

Gwent Beekeepers Association Newsletter

Founded 1918

Charity No. 1014600

www.gbka.co.uk

October 2011

Forthcoming Events

Monday 10th October **ANNUAL DINNER** (booking closed 25th Sept)

Saturday 12th November **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** followed by a talk given by
2.15pm **Richard Ball - QUEENS - CHANCE or CHOICE**
Goytre Village Hall *Directions - see page 5*

Thursday 8th December **POLLEN - Dinah Sweet** who is now Seasonal Bee Inspector for
7.30pm Cardiff and the Valleys
Goytre Village Hall *Directions - see page 5*

The End of the Beekeeping Year ... or the Beginning of the next?

I recommend reading the NBU's leaflet on preparing bees for the winter - it makes an excellent checklist: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/downloadDocument.cfm?id=400>

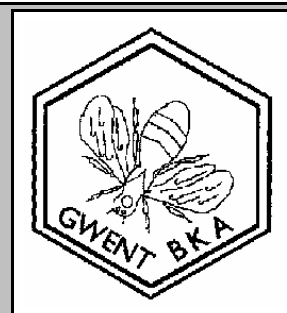
IF you need to give your bees an autumn feed, and they are not thriving, why not treat them for Nosema anyway? DON'T! Fumidil B is an antibiotic, and there is a risk that the parasite will develop immunity to our only treatment, as with Apistan and Bayvarol. Preparing a sample for the microscope is not easy, and I can never see a thing through one! However this Autumn Janet and Angela have kindly offered to do the 'looking' bit for us (see my 'update' in the middle of last month). The other problem with Fumidil is it is only available in 2 sizes - for 3 hives, or 54, and doesn't keep.

Last month I included a short article from N Staffs on comb storage. Let me expand on that slightly: Wax moth is only really a problem on comb that has been used as part of the brood nest because the moths feed on bits of larvae. Comb that has only been used for honey storage may get the odd 'tunnel' through it, but can usually be given back to the bees for repair. I take supers that have been used as part of a '1½' brood, tidy the frames and boxes and seal 3 supers at a time, with clearer boards top and bottom, with duct tape on all joints, and over the escape holes. If you don't do this straight from the hive, then put the entire super in a freezer for 24 hours, to ensure no moths get sealed inside alive!

- Keith

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To contact a committee member, please click on [www.gbka.co.uk/document lib/pdf/Contacts.pdf](http://www.gbka.co.uk/document_lib/pdf/Contacts.pdf)

Our search for a new apiary site:

Over the last 15 years we have enjoyed the benefit of an excellent apiary site at Cefn Tilla courtesy of Lord Raglan who proved to be a perfect host. Our agreement was always subject to his personal consent and could always be removed as we knew it would one day and the so the day has arrived and we have to leave.

Over the spring and summer, therefore members of the committee have sought and looked at several possible new apiary sites for the Association. Our need for a quiet, out of the way spot, central to Gwent with good access and car parking space for our members, plus the owner being willing for us to put up a shed and neighbour wild insects, has meant that it has been difficult to find somewhere that met all these aims. We are grateful to all the owners of land who have offered to accommodate us – Usk Farmers Club, Mr Trumper, Usk Open Prison, The Woodland Trust and Gwent Wildlife Trust . We decided that the offer that best suits our needs is from Elizabeth Murray and the Llanover Estate who have offered us a site at Ochran Farm, a mile or so south of Llanellen. Currently there is a timber store on the spot, and we cannot move there until it is removed next spring. We had asked the Cefn Tilla estate whether we could stay until next spring but they have said no, so one of our committee, Angela Thomas has offered to give the hives a home over winter. In the spring the hives will be moved to Ochran.

Our departure from Cefn Tilla has reminded us of the limitations of not owning our own site and so in August, when a piece of land became available for auction in Nantyderry, Eric came up with his scheme to raise money. There was such support for the proposal that the committee feel that it is something we should pursue. So I will mention the details again in case we are able to find an appropriate spot to buy. Eric's funding proposal was to raise a loan of target £10,000 from the members in individual tranches of £250 for a 10 year period at a simple interest rate of 2.5% pa payable at loan redemption. GBKA would retain the right to redeem individual tranches earlier than 10 years at its discretion, (if members left the area for example and requested repayment). Members would be able to transfer their loan rights if they wished eg to family members. The loan would be held against the association and not against the title to the land. These rights would be documented in a signed and witnessed formal loan agreement for each tranche between the lender and GBKA. Each would have a copy.

