



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder

October 2009



Bumblebee on Artichoke at Attingham Park

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**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

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| October Thursday | 22 nd 7.00pm | MBKA meeting Sarah Farrington Talking on A Vets perspective on bees & diseases. Latest News from the National Bee Unit in York. 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 |

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Editorial

What happened to summer? Here in West Montgomeryshire it just didn't happen. I'm not getting any honey this year and have to content myself that I have doubled my hives to 8. The open apiary day at my out-apiary was reported by Carol Gough in July's BeeHolder. So full of praise. As editor I was in a dilemma about altering or adding to her text.

What Carol failed to record was that one of the hives had a large number of dead bees and the remaining ones tightly clustered together and a dead queen by the entrance. The colony was on the point of death. The sunny weather that day had allowed us to forget that the weeks proceeding had been almost continuous rain. There were no stores and the colony was starving. When the inspection was over and the BBQ began I quickly opened a jar of honey and ran it across the top of the frames. Within an hour the bees were frisky. The next day I united it with a nuc and a couple of pints of syrup and the hive settled down the week after. I hope our members took note of what a dying hive looked like. There were no dead bees the day before. All would have been dead the next day without the food. Death can be that fast.

You will all have got John Verron's (Welsh National Bee Inspector) message in July saying we should check our hives for starvation. I took heed immediately. There was probably just two day's worth of stores in the hives I keep at 1350'. I fed immediately. Beekeepers should take note of these warnings: sadly many don't.

I was so impressed by the Bee Hygiene workshops run by Shropshire Beekeepers Association. At the end of the day the local Bee Inspectors put on a quiz about bee hygiene. What had we learnt? There were 20 questions. We marked our own papers. "hands up who got 11 or more correct." asked the Regional Bee Inspector. A sea of hands; well over half the attendees.

"And hands up who got more than 13" far fewer hands.

Eventually a single person with the highest score was identified. A big round of applause. He was asked to come up and receive a prize which was a packet of Washing Soda to help in his work of Hygiene. When he had returned to his seat a casual remark that we could go the other way:

"hands up who got less than 10" And gradually the lowest scorer was identified. Dave Sutton (West Region Bee Inspector) lavished praise for the guys openness and honesty and said that it wasn't ignorance that was the enemy but the unwillingness to admit to ignorance. The person was invited to receive a prize. It was a very lavish bee book just published. A willingness to be open was deemed more important than a skill in identifying disease. We should learn from our mistakes and share them for the common good. **

One of the MBKA committee remarked casually a month ago that when he open one of his hives he thought there was more varroa than bees. My immediate thought was to ask if we could have a apiary meeting but by the time it would have been arranged the problem would have been rectified. Seeing obvious varroa would have been so useful. Some of us are not sure we have

ever seen Varroa. Bill Downie , (previous editor of BeeHolder and a very experienced beekeeper) was so convinced that he was failing to recognise varroa that he called in Peter Guthrie (Seasonal BI) to inspect his hives. Peter could not find any varroa. I myself have done three icing sugar shakes this year and cannot detect any varroa. The same happened last year no varroa detected yet I did have a bad case of Nosema . However Peter Guthrie said that he has noted in his area a very fast increase in varroa just in the last few weeks.

Tony Shaw September 2009

***At the September Apiary meeting, after this editorial was written, I met Tony Bosworth probably one of the longest serving MBKA members, he was praising the Bee Disease day and the test at the end and announced that he was the lowest scorer who got the wonderful prize. He said that after having trouble-free beekeeping for many decades he had probably got complacent. He was shocked to get such a low score but thought it was a wake-up call that all experienced beekeepers should have. Thank you for the useful lesson Tony.*

