

West Wilts BKA News



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



ABOVE - Last year my Eucryphia had only a handful of blooms on it. This year it is making up for it – the honey bees and other pollinators of all shapes and sizes are loving the blossoms!

IN THIS ISSUE

Diary of events **page 2**

Need to know **page 2**

This is your 'go to' section that will describe the things that you need to know about.

Good to know **page 3 - 18**

The 'fun bits': news and reports.

How has the month of July been for you and the bees in your care? Listening to the conversations being had by beekeepers it seems that the bees are using the recent good weather to make up for their slow start to the season. How is your honey harvest progressing? Now is a good time to be preparing for the winter – with that in mind – take note of the club sales regarding varroa treatment and syrup/fondant. Don't forget the forthcoming honey shows - **WWBKA Honey Show** (more information about that subject to follow soon), and **Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day**, details on page 2 and <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/events/wiltshire-bee-honey-day/> -

Diary of Events

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>

MORE LECTURE DATES ON PAGE 6

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/pfbid0fgVBgc2JVMY17ShhTnUsXq2o3Znky3GeSoUfhNj4LecCnsboXuVr2FYfFt6nEaoSI>

Apiary sessions - reminder:

- Hive inspections start at 14.00
- Parking is in the lane outside the farm.
- Please wear a clean bee suit and remember no leathers gloves, please.
- Everything you will need for inspecting the bees will be provided, please do not bring your own tools/equipment.
- There is tea and coffee in the club house, but please bring your own mug.

If the session has to be cancelled due to the weather, an email will be sent out in the morning.

Good to know

A message from our club secretary –

“Richard Ridler, Chair of Trustees of **Bees Abroad**, has asked me to share the following message regarding recruitment of new Trustees for the organisation:

As a member of the beekeeping community, you are likely familiar with Bees Abroad and our impactful work supporting beekeeping initiatives in Africa.

We are reaching out to you to seek your assistance in expanding our Board of Trustees. With our exciting growth plans, we aim to enhance our board's diversity and extend our reach. We are looking to fill three new Trustee positions and are also in search of our next Chair of Trustees. For more information about the roles and how to apply, please visit our microsite:

www.beekeepersforlife.com.”



Photo above from Bees Abroad website

Apiary News



Wow – successful bees! I cannot recall whether these bees ended up with six or seven supers – I am sure somebody will put me right on that!

Saturday 27th July - Another great apiary meet was well attended by novices, experts and “in between”. As ever, the hives provided a conundrum of intriguing problems for consideration. Come along and join us – the next meet is August 10th - remember to bring your mug for a drink!

“**Apiary honey**” is available to buy by the bucket. The price remains £5 per lb – the same price as last year.

Additionally – the club has available **Invertbee syrup** -at £25.20 per 14kg can AND - **Fondant** £20.00 per 12.5kg box

Please contact the club treasurer by email at Treasurer-wvbbka@outlook.com to register your interest and arrange payment.

PLEASE NOTE ALL GOODS TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE APIARY ONLY.

Are you preparing for clean bees and hives to go into winter? Take advantage of the following club offer –

“Dear members

The beekeeping season has almost flown by! We all know about the trouble varroa mites cause, both as a parasite and a vector of diseases.

A particularly important time to treat for varroa is between honey harvesting and preparing for winter. This reduces the possible parasitic loads on the winter bees and increases their chances of survival.

We are offering members the opportunity to buy Apivar at £27.50 per pack of 10 strips (this represents 5 treatments). For those with fewer hives, the price of 2 strips (or 1 treatment) is £5.50. The active ingredient of Apivar is Amitraz.

Additionally, for those looking for a Thymol based treatment for rotation or preference, Apiguard is £20 per box of 10 trays.

Please email Treasurer-wwbbka@outlook.com with your order requests. The **deadline** for orders AND PAYMENT is **10th August 2024,**

Thanks,

Den & Gloria

PLEASE NOTE ALL GOODS TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE APIARY ONLY.



Thinking about winter? Getting your hives in the best condition to make it through successfully to next spring?

Read on, our club secretary has shared the following message from Jane Medwell, (BBKA Trustee and Chair of Education & Husbandry).

