

Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association Newsletter October 2018

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From the Editor

This is the first time that I have edited this newsletter, and due to time constraints I have closely followed previous editions as far as layout and content are concerned. However, I hope to tweak the format a little over the coming months, so contributions and comments of all kinds are welcome. I am a total beginner and don't even have my own bees yet, so am dependent on the rest of the membership for content! Practical tips and hints, accounts of training days and visits, book reviews, bee-related crafts and recipes are all welcome – anything that you would like to share with other members.

Please contact me by email as above, and put WGBKA in the subject line so I don't miss anything. I will usually be putting the newsletter together over the last weekend of the month, so I will need to have everything by the Friday before in order to include it. The deadline for the November edition is therefore 26 October, but as I will be off work the following week I can accept Honey Show reports and related contributions until the evening of Monday 29 October.

This month's *Patterson in Print* highlights the life and work of Miss Annie Dorothy Betts, beekeeper and aeronautical engineer. From Roger's description, I have a firm mental image of her, but if anyone out there has an actual photograph, I would love to include it in a future edition. Elsewhere, our President successfully infiltrates a canine psychology conference and provides useful advice on the purchase of hive parts.

Finally, take note of the dates of the planned winter meetings and don't forget to renew your subscription to *Beecraft*.

Tamsin

Dates for your diary

WGBKA Annual Supper

Wisborough Green Village Hall

Saturday October 6th

I'm sure that we are all looking forward to this event at Wisborough Green Village Hall, starting at 7pm. You should already have booked your tickets with Daisy.

Apiary Meetings

These will continue on an *ad hoc* basis into November; watch your email for news, and see Roger's *Teaching Apiary* column below.

Winter Meetings

These are now being arranged for 7.30pm start. The first will be on

Tuesday October 16th - "**Practical beekeeping tips and hints**" – Speaker: Tom Moore - **Venue TBC**

Further dates are:-

Tuesday November 13th

Tuesday December 4th

Tuesday November 13th

Tuesday January 15th

Tuesday February 12th

Tuesday March 12th – Annual General Meeting

The programme for these will be confirmed later. We expect to have an interesting programme that will include "Other bees" and a demonstration on "Making sweets with honey".

Please support winter meetings as they are arranged to help learning.

National Honey Show

Sandown Park Racecourse

Thursday 25th - Saturday 27th October

Held at Sandown Park Racecourse, which isn't too far away. As well as the usual competitive exhibits there are trade stands where you can purchase your needs for next season <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>. There is also a great programme of workshops and lectures, including practical and scientific topics and a programme for beginners. See <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/lectures-and-workshops.php>.

There is an opportunity to attend the show without paying if you are willing to do half a day stewarding.

Stewarding may be.....

- Watching over a room full of exhibits, answering questions, ensuring the exhibits are not touched or stolen.
- Stewarding a lecture where you would be available to show people out in the event of a fire.
- Standing by a doorway making sure only people with a valid wristband are allowed to enter.
- Running errands.

There may be other jobs but these are the main ones.

It is anticipated that you would Steward for either a morning or an afternoon, allowing you the other half of the day to listen to lectures, visit the trade stalls, take part in the workshops or view the Show exhibits.

The trick is to look at the lecture programme and offer to steward at the same time as the one(s) you wish to attend. The Chief Steward is Bill Fisher who I have known a long time. He is very good and works with people if he can. Don't worry if you are a beginner as Bill will make sure you know what you are expected to do.

As a Steward, you are entitled to free entry to the show on that day, and given £5.00 towards refreshments. I think that is a very good deal.

Please contact Bill Fisher at steward@honeyshow.co.uk direct.

Introduction to Beekeeping

Rudgwick Village Hall

Saturday 2nd March 2019

A day for those who haven't started bees or only just have. Details on the website soon.

Teaching Apiary

Activities are reducing now, but there are still things that need doing in autumn. Many beekeepers, speakers, teachers and writers concentrate on "wintering", which I think is the wrong attitude. I think of live colonies in the spring in good condition of which wintering is obviously a part. Wintering should have been thought about in July, not October.

At one meeting we looked at the laying behaviour of queens in colonies that were treated with Apiguard. It seems that in general they went off lay within a couple of days of the treatment, but had a break of around 14 days before starting laying again. This is the same as I have observed in my own bees, where they have laid a large number of eggs, not small numbers.

We have changed hive parts that weren't treated last year, so they can be repaired and treated during the winter.

Feeding has started by using thymolised syrup.

From now onwards meetings will be on an ad hoc basis, so look out for email notice. These may be at fairly short notice depending on needs and weather, so may not appear on the website.

Patterson in Print

This issue is being edited by our new Newsletter Editor Tamsin Farthing. She is a new and enthusiastic member who will welcome copy from members. Please give her your support. I thank Caroline for performing the task for several years.

