

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter,

August 2015

Apiary News

At the latest apiary visit on the 9th August, a few hives were still waiting for virgin queens to start laying.

Overall, it has been a cool, wet summer for the bees, which had a very late start due to the persistent cold weather in the spring. As a result, winter feeding will need to start early this year.

The National Bee Unit has recently sent out a warning that hives in many parts of the country are short of stores, and bee-inspectors have identified many colonies which are near-starving, or already dead. The other hazard they have identified is an increased risk of invasion of colonies by wasps.

The bee shed has been painted by Richard Robinson, and some panels in the roof over the hives will be replaced later in the autumn.

The apiary garden

The rabbits have largely been excluded from the apiary garden, thanks to the wire-netting, and a family of weasels or stoats that seem to have taken up residence under the bee shed.

The weekly weeding sessions are continuing, with Joan Stephenson and Eleanor Gate helping Val and Sarah to keep the worst of the weeds at bay. Many thanks to them both for all their help.

The borage has been in full flower for several weeks, providing masses of nectar for the bees. The purple loosestrife is also flowering well, as is the transplanted *Eucryphia*, which was donated to the garden earlier this year.



We are planning to add some more plants this autumn, to replace some losses of some of the more tender plants.

WDBKA Events

Visit to Apiary by Gosforth WI

Members of Gosforth WI visited the apiary in July, to see the garden & have an introduction to the bees. Paul Connor and Piers Manson spoke to the group, and 2 hives were opened.

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Annual Honey Show 2015, in conjunction with the Gosforth Show, Saturday 15th August

Despite rain and a wet field for setting up the gazebo and display area for the show on Friday 14th, the day of the show was fine, warm and sunny, and saw a record number of people who were interested in seeing the demonstration of live bees. There was a crowd around the Observation hive all day,

and the Queen Bee was very obliging in showing herself. In addition to the bees, Richard Robinson ably demonstrated skep making throughout the day.

The main tent entries for the honey show were down on 2014, with very few from W&DBK members! Kendal and Lancaster beekeepers saved the day with their exhibits, and the judge awarded prizes and cups accordingly.

However Paul Connor, our Apiary Manager won the Best Exhibit in the honey show with his splendid "Frame of honey ready for extraction."

There were many entries for the "baking with honey" classes, as well as for the new children's classes. Some fine photos of "Bees at work", and "A picture of a bee in any medium" from the youngest age group filled the display boards. In the History tent a display of The History of the W&DBK also generated much interest, especially the contrasting photos of beekeeping styles in the early 1900s and today.

Among the prize winners, Alan Tett won all 4 honey classes, and the Challenge Cup. The Novice cup was won by Debbie Ashton.

The Heckles Cup and the Ashburner Trophy were won by Tony Calvin of Whitehaven Beekeepers, while Paul Connor won the Waddington Cup.

Our thanks go not only to the members of W&DBK who gave up their Saturday to run the Honey Show but also to Ian Gregory who judged the exhibits for us.

Dates for your Diary

Apiary Meetings;

The next apiary meeting at the Westlakes Apiary will be held on Saturday 19th

September at 13.00, to discuss how to prepare the bees for winter.

Annual General Meeting

Whitehaven & District Beekeepers AGM will be held at Lamplugh Village Hall on the 9th November, starting at 7.00 pm. After the AGM, there will be a pie and peas supper.

Christmas meeting

On the 6th December, Helen Shipton-Smith www.helensherbs.co.uk will be talking about plants and bees, at 6.30 pm at Lamplugh Village Hall. After her talk, there will be an opportunity to buy some of Helen's bee-friendly plants, and to share something to eat.

New eLearning Programme from the NBU

www.nationalbeeunit.com

In case anyone has not received a message from the NBU, I am including a copy of their e-mail which was sent on the 19th August, about their new eLearning programme.

"The NBU would like to announce that its eLearning programme for beekeepers is now live and ready for use. The first module 'Honey Bee Pests, Diseases and Viruses' covers six main topics; Exotic Threats, Foulbrood, *Varroa*, Adult Bee Diseases and Viruses, Other Brood Disorders and Other Pests. To access this free and exciting platform, you will need to log into BeeBase where you will find an eLearning link to the left hand side of the navigation panel. When clicking on this, you will be re-directed to the eLearning platform where you can access the content. Like all of our material, the aim of the

module is to provide you with a good understanding of the issues that might affect colony health. It will be available on most mobile devices and tablets, although you will need to make sure that your web browser is up to date, otherwise you may experience compatibility issues with some of the content.”

Keeping in Touch

Just to remind members;

- i) to let myself or Alex Nancollis know if your contact details, including e-mail addresses have changed, so we can keep in touch
- ii) Our website address is www.whitehavenbeekeepers.co.uk

Finally, I have included a poem written by Pam Ayres about beekeeping. She has several hives, and I heard her reading this out on her show on Radio 4, earlier this year. She has very kindly given me permission to include it in our newsletter, and I hope you enjoy it as I did. I was very impressed that she managed to “thixotropic” in the poem.