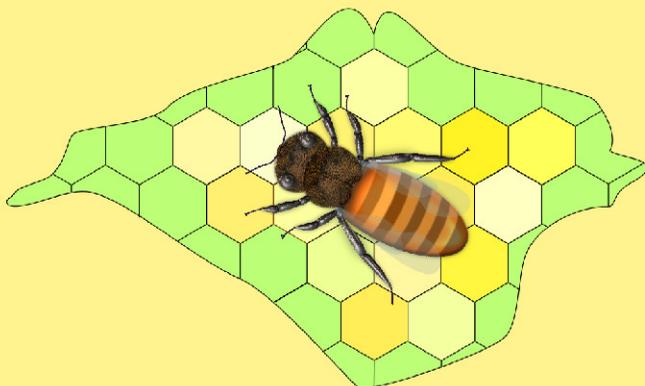


The
Wight Bee



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Issue 113

The word "rape" as applied to oilseed crops is derived from the Latin word *rapum* that means turnip. Today both turnip rapes and the more common swede rapes are grown for their oil and are widely recognised by their bright yellow flowers that can be seen from late April onwards.

UK Agriculture

The Journal of
The Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association
www.iwbka.org.uk

The bright yellow of oil seed rape blossom is breaking out on fields across the island and beekeepers are now deciding whether to take advantage of this by moving hives nearer the fields, or in my case accepting that my bees are already travelling some distance and returning covered in tell-tale OSR pollen. The article by Ian King on pollen on the next page explains why bees will travel so far to these fields.

I am therefore bracing myself for early extraction before the honey crystallises, which means that much of it won't have been capped. The association has a refractometer, currently held by Terry Willis at Adgestone, which I have found invaluable when checking if the honey has ripened enough to be taken. Many beekeepers experience the depressing sight and smell of a fermented batch of honey, but only once, and the refractometer is a great reassurance to those of us who are determined not to let it happen again.

Then of course I have to make sure I don't remove too much honey in case the 'June gap' leaves the bees starving, not forgetting the challenge of swarm control and in my case swarm chasing when my swarm control methods have failed.

All these challenges and many others will be discussed at the apiary meetings between May and August, and the bee safari day on May 30th. Please remember that this year the apiary meetings hosted by individual members need to be pre-booked so we can manage access, parking and the all-important refreshments. Booking will be managed by Christine McClennan on 0790 133 2636 chris@gec-co.co.uk Thank you to the four members who contributed to this issue. Enjoy the coming season of busy beekeeping.

Gillian Belben

The Pollen Loads of Honey Bees

THE POLLEN GRAIN

This contains the male nuclei and is produced by the anthers; each grain contains from 6 to 30 % crude protein. The higher the crude protein percentage, the less pollen is required by the bees to sustain production; therefore pollen with more than 25% crude protein such as clover and vipers bugloss is favored.

Pollen containing from 20 to 25% crude protein such as pussy willow, fava beans and canola (OSR-oil seed rape), are acceptable. Blooms with 20% crude protein and lower such as lavender, thistle and sunflower are overlooked if higher crude protein pollen is available. Looking at these percentages I'm sure we all know that if their favorite OSR is available it will be collected !!

THE POLLEN LOAD

As the honeybee forages for both nectar and pollen, the nectar is stored in the honey crop; and the returning forager will be loaded with her collection of pollen usually held in place on her corbicula (Pollen baskets). Although the honeybee will only source one type of blossom whilst out foraging, once she returns and unloads the pollen will often be mixed with other pollen types in the cells. This can be easily illustrated by removing some pollen from a sealed cell and viewing it under x20/30 magnification.

These dry pollen grains are held in place with the addition of nectar regurgitated from her crop and mixed with the grains whilst being brushed from head to rear legs and finally pressed through the auricle and rake (pollen press). All this happens during flights between blossoms and returning to the colony.

Pollen loads can be stripped off using pollen traps. At present a European IBRA survey is in its second year (CSI Pollen)

<http://www.ibra.org.uk/articles/CSI-Pollen>

To join in all that is needed are 3 pollen traps, which are closed for one day every 3 weeks, with the results reported online. No additional equipment required.

No harm is done to the colony as only a percentage is stripped off; the pollen stripper is 5.1mm in diameter compared to a QE gap of 4.6mm.

The pollen can be returned to the colony after the survey, as a pollen patty. Or it can be eaten or sold as there is a market for British pollen. It is also used in queen rearing as an additional pollen source for the rearing colony.

