

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 AGM.

The AGM was held in the Newbiggin Village Hall on Saturday 2nd March 2019 and attended by 20 members. The President, Mr Stephen Barnes expressed his disappointment that more people had not attended the meeting. An AGM is an essential part of any organisation and it is an opportunity for members to express their views on how the Cumbria Beekers is being run and other aspects of beekeeping which may be of concern. However, see the article regarding the History of the Cumbria Beekeepers. Things don't change!

Those members that did attend were given an excellent talk by Anne Rowberry, from Bath, on the threat of the Asian Hornet.



ANNE ROWBERRY AND THE ASIAN HORNET

There have been a number of confirmed sighting throughout the country, during last year, and the message is to be vigilant around the beehive and set traps to attract the Asian Hornet. It was emphasised that if you do find a nest do not approach it or try to destroy it yourself. As a colony they are defensive and aggressive giving a nasty sting and have the capability to spray their venom. Living in Cumbria does not isolate us from this none native species as they are able to hitch a ride on a lorry from the Continent arriving at the port of Hull. The next stop for the lorry driver could be Penrith for a cup of coffee when the Queen Hornet

decides to find a suitable nest site. If you do find a hornet take a photograph and send it with location details to:

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Penrith Beekeepers were also in attendance with a display of their Remote Hive Monitoring System. This system allows the Penrith Beekeepers to remotely monitor their colonies by accessing data on:- Queen Status, Colony Strength, Foraging Activity, Winter Feeding, Apiary Weather and if the hive is stolen. This is obtained by sensors in the hive which measure Hive weight, brood temperature, hive humidity, apiary weather conditions and there is a microphone that detects the acoustics in the colony.

Although the system has only been running for a few few months a graph on display showed how the weight of the hive had slowly declined over the winter months. At the end of February there were a series of blips that corresponded with the days of unusually warm weather, demonstrating that the bees were bringing in nectar and the hive weight went up, on daily basis, and then a drop in weight as the bees evaporated water from the nectar over night.

It is hoped that all this information will be shared with members of the Cumbria Beekeepers and it will be of definite benefit when giving talks to schools and other interested parties.

Chairman of Cumbria BKA

The Chairman of the Cumbria Beekeepers wishes to share the following with all members.

View From the Chair

Changing the status of the BBKA from a Charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation better fitting the form of the organisation, means a

change to the BBKA constitution, a down side is that the present 9 pages becomes a 29 page document, bit more difficult to get ones head round.

The application of organisations to become BBKA Area Associations continues mostly as a result of larger AA,s breaking up into smaller groups, some so small one wonders about their long term survival, Cumbria having been similarly affected in the past with the loss of Kendal and Sedburgh. Last years proposition from Cumbria that, environmental considerations be part of BBKA governance (thrown out), now seems to be getting some traction within the BBKA , the use of plastic BBKA News wrappers has changed. Being responsible for 25000 non recyclable plastic bags a month being sent out, was not a responsible situation.

Rolling out the Branch-based online registration system E2R is well underway thanks to the sterling work of Peter Weatherill and the Branch representatives involved. It is hoped that this process will be completed by end of March when BBKA send out membership invoices for 2019 memberships which include BBKA News and third party and product liability insurance. E2R once it has bedded- in will save a lot of repetition of data copying, hopefully make data handling more secure, speed up the registration of new branch members and give the branches a convenient data base they can use for Branch organisation and mailing. Peter is available to help any branches if there are further teething problems getting established with the new system.

Walter McPhee, Chairman of Cumbria BKA
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History of the Cumbria Beekeepers Association

At the beginning of the 20th century most bees were kept in straw skeps, wooden frame hives were rare and mostly home made in a variety of idiosyncratic designs. Foul brood diseases were rife. For example,50% of colonies in the Keswick area were known to be infected. Beekeeping in such a difficult climate as the county of Cumberland was in a sorry state and both Beekeepers and their bees were apathetic.