If GBKA borrowed £10K in 2011, we would face a potential loan repayment and interest charge of £12.5K in 2021. In the worst case, if we were unable to do so, we would have to sell the apiary site. Some members might at the time agree to extend the loan duration beyond the 10 years to avoid this kind of event. The association would consider additional revenue streams such as grants to fund a phased redemption of the loans once the initial establishment expenses have been met. Hopefully we would not need to borrow as much money as the plot of land we require is much smaller than the auction site and we would not be competing with pony plots.

Over the last 5 years we have made a surplus of approx £1K each year which has built up our funds to £10K of which we need an operating reserve of £3K. The committee is very aware of the financial responsibility that would ensue in generating the income to pay the loans and that we cannot be sure of making a surplus each year. Our aim would be to borrow as little as possible and in the meantime, we feel it would be wise to strengthen our financial reserves. We may even appoint a fund raising officer on the committee! There will be several new officers on our committee after the AGM including a new treasurer, membership secretary, and secretary.

One of our members has offered a plot of land south of Raglan. There are issues over access which we are working on to see if they can be resolved. We have contacted MCC to see if they have something suitable in their land bank. It seems that purchasing any plot of land will require lengthy investigations. Meanwhile Elizabeth Murray has kindly offered to keep open our option of going to Ochran.

- Janet

Home-made honey could fight superbugs

University researchers and the National Botanic Garden of Wales are appealing for help in building up a DNA profile of the nation's honey. They hope to use the information to identify plants which could fight antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as the 'superbug' MRSA. The honey project could also help fight the diseases currently attacking Britain's bees.



Honeys have long been known to have antibacterial properties and are used in wound dressings today. Different honeys act against different microbes depending on the chemicals in the plants visited by bees.

Now the Welsh School of Pharmacy and the National Botanic Garden of Wales with support from the Society for Applied Microbiology is asking honey-makers across the country to send them samples, along with a list of plants near their beehives. A screening test developed at Cardiff will test for activity against two of the most common hospital acquired infections antibiotic-resistant bacteria MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales will identify the plants which contributed to the most powerful honeys, using a DNA profiling process being developed as an application of their Barcode Wales project, that has DNA barcoded the flowering plants of Wales. The team will then investigate the plants found in honey for the potential to develop new drugs. The Botanic Garden has 14 beehives and an inhouse bee keeper, Lynda Christie, who will provide key expertise in support of this project.

The joint University and Garden team will also be looking for honeys which help bees resist pests and bugs. In particular, they will test for resistance to the Varroa mite, which has caused a rapid decline in the UK bee population, and the bacterium *Paenibacillus larvae*, responsible for American Foulbrood, which is one of the most destructive of all bee diseases. Bee pollination is worth an estimated £100m to British agriculture every year, and it is vital to halt the fall in bee numbers.

Professor Les Baillie of the Welsh School of Pharmacy said: "A lot of drug development involves expensive laboratory screening of a huge variety of plant products, often without success. We're hoping to cut out the middle man and let the bees do a lot of the hard work, guiding to us those plants which work. We're hoping the public can provide us with as much home-made honey as possible – they could supply the vital breakthrough in fighting these bacteria."

Dr Natasha de Vere, National Botanic Garden of Wales, said: "We have nearly completed our Barcode Wales project to DNA barcode each of the 1143 flowering plants in Wales and are excited to be developing our first applications that use this fantastic resource. We can see which honeys have the best results against infectious diseases that affect humans and bees and use DNA barcoding to identify the plants making the honey.

Anyone who wants to contribute their honey to the research project should send a 200 gram pot with their address, postcode, and details of the plants their bees feed on to:

Jenny Hawkins,
Welsh School of Pharmacy,
Cardiff University,
Redwood Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3NB

I have a son in Cardiff so if folk wished to leave a labelled sample with me, I will do a "mass" delivery.
- Janet

Report on September Meeting

At the first indoor meeting of 2011 Frank Gellatly, Regional Bee Inspector, Wales, was our speaker; his topic being "An Inspectorate View of the Season."

