



# Montgomeryshire Beekeepers Association

## The BeeHolder

Spring 2019



### Bee-ginners

Class of March, 2019

a first nervous foray into the apiary ...

(see also back cover)

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## We welcome as new members ...

Names removed for distribution outside MBKA.

Other places where this edition has been anonymised are indicated by enclosing with <> style brackets.

*"Give the BeeHiveMan a Buzz!"*  
**BEEHIVEMAN**



DYN CWCH GWENYN

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# Editorial

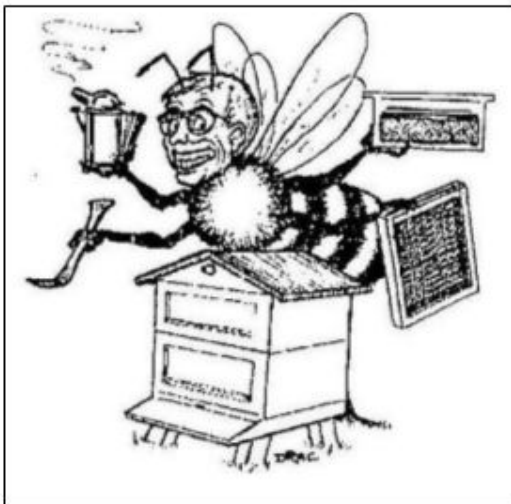
The Spring edition, and what a spring we are having so far. A bit cool in April, but the weather has been splendid of late and the bees are as busy as themselves. I didn't hear any horror stories of mass colony loss over the winter, or desperate stories of bees needing rescue feeding in the spring, but if you have heard anything do write in. We don't want to get too complacent!

And talking of not becoming complacent, see the article on Asian hornets (page 13). Not here in Montgomeryshire yet, but getting closer.

The summer ahead is looking packed with events and shows (see page 7), so a big thank you to Ann for her efforts in booking and coordinating all of these.

And finally a thank you to Roger, Brian and all who help at the apiary as numbers are strong even if we are struggling to produce nucs just yet. Hopefully this recent warm weather will lead the bees to start making increase.

As always, I have an open request for any stories, pictures or contributions of any kind which you would like to share with the members at large. Just email them in, or give me a ring (details page 19).



## **BRIAN NORRIS**

**FOR ALL BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT**

**AGENT FOR THORNES**

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# Recent Events

## 20<sup>th</sup> January - MBKA Annual Dinner

12:30 at the Lakeside Golf Club, Garthmyl. The Lakeside put on another fantastic spread, which went down well with all who attended. It was a great opportunity to catch up with each other after the winter break.

## 19<sup>th</sup> February - MBKA Annual General Meeting

Whilst I don't intend to reproduce the minutes of the meeting here, it was certainly one of our better AGMs of late with some lively discussion as well as some people "stepping up to the plate" and volunteering for positions on committee.

Highlights were :

- Pete's Chairman's report - a lively summary of the last bee year.
- Siân's treasurer's report - the association is in good financial health.
- Election of officers - Gez <> is our new treasurer, Joe <> stood down as Swarm Co-ordinator, and the position was not filled.
- Acceptance of the revised MBKA constitution - A much needed revision of the MBKA constitution has occupied the committee for much of the year. The resulting document was presented to the AGM for approval which, after some lively debate and a few amendments, was duly given by a majority vote. It was agreed that the constitution should be revised if necessary at least every three years.
- BKQT - The meeting concluded with the raffles and a light-hearted "Bee-Keepers Question Time" panel <comprising some experienced members> answering questions from the audience, sharing tips and generally entertaining members.

Democracy is alive and well at MBKA even if it seems to be sadly crumbling elsewhere!

## 11<sup>th</sup> May - Llanidloes Food Festival

We had a stall at Gŵyl Fwyd Llanidloes Food Festival talking about bees, having some bee equipment and the virtual hive on show as well as selling wax and honey. This is the second food festival in the town and it was well attended, so hopefully it will become an annual event.