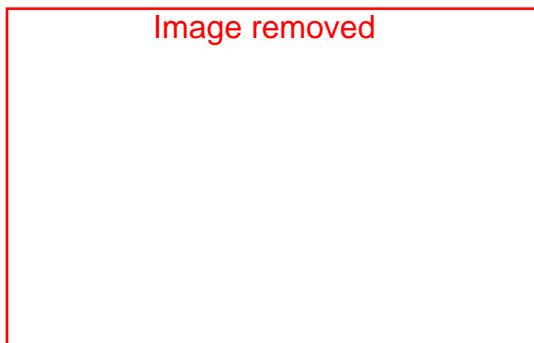
BEE BREAD

Once the forager has off-loaded her pollen into the cells, it's the turn of the house bees to pack the pollen down into the cells and adding small amounts of saliva.

Bee Bread is a fermented mixture of bee saliva, plant pollen and nectar. It is used by house bees as a food for larvae and for young bees and to produce royal jelly. Its nutritional value is increased due to the fermentation process.

It has been suggested that the unique combination of ingredients used to make up the hard nuggets of bee bread contain every nutrient needed to sustain life.

Ian King



Dandelion pollen grains

Colour images of other identified pollen grains can be found on the back page.

My quiet place

My quiet place is loud with song of bees
That throng in dozens round their entrance ways.
This late October day is rich with sun
That warms my bees and me, and gives delight
In labour. Come, sit a while at ease
And wonder how each worker knows which hive
Of five is theirs. Watch how they circle thrice
Then fly with purpose to their task, returning
Plump with nectar or great pollen loads.
A waft of ripening honey tells of wings
That fan to draft the warm air through the combs
And save the precious food for winter use.

I wander home, work-weary, slow of pace,
For all is well within my quiet place.

Elizabeth Van Wyk

The winning poem at the IWBKA Honey Show in 2014

Recipes with honey
Steamed honey sponge

Ingredients

130g runny honey
100g softened butter
100g caster sugar
3 free-range eggs
110g self raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
Custard or cream for serving

Preparation

1. Butter a 1 litre pudding basin, put two tablespoons of the honey in the bottom of the basin.
2. Put the remaining honey and all other ingredients in a bowl and beat together using an electric whisk until well combined.
3. Pour the mixture into the basin on top of the honey.
4. Cover the bowl with a piece of greaseproof paper and a piece of foil, both with a folded pleat in the middle to allow expansion during steaming. Tie the paper and foil layers in place.
5. Put the basin in a large saucepan and pour in enough boiling water to come half-way up the sides of the basin. Put the saucepan lid on, bring to a simmer, and steam the pudding for 1¼ hours until the sponge is risen and springy to the touch. Replace water if necessary.
6. Lift the basin out, remove the paper/foil and run a knife around the top of the sponge to help release it.
7. Turn onto a dish and serve hot with custard or cream.



Island beekeeper interview

Dave Cassell

When do you first remember being aware of bees and honey?

As a very young boy I would watch bees collecting nectar and pollen from a bed of raspberries outside of our kitchen. Honey was a treat and bought locally and not from the shops. It was relatively expensive so we did not eat it often. Sometimes friends of my father would give a welcome jar to us.

What tempted you into beekeeping at first?

I had made several attempts to experience beekeeping with a friend of mine, Les Mosdell, but we never seemed to tie up at convenient times. He was always busy when I was free and vice versa. I met Arthur Johnson who also said I could go out with him one day but I was working on the mainland a lot and this never happened. Looking back, I would have really gained a lot of knowledge from Arthur as I found out when I joined the IWBKA that he was a very proficient beekeeper.

Did you have an easy beginning with lots of help or did you struggle?

My beekeeping debut was rather rushed and unplanned. I was talking with a friend, Brian Holden, who told me he was to spend the afternoon with his bees. Until that moment I never knew that he kept bees. I asked if he would take me one day as I was interested in being a beekeeper. He invited me to the IWBKA auction the following weekend. He would meet me there to guide me if I wanted to make a purchase.

Unfortunately Brian could not make it but had asked Dave Button to sort out this “Newbee.”--- I think I was a thorn in Dave’s side that day, (not quite how he would have put it.—He always called a spade a spade!), as he was busy doing “Committee things” and kept being interrupted by this idiot who wanted to keep bees.

I ended up buying the pretty WBC hive and bees, (my wife’s preference), much against Dave’s advice, but he and Rob Marshall helped me get it into my car boot to get it home. Dave followed me

home and helped unload and install it and was amused at me wanting to keep bees with no bee suit as yet.

