



O C T O B E R 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...

Question Time at BOAD... some interesting questions posed this year from the participants. The panel of the day's speakers were asked several questions on importing bees. Varied views were given – the importance of maintaining diversity of stock, diluting the gene pool, having mated Queens readily available in spring (particularly in a wet cold spring), the risk of disease/pests with importation and so on. The problem with an ban on imports would mean that illegal imports would happen instead. So even though the current sampling of imports is imperfect, it at least does provide some sort of traceability was the overall view from the panel. Interestingly at the recent BIBBA conference the message I took away was – breed from the local stock we have (whatever they are now), cull the weak and look after the strong. Not rocket science really....

Look forward to seeing you at the winter meetings.

Kate Bowyer



"Collaboration is the essence of life. The wind, bees and flowers work together to spread the pollen

- Amit Ray from *Mindfulness: Living in the Moment - Living in the Breath*

In this issue:

News in Brief	Pg 2
BIBBA	Pg 3
Science Bit	Pg 4
Heligan Reserve	Pg 5
A Bit of a Do	Pg 6
What's On?	Pg 7

Save the Date!

MONDAY 8th October

First Winter Meeting
Marazion Community Centre

13th October 2018

Kehelland Apple Day

22nd October 2018

1st 'Better Beekeeping' Meeting
Marazion Community Centre

12th November 2018

WCBKA's AGM

Monthly Hornet Update...October

From the Asian Hornet Task Group

It is unlikely that anyone doesn't know about the recent Asian Hornet sightings around Britain's coast this last month. Beyond providing advice to members, we have been trying to engage with conservation groups such as the National Trust, the RSPB & Cornwall Wildlife Trust about the impact of the Asian Hornet will have on pollinators – it's not just a beekeepers problem! It is fairly straightforward for beekeepers to provide evidence, but not so easy to show the impact on other species. Ongoing work over the winter – putting together resources for us all to share when we are talking to the non-beekeeping world...I hope you all spent an hour in front of your hives observing our clever bees this Autumn.

BIBBA Biennial Conference 2018

I was glad to be among those who travelled up to Gloucestershire from West Cornwall for the BIBBA Biennial Conference this year. A wide choice of presentations and workshops took place from the 7-9th September in Cirencester Agricultural College. It was great to feel like a student again! We learnt about how to breed our own bees, queens and drones sustainably, how to breed true to desirable characteristics and how to favour the native Dark European Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera* (Amm).

Speakers came from distant parts of the British Isles, including the West of Ireland, which is proving to be a stronghold for Amm. Cornwall too was mentioned in several of the talks as having some native bees, as were parts of Scotland & Wales. Andrew Abrahams from the Island of Colonsay spoke about his work over many years preserving the local native stock. Kevin Thorne described how a beekeeper group on the Abberton Reservoir in Essex is managing to increase the native bee population. Their apiary must be situated in an unlikely spot for native bees, but Kevin encouraged us that we can try to do the same wherever we are.

Michael Collier from Shropshire talked about Large Scale Queen Rearing & gave a half-day workshop on Artificial Insemination. Microscopy workshops were given by Jim Pearson and Graham Kingham. There were several talks

on Genetics which is playing such a pivotal part in identifying specific species of honeybees & influencing where we steer our beekeeping in the future. This conference strongly advised we stop using imported strains of *Apis mellifera*. Rather, we should favour the native Dark European Honey Bee, Amm as we try to improve our stock.



Like all good conferences we had a good chat with other beekeepers from different parts of the country, share what we have in common & compare our varied approaches to challenges. The beautiful halls of Cirencester Agricultural College were an inspired venue. Thank you to the BIBBA Committee for putting on a very good show.

Maggie Freegard

News in Brief

Winter Meetings Begin in a New Venue & on a New Day – Mondays at Marazion Community Centre

A new venue has been arranged for all our Winter and Better Beekeeping Meetings. The first Winter Meeting of 2018 takes place on Monday 8th October. That's right – MONDAY 8th October. This season all our winter gatherings will take place on Mondays at 7:30pm at:

Marazion Community Centre. Gwallon Lane, Marazion, TR17 0HW

Please come along – it'd be great to chat to each other about winter prep and **Bruce Henderson Smith** will be joining us to talk about **Showing Honey**. You could learn some top tips for the Honey Show in December! The full schedule of meetings can be found on the **What's On** pages at the back this edition.

