



## WISBOROUGH GREEN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

A DIVISION OF WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2018

Website: [www.wgbka.org.uk](http://www.wgbka.org.uk)

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## DIARY OF EVENTS



### REGULAR APIARY MEETINGS

*Please see scheduled meeting dates on page 3 of this newsletter.*

*If possible please arrive early this helps the meeting leader to arrange the right number of groups and allocate colonies. Please sign the attendance book.*



*Please monitor your email for apiary meeting updates.*

### EVENTS 2018

**Brinsbury Country Fayre - 17th June - Brinsbury Country Fayre .**

<https://chichester.ac.uk/brinsbury-show>

*See the West Sussex BKA Newsletter for events organised by other local divisions.*

**To help reduce the carbon footprint, parking and traffic on the roads we ask members to share vehicles if possible when attending meetings.**

*We advise all beekeepers not to purchase bees and queens that may have been imported. This is to reduce the risk of importing pests and diseases. Very often they are unsuitable for our climate and it is possible that aggression may show in subsequent generations.*

# Queen Introduction

*Tom Moore writes about the recent queen introductions at the apiary.*

At the apiary meeting on 26th May we had, among other things, a session on queen introduction. This covered such topics as the reasons for introducing a queen, the need to understand the condition of the hive, life cycles and their significance, timing, and an outline of several methods of queen introduction. I hope there was something useful in this for everyone attending. If there is demand for a repeat, from those who missed this meeting, we could do a similar session a bit later in the season. Please let either me or Roger know if you are interested.

As part of this topic we moved a number of queens between hives in the apiary, introducing them in different ways. We introduced the queens to their new hives as follows:

- 1 – in a cage alone, introduced immediately after the removal of the old queen;
- 2 – in a cage alone, introduced about 30 minutes after removal of the old queen;
- 3 – in a cage with 4 workers, introduced an hour after removal of the old queen;
- 4 – bees shaken onto a board in front of their hive, the queen dropped onto them and all run in with a lot of smoke, about 30 minutes after removal of the old queen.

We will look at the results in the coming week. Of course we will prove nothing scientific, and there are almost as many different ways of introducing queens as there are beekeepers. However, it is a start at a more measured assessment of the success of various ways. We will hold the result back until next month's newsletter, just to keep you guessing. If you want to know sooner, come along to one of the Saturday apiary meetings in June!

**Tom**

## Scheduled Apiary Meetings 2018

**Meetings will normally start at 2pm.**

<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
2nd	7th	TBA	TBA
9th	14th		
16th *Extraction* no apiary meeting.			
23rd			

**Please check emails regularly for changes and additions.**

## Patterson In Print



*Nell and friend*

As always there has been a lot going on at apiary meetings this year. Maggie brought a small swarm, which was hived on foundation and isolated from the other colonies. We did the hiving demonstration and at subsequent meetings showed members progress to the point where there was a full brood cycle. Maggie can now take it home to build up. This is one of several swarms from outside that have clustered in the same place in her garden, so you should all know by now why that is!

We have covered viruses and interestingly members saw Black Queen Cell Virus (BQCV) in a colony at the same meeting. BQCV has only appeared at a very much increased rate in the last 20-25 years, possibly as the result of varroa. Queen introduction is quite a large subject with many methods available. Unfortunately none of them are as reliable as they once were. When I started beekeeping the standard method was to put a queen and 4-6 worker bees in a cardboard matchbox, leave the lid slightly ajar and place over the frames. Within a day or so the bees would have chewed the lid to release the queen and all was well, but it's no longer that simple. I don't know the reason for the current problems, but it may be connected to the issues with queens. Tom Moore has written a short account elsewhere in this newsletter. Murray West and myself checked on the following Tuesday and the results, as Tom stated, will be in the next newsletter.

