

Preveiling Wind



Winter 2022

Newsletter of the Kendal and South Westmorland Beekeepers Association

I was invited to attend a 'pollinators conference' in Carlisle back in October. It took me briefly into a different world, and for a day I saw things from a different perspective. On the journey up from Kendal you move through limestone into sandstone country and everything subtly changes. When you arrive, the traffic in Carlisle is as bad as anywhere, however. We got to the bright new campus in time where the conference was being held and over a coffee in the refectory we all reminisced in turn about our own times as a student. We sensed our lost youth sitting around us at other tables. I met a lot of passionate people. It took me a bit to realise they were passionate about the insecta class in general, not just honey bees. The day was about how we are going to save them. At one talk, a scientist took 30 minutes telling me how I could help by appealing to my head; I marvelled at her dedication to five years of study which involved a lot of counting, proving to me that insects are in trouble. However, I'm afraid, as always, I fell much more easily to the appeal to my heart. Dave Goulson did it with one slide and one sentence, which I think was why he was the keynote speaker. Studied close up, insects create a sense of unparalleled awe which we will all be the poorer for if they disappear. This is aside to what they achieve as pollinators. If I came away with just one useful bit of understanding that I won't forget, it is : To encourage wildflowers to establish, which will encourage insects to thrive, time your grass cutting carefully, **and remove the cuttings afterwards**. Easy. Thanks to Martin and Julia for encouraging me to go. **Phil**

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BEE FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

My Season as a Beekeeper. Kept on an allotment in Kendal...2022

The year started well. By the end of April I had 4 full hives....but things soon started to go wrong. By mid May I had my first swarm which I managed to catch and rehive in my spare hive. On inspection I found four queen cells. So having two empty polynucs, I decided to put one cell in each (along with worker bees), leaving two queen cells in the hive. To my amazement, they all hatched and were soon laying. Didn't the boy do well!? I was pleased with myself at my first attempt at a 'simple' manipulation. Things continued to hot up.....the association was approached about a stall on the monthly farmers market in Kendal. I volunteered to set one up and front it. It was a success. There was a lot of interest about beekeeping, wild bees and other pollinators. Then in June my bees decided to swarm again. This time, 3 swarms in a month, all of which were collected and re homed via our coordinators, Dick and Sally Towler.

July came along and guess what.....more swarms.....another 3 in fact. I only had 4 hives! Once again, I caught all the swarms, and rehived them in and around Kendal. I was also able to take my first lot of honey off. We then got an invitation to run a stall at the Cartmel show. This was also a very successful day, albeit long. There was plenty of interest in the bees again, and people also offered apiary sites, at Grange and Newby Bridge, which were advertised on our website. August came and yet another swarm was caught and re-homed. I have now got five full national hives plus 2 poly nucs to overwinter, on top of all those swarms I gave away!

I then accepted an invitation to have a stall at the Westmorland County Show in September. This was a two day event which also generated a lot of interest. We had discussions about how farmers can help by leaving some land to go wild and by planting trees.

It is now the second week in September and time to get the bees ready for winter. I've done everything I can for them and will now concentrate on the remaining Farmer's markets. Thanks everyone who has helped with these...it is much appreciated.

Denis

Kendal and South Westmorland Beekeepers Honey Show.

Date: Thursday 10th November 2022 - 7.30pm (entries from 7.00pm).

Location: Brigsteer Village Hall, Brigsteer, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 8AL.

Officers for 2022

Chair Geraldine Dawson **Secretary** Alison Crumbie

Treasurer Pat Malone **Education Officer** Julia Pigott

Meetings secretary Julia Pigott assisted by Melissa Lovett

Assessment/Examinations officer Julia Pigott

Honey show secretary Crystal Gallagher **Webmaster** Andrew Brown

ADM delegate Meg Wroe **Newsletter editor** Phil Whiting

Other committee members: Di Elphinstone Jacqui Cottam Dennis Hudson

Bee Buddies

At the start of this season we tried a new system of Bee Buddying. The purpose was to pair up beekeepers close by, irrespective of experience and knowledge, and encourage them to help each other through the season.

For my part I found it hugely helpful and really really enjoyable. I've learned so much from both my buddies (Phil- very experienced and Emma- a newbie like me). I loved seeing other peoples' apiaries and working with different hives and tools. Phil helped me catch a swarm very early in the season- an experience I would have found entirely overwhelming as a relatively new beekeeper. It's been wonderful having people close by I can ask for advice.

