

West Wilts BKA News



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



The above photo is of a honey bee on Aстранtia Major – a pretty flower, but personally it smells disgusting.

Now that the Royal Bath and West Show is over for this year, members might be geared up for the shows in September and October?

Keep your eyes and ears open – there will be a few changes in the

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The 'fun bits': news and reports.

Did anyone notice the late publication of this July newsletter, or were you all too busy with your bees to notice? I heard that there was a "monster colony" for members to deal with last Saturday at the apiary! Crazy weather!

The Royal Bath and West Show for the Bees and Honey Section was most successful. There is a list of winners in this newsletter – I hope not to have made any mistakes – please notify me at the editors email address at the end of this newsletter if there have been any inadvertent errors.

Diary of Events

July

July 13th and 27th (Apiary meet dates)

August

August 10th and 31st (Apiary meet dates)

September

September 7th and 14th (Apiary meet dates)

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

Need to know

Lectures

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

Use the following

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

Beekeepers need to remain vigilant!

Below is the link to the **Asian Hornet Watch App**, we are all encouraged to have: <https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishBeekeepersAssociation/posts/pfbid0fgVBgc2JVMyl7ShhTnUsXq2o3Znky3GeSoUfhNj4LecCNsboXuVr2FYffT6nEaoSI>

Bring your mug to the apiary on “meet days” for a cup of tea!

Good to know

Did you make any entries to the Royal Bath and West Show? Wiltshire retained the shield scoring an eye watering number of points - well done to all - volunteers and participants.



Just take a look at that mud! What a deluge there was!

A huge vote of thanks is extended to Chris Rawlings for his encouragement and helping to keep members focused and motivated.



Photos in last month's edition showed the newly updated WWBKA stand, updated and looking very smart. Many thanks to Gloria Pilz and those concerned.

A Royal Bath and West Show 2024 Bee and Honey report from Chris Rawlings follows:

"West Wilts and the Royal Bath and West Show.

Well done West Wiltshire members, you helped to set up the WBKA stand, thanks to Gloria, Arno, and Amanda during and following the heavy downpours from Sunday to Thursday.

- you helped to occupy the stand from Thursday to Saturday and make a huge number of candles from a massive collection of moulds gathered by Gloria.
- you put in some fantastic entries in the biggest ever Honey Show winning the County Shield for Wiltshire.
- you contributed to over £6000 worth of honey sales.
- you helped with breaking down the exhibits and the stand on Saturday evening.

I could not have done without you!!!

Let's look at trophy Winners:

Bindley Trophy (most points in the Honey Classes) Elaine Mairis

Hender Trophy (best cake of wax) Martin McDermot

Cup for Best Mead Chris Rawlings

Horstman Cup (most points classes 41, 42, 43) South West Counties Ruth Watt

Most Points Resident member of Wiltshire, Elaine Mairis

Snelgrove Shield (most points for young Beekeeper) Katie Carrington

All West Wilts Winners. Comments during and after the show; The outstanding Stand /Demonstration was the (West) Wiltshire Beekeepers candle display of 'Creatures Great and Small.' Well Done West Wiltshire."



And.... here is a reminder about shows coming up in September and October...

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.

June 8th Dan Young, (WWBKA AHAT Lead), brought us up to date with regard to the process of identification and monitoring of Asian Hornets before the apiary session. Dan asks that those who have previously offered to act as monitors and verifiers to please confirm again by sending him a message via the members WhatsApp group or to his email address

(WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com or to him



We are still looking – can you help - could YOU be the one?



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)"



The Role of a Show Steward....

Wondering what the role of "Show Steward" entails, while dropping off entries at the Royal Bath and West show I approached Bridget Knutson and asked her whether she would agree to write a few words about the role - Bridget's explanation of what happens with regard to the Royal Bath and West Show follows...

"The process started in April, when the schedule was issued. Then comes the decision of whether we volunteer to steward in the Bees and Honey Tent at The Bath and West Show, which gives you half a day to look round the show, and half the day in the tent, candle rolling, making candles or badges, or standing around the displays answering questions about different colour honey, and how do they make those candles?"

My role of Show Secretary means the team and myself start much earlier, looking through the schedule – deciding whether we want to add, remove, or alter any of the classes, before the schedule is made available to everyone...

Then, having decided that, the schedule is sent to the Bath and West Office staff, where any alterations are typed up, and then uploaded to the Internet for people to peruse and make decisions about what they are going to enter. Some are optimistic, and enter more, others wish later they had entered more!

