

# 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 Honey Bee on a dandelion in my garden is enjoying the delights of pollen and nectar. I must admit in the past I have tended to pull out dandelions (in my defence I do host a lot of other flowers) – however this year I have let them be – though have borne in mind what my Dad used to say “one year's seeds equals seven years weeds” – so I have been doing a daily round to pull off the dandelion clocks. I know there will be dandelions again next year, but not a full carpet of them!

**Welcome to this edition of the WWBKA newsletter** – did you notice that it is suddenly May! We could do with a bit more warmth and sunshine – I hope that temperatures are going to move up at least a couple of degrees very soon.

It was fabulous to see so many new members at the apiary on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April – we extend a warm welcome to you all, though it was a shame the planned apiary meet had to be cancelled on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. Come on sunshine – we are all waiting for you!

Many thanks again to those sending in articles and ideas for the newsletter- all submissions are gratefully received.

# Diary of Events

## May

May 18<sup>th</sup> (Apiary meet date)

## May/June 2024

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

## June

June 8<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> (Apiary meet dates)

## July

July 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> (Apiary meet dates)

## August

August 10<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (Apiary meet dates)

## September

September 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> (Apiary meet dates)

**WWBKA Honey Show** – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September. Jubilee Hall, Bratton. BA13 4 RW

## October 2024

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

**National Honey Show** Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October. Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher. KT10 9AJ

# Need to know

## Lectures

**Did you miss** the opportunity to view the AH conference 17<sup>th</sup> February? It is still available for you view on YouTube.

Use the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/dUMk2tzaw1E?si=CXzQZtZNWfLGv7SF>

**Below** is the link to the **Asian Hornet Watch App**, we are all encouraged to have:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishBeekeepersAssociation/posts/pfbid0fgVBgc2JVMY17ShhTnUsXq2o3Znky3GeSoUfhNj4LecCNsboXuVr2FYffT6nEaoSI>

# Good to know

**FOLLOWING THE SGM by zoom on April 16<sup>th</sup>** - we are pleased to announce the election of Richard Green as our second trustee

**Many thanks are offered to Ken Wilson** for his past work as AHAT lead for WWBKA. Ken has stepped down as lead and Danny Young is picking up this role.

## **Swarms wanted!**

It seems that messages from members asking to be included on David Newell's "Swarms Wanted" list have "gone astray."

David has checked his email and is unable to find requests from members asking to be on that list. So, this is a plea from David asking those wanting to be on this year's "Swarm Wanted" list to drop him another email if they have not had a reply from David. (Swarm Collection Register: Branch Swarm Coordinator David Newell [sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk))



## **Your Club Needs You!**

A message from our chairperson follows:

"Gloria Pilz, our current Membership Secretary, has given notice of her intention to resign at the next AGM. Gloria has given plenty of notice of her intention to resign. I do not want to delay things and end up finding somebody to replace her at the last moment. Therefore, I would like each member to give careful consideration to whether this is an area they could contribute to the running of WWBKA.

Please contact our chairperson Alan Ridout using the following email address should you feel this is something you could do ( [chair-wwbka@outlook.com](mailto:chair-wwbka@outlook.com) )"

## The Ashy Mining bee (*Andrena Cineraria*).

Have you spotted little “volcanoes” of soil on your lawn? These could possibly be the conical mounds of excavated soil from the burrow/nest under the lawn of the Ashy Mining bee, one of the solitary bees. These are reported to be seen from April through to June and are important fruit tree pollinators.



Elaine Mairis

## **DID YOU GET YOUR ENTRIES IN FOR THE ROYAL BATH AND WEST HONEY SHOW?**

I hope you did! Many WWBKA members will be busy in the next few weeks, perfecting their exhibits for the show. Chris Rawlings has emailed us telling us that Somerset BKA are advertising for competitors on Social Media and planning to encourage their member to put in Craft entries. Let us hope that WWBKA crafters are planning to respond.

WWBKA will be setting up the Marquee at about 10am on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May so if you are able, help would be welcomed.

For the main event 29<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June volunteers are needed to assist manning the Wiltshire Stand which our treasurer Gloria is organising this year.

Chris Rawlings is looking for volunteers to answer questions from the public and experienced and new people to do the candle making using silicone moulds. If you are interested please contact Chris at [chris.rawlings@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:chris.rawlings@blueyonder.co.uk) Please stipulate which day and session you would prefer. Sessions are 9am to 1.30pm and 1pm to 5.30 pm and new beekeepers.





