



J U L Y & A U G U S T 2 0 1 8

An Hes



'The Swarm'

Newsletter of West Cornwall Beekeepers Association

Secretary: secretary@westcornwallbka.org

www.westcornwallbka.org.uk

From the Chair...

In this issue:

Summer's rolling on and the promise of a bumper harvest for beekeepers at least looks likely. The swarming season seems to be going on forever too, perhaps because of the congestion in the hives from all that nectar! I'm still being called to collect small caste swarms, which I tend to box together and let them sort themselves out. But, - AFB is still rumbling around – so do make sure you report anything suspicious (swarms collected or otherwise) to Hazel, our Bee Inspector – she's there to help not judge you! Soon we shall be extracting – the Association's extractor is available to book, so let Mike know when you want it. Sightings of Asian hornets are more likely now as they are attracted to apiaries. An opportunity to relax near your hives and watch their comings and goings after the mad rush of May and June? Perhaps.

If you do want to book the extractor contact Mike Dunnell on mike.dunnell@btinternet.com. The hire charges are for £5 for two days, £10 for 5 days and £15 for a week's hire.

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Save the Date!

29th July 2018

WCBKA Barbeque

22nd September 2018

A Bit of a Do - 2018

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A Bit of a Do 2018

CBKA & WCBKA's Annual Beekeeper's Convention is back on **Saturday 22nd September 2018**. A leaflet for the event and the booking form are being sent out along with this edition of An Hes.

As always, each talk sounds fantastic so book early to make sure you can attend the ones you're most interested in – and don't forget to order your pasty!

"A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July is not worth a fly"

- English Proverb

News In Brief

For Sale

One of our members who lives near St Day has some back copies of our magazine for sale. There are about 40 Kernow Official Cornwall Beekeepers' magazines from the 1980's that she no longer wants but wondered if another member would like. She wants £10 for them but is open to offers.

If you are interested please contact Val on wcbka.val@gmail.com who can put you in touch.

The WCBKA would like to extend a warm **WELCOME** to our newest members:

*Lorraine Parker, Simon Richards
and Matthew Jones*

Apiguard

We currently hold a good stock of Apiguard available for purchase. Prices are £2 per tray or £18 for a box of ten. You need to use two trays per hive (applying the second tray two weeks after the first).

Bee Health Day in Lostwithiel

A small number of members joined Cornwall BKA at the Bee Health Day in Lostwithiel. Those that went were treated to updates on the on Asian Hornet, Varroa treatments, hands on demonstrations of disease inspection at the Bodmin apiary, and the opportunity to delve around in some pretty disgusting disease riddled frames in a carefully controlled workshop.

Spotting foul broods, and the effects of Varroa isn't as straight forward as the books tell you – I'm sure all of you that went have a much better idea of what to look for now when carrying out disease inspections.

Cornish Black Bees Visit, Sunday 8th July

Bob Black invited members to visit a new native black bee apiary near Trelusswell, Penryn.

The heat of the sun ensured everyone was sweating in their suits as we crowded around the hives. Tall with supers and full of bees we did short inspections checking for signs of a laying queen.

There was a near disaster when one of Bob's black queens was inadvertently lost on the floor next to her hive. If it wasn't for the swift action of David Came she might have been lost forever! After that shock, we all needed a nice cuppa accompanied by some delicious homemade cakes courtesy of Tamsin and Minnie Black. Tamsin & Bob then took us on an informative stroll around the allotments which adjoin the apiary. Well worth the visit!

Thanks Bob for giving us the opportunity to have a look at the work that's being done there!

For more info on "Bringing Back Black Bees" go to the B4 Project page:

<http://www.b4project.co.uk/>



Calling all West Cornwall Beekeepers!

Special Request from Meri Anderson, University of Exeter in Penryn.

Dear beekeepers of West Cornwall,

My name is Meri, and I am currently doing a research masters with the University of Exeter looking at ways of protecting our precious honeybee population. Bees have been a passion of mine since my father became a beekeeper ten years ago, and this has spurred on my keen interest of honeybee research. I am specifically looking at a gut parasite called *Apicystis bombi* which is known to infect bumblebees and affects their winter survival by attacking the bees' fat body. In my recent studies I've found high prevalence of *A. bombi* in both bumblebees and honeybees in Cornwall, higher than what has previously been reported. However it is yet unknown how *A. bombi* affects honeybee colonies.

I plan on doing some experiments this summer to find out if *A. bombi* is a threat to our honeybees. I would like to take samples from as many hives as I can. Sampling 30 forager, 30 nurse and 30 brood bees from each hive. I would like to come visit each of the hives myself to collect the bees. Determining the prevalence of *A. bombi* within the hives is a very important first step in understanding this parasite. After this I might want to follow up at a later date to take a couple more samples for some other experiments.

