



Bluebells and Ramsons by Ian Kirk

May 2016

WVBKA Charity Registration Number: 517008

Visit to the Welsh Botanical Gardens Saturday 19th June

We are currently in the planning process for this visit. This is a coach trip, departing from Peterchurch early and returning late afternoon and will involve the trip to the gardens which should be in full bloom. If the weather is not too brilliant we will be able to visit the biosphere. Put this date in your diary, further information and application form is attached.

§

- Diary Dates**
- May 7th/8th**
 - Practical course class 1 & 2
 - May 14th/15th**
 - Practical course class 3 & 4
 - May 21st**
 - Car boot sale
 - June 2nd**
 - Committee meeting
 - June 3rd**
 - talk by Jim Vivian-Griffiths: *Healthy Bees*
 - June 19th**
 - visit to Welsh Botanical Gardens
 - July 16th**
 - talk by Val Vivian-Griffiths: *Queen Rearing*
 - July 15th**
 - BBKA Basic Assessment

§

Queen Colour of the Year 2016 is:
WHITE

WVBKA Association Apiary

We are slowly developing plans for the apiary with a view to increasing the number of hives. However, we have to be mindful of the total number of bees kept in the area and not introduce extra strain on resources. I'm pleased to say that several people have expressed interest in becoming involved with training. There will be a meeting of this group soon to develop a plan to run short workshops on practical beekeeping topics. Further information will follow in the next newsletter.

Peter Woodward

§



by Jon Sullivan

BBKA Basic Assessment

The BBKA run a series of training modules designed to increase the knowledge of beekeeping. This training is open to all members of the BBKA. Before you can start on the modules it is necessary to pass the BBKA Basic Assessment. To take the Basic Assessment you should have managed at least one colony of bees for a minimum of twelve months.

The Basic Assessment syllabus can appear daunting at first glance but closer inspection will show that it merely lists the basic things which all beekeepers should know.

The assessment is both practical and oral and takes place mainly at the hive in a local apiary.

If anyone is interested in taking this test then WVBKA will provide additional training to make sure the candidates are prepared.

For more information contact [Sue Quigley](#) or [Peter Woodward](#) or go to the [BBKA website](#).

§

From Friends of the Earth:

28 great plants for bees

Help get your garden ready for the Great British Bee Count in May. Check out the free guide to 28 great plants for bees, including everything from herbs to trees at <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/28-great-plants-bees>

Great British Bee Count 2016

Join Britain's biggest bee survey from 19th May to 30th June 2016.

Find out more at:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/page/great-british-bee-count-2016-sign-up>

Managing the Swarming Impulse

On 16th April Jenny and Wally Shaw gave a very informative and interesting presentation about controlling swarming. They have a background in investigative biology and when they started beekeeping they approached the challenges in a scientific way. Jenny and Wally were very open about the mistakes they have made along the way and that bees very rarely have read the same books as them. However, they have tried many ideas and now have systems that help them manage swarming.



As this is a natural impulse, they have looked at how to approach this either in a pre-emptive way, splitting colonies before they swarm, or reacting to the building of queen cells in a way that can reduce the number of swarms leaving the hive. Wally gave us the theory and then Jenny followed up by demonstrating how they do it with colour coded brood and super boxes.

It all made sense at the time, but now we have to try and apply this to our own bees. There was a lot of talk about using Snelgrove boards and in case anyone wants to make their own, instructions will be added to the association website.



Jenny and Wally make all their information freely available on the Welsh Beekeepers web site and Jenny recommends reading it and then applying the methods, to make sure all the steps are followed. She advised to print it out and take it with you into the apiary.

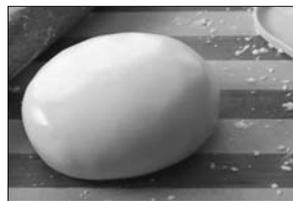
§



Fondant Candy Recipe

Ingredients

- 1kg sugar
- 900ml of water
- 3g (approx) of cream of tartar



Method

Place all the ingredients into, either a non-stick or copper pan and bring to the boil, stirring constantly.

