



**MONTGOMERYSHIRE BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**

The BeeHolder

Autumn 2022



Shaking the Bees

Editorial

This summer saw an outbreak of European Foulbrood in our Gregynog Apiary. Jill Hill explains how it was dealt with whilst Sian Jones writes about the consequent apiary shook swarm trial.

If you are interested in learning more about beekeeping then turn to our training schedule for 2023 which covers both theory and practical sessions for beginners, improvers and intermediate students.

On a happy note Mal Shears writes that Monty Bees is now a voluntary conservation area for the native honey bee - it's official!

Finally, many of you will know Brian Goodwin, the President of the Shropshire Beekeepers Association who is the subject of this issue's 'In the Frame'.

Carolle

www.montybees.org.uk

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National hives in cedar and pine

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EFB in the Gregynog apiary

It was all going so well. Ten strong colonies came through winter and during a hectic swarming season, successful splits meant we avoided losing bees and made increase. Mal Shears, our Monty Bees alternative beekeeping representative, also populated the Warre and Kenyan Top Bar Hives. The end of June found the association apiary thriving with 17 colonies, managed by a team of ten volunteers led by Mark Swain. Mark was concerned that maybe we had too many colonies and that we'd have to do something about this later in the season. Be careful of what you wish for!

On July 3rd, some dodgy looking unsealed brood was found in one of the splits by Simon Anderson and Jill McAloon. Well-spotted as Jill and Simon only started beekeeping last year. The apiary was immediately put on voluntary lockdown until Seasonal Bee Inspectors Paul Aslin and Liz Childerley inspected the apiary on July 5th. EFB was confirmed and the apiary was put on formal standstill, with a date arranged the following week to shook-swarm all the colonies.

The apiary team met at Gregynog on Sunday 10th July to prepare for shook-swarming all the colonies on Tuesday 12th when every colony would need to be shaken from all the frames into a completely clean hive. All the frames, honey and brood included, would be burnt and the floor, brood box, supers, crown board and roof would be scraped and scorched, ready for the next colony to be shaken into.

It was one of the hottest days of the year and we had 132 brood frames to assemble; not ideal conditions for handling sheets of wax foundation! We decided to unite some of the smaller colonies as they were unlikely to survive being shook-swarmed and it also meant we had some equipment ready for scorching and use immediately when Paul and Liz arrived on the 12th. Other preparations included strimming the apiary and ensuring there were no trip hazards. A risk assessment for digging a fire pit in the field nearby was requested by the Gregynog Hall management after getting permission from the tenant farmer. We

decided to expand this to include all the hazards involved in the whole process that we could identify. Fore-warned is fore-armed! Mark and Chris Wyton prepared the fire pit late on the Monday evening and Owen Pugh, Gregynog ground manager, was very helpful in identifying a safe area to use and lent us netting to put round it to stop anyone falling in it.

Five of the apiary team were available to help Paul and Liz perform the shook-swarm on the 12th. We allocated individual responsibilities, so we weren't all tripping over each other.



Brian Norris was nominated fire pit manager which on reflection wasn't very tactful as he'd recently had a bad fire on his property, but he took it in good spirit and did a safe and efficient job all day. Chris scraped every bit of kit taken from each hive, giving it to Liz to scorch before it was used again.

Joy Sisley accompanied Paul and recorded all the frames removed and destroyed. Mark was "clean" and in charge of assembling sterilised kit ready for Paul to shake bees into. I volunteered to be "dirty", collecting all the dirty equipment and taking it to Chris to scrape. We had a system which worked well but it was hard work in the incredible heat we were experiencing.



As you can imagine, the bees weren't impressed but actually, we didn't have the clouds of angry bees stinging anything that moved within a half-mile radius that we expected. We had put up notices in the area to warn the public anyway.

We started at 10am and finished at 4.45pm, a long exhausting day, and emotionally draining seeing the disruption to our bees and the loss of all the brood, honey and comb they had made. Joy had provided a picnic for midday which sustained us, along with lots of water and cakes.



