

Winter preparations

After such a good summer for the bees we need to make sure that colonies go into the winter period in the best possible condition to ensure their survival into 2015.

Varroa treatment completed, it is difficult for newer beekeepers to decide how much food they should have given their bees, in the form of thick sugar solution or Ambrosia. Estimates for winter survival of a colony are at least 18kgs of stores equivalent to a full super, or 8 brood frames of sealed food. By now this should have been administered and all feeders removed. Hefting the hives by gently lifting by the floor on one side a few inches off the stand gives you an idea of how much food is stored. Queen excluders should be removed then the hives need to be checked to make sure that the components are well fitting with waterproof roofs. Damp leaking into the brood will do great harm in bad weather. Mouse guards or reducing entrance blocks should be fitted and if you have woodpeckers in the surrounding area, wrapping chicken wire around the outside of the hives will deter them from making holes in the woodwork. However remember that a good flow of air is not harmful— not a problem nowadays with OM floors. Many people like to add insulating material to the roof space above the crown board to keep the heat in.

All used equipment needs to be cleaned and woodwork scorched to remove spores and wax moth eggs. Before storing comb it can be put into a domestic freezer for 24hrs to rid it of potential infestations. Boxes of comb can be treated with 80% acetic acid poured onto a pad between each box. Remember this is a dangerous

chemical to handle (do not inhale the toxic vapour) and that it corrodes metal and concrete.. After a fortnight dismantle the stack and air it. Once the colonies are broodless, usually in December, it will be necessary to put an insert under the OM floor to assess mite drop, before deciding whether to treat the cluster with Oxalic acid. There will be a Teaching session at the Apiary demonstrating how to apply the acid safely. In deepest winter a block of candy(fondant) can be placed under the crown board for the bees to use if they become short of stores.

Good management is better for your bees than good luck., and cheaper than buying new colonies in the Spring.

Native Black Bees

W&DBKA are hoping to raise colonies of native black bees (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) using pure black drones. As most queens mate with several drones from several Apiaries all collected in Drone congregation areas, the hunt has been on to find an area in which to raise Drone breeding colonies which will then be far enough away from other bees to form pure drone clouds. In the September issue of the BBKA news there is an article by Dr Catherine Thompson in which she identified the only 3 areas in Wales and England which she considered to be remote enough from Beekeepers to ensure genetic isolation, and one of these is Ennerdale forest. She was hunting for wild native honey bees, but found no evidence of any colonies in any of the 3 sites she had found.

Next Spring we will start the project to breed pure native bees and will keep members informed of progress.

Whitehaven and District Beekeepers Newsletter Autumn 2014



From the Secretary

As Sarah, the Social Secretary and Newsletter editor is away on a 3 month trip to Australia, I will be filling the editorial gap and organising the winter calendar.

It has been a busy Summer at the Whitehaven and District Apiary with weekend teaching, many gardening sessions, visits by interested external groups, and a great deal of bee activity. Several colonies in hives and nuclei have been sold most to recently recruited beekeepers, and the cash has gone towards more equipment for the Apiary.

The Big Lottery Grant has all been spent with the garden now well stocked with a year long succession of bee friendly flowering plants. Helen Shipton-Smith has given us invaluable assistance with planning and planting as well as finding the plants for us. By next Spring there will be a display board near the gate showing the site and names of the majority of plants in the garden. Gardeners will continue to be needed although it is to be hoped that we will have the weeds under better control by the start of 2015.

With this newsletter you will find a copy of the Agenda for the W&DBK AGM on November 10th as well as the minutes of the last AGM. Please try to come long. It is your chance to have a say in how the Association progresses. There will be no coercion to join the Committee, though a change of officers brings fresh ideas to any club, **AND** there will be a Pie and Peas supper after the AGM, followed by a short talk about the development of the Apiary garden, by the designer. You will also find details of the Cumbria Beekeepers Annual Honey Show and Conference, to be held at Newbiggin on Saturday 15th November. Entry is "On the Day", cost is only £10 to include lunch, and the day includes talks from Terry Clare and Gerry Collins, as well as the usual "Ask the Experts" session and a follow up chat by the Honey Judge to explain how he chose the winning entries. Bring along your exhibits; jars of honey, a wax block, or candle, or try your hand at baking a honey cake. See you there!

Apiary Visit by the Howgill Girls Group

On 30th July girls from the Howgill Girls Group came to look at the bees and the Garden. The lengthiest procedure was getting suited up for the occasion with the disposable gloves giving a lot of trouble. Once kitted out, we all looked at the bees, with good sighting of at least one well marked Queen and plenty of "BIAS" A wander around the garden several girls still armed with lit smokers was followed by juice and a biscuit well away from the bees. See you next year.



Cumbria Bee Health Day

This year FERA (soon to be renamed) ran their Cumbrian Bee Health Day in conjunction with Penrith Beekeepers at Newbiggin village hall The day was organised into 4 workshops of 1 hour each and included a practical demonstration of

- 1/How to examine brood frames for diseases,
- 2/How to change old comb for new,
- 3/Varroa management
- 4/ Brood diseases recognition session.

The chance to see diseased combs, once we were dressed in protective gloves and aprons, in a closed room was invaluable. No beekeeper would wish to neglect an outbreak of AFB or EFB in his apiary, so better to gain experience of the signs of these and other diseases with the guidance of Bee Inspectors than miss them later in our own hives.

Gosforth Show 2014

The day dawned fair and calm with the promise of sun - a promise never delivered, but it did stay dry and bright with only the occasional drip of rain. The first plus of the day was that the gazebo was still standing. Turnout for the honey show was good although I didn't spend much time in the main tent as I spent most of the day manning the Gazebo and displaying the bees to a lot of very interested people - mostly children. Skep making also attracted attention and interest from numerous people and included offers to purchase the skep as long as it was finished by the end of the day. One young chap visited several times to see the bees and the queen until his father had to drag him away at the end of the day. In all it was a very pleasant day, the rain never got too heavy and never lasted more than a few minutes and by the end the gazebo was nice and dry to pack away. Missing was the high wind and heavy rain from 2013 and the acres of knee deep mud from 2012 but the day was all the better for that. For results look on the website. R.Robinson

The Apiary Garden

It has been a busy Summer getting the Apiary Garden shaped into a bee-friendly flower and nectar rich area with colour throughout the year. A band of diggers, weeders and wood chip spreaders have met at least once a week throughout the last 3 months and have been rewarded with plants growing and spreading as planned. They also sustained a few stings when straying too close to the front of the hives. Helen Shipton-Smith has been present at all the gardening sessions to help and give advice. "Is this a weed or a plant, Helen?" is a frequent shout. A plan of the garden with plants named and colour coded for season of flowering is being designed and the first draft looks excellent The idea is to have a large display board at the Apiary entrance as an information aid. All the wood chip (see the Summer newsletter) has been spread and more has been ordered. By the winter all areas should have a thick mulch of this weed suppressant to help keep the area looking cared for.

Dates for your Diary

November 10th W&DBK AGM. Followed by Pie and Peas Supper. (See enclosed forms)

November 15th CBKA Annual Honey Show and Conference. Newbiggin near Penrith. (See enclosed papers)

January 18th Preparation of equipment for Spring Apiary 13.00hrs

February 6th Annual W&DBK Dinner Parkside Hotel Cost £22 per person. More details and booking form to follow nearer the time.

March 22nd Pollen Microscopy Day Lamplugh Village Hall

Spring (date to be arranged) Skep making This is now fully subscribed



Garden progress '14.Chelsea here we come!

