

West Wilts BKA News

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



Start of a New Year

I will take this opportunity to wish you all a 'Happy New Year' and I hope that you managed to get some rest and relaxation over the Festive period (and that it continues for a little longer).

Hopefully you enjoyed the last edition of the newsletter and thank you for the feedback I had which was very positive...we just need to keep up the momentum. If you have an article you think others may be interested in, please send it in.

I am sure you have all noticed the photo and many have already regarded me as a buffoon for starting a beekeeping branch newsletter with a photo of something that isn't a bee! There are three reasons for this:

1. We have a review of a book that says why we should worry about a range of insects, not just bees (see page 9).
2. I want to avoid the obligatory photo of an apiary under snow – you know it is winter...do you want reminding?
3. I am worried that I will run out of bee photos, so I am rationing them until I get some more!

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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)!

Good to know **page 6**

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

Start of a New Year (continued)

This should be a quiet time for bees and beekeepers in the UK, so check for stores, carry out any varroa treatments and repair equipment, but I also hope it is a time to reflect on your aims for the coming year. Maybe your plans are to:

- improve, or broaden, your beekeeping skills and/or knowledge,
- take a new challenge in beekeeping, such as making something new or exhibiting,
- improve the marketing of your produce, or
- get more involved in the hands-on or the paperwork of running the branch (...it isn't that bad....no, really, it isn't!).

Whatever your plans, now is the time to start to take action. If we were sitting on beanbags in a 'workshop', I am sure this would be the time when I ask you to make a list of our goals and share them with the person sitting next to them before 'vocalizing them to the whole group', but a) we are not in a workshop and b) my back is too dodgy for a beanbag (apologies to anyone who facilitates workshops that involve copious quantities of beanbags - *Editor*). West Wilts and Wilts BKAs can both help (to some extent) with the aims listed above, so please let us know what you want.

If you want to increase the number of hives there are many techniques of doing this, just ask...who knows if you are after a nucleus or two we may have some from the branch apiary and if you want to reduce we can advertise in the club that there you have spare colonies.

If you want to broaden your knowledge, keep an eye out for notices of courses coming up. We have the 'Beginners' Course' and the 'Basic Course', but there are courses and taster sessions being organized by Wilts BKA on some of the BBKA Modules (written exams) and some practical sessions (such as a microscopy taster and a microscopy working group). Please see the 'Good to Know' section for Training (see page 7).

If you want to take up a new challenge, such as exhibiting (and maintain the momentum of West Wilts winning the County Show and Wiltshire winning the regional show), we hope to have a few articles of encouragement over the coming months. It is really worth considering as it helps to hone a few skills as well as giving you the skills to produce some bespoke presents for those 'difficult to buy for' individuals we all know! Also, if you have any handy tips please send them in.

Last month's Newsletter had a certain element of seriousness to start it off. We hope this will reduce as the year really gets going, but unfortunately that is likely to continue for the coming few editions: we have the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) discussion (see page 4) and the apiary move (see page 4 for some good news), but I hope both will leave us in a much better position. As you can see there are some lighter elements in this edition, including a rather tasty brownie cake!

I started this (slightly longer than planned) section of the Newsletter by wishing you all a Happy New Year. I really do hope that for all of you 2022 is better than 2021...and what better way to start it than at the Branch Dinner on 18th January (see page 6), I hope to see as many of you there as possible, but as with anything we plan, please add the caveat "Covid Permitting!".

Diary of events

January 2022

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

West Wilts BKA Branch Dinner – 18th January

Wilts BKA AGM – 20th January, 7pm Corn Exchange, Devizes. To include a talk by Marin Anastasov NDB on Preparing for Spring Build Up - Colony Management.

February 2022

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

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

March 2022

WBKA Charity Conversion Special Meeting – Date to be confirmed (was going to be Feb)

Bee Tradex 12th March - BeeTradex is back and scheduled to be held at NAEC Stoneleigh on Saturday 12th March 2022. Most of the bee equipment providers will be there with many discounts on offer. Tickets are £6 and can be bought online at <https://beetradex.co.uk>.

April 2022

BBKA Spring Convention – 8th-10th April. The 2022 Spring Convention will be held at Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB. This event can be expected to include a full programme of talks by leading beekeepers, some excellent workshops and trade stands. See <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Pages/Category/about-spring-convention> for further details.

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) Every three or four years our Regional Bee Inspector brings a team of Seasonal Bee Inspectors to Wiltshire for a day of talks and demonstrations covering all aspects of managing honey bee diseases. Not to be missed.

