



Newsletter - Winter 2013/14



I am pleased to be the 'guest editor' of this chilly edition of our Newsletter. Brigid has set a high standard which is hard to follow.

With this newsletter are details of the Association's Annual General Meeting. Please come along and meet your fellow beekeepers and let the committee have your views. Or put your name down as a volunteer. Helping out at Association events or the Apiary is a great way of expanding your knowledge and meeting other members.

Don't forget to complete your Membership form as soon as you can. We can only contact you once you have joined - so make sure you don't miss out on hearing from us.

**AGM at 7.30pm on Thursday 16th January 2014 at
Haverfordwest Cricket Club.**

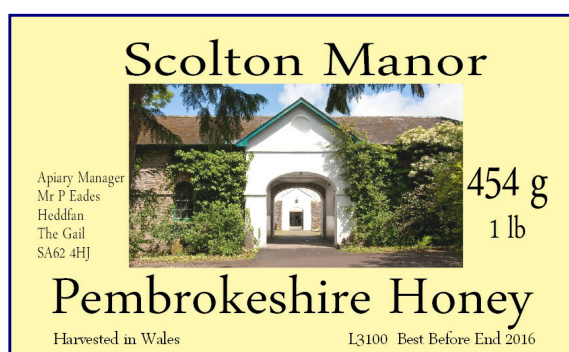
John Dudman

Chairman's Message

The season turned out to be a good one after the last four poor ones. The bees built up well again after the winter losses and hopefully everyone has managed a crop of honey. Don't forget it is a valuable commodity and does not deserve to be sold cheaply just because it is there - it will keep!

It was a pity, after such a good season, that there were few entries in the Honey Show. The best exhibit and entry was a comb of honey for extraction entered by Lesley Lewis. It was superb and would have won in any National event. With the lack of entries maybe we should alter the format of the show and have it earlier in the season when you are still thinking beekeeping. Please let us have your thoughts. The Honey Show cups were presented at our annual Sunday lunch at Beggars Reach Hotel - another low turnout, but a good social occasion when beekeepers get together.

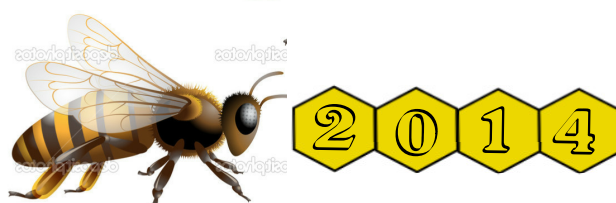
The County Show saw us selling PBKA honey from the stand once again with some success. Thanks go to everyone who helped over the three days making it a successful show with, as usual, the showing of the observation hive drawing the crowds. Later, in September, Babs and I took part in the education day at Narberth Food Festival with lots of interest from the schools that attended.



With this newsletter you will find details of the AGM, next year's membership form and a questionnaire. Please think about what you want from the PBKA and more importantly what you can give to it, so that we can move towards our centenary celebrations in 2019 - it will soon be here!

Finally may I thank all of you who have helped in any way this year Babs and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and we hope to see you at the AGM in January.

Tom Pegg



Apiary Notes

Well, it's the end of another season and as always it has been very busy! Training at Scolton Manor was put on hold for most of the season due to contractors working on site, but we were able to get some hives back in for the Prince's Countryside Fund's, Countryside Week in July, which was very successful.

I would like to thank Jeremy and Sherrie Percy for making their apiary available for training throughout most of the season and their generous hospitality, with special thanks to Rosemary Birdsall and Sherrie who kept us supplied with their wonderful cakes all summer!

This year has been our best year to date so far as honey production is concerned, despite losing several hives over the long winter. Successful demonstrations took place at the new Honey Kitchen at Scolton Manor watched on one occasion by over 70 people, who somehow crammed into the exhibition room. I uncapped the frames, while John Dudman loaded the extractor and gave a running commentary to various groups, consisting of PBKA members and the public, who all came in to watch the fun!

Lots of questions were asked by the observers present, and staff at Scolton Manor have indicated to me that an enormous amount of interest has been generated by the public since the facility first opened. The Honey Kitchen, which has been made possible by a grant from the Prince's Countryside Fund, is a commercial standard honey processing facility, to be used



for hygienically extracting and bottling honey from the association hives, as well as for training PBKA members and public demonstration. PBKA members wishing to extract their own honey can of course continue to hire the association extractor from me.

We expect to be fully operational at the Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre at Scolton Manor again

by next spring and hope to be able to offer more training opportunities

for new and experienced beekeepers alike, so if you have any particular areas you would like us to cover, or would be willing to help as a volunteer or mentor, please let me know or put it in the questionnaire which we are sending out with this newsletter.