Bring Back Your Books

If you currently have any books on loan from the vast cavern of wonder that is the WCBKA Library, please could you return these at the first Winter Meeting on Monday 8th October in a new venue so that others may enjoy the full selection on offer.

The Annual General Meeting 2018

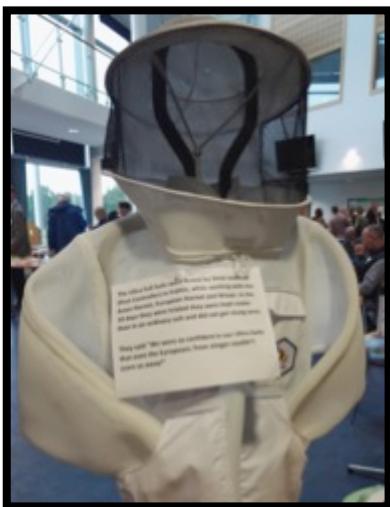
WCKBA's AGM will take place at 7.30pm on **Monday 12th November** at the Marazion Community Centre. All members are welcome to attend.

Association Extractor, Apiguard and Syrup

Fondant and syrup for feeding are both available from **Mick Jordan**, please contact him on 01209 860630 or 07974154472 to arrange collection and payment.

We are currently holding a good stock of Apiguard. Prices are £2 per tray or £18 for a box of ten. You need two trays per hive (second tray applied two weeks after first). Call **John Mills**: 07764291106 or email johnwindmills@yahoo.co.uk

If you want to book the extractor contact **Mike Dunnell** on mike.dunnell@btinternet.com the charge is £5 for 3 days hire.



Asian Hornet Suit



A Bit of A Do from Above



Chris Park

News in Brief (cont.)

When Pete, our science gent, went to Ghent! The 8th Congress of Apidology

Every 2 years since 2004, bee researchers from around the World have come together for a Congress of Apidology. The 8th Congress was held in Ghent, Belgium, last month. The congress is aimed mainly at scientists, with the intention of bringing together those studying wild and managed bees, to share latest insights. I was fortunate to attend (after sleeper train and Eurostar) to give an oral presentation on my tracking of Asian hornets. With 157 oral presentations across 4 parallel sessions over 3 days, it was impossible to attend all talks. New to me were those exploring the effects of *Crithidia mellifica* and *Lotmaria passim* (a couple of trypanosomatids, protozoan parasites) on honeybees. But Prof Alison Mercer's keynote talk caught my attention, delving into the mechanisms behind how bees learn by association to respond to different cues. For example, how some nurse bees learn to respond to the smell of varroa infected brood cells while others don't, and how work is underway to identify genetic markers that may help in selecting colonies with a greater proportion of these sensitive bees. Great stuff!

Be Prepared for Unwanted Guests!

British-Irish Council meeting on Asian hornets

On 11th & 12th September, agency staff from the devolved governments and the crown dependencies of the British Isles came together to discuss contingency plans focussed on Asian hornets, to identify gaps in knowledge and to explore how best to collaborate & share information in the future. The Non-Native Species Secretariat, National Bee Unit, Jersey's Department of Environment, Guernsey's State Analyst's Laboratory, University of Exeter and Jersey beekeepers shared their experiences with the other government agencies, and observed Jersey's hornet hunters in action. Much was learned on the occasion, most important of all to prepare and not underestimate the speed at which Asian hornets can establish.

Pete Kennedy

From Our Resident Science Correspondent by Dr. Peter Kennedy

Crop management and pollination of oilseed rape

Prof Riccardo Bommarco's team in Sweden have recently been studying how crop management practices influence insect pollination of oilseed rape. In 2015, Lorenzo Marini and colleagues showed how pollination benefits crop yield in open-pollinated varieties of oilseed rape but not hybrid varieties, and how benefits to crop yield from insect pollination improved with decreased nitrogen fertilization (and how nitrogen fertilizer can partly compensate yield in areas of poor pollination). Sandra Lindström and colleagues showed how treating oilseed rape to protect it from pollen beetle increased the nectar resources available to pollinators; plants had more flowers and produced more nectar per flower resulting in higher pollinator densities. Pollen beetle larvae can damage or deplete nectaries (nectar-secreting glandular organs in flowers) and adults can block access to flowers, or otherwise signal reduced floral rewards. Pollinators are less attracted to infested crops, such that yield losses due to pollen beetle attacks are aggravated by decreased pollinator densities. The work needs to be repeated with larger plots, but the authors already identified the need to develop pest control tools that effectively protect crop yields (and preserve floral resources) while causing no harm to pollinators.