West Wilts BKA Honey Show, Bratton Jubilee Hall - 10th September 2022

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

Charity conversion Briefing for Gift Aid – 7 January 2022

Hopefully, most you will recall that at the 2019 AGM, we, as a Branch of the WBKA, authorised our Branch Committee to pursue an initiative to enable members to claim Gift Aid on their subscriptions. This was progressed by the WBKA which concluded that the best way to achieve this objective was for the County organisation to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Becoming a CIO involves a formal application to the Charity Commissioners with a great deal of detailed and legal information which has now been completed by a sub committee - and approved by the WBKA Council. This in turn now needs the majority support of the membership, and therefore it is planned to hold a County-wide vote on this proposal at a Special General Meeting in March this year. However, in order to ensure that members understand this proposal and its implications for us as beekeeping members, each Branch is holding a briefing session at which there will be ample opportunity to ask questions.

Members are therefore invited to attend our West Wilts Branch briefing on Friday 7 January at 7.00pm in the Jubilee Hall, Melborne Street, Bratton BA13 4RN. In view of the Omicron situation, it is also planned to run it as a hybrid meeting to ensure that the maximum number of members can attend. To this end, the Secretary who will be emailing the Zoom details to all members on 3 January.

Whatever your decision, it would be greatly appreciated if you could let the Secretary know on secretary-wwbka@outlook.com as to whether you plan to attend in person or by Zoom.

As we have the County Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Sub Committee Chair attending to deliver the briefing and answer any questions you might have, your Committee hopes as many of you as possible will consider attending in person.

Post Script

One important aspect of our conversion to a charity is the need for two Branch members to volunteer and act as Trustees of the CIO. May I ask all members whether they might consider taking on this role?

Apiary Move

Since the report in the December Newsletter, the Project Manager for the new apiary near Chapmanslade our Project Manager, and the Apiary Manager have progressed the planning significantly and can be seen completing the successful move of the club's five colonies to their new home in the the new apiary.

This early move will give our girls time to settle into their new "des res" before they start flying and reset their GPS systems! However, before they start their Spring cleansing flights, it is planned to prepare the base for the new workshop during the first week in January. We have bought a 10ft x 20ft workshop which is being pressure treated to



ensure we have ten years maintenance free woodwork. This building will be sited in front of the Dutch barn with windows overlooking all the hives you see in the photograph. We are very much in the hands of the supplier in terms of delivery, but we anticipate mid January when we will need a working party to construct and commission the workshop which will effectively become our "Club House". We already have two very willing volunteers to assist with this task, but on the basis of the more willing hands the better, if any other members were prepared to give a couple of hours of their time (on a specific date yet to be decided), it would be appreciated if they would contact the Secretary or Chair on secretary-wwbka@outlook.com or chair-wwbka@outlook.com respectively.

Behind the workshop (which will have electricity connected), and under the cover of a Dutch barn, there will be an area for both hive/super storage as well as apiary session debriefs, quizzes and general Club camaraderie over a cuppa in much the same way we did at Town Farm before the Covid pandemic.

To the side of the Dutch barn there is an area which we can use for dedicated Club parking, and although it is grassed over, the grass overlays a former farmyard, so the ground is stable and relatively mud-free!

Hopefully by the time you receive the next new apiary update, the workshop will have been constructed and the full Club apiary established. Watch this space.



Website

In December we moved our web-site to a new address - we can now be found at <https://westwiltsbka.org/>. We have bought the domain name of the old web-site and set it to re-direct to the new address, so for the time being anyone using the old web-site address will be automatically re-directed. However, if any of you have the old address (www.westwiltsBKA.com) bookmarked, please update your bookmark to the new address.

Our web-site exists to serve the needs of two audiences; firstly, the West Wilts BKA members, but also members of the public who might be looking for information about beekeeping in the West Wiltshire area. Our aim, therefore, is to provide content that is of relevance to both these groups. We took the opportunity, while moving the site, to make sure all the content and links are up to date, and have added some new content that we think will be useful. We are keen to ensure that the site remains relevant, interesting and accurate, and would welcome any suggestions or ideas members may have about the site's content. If you would like to make a suggestion, please e-mail Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com The Committee would like to take this opportunity to say thank you very much indeed to the outgoing webmaster, who has been hosting and maintaining our web-site for the last few years. We're very grateful to her for all the work she put in to it on the club's behalf.

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 and the menu is:

Welcome glass of Prosecco

Starter choices:

- * Creamy Garlic Mushrooms (v) served with Crispy baguette
- * Prawn Cocktail served with brown bread & butter
- * Duck & Orange Pate served with toast
- * Homemade cream of vegetable soup (v) served with baguette

Main Course choices:

- * Traditional Roast Beef Dinner Tasty topside of Beef served with crispy Roast Potatoes, 'local' Honey & Garlic glazed parsnips, Yorkshire pudding, seasonal vegetables & Gravy
- * Italian Chicken (G/F) Tender chicken breast wrapped in Parma Ham, topped with a delicious Garlic & pesto butter served with Minted new potatoes and Green Beans
- * Rocky Mountain Salmon (G/F) A tasty Canadian Salmon Fillet oven baked with Maple syrup & topped with sesame seeds, served with buttered new potatoes & Green beans
- * Mixed Pepper Frittata (V) (G/F) (Baked Omelette) served with Buttered new potatoes and a mixed leaf salad

Dessert choices:

- * Sticky Honey Pudding made using 'Your Local Honey' this take on a traditional Sticky toffee pudding is light and delicious, served with Ice cream
- * Strawberry & Cream Cheesecake served with Chantilly cream
- * Fresh Fruit Salad (G/F) served with ice cream

Coffee or Tea

Please email Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com with the number of attendees (partners & friends most welcome) together with your choices of menu. You will then receive details of how to pay.

