



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

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Wiltshire BKA AGM

Wiltshire BKA held its Annual General Meeting and Winter Lecture at The Corn Exchange in Devizes on 20th January 2022. Nearly 50 members attended in person with just under 50 others attending online - surely a record attendance for a WBKA AGM.

The main purposes of the meeting were first to approve the accounts for the last financial year, which was duly achieved and then to vote on six proposed changes to the present Constitution prior to seeking members' approval to charitable status.

For many months a small committee representing all four branches of WBKA under the chairmanship of Tony Awdry (Melksham BKA) has been meeting to prepare an application to the Charity Commissioners for WBKA to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Whether or not WBKA formally submits that application will be decided by members at a Special General Meeting on 8th March 2022.

In the course of its research the committee realised that there were six aspects of our current constitution that required amendment in order to facilitate a smooth transition to the new constitution should the members decide to seek charitable status for WBKA. Five of the six changes were voted through by a large majority with minimum discussion namely: postal voting; electronic voting at Council meetings; simple majority voting at AGMs and SGMs; electronic voting at AGMs and SGMs and a definition of 'amalgamation'.

The last resolution designed to prevent a conflict of interest sparked some debate as members were not sure where the conflict of interest lay. In discussion it was explained that when applying to become a CIO, the Charity Commissioners need to know who will be responsible for the charity from the moment they give their approval (assuming they do!). It is therefore necessary for the first trustees to be named in the application. By being named, the trustees are declaring an interest in favour of Wiltshire BKA becoming a CIO. Wiltshire BKA is a membership organisation and so it is ultimately for the members to decide whether or not WBKA applies to become a CIO. The future trustees can make the case for the move but in order to avoid a conflict of interest between their role as trustees and their role as individual members, the legal advice is that they may not vote nor form part of the numbers to create a quorum when the time comes whether that be at the SGM in March or any time thereafter. The resolution was subsequently passed by a large majority.

The meeting over, members adjourned briefly before reassembling for the Winter Lecture. Key points from this lecture will be published in the March edition of Honey Bee Times.

Wiltshire BKA Special General Meeting

There will be a **Special General Meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 8th March 2022 at The Corn Exchange, Devizes, online or vote by post**. The sole purpose of the meeting is for the members to decide whether or not Wiltshire BKA should apply to the Charity Commissioners to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

This is by far the most important decision members have been asked to take for many, many years. A really strong attendance, beating that of the recent AGM, will help ensure that the correct decision is taken.

This will be a hybrid meeting. All members should by now have received a letter from the WBKA Secretary informing them of how to vote either in person, on Zoom or by post. Meanwhile you can register how you would prefer to vote by emailing: secretary@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk.

Dates for the Diary - County and Branch

Wiltshire BKA

8th March - Special General Meeting to decide whether or not to convert to a Charitable Incorporate organisation. Details as described above.

2nd-4th June - Royal Bath & West Show. Bath & West Show Ground near Shepton Mallet.

3rd September - WBKA Honey Bee Health Day. Market Lavington Community Hall (to be confirmed).

8th October - Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day. Corn Exchange, Devizes (see page 4)

Branch Events

Kennet BKA

2nd February - 7.30pm at Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Talk by Kevin Pope on "Whether the weather weathered the health of the bees in 2021."

2nd March - 7.30pm at Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Talk by the Buckfast Beekeepers on "Preparing for Spring".

6th April - 7.30pm at ~Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Talk by Richard Peterson on "The Demaree Method".

Melksham & District BKA

28th February - 7.00pm at Broughton Gifford Village Hall. Talk by Richard Oliver on "Preparing for the Season".

Swindon BKA

Details of the February meeting will be published in Swindon BKA's February Newsletter.

West Wilts BKA

15th February - Lecture via Zoom. Barbara Dalby on "Producing Products from the Hive".

3rd March - Lecture on Zoom. Dave Bonner on "Swarm Collecting".

Dates for your Diary - National and other counties

12th February - Somerset BKA Lecture Day. Canalside Centre, Bridgewater. See: <https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk>.

12th March - BeeTradex - NAEC Stoneleigh. <https://beetradex.co.uk>.

