



EDWARD
LEWIS



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder April 2009

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NEW MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVE	Julian Kirkham
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Ralph Mills
	Joe Bidwell
SEASONAL BEE INSPECTOR	Peter Guthrie

(March to August inclusive)

**REGIONAL BEE
INSPECTOR** **John Verran**

To arrange for a visit by a **Bee Disease Officer**,
contact John who will make the necessary arrangements

**Any of these contacts can be used to ask a Bee Question.
They will pass it on if they cannot answer you themselves.
They are here to help you.**



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March Saturday	28 th	Welsh Beekeepers Association Annual Convention, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells
April Sunday	26 th 2.00pm	MBKA Apiary Visit Host Rev John and Brigit Newbury Llangurig
May Sunday	17 th 2.00pm	MBKA Apiary Visit Host Roy Norris + Nigel Jones of the Solitary Bee Unit Newtown
June Sunday Then at	21 st 2.00pm 6.30pm	Bee Demonstration as an event during a Garden opening under the National Garden Scheme MBKA Apiary Visit Host Dr Beverly Evans-Britt and Tony Shaw Ty Capel Deildre SY18 6NX
Followed by BBQ		
July 20 - July 23 rd Monday to Thursday		Royal Welsh Show, Bee Section in South Glamorgan Hall, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells
July Sunday	26 th 2.00pm	MBKA Apiary Visit by coach Shropshire BKA Apiary the to Attingham Park Skep beekeeping in a Traditional English Garden
August	14th/15th	Shrewsbury Flower Show MBKA have a stall in the Bee Section which is run by our neighbours the Shropshire Bee Association
September	5 th & 6 th	Food Festival at Glansevern Hall, Berriew Bee Stall run by MBKA
September Sunday	20 th 2.00pm	MBKA Apiary Visit Host Bill & Carol Gough Newtown
October Thursday	22 nd 7.00pm	MBKA meeting Tony Spacey of Little Over Apiaries TBC Health and Safety issues for the Amateur Beekeeper Plas Dolerw , Milford Road Newtown
November Thursday	26 th 7.00pm	MBKA meeting Peter Gurthrie SBO End of Year and planning for the next. Plas Dolerw , Milford Road Newtown
February Thursday	18 th 7.00pm	MBKA AGM PLAS DOLERW Plas Dolerw , Milford Road Newtown

PLEASE NOTE

The main subject of the Apiary Meetings will be dependant on the weather during the previous few weeks

Teas

A Pool Tea System operates for Apiary Visits: please bring along something to eat by way of a contribution. To assist with planning numbers etc it will be appreciated if those proposing to attend would telephone the hosts in advance to let them know they will be coming.

Directions

MBKA signs will be posted around venues to guide those visiting

Editorial

A quick phone survey of friends reveals that **winter losses** are fewer than last year. Bees can cope with the cold far better than the mild and wet. But maybe it is because we have all been that little bit more diligent than normal. Last year was characterised not only by the worst bee weather for a long time but also by the sheer weight of the bombardment of advice from our bee inspectors, specialist bee magazines and the general media. One couldn't even have a quiet cup of tea at an Apiary meeting without being confronted with the problems of the previous winter and the lessons to be learnt for the next. Perhaps all of this has paid off. David Culshaw, the Chairperson of the Welsh Beekeepers Association, remarked last year that it was the older beekeepers who were suffering the greatest losses. The newer beekeepers are better at accepting advice than the older beekeepers. The advice works: we ignore it at our peril.

Our training course with Brian Goodwin was so popular that we have organised another on Saturday the 25th April. At the time of going to press there were just a couple of places left. See on page XX just how much a new MBKA member Captain Tim Blackmore enjoyed his first training session. We now have a considerable number of new members who have not started to collect equipment let alone their first bees. Other Beekeeping Associations are finding the same: a greater proportion of beeless members than in previous years. To many the bee has become a symbol of the environment and its problems and joining a Beekeeping Association has become a way of setting down a marker that one is concerned about the environment and wants to help.

How different to ten years ago when I first took up beekeeping. Then new members were divided into those whose primary interest was Honey and those who were interested in Apis Mellifer. This division was reflected in shows: there were those called "Honey shows" and those called "Beekeeping Conventions; different orientations and different organisations. The new members seem more catholic in their interests with solitary or bumble bees commanding as much interest as the honeybee.

Beekeeping committees cannot just sit back and revel in the rejuvenation of their Association for it is the multitude of articles in the press and TV that has caused so many of the public to seek-out and join their local Beekeeping Association. In Montgomeryshire our membership actually went down slightly in 2008 because so many who had lost bees became disillusioned and did not rejoin. Like other BKAs we in **Montgomeryshire must rethink** the way we organise our programme to keep the members even when they do not have bees. We must constantly support and educate new beekeepers and persuade those who have lost their bees to rejoin and share their experiences with us all. A failed strategy is as informative as a successful one. The fact is that there is no clear cut answer about the surge in hive losses over the last few years. Everybody has some useful experience to contribute to the debate. So, do encourage any ex-beekeeper you know to rejoin the Association. For the sake of our bees we really do need the person who can say "I tried that, it didn't work".

Fast and efficient communication about bee problems has become a major issue in the last few years. We are told that it is not the case of IF but WHEN some infection or disaster will strike:

And that we have to be ready to swing into action. It is not the case of the strong who will survive but the fast who will survive. Perhaps beekeepers need to have training sessions in the use of their computers. I am amazed at how many MBKA members only open emails when there is a **J** in the month and the moon is in Sagittarius. OK, of course, our broadband connections in Mid Wales are scandalously slow or non-existent and some just do not feel happy opening attachments even when they are on broadband. Sending emails out to members is a major problem. My email box is cluttered for many days with bounce-backs and the secretary and treasurer have the same problem. Such an enormous number of bounce-backs, so many accounts are reported defunct, so many are full and awaiting the removal of old emails before any new ones can be accepted. One way to get over these problems is to have a MBKA website. Chris Leech has kindly offered to set one up for us. Read his article on page 17. The other way is for those MBKA members, who have yet to join the 21st century, to have a go. It's quite fun really.