Once the closing date is past, it is then time to write the entry labels, send them out with all the relevant passes, and hope everyone has managed to make/find/jar all their entries.

Every year it gets to 8pm on the day before the show, and shelves look a bit empty.... then realise there are still 3 competitors to bring their entries the next morning. So, it's necessary to space the items out on the shelves and put them in numerical order if at all possible. Sometimes it's a case of moving items onto different tables as there are more in one category than another. You all make the entries look outstanding, I try and make the shelves reflect all the hard work that's been put into the entries and show everything to its best advantage – and it always helps if the sun shines!

Show day arrives – at this point we finish setting out last entries, and tidy everything away that isn't needed. It's then time to meet the Judges, to make sure their Stewards know for which Judge they are stewarding. The steward then has responsibilities to ensure each judge has a table, water, and anything else that they might need. Then the judges are left to get on with the task of judging. (Although this year I did ask if I could be in on the mead tasting, particularly the melomels, there was a very nice sounding one on the show bench.....!) - In fact, there were several VERY nice meads on the show bench, and I did enjoy my tastings!

(The Role of a Show Steward contd...)

A lunch with the Stewards and Judges follows - we were complimented on a particularly good show, with many excellent entries. The Judges then use the afternoon to decide on "Best in Show," "Best of the Meads," and Best in the Junior classes. Other cups are decided by overall points in various classes, so that can be done by the Chief Steward. Then the time arrives to put out prize cards and congratulate everyone on their winning entries and commiserate with those whose entries that didn't come first.

The next day is a quieter day, making sure there are enough stewards around the tent to help with the activities, and make sure none of the exhibits are touched or removed.

The afternoon of the last day of the show gets hectic, this is when we return exhibits to exhibitors, making sure they get the correct entries. I heave a sigh of relief when that is done. After this I then have time to collect my own entries and help to take down all the trappings that make the marquee ours.

A couple of months later there a final meeting is held in which there are discussions about any problems that have arisen, any changes we might want to make for the next year are put forward. After another 6 months, and the whole process starts all over soon again.....

We have a good team, and we all work together well. It's not something you can do on your own; having a good team makes all the difference. We need the volunteers to help out, and I hope they also enjoy their time at the show."

I look forward to seeing you all next year!

Bridget Knutson

Nectar robbing - have you noticed, if you sit and watch bees foraging, some bees go to the base of flowers on the outside rather than going down the "throat" of the flower? This is because some bees will break into the base of the flowers and take nectar from the nectaries using this route. This does not pollinate the flowers as effectively as it bypasses the stamens. This technique/phenomenon is known as "nectar robbing."



Did you follow Liz Gwinell's journey last year as she received her first colony of bees? I asked Liz to update readers how things are progressing for her this year, and she has sent the following report...

A Year of Bees.

On 15th June 2024, it was a year since my first colony of bees arrived. Experienced beekeepers say that during your first year, you are just looking after the bees and that after that, you start to take on a more involved role.

During my year of stewardship, I have been frequently puzzled, made quite a few mistakes and learned many things: how to fit mouse guards with drawing pins, how to keep a smoker alight (still learning!), how to put a hive back together without squashing the bees and, how to observe what they are doing and work out what you need to do in response. Sometimes it has been like learning a new language.

I have been mesmerised by the paintbox of pollens inside the hive and impressed repeatedly by the calm nature of the honeybees even when a novice beekeeper like me is poking around inside their home. I have been stung no more than three times and that is probably far less than my clumsiness deserves.

My priority during the first winter was to keep my two colonies alive. When, with great relief, they both survived and not only survived but thrived to the point where one colony had to become two in the Spring, the next challenge was swarming. As of the end of June 2024, they have not swarmed, despite all three hives boiling with bees and brood. I have given them new frames, added supers, and hoped that the wide variety of forage in my area, despite the June Gap, will keep them occupied. I have expected it to happen several times with the queen cells I have seen in two of my hives but for now, the bees remain.

The next challenge is extracting honey. I don't intend to take the stores they make for winter, but I would like to sample some of their early summer harvest. Extraction was postponed when the weather forecast at the beginning of June was dire and lived up to its promise. Warnings were received from the BBKA about the dangers of starvation, but I knew that all three hives had plenty of stores to keep them going. Now that summer has finally arrived, the day is approaching when I will, as other beekeepers promise, cover my kitchen in stickiness and taste the honey produced by the bees who live at the bottom of my garden.

It will be the best way to celebrate my first year of stewardship.