Your help with my study will be greatly appreciated and I will acknowledge you in my paper I am planning to publish after the study.

Please do get in touch if you would like to be involved in this important research. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Meri Anderson

maja201@exeter.ac.uk

Mobile: **07450986466**

Monthly Hornet Update...

From the Asian Hornet Task Group

Large worker Asian Hornets appear in late July / August and it is from now on that beekeepers may see them hawking in an apiary. **Be vigilant!** – make sure you have an identification guide to hand in your apiary, means of capturing any suspects (fishing nets are ideal), a camera and a pot of some kind to put the suspect into. Away from the nest, the Hornets are no more aggressive than bees.

Traps in apiaries are best put up now in July / August onwards with a fish bait. **Don't put out traps if you are unable to check them daily and release the by-catch.**

Asian Hornet Nests Found by Radio Tracking

Electronic radio tags could be used to track invasive Asian hornets and stop them colonising the UK and killing honeybees, new research shows. Scientists from the University of Exeter attached tiny tags to Asian hornets, then used a tracking device to follow them to their nests; the first time this has been achieved. They tested the technique in southern France¹ and Jersey¹ – where Asian hornets are well established – and the tags led researchers to five previously undiscovered nests. “Our new method of tracking offers a really important new tool to tackle the spread of this invader, providing an efficient means of finding hornets’ nests in urban, rural and wooded environments,” said lead researcher [Dr Peter Kennedy](#), of the Environment and Sustainability Institute on the University of Exeter’s Penryn Campus in Cornwall. Asian hornets prey on honeybees and other pollinators, and the scientists say the technique demonstrated in their study could help protect Britain’s “beleaguered pollinator populations”. “It is vital to find the nests early in the season to prevent the hornet spreading, as later in the year hundreds of new queens emerge and disperse from each nest, each with the potential to make new nests,” said [Professor Juliet Osborne](#), a co-author on the study, and Director of the Environment and Sustainability Institute.

The work was funded as part of Defra’s efforts to prepare for future outbreaks of the Asian hornet in the UK. South West beekeepers also saw the urgency of the work, supporting it with their own funds. Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said: “This work is key for ensuring a rapid response to Asian hornets when sightings are confirmed, and in future bee inspectors will be able to use this technique to take swift action.” “In France, the Asian hornet is unlikely to be eliminated, so efforts are now focused more on limiting their impact,” said [Dr Denis Thiéry](#) from [INRA Bordeaux-Aquitaine](#) in France, who collaborated on this work. Mr Willie Peggie, Director of The States of Jersey Department of the Environment, where the technique was also tested, said: “We are pleased to be investigating efficient methods of tracking Asian hornets to their nests, as we’re concerned about their impact on our wild insect pollinators, as well as their effect on local honey production.” The researchers used the smallest radio tags available – made by UK firm Biotrack Ltd – and attached them to hornets with sewing thread. Hornets were able to carry them as long as the tag weighed less than 80% of the insect’s weight. Asian hornets are the latest threat to Britain’s honeybees, which – like many pollinators – are suffering due to factors including habitat loss, parasites and pesticides. The British Beekeepers Association are also pleased about the development of a reliable technique for tracking this invasive predator, and stated: “The BBKA are greatly concerned about the possible incursion by the Asian Hornet because of the devastation likely to be caused to honeybees and other pollination insects.”

Adult Asian hornets “hawk” at beehives, meaning that they hover outside to grab bees, before dismembering them and taking them back to their nest to feed to larvae. The first Asian hornet discovered in Britain was in Gloucestershire in 2016, when a nest was found and destroyed. Another nest was destroyed in Woolacombe, Devon, last year. In April this year, a single hornet was [found in Lancashire](#). Asian hornets are smaller than native European hornets, have a largely dark brown or black body and yellow-tipped legs, a distinctive orange-yellow stripe near the end of their abdomen, and often a thin orange-yellow line just behind the “waist”. Their face is orange, and the back of the head is black, unlike the European hornet in which both the face and back of the head are yellow. Any suspected sighting of an Asian hornet should be reported, ideally with a photo, via email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk or by using the Asian Hornet Watch app.

The paper, published in the journal *Communications Biology*, is entitled: “Searching for nests of the invasive Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) using radio-telemetry.” The main funder of the research was the UK government’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

DOI: 10.1038/s42003-018-0092-9

Link to paper once live: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s42003-018-0092-9>

For further information: University of Exeter, Press Office; +44 (0)1392 724828; pressoffice@exeter.ac.uk

¹ Initial work was conducted in the grounds and vicinity of [INRA Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Bordeaux Centre](#) in south-western France, an area near where the Asian hornet originally established following its accidental introduction to France in or before 2004 and with a remaining high nest density. INRA generously provided access to their facilities in support of this research.

