

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.

This picture for our newsletter this month is of a honeybee gathering pollen and nectar from hollyhocks in my garden. I usually see the bumble bees busy on them, but this year the honeybees have joined them – maybe I have just missed them in the past.

HOW ARE YOUR PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING "HONEY SHOWS" COMING ON? – GOOD LUCK TO ALL!

Welcome to the September edition of the West Wilts BKA newsletter.

How strange the weather has been over the last month and what an effect it has had on forage for the bees! I'm sure you have been seeing the blackberry pollen coming into the hives – it seemed to be quite early to me this year.... and soon the ivy will be in flower – the last major available forage of the year I believe.

It's likely you have had the overwintering of hives on your minds – I'm pleased to have a great article in this edition of our newsletter reminding us of some of the actions we should be considering.

A big "thank you" once more to all of those who have contributed to this – YOUR – West Wilts BKA newsletter. I'm always happy to receive suggestions for content, and your own submissions – please send them to

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

Diary of events

September 2023

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

West Wiltshire BKA Show – 23rd September (Saturday), Bratton Jubilee Hall. Open judging starts at 1000 when the general public as well as members are most welcome. Refreshments will be provided.

October 2023

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

WWBKA SOCIAL – Skittles evening. The Organ Inn, Warminster 13th October 7.30pm - please see note about ordering your meals for the evening before 29th September (Friday) in the contribution from the treasurer on **page 4**.

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

November 2023

WWBKA AGM, confirmed for Tuesday 7 November at 7pm, Bratton Jubilee Hall

Apiary dates: 2nd September is our last “apiary meet” for this year – come and join us for cake and a chat – always an inspiring conversation to be had. Don't forget your cup for a drink.

Need to know

Lectures

Off-season lectures start on 13th September - all to be delivered on Zoom; links will be sent to members about a week before each session is scheduled to take place. The broad range of topics should supply interest for members of all levels of experience. **SEE PAGE 10 FOR ADDITIONAL ASIAN HORNET ZOOM MEETING INFORMATION**

Dan Basterfield - Queenright and Broodright?	Wed 13 Sept 2023
Roger Patterson - The Patterson Unit	Thurs 19 Oct 2023
Bob Smith - Beyond the Basics	Mon 20 Nov 2023
Roger Patterson - Observation: Interpret What You See	Wed 17 Jan 2024
Bob Smith - Keep It Clean	Weds 20 Feb 2024

Good to know

First - A special thank you to all the WWBKA team involved in facilitating the purchase and distribution of varroa treatment and bee fondant for members.

I'm very much hoping this successful well supported activity will be repeated for next year – and a message from our apiary manager, related to that subject follows...

"The last batch of Hive Alive fondant went incredibly quickly! We have just received a new delivery - if you would like some, please contact Treasurer-wwbka@outlook.com to place your order. The price is £10 for 3 packs. We look forward to seeing you at the next (& last) apiary session this season on the 2nd September".

Have you had a chance to consider David Newell's message with regard to being a trustee for "West Wiltshire Beekeepers ...if you might be interested in becoming a Trustee, or would just like to know more about trusteeship, please contact WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com who will put you in contact with David Newell, or Amanda Leworthy who will tell you more.

We are pleased to announce the club now have in stock individual WWBKA Club embroidered patches which can be either ironed or sewn on any item of clothing or bag you wish.



For those of you who already have our club logo clothing, these logos are the same size as those on the polo tops and fleeces (8 cm in diameter).

These are for sale at £2.50 each and will be available on Apiary days, Club Honey Day and Club meetings.

Please contact Cressida Hemmings direct at

brunello2004@hotmail.co.uk to order/ organise your patches, alternatively just turn up with your money.

From the Membership Secretary:

PLEASE NOTE - our membership year runs from 1st October to 30 September each year.

Following our conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and our eligibility for gift aid, despite rising costs, we will be **reducing** our full membership fee from £41.50 to £40.00.

Please look out for your renewal reminders later this month, do consider opting in for Gift Aid on your renewal!.

WWBKA Social - Skittles Evening –

Friday, 13th October at 7.30pm at the Organ Inn Warminster for our Skittles evening.

Friends & family welcome!

The Menu:

Mains £13.75

Chicken curry

Steak and ale pie with chips and peas

Ham eggs and chips

Falafel burger (g/f, v and vegan)

Salmon dill fish cake with poached egg and hollandaise sauce poured over plus chips (supplement
£0.20)

Dessert £5

Affogato with homemade shortbread

Eton Mess Sundae

Bread and Butter pudding with ice cream

Dessert of the week

To avoid delays in getting your food and disappointment if your choice isn't available, please place your order by 5pm, Friday 29th September via email to Treasurer-wwbka@outlook.com.

Are you and your bee hives winter ready? Here are some important reminders about winter preparation.

Overwintering your colonies.....

The final few things for Winter

If you remember the talk given to West Wilts a couple of years ago, winter preparations should be well under way by now, but if you are a bit behind, don't worry, all is not lost. There are things still to be done to make sure your bees are ready for winter.

Feed -

They need enough food to get them through. The typical estimate is about 30-40 lbs of honey...personally I think that is a bit low with the warm winters we have, but no-one seems to have updated to account for the warm winters. I would always go for a bit more because I would rather have

(Overwintering your colonies...contd.)

bees and excess honey in the spring, rather than starved bees (a super is about 30 lbs).

So, you need to work out how much forage they can possibly bring in between now and when the flying season closes. The only forage that is left to them now in any quantity is ivy. It is a forage crop that sets solid, so perhaps not the best, but it will have the mix of pollen and trace nutrients that sugar will not provide, so it is perfectly good for them.

A word of caution though, don't leave too much food, because with a thin-walled hive they need to keep the cavity warm – it is less of a problem in a thick-walled tree trunk, so it is a balance.

Get used to hefting the hives lift one side and then the other to work out whether they are too light.

If, they do not have enough food (and won't get a lot of ivy), then feeding or combining is your only option (and remember after the year we have had, even if they can get ivy, the weather needs to allow them to fly).

Health -

A big reason for bees not making it through the winter is health – hopefully, you will have checked for varroa and done all the necessary treatments to knock down as many mites as possible. You should also have done a health check to make sure there are no brood issues (from the queen or endemic diseases). If it looks like you have a poor queen, then we are getting too late for replacement, but combining with another weak colony may just give them both the boost to make it through the winter. The newspaper method is the way forward here and you must decide which queen stays and which one goes.

Weather Protection -

The other aspect at this time of year is making sure the hives are protected from the weather. Make sure the hives are waterproof, fit together nicely, are well weighted down and protected from any harsh winds – a wind break may be appropriate here. It is often said that colonies don't die from the cold – they die from the wet, so keeping them protected from driving rain is a good idea. If you are in an exposed spot, I wouldn't rule out a strap to keep the hive together and a few bricks on top.

Protection from predators -

There are only a few predators for bees in this country: mice, woodpeckers, anything that can knock the hive over and other insects:

To protect -

- from mice, fit the mouse guards in October.

(Overwintering your colonies...contd.)

- from green woodpeckers, put chicken wire stood off from the hives (note not all green woodpeckers are thieves...this seems to be a learnt trait and doesn't seem to affect double-walled hives).

- from other insects, fit winter entrances – these should already be fitted to protect from wasps.

- from large animals that can knock over hives, make sure the hive stand is stable and the hive is weighted down.

Queen excluder -

Don't forget to remove the queen excluder so that the queen can follow the cluster to the fresh stores. This may mean some of your nice super frames will get brood in at the start of next year, but that is a risk.

Where do the stores go?

There is always a debate on whether the stores go under the brood box or above. There is something to be said about either. Above is what they will do in the wild, but below gives them a start on the stores and when they have migrated up, they will lay in the brood box...I don't think there is a set answer. I may try both this year.

Anyway, I hope this helps, but if you have any questions, do pop along to the final apiary session of the season on Saturday 2 September when we will be having a bit of a brain storming time to address such questions. I wish you the best of luck and hope for some successful overwintering.