The next instalment in the BBKA lecture series will take place on Tuesday 20th August at 7pm on Zoom. The title of this will be **"Preparing your for winter"** with Dave Bonner, Master Beekeeper and former Bee Inspector.

This will be streamed to YouTube for those unavailable to watch live.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83824579560?pwd=kjhRbTQz1THpUcmwAHUkn6LZxaq37.1>

Meeting ID: 838 2457 9560 Passcode: 753891

Further lectures are being planned, so please do put the following dates in your diaries.

Sept 17th

October 15th

November 19th

The above dates will be lectures on bee pests and diseases, discussing a different subject each month.

January 21st 2025

February 18th

March 18th

The above dates will be lectures and sessions to help newer members progress towards the basic assessment.



Beekeeping Taster Day.

The following is a message from Nina Wilton about the first beekeeping taster day to be run from our apiary...

"On Sunday the 18th of August our club will be opening the apiary for the first beekeeping taster day. This is aimed at members of the public who are interested in beekeeping generally, or who are considering taking it up in the future.

We will start off at 13:30 in the clubhouse, where there will be a quick run through of what is involved, including the time commitment, cost, and essential information about the kit beekeepers need. We will also talk about the importance of all pollinators (not just honeybees!) to the environment.

Then, weather permitting, participants will be able to put on a bee suit and head out to the hives for what might well be their first opportunity to peek inside a working hive full of bees. There will be lots of opportunities to ask questions and hopefully we will be able to answer them!

If you know anyone who you think might be interested in coming along please spread the word. The session costs £10, which can be offset against the fee for the 2025 Beginners Course if they decided they would like to take that. Booking is essential because numbers are limited.

To book e-mail education-wwbka@outlook.com"



Beekeeping – Why keep bees?

How do you feel when you go to open up your bees? Excited to see what progress has been made since you last opened up the colony? Apprehensive? Maybe the queen could not be found during the previous inspection? Separating responsibilities, time and attention can be difficult. Keeping bees is not like having a pet animal to care for. Many domestic animals we care for respond to in a way that is translated as affection and attachment. This is not the case with bees. So why do people keep bees? Talking to beekeepers and asking why they keep bees; it is difficult to get any serious responses. Having read at length about beekeeping, the more I read, the harder I find it to identify the main reason for keeping bees.

Perhaps we keep bees because it is an inexpensive hobby? Not sure about this either. Literature suggests beekeeping is an inexpensive hobby – in relation to what – owning a racehorse – or maybe a dog? From the perspective of setting up myself and a colony of bees, I have not found the cost to be “cheap.” If keeping bees in an arguably conventional fashion, you need a hive, a beekeepers suit, frames, wax, a smoker, fuel, fondant for feeding and some way of controlling varroa. Then there is membership of a bee club (I am biased – but well worth the investment I think). Of course, having only one hive is a good idea – or is it? Two or three more colonies can offer greater options when manipulating a colony... so an inexpensive hobby? I am not convinced – it might depend upon your personal budget.

Beekeepers keep bees because selling honey is a good way of making money – right? Well.... umm... not exactly. Bees do not produce honey to order. Bees are as affected by the weather as we are – especially as they rely on the season and good weather for forage and to proliferate – queen mating flights etc etc. It is wonderful to have sufficient honey to sell – but selling commercially involves a degree of knowledge about the law, health and safety and food hygiene. I am beginning to wonder whether it takes a number of man hours comparable to the

(Beekeeping – Why? Contd...)

bee hours said to be taken for each bee to manufacture honey.

The removal of full supers, can be time consuming. Extraction of the honey with a frame spinner (or centrifuge if that is the proper name for it) also takes time – particularly if yours is hand operated and only takes a couple of frames at a time. Then settling buckets are needed (with taps) and glass jars and labels that conform to certain standards. Beekeepers with only a couple of hives might not make a profit – they might break even; in my opinion it would be necessary to keep bees on a far bigger scale to make a profit.

Do beekeepers keep bees because it is a tranquil hobby? Although it is very absorbing to sit and watch the comings and goings of a colony of bees, it is necessary to find the spare time to do it in. Life does not stop around the schedule of a colony of bees. There are still domestic chores and family to fit around the duties and responsibilities of a beekeeper. Many activities, both bee and human related are dependent upon the weather. Beekeepers just hope that activities and needs of family and the colonies of bees they care for do not clash. Often beekeepers will plan to open up the hives for inspection, but the weather conspires against them. So not necessarily a tranquil pastime.