With the passing of time it is easy to forget people who have made a great contribution to our craft. I have known many good beekeepers and good people both locally and nationally who have quietly done a lot of useful work that has moved the craft on, yet were quickly forgotten with their passing. **Miss Annie D. Betts** is probably in this category and until I was doing some research for the "Thymolised syrup" page on Dave Cushman's website was only a name from the past. She appeared to have had an interesting life that included bee research and aeronautical engineering. She was Editor of *Bee World* from 1929-1949 and wrote around 170 original articles, as well as thousands of reports on other publications. On retiring as *Bee World* editor after 20 years she asked for no present or testimonial and made it clear any would be rejected.

Annie Betts was born in 1884 and died in 1961, just two years before I started beekeeping. In searching for information I came across her address in March 1937 as Strood Cottage, Broadbridge Heath, Sussex. This is within 5 miles of where I have lived all my life and I didn't know it. I have never heard of anyone from either Horsham BKA (later Horsham and Crawley, then Central Sussex) or Wisborough Green BKA mention her, although I suspect she had an involvement with one of them, probably Horsham, as she would have been a beekeeper way before WGBKA was formed. She apparently rode a motor cycle.

I have recently organised the **BIBBA conference** in Cirencester that 5 WGBKA members attended, two of them speaking and three chairing presentations. I hope the others will agree with me that it was a great event with high quality lectures and workshops. There were over 200 attendees, with tremendous feedback, many commenting how good it was to see other beekeepers from different parts of the country and how much they enjoyed the great company. One person was kind enough to give me 3 jars of heather honey that I will make into mead and a jar of home made jam! There are still some good people in beekeeping.

I had better tell you this story before Daisy does. My car was loaded up with kit I needed for the conference, such as empty hive parts, nuc boxes etc, to the point where there was no room for anyone else to sit. When I got there a crew was dismantling a mock building that had been used for a film set. Someone had done a brilliant job making a wood and plywood construction look like a Cotswold stone building. They put all this into a skip. To grow trees for

40+ years, then fell, cut into planks and plane, with all the cost to the environment, then put in a skip a few weeks later seems a dreadful waste to me. I don't like waste! Some of my hives are in need of repair, so I carefully selected some pieces of wood to use and put them in my car. On the last day Jim Ryan, who is known to some of you, asked if someone could give him a lift to Swindon Station. I said I couldn't because I had a car full - but then I thought - "Daisy, have you got room to take a few bits and pieces, so I can make room to give Jim a lift please?" It's good to have friends!

To start setting up I arrived the previous day. I was on my own and for the evening meal I was told to sit where I liked. Carrying my tray I walked into the dining room with a lot of people sitting down. Somehow I had a bit of a "feeling" about them, so, although there were spaces I sat on a table on my own, but next to another table that was full. All tables had water and bottles of red and white wine. I started eating, then poured a glass of wine thinking they were for everyone. Very soon a couple sitting on the end of the next table asked what "doggies" I had. I wondered how they knew I had dogs (I assumed that's what they meant), so I told them border collies. It turned out they were all dog owners who were on some sort of expensive sounding canine psychology and behaviour course. I briefly spoke to a few of them, or more accurately they spoke to me. They were all eager to show me pictures of their "doggies" and after a little more discussion they realised I wasn't on their course, probably helped because I didn't have a badge saying who I was. It wasn't long before a lady appeared and grabbed the bottles of wine which had both been sampled, glared at me without speaking and put them on another table! I doubt if she knew that the labels and 11% ABV on them were giveaways the bottles contained cheap plonk. The white was reasonably drinkable, but the red could have been used as creosote substitute.

Without too much delay I retired to the bar where I was the only person. I spoke to the barmaid who asked where I came from. "West Sussex", received the response of "my mother used to live in Billingshurst"! It turns out it was somewhere in the Plaistow Road, Loxwood, probably within a couple of miles of Dounhurst. After a time the bar filled up with people talking about their "doggies". I found it quite amusing to listen to people who have a rather different approach than me, but I quickly learnt about grooming, nutrition, obedience, etc. It appears I am doing it all wrong!

This reference to "doggies" reminds me a bit of how a very small number of "beekeepers" refer to their bees. How often do you hear of them being referred to as "the girls"? I get a lot of emails about beekeeping and other terms are used such as "little sweeties" or "little darlings"! In the last week or so I have had an email from a couple asking for information on insulating hives and giving supplements to ensure better wintering for their "little dears", with an offer to write something for the Dave Cushman website. I wonder how they received my response that in my opinion winter is nature's way of culling the weak and mollycoddling only covers up the weaknesses. I wonder if keeping "doggies", little "dears", "sweeties", "girls" or "darlings" is as much fun as real beekeeping is. I guess that has given some of you an idea for winding me up at meetings! Perhaps I will then know who reads the newsletter and who doesn't!

