

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter

Autumn 2012

Introduction

The continuing wet weather this summer has been difficult for bees and beekeepers. Some estimates suggest that honey production in the UK may be reduced by up to 90% this year.

Beekeepers in France had a different problem, i.e. coloured honey! Look at the link for details. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-19840555>

Another problem caused by the wet weather this year, has been difficulty in getting queens mated. This has resulted in long spells without laying queens (up to seven weeks has been reported) and significant numbers of drone laying queens. This highlights the value of Dominic's queen rearing programme (see below) in providing a supply of locally bred queens.

Branch Apiary news

In spite of the poor weather, all of the visits to the branch apiary at Westlakes have gone ahead this year, which shows the value of the roof & windbreak around the hives. In early September, two queenless hives were united with other stocks, so there are currently four hives at the apiary, with 1 additional hive & a nucleus at other sites.

Apiary Visit by the Howgill Centre Girls Group

In July, a group of 10-12 year old girls from the Howgill Centre in Whitehaven visited the apiary as part of their summer

programme. Seven of the ten girls were keen to put on bee suits and take a closer look at the bees, while the other three watched from further away.

Paul and Val explained about how a bee hive works, and the roles of the queen, workers and drones. Once the girls had gained some confidence, Paul opened a hive to show them the bees. The girls were very interested, asked lots of questions, and were delighted to spot the queen.

As an unexpected extra, there was a swarm of bees hanging in an apple tree, so we were able to show this to the girls as well. The visit was rounded off by a quiz, a taste of honey and a cold drink.



Paul going through a hive with the girls



It turned into a very “hands-on” visit



Thanks to Mike McKenzie, the photographer from the Whitehaven News for the photos, and to Tracey Kendall for her report about the visit.

Queen rearing programme

Dominic’s queen rearing programme, which started in June, continued throughout the summer, using eggs which were laid by one of the queens at the branch apiary.



An estimated 25 queens were raised this year, and ten members of W&DBKA received replacement queens from the programme.

Whitehaven & District Annual Honey Show

The annual honey show was held on August 18th, as part of the Gosforth Show. There were entries for various classes of honey, beeswax, honey cakes and confectionery. Although the numbers of entries was low, the only class with no exhibits was the one for mead.

Bill Mackereth from Cockermouth beekeepers judged the exhibits, and stressed the importance of good presentation when showing honey. Jars with sticky marks and rusty lids don’t win prizes.

The trophies were awarded as follows;

The Heckles Memorial Cup, for most points in the extracted honey classes was awarded to Tony Calvin of WDBKA.

Alan Tett from South Cumbria won the Challenge Cup, for most points awarded in classes 125-139.

The JJ Ashburner Memorial was not awarded this year.

The Novice Cup went to Sarah Richards

Finally, the Waddington Memorial Cup was awarded to Paul Connor, on behalf of W&D Apiary, for the best exhibit in the show. This was an almost perfect frame of honey ready for extraction, taken from one of the hives at the Branch Apiary.



The observation hive, made by Richard Robinson was a great success, and the beekeepers stand had plenty of visitors who came to see the bees.

Books about Beekeeping

Dominic Rhodes has a collection of books about bee-keeping, which are available for members to borrow. There is an up-to-date list of titles on our website at;

www.whitehavenbeekeepers.co.uk Please can members return any books that were borrowed over the summer to Dominic.

Other Meetings and Events for Winter 2012-13

Saturday 27th October at 13.00

Equipment -making afternoon. Please come & help make/paint/assemble equipment for the apiary. **Note, this will be held at Brackenwray, not at the apiary.**

Saturday 10th November

Cumbria Beekeepers Association Autumn Conference & Honey Show at Newbiggin Village Hall *See separate attachment for details of speakers & schedule for the honey show*

Monday 12th November at 19.00

Pie and peas supper and social evening at Lamplugh Village Hall, preceded by Whitehaven & District Beekeepers Association AGM. **Agenda to follow in a separate e-mail.**

Saturday 1st December at 13.00

Demonstration of oxalic acid treatment for varroa at the branch apiary at Westlakes.

Sunday 3rd February at 13.00

Gardening and tidying at the branch apiary, with a demonstration of retrieving wax and cleaning frames.