Volunteers needed to host apiary visits

We are compiling the programme for 2010. Opening hives is instructional for the host and guests alike. And organising the tea is not difficult. Volunteers seem to magically appear from the woodwork. Please contact Programme Secretary ,Graham Winchester tel: 01686 627014

gjwinchester@lineone.net

We welcome as new members

Nicola Alexander/ Llanfair Caereinion, Graham & Jane Brooker / Llandinam,
Richard Davies/ Mochdre, Chris & Gail Fynes/ Trefeglwys, Brian & Marilyn Hinks/ Llangadfan,
Ian Hubbuck/ Berriew, Paul King / Old Churchstoke, Nicola & Rob Mason/ Berriew,
Nigel & Rebecca Moulding/ Berriew, Flavia Murton / Llanfechain, Funda Simmons/ Montgomery,
Ken Wakeley/Minsterly, and Dee Yeoman / Guilsfield

As usual the Data Protection Act prevents my publishing emails and addresses of members, but I can recommend the local telephone directory.

Next Meetings

Sarah Farrington is coming on the **22nd October** to replace Tony Spacey. Sarah Farrington, who represents the third generation of beekeepers in the family, has been working at the National Bee Unit (NBU) in York. She will give a talk on the work of the NBU and some of the latest developments in the search for cures for Bee diseases. The talk is titled **A Vets perspective on bees & diseases**. And she'll concentrate on her research on the mite that causes acarine disease. (science is trying to get ahead in what could become a problem to British bees in the future). Even some of our newest members will be aware that the Government's NBU is the foremost bee research station in the world: underfunded of course, but that is a reflection of the near universal neglect of the impact of insects upon the world economy.

Tony Spacey would have brought controversy with him. He splashes it round like a rampant teenager with the Lynx bottle. Essentially he blames the amateur beekeeper for all the woes of the world and the professional commercial beekeepers as the font of good sense. Many of us feel it is the other way round.

I give here some of his ideas because they do deserve consideration by all beekeepers. He explains that thousands of amateur beekeepers nationwide have overused the treatment to combat varroa, and the end result, over a period of time, has been the development of treatment resistant mites. 'For every good amateur beekeeper there's thousands that shouldn't be allowed to keep goldfish, let alone bees. People just don't realise the potential damage that they are doing.'

His argument bears some weight. If you keep cattle or pigs and keep them badly, you're being cruel. But without direct contact you don't affect the farmer five miles up the road. But bees fly for up to 5 miles, so if you keep them badly and they are infected, they could infect bees from colonies up to 10 miles away. He will cite several different instances of bad management to back up his case, such as one in Staffordshire last year where a senior amateur beekeeper was selling nucleus colonies (starter colonies) which he knew had foul-brood, a disease so contagious that, once proven, DEFRA* come along and dig a hole three foot wide by three foot deep, light a bonfire in the bottom and tip the hive into it – 'foot and mouth for bees', as Tony has it.

'We are the last Western country that allows unlicensed beekeeping,' he explains. 'The sooner we ban it the better for the environment, the better for the bees and certainly the better for the honey industry.' He adds that just a couple of weeks earlier, DEFRA's senior bee inspector told him that 85 per cent of British bees should be put down because they are so badly bred.

In fact, Tony explains, the situation is now so bad that most commercial honey producers in the UK are having to import their queens, either from Scandinavia, or more typically from the Greek Islands. It's a system that has little of the romance of local beekeeping. They find an island too remote for bees to reach other islands, eradicate the native strain of bee, and then breed a stronger strain of bee – ironically, originally an English variety, the Buckfast, but bred in Greece to ship to the UK for our hives. Clearly this is exactly the opposite of what the National Bee Inspectors are telling us... "Don't import bees from other areas". Let us quiz Sarah Farrington on whether there is an NBU attitude to all this.

On **November 26th** SBI Peter Guthrie will talk to us about the preparations for the year to come. Peter has hinted that he will try to persuade us to revive the Honey Shows that the MBKA used to have many years ago. They were more of a honey competition than a show and often judged by Brian Goodwin from Shrewsbury. Peter's remit has now been extended from March until October inclusive. He and his fellow SBI are tasked to visiting 5000 apiaries in the next year and so he is quite eager to be called in. Contact Peter or John Bevan for any bee problem.

