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Pictures

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This year’s Queen marking colour is Yellow.
Editorial

As I’m typing these lines, it’s raining. “What’s new?” you may ask. What’s new indeed?

At least this magazine IS new, freshly printed and full of very good articles, good fun, deep knowledge, sound advice, all interesting stuff. A lot on diseases this month. It is a recurrent topic for a great number of local club newsletters, and not only in Wales, for what I have read. Should we need to see something there? Is it simply coincidence or has it really become an urgent concern for the past couple of years? Has the adverse weather we have seen for the past two summers been an aggravating factor in the spreading of pests and pathogens?

A couple of months ago, I had so little in reserve that I had to call upon WBKA executives and ask everybody, beekeepers and readers for articles to put in these pages. Well! It was a real pleasure for me to receive so many contributions from everybody and everywhere. I really enjoyed putting these pages together this month. It has been an easy, fast, fun and entertaining task. To all of you, thank you ever so much. I can only make out of this magazine what you want this magazine to be. Please keep sending all your articles and letters and submit all your ideas for improvement to me at editor@wbka.com

We recently saw the grand opening of the National Beekeeping Centre which is now fully operational and fully open to the public and you can read, not one, but two articles on the topic.

John Page has had some 'Bee Medicines Record Cards' produced. They are great and you can find them in the centre pages. They were approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. As you most certainly know, it is a legal requirement that beekeepers keep a record of all treatments administered to honeybee colonies so hopefully these will be very useful for everyone.

You will read a short report on a well deserved award to Fred Eckton. I had the chance to meet Fred a few months ago at the Small Holding Show in Builth Wells and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He put a queen rearing frame in my hands and explained to me the whole process in great detail as if it was the simplest thing in the world. A great man with a big heart, a real knack for sharing his extensive knowledge in the simplest way and, let it be said, an impressive glass fronted display hive I’d really like to copy for myself.

Emmanuel Blaevoet
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Chairman’s Message

Valerie Forsyth

Congratulations to all those involved in the displays of beekeeping at the Royal Welsh Show.

Well done everyone. Thank you for all for your hard and excellent work promoting beekeeping. So much work goes into preparing for shows and events. I salute you, and apologise that due to my shoulder injury I was unable to be with you.

Beekeeping will also have been given another boost with the Welsh Government Minister of Environment, John Griffith choosing to make his announcement of the Pollinator Action Plan at the WBKA stand. Although this initiative is for the benefit of all pollinators, and at the time of writing we do not have all the details, it will raise the importance of bees in the environment and keep pressure on the 'powers that be'.

With this copy of the Magazine you will find a 'Bee Medicines Record Card'. You will see that it is recommended by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, and in collaboration with the BBKA, for recording all treatments that you give to your bees. You are now required to maintain these records for five years and have them available for your Bee Inspector when they or any other authority calls. They are free of copyright so you are able to copy as many times as you wish.

We have all been affected by the weather this summer in so many ways but I have never heard of so many calls about starving bees. The 'June Gap' is normally the only time we worry a little but this year has been unbelievable. The poor bees, doing their best when we had a few fine days, then produced so many swarms that swarm collectors were struggling to keep up with the calls. Thank to all those beekeepers who went to the public's aid and picked up the swarms. You do a great job and your work is also appreciated.

I hope that you have been able to remember to take your camera with you when you have been out and about. Remember that there will be a beekeeping related photographic competition at the WBKA Convention in March 2013. The categories are:

'An Amusing picture', a 'Close Up' or Macro image and a 'Group Beekeeping' photo.

Prints only please as they will be displayed on the wall in the Demonstrations Hall. All photos to be taken this year and up to February 2013. Good luck.

I hope that the Autumn will finish well for the bees and you do manage to get in a good honey crop.

Valerie Forsyth
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We have had such poor weather all around Wales this summer with only about 10 days of continual sunshine coinciding with the Royal Welsh Show (which was very busy and enjoyable, especially the honey show part).

Being confined most of the summer, inside the hive, the bees have been making queen cells, resulting in a higher than average number of swarms and casts. I was lucky enough to see four casts together all wrapped around a car tyre and the virgin queens battling it out in small clumps. They walked into my nuke box easily when I put the victor in.

The damp days have also caused many poor matings, resulting in failing queens/drone layers. At the end of June many colonies were starving, however most beekeepers have reported nectar coming into the supers since the middle of July, so we may yet have a decent honey crop. I think the bees will come out on top whatever the beekeeper or climate change throws at them!

This year in Wales many more beekeeping associations have their own teaching apiaries with dedicated managers and educationalists. This is an excellent development and shows that the WBKA training days held this year and last, were of benefit to our members and the large number of beginners starting out in the craft.

We now need to cater to the needs of improvers and to this end, plan to run a course next year, in both north and south Wales on ‘preparing for the general husbandry exam’. This doesn’t have to be just for passing the exam so any beekeeper who wants to improve their knowledge of beekeeping skills and bee management, can apply.

I hope you all have a good honey harvest and remember to prepare the bees well for winter, treating for varroa in order to have strong and healthy colonies at the start of 2013.

Dinah Sweet
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Wales Ministry of Environment Plan

New plans that will help protect Wales’ unique environment and boost its bee population were announced by Environment Minister, John Griffiths.

The Minister called in at the Welsh Beekeepers’ Association stand as part of his visit to the Royal Welsh Show and announced his intention to develop a Pollinator Action Plan for Wales.

