

West Wilts BKA

News



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



The bee on the picture above is on a Hellebore in my garden last week – since the cups of the flowers hang downwards I found it rather difficult to get a decent photo – acrobatics are not my forte!

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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.

Very many thanks to all those who have offered input, for this edition of the newsletter. I was looking on my holiday for experiences to write about from apiaries in Malaysia – it seems that I will be more successful with that venture next year as I have been able to make a few contacts to follow up on. Watch this space if you can wait until next March!

I hope this newsletter finds members all fit and well and hopefully you have seen some of your bees out in the milder weather. It is unlikely we are "out of the woods" yet so far as the winter and the weather are concerned, so watch out and keep topping up the fondant! How are you getting on with your winter jobs in the shed – have you finished yet? Oh – by the way – have you given thought to entering the Royal Bath and West Show? The closing date for entries is May 1st – you will find more encouragement from Chris Rawlings in this issue when you read on...

Diary of Events

April

BBKA Spring Convention. Friday 12th – Sunday 14th April. Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8NB . ([BBKA Spring Convention 2024 | British Beekeepers Association](#))

May/June 2024

Royal Bath and West Show Thursday 30th May to Saturday 1st June. Royal Bath and West Showground, BA4 6QN - near Shepton Mallet. (Bees and Honey link: [Bees & Honey \(bathandwest.com\)](#))

September

WWBKA Honey Show – Saturday 28th September. Jubilee Hall, Bratton. BA13 4 RW

October 2024

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day Saturday 12th October. Devizes Corn Exchange. SN10 1HS 10am – 4pm.

National Honey Show Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th October. Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher. KT10 9AJ

Same message as last month re apiary dates – it is too early in the season to issue apiary dates – those dates will follow when the apiary manager has had a chance to critically review the status of the hives on site.

Need to know

Lectures

Did you miss the opportunity to view the AH conference 17 February? It is now available on YouTube. Use the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/dUMk2tzaw1E?si=CXzQZtZNWfLGv7SE>

AND: below is the link to the Asian Hornet Watch App, we are all encouraged to have:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishBeekeepersAssociation/posts/pfbid0fgVBgc2JVMY17ShhTnUsXq2o3ZnkY3GeSoUfhNj4LecCNsboXuVr2FYfFt6nEaoSI>

Winter lectures 2024 - details will be published as they become available.....

Good to Know

A REMINDER - On Saturday April 6th, 2024, at Shipham Village Hall BS25 1SG

9.45am – 4.30pm (arrive any time after 9.15 for tea and chat)

The Spring Gathering

Getting together with other beekeepers to swap experiences and ideas with the chance to pick up new ones. Here's everything you need this year to put in ...

THE BEEKEEPERS KIT BAG

All the ideas and new skills necessary to equip beekeepers for a successful season

With

Roger Patterson and Dan Basterfield

Talks will include:

Reading your Bees

Making Preparations for a Better Season

A Straightforward Approach to Bee Improvement

Challenging what you are told

Also, an update about the Asian Hornet, Bees Abroad and other important practical news and views.

There will be refreshments and a light lunch during which a short Avon AGM will be held to elect the new committee

How to apply.

Please sign up and pay before the event. The cost is £10 which will include refreshments and light lunch.

Pay: Avon Beekeepers Association Bank code 30-99-50. Account No 87831968

For ref use initial, last name and "spring G." e.g. JSmith SpringG.

Could you also inform Rob Francis at: robfrancishere@gmail.com

CAN YOU HELP?

A co-ordinator is urgently sought
for the 2024 Branch Honey Show...

If you are able offer assistance please contact the secretary for details as soon as possible
(Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)



Also

An Invitation to get together
to build new brood boxes, supers and frames
in preparation for the start of the new season.

Open to all members, new and old

Two sessions:

Monday 11th March

Monday 25th March

Venue:

The "back hall" at the Methodist Church in Westbury BA13 3JL

The Club secretary will be emailing members with this invitation – if you are going to attend please let them know at least two days before the date of the session you plan to attend (WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

Here is our regular feature “Meet the Committee”

...Continuing from last month, the March newsletter features the responses from Den Pictor to the monthly questions.

