



Photo: Sunset over Shenmore by Bee Dale

August 2021

WVBKA Charity Registration
Number: 517008



Obituary - Ernest Morgan

We are very sorry to tell you that Ernest Morgan passed away on the 7th July aged 98. Ernest had been a member of the WVBKA since its beginning. Many of you would have met him at our 40th anniversary party at Poston Mill where we held our last Honey Show. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word. Ernest hosted many association meetings in his garden over the years when his late wife June was alive. He was also our Auditor for many years working with several Treasurers. He had a great sense of humour, always putting on our Christmas card, *'still in the waiting room!'* Ernest's funeral took place at Dorstone church on the 27th July. We will always remember him with great affection as a friend and as an accomplished beekeeper.

June



Diary Dates 2021

Apiary meeting dates:

- 6th August
- 17th September
- 19th November



Queen Colour of the Year

2021 is: **WHITE**

Notes from the Chair

Leaving, what's turned out to be a manic swarming season behind us, July has also proved to be a busy month for WVBKA members. We welcomed several new members into the association, ran a number of successful practical workshops at Shenmore (our intro course students getting two opportunities to handle the bees and gain in confidence as beekeepers) and some of us took our first extractions of honey – glowing jars of amber nectar being proudly uploaded on WhatsApp.

Social opportunities are also increasing, and as I write this, Patricia and I are putting the final plans together for the first real opportunity for all association members to meet up for a very long time – too long. Our 'Bee Safari' will take place in Breinton this year.

Juliet



The Taming of Robin's Bees

In the spring I was contacted by Robin Whalley, a beekeeper of 50 years, who lives high in the hills on the outskirts of Brecon. Robin is sadly having to give up beekeeping due to ill health and as he and his wife had heard that WVBKA had a teaching apiary, he kindly offered some of his equipment to the association for teaching purposes.

Andi and I arranged a meeting to collect a few bits and pieces and whilst there Robin offered us, what he termed, his 'rogue colony'.

A challenge is always good, so we taped and strapped the hive securely and slowly drove home. The brood box looked like it had suffered possible woodpecker damage and so the bees had long since given up using the conventional entrance and were nipping in and out of the hive from numerous points.



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To complicate things further, there was an absence of queen excluder



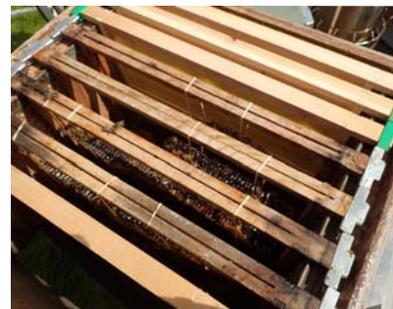
and when we lifted the crown board, we were faced with a super which had been left empty and subsequently filled with comb built diagonally from corner to corner.



'Queenie' had dutifully been laying well at this level, but the comb was firmly cemented to the hive. What to do? We didn't want to lose the brood, so Andi decided that if we cut the wax

from the super, we could suspend the comb in empty frames using rubber bands.

Success! Within a couple of weeks the bees had built around the edges of the 'hung' brood comb and there was practically no sign of the rubber bands, which had long since been discarded.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Robin and his wife Karen, for gifting the association the bees and equipment, and to wish them well for the future.

Juliet



First Practical Beekeeping Session

On Thursday 1st July I found my way down the lanes from Ross to Shenmore Apiary for my first practical beekeeping session, having participated in the theory day in May. I greeted fellow novice beekeepers Jane and Alison, and experienced beekeepers Juliet, Clare, Peter and Dave, and we got togged up in either our own or in my case a borrowed bee suit. We were shown how to light a smoker and then we set off for the hives. There we divided into two groups and a hive was chosen for each group to inspect.

As we had been warned, I did find the bees noisy as they rose in a cloud around us. I gradually learned to look 'through' rather than 'at' the cloud to the hive itself. Peter pointed out the different cells filled variously with honey, pollen, an egg or a larva, as



well as many other aspects of the hive's construction. I am sure I only absorbed a small portion of what was happening in that busy colony. My overriding impression was the feeling of amazement engendered by coming up very close to a thriving bee colony in mid-summer. Back at the car park, we were shown how to clean up the bee tools and our gloves in soda crystal solution while we chatted about the experience. All together it was a really memorable practical session and I am definitely looking forward to the next one in a month's time. Thank you so much to Juliet, Clare, Peter and Dave for all the friendly teaching and advice.