The plan is part of the Welsh Government’s efforts to halt the decline in populations of honey bees, managed bees and hoverflies, all of which have been in severe decline for the last 30 years.
Speaking ahead of his visit to the Welsh Beekeepers’ Association stand, the Minister said:
“We know that twenty per cent of the UK cropped area is made up of pollinator dependent crops; a high portion of wild flowering plants depend on insect pollination for reproduction; and the value of pollinators to the UK Government is conservatively estimated to be £430 million per annum. This makes pollination a vitally important eco system service.

“However despite their importance, pollinator populations have been on the decline for the last 30 years and we know that if we don’t take prompt action, this trend will continue.

“That is why I am considering how we might slow and reverse the decline in pollinator numbers and why I am committed to addressing this issue.

"Wales will be leading the way on this issue and will be the first UK Government to produce a Pollinator Action Plan."

The action plan will be developed in partnership with key agencies and might include things like:

- Changes to the planning system that will help to make development ‘pollinator friendly’
- More “pollinator friendly” planting across the public estate, including on railway embankments and road verges
- Joint working with local authorities on the management of parks and other public green spaces
- Encouraging nurseries to sell “pollinator friendly” plants and provide advice to consumers
- Building an evidence base on the impact of pesticides through joint working with the National Botanic Garden of Wales
- Close working with the Welsh Beekeepers’ Association and other voluntary groups.

The work will be undertaken in line with the principles set out in the Welsh Government’s ‘Sustaining a Living Wales’ programme and will take a whole eco system approach.

The Welsh Government will now start work on developing the plan in conjunction with relevant agencies and organisations.
The 2012 Welsh National Honey Show was a special occasion for Brecknock & Radnor Beekeepers’ Association because we were once again the feature county. But it was made even more special for all of us who belong to the Association as our longest-serving active member, Fred Eckton, was this year presented with a Life-Governorship of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society “for his outstanding contribution to the Welsh National Honey Show and the Society”. In Fred’s case, this was no mere long-service award and the words truly reflect the tremendous work he puts in to make the Honey Show the undoubted success it is.

As Chief Steward for 18 years, Fred has played an active part in the planning of each show and is always on hand to organise and then help with the general layout and the setting-up of the staging. His major contribution to school visits for this year’s feature county display also reflects his longstanding desire to enthuse and encourage the beekeepers of the future. In addition, Fred is a sponsor of this section of the Royal Welsh Show and is similarly generous in providing all the wax for the candle rolling which attracts so many children to the stand. But above all Fred gives unstintingly of his time. He likes to make sure that there is an eye-catching practical demonstration to draw the public in, giving careful thought to each year’s programme so that it is as varied as possible. And, for the same reason, he goes to the trouble of preparing and bringing in the observation hives to stimulate an interest in bees. He is also the first person the office calls when a wasp nest is causing problems on the Showground. They know from experience that he can be relied on. Nothing is too much trouble for Fred.

The many members of the Brecknock & Radnor B.K.A. who have called on Fred’s services over the years would, I am sure, like to feel that his special award expresses in some way their gratitude for the generous help and advice he has always been prepared to give. The wider membership of the W.B.K.A. is equally indebted to him for what he has done on their behalf especially in his role as chief steward of the Convention. Finally, as a representative of the team of stewards who are pleased to serve under him in the Honey Show, I would like to say how delighted we are that his service to the R.W.A.S. has been acknowledged. Many congratulations Fred on your well-deserved honour from everyone connected with beekeeping in Wales.

Richard Veasey
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A Cautionary Tale

Margaret Jones

When someone new decides to take up bee-keeping the 'old hands' recite the mantra 'be careful when you are lighting your smoker and that everything is extinguished'. With those words ringing in my ears I would like to share this salutary tale.

Imagine the scene if you can - a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky, with a brisk breeze blowing. Three hives standing in a wild flower meadow with the dry grass swaying merrily around them. A perfect day for looking at the bees.

I go through my usual routine, checking my tool box, get out clean gloves and prepare to light my smoker. Not as easy as I'd hoped, trying vainly to keep the breeze from blowing out the lighter, and kindling determined not to catch.

At last success! With a few last puffs I put on my veil, don my gloves and grind a piece of smouldering cardboard under my boot. Concerned that I might set the dry grass alight, I pick it up - I mustn't leave litter! Put it back in the bag with the spare kindling; big mistake. Without a backward glance I set off to the furthest hive.

Ten minutes pass. All is well with the bees and I prepare to move on to the next hive. A quick glance at the car as I straighten my back and my heart stands still, as I realise there are flames two foot high in the back of my Land Rover. At the speed I moved I would have qualified for Team GB.

Luckily I managed to smother the flames with a handy body warmer, completely forgetting the bottle of water I had with me.

Very shaken I still had the unenviable task of explaining to my husband, what I had done and what had happened to the car (my pride and joy). He, supportive as ever, pointed out that the car was insured and that I was unhurt, and it could have been much worse.

I pride myself on being as careful as the next person and still it happened!! So please take care.

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Hydref 2012
How bees turn back the clock

Researchers at Arizona State University and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences have discovered that older honey bees can effectively reverse brain aging when they take on duties normally handled by much younger bees.

Their research showed that tricking older foraging bees into doing social tasks inside the nest causes changes in the molecular structure of their brains. Suggesting that social interventions may be used to slow or treat age-related dementia.

Studies have shown that when nurse bees stay in the nest and take care of brood, they remain mentally competent. However, when bees fly out foraging they begin aging very quickly. After just two weeks, foraging bees have worn wings, hairless bodies, and more importantly, lose brain function – measured as the ability to learn new things. The researchers discovered however, that the aging pattern could be reversed.