8th - 10th April - BBKA Spring Convention. Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB. See: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Pages/Category/about-spring-convention>

27th - 29th October - National Honey Show. Sandown Race Course, Esher, Surrey KT10 9AJ

Beekeeping Tips

Check you bees. January has been dry but chilly and for the most part the bees have stayed clustered in the hive. However the days are now longer and the workers will be encouraging the queen to lay and more stores will be consumed. Heft your hives regularly and feed if necessary.

Water. The bees will need water to help metabolise their stores when they start feeding brood in earnest. Check that there is a supply nearby. A suitably sized bowl filled with pebbles and moss, or some other material that holds the water, will be much appreciated. Aim to keep it moist throughout the year so the bees stay loyal and don't stray into your neighbour's paddling pool.

Clean and Prepare Equipment.

February is a good month for finding time to clean any used equipment. Scrape and torch any boxes that were in use last year. Check your frames. Brood frames with dark wax should have the wax removed. The comb can be rendered but will produce very little worthwhile wax and is best burnt. The frames can then be scraped before being soaked in a container of near boiling water with soda crystals. They come clean in a few minutes and once rinsed and dried, look like new. Store them without foundation for now.

Keep learning. No matter how many years you have been beekeeping, there is always more to learn. With many branch meetings now on Zoom, try finding an hour or so to join as many as you can. You will always pick up something new. Why not attend the BBKA Spring Convention in April. Two and a half days of lectures and workshops, a trade fair and a chance to meet and talk to beekeepers from across the country.

Basic Assessment. If you have been keeping bees for two years or more, do consider taking the BBKA Basic Assessment. You will have covered the syllabus on your beginners course and your branch may run a course to help refresh your memory. The assessment itself is essentially a practical demonstration that you can handle bees competently, understand what you see and know what to do if you see signs of swarming or disease. It is all completed within an hour and you will receive a very smart certificate from the BBKA if successful. If you are considering keeping bees at an out apiary or on an allotment, having the Basic demonstrates that you are a competent beekeeper. The national pass rate is around 96% so why not give it a go. You can apply to take the exam at any time up to the end of July. To find out more contact either your branch education/training officer or email:

education@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk.

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day

What is it?

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day is the annual gathering of Wiltshire Beekeepers Association. It's a chance for beekeepers from all over the county to come together to listen to some informative talks about beekeeping, educate the public about our wonderful world of bees and to enter the fruits of the season's labour into the county Honey Show. It's also an opportunity to meet up with old friends, make some new ones and talk about beekeeping - all day long if you want to.

When and where is it?

For the past few years it has taken place in October at **The Corn Exchange in Devizes**. The event has been so successful there, we've now made the venue our home and return each year. For 2022 it has been booked for **8th October**.

What is all about?

There are several different elements to the day:

- The annual county Honey Show, where members from all branches can exhibit their produce and win prizes. There are county cups which are awarded for separate categories. There are also some open classes for children and family. A full schedule can be found on the WBKA website here: <https://bit.ly/wiltsbees>
- Trade stands where makers of bee related produce sell their wares
- Educational tables where members of the public can find out about bees and beekeeping, including an immersive 'Hive Experience' exhibit, which proved to be very popular in 2021
- Free balloons and candle rolling for children
- A lecture-series where beekeepers can learn more about beekeeping, bee-related matters and some of the environmental challenges we all face
- Honey sales where we all have the opportunity to sell our surplus honey!
- The chance to have a glass of honey beer, made especially for us by Wadworth Brewery, with old friends and to network with new ones. This is also a great chance to learn more about the art and craft of beekeeping by chatting to fellow (local) beekeepers. The beer is optional, tea and coffee are also available!

In the monthly publication of The Honey Bee Times, over the coming months you'll be able to read about each of these elements in more detail. You'll also pick up some useful tips in case you want to enter an exhibit into the show. It's not as difficult as you might think and sometimes you just need to be prepared to have a go.

This first month we're talking about mead. Why start with mead? Well, one of the main ingredients in mead is 'time', so we thought we'd give you as long as possible to let those flavours develop. See Article below.

Get involved

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day is run by volunteers across the membership of WBKA and although we have already started organising this year's event, we welcome newcomers who would like to get involved. Your contribution, however small, will be very welcome.