There will be an announcement in the next BeeHolder about the speaker for the AGM on **February 18th** But do put it in your diaries now because we will be having a free raffle of a new National Beehive for all members attending. Doug Wood, Jessica and Dave Bennett and I will all be making announcements that this will be the last year we will be standing in the posts of Chairman, Secretaries and Editor. Obviously anyone can take over from us February 2010 but by announcing our intention to retire definitely in 2011 it does give time for the association to push forward some new blood and ideas.

Report on Meetings

MBKA Trip to Attingham Park and Radbrook College, July

The Coach full of Montgomery Bee Keepers set off in excitement. First we were off to see hives at Radbrook College then to Attingham Park. The weather was a bit dull but never mind. "This isn't the way to Radbrook" someone shouted and soon after we arrived at Attingham Park. Change of plan we are meeting Brian Goodwin (President of Shropshire Beekeepers association and lecturer at Radbrook college) by the Old hives in the walled garden and off to Radbrook afterwards.

We entered Attingham and went through to a lovely vegetable and flower garden reminiscent of Villandry Chateau with its clever geometric layout and we happily compared vegetable growing stories with fellow beekeepers. We did however have some trouble locating the old beehives which were tucked away in a little used part of the garden. Eventually we came upon a structure full of skeps, ancient woven beehives, where we met Brian. He gave us an interesting talk on how Shropshire Beekeepers were restoring the hives and building and how they would have a permanent presence in Attingham Park. He also told us about their work with school children learning about beekeeping. Conversation flowed through African tribes collecting honey to modern practices and varroa treatments. Then just as it started to pour with rain we posed in front of the skeps for photos.



19th Century Skep House at Attingham Park MBKA members breaking for the tea rooms

By the time the heavens really opened most of us were firmly ensconced in the Tea Rooms. Then we were off again in the coach. Then we really went to Radbrook and changed into our bee suits to get up close and personal with the bees. Luckily by then the rain had stopped and the bees mainly behaved. At one point I was amused to see around 500 bees congregated on the back of someone's suit. When I drew it to his attention I realised it was my husband!

A novice spotted the queen in our hive and we saw the experts at work and all got the chance to handle the bees. Afterwards I found my husband obviously flattered by the attention of all those lady bees unzipping someone else's bee suit he claimed he had thought it was me!

Next it was back to Attingham or at least the pub opposite the Mytton & Mermaid where we enjoyed a delicious meal. We enjoyed the good company and even stretched the parameters to speaking about subjects other than bees for a while. Back on the coach we nearly took the scenic route home over the mountain to Montgomery. We really had a wonderful day out and look forward eagerly to the next social occasion.



The neat patch of bees on Phil's back. Not quite the 500 that Janet reports. Estimating bee numbers is something that comes with experience I'm glad Janet thought it was a social occasion..actually it was planned as, and was educational (Ed.)

Janet Willson

A Recycled Bee Stand

South Glamorgan's bee stand at this year's Royal Welsh was probably the best ever seen. It is well photographed in the latest quarterly edition of the Welsh Beekeeper. It was obviously designed by a professional with text written by someone with an eye for capturing salient points without the clutter of too much information. So often bee information stands are either twee or so scientifically complicated that they can only be appreciated by those already converted to an advanced state of bee awareness. South Glamorgan BKA kindly agreed to lend us the stand for the **Shrewsbury Flower Show** and the **Glansvern Food Festival**.

Our Julian Kirkham, who has a joinery workshop, kindly did some fancy adaptations to enable the stand to accommodate our Observation Hive. Originally the stand was 20' long 8' wide and 8' high and it took a lot of effort to adapt it to the uneven ground, smaller footprints and heights of both new venues. But the biggest problem we encountered was the politics involved in both places. Everyone is a Prima Donna at ShowTime.