Onto the scene came 9 dedicated Cockermouth beekeepers with a vision to improve the situation. They began by setting up an Association,

appointing Lord Muncaster as President and Canon Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, the co-founder of the National Trust and a famous conservationist, friend of Beatrix Potter, as the first Chairman. The first meeting of the new CBK Association was held in April 1901 at which a series of aims were drawn up to advance good beekeeping practice within the county. These were to prevent the wanton destruction of healthy colonies of bees (as occurred when extracting honey from straw skeps) to detect and remove bee diseases, to assist in the selling of honey crops and to provide a bond between Cumbrian beekeepers for their mutual benefit. The annual subscription was 5 shillings (25p) but 2s 6d for those who were unable to pay the full amount. 80% of the membership paid the lower fee.

With 51% of the bee colonies infected with foul brood in 1902, CBKA decided to appoint a Touring Expert, the first being a J.Gray from Derbyshire, to advise members on disease control and to recruit new members, for each of whom he was paid a small commission. Between April and September of that year he travelled 1,600 miles, giving advice at 198 Apiaries and commanding fees of £83.13s. 6d. Prizes for 4 classes of honey were awarded at the Cumberland, Penrith and Gosforth agricultural shows, the prize being 10s each (4 times the annual subscription paid by most members to CBKA)

By the end of 1903 the CBKA had 356 members and was employing two Touring Experts who as well as visiting member's apiaries, gave 39 talks. The association slid heavily into debt, which was paid off by Cumberland County Council and there was also a large overdraft to manage. However the disease statistics had improved with only 310 colonies diseased out of 1562 inspected. Annual General Meetings were held at 4 locations with different Chairmen for each,

At about this time, following the great success of the Association in controlling bee disease they tried to get the BBKA to support a Bee Disease Bill in parliament However the BBKA, to their shame, were absolutely against any form of legislation despite petitions from several Counties. The CBKA

sought help from the Irish BKA who had also been actively working towards a Bee Diseases Bill. In exasperation CBKA even contemplated joining the Irish BKA and for many years there was close co-operation between the two associations. At this time the British Bee Journal, also virulently opposed to any Bee Diseases Bill, had been adopted by the BBKA as its official voice, so CBKA shunned it and adopted the Irish Bee Times as its official journal also suggesting "Digges Irish Bee Guide" as the recommended reading for aspiring beekeepers.

Over the next few years Touring Experts quartered the county and disease fell to 11%. However financial problems continued with bail out by the County Council on many occasions. Few beekeepers paid the full subscription and many defaulted altogether. Westmorland Beekeepers joined the Association in 1911 and together they sent a resolution to the President of the Board of Agriculture demanding a Bee Diseases Bill be presented to parliament. Nothing happened and now a greater threat than foul brood swept the counties-Isle of Wight Disease. Diseased bees were introduced to Thornthwaite and Kirkland by two members buying bees from Kent where the affliction was already killing colonies. Both these beekeepers lost their bees within a year, and the disease spread rapidly with whole areas of both counties being completely devoid of bees

The First World War led to a lack of sugar for autumn feeding, and widespread Isle of Wight disease caused a decline in colonies and membership of C&WBKA. Money problems continued with the need for regular grants from the County Council to keep the association solvent The Board of Agriculture was unhelpful in disease control so the C&WBKA decided to restock areas now devoid of bees with healthy stock. Keswick and Bassenthwaite were the first areas chosen with new hives donated by Mrs Edmondson of Derwent Bank and bees given by beekeepers in Ulpha, Stavely and Kendal.

AGMs were poorly attended and many committee members resigned. In 1920 the AGM recorded a three times increase in attendance (to 30

members!) with the famous William Herrod-Hempsall giving a talk after the meeting. The Association continued to decline and Isle of Wight disease continued to decimate the county of bees. Finances continued to be in an unhealthy state. Bee Experts were proving too expensive to employ and in 1924 it was decided to pay them on a pro rata scale of 3s 0d per member visited and 3s 6d per new member recruited. The idea of self-governing Branches was formulated with each Branch paying a capitation fee to the Association and despite resistance towards the idea it was gradually adopted over the following few years.

Isle of Wight Disease almost wiped out bees in Cumberland, but one advantage was that foul brood also disappeared, and with the advent of Frow's remedy for acarine (now believed to be the causal agent of Isle of Wight Disease) things began to look up. 10 local advisers were appointed by the Association in 1930 and they visited all 375 members' apiaries examining 890 colonies. Only 44 had acarine infestation.

Several poor seasons (In 1938 bees needed feeding from April until early July) followed and with the advent of the Second World War advisory work was severely curtailed. Many new members enrolled with the Association and claimed sugar rations for feeding bees, but sadly many members fell into arrears with their subscriptions. One bright spot was the introduction of the Foul Brood Diseases of Bees Order some 50 years after CBKA had first clamoured for such an order. A Foul Brood Insurance Scheme was set up in 1942. Officers were appointed to check apiaries for foul brood and acarine and members who subscribed to the scheme were compensated for colony destruction Many interbranch squabbles led to Kendal and Appleby leaving the Association followed by Maryport and Aspatria.

1948 was one of the best years recorded for honey crops, but this co-incided with importation restrictions being lifted on Australian honey so sales were poor. Membership continued to decline and by 1956 it stood at 282, with no money to continue printing a year book. Eden Valley Branch folded and with continued money worries the AGM

decided to increase subs to 10s 0d per year, but continuing at 5s.0d for OAPs and Minors. This led to a further fall in membership and by 1958 it was only 221 of whom 53 subscribed to the Foul Brood Insurance Scheme.

CBKA decided to produce an Association honey label and at about the same time it was decided to revert to CBKA as Westmorland had so few members. By 1962 although membership had fallen to 204, no disease was reported and the Foul Brood Insurance fund stood at £120. It was decided to go ahead with a print run of 50,000 labels (cost £87 10s- selling to members at 4s 0d for 1,000) and to apply for membership of the BDI using the FB Insurance Scheme monies for the purpose. The loss of bees that year was 50% during the winter.

Lectures and courses continued both at Newton Rigg and throughout the Branches, but membership continued to decline and by 1966 was only 164 in 6 branches.

In 2019 we are down to 5 Branches: Carlisle, Cockermouth, Keswick, Penrith and Whitehaven, (Workington having dissolved in the late 60s). Over the 20th century the Association has developed effective ways of monitoring and controlling bee diseases, put on courses, yearly Honey Show and Conferences with excellent speakers. Annual General Meetings enable all branches to have a voice. There has always been a battle against apathy and a struggle with finances, but despite this the Association has made itself heard at the BBKA.

Cumbrian weather tests Beekeepers to the extreme. Nevertheless the CBKA has an illustrious history of endeavour and innovation and deserves support. Canon Rawnsley, no less, supported the association for over 20 years.

Please add your name to the list of supporters, attend the AGM and help to guide the Association's future in the 21st Century.

This article was provided by Val Sullivan, Whitehaven Beekeepers

Sustainable Bees and Queens. This event, held on Sunday 10th March 2019 in the Newton and Bywell Community Hall, near Hexham, was one of nine being held across the country and run by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA). It was an excellent event, attended by a number of Beekeepers from Cumbria, and was of interest to all beekeepers and especially Managers of Association Apiaries. The speaker, Roger Patterson, gave practical advice on raising your own local queens which are far more suitable to our environment and climate and are cheaper to run as they consume less stores during the winter months than many imported strains, especially Italian. Imported bees may be successful the first year, however, the second generation cross from pure queens can be aggressive. During 2018 there were 525 queens imported into this country from Argentina. Argentina has Africanised Bees! There is also the potential for new pests and diseases to be brought in with the importation of queens. Roger's advice was to keep your management techniques simple and breed from the colonies that have the characteristics that are desirable to the beekeeper, such as temperament, calmness on the comb and suitability for the locality. More information can be obtained from the BIBBA website and David Cushman's website on Queen Rearing was recommended

Dates for your Diary.

Saturday 7th September 2019

Cumbria Beekeepers Autumn Convention.

Embleton Village Hall, Cockermouth, CA13 9YP.

This is run by the Cockermouth Branch and further details will be issued as they become available.

Sunday 3rd November 2019 Cumbria Annual Honey Show

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