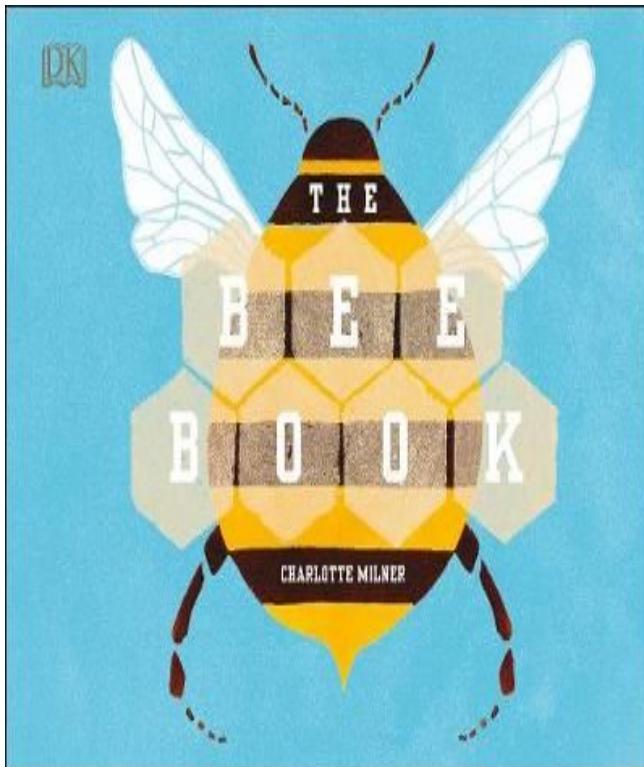




**Montgomeryshire BeeKeepers
Association**

The BeeHolder

Winter 2019/20



The Bee Book

An interesting bee book for children

Editorial

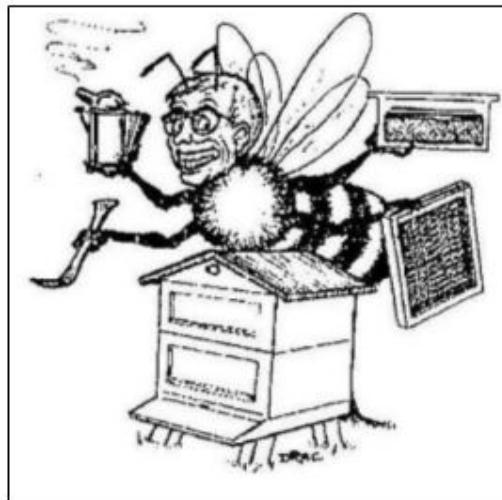
It is hard to believe that another year has sneaked itself by, but presumably the calendar doesn't lie. Well done to all who had a successful bee year, and better luck next year to those who struggled in one way or another.

My apologies for not getting an Autumn issue of BeeHolder out. My usual new year's resolution to get four copies out and on time has been renewed, so fingers crossed for that. The (slightly revised) publishing schedule for the next year is printed below, so there are no real excuses for deviation, hesitation or, indeed, repetition.

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. Contact details see page 19.

MBKA BeeHolder Publishing schedule

Issue	Issue Date	Copy Deadline
Winter 2019/20	6 January 2020	21 December
Spring 2020	6 April 2020	23 March
Summer 2020	6 July 2020	22 June
Autumn 2020	5 October 2020	21 September
Winter 2020/21	4 January 2021	21 December



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BEEHIVEMAN

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HIVES • NUCCS • HIVES • BEES • TRAINING • HIVES • QUEENS

01686 414854 07508 751 479



We welcome as new members ...

(Contact details removed for data protection).

Forthcoming Events

We have various events which will be of interest to members. Some are organised by MBKA, others are external events which we think you might find worthwhile.

Because apiary training days are subject to the weather they are difficult to schedule far in advance. We try and fit in one a month, usually on a Sunday. Latest info will be on the website/facebook or, if you don't do either of those things, check with the apiary manager (see page 19).

If you are interested in hosting an Open Hives event this year, do talk to someone on committee (Maybe at the AGM?). Open hives, on a good day, are one of the best features of MBKA membership!

22nd January, 7pm - MBKA Honey Show

We thought we'd do something a bit different so we invite everyone to bring along examples of any of their bee-related products for everyone to taste/smell/rub-on (e.g. honey, cosmetic products, honey cake, mead....) If you have honey or other products you would like to sell, bring these along too.

The evening will be very informal and a chance to share what we (and our bees) have been up to in 2019. This is not a competition so don't worry if you don't think your honey is "show-worthy" (my honey is solid!). It will also be an opportunity for those of us less experienced beekeepers to pick the brains of those who have been keeping bees for a long time (so bring a pick *Ed*). As usual, we'll have a raffle so any donations will be gratefully received.

Plas Dolerw, Newtown

16th February 2020 - AGM and annual meal

We are holding the Annual General Meeting and the annual meal on the same day this year. Hopefully people who would only attend one of these will be inspired to attend both, but it is possible to just come to one or the other if you so wish. It is a change of venue as well - The Royal Oak in Welshpool.

Their Powis Suite can hold up to 120 people, and so we will occupy just a large alcove for the AGM which can 50 people theatre style. The AGM will be from eleven am until noon, then we will move into the main part of the room for lunch, starting at half past twelve (this gives people time to buy

a drink, go to the loo etc). There is some parking in the hotel but also a big public car park very close by. Guests and partners who don't want to sit in on the AGM can sit in the separate bar or sitting room.

As usual the meal is open to MBKA members and their guests, so don't be shy about bringing friends and family. Places must be paid for in advance, and the menu choices need to be made and sent with payment to Jill by 7th February. There is a booking form included with this issue of Beeholder, and the full description of the menu choices is on page ZZ.

The Royal Oak, Welshpool

25th March, 7pm - Lynfa Davies

Lynfa will give us a talk entitled "Spring Management". This has nothing to do with car suspension or clock winding, but everything to do with getting your bees off to the best possible start for the 2020 season.

Plas Dolerw, Newtown

Saturday March 28th - WBKA Spring Convention 2020

Why not attend the WBKA Spring Convention this year? See the article on page ZZ for more information about the speakers etc.



An email was sent around with a link to a form to get cheap advance tickets (£7 each instead of £9). However for two hours of your time you could get in for free. Stewards are required to make sure that this event runs smoothly. If you would be prepared to join this group of volunteers send me an email stating when you could steward ie early/mid/late. Stewarding starts at 8am and goes on until 4.30pm.

Old Food Hall, RWAS, Builth Wells, LD2 3SY

Friday April 3rd to Sunday 5th - BBKA Spring Convention 2020



The British Beekeepers Association

The UK's premier educational and networking event for beekeepers and those interested in learning more about honey bees. Internationally renowned for its lectures, workshops and many trade stands. See their web site for more information and booking.

Harper Adams University , Newport, TF10 8NB

April 22nd, 7pm - Dr Alison Nash

Dr Alison Nash of Aberystwyth University will give a talk on “Boosting honey bee immunity to varroa”. Varroa seems to be playing second fiddle to the Asian hornet as a problem for honeybees, but we aren't out of the woods yet (if that isn't mixing too many metaphores). I'm sure that Dr Nash will explain it much more clearly than I am!

Plas Dolerw, Newtown

August 15th & 16th - Shrewsbury Flower Show

The 133rd Shrewsbury Flower Show (and you've got to admire their persistence) is worth going, not just for the flowers, they have a good bee section and a great deal more besides. See their web site for more information and ticketing. <https://shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk/>



Book Review 1

This charming illustrated non-fiction picture book (see cover picture) takes you on an amazing journey all about the wonderful world of bees and their adventures from flower to flower. Bees are brilliant at building, super social, and - most importantly - along with other insects, they are responsible for a third of every mouthful of food you eat! The Bee Book is perfect for children age 5 to 8 all about bees, how much they matter, why they are declining, and what we can do to help. This dazzling celebration of bees is lavishly illustrated by the talented up-and-coming author and illustrator Charlotte Milner. Children will be fascinated by the beautiful pictures and learn plenty of buzz-worthy facts covering types of bee, bee hives, beekeeping, how they pollinate plants and make honey, and much more. Meet the humble honey bee face-to-face: an animal that is considered nature's hardest worker, in this educational yet engaging kids book that you can treasure forever.

ISBN: 9780241305188

Publisher: Dorling Kindersley Ltd

Imprint: DK Children

Format: Hardback

Number of Pages: 48

An Invitation from Meirionnydd BKA

On Tuesday 21st January at 7.30pm guest speaker Michael Young MBE will talk on "Treating Varroa with Essential Oils".

Michael Young lives near Belfast and has kept honeybees for over 30 years. He is the past Chairman and founder member of the Institute of Northern Ireland Beekeepers' and a Senior Honey Judge. He has exhibited beekeeping products across the world. Michael has connections with the Harris Beekeeping Institute in Georgia USA, is a Georgia Master Beekeeper and was instrumental in partnering the Welsh Honey Judging system with the USA. In 2008, Michael was awarded an MBE for his services to apiculture and conservation.

Michael will also show a short video that he made about "the Sugar Roll" featuring Dr Sammy Ramsey; and will give us 5 minutes on the "Welsh Honey Judge Programme in the USA". He will also enlighten us on the importance of "pickle wick" in candle making. All in all, it should be an entertaining, informative evening. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to secretary@mbka.info, for catering purposes.

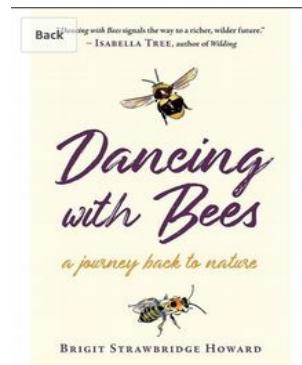
The venue is Llanelltyd Village Hall, Derwen Gam, Llanelltyd, Dolgellau LL40 2TA

Book Review 2

Did you know we have 3 native species of bees that nest inside abandoned snail shells? A fabulous book to learn about all species of bees. Advice on creating habitats for our more endangered bees, and amazing facts and figures.

Wildlife gardener and naturalist Brigit speaks and campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of native wild bees and other pollinating insects. In this book Brigit, through her observations of the natural world, helps the reader to reassess their relationship with it. In this modern, busy world it is a pure escape into the truth and simplicity of the wonders that surround us and which, if not carefully considered, we end to take for granted.

Beautifully written, this book will be good on the coffee table when you finally get round to putting it down.



Asian Hornets - Jersey Trip

Members of some BKAs are visiting Jersey to get involved in the identification and destruction of Asian Hornet nests. This is a useful learning opportunity for the BKAs and also helps the beekeepers of Jersey who are, once again*, on the front lines of an invasion from the continent. At committee meeting, Liz proposed that some MBKA members get involved, and so far seven members have expressed interest. Transport and accommodation would need to be self-funded, so expected costs will be:

£200 flight from Birmingham (ferry is also an option, but not from Brum)

£50 per room per night B&B

£30 per day sundries etc

Total APPROX cost for a 5 day trip: £600

As well as the bee involvement, Jersey is a lovely island to visit with a beautiful coastline, sandy beaches, some nice architecture and quality restaurants.

Liz is liaising with her contacts over there as to the best time for the visit, so if you are interested in joining in, contact Liz (see page 19).

* see Ajay P Taylor's book "Occupied Jersey 1940 - 1944"

MBKA Committee Vacancies

Part of the process of the Annual General Meeting (Feb 16th, see page 4) is to make any changes to our committee - whether these are because current members are retiring or because somebody in the membership wants to get more involved.

This year we have a vacancy for Apiary Manager as both Roger Stone and Bill Gough are stepping down. Four members have offered to help in the apiary, but an overall coordinator/manager to sit on committee is required.

The post of Equipment Officer is still vacant.

A new post of New Members' Representative has been proposed, whose exact duties are still to be decided.

Talk to our chairman, Pete, or maybe Roger with regard to the Apiary Manager post, if you are interested and would like to know more details about any of these positions (contact details on page 19).

General Husbandry Training

The WBKA will be offering a three day training course in 2020 to help people who are working towards completing the General Husbandry assessment.

The location will be Gregynog Hall, Tregynon, Powys, SY16 3PW, utilising the apiary facilities of Montgomeryshire BKA.

The course is split into two parts. A weekend of theory on 14 & 15 March followed by a day of practical sessions on 17 May. The sessions will run from 9am to 5pm each day.

The course will cost £90 per person for the three days. This includes all tuition and refreshments but accommodation is not included.

The aim of the course is to ensure that candidates understand the breadth and depth of the General Husbandry assessment to enable them to prepare as thoroughly as possible. While the course is primarily aimed at people wishing to take the assessment in the next couple of years, there is no obligation to do so. In addition, candidates who are not looking to take the assessment may find the course interesting to learn some new skills and understand what is required of them to improve their beekeeping.

Course requirements: You will need to have been keeping bees for at least three years and be a current member of an association. You will need to have passed your Basic assessment. We may ask for proof of this on application.

For further information and to register your interest on this course please contact Lynfa Davies (Contact details removed for data protection). There are 14 spaces available and they will be offered on a first come first served basis. Payment will be required in full in advance of the course.

When making your booking please inform us of any dietary or accessibility requirements that you may have.

NB Although this course is being held on our 'home ground' and will utilise our apiary to some extent, it is being run by the Welsh Beekeeping Association.



Slovenia

If Jersey isn't enough of a vacation challenge, then how about Slovenia? Jill had an email from Margaret Riches from Penrith BKA. She visited Gregynog recently and thought we might be interested in the Apicultural excursion to Slovenia 31st August to 5th September 2020 that she is organising. The closing date is **17th January** so if you are interested, you will need to contact her asap.



Ljubljana

Slovenia lies in the centre of Europe, where the Alps meet the Mediterranean area and the Karst changes into sumptuous forests; you will be captivated by the blue Adriatic Sea and the mysterious Karst with its subterranean caves.

Beekeeping is part of the fabric of Slovenian culture, being one of the oldest and most traditional rural activities. It is therefore no surprise that



Spectacular scenery

many internationally renowned beekeepers were born on Slovenian soil. Slovenia offers and examines some of the extensive beekeeping heritage enriched by beekeepers' activities today. Friendly beekeepers throughout Slovenia will be happy to open the doors of their bee farms, where you can get to know our Carniolan bee and the

secrets of how it lives, as well as learn why the products of Slovenian beekeepers achieve such high quality.



Slovenian Beekeepers (like ours, only sunnier)

Briefly, the itinerary is as follows. On arrival, a guided tour through Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, with its medieval old town, rich Baroque and Renaissance architecture, museums, galleries, etc. Day 2 is to visit a bee keeper near lake Bled with optional boat ride. Day 3 to a beekeeper specialising in pollen. Day 4 is to the Styria region and a tour

of the city of Maribor. Day 5 to a typical karst village of Pliskovica and wine tasting. Day 6 to the coastal marsh wetlands and the Postojna Cave. The full itinerary is available as a pdf on the internet at :

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/a07efe6888aee826b0fb475d0/files/ef9b8954-c161-4609-9178-76ba48a61e52/Slovenia_trip.pdf

If you don't do internet, contact Chris (see page 19) to get a copy.

To book your place contact Margaret Riches before January 17th.

(Contact details removed for data protection)



Postojna Cave

Menu for the annual lunch



Starters

Chicken Liver Pate with Melba Toast and Red Onion Marmalade

~

Vegetable Soup with Crusty bread

~

Prawn Cocktail with brown bread

Mains

18hr Slow Braised Beef, Mash, Baby Onion and Mushroom Sauce served with a selection of Vegetables

~

Baked Salmon, New Potatoes, White Wine & Dill Sauce served with a selection of Vegetables

~

Wild Mushroom & Rocket Risotto,
Parmesan tuile, truffle oil

Desserts

Royal Oak Eton Mess

~

Chocolate Brownie served with Vanilla Ice cream.

~

Sticky Toffee Pudding with Vanilla Ice cream.

~

Tea & Coffee

Please fill in the enclosed booking form and return with payment to Jill (her address is on the form).



Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Cymru
Welsh Beekeepers' Association

Convention 2020

Saturday 28th March at 08:30

Tea and Coffee available from 08:00

Old Food Hall, Royal Welsh Agricultural Showground
Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SY

Mynediad/Admission: Oedolion/Adults - £9.00,

Advance Payment - £7.00 (see below)

Ieuenctid/Juniors (under 17) - am ddim / free admission

Guest Speakers:

Paul O'Brien

President of The Federation of Irish Beekeepers Associations
(FIBKA)

BDI Sponsored Lecture

Professor Stephen Martin

Understand the evolution of natural Varroa-tolerance mechanisms in various
beekeeping populations

Laura Jones

Investigating the foraging preferences of honeybees using DNA metabarcoding

Filipe Salby

Upstairs, downstairs hive

Kevin Williams

The History and Traditions of the beekeeping in Wales

“Beekeepers’ Question Time”

your chance to ask the experts....

Trade stands and exhibitions.

Bargain beekeeping supplies. All day refreshments.

Free Parking.

Earlybird tickets (£7.00): Forms available on WBKA website
(www.WBKA.com)

Return completed forms plus payment to
Convention Secretary by March 21st
Address and payment details on form.

Apiary Update

The apiary went into the winter with nine colonies, all looking good. The policy for next year is to get back to ten colonies and aim to produce eight nucs. We also need to start replacing some comb in most of them, and a shook swarm to replace all the comb in the worst affected hive.

Membership Renewal

Yes, another year means another year's membership is now due. Please complete the form enclosed and send to Sian Jones, our membership secretary, with your cheque. Can you also complete the second part of the form so we comply with the General Data Protection Regulations. If you would rather pay via BACS, please contact Sian (see page 19) and she will explain how to go about it.

Training

A reminder to those who are interested in training this year that the in-house courses are as follows:

The improvers course is at Plas Dolerw, 8th Feb at 9 am until about 1pm. This course is aimed at those who have attended the beginners course last year or have been keeping bees for some time but would like to hone their skills. The cost is £30.

There are beginners course is in two sessions at Gregynog on 8th March and 22 March, both starting 9.30 until about 1.30pm. This is because there is a lot of ground to cover - too much for a single session. The cost is £30 each session.

Please get in touch with our training officer Rachel to book a place, which should be paid for in advance. Her contact details are on page 19.

Bees abroad

Each year, MBKA are delighted to donate to the charity Bees Abroad. This organisation does amazing things to provide local communities in Africa with beautiful top bar hives - a sustainable and welcome gift. We continue to support this charity and wish them well for 2020. Watch this short film on the internet to find out more.

<https://vimeo.com/250243475>

Guardian of Wildlife

An article entitled 'Insect apocalypse poses risk to all life on Earth' appeared in The Guardian last November regarding a report written by Prof Dave Goulson, at the University of Sussex, for the Wildlife Trusts. The full text of the report is available on the internet, but it highlights the fact that as much as 40% of the known species of insects face extinction due to habitat loss and increasing pesticide use.

In terms of numbers, there are at least 50% fewer insects in Britain than there were in 1970 – cleaner windscreens but darker consciences. Exact numbers are unknown and studies of insect populations scarce, but Prof Coulson said "the overwhelming weight of evidence that exists suggests the rapid decline is a real phenomenon. It really worries me to hear people say we need more long-term studies to be sure. That would be great, but we can't wait another 25 years before we do anything because it will be too late."

Twenty-three species of bees and wasps became extinct during the last century, whilst pesticide use has doubled in the last 25 years alone. Farming monocultures reduces diversity and creates swathes of countryside hostile to some species.

Insects are an essential part of the ecosystem, and their loss has ramifications upwards through the food chain as well as down to the things which insects eat.

So what can be done? Sweden has been taxing pesticides since 1984, and Denmark, France and Italy now do the same. We should follow suit in the UK. Habitat loss means that species are trapped on islands too small to be sustainable. Restoring networks to reconnect these islands must be a priority. And on the home front, let your garden go a bit. Such small scale rewilding performed in thousands of gardens across the country will make a difference – already people have observed that honeybees thrive in urban environments compared to the countryside due to the garden effect.

The report concluded that although the extinct species are clearly lost, insect populations can recover provided we stop poisoning the natural world with these harmful chemicals, many of which find their way back up the food chain and into our diets!

Bees are Evolving Natural Varroa Tolerance

On October 14th several members of MBKA were the guests of South Clwyd BKA in Ruthin, who'd arranged for a lecture to be given by Professor Stephen Martin of Salford University. The Professor has spent decades studying the Varroa mite and how European bees have been adapting to it. It was a challenge for him to summarise his vast body of research in the allotted time - it's even more daunting to attempt to condense his key findings into this article, but here goes!

Important point number one - there *is* now light at the end of the tunnel. To arrive at where we are at this stage in time we should remind ourselves that historically there have been two distinct threats posed by varroa: the harm that the bug can itself do by parasitically draining the bee's 'blood' (haemolymph), and its capacity to carry and transmit harmful viruses directly into that same haemolymph. When varroa first appeared in the UK in the early 1990s, it was the mite's vampire-like qualities that were by far most responsible for the destruction of bees and the reason behind attention-grabbing headlines about epidemic 'colony collapse'. Unlike the Asian honey bee, our Western *Apis Mellifera* had no natural defences, and colonies were decimated. This was very lucidly demonstrated by a slide of a honey bee that had been reduced to nothing more than a transparent hollow shell. A macabre statistic quoted was that 80,000 mites were what it takes to kill a colony by "sucking it dry".

For various reasons - not least the adaptive abilities of the bees themselves - mite infection levels tend to be a lot lower these days. Before casting attention upon that though, the capacity of varroa as a vector for viruses needs a mention. There are a number of known bee-unfriendly viruses, the most prominent of these being Deformed Wing Virus (DWV). The transmission of this via varroa is believed to be what has made this disease world prevalent. Early researchers discovered that there was no difference in the number of mites in collapsed colonies as compared with surviving colonies. Further research found that the detection of a virus was the greatest indicator of whether or not a colony would die, rather than the number of mites present. Amazingly, it took ten years for these research findings to be accepted. DWV comes in a number of different strains. The A strain is most lethal, but in Europe the less harmful B strain, through a process known as Superinfection Exclusion-Recombination, has become the most prevalent. In North

America however, where intensive farming methods and the use of chemicals are far more the order of the day, this process has not occurred and the deadlier A strain remains dominant.

Which brings us to the contentious topic of chemical intervention. On the one hand, it is quite undisputed that in the nineties the already huge losses would have been far greater and many more colonies would not have survived if beekeepers had not resorted to chemical anti-varroa treatments. On the other hand, it is observed that there is much less of a problem in sub-equatorial areas where beekeepers don't tend to treat, an important factor which has probably thereby increased the rate of evolution of naturally-adaptive responses. Professor Martin felt that by chemically reducing mite numbers we've probably made it harder for our bees to develop their own defence mechanisms: although he still advises against stopping treatments à la Integrated Pest Management. He acknowledges however that many beekeepers have already elected for the non-chemical route, and where they have his advice is to keep the bees closely monitored.

So what is the amazing anti-varroa intervention that bees have figured out all by themselves? It is a process that is being referred to as cell uncapping/recapping. Varroa mites move into honeybee cells to breed whilst feeding upon the larvae therein. Bees have learned to make checks on these cells, opening them and removing any infected content, and then recapping the cells as appropriate. In the most varroa-tolerant colonies the bees appear to be better at finding the mites - one theory is that the best-equipped bees have the most well-developed olfaction genes. A reduction in the rate of reproduction of varroa by one third has been recorded as a result of this practice. Interestingly, and somewhat counter-intuitively, bees apparently don't bother to open and recap drone brood. This is thought to be due to the fact that drones are only around for a relatively short period of time.

At the end of the talk, in the Q&As, MBKA Secretary Jill asked Professor Martin if this new detection activity by the bees adversely drew on resources that may be needed for more traditional tasks elsewhere. The Professor replied that contrary to popular 'busy-bee' folklore, for most of the time up to 80% of a colony are just hanging around doing not a lot in particular, so there's always plenty of spare capacity to be drawn upon!

Mal Shears

Minister for Natural Beekeeping

Some of you will have heard that natural beekeeping has gained a foothold within MBKA, and to such extent that Mal Shears is now a member of the association committee as the point of contact for members and exterior organisations. His contact information isn't on page 19 as I printed that before writing this, but he can be contacted by phone on (Contact details removed for data protection).

Mal is a member of Gwylio'r Gwenyn (Watching the Bees), a group set up in 2018 with a focus on natural beekeeping and who meet fairly regularly in Machynlleth, Llanidloes and perhaps elsewhere. One of their inspirations is John Vendy (see <http://topbarbeehive.co.uk>). There is an article by Mal about bees evolving natural varroa tolerance on page 16.

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

The MBKA Committee

Contact details removed for data protection.

Please feel free to contact any member of the committee with any questions, or if you can volunteer time to help with any aspect of the association.

see also our website and facebook page

www.montybees.org.uk

Although David Hughes is not on the committee, if you have any website input or issues :



A good point, but not an exemplar of grammar.

“Give the BeeHiveMan a Buzz!”

BEEHIVEMAN

DYN CWCH GWENYN



HIVES • NUCS • HIVES • BEES • TRAINING • HIVES • QUEENS

01686 414854 07508 751 479

www.montybees.org.uk

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