

Honey Bee Times

Welcome

Welcome to the pilot edition of Honey Bee Times in newsletter format, a monthly publication for all members of Wiltshire BKA. The aim will be to provide information on beekeeping news and events primarily at county and national level, with contributions from branches welcomed along with contributions from individual members. There will also be beekeeping tips for the month ahead and, hopefully short articles on other bee related topics.

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day

Wiltshire Beekeeping Association (WBKA) held its annual Bee and Honey Day on Saturday 9th October. Having cancelled the show in 2020 owing to Covid, it was a welcome opportunity for beekeepers from across Wiltshire and neighbouring counties to meet, compete and learn.

It also enabled beekeepers to demonstrate all aspects of the craft of beekeeping to the public. Between 450 and 500 people dropped in to see what was going on, to purchase local honey, sample Wadworth Brewery's Happy Days beer and visit the various stalls.



The Corn Exchange, Market Square, Devizes was the venue for this year's event

The Honey Show

There were over 170 items entered into the Honey Show, not just honey but wax blocks, wax candles and wax flowers. Some mead, several photos and some splendid drawings from children.

The entries were judged by Hazel Blackburn, a British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) National Show judge, assisted by two trainees, Claire O'Brien and Bridget Knutson. Together they used their expertise to determine which entry was best in class sampling every jar of honey and scrutinising the wax products and photos.

Chris Rawlings, President of WBKA, won the Methuen Cup for the individual with the most points in all classes. Geraldine Lenert, like Chris a member of West Wilts BKA (WWBKA), won the Norman Lovegrove Trophy

for her delicious bottle of raspberry melomel. Sian Simms (WWBKA) won the King Shield for the best jar of honey, a fine achievement having only started beekeeping four years ago. Elaine Irvine (WWBKA) seen here collecting the David Wicks Cup for the best frame for extraction. While Gavin James from Swindon BKA won the Novice Cup. It was no surprise when WWBKA won the Applegate Trophy for the branch with the most points.

The trophies were presented by Councillor Peter Corbett, Deputy Mayor of Devizes, who also judged the open classes for children. Winnie May Foster Hugh of Holy Trinity Primary Academy in Great Cheverell won the 4-6 year old class: Carolyn Read from the same school won the 7-10 year old class.

The Elder class at Silverwood School in Rowde created a montage to win the Drawing of a Bee on a Flower class for children aged 11-13. Nathan Nichols, also of Silverwood School won the Calligram class for those aged 14-18.

The Talks

There were four talks upstairs in the Wessex Room.

Ken Basterfield NDB spoke on “Tools and Techniques for making Beekeeping Easier” and “Reading bees - what to look for when inspecting a colony”. Marin Anastasov NDB explored “The Mind of the Honey Bee”. All three talks provided useful advice to beekeepers whatever their level of knowledge and experience.

Eden Renewables were the event’s main sponsors and on their behalf Dr Guy Parker explained how solar farms can set an example for diversity in the environment.

Finally Richard Oliver gave a talk entitled “So you think you want to keep bees” designed to explain what it means to be a beekeeper including the cost and commitment as well as the benefits. Over 50 people attended so the beginners courses next year could be very popular.

The Stands

There were seven trade stalls: five charities also took stalls. Talking to a few of the stall holders after the event they seemed to have had a good day not least because those attending had a specific interest in their work and were keen to learn more. This is good news because these stalls help make the day more inclusive than a straightforward honey show. *(Photo opposite shows just one of the stalls in the main hall.)*



Prizes were presented by Councillor Peter Corbett, Deputy Mayor of Devizes.



Marin Anastasov gave a talk on “The Mind of the Honey Bee” to over 50 beekeepers from across



The Sponsors

As mentioned earlier Eden Renewables was the main sponsor. The other sponsors were Viridor, Corsham Print and Wadworth, who produced the very popular Happy Days Beer. The support of all four of these organisations is much appreciated.

The Volunteers

A show such as this would not be possible without the efforts of scores of volunteers. This year, perhaps owing to Covid, we had fewer members volunteering than in 2019. However they did a sterling job and enjoyed their experience whether stewarding the honey show or selling honey.



Angela and Julian Barlow and Peter Wise running the Honey Stall. Over £900 worth of local honey was bought by members of the public.

