



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

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Asian Hornet sighted in Felixstowe, Suffolk

The NBU has announced confirmation of a sighting of Asian Hornet in Suffolk. This was a single insect of *Vespa velutina* that was killed at a sentinel apiary and reported by the beekeeper.

It is time to put the traps out. They are best sited in a sunny place where they can be monitored on a daily basis so that non-target species can be released. They crave sweetness while they are building their preliminary nest so some form of sugar syrup or jam mixed with a dark beer seems to work well.

If you do find one report it to the Non Native Species team at alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and inform your branch AHAT coordinator.

There is more information on the BeeBase website at: <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/.index.cfm?sectionid=119>.



Wiltshire Beekeepers Registered as a CIO

Wiltshire BKA has become a **CIO** (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). You can search the Charity Commission records yourselves by going on to :- <https://www.gov.uk/find-charity-information> and clicking on the link "Find a charity". Type in either "Wiltshire Beekeepers Association" - or the charity number "1198735". This will give you the list of Trustees, the Constitution and, in due course, the Annual Report along with the annual accounts.

Largely due to Covid, the process of becoming a charity has taken over two years. But once the members had agreed to proceed the Charity Commission registered the charity within three working days from receiving the application. This is a great credit to Tony Awdry and his committee who have worked hard to rewrite the constitution and ensure it met the Charity Commission's requirements exactly. Clearly it did, hence the quick turnaround. More detail and what this means for WBKA will be set out in future editions of Honey Bee Times.

Dates for the Diary - County and Branch

Wiltshire BKA

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

21st June -WBKA Council Meeting. Bishops Cannings Village Hall.

3rd September - WBKA Honey Bee Health Day. Market Lavington Village Hall.

13th September - WBKA Council Meeting. Broughton Gifford Village Hall.

8th October - WBKA Bee and Honey Show. The Corn Exchange, Devizes.

Branch Events

Kennet BKA

4th May - Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Talk by Richard Oliver on "Swarm Prevention and Swarm Control".

1st June - Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Bee Chat.

6th July - Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Bee Chat.

Melksham & District BKA

See website for latest news of forthcoming events.

Swindon & District BKA

Details will be published in the Branch Newsletter. The plans are:

May Meeting - A talk on Swarm Control

June Meeting - Skittles evening (postponed from May).

July Meeting - A talk on Honey Extraction

West Wilts BKA

10th May (Tuesday), 7.30 pm by Zoom. Opening a Hive – Why, When and How by Enid Brown

National and International

20th May - World Bee Day <https://www.fao.org/world-bee-day/en>.

27th -29th October - National Honey Show. Sandown Race Course, near Esher.

Royal Bath & West Show

The Royal Bath & West Show is one of the main agricultural shows of the year. It is a really enjoyable day out for the family. There is great entertainment, numerous food and drink outlets offering delicious local fare, show jumping, and all the competitions that are such a feature of country life.

Then there are the displays of country crafts with the Bee & Honey Tent a key feature. If you would like to volunteer as a steward for either half a day or more then please contact Chris Rawlings, chris-rawlings@virginmedia.com.

West Wilts BKA Commissions its new apiary

On a beautiful crisp Saturday afternoon, forty three West Wilts members gathered at our new Club apiary to see a pillar of our County and Branch beekeeping lives for many years, Bill Clarke, cut the ribbon to our brand new Clubhouse **[see photo 1]** – followed immediately by our current County President, Chris Rawlings doing likewise for the W bee C “hive” **[see photo 2]**.

Both “ribbon cutters” then exchanged their ribbon-cutting scissors for a cake knife and sealed the occasion of officially opening our new Clubhouse, apiary paddock and meeting area by cutting an amazing celebratory bee themed cake **[see photos 3]** kindly baked and decorated by our Secretary, Nina Wilson. This was followed by an enjoyable hour of social chit chat amongst the membership over welcome cups of tea and a wonderful array of cakes provided by many of the members **[photo 4]**.