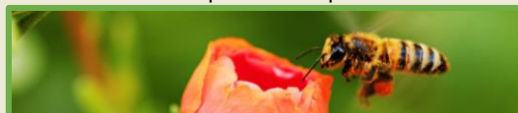
One benefit to the beekeeper might be considered to be the companionship and camaraderie of like-minded folk, for example, sharing a cup of tea and a biscuit after a club meet whilst exchanging ideas about solutions to problems posed by the bees. Beekeeping clubs and societies often provide additional social activities such as exhibitions and competitions. Beekeepers may choose to share their knowledge and skills with schools and other gatherings, involvement in these can be rewarding. There is a degree of “give and take” in beekeeping – not so much with the sharing of equipment (to avoid the careless spread of disease) but sharing frames of eggs and spare queens – or giving a nuc to someone in need with a failing colony.

(Beekeeping – Why? Contd...)

Well – beekeepers enjoy learning – maybe that is why they choose to keep bees? The learning journey never stops if you keep an open mind, the thirst for knowledge in itself can be stimulating. There is much information to be found in articles published on the internet. Additionally, beekeeping clubs frequently offer educational programmes – online lectures and face to face conferences. Bees give people a “reason to get up in the morning” – a sense of purpose and being needed, it is good to have something to care for. Additionally keeping bees is good exercise – walking up and down your garden or the apiary, backwards and forwards with supers and frames and lifts, bending and stretching and lifting. I keep reminding myself mental and physical activity is good for me.

Amongst other known benefits to keeping bees, beekeeping is recognised to be therapeutic in the treatment of people suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. During the Covid 19 pandemic – and during “lockdown” there was increased interest in keeping pets. Whilst I baulk at calling bees “pets” I understand the benefits of keeping bees during that time. If alone with the bees, it is easy to be “alone in the moment” – whilst concentrating on the bees problems may move into the background – personal problems can fade into the background. Bees with their natural flow and gentle buzz provide a focal point. People talk about “mindfulness,” many are sceptics, but it is understandable. Caring for bees can be calming, though bees can cause concern and puzzlement by their behaviour. Making connections with nature and outdoors has been shown to have positive effects mental health and wellbeing. I have read of bee therapy where clients sleep above bee hives – they find the buzz therapeutic and soporific. Personally, I love the smell of beeswax, honey and propolis when I lift the roof off a hive, better than aromatherapy!

I still cannot give one exact reason beekeepers keep bees... What do you think?



Elaine Mairis

“Meet the Committee” – we are coming towards the end of our monthly feature... Just a few members left – I hope you have enjoyed hearing about committee members – it is good to see that we enjoy a mix of very experienced and less experienced beekeepers on the committee – a good mix on the committee helps to ensure a broad representation of member's interests. This month it is the turn of **Nina Wilton** to answer questions – thanks very much Nina...

Question - What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer:** I am the club's education officer, and my role is to help our club deliver training and education to our members and to the wider public. I co-ordinate the Beginners and Improvers (Basic Assessment) courses and an annual training programme. I also arrange for beekeeping talks and demonstrations to be given to schools, care homes and open days, and reply to enquiries about training from the public.

Question - How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer:** I cannot honestly remember; it was so long ago! I went on a beekeeping taster day at least 30 years ago and as a result realised that a combination of a full-time job, a long commute, small children, and an even smaller garden were not going to be compatible with keeping bees., so beekeeping went into the large pile of "maybe someday, maybe never" projects.

Question - How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer:** I am now into my 7th year - after I stopped work, got a garden and the children had left home it seemed like the right time to retrieve beekeeping from the potential projects pile. I did the Beginners Course, taught by Geraldine Lenert, and was then mentored by David Raines. My first colony arrived much sooner than expected; in the first week of the season David asked me if I would like to accompany him while he collected a swarm. I rather nervously said "yes", so we packed up the kit, collected the swarm, and then he asked me where I planned to put them. That was definitely not something I had anticipated! Time for an urgent call home to say that we needed to put together a hive within the next couple of hours, not the next couple of months as originally planned.

