



THE LANCASHIRE AND NORTH WEST
BEE-KEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Liverpool and
Merseyside
Branch

1942-2017

Newsletter

May 2017

Our Anniversary Year!

This year, in fact **this month**, we celebrate **75 years** since the Liverpool branch of Lancashire Beekeepers Association started to meet and operate as a distinct member group. Incredibly, we have several members who have supported the branch and its members for much of this time. You can read all about one of them later.

But this little missive is not enough and in celebration, we plan to publish a booklet on the history of the branch with excerpts from original Minutes, profiles of members both long-standing and more recently joined, interesting anecdotes, tips, recipes, etc. We would like to appoint a sub-Committee to take this forward, ideally composed mainly or entirely of non-Committee members. So if you would be up for some research, writing, proof-reading, editing, arranging publication, illustrating, eliciting information from other members or anything else useful, let us know. Have a chat at the next meeting, drop us an email or pick up the phone.

Academic endeavour aside, the occasion has to be worthy of a bit of cake. So ...

PARTY TIME!

Celebration Anniversary Barbecue

Woolton branch apiary
1st July, 1pm

Save the date!

There will be no charge but it would be useful to have an idea who's planning on coming so that we can make sure there's enough grub

'The Hive'

Cliff and I were at Kew Gardens the other week, visiting 'The Hive', an intriguing installation based on a beehive by artist Wolfgang Buttress. It combines art, science and engineering to stunning effect, exploring and explaining the life of the honeybee in a way that draws you in to a complete sensory experience. A key feature uses acoustic signals recorded in actual occupied hives nearby. The sounds include bees begging for food, and the queen 'piping' after emerging from her cell. A soundtrack incorporates these recordings with haunting orchestral and vocal accompaniment. I bought the cd and listened to it while driving alone through the Lancashire countryside on a sunny Saturday. It was strangely enchanting and unexpectedly moving. The Hive is there until November. And Kew is fabulous any time.



Me and My Girls

So now I can put sounds to the activity of the bees in our best colony when it became queenless recently! No idea what happened. One week she was there, looking lovely and laying fine. The next week, no queen, two capped queen cells, no young brood. Five weeks on, we now, finally have a new queen who has started laying and all bodes well.

Meanwhile we had gingerly shook swarmed the other remaining colony and fed it plenty of thick syrup in its brand new rapid feeder. It was hard to sacrifice the brood but it got rid of both old brown comb and a high varroa load instantly. The bees were soon drawing out new comb and Mrs Queen was laying nicely. Until last week. Now, they too look suspiciously queenless! Arggh!!

BUT, we have just acquired a delightful new colony full of lovely, calm, productive bees and are full of hope. Oh the highs and lows!

Back in the day...

This month's seasonal snippets from branch meetings of yesteryear.

2nd May 1942

The first General Meeting of the South West Lancashire Group (later to be named the Liverpool branch) was held in St Helens. Mr Nicholls explained the new scheme of sub-dividing the County Association as a war time emergency plan.

The 11 members elected to Committee included Mr Shuker and Mr Nicholls, (after whom two of our trophies are named).

22nd May 1946

At the Committee Meeting held at Northway Council School there was discussion about the Lewis' Show. Another item on the agenda was 'Advisors visits', and it was proposed that an advisors class be run under the tuition of Mr Shuker. It was agreed that a dissecting set be purchased for the use of the advisor.

Was this the first incarnation of bee inspectors? Anyway, by September the dissecting set had still not been purchased!

13th May 1954

Mr Nichols said that the visiting postcards were in hand but were not yet delivered. (What were visiting postcards?? Answers on a ...)
Foul Brood Inspections are compulsory in this branch during this year. The methods to be followed were explained. Inspectors are to examine the brood. If disease is suspected make out stand still order in triplicate. Diseased comb is to be sent to Rothampstead, postage prepaid. Rothampstead will reply usually in 48 hrs. If disease confirmed, block entrance and pour in petrol... destroy all except the outer case which must be singed with blow lamp. It is recommended that inspectors work in pairs. (Plenty more detail is given) .

18th Sep 1972

DÉJÀ VU!

Purchase of observation hive approved, £12.

We have this year just followed suit with the purchase of a new branch observation hive. A bargain at £125.

22nd Oct 1984

Rice Lane City Farm gets its first mention for a possible apiary - but with a worry about vandals.

33 years on and we're about to set up our first WBC hive at the apiary. And not a vandal in sight!

Meetings and Events

It was really unfortunate that the weather was so unreliable on the day of our May meeting that we had to cancel it at the last minute. The subject was very topical - nucleus colonies - and there was a lot of interest. At least we have the beginners' nuc now installed in the Woolton branch apiary and Dave Harrison will be calling periodic evening meetings to follow its progress.

At our previous meeting, in a last minute change to the advertised programme, Graham Royle gave us an update on the Asian Hornet. The method used to track the nest in Tetbury last year was carried out with military precision and involved a lot of bee inspectors and other APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) staff.