How the study was done

They removed all of the younger nurse bees, leaving only the queen and brood. When the older, foraging bees returned to the nest, activity diminished for several days. Then, some of the older bees returned to searching for food, while others cared for the nest and brood. Researchers discovered that after ten days, about 50% of the older bees caring for the nest and brood had significantly improved their ability to learn new things. They saw not only a recovery in the bees' ability to learn, but also discovered a change in proteins in the bees' brains.

They found Prx6, a protein also found in humans that can help protect against dementia – including diseases such as Alzheimer's – and they discovered a second ‘chaperone’ protein that protects other proteins from being damaged when brain or other tissues are exposed to cell-level stress.

What the findings mean

In general, researchers are interested in creating a drug that could help people maintain brain function, which may take many years. However, since the proteins in people are the same proteins bees have, maybe social interventions – changing how we deal with our surroundings – is something we can do today to help our brains stay younger.

(Source - EurekAlert, July 2012)
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This season, we have been running a series of disease recognition workshops in Wales, hosted by local associations. The feedback has been positive and participants have especially mentioned that they have valued the opportunity to see the detail of diseased comb ‘close to’ and to handle examples. We have had requests following the workshops for handouts as a reminder of the key points. I thought it might be helpful to reproduce the ones relating to foul brood in this edition of Welsh Beekeeper.

AMERICAN FOULBROOD - key characteristics:

- Sunken, greasy, perforated cappings
- Pepperpot brood pattern
- Confirmation by ropiness test
- Dried remains form ‘scales’
- Comb and honey is infectious for many years
- Feature of sealed brood
European FOULBROOD - key characteristics:

- Larvae assume contorted position in cell
- Melted down, discoloured appearance, distended white gut
- Removable scales, uneven brood pattern, may smell
- Bacteria multiply in mid gut of infected larva, competing for its food
- Remain in gut, larva dies of starvation shortly before cell is sealed

Figures up to the end of July 2012 show that, of beekeepers inspected in Wales, 0.34% had AFB and 2.35% had EFB confirmed in their apiary. Both AFB and EFB are notifiable diseases. If you are concerned that you may have one or other, give your seasonal bee inspector a call. Our key message in the workshops has been to emphasise the importance of beekeepers regularly checking their hives for disease and of being able to recognise the signs. There is more information on Beebase and your local inspector will be more than willing to advise on any concerns.

Frank Gellatly
frank.gellatly@fera.gsi.gov.uk
Should I Consider..............................................
As bees have been so confined to their quarters over the last few months, and it has been so difficult to do regular inspections, do consider the possible risk of missing the first signs of disease. To help reduce any potential risk of European Foulbrood in Wales could you please continue to be vigilant and careful.

1) Do not move colonies around from apiary to apiary unless it is absolutely necessary.

2) Be extremely vigilant of any swarms that you collect. House them on foundation in scorched (or new) equipment. Keep them isolated from your existing bees. It is wise to wear Wellington boots that are easier to clean. Always clean boots and hive tools before and after inspection of the swarm, and use disposable gloves on any inspection. Do keep a special eye on these unless you know where they have come from.

3) Inspect unsealed brood carefully at all colony inspections. Shake off bees if necessary so that you can see the brood properly. Contact your local Bee Inspector if you find any larvae that look suspicious. The National Bee Unit booklet on Foulbrood has pictures showing what you should be looking for (available from the link at: https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?sectionid=26).

4) Step up your practices for inspecting colonies by regular cleaning of hive tools and footwear with strong washing soda solution. Wash your protective clothing very regularly. Use disposable gloves - with a suitable size, these can go over your 'Marigolds' (or leather) gloves if you have concerns about being stung.

5) Please review your beekeeping practices carefully to reduce any risk of spreading a very infectious disease. We have mostly kept bees in a foulbrood-free area, and as a result may have developed some poor habits that should be re-assessed. Please review what you do, and make changes so that you are working to the highest standards. Associations could consider arranging a meeting on the topic of hygiene in and around bees and beehives.

Associations may wish to consider reviewing their rules of good practice at their Association Apiary.
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Gwenynwyr Cymru #178

Hydref 2012
Honey Farming in North Wales

Alan H Morley

When I was a little boy of 10 to 14 year old and being dragged round the shops by my parents, and if I saw honey in a shop window I would stop and read the label and say to myself “lucky man, he keeps bees”. Then years later at a leaving school event we were all asked to talk for five minutes on what we thought we would do with our lives. Now, a few weeks before that event I had read an article in the National Geographical magazine about beekeeping in Australia, and nomadic beekeepers moving bees around the country for pollination, I thought it was magical, so that’s what I said I wanted to do with my life. However I was also very interested in nature conservation, bird migration and so on, so that won the day and that’s what I did for the next few years. However at that time wages for that sort of occupation were not enough to survive on, so being married by then and with a family I had to think of earning a living. What ever I did it had to be environmentally friendly, sustainable, and not damage the environment in any way, so what to do? Beekeeping was the perfect answer! In Aberaeron there was a commercial beekeeper, Holgate’s Honey Farm. He took me on as his assistant for a year on the understanding that I did not set up a Beekeeping business on his door step.

So I was finally off on my beekeeping adventure. The first time I ever looked inside a beehive was then, when I had 400 hives to attend to. At the end of my year there Holgate told me to take the land rover and take 20 of the hives away with me. So I did and took them up to North Wales to the Lleyn peninsula and started my own honey farm, and shortly after that I acquired a further 40 hives from a man who was leaving for South Africa. There was a commercial honey man, a Mr Howard in North Wales at the time and he helped and advised me in the early years. I never bought queens, I bred all my own from my best colonies and sold a few to make ends meet.