During the standstill period when nothing could be moved from the apiary and we had to cancel training visits, the team took the opportunity to have a thorough spring-clean of the apiary. We'd had a mouse-problem in the bee shed so this was cleared out completely, gaps filled in and everything (I mean everything) was taken out and scrubbed in washing soda solution. Old defunct and broken equipment was destroyed. The apiary was now clean and tidy, and we waited in trepidation for the SBIs to return to check the apiary was clear of EFB.

Hurrah! The apiary was given a clean bill of health on 31st August and the standstill notice removed. However, it was not all good news. From 17 colonies at the beginning of July, we now have just six colonies going into winter. The response to shook swarming was very disappointing and particularly sad was the loss of the Top Bar Hive colonies. Thankfully, the BDI covered the cost of the replacement frames and the loss of honey, as we were fully covered for all the hives.

Certainly, this is a message to convey to all our members- make sure you calculate how many colonies you are likely to accumulate throughout the season when renewing your membership. Better to be over-optimistic and make sure you are covered than find you are under-insured later in the year and get no compensation if the worst happens.

Jill Hills

Whole Apiary Shook Swarm Trial

Bee Diseases Insurance Ltd (BDI) and the National Bee Unit (NBU) launched a two-year trial in 2021 to encourage the use of whole apiary shook swarm as a means of reducing the reoccurrence of European Foulbrood (EFB). The full cost of the pilot scheme will be funded from BDI reserves and will not result in any increase in subscription rates during the period of the trial. The MBKA apiary at Greygynog has been included in the trial.

EFB is a statutory notifiable disease of honey bees which is highly infectious and persistent, being caused by a bacterium *Melissococcus plutonius* which has a latent stage where colonies may be infected but be non-symptomatic at the time of inspection, the disease showing months later or even in the following season. Beekeepers are legally obligated to report any suspected diseased colonies to the NBU with infected colonies normally being destroyed or shook swarmed when a local bee inspector confirms EFB. Equipment and honey destroyed following inspection can be subject to compensation provided by BDI.

As viable bacteria can exist on old combs and woodwork left in an apiary ready to re-infect other colonies it makes EFB more of an apiary disease than an individual colony disease therefore the Whole Apiary Shook Swarm procedure is highly effective in controlling EFB in colonies with low levels or no clinical signs of disease.

A review of BDI and NBU records shows that EFB frequently reoccurs within an infected apiary. In an attempt to break the cycle, the two organisations are encouraging the use of shook swarming of non-infected colonies. The National Bee Unit states: "Trials have shown that shaking bees onto new foundation and then destroying the old combs can be beneficial when controlling European foulbrood. Shook Swarming may also be beneficial in controlling *Nosema* spp., chalk brood and *Varroa* mite populations. Colonies treated in this way often become the strongest and most productive in an apiary. Some beekeepers are now using this system to replace all the old brood combs in a beehive within a single procedure."

The NBU and BDI will analyse the results in general and the re-occurrence rates in particular at the end of the study. These will be used to assist in the guidance issued for dealing with EFB in future. Source Bee Diseases Ltd website www.beediseasesinsurance.co.uk

Sian Jones

The National Bee Unit needs YOU to update your records!

The National Bee Unit and the Scottish Bee Health Team are again asking beekeepers to take part in the National Hive Count and update BeeBase your colony numbers. Almost 9,000 beekeepers completed the Hive Count in 2021. This information is vital for our planning and preparation for outbreaks of disease or exotic pests. It is very important, for example, that we do all we can to keep levels of foulbrood to a minimum. Knowing the number and location of beekeepers, hives and apiaries helps to inform where Bee Inspectors should be deployed. This applies in relation to familiar pests and diseases and to more recent threats such as the damaging invasive species Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*).

We will also use the figures we have on BeeBase to monitor honey bee populations over time. Having up to date records that reflect the current position in each year is vital and allows us to monitor changes. For this, it is important we ask all beekeepers to notify us of the number of hives owned on 1st November 2022. Using this date helps us to ensure consistency across the country by reflecting the national position at a single point in time. If you had no colonies at that date, it is important to update your BeeBase record to confirm this. Please provide this information by 31st December 2022 <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/secure/beekeeper/hiveCensus.cfm> If you have not yet registered on BeeBase you can do so here www.nationalbeeunit.com

Welcomed back to Shrewsbury BKA apiary



It was lovely to welcome Brian Goodwin and his wife Daphne to our annual lunch earlier this year, and as he left, Brian extended a warm welcome to Monty Bees to visit Shrewsbury BKA apiary again. Remembering the generous tea laid on by Daphne, we eagerly accepted! We last visited before Covid, which seems a long time ago as so much seems to have happened since then. Looking at photos taken on that occasion, I was sad to see our dear late Chair Pete Elvis loitering at the back of the group trying to keep a low profile as usual!

