

Western Galloway Beekeepers Association members recently celebrated its 90th Anniversary by the cutting of a cake by honorary member Jim McColm

The Beginning

The first meeting was held on 2 June 1934 at The MacMillan Hall, Newton Stewart with 20 members present and Mr R Hamilton of Glenrazie as Chair.

Almost a year later, the club was officially formed on 23 April 1935 and with the aim to foster cooperation and education within the local branches.

‘The Western Galloway Association’ was unanimously agreed by the people present, it would cover the whole of Wigtownshire and the western district of Kirkcudbrightshire, west of the river Fleet. 15 members joined immediately, paying the subscription of 2/6d on the spot!

The branches formed within the association were: Newton Stewart, Kirkcowan, Wigtown, Glenluce, Creetown, Minnigaff and Whithorn

Membership figures rose to a maximum of 332 in 1947 – this could have had something to do with the fact that rationing was still in place! During this time, beekeepers were known as ‘sugar beekeepers’!

Glenrazie Shield was donated by Mr Hamilton to be presented to the branch judged to have shown most activity during the year.

1942 – 1950

Newsletters written by Mr William McClelland, Mochrum Schoolhouse addressed to Mr J Fletcher, Cruggleton, Garlieston (*picked up at a house clearance*)

Some memorable snippets

July 1942 – Controlled price of honey 2/9 per lb or 1/6 per ½ lb. heather 3/6, comb honey 2d per oz (2/8 per lb)

Sept 1942 – Sugar rations 10lb in October + 5lb in the spring – to be fed to bees

July 1943 – Long wet spell last autumn/winter prevented build-up of stores – aggravated by poor spring and cut in sugar rations

September 1943 – Better season than average – over 100lb average but winter losses + food deficiency in spring limited total crop. Heather men – better than expected

April 1944 – AGM – membership 235

May 1944 – Information about Scottish Beekeeper magazine, Moir Library, County Library. Mention of Insurance, courses at Auchincruive, Swarms and the Pagden method + nucs

August 1944 – The worst year on record, despite 10lb sugar

April 1945 – Extractors available to members. Foul brood mentioned. Talks by Mr Livingstone at Mochrum, Wigtown and Newton Stewart

June 1945 – covered sections and extracting

September 1945 – Heather yields 100lb, clover 30-40lb.

Branch news

Creetown – forage from trees, sage, bramble, willowherb, clover and heather. Different from Mochrum – only clover

Newton Stewart – acarine – warning of doing nothing

Whithorn – feed thick syrup in autumn

Stranraer – why no association honey press?

Glenluce – new extractor in use

Sandhead – Extractor + bottling tank with Mr Robert Nesbit. Queen clipping

Mochrum – Mr Rae promised a winter lecture on heather honey

New branches – Kirkcolm and Drummore

April 1946 – SBA affiliation 3d per member + 6d insurance (fire theft and 3rd party risks)

2 x perforextractors purchased

Excursion to Auchincruive

Honey Show at Newton Stewart Horticultural Society Show – sections, light, dark, granulated honey, wax, frames and a gift class

November 1946 – 6 x weekly lectures at Sandhead, Whithorn, Kirkinner and Newton Stewart. Run by Mr Livingstone

Association apiary mooted

Spring 1947 – 332 members – 2/6 subscription

Queen rearing. Beemaster + Expert Beemaster + honey judge certificate

July 1947

Dutch bees – to build up stock

August 1947 – Honey Show report. 59 entries. Results given in detail

April 1949 – Looking for a secretary

Galloway Honey label mooted

May 1948 – Summer demonstrations – becoming difficult to organise.

Cell cutting a hopeless method of swarm control

June 1949 – Mr William Paterson, Kirkcowan agreed to act as local secretary. *Mr Paterson was an honorary member of WGBA until his passing in 2023*

September 1949 – Handling Honey

March 1950 – 10d a 1lb jar. Foreign honey 2d per lb, but not a competitor

October 1950 – prospects of a bumper season have not materialised

We can see that issues we have now are nothing new – from poor weather to foreign honey to lack of secretaries and apiary hosts

Wind forward to **October 2006**

By this time the number of beekeepers had markedly reduced and WGBA was the only association with no branches

Letter to Galloway Beekeepers from Laurie Robertson, Wigtown and copied to South of Scotland Beekeepers and Scottish Beekeepers Association intimated that Western Galloway Beekeepers' Association would regrettably cease to be due to the inability of the group to nominate a Secretary or President.

Thankfully the association was rescued by a new committee consisting of Jean Jackson, Port William, John Adams, Leswalt and Fiona Keith, Dunragit

Now – at the 90th Anniversary – Western Galloway Beekeepers Association thrives!

One association with no branches

46 members

An active committee

Annual Honey Show where some of the old trophies are presented, including a new Glenrazie shield which is presented to best entry in show

Monthly meetings – Glen of Luce Hall September – March, in members' apiaries April – August

Beginners course each spring as well as themed workshops

Onwards and upwards to the 100th anniversary!