

West Wilts BKA News



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



Pictured above is a honey bee on loganberry blossom – the date it was taken was 23rd May 2023 – I am hoping for a good crop of bees, honey and loganberries in 2024!

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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.

I hope that all WWBKA members enjoyed a happy Christmas.

I can hardly believe it is time to wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year and hope very much that many of you will be able to attend the annual Branch Dinner on January 25th (details on page 3).

If you have not got around to renewing your membership – have a look on page 4 where you will find a reminder of how this can be done. Neglecting to renew membership results in withdrawal of benefits – if you have not renewed – now is the time to do it.

Although the weather has been mild, we should remember winter is not over yet and active bees with little forage require adequate stores – do find time to keep hefting them, checking supplies, and topping them up – the apiary has fondant available for purchase.

Diary of Events

Apiary dates will be announced at a later date...

January

South West Beekeeping Forum (SWBKF) 2nd AHAT Conference. Saturday 6th January. Venue: The Canalside Conference Centre Marsh Lane Bridgwater TA6 6LQ Bridgwater.

WVBKA Committee meeting. 19:30 Monday 15th January. Venue: Jubilee Hall, Bratton.

Branch dinner – Thursday 25th January. Venue: The View, Westbury Golf Club, Coach Road, Westbury BA13 4LX – more details on **page 3** of this newsletter

WBKA Annual General Meeting. 19:00 Tuesday 30th January. Venue: The Corn Exchange, Devizes.

April

BBKA Spring Convention. Friday 12th – Sunday 14th April

May/June 2024

Bath and West Show Thursday 30th May to Saturday 1st June

September

Branch Honey Show – date and venue tbc

October 2024

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day Saturday 12th October

National Honey Show Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th October

Need to know

Lectures

Off-season lectures will be delivered on Zoom; links will be sent to members about a week before each session is scheduled to take place.

PLEASE NOTE – THE PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED ZOOM MEETING – “Roger Patterson - Observation: Interpret What You See (Wednesday 17th January)” IS CANCELLED

Following the **WBKA Annual General Meeting** - 19:00, Tuesday 30th January. Venue: The Corn Exchange, Devizes, The Annual Winter Lecture “The Magic and Mystery of Drone Segregation Areas” will be presented by **Stephen Fleming**

Bob Smith - Keep It Clean

Wednesday 20th February

Good to Know

SAVE THE DATE!

WWBKA Branch dinner - details follow below:

Date: 25th January 2024. Thursday

Time: 6.30pm for 7.00pm, carriages 10pm

Venue: The View, Westbury Golf Club, Coach Road, Westbury BA13 4LX

Parking: Ample, Disabled parking available

Price: £30 per person, 3 courses, including a welcome drink

As in previous years, prepayment needed, menu choices ahead of time, cash bar on the evening.

Welcome Drink

Starter

Sweet Potatoes and Butternut Soup

or

Chicken Liver Pate with Ale Chutney & Herb Croutes or Prawn cocktail

Main

Roast Chicken,

or

Nut Roast

With Roast Potatoes, Parsnip, Carrots, Red Cabbage, Stuffing, Yorkshire pudding, gravy

or

Oven baked salmon

With crushed new potato cake, spinach & hollandaise sauce

Desserts

Salted Honey Cheesecake

or

Warm Brownie and Ice cream

or

Sticky Toffee pudding and Ice Cream

Details for payment: Lloyds WBKA West Wilts Branch sort code: 30-98-75 Account number: 00061511

Membership

Apologies are offered once more for reminding members that the membership year runs from 1st October – 30th September each calendar year. It is hoped that members will renew their membership and we look forward to seeing members in the coming year at branch meetings, and at Branch apiary sessions next spring and summer. If you have any questions, please send an e-mail to Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com and the Membership Secretary will respond. A number of members paying their dues for 2021- 2022 are outstanding with their payment for the current membership year. If you have left the area or no longer wish to renew your membership, it would be helpful if you would please inform the Membership Secretary of your decision. Thank you.

Meet your committee....

Continuing on from last month and the changes in our committee, this newsletter features the responses from Alan Ridout, our newly elected Chairperson to the questions posed last month.

Question - What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer** - Chairperson

Question - How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer** - I worked with a beekeeper who initially kindled my interest, however, when my wife returned home with honey she had bought from Chris Rawlings, my response was, "If this is what real honey tastes like I am going to keep my own bees".

Question - How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer** - approaching 30 years.

Question - How many hives do you have, and which hive is/are your favourite? (Why?) **Answer** - I went into this winter with 32 hives - hopefully, I will come out with 32! I started by using National hives but switched over to Commercial hives because I got fed up with pollen being put in the supers - but the bees still put pollen in the supers even with Commercials!

Question - Do you like your honey - what do you do with it? **Answer** - Yes, I do like my honey, but I sometimes wish I could get some with a bit of stronger flavour.

I have two main outlets that sell most of my honey, one of those outlets is Bath Abbey. I also sell honey at village fetes, however that has dropped off a lot since covid.