Question - How many hives do you have, and which hive is/are your favourite? (Why?) **Answer:** My husband Robin got dragged into beekeeping a couple of years after I started, so I am going to say that between us we have... too many hives. Ideally we would have 3 colonies, but at the moment we are running 11, and have expanded into a couple of out apiaries. We have Nationals and WBCs, with the WBCs being our strong favourite. The lifts are a really useful way of stacking supers when I am inspecting and save a lot of backache. And although there is no scientific evidence to back this up, I think our bees do better in WBCs than they do in Nationals. Maybe it is the small amount of extra insulation, maybe they just appreciate the prettier housing, maybe it is just wishful thinking, who knows?

Question - Do you like your honey - what do you do with it? **Answer:** I can take it or leave it, but fortunately Robin really likes it. I have some excellent recipes which help use it up. Honey pannacotta is really nice! I give a lot of honey away, and sell some of it, but do not make much/enough effort to make sales.

Question - What has been the most useful tip given to you that you would like to pass on? **Answer:** Something my mentor always tells me when I ring him up in a bee-related panic: "When in doubt, do nothing. Take a few marching paces backwards and make a plan." Thank you, David!

Nina says "I am always keen to receive feedback on the training and would love to receive requests for any particular topics that you would be interested in us to arrange training for. Please do contact me with comments, feedback, suggestions, and requests on education-wwbka@outlook.com"



A collection of interesting honey bee facts...

I think it unlikely that I would be able to tell you anything you do not already know about honey bees since if you are reading this, you are most likely to be a member of a Beekeepers Association with an avid interest in the honey bee. However, at the risk of being boring here are a few interesting facts that have been picked up from reading articles and features. Please do not seek to shoot the messenger! All sources of information will be quoted at the end of this feature. If you read more on the internet or academic publications you might find contradictions to the facts offered.

Honey bees on a space shuttle In 1984, constructed a honeycomb in **zero gravity**.

Apart from Honeypot ants in Australia, honey bees are said to be the only insect species that produce food **consumed by humans**.

Honey has long been used as a **beauty treatment** due to its ability to attract and retain moisture.

Honey is rich in **enzymes, vitamins, and minerals**. Honey is apparently the only food that contains "pinocembrin," an antioxidant associated with improved brain functioning.

Do honey bees sleep? In 1983 a researcher by the name of Walter Kaiser observed bees had stopped moving and were asleep in his hive. He noted that a bee's legs would firstly start to flex, and its antennae would stop moving. They would sleep for between five and eight hours – mostly at night.

How fast can honey bees fly? When flying to a food source the normal top speed of a worker is about 15-20 mph (21-28 km/h), on return, when loaded up with nectar, pollen, propolis or water, it is assessed to be about 12 mph (17 km/h).

Number of bees in a colony, the BKA website states there is an average of 35 / 40,000 bees in the hive in the height of Summer. Over the Winter this falls to around 5,000.

Besides honey, honey bees produce beeswax, bee bread, propolis and royal jelly.

(A collection of interesting honey bee facts...contd)

Beeswax is said to be the purest and most natural of all waxes. It is calculated that for each pound of beeswax provided by a honey bee, over 30 million flowers are visited. Apparently, to produce one pound of wax requires the bees to consume about eight to ten pounds of honey. The youngest bees cluster in large numbers to raise their body temperature. Wax-producing glands under the abdomen of the youngest bees slowly secrete slivers of wax about the size of a pinhead. Other worker bees harvest these wax scales, they are taken to the part of the hive requiring the new wax.

Bee bread, a mixture of plant pollen and honey is moulded by bees into granules and stored in their honeycombs. Bee bread is eaten to try to stop allergies. It seems Olympic athletes eat bee bread in a bid to strengthen their immune system, increase oxygen intake, boost performance, and help them recover quicker after training,

Propolis, most people reading this know that bees make propolis by gathering exudates from tree buds and sap flows. Beekeepers know it as "bee glue" used by the bees to seal small gaps. In warm weather propolis is very sticky, whilst in cold winter weather it is more brittle. Propolis is said to have medicinal properties.

Royal jelly is creamy white in colour, produced by the mouth glands of young bees, it is rich in proteins and fatty acids.