A quiet moment at the MBKA stand at the Glansevern Food Festival.

At Shrewsbury our stand was over twice the size of the next largest and our “Montgomeryshire Beekeepers Association” sign so dominated that many visitors had assumed that we had organised the whole of the Bee Honey and wine section rather than being merely guests of Shropshire Beekeepers Association. At Glansevern the bigger space we had been promised became so whittled down by other organisations coming in to share a marquee that we had to find and finance a marquee of our own. Fortunately Chairman Doug’s Church came to the rescue and put a tent up over an already erected stand.

Comments on our display were most favourable. The thanks is not to ourselves but the clever designers who recognise the psychology of crowd behaviour. People must be able to read the salient points at a distance without the need to make a commitment to enter the inner space of an empty stand. And, if a stand is already full with people then the text should be high and large enough for people to read it over the heads of those engaged in the bee activities such as examining virtual hives, drawing, honey, tasting and looking at live bees in an observation hive.

On the far left of the picture above, a child is standing on a box to view the observation hive that is built into the wall of the hive. The hive was at a height for an adult to see without bending down. Children are more used to climbing up to see things than are adults used to bending down. We had a petition calling on Powys Council to pay more attention to beekeeping within education and a raffle for a beehive which made over £500 profit.

Lembit Opik MP, who is a MBKA member, made a speech stating that nearly all of the food stands at the Festival relied upon bees for their very existence. Indeed many stalls were displaying a leaflet (shown right) that replicated one of the panels on our stand. Most stall holders appreciated that just over a hundred years ago such food, bread and water, (in practice bread and dilute beer) was the official punishment diet.



The picture below shows Chairman Doug Wood presenting raffle winners Nigel and Rebecca Moulding from Berriew with a National Hive. The Mouldings dashed back to Glansevern as soon as they picked up Lembit's message on their answer machine. Rebecca, who bought the ticket, said they could hear the crowd cheering in the background as Lembit told them they had won. Rebecca gave the hive to her husband as an extra birthday present.



MBKA meeting 20th September, Llanfair Caereinion

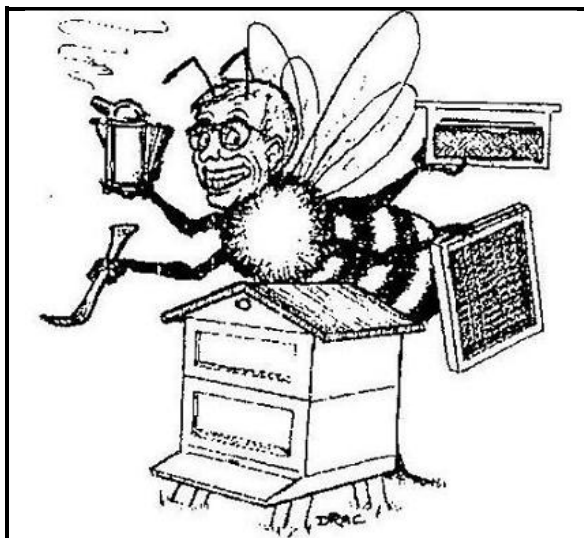
The apiary visit and tea this month was at...Liz Farrington's apiary 3 very smart hives very well maintained with very smart yellow mouse guards. Each hive belonged to a different generation: Liz, her daughter and father Bill Gough. *The hives were on a steep valley side surrounded by fruit trees and an extensive plantation of mixed native hardwoods all of which had superb views
The meeting was led by John Bevan our seasonal bee inspector (John had been to my hives a few weeks before and I had found his whole approach so educational. So I was very pleased when he said he would do the apiary visit.

