payment.

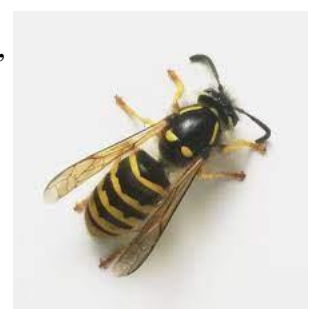
Alternatively, the bees can be fed with syrup made from white sugar. For new beekeepers there is a good Best Practice Guideline (Number 7a) called "Feeding bees sugar." This link should find the right page. <https://nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

Wasp control

Wasps can be very destructive to honeybee colonies at this time of year, especially new, small or weaker colonies that are less able to defend themselves. There are several things that can be done to protect colonies;

1. Reduce the size of the hive entrance to make it easier for the guard bees to defend against the wasps.
2. Make wasp traps and hang them outside the apiary.
3. Be careful not to spill honey, or sugar syrup or wax in the apiary as this attracts wasps.
4. Consider screening the hive entrance. There are commercial entrance screens available which allow the bees to come & go, but which fool the wasps and stop them getting in.

Dave Cushman's website has details of how to make a simple screen. http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/robber_screen.html



Events so far in 2021

Beginners Weekend. The socially distanced Beginners Weekend was held later than usual on the 26th/27th of June. It was our first event since the beginning of the Covid pandemic and was well attended. The theory day was held on Saturday at The Gather in Ennerdale Bridge, where Alan Robson's talk and demonstration about beekeeping equipment was very well received. This was followed by a visit to the apiary on Sunday to look through the hives. Feedback from the weekend has been very positive.

Looking ahead, events this autumn.

Covid willing, the committee has planned 2 events this autumn. Cumbria Beekeepers are also planning to hold their Honey Show in November.

1. Wax demonstration and W&DBKA Honey Show. On 16th October Alan Robson is giving a demonstration of melting wax and making foundation. This will be held at Bigrigg Village Hall and will be followed by a Honey Show, to make up for the cancellation of Gosforth Show. This will have fewer classes than usual but will be a good opportunity to show honey at a relaxed and friendly local event. Full details of the classes etc will be circulated soon. There will be no charge for admission or for show entries.

2. W&DBKA AGM Our AGM will be held on Thursday 11th November. Lamplugh Village Hall is being demolished this autumn so we are looking for an alternative venue. We hope that we will be able to have a face to face meeting this year, with refreshments and a opportunity to catch up with fellow beekeepers.

3.Cumbria Beekeepers Honey Show. This is scheduled to take place on Saturday 20th of November at Braithwaite Institute. Further details will be circulated nearer the date.

Our Membership.

At our last committee meeting this month, our membership secretary reported that the number of members has increased this year. We currently have 42 full members, 20 Friends of the apiary, 1 life member and 1 county member.

Sarah Richards, 29th August 2021.