

# Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

## Newsletter September 2018

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

Facebook Group: [www.facebook.com/groups/486401598062884](https://www.facebook.com/groups/486401598062884)

### **Officers and Contact Information:**

Life President:	Roger Patterson	01403 790637	<a href="mailto:roger-patterson@btconnect.com">roger-patterson@btconnect.com</a>
Hon. Secretary:	Tess Clarke	07773 413025	<a href="mailto:secretary@wgbka.org.uk">secretary@wgbka.org.uk</a>
Hon. Treasurer:	Murray West	01798 867048	<a href="mailto:murray@mt-w.co.uk">murray@mt-w.co.uk</a>
Membership Secretary:	Richard Gibby	01403 588092	<a href="mailto:richard.gibby@outlook.com">richard.gibby@outlook.com</a>

### Contents

VARROA TREATMENT .....	2
Dates for your diary .....	2
WGBKA Annual Supper.....	2
Apiary Meetings .....	2
Winter Meetings.....	2
National Honey Show .....	3
BIBBA Conference .....	3
Introduction to Beekeeping ..	3
Teaching Apiary .....	4
Patterson in Print .....	5

This newsletter is very soon after the last one, but there is a lot of information to distribute. We are getting towards the end of the active season, so we are preparing for the winter programme. This will include the start of the monthly meetings, the Annual Supper and Winter Learning sessions. Beekeeping really is an all year event!

At the last committee meeting Gordon Allan proposed that members should be able to attend committee meetings as observers if they wish. The final wording is to be agreed and will be announced in a later newsletter and on the website.

With the cancelling of the WGBKA Honey Show we still had a presence at the Wisborough Green Horticultural Show. Lisa Baker and Roger sold honey and answered questions on our behalf. There was a steady stream of visitors all afternoon, although there seemed to be a lot less people in the tent than normal. Visitors in general were interested in bees (apart from one lady who didn't seem to like anything!), with a couple of comments about there not being as much honey on show as normal.

Below is Lisa explaining what is happening in the observation hive to visitors.



## VARROA TREATMENT

available now from Tom - but hurry!

We have reached the important time to treat your colonies for Varroa.

This should be done as soon as possible after honey extraction, while temperatures remain reasonably high.

Stocks are very limited this year. I currently have the thymol-based treatment Apilife Var available, as detailed below.

**ApilifeVar** – thymol (8g) plus eucalyptus oil, levomenthol and camphor in the form of a brittle foam strip from which the active ingredients vapourise (**\*\*\* note that the oils in ApilifeVar will dissolve polystyrene so it is not suitable for use on polynucs or polyhives \*\*\***). Requires two sachets per full hive, applying half a pack (the strip is pre-cut) each 7 days over a 4 week treatment period. No eke is required as there is enough space under a normal crownboard.

Lot number 081317 Expiry date 06/2019.

For more details see [www.bees-online.co.uk/resource-downloads/APILIFEVAR.pdf](http://www.bees-online.co.uk/resource-downloads/APILIFEVAR.pdf)

Price £2.20 per sachet or £20.00 per 10 sachets (to treat 5 hives). (Limited stock)

Rates of application are based on a full colony; you should adjust for nuclei and very small colonies. Open mesh floors should normally be closed during treatment to allow the vapour to spread in the hive.

Email orders to Tom on [stone.house@btinternet.com](mailto:stone.house@btinternet.com)

## Dates for your diary

### WGBKA Annual Supper

Wisborough Green Village Hall

#### **Saturday October 6<sup>th</sup>**

Wisborough Green Village Hall, starting at 7pm. This event is a highlight of our year, where members, family, friends and guests can enjoy a chat in a relaxed atmosphere with other beekeepers. The food is always incredibly good. The Association will provide drink and meat/fish - with members bringing a pudding or a salad.

Please book your tickets with Daisy at [wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk) or 07980 280852, stating if you will bring pudding or salad.

Ticket price is £7.50 per person and you can pay on the door.

