

West Wilts BKA

News



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



This year my Perovskia (Russian Sage) was covered once again with honeybees, the blossoms are only just beginning to drop – in keeping with the slowing down generally with the season.

Hoping you have had a successful beekeeping season and are well underway with your winter preparations.

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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.

Did you visit the West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Show on September 28th?

Did you enter some of the show classes?

I believe there were one hundred and sixty-five entries – an increase on the one hundred and fourteen last year. **Front page thanks are extended to all the organisers and volunteers.** Just think - all those people baking - and polishing jars of honey into the night and now getting ready to do it all over again for the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day on Saturday 12th October (Devizes Corn Exchange. SN10 1HS 10am – 4pm).

See you there?

Diary of Events

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

November 2024

WWBKA Branch AGM on Monday 18th Westbury Methodist Hall BA13 3JL – We look forward to seeing you for this important event. The meeting will be followed with a talk by Chris Rawlings on the subject of “Mead.”

Need to know

Lectures

You can also see Preparing for Winter BBKA zoom meeting on YouTube using the following link – or just by searching or the BBKA website

Beekeepers need to remain vigilant!

Have you downloaded the Asian Hornet Watch App?

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

19th November 2024: Kirsty Stainton, Varroa

21st January 2025: Giles Budge

18th February 2025: Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus TBC

18th March 2025: TBC

Further details for each talk will be available nearer the time.

Good to know

The West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Honey Show – did you go? If not then you missed a real treat!

A massive thank you to all those people who helped to organise the day – show co-ordinator, the show judge and show stewards, show secretary, treasurer and members who helped to set up and dismantle the tables and to organise a buffet lunch, a great occasion – with time to meet up and chat with other members, to exchange show tips and ideas and to celebrate successes.

Entries were from seasoned competitors and newcomers too, a fabulous range of entries – the show judge was complimentary about the standard of entries and generous with her time, feedback, and constructive advice. Did you enter? If not, please have a go next year – and remember – the County show is to be held in Devizes on October 12th.

AWARDS



Points awarded 1st place – 3 points, 2nd place – 2 points, 3rd place – 1 point

Kate Forbes Trophy for the most points by a member with less than two years beekeeping

Experience: Nicola Loud

Dick Mills Rosebowl for the most points in Classes 1 to 12: Chris Rawlings

Chairman's Cup for the best exhibit in Class 6: Chris Rawlings

Sister Lucie Cup for the best exhibit in Classes 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23: Sue Rawlings

(The West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Honey Show contd.)

Aldo Cup for the best exhibit in Class 26: Alan Ridout

Walt Conway Cup awarded to the competitor with the most points from all classes:

Elaine Irvine

Geraldine Lenert Excellence Award for best show exhibit: Elaine Mairis

Well done to all entrants and winners like!

The following are a collage of photos taken at the event



(The West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Honey Show contd.)



Our show judge and stewards checking out the entries



A selection of entries – so much hard work has gone into preparation for the show!



Wonderful wax, mouthwatering honeycomb – a selection of honey and other entries

(The West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Honey Show contd.)

There was some excellent feedback during the open judging session - this should help to guide future us for the forthcoming show in Devizes.

The judge reminded us to fill our honey jars to the appropriate level, seal the jars (appropriate shape and size for the class we are showing in) with the correct lids and avoid bubbles in the honey, and wipe the inner lid of our jars free of honey drips (transporting them level to the show).

The dreaded torch was shone through every jar – showing up any granulation or debris – a reminder to us to use a fine mesh strainer and increase the warming time (not the temperature) for jars of honey showing signs of granulation. An Aga is said to be extremely useful for this purpose. We were reminded that matching jars should be exactly that – colour, weight, jars etc etc. – remember – the judges taste your honey – it should look appetising without debris floating around – a good idea to check your lids are perfect inside and out before screwing them on.

Frames for extraction should look tidy and easy to extract, without any pollen, cells nicely filled and nicely drawn out. Remember to clean up wax and propolis off the frames – otherwise the judge may end up in a sticky mess and mildly irritated!