# Training Reports

## 2019 Improvers Course (January)

A fantastic turn out for the latest 'Improvers' training which was run by Rachel <> and Roger <>. The majority of attendee Beekeepers were in their first or second year of beekeeping, and were facing their first 'full' season - which includes preparation for Spring opening of hives and of course - our favourite - swarm management! The knowledge bestowed by Rachel and Roger is just breathtaking at points.

Roger gave us comprehensive coverage of the first Spring inspection and how to spot tell-tale signs of health and wellbeing, along with advice on planning hive configuration for the coming season - including a full inspection of kit.

Rachel then moved on to walk us through the bee-keeping year - and in particular 'swarm management' techniques! Absolutely fascinating from beginning to end.

There was also considerable coverage of pest management - including European and Asian Hornets. We were all encouraged to visit the National Bee Keeping Unit website to find out more about setting up Asian Hornet traps as a precautionary measure - after all, it is us beekeepers who are going to be the first



Getting to grips with the nitty gritty

to spot any intrusion. The training section on our website has links to the NBU website and a YouTube video on making a hornet trap as well as photos of the course in progress (in the photo gallery).

## 2019 Beginners Course (March)

A fabulous turnout for the first 'Beginners' training day of 2019. Training Officer and Apiary Manager Rachel and Roger never fail to provide the most fascinating insight into the world of bees.

With over 30 attendee's, it would appear that the future of the honeybee in Montgomeryshire is safe.

After the classroom sessions, we headed out to try bee suits, make frames, light a smoker and look at the anatomy of a hive. We hope the day was useful and that we have spurred these fledgling beekeepers on!

Visit the Photo Gallery on the website to see more pictures of the course in progress.

## **2019 Beginners Course (April)**

This was a follow-up to the Beginners' training that took place in March at Gregynog.

It was the first opportunity to open the hives and the first time that the beginners had come 'face to face' with real bees. The weather was not great, but the bees were in good temper and busy expanding their colonies. After the initial apprehension it wasn't long before the students got stuck in.

We managed a quick look into most of the hives to see the different brood stages and bees - queens, workers and drones - all in all a useful starter session!

See pictures on the front and back covers of this BeeHolder to see the students in action. Can you recognise yourself in a bee suit?

## **Basic Assessment Study Group**



Certified bee keepers

In the winter of 2017-18 Rachel convened a study group of five in order to prepare for the Basic Assessment beekeeping exam. They met regularly and then four of them took - and passed - their Basic Assessment exam. Unfortunately there were no takers for the study group this winter, so it didn't take place. If any members are interested in occupying the long dark months

studying for this useful qualification next winter, do make yourselves known to Rachel (contact details page 19).

## **Forthcoming Events**

We have a mix of shows and events this summer, listed below. Because apiary training days are subject to the weather they are difficult to schedule far in advance. Latest info will be on the website/facebook or, if you don't do either of those things, check with Roger (see page 19).

If you are going to any of the shows mentioned and can spare half an hour or more to help on the MBKA stand, do get in touch with Ann. It is refreshing to talk to the public about bees and realise that most are interested in and sympathetic to beekeeping.

We have several Open Hives events planned for this year. They are a great chance to see how others keep their bees and hear words of wisdom from folk that know what they are talking about. A necessary part of these events is the pool tea afterwards – everyone brings along sandwiches or cakes or some such food to share whilst the wrap up discussions are taking place. A great tradition of bee keeping in the Montybees style!

If you are interested in hosting an Open Hives event yourself, do talk to someone on committee as it is a good opportunity for people to come and see your bees and hopefully give you some helpful tips appropriate to your apiary.

### **8<sup>th</sup> June - Bee Health & Comb Workshop**

From 2pm until 5pm. Experts from the National Bee Unit will give advice on bee health, usefully illustrated with examples of diseased comb etc. If you can't make it on that day, three further workshops are planned for June elsewhere in Wales. See page 11 for details.

Plas Dolerw, Newtown

### **23<sup>rd</sup> June - Shropshire Association apiary**

The Shropshire BKA have invited us to visit their apiary near Shrewsbury. Details of times, transport etc to be finalised. Keep an eye on the website!

Shropshire BKA apiary, Shrewsbury

### **21<sup>st</sup> July - Open Hives and hornet trap workshop**

Open hive event incorporating an Asian hornet trap workshop with Liz <>.

Llanbrynmair



## 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July - Royal Welsh Show

This is the big show with animals, sideshows, stalls, food, drink and so on. MBKA helped host the WBKA bee section last year, but this year we aren't directly involved. There is quite a big section of honey, wax and bee products, so if you want to enter something contact RWAS directly.



Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells

## 4<sup>th</sup> August - Open Hives

Open hive event with Mal <>, Cath <> and Sheena <>.

<>, Llanidloes

## 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> August - Shrewsbury flower show

There is a big honey section at this show, and we have been invited to submit entries for judging. See the article on page 9 for more information on what and how to enter.

Quarry Park, Shrewsbury

## 10<sup>th</sup> August - Llangurig Show

MBKA will be having a stand at Llangurig this year. This is a fun show to visit, so if you're attending do drop by our stand.

Show Ground, Llangurig

## 17<sup>th</sup> August - Montgomery Show

Montgomery Carnival starts from the show ground at 12 noon, followed by the show itself from 1pm till 5pm. MBKA will be there stimulating public interest in bees.



The MBKA display stand at shows in years past - note that we do seem to attract excellent weather!



## **24<sup>th</sup> August - Berriew Show**

This is the Summer bank holiday Saturday. Berriew show is a popular agricultural, horticultural and craft show, and well worth a visit.

Upper Rectory Field, Berriew

## **25<sup>th</sup> August - Open Hives**

Open hive event with Mark <> and Heather <>.

Aberhafesp

## **7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> September - Newtown Food Festival**

MBKA's third year at Newtown Food Festival, which is getting bigger, better and busier each year. Do come along and support us!

Back Lane Car Park, SY18 2NZ

## **21<sup>st</sup> September - Bishops Castle Michaelmas Fair**

In spite of our poor location last year we're back again. Hopefully we'll be nearer the heart of the action. The Bishops Castle Michaelmas Fair is spread through the whole town and a big event by local standards. As well as street food, dance, sideshows, theatre and Panic Circus, they have several parades including steam engines of various types.

## **The 132<sup>nd</sup> Shrewsbury Flower Show**

The organisers of the show have asked MBKA members to help raise awareness about bees by entering something bee related into the Shrewsbury Flower Show. I have reproduced page 3 of the "Schedule of classes in the Bees, Honey and Wine Section" on the following page to show the address for applications and give a general feel for the event. If you need a copy of the whole schedule get in touch with me (Chris Leech, details on page 19) and I will forward one either by post or email. There are fourteen pages which would be too much to include here.



There are well over 40 classes which you can enter in this section. The schedule contains the various rules for entry, where to send it, entry fees and prizes etc. So if your bees have been making good honey, wax etc, or if you have invented, say, a bee keeping contraption which you'd like to share, why not have a crack at entering?

This is an extract from the official application form

**SHREWSBURY FLOWER SHOW**  
[www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)  
**9<sup>th</sup> and 10th AUGUST 2019**  
**BEES, HONEY and WINE SECTION**



(Affiliated to the British Beekeepers' Association)

[www.shropshirebees.co.uk](http://www.shropshirebees.co.uk)

**PRESIDENT**  
**B. T. GOODWIN**

**Help us to promote the craft of beekeeping by entering exhibits in our show.** The exhibits will be seen by over 30,000 visitors during the two days and your entries will help to increase public interest in honey, wine and other products and encourage newcomers to take up the crafts.

- The publicity creates awareness and demand for our products.
- The competition helps to improve standards of presentation and quality.
- Prize cards and splendid cups are a great boost to sales.
- You will meet many new and old friends in beekeeping while your family enjoys one of the best days of activity, interest and general entertainment in the country.
- You will find that it is great fun.

**Please collect Show Entry Passes from 2.00 pm on Thursday when you have completed staging your exhibits.**

**Complete your entry form now - we look forward to meeting you.**

**ENTRIES TO BE RECEIVED BY: Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019**  
**NO LATE ENTRIES ACCEPTED**

**Send entries to the Entries Secretary:-**

Mrs M. Formby, 28 Belvidere Walk, Shrewsbury, SY2 5LT. (01743 368711)

# NBU Wales Bee Health Days 2019

The National Bee Unit (NBU) Wales will be running four Bee Health Days in June with a presentation for beekeepers looking at bee health and good practice, and at Henfaes and the National Botanic Gardens beekeepers will have an opportunity to join in an inspection at the apiary, where we will demonstrate inspecting hives the NBU way.



Inspecting an invisible comb?

(Joe <> at bee disease day 2013)

beekeepers to meet some of the NBU team in Wales, to get an understanding of the purpose and value of the Inspectorate's work and, most importantly, to develop their knowledge and diagnosis of the key pest and disease threats to their bees.

## Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June

From 2pm to 5pm at Plas Dolerw, Milford Road, Newtown, SY16 2EH. This is our venue and so probably the closest for most of our members. However there will not be a hive inspection demonstration.

## Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June

From 10am to 5pm with the Conwy BKA. The venue is Henfaes Research Centre, Abergwyngregyn,

Indoors you will have the chance to see diseased combs, displayed under special licence, to give attendees first-hand experience of brood disease. Workshops will look at pests and diseases and relevant good beekeeping practice, from *varroa* control to biosecurity and exotic pests.

The event will provide an opportunity for



Varroa mites on a honeybee larva

Llanfairfechan, LL33 0LB. Attendance with Conwy BKA is open to all beekeepers, further details from their association.

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

From 10am to 5pm each day at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire, SA32 8HN

The event is now on the National Botanic Garden of Wales' website at - <https://botanicgarden.wales/visit/whats-on/bee-health-event-in-partnership-with-the-national-bee-unit-wales/>. The programme runs from 10am to 5pm with a break for lunch (12pm to 2pm) and is the same for each day.

Spaces are available to book via the Garden's Eventbrite page -

Saturday June 22nd - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bee-health-event-digwyddiad-iechyd-gwenyn-tickets-60573523038>

Sunday June 23rd - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bee-health-event-digwyddiad-iechyd-gwenyn-tickets-61484425572>

Entrance to the Botanic Gardens is £10.45 (or £7.50 each for groups of 10 or more, you book on 01558 667148). The NBU Bee Health event is no extra charge, the gardens have a lot to offer if you make a day of it, they are well worth supporting.



National Botanic Garden Wales, the giant bee eye greenhouse

# Asian Hornet Update

If, like me, you are getting a bit fed up of seeing articles about Asian hornets, do bear with it. Like many artificially or accidentally introduced foreign species, our native species have not yet learnt how to cope with them and so they will wreak havoc if they become established in Britain. Hence it behoves all conscientious bee keepers to be aware of the risk and report any Asian hornets spotted to the GB Non Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) following the NBU advised procedure (see below).

MBKA now has an Asian Hornet Action Team representative (Rachel Kellaway). WBKA is recommending all Associations have a local contact for people to report possible sightings of this menace who can then check out the sighting before alerting the NNSS. There were about 8,000 reports of possible hornets last year so the idea of local AHATs is to triage realistic reports that need investigating. So if you get a possible sighting and are not certain it is an Asian hornet, contact Rachel (page 19). If you are certain of the sighting, contact the NNSS directly yourself.

