



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder

July 2011



Whoops! Well, it was the queen

Boffins explaining the brood frame at the apiary family day.

No queens were harmed in the making of this BeeHolder

Photo courtesy of Gekkkko



Forthcoming Events

- July 16th - 21st Royal Welsh Show, **Bee Section** in South Glamorgan Hall
Monday – Thursday Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells
- July 31st **MBKA** Apiary Visit: The hobbyist apiary Host: Graham Winchester
Sunday 2.00pm Link House, The Gro, Pool Road, Newtown, SY16 3AJ
Tel: 01686 627014 grid ref SO 923 126
- August 28th **MBKA** Apiary Visit: Open Hives at our Training apiary
Sunday 2.00pm Theme: Getting ready for honey extraction Gregynog Hall, Tregynon
- September 3rd and 4th Glansevern Food Festival - Bee stall provided by MBKA
Sat and Sun 10.00am Volunteers needed to man our stall Glansevern Hall, Berriew
- September 23rd Coach trip to Tropical Forest Products, Nr Aberystwyth
Sunday time TBC and afterwards a meal, various pick-ups starting Newtown
- October 20th **MBKA Meeting:** Making beeswax products, talk and workshop
Thursday 7.00pm with Jane Frank and Michelle Boudin Plas Dolerw, Newtown
- November 17th **MBKA Meeting:** Bees in the Time of the Pharaohs
Thursday 7.00pm Talk by Pauline Norris Plas Dolerw, Newtown

2012

- January 14th **MBKA** Annual Dinner, date and time TBC
Saturday 7.00pm Christmas dinner in January, yumm. Gregynog Hall, Tregynon
- February 23th **MBKA** Annual General Meeting, date and time TBC
Thursday 7.00pm Guest speaker TBA, free hive raffle. Plas Dolerw, Newtown

For the latest information, check the website – www.montybees.org.uk.

Situation Vacant

The secretary post is currently vacant. This is quite a prominent post, as the secretary is the first point of contact for people contacting the association. Some of the sundry tasks normally associated with secretary (ie new members, minute taking) have been split away to simplify what needs doing, but it is still a job which would get you involved with the organisation and future of MBKA.

It is also a great opportunity to meet people to do with bees outside the association. If you are interested, just contact any committee member.

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This space for rent !

If you would like to advertise in the BeeHolder and reach over 100 beekeepers directly plus many more on the internet, please contact a member of the committee

Editorial

Well, this is my second stab at the BeeHolder editing job, and so far it has not gone as smoothly as hoped. July 5th already and the thing is only half done. Still, it has to get easier as I go along, doesn't it?

I hinted in my last editorial that the winter had not been a bad one for bees and beekeepers, but now the dust has completely settled it is clear that I have lost both my hives. Not strictly true – I still have them, but they are empty. Perhaps I should concentrate more on the keeping aspect of beekeeping.

My hopes of catching a swarm to keep things going have pretty much evaporated for this season, but with a lot of other things going on perhaps it is better to put off keeping bees till next year. I expect there will be a lot of angry, unpollinated plants about who won't thank me for that.

Chris Leech

We Welcome as New Members ...

Debbie Gurden [Shrewsbury], Simon Church [Newtown], John Sanford [Felindre] and Veronica White [Llanymynech].

We look forward to seeing you at the various events coming up during the next few months. Also, if you have not already done so, why not sign up to the Montybees web site to keep track of the latest developments and join in on the forum pages?

Chairman's Chat

At the last committee meeting there was criticism that the MBKA had perhaps spent too much time trying to make the meetings attractive and sociable and not provided enough training courses. It is a balance that it is hard to get right.

