



January 2019

Happy New Year. Here is the January 2019 newsletter. Any contributions or ideas for future editions please email to: [newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

## Things to Think About

### This Month's Meeting

This month's meeting is a talk on "Spring and Swarm Management (including Demaree)" to be given by Anne Rowberry. The meeting will be at 7.30pm on Thursday 10th January 2019 at Goytre Village Hall.

### Selling Goods at Future Events

Just another reminder that Dan Baxter is co-ordinating our activities at the various shows and events that we attend during the year. At the events we plan to sell a range of beekeeping goods that you might be producing such as candles, soap, lip balm etc. Or perhaps you make skeps or some other equipment. The goods will be sold at your asking price plus a small uplift. If you are busily producing anything that you would like to sell through this route, please contact Dan on [danielnbaxter@icloud.com](mailto:danielnbaxter@icloud.com)

### Membership Fees 2019

As you are aware membership fees for Gwent Beekeepers were due by 1st January 2019. If you have not yet paid then please urgently complete the GBK-CIO 2019 membership application form or apply/renew online. You can do either via the website at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/gwentbeekeepersassociation/membership>

There are a number of ways to pay including: Manual bank transfer: Gwent Beekeepers' CIO. Lloyds Bank: SC: 30-98-90 Ac.17415160 . Please ensure your full name and (if possible) your membership number is clearly stated in the transfer details. Cheques payable to "GBK CIO" sent to : Gwent Beekeepers' CIO. Russell Flynn. 84 Festival Crescent , New Inn, Pontypool, Gwent. NP4 0NH. Cash with a completed form at a GBK - CIO meeting. Please do not send cash through post.

## **Apiary Reports**

Miriam reports that the hives at Rhadyr have all been all sublimated bar one. All 19 colonies all alive and well. She plans to do the final hive at Rhadyr and the hives at Ochran on Sunday 6th January depending on temperature.

Janet reports that at our new site at Llanvair Kilgeddin we now have an orchard of 50 fruit trees - 40 apples (James Greive, Katy, Braeburn, Egremont russets, Blenheim orange, Elstar, Green sleeves) and 10 pears (Concorde and Conference). The trees have protective spirals and support posts. The fencing has been done and John H's gate installed. Many thanks to all who have helped.

If you have any spare time and are willing to help then please contact Miriam, Janet or John H. They will always have something that you can help with.

# **This Month's Article**

## **National Bee Unit - 2018 Wales Annual Report**

As it is the start of another year it is always good to review the year that has passed. The following are some extracts from the National Bee Unit Wales Annual Report for 2018 the full report can be read at

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/searchResults.cfm>

### **The 2018 Season**

I was listening to the food programme on Radio 4 recently about UK wine being such a success story this year, thanks to an exceptionally warm season running into harvest time in October, and no late frosts. It's billed as the vintage of the century, I thought it could equally have been beekeepers extolling the virtues of a remarkable season! It's been a truly extraordinary year in Wales, so much so that the old timers, and I don't consider myself one yet, reckon it's beaten previous exceptional years hands down eg 2006 & 2013. In Carmarthenshire we've had production hives with 3, 4 & 5 full supers on and in Pembrokeshire 5, 6 & 7 full supers, something not experienced for a long time, and I've heard of similar experiences in other counties further East and North.

After a long cold spring, the nadir being storm Emma setting in on March 1st, added to by the 'Beast from the East', with spindrift snow driven by a biting cold east wind,

we were bowled from survival of the fittest to a glorious May, which saw sycamore nectar and pollen piling into the hives like never before. The predominantly warm and dry weather over the next month meant forage coming in consistently, filling a super or two on strong stocks. There was a June gap in the first half of the month in some areas when the honey flow dropped off, but the nectar producing plants for the main flow, the bramble, clover, and soon rosebay willow herb, didn't disappoint and kicked in rapidly and early with continued warm sunshine in June.

Come July some beekeepers had already taken a crop to release supers and others were wondering whether they'd have enough boxes to keep one step ahead of the honey flow, which just kept on coming. However, it dropped off abruptly in the middle of July as the drought really kicked in and, despite some rainfall resuming, there has not been much excess honey coming in since then. The season was condensed into under three hugely productive months, both with fabulous honey and wax production and also with better queen mating than recent years.

The largely dry autumn has been kind apart from storms in both September and October, causing flooding in some areas. Those that took most of the honey off in the summer have had to feed to ensure the strength of hives going into winter as it's not been replaced to any degree.

***Honey yield:** The average honey crop per hive recorded by the seasonal bee inspectors in Wales from their own areas in 2018 was 56lb, that's twice the figure of last year*

### **Beekeeper numbers**

There are currently 3,444 beekeepers in Wales registered on the NBU's online database Beebase. Between them, they have 19,356 colonies in 4,769 apiaries – an average of 5.6 colonies per beekeeper and 4 colonies per apiary. Over the past 5 years, the number of new beekeepers registering on Beebase in Wales has fluctuated - in 2014 there were 331 new beekeeper registrations, rising to 347 in 2015 and dropping to 246 in 2016, 205 in 2017 and 216 in 2018.

