



## *Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre*

Above: A sneak preview of part of the design for the Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre.

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## *Wonders of the Colony*

I recently bought a copy of Tom Seeley's 'The Wisdom of the Hive, The Social Physiology of Honey Bee Colonies' the introduction to the book contains this succinct summary of the complexity of the organisational skills within the bee hive. I thought it was worth sharing.

*"As we shall see, a honey bee colony operates as a thoroughly integrated unit in gathering its food. It monitors the flower patches in the countryside surrounding its hive; it distributes its foraging activity among those patches so that nectar and pollen are collected efficiently, in sufficient quantity, and in the nutritionally correct mix; and properly apportions the food it gathers between present consumption and storage for future needs. In addition a colony precisely controls its building of beeswax combs for honey storage, strictly limiting this costly process to times of clear need. And it adapts its water collection in accordance with its need for water to cool the hive and feed the brood."*

Have you a favourite beekeeping book or quote? If so please let me know about it so that it can be shared in a future edition of PBKA News.

John Dudman

## *Chairman's Notes*

The year, so far, has been so much better than last winter with apparently few losses and strong hives coming through. This has led to the National Bee Unit emailing Beebase members to be aware of food shortages during the next few weeks especially should the weather change. Some candy or if the weather remains warm a feed of syrup will help the bees through. Pollen seems to be in plentiful supply coming from the gorse and with the pussy willow following.

With a good spring build up and low losses the availability of clean secondhand/new equipment should be looked into – we could see swarms at the end of April if the weather holds. Don't forget our annual auction sale on the 3rd May in the Brithdir building on Withybush Showground when bees and equipment will be for sale. This year we will start selling at 1 p.m. (earlier than usual). Please let me have details of any items you wish to enter. Those of you who visited the WBKA Convention will no doubt have picked up some bargains but remember Geoff Bazin has new equipment available to members at a discount on Thorne's catalogue prices.

Let us hope for another good year and remember the committee members are available to give help and advice over the phone if required. Do pay a visit to the Apiary at Scolton Manor and see for yourself the wonderful resource we have there.

Happy beekeeping!

*Tom Pegg*

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## *Apiary Managers Report*

As at 20th February 2014

### **OVERVIEW**

All hives are being checked regularly for security and for stores. Any light colonies are being supplemented with candy. There has been no damage noted as a result of the recent severe storms.

### **SCOLTON MANOR PROJECT**

1. Development of the exhibition is progressing with the Council's Senior Graphic Designer, who is designing the layout at no charge to the PBKA. As it needs to be bilingual, it will also be translated into Welsh (again at no cost to the PBKA) and will in due course go to the Council's Print Unit for printing and installation. We have also been offered free translation into Braille from the Council's Visually Impaired Unit. Electricians are going to be installing additional lighting as required in the Exhibition Room. All the above has either been budgeted for within the PCF grant, or is at no cost to the PBKA.

2. The 'end of project' report for the Prince's Countryside Fund is now due as according to the grant agreement the project should have been completed by 1st February 2014. However, I have developed a very good working relationship with the PCF and have been

in touch with them to clarify the situation. They have confirmed that they are happy for me to send this final report once the project has been completed and I have given them a completion date of 1st April 2014, by which time all grant monies should be spent.

3. With this in mind, a quotation was obtained for a portable Public Address system with a wireless microphone. This would enable the association to have PA facilities for the auction, public demonstrations at the apiary and honey kitchen, etc.



4. Four bee boles have now been built into the Victorian garden wall (at no cost to the PBKA) to house straw skeps. Four skeps have been ordered from a local skep maker.

5. I have also allowed in the grant for roll up banners for exhibitions; e.g. the County Show; which are to transport and erect instead of the current cumbersome displays and I require input from the Chairman in respect of the information required on these. I will also be purchasing additional banners to promote the Pembrokeshire Beekeeping Centre at Scolton and will again be assisted by the Council's Senior Graphic Designer and Print Unit in this matter. Costs to be met by the PCF grant.

6. An order from Thornes includes an additional 15 hives for the Paddock Apiary and was again paid for by the PCF grant. This has now been delivered and checked and is in our new storage area adjacent to our existing store room in the stable block. Assistance in assembling these hives in due course would be appreciated, although some equipment will be kept back for training purposes.

## **APIARY MANAGER'S ROLE**

I have given development of the Scolton project and managing the association apiaries my all since I took over from Geoff Bazin as Apiary Manager at the end of 2009.

Last year was very challenging due to significant problems developing the Honey Kitchen, recovering from the loss of colonies due to the weather and organising apiary meetings away from the association apiaries. This was in addition to undertaking routine apiary work while also maintaining a full time professional career with an ever increasing workload. I have decided therefore, to reduce my direct input in activities, such as apiary meetings and training, in order to concentrate my spare time managing the association apiaries and the facilities at Scolton.

