



MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION

The BeeHolder

October 2011



Does anybody remember the original caption for this Cordwell classic?

This edition of the BeeHolder is dedicated to the memory of Dennis Cordwell.

MBKA member, bee keeper, cartoonist and a former editor of the BeeHolder.



Forthcoming Events

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

The two talks coming up in October and November at Plas Dolerw both look very interesting, and as always there will be time for a cup of coffee and chat with fellow beekeepers. Unfortunately the events for next year have not yet been finalised **BUT** we are planning some structured training for both beginning and experienced bee keepers.

We are also inviting some interesting speakers for the indoor meetings this winter, so for the latest information, check the website – www.montybees.org.uk.

If you would like to suggest a speaker or a topic for a meeting, or if you would like to have an apiary visit held at your apiary next summer, do contact a member of the committee (see page 19).

We Welcome as New Members ...

Jim and Anne Wren [Newtown], Maggie Summerfield [Welshpool], Richard Hayes [Welshpool], Gail Gwesyn-Pryce [Caersws], Russell Davies [Llanymynech], Carolle Doyle [Meifod], Annabel West [Newtown], Leslie Venis [Montgomery], Neil Griffiths [Oswestry], Anne Hooper [Machynlleth] Rodger Stewart [Oswestry] and Elaine Willetts [Newtown].

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?

Note that the place names given are nearest town rather than individual villages.

Beattitudes I

Blessed are they who bid at MBKA auctions for they shall gain bargains

Yea verily – not half

Dennis Cordwell

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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

As we start to prepare our bees for the winter, and another beekeeping year slips into the past, we can reflect on very mixed results across our region. Whilst some have had a bountiful honey harvest and increased the size of their apiaries, those less fortunate have had barely enough to cover a slice of toast and/or will be putting the odd empty hive into storage for the winter.

I don't know if it has been the way the weather has fallen across the area, the variations between the different strains of bee, some mixture of the two or something completely different! Perhaps it is as simple as the fact that no two beekeepers keep their bees exactly the same way? If anybody has an answer to the mystery, perhaps it would make an interesting article for a future BeeHolder? In any event, it is something to think about when planning for the next bee year.

Don't forget that this magazine is also available on the web site (montybees.org.uk) with more colour and a handy, downloadable pdf file.

Chris Leech

Chairman's Chat

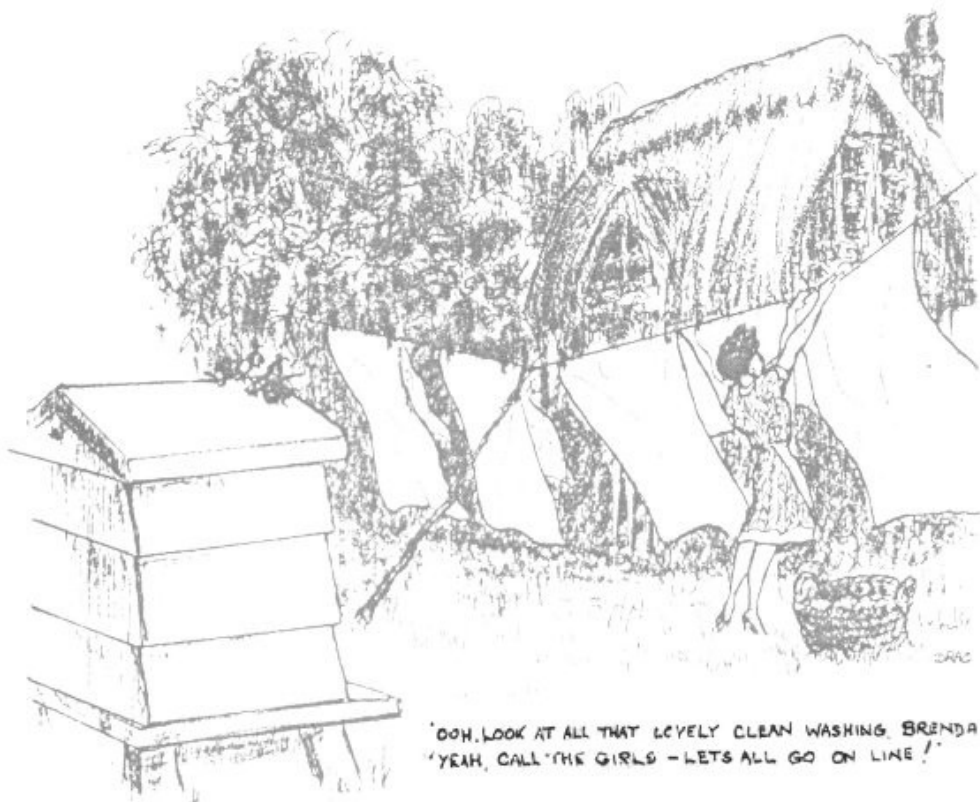
What is a beekeeper?