### **Inspections**

This year Wales' Seasonal Bee Inspectors visited a total of 697 beekeepers in 1109 apiaries and inspected 5003 colonies. We also carried out 12 import inspections following up the importation of queens from other EU countries.

### **Disease and Pests**

#### **Notifiable diseases: European Foulbrood (EFB) and American Foulbrood (AFB)**

This season, we found foulbrood in 11 apiaries, affecting 14 colonies. This is a decrease on 2017 levels when 34 apiaries were found with 65 diseased colonies. It represents a 68% fall in infected apiaries and a 78% fall in infected colonies.

The fall in cases of disease is primarily attributable to the clearing up of a major disease outbreak in Mid Wales since 2015 with no new cases in the area this year. The extremely good season will have played a part as well. Beekeepers should not drop their guard but can take some comfort from the fact that the likelihood of their bees being affected by foulbrood remains low: 0.7% (5 in number) of beekeepers inspected were found to have EFB and 0.3% (2 in number) AFB. Being affected by foulbrood remains low: 0.7% (5 in number) of beekeepers inspected were found to have EFB and 0.3% (2 in number) AFB.

## **Varroa**

This year again there have been additions to the Varroa treatments available in the UK. The list of those registered and approved for use by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is available on their web site <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx> together with the Summary of Product Characteristics giving full details of use.

Oxybee Powder and Solution by DANY Bienenwohl is the most recent addition to become available in the UK, the active ingredient being oxalic acid dihydrate, an oxalic acid based treatment applied by the 'trickle' method. As well as the tried and tested thymol varroa treatments such as Apiguard, Api-life Var and Thymovar, oxalic acid treatment is popular not only by dribbling but increasingly by vaporisation. Many associations have invested in applicators and associated PPE to allow members to use oxalic acid sublimation at little cost for this effective treatment.

NBU advice for strong, vigorous colonies is to monitor and control varroa appropriately using biotechnical methods and authorised products as directed. Varroa treatments should be targeted before colonies start to produce their 'winter' bees but monitoring of Varroa levels during the season will help determine whether an earlier treatment is required. Viral damage, which is associated with varroa as they are such good vectors for viruses, will seriously reduce the longevity of the adult bees and so impact on the foraging capability of colonies with a high Varroa infestation level in the summer period. Treated too late in the season, so that the winter bees are affected by viruses or purely weakened by the mites feeding on them, is frequently the cause of colony mortality in the late winter and early spring.

## **Exotic pest surveillance (EPS)**

We carried out 441 inspections specific to exotic pests this year, targeting a combination of identified risk points and random sites. EPS inspections check for Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Tropilaelaps mites and Asian Hornets (AH) as well as being a normal brood inspection looking for foulbrood. The identified risk points are ports, airports, crude hive product importers, fruit and vegetable wholesale markets, larger queen importers and landfill sites associated with imported products. Given the continued presence of Small Hive Beetle in Italy this year and the incursion of the Asian Hornet from across the channel in France, the importance of exotic pest surveillance work cannot be overstated.

We have 15 Sentinel Apiaries in Wales in order to improve our capacity to combat the arrival of pests from abroad. Sentinel apiaries are set up in areas considered 'at risk' where a volunteer beekeeper agrees to monitor their colonies specifically for exotic pests. As well as visual inspection, floor debris from the designated hives is sampled twice a year and tested for Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps. All equipment and paperwork is supplied to the beekeeper who collects samples as directed and sends them to the NBU laboratory for screening. SHB & AH traps are provided and checked at normal colony inspections and noted on a log sheet. Thank you to those beekeepers who currently carry out this work, but also, please do get in touch if you would like to be involved in the future.

**Frank Gellatly** Regional Bee Inspector, Wales | Arolygydd Gwenyn Rhanbarthol, Cymru

# Events for Your Calendar

**The following is a list of the Gwent Beekeepers programme for 2019:**

Gwent Beekeepers Programme of Events 2019			
Month	Date	Speaker /Activity	Topic
January	10th	Anne Rowberry	Spring and Swarm Management (including Demaree)
February	14th	Dr Aled Phillips	Stings and Allergies
March	14th	Marin Anastasov	Comb Change and Wax Recovery
April	11th	Sue Lang	Showing Honey, Beeswax and Other Beekeeping Items
May	12th	Apiary	
June	16th	Apiary	
July	14th	Apiary	
August	11th	Apiary	
September	12th	Ingo Scholler	Honeybee Feeding - Time for a Rethink?
October	TBC	Association Dinner	
November	16th AGM	TBC	
December	12th	Social	

## **Beetradex**

**9th March 2019**

Stoneleigh Park  
Warwickshire

## **WBKA**

**Spring Convention**

**30th March 2019**

Royal Welsh Showground,  
Builth Wells

## **BBKA**

**Spring Convention**

**12-14 April 2019**

Harper Adams University