

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.

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The 'fun bits': news and reports.

It's June! At last some sunshine and pleasant temperatures. This month the photo is of a honey bee on a loganberry flower in my garden – the bees don't linger as long as the bumble bees – it's necessary to be very quick to get a photo!

I expect you are all busily preparing for the Bath and West Show – good luck to you all - and I hope to be able to report huge successes in the July newsletter.

This newsletter has some fabulous contributions from our members – it's great to hear from you and to receive your articles and experiences – if you could please indicate whether you are happy to have your name alongside your offering that would be very helpful.

Diary of events

June 2023

Royal Bath and West Show – 1st-3rd June 2023 (Thursday to Saturday), Royal Bath and West Showground, near Shepton Mallet

September 2023

Frome Cheese Show – 9th September (Saturday), West Woodlands Showground, Nr Frome

West Wiltshire BKA Show – 16th September (Saturday), Bratton Jubilee Hall

October 2023

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – 7th October (Saturday), Devizes Corn Exchange, 10 am – 4 pm

National Honey Show – 26th-28th October (Thursday to Saturday), Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey

November 2023

WWBKA AGM, week beginning 6th November, TBC

Need to know

Lectures – if you know of any lectures do let me know and they can be noted here

Forthcoming apiary sessions are:- Jul: 22nd Jul: 5th Aug: 19th Aug: 2nd Sep.

Apiary bound? Don't forget to bring your cup or mug with you if you would like a drink – the kettle is (usually) on and there's always a welcome!

Good to know

The article below is from one of our new club members - she describes her recent experience at the club apiary – well done and thank you for this! As you read her own words, I'm sure you will recall your own first experience of opening up a bee hive – yes, truly a moment to treasure.....

The Honeybees and the Newbie!

My first experience with these amazing Bee-ings, Wow! Did I just do what I think I just did?

Having recently completed the brilliant 6 weeks Beginners Beekeeping course, the time soon arrived to put the theory into practice, and see if I really was listening, whilst sat at the back of the class.

What will I need.....

- Bee Suit ✓
- Wellington Boots ✓
- Marigolds ✓

The day arrived, a lovely English Spring Day. As I was making my way to the club apiary, I realised I had forgotten something, "confidence". I must have left that back in the classroom. Anyway, a few deep breaths later and I arrived at the apiary, warmly welcomed by club members. I immediately began to feel at ease. Then, I put my bee suit on, oops starting to get a bit real now thought I. A few discussions later, and a lovely chat with one particular member who promised me I was going to have a great time, and thoroughly enjoy what I was about to experience. It all began to start to feel real. I was allocated a guide for the day, and began to talk through hive records with me, how to complete them, and the importance of keeping hive records. We ran through the hive tools, and the smokers, which I found fascinating. My "guide" then demonstrated how to lift frames in an empty hive, as we would had it been full of honey bees, with the tools, and different ways it can be done with each tool, It then dawned on me, so I asked "but, you aren't going to have me do this today are you?" my guide smiled and said "yes", I realised I ought to have picked up some more confidence on my way to the apiary. Well, here goes thought I, veil on, gloves on, remember to breathe!

I dutifully followed my guide, who very gently, puffed smoke around the hive. I was then asked to lift off the hive roof, hmmm thought I - a practical, and I am being asked to do things, whatever next! I lifted off the roof, and all was well, then the crown board was removed. I was then asked, where the propolis had built up, to use the hive tool, to gently loosen the super, to allow removal. My guide kindly lifted the super, phew! Then the Queen excluder was removed and there they were - this amazing universe of busy "bee -ings". Focused on their world, doing their respective tasks, and they were not interested in me at all. Then we loosened a frame with the hive tool, and talked through what we were looking for, and of course, we were hoping to see the Queen. A few frames in and there she was - the Queen, quite amazing and very special. But, I saw so much more than just the Queen, I saw drones, and worker bees, I saw drones that had not long emerged, and a little worker bee, who was not yet old enough to fly, I saw nectar and the different colour cells, honey, wax, propolis, I saw drone cells, and queen cells, larvae, and the tiniest of eggs, only been a hatched for a day and some for to two days. Quite magical, and really to understand the wonder of seeing this whole cycle of life, in the one place, a person needs to experience for themselves. Honeybees are surely, the perfect example of the laws of life and universe.

