

Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

Newsletter - November 2018

Website: www.wgbka.org.uk

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Table of Contents

<i>From the Editor</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Dates for your diary.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Apiary Meetings.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Winter Meetings</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Introduction to Beekeeping..</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Annual Supper Report.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>New Division Rules Proposal....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>At The Apiary</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Patterson in Print</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Fondant Offer.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Annie Betts.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Beecraft Reduced Subscription Rate And Renewals 2019</i>	<i>8</i>

From the Editor

As we move towards winter, there are still things to do, so keep an eye on your email for news of apiary meetings and winter talks. Tom got us off to a good start with his October *Hints and Tips*, sharing lots of practical advice and demonstrating useful bits of kit. If you have a recommendation or observation to share, please send it to me for the next newsletter; perhaps we could have a "Please Mr Santa" section, so we can all add some useful bee stuff to our Christmas lists! Please contact me by email as above, and put WGBKA in the subject line so I don't miss anything. I will be short of time to put the next edition together, so must have all contributions by **Friday 30 November** in order to get it out over the weekend.

It would be good to get a few reports from people who attended talks and workshops at the National Honey Show; it was my first time there and a real eyeopener as to the things beekeepers can make – and buy! The talk that I attended on *Honey bee communication* was fascinating. Roger had the opportunity to compare this large show with a much smaller and rather different affair in Ireland. *Patterson in Print* also points out some recent changes to the WGBKA website, particularly its *What We Do* section, so take a look at some of the information and videos there.

Don't forget that the deadline for taking out or renewing a subscription to *Beecraft* at a reduced rate is **26 November**; see the notice from Gordon below.

Tamsin

Dates for your diary

Apiary Meetings

Apiary Meeting Saturday November 3 at 1.30pm

This is to put on mouse guards where necessary and woodpecker guards on all colonies. We will also take off feeders and clean them ready for storage. If the weather is fairly warm we may open a few colonies to see what the bees are doing.

Watch your email for news of future meetings, and see Roger's *At The Apiary* column below..

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 November 13th – *Making sweets with honey*. This should be of interest to non-beekeepers as well, so please bring your friends.

Tuesday December 4th

Tuesday January 15th

Tuesday February 12th

Tuesday March 12th – Annual General Meeting

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

Introduction to Beekeeping

Rudgwick Village Hall, **Saturday 2nd March 2019**

A day for those who haven't started bees or only just have.

Details are now on the website. http://wgbka.org.uk/Intro_to_Beekeeping

Annual Supper Report

What a delicious feast we all had at the annual supper this year! Everyone bought along such lovely puddings and salads to share, it made choosing what to have quite tricky. Coughtrey's at Pulborough supplied the meat which was excellent. I know of at least one person, who shall remain nameless, who managed 6 puddings, which makes my point and makes me quite jealous as well Jo - oops!

Wisborough Green Village Hall seemed an appropriate venue once again and it was so good to see so many of you, both newer members and veterans (Roger!). A big thank you to everyone who attended for making it such a lovely evening.

We look forward to next year's supper where we shall resume the trophy presentations and awards gained from the honey show and the exam process during the year. Please keep an eye out for details of workshops which we shall be running to help any of you wishing to learn how to prepare you honey for the show bench.

Daisy

Editor's note: I'm sure that we would all echo Roger's thanks below, to Daisy and everyone else who helped make the supper such an enjoyable event.

New Division Rules Proposal

Members have been emailed details of proposed new rules, together with an explanatory narrative; if you haven't received this, then please contact Tess Clarke. It is proposed that the revised Rules will be put to an Extraordinary General Meeting in January 2019, but in the meantime the committee would like to receive your feedback (positive or negative) in order that any outstanding issues/lack of clarity can be resolved before or at the EGM.

Please send your feedback to secretary@wgbka.org.uk by 1st December 2018.

At The Apiary

Feeding and varroa treatment has been completed. All we need to do now is to fit **mouse guards** where needed and wrap plastic around the hives to prevent woodpecker damage. Mouse guards should be put on as early as you can, because bees cluster in cold frosty weather, allowing mice to enter unopposed. Once inside they chew the combs to make their nest. This damages combs beyond repair. If you have shallow floors or entrance blocks where you can only just get a pencil in, there is no need for mouse guards. There is a view that mice can collapse their skulls to get through a narrow gap, but as anyone who has dissected owl pellets will know this is a myth. They can't.

I think plastic is much better against **woodpeckers** than making cages from wire netting as some do. It is much easier to store in the summer too. Yaffles (green woodpeckers) are the only type that will make holes in beehives, where they are after bees. Don't think that bees not in a wooded area won't get attacked. They will and quickly too. I have seen a woodpecker go through a hive in less than 5 minutes.

Wash out **feeders** and dry them thoroughly before storing them. Don't leave plastic feeders in the light, otherwise they will degenerate and crack.

It is probably worth doing a 7-day **varroa count** using the drop test. This will give an indication of the levels in your colonies.

Don't forget to buy **oxalic acid** treatment if you want to use it, so you are ready. I know it's early, but if you only have a few colonies it is probably worth inspecting them in the **2nd week of December** if the weather is warm and the bees are flying fairly freely. If there is no brood, then trickle with OA. Much better than leaving it until early January, when there may be brood. A quick inspection on a warm day shouldn't do any harm.

Heft the hives at the back and both sides in early November, then again at the turn of the year. When you get into February then heft every 2-3 weeks. We will be doing this during the winter, so come along to learn how to do it and compare our colonies with your own.