The big increase in membership and the average attendance at meetings suggests that we are doing something right. Then, during casual conversations, one notices the fathomless depth of ignorance of a fellow beekeeper to the seemingly obvious and is driven to despair. But one cannot show the despair because that would cut off the learning process. One has always to show concern and encouragement. Could there be a way of having a course for say, "assembling a brood frame from a kit of bits of wood"? Of course too few would come, but how many times have you noticed a frame nailed wrongly and causing trouble in the hive? Or, another example, could we have a course on the genetics of insects? I suspect it would either be deemed to be too esoteric or too simplistic. Yet I know of many members who are full of enthusiasm for helping the environment through keeping bees or desperate for the honey for their family and yet are totally ignorant about simple insect biology. "What is a drone?" . These questions do not come out in formal training courses, but in the casual walk towards a hive and whilst stacking the tea cups.

During the life of this edition of BeeHolder we are going from the second blast of nectar flow to taking off the honey and shutting down the hives for winter. July to October is a busy time for beekeepers and yet it is where many, especially novice beekeeper, maybe approaching without

knowledge or guidance. The courses that we have run at the beginning of the year seem a far distant ...memory... no not even memory... because most of what was said would have been forgotten. Beekeeping is a craft that can really only be learnt by closely following the hand movements of a more experienced beekeeper. A book may describe how to light a smoker and administer smoke to a hive. Only the sight of an experienced beekeeper smoking can show the lazy waft of the smoke over the frames drifted into crevices by the wind.

The Training Apiary at Gregynog is manned regularly by Apiary Manager Dave Bennett and Seasonal Bee Inspector John Beavan. For hands-on experience of bees there can be no better opportunity than to be at Gregynog whilst these guys are working the hives. They have both done courses on how to teach beekeeping. And both have a natural way with bees. Phone up to check on a date. Often Dave and John can arrange for their next visit to the apiary to coincide when you are free to be in the area.

In the next MBKA meetin, in Newtown on July 30th, host Graham Winchester has promised us a couple of deliberate mistakes. Bring along your children and grandchildren in the hope that Graham will again throw himself into his pond to bring out newts and dragonfly larvae for the amusement of children and adults alike. Learning is easier when there is delight and he who plays the fool has often the highest of motives at heart.

Tony Shaw

If you have any views on this, or if you have some ideas for courses you would like to see, don't hesitate to get in touch with somebody on the committee or start a thread on the forum area of the website.

Ed

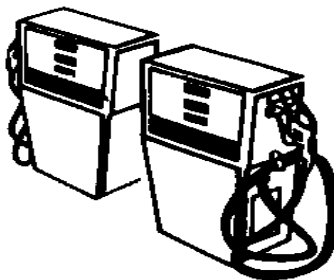
Petrol for half price (or less).

Is the cost of getting to meetings and apiary visits getting you down?

Why not share the driving with other bee keepers in your area?

This could reduce your bee related fuel costs by 50% or more. If you don't know who is nearby, get in touch with the chairman, Tony Shaw, who can let you have phone numbers of any beekeeping neighbours you may have.

As a side benefit, it will make parking easier, too.



Bee Safari

When Regional Bee Inspector John Beavan first mentioned the idea of a “bee safari” to me I was a little confused. Immediately my thoughts turned to pith helmets, khaki shorts, native-bearers and blunderbusses. I began to wonder if *Apis Mellifera* would look a bit out of place mounted on the wall next to the moose’s head.

However, with a bit of explanation I began to understand that FERA’s bee safari idea was one that could be really useful to new and experienced beekeepers alike. The simple premise was that John would organise a group of us, all living relatively near to each other, to meet up and take a look at each others’ bees. We’d move from apiary to apiary, inspect the bees, and then finish the day with a bring-and-share lunch.

After a bit of to-ing and fro-ing by e-mail a date was agreed and I began to start worrying about whether my rather feisty bees would behave themselves on the day! When the day arrived I awoke at the sound of rain on the roof – not a good start. However, John picked me up at around 10am and we headed off to meet the others at the first apiary. Our fellow beekeepers on the safari were Ros, Richard and Ivor – all members of the Oswestry Beekeepers Association.



Dress for bee safari



Don't expect this

We arrived at Richard’s apiary where he keeps his two hives in the beautiful countryside up near Rhiwlas and the sun began to emerge from the clouds. John treated us to a few jokes from the FERA Bee Inspectors’ Joke Book – including the hilarious “your bees are all dead”. How we laughed!