We, my wife and I decided to try and work without employing any staff, so I did the beekeeping and we became market traders with the local council, so my wife became a market trader selling honey direct to the public so cutting out the middle man. We made all the money! The market stall became a local craft stall, but one table was always devoted to our honey. I managed up to 200 hives and only employed casual labour to help bring in the harvest. I had a work shop where I made most of my hives, supers etc, and in the Winter we were able to go on long holi-
days some times. Of course we had our ups and downs, and one year we ended up with a huge overdraft with the bank and the manager refused any more help. Sitting at home all winter on the dole does not get you any where, so I packed a bag and went off to Elsmere Port and worked in a factory from October to March and when I went home I had money in the bank and a new van. Sometimes you just have to do these things or give up. After 24 years of heavy lifting and bending, my back could not stand the strain any more and my Dr. told me “if you want to finish up in a wheel chair, carry on carry on!” That remark sank home and so it was time to sell up. I did not sell it as a going concern, instead everything was loaded onto lorries and taken to the Midlands and split up and sold under the hammer at auction, and I was amazed at how much it all sold for. One thing of interest was that on the Lleyn peninsular near Aberdaron there is sea on three sides as it’s a narrow strip of land, but I still had very good harvests, and sometimes very good ones, however for the last few years we moved up to the Conwy valley but never had such good harvests there in spite of more land and less sea.

I was still in my early 50’s with a lot of beekeeping experience, so I went back to University and got a post grad diploma in beekeeping and tropical bees and started off on another chapter of my life helping and teaching beekeeping in developing countries, but that is another story, another chapter in my life.

Alan H Morley.
Welsh bees have had good reason to make royal jelly after the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall officially opened the National Beekeeping Centre Wales (NBCW).

Charles and Camilla unveiled a special, honeycomb-shaped plaque to commemorate their visit.

They enjoyed a guided tour of our unique visitor centre which is now fully open to the public.

NBCW Director Pete Barrar said: “It was great to meet HRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall. They were both very interested and supportive of the project, particularly the duchess who keeps bees herself.

“Like other beekeepers, she’s had numerous swarms this year, but I understand she has a helper and doesn’t need to climb trees to get the swarms down!”

NBCW is a groundbreaking initiative to help safeguard the future of honeybees and other pollinating insects.

It will involve people from all backgrounds, from people living in town or country, farmers, landowners, developers, schoolchildren and more.

The visitor centre, situated within the new Welsh Food Centre near Bodnant, is just part of this initiative. There’s a bee friendly garden at Tŷ Hyll (The Ugly House) near Capel Curig, and an education facility at Henfaes Farm in Abergwyngregyn.
What is the National Beekeeping Centre Wales?

It is a non-profit enterprise unique in Wales that sets out to preserve and enhance local and national beekeeping as part of its wider aim to help arrest the decline in honeybee numbers.

It will promote good practice, accurate and accessible public information, and involve the community as well as landowners and other key stakeholders.

A future key role of NBCW will be supporting research projects covering honeybee numbers, threats to their survival, and information on the results of efforts to reverse the trend of shrinking populations. NBCW will work closely with DEFRA’s National Bee Unit inspectors as well as other agencies.

The focal point is the visitor centre situated within the new £6.5m Bodnant Welsh Food Centre in the Conwy Valley. More than 25,000 people are expected to visit each year.

It features interactive displays and a live TV feed to the centre’s own apiary. Visitors will also be able to tour the apiary (and provided with suitable clothing) for a small fee.

The visitor centre is supported by an interpretation centre and bee-friendly garden at Tŷ Hyll (The Ugly House) near Capel Curig. Both Bodnant Welsh Food and Tŷ Hyll sell locally made honey and list the ingredient on their cafe menus.

Education and training in support of NBCW’s aims take place at Bangor University’s Henfaes Research Farm in Abergwyngregyn. One of the first courses is a 10-session Beginners Guide to Beekeeping, due to start in September.

A team of six NBCW staff, with knowledge of environmental and sustainable Welsh enterprises, help run the operation. They are supported by a pool of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers.
Funding for the Centre comes from the Conwy Rural Partnership (Axis3 Environment: Rural Development Plan for Wales), Environment Wales, Snowdonia National Park CAE Fund, Conwy Beekeepers’ Association and the Welsh Beekeepers’ Association - John Hall legacy.

**How can my Association or I get involved?**

As a beekeeper you are already helping us! Ideally, however, we’d like to hear more about your beekeeping experiences here in Wales.

Beekeeping can be a solitary endeavour, whether you do it as a hobby or as a small business. Many problems and successes often go unnoticed by the wider beekeeping community. Sharing these experiences will help us to build a better picture in terms of bee numbers, the extent of beekeeping in Wales, and the issues affecting us.

Whether you are a beekeeper or an Association representative, we’d love to hear from you. If you live near Conwy or are visiting, why not call in and talk to us? Otherwise you can get in touch through our website. You can also sign up for our email newsletter and keep up to date with developments.

The NBCW website address is [www.beeswales.co.uk](http://www.beeswales.co.uk) where you will find loads of information about the enterprise, beekeeping courses and more. Call 01492 651106 or email info@beeswales.co.uk

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As a new beekeeper and having exhausted family and friends in conversation about bees I was drawn to volunteering with the National Beekeeping Centre Wales (NBCW) at Bodnant Welsh Food in the 18th century Furness Farm near Conwy. It is in an astonishing setting in the Conwy Valley - is there a more beautiful place in Britain than this? I doubt it! The Beekeeping Visitor Centre is perfect, with great potential, a credit to the organisers who are deeply involved, along with a team of staff. Such a great initiative deserves the help they asked for. It is a great opportunity to meet people interested in bees.