Varroa treatment should soon be finished. In my experience about 50% of colonies that have been treated with Apiguard will migrate their brood nest to one side of the box. This may cause a problem in cold weather when isolation starvation may occur. I have seen several colonies starve with plenty of food on one side of the box. A simple way round it is to remove about half the food frames from one side of the box and place them in the other side, so centralising the brood. This gives food on both sides of the cluster, so reduces the chance of starvation. With some treatments queens go off lay. This year I have done a little monitoring on my own bees that have been treated with Apiguard. About half the queens were off lay for around 14 days, then started laying at quite a pace, many with lots of eggs in combs.

At the National Honey Show there will be trade stands, some of which will be selling budget **hive parts** and sale items. These are usually offered at major beekeeping events, so are not confined to the NHS. There can be some good savings made, but a little care is needed to gain the greatest benefits. I give a little advice, especially to beginners, that has come from my experiences.

Wooden hive parts are usually made from lower grade western red cedar than premium grade are, but are half price or less. The timber is grown in Scotland and felled at a fairly young age, hence there may be knots, although in my opinion this is good, as the parts don't split as readily. I have used these "seconds" as they are called at Dounhurst for around 15 years and there are no signs of deterioration further than premium grade. In my view they are very

good value. Some batches can have a lot of dead knots, which I assume has come from forests where the lower branches were not removed at an early stage.

Brood boxes and supers are strapped up in a bundle, but they can be easily inspected by sliding the end bars out individually to inspect them. Live knots will be OK, but avoid dead knots as they can fall out in use. Make sure there are no knots where you will be driving nails into. Look at the wood. Lighter coloured patches are likely to be soft and may not last very long before rotting. Press your thumbnail into it and if it is soft leave it. Make sure you pick up the nails (not thumbnails!) as they are often separate.

For using castellated spacers I prefer Thorne's boxes over Maisemore, as the latter has a bevel on the top edge of the inner end board to rest frame lugs on that is better suited to plastic ends or Hoffman self spacers.

If you want 4" deep roofs there is little in it, but Maisemore do an 8" deep roof at roughly the same price as Thorne's 4" roof, that I like better. Their roof nails are better too, having bigger heads. Wooden roof parts are packed inside the metal cover. Have a look inside to make sure there are no knots where you will be driving nails. Maisemore sterling board cover is usually in one piece, Thorne's in two.

I don't believe there is much difference between Maisemore and Thorne's crown boards. Queen excluders appear to be standard, but at sale price.

Budget open mesh floors can be flimsy, but they will last a long time if care is taken in use.

Several newer members have asked me about **protective clothing**. I am the last person to ask because I have never worn a bee-suit or tunic in my life. I'm told you probably need a size bigger than you think you are and the quality varies considerably, some being tough cotton, others little more than butter muslin. You then need to decide what sort of hood and zip you want. We have a wide range of tunics at the apiary, so try some and see how you get on. Have a word with some of our more experienced beekeepers like Daisy, Maggie or Tom Moore and they can give you better guidance than I can, although I suggest you try them on, not buy online.

Postscript: After I sent this to Tamsin I received the following email.... *"I am working on a future project for XXX Hotel Hyde Park in London.*

The executive chef would like to make our own honey, and for this we planned to put 2 beehives on the top of the hotel at the 9th floor.

For this project, we are looking for a beekeeper to look after the beehives during all the year.

Would you be interested to come to work with us?

Thank you very much for your answer."

There were 14 beekeepers on the emailed list, 9 of whom I know and there may be others, as their names weren't part of their email address.

This is sadly becoming more common as bees are seen as an opportunity to increase the reputation of the establishment, very often by people with no knowledge of bees and no signs of doing any research. I felt I had to respond and in my email I pointed out they had contacted people who live in Lancashire, Manchester, Yorkshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Wales, Essex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex! All some distance from Hyde Park. At least 5 of them were clearly taken off the Bees Abroad website! Another is a bee researcher who isn't a beekeeper! They show poor research and understanding. I pointed out that bees need shade and shelter from wind on the 9th floor, as well as forage being scarce.

I did suggest that someone came to our "Introduction to Beekeeping" day, so there may be some good come of it.

Roger

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<http://www.bee-craft.com/see-inside-our-magazine/>

Subscriptions run from January (magazine delivered at the end of December) but in order to receive the reduced rate, Beecraft need to be informed, and subscriptions received, by the cut off date.

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In order to qualify (and to ensure uninterrupted delivery if you are renewing your subscription), I must receive your order and payment by mid-day on November 26th at the latest.

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