

# Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

## Newsletter August 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>

### **From the President**

I apologise to members for there being no newsletter for July and to date nothing for August. I also apologise for there appearing to be no Honey Show this year. Several of you have asked me what is happening and unfortunately I have had no answer to give.

I have cobbled this together in an hour or so, so members have communication from their Beekeeping Association. Yet more apologies for the state of it, but I think it's more important to give information than worrying about presentation.

Roger.

### **Dates for your diary**

#### **WGBKA Annual Supper**

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

The Annual Supper is being organised by Daisy. This is a great social occasion, with good food and company. Put the date in your diary now, bring your husband/wife/partner or if you wish someone else's husband/wife/partner, as well as children. I remember taking my eldest son George when he was only a few weeks old. We wrapped him up and put him in a cardboard honey jar box, because we couldn't afford anything else. He was put under a table against a wall where he slept throughout! He is now 42! Details of the supper will be circulated later.

#### **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>.

In 2017, I counted around 28 WGBKA members at the show.

#### **BIBBA Conference - Cirencester, Gloucestershire**

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

I put the programme together, so you will expect me to promote it, but just check the programme (attached) for yourself. It is as good as you will get anywhere at one event. There really is something for everyone, whatever their experience or interests.

There is a stream especially for beekeepers who want to progress from the beginner stage, where the speakers have been asked to explain things in a little more detail than if they were addressing an advanced audience. There are also workshops. You don't have to be a BIBBA member and you can attend for one day if you wish. There are day tickets or you can book the whole conference including meals and accommodation. There is a deadline, so book ASAP, although I can arrange late bookings if needed. I may be able to put members in touch, so they can share transport.

### **Winter Meetings.**

These haven't been arranged yet, although the topics have been mapped out. Tess and myself will do this in the next week or two. The proposed dates are Tuesdays Oct 16, Nov 13, Dec 4, Jan 15, Feb 12, Mar 12 (AGM), but these will be confirmed later. These will have some interesting topics that should help beekeepers keep and understand their bees better, so please support them.

### **Introduction to Beekeeping - Rudgwick Village Hall**

#### **March 2nd 2019**

The name has been changed from "Beginners Day" to better reflect the event. For those who have passed the Preliminary Sessions late in the season, this is relevant to you, so keep the date free. If you know someone who is thinking about starting beekeeping, then please tell them about it. Further details later.

### **Apiary Meetings.**

These will continue, but further dates haven't been fixed yet. Please see emails. We have taken advantage of an offer of free protective equipment, which will be available for use at meetings. Unfortunately they are all rather small.

On **25<sup>th</sup> August** we will be discussing varroa treatments and treating our colonies. This year we will be using Apiguard, ApiLifeVar and Thymovar. We have found these to give similar results. It is a matter of personal preference which you use. I will no longer use MAQS. It is a shorter treatment than the others and does kill varroa in brood cells, but it strips galvanising and plating off metal hive parts.

### **Winter Learning**

We have run these for several years now and try to pitch them to suit varying abilities. All are based on good sound information, not recycled from books. Those who attend get a lot from them. Suzy Lion is organising these, so please support them when dates are fixed.

### **Varroa Treatment**

Tom Moore [stone.house@btinternet.com](mailto:stone.house@btinternet.com) still has some treatments left. Please contact Tom directly.

### **Rails for hive stands**

At a recent meeting there was discussion about treated fencing rails suitable for hive stands at Mole Country Store at Billingshurst, so I had a look. I couldn't remember the sizes, but it's something like 75mmx75mmx 1.6m (may be 1.8). Two placed on concreted blocks will make a good stand for 2 colonies. Price £4.14 each. A quick look online suggests this is a very good price.

### **Now for some cheek**

If a member has about a dozen 16 x 10 British Commercial frames that are surplus to requirements Roger can find a home for them.

Below are two Patterson and Nell in Print that should have gone out.

### **Patterson in Print (July)**

I jot down a few ideas for the monthly PiP as I think of them. I am starting to write this two days before the longest day. I want to know why it is the older you get, the quicker time passes. Everyone agrees, but nobody comes up with a reason, not even those older than me, of which there are reducing numbers. It doesn't seem long ago that we had the first apiary meeting, yet a couple of hours ago I emailed Tom Moore asking him to give an apiary presentation about "Preparing for Autumn"! Like everyone else, Tom is aware of my sense of humour and may be suspicious, but I'm dead serious. A week is a long time towards the end of the season, where things can change quickly. I want to see beekeepers plan further ahead than they usually do. Advice needs to be in advance, so does the tuition, especially for beginners.

