



WISBOROUGH GREEN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

A DIVISION OF WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2018

Website: www.wgbka.org.uk

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DIARY OF EVENTS



SCHEDULED APIARY MEETINGS WILL RESUME IN THE SPRING

Ad-hoc meetings will be advised by email.

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

- * **Winter Talk by Paul Cleaver - "15 years of beekeeping mistakes" 30th January**
North Hall Loxwood, prompt start at 7.30pm .
- * **Demonstration: 'Making good use of your beeswax' - 9th, 10th, 11th February**
See November newsletter for full details and booking form.
- * **WG Beekeepers AGM - 14th March** North Hall Loxwood, prompt start at 7.30pm

Membership fees for 2018 are now overdue!

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.

Membership Renewal 2018

Membership subscriptions are now overdue!

Irrespective of payment method, late forms must be returned either by post or email and subscription paid by 31st January 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.

WSBKA Annual Convention

24th February 2018

Venue: *The Lodge Hill Centre* near Pulborough

Enclosed with this month's newsletter are the details and Booking Form for the WSBKA Spring Convention 2018. As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have a renowned group of speakers and an impressive mix of lectures and seminars with something for everyone.

A simple lunch will be included and there will be many opportunities to catch up with fellow beekeepers from around the county. As always, *Paynes Southdown Bee Farms* will bring a range of equipment and books to the convention for you to purchase.

Special bonus for Beginner Beekeepers! In conjunction with *Paynes*, we are pleased to offer a £10 *Paynes* voucher to the first 10 beekeepers from WSBKA who book a place at the convention in 2018; and who have attended a beginners' training course at any division of the WSBKA during 2017. It is a special opportunity to make a beekeeping purchase with a high discount! Qualifying members will receive separate notification in the coming days.

We are hoping for record numbers to attend and encourage you to book early to ensure that you secure a place on your preferred seminars.

Further details will soon be available on the WSBKA website and will be sent out in next month's newsletter, together with the Booking Form.

2018 March Module Dates

The closing date for applications for the March modules is 10th February.

Please note that applications should be with me by **1st February** to allow time for processing and postage to BBKA.

Applications must have a cheque attached for the correct amount.

Please send to the following address:

Kaz Powell,
71 Cuckfield Crescent,
Worthing,
BN13 2EB

examsecretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



Happy New Year,

Stop Press

I have just bought a CD of old bee books from eBay. There are 300 books for £5.95 all in PDF. Most are 100+ years old. I have just glanced at a few of them and there are some real gems. There are quite a few from abroad, but that adds to our knowledge.

Despite their age, much of the beekeeping content is still very sound and written from experience, not cut and pasted as so much modern printed material is. They were obviously pre-OSR, varroa, etc, so allowances need to be made.

https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/300-Rare-Bee-Keeping-Books-on-DVD-Apiculture-Queen-Bees-Hive-Honey-Swarm-E0/382329061043?_trkparms=aid%3D222007%26algo%3DSIM.MBE%26ao%3D2%26asc%3D49138%26meid%3D074e80fe9c4a4063996975bede61a1b7%26pid%3D100005%26rk%3D2%26rkt%3D4%26sd%3D382329061006&_trksid=p2047675.c100005.m1851

There are only 2 left, but they will come up again.

Roger

Nell In Print

Hello beekeeping friends and Happy New Year. I'm told that some of you like my occasional notes, so I have decided to do a short article each month to see how it goes. They won't be very long, but just a few lines to tell you what I have done, what I am going to do and some things that my Dad has forgotten - well, it might be a bit longer than I thought because he forgets quite a lot!

I haven't got my own computer yet, so I will use Dad's when he is doing the housework. Come to think of it my articles will be short after all!

Dad has already told me when he is going away and when I won't be able to go with him. In January he will be going to the Isle of Man again to speak to beekeepers over the whole weekend, but I am not allowed to fly with easyJet. In February he is going to the Eden Project in Cornwall, where he will be speaking to beekeepers there. They don't allow dogs in, which I think is very unfair. I don't mind, as I will go on holiday with my sister Shadow, Uncle John and my friends Ruby and Jessie. Here is a picture of me at the top of the stairs waiting for Uncle John to go to bed.