Training

Introduction to Beekeeping – the Beginners' Course 2022

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

We will be 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 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 and you don't have to take the assessment unless you want to (some beekeepers will use the course as a refresher 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.

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. The Module 3 training (Honey Bee Diseases, Pest and Poisoning) has started, but other will come in due course.

Spiced Honey and Pear Brownie Cake

This is a cross between a cake and a brownie - I wrote the recipe to use up the surplus pears and honey from this year's harvests.

Ingredients:

200 g chocolate hazelnut spread

200 g honey

3 medium eggs - room temperature

50 g butter or cooking margarine

140g self-raising flour

25 g cocoa powder

1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

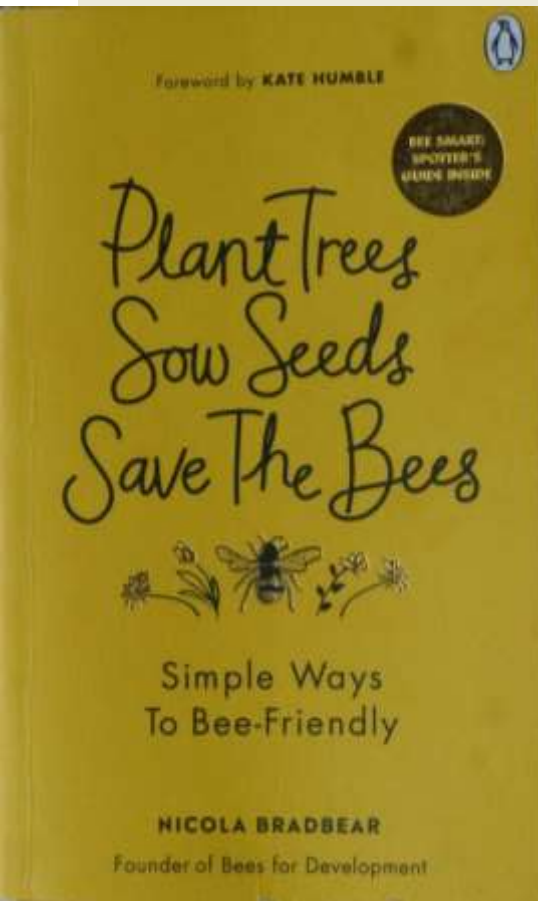
1 large pear - ripe but not squashy



- Heat your oven to gas mark 3 (160C conventional oven, 140C fan oven). Grease and line a 23cm round springform baking tin.
- Put the hazelnut spread, honey, eggs and butter into a large bowl, and beat with an electric beater until the mixture is smooth (about 2 mins).
- Sift the dry ingredients into the bowl and fold in. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking tin.
- Peel and core the pear, and slice thinly. Gently arrange the slices on top of the cake mixture - don't push them down.
- Place the tin into the centre of your pre-heated oven and bake for 40 minutes. The baked cake will still be slightly wobbly in the centre - this is OK! Remove and leave to cool, then brush the pear slices with honey to glaze.
- Serve with a spoonful of crème fraîche.

Book review: Plant Trees Sow Seeds Save The Bees by Nicola Bradbear

Penguin Books, ISBN 978-1-52910-877-4



This is an incredibly informative and easy to read book being split into several sections. It is one of those fun to read books that you can read as much or as little as you want each time you open the cover. It also turns into one of those handy reference books when you have been through it and want to identify an insect visitor to the garden or when you are on a walk. It has a guide to many of the stripey friends that visit our gardens and gives some great advice on how to help them, as well as polishing your skills on how to identify them.

This highlights the issue that our ways of producing food have headed towards greater and greater productivity and away from a balanced approach. Some of the ways in which it encourages readers to help the pollinators is to:

- Plant more flowers (but not any old flower, and the most useful are recommended).
- Set up a bee hotel.
- Encourage those producers that are doing their bit, by using less pesticides, putting in insect friendly areas or growing organically.

It is the size of a large pocket book, 166 pages long and costs £8.99. It has lots to assist in the identification of the most common stripey visitors and a book I would thoroughly recommend to anyone who

engages with the public who want to know more about their garden visitors and not just honey bees. As you can see from the image from inside the cover this actually makes it incredibly easy to identify the picture on the front page of this newsletter as a Common Drone Fly (although it may not be that common unless we do something for all insects!).



Contact us

Newsletter content

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.

We are always looking for useful information, news, articles, reviews, photos, etc., so if you have anything please send it in.

Contact details for committee and officers

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