As the venture is new it needs a little help with general duties. Initially we were filling in holes at the apiary site, then building hives, and more recently some of us more talkative volunteers are helping at the Visitor Centre, where on my first day we were inundated with visitors. I am no expert but the questions are mostly pitched at a level I can handle.

One little girl asked if honey is really "bee sick"; I said yes but maybe I should have said “sort of”!

The video link from the new apiary to the Beekeeping Centre delivers what I call “beepeeping” through a high-definition, real time general apiary view, and a close-up of bees at a hive entrance; over a few minutes you will see different pollen, bees interacting and fanning at the entrance, and a buzz of activity, all provoking questions and en-
gaging visitors, many of whom have never seen bees up close before.

NBCW supports the work of Beekeeping Associations through its high visibility and seven-day public presence, and we find ourselves recommending would-be beekeepers to contact their local associations to engage further with beekeeping. I can see this as a significant route to increased membership.

The next step at Furness Farm is to start apiary tours for visitors, who will be booted and suited for the introductory tour, and I hope I’m up to it! I caught my first swarm this year – but it was one of mine!

Barry Griffiths, Kinmel Bay, member of Conwy Beekeepers' Association.

July 2012
As children we all watched the sparks from an open fire going up the chimney, we called them fire flies or fairies. We watched the steam from a kettle twisting upwards or our breath on a frosty morning and bonfires were magical with their fire flies, fairies and decorative plumes of smoke making all sorts of patterns as it rose upwards into the sky. So we all learnt from a very early age that hot air rises, and later learned that it takes with it a multitude of unwanted gasses such as carbon dioxide and then later learned that it’s these unwanted gasses that are causing global warming. We also know that all life on earth needs to breathe fresh air and use the oxygen in it. All that is except "Clever Dick" beekeepers!

Their rational came about with the invention of the open mesh floor as a way of controlling Varroa and it has developed into an extraordinary belief that if you have an open mesh floor and cover up the area over the crown board that the waste air will go downwards and out of the bottom mesh. This cannot happen! The warm air from the bees full of carbon dioxide and water vapour (bees give off a lot of water vapour) swirls about at the top and condenses into water which is wet sour and cold as it works its way down the sides of the hive turning the walls and end combs black and green with mould and reducing the viable usable frames from 11 to 9 in a National hive, turning evaporation into condensation, and in its wake a huge increase in chalk brood. Oh! No, no I hear you all shouting, you change the queen for chalk brood, no, no I tell you, chalk brood is a mould, and when ever was a queen infected with a mould? We will agree to differ, but read on.

A lovely lady, all keen to have bees, not so keen on honey, just to watch and enjoy them. Decided to have a Warre hive, the perfect home for her bees, studied the book watched the Bee Forum on the internet and followed all the instructions to the letter. The roof had its cloth cover and padded insulation on the top. But after two years the whole thing was a sorry sight, what could we
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do, the walls were all black with mould and the chalk brood so bad it was affecting the size of the colony. Like the writer Storch, she spends hours sitting watching her bees, "They are depressed, you can see that" she told me. "I want them out of that hive and into something where they will be happier, can you help."

We took a WBC floor and put a 14x12 brood box on it, on top we made a large hole in a crown board and on top of that all the Warre boxes with bees in. It was then covered with lifts and a roof. A shook swarm would have been better but the weather was beyond a joke at the time. Six weeks later and the bees are apparently happier with less chalk brood coming out, but with a varroa floor its apparent mat the bees do need some treatment, another disadvantage of the Warre hive, although I'm sure it could have had an adapted floor, but then treatment poses another problem with this type of hive. The weather has suddenly changed, end of July as I write so I feel all distressed bees everywhere will soon recover and if the weather goes on being good they will all build up well with enough stores for the winter, and dare I say it a little spare for us.

The next hive that forgets that bees need to breath is the top bar hive with spacers in between the bars so that no bees can go into the roof but I do believe some have vent holes at the top of the brood area, but a long wide hive in Wales? Is that a good idea? Designed for Africa not exactly a comparable climate is it? Do bees work sideways, it's cold in the east wing, they might do more in the west whig where it's wanner, but in the middle is where they will stay, and when stuffed they will swarm. A hive for people to play with.

But if you really want to suffocate your bees in style your Association will buy one of the up to date observation hives found in the latest catalogues. It's a wonderful idea. A nuc box 5 frames and a frame feeder, no problem with that. To exhibit your bees you place the frame with the queen etc. in the top glass show case with the plain wooden bar along the top, and replace the space where the frame has come from with the in frame feeder full of syrup, fix the show case on top of the nuc and away you go. There is plenty of air for these bees; the bottom of the nuc has an open mesh floor!!!!! So of course the heat they give off in transit will go down wont it!! Have you tried one? I did, I took it to an 'open garden day' 10 miles from home. We had a lovely spot, under some trees in front of a tall cool wall; all the bees came up and spent the day bashing themselves against the glass desperate for air. I was mortified, ashamed and vowed never to listen to experts ever again. Not only were the bees suffocating but nothing could be explained and the queen wasn't even visible. Half the bees died that day and the mesh floor was covered in broken legs, wings and bodies. I spent the next three days drilling large holes halfway through the wooden top and slightly smaller holes below and cutting mesh in circles to fit round the ridge, men I covered the floor with plywood cutting large round holes in each corner On the next outing all was well and all the children's questions could be answered. It's a wonderful design of hive so
much easier to handle than the tall wobbly ones we used to use, but when I phoned and pointed out its MEGA fault, I was told it had been designed by experts and was perfectly adequate. I wonder where these experts come from!!

A home for a bee is a rotten old tree
Deep in a wood has got to be good
With holes here and there to let in the air
Cool in the heat the warmest retreat
As high as you can away from that man
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What is Bee Venom and how is it used and collected?

Honey bee venom, or Apitoxin as it is also known, is a bitter colourless liquid. It is produced in the venom gland of female bees from the time they are fourteen days old, and is stored in their venom sac (approximately 0.3 mg per bee).

A bee can inject 0.1 mg of venom via its stinger.

The venom is acidic, (pH 4.5 to 5.5), and is similar to snake venom and nettle toxin. Composed of enzymes, proteins and amino acids, the active portion is a complex mixture of proteins, which cause local inflammation and act as an anti-coagulant.

Containing about thirty biologically active compounds, some of which are practically impossible to synthesize by chemical methods, bee venom is a unique multi-component complex. The main anti-inflammatory pharmacological components are peptides: Melittin, Apamin, peptide 401, Adolapin and protease-inhibitors.

It is a strong immunological agent which can stimulate the human body’s protective mechanisms against disease. There are different mechanisms of venom action in the human body; indirectly through the hormone system and directly on the cardiovascular system.
Collecting Bee Venom

A common method of collecting venom, which generally does not kill the bees, uses an electric shock to stimulate the bees to sting. A collector frame made from wood or plastic, with a wire grid to carry electrical pulses is placed at the hive entrance.

Under the grid a glass sheet is positioned and covered with a plastic or rubber material to avoid contamination of the venom. Bees contacting the wire grid receive a mild electric shock, and sting the surface of the collector sheet. Venom is then deposited between the glass and the protective material, where it dries and is able to be recovered.

After drying it is a white powder. If not protected from oxidation, this will change to brownish-yellow colour. Oxidation can also reduce its healing properties.

There are different kinds of venom such as: ‘whole dried’ which may be contaminated with pollen, faeces, dust, nectar; and ‘freeze-dried’ which is highly processed and purified. During the preparation its moisture content and any other contaminants are removed. Freeze-drying is also used to preserve the venom, but some of the active components may be also be removed.

If the venom is protected from moisture and light it can be stored for five years or more. It will not lose its toxicity, but its healing effects are reduced.

Uses of Bee venom

Bee venom therapy is used for a wide range of treatments such as for rheumatism and joint diseases, due to its anti-coagulant and anti-inflammatory properties; and is claimed to benefit chronic pain, hearing problems, trauma, multiple sclerosis, scars, spondylitis deformants, sporiasis, and arthritis.
A toxin extracted from the venom, Apamin, which speeds up brain activity, has also been credited with alleviating conditions such as muscular dystrophy, depression and dementia.

The Chinese have combined traditional acupuncture methods with the use of bee venom to treat epilepsy; and in homeopathic practice bee venom is mixed with snake and centipede venoms, then taken orally to treat cancer.

Cosmetic use of bee venom is also wide spread amongst celebrities and others, including the Duchess of Cornwall and Posh Spice. Anti-aging properties are claimed. Bee venom is used to stimulate the production of naturally-occurring collagen and elastin chemicals in the skin and muscles, which reduce wrinkles by relaxing and strengthening the tissues.

**Composition of Bee Venom**

52% **Melittin** - a strong anti-inflammatory agent, induces cortisol production

10-12% **Phospholipase** - most destructive component, an enzyme which degrades cellular membranes, causes decreased blood pressure, and inhibits blood coagulation
2-5% **Adolapin** - anti-inflammatory and analgesic
2% **Protease-inhibitors** - anti-inflammatory agents and stop bleeding
0.5-2% **Histamine** - involved in the allergic response
1-3% **Hyaluronidas** - dilates the capillaries causing the spread of inflammation
1-2% **Dopamine & Noradrenaline** - increase pulse rate
**Apamin** - a mild neurotoxin, also increases cortisol production

**Therapeutic Effects on Human Body**

- Improves cell regeneration
- Activates renewal of damaged skin cells
- Scar reducing effect
- Helps treat and reduce fine lines and wrinkles
- Helps collagen formation
- Reduces skin ageing including photo-ageing
- Anti-bacterial
- Anti-inflammatory
- Helps treat & prevent skin acne
- Helps maintain lower cholesterol
- Fortifies the natural immune system to increase antibodies against infections and diseases
- Improves energy levels
- Improves blood circulation

It is estimated that over 1% of the human population are allergic to bee venom, but it is also a medical phenomena, and another marvel from the amazing world of bees.

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Article based on extracts from various sources inc. American Bee Journal

Pictures 1 and 2: University of Illinois
Picture 3: University of Beijing
Pie-chart: E. Blaevoet
Book Review

By Rebecca Blaevoet

Until the last second, I was hoping to have a book to review for this issue of the Welsh Beekeeper; and fortuitously, at the last moment, two books arrived, both of them by the well-known-in-Wales author, David Cramp.
I’ll present one for now and keep the next one for the next issue of the magazine.

A PRACTICAL MANUAL OF BEEKEEPING

An example of the many titles in the popular “how-to” series, known first for their excellent, conversational web pages, outlining everything from how to cook pasta to the best way of writing xml text when submitting your top-level website for SEO. If that’s Greek to you, don’t worry, the “how-to” book on beekeeping is not. It is written in friendly, modern, unsophisticated language, suitable for a new beekeeper of any age who wishes to begin an investigation of the craft of apiculture; or for a more seasoned beekeeper who just likes reference books with the possibility of having any obscure question tackled by yet another perspective.
This book is no exception. It is definitely another perspective.