Although I prefer to plan topics for apiary sessions, it isn't always easy. Usually topics need colonies in the right condition, to give the demonstrator enough time to prepare. We also need enough members attending to make it worthwhile. For the meeting on 30th June I asked Tom Moore to talk about the above, which some many think is too early. I gave Tom a brief outline of what I wanted, but let him plan it. Although I wasn't in that group I understand it went very well. I often get asked to give demonstrations at other BKAs on specific topics such as swarming, feeding or wintering, but I think sessions on the wider issues are far more valuable. There is plenty going on at the apiary for those who attend, but I regularly hear that all we do is open hives. I doubt if regular attendees think that is the case.

WGBKA have attended the Brinsbury Open Day for several years. This year our stand was manned by Tess Clarke and Lisa Baker, both fairly new members and myself, none of whom have done Brinsbury before. We had a constant stream of interested people, to the point where none of us had a lengthy break during the day. We sold nearly 50lb of honey and took about a dozen names of people who wanted to attend preliminary days. Several members visited the stand and exchanged a bit of banter, which added to a thoroughly enjoyable and productive day.

We also attended the Cranleigh Show, that we have attended for around 15 years. Having attended every year I think it fair to say that every year is different. Unfortunately attendances were well down on previous years, so our impact wasn't as great as it has been in the past. We had 8 members man the stand during the day, 5 of whom were first timers. They all did extremely well and worked together as a team. Well done all.

You all know my dislike for "standard off the shelf" advice, but this year highlights my reasons. I have just spent 3 hours at the bottom of my garden attempting to lift supers that were extracted only 4 weeks ago. Some years ago I could lift 3-4 full supers off a hive in one go, but I'm finding it a little more difficult these days. The bees are currently pouring nectar in at an incredible rate, this on June 19th. Who was it who "invented" the "June Gap"? We keep reading about it as if happens everywhere every year, but it doesn't. Having said that, I have had email correspondence today from a beekeeper in Northwich, Cheshire, whose queens have gone off lay because of lack of forage. This shows that information that is peddled in books, magazines and the screen assuming that bees and conditions everywhere are the same are often very wide of the mark. That seems like another topic for "Patterson's Page" in BBKA News or perhaps yet another lecture title!

I must keep repeating warnings about queen problems. In a couple of weeks at the apiary we have had three queens "disappear", all from good strong productive colonies. One looked as if the queen had laid eggs in queen cells, then quickly disappeared. There were swarm and emergency cells in the same colony, which is a rarity. The timing was such that the queen could not have been killed during a demonstration.

I have recently spent a day in the Isle of Man. When there I helped a beekeeper who has just had a baby, so she hadn't looked at her bees for several weeks. She put on what she thought would be enough supers, but when I arrived to see her 8 hives in the corner of a field it soon became obvious I was going to enjoy myself. One colony had swarmed just over 3 weeks earlier. Of the other 7, although absolutely crammed full of honey, only had one colony showing signs of swarming.

I have been to the Isle of Man a dozen or so times to help with beekeeping. This session took me back 30 years to when the craft was much more of a joy than it is now. The bees are dark native or near native, there is no varroa, but braula in every colony. The bees are very healthy, with not one cell of chalk brood seen and no visible signs of virus. They were very well tempered and although I gave a full inspection and had to split the supers to remove them, I only received one sting. That brought back memories of how beekeeping used to be.

On the way home I was in the departure lounge at the airport, which doesn't have many seats, the majority having to stand as I was. A lady who was probably in her mid-thirties offered me her seat!

Notice of the BIBBA conference should have been sent to all local BKAs by the BBKA, but for some reason it hasn't filtered down to all of them. Details are elsewhere in this newsletter. I have an interest in this because I put the programme together, so you would expect me to push it, but I think it has the most comprehensive programme you will see anywhere. The majority of presenters are experienced beekeepers who will speak from experience on topics that suit all beekeepers, not like so many who read from books. Please have a look at the programme as it would be a pity to miss it. There are three streams, including one for beekeepers in their early years and workshops. It would be nice to share transport from West Sussex.

Roger

### **Nell in Print (July)**

My Dad gets lots of emails of which about 25-30% are what he calls "junk". He has recently had about six in three days from someone whose father has died and they want to give Dad all his beekeeping equipment! The sender is apparently attending the World Cup in Russia! There is confusing mention of sending a cheque for £4,000. We have had a discussion and we feel this could give Dad a lot of equipment, most of which he doesn't want. If anything sounds suspicious this does, especially when they list "queen guards" and "cement coated frame nails". Even I know that doesn't seem right! I think that £4,000 can buy a lot of biscuits, so I have advised Dad not to fall for what is obviously some sort of trap.