The apiary is situated in Nobold Lane in Shrewsbury and although you drive through a built-up area to get to it, once there it feels like you are in the middle of the countryside. The apiary is on the site of 9 old wells dating back to 1556, which used to provide clean water for the town. Despite the unprecedented hot weather and lack of rain, the wells were full to the brim and the surrounding grounds were lush and green, rich in wildlife.

Brian took us on a tour of the wells and old buildings, giving us a history of the site and how Shrewsbury beekeepers were lucky enough to claim it. Apparently, it was in a pretty poor state when they took it over, attracting vandals and drug-users to the derelict buildings. A team of beekeepers with a comprehensive range of skills got together to clear the area and renovate the old pump house and now have, for a tiny rent, a superb apiary and facilities for training, storing kit, extracting honey, and having tea-parties for envious beekeepers from other BKAs!

As before, we finished our visit with a slap-up tea provided by Daphne and lots of laughs and conversation. It was a very enjoyable afternoon with something for everyone, even the non-beekeepers who tagged along.

Monty Bees Training Programme 2023

Did you know that Monty Bees has a very successful education and training programme that includes both theory and practical training? Training is led by Rachel Kellaway, assisted by Simon Anderson, both are committee members and members of the apiary team.

We run training for beginners through to intermediate beekeepers. We also have a number of association members completing further qualifications through the BBKA including the Module examinations, Honeybee Health, and the Basic Assessment through the WBKA. This season 8 members of the association successfully passed the Basic Assessment Award and our assessor commented on the excellent level of knowledge and practical skills that all candidates demonstrated.

If you would like to express an interest in any of the training listed below, or would like to discuss other training opportunities please make contact by emailing Rachel and Simon on training@montybees.org.uk Further information can be found on Monty Bees website www.montybees.org.uk

Training Dates and Cost 2023

Beginners £130 per person for the full course, Improvers and Intermediate £100 per person for the full course. There are concessions for attendees who come from the same household.

Beginners (new to beekeeping): Saturday 11th March 9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. at Plas Dolerw, Milford Road, Newtown, SY16 2EH.

Theory Topics covered: siting an apiary, the colony of bees, records and record keeping, varroa, hygiene, NBU and role of bee inspectors, resources.

Practical Gregynog Hall & Apiary, Tregynon, SY16 3PL: Dates for both practical sessions (possibly April) and times to be confirmed when course numbers are finalised.

Practical Part 1, Topics covered: how to light a smoker, fuel and safety, how to make a frame with foundation, suits, gloves and basic tool kit for the first year, the wooden national hive, practical considerations in an apiary, hygiene and stings.

Practical Part 2, Topics covered: a first look in a colony of bees, the routine of kitting up, lighting a smoker.

Improvers (1+ years beekeeping): Saturday 4th February 9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. at Plas Dolerw, Milford Road, Newtown, SY16 2EH.

Theory Topic covered: plans for the year, kit for the year, spring inspection, growth of a colony, swarming, queen problems, artificial swarm, making increase, brood diseases, adult bee diseases.

Practical at Gregynog Hall Apiary. Spring inspection, how to do a disease inspection, finding the queen, artificial swarm methods, making increase. Likely to be in April. Date and times to be confirmed when course numbers are finalised

Intermediate Saturday 25th February 9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. at Gregynog Hall

Theory Topics covered: Managing comb, Bailey comb change, shook swarm, queen problems, finding the queen, disease inspections, splitting on swarm cells (queen rearing), healthy bees, bee behaviour (Communication by sound).

Practical at Gregynog Hall Apiary. Date and times to be confirmed when course numbers are finalised. This is likely to be in May.