There were a lot of new members who asked a lot of good questions that were answered at a level that everyone understood. The main points covered were looking for varroa and checking the weight of the hives for winter stocks. New members learnt the good old beekeeping term "Heft"
Liz had treated with apiguard and John suggested that she remove the trays which were virtually empty and scrape any remainder over the top of the frames. The other tip was to not have a mesh floor in place as a solid floor(even if it was just a bit of cardboard)would keep in the fumes better
All the hives were down to a brood and one super. John was not bothered if the queen excluder was left on or not there was a bit of a discussion as to whether to have one or not. The conclusion was that if it was not left on then there was absolutely nothing to stop the bees harvesting anything in the super if one was left on.

There was some discussion about MENTORING new members and it was generally thought to be a good idea as there are so many terms and ways of doing things that many questions would be asked and if someone of experience could be at the other end of the phone to try to answer questions as they cropped up it would be a great help and probably ensure the newcomer having more confidence would remain a member

The spread the weather the location the hospitality and turn out were all perfect. A great day.

Graham Winchester MBKA events organiser



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LETTER

I would like to wholeheartedly thank the MBKA group (and particularly the hosts) for a very welcoming and informative afternoon last Sunday (20th September) at Bryn Mawr. Diolch yn fawr !

After mistakenly arriving at Bill & Carol Gough's 'Old Farmhouse' and finding it deserted (our fault) we managed to find our way to Bryn Mawr in time to join in the 'experience'. This surpassed our expectations in terms of the friendly welcome received, the excellent 'workshops' - led by John Beavan, and the subsequent (and unexpected) generous feast of tea, sandwiches, cakes and conversation. We returned home even more enthusiastic about the project.

We are part of a group of people living in a small eco-village in Bishop's Castle, who run allotments, orchard, woodland, and chickens amongst other cooperative/communal activities. Bees are high on our to-do list, and we are preparing to commence in earnest with a few hives next spring. In the meantime we will be busy acquiring the necessary equipment and enhancing our knowledge.

A couple of us have some previous (limited) experience of working with bees, but realistically it's a clean start.

So no doubt one or two of us will be around at future apiary visits and meetings, and we will look forward to the privilege of maybe being hosts for an apiary visit in a few years' time.

Keith Wood Bishop's Castle

(do I detect an interesting venue for a future open Apiary meeting??? ED)

Message from New Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI)

John Beavan the new SBI for the east of Montgomeryshire announces that he would like any beekeeper to make a request to him for an inspection. "Inspection" is probably the wrong word for it's a visit to see the bees and advise on ways to keep them healthy. Old beekeepers will already know that the visit and advice is excellent and is free. One only has to phone and ask. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has upped the amount of money given to the Inspectorate so that we now have more inspectors and a longer season during which they are "in the field". It would be near crazy not to take up such an offer of help especially early on in ones' beekeeping career.

The recipe of those wonderful bee buns made by Vicky Farrington

Vicky's Honey Bee Buns

Makes 18

250g/9oz plain flour
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
125g/ 4 ½ oz butter, softened
125g/ 4 ½ oz soft brown sugar
1 large egg, separated
125g/ 4 ½ oz runny honey
4 tbsp milk

Decoration:

100g/4oz plain chocolate
1 small block golden marzipan
Flaked almonds



1. Preheat oven to 200°C/ 400°F. Line bun tin with paper cases.
2. Sift flour into large mixing bowl with cinnamon and bicarbonate of soda.
3. In a separate bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolk then gradually add honey.
4. Fold in flour mixture and enough milk to give a dropping consistency.
5. In a clean bowl, whisk the egg whites until stiff then fold into cake mixture.
6. Divide mixture among paper cases and bake for 15-20 minutes or until firm and golden brown.
7. Break the chocolate into pieces, place in a heatproof bowl and melt over a pan of hot water.
8. To make the bees: roll small pieces of marzipan into bee body shapes. Make a piping bag from greaseproof paper and spoon in a small amount of melted chocolate. Pipe stripes and eyes onto the marzipan bees. Push a flaked almond in on either side to make wings.
9. Spread the rest of the melted chocolate onto the buns using a wide-bladed or palette knife. Sit a bee on top and leave to set.

