

Cardiff, Vale and Valleys Beekeepers' Association

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Newsletter June 2011

As predicted, there were many swarms in May with such sustained good weather early on in the year. However, this did not last and many beekeepers were having to feed their colonies by the first of June. The dry Spring and sunny April/May weather caused many flowers to come out early which has produced an even bigger June gap than usual with a long dearth of nectar. Those beekeepers with hives near the oil seed rape fields have been fine, but my few strong colonies that had 2 supers of honey on them at the beginning of May have now eaten all their stores and have been nearly on the point of collapse. Mike Pett's message in early June, to feed weak colonies was very timely indeed.

I have had some interesting call-outs to collect swarms over the last few months. One was in some ones attic which on first sight looked as though they were gathering around the chimney on the inside of the loft. On risking life and limb to get up for a closer look I found that the bees had made a lot of comb under the eaves and it would have meant tearing down half the roof to get them out. Another swarm that we were called out to collect was about 25 feet up in a Lime tree. Even with a long step ladder and long handled tree pruning saw, we only managed to retrieve two thirds of the swarm and cut down half the tree in the process. I realised that we had left the queen behind when bringing them home they all walked into the queen-right hive next to them. So sometimes catching swarms can be rather tricky but when successful the sight of the bees walking up into their new home is wonderful.

DIARY 2011 - Meetings and other events

Saturday July 9th at 2.30pm Out apiary meeting at Caerphilly including looking at how to do a shook swarm. Phone Dinah Sweet on 02920 869242 for directions and numbers attending.

July 18th - 21st -The Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells. WBKA will need volunteers to man the stand, let Dinah (Tel. above) know if you are interested in helping.

Saturday 13th August at 2.30pm Extracting honey at Lisvane Honey Farm with Tim Wright and Peter Shaw. Phone Peter 01633 897195 for directions and so that they have an idea of the numbers of people attending.

Friday 19th August 2-5pm Microscopy Course on adult bee diseases at Thornhill. You will need to bring a microscope and book up with John King, john.king1949@gmail.com

Tuesday 13th September 7.30pm talk by Peter Guthrie - showing hive products.

Newsletter contributions If you have any contributions for the newsletter such as letters, articles, poems, cartoons etc. copied from elsewhere or made up please send them to Dinah Sweet, GraigFawr Lodge, Caerphilly, CF83 1NF. Advertising rates for commercial / semi-commercial traders at £5.00 per year for approx. 1/6th page in 11 monthly issues. One off adverts at £1.00. Non-commercial adverts i.e. for sale of surplus equipment are free to members for a single entry.

It is with great sadness that I report the death of **Hildegard Davies**, an Honorary member of our association. She was from Austria but lived in Wales for a very long time and was a keen beekeeper for many years. Hildegard would talk to everyone about the pleasures of keeping bees and how wonderful and industrious those little insects are. She looked after a few hives for many years until recently, when the lifting became too much, but still attended many meetings bringing her delicious honey cakes and mead along. She was a lovely lady and will be sadly missed by the many members who fondly remember her.

Wholemeal Honey Date Cake Recipe (This won 1st prize at a large honey show in 1995)

Ingredients:- 4oz chopped dates, 6oz honey, 4oz margarine, 8oz wholemeal flour, 2 eggs, grated rind & juice of one large orange, 2 level teaspoons of baking powder.

Topping - 1oz demerara sugar, 1oz chopped walnuts

Cream together margarine, honey and orange rind. Add the eggs one at a time. Gradually sift in the flour and baking powder alternately with the orange juice. Add the chopped dates. Grease and line a 7 inch cake tin and spoon the mixture in, making sure to level the top. Mix the demerara sugar and walnuts together and sprinkle over the top of the cake mixture.

Bake at 325 degrees Farenheight or gas mark 3 for one and a quarter hours.

Robbing (by bees), and how to prevent it - do not spill syrup or leave honey comb around!!

The signs of robbing are noisy, angry bees at the entrance of a weak hive which is being fed. They look very similar to young orientating bees in their zig-zag approach but the tell tale sign is about 20 dead bees outside the front of the hive and wax cappings on the floor, if they have emptied the cells. They come out crawling upwards and are heavy with honey/syrup so sink a little when they take off. Poor apiary hygiene or a sudden stop of nectar flow may cause this.

Reduce the entrance size to one bee width and spray dettol, bleach or any strong smelling substance at the front of the hive, that won't kill the bees - just put off the robbers. A sheet of perspex over the entrance which allows the hives own bees to crawl around it to enter the hive, may also deter this robbing frenzy! Dinah Sweet.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES from 'Natures Little Helpers' open every Saturday from 9am - 1pm

Lisvane Honey Farm, Unit 8, Mill Farm Industrial Estate, CF14 0SH

Peter Shaw (Thorne's Agent). Tel. 01633 897195

Tim Wright (Hand made natural products) Tel. 07970 289677

Nigel Harris Tel. 07970 293016

Contract extraction services available and taster sessions for beginners

L & G R Chirnside

Foundation available at a straight exchange for wax.

Beekeeping supplies available from stock. Equipment new and used available.

Bryn y pant Cottage, Upper Llanover, Abergavenny. NP7 9ES.

Tel. 01837 880625