That day, Dave passed on to me his extraordinary ability to get stung. It has stayed with me ever since. Bees really don't seem to like me. Two days after the auction, they swarmed, supplying me with my first experience of swarm collection on my own with no spare kit. They went into a cardboard box and then into a nuc which I was able to purchase. Two colonies for the price of one! Dave Button was always around to advise me by phone.

More recently I partnered up with Terry Willis and we were looking after over 80 colonies together for about six years.

What hives do you use and how did you choose which format?

My WBC hive was my one and only to actually keep bees in. I heeded Dave Button's advice and moved on to Nationals although the WBC stayed for some years in the same spot. Were I to start again today I would use Langstroth hives.

How many colonies do you hope to start this next spring with, and what sort of a journey has it been to build them up?

I have 24 at present. I have kept up to 40 colonies but I am now coming down to a more manageable number.

What has been your happiest discovery along the way?

That bees will nearly always make up for mistakes that the beekeeper makes. Even if you kill their queen the repair to the colony is always underway very quickly.

Do you have any 'rules' that you observe every year leading to recommendations you could pass on?

Don't do as I do. I often describe myself as a crisis beekeeper, leaving everything to the last minute.

What has been your worst beekeeping mistake?

Catching swarms whilst dressed in sandals, vest and shorts. – On more than one occasion.

How has beekeeping fitted in with the rest of your life?

It helped me to calm down at weekends after a stressful week at work.

What other aspects of your life are important and enjoyable to you?

I enjoy gardening, fishing and travel.

What is the most surprising thing that others might like to know about you?

I hate extracting honey.

What are your beekeeping hopes and plans for the future?

Just to keep a few hives. Not too far from home.

News from Quarr Teaching Apiary

April update

At the time of writing, the cold spring weather continues so we have only been able to inspect the teaching apiary colonies twice so far. All the colonies have survived, but two sister colonies appeared queenless at first inspection – no eggs or brood, though the bees were not making that characteristic whine that a queenless colony makes. We decided to wait and see; by the following week, one had a few eggs but the other was still barren, though sounding content. Let's leave them another week, we decided..... Compared with the colonies in my own apiary, which is sheltered and gets any sun from early morning until early afternoon, the Quarr colonies are at least three weeks behind. "Always said it was a rubbish site," said one who shall be nameless of the new apiary, but, on balance, it's better than the old one, during the summer at least. I am particularly pleased, having been given dire warnings about using MAQS as the autumn varroa treatment, that the colonies treated with it last August have come through well. We will be using Hiveclean as a diagnostic tool and treatment for varroa during the spring and summer, having been advised by its inventor, Werner Hohl, of its correct use – we met Werner at the National Honey Show last autumn. Dorothy, ever the wheeler-dealer, has bought a box of it at a discount which is available to members at £16 while the stock lasts. You probably already know that BBwear offer a 20% discount to members and that Caddons offer 5%. Dorothy has a small stock of Caddons National and Langstroth equipment in her garage so that members can place their order with Caddons and pick up the order immediately from Dorothy provided it's in stock. For further information on any of these discounts, please contact Dorothy on dorothyhaynes@tiscali.co.uk

I was interested to read recently that a 2014 COLOSS report, based on a study in eleven countries, states emphatically that local strains of honeybees perform better than bees brought in from elsewhere. This supports what we are doing with the colonies for sale at Quarr, using and selecting local strains of bees. Christine does an amazing job assessing and treating the colonies for disease, checking that they are doing well and the queen is productive for at least six weeks before making them available for sale. Unlike the old swarm system, the weak or swarmy colonies are weeded out, with only about 50% of those that arrive being deemed suitable for sale. Anyone wanting to buy a six-frame nuc colony for £135 (I'm told a refund of £20 is given if the box is returned) can contact Chris at chris@gec-co.co.uk

The beginners' theory classes have come to an end and practical sessions started. Unfortunately, enquiries about classes were still being received as recently as a few days ago. Once the bees start demanding our attention, there is no time to run further theory sessions, alas. Four established people so far have registered to take their Basic assessment in July and a few more probably will. An assessor is lined up, though no date set yet. The BBKA has once again offered the Association a subsidised General Husbandry two day course which I hope will be in July. We have enough people interested to go ahead with planning, though more would be welcome. The cost is £50, so if you are interested, please contact me.