Question: What is your role on the WWBKA Committee?

Answer: My role at the moment is Apiary Manager.

Question: How did you become interested in keeping bees?

Answer: I became interested in beekeeping while living in Catalonia, Northern Spain and seeing just how important these little friends were to the fruit growers, but my lack of grip on the language held me back.

Question: How long have you been keeping bees?

Answer: I've now been keeping bees for around thirteen years and took the beginners course on my return to the UK.

Question: How many hives do you have, and which hive is/hives are your favourite? (Why?)

Answer: at present I'm running thirty-five colonies across five apiary sites, two of which are on the Longleat Estate. Most hives are Nationals, but I also have a few Langstroth which I find easier to handle than 14x12 Nationals.

Question: Do you like your honey - what do you do with your harvest?

Answer: I love my honey, but I can't say I eat vast amounts of it, it amazes me how it varies between the different apiaries, and I certainly don't have any trouble selling it all.

Question: What has been the most useful to given to you that you would like to pass on?

Answer: I think one of the best things I could pass on is, when you're doing your hive inspections, don't get hung up on spending time looking for the queen. If you can see healthy brood, larvae and eggs then probably the queen is not far away – but most of fall, enjoy your beekeeping!

Can you home a swarm this season?

David Newell, our Branch Swarm Coordinator (01373-825560 or sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk) would like to know so he can put your name on the list (please give your landline and mobile numbers). As usual, the likely number of swarms is unpredictable, so it cannot be guaranteed that everybody who wants a swarm will get one. Swarms do not wait to be collected. Once captured, they need to be hived fairly quickly so, when a swarm is reported, the coordinator will ring the next member on the list. If that person cannot be contacted quickly, he will ring the next member (he will not normally use email or answering machines). Remember that you will need to have an empty hive ready (assembled and complete with frames and foundation) to receive the swarm.

If you hear of a swarm in your neighbourhood but you cannot collect it yourself, or if you capture a swarm that you do not want to keep, please ring the Swarm Coordinator so that it can be collected.



Here is a message from **Chris Rawlings, (President Wiltshire Beekeepers Association)**

"The Royal Bath and West Show is 3 months away, sounds a long time, but with a closing date for entries being 1st May our members need to start planning what they can enter. The show schedule and entry form can be found by following the link to the Bees and Honey Competition <https://www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition>

Somerset have already started forming groups to specialise in certain classes and will be doing their best to stop Wiltshire from winning again... I wonder if Wiltshire could do the same to block out the opposition?"

Come on Wiltshire! Let's get our competitive hats on and see what we can do together!

A volunteer has come forward for the trustee vacancy for West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association.

Ideally, each WBKA branch should have 2 Trustees; currently, David Newell is our only Trustee. Richard Green has volunteered to be WW's second Trustee for the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association. We welcome his interest.

Richard will need to be formally elected. The election would normally be held at the AGM, but as this will not be until November, we will be holding his election via Zoom at a Special General Meeting to be held in April – (details to follow).

As you may not have met Richard yet, he has agreed for his CV to be shared with members:

"My name is Richard Green, and I am the Owner and Managing Director of a specialist management system consultancy organisation supplying a diverse range of technical services to clients on a regional, national, and international basis. I am regarded by the International Organisation for Standardisation, (ISO), as a subject matter expert in the fields of quality management, occupational health and safety and information security and as such assist in the development of global standards in these fields, along with the development of strategy, the evaluation of governance, the testing of audit robustness and the management of strategic, tactical, and operational risk.

Prior to establishing my own business, I held senior positions in both the public and private sector with organisations with assets exceeding £1bn. My last two appointments were with not-for-profit organisations and consequently I have a sound understanding of the challenges, responsibilities and indeed opportunities working for this type of organisation presents. I am used to working with the Boards of some of the largest companies in the world and have presented seminars and training to audiences of up to 3000 professionals, most often in South East Asia and Japan.