When showing candles pairs we were reminded that pairs should match exactly – and were advised that wicks should be dipped as dipped wicks light better. Check that your wicks are central, and the wax is clean – the dreaded torch was out again to check for foreign bodies!

The judge suggested that if using old candles to show in a class, put them into hot water to remove the bloom and bring back the shine – I have not tried this method – and suggest if you try it to exercise a degree of caution and have a spare pair of candles standing by just in case. When prepared, keep wax with “other wax” to ensure it retains its delicious aroma! Beeswax bars should be the correct weight and free from foreign bodies. Make sure your plastic bungs fit mead and metheglin bottles in case they get tipped over.



At the end of the show, we were reminded there is to be a new category at the Bath and West show, “Cyser” – honeyed cider (I think) - ask around or google for recipes – apparently now is the time to start brewing in preparation!!!! Good luck everyone for October 12th.

Elaine Mairis

Round the committee – Read on for a bit more information about your committee members... This month we hear from Alex Sparke...

Question - What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer** - My role is as librarian, and I would urge everyone to take a look at the wonderful array of books we have available and choose something to read over the winter months.

Question - How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer** - My interest in bees started thanks to my neighbour. He went on the six-week course and was very taken with it and told me that, even if I didn't get any bees, I would find the course fascinating. How very right he was. During our first year we both acquired bees and worked together, bouncing ideas off each other, which I found extremely helpful. But gradually his life became busy as he works full time and other hobbies crept in. Apparently there are other hobbies. Who knew??

Question - How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer** - This has been my seventh year of keeping bees and I am finally feeling that I just might have a bit of an idea of what I'm doing. There is so much still to learn, and I avidly listen to all the talks and chatter at the apiary to glean as much information as I can.

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

Answer - I started off with one hive and, as we all know, that didn't last long. I now have four and intend staying with that as a maximum. At the end of last season, a fellow beekeeper needed to rehome some of his bees and as I had a dwindling colony, I happily agreed to take them. It arrived queenless, but as we were inspecting it we realised there were eggs in there, so we just put everything back together and left her for the winter. She is an incredible queen, and I have an enormous colony, requiring five supers during the summer and giving me copious amounts of honey.

Question - Do you like your honey - what do you do with it? **Answer** - Before keeping bees I would have told you that I didn't like honey. However, like anything, if you have produced it yourself, it tastes different, and I now use it in porridge and through yogurt over fruit. Although my husband isn't a fan, the rest of my family now loves honey too and I keep them well stocked, as well as letting some good friends have the odd jar.

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

Answer - My most useful tip, to which I adhere without fail, was given to me by my good friend Alan, now our Chair person. Setting out to look at his bees to see if it was something I

(Round the Committee contd...)

would like to do as a hobby, he said to me 'Alex, always wear two pairs of trousers.' I have gone further – I also wear a long-sleeved shirt under my smock and, as those of you who know me well, two pairs of Marigolds. Because I am a wuss.

Thank you for this Alex – only one more committee member to go to finish this monthly feature – any ideas for another monthly input? Please email the editor at the address at the end of the newsletter with your ideas....

Chris Rawlings offered sessions to demonstrate extraction of honey on Saturday 31st August and Sunday 1st September– also covering the subject of chunk and cut comb.

The demonstration and talk were held in his new extracting/hobby room and was open to all members, beginners, and more experienced members alike. I attended the Sunday session – my goodness the rain hammered down outside, and we had a show of thunder and lightning too!

Chris patiently answered all our questions, demonstrated techniques, and allowed us to “have a go” as well, carefully guiding our performance in the light of his experience. It was a really useful afternoon – thank you so much Chris for sharing your knowledge and expertise.



Equipment set out and ready to go!

(Chris Rawlings extraction of honey contd...)



Chris demonstrates the use of an uncapping fork



.....and gives tips on the use of the refractometer

...and here it comes!



Using grading glasses



Cutting comb



(Chris Rawlings extraction of honey contd...)



Chris explained the finer points about producing and presenting comb...