You need to plan for next season now, not when the bees are swarming! So if you need beekeeping equipment, contact Geoff Bazin on 01834 869441 who is our Thorne's agent and can offer preferential rates on most items to members.

Our increasingly popular website, which over the last year has had some 15,000 hits, can be found at pbka.info



For Facebook fans, you can access our association page at: www.facebook.com/PembsBeekeepers

Paul Eades
Apiary Manager

Varroa - Using Oxalic Acid

From the National Bee Unit's IPM Guidance.

"Oxalic acid is applied as 3.2% oxalic acid in 1:1 sugar solution using a 50ml plastic syringe with a wide bore needle. It has an efficacy of about 90% and will mop up mites that escaped the Apiguard treatment. It will also kill mites that have bred since then and those that have come into the hive from external sources."

We recommend that you buy the solution ready made. It is available from all beekeeping equipment suppliers at reasonable cost and avoids the risks associated with preparing the solution from crystals.

Oxalic acid solution is poisonous and should be used and stored safely. It should be very pale in colour with no crystals formed. If the solution is darker than straw colour or has crystals, DO NOT USE IT. It should not be stored for the following winter as there is a build up of HMF that is toxic to bees.

Timing

Oxalic acid only kills mites that are living on the bees, in the phoretic stage. It does not kill mites in the brood. When there is brood in the hive, only about 15% of the mites are found on the bees and the majority (85%) found in the brood. It follows that oxalic acid works best on colonies that are broodless at the time of treatment. This is ~~most likely to be the case in late December to early January. Removing~~ the floor insert to ensure good ventilation will encourage the bees to have a broodless period. It is worth noting that oxalic acid will kill open brood. Oxalic acid can be used on both natural and artificial swarms that offer a broodless period.

Application

Treatment is best carried out when the weather is cold and dry when the bees will be well clustered. Only treat once and do not overdose.

- i. Fill a 50ml syringe with oxalic acid solution (ideally at blood temperature).
- ii. Open the hive to expose the clustered bees.
- iii. Trickle 3 - 5ml of solution between the frames along each seam of bees. A small colony may only require half the syringe or less.
- iv. Close hive.

After the oxalic acid treatment has been completed any top ventilation should be closed and the floor insert cleaned and put in place. Mites will continue to fall for about 2 weeks after which the insert can be removed."

Beekeeping Mistakes in 2013

Well, in general fewer mistakes were made by me this year. I was away for the month of August and the biggest mistake was not taking off the honey in the last week of July. By the time I came back home the honey was crystallizing and I estimate that I had some 40 lbs less than I would have with a complete extraction.

The biggest mistake you can make in Montana is to forget about bears. The first action on setting up an apiary is to put up a solar or mains powered electric fence around the site you intend to put your bees. If



the bears don't take the food in the middle then they have learned not to enter, and beehives can follow. The biggest predator we have is man - thank goodness.

I replaced last year's Queens as soon as possible as I felt there was a good chance they were inadequately mated and were either carrying insufficient or poor quality sperm. This worked well enough with my own Queen cells taken opportunistically from the hives. Next year's objective is to attempt the Jenter method with a Cloake board, assuming the spring is warmer than it was this year. Ricky Wilson was kind enough to replace a drone layer from 2012 - but the queen arrived while I was away and died at home in the pile of post. One other episode with NZ queens was frustrating. The four queens were introduced by myself and Ian to two hives each. Only one queen was accepted and I had several queen cells and virgins from this colony thanks to Ian. It seems introducing a very yellow queen is particularly difficult. Anyway, one of the second generation did survive (the viral one) but after supercedure the colony is now as black as all the others. When it was good tempered before supercedure it is aggressive now so needs re-queening next year.

One of the greatest educational opportunities is the visit by the Inspector, and one member joined me this year. I hope that up to 3 or 4 will join next year but the visit warning notice can be short, and now I am not working it will likely be midweek. Anyway, Ceri found one colony with a heavy viral infection, and this was treated with acaricide strips and a good feed. As I write it seems to be recovering. After a few years of stings I have become a bit blasé and have often found my neck zip open - when a bee gets behind the veil, but when a friend came to help strap down the hives this year before the threatened storm end of October, I gave him heavy gauntlet gloves, but without sufficient wrist protection.... I hope he has not been put off too much.