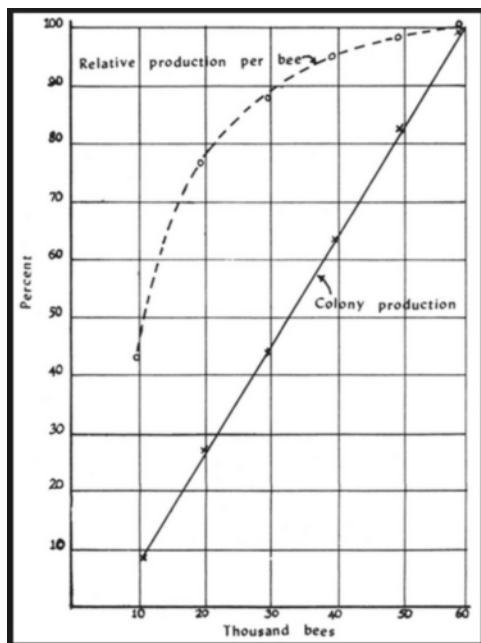
John Dudman and Jerry Percy will be taking over the members meetings at the apiaries although I will be on hand when possible.

More experienced members would be welcome to provide regular assistance whether at apiary meetings, mentoring beginners, giving talks to the public at Scolton etc.

Volunteers should contact me with offers of help.

*Paul Eades*

## *Productive Management of Honey-Bee Colonies*



In 1946 C. L. Farrar of the Entomology Research Division of US Department of Agriculture published a paper reporting his work on honey production in colonies of various sizes. Although this work was carried out over 60 years ago and probably with Italian bees, it is still applicable.

He took a population of 60,000 bees as his maximum colony size, remembering this was carried out in the USA, and compared this with populations down to 10,000 bees. The production was not described in weight but as percentages.

The first finding, which shouldn't be a surprise, was that the largest colonies produced the most honey and the production per bee was also highest in these large population colonies.

However looking at the results suggests that we do not have to try and manage large population colonies - with the practical management issues of working

with with a large hive.

For example colonies of 30,000 bees, produced 44% on average of the production of the 60,000 colonies - if a colony of 60,000 bees produced 60 lbs of honey then two colonies of 30,000 would yield about 53 lbs (these are my examples, remember he didn't quote numbers just percentages).

The difference becomes greater with populations of 20,000 bees which produced 28% of the largest colonies. So, three colonies of 20,000 bees would be expected to produce 50 lbs of honey.

Of course using three hives instead of one to manage 60,000 bees requires a greater investment in equipment but it is interesting, to me at least, that differences are not as large as might be expected.

*John Dudman*

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### *First Inspection*

The first Spring inspection needs to be done on a warm day towards the end of March or beginning of April. This needs to be done fairly quickly and preferably in the warmest part of the day so as not to chill the brood.

Two questions - have they a laying queen and have they enough food ?

Hefting, or using a spring balance is also a good way of assessing stores. The period from mid-March to mid-April is critical and many colonies that seem well at the beginning of March can starve in April if the weather is cold and Spring delayed.

Feed a thick syrup if in any doubt, or a block of candy over the feed hole.



Another job is to clean the floor, if you have a spare one this can take a few seconds to swap them over, then scrape and flame the used one.

Check over equipment to be used for the coming season, assemble frames and put wax in them. Make sure there is enough for the coming season and lets hope it is a good one

*Dee Williams*

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## *Honey and Jam Sales*

From a report in the Times (thanks to Roger Burns for bringing this to my attention).

“It seems that the decline in UK jam sales and the increased popularity of honey (along with peanut butter and chocolate spread) now means that by value Britons bought £112 million worth of honey last year, not far off the £119 million spent on jams and conserves, according to Mintel, a market research company.

Heidi Lanschuetzer, a food and drink analyst at Mintel, said: “[Honey] has benefited from its healthy and natural attributes, as well as the resurgence of porridge for breakfast, with honey often being used as a topping.”

However, much of the increase in sale value of honey is due to a shortage caused by dying bee colonies. The price of 1 kg rose from £5.70 in 2011 to £6.20 last year.”

Delving a little further into this:

- In the UK sales of honey and jam each seem to be about 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes.
- Domestic honey production provides only 1,500 or 5,000 to 7,000 tonnes depending on the source of the estimate, anyway relatively little.
- Prices per 100 g using information from the Tesco website:

- ❑ Jam price ranges between £0.06 (yes really!) to £0.70 for a premium brand and is typically £0.44 for a branded product.
- ❑ Honey price ranges between £0.70 to £3.40 (Manuka) but is typically £0.80.

At £0.80 per 100 g a jar of Rowse honey 'from various countries' is the equivalent of £3.63 per 1 lb jar. Your honey should be worth considerably more than this to the consumer. To paraphrase Tom Pegg's comment in a previous PBKA News - *your local honey is a premium product, don't underprice it.*

*John Dudman*

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## *Hive Record Software*

Keeping beekeeping notes with queen origin and age, brood pattern, store levels, temperament, etc. is essential if you are to manage your bees effectively. Keeping these notes on cards or paper is the method used by most beekeepers. For some of us this doesn't work. Personally I find my notes get: lost, difficult to read or I decide to change my recording system.