Tony Shaw April 2009.

The plate was claimed and is now happy back in its old home. It is a pity the same cannot be said for the 2 bee videos lent to one or two MBKA members and yet to be returned. They belong on a shelf in Radnorshire and their absence is causing quite a tense diplomatic situation. Contact Graham who will guarantee anonymity.

We welcome as new members

Captain Tim Blackman, Aberhosan; Gillian Evans, Llanidloes; Mark Swain, Forden;
Alisa Cakebread, Berriew; Monica Bukalgo, Carno

I'm sure I speak for all MBKA members in telling them not to be shy about contacting other local beekeepers at meetings. They could always contact Jessica, our Secretary or Roy our treasurer to ask the email of a neighbouring beekeeper. Neighbourly advice is always welcome and is more likely to be appropriate than that of a beekeeper 20 miles away in a different climate.

The Data Protection Act prevents me from publishing emails and addresses of members but I can recommend the local telephone directory.

Good luck in their beekeeping or bee watching career.

Report on Meetings

AGM February 19th

Who ever heard of 40 people turning up for and AGM.? “I expect to see 7 to 10 at an AGM” said Jim Crundwell our President. Jim exaggerates terribly. I’ve been at a MBKA AGM with just 4 other people. Perhaps the large attendance was for our speaker Caroline Davies from the CAFE (Children, Agriculture, Food & Education). Caroline had admired our stand at the Welsh Food Fair and talked to us there of her interest in bringing bees into schools for teaching purposes.

“It was immediately evident to me that this would be of interest to schools.” said Caroline “The CAFE Project has been running in Montgomeryshire since January 2005.. Funded by a CCW education grant and by the Powys County Council Schools & Inclusion Service, the project is a partnership with the Mid Wales Food and Land Trust. The trust has found it invaluable to have on its board both local primary head teachers and farmers prepared to host school visits.”

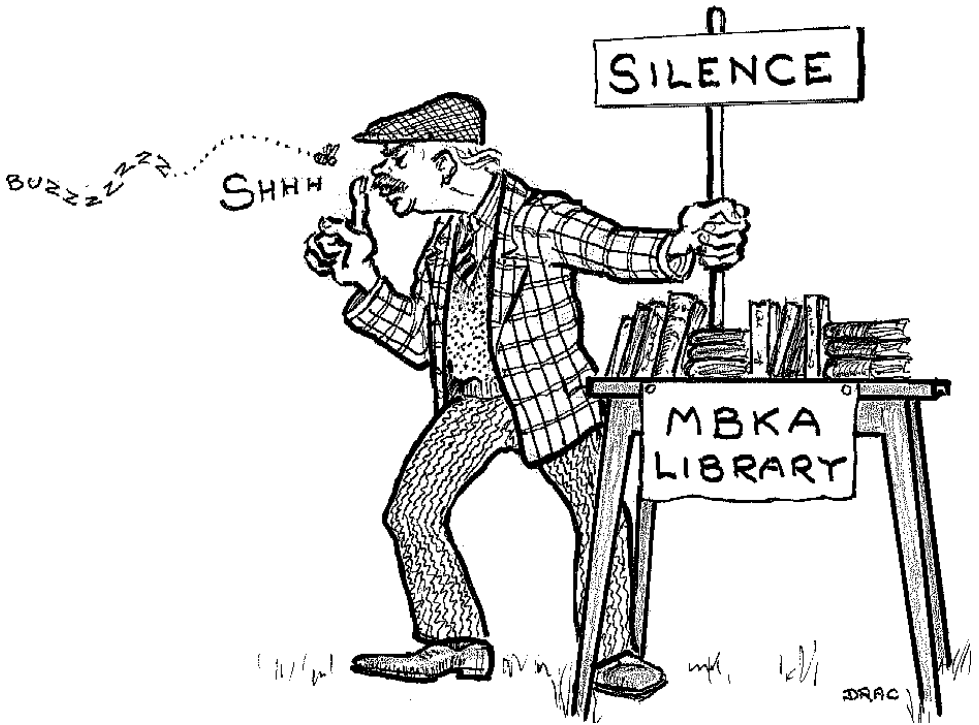
As beekeepers we were aware that a tendency to a “No Risk Culture” had made visiting schools seem out of the question. Caroline however assured us that things were not as daunting as we had assumed. First of course it was necessary to ‘talk the same language’ as teachers. We had to understand the meaning of and relevance of such terms as ‘National Curriculum’, ‘Key Stages’, the ‘Foundation Phase’, the ‘skills agenda’ and ‘pathways’ before we could appreciate where learning about bees fits in. Recently Schools have been encouraged to include **Education for Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship** known as **ESDGC** into the curriculum and this is where bees might well be able to fit in. This stimulated some useful discussion during which Caroline summarised the ‘risk assessment’ process that teachers were used to doing for any activity (“and parents could depend on them so to do when entrusting their offspring to their care...”). To a somewhat sceptical audience Caroline stated that children were not as cotton-wooled as commonly imagined. Parents did appreciate that it was important for children to visit places of work including farms and that a vital part of education was to have workers from these places visit schools to talk about their expertise. Criminal Records Bureau checking was not applicable to those going into schools or hosting visits as the children are always supervised by teachers. These outside visitors, whether they were farmers or beekeepers, would never be left alone supervising a child or children

