



## WISBOROUGH GREEN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

A DIVISION OF WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2017

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

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## DIARY OF EVENTS



### **APIARY MEETING EVERY SATURDAY (unless notified as cancelled)**

**Meetings have now been scheduled for September, October & November** See page 2

*If possible please arrive at meetings 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 2017**

**National Honey Show** - 26th - 28th October

**Winter Talk** - Tuesday 7th November See page 3 of this newsletter

**'Bee Improvement for All'** - Sunday 19th November See page 2 of this newsletter

*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.*

## The following apiary meeting date has been scheduled for November 2017.

**Saturday 4th November**    *Gather from 1.30 p.m.*    *Notices at 1.50 p.m.*

*Please remember to sign-in when attending meetings.*

## “Bee Improvement for All”

*A whole days learning on how to improve your bees.*

Bee Improvement should be of interest to all beekeepers and for a number of reasons including temper, quietness on the combs and suitability to the locality. Learn how to improve your bees without buying imported queens that may not be best suited to our conditions or risking bring in diseases.

Amongst the topics covered will be:

- Setting the criteria you want in your bees.
- How to assess your own and other people's colonies.
- Recording assessments using simple methods.
- Rearing queens from local bees to avoid relying on buying them.
- Deciding which colonies to use queen cells from and which queens to replace.
- Using natural queen cells the bees build.
- "Artificial" queen rearing for those who want more queens.
- Replacing queens in colonies.
- Making up mating nuclei.
- Getting queens mated.
- Working with other beekeepers and the local BKA.

There will be plenty of information on colony management, with emphasis on understanding what is happening inside colonies and keeping things simple.

This course will help beekeepers to rear their own queens from local stock and not rely on imports.

**Date:** Sun 19th November 2017

**Time:** 9.00 for 9.30-4.30 approx.

**Venue:** Rudgwick Village Hall, Guildford Road, Bucks Green, Rudgwick, WSussex. RH12 3JJ.  
*A map to the venue is available on the BIBBA website.*

**Cost:** £10/head adult. £7/head for under 18, who must be accompanied by a fee paying adult.  
*Refreshments included, but bring your own lunch.*

**Bookings and Enquiries to:** Daisy, 23 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, Horsham, WSussex. RH13 0SQ.  
Tel 01403 790 167 or 07980 280 852

[wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk).

A Booking Form is available to download from the BIBBA website: <https://bibba.com/event/bee-improvement-bifa-day/>

Details of the event are also on the WSBKA website: [www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/](http://www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/)

## Winter Talk

*Tuesday 7th November, 7:30pm at North Hall, Loxwood*

Pam Hunter will be giving us a talk on 'Non-standard medications for the Control of Bee Problems'.

**Synopsis:** *A variation on Is Natural always Nice? But concentrating more on the new medications. There is now a plethora of new medicaments available for treating colonies, some claiming almost magical properties. Almost all say that they are 'natural' and some that they 'contain no chemicals'. Organic acids are frequently an ingredient. With so many products and such claims, we should all have amazingly healthy and productive colonies! There are experimental data for some of these products while others seem to have none. I shall discuss many of these claims and examine the reality of such touching faith in anything natural. Overall there is some promise with a few products of activity against varroa, Nosema and chalk brood, but the beekeeper needs to be wary of accepting all the claims.*

Pam is a member of Central Sussex BKA, is a Master Beekeeper who has been keeping bees for over 25 years. She is now Chairman of the BBKA Examinations Board, sets and marks module exams and is an assessor for the Basic, the General Husbandry and the Advanced Husbandry exams. She has a particular interest in the interaction of plants, bees and the environment as well as the more biological/scientific aspects of bees and historical aspects of beekeeping.

## Patterson In Print



*Nell and friend*

We are now very close to the end of the season, so apart from a few occasions, there will be few apiary meetings until the spring. Being Apiary Manager, so closely involved with the apiary, I am fully aware of the amount of effort put in by several people in order to teach our members. During the season the demonstrators make a great commitment to attend, often when they have other options. Tom Moore runs the shop, not only by bringing orders to meetings, but distributing items from home too. Jerry has done well to organise teas at most meetings and Sue and Graham have collected sugar, made syrup and fed around 35 colonies of bees. In addition John Glover has acted as administrator for the Preliminary Sessions; Jim Heath has repaired and treated hive parts; and I have a small group who help me, Meriel Bottle, Tom Weston, Murray West and Martin Hill. These are mostly tasks that go unseen, so I think it appropriate to thank them all for their effort on behalf of all of us.

In recent weeks I have been pleased to receive favourable comments from members on the level of tuition they receive at the apiary. Beekeeping teaching throughout the U.K. is largely in the hands of volunteer amateurs and as I have said on many occasions it is quite variable. With the resources we have I think we do very well, which is a tribute to those who contribute.

On the subject of thanks, I think it appropriate to thank Daisy and her helpers for organising a

brilliant supper. I have been to every one, bar one, which is over 40 and as ever the food and company were brilliant. I think it's important to have a social side to any organisation and the supper gives us a chance to meet other members and their guests in an informal atmosphere. Feedback I have had has been very positive. Well done all.