Several events have occurred recently causing me to ask that question. At a committee meeting the question was asked whether we should discourage people to keep bees until after they had had some training. This is because there is a great attrition rate in new beekeepers. Many take up the hobby before realising the implications. They give up at the first obstacle and often a neglected or abandoned hive becomes a source of disease in a district to the detriment of other beekeepers. But to actively deter people from keeping bees is that right? We have many members who have no bees in their direct care. Some have lost colonies and intend to restock. Some have had a policy of keeping empty hives in the hope of catching a swarm. These will call themselves "beekeeper".

Other members have no intention of keeping bees but don't want to give up the title "beekeeper". So obviously a person can be a beekeeper before ever having bees in their care. But we do need to give the training and even mentoring before the bees arrive. A trainee beekeeper without bees is probably more entitled to the term "beekeeper" than someone who dashes in with a hive and bees bought at a whim from the internet. My own view is that we must welcome the later as much as any retired beekeeper. We must never dampen enthusiasm. Our task as an association is to supply support for bees through helping beekeepers and by educating the public about the importance of both bees and beekeepers.

Dennis Cordwell proudly described himself as a beekeeper right up to his death on 6th September. But he had not kept bees for many years. Dennis' style of beekeeping can best be summed up by the joke "How does a queen get round her hive?" Answer "she's throne". He could be a bit rough with his bees but what a great contribution he made in encouraging beginners, mentoring and serving in all the great Offices of State (as they say in politics). We have reprinted on the following page of this edition one of Dennis' cartoons for the BeeHolder and what he called his "filler pieces" - the amusingly punned "Beeattitudes" and "Beesop's Foibles" (see page 16). Dennis got a great kick out of how many times his cartoons were repeated in beekeeping magazines throughout the

UK and acknowledgement was always given to the Montgomeryshire BKA. He put our county as well as beekeeping firmly on the map. So here was a person who did Montgomeryshire beekeeping proud.



Andy Brown, (New members' Representative) was a neighbour of Dennis in Oswestry and brought him to the MBKA Xmas Dinner last January. I thanked Andy on behalf of all those at the funeral who said how much Dennis had appreciated being brought to the dinner. "Not A bit" said Andy "It was a pleasure. I learnt more about beekeeping during the drive than from all the meetings and all the books I had ever read". It made me think; What is a beekeeper? A beekeeper is someone who has within them a knowledge and experience about bees that can be shared. Everyone who has ever kept bees should share. Maybe we should have an "OLD Members' Representative" whose task it is to root out experienced and exbeekeepers and encourage them to share and mentor with the novices. Volunteers please!

When asked what I did, I sometimes said "Construction Manager" or " I'm in Construction" or "I just fester" or "I'm a beekeeper". "I'm a Beekeeper" produces much the best response and by far the most interesting conversations. We need to make it more worth while for Old Beekeepers to come to meetings.

Tony Shaw

Bees in Berriew.

Late last summer we took our first look at Upper Rectory. Upon our arrival, a chap up a ladder informed us that there was a wasp's nest in the wall of the house, but we weren't to worry because he has squirted silicone into the entrance so they would no longer bother us. Now, we are no experts, but even to the untrained eye, one could see that these creatures were bees. Luckily, the bees had several entrances, no harm was done, and so our love affair accidentally began.

A while after we moved into the rectory, the daughter of the previous occupants came to visit. They had moved there in 1935 and the feral bees were already in residence and had been for some considerable time. Her mother had tried without success to have them removed but they kept returning. The family finally gave up and allowed the bees to remain, where they stay to this day. At first we were wary of them, we have a little boy and I am allergic to them. They nest in the wall, at the front of the house, quite near to a bedroom window - this has proved a pleasure and all our misgivings unfounded. When they are really active you can listen to them and feel the heat they produce through the wall in the bedroom. We have since opened a restaurant and shepherd hut bed and breakfast and have regular visits to "the bee room", as its known, by our customers, curious to find out more and get close to them. These little fuzzy creatures are so content and docile they will sit happily on your hand. We leave the window open, and the drones spend their last hours sat on the flowery curtains. I put the radiator on high, last winter, just as a precautionary measure, which I am now assured was totally unnecessary. We have a very small knowledge of bees and would appreciate any advice. We shall be on tenterhooks this winter, until spring comes, when we hope to see activity again.