March 19th

Just back from a lecture tour of New Zealand Wally Shaw from Anglesey came for a first visit to Newtown. His talk “**Where do we go from here**” was a continuation of his article in The Welsh Beekeeper. Wally’s theme was that we all have responsibility for the present state of the honey bee. We, localities, countries and communities have either directly interfered with the honey bee or allowed things to happen in our name. “We have bred bees for our own purposes –selecting for characters such as uniform behaviour, honey production, docility etc, with little regard for their climatic adaption or disease resistance.” The result was a lowering of the gene pool and an inevitability that beekeepers had to resort to medications to cure some of the problems thus created. Inbreeding of bees quickly produces profoundly dysfunctional colonies. There was a need for genetic variability within available drones (see “*Honeybee sex mystery solved at last*” Page 9 January *BeeHolder*), and for beekeepers to have a faith in Natural selection and ruthless cull colonies showing propensity for diseases. Wally was throwing his weight behind a WBKA sponsored “No Varroa treatment colony Survival Project” to be set up on Anglesey. For all our sakes we must wish the project well but the rate of natural genetic mutation would seem too low for natural selection to work in the necessary time span.

Library Exhibition

As you are all aware the MBKA is holding an exhibition in the foyer of the Newtown library throughout the whole of April, nothing is fixed yet as to displays but we seem to be accumulating some interesting bits. If you have anything you will be prepared to lend us will you please come along on the morning of 4th when we shall be setting up? The exhibition will, of course, be unmanned but we are hoping that people may drop by on Saturday mornings to explain the exhibits to visitors, also if anyone is visiting the library themselves and see milling crowds around the displays, then perhaps they could spare a few moments enlighten the ignorant.



At this time we are intending to have an empty hive in the corner complete with foundation and drawn comb also some wonderful photos of brood and stores stuck to frames by Jessica and David, Jane Woods is going to do candle making on Saturdays and Tony is hoping to fill the MBKA observation hive with live bees for the final week. Caroline Davies of the CAFE Project is exploring the possibility of the three nearby schools walking children into the Library to see the observation hive there.

We have the use of three glass cabinets in which we intend to display old beekeeping kit and other items of interest and we have a number of posters to put on the wall, what else? If you have any ideas please contact me:-

Joe Bidwell

Beginners Beekeeping Course

On Saturday 14th March Plas Dolerw, Newtown was the venue for the Beginners Beekeeping Course with Brian Goodwin, President of the Shropshire Beekeepers Association. There were twelve students on the course, one or two with some experience, the remainder absolute beginners.

Bee evolution and the history of beekeeping was an excellent way in which to introduce the students to the course. The morning progressed with Brian covering the colony, bees from egg to adult and how the workers control events. Medical matters in the event of bee sting, varroa control and the work of bee inspectors were all addressed.

With scale models of the WBC and National hive students were able to see how hives are constructed. Samples of actual frames and comb were used to illustrate specific points. Details such as 'bee space', frame spacing, queen exclusion and various personal preferences were also covered. I'm sure everyone was impressed by the potential honey harvest that could be obtained from a single hive in a season. The morning's teachings had gone without a break and so a 30 minute recess was called at 1230 giving a chance for a bite of lunch.

The afternoon session was started with a most interesting slide show illustrating much of what had been talked about during the morning. Then a more detailed talk about swarming, swarm control and how to collect a swarm as this was considered important for the beginner to understand particularly the advantages for expansion of the apiary. Whilst talking about inspection for queen cells the use of a manipulation cloth was demonstrated showing how useful such a simple piece of equipment was.

Collection of nectar by the bees and how it is converted into the honey we know was followed by the all important extraction and the equipment required for this task. Finally the principle of feeding bees was covered and with a range of feeders on hand Brian was able to demonstrate their use.

This narrative is the absolute basis of the course which also included such a wealth of personal knowledge that I'm sure all of us came away with a far greater understanding of the craft that we are about to take up. Brian has a wonderful way of speaking with clarity of explanation and his passion for the craft cannot fail to keep an audience interested. I don't think anyone fell asleep as so often happens when confined in a warm room. The class had questions for Brian right from the start and even though the question often side tracked that part of the course he not only answered with absolute conviction but tried to ensure that the person asking the question was satisfied.

In conclusion, the day was a great success and was just what the 'beginner' needed, not too much in depth detail but enough that someone starting should not make a complete hash of it. Also the individuals on the course were able to have any questions about their own circumstance answered and, with tips and tricks learnt over a lifetime, everyone will have gone away with information that cannot be learnt from books. One fact that everybody should know, and certainly those on the course will always remember, is that everything costs £15 or multiples thereof!

Capt. Tim Blackman

(The next Training Day with Brian Goodwin is Saturday 25th April. There may be places left, check with Jessica OR pressurise for another course! Ed)



Pupils at Aberhafesp School learning the basic of hive construction. The Headmaster, MBKA member Eifion Thomas, is keen that the school teaches beekeeping as part of its curriculum. Brian Goodwin (see page 8) would approve of training as young as this. Of the 10 finalists for “Welsh BeeKeeper of the Year” 8 had been taught beekeeping in school.

Shamans, Saints and Bees

A friend had recommended “The Shamanic Way of the Bee” by Simon Buxton so passionately that I put my name down in the queue to borrow it. But the queue is long so I Googled for a review and found this by the poet David John Drew.

The Gentle Bee Shaman: Keeper of the Pollen Path.

