

# Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter

## Summer 2012

### Introduction

This spring has broken all records for rainfall across the UK, though until the middle of June, Cumbria had escaped the worst of the weather. However since then, it has been persistently wet and the bees have been unable to fly for much of the time. As a consequence, there is a real risk of bees starving, and the National Bee Unit has issued two warnings that bees may need to be fed if stores are low. For full details see the NBU website.

### Branch Apiary news

After the early losses from *Nosema*, the bees have done very well at the Branch Apiary site at Westlakes. The site is well-sheltered, and the bee shelter has proved its worth, keeping the hives warm and dry. The bees at Westlakes certainly seem to be able to fly when it is too cold and windy elsewhere. While two visits to members apiaries have been cancelled, the teaching programme at the Branch apiary has continued as scheduled.

Alan Robson and Richard Robinson have very kindly donated stocks of bees to bring the number of hives back up to four hives. This has been supplemented by two swarms that Dominic donated, plus a further swarm from the apiary itself.

### Teaching Programme

One of the highlights of the Apiary programme so far this year, was the demonstration of shook swarming & the Bailey comb change on May 21st by Stewart Beattie, the seasonal bee

inspector. The turnout for this event was excellent, with more than twenty people at the Apiary.



Shook swarming entails the bees being shaken off their frames into a clean brood box with clean foundation, and the old frames being thrown out. Although it seemed a very drastic procedure at the time, resulting in the loss of all the brood and stores, the colony has drawn out new comb rapidly and is doing very well.

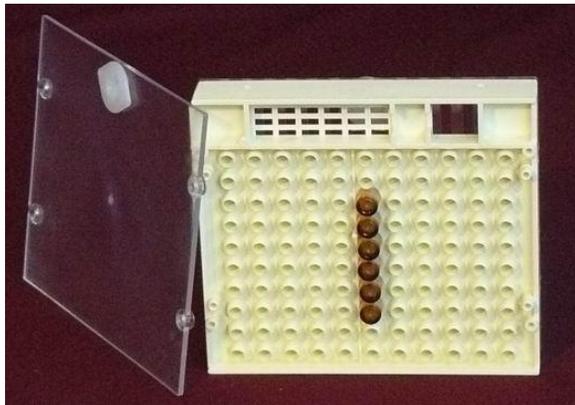
Full details of both methods are available as fact sheets to download from the National Bee Unit website.

During his visit Stewart also stressed;

- a) The importance of replacing frames regularly, to minimise the build-up of diseases such as Nosema and chalk brood
- b) The value of marking frames with the year and apiary number, so they can be replaced regularly and be traceable.

### Queen rearing

Dominic began his queen rearing programme at the apiary on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June, using the Jenter system, which involves a queen laying eggs in artificial cups (see below)



These cups are transferred to holders on a frame and placed in a queenless hive, for the bees to raise queen cells.



Once the queen cells have been sealed, they are covered with hair roller cages, so that when the queens hatch, they can be transferred into mating hives or other queenless colonies.



The latest batch of frames was set up on 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> of July, so the programme is ongoing. The aim is to have locally raised queens available as a resource for members of W&DBKA.

### Swarm reports

The hot weather in the second half of May encouraged the bees to swarm, and there have been lots of swarms collected since then. This picture shows a large swarm on the fence of Sarah Chaudhri's apiary at Bridekirk.



One of my hives swarmed in May, and the bees disappeared down the lane, to be spotted shortly after as they took up residence in the roof of the local church. If anyone has any good pictures or stories about swarms, please let me know so I can include them in future newsletters

P.S. To end on a cautionary note, Dominic had an unfortunate experience when a swarm of bees he was capturing fell out of a tree and onto his head, before he had zipped up the hood of his bee suit...

## Beekeepers barbecue

Val and Steve hosted the annual barbecue in their tractor shed on 30<sup>th</sup> June.



In spite of the forecast, the weather stayed dry and a good time was had by all. As well as cooking burgers and sausages, Steve provided an excellent quiz for the adults, while the children completed a mini orienteering course in the field.

Many thanks to Val and Steve for all their hard work in making the evening a success.



## Other Meetings and Events in 2012

The W&DBKA annual honey show will be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August as part of the Gosforth Show.

There is a range of classes for honey, wax, mead and honey cakes. Full details of the classes, together with an entry form, are attached or are available via the Gosforth Show website [www.gosforthshow.co.uk](http://www.gosforthshow.co.uk). The closing date for entries is 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012.

**The Committee would like to encourage as many members as possible to put in entries, so that the Honey Show remains viable.**

### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October.

The Cockermonth Beekeepers are holding a conference at Embleton Village Hall

### Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Whitehaven Beekeepers are holding another Microscopy Day on pollen identification. Further information will be sent out once final details are available