Next year, we would like to catch a swarm they throw, and hive it. A friend of ours recently told us that, in folklore, having bees in the wall of your home brings great happiness and luck to the occupants. We feel lucky to have them... they have survived for all these years, against all odds, and we can closely interact with them as they go about their daily life.

If you are interested in visiting our bees We can be contacted at www.upperrectory.co.uk.

Kerry and Steve Houlker

Reports on Meetings

Apiary visit July 31st – The Hobbyist Apiary

We arrived to the threat of rain (in 1 ½ hours) so it was decided that we should get on with it.

There were about 30 people so we split into two groups. My Dutch Wwoofer friend, Bergit, and I followed the smaller group led by Roy Norris to the far side of the veg plot, where we found two hives, one of which was Graham's strongest colony: a brood and a half with three supers from which he'd extracted 150lbs honey this year.

Graham told us he'd dusted with icing sugar a few days previously, so (after being reminded to zip up his hood) Roy started by inspecting the varroa board which had been there for four days. 5 or 6 mites were spotted and we also saw some varroa damaged bees in the hive, but not many.

Despite the weather being rather heavy and threatening, the bees were very patient and well behaved as Roy meticulously inspected the hive. We felt the weight of frames heavy with delicious smelling honey, saw some eggs and new bees emerging. There was also a little chalk brood.

The supers had been stacked hot/cold. Graham told us that if the frames were pointing the same way the upper ones would stick to the lower and pull them up rolling the bees and upsetting them.

His bees are very good at making glue!

Roy discovered a mysterious waxy tube – it turned out to be an empty bee bait phial. Eventually to Roy's relief the queen was spotted so the hive could be reassembled. "Did we want to look at the other hive?" no thanks, we were more than ready for tea and cakes!

There was plenty of nice food and an interesting selection of honeys to taste including lime, bell heather, and Graham's own. The eucalyptus wasn't to everyone's taste, but I thought they were all yummy!

I asked Graham how it went with his group. They had opened up two hives and examined them in 'hefty detail', frames were handed round to see drone cells and queen cells. They talked about getting ready for feeding. There were interesting discussions regarding the stacking of frames and Himalayan balsam as we observed bees white with pollen coming in. The main point which Graham wanted to make was that he doesn't use smoke anymore.

Bergit really enjoyed her first apiary visit, and was thrilled to have seen bees emerging from the cells. She loved the outfit and the cakes, although struggled a bit with the new language – that of beekeepers.

A big thanks to Graham and Jean for a lovely afternoon.

Anna Lockwood

Glansvern Food Festival – 3rd & 4th September

The Glansvern Food Festival were happy to have us back once more to help spread the word about bees to the masses. Once again the festival was well attended and it seemed as though everybody was keen to find out more about bees.

The weekend weather was mostly excellent which allowed all of the outdoor activities to take place without any disruption.

Our marquee was well stocked with honey for sale, wax candle making, information about bees, the ever popular observation hive and a children's activity area supervised by Lis and Vicky Farrington. Outside on the grass were the mandatory hive raffle prize, the virtual hive for the nervous and also the demonstration hive on a trailer with a bee-proof cage around it so that people could see bees, beekeepers and what they do to each other.

The added twist this year was that groups of 5 children, having been trained by Vicky in the marquee, could get their first taste of real bee keeping in the cage supervised by North Montgomeryshire's SBI John Beavan. The children were clearly enjoying themselves, even when they had their hands filled with live bees (one of the best ways to overcome potential fear of bees is to literally "handle" some live bees).

To round off their special day, all the children received a certificate (see cover photo, including Chairman Tony Shaw (third from left) and teacher Vicky Farrington (fourth from left)). It was great to see so much enthusiasm for the hobby from ones so young. Money raised by the introductory courses will be used to buy more bee suits in children's sizes for the association.