My exposure to beekeeping began almost two years ago when I started as a volunteer assisting with the Riding for the Disabled Scheme sessions, once a week. I really enjoyed this, but circumstances contrived to prevent these sessions continuing to be run. Fortunately, an opportunity then presented itself to assist with the restoration of the Larkrise Apiary. The Apiary had been neglected, was badly overgrown, with the buildings and hives in a state of disrepair. Together my wife and I, with invaluable assistance from our WWBKA mentor and president David Raines, have resurrected this facility. We are now confident we can turn this part of the business into an income generating asset relatively swiftly. Recovering the apiary is only the start, however. The Larkrise Mission identifies our intent to roll out educational opportunities to a wider audience of those facing physical and mental challenges. In July 2023 I was elected the first New Business Development Trustee for the Farm which will significantly increase my ability to instigate initiatives to achieve this. Our plans include using our new observation hive to bring knowledge of bees and beekeeping to the classroom and local shows and events, making beeswax products with our day students and providing lessons on the importance of bees to adult and child audiences.

(Richard Green cv cont...)

The skills I bring include:

- Extensive experience in effective governance and risk management
- Production of strategies, business, and project plans plus associated business cases
- Financial management and budgeting
- Business resilience and contingency planning
- New Business development
- Performance monitoring and measurement
- Audit, root cause problem solving and improvement
- Coaching and mentoring of people
- Training and personal development
- Information and communication technology support and guidance
- Years of day-to-day business operation: sales, invoicing, process design, costing, contracting, issue resolution.

I consider myself easy going and approachable, supportive, and caring. I have already had contact with members at all levels of the Association from new joiners through to the current president and have attended introductory training at the Chapmanslade facility.

Are you able to help by offering data for research?

John Fatcher is a PhD student at Kingston University, London, and is looking into how computer vision can help beekeeping. He is currently conducting a survey into beekeepers' attitudes towards varroa. He obtained the club email address from the BBKA website as the contact point for your local beekeeping association.

The survey is available at https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_80vE6ONgUFZijjU it is non-judgemental and does not ask questions about losses, just about monitoring and treating techniques, and how open the beekeeper is to using computer technology e.g. a smartphone, to help monitor varroa levels. The survey is completed anonymously, and no personal identifying information is captured.

John asks the club secretary to distribute the survey web address to members asking them to complete it - and pass on thanks to those that do.

...I think we would be extremely interested to hear the findings of his survey.



On the hot topic of the Asian Hornet a welcome article from Ken Wilson our AHAT Co-ordinator follows...

Asian Hornet

Thanks to Liz Gwinnell for the Asian Hornet (AH) piece in the February Newsletter and a summary of the AH update delivered over Zoom by Andrew Durham on 16th Jan 2024. I think we can all agree that the arrival of AH in Wiltshire and our corner of it is a matter of when and not if. The 2023 season resulted in over seventy nests being destroyed in the southeast counties and along the South coast. Also, along several major road routes to London, probably via sea ports of Dover etc. For us in West Wiltshire, a similar route for its arrival is the A350 and A36. The historical rate of expansion of AH in France suggests a figure of up to 70Km per year. If that rate of expansion happens in the UK, it will be here very soon, and we need to be ready for it. The BBKA now has an AH Committee that has had its first meeting, and we should look forward to hearing its plans for future activities to deal with the AH threat. The Wilts BKA AHAT lead is Martin Phipps, and he has held the first meeting of the Branch AHAT leaders in Devizes recently. While there is not yet a clear strategy coming from County, Martin Phipps, and the branch AHAT leaders were clearly in favour of 'spring trapping' of AH Queens. It was also clear that the message to beekeepers and the general public is required to educate everyone as to identification and the threat the AH poses and what we can do. The threat is not just to bees and our future honey harvest but will have environmental, health and economic impacts.