This is a synopsis of his observations, wide-ranging in content in which Frank outlined the work of the Inspectorate, current threats and topical issues with questions and comments from members throughout.

Honey crop-wise this has been a reasonably good season, with a good heather crop in August.

Ade Morris (our Seasonal Bee Inspector) is working in 10 kilometre squares, checking apiaries in the South Wales, high density area, to cover all new beekeepers under the Bees Act, 1980 and Bee Diseases and Pest Control (Wales) Order, 1986. Government policy is to have healthy bees.

Discussing diseases, Frank gave an outline of American Foul Brood (AFB) and European Foul Brood (EFB). AFB, a disease of capped brood, is endemic, though only occasional; Wales is a residual area. Spread is by comb moving and robbing (by bees) as well as during feeding. The dried remains form scales and comb is infected over many years. AFB is a notifiable disease throughout the EU. UK policy is automatic destruction of hive contents by burning.

EFB is endemic and widespread and is worse this year. It is a disease of uncapped brood, spread as in AFB. Frank would like to have a comb workshop to enable beekeepers to see diseased combs. It is a more insidious disease than AFB. In Mid Glamorgan it coincided with the June gap when there was a starvation threat. Treatment is by shook swarm or oxytetracycline (OTC) later in the season. Colony destruction only in extremis, though combs maybe destroyed.

There are specific on-site diagnostic lateral flow device (LFD) tests which give an instant result; sample frames are still sent for laboratory research projects.

Frank showed a graph of foul brood in England and Wales for 1952-2010 which described a drop in figures from 2000, probably due to the use of shook swarming. A more recent graph of AFB and EFB shows AFB to be dropping. Regional trends of AFB also show Wales with AFB, but on the whole dropping. Sometimes a previously unknown beekeeper distorts the figures. More graphs are available on Beebase and also figures via the Pests and Diseases link - Live Diseases, Regional Trends in Disease.

Apiary hygiene and barrier management is essential; the advice is to use a solution of washing soda (1kg in 5 litres of water) for hive tools and use disposable gloves.

Dealing with Exotic Pest Inspections - Wales, - there are 15 sentinel apiaries near "risk ports" and some randomly selected ones on the lookout for *Tropilaelaps* mites. There is contingency planning with regard to Small Hive Beetle arriving in the UK; traps and floor debris will be monitored and legislation to establish 16 km statutory infected area movement restrictions and emergency searches of apiaries. Small Hive Beetle originates in sub-Saharan Africa and is notifiable.

Dealing with species such as *Vespa Velutina*, the Asian Hornet, we learnt that it is smaller than our native hornet and spread from S.E Asia into France by 2004. There is a yearly 100 km spread. Containment efforts have been unsuccessful. It is also in Spain. Adults are highly mobile and specifically target honeybee colonies, also flying bees. 50% - 70% losses reported in France. As with our wasps, entrance block and maybe a floor trap could be used. YouTube has information .

Our native *Vespa Crabro*, the European Hornet, whose range is spreading, is a gentle giant unless its nest is threatened. Mated queens overwinter and there are up to 700 workers during the season. It is not a threat to honeybees.

Moving on to *Varroa* - Frank outlined the various treatments such as thymol and Apiguard, Thymovar

and Apilife Var. Oxalic acid should be used at a dilution of 3-5ml per seam and treat only once in the broodless period, being sure to monitor the mite drop. "Hiveclean" he said was not proven as a varroa treatment.

Nosema, a mid-gut parasite, is evidenced by fouling on the hive and combs, spread during confinement in winter. It is important to sample for Nosema - do so on flying bees at mid-day, Nosema recognition sessions are a vital part of training. Look for spring dwindling of the colony. Treatment is by antibiotic Fumidil B in syrup.

Stored supers should be protected from wax moth and mice. If stored wet, they are not so susceptible to wax moth; if stored dry, then Certan B410 is to be used, NOT PDBcrystals.