A word of caution: even to my novice’s eye, the author seems to want to pack far too much into the book to cover everything in a balanced way, that a completely new beekeeper, without any mentoring, will understand. Of course, the point is made straight away that you need mentoring, so for all intents and purposes, that’s covered.
However, this, like many other books, should be read alongside the guidance and advice of other beekeepers with long experience; and perhaps also alongside other reference volumes not published by the same group, just for variety.
At the end of my brief review, I will reproduce the Table of Contents, as the most immediate way of getting a sense of how the authors have chosen to organise the book.
The first thing that struck me was the angle the publisher had chosen to approach the subject of beekeeping. Obviously, the thinking went like this:
- For a modern market, we have to demonstrate why apiculture will be lucrative. People, in general, won’t invite eighty thousand stinging insects to share their environment unless they can get something out of it. The point is made loud and clear right from the start that you can make beekeeping turn a profit for you, whether with the sale of honey, wax products, silk, venom etc., or at least, get involved in bee research, thus developing an unexpected career. For myself, I found this a little saddening, as the most important reason, to my mind, for getting involved in beekeeping is due to the vast importance of bees as pollinators. This point is certainly made right alongside that of financial gain, much to my relief.

A conventional approach is taken with the order of chapters, introducing many facts about honeybees, their anatomy, the ordering of the hive and the life cycle, before embarking on the multifaceted topic of beekeeping. There are some extremely moving and inspiring passages which should encourage any beekeeper, discouraged by the abysmal weather we’ve had this season, to persevere, for the sake of these marvellous creatures and for our own edification.

I believe A PRACTICAL MANUAL OF BEEKEEPING which can be found at www.howto.co.uk is a useful book for any beekeeper’s collection and is worth dipping into, when one needs an opinion on queen rearing, which kind of hive to try next, or simply to brush up on bee diseases for the next talk; as the Table of Contents will show. Get ready to be inspired, encouraged and invigorated by this lively, fast-moving and extensive look at our chosen hobby.

1 Honey-bees and human beings
   Understanding the ancestral relation between bees and human beings, making a hobby of beekeeping, becoming a beekeeper

2 Understanding the honey-bee colony
   The colony as a whole, the queen, the worker bees, the drones, the different roles, the politics of the hive

3 Using the products of the hive and bees
   Harvesting the different products, honey, pollen, royal jelly, beeswax, propolis, venom, silk

4 Obtaining equipment and bees
   Getting started, which hive?, a review on the types of equipment, acquiring your first bees

5 Starting with bees
   The positioning of the hives, insurance in rural and urban areas, arrival of the bees

6 The active season: Spring
   Starting in the springtime, swarming, supersedure, building-up of the colony
7 The active season: Summer and Autumn
   Harvesting, extracting, analysing, the colony after harvesting, marketing your honey
8 Dealing with problems
   Aggressive colonies, robbing, uniting colonies, moving colonies, queen problems, re-queening
9 Overwintering your bees: Autumn to Spring
   Preparing for the winter, feeding options, storing, the start of Spring and a new season
10 Controlling diseases and pests
    Diseases and pests, wax moth, brood diseases, other problems, adult beesdiseases, more pests, yet more pests
11 Rearing queens and breeding bees
    Outline, methods, queen marking, assessing the situation, troubleshooting, keeping records
12 Exploring products and career possibilities
    Pollination, going organic, making a career in beekeeping, beekeeping around the world

Further reading, list of addresses, index

About the Author

David Cramp started beekeeping in 1991 whilst still in the Royal Air Force when his wife gave him a present of a swarm of bees wrapped up in a duvet bag. He kept two WBC hives in an RAF married quarter garden in Lincolnshire and in 1992, he attended a basic beekeeping course at Riseholme college, Lincoln. After leaving the RAF David went on to do a post graduate research diploma at the Cardiff University Bee Research Unit under Professor Robert Pickard and Dr Robert Paxton. His thesis was on Drone Congregation Areas.

Immediately upon graduation in 1993, he and his wife left the UK to start a commercial bee farm in Southern Spain where, due to their total inexperience and general incompetence they hit the inevitable cliff face and painfully climbed up and over it during the next 12 years, eventually obtaining organic production status for their honey. During his time in various remote parts of Spain, he became the Spanish correspondent for the Beekeepers Quarterly and also wrote for Bee Culture, The American Bee Journal and El Colmenar and he and his wife had two daughters which they carried around in moses baskets with nets over them to keep the bees
away. In 2004 most of his bees were destroyed in a forest fire and the rest began to suffer from Colony Collapse Disorder which, at that time, was virtually unknown.

In 2005 he and his family left Spain and he became the manager of a 2500 (later 4000) hive operation in New Zealand involved in kiwifruit and avocado pollination and manuka honey production. Following a move of the company in 2006 he left commercial beekeeping and now lives near Wellington with his wife, two daughters and just 15 hives of Italians and Carniolans. He is the author of 'A Practical Manual of Beekeeping (How to Books Ltd), The Beekeepers Field Guide (How to Books Ltd0, The Complete Step by Step Book of Beekeeping, Beekeeping. A Beginners Guide to be published in June 2011 and he is currently writing 'Bees' as part of the Whittet Books British natural history series. He is the editor of the online beekeeping science newsletter APiSUK published by Northern Bee Books which can be found at www.apisuk.com and is a member of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA).

A word about the book by the Author himself

In many countries, beekeeping has often been regarded as the domain of vaguely eccentric elderly men and women who potter about in their bee clothing with their stinging insects, whereas in fact beekeeping is a dynamic global industry worth literally billions of pounds, euros and dollars and is of strategic interest to governments worldwide.

