



Photo: Primroses by Belinda Dale

April 2019

WVBKA Charity Registration
Number: 517008



For Sale

3 x WBC bee hives – well maintained and kept under cover when not in use.

Each hive includes:

- roof, clad with 2 vents
- 4 x outer Lifts including entrance porch
- hive stand with landing board, legs and incorporating a Varroa mesh floor including sliding inspection tray
- 2 x deep brood boxes
- 3 x supers
- metal framed queen excluder
- glass crown board
- mouse guard
- plus extras

£125 each ono

Contact Jane Praill:

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Diary Dates 2019

- **April 12th - 14th**
BBKA Spring Convention,
Harper Adams University,
Newport
- **April 16th**
Committee meeting
- **April 26th**
Apiary meeting - details tbc

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Queen Colour of the Year
2019 is: **GREEN**

WBKA Annual Convention 2019

Not being free to attend the BBKA National Spring Convention this year, I was quite excited when a friend alerted me to the WBKA Annual Convention, which was being hosted in Builth Wells. Despite my slight sadness that the weather was stunning – surely not a day when we should be sitting through lectures?! Andi and I tootled off in the car, Builth bound to have a browse around the trade fair and lap up a bit more knowledge. We needed bee pheromones to find the location as there wasn't a sign post in place! Fortunately we are fairly local with a reasonable familiarity with Builth but how others found it goodness knows.

Anyhow, first on was Joyce Nisbet talking about cut comb, chunk honey and sections. She was an excellent speaker and, for us, very interesting as we had our first stab at cut comb last year. The lecture theatre was 'full to bursting' as Clive Hudson took the stage next, to discuss the experience of many beekeepers from Lleyrn and Eifionydd who



have decided against treating for Varroa and are recording reduced Varroa occurrence and possible development of Varroa resistant bees over a period of time – a talk which sparked a certain degree of controversy but was very interesting. The last lecture was by Professor Robert Pickard and was entitled 'Honey Bee thoughts'. Robert is an amazing speaker, both original and amusing who captivated his audience by comparing the honeybee brain with the human brain – only honeybees and humans can give complex navigational instructions to others of their species.

Finally, it was time to spend the profits of last year's honey sales on the many bargains to be had in the trade fair.

All in all, it was an excellent day out.

Juliet



Apiary Meeting

Thirty members attended the first apiary meeting of the season and admired the new surroundings of the lodge. It was too cold to inspect any hives so Dave gave a tutorial showing frames from a lost colony with evidence of drone brood and wax moth invasion, including gaping holes in the combs and a mess of silk. Discussion continued on how to select and sterilise frames for re-use.



This hornet trap is made from three parts of a plastic bottle. The inverted top is stapled to the middle section. This is then inserted into the base and pinned with removable wires.

Back indoors and using our existing projector and screen, Peter showed microscope slides to demonstrate the audio visual equipment bought with a donation in memory of Ian Hydes.

Lastly, Rob described an adapted DIY version of a hornet monitoring trap made from a plastic bottle. This has a mesh to prevent the drowning of insects collected inside and enabling identification.

NBU posters and leaflets on the Asian hornet were distributed for members to advertise locally on notice boards in public places. We want everyone to know what this bee killer looks like.

Looking forward to the next meeting on 26th April with at least as many attendees as before. We hope to be able to open some hives and handle the bees under Dave's expert guidance.



The plastic mesh keeps trapped insects from drowning in the bait juice and is easier to cut and fix than metal mesh..

The apiary team wish to express their thanks to everybody who turned up to the training session. It was much appreciated by all who put this on.

Rob

Recent Events

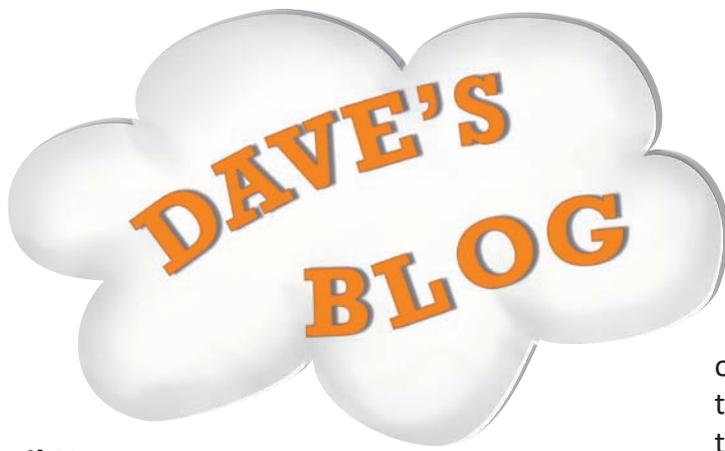
The display to the public at Wyevale

We were made very welcome and set up our stand near the exit of the garden centre in Kings Acre. Unfortunately garden centre customers were not showing much interest but it was warm and dry. Next time we will aim to locate next to the restaurant where the footfall may be more promising.



