

ECBKA Newsletter – June 2016

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After a slow start to the season things are really warming up and so far I have managed to keep the bees in the box. Encouraged by Frank to try again, after nearly de-legging a queen at my first attempt, I have been using the one handed queen catcher to catch queens for clipping and for the first time all my queens are clipped. I have a couple of bonus queens after I found a colony and nuc, that were both 'queenless' in early April, had a good quantity of eggs and young larvae in them last week.

There was a good attendance at our May meeting, including many members from neighbouring associations, for Professor Ratnieks' talks. He spoke about two areas of research undertaken by LASI (Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects). If you are interested there are some short videos relating to the Laboratory's research on You Tube (search: *LASI bee research*). To summarise his two talks for members who were not there – oxalic acid sublimation is a very effective control for varroa when a colony is genuinely broodless. He advocates taking out frames in the winter and destroying any brood present. And, the best garden flower for attracting honey bees is *Helenium 'The Bishop'*, followed closely by *Erysium 'Bowles Mauve'*. He also spoke about the LASI hygienic queen breeding programme and there is more information about this (and an online shop to purchase queens) on the LASI website.

Particular thanks are due to Doug for making the arrangements and Doug and Stella who provided accommodation and hospitality for Professor Ratnieks' visit. On returning to Sussex he sent an e mail in which he said '*I do not think I have ever had such a memorable visit to a beekeepers' association.*'

Dates

Thursday 9th June 8.00pm – Integrated Wasp management with Karol Pazik

Saturday 11th June 2.00pm – Apiary meeting

Saturday 18th June 10.00am – Taster Day

Saturday 2nd July 2.00pm – Bee disease recognition comb workshop

Saturday 9th July 2.00pm – Apiary meeting

Saturday 30th July – ECBKA at the Trap Show

Saturday 13th August 2.00pm – Apiary meeting

Saturday 20th August – ECBKA at the Llandeilo Show

Monday 29th August – ECBKA Honey Show at the Cilycwm Show

June Meeting

We have another guest speaker for our June meeting, thanks again to Doug for making contact. He is Karol Pazik from Aylesbury. His specialist area is pharmacy and he has a particular interest in, and wealth of knowledge about wasps. He will be talking to us about wasp management and how to protect hives from wasp invasion. I hope this will be of interest to many members especially after the problems many people encountered with wasps last year.

The Apiary

There has been a lot of activity at the apiary over the last few weeks and it is good to see new faces, including some of our yet to start beekeepers, coming along each week. For members who cannot manage a Thursday afternoon there will be 3 Saturday afternoon sessions as noted in the 'dates' above.

Nikki has started the queen rearing process to make up nucs for this year's beginners. He is using the Miller method which has been successful in previous years. This starts by placing a frame of foundation into a hive containing the queen that has been chosen for breeding. This year she is a lovely, plump, dark queen whose bees have a good temperament. The foundation in this frame has the bottom cut off in a W shape. The bees draw out the foundation and because it is lovely and new the queen uses it. The following week the frame is taken out and the edges containing eggs so are cut away so that the newly emerged larvae are at the edge of the comb.



The frame is then placed into a strong hive that has had the queen removed. Being queenless, the bees construct queen cells using some of the young larvae. The space at the bottom of the comb means that the queen cells hang down into the gap making them easier to remove. Once the queen cells are sealed they are cut from the frame and attached to a frame of brood in a nuc, especially made up for the purpose of receiving the queen cell. The nuc raises the queen cell as its own queen.

As soon as the frame has been taken out of the hive containing the breeder queen a new frame with cut foundation can be put in to the hive to repeat the process.



The bees were a bit over enthusiastic drawing comb on this frame and filled in the gaps. They only made 5 queen cells on this one, usually there are many more.



This is one of the queen cells cut from the frame and pinned to a frame of brood ready to go into a prepared nuc.

The final stage is of course waiting for the queens to emerge and be successfully mated. Once it is evident that the new queens are laying well the nucs will be ready to be passed on to some of our beginners.

Also in the apiary last week was the first swarm of the season. There was no evidence of it having come from any of the apiary hives so it may have arrived from another apiary. The swarm was hanging in a nearby holly tree about 8' off the ground. Luckily we had a man with a van in the shape of Keith who produced a ladder, a saw and a cardboard box. Keith successfully collected the swarm in the box and at the end of the afternoon it was shaken into the top bar hive that he had conveniently completed refurbishing the previous week. A swarm is said to be the best way to populate a top bar hive as the bees draw the comb readily.

As mentioned last month we also have the Warré hive to populate with a swarm so if

anyone has a swarm to spare for that hive please let me know.



An elegant pose from Keith who was standing on a short ladder. He dropped most of the bees into the box with one shake of the branch

Taster Day Saturday 18th June

A Taster Day has been arranged for prospective beekeepers who have contacted the Association since we held the introductory course earlier this year. This is not something we have done previously. The aim will be to give people sufficient information for them to know whether or not beekeeping is for them without committing to the 6 week introductory course. The day will consist of a classroom session in the Llangadog Community Centre in the morning starting at 10.00am. After lunch the attendees will be taken to the apiary at Salem to look in to some of our hives. We will provide protective clothing. The cost for the day will be £10 per person but if anyone wants to join the Association that cost will be deducted from the £20 subscription.