Sandra Lindstrom et al. (2018) Crop management affects pollinator attractiveness and visitation in oilseed rape.

Basic and Applied Ecology 26, 82-88. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S143917911730052X?via%3Dihub>

Lorenzo Marini et al. (2015) Crop management modifies the benefits of insect pollination in oilseed rape. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment 207, 61-66. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167880915001115>

Antiviral properties of fungi provide hope against bee viruses

Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV), Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (ABPV), Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV), Deformed Wing Virus (DWV), Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV), Black Queen Cell Virus (BQCV) and Sacbrood Virus (SBV) are just some of the viruses that threaten and can cause severe disease in honeybees, yet to date beekeepers have limited options of managing viruses in their colonies. Just published is a paper in Nature's Scientific Reports by Paul Stamets and colleagues that offers some hope. Following observations of bees feeding on fungal mycelia, the authors speculated on their potential to self-medicate. Fungi are known to produce chemicals with antimicrobial and antiviral properties. The authors treated caged bees with fungal extracts mixed with sugar syrup and found DWV levels significantly reduced. The best performing extracts were tested on nucleus colonies in short-term (12-day) field trials and again reduced DWV titres. Amongst the extracts tested were those of the bracket fungi *Fomes fomentarius* and *Ganoderma resinaceum*.

Paul Stamets et al. (2018) Extracts of polypore mushroom mycelia reduce viruses in honey bees. Scientific Reports 8:13936.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-32194-8.pdf>

To Heligan...and Back

The Lost Gardens of Heligan declare Native Honey Bee Reserve Status



On a glorious autumn day on Wednesday 26th September, beekeepers and members of the general public gathered in front of a wonderfully constructed observation hive to witness the opening of Heligan Gardens as a Black Honey Bee Reserve. Speakers included the Founder of Heligan Gardens and Patron of The B4 Project, Sir Tim Smit, who told us that he is pleased that Heligan provides an ideal place for selective breeding, so supporting the recovery of the native honeybee. Victoria Buswell told us how she is welcoming beekeepers to contribute to the Cornish Honey Bee Survey, which she is conducting from Plymouth University as a part of her Phd.

Victoria is in the process of analysing both the genotype and phenotype of 300 Cornish colonies, and she invited those of us attending to join the survey. Rodger Dewhurst demonstrated his meticulous queen rearing techniques using apideas, (and impressed us by not needing protective clothing!) He listed the various stresses which our honey bees are subjected to (including varroa, viruses, the expected Small Hive Beetle, the Asian Hornet, habitat loss, pesticides and climate change). By avoiding importing more bees and, as far as possible, avoiding contact with imported bees, we are reducing the stress on the native honeybee. He, together with many other black bee protagonists, observes the black bee shows greater resilience, and he hopes the research going on at Plymouth University will give scientific backing to these observations.



If you were unable to attend the opening of the Heligan Native Honey Bee Reserve, but would like to take part in the survey, please email Victoria at beesurvey@plymouth.ac.uk

Maggie Freegard



Well, that was a Bit of a Do!

If you went along to this year's Bee Convention, "A Bit of a Do" (aka "BOAD") at Truro College on 22nd September then you will be able to appreciate the hard work that goes into organizing this annual Event. Once again Cornwall and West Cornwall Beekeeping Associations collaborated to put together a varied, interesting and highly enjoyable day of talks.

First on the agenda was Dan Basterfield talking about 'new findings in honey bee dance language'. He was an engaging speaker and delivered a knowledgeable and interesting seminar on bee behaviour. It's a shame, however, that he made the "joke" oft expressed at beekeeping events about Italians and laziness, and I have to wonder why people still think this is ok. Perhaps this kind of casual racism and cultural stereotyping is what keeps younger people away from community associations and events?

After a tea break we all went our separate ways for the short talks. I attended Will Steynor's 'Time-Saving Tips for the Practical Beekeeper' and my co-editor Paul went to Dan Basterfield's 'Reading Bees'. There were two other talks on offer- Dr. Peter Kennedy's 'In search of the invader's nest: tracking Asian Hornets' and Anne Rowberry on 'Using a Demaree'. Truly something for everyone!