Richard’s bees were a fairly dark strain and were almost as ferocious as mine have been over the last few weeks – John sustained a few stings and Ivor ended up with a few hundreds of bees on his back and a couple inside his veil. But, the bees seemed to be doing well and his recently artificially-swarmed colony was building up nicely.

One of the “rules” of the bee safari is that you are not allowed to inspect your own bees. It was exciting to handle someone else’s bees but made us all a bit nervous of committing some kind of terrible mistake. For the first time in years my hands were trembling as I pulled out each frame!

After a brief break for tea, cake and chat we moved on to Ros’s apiary. Ros’s two colonies and two nucs had been giving her cause for concern lately as they had been hell-bent on swarming. We carefully opened up Ros’s hives and found a mixed bag – the two nucs were doing really well but one of colonies seemed to be almost “swarmed out” and the other was in desperate need of feeding. The poor weather over the last month had left the bees with little or no stores. Ros headed off to find a feeder asap!

Next came my apiary. I had been looking forward all week to proudly showing off my bees but, surprise surprise, as we reached my house the heavens opened and a torrential downpour began. So, as we were already running a bit late, we reluctantly decided to skip my bees and move straight onto lunch. Over our feast of sandwiches, salads and cakes we discussed everything from varroa to hive thefts, and John gave us all some very insightful tips on disease control.

I was disappointed that we didn’t get to look at my bees but, I have to say, I benefited immensely from the bee safari. The chance to see how other people manage their bees, the equipment they

use and the problems they encounter, was an enriching and educational experience as well as being a fun, social day. I would highly recommend it to new and experienced beekeepers alike.

As we parted we exchanged phone nos and e-mails and all agreed that we would carry on meeting as a small group every now and then and would assist each other with swarms etc. I'm already looking forward to our next meeting when, hopefully, my bees will be the main attraction!

If you would like to go on safari with beekeepers in your local area please get in touch with John Beavan (details on contacts page).

Andy Brown

Reports on Meetings

Varroa management for beginners - 17th April

We had booked SBI John Beavan for two varroa courses at Gregynog. John had advised that there should be a course for novice beekeepers and another for experienced beekeepers. Novices on the 17th and the more experienced on the 30th April. That way John would be able to pitch the courses at the level of experience of the audience.

The novice course, on 17th April, was well attended - perhaps even a little oversubscribed. John gave the lecture in the morning, and the attending beginners left with a more confident attitude towards the varroa problem. John then drove to Churchstoke to inspect a Member's hives (before they were sold on to a new member) and then drove back to Gregynog for our first Open Apiary meeting with an emphasis on family friendliness in the afternoon.

This was a pleasant afternoon spent in the apiary whilst some wives and children played outside. Some beekeepers remarked that they would not have been able to attend had they not been able to bring their children. Afterwards there was an opening of the hives in the Gregynog apiary which all could attend, and finally the traditional (and to some, all important) apiary visit tea and chat.

Varroa management for more experienced keepers - 30th April

Unfortunately this event was cancelled due to undersubscription, and then tragically several beekeepers turned up on the day, not realizing that they had needed to reserve a place in advance. Unlike normal apiary meetings, for a course the lecture room at Gregynog has to be paid for, John Beavan cannot afford the time to come all the way from Oswestry for a non-event, and so we need to know in advance if there is sufficient interest in a course to justify holding it. Perhaps it is appropriate to mention that the rate of colony loss is greater in apiaries of "the more experienced" beekeepers than in those of novice beekeepers.

This was an unfortunate mix up, but hopefully the course will be re-scheduled to run at another time as varroa management is clearly a key skill for beekeepers of all experience levels.

Open Hives at Gregynog – 15th May

The theme of the open hives meeting at our Gregynog training apiary was "American and European Foul Brood". Again this was a meeting designed to be family friendly, and as the pictures (also front cover) show, the meeting was well attended by beekeepers both young and old. Many thanks to Trisha Marlow (© Gekkkko) for taking the photographs and allowing their use here and on the web site.