The cut-off date for booking tickets is 23<sup>rd</sup> September. There will be a raffle and hopefully some entertainment during the evening. If you haven't been before it's a lovely evening with a chance to bring partners along if you wish.

Daisy

### Apiary Meetings

These are coming to an end, but although we won't meet every week, we will go into November. There is still plenty to teach about how we need to help our colonies survive the winter.

Further apiary dates in September are the following Saturdays 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

We will do follow-up varroa treatments and anything else that needs dealing with at the end of the season. There is always plenty to see and do.

### Winter Meetings

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

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

Further dates are:-

Tuesday November 13<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday December 4<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday November 13<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday February 12<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday March 12<sup>th</sup> – 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 25<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:steward@honeyshow.co.uk) direct.

## BIBBA Conference

Cirencester, Gloucestershire

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

Details were sent earlier. Have a look again at an incredibly good programme that appeals to all beekeepers.

<https://bibba.com/event/bibba-conference-2018/>

## 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 on the website soon.

## Teaching Apiary

I feel we should have a newsletter item on the teaching apiary every month, even if it's only a paragraph. This is an important part of what we do and the main way in which we teach members about beekeeping. If members have something to contribute, then please do so.

I doubt if many members are aware of what is done to provide what I think is one of the best teaching apiaries I have come across. It is not just a case of having a few hives where it is pot luck what happens, with little planning, there is a bit more to it than that. I don't think anyone learns much from a model apiary, so I tend to have things that will teach people more about what they are likely to see in their own apiaries. Examples are I am happy to have the odd colony with fairly bad chalk brood and less than perfect combs. There are the occasional comments and a bit of banter (well, I think it is!), but how else are you going to show beekeepers what needs attention and how to do it if it isn't in front of them? I know I may have frames with nails where the lugs have broken off, but there have been a lot of lugs broken off recently, especially at extraction time!

There is an annual cycle in the apiary in the same way as there is in a colony of bees. We have losses, both summer and winter (50% 3-4 years ago), which need to be made up, if not immediately, at some time in the future. Several methods of colony increase are made during the summer, which will give us far more colonies than we need, so they are united using several methods during the autumn. This gives us opportunities for two demonstrations, as well as showing how to raise and introduce queens and queen cells. Very often we can manipulate the increased colonies to add or remove frames of brood and/or food and move positions to lose or gain flying bees. Very often techniques like this are frowned upon by others, but we live in the real world where we teach how to manage an apiary in a sensible and efficient manner. If queens fail to emerge or to mate, as they often do, we can discuss and demonstrate ways of rectifying the situation.

One main concern of mine for a long time has been that if we have a situation in one group it is only 4-6 people who see it, when we have 150ish members. How do we get the information out to everyone? At one stage we tried a debriefing at tea time, but this only lasted a few weeks. After a couple of hours looking at bees attendees were ready for their tea and some left early. We had several who didn't want to speak on behalf of their group and it is unreasonable for demonstrators to do it. I don't know how we get information out to others.

We have to satisfy experienced and beginner beekeepers, as well as those who have never seen inside a beehive before. This needs everything from small nucs to full honey producing colonies.

I think it reasonable to demonstrate anything that is sound that we would normally not have a problem with, but I see little point in demonstrating something we wouldn't recommend that is difficult to operate or unreliable. One request that crops up occasionally is having several hive types, so members can compare them. This sounds a great idea, but it is very difficult to run an apiary on these lines. At one stage we had 5 hive types - National, WBC, Smith, Commercial and Langstroth as well as a long hive (Tredwell's coffin), Cottager and earlier variants on WBC at various times. They were an absolute nightmare to operate, because boxes weren't compatible and there were 4 frame sizes amongst that lot. In the past we have sold a lot at the annual auction!