None of this celebration would have been possible without a lot of goodwill and help from a small dedicated cadre of members. First and foremost - Sandra and Robert Hoskins who have very generously allowed us to develop and occupy this wonderful new Club training facility alongside their home over the last three months. Thanks are especially due to the small dedicated band of Geoff Cross, Den Pictor and Chris Rawlings without whose commitment the creation of the new facility would not have happened.

David Raines Chairman. West Wilts BKA



BBKA Spring Convention 2022

The second weekend in April saw a handful of Wiltshire beekeepers join hundreds of fellow beekeepers from across the country at Harper Adams University in Shropshire for the BBKA'S Annual Spring Convention. Having cancelled the event in 2020 and held an online version last year it was great to return to face-to-face talks and workshops.

Starting with the eve of opening dinner on the Thursday the Convention runs through until Sunday lunchtime. It consists of a series of talks by leading national and international speakers as well as numerous workshops covering a wide range of topics. There is also a trade exhibition on the Saturday. Accommodation is available on site or there are numerous hotels within easy driving distance.

Sadly I could only attend on the Friday. I chose to drive up on the Thursday afternoon with just enough time to book in to a local hotel before making my way to Harper Adams for the opening dinner. Over 100 people were present with most booked into the student accommodation and due to act as stewards over the course of the next three days.



On the Friday I listened to two talks in the morning. The first by Norman Carreck NDB was a report on two European wide citizen science projects. The first demonstrated that honey bees concentrate on just four sources of pollen which is sufficient for them to acquire the necessary amino acids for a healthy life. The four sources change as the year progresses and will, of course, be different from location to location but four main sources suffice. The second talk by Lynfa Davies NDB was on 'Nutrition for Honey Bees'. We all know that honey bees need nectar, pollen and water but how much, when and for what purpose is less well understood. Lynfa's talk filled in the gaps.

As you would expect of one of the country's leading agricultural universities, Harper Adams has very well appointed laboratories. In the afternoon I attended a workshop on pollen led by Marin Anastasov NDB assisted by Lynfa Davies. This was a really useful refresher for me and since returning home has spurred me into collecting pollen samples from all sorts of flora on almost a daily basis.

This was a really enjoyable day of immersive beekeeping as well as catching up with beekeeping acquaintances. Next year I'll be back hopefully for at least two days. But how did the others get on? Richard Oliver (KBKA)

4 days of beekeeping. Have you come far? How many colonies have you got? How's your beekeeping year been? These are some of the conversation starters I used at the Convention. Everyone wanted to exchange their beekeeping experiences with others and to listen to how others did it.

The convention is a superb weekend organised for beekeepers by beekeepers. I spent the weekend chatting, listening, and learning. I met beekeepers from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England. Closer to home I met beekeepers from Hereford, Devon, and Bristol. We chatted during meal times, between workshops, in queues for refreshments and in our accommodation kitchen while making our end of day cuppa.

One of the interesting lectures I attended was on 'The bee's sense of taste' by Geraldine Wright. I learnt how they can distinguish between the different sugars. How their mouthparts are designed to continue feeding on nectar for as long as possible. And which sugars they prefer!

I also bought some new books for the MBKA library in the Trade hall. There you could also purchase that vital piece of bee keeping equipment you've realised you desperately need!

Join me and hundreds of others at next year's National Convention April 21- 23rd 2023.

Frances Shires (MDBKA)

And another four days. This year's Spring Convention was good fun and interesting too. Bumping into so many beekeepers and listening to familiar stories of success' and failures, trials and tribulations, reminds us that we are 'not alone'! The many stall holders are often helpful with advice regarding equipment and how to use it, and dazzle us with their displays.



Open lectures included topics ranging from 'The Mind of a Bee' to 'Beekeeping Through the Ages' - and many other informative subjects in between. One very interesting lecture I attended was 'The Truth About Honey - Adulteration and Fraud' - concerning the trade in illegal honey and what lengths people go to adulterate honey for profit.

