



Oil seed rape in Shenmore by Belinda Dale

WVBKA Charity Registration Number: 517008

Explore the World Day

Peterchurch Primary School are having an 'explore the world day' and would like someone to talk about bees. See the attachment to this newsletter for more information. If any member wants to do this, then we can make the association stand materials available.

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Basic Assessment... Is It For You?

We now have three brave volunteers who want to take the Basic assessment and we are making plans to arrange a revision day and coaching. If anyone wants to put their name forward to take this practical assessment please let Sue Quigley or Peter Woodward know fairly soon so we can book up places.

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Diary Dates

- May 6th and 7th Beginners Course
- May 12th Apiary meeting 6.30 pm
- May 20th and 21st Beginners Course
- June 7th Committee meeting at Moccas, 7:30 pm
- June 11th Car Boot Sale
- June 23rd Apiary Meeting 6:30 pm

Queen Colour of the Year

2017 is: **YELLOW**

Beekeeping Saints in History

There may be those association members that are aware the patron saint of beekeeping is Saint Ambrose who is recognised as one of the four doctors of the Catholic Church. Born in 338AD, he died on the eve of Easter 397AD (4th April) in Milan where he had been appointed as bishop. As an infant his father had found him with his face covered in bees, this was taken as a sign of his future eloquence and the ability to talk with a 'honeyed tongue'. His feast day is commemorated on 7th December.



St Ambrose is not the only saint to be associated with bees and beekeeping, St Valentine is another saint recognised to be linked with bees. It is said that the 14th February is when bee keepers should bless their bees in preparation for the coming year (the Ides of February).

In Bulgaria 10th February is when they celebrate St Haralambas their patron saint of beekeeping.

Closer to home in Ireland, well known for its love of saints, there are two saints associated with beekeeping, trust the Irish to go one better. The first of these is St Modomnoc who was a disciple of St David of Wales and a member of the O'Neill royal family. He left Ireland to train for the priest hood under St David at Menevia. Whilst there, he was given charge of the bees in the monastery where he planted bee-friendly flowers.

He would talk to the bees as he worked and in the evening he would walk amongst the hives again talking to them. It was said he was never stung!

When he decided to leave Menevia to return to Ireland, as he was departing a swarm of bees followed him and settled on the mast of the ship. Finally after the third attempt, St David took this as a good omen and instructed him to take them with him. Modomnoc's practice of talking to the bees is in keeping with the folklore of telling the bees about family affairs – births, deaths and marriages etc. His feast day is the 13th February.

The second saint to be associated with beekeeping in Ireland is St Gonnait, a female saint whose bees are said to originate from those introduced to Ireland by the previously mentioned St Modomnoc. She is said to have used her bees to protect against a cattle thief. In the nunnery which she founded, she used honey as a healing aid. Her feast day is the 11th February.

So go out this year, talk to your bees, read John Greenleaf Whittiers poem 'Tell the Bees' and plant bee-friendly flowers.

Frere Jacque

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Car Boot Sale and Technical Meeting Ewyas Harold Memorial Hall

Change of Date Sunday June 11th

Unfortunately we were not able to book the Ewyas Harold hall for the Saturday so we have had to change the meeting and car boot to SUNDAY 11TH JUNE. There will be a talk by Ron Hoskings from the Swindon Honeybee Conservation Group. Ron and his group have selected lines of honey bees which are better at controlling Varroa through grooming. Ron started this work in 1995 and gradually developed techniques which have been the basis of the work by the Swindon group. He will talk to us about this work. Entry to the talk will be free for WVBKA members and £3.00 for non-members.

The talk will be start at 11 am in the morning and will be followed by the car boot sale at 1pm. Entry to the talk is free for members of WVBKA and £3.00 for none members.

We are still working on the format for the day, but please see the attached poster, put this event in your diary as it should be very interesting. If you have a chance can you please advertise this event.

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The Pam Gregory Memorial Lecture.

Pam Gregory sadly lost her fight for life in 2015. She was the Ministry Bee Disease Inspector for West Wales. In past years she gave talks to Wye Valley Beekeepers and judged our Honey Show. In 1999 she set up a charity called Bees Abroad to support beekeepers in developing countries. The lecture was given by David Evans who is a professor of biomedical sciences at St Andrew's University. He has for several years researched the Polio virus and as a beekeeper saw that it had similarities to the Deformed Wing virus in honey bees.

Viruses and pathogens are spread by migration of bees and beekeepers. Over wintering losses from pathogens are increased when Varroa infestations are high. Deformed Wing is an RNA (ribo nucleic acid) virus which is distantly related and has some similarities to the Polio virus. Professor Evans believes the virus is probably present in most bees even when asymptomatic. It causes reduced longevity, fitness, foraging and learning ability.

International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB)

The IMYB will be held on 6th to 9th July 2017 at Marlborough College, Wiltshire.

The BBKA is raising money to stage this event which is the only event that brings together youngsters from many different countries and beekeeping traditions. The IMYB has been held since 2010 and previously has taken place in mainland Europe. In 2017 it is being held in England at Marlborough College. The BBKA



needs to raise £80,000 to make it a successful event. The BBKA have set up a Just Giving Page - Our Future in Young People and are asking associations to support this. WVBKA has decided to donate the sum of £60 to support this good cause.

Ian Homer, organiser of the event, said "Marlborough College in Wiltshire has kindly agreed to host the competition and we are hoping to give the competitors a quintessentially English experience. The IMYB always includes cultural visits and we intend to make sure they have a memorable trip."

23 countries have pledged to send competitors; the two newest ones are India and South Korea. You can read all the latest news stories about the event in BBKA News.

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Replication depends on how well the host controls it, therefore colony health is important.

Virus diversity is caused by transfer from bee to bee by the mite. Some single virulent strains which grow to a very high level quickly take over a colony and start to cause symptomatic disease. Studies of colonies have shown 13 to 42% of bees are alien to the colony; 1% of bees drift over a three day period and 37% of drones drift in the apiary also robbing and introducing mites in to the hives. Professor Evans thinks Varroa treatment is best carried out in August when the eggs laid will become the bees which over winter. Thus healthier bees with lower mite levels will reduce early spring losses.

Pam's husband attended the lecture and a collection was given to Bees Abroad in her memory.

Jane Matthews

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DAVE'S BLOG

May notes

The season will be well under way by the time these notes reach you and perhaps the odd hive has already started preparation for swarming or should I say, reproducing. This scenario presents difficulty for some beekeepers; actually I'm always quite pleased to see this, in some respects because it is a new beginning. A new queen – perpetuation of the species in my opinion is all good, we know that all is well providing the bees can produce a new queen. What would we do if the bees did not provide us with new queens; it would be a disaster for some. I do hope man will never ever reach the stage when he has complete control over swarming and breeding, it would be an absolute tragedy in my mind. I would much prefer the bees to carry on as they have been doing for millions of years and long may it last.

Before beekeepers get too clever the first thing they must do is to be able to control the natural instinct of the bees, which is not that difficult if one applies straightforward thinking with no confusion. If a colony has already built queen cells why not utilise those cells to encourage them to increase? It may not be scientific but it is a means of increase, perhaps to fill those empty boxes if you use this approach. Once you have split the colony into two, three or more leave well alone for a considerable time, in the region of a month. I have seen and experienced the loss of queens by prematurely interfering with a nuc before it has had sufficient 'time'. The golden rule here is to leave it well alone with no interference, they will not come to any harm and of course you will have provided them with some food. Nucs made in the summer will invariably survive with a small amount of food because they can usually maintain themselves.

Once you have mastered the art of splitting colonies and making use of those which have decided to swarm, you can then move on to a more selective regime and try your hand at propagating from colonies with a known

pedigree. It is not too difficult and well within the scope of the average beekeeper, if you don't try you won't succeed. There are many books on queen rearing, as beekeepers we are spoilt for choice. My advice is to choose one book and try and get an understanding of the requirements which are required to make a success. There are several stages which you must consider but first and foremost you must have a breeder queen. In layman's terms, you need a colony which has the right characteristics to breed from.

There are many things to consider here; docility, temperament when handled, not running about the comb, nice steady build-up with a propensity not to swarm but the most important feature for a commercial beekeeper is the ability to gather a surplus of honey. That in my mind is one of the main reasons for a commercial beekeeper to bear in mind. In addition, you will require more equipment i.e. nucleus boxes, spare frames and foundation – numbers will depend on the size of your operation. However, even if you're considering just breeding a few queens you will need nucleus boxes. Depending on your persuasion you will also need grafting needles or one of the cup kit systems, all of which have a place and have been proven to work. You will also need to identify a 'cell builder' i.e. a colony that is suitably furnished with an abundance of bees to accept the grafted cups. You will have to work out a timetable for various stages of the cycle, all of which are explained in many of the queen breeding books. Larvae need to be no more than 24 hours old for grafting and for the bees to accept the cups they need to be in a good physiological condition. Do not expect 100% acceptance, this may well vary from just a handful to perhaps 85-90% success rate.

This isn't the complete picture, once they have been accepted you then have to get them mated – your success rate with this may only be 50%. It is generally acknowledged that if you get an acceptance of 75-80% you are doing very well and my own experience bears that out. However, don't be frightened to have a go but do make sure you have the necessary equipment and plan carefully before you start. Frames and foundation are most important for making up nucs or indeed banking a colony backup. Remember to get frames nicely drawn, you will need a good strong colony with plenty of wax secreting bees to build those combs with a good flow or you should supplement feeding. It is also very important that all queen breeding bees should be free of disease as far as you can tell.

Dave

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- Peter Woodward

Honorary Auditor:

- Mike Price

Jonathan Byard

Most of you will remember Jonathan who trained with us a few years ago; sadly he died recently following a prolonged battle with cancer. Jonathan was one of the few members of the association who took his beekeeping to the next level by studying for and passing the BBKA modules and in his quiet way was able to share his expertise with us at some of the meetings he used to attend. Unfortunately, he has not been well enough to come to our meetings for a year or so but he was there in spirit asking the right questions. He will be missed.

Association Website

If there are any improvements that you would like to see or information you think we should include on the association website then please let me know.

I believe everyone now has access to the Member's Area so please feel free to put up posts and questions in the forum and we can maybe get some conversations going.

Peter W

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Wanted: Beekeeper
to care for honeybees in the
Walled Garden at
Newport House, Almeley, HR3 6LL
3 WBC hives, one currently occupied
Equipment available for bee keeper's use
inc: smokers, tools etc.,
lots of frames and other kit.
For more information please contact:
David Gray, Head Gardener, Newport House
Tel: 07754 234903