Frank prefers hive stands to be constructed of tanalised rail and posts; (frames can then be hung in between when examining colonies) be of good working height, mouse-unfriendly, with room for expansion and protected from livestock.

The "curse or wonder crop" - Himalayan Balsam was briefly mentioned, probably because of its rapid expansion and being a very important crop of honey.

There were questions and comments during and after Frank's 1h hour talk; our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Ade Morris joined us for this meeting. - Jill Chirnside

Directions to Goytre Village Hall

Ordnance Survey ref SO 323 046. Just over 1 mile North of the junction of the A472 from Usk with the A4042 Pontypool/Abergavenny road is the village of Goytre, Goetre or Penperlleni. There's a pub on the East side of the A4042. Turn down the road beside it, then 2nd left just before the railway bridge, and left again into the hall car park.

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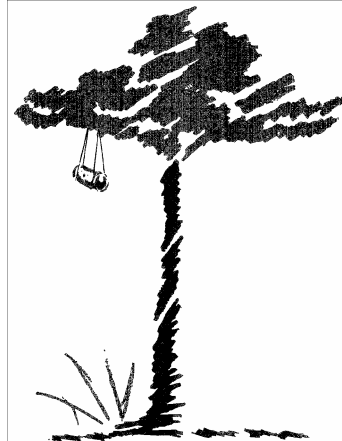
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DRONE LAYERS?

This year I have had 3 colonies become drone layers. In 30 years beekeeping I've only had a drone laying colony once or twice before Janet Bromley has reported a similar experience this year. Has anyone else suffered from this 'disease' and why this year?

Normally the only thing you can do with such a colony is 'chuck them in the hedge' because, whether the drone layer is a queen, or a worker, the colony believes itself queenright, and will kill an introduced queen, or the queen in a colony it is combined with. However I read that Ted Hooper suggested that late in the season it was often possible to combine them with another colony providing it was large, without the offending colony killing the 'host' queen. I've got away with it in 2 of 3, and the third is looking hopeful. The offending colonies each had a lot of honey, as well as the bees, to contribute, so it was worth saving them.

- Keith

FREE SUGAR?

Members of BBKA will know that, armed with their BBKA membership card, they can be registered at Bookers trade depots as a buyer and purchase sugar at trade prices. Clearly for some beekeepers this is not enough. Hugh Allen has spotted comments on an Internet forum describing how it may be possible to obtain sugar for free...

"... thought I would put my stigging skills to the test today while at the local Tesco extra. I went in and asked at the customer service desk if they had any damaged bags to be told 'no they go straight in the bin'. So while I was wandering round doing my shopping I asked a member of staff on the shop floor if they had any out the back. Was asked why, explained what I wanted them for and he said yes how much do you need. I said as much as they have as any I didn't use would pass onto other beekeepers at meeting tomorrow. 5 mins later out he comes with a box with 15-20 kg of Tate & Lyle granulated sugar. All for free and told if wanted any more just ask as it saves dumping it. So if anyone wants any sugar just ask if they will give it to you. Its unsaleable so would have to go in bin otherwise....."

Another subscriber writes:

"The club I am in have set up an arrangement with Sainsbury's. The staff collect the swept up sugar off the floor and save it in buckets. The sugar is collected by a branch member who then distributes it about the club for free. The sugar is not fit for human consumption and does have some dry floor dirt in it. Since the sugar is dry and then mixed with boiling water I am certain that this has no effect on the bees. A double win. Sainsbury's don't have wasp attractive sugar in their bins and the club gets sugar for nothing. I was given 10 kg last autumn."

(from Shropshire BKA, courtesy of eBees)

Bee Pollinator Survey

Dear Beekeeper,

I would be grateful if you had the time to complete the following survey. The results the survey generates will be used for a research project currently being conducted at the University of Lincoln into the movement of bees and importance of the spray liaison scheme to beekeepers.

The survey should only take 2 - 3 minutes and your comments will be greatly received.

