



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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This issue's cover photo shows a honeybee on Ragwort. Is it friend or foe? It is an attractive looking plant with bright yellow daisy like flowers, that inhabits waste land and neglected places. Honey bees and other pollinating insects are attracted to the flower for its pollen and nectar. Unfortunately it is also a very poisonous plant to animals, particularly cattle and horses, as are

many other wildflowers. When growing it is unpalatable to animals and they usually avoid it but when cut and included in hay and eaten by an animal it has a serious effect on their liver.



Hoverfly on Ragwort

The plant is covered by the Weeds Act 1959 and the Ragwort Control Act 2003. I always thought that it was illegal to allow ragwort to grow on your land. However, this is not the case and neither Act makes ragwort control compulsory. As a side note, it is illegal to uproot any wildflower, including ragwort, unless carried out by the landowner, occupier, someone authorised by them or by a specified official. Ragwort is an important plant that helps feed many types of bees, moths, other insect and birds although it is sensible to have some sort of control where there is live stock. When a crop of honey is obtained from ragwort, it is bright yellow and, apparently, has such an offensive odour that when first extracted it is quite unpalatable. However, once granulated the smell is lost and the honey quite good. As a beekeeper I like the plant as it a good source of nectar and pollen after I have extracted my honey and it is there for the bees winter stores but I don't have a horse!

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Beekeeping 90 Years Ago

The Cumbria Beekeepers Autumn Conference has been cancelled this year because of the Coronavirus pandemic so I thought that a copy of the Annual report from 1930 would be of interest.

This was supplied to me by Dennis Chambers of Penrith Beekeepers who allowed me to take pictures

of a copy in his possession. Thank you to Dennis, it is interesting to read.

Annual Report 1930

From a Bee-keeper's point of view, weather conditions in 1930 were not good. A fair amount of honey was taken in the early part of the season, but later the weather became very bad; July was unusually wet, and so was the first half of August. hope of gathering heather-honey was abandoned when bees were found to be starving, and syrup feeding had to be resorted to, but the weather then suddenly changed and became sunny and warm, and there were some good takings of heather-honey after all.

Out Door Meetings were held earlier in the season than in former years. There were six, on consecutive Saturdays, from April 26th to May 31st. Twenty-seven apiaries were visited and sixty hives examined. there was an average attendance of fifteen members. The early visitation of apiaries had the advantage of enabling disease to be detected before being widely distributed, and the additional advantage of avoiding disturbance of hives during the main honey flow. The very first hive opened on 26th April, was found to be badly infected with Foul Brood, and another case of Foul Brood was found on May 24th. Samples from fifty hives were taken at the meetings for examination for Acarine disease; not one of the stocks from which the samples were taken was suspected, nevertheless, four of them were found to be diseased.

Queen Rearing. It having been suggested at the General Meeting in January, 1930, that Queen-rearing should be considered, a meeting to that effect was held at the Depot on March 15th and was well attended.

During the discussion, Mr Anthony Wilson offered to give to the Association a stock of bees recently

purchased, well known to be a good honey producing strain, and very quiet as well.

A sub-committee was appointed to work the stock which was taken to the re-forestation ground at Beck Wythop so as to be far enough away to ensure true mating.

Good progress was made and, in all, six good stocks were built up from them, and five stocks were distributed to members. From a sister Queen eleven stocks and fifty sections were obtained.

The object is to establish this strain of bees throughout the district as far as possible.

It has been suggested at a meeting in London of the British-beekeepers' Association that all County Associations should consider the raising of their own Queens by selecting a strain of the best bees in their respective districts, and thus stop the importation of Foreign Queens and disease.

It is with this object in view that the Keswick and District Bee-keepers' Association wishes to raise Queens from a tested strain at a reasonable price, and they have made a start. The prices of Queens and Nuclei from the Beck Wythop nursery will be as follows:- One Queen (in May and June) 7/6, (in July, August and September) 7/-. One 3-frame Nucleus (throughout the season) 15/-. The Beck Wythop strain will be known as "Queen-of-the-Lakes".

The Committee therefore wish that all members and others who are desirous of obtaining bees to *apply at the Depot* before going elsewhere, so as not to introduce Foul Brood into this district, for they are sorry to say that Foul Brood is spreading rapidly in other Districts. Preference will be given to members whose subscriptions are paid.

I wonder where the "Depot" was and are there any descendants of the "Queen of the Lakes"?

Dates for your Diary.

Or rather Dates not for your Diary!

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic all planned events have had to be cancelled this year and include:-

2020 Autumn Conference and Honey Show.

Cockermouth Beekeepers Convention

Another event that has sadly been cancelled was the excursion to Slovenia being organised by Margaret Riches of Penrith Beekeepers.

However, good news, the trip has been re-organised for August next year and there are vacancies!

AUGUST 30 – SEPTEMBER 4 2021 (Postponed from 2020)

Buzzing off to Slovenia

Penrith Beekeepers Association invites you to join them on an excursion to Ljubljana, the 'beekeeping capital of Europe'.

Reservations closing date: 31 DECEMBER 2020

For further information E mail:

mr4cnr@gmail.com

Hopefully in the new year everyone can return to a more normal life and we can once again meet with one another. In the meantime many organisations are holding virtual meetings which are proving to be extremely successful and well attended. In many cases more people are attending than at the usual meetings. Very often speakers from further afield can be booked to give a talk without the expense of travelling expenses. If a Branch of the Cumbria Beekeepers has an interesting speaker booked it may be worthwhile sharing the experience with other Branches to cover the costs. There have already been two excellent talks on bee diseases by Newcastle Beekeepers and the Cumbria Bee Inspector Julia Hoggard. The Cumbria Beekeepers Executive Committee is continuing to hold meetings, via Zoom, and the next one is on Saturday 28th November 2020. If you have any beekeeping related subject that you would like to be discussed at that meeting please contact the Cumbria Secretary email:-

cumbriasec@gmail.com

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Please provide articles that you would like to share with other beekeepers before the end of December 2020 to be included in the next issue of the Bee Times. The Editor appreciates this contribution from others and it makes the Bee Times more interesting.

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