One of my hives had rather a lot of chalk brood and both my buddies came over to help me clean it out and replace the queen - an exercise that proved very successful. Emma and I are both 'feeders' (Phil's an eater, ed) and share a love of entertaining and feeding friends and family. This has definitely extended to our bees and I love comparing notes with her. As well as communicating with my buddies there is a Whatsapp group for all the bee buddies where we can ask questions, seek advice and compare notes. I feel that the Bee Buddy system has greatly enhanced my confidence and enjoyment. When we started the program we thought that we would change pairings every year to give people the opportunity to learn from other beekeepers. I would say that this is the only down side of the system because I'm going to miss my 2022 buddies terribly! If you are interested in finding a buddy for next year please do let me know- I cannot recommend it enough!

Melissa



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Swarm collecting snippets

Dick and Sally sensibly organized a list of customers wanting swarms this last summer, which worked well. I was called out to a good number of cases where swarms had already made their home in a house wall or similar cavity. After one frustrating and time consuming attempt at trying to smoke out such a swarm, I now just advise the property occupier of their options and the slight hope that the bees will not become sufficiently well established to survive the winter. My main adventure however, followed on from being called out to a swarm in a chimney in Cow Green. It was in one of two mushroom or dome cowed unused chimneys, either side of a central chimney on the same stack, which was used for a wood burner stove. Understandably, the builder who was asked to insert a new liner for the stove refused to do the work until the bees were gone. I consulted a chimney man who had some experience of a similar situation and the outcome was the hiring of a cherry picker, in which I was accompanied by a chimney man and former beekeeper. Dome cowls are usually set in a lower pot from which they can generally be loosened, which my companion soon did. But on lifting the cowl clear, with a length of comb attached, we realized that this was not a recent swarm but a well established colony. Victorians built good chimneys and I was able to cut out section after section of comb until my arm was in up to my shoulder. I did let a bit of soft new comb slip but filled a basket to overflowing with what was removed.

Besides the cherry picker plus passengers, the pictures show the cowl and hanging comb, and the basket of cut comb. This contained much clean and new comb with honey which was later shared out between homeowner and swarm removers, and much enjoyed. But there was no brood at all in any of the comb, nor any sign of queen cells. The bees in the cowl quickly dispersed and we were unable to save the colony. We sealed off the open chimney and the other cowl. Bees were seen flying around the chimney a week or two later in the better weather, so perhaps they were hanging out close by with a queen, but the latest report was that all was

quiet. **Granville** PS Dome cowls seem to be made to attract swarms, with many small holes underneath the dome well protected from the weather. If you have one, cover the holes with a durable fine mesh.



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Thoughts of a Beekeeper, Autumn 2022. Natland.

Looking back over what has been on the whole a very productive year I start to think about the coming colder months. I look back at the honey crop, and the results of the experiments I have been doing with the colonies over the last couple of years – how many frames is optimum in a super, or having combs orientated the hot way or the cold way, 14 x 12 or brood and a half? I feel that I am starting to find what works for me and my bees.

This is the end of my second year that my colonies have all been AMM (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) having moved away from some of the other types available. I decided to move back to the British Black bee as I felt it was likely to be most suited to the local environment – let's be honest, they are not the most gentle of bees but they are grafters! Of huge fascination for me this year has been monitoring the colour of the honey extracted. It has ranged from the very dark, heady scented and rich first extraction through to the very light and incredibly floral in the final supers taken off. The range in colour and flavour available from one hive over a season is amazing.

The colonies are fed now and the Varroa treatment is done for the year. My next job is securing the hives to the stands and making sure they are watertight but still have airflow. I have made my choice on hive floors and am sticking to this. I am putting 11 healthy and well fed colonies to bed for the year. My full time job and an increasingly inquisitive toddler will see me reduce this back to 8 next year. It has been quite a challenge getting supers off, spun out and back to the bees when the flow was at its heaviest, and I really found the limits of the hobbyist equipment when it comes to uncapping and extracting – my arm hurts!

Overwinter I will be building and repairing hives and equipment, making sure I have spares and that they are serviceable. I am toying with building a Slovenian style Beehaus in the apiary as I have seen these and ones similar in Germany and the Italian Dolomites. Having talked to the owners I can see the benefits, and also the drawbacks – but I see the drawbacks as opportunities for improvement and something to keep me busy with. I am considering using basic optical measurement equipment to count traffic in and out of the hive and correlate this information to data gathered from our home weather station which uploads and broadcasts free to all (found on the Weatherlink app and is called Beelandia. www.weatherlink.com) with a view to understanding and possibly predicting local trends. I am already thinking about next year and what my plan of action is for the Spring time.

Do I get stung? Yes. Do I get frustrated and impatient at times? Yes.

Does my back hurt sometimes? Yes.

Does it cost a fair bit in time and money to maintain this hobby? Yes.

Do family members get annoyed with me for always talking about bees or rushing off to see them? Yes.