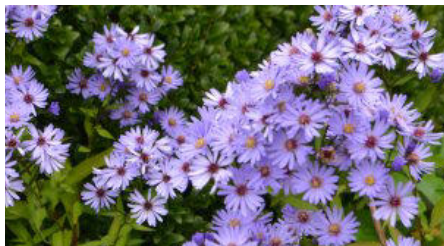
A Note on Practical Sessions Every effort is made to stick to the agreed dates and times for practical sessions, however, the welfare of the bees is paramount, and if the weather is not suitable to open the hives, the sessions cannot take place. A replacement time and date will be agreed if this happens.

Simon Anderson

The Garden - Daisy, Daisy

Just as our flower gardens are winding down one group of plants is coming into flower. Michaelmas daisies are named after the ancient festival of St. Michael and All Angels, the day in the Christian calendar which is the third of the calendar's quarter days and a time for Goose Fairs to celebrate the changing of the seasons.

Their flowers, which match the Greek word 'aster' meaning star have been with us since John Tradescants introduced them after his voyage to North America in the 17th century. Now botanists have removed the most well-known of our Michaelmas daisies from their familiar home in the aster family, so you must turn to the newly named *Symphotrichum novi-belgii* which is native to the woods of New York State and *S. novi-angliae*, a denizen of New England. These are what we have in our mind's eye when we think of Michaelmas daisies and for beekeepers they are a nectar rich source blessed with a myriad starry flowers on every stem. If there is one word of warning it is that the *novi-belgii* group are prone to mildew although this doesn't affect the flowers nor does it lessen the vigour of the plants and perhaps this should also be a warning, both can overwhelm a border for they are 'runners' sending out underground shoots.



In the further reaches of a big garden this is no problem but those tall cumulus clouds of flowers come at a cost of space if a garden is small. There is a solution, several in fact for at just over knee height the aptly named 'Little Carlow' produces its clouds of violet-blue flowers at a

civilised height. It is a cultivar of *Aster cordifolius* for not all Michaelmas daisies come from the New World nor do you have to wait until Autumn for them to flower.

The best of all in my opinion is *Aster x frikartii* 'Mönch' which begins to flower in July and is a plant for a pot or the front of a border being knee height. It has nothing to do with America being a cross between the long flowering, low growing Himalayan *Aster thomsonii* and the Italian *Aster amellus*. It made its first appearance fleetingly in Victorian times, was lost until reintroduced by the Swiss plantsman, Herr Frikart in the early decades of the 20th century.

Carolle Doyle



Candle-rolling fun

Local beekeepers Rob Ritchie and his partner Pippa showed a group of people living with dementia and their carers what is involved with keeping bees. They suggested Monty Bees got involved too and so Sian Jones, Jill McAloon and I found ourselves at the Evangelical Church on Llanidloes Road, Newtown on 5th July, armed with packets of coloured wireless wax foundation and wicks. It was a good job there were 3 of us as the participants soon got the hang of rolling their wax sheets and we had our work cut out keeping up with demand for more wax and wicks! We shared lunch with the group afterwards and left them with their candles, a small pot of honey from Rob and a knitted bee made by a couple of the participants. Great fun and no risk of stings!



Jill Hill

MBKA Now a Voluntary Conservation Area!

 CGLLE	<p>Cymdeithas Gwennynwyr Llŷn ac Eifonydd</p> <p>Ardal Gadwraeth Gwirfoddol (AGG) y wenyen fêl frodorol</p> <p>Cefnogwch yr AGG hon trwy gadw gwynen mên lleol</p> <p>Cefnogir yr AGG hon gan aelodau Cymdeithas Gwennynwyr Llŷn ac Eifonydd</p> <p>Am ragor o wybodaeth: www.e-voice.org.uk/llebka</p>	 LLEBKA	<p>Lleyn & Eifonydd Beekeepers' Association</p> <p>Voluntary Conservation Area (VCA) for the native honey bee</p> <p>Please support this VCA by keeping local honey bees</p> <p>This VCA is supported by members of Lleyn & Eifonydd BKA</p> <p>Further information: www.e-voice.org.uk/llebka</p>
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In the September 2022 meeting of the MBKA committee, a pleasant duty was to consider the feedback of our members following our consultation with them over the recommendation that we declare MontyBees' own geographical patch a Voluntary Conservation Area (VCA) for the native honey bee. Not a single voice was raised against this, heartening the committee that both they and the membership are in tune in their desire to manage and support bees in a way that is thoughtful and sustainable: protecting this fascinating creature's locally-adapted genes and ensuring their healthy continuation ahead. In line with this approach MontyBees will amongst other things encourage and support breeding practices that, drawing upon good practice and research evidence, are most likely to ensure the relationship between bee and beekeeper continues well into the future.

In recent years the support for the preferential cultivation of locally-adapted honeybees has become overwhelming; endorsed by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association, the Welsh Bee Keepers Association and the British Bee Keepers Association amongst many others, the latter for example stating in BBKA News in 2020: "Readers are reminded of the BBKA's position of discouraging the importation of queen bees and colonies from outside the UK". Even Buckfast Abbey, home of Brother Adam's famous 'Buckfast Bee', now favour instead the breeding of a more locally-adapted variety! Most advanced in the development of VCAs is the island of Ireland, with 18 Irish Bee Keeping Associations (BKAs) there already having signed up to the cause of protecting indigenous bee purity, and lowering the risk of importing novel pests and diseases such as hive beetle and of course the infamous varroa.

MBKA are very proud to be only the second of all Welsh BKAs to take this important step, following the inspiring lead of Lleyn and Eifonydd BKA, but we hope that many others will soon be joining us!

Mal Shears

Long Hive

After seeing various versions of long hives, from the rough and ready, versions made with breeze blocks and the super duper commercial ones, I decided that I would make my own version. One of the deciding factors was having the ability to work at one level, particularly with regard to heavy supers at more than chest height as in the case of British National setup.



The basics are an open mesh floor with plastic L pieces below for Varroa boards, a long brood box divided into two compartments with a very tight fitting board central and a hinged roof. A couple more dividing boards were made up and entrance discs on the front of the hive so two nucleus compartments could be made up if needs be. The roof was made with sufficient room for feeders and insulation to fit in.

I have seen long hives fitted with gas struts for the roof, but decided they weren't needed on the KISS principle (keep it simple stupid), just built in some stops to keep the roof open when inspecting. Only one colony at the moment which was a swarm from a bait hive so it is still work in progress.

Peter Storey

Bees in the News

Asian Hornet Sightings Autumn 2022

September - Asian hornet confirmed in the Rayleigh area of Essex. A local Asian Hornet Team member in the Rayleigh area of Essex captured three hornets and reported this using the Asian Hornet Watch app. National Bee Unit inspectors were dispatched to the location to carry out enhanced surveillance and the hornets were confirmed as Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*). An Asian hornet nest in a sycamore tree was killed in the Rayleigh area of Essex on Friday the 30th September and removed the following day. Monitoring will continue in the area supported by local beekeepers.

October - Credible sighting of a single Asian hornet in Dover, Kent. National Bee Unit inspectors are carrying out enhanced surveillance in Dover in response to a clear photo of an Asian hornet taken by a member of the public.

The National Bee Unit is encouraging beekeepers to remain vigilant, especially near ivy in full flower which is particularly attractive to *Vespa velutina*. Where possible, a photo, the location and a description of the insect should be included. Please report sightings of *Vespa velutina* using the 'Asian hornet Watch' app for iPhone and Android. Further information regarding the Asian hornet can be found on the Asian hornet page of BeeBase www.nationalbeeunit.com.

Telling the bees

The Daily Mail reported that royal beekeeper John Chapple complied with an old tradition by telling the bees that their mistress the Queen had died, and they now had a new master, King Charles 3rd. He knocked on each hive at Clarence House and Buckingham Palace and told them "The mistress is dead, but don't you go. Your master will be a good master to you". Apparently, if you don't inform your bees of a change in ownership, they will abscond and you won't get any honey!

Bill Turnbull

Beekeepers were saddened by the news that broadcaster and keen beekeeper Bill Turnbull died on August 31st after a 5-year battle with prostate cancer. Bill was well known as a journalist, radio and TV presenter, and Strictly Come Dancing contestant among other things. But he also kept bees for about 30 years, inspired after a swarm landed in his garden and was competently collected by a local beekeeper. His book *The Bad Beekeeper's Club* was a joy to read, and many beekeepers may recognise the mistakes and mishaps he describes in his journey to become a beekeeper. He was patron of Bees for Development and was a great promoter for beekeeping through his involvement in local and national events, including running the London Marathon dressed in his bee suit.

