

# Cumbria Bee Times

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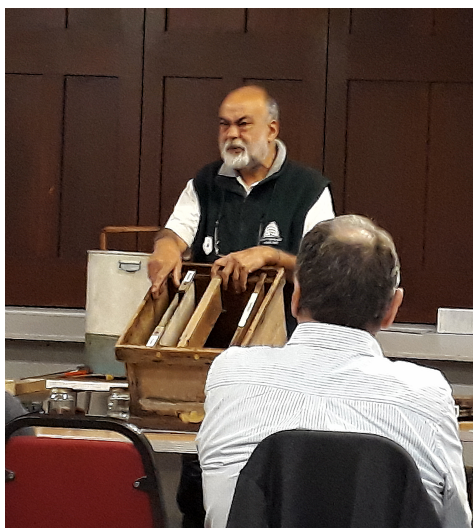
(Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor and do not necessarily present those of the CBKA)

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## Cumbria Beekeepers Annual Conference and Honey Show.

The County Honey Show was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 at Braithwaite Village Hall. This year the guest Speaker was Clive De Bruyn a prominent and well-respected beekeeper who has written books on beekeeping and has been keeping bees for most of his life. Clive presented two excellent talks. The morning talk was on Living with Varroa and the afternoon talk was on the Joys and Benefits of Queen Rearing. Both talks were excellent and delivered without PowerPoint. Clive travelled up from south of London and it is a shame that more people were not able to take advantage of such a fund of knowledge and experience,



Clive De Bruyn (Photo by Stephen Barnes)

Although the number of entries in the Honey Show were low, the quality of the exhibits were of a good standard. The judge for the day was International Honey Judge, Peter Matthews who was assisted by Stewards Ian Gregory and Bill Mackereth.

Thanks are extended to all those who worked behind the scenes to provide an excellent lunch and supplies of tea and coffee as well as to stage and judge the honey show. They gave their time freely so that the rest of us could enjoy what was an excellent event.



Peter Matthews Judging the Honey with Steward Bill Mackereth. (Photo I Gregory)

Congratulations to the Beekeepers who gained the following awards:

<b>The Association Cup</b>	K Hodgson
<b>The Hendran Cup and Med</b>	S Buckley
<b>John Dixon Cup</b>	I Gregory
<b>Scott-Just Trophy</b>	A Tett
<b>W Barton Cup</b>	D Keighly
<b>F Hydes Cup</b>	V Sullivan
<b>S J Wornham Trophy</b>	A Tett
<b>William Douglas Trophy</b>	V Sullivan
<b>Report by: Stephen Barnes</b>	

## **Beeswax.**

When beekeepers are asked how their hives have done during a specific year, the usual answer is the number of pounds of honey produced. However another important product from the beehive is Beeswax. This natural product made by the bees is another reason why humans have always had a close association with bees.

An early instance of the use of beeswax, for magical purposes, is mentioned in a papyrus scroll dated about 2,830BC. The Egyptians used beeswax to make an air tight seal on their coffins and in the embalming process. The Babylonians used beeswax to cast bronze images as early as 2,050BC. This is the Lost Wax Process, still used to day to cast items with fine detail for jewellery and precision engineering components.

During Roman Times, nations subjugated by Rome sometimes paid tribute, or taxes, in beeswax. The Romans sent messages on hinged pairs of wooden writing tablets coated with beeswax; the message being written into a smooth wax surface using a stylus. After it had been read the message could be erased and a reply written and returned (The first iPad?).

It was during the Roman Empire beekeeping probably reached its zenith, and it was not until the Middle Ages, when the Church began to use beeswax for candles, that the industry revived. Beeswax is still as important to day and its special and natural qualities are being recognised, to be used in many different processes.

Beeswax is authorised for food use and has its own E number, E901 a Glazing Agent, and is used in many different foods and pharmaceutical products. One modern use of beeswax is to replace cling film by impregnating cotton material with molten beeswax and allowing it to cool. The resulting cloths can then be used to wrap sandwiches or cover jars of food. The cloths can be easily manipulated as they soften at human body temperature and after use can be washed in cool water and reused a number of times.

To prepare beeswax for use in candles, polish and especially food, great care must be exercised in the refining process. To achieve a high quality product, wax from the honey comb cappings should be used, as the wax from the brood comb

will be darker in colour and contain more impurities. The cappings are allowed to drain of as much honey as possible and if required can be given a final washing in cold water. The cappings are then placed in a pan of water and the temperature raised to melt the wax.

Beeswax has a melting point range of 62 to 64 degrees Celsius and if the wax is heated above 85 degrees Celsius discolouration will occur.

On cooling, the solidified wax will float on top of the water and any impurities, in the wax, will adhere to the underside of the wax. These impurities can then be scraped off using a metal blade; repeating the process until a clean cake of wax has been produced.

For wax-making bees to secrete wax, the ambient temperature in the hive has to be 33 to 36 degrees Celsius which requires a vast amount of energy from the bees. To produce this energy the bees consume honey and it has been estimated to produce one pound of wax the bees visit over 30 million flowers and they consume about eight to ten pounds of honey. In monetary terms, for the beekeeper that is a cost of approximately £50.00 for a pound in weight of wax!

## **Winter in the Apiary.**

This year the bees were taking pollen loads into the hive until late November and so hopefully there will be plenty of young bees to go through the winter. So it is important to keep a watchful eye on the stores situation. Candy or fondant can be placed on top of the brood combs as an emergency source of food.

As I write this issue of the Bee Times it is the Eve of the Shortest Day, so after tomorrow we can look forward to the days lengthening and the first Spring Flowers coming into bloom.

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