I'm going to have an exciting summer with lots of beekeepers to see. I hope to see you all at the auction, so set aside the date for Saturday 21st April, where my Dad will sell you lots of things you might not want. This is a real fun day that everyone enjoys, with lots of other beekeepers to see; and the chance to buy some plants from Sue Cooper and beekeeping kit from Payne's. If you can spare the time to help please contact Graham as he needs people to do lots of jobs on the day.



Talking of fun, Daisy introduced my Dad at the Bee Improvement Day at Rudgwick. She said she looked online for information about Roger Patterson and found that he had made a film about "Bigfoot". Daisy and Dad laughed, but nobody else did. Here is a photo of Daisy introducing Dad.

I'm looking forward to Jim Ryan's wax days. Jim is a very nice Irish man (older than Dad, so getting on a bit!) who makes people laugh. He isn't bad at demonstrating making things with beeswax either! I overheard a phone call where Jim said he was going to make some different products than he did last time. This sounds very interesting, so don't forget to book with Lisa and don't forget to bring a biscuit for me. It helps me remember people!

Dad will be cleaning up the supers and equipment at the apiary soon ready for the coming season. If you would like to help please email him and he will set a date. This is instructional, as he will explain how to put combs in supers to avoid problems later. There is going to be lots going on at the apiary this year and this is the start of it.

I think it will be a good idea to have a monthly recipe for dog biscuits. Please send recipes to Caroline. I will choose the best one next December.



Nell.

Patterson In Print



Nell and friend

Every year starts with loads of optimism. We may consider we need to learn more about a specific topic or perhaps try something different to expand our skills and knowledge; but that will depend on the individual beekeeper as we all have different interests. I still seek knowledge that may help me keep my bees better, even after keeping them for so long. I have seen far too many beekeepers consider they don't need to know any more. We can have all the ideas in the world, but we need equipment and bees in the right condition, the time to do it, a plan and enough experience to judge if it will work or not. This may involve some preparation, but much in beekeeping relies on that.

There is little point doing something unless you have bees in the right condition. I have seen many colonies die out in January, February and March due to starvation that could have been avoided. Books don't often stress that brood is incredibly hungry, so we need to check the food situation regularly, perhaps every 2-3 weeks from now until the spring forage is available; when bees can collect enough nectar and pollen to keep them going without depleting their stores.

Unfortunately there is a modern view that beekeepers should feed, feed, feed and if you are in any doubt feed again. Just look at online forums and they are riddled with such advice. I have always taken the attitude that I only feed bees if they need it, but you need the experience to know if they need it and what their reaction is likely to be depending on the weather.

You need to understand that if the weather is cold, bees will cluster in a space on comb where there is no food, but under or beside it. Having food adjacent to the cluster allows them to eat it, so the cluster moves as the food is consumed. When the weather warms up the bees break cluster to either forage within the hive to bring food into where they are clustering, or to move onto fresh combs of food. It is this breaking cluster that confuses beekeepers, when in a warm spell during the winter they see 8 frames of bees, but only 4 when it gets colder, so they panic and assume the colony is losing bees.

I will digress slightly here to point out that I believe that overfeeding in the spring may result in early swarming later on. You may reduce the area the queen has to lay in, so delaying natural build-up. Very often we get a few warm days in the spring when bees bring in fairly large amounts of nectar and pollen. If they try to pack that in the brood box alongside food that has already been fed, this often sets off early swarming if the supers aren't put on early enough.

Back on track now - if the temperature is cold and you have left the feedholes open, gently remove the roof and have a look through the feedhole. If the bees are up against the crown board there is a likelihood the colony is short of food, but if the bees are some way down and you can see sealed food they will be O.K. for at least a couple of weeks. If you can't see or hear bees, just put your ear to the hole and give the crown board a sharp tap with your knuckles. If you hear a roar that quickly subsides then all is well, a prolonged roar can mean queenlessness, no roar is terminal. You won't get a sting in the ear if the weather is frosty, but I don't advise it when it's warm!

If the temperature is warm and the bees have broken cluster, they may be right up at the feedhole. Heft the hive and if it still feels heavy, then leave alone; but if it feels light, then light a smoker, put on protective gear and give a quick inspection. Smoke the bees down and if you see 3-4 seams

of food that is sealed there is no need to take out any frames, although you won't do any harm. This is no more than we do when we trickle oxalic acid.