One mistake was to try to free up the shaft of my 25 year old second hand extractor from its 12 frame holder. The use of a hammer (wood followed by metal) simply flattened the end and cracked the plastic on the frame holder. The problem is that the joint has rusted, and is between metal and plastic so that heat would cause more problems and not less. I have to accept that it may be impossible to separate

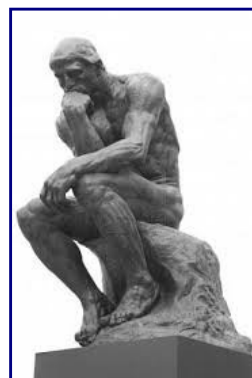
and therefore much more difficult to clean. If anyone has any ideas on freeing this please let me know. On my apiary I need a winch as there is quite a slope from the beehives to the car, and I left the winch and wireless winch control in a damp environment. The controller shorted out as did the solenoid so there has been a cost to my negligence...

Roger Burns

PBKA - A victim of its own success?

Meeting the PBKA's stated aims of supporting bees and beekeeping in Pembrokeshire relies upon the Association and its members being proactive, especially those with something to offer in relation to the aforesaid aim.

With the advent of the new Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre, with its honey kitchen and expansion plans for the Association apiaries, together with the much increased publicity these initiatives have generated, there is a real danger that the few proactive members will be swamped by the need to meet not only present demands, but also this improved interest in beekeeping in Pembrokeshire.



It is worth noting in this latter respect, that a recent honey extraction demonstration at Scolton attracted over 70 members of the public, some of whom will no doubt be encouraged to take their interest further. This is in addition to the significant numbers of new beekeepers already in the Association who all need and deserve a level of support from the Association that it is currently struggling to meet.

It is clear that we have the potential benefit of a number of experienced beekeepers within the association, especially within the Committee structure, but if the association is to meet its stated aims then those Committee members, together with others in the association more generally, need to step up and get more involved.

There is a recognised need to provide an improved level of support to newer beekeepers, especially in the early stages. Never has this been more important than now with the problems caused by Varroa, together with an apparent change in climate, making survival of the bees even more difficult than it was years ago.

Now we understand that everyone is busy, modern life seems to be like that, but the knowledge resource within the more experienced Committee and wider membership is so valuable to the Association, that it really needs to be utilised more effectively. There is a real difference between a Club that is very much a social affair and an Association with specific aims that all members have signed up to and should therefore actively support.

So what else should the PBKA be doing?

Apiary meetings - a rota of the more experienced keepers able to assist the Apiary Manager to illustrate hands on best practice would be invaluable. Properly organised, this should not have a significant impact on individual members' free time. Currently, meetings are only once every two weeks through the late spring to early autumn period.

Apiary inspections - Additional support for the Apiary Manager in respect of hive inspections would I am sure be welcomed, as he also has a full time career and in addition to project managing the Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre, does most of the routine apiary work on his own, with only limited help.

Mentoring - it is perhaps of little surprise that many colonies are lost in the first year of beekeeping. Expecting anyone to attend a single one day course, however effective it may be, on the care of any stock, never mind tens of thousands of insects living in a confined space and then expecting those new keepers to effectively manage that stock is asking a bit much. This is especially so in light of the increasing threats to bees and beekeeping compared to when many keepers started. Having a list of keepers around the County who may be able to provide some one to one support would potentially not only provide a valuable service, but as stated earlier, should not prove too onerous.

Specific issue meetings through the winter evenings - again, maintaining an interest in bees through the long winter months, as well as addressing specific concerns and enabling newer beekeepers to be better prepared to deal with any cold weather issues, as well as for that all important spring inspection would be particularly beneficial. There is no doubt that with the number of experienced keepers in the Association, having just one of them attending just one out of perhaps half a dozen evening meetings should not be too onerous.

Assistance at local shows and other educational opportunities
- Past experience suggests that in the event that those members who

have committed to the support and development of the aims of an association do not get the aid and assistance of the wider membership, especially from those who have the time and knowledge that would make such a difference, then they soon become overwhelmed and sometimes lose the will to continue.

From comments received from members it would appear that the association would benefit from reviewing its approach to meeting the main aims of supporting bees and beekeeping in Pembrokeshire. At the same time, the weight of this work should not fall only on those few currently active members. It really needs all concerned to make a contribution to the work of the association.

This article is meant to encourage positive debate within the membership. There will no doubt be a wide spectrum of views, but it seems clear that if the association doesn't move forward then it will not meet its stated aims, to the detriment of bees and beekeepers.

If you have a view, and across the 120 plus members of the PBKA, it would be surprising if there weren't a range, then I would suggest that you complete and return the attached questionnaire and also attend the AGM to make your views known.

