



# CARLISLE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter July 2014



What to do now 2

## Chairman's muses

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Houghton Fair 2

*Caveat emptor!* ... or is it *carpe diem*? Oh no, I think it's *tempus fugit*. Anyway, whatever, hasn't time flown!

Not been a bad year for beekeeping so far though. Winter was not too long or hard. Spring sprang with a decent spell of weather and, so far, the summer has been pretty good.

We are through the May/June Gap (which didn't really seem to take place as far as I could see) and, at the time of writing, we are into the main nectar flow. Or are we? Weatherwise things seem to have progressed so well this year that a lot of the blossom, trees and general floribunda are well advanced – almost tired looking. Hopefully, we should get a decent supply of honey this year.

From the general chat at the apiary (and where have some of you been by the way??!!), this seems to be the “year of the swarms” and “year of the missing queens”. Many of us seem to have experienced unexpected swarms despite diligently undertaking swarm prevention procedures and, of course, at the other end of the spectrum, there have been urgent calls from householders to say that a swarm has appeared in their garden and can we please come and do something! Often the blighters go into the most inaccessible of places such as eaves, holes in garden walls etc and, short of removing half of the roof or demolishing the wall, there is not much one can do.

I was lucky with one call out however. This was to a very large swarm hanging from a high branch in the grounds of Austin Friars' School. As you would expect from Austin Friars' School, the swarm was very well behaved and respectful, hanging as it was in classic text-book style high up in an oak tree. A bit aloof perhaps but what would you expect in such an august setting? Fortunately the school had very professional scaffolding-type ladders; just as well considering how high up the swarm had located. Collection was easy, being in the traditional rugby wall shape and the critters were quickly gathered into my skep. Being a bit of a wimp (well, actually, a complete wimp), I donned all the garb. Not for me the assertion that bees don't sting when swarming. It was a bit embarrassing however, to have the ladder system held by two of the ground staff, resplendent in their shorts and t-shirts. Personally I think they were pretty nervous but showing off to the ever building number of young ladies who came out of their classroom and clustered around (boys behind them!) to have a look.

All went well: The swarm taken home and, as ever, I stood and marvelled at them as they made their journey up the old bed sheet and into the hive. Now, before anyone takes me to task (and, in particular, that meddlesome brother-in-law I keep telling you about), I know I should have housed the girls elsewhere to make sure they were disease and pest free but, by the time I got home, options were limited and I was keen not to lose them (and to down a celebratory drink). I did subsequently add some MAQ strips.

Two weeks later, I was again called to Austin Friars to deal with another swarm in the same tree. Not so large this time but a decent size all the same. On this occasion it was a Saturday evening and there was a formal “do” taking place with orchestral entertainment. I collected the swarm to the strains of Brahms and Liszt – which was pretty well the way I felt after I got home and had another celebratory drink!

But tell me (letters to the Editor are always welcome), what are the reasons for what appears to be an unusually large number of swarms this year? Is it down to the heat, the sometimes clammy weather or just poor hive management? Or is it just something which is becoming more prevalent?

There have also been tales of hives becoming queenless for no apparent reason and not readily accepting either new mated or virgin queens. This seems odd bearing in mind the implications to the hive over time. Putting in a frame of new eggs usually works but it does seem that there are some strange things going on at the moment.

Speaking of the apiary, it is good to see the number of new recruits coming along and maintaining an interest. Not surprisingly some are keen to start straight away and are looking to source hives, equipment and bees. We are always happy to help and give advice (often differing of course) but, even as a keen beginner who was desperate to get going myself as soon as possible, I would counsel that it is now a bit late in the season as there is not a great deal of time for a new hive/nuc to establish itself before the onslaught of winter. There is a lot to learn from the outset and obtaining bees can be expensive so do make sure you are up to speed on what you need to be doing, have the necessary equipment in place and perhaps ask one of us to be a mentor for you to contact when the inevitable queries or concerns arise. That is what the Association is about and I have yet to be disappointed by approaches to the more experience beekeeper when I have needed help or advice.

Robin MacLeod

## 2014 Programme

### Winter meetings

Houghton Village Hall starting at 7.30 p.m

**January 17th** Annual Dinner Eden Golf Club

**February 24th** David Walmsley Which bees do what, when and how

**March 31st** Keeping Bees Healthy

**April 29th.** Janet Queen, Rose Castle gardens\*

**September 29th** Peter Matthews 'Preparing Honey for a Show'

**October 27th** Honey Show

**November 24th** AGM

\* Janet Queen has gained permission to show us Rose Castle Gardens in May. date tbc

### Apiary Meetings

at the Association's Walby Apiary at 2.p.m.

#### Saturdays

#### Sundays

12th April 27th April

Clean up

10th May 25th May

7th June 22nd June

5th July 20th July

2nd August 17th August

30th August 14th Sept.

27th September Clean up day.

On the first apiary meeting of the month there will be short talks on apiary management by a branch member. The topics suggested, although these are not set in stone, are, beginning in May, queen rearing, swarm control, increasing colonies and wax collecting.

## WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING JUST NOW.....?

### JULY

- Attend Apiary Meetings.
- Up With The Honey Supers
- Extract Spring Honey If Required
- Attend Apiary Meetings
- Maintain Vigilance For Signs Of Swarming

Keep Up With Swarm Prevention Or Swarm Control measures

### AUGUST

- Attend Apiary Meetings
- Be Ready To Extract The Main Harvest
- Commence Queen-Rearing For Autumn Queens If That Is When You Re-Queen
- Attend Apiary Meetings
- Split Hives For Re-Queening
- Take Hives To Heather If A Strong Colony
- Begin To Prepare Hives For The Winter
- Book Early For Our Annual Dinner

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## Houghton Summer Fair

Carlisle Beekeepers were invited to be involved with the newly revived summer fair in Houghton on 28th June.

After a flurry of offers to be there to help, it was doubtful, up to the last minute, that we would actually be able to attend, as lots of people had arranged to do other things on the day instead.

There was a shower of light rain as I arrived, but that didn't dampen the buzz in of excitement around Houghton and soon the sun was shining bringing the people out to enjoy the day.

There was a car boot sale in the school play ground and a display of Hornby trains in the school. Organised activities were held all day for the children and the grown-ups had a bar in the hall to enjoy!

In the evening there was a magic show and later a dance for everyone.

The day was a great success with a lot of people showing a keen interest in bees and beekeeping.

Thanks must be extended to Fiona for picking up the equipment and helping to erect the stand, Malcolm for putting up the stand and being there all day enthusing people with his interest in beekeeping, Charlie and Stuart for coming along to help ( lovely ice creams Charlie!) and David Tunnicliff for returning the equipment to Walter and Mary.

These events don't just run themselves and it would have been better if there had been a few more people to help out. Imparting your knowledge to the public is a great way for new beekeepers to realise just how much you know about bees.

Lorraine .