New Varroa!

A dangerous mutant gene in a previously harmless honeybee mite in Papua New Guinea has Australian beekeepers fearing for their future. The Asian honeybee mite has undergone a genetic mutation which allows it to infest European honeybees.

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization bee pathologist Denis Anderson tells the Australian Broadcasting Corp. the mite is one of a strain of Varroa mites which had never before been able to breed on the European honeybee, and thus had been no threat to horticulture. Now the mutant mites are running rampant through honeybee hives in Papua New Guinea, wiping out up to half the country's honey industry. The mutation is believed to have originated from a single female mite.

Anderson says based on experiences in the past, the mites will be also carrying exotic viral diseases. 'Those viruses are actually what cause the death to the European honey bee colonies,' he says.

Why is this important?

Because at the moment there is ,officially, no Varroa in Australia and Australia exports many hundreds of thousands of hives each year to pollinate the American fruit and nut crop. A more virulent varroa in Australia would cause immediate problems for the USA but would also spread worldwide and cause major problems worldwide.

Australian Agriculture Minister Tony Burke is meeting Papua New Guinea officials in Brisbane and containment of the mite to prevent them from entering Australia will be on the agenda. Burke tells reporters the government recognizes the importance of rigorous quarantine and biosecurity measures to protect Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries. "In November last year we announced an extra \$300,000 over two years to continue the sentinel hive program," he says. "This is an important surveillance program for pests and disease in Australia's honey bee and pollination industries."

An Asian honeybee eradication campaign is continuing in Queensland two years after an incursion was found in Cairns. Thus far 28 hives have been destroyed.

From 'Catch the Buzz', courtesy Bee Culture magazine

Propolis sterilises hives

Yes yes: intuitively we knew it must do, but the actual scientific proof was a bit thin. The well known antimicrobial properties of propolis give the whole colony a form of "social immunity", which lessens the need for each individual bee to have a strong immune system. Although honeybee resin is known to kill a range of pathogens, it is only recently that bees themselves have been shown to utilise its properties. A team from the University of Minnesota in St Paul, US, has published details of their discovery in the journal *Evolution*.

Honeybees in the wild nest in tree cavities. When founding a new colony, they line the entire nest interior with a thin layer of resins that they mix with wax. This is the mixture we know as propolis. They also use propolis to smooth surfaces in the hive, close holes or cracks in the nest, reduce the size of the entrances to keep out intruders, and to embalm intruders that they've killed in the hive that are too big to remove.

A number of studies have shown that propolis has a range of antimicrobial properties, but mostly in relation to human health. For example, numerous publications cite its effectiveness against viruses, bacteria and even cancer cells in humans. But Mike Simone, a PhD student and his supervisor Professor Marla Spivak at the University of Minnesota became interested in the effectiveness of honeybee propolis against bee pathogens, such as American foulbrood.

"This led us to wonder what other things propolis might be doing for the bees," said Simone.

In experiments funded by the US National Science Foundation, Simone's team painted the inside walls of hives with an extract of propolis collected from Brazil or Minnesota. This inside layer mimicked how propolis or resins would be distributed in a feral colony nesting in a tree cavity. They then created colonies of honeybees and housed either in hives enriched with resin, or hives without the resin layer - to act as a control. After one week of exposure they collected bees that had been born in each colony. Genetic tests on these 7-day-old bees showed that those growing in the resin-rich colonies had less active immune systems.

"The resins likely inhibited bacterial growth. Therefore the bees did not have to activate their immune systems as much," said Simone.

"Our finding that propolis in the nest allows bees to invest less in their immune systems after such a short exposure was surprising. Resins in the hive have been thought of as a potential benefit to a honey bee colony, but this has never been tested directly."