SBI John Beavan had used the apiary equipment shed to arrange posters, booklets and even some infected brood frames to demonstrate how to spot AFB and EFB. This was organised so that the

members could file through, whilst John was available for questions and more detailed explanation. A simple concept but one which was very effective.

Whilst this was going on, in the apiary proper president Jim Crundwell and apiary manager David Bennett went through hives with the other members. For many it was the first time at the apiary, and there is a lot to take in with the number and variety of hives. The younger attendees were clearly delighted to handle frames of bees and look at them – you can't start 'em too young getting an interest in beekeeping!



A first encounter with bees, and only slight trepidation!

After the serious business with the bees, an apiary tea took place with plenty of sandwiches, cakes, teas, coffee and chat. After some re-organisation, the picnic tables and benches between the car park and the apiary made a very serviceable picnic site. And I dare say that the children enjoyed the cakes too.

Apiary Grand Opening, Gregynog – 5th June

The official opening of the Gregynog Apiary was on Sunday 5th June 2011 coinciding with the Gregynog Hall Garden Festival.

There were many stallholders as well as demonstrations of birds of prey flying and sheep dogs herding ducks. In spite of the weather forecast, which had talked of downpours and storms, it was a pleasant day if a little cooler than of late and overcast at times.

The MBKA marquee was the biggest and most obvious one there and contained bee and honey related

stalls. Bees abroad organised candle making for children and Pam Gregory gave an interesting talk



Help us help bees



The chairman on his chair. (Photo courtesy of You've Been Framed)

about their work in Africa. See here for more information about what they do.

The Great Oak Bookshop of Llanidloes had a table in the tent with an extensive range of books about bees and beekeeping. Their shop is well worth a visit - it is like a little piece of Hay-on-Wye in the middle of Wales.

Our association president, Jim Crundwell, brought along some of the extensive collection of

equipment which he has amassed over his beekeeping career. Quite a few people had to ask what some of the stranger looking items were used for.

As a special treat, Brian Goodwin (known to many of us for his beekeeping instruction classes) brought along his male voice choir who entertained the crowd with a selection of anecdotes and songs. The MBKA members who had volunteered to help out on the day also assisted the choir in demolishing a delicious tea laid on for the occasion.

Although no actual ribbon was cut, chairman Tony Shaw made a brief speech to welcome everyone to the opening of the apiary. The viewing hut was not then completely finished, but the crowd filled it up and the overflow arranged themselves along the bee-proof fencing to either side.

There were then two demonstrations of beekeeping at the apiary, ably presented by Dave Bennett and SBI John Beavan. They gave informative and yet entertaining performances which were well received, and yet still found time to go though all nine hives thoroughly.

Thanks again to all the members who helped make it a successful day.

Garden Opening at Tŷ Capel Deildre - 26th June

Dr Beverly Evans-Britt had an open garden day at Tŷ Capel Deildre near Llanidloes in aid of Bees Abroad and MBKA apiary at Gregynog. Although the weather was glorious, the event was not as well attended as it has been in the past. Was this due to insufficient advertising, the recession or the radio advising people to stay indoors and keep cool to avoid spontaneous combustion?

The garden is at 1,350 ft (411 m) and was created 42 years ago from a very windswept waste site. It is amazing to see what trees and plants she has managed to cultivate here at the top of mid-Wales.

For the kids there was a bouncy castle whilst the grown-ups restocked their own gardens at the well stocked plant sale. Bee interests were met by the virtual hive, an observation hive as well as the demonstration opening of one of the apiary hives by John Beavan and his son Toby inside the bee proof cage originally built for Glansevern last year. Croquet and badminton were set up for those who wanted some competitive excitement. Bees abroad had their stall set up to demonstrate their work in Africa.