The efforts were worthwhile and our bees have remained safe from this particular threat so far. The worry is that if (when) the Asian hornet appears in more than one location in the UK we will not have the resources to roll out the same procedure for all sightings. So do be vigilant. Graham also emphasised that varroa is by far the biggest threat to our bees and that it is crucial that none of us take our eyes off that particular ball. We must monitor routinely and treat appropriately using an Integrated Pest Management approach, applying different treatments according to the time of year and status of the bees and following instructions to the letter. Anyone who chooses to let the bees manage themselves puts everyone else's bees at risk as well as their own. Please be responsible.

We have our next meeting at Rice Lane on 17th June with Eric Graham going through the colonies there.

The following events are taking place in the wider area over the coming weeks:

Sunday 4th June **Preston** – Hive opening at Goosenargh, 2pm – 4pm, for directions ring 07939 645 561

Sunday 11th June **Preston** – Myerscough Open Day and Country Fair, Myerscough College, 7am – 5pm

Fri 16th June **Preston** - The Secret Life of a Bee Inspector, Speaker Graham Royle, 7.30pm at Church of the Latter Day Saints, Longsands Lane Fulwood PR2 9PS.

Sat 17th June, **Ormskirk** – Making Increase, 2pm Out Apiary, Fir Tree Farm, Pimbo Lane, King's Moss, St Helens WA11 8R

Sun 18th June **Preston** - Hive Opening and demonstration on making up Brood and Super boxes Ulness Walton 2-4pm. Speakers Bill Helm and Dorothy Todd. **PLEASE RING 01772 601264 TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE**

Sat 8th July, **Preston** - Bee Health Day, Myerscough College, various Bee Inspectors. £10 payable in advance. Go to www.prestonbka.org.uk/diary.html for application details.

Spotlight on ...

Arthur Gillett

Appropriately, this month at the start of our 75th year, we meet our longest-standing member, the inimitable Mr Gillett.

Arthur started keeping bees 67 years ago in 1950. He had come out of the army, having served for 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ years in the Royal Electric and Mechanical Engineers, becoming a Staff Sergeant with the 8th Royal Welsh Fusiliers in Bridport. During this time he was torpedoed but was evidently not much the worse for it! He first came across honey bees in 1948 on holiday in Ireland, but not in the leafy lanes of the emerald isle countryside as you might reasonably expect. Walking down Dublin high street, seeking shelter from a thunderstorm, he and his wife ducked into an amusement arcade. He noticed over the door

where a glass fanlight had been removed bees were flying into a glass cage containing wild honeycomb. He was amazed and set about reading up on bees. Visiting a relative at a rented holiday bungalow in Prestatyn a little while later he noticed three empty WBC hives in the garden and struck a deal with the owner to buy them for £5 (a week's wages!). He got them back to his allotment in Aintree in a purpose-made travelling frame that he made for his motorbike sidecar. He then found that a garden shop in Moorfields happened to sell Taylor's bee supplies - the Thorne's of the day. All he needed then was some bees. He asked a cousin who worked on Bibby's farm on the Wirral if he knew of any beekeepers and it turned out that Ted next door but one had eight hives. Arthur hot-footed it around to see Ted and promptly got stung but came away with a brood and a half of bees. Needless to say, there were no beekeeping courses in those days. Arthur just read all he could, looked and learnt and made most of whatever equipment he needed.

Arthur came across the Liverpool branch of the Beekeepers in 1950, after a short while joining the Committee, on which I think he has served ever since. He was Branch Secretary for many years and Delegate to the Central Council, as well as joining the Central Council Committee, where he became Vice Chair, Chair and ultimately President. He and a fellow member, Frank Baldwin, became the first Foulbrood Inspectors for the whole region, before the BBKA officially appointed Foulbrood Inspectors.

Arthur is reknowned for his honey-, wax- and mead-producing prowess. At the show at Stoneleigh one memorable year he took every prize, including the 'Best in Show' which was presented to him by HRH Princess Margaret. He has now been kindly asked not to enter the shows in order to give the rest of us a look in. Over the years Arthur has passed on his wisdom and expertise to countless 'newbees', experts and specialists alike, including for many years running his own beginners beekeeping courses.

At 98 he's still tending his bees, though only two colonies now, and he is very grateful to John McCann and Andrew Stephenson (his 'apprentice') who both help enormously, particularly with the physical side of things. His colonies are enviably productive and he makes wonderful mead, as well as honey and wax and harvests propolis for health applications (is that his secret elixir?). He is always ready with advice and acute insights into all of our beekeeping questions and traumas. He knows that honey bees will go for red clover late in the flowering period and why (because other pollinators pierce a hole in the bottom of the long flowers, giving honey bees access for a later nectar flow). His bees don't swarm. He invented a special spoon for skimming the scum off the honey. He invariably gets a fantastic honey crop. And we all know Arthur's opinion on poly hives - 'Bees live in wood!'

We are lucky to have such a knowledgeable and charming elder member.

Would you like to be our Membership Secretary?

For the last few years John Heath has done a sterling job of keeping our membership records up to date and accurate. He has decided that he will stand down from the post at the end of this year. The AGM is a long way off yet, but do have a think about whether you would be interested in standing for this position or any other. Being on the Committee is a great way to be really involved with the Branch and to meet more of the members. Have a chat with John or any of the other Committee members if you think you might be interested.

That's it for this slightly bumper issue!

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