It was an extremely successful day for the association. Three organisations asked us to repeat the demonstration and teaching format at their events next year. And the raffle raised some very useful funds. However it was a lot of hard work and it will be difficult to keep doing things like this without some more members helping out. It is definitely a case of many hands make light work, and the more people to help out on the stall, the more time each will have to look at the rest of the festival too. All the improvements came from fresh helpers but we do need more of them.

Aberystwyth “Coach Trip” – 28th September

A Sweet Success of a Trip

Sunday afternoon is a sensible time for a trip out. Chores done and feeling relaxed we arrived at Tropical Forest Honey Products in deepest Ceredigion. A dozen or so Montgomeryshire Bee Keepers were keen to see the Forest Honey Factory and talk to David Wainwright who owns and runs the business.

David has about 750 hives in the UK, mainly in Wales, Shropshire, Lincolnshire and on Salisbury Plain. He produces set and runny honey (though he says he prefers to sell set honey as this produces less problems with consumers and retailers).

Alongside his UK production, David has been working with African honey producers and over the last 20 years he has travelled to many African countries to source honey and to help local people to set up and run their own honey production companies. David’s fair-trade business approach is admirable and he has built up a successful business as a partnership with the African producers. He has invested in these businesses and helped to provide a living for many families in a number of countries.

The African producers use traditional bark hives which allow them to crop some of the honey and leave about half for the bees. The tube shaped “hives” are placed high up in the trees and the producers (usually families), climb up to the hives to harvest the honey. The family members, some quite young children, don’t use any safety equipment or protective clothing which David believes results in a more natural production and calmer, less aggressive bees! If you have access to the internet, there are lots of photos of the production in Africa on David’s website which can be found at www.tropicalforest.com

Over the years, David has worked to produce bees that are adapted to the Welsh climate and has been part of a research project with Bangor University called the West Wales Bee Breeding Programme. David and university researcher Ian Williams are trying to re-invigorate bees in Wales and during our visit we were able to listen to a presentation by Ian and discuss the programme. Ian told us that genetics are playing a key role in breeding strong bees which are adapted to life in our climate, are resistant to Varroa and to other bee diseases.

Members asked copious questions about bees, honey, wax, equipment, product demand, cost, production and a number of other topics. David showed us around each of the production and packing areas starting with the drums of honey that are imported from Africa and some which are sourced in the UK. Inside the factory which we toured, adorned with attractive blue hair nets (see photo), the filtering area where the honey is warmed and filtered to remove impurities. David does not use very fine filters as this can remove all of the pollen and also some of the taste. We were then shown the filling and packing areas and David showed us some of the different packaging used for specific customers. He supplies a wide variety of retailers including Fortnum and Mason.

After our tour, David kindly made us tea (thankfully there were less than 18 of us as this is the number of cups they have at the factory!) which was very welcome after standing for a couple of hours. Tony proposed a vote of thanks to David and to Ian for giving up their time to talk to us and a number of members purchased a jar of the forest honey (I can confirm that it is delicious).

The day was rounded off with a very good carvery meal at LLety Ceiro Guest House, to be recommended, an excellent end to an interesting and enjoyable half day out.

Liz Barnes

See also the pictures on the back page

Ed

Apiary Report

Whilst the apiary is looking very good with the new observation hut, and we have held several successful apiary visits and training sessions there since opening, we have to say that this year has not been an unqualified success.

Losses have been considerable and in spite of having bought in five new colonies, we will be going into the winter with the same number of hives as we went into last winter. Further there is very little honey to harvest from the hives that have survived. Perhaps it is not in a good place, but Eric Franklin is only a couple of miles away and has 17 hives with tons of honey. Several local beekeepers said it was a good place for bees, and the estate manager told us that lots of swarms used to come in to the estate.

The plan was to concentrate on making increase in the early part of the season (whilst the rhododendrons were in bloom), and then add supers for a honey harvest towards the end of the season. Perhaps this was too optimistic, or other factors were in play which meant that both objectives were not met.

There was some damage to the bee mesh of one of the observation hut windows. People have complained about the number of bees that get caught inside the hut, trying to get back to the hives, so perhaps this was deliberate damage? When the hut is finished off (just a few bits of tidying up and cladding to do) a bee space sized gap will be left so that returning bees can negotiate the hut safely.

On a positive note, we do have a good range of different types of hive (including Warre and top bar hives) and colonies at different stages of development, both of which are good for educational purposes.

Chris Leech



Warre hive



Top bar hive



The children learn about bees in the MBKA marquee at Glansevern ...