We are a small, jolly team of beekeepers who like to get stuck in and do our bit. There are plenty of jobs from designing/printing marketing materials, organising trade stalls and writing editorials, through to the more public facing roles of coordinating honey show exhibit entries, stewarding and manning stands on the day.

If you'd like to join our little team, please email Sophie Butcher (wiltshoneyday@gmail.com) so that we can find the best role for you. You never know, you might even have some fun!

Making Mead Easily and Successfully by Alan Stonell

Dr Sally Wadsworth and I used to run training days at Rowde Village Hall. As part of these I included Mead Making. These notes cover the recipe I used, which proved very successful winning me a cup and cards at the Bath & West, cards at the National Honey Show and the Three Counties Show at Malvern.

Equipment Needed

- 1 gallon Demijohn with cork and airlock
- Siphon tube
- Jug
- Sterilising agent
- Hydrometer (optional)

Ingredients for 1 gallon

- 3lbs run honey
- 4 litres spring water
- 1 orange
- 1 tea bag
- 20 raisins
- 1 packet wine yeast.



Method

First - sterilise all equipment

Then - Mark the demijohn with a 1-gallon mark. (Use 8 pints of water for this to give you the right amount of liquid.) Now:

- Make a tea with about half a pint of water consisting of: chopped raisins, half orange quarters and the black tea bag. Bring to the boil and allow to stand for about 15 minutes then strain and keep the liquid to put in the brew later.
- Warm the honey and pour into the demijohn. Add spring water to approximately half full and shake to blend the honey.
- In a separate jug make a yeast starter with water - just warm but not hot.
- When the tea is cool add it to the brew in the demijohn and again give it a good shake to blend in.
- When you see the yeast bubbling, add this to the brew. Just gently swirl the bottle and top up to the gallon mark with spring water. Put the airlock and cork in place and leave to start fermenting.

Leave to mature for at least 12 months or more. Once fermentation is complete, it can then be transferred to clean mead bottles. (There are some recipes that lead to a drinkable product in less than a year.)

Enjoy and good luck.

Need more help?

- Two YouTube films:
 - City Steading Mead
 - Storm the Castle Mead Recipe (Make mead easily and successfully).
- BBKA News Special Edition: Practical Mead Making

Important Beekeepers

The BBKA's Examination Committee has made some significant changes to the syllabus of the Modules including expanding the list of historically important beekeepers. One such beekeeper is Dr Leslie 'Bill' Bailey, who carried out pioneering research on viruses affecting honey bees and developed the Bailey Comb Change manipulation for the treatment of *Nosema*.

Dr Leslie 'Bill' Bailey PhD ScD (MiD)

Navigator and Entomologist. Born 5 May 1922. Died after a short illness 1 May 2017 aged 94

Early Life

Bill Bailey was born and grew up in South Yorkshire. He won a place at Barnsley Grammar school where he was inspired by a physics teacher to study natural sciences at Queens' College, Cambridge. This surprised his parents who expected him to follow his father into retail. But war intervened.

Navigator

Bill had a fascination for aviation and had applied to Imperial Airways when in sixth form but they had no vacancies for pilot training. He then applied for the RAF but he was too young for pilot training so he joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) in the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) as an observer. It was in the Navy that he became known as Bill after the song "Won't you come home, Bill Bailey", which was popular at the time. His parents and old school friends continued to call him Les.

After three months training as an observer (navigator) at HMS Daedalus, the Royal Navy Air Station at Lee-on-Solent, Bill joined 825 Squadron FAA equipped with the Swordfish, a biplane torpedo bomber. In May 1941, just after his 19th birthday, he was embarked on the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious. On the night of 24th May nine aircraft in three flights set off in murky conditions on the 120 mile flight to find and engage the German battleship Bismarck. On finding the Bismarck the aircraft launched their torpedoes which Bismarck manoeuvred to avoid with one exception. This slowed Bismarck and she was attacked again the next day by aircraft from HMS Ark Royal before being sunk by surface ships soon after. Bill was mentioned in despatches (MiD) for his role in this operation. His squadron leader, Lieutenant Commander Esmonde RN, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

825 Squadron transferred to Ark Royal in June 1941 and engaged in protection duties for the Malta convoys before Ark Royal was sunk by a German U-boat in November. The aircraft helped ferry Ark Royal's crew to safety. Only one member of the crew of 1,500 was lost though all lost their personal possessions.