As the mixture begins to boil stop stirring. Clean down the sides of the pan with water and a pastry brush or similar.

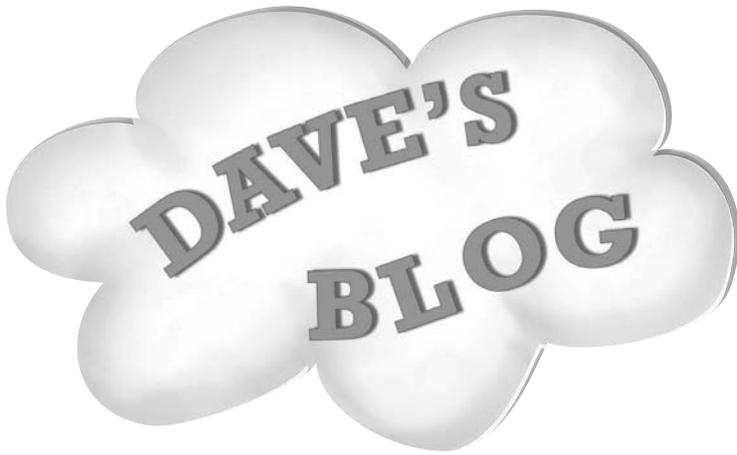
Boil the mixture at 240°C or 'soft ball' (when a small amount of the mix dropped into cold water produces a small soft ball of sugar)

Meanwhile place a heat resistant or stainless steel mixing bowl in a sink of cold water. When the boiling syrup reaches 240°C pour it into the prepared bowl and stir using a wooden spoon or spatula, ensuring the cooling syrup is scraped from the sides of the bowl. As the syrup cools it will begin to assume an opaque appearance and start to solidify. Before it is completely solid, pour the mix into suitable containers.

This recipe produces approximately 1.3kgs of fondant. Preparation time is 1½ hours

NB Take extreme care as boiling sugar can cause serious burns so plunge any splashes to the skin immediately into cold water.

§



May Notes

We are right at the beginning of the season. You'll have already checked your bees for food etc and on a nice sunny day you should be examining to see if you have a viable queen. She should be laying regular brood with a nice pattern, you may well see at this time of year one or two cells which look raised as though she may be beginning to fail. Don't forget that some will undoubtedly be drone layers, there will always be one or two, this is nothing to worry about as you have the whole season in which to correct this problem. Of course the colony will probably not be viable. You will have to work with it to get a nice new laying queen established. Be ready with spare equipment, brood chambers, new frames etc for the impending reproduction of some of your colonies.

You will undoubtedly have a few which will attempt to reproduce; this is not a bad thing as it is nature at work, I personally don't like the word swarming. It's merely the bees trying to get a new queen. Those of you who couldn't make the session with Wally from Anglesey missed an opportunity to gain further knowledge about how bees go about reproducing. Please, please do not put your bees under stress expecting them to do things which are outside their comfort zone. I have mentioned this before but in the last few years we have seen the increased use of various products, all in an attempt to improve their bees. Don't be tempted to join this bandwagon, most if not all of them, are there to catch the unsuspecting beekeeper, making them think they are well ahead of the crowd.

So, if you have a colony which has a drone layer, what should you do with it? Well, before you start any manipulation you should check for disease immediately. Once you've established that it is disease-free then you can set about repairing.

The easiest way to deal with this is first find the queen and remove her – making sure that there are no other queens present at the same time. Then a sheet of newspaper on top of a queenright colony will undoubtedly fit the bill. The brood will hatch leaving you with a reasonably strong colony – job done! This procedure is best carried out using a queen excluder just in case you missed a scrub queen, which is very possible, but one which most beekeepers would ignore.