... before going into action in the bee cage.



Proud graduates of their first bee classes



Volunteers finish packing up at Glansevern

Home-made honey could fight superbugs

University researchers and the National Botanic Garden of Wales are appealing for help in building up a DNA profile of the nation's honey. They hope to use the information to identify plants which could fight antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as the 'superbug' MRSA. The honey project could also help fight the diseases currently attacking Britain's bees.

Honeys have long been known to have antibacterial properties and are used in wound dressings today. Different honeys act against different microbes depending on the chemicals in the plants visited by bees.

Now the Welsh School of Pharmacy and the National Botanic Garden of Wales with support from the Society for Applied Microbiology is asking honey-makers across the country to send them samples, along with a list of plants near their beehives. A screening test developed at Cardiff will test for activity against two of the most common hospital acquired infections antibiotic-resistant bacteria MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales will identify the plants which contributed to the most powerful honeys, using a DNA profiling process being developed as an application of their Barcode Wales project, that has DNA barcoded the flowering plants of Wales. The team will then investigate the plants found in honey for the potential to develop new drugs. The Botanic Garden has 14 beehives and an inhouse bee keeper, Lynda Christie, who will provide key expertise in support of this project.

The joint University and Garden team will also be looking for honeys which help bees resist pests and bugs. In particular, they will test for resistance to the Varroa mite, which has caused a rapid decline in the UK bee population, and the bacterium *Paenibacillus larvae*, responsible for American Foulbrood, which is one of the most destructive of all bee diseases. Bee pollination is worth an estimated £100m to British agriculture every year, and it is vital to halt the fall in bee numbers.

Professor Les Baillie of the Welsh School of Pharmacy said: "A lot of drug development involves expensive laboratory screening of a huge variety of plant products, often without success. We're hoping to cut out the middle man and let the bees do a lot of the hard work, guiding to us those plants which work. We're hoping the public can provide us with as much home-made honey as possible – they could supply the vital breakthrough in fighting these bacteria."

Dr Natasha de Vere, National Botanic Garden of Wales, said: "We have nearly completed our Barcode Wales project to DNA barcode each of the 1143 flowering plants in Wales and are excited to be developing our first applications that use this fantastic resource. We can see which honeys have the best results against infectious diseases that affect humans and bees and use DNA barcoding to identify the plants making the honey.

Anyone who wants to contribute their honey to the research project should send a 200 gram pot with their address, postcode, and details of the plants their bees feed on to:

Jenny Hawkins,
Welsh School of Pharmacy,
Cardiff University,
Redwood Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3NB

Reproduced from Gwent BKA newsletter courtesy of eBees

Reflections

I was thinking about my pastimes and hobbies and realised that many, if not all, tended to look back to supposedly better times. Then I thought about beekeeping.

If ever there is a craft that demands a forward-looking optimism it is beekeeping. I've been keeping bees (or trying to) for just over 10 years. Nowadays many more people are giving it a go. And why not? It is absorbing, challenging to the physical condition and to the little grey cells, relatively inexpensive and if you work hard enough at it, it can pay for itself. Not yet for me -- you understand!

There are loads of books about beekeeping and getting a selection is a sure way to madness. Buy one book and if you like it -- follow it. If you don't -- recycle it and get another. Don't keep both -- if four beekeepers are asked one question about beekeeping you will be given at least five very different answers. And (unfortunately perhaps) they will all be correct. So you have to find an approach or method that you like and one that works for you and that's about it!

But the bees don't read the books and will usually do what they decide they will do unless you are a very cunning and clever beekeeper. To be a cunning and clever beekeeper you have to keep bees for at least five years longer than you have already kept bees. Yes; you can never outsmart all the bees all the time. So you have to keep alert. Where did I put mine, I know I saw it recently. That would be just before the swarm which I was sure I had anticipated and prevented.

Most of my bees are housed in a custom built bee shelter. Here is a picture to save 1,000 words.

It is really a shed with a concrete floor, slatted sides, open front and a solid back (to thwart frosts rolling down the hill to the pond), built by one of our members – not me. This is the first year of use but so far the signs are encouraging. Bees inside the house are much better tempered when compared to those left outside. On the other hand, it may be that I am getting tired when I reach the outside bees. The bees really appreciate a clumsy beekeeper and show this by rising -- as if one body -- from the hive and indicating to the hapless beekeeper in a gentle spirit of warning, that one should be more careful - if there is to be a next time.