[BBKA Insurance \[from AVIVA and the recent amendment to the Public & Product Liability insurance\]](#)

Many of you will be aware of the extension of the BBKA Insurance to cover beekeeper activities associated with AH. This cover will apply when trapping and destroying AH [put in a freezer for 24hrs].

(AH article Cont....)

The release of AH from a trap is expressly excluded from the insurance unless covered by the allocation of a license. The NBU will be operating under such a license to 'track and trace' AH and to destroy and remove nests. As a result of the extension to the BBKA insurance, BBKA is changing the way Asian Hornet Teams [AHT] are recorded within eR2, the BBKA membership database. AHAT (Asian Hornet Action Team or AHT-Asian Hornet Team). As a result of the BBKA Insurance extension, all BBKA members are to have their membership record in eR2 updated to indicate if they are a member of their Branch AHAT/AHT as a Coordinator or a Verifier, or not a member.

Role of Coordinator

To act as a publicly available point of contact in the local area when a reported sighting of AH is made.

To pass the reported sighting onto one of their team of local verifiers.

To be the local point of contact between government agencies and local verifiers in the case of a confirmed sighting.

To report back on the results of their investigations.

Role of Verifier

A person who has expressed an interest in assisting locally in the investigation of reported sightings of an AH.

To be prepared to help in trapping or monitoring as the local Coordinator may deem necessary.

To provide any assistance that the NBU [National Bee Unit] may request. Such requests will be arranged through the local AH Coordinator.

Could you volunteer to be an AH Verifier?

To minimize the burden of monitoring for AH it is hoped to maximize the number of verifiers across the association. The more we have on the ground investigating sightings, monitoring bait stations or traps the sooner we will be aware of their arrival and able to report this to the NNSS/NBU. This in turn will get the NBU on the ground sooner rather than later.

All members are requested to consider volunteering to be an AH Verifier by contacting Ken Wilson, your AH Coordinator by email (AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com) or text (07941 616523).

(AH article Contd...)

Spring Trapping – Start now

Spring trapping of AH Queens is strongly recommended:

To get early identification of their arrival in our area

To minimize or delay the establishment of primary nests

Spring trapping is most successful near last year's nests as they are thought to enter hibernation locally.

Once emerged in the spring they are expected to disperse to a new area to start a foundress nest for their first brood. The new Queens are expected to travel tens of kilometres, replenishing their energy resources as they go, looking for a suitable nest site. These starter nests are frequently made in outbuildings and wood stores, any sheltered spot and look genuinely like a wasp nest. Identification is usually confirmed by photographing the Queen in the nest as she builds it. Identification by the nest alone is not easy and requires experience.

AH Queens are likely to emerge from their winter hibernation when the temperature is frequently above 12°C for days at a time. This is likely from March onwards but could be earlier. The Queen is on her own to make the foundress nest and her first brood. The first brood of workers are expected to emerge approximately fifty days from egg laying [Mar-May] so emerging mid to end April to Jun. Spring trapping should start with a bait station that is frequently monitored through the day. A bait station can be an open tray of attractant or a wick type in a jar. No attempt is made to capture the insects visiting it, so we are still covered for insurance purposes. Once an AH is trapped it must be killed and not released. It should be retained until we are sure the NBU do not need it for testing. Once AH have been spotted or suspected, add to, or replace the bait station with an AH trap. Every effort should be made to minimize bycatch and take a video or photo of specimens. The AH Coordinator is required to submit a sighting report to NNSS/NBU as soon as the AH identity is confirmed. Note that negative reports are important too and we should expect to receive many reports that cannot be confirmed.

Reports to NNSS/NBU:

email- alertnonnative.ceh.ac.uk

Web- https://risc.brc.ac.uk/alert.php?species=asian_hornet

AH App for mobile tel- go to your App store, enter a search for 'asian hornet watch' and install





It looks as though a good time was had by all – a fantastic opportunity for members to “catch up” socially after Christmas – we extend sincere thanks to all those involved in the organisation that helped the event take place, especially Gloria Pilz, our Treasurer.



Beekeeping supplies.



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Your local supplier providing a service for:

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01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

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 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 sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association