The easiest way to spot Asian hornets is after you have captured them in an Asian hornet trap. How to make such a trap has been covered in an earlier BeeHolder, or you can find this information on t'internet. But even better would be to come along to the Open Hives event on July 21<sup>st</sup> with Liz <> in Llanbrynmair. As well as the usual hive opening(s) and pool tea, there will be a workshop where interested handypeople can put together an Asian hornet trap.

## The recommended reporting procedure

If you think you have seen an Asian hornet, sightings should be reported through the free Asian Hornet Watch App, available for Android and Iphone. Other methods of reporting the hornet also include using the NNSS online notification form. Finally, you can send any suspect sightings to the Non Native Species email address [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk). Where possible, a photo, the location of the sighting and a description of the insect seen should be included.

The NNSS website provides a great deal of information about the wide ranging work that is being done to tackle invasive species and tools to facilitate those working in this area.

**Chris**

# Queen Rearing and Bee Improvement

Steve <> travelled to Plas Dolerw for our 12<sup>th</sup> March meeting to describe the work of BIBBA (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeding Association) in conserving and restoring the British native bee, the practicalities of successful queen rearing, and the work he has been involved in with South Clwyd in bee improvement. The talk was very clear, with photos to illustrate, and it was good to hear about the principles of queen rearing even if some of us in the room are not beekeeping at this level.

He began the evening with a short resume of the work of BIBBA which now has about 500 members and has been in existence since 1963. The organisation's aim is to conserve, restore, study, select and improve the native or near-native honeybees of Britain and Ireland. It runs courses including queen-rearing, colony assessment and grafting techniques etc.

The bee improvement movement in South Clwyd, where members are all working together towards achieving having native bees has been a great success. The South Clwyd bee improvement work's success has worked through:

- Working together to improve the consistency of open mating
- Improving or maintaining the adaptation of bees to local conditions
- Improving the temper of the bees
- Eliminating the need to import exotic bees which would stir up the gene pool and upset local stability. (A nuc co-ordinator matches bees to appropriate locations such as cold/windy)
- Reducing the risk of importing diseases and parasites into the area
- The BKA has a teaching apiary with dark local bees. Beginners and Intermediate courses stress the advantages of keeping local bees
- There are 8 small breeding groups
- The BIBBA co-ordinator helps with advice, morphometry, running workshops and keeping records.
- All the beekeepers take their virgin queens to a remote mating site where 10 drone colonies are maintained.

Steve emphasised the importance of drones, saying they are key to any bee improvement programme, and saying it is not difficult to do more harm than good by letting pure queens mate with drones of a different



sub-species. The use of a remote mating site increases the chance of the queen mating with suitable drones. All his hives contain 3 frames of drone foundation (or half frames as the bees will draw drone cells) to ensure he has plenty of drones.

He described the evolution of different strains of honey bees over millions of years, as they followed tree lines during successive ice ages. Interestingly, he said that native bees need less honey stores (about 22lb) over winter. Successful bee improvement results in native bees with the desirable characteristics of being adapted to the local area, gentle, healthy, non-swarmy, and non-prolific. However, in-breeding can produce an excessive number of diploid drones which results in a pepper-pot pattern of brood, poor winter survival, lazy worker bees, and increased susceptibility to brood diseases.

Steve continued with a description of the principles of queen rearing and the use of “Queen right” and “Queenless” methods of producing starter and finisher colonies. He concluded the talk with some tips for local bee improvement:

- Raise enough colonies to supply local demand
- Get the local beekeepers on board
- Choose a race that suits your area and select in accordance with that race or breed
- Remember the importance of drones and try to ensure that they are compatible with the virgin queens
- Don't be afraid to cull when all your efforts produce “bad” bees
- Bees must be able to perform well in bad seasons as well as good seasons
- Don't be fooled by hybrid vigour - it won't last
- Enjoy the journey!

More comprehensive information than my non-specialist beekeeper interpretation of Steve's talk, and details about courses and practicalities are available on the BIBBA website: [www.bibba.com](http://www.bibba.com). Also, three of the four Bee Health Days in June (see page 11) at Henfaes and the National Botanic Gardens will give beekeepers an opportunity to join in an inspection where we will demonstrate inspecting hives the NBU way.