¹ Further work was conducted on the Channel Island of Jersey on the invitation of the States of Jersey Department of Environment. The first hornet was sighted in Jersey in 2016 and therefore represented a location with a newly established population at low nest densities. Laboratory facilities were similarly provided by the Department of Environment to support this work.

The Royal Cornwall Show 2018

Congratulations to Carrie Sparrow, Val Hitchman and Barbara Barnes for bringing the George Wright cup back to West Cornwall for the best stand in the Bee and Honey Section. Thank you for all the volunteers who staffed the stand over the three days – it's a great show, and is a very enjoyable and worthwhile event. Congratulations also to Jenny Lewis, winner of the W. H. Bolitho cup for her wonderful wax cups (she showed them at our honey show last December if you remember, and went home with all the silverware there too!). Other winners included Carrie Sparrow for her soft set honey, and Barbara for her savoury cooked item – a tart I believe. St Uny School repeated their dominance in the junior section – taking the Brookholding Dawes Shield home with them again. John Roberts – from CBKA, last year's winner of the Blue Ribbon, and winner of many cups at this show for his wax, has agreed to come to one of our winter meetings to talk about wax processing. Perhaps he will have more competition next year!



Full list of WCBKA winners

- 5. Soft Set: C. Sparrow 1st
- 9. Four blocks of beeswax: C. Sparrow 2nd, B. Barnes VHC
- 10. Three beeswax candles: B. Barnes, 3rd
- 12. New entrant -Run honey: G. Caines VHC
- 16. Two jars of honey: St. Uny School, 1st
- 17. A piece of creative work: St. Uny School, 1st
- 18. Baking: St. Uny School, 1st
- 19. Photograph or image: St. Uny School, 1st
- 20. A bee garden: St. Uny School, VHC
- 32. Three plain moulded candles: M. Trace 2nd, B. Barnes 3rd
- 34. Three patterned moulded candles: M. Trace 2nd, B. Barnes 3rd
- 38. J. Lewis 1st, B. Barnes 3rd
- 46. Colour photograph: M. Trace 1st
- 53. A savour food containing honey: B. Barnes 1st
- 59 Dry mead: K. Bowyer 2nd
- 62. Fruit mead: B. Penberthy 2nd



Bee School

As part of our education remit – and to celebrate our birthday with a community activity, five beekeepers were invited into Marazion School armed with an observation hive, microscopes, games and other bits and bobs to round off their work over the winter on pollination. Hard work looking after 30 plus eight year olds – but their teacher Louise Tremewan had them well trained, and all enjoyed the morning session, including the beekeepers. The new observation hive – purchased specifically for events such as these was a great hit. The children then produced artwork for our display at the Royal Cornwall Show – some of the children even visited us at the stand.



Bee Story

Imagine a South London lad stuck in inner city Birmingham after graduating from Aston University. He has lived in cities all his life and wants something different. He reads John Seymours' *Guide to Self Sufficiency*, buys a copy of *Backyard Beekeeping*, scrounges scrap wood from a building site and builds a WBC hive. Six months later he is living on his girlfriends family farm in Sussex and waiting for a swarm. That was me in 1978 and the swarm inconveniently arrived in a bramble patch thick with nettles. After collecting the swarm and watching them travel up a white sheet and into my hive, just like the books say they should, I became a beekeeper! A few years later I had 8 colonies. Some collected as swarms or by dividing colonies with a book in one hand and hive tool in the other. A few I bought from a retiring beekeeper, along with lots of empty hives and old equipment. Nationals were now my preferred hive but I still kept the awkward but beautiful WBC hive in a prominent position in the apiary. Swarm collecting is always exciting and unpredictable. I remember learning the hard way just how heavy bees can be when I shook a swarm down into a box my girlfriend was holding. The weight knocked her off balance and there were bees everywhere, the buzzing eclipsed only by the angry curses. Another swarm was collected uneventfully but started to escape from the flimsy cardboard box on the back seat of the car as we drove home. Not such a problem for me but the hitchhiker I'd picked up seemed a little nervous! By now I was working in a hospital and was asked to remove a colony from the tank room on the roof of the nurses home. A photographer from the local paper agreed that this would be a good story and came on to the roof with me. He declined my offer of a suit and veil with "I'm sure I'll be fine". Bees don't like having their homes dismantled and rose up in an angry cloud. That photographer deserved a medal for having the courage to take a picture before he ran for the stairs trailing furious bees. By the time I'd removed that colony numerous bees had penetrated my suit and I had about 10 stings on my face. I arrived home looking like a gargoyle to discover we were hosting a family of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka who had just arrived at Gatwick Airport. I think they feared they were living in the home of a leper!

