

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter June 2015

Apiary News

The bees at the apiary suffered some losses overwinter, and several hives were combined to make 2 stronger colonies. Two hives which had overwintered elsewhere were returned to the apiary, and Alan Robson donated an overwintered nucleus, so we are back up to five hives again.

After a slow start due to the persistently cold spring, the hives are building up again now that the weather is somewhat warmer.

The seasonal bee-inspector visited the apiary on the 13th May, and has given the bees a clean bill of health.

Details of the dates of apiary visits for the remainder of the summer season can be found at the end of this newsletter.

The apiary garden

In spite of the cool and unsettled weather, the majority of the plants in the garden are growing well. The weeds are also doing well, but we have done some intensive weeding and are starting to get on top the buttercups etc. The other problem has been rabbits nibbling our newly-emerged perennials, so the post and rail fence has been reinforced with a roll of wire-netting. Fortunately the stone wall protects the other 3 sides of the garden, so we hope we have a reasonable chance of keeping the rabbits out.

A mature *Eucryphia* has been donated to the garden. This is a small, evergreen tree which has white flowers in late summer. These are very fragrant, and produce large amounts of nectar for the bees.



We now have a laminated, colour plan of the different bee-friendly plants in the garden for reference.

Apiary Visits

The St Bees Cubs visited the apiary on 2 evenings in April. We were lucky with the weather, and both visits went very well. The Cubs were very enthusiastic, and especially enjoyed getting dressed up in bee-suits, as you can see from the picture below.



We demonstrated how a bee-hive is put together, & talked about the roles of the workers, drones and queen, and then were able to have a brief look at some bees inside one of the hives.

The purple gloves were very popular and all the Cubs were delighted when Val suggested that they could take their gloves home with them as a souvenir of their visit!

WDBKA Events

Beginners weekend, 18-19th April

Ten people attended the Beginners course this year. For the first time, this was run over two days. Saturday comprised a day of talks and demonstrations at Lamplugh Village Hall. Val and Dominic covered topics such as “A year in the Life of a Beekeeper”, “A Year in the Life of a Beehive”, finding a suitable site for an apiary, and the responsibilities that come with owning bees, while Alan Robson gave an excellent practical demonstration of the equipment needed to start keeping bees.

On Sunday afternoon, the group met at the Westlakes apiary, and had an opportunity to look through the bees with members of the Committee.

Following the Beginners Weekend, two new members have joined Whitehaven Beekeepers, and plan to start keeping bees.

Skep making Day

On May 17th, a group of 10 Whitehaven Beekeepers met at Maggie & Eddy Sewell’s barn, to learn how to make skeps. Richard Robinson demonstrated the technique of using split cane to fasten a rope of straw together in a continuous spiral, then the group all set to work.



It was a chilly day, but Maggie and Eddy kept us all well provided with hot drinks and cake, and by the end of the day, everyone had made great progress with their skeps (see below).



Everyone left with sufficient materials to complete their skep at home, and I’m looking forward to seeing some of the finished articles in due course.

Thank you to the Sewells for their hospitality in hosting this workshop.



As places are limited to 10 people, we plan to run a second skep-making day in the autumn, so if anyone is interested, please let me know and I shall let you know as soon as we have arranged a date

Dates for your Diary

Apiary Meetings;

Apiary meetings at the Westlakes Apiary will be held every fortnight in June, July and August as follows;

Saturday 27th June

Sunday 12th July

Saturday 25th July

Sunday 9th August

The dates of meetings in late August/September will be decided later in the summer, as the timing of treating for varroa will depend on the weather later in the season.

All the meetings will start at 13.00 as usual. Please park in the overspill car-park at Westlakes Science Park.

Whitehaven Beekeepers Association Annual Show

This will be held on August 15th, in conjunction with the Gosforth Show www.gosforthshow.co.uk. There are classes for different types of honey, beeswax, and various cakes and confectionery. The details of the different classes are available in the Gosforth Show Handicraft and Produce Schedule, which I am sending in a separate e-mail. WDBKA will also have a stall with an observation hive at the show. There are lots more attractions and events at the show as a whole, so do put some entries in (it only costs 30p per entry) & come along.

Keeping in Touch

Can I take this opportunity 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

Apologies for the late arrival of this spring newsletter, but I have had some problems with the e-mail system, which I hope are resolved now.

