

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter

Summer 2013

Introduction



Due to the cold weather continuing through April, the start of the beekeeping season was delayed into early May, and many beekeepers in Cumbria lost their bees. Fortunately, the weather has been rather warmer since late May, and members are slowly replacing their stocks.

Several new members have joined the association since the last newsletter, and additional beesuits and equipment have been purchased for the apiary.

Apiary News

Even by the end of April, it was too cold to open the hives. All we could do at the apiary visits was to check that the bees had sufficient



fondant to eat.

The first inspection of the bees at the Apiary finally took place on Sunday 19th May. One colony (in a polystyrene hive) looked strong, two had died, and a fourth had dwindled to low numbers, so this hive was boosted with brood and bees from the stronger colony. Since then, it has continued to build up, and is now doing well. The strong hive now has a second brood box, and three nucs have been made from it over the last month. The aim is to have 6 stocks by the end of the summer.

Grant from the Big Lottery Fund

In the last newsletter, I reported that our initial bid for funding from the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) had been turned down. Since then, Val Sullivan & Richard Robinson have done a lot of work to meet the requirements of the BLF, culminating in a Special General Meeting (held in the Car Park at Westlakes on Sunday 16th June) to approve a required change to our Constitution. 28 members attended, & voted unanimously for the change to be introduced with immediate effect. Thanks to everyone who came for their support.

The very good news is that, as a result of this change, Whitehaven Beekeepers have been awarded £7,000 to improve the apiary site & develop a bee-friendly garden.

Visit by seasonal Bee Inspector

The postponed visit to the Members' apiary by the seasonal Bee Inspector Stewart Beattie took place on 8th June in glorious sunshine. Unfortunately, because of the long cold spring, the colonies were not strong enough

for Stewart to demonstrate Shook swarming, though he explained the benefits of this procedure, and also discussed the Bailey comb change.



Then we went through the colonies and the Queen was found and shown to the several new beekeepers including the children. Everyone had a chance to see sealed, unsealed brood and eggs. Stewart suggested that we try to use only one type of brood frame and he also strongly encouraged the marking of frames with the year and also the unique Apiary number (the latter down the spine of the frames). We balanced the nucleus hives with some more bees from the strong colony. Our thanks go to Stewart, and we hope that next year we will be able to present more opportunity for his planned demonstrations.

General news

Update on Neonicotinoids

From 1st December 2013, the European Commission is introducing restrictions in the use of three neonicotinoids, clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiametoxam for seed treatment, soil application and sprays on bee-attractive plants and cereals. These restrictions will be reviewed once new information about the effects of these pesticides is available, or within 2 years at the latest.

The Importance of Ivy

Research from the University of Sussex, published in April this year has highlighted the importance of ivy as a nectar source for bees in the autumn.



On average 89 per cent of pollen pellets brought by worker bees to hives in September and October were from ivy. There was no difference between hives located in urban or rural areas.

80 per cent of honey bees foraging on ivy were collecting nectar, not pollen, and this nectar had a high sugar content (up to 49%)

Ivy flowers are also visited by a wide range of other insects, such as late-season butterflies, hoverflies, wasps and bumblebees.

Did keeping bees help Edmund Hillary climb Everest?

Edmund Hillary was from a New Zealand beekeeping family, and in his autobiography "Nothing Venture, Nothing Win" he describes the hard physical work of commercial beekeeping. Clearly the weather could be problematic in New Zealand, as well as in Cumbria. Thanks to Paul & Lyn for sending me this brief extract.

"It was a good life- a life of open air and sun and hard physical work. And in its way a life of uncertainty and adventure: **a constant fight against the vagaries of the weather.** We had 1600 hives of bees spread around the dairyland south of Auckland.. We never knew what our crop would be ... it could range from a massive 60 tons to a miserable 20 or less. But all through the exciting months of the honey flow the dream of a bumper crop would drive us on through long hours of hard labour; manhandling thousands of ninety pound boxes of honeycomb for extracting **...and grimacing at our daily ration of a dozen, or a hundred bee stings.**"

Summer Events

Wednesday 10th June. Social evening at Lamplugh Village Hall from 7.00 pm-9.00 pm. This is a chance to share a meal, talk about bees & find out more about plants for bees, and the plans for the apiary garden.

Apiary Visits are planned for Sunday 14th July, and Sunday 28th July. There is also a visit to Piers Manson's apiary at Santon Bridge on Saturday 20th July. I will circulate details of how to get there nearer the date. All visits will start at the usual time of 13.00.

Saturday 17th August is the date for Gosforth Show, which includes Whitehaven Beekeepers honey show. There are two new classes for children this year. The schedule has already been circulated, but if anyone hasn't received it, please let me know. Please think about entering, there are classes for honey, beeswax and baking.

Dates for your Diary

On Saturday 26th October Cockermouth Beekeepers are holding their convention at Embleton

On Saturday 16th November the Cumbria Beekeepers Association honey show is taking place at Newbiggin Village Hall

On Saturday 23rd November Whitehaven beekeepers are running a bee anatomy day at Lamplugh Village Hall