

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)

New Issue no:48

Date March 2017

Annual General Meeting of Cumbria Beekeepers Association

The 2017 Annual General Meeting of CBKA was held on Saturday 18th March at Southey St Keswick. 17 people turned up for this AGM (a quorum is 10) and were treated to a fascinating talk and slide show by Ian Gregory about the difficulties faced by beekeepers on the island of Bermuda. Ian has family connections with the island, and has spent several holidays there. He knows both it and the resident beekeepers well. A short summary of his talk is reproduced on this page.

Tea and coffee were accompanied by excellent home made biscuits, courtesy of Melanie Vincent.

Stephen Barnes was presented with certificates from the BBKA following his success in two modules.

The AGM accepted the 2016 minutes, and the accounts, presented by the new Treasurer, Melanie Vincent.. Copies of the accounts (Inspected and signed) may be obtained from your Branch Secretary. Thanks were expressed to Christine Matthews who has shouldered the post for several years.

The Executive Chairman, Walter McPhee, gave an account of the previous year's work and also expressed his sympathy for Peter Harris who remains in poor health. He reminded those present that despite this the Northern Bee Auction will take place on 22nd April at Houghton (details are on the website) Stephen Barnes was elected to the post of President following the resignation of Val Sullivan. All other officers agreed to continue in their posts for the next year.

Both propositions were passed with little discussion.

There then followed a lively debate about the use of members' details (including e-mail addresses) for the purpose of disseminating information from the Executive. This has been passed back to the Executive Committee for further consideration, including a better understanding of the Data Protection Act and how it affects small groups such as the CBKA.

The next AGM will be held on Saturday March 17th 2018.

Beekeeping on the Island of Bermuda

The island of Bermuda, situated in the Atlantic Ocean some 600 miles from the east coast of the USA and 1,000 miles north of the Caribbean, enjoys a sub tropical climate due to the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. The island is 20 miles long and at its' widest point one mile wide with a population of 62,000

This does not leave a lot of room for agriculture and beekeeping.

Since the accidental introduction of Varroa during 2009, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of hives on the island. Rather than using chemicals, Bermudian Beekeepers are breeding bees from queens that have come from colonies in the USA that are known to be sensitive to the Varroa mite in the bees' brood cells and remove the affected brood.

Other problems encountered by the local Beekeepers are hurricanes, Cane Toads introduced to control a cockroach problem but which will gorge themselves on honey bees, Kiskadees, a bird introduced to control lizards but which has now included bees on its' menu, ants which can infest a colony stealing the honey, and the Greater Wax Moth.

The picture shows Mr Randolph Furbert who gained recognition from the Queen for his work in promoting beekeeping in Bermuda through schools and helping other Beekeepers on the island.



Asian Hornet - Free Smartphone App

A free smartphone app has been launched for people to report sightings of the invasive Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*). The Asian hornet (brown with 4th abdominal segment yellow/orange) first sighted in this country in Gloucestershire last autumn, begins to build nests high in trees in April, initially looking similar to a wasp nest but rapidly expanding by May to 40-80cm diameter.

The Asian hornet watch app allows people to report sightings and to send photographs to the National Bee Unit for confirmation of this species.



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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

Dates for your Diary

April 1st Furness Beekeepers' Convention. Bardsea Speakers
Margaret Thomas and Gerry Collins
Contact: djwalmsley@hotmail.co.uk

April 1st Northern Bee Convention The Beacon Newcastle upon
Tyne Contact: www.nebees.org

April 7th and 8th BBKA Spring Convention Harper Adams
Shropshire Contact: BBKA

April 22nd Northern Bee Auction Houghton Village Hall, near
Carlisle. Contact: website for CBKA

Spring Management

Living in a northern county with a lack of sunny days means that we are often weeks behind other areas in our first inspections of the year. Apart from a quick peek and heft of hives to check on food stores most colonies have been left untouched for several months. A warm spring day when the bees are flying is the ideal time to do the initial hive checks.

Equipment should have been mended, painted and cleaned during the winter in readiness for the season. Before opening the hive check that you are suited and booted, with usual beekeeping kit -it is easy to be forgetful after a winter break. Take a clean floor with entrance block for each hive, Q marker, a few brood frames and a plan of action. Once the hive is open look for signs of a laying queen; brood on several frames with all stages present. Does the brood look healthy with nice light coloured cappings or are there signs of disease? It is not necessary to try to find the queen, which might lengthen the inspection but if she presents herself now is a good time to remark her if necessary before the numbers of bees increase. Is there enough food and pollen stores? Are there any old, dirty, broodless frames which can be replaced by removing and replacing with new ones to the side of the brood nest. The floor can be replaced with a clean one, and if you have overwintered with brood above a super this can usually now be reversed. If all brood is in the BB with plenty of stores, a QE can be put on. Write up hive notes and have a cup of tea, happy in the knowledge that your bees are going to have a successful new season.

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What about using a bait hive this year?

There are a multitude of reasons to set up and use a bait hive. Even the most vigilant of beekeepers inspecting a colony may miss a developing QC tucked into the recess of a hive covered with masses of bees, especially if the weather is not perfect, it is the last of several colonies to be inspected, the bees are getting fractious and supper is already on the table etc. The resulting swarm may be lost, may settle in an awkward site, and may cause inconvenience and possible panic to the general public.

A bait hive can lure a scouting party from the hive preparing to swarm to examine its' potential and the issuing swarm may be directed in with no input from the beekeeper. How much better to have a swarm house itself rather than wrap around the local primary school playground equipment, or 40ft up a neighbours' monkey puzzle tree.

Professors Tom Sealey and Roger Morse of Cornell University studied sites chosen naturally by swarms and came up with the following preferences: Shaded site (full sun usually rejected), 3m above ground level, a cavity of about 40 litres capacity, a south facing entrance no larger than 15cm x 15cm and situated close to the floor. The best bait hive is a lightweight box, waterproof and movable. It will need a removable lid, to extract and rehouse the swarm and will need something to secure it safely at the preferred height.

Inside the box a few frames or a bar or two with strips of wax will help attract the bees (do not use any old brood frames which may just attract wax moths). Many bee equipment suppliers sell pheromone lures, which can be added to the interior. Covering the entrance with a wire mesh may deter small birds from taking up nesting rights before the bees get there(though we once collected a swarm which was living in a pygmy Himalayan owl nesting box alongside the egg clutch)

Once in place the bait hive will need frequent observation, the swarm will rapidly start building comb and bringing in stores of pollen and nectar, adding to the weight which you will have to lift down.

. Nowadays most beekeepers will own a polystyrene nucleus box, which will fulfil all the requisites of a bait hive, and even when full of bees will still be easily closed and moved from the original bait site.

Re-sited in the Apiary the colony can soon be transferred to a full sized hive. Remember that if you are not sure of the origin of the swarm (i.e not from your bees) it will need to be quarantined for 3 weeks to check for any disease