

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter

Winter 2013-2014

Introduction

Welcome to the start of another beekeeping year. Let's hope that the wet and windy weather settles down, so that our bees can take advantage of the early spring flowers which are already out in this mild weather.

Apiary News

The apiary site has been transformed this autumn.

A working party cleared the undergrowth from the apiary garden in September, and then all the bees were moved to a site in Haile for the winter, in preparation for the landscaping work at the apiary.

In early November, Dan Harper cleared the big rocks & rubble from the garden with his digger. He also removed tree roots & as many roots of the large perennial weeds (such as bramble) as he was able. He made a raised bed area in front of the bee shed & laid out the foundations for a path around the garden.



Since then, a wide range of shrubs, trees and hardy perennials which were sourced by

Helen Shipton-Smith have planted at the apiary in November and early December, and the gravel was laid on the pathway in January.

The bees are being returned to the apiary in early February.

However, many herbs, heathers & smaller, more delicate perennials such as thyme remain to be planted in the spring. There is more weeding and removing of bramble roots to be done, & once the planting is complete, the soil will be mulched with bark chippings to help suppress weeds.

N.B. More members gardening days are planned, starting in March (see Dates for Your Diary for details).

Autumn events

Honey Extraction: An evening at Lamplugh Village Hall on 26th September

25 people attended the Honey Evening at which extraction techniques were explained by Dominic Rhodes and a wide variety of extraction equipment was displayed. Tangential and radial extractors, several varieties of uncapping knives, rollers and forks were on display. Honey settling tanks and wax collection trays were also seen in all sorts of materials and sizes.

The Apiary harvest of honey (one fairly full super) was then uncapped and the honey extracted (in the kitchen to keep stickiness out of the main hall!) As many members of W&DBK have never been in a position to harvest honey before, this was fascinating, and everyone had a turn on the manual

extractor. In total, we spun off 9 jars of honey.



A Pie and Peas supper followed with general bee related chat around the table. Following this, there was a short presentation on labelling honey jars ready for sale to the public, including the many rules, regulations and pitfalls.

Where did all the Honey go?

In 2013 Whitehaven and District Apiary bees produced a crop of honey for the first time since the Teaching Apiary was set up at West Lakes Science and Technology Park. This crop was achieved despite the odds. We came out of the long cold winter of 2012- 2013 with only one very small stock of bees. By mid May these were hanging on but on few frames and decidedly weak. Paul, the Apiary Manager also had a small swarm of W&D bees from the previous "Summer" which he had nurtured through the winter at his Apiary. These came home, and the two stocks began to flourish. Several methods of increasing colonies were used and by August we had 7 populated hives without having had to buy in any outsiders.

By the end of the season it was possible to take a super of honey from the strongest stock, and use this for our Honey extraction evening at Lamplugh Village Hall (see above).

So we were able to pay our rent to West Lakes (in fact we doubled the amount so that the Office Staff also had some to taste). We also

gave some to the Head Gardener who has been so helpful allowing us to move on to the next phase of the Apiary- the new Bee Garden.

Our new life members, Marjorie and Ginger Higham were given two jars too. They are not able to keep bees any more but miss their honey crop. We gave some to Helen Shipton-Smith who is acting as our Garden Design Consultant and co-ordinating the works.

Finally we entered some into the Cumbria Beekeepers Honey Show at Keswick. This was donated to a local hospice at the end of the Show.

Next season, who knows? We may have enough to sell some and boost funds. In the meantime remember to pay your dues to help keep the Branch going.

N.B. Thanks to Val Sullivan for both these articles about the apiary honey

W&DBKA Microscopy day.

This was run by Val Sullivan and Dominic Rhodes at Lamplugh Village Hall on 23rd November. From a personal view, it was most enjoyable and informative. There is a detailed account of the day written by Mike Fitzgerald from Cockermouth Beekeepers in this month's Cumbria Bee Times.



Whitehaven Beekeepers AGM

There was a good turn-out for our AGM on Monday 11th November.

After the reports on the year's activities, it was agreed that the committee should be expanded to include 2 additional ordinary members. Piers Manson and Grahame Pinches volunteered, and have been accepted onto the committee.

The business meeting was followed by pizza and a raffle.

Dates for your Diary

On Saturday 1st March:

Furness Beekeepers are holding their 25th Spring Convention at the Malt Kiln, Bardsea near Ulverston, from 9.30-5.00 pm. The speakers are Dr Keith-Lucas, talking on "The Uses of Pollen in Forensic Science", Simon Reed, on "How Bees Fly" and "Bees and Warfare" and Val Sullivan is speaking on "Medicine and Honey Bees".

If anyone is interested in attending, and has not received a programme, please get in touch with me.

Saturday 8th March:

Whitehaven Beekeepers are holding a Beginners Day at Lamplugh Village Hall. This is aimed at people who are interested in finding out more about keeping bees.

Last year, the Beginners Day had to be cancelled because too few people expressed an interest. Please can you pass on this information to anyone outside the association that you think might be interested.

Sunday 16th March at 13.00: Members Gardening Day at the Branch Apiary.

Sunday 23rd March at 13.00: The first Apiary meeting of the season will be held at Westlakes. We meet in the overspill carpark. (If anyone would like directions, please let me know)

The BBKA Spring Convention: is being held at Harper Adams on **April 4th – 6th**. For full details of the programme see the BBKA website www.bbka.org.uk.

Penrith Beekeepers may be organising a bus to the convention. Please contact Joy Rich via the Penrith Beekeepers website.

The annual Bee Auction is being held at Houghton Village Hall on April 26th. Full details at www.northernbeeauctions.co.uk.

Reminder about our Website

Whitehaven Beekeepers website now has a photograph gallery. If you have any pictures that you would like to be included in the gallery, please contact Richard Robinson.

Also, the user ID for the members section is "member", and the password is WDBKA.

www.whitehavenbeekeepers.co.uk

Finally

If anyone hasn't paid their subscription for 2014, please could you get in touch with Alex, our membership secretary.