



# Wisborough Green Beekeepers' Association Newsletter - December 2018



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Contributions for the January newsletter should be received by Friday 28 December.

## From the Editor

As the festive season approaches, you might be inspired by Mollie Bonard to try making some honey-flavoured sweets; Judy's report on the November meeting includes Mollie's coconut ice recipe. Sue Carter has also shared her recipe for Honey Snickerdoodle Biscuits, which I will definitely be trying. The next meeting should be rather less sticky, as Mike Edwards asks *Are bees really declining?*

We have a new *Wanted and For Sale* section, so if you are using the winter months to take stock of your beekeeping equipment, consider placing an advertisement.

Please take note of some important dates for your diary, particularly membership renewal and the EGM on 8 January.

With winter closing in, it's a good time to take stock of the season, and Roger has some observations on the varying honey crops experienced by beekeepers this year, as well as reminding us that we can still learn about our bees as the weather gets colder.

Finally, Nell returns as a contributor to the newsletter, and we welcome our newest correspondent Rosie!

Tamsin

**Merry  
Christmas  
and a Happy  
New Year!**

## Dates for your diary

### Winter Meetings

These will take place in Wisborough Green Village Hall unless otherwise advised, with a 7.30pm start. The dates are as follows – topics to be advised:

**Tuesday December 4<sup>th</sup>** - Mike Edwards – *Are bees really declining?* - Wisborough Green Village Hall

**Tuesday January 8<sup>th</sup>** at North Hall, Loxwood. *EGM to discuss and vote on the proposed new WGBKA rules. This will be followed by a beekeeping quiz where members will be put into teams.*

**Tuesday February 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Tuesday March 12<sup>th</sup>** – Annual General Meeting

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

### Introduction to Beekeeping

Rudgwick Village Hall, **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019**

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

### West Sussex Beekeepers Annual Convention

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019**, 9.30am – 4.30 pm

Lodge Hill, Pulborough.

Lodge Hill, Pulborough will again be the venue for our Annual Convention in February. Details are now finalised and, as always, we have an impressive blend of lectures and seminars to look forward to. Please book the date in your diary NOW!

The main speakers are Clive de Bruyn, Dr. Martin Bencsik and Adam Leitch NDB:

**Clive** has been a beekeeper since the 1960s. Since then he has been an amateur, commercial and professional beekeeper, managing bees in 11 English counties. He has held a number of roles in the beekeeping industry both in the UK and abroad and is also the author of the book *Practical Beekeeping*. His approach to talks is very practical and interactive with lots of props and equipment. He will be presenting a main lecture on *The Joys of Raising Queens* and a seminar on *Beekeeping Mistakes*.

**Martin** is an Associate Professor in Physics at Nottingham Trent University. His research focuses on novel applications of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and more recently on bioacoustics, including honeybee colony condition monitoring. His use of accelerometers to measure vibrations in honeybee hives led him to become involved in The Hive artwork at Kew, supplying the measurement technology and software which animates the work. The technology has revealed some fascinating insights, particularly around swarming prediction, and other happenings in the hive. Martin will share his most recent findings during his lecture *Monitoring honey bee colony activity with accelerometer sensors*.

**Adam** is a member of the Reigate Beekeepers Association, Master Beekeeper and Vice-Chairman of the NDB Examination Board. Adam has been working closely with Research Fellows at the University of Brighton with whom he has been studying pollen. His lecture *Melissopalynology – The Study of Pollen in Honey* will give an insight into why pollen is so important, how we use it to find out where our bees have

been foraging and what the important nectar sources are. Adam will also be running a seminar, 'Asian Hornet Update'. An important subject for beekeepers at the moment.

There will be a variety of seminars to choose from:

*Beekeeping Mistakes* – Clive de Bruyn

*Experiments in Skep Beekeeping* – Chris Park

*BBKA Examination System & what you can get out of it* – Celia Perry

*Asian Hornet Update* – Adam Leitch

*Mead, Metheglin & Medicine* – Chris Park

*Wings, Stings and other things under the microscope* – James Donaldson.

Refreshments and a simple lunch will be included and there will be many opportunities to meet up with fellow beekeepers from around the county and beyond. Paynes will bring a range of bee equipment and books to sell and so there will be plenty of opportunities to part with your money!

**Further details will soon be available on the WSBKA web site and will be sent out with the Booking Form attached to next month's newsletter.**

## Making Sweets With Honey

**Demonstration given by Mollie Bonard (Reigate and Epsom Beekeepers)**

**13<sup>th</sup> November, the Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood**

We welcomed Mollie to Loxwood to share – not only her experience of sweet making incorporating honey – but during the demonstration, her anecdotes from her early training as a chef, workshops at Gormanston, sticky sweet making sessions organised as a Leader of Girl Guide and Rainbow groups, organising fundraising stalls, coffees and cakes for church, knitting, beekeeping, running a weekly supper club for around 30 disabled folk, not to mention giving talks on preparation of exhibits for shows, and judging (even if not yet quite a fully qualified BBKA judge!). All that left me breathless enough...and then you notice the crutches placed carefully to one side....I was in awe!

An early observation with using honey in recipes was – as I have found myself – that it is really difficult to use much without the mixture being too sticky to handle. Therefore whatever honey is used, it should be a strong-tasting type (as opposed to a light floral variety) as a little flavour needs to go a long way.

As Christmas is coming, it is a great time to raise funds, 'Homemade' presents being very much back in vogue, with biscuits, candles, honey products all being popular on her stalls. Coconut ice, honeycomb and peppermint creams are perennial 'best sellers' and could be made now for eating at Christmas.

Peppermint creams last a little longer as peppermint (and also ginger) are natural preservatives. Sweets can be packaged in gusseted presentation bags available from Lakeland or similar shops, and tied with a bow; coconut ice can be stacked and tied at the top, but peppermint creams are best packed flat with the bow on the side for best effect. Packs easily sell for £1 a bag (or you can ask for 'A donation' to a good cause), and if selling, there MUST be a label, listing all ingredients in order of high to low content.

The recipe Mollie shared is below, and the hint of honey made them completely delicious!

## Coconut Ice with Honey (makes 35'ish sweets)

<b>Ingredients:</b>	8 oz icing sugar plus more if needed
	1 small egg white (use the yolk elsewhere)
	6 oz desiccated coconut (ensure it's fresh) plus more if needed
	397g tin of condensed milk
	1 pinch Cream of tartar (goes 'off' quickly; check the best before date!)
	1 tsp vanilla essence
	1 tsp honey (runny with strong taste is best)
	Small amount of red food colour liquid or paste for <u>half</u> the mix (optional).
	Red cherries or dates to decorate on top (optional).

### Method:

Stir and mix with hands (you'll get very sticky!!) all ingredients except the food colour. If the mix is too sticky (egg too big?), add in more coconut and more sugar in roughly equal quantities, aiming for a mixture which can be formed into a sausage and hold its shape while it sets.



- Divide the mix in half and add food colour drop by drop to one half, mixing well.

- Knead each half of the mixture separately on an icing-sugar sprinkled surface, until mixture comes together, and roll into a sausage shape of about 2 cm diameter, but make as thick or thin as you want - traditionally a 'squared sausage' for coconut ice. Repeat for the second colour, then lay a coloured and an uncoloured sausage next to each other and squeeze gently to stick them together.



- Cut into bite sized pieces and if desired, add a piece of red glaze cherry and leave somewhere cool to harden.



*Judy Knight*

*All photos: Roger Patterson*

## Honey Snickerdoodle Biscuits

200g/7oz self-raising flour (for gluten free, use 200g gf plain flour and 2 teaspoons gf baking powder)

140g/5oz butter

113g/4oz caster sugar (plus extra for rolling)

2 large tablespoons honey

1 egg yolk

Cream sugar and butter together. Mix in the honey and egg yolk. Sift in the flour and combine to form a dough. Roll into balls, roll these in sugar, then flatten onto a baking sheet covered with silicone or greaseproof paper. Cook in a medium oven (gas 4/180°C/350°F) for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

*Sue Carter*

## Patterson in Print

When writing PiP I occasionally look back to see what I have written for the same month in previous years. I could almost repeat what I wrote last year. In general beekeepers had a good honey crop, we had the usual queen problems and we lost a good colony a lot earlier than we should have done.

Looking at these a bit closer I have spoken to several beekeepers about the crop and they have told me that some beekeepers didn't get much honey. This area isn't the greatest for forage compared to some I see, but my own bees and those at Dounhurst did well. One member only has one colony, but harvested over 150lb from it and left a super of honey for winter, another got 670lb from 4 colonies. I keep hearing that single brood Nationals aren't big enough, but I think this shows differently.

There may be many **reasons why a colony didn't produce a good crop** when others did including: weakness, where the colony may be diseased or had a nucleus removed; a poor queen that isn't laying the required number of eggs; or it may have swarmed. Whatever the reason, if the beekeeper comes to apiary meetings regularly, then they can compare their own colonies with ours and if there is a problem learn how to overcome it.

The early losses really were carelessness and inexperience, but as I keep reminding everyone it is a teaching apiary and things will go wrong. If everything goes right nobody learns anything. The problem is there are only a small number who see it and I don't see an easy way of distributing information.