...and chunk honey



Many thanks once again to Chris Rawlings for sharing his experience and knowledge - and for encouraging and motivating members to "hone" their skills and enter the world of "SHOWTIME"!



(The delicate subject of) **Honey Cakes**

When I went to prepare the ingredients for making a honey cake for the show I realised I had picked up an incorrect bag of flour for the recipe. On my way to the supermarket, I started thinking about the recipe specified to follow for the honey show....

The recipe used appears to be pretty much standard to the BKA. To highlight honey. Naturally. But what about the health benefits (or not) of honey cake? Are there any? There's an awful lot of sugar and calories in the recipe and a lot of calories involved. As far as I can recall, once cooked, any health benefits are degraded when honey is cooked. The bag of flour I had inadvertently purchased contained a percentage of wholemeal flour (although the recipe we are asked to use does not specify white or brown flour - it just says self-raising flour). Searching the Internet for other club recipes to see what other beekeeping clubs do for their shows, I noticed some recipes for fruitcakes (with my health hat on I thought those would at least include a little fibre).

Below you will find a selection of recipes I encountered – along with links to the pages I found them on. I have not tried baking them – I think I might get too much of a sugar buzz if I try them all at once. Honey cake does have a pleasant taste, but I find it extremely sweet and can only manage a little slice – it is not a staple in our household, I only bake honey cake for the shows. I confess we cut honey cake into small slices and put it in the freezer to take out a slice at a time!



(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

Huntingdonshire Beekeepers Association

Honey Cake

Ingredients:

250g honey and a little extra for glazing

225g unsalted butter

100g dark muscovado sugar

3 large eggs beaten

300g self-raising flour

Method:

Preheat the oven to 160°C/Gas 3/Fan 140°C

Butter and line a 20cm/8" round cake tin. (Paper cake liners may be used)

Cut the butter and drop into a medium sized pan, melt slowly over a low heat. When liquid, increase the heat and boil for about one minute. Leave to cool.

Beat the eggs and the cooled honey mixture using a wooden spoon. Sift the flour into a large bowl and pour in the egg and honey mixture, beating until you have a smooth batter.

Pour the mixture into the tin and bake for 50 mins to 1 hour or until the cake is well risen, golden brown and springs back when pressed. A metal or wooden skewer inserted in it should come out clean.

Turn the cake out onto a wire rack, leave to cool and then brush the top with two tablespoons of warmed honey.

Display on a white paper plate in an unsealed transparent plastic bag.

<https://huntsbka.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Honey-Show-Cake-Recipe.pdf>

Next comes the recipe for plain honey cake from **Cheltenham and Gloucester**

(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

Plain honey cake Cheltenham and Gloucester

Ingredients

8 oz self-raising flour

4 oz honey

3 oz sugar

2 eggs

4 oz butter (or margarine or mixed)

Method:

Cream butter and honey, beat eggs well and add them alternately with the sifted flour.

Beat well. A little milk can be added if necessary.

Bake in a well-buttered 7" diameter tin for 1hr 15mins – 1hr 30 mins moderate oven.

<https://www.cheltglosbeekeepers.org.uk/recipe-for-plain-honey-cake/>

Well, that does not seem too complicated does it? Let me know how you get on with that one... But aha – what about this one found on the Beekeeping Forum chat!

Beekeeping forum

Polish Honey Cake

Here's a recipe for a traditional Polish Honey Cake - rather like gingerbread and associated especially with Christmas.

Mix 4 eggs with 5 ounces of sugar (14 dkg), add 1 lb (.5 kilo) of honey and .5 pt (.25 ltr) of milk and 1 lb (.5 kilo) of self-raising flour. Lastly add a teaspoon of continental / German gingerbread spices - mixed spice is an adequate substitute. Bake for an hour and check whether ready with a skewer.

Possible additions/alteration: this recipe will give you a rather dry cake that traditionally was baked 4 to 6 weeks before Christmas and over this period softened and moistened of its' own accord. To get a cake that is immediately soft and ready to eat add 0.5 packet(softened) of butter or a cup of sunflower/vegetable oil. You can also add a handful of mixed fruit and my mother's own invention : chunks of dark, plain chocolate, preferably 70% cocoa, which can

(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

The author says "I have adapted the recipe for modern ingredients which gives you a very quick cake to mix - I can throw it together in 10 minutes. Universally acknowledged as delicious."