After the general public were turfed out and the barbecue was fired up. In the absence of regular barbecue gourmet Graham Winchester, it was all a bit haphazard and disorganised, but there wasn't a lot left at the end, so we must have done something right.

After the meal, those who had them donned bee suits and went to look at some of the highest bees in Wales, if not Britain. Tony has three hives here which seem to do surprisingly well on their diet of mountain flora and clouds.



Cage fighting with bees?

The Role of the Swarm Co-ordinator

Ideally, the swarm coordinator would be available at home 24 hours a day during the swarming season, with access to telephone and the internet. It is a distinct advantage if his/her telephone contract is one with free outgoing calls at any time!

Before the swarming season, the coordinator makes contact with the Local Authority, the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services, both at local stations and their respective headquarters, to inform them of the services we provide for the removal of swarms, giving contact details. At the same time the swarm removal service is publicised in prominent places, such as doctors' and dentists' surgeries, free public advertising sites in supermarkets and the like.

The press are also to be asked to publish information about the Association giving details about bees, swarming, and who to contact. As the public generally are unable to differentiate between bees and wasps we indicate that we are willing to give advice. This information appears twice, once at the start of the swarm season and again a couple of weeks later if possible (a jar of local honey works wonders). Another useful contact is using the local freegle groups internet site to advertise our work.

So far as the members are concerned, a list is made of those requiring swarms. This includes names and locations, telephone numbers, distance willing to travel to collect a swarm and whether or not assistance is required for their first swarm. **Members putting their names on the list should ensure that they have the facility and equipment required to collect a swarm.** A cardboard box perhaps? And a hive to put the bees in at the apiary or home?

On report of a swarm the first person on the list in that area is telephoned and given the available details of the swarm together with names and telephone number of the person reporting. They can then get any further information from the source such as the requirement for special equipment - a ladder may be required or detailed directions by mobile phone.

It would be nice, but not essential, to receive a return call on the completion of the collection : it is essential to get a return call if the person going has a change of mind and decides not to go for any reason. This enables the call to be passed down to the next person on the list. A phone call is essential, not an email as the computer is not manned 24/7 If you find that you no longer need a swarm please let the coordinator know as soon as possible to save unnecessary phone calls.

It is an required skill to be able to fend off calls diplomatically without bringing the Association into disrepute. Numerous calls are received from householders who say they have a swarm, but in reality have a wasps nest. Some are genuinely worried not knowing the difference between bees and wasps, and just want advice and reassurance, but others are just trying to get the wasps removed for free, as the local authority and pest controllers charge heavily for this service.

You have to be prepared to receive calls into the night, like one I received from a vicar at 11-30 p.m. who wanted, nay, demanded, that we do something immediately with the masonry bees that were allegedly eating his church. Fortunately his church was in Shropshire so he was provided with the telephone number of the Shropshire bee keepers

Another late one was from a lady who also demanded that we removed four bees that were threatening to sting her children. When asked where the four bees were she replied that they were in the window. She was advised to open the window.

You meet a lot of nice people doing the job, mainly on the phone and it is nice to be able to help them to help us.

Roy Mander

Bee Inspector's newsletter

I have been holding back from writing a Wales inspectorate's newsletter until we have our new recruits in place and I can introduce them. The process has been slow because of the public sector recruitment freeze and it is still not finalised. However, I am confident that we will fill the vacancies and that they will be in post very soon. I will send out details of our new inspectors and the new inspection areas as soon as I can confirm them. Until then, I am pleased to say that our newsletter has been missed and, because events are threatening to overtake us, I will wait no longer.

As usual, the highs and lows of our beekeeping fortunes are dictated by the weather. After a warm April, when colonies built up very well, May turned cool and wet in West Wales, and drier and cool in East Wales. Those close to oil seed rape found that the flow ended abruptly while it was still in flower due to the drought conditions and that only pollen continued to come in. At the same time, the tree blossom fell prematurely and the nectar flow from the ground plants dried up. For most of May, we have had cool windy damp weather, cold nights and not much rain in many areas so that there is a serious soil water deficiency.

These conditions do not stop the swarming impulse. In fact, colonies that had built up strongly on the rape and then were idle in the hive with no foraging to do, have now turned their energies to swarming - if they had not done so previously. I fear that many of these have gone feral and perished due to starvation. You should inspect your bees regularly, weekly at this time of year. Only then can you be up to speed with what's going on in the hives and manage any potential swarming.

Queen mating and requeening after swarming, splits and so on, has been very slow. This makes for irritable bees when they have no open brood to look after. On our travels, we have seen splits, nucs and even some slow developing colonies that missed the April nectar flow, on the point of starvation. If you find that your colony is light and lethargic, give it a feed of 1kg/1 litre of sugar syrup, spraying some on the bees or dribbling on the top bars in extreme circumstances. If you are doubtful that there is a queen in the colony, then give it a frame of eggs and young brood from a queen right colony. Provided the bees have not been left too long and become weak and demoralized, they should make emergency queen cells and right the hive. To subdue a restless, hungry hive, you can carry a hand sprayer containing weak sugar solution to wet them and keep them under control while inspecting.

The warm, calmer weather now should allow all those unmated virgins to get out and mate at last. Remember that they need five days to mature after emergence and then have a three week window of time in which to mate before they become stale. This fine spell has come just in time. Meanwhile, the blackberry, clover and rosebay willow herb promise to be in flower early and we await a flow from them.

The inspectorate team has been busy working on the National Bee Unit's two year Random Apiary Survey sampling programme. This came to a close on 31st May. I am assured that the results of the pathogen screening of the samples collected from around Wales will be posted on Beebase by November this year. We will be visiting new beekeepers in the coming weeks so, when you get your bees, please visit Beebase and self register your details, and we will be in touch.

I will sign off with thanks to David Coles, Seasonal Bee Inspector for South Powys, for allowing me to use some of his seasonal notes and wish you a very productive summer.

Frank Gellatly
Regional Bee Inspector



Toby's Top Tip

Make sure the hood on your bee suit is zipped up properly before you open the hive.

Toby Beavan



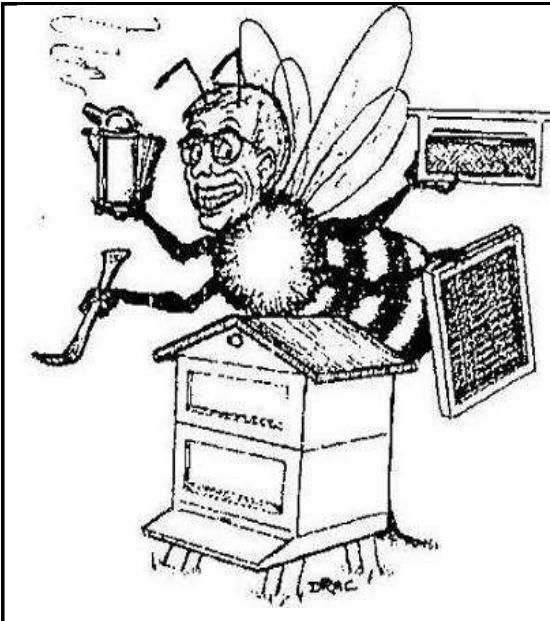
Bees without frontiers

The Czech Republic started the international competition and meeting of young beekeepers in 2010. This was a very well-organized event in which both the beekeeping as well as entertainment and sociability were not neglected. The understanding of young people across the borders should be, in this era of globalization, developed and not taken for granted.

Austria is going to hold this event in 2011 which was welcomed and accepted by last year's participants in a very positive way. There are representatives from up to 20 nations expected this year. Monty Bees are one of the supporters who are sending a Welsh team of 3 young people from Ceredigion, Anglesey and Ruthin to Warth in Austria to represent the nation of Wales and learn from the other nations taking part.