Question - What has been the most useful tip given to you that you would like to pass on? **Answer** - One of the tedious tasks I find is autumn feeding with syrup, so when a guest speaker at the club explained the method of simply soaking bags of sugar in water and placing them above the crown board I thought I would give it a try; I did further research into this method of feeding and having made a modification to it I finally got around to trying it in 2022 with half of my hives and had great success. This year I fed all hives using this method. If this again proves successful, I will submit an article to the news letter explaining the details of how to do it.

From the apiary – Den Pictor our Apiary Manager has sent us the following report....

“Now that the year has ended, we can look back at the highs and lows of our beekeeping year and remember the mixed bag of weather it brought us.

Spring 2023 gave us a chilly wet start to the year, and then I recall, we had a heatwave, followed by a difficult summer. September brought us another heatwave. So, to say the “beekeeping” season was challenging may be an understatement.

As for the honey crop, it was a mixed bag with a lot of oilseed rape around the site producing a respectable harvest which needed extracting quickly.

Then we moved into what some might call summer. The bees managed to produce a reasonable amount of honey, and things were ticking along fairly well. It seems that the summer took a nosedive, and they began consuming their honey stores.

So, we managed to persuade them to let us have a little honey, but this was much less than what it should have been and from late summer we were feeding them. Even the ivy this year seemed to be late flowering and all of a sudden it had finished and from that point on we have been hefting and feeding fondant where necessary which has been pretty much continuous.

It is incredible the amount of fondant the bees have consumed. On average we have been looking in on them every four to six weeks, at the time of this report we last looked in on them on around the 13th of December - one or two needing more fondant, but it was really good to see them all alive and well (if not that pleased to see us!!)

I encourage everyone to heft their hives regularly because it has been so mild, they have not clustered down and while they remain active, they will consume more stores. My motto is “if in doubt whack it on!” - a little food is a lot cheaper than a box of bees.

So Happy New Year to all and hopefully see more of you at the apiary in 2024”.

The worry over the increasing likelihood of Asian Hornets in our geographical area is ever present –

Here is a reminder to book your ticket for the

South West Beekeeping Forum (SWBKF) 2nd AHAT Conference.

Saturday 6th January.

Venue: The Canalside Conference Centre Marsh Lane Bridgwater TA6 6LQ Bridgewater.

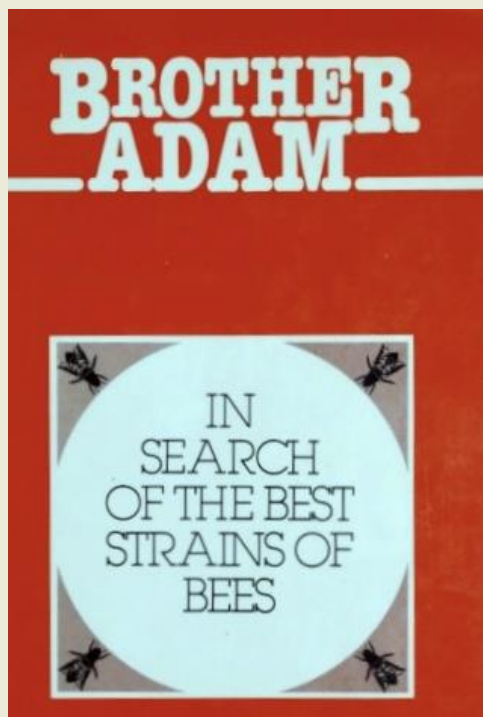
The following is a **book review** from a WWBKA member.....

Title - In Search of The Best Strains of Bees. Author – Brother Adam.

It does not really matter what your thoughts on Brother Adam are; some of his techniques would be frowned upon now, but he took a methodical approach in trying to understand and breed the 'best bees.' We must remember it was at a time when lots of techniques were applied to improving livestock and cereal productivity – he was simply applying a similar approach to bees.

This book records Brother Adam's travels in the 1950's and early 1960's to Europe, Africa and Western Asia looking at the different strains of bees and how they were managed. As someone that has only known moveable frame hives, I found the different techniques of keeping bees, and the different homes we provided for them, as fascinating as understanding the different strains of bees.

Whilst these journeys of Brother Adam were to provide the evidence to attempt to breed the perfect bee (of which you may approve or disapprove) this journey into beekeeping of Western Honey Bee from 60-70 years ago is well worth a read. A copy of this book is available from the branch library.



And finally – add the date for the WBKA Annual General Meeting to your diary - 19:00, Tuesday 30th January.
Venue: The Corn Exchange, Devizes. The meeting will be followed by the Annual Winter Lecture presented by Stephen Fleming "The Magic and Mystery of Drone Segregation Areas".

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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 - Payment by BACS, card, cash, cheque
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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.

sales@thebeedepot.com

07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleight

The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP
[what3words poetry.unto.driveway](http://what3words.poetry.unto.driveway)

Contacts and services

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 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

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

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 sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association