<https://beekeepingforum.co.uk/threads/honey-cake-recipe-needed.11182/>

Here are two more recipes from the Meon Valley Beekeepers....one sweetened with honey alone and dried fruit.....

Meon Valley beekeepers

Class 16

Honey Cake. (sweetened and flavoured with honey only)

Ingredients:

8oz (228g) Self Raising flour

6oz (170g) mixed dried fruit

6oz (170g) honey

2 large eggs,

4oz (110g) butter or margarine,

milk,

pinch of salt.

Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 300°F/150°C and grease and line a 7inch (18cm) round tin or similar.

Beat the eggs, then cream the butter and honey together.

Add eggs alternately with the sifted flour/salt to the creamed mixture. Stir fruit in until evenly distributed, then add enough milk (if necessary) to give a dropping consistency.

Turn into the prepared tin and bake on middle shelf for 1¼ - 1½ hours (if the cake is becoming too dark then cover with baking parchment).

(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

The second recipe from **Meon Valley Beekeepers** is sweetened with honey and brown sugar...

Class 17

Plain Honey Cake

Ingredients:

150g butter or margarine

100g light soft brown sugar

175g clear honey

15ml water

200g self-raising flour

2 large eggs.



Method:

Grease and line a round cake tin 15-20cm diameter (6-8 inch). Place sugar, butter, honey and water in a pan and heat gently stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Sift the flour over the surface and stir in. Beat well with a wooden spoon to remove lumps. Beat the eggs lightly then add to mixture distributing evenly. Turn the mixture into the prepared tin. Bake for 40 minutes at

180C (350F, Gas Mark 4). Leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes and then turn out onto a wire rack until cool.

Cooking time and temperatures may vary to suit the type of oven used so have a trial run before competition day. To be displayed on a plain white paper plate.

<https://meonvalleybeekeepers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Honey-Show-Cake-Recipes-Class-16-and-17.pdf>



(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

Next we have an offering from **North Buckinghamshire** – this recipe suggests spice is added - personally, I like a little bit of spice in my honey cake - but usually plain honey cake – I have not yet made a fruit honey cake.

North Buckinghamshire Beekeepers Association suggest this Honey Fruit Cake recipe

Honey Fruit Cake

Ingredients:

8oz SR flour

4oz sultanas

4oz butter

8oz honey

4oz currants

2 eggs size 3

pinch of nutmeg and salt

A little milk if required

Method:

Cream butter and honey together.

Beat eggs well and add alternately with sifted flour and salt.

Add fruit, etc. Beat well and lightly.

Bake in a well buttered 7" round tin (between 6" and 8"), 2 to 3 hours in a moderate oven.

Well – that seems straightforward enough!



(The delicate subject of) Honey Cakes contd...

North Buckinghamshire Beekeepers Association offer this one too –

Plain Honey Cake

Ingredients:

5oz butter

6oz clear honey

1 tablespoon water

4oz soft brown sugar

2 eggs

7oz self-raising flour

Oven temperature 180°C or 350°F or gas mark 4

Method:

Place butter, sugar, honey and water into a saucepan and heat until the fat has melted, stirring all the time.

When fat is melted remove pan from heat and allow contents to cool to blood temperature.

Gradually beat in the eggs.

Add sieved flour and mix until smooth. Do not overmix.

Pour mixture into a greased and lined 7" cake tin and bake for 1 hour or until risen and firm to the touch.

<https://www.nbbka.org/honey/honeyShow/recipes.aspx>

I found a Christmas cake recipe too – perhaps I should have a go with that – what do you think? Here's hoping I haven't stirred up an (Asian) hornets' nest with this discussion!!!

Elaine Mairis

PLEASE NOTE

Our membership year runs from 1st October to 30 September each year.

Following our conversion last year to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and our eligibility for gift aid, despite rising costs, our full membership fee is still £40.00.

