

West Wilts BKA News

News, the planned activities and some advice for members of West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



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This is your 'go to' section that will describe the things that you need to know about (because it is the stuff that spends your money)!

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The 'fun bits': social events, training and reviews!

From the committee

At the first West Wilts BKA Committee of 2021/22 the way in which the branch communicates within itself and with others was discussed to try to make it as accessible as possible. We decided that Formal News and Notices for all members should be sent out in a Newsletter and informal communications or communications to a wider audience should be sent out through social media (Facebook, in our case). So welcome to the first edition of the new look newsletter.

The format will be fairly informal with a diary of events (page 2), things you 'Need to Know' which are important changes to the club (page 3) and 'Good to Know' which will include training, social events, reviews and advice (page 5). We'll probably play with the format over the coming months just until we feel happy, but some will be longer than others, so please consider the environment (and your printer costs!) before you decide to print it out.

Editorial

As we have been coming out of lockdown and trying to work out what the 'new normal' looks like, West Wilts BKA has been hit with a few significant quakes.

The whole County BKA (including West Wilts BKA as a constituent branch) are trying to decide whether to change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation so that we could be recognised as a charity. This could bring significant benefits, but also brings some significant hurdles and constraints. We can get benefit in that we should be able to claim Gift Aid on the membership fees of suitable tax-paying members, but in order to do so, there are limits on our reserve budgets and our controlling paperwork must be in the best state. Of course, having our controlling paperwork 'in order' is a good thing, so long as it is meaningful and workable, and a reasonable reserve budget makes sense – we believe the fantastic efforts that have been put in place across the county have ensured this and it is all heading in the right direction.

All of this sounds a bit serious for a hobby beekeeping branch, but the trouble does not stop there. We had issues recruiting a new Apiary Manager for the Branch and our time at the current site was becoming limited. We had also outgrown the facilities there. We were faced with a serious set of questions: Did we try to keep Town Farm going with no permanent Manager? Did we close the Branch Apiary with the absence of an Apiary Manager and just 'do without' an Apiary? Did we try to move the Apiary somewhere else? We felt uneasy with the first two options and could not see them as tenable. A search was undertaken to look for a new site and a new Manager. Both of these came along and we are looking to moving to a new site. The decision has been made to try to move the Apiary by Spring 2022 and the agreement was given at the Annual General Meeting to spend most of the Branch Reserves to buy and start to equip a new facility – we will provide more detail as the project develops to this rather sporting timescale.

As far as a future lecture programme is concerned, we hope to have a hybrid of virtual and in-person meetings. We haven't booked any speakers at the moment with so much going on, but the talks will start again in the New Year.

So, this first edition is quite lengthy and has some rather serious elements, but we hope that it will soften a bit over the coming months. As we get the first taste of some frosts in the morning, I have avoided the obligatory photo of an apiary under snow to remind you there is better weather ahead. I hope you enjoy this, find it informative and please let us know what you think. This first edition of the new format also has the details for the Branch Annual Dinner – we also hope you'll take this opportunity to come along for a nice meal and some friendly chat and we can get started on the business of keeping bees and away from the intricacies of running a club.

Contact us

We will try to send this out as close to the 1st of the month as possible. We will have a copy date of a week before to give us time to get everything together, and we would really like to hear from you. If you want to include anything please send an email to Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com.

Diary of events

January 2022

West Wilts BKA Special General Meeting to discuss charitable status, Bratton Jubilee Hall – 7th January

West Wilts BKA Branch Dinner – 18th January

Wilts BKA AGM – 20th January

February 2022

WBKA Charity Conversion Special Meeting – Date to be confirmed

Beginners' course starts – 22nd February (weekly for six weeks with apiary sessions to follow).

Basic course starts – 24th February (To Be confirmed)

Spring 2022

Apiary move!!!