After four days examine them and you will find that most of the bees will have joined the queen-right colony. At that point you can remove the queen excluder and treat as a double brood. You may wish at this stage to replace four or five combs in readiness for eventual splitting later in the year. I do not, I repeat, I do not recommend wholesale renewal of brood comb. This is putting bees under huge stress and should be avoided. That is not to say that you shouldn't replace some comb but you do need a strong colony with a good income and plenty of bees to draw and build that comb, which they should do providing everything else is equal. "Oh, that's fine but what about the swarm?" I hear you say, they seem to go ahead on empty comb without setback what so ever. There is a very simple answer; they have no brood and they have an abundance of bees, all waiting to get on and establish a new home. Don't be under any illusion, this does mean that the bees will have to be fed a minimum of two gallons of syrup to draw those combs and get them nicely established. Once again I hear people talking about comb drawing. There is no doubt whatsoever that comb will be drawn better above a brood chamber, the resulting warmth from the cluster will help the comb building of the bees no end and they will build the comb right to the bottom of the frame.

Work with your bees and they will work with you, don't put them under stress. Don't expect them to do more than they would do naturally. Generally, young vigorous queens will do better in their first year, possibly not reproducing. Remember that all activities are governed by temperature and available forage, bees do not need training, they do this readily and passionately in order to survive – it is their basic instinct.

Dave

WVBKA Officers for 2016-17

Chairman:

Peter Woodward
peter_woodward@tesco.net
wvbkachairman@gmail.com

Vice Chairman:

David Williams 07875 426089

General and Honey Show Secretary:

Susan Quigley 01981 510183
New House Farm, Michaelchurch Escley, HR2 OPT
quigley.susan@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

Lee Howarth
47a Crossways, Peterchurch, HR2 OTQ
wvbkamembers@gmail.com

Librarian:

David Williams

Association Apiary Manager:

- TBC

Newsletter Editor:

Tim & Belinda Dale
beedale@outlook.com

Committee:

- David Bannister
- Geoff Dutson
- Jane Matthews
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams
- Suzanne Wenczek

Catering Committee:

- Rosemary Bashford
- June Williams

Mentoring Team:

- Geoff Dutson 01981 500491
- Cliff Rose 01981 251844
- David Williams 07875 426089
- Peter Woodward 01981 240280

Technical Advisers:

- Gareth Baker 01600 714323
- Dave Williams 01981 550320
- John Howarth 01981 550733

Website Editor:

Greg Fisk

Honorary Auditor:

Mike Price

§

Healthy Bees talk – Friday 3rd June at 7pm

Jim Vivian-Griffiths is a former member of WVBKA and has been involved with us over a long period. Jim is a Master Beekeeper and is part of the training team in the Dean Forest Beekeepers Association. Jim will be talking about the importance of keeping your bees in a healthy condition and how to recognise signs and symptoms that need to be addressed. This is another very important education opportunity for all members to understand a bit more about the management of their bees.

We are trying to link this talk into a social event for members. Further details and the location will be available shortly and we will contact members via email or post details on the association website.

§

Golden Valley Apiary

Long Lane, Peterchurch
Agents and stockists of Thorne's beekeeping equipment: Honey jars, Varroa treatments, Sheriff bee suits etc. all at competitive prices.

Dave and June Williams: 01981 550320

Remember to phone first!

§

Car Boot Sale – Saturday 21st May

Despite the poor weather last year, we are optimistic for better conditions this time. We will be holding the car boot sale on Saturday, 21st May and are again inviting local beekeeping and gardening associations to take pitches. If you have surplus beekeeping kit or too many seedlings and plants then bring them along to the sale and get a bit of cash back. Alternatively, come and grab a bargain.

The sale will be held at Ewyas Harold memorial hall car park starting at 10am. There is a poster for the car boot sale attached to this newsletter – if you have the opportunity please display it on your local notice board.

§

Please note that in order to save on the costs of ink, the images contained in the printed version of this newsletter will be in greyscale.