He has also received a message to the WGBKA website email supposedly from HM Government stating "The submission for reference 039-QV73259 was successfully received but unfortunately failed HM Revenue & Customs data checks and could not be accepted". I intercepted this one and warned Dad.

Here is another email... "Could you call me at your earliest? I have serious questions about hive in tree at property i am leasing in central Florida."

I went to Yeovil to see some very nice beekeepers. One kind lady dropped a scone with jam and clotted cream on it. I helped her pick it up. Wow! clotted cream! If someone drops some in front of you, don't leave it there. Dad had a nice email from a couple of their beekeepers who wrote ".....We also enjoyed watching Nell chase the cat". Well, I think cats are great fun and well worth chasing!

I have been to lots of places with Dad and although I keep away from the bees I pick up a few gems from people. One "beekeeper" thought you shouldn't clip queens in the spring until they had gone out to mate! Dad asked a few questions and the person genuinely thought that queens that came through the winter mated again in the spring!

At Brinsbury one visitor stated that natural things behaved naturally! A Lady was told by Tess the honey on sale had been produced by local bees, to which the lady asked "Are the plants for sale?"! Dad is right "Beekeeping is fun"!

Nell

## **Patterson in Print (August)**

During the month I have been a bit nomadic, going to such far away places as Finland, Tatton Park Flower Show, Yorkshire and the Isle of Man. I gave presentations in all of them and in speaking to beekeepers over that wide area it is clear the summer, although hot everywhere has had varying effects. With little or no rain, soil types and flowering plants make a difference to the amount of nectar available. Thin or quickly drying soils prevent plants from producing nectar, often resulting in queens reducing or stopping laying, where those that retain water better have yielded very well. There was a lot of blackberry blossom this year, but they set seed quickly, so the flowering season was cut short.

In Finland I visited the island of Pakinainen that a beekeeper is using for an isolated mating station. It is reached by a ferry service that docks at several islands, all with very minimal landing stages. How many beekeepers go to an out apiary by ferry? There are less than 20 people who live on the island. I was told the ferry is an extension of the road network and is free. The beekeeper had about a dozen full colonies to provide drones and about 150 mating nucs tied to trees. Although the weather had been good with temperatures in excess of 30°C he was feeding the bees. He wasn't allowed to use a smoker in case he set fire to the vegetation.

The conference in Finland was attended by beekeepers and scientists from all over Europe. They all reported very low swarming this year. This shows that bees are probably much more in tune with things than we think they are. Interestingly the queen problems I have been trying to highlight since the turn of the century are seen everywhere.

The apiary in Yorkshire is situated where 4 BKAs meet. They all have their own views on which bees to keep and they are all different. The subsequent mongrelisation causes very bad aggression in the bees and the beekeeper, who I have known for some time as a good handler got absolutely hammered. I have photographs of his jeans and sleeves of his tunic covered in stings. They even stung his wellingtons! Within a few days I was handling bees in the Isle of Man and our own apiary with no problem. This is what the importation of bees does, but it is difficult to get beekeepers to understand the damage they are causing.

Now our own nectar flow is coming to an end we must expect robbing to start. Keep colonies strong and the entrance small enough so they can easily defend it. At this time of year wasps are also a problem. Don't leave honey exposed, especially when extracting. If bees get into the room, don't let them out of the window or door, otherwise there will soon be reinforcements to help you. Kill them! If bees do start robbing honey you left lying around, move it away, then place a small amount of honey in it's place. When they have finished it, they seem to be satisfied and quieten down, where if you removed the source without leaving something, they could search for cheap sweets and set about a colony.

We have finished Preliminary Sessions for this year. Once we get into August we are treating for varroa and removing honey, so it isn't ideal conditions to introduce new people to our craft. We have had some potentially very good beekeepers this year. I hope they continue and help to become part of WGBKA in the coming years. Welcome to all of them.

I brought a friend for Nell back from the Isle of Man, but I will let Nell tell you about that.

Roger

## **Nell in Print (August)**

Dad left me for over 2 weeks to stay with my sister and her two friends at Uncle John's. When he arrived back there was a cage in his car with a small Nell lookalike in it. He did tell me he was going to play a trick on me, but I didn't think I would have to share my biscuits too.

He has cunningly left me to tell you about her, so here goes as far as I know. She was born in February and came from a farm in the Isle of Man that she shared with her father, mother and brother from a previous litter. She was called Rocket, but now Rosie. I was going to make the best of it and try to like her, but she pitched into me when I got a bit close to her food. Not the sort of manners I would expect from a border collie. She has already met some of the members and showed off.

Dad says we will need help with extracting again, so please keep the weekend of 18/19 August free. Not only is this a learning experience for newer beekeepers, but we still need to deal with the main crop. Details will be sent later.

Nell.