The healing properties of honey

Scientists at Manchester University have reviewed over 250 articles published since 1937 relating to the use of honey as a healing agent for wounds. Research is ongoing to identify what honey contains to give it its antimicrobial and healing properties, and to confirm the quantities needed, with a view to using honey to treat wounds and to reduce the reliance on antimicrobial drugs. Resistance to conventional therapies is an increasingly significant problem globally so the use of honey as an effective topical treatment for all types of wound is attractive.

Honey has been used in promoting healing since ancient times but only recently has science begun to identify why it works. It contains phenol, defensin-1 and methylglyoxal, but its acidity, low water content and ability to generate hydrogen peroxide are important properties. Its consistency also acts as a barrier over the wound, keeping it moist and protected. Honey on toast will never be the same!

Jill Hill

Brian Goodwin - In The Frame

Brian Goodwin's story is so intertwined with the Shropshire Beekeepers Association that it is difficult to write about one without the other although the Association goes back to 1878 and Brian's story begins 80 years ago when he was six, standing behind his father as he tended the bees. Brian got stung but it didn't put him off and when his father died twenty years later Brian inherited the bees and his life with the Shrewsbury Beekeepers Association began. Brian became Secretary shortly after joining and after 15 years as Secretary became Chairman and is now President which, in effect, means that he has always been at the very heart of the Association from its small beginnings of 35 or so members to the current membership which is something over 400.



As a lecturer by profession education was and still is part of his life which is perhaps why Brian didn't simply take over his father's five hives but set about studying to take the NBKA exams which would be considered common place today but was unusual in the years after the second world war. Formal courses on beekeeping were rare and old practices lingered. Brian recalled those days with a telling anecdote about the tragic death of the then chairman when a packet of Cymag, the cyanide based gas used to destroy wasps, that he was carrying became activated when it accidentally got wet.

It was a time when the Association was still small enough for members to play host at each other's apiaries although the membership was steadily growing. Walford College provided a shed and a site for beehives although, not being open at weekends, its use was limited. The government of the time being keen to promote beekeeping

provided free sugar to beekeepers and installed a Beekeeping Instructor in every county. Neither initiative lasted long, the sugar was dyed green to stop wily beekeepers selling it on and Shropshire's County Instructor did very little so that when the council removed both the man and his job, he wasn't missed.

By the early 1970s the Association was outgrowing its space and in one of those serendipitous moments Brian who was chairman and also head of Radbrook College sensed an opportunity to base the Association at the College with its spacious grounds and facilities. Just as the membership grew and blossomed in the new facilities so his own apiary had grown from five WBC hives to 20 of which half-a-dozen out apiaries lay handily along the roads he took to and from the college so that Brian could visit them as he came and went from work.

Brian retired 28 years ago and since then the College's grounds have shrunk due to development until it was time for the Association to move on. Scouting around for a suitable site Brian remembered a place from his childhood. Land where he used to play on the outskirts known as Conduit Head for it had provided Shrewsbury's water since 1578 and is home to the disused Victorian pumping station. As far as the council was concerned it was a liability, open to vandalism with the building covered in graffiti.

Little wonder then that the council readily agreed to lease the site out to the Shropshire Beekeepers Association for 99 years at a peppercorn rent. The first thing to be done was to erect a security gate and make the place the Association's own. With over 400 members the place is buzzing with volunteers on hand on Wednesday and Saturday mornings throughout the year. Incidentally, the shop sells a range of equipment at discounted prices because it is able to buy in bulk and non members are welcome to come and browse and buy.

Volunteers are also very much a part of the Shrewsbury Flower Show which Brian sees as the public face of the Association and a chance to engage with the public. No doubt if you go along you will see him there for some of the honey will surely be his. His fascination with bees is as great as it was when he stood behind his father.

Carolle Doyle

MBKA Committee

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Please feel free to contact any member of the committee with any questions, or if you can volunteer time to help with any aspect of the association.

For website input or issues contact David at webadmin@montybees.org.uk