Please look out for your renewal reminders, do consider opting in for Gift Aid on your renewal!!

Remember -

To be eligible to submit entries into the **Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day** (Saturday 12th October. Devizes Corn Exchange. SN10 1HS 10am – 4pm) you must have renewed your membership, so check your email reminders to renew membership if you haven't already done so.

Message from Diane Drinkwater, BBKA Chair, about the October Zoom Talk on 'Mead'

The next in the BBKA series of Zoom talks will be "Mead" with Michael Badger on Tuesday 15th October at 7pm. A recording of this talk will be available on YouTube for those unable to watch live.

Michael Badger MBE has been a mead and honey wine producer for over 60 years, and both a BBKA certified honey and mead judge for 40 years. Michael continues to both judge and exhibit his wares. His knowledge of honeys and honey-based wines is exemplary, due in part to his beekeeping expertise of 73 years. He continues to judge both mead and honey at the highest level at the National Honey Show in the UK and the USA. Michael has written the most up to date book on mead and honey wines "Mead and Honey Wines – A Comprehensive Guide" that details all that is to be known about current practices which has sold over 30,000 copies world-wide in hardback and eBook format, donating all the proceeds to beekeeping charities. Michael travels worldwide to both judge and lecture on the subject. Shortly he will be travelling to the West Coast of the USA, extolling the virtues of British mead and honey judging practices to both tyro and sage alike.

Zoomlink: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83502493107?pwd=Yu5huayrKJSvnXTSC7W1M1gkh5BU>

1L.1 Meeting ID: 835 0249 3107 Passcode: 700083



Sponsored by Eden Renewables & Whitehall Vineyard



Saturday 12th October
10am-4pm



The Corn Exchange, Devizes, SN10 1HS

FREE ENTRY

Talks include

**“Thinking of becoming a beekeeper?
– How to get started”**

Activities include:

- **Face painting for the kids**
- **Explore inside a virtual hive**
- **Mead and honey-beer tasting**
- **Local honey, bee-related gifts and seeds for bees**



For more information visit
www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk





WWBKA HONEY FOR SALE!

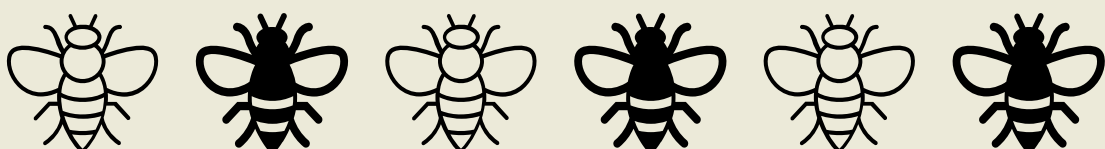
The Apiary's new season honey is available to members to buy by the bucket

£5 per lb

If you would like to buy apiary honey, please pay the treasurer direct after checking with Den the weight of buckets available (this can be done via WhatsApp)

You can contact the club treasurer by email at [Treasurer-wwbbka@outlook.com](mailto:treasurer-wwbbka@outlook.com)

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



Have you spotted the **newly updated document (July 2024) from the National Bee Unit** on the subject of **Apiary Hygiene and Quarantine?**

“Observing best apiary hygiene practices and quarantine procedures can prevent the spread and impact of disease. Even healthy colonies may harbour small numbers of disease-causing organisms without any outward signs, so good hygiene should be practiced at all times, even where disease appears to be absent. This fact sheet contains guidance on the best hygienic practices for routine colony and apiary management.”

Well worth a read – follow the link.....

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3 Resources for beekeepers/Fact Sheets/Fact 03 Apiary Hygiene and Quarantine.pdf>

FINALLY

REMEMBER –

ENTERING THE WILTSHIRE HONEY SHOW ENTITLES YOU TO SELL YOUR HONEY ON THE HONEY STAND AT THE SHOW

CHECK THE EMAIL YOU WILL HAVE HAD REMINDING YOU HOW TO DO THIS



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
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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 Sleigh

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Contacts and services

Contact details for committee and officers

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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