June 2022

Bath and West Show, nr Shepton Mallet – 2nd-4th June

September 2022

Wilts BKA Honey Bee Health Day – 3rd September (To Be Confirmed)

West Wilts BKA Honey Show, Bratton Jubilee Hall - 10th September 2022 (To Be Confirmed)

October 2022

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day, Corn Exchange, Devizes – 8th October

November 2022

West Wilts BKA Annual General Meeting, Bratton Jubilee Hall – 7th November

Need to know

Apiary Move

The branch has had a long and excellent existence at its current site, however a number of factors that have come to bear that means our continued residency there is uncertain and we had been struggling for some time to find an Apiary Manager. As a result, the branch took the difficult decision at the AGM to move sites. This was difficult for several reasons – no move is an easy decision, especially when it involves bees, the move requires some action and significant expenditure to get a site that will meet our needs for the foreseeable future. The move will also include substantial effort in getting a new facility together that is safe, secure and accessible, as well as a new base where we can encourage the art and craft of beekeeping.

Time is not on our side as we need to get the new storage and training facility established on the new site by mid-January to ensure the bees can move to their new home in peace and quiet. We have

therefore created a small project team. After the initial capital outlay agreed at the AGM, much of the work will need to be done on a self-help basis - so we will be calling for volunteers to assist. The first call to arms is for an electrician or experienced DIY member who would be prepared to assist with fitting the electrical wiring, lights and sockets in the new facility. If you have these skills, please contact us on Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com.

We will try to keep you up to speed in the coming weeks on this exciting club project with more detailed plans about how we plan to use this new facility for West Wilts BKA members.

Charitable Status

Wiltshire BKA still has a working group to determine the best way forward for charitable status for the County and Local Branches. There will be developments over the coming months which will come to you as members for a decision. Without a charitable status the County association and local branches will not be able to claim Gift Aid, however there are several hurdles that need to be undertaken first, such as membership agreement to change status, the identification of Trustees and ensuring all the controlling paperwork is in order. None of this change is a trivial activity and, even if members do not decide to change the clubs to a charitable status, the paperwork should be in a better state for the future. The first step for West Wilts BKA is to hold a Special General Meeting on 7th January at Bratton Jubilee Hall (at 7pm). Please try to attend if you can.

Please watch this space and email communications as Wilts BKA and West Wilts BKA work on the proposals and we will come back to you with further information as things develop. We hope to know a lot more in January and February 2022.

Update from the membership secretary

Our membership year runs from 1st October to 30th September each year. For members who have renewed, you should have received your certificates of membership and insurance, please keep these in a safe place. If you have not received these documents or unsure if you have renewed, please contact the membership secretary at Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com. Members are reminded that should you allow your membership to lapse, you will no longer enjoy BBKA membership benefits such as third-party insurance or Bee Disease insurance and regular newsletters.

Editor's comment – don't forget to check your email spam folder...mine was hiding in there!

Contact details

Following the Annual General Meeting we have decided to set up some generic email addresses for contact points on the committee and branch officers. It is still early days for these and, of course, due to the small size of the committee some of the different emails will go to the same person. We appreciate that these are a bit 'faceless', but are hoping that by doing this we can have an email for the role, not the person, so when a person changes the new incumbent can pick up the emails. These emails are:

WWBKA President: President-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Chair: Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Treasurer: Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Training Coordinator: Training-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Apiary Manager: Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Honey Show Secretary: HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Membership Secretary: Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

This should make it simpler for you to get in touch with us – each of the post should be self-explanatory, but if in doubt the Secretary will know who to chase down! We hope to have these on the website as soon as possible, so that will be a resource to be able to find us.

Newsletter

We hope to send out a newsletter every month ("*The best laid schemes o' mice an' men*" and all of that) and we are still trying to settle in with a format, content, etc.. One of the more serious aspects is how we get this to people and how we deal with names and photos of people. So, this is what we currently intend to do:

How we get it to people

We will send it using the BBKA ER2 email system. There are many assumptions in this approach including:

- The system works and it is judged compliant with all of the relevant rules and regulations (this is the responsibility of BBKA).
- Your contact details are correct (and of course if your contact details aren't correct at the moment, you won't have got this!), so we ask you try to keep your details up to date and if you don't hear from us for a while, it may be that your details are incorrect (of course it could be our plans have failed to send out regular newsletters!).
- You can receive this, but you don't get told: so, if you have an overactive spam filter you may need to check whether this comes from a recognised email address (I am afraid that this is more on you again, sorry!).

The advantage of this is that a lot of Data Protection hurdles are out of West Wilts BKA hands and we, as a branch, have taken all reasonable precautions.