*“Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt a marvellous error;
That I had a beehive here inside my heart.
And the golden bees were making white combs
And sweet honey from my past mistakes.*

-Antonio Machado

(Spanish Poet 1875–1939 Ed)

The Shamanic spiritual path of the anthropologist Simon Buxton developed slowly over a 13

year apprenticeship with a European Bee-Keeper. During that time he established the British branch of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, and The Sacred Trust; an organization which guides those seeking native spiritual traditions. His sharp and enlightening path is detailed in his book; *'Shamanic Way of the Bee: Ancient Wisdom and Healing Practices of the Bee Masters'*.

I find this a strange, beautiful but not altogether surprising occupation. The 'Pollen Path' is certainly mystical, yet based on practical elements and possesses a sound purpose. The honey bee and all its relatives have been exchanging information with humans since the beginning of our time, they themselves are prehistoric, having been here for at least 55 million years since the Cenozoic era. Within the concept of healing and nutrition we are indebted to this marvellous creature, their beneficence is without doubt. Buxton's initiation into this secret world came when as a nine year old boy he succumbed to a fatal infection of encephalitis, yet was miraculously saved by an Austrian bee-keeper Shaman. We need only consider the various healing agents of the hive to understand; honey, pollen, propolis, wax and royal jelly to understand the immense potential. I myself recently created a successful skin healing salve with bee's wax and lemon balm for a particularly bad irritation. This is animal-spirit medicine at its most potent; traditional practitioners even used the bee stings as a form of acupuncture!

In medieval Ireland there was a saying; that one of the three most difficult things to understand was the work of bee's (obair na mbeach) and as such were closely connected to the mysterious and magical priestly functions of the Druids. Legal restrictions were imposed as to who kept bee hives and who was entitled to the seemingly divine produce of honey, but especially mead; reserved for warriors and nobles. Throughout Europe, especially amongst monastic orders the bee was not only symbolic of the soul, death and rebirth but also of the Virgin Mary herself; the queen bee of heaven. Amongst the Native Navajo the pollen path is sacred, representing the very source of life and incorporates a ritual as a way of envisioning the centre of existence. They sing;

*"O beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty to my right, beauty to my left,
beauty above me, beauty below me, I am on the Pollen Path."*

It is a journey to understanding the deepest aspects of the self, to the hive of the heart, to listen to the constant drone of the song of creation, and extract the honey-like essence of our mind and bodies. Pollen is the substance of the earth, the spirit, the cosmos; truly the finest blessing.

As a totem animal the bee possesses the powers of a higher consciousness, prophetic dreams, industriousness, diligence, productivity, creativity, immense sexual attraction and can act as a divine messenger. Like the Queen Bee in the Grimm fairy tale, this creature has the capacity to restore order, life and love; a balm blessing on the lips of the 'forever young.'

One of my favourite stories is that of Saint Modomnoc; as a young lad of the O'Neil clan in Ireland he longed for a spiritual life, like his relative St. Columba. So one day he set off across the sea to serve and study as a monk in the monastery with St. David in Wales. Modomnoc was given charge of the

bee hives, and diligently he cared for them like they were his own children; even planting the sort of flowers they liked best in the garden. The bees likewise became enamoured of the monk,

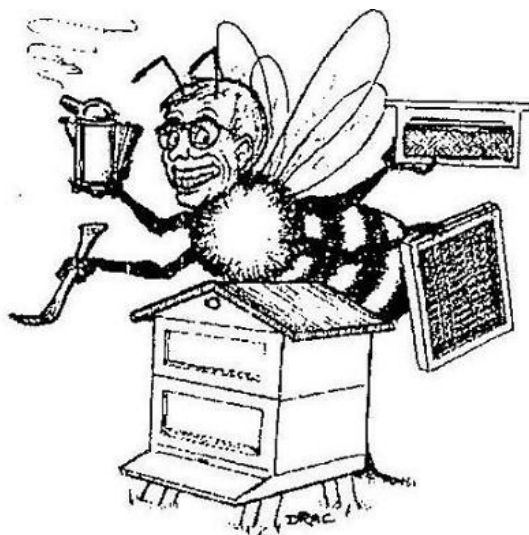
constantly following him around, buzzing about his head singing fair melodies in an enchanting manner.

Soon it came to the end of his time there, and after his ordination he packed up and prepared to return to Ireland; bidding farewell to his bees. Every time he boarded the ship the bees would fly after him, not even twice but thrice times in a row. He tried all means to persuade the creatures to remain in the Welsh monastery, but all without success until eventually St. David himself told Modonmoc to take them with him. He eventually settled in Bremore near Dublin and built there a spiritual dwelling which soon became known as 'The Church of the Beekeeper.'

David John Drew, Aurora Colorado USA

For a comparison here is the official review of the book:-

“ Bee shaman Simon Buxton recounts the enthralling story of his apprenticeship with Bridge, a beekeeper and master of the *Path of Pollen*, whom Buxton describes as living 'simultaneously in the past, present, and the future, a bridge across, through and outside the circles of time'. In *The Shamanic Way of the Bee*, we follow Buxton through an intense initiation that opened him to the mysteries of the hive mind, and through his experiences over the next thirteen years as he learned the practices, rituals and tools of bee shamanism. What he has to say about the healing and spiritual powers of honey and other bee products will make you see them in an entirely new way, and, as a result of reading this powerful book, you'll feel deeply connected with our friends, the bees, and their magical world.”



BRIAN NORRIS

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'Armed' chimps go wild for honey

Cameras have revealed how "armed" chimpanzees raid beehives to gorge on sweet honey. Scientists in the Republic of Congo found that the wild primates crafted large clubs from branches to pound the nests until they broke open. The team said some chimps would also use a "toolkit" of different wooden implements in a bid to access the honey and satisfy their sweet tooth. The study is published in the International Journal of Primatology.