I joined the BBKA and attended meetings in both Surrey and Sussex. I remember hearing Ted Hooper, author of *Guide to Bees and Honey*, speak at a beekeepers convention. I still refer to that book and pleased to see it is still in print. After 10 years, a move to Crawley, three children and long hours in the hospital I decided that the bees would have to go so I sold my colonies and equipment and just kept a smoker as a reminder. A sad day but I just didn't have the time to look after them properly. Thirty years later I found myself living in Totnes and chatting to an enthusiastic beekeeper by the name of Phil Chandler aka The Barefoot Beekeeper. I'd been thinking about keeping bees again but put off by the expense. Top Bar hives seemed to be the answer. Easy to build and the route to a simpler, more natural form of beekeeping. So I spend the winter building hives in the garage and purchase a nucleus from Adam Vevers, the Devon County Bee Inspector. A National nucleus is not the best way to populate a top bar hive! The technique is called 'chop and crop' and involves cutting away the side and bottom bars of the frame and trimming the comb, brood and all, to fit the top bar hive. It is brutal and messy and I don't want to do it again. My new start in beekeeping went well for a year or two but then we had a succession of very poor summers. I still had just one colony and found, after a long trip abroad, it was queenless with no eggs present. Phil Chandler offered me some queen cells to transplant and we visited one of his apiaries. For no discernible reason the bees were not in a good mood that day. I prefer to work without gloves and stupidly didn't even take a pair with me. Phil had forgotten to tuck his suit legs into his boots. They came at us mercilessly and by the time we retreated with a couple of queen cells, I had about twenty stings on my hands and Phil a similar number on his legs. He ended up in hospital with low blood pressure while I just had to put up with intense itching for a few days. And the grafted cells never worked so I ended up beeless! After a couple of years travelling in Monty, our motorhome, my partner and I moved to a smallholding near Penryn. At last I have the space to make use of all the chapters in Seymours' book! And I have bees again – I think. Towards the end of June I collected a swarm from the chimney cowling of a two-story cottage. Balancing on the top rung of a ladder with a heavy cowling full of bees in one hand is not recommended. The swarm had actually started building comb in the chimney so I'm not sure they were technically still a swarm. I dumped them unceremoniously into my hive and gave them syrup and fondant. I hope they stay so I can once again call myself a beekeeper.

Chris Bird - Halvasso, West Cornwall

What's On!

Sunday 29th July 2018

West Cornwall Beekeeper's Association - Annual Barbeque!

At Chy Vellan Apiary, near Marazion

The coals will be hot at 2 o'clock! Bring your own food for the BBQ and drinks.
Family and friends are welcome
Please park in the meadow.

Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th August 2018

Enys Gardens Bee Fayre

Details can be found online: <https://www.facebook.com/enysgardens/>

Saturday 22nd of September 2018

A Bit of a Do (BOAD)

Truro College, TR1 3XX

The application form in with which you can reserve your tickets and order your pasty is being sent out with this edition. Be sure to get your booking in early so you can access the talks you're particularly interested in! Please return application forms to: Heather Williams heather@quillet.org.uk

A lot of work goes into organizing this interesting and enjoyable event. It's a great opportunity to learn, meet fellow beekeepers and share knowledge. BOAD is open to anyone interested in bees and beekeeping but not just association members so do share the event details with friends, family and neighbours.!

Saturday 13th October 2018

Kelhelland Apple Day

Annual General Meeting

November – Date TBC

A BIT OF A DO

CORNWALL'S
10TH
BEEKEEPING
CONVENTION

Brought to you by
Cornwall and West Cornwall
Beekeepers' Association

An exciting opportunity to hear the best
speakers on beekeeping right here in Cornwall

Sat 22nd Sept 2018
Fal Building Truro College
TR1 3XX

10am to 5 pm. Registration from 9am.
Tickets £12 in advance; £15 on the door
Complimentary refreshments all day
Lunchtime Pasties must be booked in advance
Bookings open 1st July - see reverse for details

Lectures, seminars and trade stands
Gadget competition
Our Traders and Stands include:
Northern Bee Books, BB West, Bee Hive Supplies,
Modern Beekeeping, BeeBzy, Bee Craft,
Local Bee Inspectors to answer all your questions
BBSA, CBBS, BA, BpCa

Speakers

Dan Basterfield
Honey bee Dance Language
Reading bees

Chris Parks
Beekeeping

Dr. Peter Kennedy
Asian Hornets

Anne Rowberry
Using a Demaree

Will Steynor
Practical gadgets