Because of this importance, it offers young men and women (or older ones as well) a fantastic globe trotting career as a beekeeper, scientist, biologist or business owner and so not only does this book tell you how to keep bees but also how you too can benefit from what I reckon is a life changing interest in these amazing insects.

If you are wondering what to do in life and are just starting out or have come to a crossroads in your life where you need something more, or if you simply want a hobby that exercises your mind, why not have a go. You won't regret it. It's all in the book. I took it up in my early 40s and never looked back.

A Practical Manual of Beekeeping

Price £14.99 
Extent 304 pages 
Binding Paperback, all colours 
Format 210x170 
ISBN 978 1 90586 223 8 
Date 2008, reprinted 2009, reprinted twice 2010 
Imprint Spring Hill
Thank you Valerie for sharing these with us. You didn’t tell me where you found these recipes but please make sure you call everybody next time you’re making one of them and expect us all to queue up at your door. (I bet I will not be far from the front of the queue, I’m warning you all.) E.B.

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**Two Recipes For Honey Cakes**

Yummy Yum Yum

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**Welsh Honey Cake**

- 150 g Welsh Honey
- 115 g butter
- 55 g dark soft brown sugar
- 6 eggs separated with yolks lightly beaten
- 125 g self-raising flour
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice
- 100 g chopped walnuts
- 100 g ground almonds

1. Preheat oven to Gas Mark 3 or 160°C.
2. Beat butter add sugar together until pale and creamy.
3. Gradually beat in the egg yolks, then add the honey.
4. Sift in the flour, salt and spices and fold into the mixture with the almonds and walnuts.
5. Whisk the egg whites until stiff and fold gently into the mixture.
6. Pour mixture into lined 20 cm round cake tin.
7. Bake for one hour.

---

**Desiccated Coconut**

- 1 tablespoon Welsh Honey
- 4 oz Butter or Margarine, or Oil or mixture of any
- 1 level teaspoon Bicarbonate of Soda
- 2 tablespoons Water
- 3 oz Plain Flour
- 4 oz Soft Brown Sugar
- 3 oz Dessicated Coconut (unsweetened)
4 oz Rolled Oats.
Pinch of salt
Optional:
2 teaspoons Cocoa,
Or 1 oz Sultanas or Raisins
Or 1 teaspoon Cinnamon or 1 oz Walnuts.

1. Melt the butter and honey.
2. Add bicarbonate of soda dissolved in water. (Not very soluble, just swirl it around).
3. Mix all dry ingredients in bowl, add wet ingredients.
4. Put pieces the size of a walnut on a baking sheet lined with baking parchment. (They will stick to the sheet without the parchment, even if you grease it!!)
5. Flatten each piece slightly, leave room to spread.
6. Bake at: 170°C conventional oven. 155°C fan oven Gas Mk 3-4 for 15 minutes.
7. They will still be soft when you take them out.
8. Let them cool for 5 minutes and they will firm up.
9. Cool on cake rack.
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The Welsh Beekeeper #178 46 Autumn 2012
Also known as **Black Locust** or even **False Acacia**, it is perhaps one of the most confusingly named trees in the world as it has little to do with either locusts or acacias, and is in fact one of our most environmentally-friendly species. This tree is native to the southeastern United States, but has been widely planted and naturalised elsewhere in temperate North America, Europe, Southern Africa and Asia and is considered an invasive species in some areas. It was introduced into Britain in 1636.

Averaging 20 to 30 metres high and a trunk up to 0.8 m in diameter (exceptionally up to 52 m tall\(^2\) and 1.6 m diameter in very old trees), with thick, deeply furrowed blackish bark, it has a tendency to sport shoots from the base and therefore can be considered invasive or unsightly. It is commonly used in large cities and towns, alongside streets and in public parks and village greens because it tolerates pollution well. It is even said to absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide as it grows.

The leaves are 10–25 cm long, pinnate with 9–19 oval leaflets, 2–5 cm long and 1.5–3 cm broad. Each leaf usually has a pair of short thorns at the base, 1–2 mm long or absent on adult crown shoots, up to 2 cm long on vigorous young plants. The intensely fragrant (reminiscent of orange blossoms) flowers are white, borne in pendulous racemes 8–20 cm long, and are edible.

The fruit is a pod 5–10 cm long, containing 4–10 seeds. The brownish black pod remain attached to the branch well after the leaves have fallen.

As all members of the Leguminosae family, (like garden peas and beans), **Black Locust** has nitrogen-fixing bacteria on its root system; for this reason it can grow on poor soils and is an early colonizer of disturbed areas. Its root system can extend up to 15 metres around its trunk.

Its thorns and quick growth make it very good for establishing new hedges. The wood is extremely hard, resistant to rot and durable, making it prized for furniture, flooring, paneling and traditional ship-building. Flavonoids in the heartwood allow the wood to last over 100 years in soil, making it particularly suitable for fence posts and panels. Wet newly-cut planks have an offensive odour which disappears with seasoning.

In the Netherlands and some other parts of Europe, **Black Locust** is one of the most rot-resistant local trees, and projects have started to limit the use of tropical wood by promoting this tree and creating plantations. It is one of the heaviest and hardest woods in North America.

**Black Locust** is a major honey plant in eastern USA, and, having been taken and planted in France, is the source of the renowned *acacia* honey from France. It is said to produce up to 800–1200 pounds of nectar and pollen per acre, which is outstandingly high and make it a very valuable asset for our honeybees. However, its blooming period is short (about 10 days) and weather conditions can have quite a detrimental effect on the amount of nectar collected as well.
Robinia Pseudoacacia

Family: Fabaceae       Subfamily: Faboideae