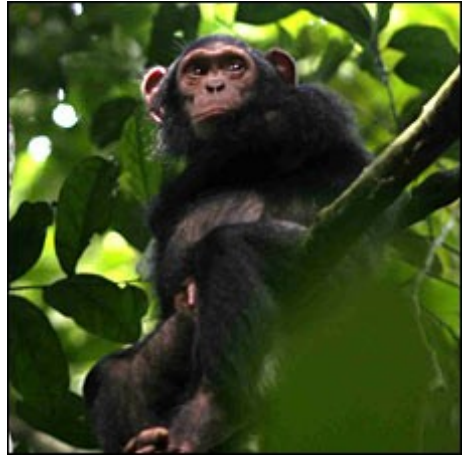
Crickette Sanz, from the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, said: "The nutritional returns don't seem to be that great. But their excitement when they've succeeded is incredible, you can see how much they are enjoying tasting the honey. But these nests are tough to get into - they can be at the top of the forest canopy, at the end of a branch - and the chimps will go up there and hang at all sorts of precarious angles to get to the honey, using these clubs in any way that they can to access it."

Chimps' love of honey and their ingenuity at accessing it are well known amongst primatologists - previous studies have revealed how the great apes can fashion sticks to dip into or prise open nests. But until now, nobody realised how prevalent the beehive-bashing behaviour was amongst chimpanzees in the Goulougo Triangle in the Congo Basin.

Dr Sanz said: "It seems these chimps in central Africa have developed more sophisticated techniques for getting at the honey than populations in eastern and western Africa - maybe it is some kind of regional feature. Perhaps for obvious reasons, the chimps avoided bee species that sting, targeting the hives of stingless bees instead. "

The video footage, which was filmed by the researchers over four years, revealed the chimps' sheer determination to get at the sweet stuff.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7948633.stm>



Dr Sanz explained: "Nobody knew they would pound over 1,000 times to get to the honey. Sometimes it could take several hours - they would start in the morning at around 10am, then take some rests, and then finish up at about 2 or 3 in the afternoon. It is quite physically challenging - in the videos you can see how large those pounding clubs are - some weigh over a kilogram."

The primatologists also found that the Congo chimps' tool use was more sophisticated than previously thought. David Morgan, a co-author on the study from the Wildlife Conservation Society and Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, said: "One of the most exciting aspects is that they are using multiple tools to access the honey that is in these hives. They have a tool kit ready when they go for honey. They will have large pounding clubs and they'll use those to hammer the hives. And if that doesn't do, if the holes are too small, then they'll access them using smaller, thinner dipping wands. And they are also using smaller sticks for leverage to get better access to the hive."

The researchers also said that once the chimps had spotted and then crafted a suitable club from a branch, by pulling off unwanted twigs and leaves with their teeth or hands, they would set it aside for later use.

Dr Morgan said: "They cache them in the canopy."

Last week, the same team also reported how Goulougo Triangle chimps were crafting fishing rods with a brush-tipped end to fish for termites, and the scientists say there is still much to learn about tool use in these chimps. However the chimps' future was uncertain, as the primates and their habitat were under threat.

Dr Morgan said: "These beehives are found in tree species that are exploited for logging, so this could be a direct affect we have on their behaviour, their feeding and their conservation."

Adapted from an article by Rebecca Morelle , Science reporter, BBC News

I had a telephone call from the Editor of The Welsh Beekeeper about our last BeeHolder. He asked permission to reprint one of our articles. It was the English translation, by our Maggie Franklin, of an article which had originally appeared in Welsh in his own magazine. Another WBKA committee member told me that the hay-day of the WBKA was when it held its meetings in Shrewsbury.

Symmetry is in the Eye of the Beeholder

When selecting a mate humans tend to go for a high degree of bilateral symmetry. Indeed it is almost the case that the greater the symmetry the greater is the perceived beauty. The same quest for symmetry is working in the parallel evolution of insects and plants. Bilateral symmetry has been considered as an indicator of phenotypic and genotypic quality supporting innate preferences for highly symmetric partners. Insect pollinators have been found to preferentially visit flowers of a particular symmetry type. This has lead to a suggestion that insects have innate preferences for symmetrical flowers or flower models. Researchers* show that flower-naïve bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*), with no experience of symmetric or asymmetric patterns and whose visual experience was accurately controlled, have innate preferences for bilateral symmetry. The presence of colour cues did not influence the bees' original preference. The researcher's results showed that bilateral symmetry is innately preferred in the context of food search, a fact that supports the selection of symmetry in flower displays. Furthermore, such innate preferences indicate that the nervous system of naïve animals may be primed to respond to relevant sensory cues in the environment.

(*=*I Rodriguez, A Gumbert, N Hempel de Ibarra, J Kunze, M Giurfa Naturwissenschaften, Vol. 91, No. 8*)

Tony Shaw

Launching Plan Bee

As a locally based regional office I was pleased to be asked to write for you. It's not often that we are approached and our voice is usually that of our head office in Manchester. But, we do exist here in Cymru/Wales and we are tuned in to the issues that face our local area and farming community.

In February on a snowy winters evening thirty co-operative members braved the cold to come along to Plas Dolerw in Newtown to find out more about the Co-operatives Plan Bee, our campaign and ten point plan to help save the bee. I know that bees produce honey from nectar, and that they pollinate fruit and vegetables but other than that I hadn't thought much about them. Bees have always been around – something I would run from in my childhood and that my dog would chase about the garden. But on that cold night in February, along with several bee keepers from Montgomeryshire, I watched a short film about bees that showed me just how important bees were and how their continued demise could impact on society.

As a leader on the environment and the UK's largest farmer, The Co-operative couldn't ignore the recent decline in the UK's bee population. The bee has been used in the Co-operative Society's iconography since the middle of the 19th Century - bees are fundamentally co-operative in their nature. In fact the Rochdale Pioneers even included a beehive in the brickwork of their central premises in mid 1860's.

So we launched Plan Bee - a ten point plan to help the bee.

1. The Co-operative Food will temporarily prohibit the use of neonicotinoid-based pesticides on own-brand fresh produce.
2. £150,000 will be made available to support research into the demise of the honeybee.
3. Over three years The Co-operative Farms will trial a new wildflower seed mix that will be planted alongside crops on our farms across the UK.
4. The Co-operative Farms will invite beekeepers to establish hives on all our farms in the UK.
5. The Co-operative will engage our three-million members in a campaign to protect and nurture the bee population in the UK.
6. Members were invited to screenings of a special preview from a forthcoming film that addresses the decline of the worldwide bee population. The Co-operative has also commissioned a new bespoke documentary on the decline of the bee population in the UK.
7. The Co-operative will partner with RSPB's 'Homes for Wildlife' team and empower members to garden in ways that are honeybee-friendly.
8. An initial 20,000 packets of wildflower seed mix will be made available to members free of charge.
9. Bee boxes are being sourced and made available to The Co-operative members at discounted prices.
10. The Co-operative will support our members and colleagues to find out more about amateur beekeeping.

To find out more about the Co-operative and our ten point bee campaign visit our website at www.co-operative.coop/membership

Alison Clinton, The Co-operative, Glansevern Hall ,Berriew, Welshpool

What do I need to start beekeeping?

apprentice yourself to an old beekeeper

In the last BeeHolder "*What do I need to start beekeeping?*" gave some rough prices for the equipment needed. If one was committed to start a hobby such as dressmaking, shooting or photography a start-up cost of around £200 would not seem excessive. But beekeeping is different. The decision to commit to the hobby really only comes once one has started. So keeping initial expenditure down is really important. This is an area where the local BKA can help.

There are so many ex-beekeepers around who are hanging onto old equipment. Perhaps they hang on out of sentiment, perhaps because they think they might come across a swarm and start again or perhaps because they are just forgetful and lazy. This equipment should be passed around. Old is not going to be the best. But as long as it is cleaned and sterilised it will be good enough to help a newcomer get a taste of the craft and be able to buy new equipment with confidence after a season or two. And how many old beekeepers have downsized and kept a hoard of equipment which could have been lent or given to a newcomer?

BKAs should come up with schemes to take over and redistribute equipment. New members should accept that they could offer old beekeeper something. Perhaps a share of any honey they produce, perhaps manual help at the time of honey extraction. In helping and giving they could become a sort of apprentice to the experienced. Remember, in the good old days of apprenticeships it wasn't just the master who looked for apprentices it was the unskilled who sought out a master and asked to be an apprentice. Both the new and the old beekeeper need to seek each other out for the benefit of the bees. Perhaps we should revive the ancient custom of the Hiring Fair

So, having borrowed, leased, or liberated some equipment how do you get the bees? You can always buy a Nuc. Expensive but safe. Swarms are safe if you know the history of the apiary from which they came. Otherwise, well you could be importing trouble. But so many beekeepers started that way and the swarm could be a real gem. Seek the advice of an older beekeeper. You will need help the first time you catch a swarm because no amount of book reading will be able to prepare you for practicalities of that first catch. Theoretically each police station should keep a list of local beekeepers prepared to come out and catch a swarm. In practice the police seem unaware of this obligation. However there is no harm in telling them what they are supposed to be doing and insist that your name is on their notice board. Most BKAs have a Swarm Co-ordinator, ours is Roy Mander who will keep your name on his list. Another way would be to put a small ad in the BeeHolder or our new website.

Remember that a kindness received should be repaid by a kindness given. Most of us were taught by someone more experienced and that is why, even when we are getting grumpy in our old age, we can always spare time to help a younger beekeeper. Don't be afraid to ask and don't be mean with equipment you are no longer using. (Hey you old b*ggers out there you know exactly who I am referring to!)

And just a word about expense. On a good season you could make enough profit to cover your costs. Old is not always best and New is not always the most expensive.

Tony Shaw

Honey dew

Flowering plants and pollinating bees evolved in parallel. The plant encourages visits by the bee by producing nectar which the bee uses as a source of energy and as a food store when converted to honey. However nectar is not the only source of sugars which bees turn into honey. Exudates from the Sugarcane sugar as well as the great industrial sugar mills provide enormous quantities of sugars which bees concentrate into a “honey”. (in Europe we would not be allowed to call this Honey but it is sold as such in the Caribbean.) The other major source of sugars for bees is honeydew. This is the exudate, that little glistening blob of liquid, which come from the backside of sap-sucking insects.

When the aphid or other sap-sucking insect bites into the stem or leaf a sugary, high-pressure liquid is forced into the insect. The “sap” is has a very low concentration of proteins relative to the sugar content. In order to get enough proteins to build their bodies the insect must ingest vast quantities of sap and exude the excess sugary liquid. Ants and bees gather this sugary liquid called honeydew.

Honeydew honey is very dark brown in colour, with a rich fragrance of stewed fruit or fig jam and is not as sweet as nectar honeys. Honeydew honey is popular in some areas, but in other areas beekeepers have difficulty selling the stronger flavoured product. In fact honeydew is a good indication not of the extent of flowers but of the extent of disease in the local flora. Sap-sucking insects are of course a major transmitter of plant diseases.