For the rest of the war he flew in a variety of aircraft such as the Supermarine Walrus amphibious bi-plane reconnaissance aircraft that were catapulted from battleships and the carrier-borne Avenger torpedo bomber. On every mission the crew were totally dependent on his navigation skills to return them to their ship often in atrocious weather conditions and at night.



Entomologist

After the war Bill took up his deferred place at Cambridge before working as a hospital biochemist in Birmingham but he was keen to move into research work. In 1951, with no previous experience of working with bees, he accepted a job in the Bee Department at Rothamsted Experimental Station. He joined a group of eminent scientists who made internationally important contributions in diverse areas. Amongst them were Colin Butler, John Free, Ronald Ribbands and James Simpson.



Bill initiated studies on bee diseases at a time when insect pathology was in its infancy and he did much to establish standard methodologies in many different areas of investigation. He commenced work on *Nosema apis*, determining its cycle of annual incidence and means of transmission. This enabled him to devise methods of comb fumigation for its control as well as

the need for regular comb change (Bailey Comb Change). He also turned his attention to the troublesome bacterial disease of the larval honey bee, European Foulbrood. A breakthrough was achieved in 1956 when Bill developed a medium for the laboratory cultivation of the organism and the first experiments with pure cultures showed it to be the primary pathogen. Studies continued on its natural history and epidemiology; knowledge essential to devising rational control measures.

All the major parasites and pathogens received his attention at some time, but perhaps his greatest contribution was in the field of insect virology. He exploited the potential of the electron microscope to reveal new pathogens and in 1963 reported the isolation of the first two viruses of honey bees, acute and chronic bee paralysis. This heralded a new era for insect pathology. Progress was slow at first with only sacbrood being described over the next few years but from 1973 on or more viruses of bees were identified annually over the next decade. Much effort went into devising techniques for their characterisation and means to distinguish them serologically: reliable identification was essential for field studies on their transmission, persistence in nature and interactions with other parasites and pathogens. His investigations demonstrated that most, if not all the wide variety of bee pathogens can occur in colonies that continue to appear healthy. This conclusion considerably modified concepts of honey bee pathology.

Bill's practical skills were employed to great effect in the laboratory as he designed and often assisted in making items of equipment required for specific investigations. He remained a "bench scientist" throughout his career and brought the same meticulous analytical approach to all aspects of his work. That same approach that had seen him navigate his crew safely home during the war.

His book *Infectious Diseases of the Honey Bee*, first published in 1963 was revised in 1981 as *Honey Bee Pathology* and was later expanded in 1991 with colleague Brenda Ball. This text was an essential reference source for bee scientists and a thought-provoking read for enquiring beekeepers.

Retirement

After retirement in 1982 Bill continued to write scientific papers for *Bee World* and the *Journal of Apicultural Research*. He contributed to the COLOSS BEE BOOK chapter on viruses in 2013.

He retained his love for the sea, spending many family holidays sailing in the estuaries around the English coast. He was also a keen hillwalker and spent time with his family hiking in the Swiss Alps, the Italian Dolomites, the Pennines and the Lake District. He was an accomplished handyman and also became a glider pilot and held a pilot's licence. (After Note: Below)

[After Note. Lt Cdr Esmonde DSO was mentioned in despatches for 825 Squadron's role in helping to save the crew of Ark Royal in 1941. On 12th February 1942 he led a detachment of six aircraft from RAF Manston in Kent in a daylight attack on the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the cruiser Prinz Eugen as they made a dash through the English Channel. All six aircraft were shot down. All but five crew members were killed including Esmonde. Esmonde was awarded a posthumous VC. The four officers who survived received the DSO. Leading Airman Bunce, who had been the rear gunner in Bill's aircraft in the attack on the Bismarck, was picked up by a minesweeper and awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM)]

References:

Obituaries in:

- Bee World by Norman Carreck and Brenda Ball
- The Times

Various naval historical records.

www.unithistories.com