I then felt the need to step back just to take in the enormity of the moment, to drink in what I was seeing, listen to the honeybees buzzing around me, to try and get in tune with just being in the moment, and these honeybees sure do have a way of helping one achieve that. I could feel my nerves calming. I stepped towards the hive again, and was from that moment on, completely focused on the honeybees. Alan asked me to loosen a frame, and remove one, I was tentative, throughout and keen to not damage any honeybees. As time progressed, I felt quite at one with the honeybees and felt I could trust them to be patient with a newbie such as I. They were incredibly welcoming and accepting.

Eventually, I found some confidence, and was just in awe of what I was seeing. What a privilege and an honour, to be allowed so near to these wonderful honeybees. The honeybees allowed me into their busy world and let me view them and learn. Such selfless, amazing little “bee- ings”.

So, in answer to my question at the beginning of this write up, yes, I did really do what I thought I had done, and I am very thankful and grateful for having done so. I can't remember everyone's name (I am useless with names), but would like to thank the apiary manager very much, for allowing me to visit the wonderful honeybees, and to everyone who gave me such a warm and kind welcome, thank you very much. Last but by no means least a huge thank you to my guide, for being so patient and allowing me to go at my own pace. I will be forever grateful to you, and it's a day I will never forget. Are you certain you do not want to be my mentor!

I loved each moment, and am incredibly aware of how lucky I am to have experienced getting so close to a beehive, with an experienced beekeeper, to keep me focused and the honeybees safe. I am left feeling as though Mother Nature, has shared a secret with me today, and I am all the better for it, and will always carry this experience and today in my heart and memory. It just feels incredibly special. Thank you to everyone who I met today and of course thank you to the Honeybees.

The Newbie.

Brilliant - thank you so much for sharing this with us – great to have submissions by members to include in the newsletter....

David Raines asks if you have ever considered being a Steward at the BBKA Spring Convention, below you will read a description of his recent experiences at Harper Adams University.

“Having not been to the BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University for 5 years, I decided to volunteer as a Steward this year and immerse myself in the lectures and workshops - and what a rewarding experience it was.

The stewarding organisation was first class with a great bunch of like-minded people - many of whom were “old hands” who were more than willing to help a newbie like me settle into - and thoroughly enjoy - the role. Attending many of the seminars and workshops was gold dust - but one in particular I must highlight was Martin Bencsik's lecture billed as “A novel honey bee signal”. He actually shared some fascinating unpublished research on what he is calling a “purring bee” - all new and exciting stuff, so keep your ear to the ground - if you'll excuse the pun.

I highly recommend volunteering for this role which also attracts a free wrist band for the three days with a lunch voucher each day, £20 in the bank and time to visit the trade show on the Saturday. The stewarding duties also provide more than enough free time to meet and catch up with fellow BBKA members from across the UK - all

Apiary News: There have been some well attended sessions – looking forward to seeing you all there – don't forget to bring your mug for tea or coffee



Here's a view from inside the clubhouse – looking out across to the hives. The donated observation hive (previously owned by Arthur Goodhead) mentioned in the May newsletter can be seen to the left side of the window.



In the foreground of the second photo taken at the apiary you can see the trolley laden with equipment ready for action at the “hive side” – acquired this season, it seems already proving to be very useful.

Beekeeping supplies.



For Your Beekeeping Supplies

Your local supplier providing a service for:

- All Thorne's supplies
- BBWear suits – try before you buy
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- Available to attend your association, apiary meetings
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Please email your order or phone so we can arrange an appointment for you to visit to discuss what you need.

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The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP
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Services available to members

The following services are provided by West Wilts BKA to members:

Bee Bank (for sale or purchase of queens, nucs and colonies). Contact the Branch Secretary at


Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the Chair at Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com or 07711 018440 for details.

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Library: Contact our Librarian (either direct or through the Secretary)

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Newell 01373-825560 or sj007q0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on  : West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association