The survey can be accessed by clicking on the following link

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WMCDHS7>

Thank you for your co-operation

Ben Crabb

Lecturer, Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Animal Sciences, University of Lincoln

Honey Business

A couple of years ago you may remember that CHINESE honey was found to contain illegal substances, and was banned from import into Europe. Well, the BBC have been doing some investigation, and it appears that now 'Indian' honey may not be what it seems. Full details are available on a BBC Podcast at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/foodprog>

- Keith

'Allergic' to Bee Stings, but still want to keep bees?

Most beekeepers become fairly insensitive to bee stings, however a few find their sensitivity increases. And there are a few people who KNOW they react to bee or wasp stings with Anaphylaxis, but still want to keep bees. Well, help is at hand. **Pharmalgen** is going to be available on the NHS. This is a drug which will desensitise someone, such that their immune system can tolerate bee venom. Full details are on

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8796536/Bee-sting-vaccine-on-the-NHS.html>

- Keith

Waggle Dance

Last year I promised you videos, here's one: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7ijI-g4jHg>

USK SHOW

For the 2nd year in succession, we've won 2nd prize for our stand. Here's Kath, who did much of the work, with the certificate, accompanied by Jill, and apparently someone they didn't like.....:



Congratulations to Martin Howells on passing his General Husbandry Exam

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Reg Laxton and Ivyn James

Two of Gwent Beekeepers' Association's highly respected members died recently and one interesting fact that comes to mind is that both Reg and Ivyn were old sea dogs.

Reg was in the Royal Navy and served on HMS Exeter during the Second World War. As a young boy Reg had helped with his father's beekeeping therefore it was not surprising that he took up beekeeping after he came to Ponthir as Engineer when the water treatment plant was being built. For 3 1/2 years Reg was county secretary, only resigning so that he and his wife, Mary, could travel to Australia to visit their daughter, Sally. Reg and Mary were well-known attendees at Midland and South Western Counties' Conventions and also Apimondia conferences worldwide. In recognition of his long service he was given honorary life membership of GBKA.

Ivyn, ("Ike" to his family), was born in 1928 and aged 14 decided to join the Merchant Navy as an apprentice. He sailed in the North Atlantic convoys during the Second World War and in due course gained his captain's ticket, often working between the U.K. and the West Indies. Ivyn enjoyed helping his wife, June, with her beekeeping and it was in her memory after her death in 1989 that he donated the June James Trophy to GBKA. Ivyn was a keen supporter of RNLI.

- Kath Harris and Jill Chirnside

RETIREMENT SALE of equipment and hives. Sunday 6th November 10 - 5.
Greenmeadow Apiary, Glascoed.
Nick Hunt 01873 880229

OLD WBC HIVES Last month I had at least a dozen people wanting my old hive for refurbishment. Has anybody else got some tatty kit around? Sell it here - no charge.

Confused by BBKA News?

Since I became newsletter editor for GBKA I've read BBKA News rather more thoroughly than I used to. Since it went to colour, and thus became more readable, I've spotted both minor and major 'gaffs'. Reporting these to the editor has, so far, not resulted in any corrections, although the September issue did attempt to explain 'Parasitic Mite Syndrome' which appeared as an unexplained photo in July. August contained an article implying honey jars can be reused, which, of course, WE know is erroneous.

Those of you who compared pages 4 and 7 in September may be a little confused. 'Pinguis Imperium' recommended 2.2 Kg of sugar in 630ml of water for autumn feeding. However Chris Deaves went with 1Kg/2lb sugar to 0.5l/1 pint water - a bit of a difference, one being nearly double the strength of the other! You should use a thicker mix in autumn than spring, but I think 'Pinguis Imperium' has somehow got lost in his metric/imperial conversions (2.2 lb = 1Kg). I personally have always used 5lb to 2 pints (yes I started beekeeping before the UK went metric!) which is a little stronger than Chris but nothing like PI. See also Jacky's excellent article on the subject under Newsletters on the website.

You must realise that the BBKA News editor is assembling articles from various sources, and, as we all know, there are as many ways of keeping bees as there are beekeepers.....There are one or two of us (NO names) who have considered that we could save money for our apiary purchase much quicker if we didn't pay for membership of BBKA.....but then many of the new beekeepers are only such because of the rantings to parliament and elsewhere of Martin Smith, formerly Chairman, now President of the BBKA.

- Keith

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the GBKA, nor of the editor