I have recently been asked about using a Snelgrove board. This appears to be a reasonable request, especially as a book was written on it. I have never used the Snelgrove system myself, only helping others. A couple of years ago I was asked to visit Ireland to help a fruit grower in Kilkenny who had 60-80 colonies of bees to pollinate his orchards. When I got there every colony had a Snelgrove Board, that someone else had advised him to use. I have never seen so many swarms hanging in trees! They are really only suitable if you have your bees at home and if you fully understand what should be happening. An out apiary situation such as we have at Dounhurst is unsatisfactory and is why the Horsley Board, which is a development was designed. What is not usually stated is that Snelgrove didn't use his board in latter years because it didn't work very well.

I welcome comments and suggestions from members. Very often they hear of some method elsewhere and wish to know more. I'm always happy to discuss things. If it's feasible, I will give it a go.

I promise this will be the longest, but I feel members should know how the apiary operates.

## Patterson in Print

We have recently had a hive of bees removed from the apiary without consent. It was hidden away from the main apiary, so difficult to understand why that one was removed, unless someone knew it was there. This is the second time a hive has disappeared, the last time was around 35 years ago. If anyone hears of someone acquiring a new colony, or equipment appearing with "WG" branded on it please let me know. You will recall that earlier this year I asked members not to put on protective clothing before entering the apiary. This was the reason and may have alerted a passer-by to the fact there are bees nearby.

The removed colony was a swarm earlier in the year that belonged to Maggie Turner. She called me to say she had collected a swarm and would it be good for teaching. As swarming was very low this year I gladly accepted. We put it in a WG hive where that colony was very useful in demonstrating hiving a swarm and subsequent management of a swarm, as well as clipping and marking the queen.

This is only one example of the many things that happen at the apiary during the summer. Another happened recently in my group with a young failing queen. The brood was a poor pattern with probably 90-95% drone brood in worker cells, with only a very small amount of worker brood. The queen had obviously mated, but for some reason was unable to lay properly. This is very rarely seen, so I showed it to all the other attendees.

I have heard second-hand that some members don't come to the apiary any more because we "only open hives". Yes we do open hives, what else do you expect at a teaching apiary? In opening hives we regularly find interesting situations like the above. We also have sessions on specialist topics too, so we don't "only open hives", there is an awful lot more than that going on.

Ivy will soon be in bloom giving beekeepers a problem if we get a flow from it. There are still likely to be plenty of foragers and as the queens will be reducing laying, there is less brood to feed and more cells to fill with nectar. Ivy honey granulates very quickly, often before sealing. It can cause bees a problem in cold weather when they are unable to collect water to liquefy the solid honey, so causing starvation if there is no liquid food within reach. It isn't easy to advise what to do. In past years we have had two supers filled with ivy honey, so they may need extra space. In some years there is a much quicker flow from ivy than anything else. A strong colony really can fill a super in a week, so don't be caught out. Incoming ivy honey can be smelt in the apiary on a still evening and is unmistakable. It can't be extracted because it granulates quickly, but we need to do something otherwise the queens will be crowded out, so unable to lay eggs to provide the bees that are needed to get the colony through the winter.

Ivy honey has a strong flavour that unless blended with a milder honey, may be difficult to sell. It will need melting out of the combs anyway, destroying them, unless you are willing to scrape them down to the midrib, which is a painstaking and messy job. I haven't done this before, but in northern counties where beekeepers take their bees to the heather they used to use what they called "cogs", which are effectively ekes. These were placed above the brood box, so the bees filled them with wild comb. In those days heather honey was pressed from the comb, not "loosened" and extracted as it is now. I'm thinking we could do the same with an empty super, letting the bees build wild combs, then melting the honey out of them. It would have to be done at a fairly low temperature to avoid damaging the honey, but we liquefy granulated honey, so little difference there. I suspect it could be used in cooking, although I know some beekeepers throw it away. What a waste?