In a short time we will see the shortest day. **Expect the temperatures to drop, which will result in a change of behaviour for the bees.** Very often the weather is colder in March than December, so be alert. The colder it is the tighter bees will cluster, so appearing to be a much smaller colony. As I keep reminding beekeepers a lot of beekeeping is observation. Have a look at a colony when it is freezing, then again when the temperature has got up to 10-12°. With the former you should see bees tightly clustered, the latter they will be more mobile, may be covering more frames and perhaps on the top bars. Don't be frightened to take off the crown board and have a quick look. You won't do any harm and you will learn a lot. Obviously put on protective equipment and use a smoker.

Towards the end of the year we will treat the colonies with **oxalic acid** (Apibioxal). A notice will come round in an email, so check regularly.

Beekeeping members of WGBKA are also members of West Sussex BKA and the **British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)**, as their capitation fees are included in WG subscriptions. There are several variations on this arrangement throughout the country. In theory the "ordinary" beekeeper has input on policies of the higher bodies through elected representatives. That is democracy, but in reality most beekeepers think parochially and aren't bothered about the higher organisations, so don't always know what is happening. There is nothing wrong with that, but it can mean that things are done in their name without their knowledge, with policies being formed by a very small number of people, often those we may not choose if we knew a bit more about them.

Every year there is an Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) of the BBKA, where propositions that have previously been submitted are debated and voted upon. Having been involved for a long time I can tell you that historically some are very poor, often dreamt up by a noisy person with a personal agenda and forced through county committee, yet others are very sensible and good for the craft. They really are a mixed bag. This year there are a lot fewer propositions than previously, though none very contentious.

At the 2018 BBKA ADM it was decided to change the status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This meant changes to the constitution, which is being debated and voted upon at the 2019 ADM. I have read it through and found a few errors, but there are also some changes that concern me, two of which under **13.2 "Eligibility for trusteeship"** state that candidates ".....must have carried out an administrative role within an Area Association" and ".....must have kept bees for a continuous period of at least four years.....". I can't believe this is a Charity Commission ruling and my simple mind suggests this hasn't been thought out too well. There is no definition of "administrative role". There are currently a shade over 26,000 BBKA members, all but a few being ineligible as a charity trustee for a variety of reasons. In my view all members should have a right to be elected, but these proposed rules will only make a very small number eligible, the low hundreds at best, many of them coerced into their local positions as it is, so unlikely to want to get involved more. At this ADM there are six vacancies for trustees, but only three candidates, two of whom are seeking re-election. I fail to see how the proposed rules will improve that.

Just to show you the sort of people who are elected, when at the National Honey Show I was asked by someone very high up in the BBKA why I didn't have them on the NHS lecture programme (I organise it). We had a very short discussion about that, then they stated that as I don't wear a bee suit it gives the wrong impression to beginners! Oh dear!

*Roger*

## Nell in Print

Sorry for not making a contribution for some time, but I have been spending a lot of time trying to break Rosie of bad habits and teaching her some better ones.

I keep a fairly keen eye on what is going on around me and I find some things very funny. My Dad is not well known for keeping our house tidy, so there are lots of things for me to see. Dad had a letter inviting him to go for cancer screening. On the back it said that if English was not your first language there were 13 alternatives. All the writing was different including some letters I haven't seen before. The numbers were the same though 0800 707 60 60. Dad bought a couple packets of pasta called "Presto". On the packet it said it was made in Latvia! On a packet of porridge oats it said it was "Farm Grown". Seems a bit obvious to me.

## Rosie in Print

Hello lovely beekeepers. My friend Nell has shown me how to use the keyboard. She checks everything including my spelling.

I was born on a farm on the Isle of Man, where I was with my mother, father and brother from an earlier litter. We had about 80 milking cows, 200 sheep and several hives of bees. I was surplus to requirements, or so they said, so following a ferry trip and a long car journey I found myself in West Sussex.

I like my new home and Nell who thinks she is teaching me. I have been to meetings and think beekeepers are nice people who share biscuits.

## Membership Renewal 2019

Membership subscriptions are now due, payable by either cheque or bank transfer. Irrespective of payment method, the completed form must be returned either by post or email and subscription paid by **31st December 2018**. Please complete one form for each BBKA member.

If making payment by bank transfer/internet banking, please include the reference details as per the membership form, i.e. 'Member - A Bloggs'. Please complete all sections of the membership form, including the total sum due; and ensure the payment sent is for the correct amount.

The membership form is attached as a separate document within the distribution email and is in both MSWord and PDF formats.

## Wanted and For Sale

Please note that all descriptions and representations in this section are provided by individual members and that WGBKA does not endorse or take any steps to verify the information supplied.

### For Sale

Thornes manual 4 frame (national supers or 2 frame brood) robust plastic honey extractor. Like me - old but a good worker!

£75 O.n.o.

Contact: Mel Robertson [01483 892763](tel:01483892763) or [Melanie.robertson@virgin.net](mailto:Melanie.robertson@virgin.net)