Felicity Hearn

Practical Beekeeping Course

After June approached me about penning an entry for the August newsletter about the first practical beekeeping session on 3rd July I revisited Candida's piece in last month's issue. I think she did an excellent job capturing my views, and no doubt those of every participant, on how well it introduced us to the art of beekeeping. However, theory is one thing and we were all keen to get down and dirty with the bees!

The documentation that arrived to prepare us for the practical sessions was very timely and comprehensive and included the arrangements to make the session Covid secure and the need to be prepared for adverse reactions to stings. The directions to the apiary in Shenmore included the postcode, the [what3words](#) location and the geo ref coordinates but I needed Peter positioned at a junction to eventually find the site. Thank you, Peter, I might have been driving around until I ran out of petrol. The car park location is now saved in my satnav in readiness for session two.

After lateral flow testing and donning protective clothing, the practical session opened with anxious glances at the sky as we had been told that bees do not like rain! Dave showed us how to light a smoker, explained the tools used to open hives and how to clean them. We then split into groups and moved on to look at our first bees. My group tutor was Juliet and she was made for the role. She explained that she was not an expert and that she was still learning despite five years of practical experience. The first hive we visited was queen-less and as much had already been assumed from the noise that the bees were making before opening the hive. Proof if it was needed, that there is no substitute for experience. What followed was an introduction to supers, queen excluders, brood bodies and the need for hive stands.

Apparently, supers full of honey can weigh tens of kilos so why make life more difficult than you need to. We inspected frames where we observed honey stores.

The second hive opened was complete with a queen. We got our own opportunity to remove some frames and inspect them. We knew a queen was present as there were tiny eggs in some cells and larvae in others and we checked the brood capping for colour and variation. But why did the bees from this hive fly around us in clouds and appear to be so much less docile? OK, another lesson learned – don't stand on the side of the hive where the entrance is! We also managed to see some varroa mites on an inspection board which is nothing to worry about. Most hives seem to be living with some of these tiny mites and building up strong hives allows the bees to handle the problem themselves. Having introduced pest management I should add that we also observed a check for European Foul Brood in some unsealed brood. The sacrificial larvae appeared healthy but were lost in a good cause.

Throughout the session, we had ample opportunity for questions that ranged from feeding the hive in winter, to where to buy clothing and equipment. The tip of the day was don't buy new if you are just starting out, rather buy second hand until you know beekeeping is for you. In conclusion, an excellent introduction to practical beekeeping and a great primer for the second session on 25th July. Thank you to all those involved behind the scenes, as well as those who provided such good support on the day.

Jim Christie



Bulk Buying – Syrup and Jars

It will soon be time to start feeding bees to ensure they have enough stores to get through the winter. What is enough? It is generally considered that a hive will need 40lbs or 20kgs of stores to get through till the spring.

Some types of bees will need more than others, the fast build up types of bees tend to go through the winter with a larger colony size and will require more feed. Depending on how much honey you have left on the bees, you may need to feed very little or quite a lot. You need to assess what is in the hive during an inspection and then plan how much to top up so that the hive has enough food. A full National brood frame will hold 2.2kg or 5lbs of food.

Autumn feeding is usually done with syrup. The syrup can be made up using white granulated sugar or it can be purchased already to feed to the bees.

There are several types of syrup products on the market. They are all similar in that they are sugar solutions that have been treated with an enzyme called invertase to make the sugars more digestible by the bees. They are also a more concentrated solution of sugar than you will be able to mix yourself, which means there is less water for the bees to evaporate off before they can store it.

I am looking into buying syrup for association members to get a good price. As with most bulk schemes the more I can buy the cheaper I can get it. Typically the syrup is supplied in 12 to 15kg tubs and prices vary considerably. If we could buy 60 of these tubs to make up a full pallet I believe I can get the syrup 25% cheaper than you will be able to buy it online.