Finally, the first apiary meeting at Quarr is fast approaching and even more planning than usual is going in to this one which is on the theme of Bee Health, May being Bee Health month. The microscopy group has agreed to be on site to diagnose acarine and nosema from samples of bees brought in by members. This will involve organizing a generator to power the microscopes, so I would like to know how many members would like to bring along a sample of bees to make this initiative worthwhile. So far, only one person has contacted me. To take a sample of thirty bees, close off the entrance while the bees are flying. Foragers will soon gather in numbers on the now closed entrance and can easily be captured in a matchbox. Please don't kill them by freezing as this makes acarine analysis more tricky; the bees will be killed quickly and humanely on the day. Contact me by email elizabethvanwyk@aol.com if you intend bringing bees along.

Happy bee-keeping!

In celebration of the themes of our recent seminar on pollinators other than the honey bee, here are some fascinating facts to help us appreciate the diversity of insect life:

- In the spring, a new queen bumble bee incubates her eggs in a little nest of straw much like a mother bird. By placing her abdomen over the eggs she is able to control their temperature, speeding up the development of her young. Once the eggs have hatched and the larvae have emerged, she will continue to keep her daughters warm until they are old enough to leave the nest for foraging. In order to retain her sitting position on the eggs for as long as possible she first constructs a little wax pot filled with sweet nectar next to the nest that she can sip from.
- After copulation, a male cuckoo bee in the genus *Nomada* transfers an 'invisibility cloak' of pheromones to his mate that allows her to slip, undetected, into the nest of her host bee species. The entrances of solitary bee nests are lined with a unique chemical signature that serves as a type of intruder detection system for unwanted visitors. However a female cuckoo bee is able to pass by without much trouble thanks to this unique gift.
- Most bees fly during the day. However a few North American species (such as a sweat bee, *Lasioglossum texana*) are able to navigate by the light of the moon and stars, which allows them to collect pollen and nectar from nocturnally blooming plants such as the evening primrose. Nocturnal species have enlarged simple eyes known as ocelli (the 3 small eyes centered between the larger compound eyes) that help them to navigate in very low levels of illumination.
- Leafcutter bees are raised in narrow, tube-like nests that are lined with leaves by their mother. Typically, the bees hatch from the entrance (the last eggs laid) to the back of the nest so that everyone can leave in an orderly fashion. Occasionally, a young bee may 'sleep in' too long, blocking the exit and causing a traffic jam for the remainder of its nest mates. When this happens, the nest mate who is next in line will give her drowsy sibling a gentle nip on the end of the abdomen as a cue that it is time to wake up and get moving.

Landmarks and events of the Isle Of Wight—53
The Furious Driving Plaque



The plaque in the picture stands close to the entrance of Osborne House and commemorates an interesting incident which took place in the vicinity.

In early January 1899 Mr. Henry House, Manager of the Liquid Fuel Engineering Co. of East Cowes appeared before the Newport Magistrates. He was charged with driving his motor Wagonette at a speed greater than eight miles an hour to the public danger. Police Constables Scott and Maber reported that they had compared watches at 10pm and set themselves to detect motor vehicles using excessive speeds in the vicinity of East Cowes. PC Scott stood near Osborne Gates and his colleague stood at the bottom of York Avenue, a distance of 1633 yards.. The accused covered the distance in just 3 minutes at an average speed of eighteen miles per hour.

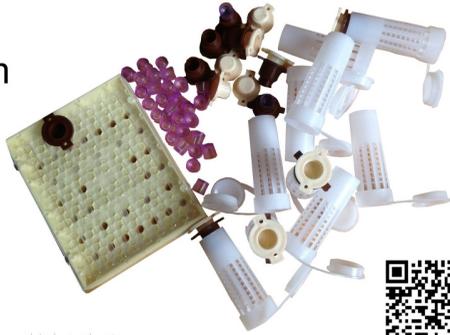
Rob Marshall

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Has anyone heard a cuckoo yet?

In 1947, when he was just starting out with bees,, one of our members was given some advice by an old beekeeper: “In spring don’t open up the hives too early, wait until you hear your first cuckoo”.

If we took this advice today some of us might never open our hives, but it is a timely reminder that if they are flying and bringing in pollen, the bees are fine, they might not appreciate us messing with their temperature-controlled homes.



This is a news item for our Chairman Dave Cassell who hates extracting honey.

An Australian father and son have invented a contraption that lets beekeepers collect honey on tap—without disturbing the hive. Stuart and Cedar Anderson’s Flow Hive is made up of artificial honeycomb cells which can be split into two using a lever. This allows the honey to drain down into a trough, with pipes leading to the exterior.

The Anderson’s launched their concept on a crowd-funding website and within three hours had £500,000—worth of orders.

From ‘The Week’ February 2015

Images removed