Adverts and Sponsors

Worried about great swathes of print? 97% of this edition is text. The Welsh Beekeeper Magazine has only 66% as text. And other local BKAs work on 80% text and 20% adverts. **Can anyone help to pull in some sponsorship or adverts?** A few adverts help to break up the text and the money is really useful to make a better magazine.

Honey dew is also the liquid that continues to exude from the wounds on leaves after the sap-sucking insect has moved on. You’ll have noticed the mess on cars parked beneath lime and Sycamore trees. This is honeydew dripping from open wounds. Perhaps you have also noticed in early summer masses of bees lying comatosed beneath a sycamore tree. What has happened is that natural yeasts have become embedded on the sticky leaves and have turned the sugars to alcohol. The bees are drunk.

The production of Honeydew honey has some complications and dangers. The honey has a much larger proportion of indigestibles than light floral honeys, which can cause dysentery to the bees, resulting in the death of colonies in areas with cold winters. Good beekeeping management requires the removal of honeydew prior to winter in colder areas. Bees collecting this resource also have to be fed protein supplements, as honeydew lacks the protein-rich pollen accompaniment gathered from flowers.

The MBKA Web Site

I'm a new member of the MBKA, and yet to get my first colony of bees (which will hopefully come along this year). I was a member of the Somerset Bee Keepers Association before moving up here to Montgomeryshire, and have been impressed at the helpfulness and enthusiasm of bee keepers of both associations towards new members, so when somebody suggested a web site at the AGM I was happy to volunteer to help get it off the ground.

Most clubs and societies these days have a website as a useful tool for members and to advertise their presence to the rest of the world. For people already receiving club information by e-mail, it is a small step to bookmarking the club web site in your internet browser and the problems of bouncing e-mails are suddenly a thing of the past. For everybody else, we can continue with paper and stamps! .

We intend that the web site will provide information on the MBKA and bees generally to the public, maintain current and archive copies of the BeeHolder, have links to other bee web sites and serve as the first stop for news and information for our members. We would also like to hear from any members with ideas for things to put on the web site, or any web sites you've seen which have features you'd like to see included..

Finally, I plan to put out a questionnaire to all members to find out who has broadband, who uses dial up etc in order to design a web site which can be used most effectively by as many members as possible.

Please contact me with any comments or suggestions. If I know what problems you are having with email and the internet then it will be easier for me to design a website suitable for the slow connection rates of Montgomeryshire.

Chris Leech bazaljett@yahoo.co.uk

CCD _does not exist_ say scientists

THE battle against the mysterious Colony Collapse Disorder which has swept the US over the past two years took a bizarre turn this month as some experts say they no longer believe it exists. Baffled by their attempts to pin down a cause for the widespread colony losses, some scientists are now blaming a cocktail of existing threats, which they say have come together in a 'perfect storm' to decimate honey bee numbers.

Chief among the more usual suspects is the *Varroa destructor* parasitic mite and the *Nosema* variant *N. ceranae*, first mooted as a cause by Spanish scientists, and Israeli Acute Bee Paralysis Virus. These are backed up by fears over pesticide use and the ongoing debate over lack of diversity in the bees' diet, brought about mainly through modern monoculture farming practices, particularly in the US.

Dr Dennis Anderson, principal research scientist in entomology with the Australian research organisation CSIRO, said: "Researchers around the world are running round trying to find the cause of the disorder – and there's absolutely no proof that there's a disorder there."

Read more in Bee Mail beemail@bee-craft.com

Your Country Needs YOU

-call goes out to invisible army of hobby beekeepers

The survival of honeybees is under threat because of an unknown army of 20,000 hobby beekeepers who lack the knowledge they need to spot and combat disease. In a hard-hitting report on 4th March the National Audit Office (NAO) suggests that unless these amateurs are identified and taught the skills they need to protect their hives the country's food production capacity will be reduced. The urgency is reinforced by the growing popularity of the pastime with about 3,200 people a year investing in safety suits and veiled helmets.

The plight of the honeybee was part of an investigation into whether the handling of animal disease control budgets by the Department of the Environment, food and Rural Affairs represented value for money. About 30% of colonies were lost during the 2007-08 winter and the endemic varroa parasite now affects 95% of hives. There are an estimated 274,000 colonies compared to 400,000 in 1960. The audit Office is concerned, however, that the control of varroa is being hampered by the lack of colony inspections by the National Bee Unit, part of Defra. It is also unhappy that control efforts to date have failed to prevent varroa, which was not seen in Britain before 1992, from becoming endemic in 2006. Unless Government inspectors find out who keeps bees and where they will be unable to prevent the further destruction of bees.

The NAO suggests a new campaign by inspectors to persuade all beekeepers to join a national register. So far only 17,000 have done so. If that fails, it suggests that ministers should examine the viability of a compulsory scheme, similar to those in Belgium, France and New Zealand. It is also anxious that the Government should organise training for beekeepers to help them to spot signs of disease and to notify inspectors who can then prevent further losses of colonies.

At present inspectors identify about 80% of hives with disease. **Only a fifth of keepers report possible disease problems in their own hives.** *(Hey this is serious folks. Ed)*

Another problem highlighted by the report is that the varroa mite, which feeds on bees and spreads viruses, is resistant to treatments that tackle infestation. Some keepers are therefore buying supplies of oxalic acid via the internet. Its use is widespread within the European Union but it is not licensed in Britain. Enforcement authorities have turned a blind eye to this unlawful activity because they recognise that the substance needs to be approved for use.

Edward Leigh, the Conservative MP and chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, is particularly concerned that disease controls are being undermined by the enormous numbers of beekeepers unknown to the Government.