Would I be without my bees? NO!

Stuart C

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition of Preveiling Wind :
Stuart, Dennis, Dick, Melissa, Ken and Granville.

Hollins Heather Honey

I couldn't initially decide whether to write something about how I tipped out a perfectly good colony of bees earlier this year, mistakenly thinking it was queenless, or whether to tell you about the unexpected heather honey we found in the last 2 supers we removed from our hives in Burneside early in September. As you can see, I decided on the latter.

We had returned these supers to the bees in August, after spinning out what we had thought was our last honey of the season. But the weather was good, and the bees very busy, and in early September we found we had 3 supers which were almost completely capped again. One spun out normally, but the other 2 would not spin out at all. Not being keen to cut the comb out of the frames, we tried an extraction technique we read about online. Standing each frame up in the meat dish out of the oven, we repeatedly stroked the uncapped comb downwards with the uncapping fork, until the honey flowed down into the dish and the uncapping fork had exposed the foundation in the centre of the frame. After doing both sides of each frame, we poured the honey into our double metal filters and occasionally ran a scraper over the upper surface of each filter to encourage the honey to slowly drip through. To get a full super of honey through the filters took about 2 days, but we think the effort was worth it, as the honey is delicious.

So now we have a small stock of Hollins Heather Honey for sale on Kendal Farmers' Market, and very popular it proved to be at the September event.



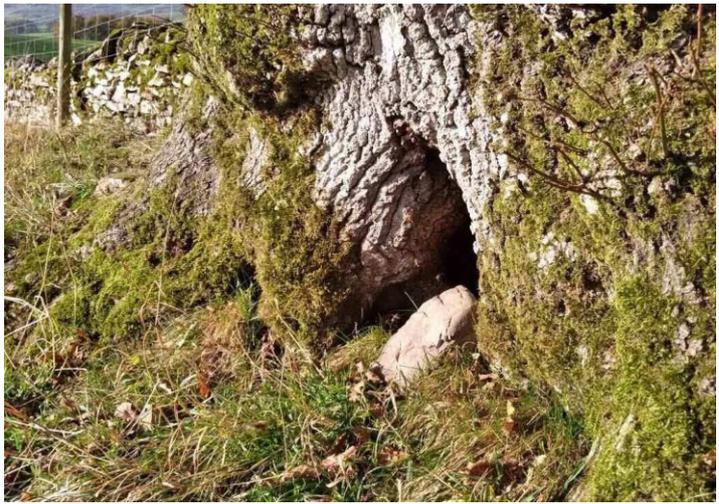
Dick T

Winter Feed. Last year I tried this idea several weeks after putting the fondant blocks onto the hives. I'd had mixed success previously because the blue bags had sunk onto the tops of the frames and it was quite difficult to lift the bags to attach the supports. This year I put 2 supports on each block as I put them on the hives. I initially tried to use duck tape to attach them but this proved not very good. I then tried brown parcel tape which proved much better. I have up cycled some offcuts of plastic tubing destined for the skip, and they stop the blue fondant bag settling onto the frames and isolating or trapping the bees from the fondant, in the photo all the fondant has been taken down and the bag is empty after 4/5 weeks.



Ken

On my occasional one way trip on the train to Windermere, whereby I then see if I still have the ability to get back across country on foot to Kendal, the weather brightened up, the sun came out, and although it was unseasonably warm, it turned into a lovely Autumnal day. Half way up to the Scar on Gamblemire lane, I found myself moving through the flight path of a colony of feral honeybees using a hole in the base of an oak tree as their home. One for Granville I thought..... no cherry picker needed. Would they survive without the problem of varroa? Lots of pollen going in.



Phil

Dear Alison, I am writing to thank all Associations and their members for supporting the recent honey petition – an action undertaken by the BBKA in support of your propositions and direction at the ADM. The response confirmed the need for Honey to meet the 2015 Honey regulations and declared that DEFRA feels these regulations and their enforcement were ‘fit for purpose’. They also acknowledged the need to take Honey fraud seriously and say DEFRA are working with the Food Standards agency and others to provide further clarity to those responsible for monitoring honey. While we are relieved to see the recognition of the importance of Honey Fraud, we believe we need to continue to highlight the issues to both government and the general public. With this in mind, we will be

launching a 2nd petition to coincide with the dates of the National Honey Show in October which will specifically ask for a change to labelling so that every jar shows the country/s of origin. We believe that ‘A blend of EU and non EU countries’ is not acceptable and that more information would allow the public to make informed choices. I hope that we can count on the continued support of all BBKA associations for these actions but in the meantime a big ‘Thank you’ for your support to date,

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Best Regards *Stephen Barnes BBKA Chair*