What happens if a colony is short of food? Perhaps we should ask the question why are they short? It is usually because the beekeeper hasn't given or left it enough food in the autumn. This could be through lack of experience, meanness or, as happens if you have prolific queens, they have reared brood throughout the winter, so have turned their food into brood. Whatever the reason there is a learning opportunity and it's likely to be the beekeepers fault.

I am writing this on December 25th (not much else to do and not many people about!) with the temperature at 9°C. I have pruned an apple tree (James Grieve for the benefit of the pomologists), then had a quick look at the bees at the bottom of my garden. There are 11 full colonies and two nucs, one quite strong, one weaker which includes a good queen I am trying to bring through the winter. Hefting reveals the smaller nuc is lighter than I expected so in a couple of weeks I will take the crown board off and look inside. If they need feeding I will probably give it a comb of food from a large colony. No harm will be done at all.

There are three options of what is effectively emergency feeding for most beekeepers. If you have other colonies that still have a lot of food, then give a frame or two, but right next to the cluster as I have just mentioned. Bees won't take syrup unless the temperature is warm enough for them to break cluster, which is usually some time in March. Before then fondant or one of the solid bee foods becomes the only other option. It needs to be right next to the bees as in cold weather they won't move to get it if there is a gap.

The cold weather gives you an opportunity to clean up hive parts and prepare supers for the spring. Both wax and propolis are easier to remove when cold. If you have run the uncapping knife along the top and bottom bars of the frames during uncapping, as I demonstrated at the extraction day, the winter work has been done on them. What is quite important is the way the frames are placed in the supers. If the combs are fully drawn they can go onto wide spacing, i.e. 9 in National, 8 in WBC. If they are only part drawn out, then leave on narrow. Bees very rarely put pollen in drone cells, but they will readily do so in worker cells in the super that is immediately above the brood box, causing problems at extracting time and waste. If you have a mixture of drone and worker comb, then put the drone in the middle of the super, worker to the side. This won't eliminate pollen in supers, but it will drastically reduce it.

If you have a mixture of drawn comb and foundation, don't put foundation next to comb unless you have to, otherwise the bees will continue to draw the comb and probably leave the foundation.

Now for something a little different. How about trying a little cut comb honey this year? I don't think beekeepers produce cut comb enough, as in my opinion it is the best way to eat honey, just like drinking milk straight from the cow or goat. Have a look in the usual place <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/cutcomb.html> for information.

This brings me neatly to the next point. If you would like anything tried or demonstrated at the apiary please speak to me, as I think I'm approachable. Last year we started to use plastic foundation in brood boxes following a suggestion from a member. We have a teaching apiary for members to learn and within reason I am willing to try anything different. I'm not normally negative, but be prepared for me to tell you why it might not be a good idea. On several occasions I have had members ask me if we can have different hive types. That sounds a reasonable suggestion, but we tried that once with 5 different types, WBC, National, Smith, Commercial and Langstroth. It became a nightmare to deal with them all. We never had enough supers of the right type and when we wanted to increase or unite we were dealing with different size frames and boxes. We did

supply plenty of equipment for the auction! Once someone has started with a hive type it's difficult and expensive for them to change, so they didn't do it and I'm not convinced anybody learnt anything.

The BIBBA conference is progressing well. The preliminary notice can be found on <https://bibba.com/event-list/> with a list of speakers booked so far. There is more planning before the programme is published in a few weeks time. I can confidently say you won't find a bigger or better beekeeping event this year. Everything will be aimed at beekeepers who wish to understand and keep their bees better; with at least three options at any one time, not obscure topics you often find at conferences/conventions. Go on! Put it on the calendar now!

Happy New Year from Nell and me.

Roger.

I am looking for a chest of drawers. If you have one surplus to requirements please let me know.

Roger

Winter Learning

We will have "winter learning" sessions again this winter. These are informal all-day events in small groups, in members' houses.

The idea is to have teaching and discussions on topics that aren't always easy to deal with at the apiary. As well as learning, it may give participants an idea of what they may need to read up on to help them understand their bees more and keep them better.

There will be two groups based on current knowledge and ability. The topics are changed every year, so if you have been before please don't think that you have done it, so no need to do it again.

The dates are yet to be fixed. Please let Suzy Lion selion52@gmail.com know if you would like to attend and we will fix up dates to suit those who apply. Please also copy in Roger roger-patterson@btconnect.com

Please don't wait for dates to be announced as we will only contact those who have replied.

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 **February edition** no later than the **27th January**.

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

Caroline