

Cumbria Bee Times

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

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2015 - A Difficult Year



One West Cumbrian Beekeeper's story

2015 started so well from a Beekeeper's stand point. The first inspection showed all hives had come through the winter without loss, queens were marked and the colonies building up well. Stewart Beattie (Seasonal Bee Inspector) commented on the strength of the hives and how gentle the bees were to handle. However as the year progressed the weather turned very cold and wet and the strong hives were struggling because of a lack of incoming nectar, with almost nothing in the supers. I decided to feed all the hives accepting that I would get no honey at all. In fact I was anticipating the worst season I had experienced in 20 years. After feeding (and I am a great believer in feeding well) I administered Varroa treatment to all the hives.

It was by now September and I decided, for the first time ever, to leave the empty supers on the hives over crown boards to store there for the winter and save the effort of carrying them home.

With the bees fed and tucked up for the winter I began plotting my campaign for next year. This involved moving the bees to oilseed rape in the Spring and I contacted a local farmer to arrange this. I then organised a site in the Newlands Valley for gathering some heather honey sections in the early Autumn. Also with my wife telling me that 8 hives were too many to manage I thought I might reduce my numbers to 4. My beekeeping for 2016 was arranged.

On the weekend of 4th/5th December I had a phone call from the lady upon whose land I keep my hives telling me to come to the bees. My apiary was at Salmon Hall, Low Seaton, on the banks of the Derwent river. I was horrified when I arrived to find the river had burst its' banks. Two hives had been washed onto their sides and the others were almost submerged. What could I do? The water was waist high and flowing rapidly. Even if I could have reached the hives what could I have done? Unfortunately you cannot just take bees out of hives like so many chicken and rehouse them. The hives were also extremely heavy being on double brood boxes (as suggested by Ian Craig at this year's convention). Even with help an attempt to get the hives would have been foolish in the extreme because the flood water was fast flowing with powerful currents. This deliberation was academic because by now the water had risen further and the hives were all swept away.

Alan James.

Dates for your Diary

Next CBKA Exec meeting Sat 23rd Jan : Southey St Keswick 2.00pm

The Annual Delegate Meeting at the BBKA will be reviewed by the Committee at this meeting following feedback from S. Barnes, our Delegate.

Beekeeping for Beginners Course

to be held at Houghton Carlisle in March contact Peter Harris at Cumbria Bee Supplies for more details.

Mobile:07830432014,
email :harris peter44@gmail.com

Free Beekeeping for Beginners Courses

in Dumfries Contact "the Bee man" at <http://www.the-beeman.co.uk> for further details.

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Full details of CBKA events and
Officers contacts can be found
on the Cumbria Beekeepers
website
Cumbriabeekeepers.co.uk

There are several other non-
affiliated Associations in the
North West

Beehivemaker
Beehives made to order
Peter Harris
Unit 8A Port Road Business Park
Carlisle
CA2 7AF
Mobile no: 07830432014

Bankhead Bee Supplies

For all your Beekeeping Requirements
Bankhead Farm, Newby East, Carlisle, CA4 8RA
Telephone:01228 573289
Your local agent for Thorne and Sherriff

Drone laying and failing Queen Bees?

Scientists at the French National Institute for Agricultural Research have flagged up a possible connection between failing queens and Neonicotinoids. They report a study of 18 colonies sited in 700 acres of oilseed rape which had been treated with thiamethoxam.

The field study reported a significant excess mortality among bees that ventured out of the hive.

They correlated a loss of foraging bees (unable to navigate home and therefore reducing the number of workers in each hive) with an increased laying by the queens of worker bees to redress the loss and a commensurate reduction in drone brood. This led to noticeable swings in the gender balance.

They suggest that this apparent pesticide induced sexual revolution in the colonies could leave the new virgin queens with too few drones in the congregation areas for them to mate adequately to store enough sperm for the next season, this in turn leading to failing colonies.

Until now only laboratory tests have shown harmful effects from these pesticides on honeybees. C. Connolly, a neurobiologist at the University of Dundee, said this field test could explain why British beekeepers are having trouble getting their queens to reproduce.

Several neonicotinoids were temporarily banned by the E.U. but have been reintroduced into some parts of Britain in the summer of 2015. Scott Hayward, lecturer in Ecophysiology at the University of Birmingham, has said that the French scientists results have reignited the arguments concerning the ban on Neonicotinoids.

Annual Delegate Meeting January 9th 2016

Stephen Barnes is CBKA nominated delegate and will vote for us according to instructions from the November Committee meeting. A lot of work goes into the committees' decisions on Presidential, Trustee and Examination Board choices as well as how we vote on the many propositions tabled by the county associations. Much more information about the ADM is available on the BBKA website.

Pollen Microscopy by Norman Chapman

Were you lucky enough to be given a copy of this book by Santa? It is an easy to read lavishly illustrated paperback by a beekeeper from Surrey who having developed an interest in the pollen loads carried by his bees, joined the Quekett club to further his abilities with the microscope. The result is a fascinating book full of wonderful photos of common plants useful to bees from the garden and the countryside, alongside drawings of their pollen grains. There is advice on collecting and preparing pollen for microscopy, as well as several ideas for homemade equipment to help with the making of the slides (as you would expect from the author of Constructive Beekeeping)

This book is much more attractive for the beekeeper new to palynology (the study of pollen) than the standard text books by D. Hodges or W.D. Kirk.

If you are interested to learn more about palynology - Whitehaven and District Beekeepers run occasional courses and would be happy to notify you when they organise the next one.