Good to know

Branch Dinner - 18th January 2022

After a year off, we have decided to reinstate the Annual Branch Dinner. This is a chance for beekeepers old and new and their families to have a night out and have a meal amongst likeminded colleagues. This year, we have chosen The Duke in Bratton (the pub with the Whale Jaw in the car park!) and it will be on 18th January 2022, starting at 7 pm. The price per head is £25 per person. If you are interested, please email Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com for more details.

Training

As you may be aware from the Annual General Meeting we have changed training coordinator. We already have a couple of courses planned in the coming months, both starting in mid-February.

Introduction to Beekeeping – the Beginners' Course 2022

Our beginners' course starts on Tuesday 22nd February and runs for 6 weeks at Larkrise Community Farm, West Ashton Road, Trowbridge (between 7 – 9 pm) for the class room sessions and a further 2 weeks practical sessions at our new Apiary on Saturday 2nd and 9th April (in the afternoon). The practical sessions are weather dependent and could be subject to slight change.

We have 7 tutors presenting theory and practical subjects and following the BBKA Guide to Beekeeping covering bees, hives, equipment, the beekeeping year, swarming, pests and diseases, getting started and much more.

Handling the bees at the Apiary using our equipment and bee suits will give the confidence to begin a fascinating journey into the hive and the life of the honey bee.

The cost of the beginner's course is £75 which included BBKA and branch membership.

If you are interested, please contact Training-WWBKA@outlook.com.

Basic Assessment Study Group

This is a group which any one can join after they have kept their own bees for at least 12 months.

The intention is to reinforce/improve your knowledge sufficiently to take the Basic Assessment in the summer months (you don't have to take the assessment unless you want to).

Some beekeepers will use the course as a refresher or improvers Course.

Together we will work our way through the Syllabus and more over the 6 sessions starting in mid-February.

We will then follow with 2 practical sessions at the Apiary.

On completing the course, I am sure you will be able to take the assessment which opens the door to future study and BBKA modules.

Anyway, it's fun to talk to fellow beekeepers on a mixture of subjects as we learn more about our bees.

If you are interested, please contact Training-WWBKA@outlook.com.

During the year we will also look at other courses and maybe some further tutoring. Once again, please let us know what you want from the club.

In addition to the practical training, Wiltshire County BKA also organizes training for the 'BBKA Modules'. These are in-depth theoretical exams that can be undertaken to improve knowledge. If you are interested in these, please contact Training-WWBKA@outlook.com.

A review of the County Bee and Honey Day

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day 2021 was held on 9th October 2021 at the Corn Exchange in Devizes. It is a venue that has been used for a few years for the day as the layout suits us and it is fairly central. Hopefully, you managed to attend and, if so, we really hope you enjoyed it.

The day has a variety of elements, such as the County Honey Show, lectures, trade and charity stands, honey sales for members and, of course, a chance to chat to fellow beekeepers. This year Wadworths made a special honey beer from local honey.



All aspects of the day seem to have been a success, certainly the showing was a success from the perspective of West Wilts who walked away with 7 out of 8 of the pieces of silverware (3 of which went one West Wilts BKA member). West Wilts have made a habit of winning the Applegate Trophy, but we are aware that other branches are keen to break this habit, so we need to make sure we keep the entries going, not just for the branch but it is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate the quality of our individual products and personal skill.

The planning has already started for next year and that will be on 8th October 2022.

WWBKA AGM – 12th November 2021

This year the AGM was held at Bratton Jubilee Hall as a hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting. This was the first in-person meeting we have held since we were 'sent to our bedrooms' by the Prime Minister in March 2020, but also it was the first hybrid meeting that we have held. Given all the hurdles we have had over the last 18 months we think it was a success. A total of 27 people attended by one means or another.

It was a chance to raise some of the serious issues we have mentioned above and get some good discussion, but it was also a time we could reflect on the last year.

And finally...some seasonal advice!

The advice for December is amongst the simplest of the year:

- Make sure your bees have enough food.
- Make sure your clothing is clean and your spare hives are clean for next year and store is vermin-proof.
- Take stock of the year you have had and make plans for 2022.
- Seriously think about coming to the Annual Dinner!