A colony was shook swarmed, but unsuccessfully. It will struggle to build up strong enough to go into winter and probably won't collect a crop of honey. As much as anything it shows that if such techniques are performed the bees need to be in the right condition. This is the beauty of a teaching apiary, where if things don't go to plan we can discuss why in the hope that members learn.

Several methods of increase have been shown, including splitting two colonies on double brood that were united last autumn. It has resulted in four strong colonies, where four weak ones may not have survived the winter if not united. This is real apiary management where beekeepers need to help bees overcome some of the problems that we present them with, such as weak colonies and queens that simply won't take a colony through the winter. Such operations mean that combs are moved between colonies, which is frowned upon by those who are paranoid about transmitting disease; but the key is to be able to recognise disease and know how to deal with it, which is what we demonstrate at the apiary. In another instance one colony has already had 4 nuclei removed from it. I'm hoping to get 6 more, so increasing tenfold, but they won't all be wintered, as it will give us an opportunity to demonstrate uniting.

At an earlier meeting Richard Gibby demonstrated sugar roll and alcohol wash for varroa control, finding that varroa levels on the colonies tested were very low. Richard used the alcohol wash on his own colonies and had similar results. It could be said that we haven't done it right, but I have seen very few adult mites so far this year and very little DWV. We will be testing the same colonies again.

Swarming has been very late this year, I think because colonies came through the winter weaker than normal. The only swarms I have been called to have been when I was away for a week towards the end of May that I couldn't collect. When I came back I found a fairly large swarm had gone into a pile of supers (deliberately left with a small gap!) and placed 20-30lb of honey in 5 supers. These I reduced to three supers by arranging combs with nectar in, removing the empty ones. The queen was confined to the brood box. Many of the bees looked sick, with shiny appearance (the cause was discussed at a meeting) and the queen was a bright yellow virgin. In the past, virtually all swarms were headed by fertile queens, but in the last 15 years or so there are many more headed by virgins. This can be caused by several possibilities including:-

- The "modern advice" to leave two queen cells. As I have said many times, if the colony is in the right condition and the weather fine, the colony is likely to swarm with the first queen to emerge.
- A clipped queen has attempted to leave with a swarm, which has returned to the hive, but the queen has been lost. The colony is likely to swarm with the first queen to emerge if the beekeeper doesn't inspect at the right time.
- A queen has "disappeared" leaving emergency cells and the colony has swarmed with the first queen to emerge. (see <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/queenperformanceproblems.html>)
- The beekeeper has carelessly missed a queen cell. This should be a reminder to shake bees off combs so you can see. On at least three occasions this year I have seen queen cells built horizontally between the comb and bottom bar.
- The beekeeper has left emergency cells and believed the now common advice that bees will only swarm on swarm cells. Don't believe it!

If you take a swarm with a virgin queen expect there to be more than one, as there often is, especially if the weather has been poor and several have emerged. I remember helping George Wakeford remove 19 virgin queens from a swarm, only for them to take wing and roar off into the distance with at least one undetected.

As Nell will tell you I have been visiting other beekeepers recently to demonstrate and give bee improvement courses. You can only teach if you point out what you consider to be good and bad points. The bees in each apiary I went to, although quite variable between apiaries, even those only 4 miles apart, didn't suit the environment very well. In each case the forage was quite good, as there was nectar freely dripping out of brood combs, but there was little in the supers. By contrast I inspected my bees before I went and I struggled to lift the supers. Why is that when our area is no better for forage? All the bees were much more prolific than ours and they were simply turning their income into brood, rather than storing it. We are lucky in our area that we have quite good bees, but it is sometimes difficult to convince beekeepers that they can improve their bees. They don't get the same opportunities as me to see anything different to what they are used to, so they assume that all bees are the same.

I have previously mentioned that a colony at Dounhurst had emergency cells on March 3rd, with one of my own colonies having the same a couple of weeks later. They both have laying queens, although both performing poorly, heading weak colonies. I had given up on both of them, but the queens managed to mate, although rather poorly. They will be requeened at the earliest opportunity.