Workshops on candle making, swarm control and other subjects were run for those wanting a more hands-on experience.

This year Frances and I were volunteer stewards that gave us an insight into how the show is organised.

The Spring Convention really has something for everyone whether beginner or advanced, and I'm already looking forward to next year's show.

Anna Kelly (MDBKA)



Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – part 4

In this month's primer for the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day we're talking about some of the classes that don't attract too many entries. If you know what these are, you can cunningly produce an entry which has greater odds of winning a prize!

Comb Sections:

Instead of building honeycomb in long rectangular frames, honey bees can be encouraged to build comb in smaller sections. These small sections are usually square or round. Both square and round sections are put in frames that have the same orientation and geometry as a regular frame, parallel to each other and run along the length of the super. They hold foundation and fit into specially designed supers called “section supers” which are sized perfectly to hold them. Like everything else, these are available from beekeeping suppliers.

Comb sections are out of favour these days, despite many people having memories of buying their honey in a nicely drawn boxwood section, because they take more effort to make than normal extracted honey; the bees need to be encouraged into the section to draw out the comb, but your hard work won't go to waste as lack of entries over the years means that it is quite easy to do well in this class.

Cut Comb

This is a bit more popular, you can buy cutters that punch out a nice crisp shape and containers to match, but there are two pitfalls with this class:

1. Granulation in the comb, and
2. Run honey in the bottom of the container

You can reduce the likelihood of the first point by storing your prize-worthy cut comb in the freezer, which slows down the granulation process.

The second point is easily solved by making sure the cut comb has fully drained from the edge cells before it is placed into the show container.

Drawn Comb

Another of the classes that might win you a prize is ‘drawn comb ready for extraction’. This needs to be shown in an appropriate display case (again, these can be purchased from most of the equipment suppliers but many beekeepers own them so ask around and you might be able to borrow one).

Some points to remember:

1. The aroma of the frame must be appreciated during judging. You'll be marked down if the case itself smells of fresh wood or varnish
2. The frame should be well drawn on both sides and even, without any damage to the surface, pollen or granulation within the comb. As above, some exhibitors who find a decently drawn frame and are worried about it granulating will store it at a low temperature (even freezing it) to slow down the crystal formation.
3. There are no restrictions on size; any type of shallow frame can be displayed.

If you'd like to have a go at any of these, there are some very informative articles in the BBKA News Special Issue on ‘Honey’ – they give some guidance on the steps you need to take to produce some excellent comb exhibits. There are also some useful tips on the Wiltshire BKA website at <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/useful-articles-and-media/>.

If you'd like to enter any of these categories, May is the time to start organising your bees and making sure they have everything they need. If, under your management, they produce some sections, or you come across a nicely drawn frame, why not put your best examples somewhere protected and enter them in the 2022 show? Let your bees make you proud!

Alan Hepper (WWBKA) and Emma Morley (KBKA)

Get involved

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day is run by volunteers across the membership of WBKA and although the organisation of this year's even is well underway, we always welcome newcomers who would like to get involved. This is your show and 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 staffing 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!

Beekeeping Tips for May

Inspections.

Unless you have clipped your queens, it is really important to continue with weekly inspections. There have already been reports of swarms from across the county. The chilly weather does not stop colonies building up ready to pop out on the next sunny day.

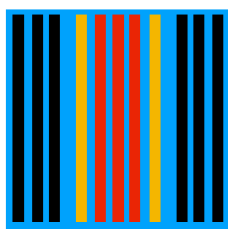
Pre-empting a swarm - Provide Space

When inspecting remember that colonies need space for:

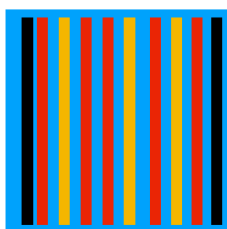
- The queen to lay
- Nectar to ripen and
- Bees to rest

Replacing individual combs with foundation

Early Spring



Late Spring



 = stores / unused comb

 = brood

 = foundation

It is good practice to make as much of the brood chamber as possible available for brood. This is best done by removing frames with old foundation, old pollen or crystallised honey from either or both sides of the brood nest as per "Early Spring" in the diagram. It is not good practice to break up the brood nest as in the other diagram though it is advocated by some really experienced beekeepers.