New Club Extractor

I borrowed the Club's 9 frame extractor earlier in the season as, for the first time, I had 8 capped frames full of honey and wanted to maximise my harvest. In the past, I've usually only had a few frames and it didn't seem worth buying my own extractor for such a small number of frames, so I simply uncapped, drained and strained the frames in order to have some honey and wax to be able to enter a few classes in the Branch Honey Show. I was delighted with my harvest but found the extractor a bit unwieldy and decided it would not be worth the effort for a small number of frames. I approached the West Wilts Committee with a proposal to buy a smaller extractor for the use of club members in

a similar position to me. The Committee agreed to the purchase, and I would like to thank them as I'm sure it will be a great asset to new and small-scale club members. I took delivery of the extractor this week and the plan is that I will be custodian of the 3-frame extractor in the same way that Kelly looks after the 9-frame extractor. I selected a stainless-steel model designed to hold 3 frames and while it is a bit bigger than I'd expected, it feels very sturdy. Unfortunately, I don't have any frames ready for extraction at the moment so haven't been able to give it a test run, but I will be bringing it to the apiary session on Saturday 2 September so come along and take a look.

New Club Extractor Photos.



Amanada Leworthy

Continuing Liz Gwinell's story....

The Second Colony Arrives.

My second colony arrived in a nuc early on a Sunday morning at the beginning of July. I didn't have a second hive so one of the members, David, came over with the bees and a spare 14x12.

"You'll probably be able to extract honey in a month or so," he said as we took out the frames heavy with honey.

Honey? I had my first colony for just over two weeks and now he was talking honey? I hadn't even got a shed. In fact, all I had was a bee suit, a hive tool and a lot of bees.

The second hive had a blue queen, but we didn't see her on that day. The most important thing was to get the bees settled and deal with everything else later. That week I ordered a toolbox and a list of things David suggested I needed. He had advised it would be wise to standardise my hives to allow the interchange of frames and boxes.

Later that week, a Standard National brood box arrived which I placed it on top of the 14x12 brood box. The idea was that the queen would move up into it and when she did, I would place a QE between the two, wait 21 days for the brood in the lower box to hatch and then remove the top box. I was amazed at by how many more bees were in the 14x12 – many more than in my first hive - and by how incredibly calm and good natured they were.

(The Second Colony Arrives contd.)

"Be patient with me," I told them as I introduced myself as their new guardian. "I don't really know what I'm doing."

Luckily they do. They stay calm – I don't need to use smoke on either of my colonies which reassures me that they must be happy at the bottom of my garden with plenty of pollen and nectar to keep them occupied. I have seen the blue queen and named her Electra, and she has decided to remain in the lower brood box while the workers use the top one as a super. This is something I am learning: watch the bees, see what they do and work with them. This seems to require a flexible approach and a willingness to revise the best laid plans of mice and beekeepers.

At the apiary, the following weekend it is too wet to inspect the hives and so we drink tea in the club house instead.

"Would you like some more bees?" someone asks me that Saturday afternoon.

"Not just at the moment," I say. "Not just at the moment."

Liz Gwinnell

Propolis.

I love the smell of propolis – here is some information about the sticky substance.

What do bees produce besides honey?

I expect most beekeepers know the answer to the question "What do bees produce besides honey?" You can probably list other bee products..... It seems impossible to care for bees without becoming aware of propolis - sometimes referred to as "bee glue". Honeybees use "propolis" bees as a sealant for unwanted gaps in the hive. In my online search for more information about propolis it was suggested in articles that Aristotle generated the word "propolis" and it means "Defender of the City"!

Reading to find out more about propolis, I met reference to a certain Mr Langstroth, who in the mid 1800's discovered that bees would close gaps larger than 3/8" with comb. He suggested bees would use this "other substance" to close spaces smaller than 1/4". He postulated that gaps between 1/4" and 3/8" would be left alone and the gap would remain. Mr Langstroth had discovered "bee space" and designed the Langstroth hive using this knowledge about propolis and bee space.

What propolis is and its' source.