Will Steynor's talk on Practical Gadgets:

From and electric bain-marie made from two stainless steel kitchen sinks to a queen catcher fashioned out of a hair curler, Will's inventions were clever, useful, and fascinating. He took us neatly through his designs explaining why he'd made them, how he used them and how to make them ourselves. Some of the items are probably beyond my skill level but the way Will talked about the construction of each one made them seem not too far out of reach. I was particularly impressed by the simplicity of some things; like applying latches on brood boxes and supers so that they clip together, remain stable and you can then remove all supers at once if you want, and a permanent entrance block that can be locked ajar one bee wide in the winter and fully open in the spring.

Dan Basterfield's talk on Reading Bees (...and acting accordingly):

Paul went to the keynote speaker's second talk of the day, which focused on how we understand the state of our colonies by observation, interpretation, knowledge & learning, and then acting on what we see. Actual reading of books is crucial-it extends our understanding and helps us evaluate & deal with problems when at the coalface of beekeeping. He recommended certain books to help equip us in this respect but warned us not to take everything we read as gospel. We should be judgemental & beware of self-appointed experts, outdated sources, cutting-edge research & anecdotes!

We reconvened over a lovely pasty for lunch, marveled at the selection on the Northern Bee Books stand, browsed beekeeping equipment and bought our raffle tickets. Before we knew it, lunch was over and we raced upstairs for the afternoon talk by Chris Park on 'Skep Beekeeping: Looking to the past, looking to the future.' Although it was clear Chris is passionate about skeps, it was a pity he ran out of time before getting to the core of his subject.

Finally there was Beekeepers Question Time, which was dominated unsurprisingly by concerns over the Asian Hornet. The panel gave in-depth & informed answers, sometimes their expert opinion coming from personal experience. I always enjoy this part of the day as you get to hear a little bit from each speaker, unrehearsed and from the heart. Some of the questions were quite insightful, and the answers were interesting and sometimes unexpected. It was a fitting end to a thoroughly enjoyable day and I for one will be in attendance next year!

At the raffle I won a queen rearing starter kit, inclusive of all tools and wrapped up inside an apedia. So I guess I will be attempting to raise some queens next season – watch this space!

Debby Wright

What's On?

Saturday 13th October 2018 - Kehelland Apple Day

Can you spare a few hours to staff our stand at Kehelland's Apple Day? It's a really good day out, lots of stands, music and laughter. Contact Val: secretary@westcornwallbka.org.uk

Winter Meetings and Better Bee-Keeping Meetings - Mondays at 7:30pm

Marazion Community Centre, Gwallon Lane, Marazion, TR17 0HW

Monday 8th October 2018 - First Winter Meeting

Bruce Henderson Smith joins us to talk about showing honey. Hopefully it will inspire us to show our honey and give us tips about how to show honey at our Honey Show later in December. He has offered to judge a few jars anonymously if anyone would like to bring some along.

Monday 22nd October 2018 - Better Beekeeping

Introductions/Review of Year/Preparing for Winter/Bees & Beekeepers/Programme Outline/Resources

Monday 12th November 2018 - Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Monday 19th November 2018 - Better Beekeeping

How the Colony passes the winter/Basic biology & behaviour/Life cycle

Monday 3rd December 2018 - Honey Show and Christmas Party

Monday 17th December 2018 - Better Beekeeping

Nectar, pollen, propolis, water, their collection and uses/Conversion of nectar into honey/Wax, how it's made by bees, its uses by bees and man/Feeding, robbing

Monday 7th January 2019 - Winter Meeting

Monday 21st January 2019 - Better Beekeeping

Pests & Diseases/Varroa/IPM/Apiary Hygiene/Importance of Changing Frames

Monday 4th February 2019 - Winter Meeting

Guest Speaker: Tamsin Harris.

Monday 18th February 2019 - Better Beekeeping

Bee Improvement/Queen Selection/Basic Queen Rearing/Where to source bees/Nucs, their uses and how to make one up

Monday 4th March 2019 - Winter Meeting

Monday 18th March 2019 - Better Beekeeping

Swarming, its prevention and management/Collecting a Swarm/Supercedure/Queenlessness/Drone Laying Queens (DLQs)/Laying Workers

Monday 1st April 2019 - Winter Meeting

Monday 15th April 2019 - Better Beekeeping

Everything else – local flora/forage through the season/the beekeeper's year/siting hives/avoiding nuisance/stings/the importance of bee space top & bottom/equipment needed for starting out/Nosema testing workshop