Using resins to help sterilise the colony can be thought of as a type of "social immunity" said the researchers. And it may partly explain why bees and other social insects, such as ants, collect resins to build their nests in the first place.

"Honeybees can use wax, which they produce themselves, to do all the things that they use resin for in the nest. So it is interesting to think about why they might go and collect resins," said Simone.

"Especially since resins, being sticky, are hard to manipulate and take a lot of energy for individual bees to gather in very small quantities."

There is also some evidence that some mammals and birds coat themselves in naturally-occurring plant resin in a bid to reduce infestations with parasites.

Story adapted from BBC NEWS:
Published: 2009/07/23 09:43:28 GMT

Caption Competition.

Suggestions to the Editor by December 1st please



What's going on here? The prize for the best suggestion is 3 large corms of *Dracunculus vulgaris*, the dragon arum., with mottled leaf stalk and the gigantic and wonderful maroon spathe. An interesting exotic with a scent that is out of this world.

The National Honey Show

The 78th National Honey Show is just weeks away. It is the UK's *gold-standard* honey show - the equivalent of Wimbledon for tennis players. It will be held in Weybridge, Surrey from 29th to 31st October. There are almost 250 classes and beekeepers come from all over the world to enter so it is truly an international show. Why not book a ticket now to see the best of the best? I went last year as I just happened to be in the area. It is really about bees rather than just honey. Certainly the display tables groaning with racks of competitive honey exhibits are the most obvious thing one notices but Trade stalls, lectures and workshops are what most visitors will be engaged in. The promotional blurb make it sound like a specialist nerdish gathering. But it is not.

What's on?

Apart from the world class honey show there will be a full programme of workshops and lectures throughout the event and a wide selection of trade stands with lots of equipment and books to buy. You can see the line-up and download the show schedule on the NHS website www.honeyshow.co.uk and you will receive all the details in the programme that comes with tickets purchased in advance. Advance tickets plus the 2009 schedule of classes and show entry application are available now.

When you arrive there are two doors : one for people buying daily tickets for £12 and another for people wishing to become members. It costs £10 to become a member and you then get in free. Also membership entitles you to bring a "partner" in for £5. So go to the door for membership and pay £15 to get two people in rather than the ticket door and pay £12. I could not quite believe this quaint madness but I met many repaat visitors who confirmed that this system had been going on for many years

It seems the excentricity of beekeepers has infected the whole organisation.

Apart from the excellent lectures and workshops one of the delights is watching people pass by the membership door and pay an extra 75% for two tickets..

UK warned of plague of bee-eating hornets spreading north

- Pesticides and traps fail to halt steady colonisation
- British summer could be their downfall, says expert



The Asian predatory hornet, *Vespa velutina*

For five years they have wreaked havoc in the fields of south-western France, scaring locals with their venomous stings and ravaging the bee population to feed their rapacious appetites. Now, according to French beekeepers, Asian predatory hornets have been sighted in Paris for the first time, raising the prospect of a nationwide invasion which entomologists fear could eventually reach Britain.

Claude Cohen, president of the Parisian region's apiculture development agency, said a hornet nest had been found this week in the centre of Blanc Mesnil, north-east of the capital.

If confirmed by further testing, the find will raise fears that the spread of the bee-eating *Vespa velutina* is no longer limited to the Aquitaine region near Bordeaux, where it is believed to have arrived on board container ships from China in 2004, and the surrounding south-west.

Denis Thiery, a specialist at the National Institute for Agricultural Research, said the hornets were likely to push on with a relentless colonisation of their adopted country until they become a common sight in vast swaths of France – and ultimately in other European states.

"We are seeing a real geographical expansion," he said, adding that an eventual invasion of southern England, which has a relatively mild climate the hornets would enjoy, could not be ruled out.