Roger

Patterson in Print

I was rather busy during October, when beekeeping activity should be in decline.

I gave two lectures at the **Mayo BKA** on the west coast of Ireland. I met Chris Redding, who was a Worthing BKA member before moving out there about 10 years ago. He told me that beekeeping was very different from Sussex.

The area is very marginal for bees, with 30lb of honey per colony seen as quite good. Several beekeepers told me they could only keep around 5 colonies in one place because forage was so poor. I did come across a couple of beekeepers who said they had colonies that produced 100lb this year, but that is exceptional.

For a small association they had over 140 entries, with well over 30 exhibitors. They don't get dark honey, so don't have a dark class in the schedule. I know both judges well and they told me the standards were very high. The show was well supported, with one trade stand, honey tasting/sales and 4 lectures at which there were over 100 seated. It was held at a Gaelic football club and apparently cost nothing to hire.

Local schools were involved with such things as drawings/paintings, poems and stories. The walls were covered with them, but there seemed to be no prizes. This is a simple way of involving young people.



This was just part of an exhibit from one school.



Irish standard 1lb honey jars are taller than our BS jars. The photo shows both in the same class.

The hospitality of the Irish is very good and I got treated very well. I was taken to a hurling match between the village I was staying in, Ballyhaunis with a population of a shade over 2,000, and a neighbouring village. Although a lifelong sportsman, I have never been to a hurling match before. There were estimated to be around 2,000 spectators. It was good fun and great to see young children together supporting different sides.

I gave a lecture at a **conference in London** that was intended for decision makers. The theme was the decline of bees. There were 7 speakers altogether, two of us amateur beekeepers, all the others were employees or got paid in some way. It was clear from the publicity material that the organisers were expecting pesticides and farming practices to get the blame. I was the first speaker and pulled apart the first paragraph of the publicity material because there were so many inaccuracies. They started off by using the word "bees" of which there are over 250 species in this country, then "honey bees" of which there is only one. They stated there was a 50% reduction of bee colonies between 1985-2005. I said this was a time when the number of beekeepers dropped and we had varroa, which killed many colonies. I pointed out that in the 13 years since, the number of BBKA members had gone from around 8,000 - 26,382! I concentrated on three issues, the importation of unsuitable bees, queen problems and the overall poor standard of beekeeping, which I believe are major contributors to colony losses. I finished by asking how many of the audience could recognise an Asian Hornet!

I was up against representatives of campaign led organisations with their slick presentations and graphs based on "selected research". No wonder the general public get duff information.

The **National Honey Show** was bigger than last year, but speaking to several judges they said the standards were quite poor, which was the reason why there were several awards not made. The star for me was this basket of fruit and vegetables made from beeswax. There are some very clever people, but they have a bit more time than I have.



This is my second year of organising the lectures and I'm very pleased at the way they went. There were no genuine complaints that got back to me. There were a few of the usual niggles, including someone moaning because a tall man sat in front of them! If they can't work out that a fairly simple way of overcoming the problem is to move seat, then perhaps we have found the reason for some of the poor beekeeping.

We hope to have some **teaching sessions** during the winter. These are helpful and augment the work we do at the teaching apiary. Please attend when they are announced.

I had many comments from members who attended the **supper**. Although there was no entertainment or honey show cups to award this year the company, food and organisation were brilliant. **Huge thanks to Daisy** for putting it all together and her helpers.

Those who use the **website** regularly will have noticed some recent new pages. There is now one for Asian Hornets and some suggested links. If you have other suggested links please let me know. Lisa Baker suggested telling members on the website about some of the things we teach. This has resulted in a page that leads to others by pressing relevant buttons. There are only a couple at the moment, but these will grow in time. This should prove to be a useful resource for reminding members what has been taught and

an indication to visitors of some of the things we teach. One page is about extracting and has a video of a brood comb being uncapped. If members have other suggestions please let me know.

Our website is managed by former beekeeper Fionn Turnbull, with me being the editor. We work well together, but it must be remembered that Fionn is a volunteer, the same as the rest of us and can't always get information displayed instantly. I may not always forward it to him when I should either. Regular items that need updating are events and newsletters.

We have probably had the website around 10 years now and although it may not be as visually up to date as others it is maintained regularly, so information is there. There are many other BKA websites that have been set up by enthusiastic people, but nobody takes over when they move on. In my view it is better to have a functional website than something with bells and whistles that is quickly abandoned.

Roger

Fondant Offer

Martin Hill has obtained some 12.5 kg boxes of fondant at a very good price of £8.00/box; the normal price from Bako is £16.00. Please contact him via duntonwoodhoney@gmail.com if you want any. It's cash only and there's limited stock so get your order in now.

Annie Betts

Following last month's profile of this remarkable Sussex beekeeper of the past, Roger has supplied a picture of her:



Beecraft Reduced Subscription Rate And Renewals 2019

BEECRAFT is the leading monthly magazine for beekeepers and WGBKA members, through a bulk order, get a reduced subscription rate. The magazine can be received in hard copy or viewed electronically. You can see sample copies here:

<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.

The direct subscription price from 1st January 2019 is £33, but if you subscribe through Wisborough Green the cost will be **£29.75**, a significant discount. There is a digital version available at £19.75 including VAT (no discount). Those subscribing to the paper version may also view the digital edition **free of charge**.

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.

You can **either** send a cheque (payable to WSBKA Wisborough Green Division) to:

Gordon Allan
Stone House
High Street
PETWORTH West Sussex
GU28 0AU

OR

Transfer the money directly to the Division's Bank account:

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