Last month I mentioned the need to add a super. You want the bees to store the nectar/honey above the brood chamber. Also remember most nectar that is brought into the hive has a water content in excess of 20% so it will take up space while the moisture content is being reduced.

Lastly bees need space to rest. Nurse bees are not on duty 24/7 and foragers rest up at night. They therefore need space to rest otherwise they could crowd the brood nest and thus restrict the movement of the queen and so trigger the start of queen rearing. Supers provide that space and have the advantage of having nectar available so that the bees can refuel ready for another day's work.

Re-active Swarm Control

Have a plan. Decide which swarm control method you intend to use. Have the necessary equipment ready and take it with you when visiting an out apiary. Do a dry run (or two) so that you deal with the situation calmly if/when the issue arises.

Disease Inspection

Devote one inspection to checking for disease. Know what's normal. Investigate the abnormal. Use a pair of tweezers to open cells that have had the cappings nibbled by the house bees or to remove odd looking larvae. If in doubt take a photo and/or ask a more experienced beekeeper to come and have a look. It's also a good time to check for Varroa.

The Weather

In many parts of the county April has been a chilly and unusually dry month. This may well have had an effect on the amount of nectar available in your area. If that is the case then the bees may not have been able to feed the queen as much as they would like and her egg laying capacity will have dropped away. If a colony has not developed as you expected just check the ratio of eggs:larvae:sealed brood is 1:2:4. If not this may be the reason.

Richard Oliver (KBKA)

Book Review

Practical small scale queen rearing using the Miller Method

By Lynfa Davies, Master Beekeeper NDB

21,405 honey bee queens were imported into GB from the EU in 2020 for use by commercial and hobby beekeepers. Commercial beekeepers import queens because they are available earlier in Europe than is possible in the UK. Hobby beekeepers do so because they think queen rearing is difficult. In this book Lynfa Davies takes us through queen rearing using the Miller method to demonstrate that it is well within the capabilities of all beekeepers.

All the terms are explained. The critical timings are clearly laid out and no specialist equipment is required. The core of this book takes explains the Miller method step by step supported by some excellent diagrams and photographs.

There are many things that can go wrong with any queen rearing method, many with no fault by the beekeeper. The main thing is to have a go and not to be put off by initial failure. Achieve 50% success to start with and you have done well. When you are successful, and you will be, not only you will feel a real sense of satisfaction and achievement, you will have spare queens available to replace any failures 😊.

40 pages. Published by Northern Bee Books. Paperback £12.95

Richard Oliver

Saved by the Sign!

Recently after delivering honey to a customer, dropping in to a beekeeping pal who is into queen rearing in a big way, and a review of a farm sale lots, I thought its got warm enough to stick my nose into a few hives in an outlying apiary. Anyway third hive in and the biggest colony, often a bit prickly, imagine if you will a full super of honey, a QX, and a double national brood chamber. Already I had thought these need at least one more super...

2nd frame in to the upper brood chamber I find a capped queen cell. How did I miss that 8 days ago ...? Oh well, spotting day old eggs I put it to one side and carried on. In total I found around 7 queen cells (QC) fully capped and a few being fed across the two chambers. And more day old eggs...

OK. Thinking to myself, I can split these up a bit rather than knock the cells down as I had nuc boxes with me and a spare hive in the apiary too. So first split QC on one frame, a frame of brood and a frame of stores and a shake of bees into the spare hive, close it up and grass in the entrance to let them get used to their new surroundings for 24 hours...

Onwards - I went through the brood chambers again....double checking for more QC and marking out the best ones. Still no queen. She was marked so should have been easy to spot.

I then made up 3 more 3 frame nucs in the same way to remove from the apiary, double, triple checking each frame for the queen. