

# 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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## CBKA Honey Show and Conference

Sat 15th November

There was a good attendance this year for the Honey Show at Newbiggin Village Hall although entries were fewer than in 2013. Gerry Collins gave a fascinating talk in the morning on Pollen, going into detail about the composition and biology of pollen and the intimate relationships that bees have with flowering plants. After an excellent lunch provided by members of Penrith BKA the afternoon talk followed after the Branch reports and an "Ask the experts" session. Terry Clare talked about Queen rearing for the Small Beekeeper.

Peter Matthews judged the honey exhibits aided by the stewards Ian Gregory and Bill Mackereth. He gave a resume of highs and lows of the various classes explaining why some exhibits were judged better than others and giving tips on better preparation, before the presentation of the awards by Terry Clare

### Trophies awarded

- Association Cup : Alan Tett
- Scott Just Trophy : Alan Tett
- Hendren Cup and Medal :Mary Mc Phee
- J. Dixon Cup: Julia Hoggard
- W. Douglas Trophy: Julia Hoggard
- F.Hydes Cup :Valerie Sullivan
- W.Barton Cup for Beginner: Andrea Andreassen
- Wornham Trophy for the Best Honey in Show also went

## A Warning

Because of the warm autumn most beekeepers have noticed that bees have been flying almost every day. Queens are still laying and there is also a lot of brood still in many hives. This means colonies may be getting short on stores and may also have high Varroa levels. It is worth checking mite drop and considering whether treatment can wait until the colony is broodless and suitable for the usual winter Oxalic acid treatment. At the same time left the hive and decide if it is necessary to add fondant above the frames for the cluster to use as needed. This is usually done by many beekeepers in a month's time – but this year that may be too late.

## LLEWELYN PATCH

Cumbria Beekeepers have lost their oldest beekeeper Llew Patch, at the age of 104. A member of Penrith Beekeepers and life member of Cumbria Beekeepers, Llew's beekeeping started in 1945 at the end of the war on the outskirts of Oldham. He was then a member of Manchester beekeepers. As a proprietor of a Pharmacy & Opticians he would commute Saturday evening until Monday morning to South Lakes. In 1968 he retired to Bardsea Nr. Ulverston where in the large walled garden of his house he managed 10 to 15 hives, mostly WBCs. He was a very active member of Furness Beekeepers and an executive member of Cumbria Beekeepers.

He was a talented photographer and gave beekeeping slide talks across Cumbria. He was the Honey Secretary for Lakeland Rose Show for 15 years and his enthusiasm drew exhibitors from across the North of England with entries running at between 150 to 250. making it the largest honey show in Northern England. In 2011 he received the BBKA award for 50 years of beekeeping

Llew was remarkable for his age, driving until his mid 90s and beekeeping until he was 98. When asked if it was the honey to which he attributed his long life he would say "No, you need to do three things; Eat in moderation, drink in moderation and pick your parents very carefully"

S.Beattie



27th June 1910 —11th November 2014

### **Beekeeping - Naturally**

As a teenager I worked on a farm and have been interested in the land and the environment for over 50 years. I have planted, grown and nurtured many gardens and allotments in as natural and organic way as possible, so when it came to the possibility of keeping bees and being aware of their plight in recent years, I began to look for a way of keeping them in a similar way.

I joined the local beekeeping association but could not find people who were beekeeping in this way. So I searched the internet and came across a book called The Barefoot Beekeeper by Phil Chandler. I had known of the Barefoot Doctor, a book written about alternative and complementary therapies for the body - but Barefoot Beekeeping? This seemed right up my street.

The 3 principles of the book resonated with me. The bees know what they are doing: our job is to listen to them and provide the optimum conditions for their well-being. Interference in the natural life of the bees is kept to a minimum. Nothing is put into the hive that is known to be, or likely to be harmful to either the bees or the wider environment, and nothing is taken out that the bees need and cannot afford to lose. It is based on the Kenyan Top Bar Hive which you can build yourself and the plans were there to download. So away I went - read the book, did a weekend with Phil Chandler, built the hive, and waited for my first swarm of bees.

After a difficult start but with some great help, I got my first queen and a nucleus on five national frames in mid June 2013. I didn't want to do the chop and crop process to get the frames into a top bar hive - it has sloping sides so that rectangular frames will not fit, so I built extensions like wings into the hive to accommodate the national frames. And in they went though not without a number of bees getting into my suit as one of the zips was not quite closed snugly! After fleeing the hive and a multi- stinging initiation, I had them in and the bees settled in fine. Of course, there were the usual wonders and worries - were they going to stay, what do I do over the first winter, will they survive the cold? But my fears were soon allayed with advice on these matters from a number of experienced beekeepers.

I fed them over the winter with Ambrosia, followed by fondant and then a sugar syrup solution all with a dose of Hive Alive - a Thymol/Seaweed liquid from Ireland. They survived well and by mid spring had extended the hive from the original five frames to over twelve top bars. Great comb with a fine mix of brood, pollen and honey. There was plenty of space in the hive for further comb building - but bees being bees they swarmed. I was not ready for this! What to do? - fortunately I had a clean nucleus box available, so heart in mouth, cardboard box at the ready, a shake of the branch and in they went - and from there into the nucleus box which was soon overflowing with bees. I was interested in the possibility of having bees in a Warre Hive. This was developed by Abbe Warre early in the 20th century after he had studied over 300 types of hives. He actually called it The People's Hive. It is brilliant for the bees. Not too big, with top bars on which they can build their own comb and the boxes go in from underneath so the bees can build the comb downwards - the way they want to. I found one on the internet (although again like the Top Bar Hive plans are available to build one yourself ) but it was delivered too late to transfer them in. I was crestfallen as in the delay the bees absconded from the nucleus box. A few days later - they were back! M. Gerrish

### **Smoking....A cautionary tale.**

It wasn't my fault. It was definitely the bees' fault. I had expanded from two hives to six, and they hadn't been checked for eight days so I loaded up my larger smoker with a roll of cardboard...it burns cool and doesn't go out easily. ( Hold that thought...it will be important in a few minutes). The large smoker is good for three quick inspections or two long ones. These were full checks so half way through I shook out the dead ashes around my rose bush at the rear of my apiary storage box noting that I really needed to water again that evening, reloaded the smoker and moved on. it was a lovely peaceful warm day and as I opened the last hive some quarter of an hour later I remember thinking it was getting even warmer. I lifted the crown board and a lovely aroma of lemon balm hit me. Lemon honey???? And then there was the slightest hint of hot plastic. This was two seconds before two events which made me lose interest in the last hive. The first was a loud hollow bang from behind me. The second was two panes of greenhouse glass disintegrating. Looking around.....the front of my storage box had become open plan and it was warmer because the contents were well alight. Fifteen minutes later and many buckets of water aimed in the general direction of the flames all was well. I put the remaining hive back together and looked at the damage.

The ashes had lit a patch of dry lemon balm which it seems burns very well. That in turn lit the base of my box which certainly burned well. At some point the melting floor gave way to the weight of contents....all of which burned exceedingly well.

The bang? A can of lighter fluid to replenish my candle lighter overheated and science came into play. The crash of glass? The destination of the lighter fluid container which was now an unguided missile. It must have missed the back of my head by a few inches only. It also affected the open hive as the brood being chilled the hive was weak for a long time. So.....my fault. I was stupid. I now put ashes in a tin can. Simple..... Learn from me. G. Pinches

