

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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A new resource for CBKA

Walter McPhee has set up a Facebook page for Cumbria Beekeepers, The Browser address is- <http://www.facebook.com/groups/355614271196318/> It is a closed site so membership is by request; there is a join group box on the right of the facebook page. Possible uses for the site; posting beekeeping pictures, communications about events, asking for advice, hints and tips, bee health. Please make use of this new and valuable resource for Cumbria

C.B.K.A Annual Honey Show Sat 10th Nov

40 people came to the Annual Honey Show at Newbiggin village hall to show their honey related exhibits and to hear two excellent speakers. The Show was sponsored by the Co-operative Society whose representatives explained the Co-op "Plan B" and gave away wild flower seeds and jars of Heather honey.

Ian Craig's talk led us through the signs which we can pick up from just watching bees and hive entrances without necessarily opening and disturbing the colonies.

A Questions to the Experts session proved very useful with lively debate engendered by the queries from the Audience.

The afternoon speaker, Murray McGregor, who runs 2,700 colonies and manages the Apiaries on the Co-operative Society Farms took us through his methods of drawing foundation in September after taking the Heather honey harvest, and of re-queening on a large scale. He is a firm proponent of polystyrene hives and explained the benefits to a commercial bee keeper.

The Honey Show was judged by Bill Mackereth with the trophies awarded by Murray Mc Gregor.

Winners this year:

J. Hoggard won the Hendren cup, and swept the board with her wax exhibits. The Beginners cup went to P.Backhouse and the F.Hyde cup to M.Hopkins. R.Blocksidge took the S.J. Warnham cup.

Yet again John Cowper showed his skills with faultless exhibits winning both the Scott Just cup and the Association cup.

The panel for "Ask the Experts"



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CBKA Web site(www.cumbriabeekeepers.co.uk)

The CBKA web-site has had a "make-over". Most Branches have now been in contact with Richard Robinson who is keeping the site up to date and hoping to add photographs and Branch information about events planned and completed. He would welcome any feedback and of course any information which you may wish to publicise on the site.

Remember: Treating for *Varroa* mites is a lot like raising children. First they seem to be everywhere and then they go away. And the next thing you know, they're back!

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50 years ago in the Cumbria Bee Times(known as "The official organ of the CBKA")—November 1962

The Annual conference was opened by the President Mr R. Graham who said the attendance was disappointing, Branch reports all mentioned poor wintering with slow build up in Spring. Wigton reported winter losses of 50% but the reason was not definitely known. Keswick bees were too weak to take advantage of the Spring flow. Whitehaven was troubled by Acarine but not Nosema, and Penrith was troubled by Nosema but little Acarine! Carlisle colonies were weak and failed to build up in the Spring. Mr Holliday reported Chilled brood in Spring and Chalk brood in summer. He attributes this to loss of stamina through excessive inbreeding.

Honey crops were very poor at less than 15lb/hive though Dr. Swales of Alston had a good early yield from Sycamore.

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Vita researchers

have just revealed startling findings about the **bite** of the honeybee in the prestigious scientific journal, PLOS ONE.

The researchers have discovered that honeybees can bite as well as sting and that the bite contains a natural anaesthetic. The anaesthetic may help honeybees fend off pests such as the wax moth and the varroa mite, and it also has great potential for use in human medicine. Their remarkable findings are expected to stimulate new research in many new directions.



No ban on pesticides that 'threaten bees'

Government scientists have advised that nerve-agent pesticides should not be banned in Britain despite four separate scientific studies strongly linking them to sharp declines in bees around the world,

An internal review of recent research on neonicotinoids – pesticides that act on insects' central nervous systems and are increasingly blamed for problems with bee colonies – has concluded that no change is needed in British regulation.

The British position contrasts sharply with that of France, which in June banned one of the pesticides, thiamethoxam, made by the Swiss chemicals giant Syngenta. French scientists said it was impairing the abilities of honey-bees to find their way back to their nests. The Green MP Caroline Lucas described the British attitude as one of "astonishing complacency".

Concern is growing around the world that the chemicals may affect the ability of bees to pollinate crops, something that would have catastrophic consequences for agriculture. Bee pollination has been valued at £200m per year in Britain and £128bn worldwide.

The French research was published in March in the journal Science at the same time as another study by British researchers from the University of Stirling, implicating neonicotinoids in the decline of bumblebees. The British team showed that production of queens, essential for bumblebee colonies to continue, declined by 85 per cent after they were exposed to "field-realistic levels" of another neonicotinoid, imidacloprid, made by the German company Bayer.

In January, the US government's chief bee researcher published a study showing that imidacloprid makes honeybees far more susceptible to disease, even at doses so low as to be barely detectable, and in April, a team from Harvard claimed to show that imidacloprid was the culprit in colony collapse disorder, in which bees abandon their hives en masse.

All four of these studies have been the subject of a British Government review ordered by Sir Robert Watson, chief scientist at the Department for Environment, Food and

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needs to be taken against the chemicals concerned.

The reports were reviewed by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) which deals with pesticides, and the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP), the statutory body that advises ministers. After considering a CRD paper on the research, ACP members agreed that "while they could not discount the findings... they did not affect the current regulatory decisions".

The ACP says more research is necessary "to clarify the papers' findings, and their relevance to the UK field situation". Government scientists have also taken into account a review of Italian research linking bee problems with neonicotinoids, carried out by the European Food Safety Authority. The EFSA said it was "not possible to draw a firm conclusion" on the research.

Sir Robert Watson said: "What they've concluded is that there is no reason at this moment to change regulation, because there is a concern that the laboratory studies did not simulate adequately the field conditions."

Systemic risk: A case of overkill

One of the major problems with neonicotinoid pesticides is that they are "systemic", meaning they are taken up into every part of the plant which is treated with them – including the pollen and nectar.

This means that bees and other pollinating insects can absorb them and carry the poison back to their hives or nests – even if they are not the insecticide's target species.

Introduced by Bayer in the early 1990s, neonicotinoids have been an immense commercial success – Bayer's imidacloprid was its top-selling insecticide in 2009, earning £510m – and have been used on vast areas. About 30 per cent of British cropland – 3.14 million acres – was being treated with the chemicals in 2010.