Propolis is a resinous mixture gathered from tree buds, sap, and other plants. Mixed with bee saliva and beeswax, it is used as a sealant for unwanted open spaces in the hive. Its colour varies depending on

(Propolis contd.)

its botanical source, the most common being deep brown to yellow though variation in colour may occur according to the source of the resin and the geographical area of the hive.

Collection and manufacture of propolis.

Specific bee foragers collect the resin necessary to make propolis on warm days, because resin hardens as temperatures fall (below around 5 degrees C) and becomes more difficult to collect. As they collect it workers mix it with wax secreted from wax glands, they then knead it into a small ball and gather it into their corbiculae (pollen baskets) situated on their hind legs. Apparently, it can take the worker bee up to an hour to collect a full load of propolis. The worker flies back to the hive with the propolis - the house bee is said to then transfer the propolis around the hive. The normal top speed of a worker would be about 15-20 mph (21-28 km/h), when flying to a food source, and about 12 mph (17 km/h), when returning laden down with nectar, pollen, propolis or water [How fast can honey bees fly? | British Beekeepers Association \(bbka.org.uk\)](#) (accessed 27/08/24).

Properties of propolis.

As mentioned previously - at room temperature propolis is sticky, but at lower temperatures, it becomes hard and very brittle. The strength of propolis supports the structural integrity of the hive. Bees sometimes use propolis to mummify intruders that have died in the hive and the bees are unable to remove. Research supports the medicinal qualities of propolis – if you manage to collect enough from your hive it you can make a tincture of it by adding it to alcohol to treat a variety of ailments. Propolis is said to be anti-septic, anti-fungal, anti-biotic, anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-microbial – spectacular stuff!

Pharmaceutical and Therapeutic Properties of Propolis.

There is an interesting - though perhaps a little complicated article available to read online within the article it is said that -

“Studies confirmed that propolis has therapeutic potential in pharmacies and medicines to treat various chronic diseases, particularly autoimmune diseases, diabetes, burns, wounds, gynaecological problems, and laryngological, dermatological, neurodegenerative, gastrointestinal, and respiratory tract-related diseases, cardiovascular disorders, antimicrobial, anticancer and antioxidant activities, and COVID-19. [Propolis: Its Role and Efficacy in Human Health and Diseases - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#) (accessed 27/08/23)

Honey, and its properties are well-known - I hope you have enjoyed reading this short overview about the amazing bee product called propolis, perhaps it will encourage you to explore the subject further?

Elaine Mairis

Asian Hornet Week 2023 - Special Briefings for Beekeepers

(information following has been sourced from British Beekeepers Association website (bbka.org.uk) (accessed 30/08/23)

Due to unprecedented demand, and restricted meeting numbers, we are unable to accommodate everyone via the Zoom meeting platform for these briefings. Therefore, the special briefings will also be live streamed to YouTube to enable as many people as possible to attend.

The YouTube link will be available from 7.00pm on Wednesday 6th and Thursday 7th September. The YouTube link will be found on the British Beekeepers Association website (bbka.org.uk)

Both sessions will also be recorded and made available after the event.

[Asian Hornet Week 2023 - Special Briefings for Beekeepers | British Beekeepers Association \(bbka.org.uk\)](https://www.bbka.org.uk/Asian-Hornet-Week-2023-Special-Briefings-for-Beekeepers)

Think you've seen an Asian Hornet? Report it!

Have a look for the app you can download onto your phone.


Think you've seen an Asian Hornet? Report it!

Species	Scientific Name	Approximate Length (cm)
Asian Hornet	<i>Vespa velutina</i>	2.5 - 3.0
European Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>	2.0 - 2.5
Wasp	<i>Vespa vulgaris</i>	1.5 - 2.0
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	1.0 - 1.5

Report through the Asian Hornet Watch app or www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport

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Contacts and services

Contact details for committee and officers

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WWBKA Treasurer: Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com

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WWBKA Membership Secretary: Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com

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

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

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: Library: Contact our Librarian through the Secretary.

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Newell 01373-825560 or sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on : West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association