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DAVE'S BLOG

Notes for August

Winter Feeding

We are fast approaching the end of the honey gathering time. Most if not all nectar secreting plants will be falling off gradually during this period and apart from heather, most of the natural flora is gradually declining. However, this doesn't mean the bees will stop gathering nectar completely during the months of August and September but it is of a reduced capacity, tailing off towards the end of the season. This is a natural progression and any activities by the beekeeper should be kept to a minimum i.e. feeding should reflect what the bees are doing naturally. In other words, you wouldn't expect them to be dealing with copious amounts of syrup late on in the year. This is one of the pitfalls of modern beekeeping; many beekeepers will feed their colony far too late which will inhibit their wintering, putting extra strain on a declining colony. Feed in early September to allow the bees to drive off excess moisture, two pounds of sugar to one pint of water replicates roughly what the honey gathered by the bees is, usually round about 17%. This ratio gives you about the same water content so the bees can take the syrup down without too much additional evaporation of moisture. One of the questions which most beekeepers will ask is how much should I give them? Generally speaking, two gallons of syrup will be sufficient for most of our indigenous bees. However, if you're dealing with a big colony you may have to give three gallons; over the years this has served us well with very little or no starvation. One word of warning though, when you've fed your bees always check they've received the food which you've given them, as there are occasions when food given will disappear. I've forgotten to mention that the bees produced in the autumn put on special body fats to enable them to pass the winter successfully, this is why early winter preparation is important.

Success in Overwintering

I'll give what I think is a recipe for success; the colony should if possible be headed by a good fertile queen, preferably this year's. Good healthy bees will in most cases survive the winter without any problems. Whether your bees are healthy is a matter for you as a beekeeper

to judge. On looking at different colonies over the years you gain a natural ability to judge whether a colony is right but ultimately it'll be your experience and decision. I don't know of any measurement that can be used to ascertain the health of a colony. Of course there are many tools which can be used if you feel you have a problem. You can test for Nosema and Acarine and indeed for varroa mites. All of these have a detrimental effect on the general health of the colony and should be kept under control but of course all these things should be managed well before the end of the season.

History

There is no doubt that bees kept 50 or 60 years ago were subjected to some very harsh winters and seemed to have survived. Whereas in more recent times we are experiencing a warmer climate. I actually prefer it to be colder rather than warmer as the bees will go into cluster on the comb, hardly moving. However, in these warmer times bees tend to break the cluster more readily which doesn't equate to good wintering and is unnatural. The actual number of bees within the colony doesn't appear to make a great deal of difference providing the colony is healthy and queen-right. Over the years we have seen both large and small colonies go into winter, all of which have managed to survive. Of course in the spring there will be a difference in size, this seems to be a natural thing which occurs in most colonies. In times past, we were told that it was bad practice to try and overwinter five frame nucs, now we see many people overwintering nuclei successfully so you see folks things are changing a little.

In Summary

Good, healthy, well-fed colonies that are headed by a current queen will, in most cases, survive the winter without a problem. A colony headed by a young queen will more than likely push on in the spring and build a good viable colony.

Supplements

I personally don't believe in any kind of medicinal supplements, feeding prophylactically or otherwise. Bees should be allowed to survive naturally and build their own natural resistances. We've seen increasing use of various treatments for the control of this or that, please leave them on the shelves where they belong. However if your colony is suffering from a specific problem, that's a different scenario altogether and of course under those circumstances, I wouldn't be opposed to using the appropriate help; diagnose first and treat second.

Dave

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Honey Show Secretary:

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- Geoff Dutson

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- June Williams
- Peter Woodward

Catering Committee:

- Jane Matthews
- June Williams

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- Julie Crickmore
- Juliet & Andi Parker-Smith
- Cliff Rose
- Fletcher Barker
- Andy Strangeway

Website Editor:

- Roger Jenner

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- Mike Price

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Bulk Buying – Syrup and Jars

If you are interested please contact me by phone or email and confirm how many tubs of syrup you want. Depending on how many orders I get I will then look for the best price and if you want to go ahead I will need you to confirm and pay.

Similarly if anyone wants to buy any honey jars the choice is 1lb round jars with lids and 12oz hex jars with lids. Again the price will depend on how many orders are placed, but I will hunt for a good price.

Please let me have your orders by no later than 12th August. peter.woodyward@gmail.com

Peter W

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Opportunity for 'Out Hive' Space

We are a family run farm based very near to Bishops Frome in Herefordshire. We have approximately 200 acres of apple trees that are used to make our own award winning cider, Celtic Marches. We're really interested in helping out with bees and would love to have some hives placed in our orchards. This would help the bee population and also help us to get our trees pollinated.

We're really interested in using honey in a new cider brand but would obviously like to use the honey from bees that have been hived in our own orchards. Do you have members of the organisation who are looking for a location to place their hives?

If interested contact Juliet Wilde:

- Mobile: 07591 208420
- Office: 01885 489812 Ext. 1

Email: Juliet.wilde@celticmarches.com

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