We have just heard of two confirmed sightings of Asian Hornets in the South West. It is early days yet, but I hope that any nests are found and dealt with quickly. Please read the identification notes on the NBU website, memorise what to look for and keep an eye out for any possible insects or nests. Once the queens have dispersed for their winter hibernation they will be very difficult to control. Although warnings have gone out to everyone, it is beekeepers who are best placed to find them.

I have already told you about the lectures and workshops at the National Honey Show, but it's worth pointing out that traders will be offering a large selection from their catalogues, plus "budget" equipment and special offers. Be aware that budget ranges are just that, so you may find the quality could be lower. You will need to make sure the item is fit for purpose and will last. In particular have a look at hive parts. The sizes will be good, but they will be made from lower grade timber, so will probably have knots or softer heartwood. I think it better to look at these parts rather than order online. They are classed as "seconds", so you must expect faults, but if you can inspect them, you can make sure there are no knots where you intend to drive nails and you can check for lighter areas of the wood, that may be the softer heartwood. Have a look at the ends of the packs as this should show up problems. We use seconds at the apiary and for the Beginners Packs and apart from the odd problem we have done very well with them. I think they are tremendous value. There will also be Northern Bee Books there, who are the worlds largest stockist of beekeeping books in the English language. I will be at the show throughout, so if you need any help just ask me. Unfortunately Nell won't be there as they don't seem to like dogs very much, so if you bring her a biscuit I will have to give it to her later.

Towards the end of this month put on mouse guards if needed. I'm often asked about insulation, ventilation and closing off open mesh floors (OMFs). Apart from my early years I have never insulated a hive for winter. I remove one crown board cover at about the beginning of November and leave the OMFs open. My bees winter O.K., probably better than most, but you do what you like, as they will probably get through if you do everything else right. Bees are very adaptable and the hardier colonies will survive, whatever the beekeeper chucks at them.

***Roger***



## 86th National Honey Show

### 26th - 28th October 2017



*See last month's edition of the West Sussex newsletter for full details and links to the website.*

# Annual Supper Review

*Mel Roberson writes about the recent bee supper.*

If you weren't there you missed a cracker!

A super evening (as always!) in a new venue right on Wisborough Green - which is exactly where it should be as we are the Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association!



I say "new" but a short and entertaining talk from Roger took us all back to the starting point -proof if needed that "what goes round comes round!" An excellent venue - expertly handled at the bar by Tom & Gordon - welcoming faces for old and new members (and their friends or long suffering partners!). SUPERLATIVE food supplied by all - what a collective talent abounds for inventive and delicious salads and amazing puds! (I had to try 4 different ones as I couldn't make up my mind which to have!) But the biggest praise of all must go to Daisy and Martin - indefatigable in their determination to make everything run so smoothly! They were there to "meet and greet" - serve the food (all the meat/cheeses/anything you needed (all ordered and sorted out well in advance of course ) then clear up / dish wash / serve teas and coffees and mints.....pewh!

A superb effort! Many many thanks from all of us who where there!

Congratulations also to all those who received their BBKA Basic certificates and those who received their cups from the Honey Show ( especially me of course!) but I have to say well done Judy especially!) Reserve the date for next year - you will not be disappointed!

***Mel***



# Varroa Management at LASI

Neil Beer writes about attending a recent workshop at LASI.

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September I went to the workshop on *Integrated Varroa Management* at the *Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects* (LASI) at the University of Sussex. There were about 20 beekeepers there – apart from me, none, I think, from our Division. So I hope this brief summary of the workshop might be interesting.

The workshop focused on the relative effectiveness of different methods of controlling Varroa, based on evidence from LASI's own research (on about 100 colonies hived at LASI and other apiaries located nearby) and some research conducted by other institutions. The main methods discussed during the workshop are oxalic acid, drone brood trapping, thymol (in the form of Apiguard), and formic acid.

In a nutshell, LASI argue that oxalic acid, especially when delivered by sublimation, is more effective than any other control method. The table below is an extract from a pamphlet published by LASI; some pamphlets are available from their website (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/sussexplan/varroamites>).

| Method  | Application  | Varroa survival |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Oxalic acid 2.25g<br>x1 treatment                   | Broodless, December                                    | 2.4%            |
| Oxalic Acid 2.25g<br>x2 treatments, 1-2 weeks apart | Broodless, December                                    | 0.4%            |
| Oxalic acid 2,25g<br>x1 treatment                   | 500 brood cells = a "palm-sized" patch                 | 17%             |
| Oxalic acid 2.25g<br>x1 treatment,                  | 3000 brood cells = a "hand-sized" patch                | 60% - 70%       |
| Drone brood trapping<br>x1 month                    | All drone brood removed                                | 54%             |
| Thymol 12.5g x2 treatments                          | Italy, late summer, brood present                      | 23.9%           |
| Thymol 12.5g x2 treatments                          | Italy, late summer, broodless, queen caged for 22 days | 3.2%            |
| Formic acid 180g x2 treatments                      | Italy, summer, broodless, queen caged for 32 days      | 5.4%            |

Given that Varroa numbers can build up very quickly, it is better to have as low a survival rate as possible. LASI research shows that, if untreated, Varroa numbers increase on average by around 40 times in a year. Treatment is more effective if the colony is broodless since then all Varroa will be on the adult bees, and will be exposed to the treatment. This is one of the reasons why survival rates are higher for those treatments that are applied when brood is present since, up to 80% of the Varroa will then be inside the brood cells and protected from the treatment.