Biologists insist that this variety of Asian hornet, which can grow to an inch long, is no more ferocious than its European counterpart, although its stings, which contain more poison than those of wasps, can be very painful and can require hospital attention. This summer swarms of the [insects](#) were reported to have attacked a mother and baby in the Lot-et-Garonne department, as well as pursuing passersby and tourists on bikes. But the hornet's menace to human beings pales into insignificance in comparison with the destruction it wreaks on its chosen habitat. In south-western France, where its population surges each year, beleaguered beekeepers claim that they are being driven into the ground by the insect's destructive eating habits.

"We have literally been invaded," said Raymond Saunier, president of the Gironde department's beekeeping union. "In the past two to four years we have lost 30% of our hives. All it takes is two or three hornets near your hive and you've had it."

He added: "It's not just about us trying to make honey. What's even more serious is the effect they have on the pollination process [by killing so many bees]. It's really a disaster."

Faced with a demographic explosion which Thiery said had seen thousands of nests documented last year in the city of Bordeaux alone, entomologists are unsure of the best way to halt the hornets' seemingly unstoppable advance. Neither pesticides nor traps have proved particularly effective, largely because the creatures nest high off the ground in trees. The *Vespa velutina* has no natural predator on European soil.

Because of this, and a gradual shift in climate which experts believe could encourage the hornets to move north, many experts are adamant that the French scourge will at some point cross the Channel. But the threat is not immediate, said Stuart Hind, head of the Natural History Museum's centre for biodiversity in London. "[A UK invasion] is very likely," he said. "It is entirely plausible. But it could be 10 to 15 years before they come knocking on our door."

But, he added, "If anything were to stop them it would be the good, old-fashioned British summers. They wouldn't cope well with heavy rain".

Lizzy Davies Paris guardian.co.uk, Friday 25 September 2009

Artificial Swarming the easy way

Take original site as site A New site B

Site A has parent cells and supers and sealed Queen cells

Move stock ie brood chamber to site B leaving supers at A

Brood chamber on new site B

Place a new brood box on site A with say 3or4 frames of preferably drawncomb (undrawn can be used) if you have no drawn

Go through parent stock now on site B and take out 2 or 3 frames which have sealed Queen cells and move over to site A

ENSURE QUEEN IS NOT ON THESE FRAMES if in doubt shake all bees off

What will happen is all flying bees will leave B and return to A which ensures that A has enough bees.

Because the original colony that is now at B has lost all flying bees they will break down any remaining Queen cells and prevent swarming

Now re erect site A with supers back on

Put a super on site B

After a couple of weeks check A has eggs or larvae

If you are in a charitable mood you can feed B for a few days

Graham Winchester

E Version of BeeHolder. This has traditionally been sent out to most of our members. But our Website is now over its initial bugs and future copies of the BeeHolder will be posted on the web rather than distributed via email. Everybody will get an email saying the BeeHolder is ready to view at www.montybee.org.uk. Please consider the option of going paperless and sending me an email saying that the Web Version is sufficient for your needs.

However, we are trying to make the Hardcopy version of the BeeHolder the sort of thing that you can leave around a coffee table so that visitors can view and perhaps start up a Bee conversation. If it is a catalyst for encouraging new membership it has done its job.

Please **do email and say how it can be improved.**

STOP PRESS

STOP PRESS

Experienced bee keepers will know that bees still celebrate Christmas on January 13th having declined to adopt the Gregorian calendar.

So on January 13th the Montgomeryshire BeeKeepers will be having a Christmas Meal . It is at the Lakeside Golf Course, Argae Hall, Gathmyl. Time and price to be announced BUT Secretaries Dave & Jessica always manage somehow to get a good deal for us.

Contact Dave or Jessica at jessica.bennett@virgin.net

The next edition of the BeeHolder is in January 2009.

Copy for inclusion should be sent, via email, to the Editor by December 10th.



This is not an advertisement nor even an endorsement for these products BUT it is nice to see a company redesigning the traditional hive and using bright new materials.

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