Roy Norris' bee shelter - ideal for the Welsh winter

Do you recognise any of my comments as reflecting your experience? If so, perhaps you would share your experiences of beekeeping. There is no need to bother too much about the downsides to beekeeping. Just tell of the joys, great honey, making wax candles, balms and polishes, of "making increase", of Queen rearing and swarm management.

Roy Norris
MBKA Treasurer

I'm sure that a lot of our beekeepers have experiences and knowledge well worth passing on. Why not write an article for the next BeeHolder? If you are interested, get in touch before 16th December!

Editor



Toby's Top Tip

If you don't feed enough in the autumn you can feed candy in the winter, last year I gave my bees lots.

Toby Beavan



Dennis The Mentor

It was a Saturday morning some years ago now that I was standing on my plant stall selling (amongst other things) some small cotoneaster shrubs that were in flower. A man with silver grey hair walked past and pointed to a bee on the shrub and made the comment that the shrub was very good for bees. After asking him if he kept bees and a bit about keeping them we talked about moving bees some distance and my garden became a staging post for two hives.

Over that season I had one or two hives in my garden most of the time and whenever Dennis came to work them I joined in and became hooked by his humour, enthusiasm and expertise and bought an old hive and a colony from him.

What is the point of this little story?

It is that I had a whole season with expert advice and practice of helping with hives and learning a fair bit from my MENTOR without any outlay. It benefited us both - me learning and he moving hives.

My point is that with all the publicity about bees dieing out and the disaster it could be. Many people think they can just buy a hive or two, a couple of colonies and at the end of the season they can harvest many jars of free honey whilst saving the planet. In other words they have the right intention but not a clue, and if they don't have some help with handling and all the work that goes into it they loose interest and sell their kit at a huge loss.

After my mentoring period was over, for several years Dennis would pop in and we would chat about things, and he would suggest better ways of managing my (by now) eight colonies and lending books on Mini Neucs and Swarm control etc.

So why do we not have a Mentor scheme in the association? So that if someone wants to start an beekeeping, an experienced member local to the new person acts as a Mentor. Ideally the experienced member would put a hive of bees in the new member's apiary and the new member would assist in the day to day upkeep of the hive learning "hands on" how to keep bees. The experienced member gets help with his beekeeping, a (temporary) out apiary and that smug feeling that comes with helping someone. The new member gets a trial period (with help) of keeping bees and that their neighbours and family don't mind, before making any outlay.

Graham Winchester
Committee Member

Dennis Cordwell passed away in September and was a keen beekeeper. Graham's tribute above is a reminder of what a good beekeeper and friend he was to many in the association.

Editor

The lighter side of beekeeping

A bee inspector had been seconded to an area where he was not familiar with the location of out-apiaries. He was searching for this particular apiary on foot having left his car in a nearby lane. He suddenly came to a river which appeared to have no means of crossing. Seeing an old beekeeper on the other bank, he called out, 'Hey, how do I get to the other side?' The old fellow looked carefully along the bank to the left, then carefully along the bank to the right, thought a bit, then called back, 'You are on the other side.'

One morning a bee inspector stops at this farm. He rings the doorbell and Mavis, the farmer's wife, opens the front door. 'Is your husband home, Ma'am?' he asks politely. 'Aargh, that he is,' answers Mavis, 'He's over int' apiary near the horses and pigs.' 'Well, I have some important items to show him, Ma'am. Will I have any difficulty finding him?'

'Oooo now, I wouldn't think so. Harry will be the one in a beesuit'

Having arrived at his out-apiary, a beekeeper saw a little mouse passing by who had caught a waxmoth. The beekeeper snatched up the mouse and the moth dropped into the long grass. Feeling sorry for the little mouse with no lunch, he poured a little beer down his throat. He put down the mouse went about his beekeeping. A bit later the beekeeper felt a tug on a leg of his beesuit. Looking down, he saw the same mouse with three more moths in his mouth...

A certain beekeeper, notorious for his sponging proclivities, met an equally mean friend at his apiary one morning, and opened the conversation by saying: "Can ye len' us a match, John?" John having supplied him with the match, the first man began to look in his toolbox ostentatiously, and then remarked dolefully, "Man, I seem to have left my smoker fuel at hame." John, however, was equal to the occasion, and holding out his hand, remarked: "Aweel, ye'll no be needin' that match then."