LASI research shows that sublimation is the most effective way of applying oxalic acid. Sublimation is generally done with an applicator that has a small pan which is heated using a 12 volt battery. The oxalic acid crystals turn straight into a gas, which then pervades the inside of the brood box. LASI found that the exact dose is not critical – anything from 1 gram to 4 grams per colony is effective and has no detrimental effect on the bees. One of the pamphlets available on their

website shows how to apply oxalic acid by sublimation.

I find the research evidence quite powerful. But one of the key aspects of oxalic acid treatment is the cost of the equipment required – around £120 for the applicator alone, plus a car battery or similar and suitable facemask and eye protection. The only legal form of oxalic acid for use on bees is *Api-Bioxal*, available from the usual beekeeping suppliers. This would only make economic sense if you have a lot of colonies to treat, or if the cost can be shared among a number of beekeepers. But as a hobby beekeeper with just two colonies so far, I could not justify spending this much, when *Apiguard* will cost around £4 per colony .

**Neil**

## Advance Notice

# “Making good use of your beeswax ”

*A Demonstration*

*Friday 9, Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 February 2018.*

*Venue to be decided, but keep the dates in your diary.*

*Details will be emailed when available.*

Most beekeepers accumulate beeswax, either from cappings or melted combs, which could be sold or exchanged for foundation, but many only have a small amount, so they just store it in the shed and don't know what to do with it. This event will demonstrate making products that can be simply made with quite small quantities of beeswax. These can be used by you and your family or can make useful and unusual presents. The good thing is you know what the ingredients are.

The demonstrator will be Jim Ryan from Thurles, Co Tipperary. This is a return visit, as he was last here in February 2015. Those who attended last time will agree that Jim is a very good and amusing demonstrator of making beeswax products. He has a very good way of showing you how easy these items are to make, using minimal equipment that is in most kitchens.

There will be about 5 items made on each day which may be slightly different, but Jim will begin by cleaning wax, then making such things as furniture polish, furniture cream, lip balm, skin cream, moisture bars, soap, etc. He will also look at using honey in recipes – honey lip balm, honey soap, etc. There may also be some alternative recipes that do not contain nut oils. He does tend to make it up as he goes along. Each day will be similar, so there is no need to attend them all.

Judging by the previous events we are expecting this to be popular and as places are limited you will need to book early. Booking details will be sent separately, so please wait until then.

This is a rare opportunity to see a top demonstrator.

**Roger**

# Tales From An Out-Apiary

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

Today is 11th October, so I am a bit late getting the newsletter ready for publication, but once this article is finished I can send it to the membership secretary. This newsletter isn't the only bee-related task I am behind with.....

As organising the WG Honey Show keeps me busy during the second half of August, I delayed extraction of my second honey crop until after the show. Unfortunately, the weather in September was very autumnal, with plenty of rain, and I struggled to get to the apiary to prepare the supers for extraction. As it turned out, this was not a bad thing, as the bees had plenty of stores to consume, whereas some fellow beekeepers had reported finding their bees close to starvation. Eventually I extracted what I considered to be excess stores on 16th September; extracting only capped frames and leaving any that contained wet stores. I replaced the supers on the hives for 'drying' and kept a close eye on the weather forecasts.

Fortunately, I have used MAQS for varroa treatment since the product became available, and so I need a much shorter treatment period. I applied the MAQS strips to the three colonies in my main apiary on 24th September. Some would say this is too late to benefit the winter bees and that treatment should be completed by the end of August; but I have read that beekeepers who take their hives to the heathers treat their colonies after extracting that crop.

Following the statutory seven-day treatment period, I next inspected the hives on 4th October. All queens were present and laying. Two of the colonies showed no signs of a brood break; whereas the third colony showed signs of a short brood break, estimated at 3 days duration. The two colonies operating on single brood both had a super containing a small amount of wet stores; these were placed under the brood chambers for the winter. These inspections will be my last of this active season. All that is needed now to finalise the winter preparations is to supplement the existing stores in the brood chambers with syrup.

For a few years now I have chosen to buy the syrup rather than make it myself. My reason for doing this is that the bees have to work it less to turn it into winter stores; as they have to work it less, it can be given later in the month than if I was mixing the syrup myself. Yes, it does cost more per litre, but the money to pay for it comes from honey sales, so it is self-funding.

The forecasters are predicting mild weather for at least another week, with summer returning for a day on the 16th!; good news for my bees as they will be able to forage on the last of the ivy and garden flowers, as well as taking down the syrup from the feeders.



***Caroline***

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 **November edition** no later than the **27th October**.

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

***Caroline***