Keeping records on a computer of some type, which these days can include a smartphone may be a solution. Here we look at three available software applications all of which, are available to begin with for free.

### **BEETIGHT [www.beetight.com](http://www.beetight.com)**

From UK this product has been available since 2010 being written by a software designer who keeps bees in Cornwall, UK.

Beetight is used by Paul Eades to keep his and the Associations apiary records. Paul likes the option to download most recent inspections to a spreadsheet which can be printed and taken to the apiary for the next inspection.

The basic web based version is free so you'll need an internet connection and a browser to make use of it.

A Pro version costing 15 USD is available for Android and Apple smartphones and tablets and this makes recording on smaller devices practical and these records are updated from and update to the web system.

The list of inspection fields you want to appear can be managed if you do or don't want to record and see 'traffic per minute' or 'orientation flights' for example.

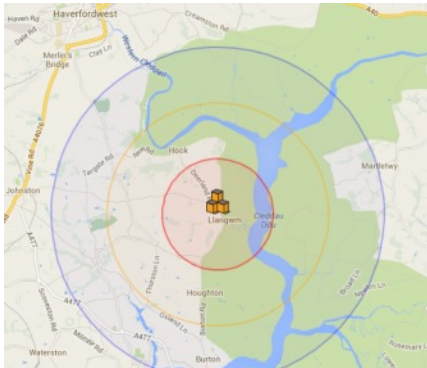
Although the system seems to run without 'bugs' (sorry) updates to the software since its launch have been few and users are showing frustration that their requests for new features are not appearing.

Conclusion: Well worth considering.

## **HIVETRACKS** [hivetracks.com](http://hivetracks.com)

This is software from the USA written by software designers and beekeepers in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

Only available in a web based free version which has recently been completely redesigned. Despite its American origins the writers have recognised that to be to suitable for a global market - the Internet doesn't care where you are based - they weren't going to restrict options to only those likely to be used in the Americas. For example when adding a new hive to an apiary, instead of offering a list of hive types - Langstroth, Dadant etc. as might be used in the USA but would probably then not include the National or WBC the hive type can be typed.



Apiary location is linked to Google maps and Hivetracks' My Maps feature provides a useful guide to the potential foraging area from the apiary by showing 1 mile, 2 mile and 3 miles rings - the other side of the Cleddau is well in reach for my bees.

I also like the graphical drag and drop to show the current structure of each hive. Everything from stand to roof can be shown. There are no built in rules so if you did want so is you did want to the floor above a super you could do it!

Conclusion: My software of choice.

## **BEEHIVE MANAGER**

This is only available on Android and is free from the Google Play store.

It is much simpler than Beetight or Hivetracks although Apiaries (Yards) and hives can be linked. The age of the queen is shown in years and months if the date of emergence of the queen is recorded. But inspections are recorded simply as notes without any structure.

Recording is kept only on the tablet or phone, although there is an export and import feature to move to another Android device, I didn't test this.

Conclusion: Too simple to be of practical use.

Let me know if you have tried any of these and what you thought, or if you have found another similar product.

*John Dudman*

## *Blueberry and Honey Cheesecake*

Base: 300g digestive biscuits .150g butter or margarine.

Filling: 250g quark. 50g clear honey. 125g yogurt. 1 large egg. 1 tablespoon s r flour.  
1 tsp vanilla essence.

Topping: 320g blueberries.1 tablespoon clear honey.

Method: Crush the biscuit and melt the butter, then combine and press into a 23 cm loose bottomed cake tin.

Separate egg and whisk white until it stands in soft peaks. Add the rest of the filling ingredients and whisk until smooth. Pour mixture into the base and bake at 160 °C for 40 to 45 minutes until firm, but spongy to the touch. leave to stand for 15 mins before removing from the tin.

Heat blueberries gently with a tsp of water, add honey and stir until soft. Pour over cheesecake to serve .

*Dee Williams*

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## *Friends, Beekeepers, Countrymen ....*

Lend me your ideas...

Thanks to those who have contributed to this edition but PBKA News should reflect the general membership and not simply be the work of a few. So whether you are new to beekeeping or an 'old hand' let me have your thoughts on your beekeeping experiences, beekeeping in general, your association, ideas for meetings or talks or questions. You can email your contributions to [pbkaeditor@live.co.uk](mailto:pbkaeditor@live.co.uk). Or write to me at Sevenoaks The Kilns, Llangwm, Haverfordwest, SA62 4HG.

For inclusion in an edition contributions should reach me two weeks before the press dates which are the first day of:

- April
- July
- October
- January

*John Dudman*

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