Shenmore Lodge

Following its recent completion, the committee had an opportunity to inspect the interior of the lodge at Shenmore. The structure is a marvellous modern rendition of a timber-framed hall, complete with 'minstrels' gallery and the benefit of high quality insulation.



April Notes

Now the dust has settled and you can see what you have in the way of brood and bees, you can settle down and do a bit of real beekeeping. If you have the odd colony which is boiling over with bees then you should put extra room on to accommodate them as there is always one which will be miles ahead of the rest. There will of course be the odd colony which will throw up swarm cells very early on so watch this carefully and deal with it appropriately. We will discuss how to manage this in the apiary later on in the year along with how to deal with reproduction so watch this space.

When it is warm enough and the bees are flying well you can do your first inspection but remember, you must have brood in all stages to enable you to carry out this procedure. Personally, I would recommend you do a thorough check as early in the season as it is practical to do so and when the bees are sufficiently large enough to enable you to check. Go through the colony very carefully frame by frame looking for any abnormal brood, if in doubt ask. This technique will be demonstrated in the apiary for you all to see in the coming season, again watch this space. The session will be 'hands on' for those wishing to take part.

Comb Renewal

In recent years there has been much discussion on this topic, mainly due to various disease factors. The standard technique for comb renewal was originally called the 'Bailey comb change' which was a method for controlling *Nozema*. This was followed by the 'shook swarm' which was another way of controlling disease and renewing comb. Yes, of course if you have very old combs within your hives then you're more likely to have a residue of pathogens contained within them. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that you should change every year. Changing three or four combs within the brood nest on an annual basis is more than adequate to keep your

brood chamber in good order. Following this procedure means that after three years you will have a complete comb change.

When producing brood frames, the method I prefer is to place a set of new brood combs on top of a good strong colony and allow the bees to draw them. They will draw them in most cases right to the bottom bar and I don't know of a better way to get good straight combs built. However, as with all things beekeeping there are other ways in which to achieve this. Putting a few new combs in the brood nest is yet another way but they never appear as good as the above methods which I have described. The 'shook swarm' is a well-documented technique which is used mainly for the control of EFB but it should not be carried out on very weak colonies.

Some of the procedures are very harsh on the bees and comb doesn't necessarily carry harmful pathogens. Pollen which is stored for reuse by the bees in the coming season, is very beneficial as a protein for the bees to build their colonies. So you see ladies and gentlemen it is not all about brand-new combs in your colonies. There are many things to consider and I urge you to reflect on these before replacing combs which are still usable. We don't want to get into the habit of propping our bees up with various chemicals to keep them alive. We need them as natural as they can possibly be and without the addition of any kind of drugs to keep them going. However, when a colony is suffering from a disease then I'm not averse to using treatment to control that disease whatever it is. Nevertheless, I do not and will not condone prophylactic treating of bees as in my opinion, this is a very dangerous step.

Enjoy your bees, keep them as naturally as possible and if they are managed correctly, I think you will find they will provide you with a surplus of honey, not hundredweights but certainly enough for you and your family. The days have gone when bees could produce large quantities of honey as the flora is just simply not there for them to take advantage of. Yes, you will get the odd year when you have a very good crop, usually followed the next year by a poorer crop. Never mind and enjoy your beekeeping!

Dave

I write these notes for personal use by members, the executive do not endorse what is written here, they are my personal notes.

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Asian and European Hornets

Although the European hornet can hunt honeybees, it is nothing like the threat posed by the Asian hornet to the honeybee population. I have a particular fondness for hornets which despite their size are the least aggressive of the wasp family.

I have spent time in France standing in front of a nest entrance in a hollow tree trunk, watching them coming and going as one watches one's bees at the hives. Again in France I have watched them hawking ivy for insects.

Since the frenzy of publicity about the Asian hornet, I've been worried that our indigenous species will be inadvertently trapped and killed in the drive to control the Asian species. May I ask all beekeepers to please learn to differentiate between these two species and save European hornets that enter traps.

Rosie Bashford

The European Hornet (*Vespa crabo*):



image courtesy Creative Commons

The Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina* - male)



image by Gilles San Martin

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