David Newell sent the above photograph for the newsletter - a photo of an Asian hornet trap showing a 'Gardapis' trap set in Dilton Marsh – in an ideal location (i.e. sunny, sheltered from wind, easy to monitor, etc.). At the time the photo was taken David says it had been in place for a fortnight but has caught nothing at that point. During recent high winds, the trap was buffeted a lot and one very windy day, the dish of attractant became detached from the 'stirrup' in which it was suspended. The attractant was still OK (because the 'trappit' was mainly absorbed into a 'wick') so it would still have been doing its job.

If you ordered Asian Hornet traps from the club have you collected yours yet?





### **A visit to Golden Island Apiary Malta.**

I like to visit different apiaries when I get the chance - so when I booked a holiday to visit Malta I looked on the internet to see whether I could locate a friendly beekeeper who would allow me to talk bees and look into their apiary. I found Golden Island Honey and More and contacted Ray Sciberras. Set up in April 2008, Honey and More Golden Island Limited manages apiaries in Malta and Gozo and produces quality Maltese honey and other beehive products. Ray is committed to educating schoolchildren and the general public about bees and the importance of them in our world.

We exchanged a few messages and finally, on a bright day in April (1st to be precise) I had the privilege of joining Ray on one of his apiary sites on the island of Malta. Ray (an industrial chemist in the "superyacht" sector in a "previous life") currently has 150 hives all over the island. Striving to be innovative and sustainable Ray places several hives within Heritage Malta sites, thus promoting Malta's historical link to honey.



Ray explained that he harvests an enormous 7 tonnes of honey each year - that is a lot of honey! This honey is sold in a variety of markets and outlets (including Holland and Barrett in Malta). In 2022 Ray won Gold Medals in the London International Honey Awards and Paris International Honey Awards with his summer (wild thyme) and autumn carob and eucalyptus honeys. His apiaries produce three harvests annually – spring (multifloral from borage, clover, citrus and wild thistle), summer (monofloral – wild thyme), and autumn (multifloral – carob and eucalyptus).

**(Contd...A visit to Golden Island Apiary Malta)**

This year the weather has so far been rather unpredictable (like ours in UK!) Ray tells me there has been little rain in Malta and the bees need feeding. Ray inserts a feeder into the frame space and at the moment is feeding them 50:50 sugar and water solution. When I asked Ray about the Oriental Hornet (different to the Asian Hornet) problem, he explained that he used electrical shocking harps as protection against them.

The weather had been rather windy for a few days prior to my visit to one of Ray's apiaries and it was still a little breezy when we opened up a few of the hives on a site quite close to St Paul's Bay. The bees were very active, and it was obvious that they needed to be fed.

We spent some time talking "bees" and looking inside the hives. After we had "closed up" the hives Ray invited us to taste honey from three different harvests, Spring, Summer, and Autumn. My favourite was the wild thyme - Summer.

In addition to harvesting and selling Maltese honey, Golden Island Honey produces infused honeys, propolis tinctures, beeswax candles and a wide range of traditional products, jams, pates, and preserves based on local fruits and produce.



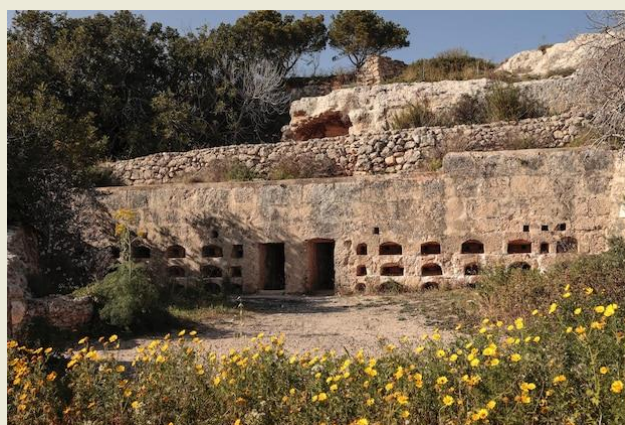
Ray presented us with bottles of his mead products for us to try - a mead, a prickly pear infused mead and a carob bean infused mead, My favourite was the prickly pear mead. Ray explained that the prickly pear mead used some of the remaining pulp from making the prickly pear conserve – I can confirm this mead is an excellent "by product" – good recycling idea there!

**(Contd...A visit to Golden Island Apiary Malta)**

At the end of our visit Ray dropped us off in the vicinity of a Roman apiary and we made our way up the scree in the warm sunshine to the site. Malta has always been known for its first-class honey; some even maintain that the name MELITA (Latin for Malta) is formed from the word MEL, which in Latin means honey.



Most apiaries were built facing south - an orientation beekeepers chose for maximum light and warmth needed by bees. The apiary is sectioned into alcoves, each containing two stone shelves, with a terracotta beehive behind each hole. The hives are lying on their sides with the neck right behind the outside hole. If the swarm was too large for the hive, an extension was added.



I confess the above photo is from the internet – my photo above did not do the site justice!

Grazzi ħafna Ray – thank you for making us so welcome!

Elaine Mairis



**Many thanks to all members** – new and “old” – for gathering together in March for the tremendously successful equipment building session – can you spot yourself in any of the photos?



### **A quick reminder to members –**

**please bring your cup or mug with you to the apiary meets and watch out on your emails for warnings of cancellation if the weather is against us**

**Apiary meet dates** are also published on the club website <http://westwiltsbka.org/>

## Here is our regular feature “Meet the Committee”

...Continuing from last month, the May newsletter features the responses from Gloria Pilz to the monthly questions...

**Question:** What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer:** I'm the Treasurer and Membership Secretary

**Question:** How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer:** After my beginners course, I was still pondering, my husband bought me beehives for Christmas. That tipped the balance ... I guess I could have returned them, but I really didn't want another food processor as a Christmas present.

**Question:** How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer:** I bought my first Nuc in Spring 2013

**Question:** How many hives do you have and which hive is/are your favourite? (Why?) **Answer:** I have 3 hives, they all have different characteristics, I'm still making up my mind which traits I like best. Is it their tranquillity or docility? Or hygienic tendencies? Production? What about ... ?

**Question:** Do you like your honey - what do you do with it? **Answer:** My family enjoys having honey with their tea, or porridge.

**Question:** What has been the most useful tip given to you that you would like to pass on? **Answer:** Even if you don't want a lot of hives, have at least 2, it improves your chances of solving your own problems.

## Gloria remembers a particular “bee related” event - she says

“When I was on the beginners course, my instructor got a swarm call in the middle of an apiary session. Well... this person thought he had a small swarm on a tree and called for help with swarm collection.

Minutes later, multiple cars pulled up in front of his house to a screeching halt, 8 people, in full bee suits, jumped out. All (except the instructors) looking highly excited, pointing, gesturing. I was given the rookie job of knocking on doors (only trying to borrow a ladder), but from a distance that must have looked quite alarming too!

Can you imagine the face of the homeowner .. not to mention his neighbours....”





### A word of thanks...

April 19th - apiary cleaning, many thanks to all those involved - all equipment was moved and the hut pretty much emptied - floors and shelves wiped, vacuumed, washed, and returned to their positions – but true to form, the heavens opened– before the job was finished!



...and then – on 20<sup>th</sup> April – open for business.

In the photo below - a group of members out with the hives.....



## Plants for pollinators.

It is not too late to plant seeds for pollinators. If you are interested in this subject perhaps you would like to take a look at the RHS website using the following link on your computers. [Plants for Pollinators advice and downloadable lists / RHS Gardening](#) You will find downloadable pdf files on the subjects of Garden Plants, Wildflowers and Plants of the world.

The RHS website gives information suggesting other ways of helping pollinators by

- Allowing lawn 'weeds' to flower by mowing less often. Dandelions for instance are an invaluable food source for many pollinators
- Providing water for pollinators
- Avoiding the use of pesticides wherever possible and never spraying open flowers
- Providing nest sites for wild bees

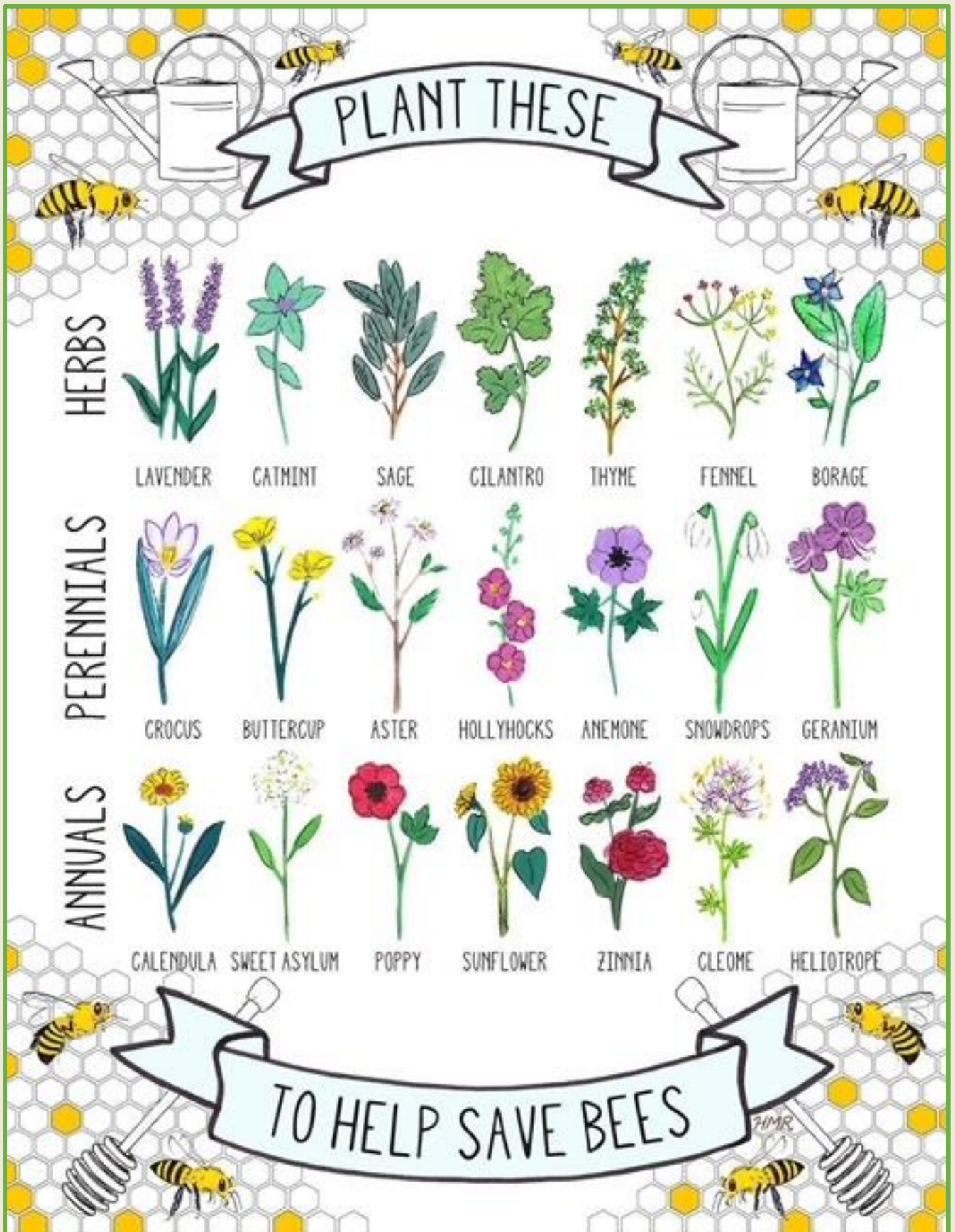
You will find a list of organic nurseries on the RHS website if that is where your particular interest lays.

As members of WWBKA it is likely that you are already familiar with the British Beekeepers Association website, have you noticed that there is a section for "Planting For Pollinators" there? You can access this page by using the following link [Planting for Pollinators | British Beekeepers Association \(bbka.org.uk\)](#). There you can download a leaflet "Ten favourite Flowers for small gardens to attract Honey Bees" [Download.ashx \(bbka.org.uk\)](#)

It is not necessary to have a big garden to plant to support pollinators – you can find seeds to suit all sorts of different growing positions – sunny, shaded, dry and damp included. Just a few pots by your front or back door will be well received by a range of insects. One of the most important things to remember is to make sure your plants have sufficient water, keeping them by the front or back door is a way of noticing how they are looking when you pass them. Any spare little areas can be raked over, seeds added and watered – many communities are allowing roadside verges to flower without being cut during the summer months as opposed to the neatly mowing the edges. If you are not somebody who considers themselves to be a gardener – buy a couple of packets of seeds and have a go – seeds make great gifts for children, and it is one way of raising interest in gardening and insects in the next generation.

Elaine Mairis





# Beekeeping supplies.



## For Your Beekeeping Supplies

Your local supplier providing a service for:

- All Thorne's supplies
- BBWear suits – try before you buy
- Second hand kit bought and sold
- Available to attend your association, apiary meetings
  - Supporting Trainers, Improvers, Newbies
  - Payment by BACS, card, cash, cheque
  - Deliveries – subject to distance, order size

Please email your order or phone so we can arrange an appointment for you to visit to discuss what you need.

[sales@thebeedepot.com](mailto:sales@thebeedepot.com)

07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP  
what3words poetry.unto.driveway

## Contacts and services

### Contact details for committee and officers

WWBKA President: [President-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:President-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Chair: [Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Treasurer: [Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Secretary: [Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Apiary Manager: [Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Honey Show Secretary: [HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Membership Secretary: [Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: [AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: [Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto: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](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the Chair at [Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com) or 07711 018440 for details.

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at [Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto: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](mailto:sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk)).

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association