Last month I mentioned I recently went to Finland. Whilst at Helsinki Airport waiting several hours for my flight I sat outside in the sun. There were 4 boys about 12-14 years old on skateboards. They were very fast and incredibly skilful, doing manoeuvres I hardly thought possible. Although I wasn't tempted to acquire a skateboard I thoroughly enjoyed watching their skills. I thought to myself they were probably very practical and were learning a lot about such things as balance and prediction. If they didn't make the right decision quickly they might have had a rather painful accident. Similarly beekeeping is a practical subject that often needs speed of thought and the right decision, so I wondered what sort of beekeepers those 4 boys would make. I believe that people are far less practical than in the past and I'm being told by a major beekeeping equipment supplier the sale of ready made frames and hive parts is rocketing, not because people are too busy, but apparently because they are unable to use simple woodworking tools such as a hammer. As a practical person I find this difficult to believe, but I guess it is the result of not letting children do things in case they hurt themselves. It's for these people that risk assessments were created. I wonder how long it will be before BBKA assessors fail someone when doing their BBKA Basic assessment because they can't make a frame - or perhaps they will withdraw it because not many can!

About this time of year I'm often asked what price to charge for honey, some asking if it can go in the newsletter. The reasons vary, some being a genuine question, others because it may be felt by the questioner that others are selling too cheaply. To publish a suggested price is illegal as it is price fixing, so we are unable to do that. If honey is well prepared and presented it should fetch a premium price. To sell at low prices I sometimes see simply devalues a premium product. We sell the Association's honey at shows at £6/lb. Comb honey is usually double the price of jarred honey for the same weight.

On the subject of selling, at this time of year many beekeepers, especially those new to the craft, have more honey than they need, so they look to sell it. There is nothing wrong with that if it is well prepared and labelled legally (see <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/honeyregsuk.html>), but find your own outlet, don't muscle in on someone else's. If an outlet is selling someone else's honey they will usually only change supplier if it is cheaper or the current supplier is providing a poor service. The former will always be looking at the price, rather than quality and service and will look for a supplier cheaper than you, the latter can probably be taken advantage of, but do a little research first. The poor service may be because the retailer has run out in the morning and demands the supplier delivers in the afternoon, so not the suppliers fault. Selling honey to an outlet needs a bit of understanding both ways, so work with the customer to establish your needs as well as theirs.

When selling honey at shows we sometimes get told that honey can be bought at 99p or something similar. What is labelled as honey may be cheaper elsewhere, but is it actually honey? During my recent visit to Gormanston I listened to a lecture by Philip McCabe, the President of Apimondia, which is the international organisation for beekeepers. He stated that 40% of the "honey" sold worldwide is fake. Yes, that's what he said - 40%! I'm not sure if it was fake or adulterated, either way it's not pure honey. I asked a Maltese analyst who had also heard Philip's lecture if he thought 40% was correct. His reply was "and the rest"! Philip showed where corn and rice syrup were advertised online ".....for making honey". This is made to taste a bit like honey, but has an absence of pollen grains. Fake honey is usually at the lower price range with a hint that wording such as ".....a blend of non-EU honies" may be suspicious. Apparently Interpol rates honey 4th place in international food fraud behind wine, whisky and orange juice.

I forget the quantities stated, but the region in China where we see fruit trees pollinated by hand because we are told there are no bees apparently produces a massive amount of "honey". The top end suffers too. We were told there are 1,700 tons of manuka honey produced annually in New Zealand, with 1.900 tons sold in the U.K and 10.000 tons worldwide!

In August and September there is likely to be a yellow/orange hue to frames, combs and cappings that has been very prevalent this year. This is normal and is usually caused by bees foraging on fleabane, a yellow flower that grows on damp and poor soil. Fleabane is an important late source of nectar and bright orange pollen. Ragwort also produces similar yellow colouring and orange pollen, but bees forage on it far less than they do on fleabane.

In the September issue of "Sussex Life" there is a small article about beekeeping that includes me. This was first set up well over a year ago and the photographs that were taken at the WGBKA apiary seemed more important than the text, with many being taken using very much more expensive equipment than the ordinary beekeeper has. It is a tribute to the docility of our bees they didn't object, even though the colony was open for well over an hour, although the photographer's wife got stung! She accidentally squashed a bee, so not the fault of the bees. From a beekeeping point of view there is little information, but these occasional articles are good for the craft, even though the information is often edited, sometimes not making sense to a beekeeper.

Roger.