The dentist's receptionist kept his diary of appointments. The dentist did not work at the weekends as that was the time he tended his bees. Looking at his August appointments he noticed that one weekend had the word "TOOTHACHE" written across both days. He queried this with his receptionist. She replied, "It's quite simple really. Toothache – time for extraction!"

Two bees met in a field. One said to the other, "How are things going?" "Really bad," said the second bee. "The weather has been cold, wet and damp, and there aren't any flowers, so I can't make honey." "No problem," said the first bee. "Just fly down five blocks and turn left. Keep going until you see all the cars. There's a Bar Mitzvah going on and there are all kinds of fresh flowers and fresh fruit." "Thanks for the tip," said the second bee, and flew away.

A few hours later the two bees ran into each other again. The first bee asked, "How'd it go?" "Great!" said the second bee. "It was everything you said it would be. There was plenty of fruit and, oh, such huge floral arrangements on every table." "Uh, what's that thing on your head?" asked the first bee.

"That's my yarmulke," said the second bee. "I didn't want them to think I was a wasp."

The beekeeping supply shop sold Varroa sticky sheet by the yard in either of two widths: 36 inches or 48 inches.

Customer: "Can you please cut some sticky sheet for me?"

Assistant: "Certainly, what width?"

Customer: (confused and slightly annoyed) "Thissors?"

What do you do with a swarm if bees in your bed? Sleep somewhere else!

Reproduced from "The Eke" courtesy of eBees

Beesop's Foibles

The members of the Little Mudpuddle and District BKA were all feeling somewhat frustrated - well, nearly all; Old Fred, who had kept bees in the area since there **were** bees, was being his usual taciturn self and grinning smugly at the unsuccessful efforts of his colleagues to get their smokers going in the stiff breeze. He couldn't help feeling sorry for Young Harry, though, who was trying pathetically hard to impress the pretty, young new member and failing miserably. After a while he gently led Young Harry aside and said quietly "Wot you needs young feller is a few drops of Bee Elixir. Works wonders, it does — specially if yer knows the Magic Words as goes wiv It. Gimme yer smoker and I'll show yer!" Obliging, Young Harry handed over the reluctant smoker and watched as the old man took a small plastic bottle from his capacious pocket and, unscrewing the cap, sprinkled about five drops of a pale red liquid on the end of the smoke cartridge and chanted "S'ereh lesied won ekoms timmad!" Then, taking an old lighter from another pocket he flicked the wheel and grinned to see Young Harry's look of stupefaction as the cartridge burst into flame. A moment later it was eased into the smoker and going like Kenneth Clark. "That's amazing" said Young Harry "What do those magic words mean, Fred?"

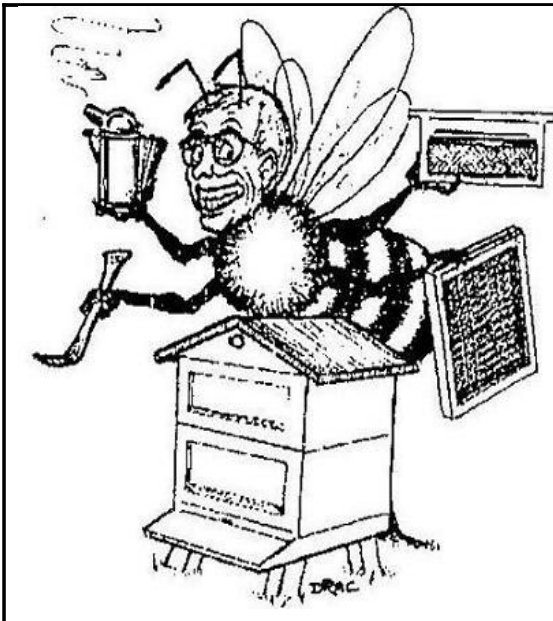
"Nuffink really" grinned the old man "it was just 'Here's Diesel now smoke dammit!' only I said it backwards to impress yer and I fink it did. After a meaningful silence he added "P'raps you could try it on the young leddy young feller" Young Harry did - and it did! He also discovered that BBQ Lighting Fluid is equally good but Diesel is easier to obtain – and cheaper too. Old Fred was wise in more ways than one.

MORAL There's no fuel like an oiled fuel.

Dennis Cordwell

Please note that MBKA does not endorse the use of accelerants for lighting stubborn smokers.