Telling the Bees

Geraldine Lenert, a very popular stalwart of Wiltshire BKA died on 10th October, just two days before her 79th birthday and one day after winning best entry in show and other prizes at the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day. Geraldine was a knowledgeable beekeeper holding the Intermediate Theory and Honey Bee Health Certificates. She was secretary and apiary manager for West Wiltshire BKA and a keen supporter of new beekeepers. Geraldine's artistic talents came to the fore with the quality of her honey, mead and especially wax. The photo shows her collecting her Honey Bee Health certificate from WBKA President Chris Rawlings. She is survived by her husband, Frank, also a keen beekeeper.



Dates for the Diary

WBKA Council. The council is due to meet on Tuesday 7th December 2021.

WBKA AGM and Winter Lecture. 7pm on Saturday 20th January 2022 at the Devizes Corn

Exchange. This is an important meeting that members are very much encouraged to attend. It will be followed by a talk by Marin Anastasov NDB on *Preparing for Spring Build Up - Colony Management*. Details to follow.

WBKA Honey Bee Health Day. Saturday 3rd September 2022. Every three or four years our Regional Bee Inspector brings a team of Seasonal Bee Inspectors to Wiltshire for a day of talks and demonstrations covering all aspects of managing honey bee diseases. Not to be missed.

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day. Saturday 8th October 2022 at the Devizes Corn Exchange. Another fun-packed day with expert speakers, trade stands, honey beer, honey sales and the annual honey show. Volunteers will be needed and every member should consider entering at least one item in the honey show!

Education

WBKA - Courses

Module 3: Honey Bee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning. Six 90 minute to 2 hour sessions on a Monday evening starting on 21st November at 7pm. Most, possibly all, sessions will be on Zoom. No expectation that those attending will take the exam as the main aim is to help members increase their beekeeping knowledge. Attending will help you become a better beekeeper. If you are interested contact Richard Oliver - E: raoliver.64@gmail.com M: 07974 816947.

Honey Bee Health Certificate. This is a practical assessment but it requires a good knowledge of honey bee diseases and pests. Attending the Module 3 course will give you the theory, as will private study. Two half day practical sessions will be held in April/May 2022 for those that apply to take the assessment.

BBKA Courses

The BBKA is offering four new courses in 2022:

Microscopy Beginners. One day - Saturday or Sunday 26th or 27th February 2022.

Microscopy Intermediate. Two days 26th and 27th February 2022.

Queen Rearing. Saturday 23rd April 2022.

Bee Handling and Husbandry. Five days - Monday 25th to Friday 27th April 2022.

Details available on the BBKA website: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/department/training-courses>.

Exams. Good luck to all the seven members taking Module exams on 13th November.

Branch Meetings (as published on branch websites at time of writing)

Kennet:

- **Wednesday 3rd November** at 19.15 for 19.30 in Bishops Cannings Village Hall for a talk by Kevin Pope on "Whether the weather weathered the health of the bees in 2021".
- **Friday 3rd December** at 19.00. Skittles Evening at The Crown, New Park Street, Devizes.

Melksham:

- **Monday 29th November.** Social evening.

Swindon:

- **Thursday 25th November.** AGM
- **Thursday 16th December.** Skittles evening

West Wilts

- **Friday 12th November** at 19.30 at the Jubilee Hall, Bratton. Branch AGM. Zoom link available for those not able to attend in person. Zoom invitation sent out on 11th November to those that request it.

Beekeeping Tips for November

Feeding. Colonies will have been checked for stores in September and hopefully you will have hefted them at the time in order to get a feel for their weight. It is all too easy to assume that they will then have enough stores to see them through until spring. However, it has been an exceptionally mild October and colonies have been collecting pollen from the ivy and the queens will have been laying up winter bees. While the winter bees are most welcome, foraging and feeding uses stores so be prepared to supplement with fondant if necessary.

It is good practice to heft your hives on a regular basis and act if they feel light. In a normal winter colonies should spend much of the time in cluster and from November to January should only get through a kilo of stores per colony per month, i.e. 6kg. Thereafter consumption increases.

Diseases and Pests. With the queen laying later owing to the warmer weather, there will be fresh brood for *Varroa* to reproduce in brood cells. It is a good idea to check *Varroa* levels towards the end of November and decide whether or not you need to treat with oxalic in December. If in doubt feed fondant and treat for *Varroa*. Better safe than sorry!

The Apiary. Now is a good time to have one last mow or strim in the apiary. Long grass harbours moisture creating a damp atmosphere. Bees don't like the damp, so anything we can do to minimise it will benefit the bees over the winter months.



Production

Editor: Richard Oliver (E: raoliver.64@gmail.com). Your contributions would be welcome.

Photos:

'Hefting a Colony' by Richard Oliver. All the others by Emma Morley.