Colony losses throughout the country are much heavier than I think they should be. Certainly my own and those at Dounhurst are much lower than those I hear about from elsewhere. We have been invited to take part in a survey\* and I encourage members to take part. I have sent details to Caroline who will deal with it elsewhere. Please take part so we can help reduce losses together. A lost colony means the loss of a queen, bees and the food.

## **Roger**

\* *The 'COLOSS Hive Loss Survey 2018' closed on 5th June. Apologies that this article was not published before the closure date. Ed.*

## Nell In Print

Last month I highlighted discrimination against dogs. That wasn't isolated as I have another couple of stories for you. My Dad has been invited to speak at the Tatton Park Flower Show in Cheshire. They must have known about me because he was told that no dogs other than guide dogs are allowed. What a bunch of fools they must be? Perhaps they don't have anything in the budget for biscuits!

I have recently been on holiday, to Essex twice, Norfolk and Suffolk. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I saw lots of beekeepers and went on several walks, once at the seaside, although I wasn't allowed in a nature reserve, even on a lead. More discrimination!


I see lots of different apiaries, showing that bees can be kept almost anywhere. Those I saw on my recent holiday were very different and here is a brief description:-

- A built-up area just inside the M25 where there is an area about the same size as the area covered by the bees at Dounhurst. There were about 25 colonies in lots of different hives including a Flow Hive and several polystyrene ones. I'm learning to recognise these now! There were over 50 people who came to hear Dad speak about energy lines. There were lots there and Dad found a cherry tree branch where swarms often cluster.
- A derelict area that belongs to the University of East Anglia that was so secure we had to unlock two gates to get there.
- A part of a solar farm, where the beekeepers were given a £7,500.00 grant to set up the apiary. An apiary that was set up on land owned by the Water Authority.

They were all dog friendly and had somewhere nice for me to lay down without getting close to the bees. Not everyone discriminates against dogs.

### ***Roger & Nell***

## BBKA Membership Cards

<b>The British Beekeepers' Association</b> BBKA - supporting bees and beekeepers		
Name:	John Smith	
Membership No:	12.3.45	
Class:	Registered member	
Signature:	<i>John Smith</i>	
Not Transferable		

The **June edition of BBKA News** included our BBKA annual membership cards. It is easy to throw the letter away not realising the card is there.

Please make sure you have signed yours and keep it safe place.

## Colonies for Sale

There is a beekeeper in Storrington who has 5 colonies to dispose of as they are moving.

If you are interested, please contact Keith Kinsbrook who will be able to provide you with the name and address of the beekeeper.

[keithkinsbrook@hotmail.com](mailto:keithkinsbrook@hotmail.com)

# Tales From An Out-Apiary

*Caroline Drewett shares the joys and frustrations of running an out-apiary.*

In last month's article I wrote that I had marked the queen in 'Borage' during my inspection on 18th April. I next inspected 19 days later; there were young larvae but no eggs and I didn't see the previously marked queen, but there were no queen cells that I could see. Had I damaged the queen when marking her? I inspected again 12 days later and found five queen cells; there was no open brood and no queen. I removed all but one of the queen cells. I had a quick look inside the hive 14 days later, 2nd June, to confirm the cell had emerged; I didn't spot the new queen. If all goes well, the next inspection will confirm the presence of a laying queen.

The other two hives in the apiary continued to increase in size following the first inspection of the season. By the fourth inspection on 27th May, 'Sweet pea' had increased from two to eight frames of brood. At the next inspection on 2nd June there were queen cups with eggs deposited in them. I decided to take no action at this inspection but to monitor closely. I will update you next month regarding the progress of this colony.