Find out more on the internet at the following URL (a bit of a typewriter-ful)
http://www.vcelarstvi.cz/cz/NOVINKY/CSV-NOVINKY_Unie_Klikanec_InfoDopisVAj.pdf

John Beavan
Seasonal Bee Inspector



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Spot the Queen

I went beekeeping this morning – began to take off the supers – and then found to my dismay that there was brood in the super frames. For the beginners this can mean that when you took off your queen excluder you either did not:

- a) **Check to see if the queen was on your excluder –put it the same side down onto the super you had previously taken off instead of reversing it –brood side upwards.**
- b) **Zinc excluder had a tear in the slots**
- c) **Zinc excluder had a bump of wax under and had widened the slot.**

I realised that I had to find the queen and put her downstairs. Took off another super and got down to the zinc queen excluder and there she was –good as gold-walking across the queen excluder , just waiting for me to pick her up and return her to the brood box.

It is not always like that. Most times you have to check and flick each super frame in turn into the brood box which is quite labour intensive, especially at the moment, with the number of supers being put on the hives.

I then went through the brood box to see if the bees had brought up any queen cells. They had and each frame had to be checked carefully so that the next time I go to the hive I do not find that the colony has swarmed. As far as the bees were concerned the queen was not around.

This was the case of having a spare queen excluder to replace the one taken off. That one's slot had stretched. But wasn't I lucky that the queen was so helpful?.

This is something that most beekeepers have experienced at one time or another.

Jenny Gammon

Thank you for this Jenny. Every beekeeper, beginners as well as the 'old hands' experience this at some time. It also happens with my wired, (Waldron) excluders when one of the wires becomes bent or lifts. What is surprising, is that it has been known for the queens to return to the brood chamber thus remembering the route she took in the first place!

Ed (of Bee Lines)

courtesy of Bee Lines, Newsletter of Taunton and District Beekeepers

be informed, be up to date, be entertained

it must be

THE BEEKEEPERS QUARTERLY

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The MBKA Committee

PRESIDENT	Jim Crundwell tel: 01686 668475	
CHAIRMAN	Tony Shaw tel: 01686 412140	chairman@montybees.org.uk
TREASURER	Roy Norris tel: 01686 622217	treasurer@montybees.org.uk
SECRETARY	Currently vacant tel:	secretary@montybees.org.uk
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Michelle Boudin tel: 01686 413968	membership@montybees.org.uk
MINUTES SECRETARY	Jane Frank tel: 01588 620711	minutes@montybees.org.uk
FRONT OF HOUSE	Jessica Bennett tel: 01686 626870	fronthouse@montybees.org.uk
'BEEHOLDER' EDITOR	Chris Leech tel: 01686 413968	editor@montybees.org.uk
SPRAY LIAISON OFFICER	Bill Gough tel: 01686 688640	sprayliaison@montybees.org.uk
STAGE MANAGER	Noel Eaton tel: 01686 630447	stage@montybees.org.uk
APIARY MANAGER	David Bennett tel: 01686 626870	apiaryman@montybees.org.uk
SWARM. CO-ORDINATOR	Roy Mander tel: 01938 555834	swarm@montybees.org.uk
NEW MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVE	Andy Brown tel: 01691 648595	newmembers@montybees.org.uk
WEB MANAGER	Chris Leech tel: 01686 413968	webadmin@montybees.org.uk
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Ralph Mills tel: 01938 552154	committee.1@montybees.org.uk
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Doug and Jane Wood tel: 01686 623154	committee.2@montybees.org.uk
<hr/>		
SEASONAL BEE INSPECTORS (March to October inc.)	Peter Haywood John Beavan David Coles	tel: 01758 721349 peter.haywood@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel: 01824 707286 john.beavan@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel: 01497 820419 david.coles@fera.gsi.gov.uk
REGIONAL BEE INSPECTOR	Frank Gellatly	tel: 01558 650588 francis.gellatly@fera.gsi.gov.uk

To arrange for a visit by a Bee Inspector contact Frank who will make the necessary arrangements

CENTRAL SCIENCE LAB: 01904 462510

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



Inspection at Gregynog, reproduced courtesy of Gekko



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