If you know of anyone who is contemplating taking up beekeeping and who may be interested in attending they can contact me for full details.

education@ec-bka.com

Disease Recognition Comb Workshop

Frank's team are doing another round of comb workshops and we will be hosting one in the Llangadog Community Hall on Saturday 2nd July for members and non members. This will start at 2.00pm and finish by 5.00pm. This is an excellent opportunity to learn (or brush up your knowledge) about the disease threats to your bees, how to manage the risks and keep your bees healthy. You will be able to see and handle diseased combs which, hopefully, you will never see in your own apiary. If you are unable to make the session on 2nd July there are others being held not too far away hosted by our neighbouring associations.

I'm afraid I don't have the technical know how to get Franks nice publicity document incorporated into this newsletter so I am sending it as a separate appendage. It has the details of all the workshops in our area.

**ECBKA Honey Show
Monday 29th August at the
Cilycwm Show**



No excuses folks, there is plenty of time to get your entries organised for our honey show this year. In 2014 we had a record number of entries. Last year, probably because of the poor season, the number of entries was a record low.

Your honey does not have to be from the current year. You can have more than one entry of honey. I usually try to put in one entry from the current year and one from the previous year (if there is any left). Don't be shy about entering your honey – there is a novice class so have a go. Don't worry if you don't know how to classify your honey as we now have a set of grading glasses for comparing the colour. There are also classes that can be entered even if you don't have honey to show.

The classes are:-

- ⤴ *Two 454g jars of light honey*
- ⤴ *Two 454 g jars of medium or dark honey*
- ⤴ *Two 454g jars of naturally granulated or creamed honey*
- ⤴ *Novice class – any exhibit suitable for inclusion in one of the above classes*

- ⤴ *One comb of honey suitable for extraction*
- ⤴ *One 400g – 500g cake of beeswax not less than 25mm thick or any other beeswax exhibit*
- ⤴ *Any item of homemade beekeeping equipment not commercially available*
- ⤴ *Honey cake to set recipe (not yet published)*
- ⤴ *Honey fudge to set recipe (not yet published)*
- ⤴ *One bottle of mead – any type*
- ⤴ *Any photo to do with beekeeping*

As soon as the Cilycwm Show committee have finalised the schedule it will be published on our website.

And finally

Thank you once again to Frank for his monthly notes



June Seasonal Notes

The variable season has continued through May which has meant forage coming in in fits and starts, steadily filling the first super and even into the second one on strong stocks. The plentiful pollen has resulted in brood nests building up well and, inevitably, the good conditions, interspersed with wet weather, have turned the attention of the stronger colonies to building queen cells.

If you have been keeping an eye on the colony's progress and taken appropriate avoidance measures, you should not have lost any swarms. An early artificial swarm or removal of the queen without too many bees should leave sufficient population in the hive to provide a honey crop, assuming we have good weather in July. The queens I've taken out, with a small nuc and frame of stores, have been kept in a nuc box for a couple of weeks, fed, and built up well. I've then hived and carried on feeding them and they've been drawing out frames of foundation OK. There has been some poor queen mating over the past two summers so I'm making sure that I have nucs available this year in September for uniting, should I find that the virgins mating now have failed or are absent altogether in three months' time.

Mild conditions for bees over the past twelve months have also provided good conditions for Varroa. I've maintained a regular regime of Apiguard (after removing my honey

supers in early August) and oxalic acid (in the winter) for many years now. This has, undoubtedly, kept mite levels low. Those of you who have not been able to maintain such an approach would be well advised to sample drone brood, look out for deformed wings and monitor mite levels now. You'll find detailed advice on how to do these on Beebase (<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=93>) where there is also a mite count calculator to help you work out the specific level of infestation and, therefore, your next best step.

If you do find mite levels are higher than is safe, you will need to take action before it's time to take the honey off. Drone brood culling and icing sugar dusting may be enough to reduce levels where mite infestation is comparatively low. A treatment with Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS) may be necessary where mites are present in greater number. Make sure you read the warning advice on the manufacturer's instructions, remove the entrance block, give plenty of space and put the insert in under the mesh floor. This allows the colony to maintain a circulation of formic acid vapour inside the hive. I'll be aiming to take my honey off during the second week in August so that I can get Apiguard into the hives by the middle of August. That allows enough time in the second half of September to unite any queenless stocks, if there are any, and feed for the winter.

Back to the here and now, I'm wondering whether I'll have enough supers as I keep one step ahead of the honey flow and allow plenty of space above the queen excluder for honey processing. At least I can afford to allow those colonies that have been through the swarm management process less forward space in the supers, and hope that they'll fill and cap all the frames efficiently and right to the edges of the box.

Frank Gellatly

Don't forget the ECBKA Facebook group. For access to the closed group go to the page and click on 'join'. This will notify Doug Taylor or Sharon Davidson who will then add you to the membership. If you are not a Facebook user you can get advice by e mailing memberhelp@ec-bka.com

2016 Committee

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Sharon Davidson ♦ Secretary
Huw Jones ♦ Treasurer
Paul Davies
Frank Gellatly
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