**Jill <>**

## Natural Beekeeping Interest Group

Llanidloes was the venue for the first 2019 meeting of Gwyllo'r Gwenyn (Watching the Bees). The group was set up in 2018 by beekeepers with a special interest in the methods of the natural beekeeping movement. Its very first meeting was held in Machynlleth, as a result of the desire of attendees of a 2-day training workshop - held in June at Y Plas, Machynlleth - to keep in touch with each other, and to meet again from time to time for mutual support and to compare notes. The training had been delivered by John <> ( <http://topbarbeehive.co.uk> ) who in the Autumn of that same year kindly travelled down from his Yorkshire home once more to give a very interesting evening presentation to the MBKA at Plas Dolerw. Partly as a result of the success of that presentation several MBKA members were in attendance of the February meeting in Llanidloes, where they found much to discuss and debate.



The top bar hive production team at work  
(is this one is open for discussion? Ed)

Mid-Wales couple Clive and Philippa, supported by a slide show, reflected upon their original inspirations, motivations, and practical experiences during their many years of keeping bees under the 'natural' umbrella. This included their work with schools, and they additionally described the many types of hive they'd tried including Warre and Top Bar, and another hexagonal design of their own making to emulate the structure of a hollowed tree trunk. However, on moving to Wales from England, the option of transporting the heavier hives with them had not been a practical one, and as a consequence are currently primarily working with National-style hives, using organically-sourced foundation.

What became apparent throughout the ensuing discussion was the 'broad church' nature of the movement - ranging from the completely non-interventionist through to approaches that many association members would recognise and feel to be a preferred part of their own beekeeping practice. Common ground would be an emphasis on bee welfare and the facilitating of natural behaviour - and the rejection of the intensive farming practices so often associated with a purely production-focused approach in order to maximise honey yield or for migratory pollination, with their dependence on the routine use of prophylactic medications such as miticides and antibiotics.

On display at the meeting was a horizontal top bar hive that had recently been made by two of the members, and which generated a lot of interest (see photo). It was based on a design popularised and promoted by the 'balanced beekeeper' Philip Chandler, author of the influential 2007 book *The Barefoot Beekeeper* - a sort of manifesto for low-cost, low-impact, chemical-free beekeeping.

Future plans for Gwyllo'r Gwenyn include inviting John Vendy to return and provide some further training. If any members are interested in this, or would like to find out more and possibly become involved with the group, please get in touch with MBKA Secretary Jill <> (page 19) for further information.

**Mal <>**



# Swarm Coordination

As mentioned earlier, Joe <> has stood down from the role of Swarm Coordinator. We now have a team of three swarm collector coordinators - details for members of the public to report swarms are on the MBKA website homepage with some useful information about what a honey bee looks like and what isn't a honey bee (wasps, hover flies etc).

Basically there are three mobile phones and depending on the day of the week, the "on duty" phone will be called. Whoever has that phone will then try and contact the nearest MBKA member who has signed up as a swarm collector. So if you are interested in collecting a swarm (aka free bees), do get in touch with someone on committee (page 19).

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

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***available on line for £20 per year***

***<https://beekeepers.peacockmagazines.com/>***

or £30 per year for paper copy from Northern Bee Books,  
Scout Bottom Farm, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5JS (UK)

*<http://www.northernbeebooks.co.uk/>*



## BBwear offer

BBwear still offers our members 20% off all garments in their clothing range and 50% off BB10 and BB11 Gloves and Spats. Free gloves are NOT included with the full suits when purchased with association discount.

To see the range of products, their web site is <http://www.bbwear.co.uk/>.



A full spectrum of bee suits is available from BBwear

<committee page removed>





... and getting stuck in.

*“Give the BeeHiveMan a Buzz!”*

# BEEHIVEMAN

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[www.montybees.org.uk](http://www.montybees.org.uk)

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