The hive in my second apiary continued to expand the brood nest and by the third inspection, on 6th May, there was brood on seven frames. There was a single empty queen cup; the first indication that the next stage may be 'swarm mode'. On 28th May I spotted a single queen cell, not far off being sealed; and removed the queen to a nuc box with three frames. My preferred method of swarm control would have been a full artificial swarm, resulting in a colony on new frames; but I damaged a ligament in my back at the end of April and there was no way I could lift a brood chamber. I returned six days later to check both the full colony and the nuc. The nuc had sealed and open brood, including eggs, so all appears well with the original queen. The main colony now had a further six or seven queen cells, nearly all of them sealed; I removed these, leaving the original queen cell to emerge. I chose to leave the original queen cell as I have a theory that the first queen cell built is the cell best looked after by the worker bees; some may think this unwise, but who knows, as we beekeepers can never truly know everything the bees know.

When I damaged my back I was in my main apiary and had struggled to inspect the two smaller colonies. I was trying to close the third, consisting of double brood, and went to the car to collect a spare super to add to the colony. As I took my first step carrying the super, my back went into spasm and all I could do was drop the super onto the road; luckily it wasn't a super full of bees! The occupier of a neighbouring cottage heard me cry out in pain and luckily for me came to investigate. Also luckily for me, she was quite happy to put on a spare bee suit and under my instructions close the hive. I owe her a jar of honey. Since then I have been enlisting the help of a non-beekeeping friend to do the lifting for me at most inspections, but it is still a struggle to stand at a hive and hold the frames. Fortunately I have a very good physiotherapist and my condition is improving; unfortunately the ligament will now always be a weak point and I will need to be mindful of this in future.

I have often considered purchasing half supers (5 frame supers) to reduce the weight when lifting; I think this will now be a definite requirement for next season if I want to continue to keep bees. It's not ideal having to rely on the availability of someone else to lift supers when inspecting hives.

As for extraction of the early crop, I haven't been able to do that either, but hope to do so before the end of June!

**Caroline**



# EQUIPMENT FOR SALE AT THE APIARY

As usual we will have supplies available for members at apiary meetings this year. Because we buy in bulk you will find that our prices are generally lower than from anywhere else, and with no carriage charges! This is a valuable service to members, but does take volunteer time so please read below about ordering. All available at apiary meetings (subject to stock).

## How to order

**Please email orders in advance** to Tom on [stone.house@btinternet.com](mailto:stone.house@btinternet.com) so that they can be ready for you. Minimal stock will be available "on demand" at meetings so you may be disappointed if you don't order ahead, and you must be prepared to wait until the end of the meeting.

All prices are PER SINGLE ITEM unless stated otherwise and are correct at April 2018 for current stocks. We reserve the right to vary prices if there are changes from suppliers.

## Frames: (unassembled) all 60p

**DN1** for National and WBC brood chambers

**SN1** for National and WBC supers

**Frame nails:** small bag (approx 80 grams) **£1.00** or full box (500 grams) **£5.00**

## Foundation for the above:

**Wired Brood** £1.05p

**Wired Shallow** 65p (*please specify worker cell or drone cell*)

**Un-wired Shallow** (for cut comb) 45p

## Spacers (to suit National hives):

Castellated spacers (metal) in 9, 10 or 11 slot **£2.00/pair** Narrow plastic ends **10p (20p/pair)**

## Sundries:

**Hive tool** - steel, yellow **£5.00**

**Hive strap**, orange, 3 metres **£4.00**

## Varroa Treatments:

Available for August treatment, we will have standard treatments; prices to be announced

**Payment** can be made in cash (easiest for us), or by cheque.

Please make cheques payable to **WSBKA Wisborough Green Division.**

## COST OF 11 FRAMES + FOUNDATION (nails extra)

BROOD - £18.15

SUPER - £13.75

Thanks to this month's contributors. If you have similar articles or beekeeping experiences you would like to share, please supply articles and any photographs for the **July edition** no later than the **25th June**.

If you need any help submitting an article, please give me a call.

**Caroline**