“Action to stem the very high losses of honeybees in recent years crucially depends on a regime of comprehensive inspections and treatment of colonies. At the moment it isn't being done” he said

In January Hilary Benn, the Rural Affairs Secretary, announced an extra £4.3million to be spent over the next five years on bee protection and disease research.

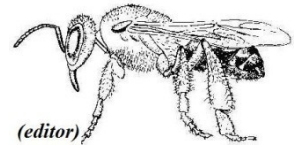
Martin Smith, the chairman of the British Beekeepers Association, who keeps 8 colonies in Skelmersdale Lancashire, said he was concerned that the extra money would be spent on leaflets and campaigns to persuade beekeepers to join the national registration instead of vital research into the underlying Causes of the decline in colonies.

Adapted from an article in The Times 4th March 2009

In the BEEginning:

the evolution of Hymenoptera (bees wasps and ants)

Flowering plants and bees evolved together. In the last issue of BeeHolder we examined the early evolution of bees. Here we look at the pressures which caused the flowering plants to evolve.



Raison d'eater

The flowering plants, or angiosperms, arose from another, older, division of seed-producing plants, the cone-bearers, or gymnosperms. In both cases the male and female sex cells are separated into distinct organs. For fertilization to occur, pollen, which carries the male germ plasm, must first be conducted to the female organs of the plant- - this, of course, is pollination. The gymnosperms produce air-borne pollen, as, most likely, did the first flowering plants. The success of air-borne pollen in pollination is dependent on the whims of wind and on the amount of pollen that a plant produces. So plants that tended to produce large quantities of pollen had a greater chance for competitive success. All this pollen represented a source of high energy lipids and proteins-- food-- to the insect world. Competition for food sources represents a major selective pressure and serves to mould the life history of an organism. Insects that were better able to exploit this resource, because of behaviour or physiology (form and function) appropriate to the task, had a better chance for survival and thus more of their offspring survived.

These insects, in their rummaging about for food, became the agents of pollination, as the pollen adhering to their bodies was transferred to the female organs of the plant. Thus, not only were the plants benefitted by increased pollination but the insects were helping to pave the way for an ensured supply of their food source. Eventually, both plants and insects became more and more specialized as a result of this relation. Many of the insects evolved behaviour and physiology completely dependent upon the cycles of flowering plants. Similarly, certain plants developed flower structures in which pollination was possible only with the intervention of an insect intermediary.

Even the structure of pollen, itself, changed. Air-borne pollen, like that of the gymnosperms and some angiosperms, is generally smooth, small and light. Pollen that is transferred by insects or other animals usually has spines, ridges or an adhesive surface which aids in attaching to the animal vector.(5) Expanding this adaptive arsenal even further, some plants even developed certain organs, nectaries, that secreted a sugary liquid, nectar, at the base of the flower. This proved to be an adaptive advantage for the plant since the nectar, as a food source, was a further attraction to many insect species whose, now, increased rummaging promoted the success of pollination and seed-set even further. The lifestyles of flowering plants and of pollinating insects became forever intertwined.

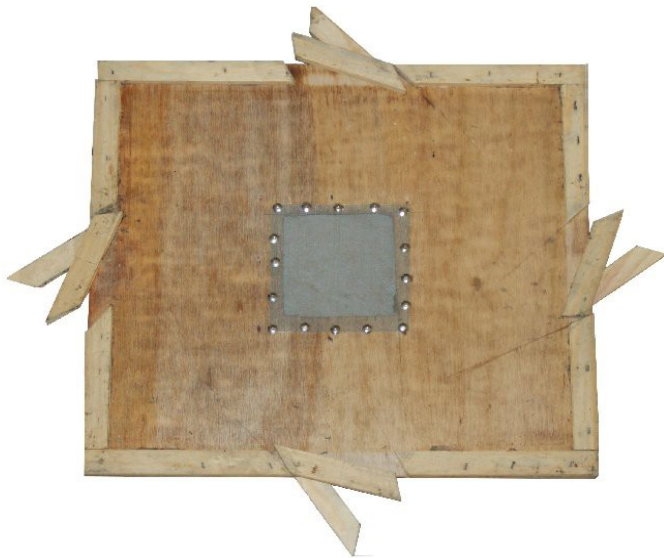
To be continued next issue

The BeeHolder presents

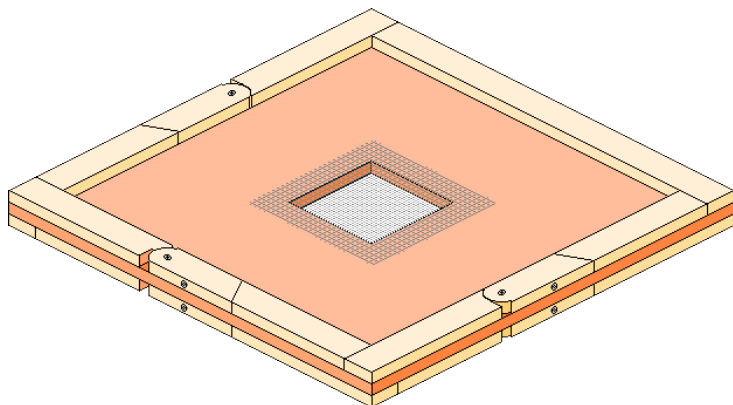
Homework for New Beekeepers

Look up and learn about the Snelgrove Board... Then ask about it at the next Training Session or Apiary meeting. It is like a stage design by Lord Brian Rix for a Whitehall Theatre farce!

scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/learning/documents/number%2013%20snelgrove%20board.pdf



Probably the best site is website.lineone.net/~dave.cushman from where this picture of a Snelgrove Board came



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