Jeremy Percy

National Honey Show Report

The 2013 National Honey Show took place between Thursday 24th and Saturday 26th October in the impressive surroundings of St. Georges School Weybridge.

Being temporarily in the area I took the opportunity to go along on the Friday of the show. In addition to the honey show itself there was a trade hall with the usual stands found at beekeeping conventions. This was open to the public although it seemed almost everyone there was wearing a rather impressive National Show Member badge. I succumbed to the temptations on offer and finally got myself a top of the range bee suit from BBWear at a discount saving £20 on the list price. Another purchase was a pan feeder from the



Maisemore Apiary stand. This holds three gallons of syrup and with the double access points for the bees allows rapid takedown. Being the same external size as a National hive no eke is needed.

I also joined, for £10 the Central Association of Bee-Keepers. Geoff Bazin is a former member and had donated to me some of their interesting publications produced from talks given at their meetings. Membership included three of their booklets on various subjects. I took my purchases to the car and made my way to the main entrance for the show. Entrance for non-members of the National Honey Show was priced at £15, but on enquiry I discovered that membership was only £12.50 which included entrance for all of the three days and free entrance for a guest and the opportunity to attend other meetings. So a member I became, obtained my own badge, and was given the schedule for show which also included details of lectures and workshops on offer. The number of entrants on show was impressive and so was the quality of the entries - although I am convinced that the frame of comb entered by Lesley Lewis to our own show would have obtained first place in that category. But none of the classes should be out of reach for many of our members if they were to enter.



But this is so much more than a Honey Show, I have already mentioned that lectures and workshops were on offer and I took the opportunity to attend a talk by Celia Davies on Pollen. Not surprisingly the lecture hall, with its raked seating obviously the College's Theatre, and probably the size of the Torch Studio studio auditorium was packed to the rafters.



The talk was highly informative describing: the role of pollen in plants, to a greater level than the obvious; the process by which bees collect pollen and how it contributes to the health of the colony. One interesting point was the relative value, not quantity, to the bees of pollen from various plants - for example the top plant was quoted as being Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) while plants such as Dandelion being of less value. I

regret not taking detailed notes. Celia Davies was convinced that feeding of pollen substitutes or supplements should not be necessary provided that bees were being kept in area with varied plants available and the number of colonies were not excessive.

I spotted Dinah and John Sweet and had a brief chat. We agreed that it was a pity that more visitors from Wales do not attend, it seems that the Irish turn up in numbers making it a regular and social occasion. I will certainly be going next year regardless of where I am living.

Hope to see you there.

John Dudman

Analysis of 2013 Membership

Jerry's article in this edition, and my own interest, led me to perform an review of the membership from 2004 to 2013.

The results are revealing. We had 129 members in 2013, of these:

- 24 have been members for at least ten years - we can assume that these are our "experienced members" and have a lot to contribute to the general membership.
- 34 members can date their membership back to 2008.
- In 2009 we started to retain members more successfully with 51 current members going back to then and for the following years 57 (2010), 74 (2011). Improved training is possibly a reason.
- 92 members go back to 2012 but that reveals a problem as that year we had a membership of 153. So 61 of our 2012 membership did not rejoin in 2013! A sequence of bad beekeeping years and inexperience may be one reason for this. How committed to beekeeping were they? How did we support these members?
- We had 37 members in 2013 who were not members in 2012. **It is up to us to retain and support these members.**

John Dudman

Honey and Chocolate Cheesecake mousse

Serves 3-4 people.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons cocoa powder
2 tablespoons skim milk powder
50g honey
500g ricotta cheese
25ml cold water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
10g grated chocolate.

Method:

Sift the cocoa powder and milk powder together. Put in a blender with the water and vanilla extract and blend until smooth. Put mixture into a heavy bottomed non-stick pan and heat on a medium heat, stirring constantly to avoid sticking. Bring to boil then pour into a bowl and cover with cling film.

Chill for at least an hour.

Put cooled sauce, honey, and ricotta into the blender and whizz until smooth.

Serve in individual dishes with the grated chocolate on top.

Submitted by Dee Williams

That's All Folks!

Well, that's about it apart from yet another reminder about the AGM on January 16th and also a request to complete the membership form and the survey. My thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition. I hope you will be inspired to make your own contribution to the next Newsletter or provide an item for the website. Opinions, questions, recipes - anything honey bee related - will all be welcomed.

Email contributions to editorpbka@live.co.uk or send in post to Paul Eades at Heddfan, The Gail, Llangwm. Haverfordwest SA62 4HJ.