Liz Gwinell



Read on for another of our regular “**Round the Committee**” question and answer features! This week it is the turn of our AHAT lead...

Question - What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer:** My name is Daniel Young, but I answer to Dan. My roles in WWBKA are Show Co-ordinator and AHAT lead.

Question - How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer:** My attraction to bees came from my grandfather as he kept bees for many years .

Question - How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer:** I have had my bees 4 years going on 5 years .

Question - How many hives do you have, and which hive is/are your favourite? (Why?) **Answer:** I have about 15 hives now plus numerous nucs . My favourite would be my cell builders as I get the best of both worlds (New Queens and honey)

Question - Do you like your honey - what do you do with it? **Answer:** I love my honey, but I sell 95% of it in various places.

Question - What has been the most useful tip given to you that you would like to pass on? **Answer:** The best tip I have had came from Richard Oliver - when you think you know your bees think again - they will out fox you 9 times out of 10.



Den's Apiary Report

Our apiary manager says -

"Having carried out a food stores check on the 13th of Dec and found that some colonies needed more fondant, everything else at the site was okay.

We then potted in on 12 Jan - as the weather was a little warmer - just did a quick check of the stores, to make sure everything was okay after the strong winds we had, glad to say all hives were still in place.

The only bad bit I have to report is that there was water just inside the door on the righthand side of the clubhouse which will need investigating."

Den Pictor



Unable to visit the **Royal Bath and West Show**, an appeal was put out for members to send photos for publication in the newsletter.... The following are a selection of what has been received.

Royal Bath and West Show 2024 photographs taken by members



Royal Bath and West Show 2024 photographs taken by members



More Royal Bath and West Show 2024 photographs and list of prizewinning members.

In alphabetical order

A list of

WILTSHIRE WINNERS

from the

Royal Bath and West Show 2024

Butcher, Sophie

Fife, Mark

Katie, Carington

Gwinnell, Miss Liz

Hepper, Alan

Hepper, Kathy

Irvine, Elaine

Mairis, Elaine

McDermott, Martin

Rawlings, Chris

Rawlings, Sue

Ridout, Alan

Ridout, Margaret

Pictor Dennis

Spark, Alexandra

Watt, Ruth

Wilton, Nina

Wilton, Rob

Walters, Mike

Wilton, Nina

Young, Daniel



Are you and your bees ready for winter?

Preparing for the winter? Already? Well, if you take a look at the literature – or search the internet to find out more – you will see that it is generally considered never to be too early to make such preparations. As beekeepers there is an awareness of our responsibility to the bees in our care – indeed we have had to feed them intermittently at times when we least expected it when forage has been scant for one reason or another. It is hard not to become fixated on the “food aspect” – however there are many other points to consider. There is a need to “weather-proof” hives - the National Bee Unit (link to the document below) suggests that hives should be queen right, disease and pest free, and there should be sufficient adult bees to over winter the colony successfully. Although we cannot directly alter the number of adult bees in the hive, if optimum conditions are offered, rules of hygiene observed and regular careful inspections carried out, the bees will stand a better chance of emerging healthy from their hives in the coming spring.

https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_19_Preparing_your_hives_for_winter.pdf

By late summer, preparations for overwintering honey bee colonies should begin, importantly, ensuring colonies enter winter in a healthy state, with adequate numbers of healthy bees and stores.

Colonies should be queen-right, disease free and secured in weatherproofed hives. Colonies will need to be regularly checked, throughout winter and especially in early spring when the risk of starvation is high. The National Bee Unit fact sheet (number 19) provides guidance on how to successfully overwinter honey bee colonies.

The document mentioned above recommends after the harvesting of the last honey crop of the year, preparation for winter should well and truly get underway. Advice follows that preparations frequently begin with application of a varroacide, administered after removal of the summer honey crop. Different geographical apiary locations across the country results in a variation of dates but is most often from early to mid-August. However, with late flows from crops such as heather and Himalayan balsam, it may be later.

I like the sound of a Perspex crown board – I must remember to ask our apiary manger and other club members if anybody has them and if so whether their experiences are positive or negative and if they are worth investing in!

If you can find time, have a look at the document mentioned. It is such a shame to spoil our summer days by thinking about the winter already – but, sorry, like it or not – winter is on its way!

Elaine Mairis

And finally – some photos from the club taken on the 15th of June.... (no muddy boots inside the clubhouse please says Den!!)



...and a little wood mouse spotted running around by our feet!



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01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

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Contacts and services

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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: 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