In one flight, a foraging honeybee, can visit 200 to 300 flowers of a plant and collect 0.05g of nectar.

In one day, she can visit up to 2,000 flowers and collect 0.5g of nectar.

In five days, 10,000-20,000 foragers can bring 5kg of nectar for the bees to turn into 1.5kg of honey



(A collection of interesting honey bee facts...contd)

It takes 12,000 bee hours to make a 1.5kg jar of honey.

A colony of honeybees is thought to fly around 55,000 miles to make just one pound (2.2kg) of honey. This is the equivalent of one and half times around the world.

<https://blog.beekeeping.co.uk/50-beerilliant-facts/>

[https://www.beeeculture.com/bees-in-](https://www.beeeculture.com/bees-in-space/#:~:text=In%201984%20NASA%20sent%20bees,with%20comb%20built%20on%20earth.)

[space/#:~:text=In%201984%20NASA%20sent%20bees,with%20comb%20built%20on%20earth.](https://www.beeeculture.com/bees-in-space/#:~:text=In%201984%20NASA%20sent%20bees,with%20comb%20built%20on%20earth.)

<https://blog.beekeeping.co.uk/the-history-of-honey/>

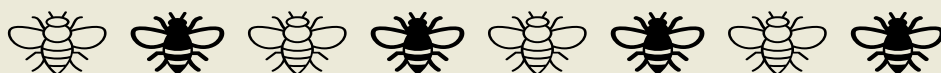
[Five fascinating facts about bees - BBC Science Focus Magazine](#)

[Bee Facts | British Beekeepers Association \(bbka.org.uk \)](#)

Elaine Mairis



Somebody had a bumper harvest! (Well done Dan).



Bristol Bee & Pollination Festival 2024



“The Bee & Pollination Festival will be held on **24th 25th August** at the Bristol University Botanic Garden, in Stoke Park Rd, Stoke Bishop. It is a great opportunity for us to engage with the public, as well as being our open honey show, which for the past several years has been a Blue Ribbon show. Recently we have seen entrants from far and wide coming to the show, and we expect this again this year – so a strong field. Members of other Avon and neighbouring groups are especially welcome. The 93-year-old Silver Queen trophy will be presented to the entrant with most points across the range of main honey wax and mead classes. Novices are especially encouraged to enter, both in the main classes and the specific novice class. The main prize winners for overall class points and best in show receive beautiful Bristol Blue Glass trophies.

If you enter the show, you can sell your honey / wax at our stand, and this is extremely popular with the public. We operate a standard price list, and a small cut of the sales goes to association funds. Volunteers from Bristol Beekeepers will man the sales stand, the observation hive and wax candle rolling for children. We also hope to have a separate stand with a display about the Asian Hornet. There will be a series of lectures as usual, Bristol Beekeepers will contribute a talk on “How to get started with keeping bees.”

Dr Rowena Jenkins from University of Cardiff reveals the amazing health benefits of Mauka honey and its use in surgery, Dr Thomas O'Shea-Wheller discusses the advance, behaviour and

(Bristol Bee & Pollination Festival 2024 contd...)

threat of the Asian Hornet, Dr Steve Nicholls will give an introduction to the world of dragonflies and how they have evolved, many can be seen flying around our large pool. Monica Barlow from Bees for Development shows how conserving bees and making the beekeepers work economically viable can help conserve natural habitat for some of the world's poorest communities, plus many other speakers, Including Prof Jane Memmott, and Sam Macro Versteeg.

Other stands in the marquee will include Feed Bristol, Avon Wildlife Trust and the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust will show how they care for and improve their land for the benefit of pollinators. This inspirational work can be easily shared with others at home or work. Take some of their ideas home to improve your local environment for pollinators. Heart of BS13 Flowers will be here again. This community led initiative creates opportunities for people locally whilst growing many wildflowers as cut flowers. Chris Park the Skep Maker will also attend.

So do come and enter the show, sell your honey, and enjoy 2 days of bee experience. It is a great opportunity to engage with the public and give them some real information about our wonderful honey bees.

The schedule and entry form are available at [Bristolbeekeepers.org.uk](https://bristolbeekeepers.org.uk) and for any more information contact: showsec@bristolbeekeepers.org.uk



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

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

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