Ed



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The True Significance of Winter Brood Rearing

The recent scientific confirmation of winter brood rearing in the honeybee colony has real significance for the survival of over-wintering colonies in the present circumstances. Despite the fact that there are many beekeepers who either never questioned the accepted wisdom of a hiatus in rearing brood in the bee colony in the dormant period or who have rejected the concept out of hand; winter brood rearing in the presence of the Varroa mite takes on a whole new dimension.

The jury is still out on the causes of the massive bee colony losses world wide but there is increasing focus on the neuro-toxic pesticides such as Imidacloprid, Clothianidin, Fipronil etc, in the areas where crops like maize and OSR are grown and where the seed and development of these crops is treated with these suspect substances. There is little doubt that the nicotinoid pesticides are deeply implicated in colony losses, however the mystery of the losses deepens when despite the argument that pesticides are the culprit, heavy colony losses are also being incurred in areas well away from intensive agriculture. The issue of winter brood rearing becomes a critical factor when these late winter/early spring losses are addressed.

Recent information coming from Germany advocates that the infestation level in any colony infested with Varroa should not exceed 50 mites at the end of December. A drop of 1 mite/2 days on the floor insert at this time seems to be a good indicator that a mite population of between 35-50 has been reached. If a fall greater than this is registered the colony MUST be treated immediately. Even in Germany many beekeepers, up until the present time at least, still hold the popular belief that there is a hiatus to brood rearing in winter (personal correspondence), however notwithstanding it has been noted that colonies entering winter with low mite infestations have a greater survival rate than otherwise.

A simple calculation might drive home the critical importance of low mite numbers in colonies in early winter:

- Every larva produced as a result of winter breeding will be a target for a female mite, which will live for around two months.
- The mite average reproduction rate is reckoned to be some 1:1 new mites per generation
- Consider a colony entering winter with a mite burden of 50; every 18 days the mite population will double; using mid December as a start date – best case scenario is that by mid January there will be 105 mites, by early February there will be 220, by the end of February 460, by late March 968 and by mid April 1800.
- The adult bee population is of course meantime being parasitised and debilitated as well. Believe it or not that is the good news.
- Now consider a colony with a mite population level of just 200, which is quite low by the current accepted standards of the 'winter breeding hiatus' beekeeper advocate:
- Initially each developing winter larva will be 'multiple parasitised', every 18 days the mite population will increase dramatically and to boot each emerging bee will be a total loss to the colony:
- Using mid December as a start date – best case scenario is that by mid January there could be 500 mites, by early February there could be 1250, by the end of February 3125, by late 189 March 7860 and by mid April – best case scenario 19,440. The figures postulated could be questioned but the order of increasing magnitude is indisputable. By late April this hypothetical colony could be in real crisis or may have already succumbed.

It is unsurprising that many colonies entering the winter with mite burdens of over 200, especially

in the possession of beekeepers who do not carry out their anti-mite treatments diligently or correctly, fail to survive past late winter or early spring. The phenomenon of winter brood rearing in the honeybee colony will be ignored at beekeeper peril. If age-old dogma can be cast aside, who knows, we in Scotland at least could really begin to take control of our colony health and winter survival. By ensuring that the mite has as few potential hosts on which to do her wicked work and really getting to grips with the necessary work of winter mite control – which entails any treatment method, applied at the correct time, that kills mites in the brood cells. Formic acid is, to date, the only substance which does just that. Applied correctly around early April this treatment method could just be the tipping point to get your colonies through to summer to become an effective honey gathering force.

The effectiveness of any late winter treatment will have to be closely monitored to ensure that the mite burden is as low or ideally lower than recommended. Thymol or oxalic acid treatment used correctly will achieve this aim.

**Eric McArthur, Scottish BKA
(Reproduced courtesy of eBees)**

I resisted the temptation to re-title this article "How the mitey have fallen"
Ed

be informed, be up to date, be entertained
it must be

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Beeattitudes II

There are certain pursuits which, if not wholly poetic and true, do at least suggest a nobler and finer relation to nature than we know. The keeping of bees, for instance.

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)
philosopher, author, naturalist

Aerodynamically, the bumble bee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumble bee doesn't know it so it goes on flying anyway.

Mary Kay Ash

Hope is the only bee that makes honey without flowers.

Anders Aslund



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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



Smurfs inspecting the honey production line at Tropical Froest



Now that's what I call a bee suit

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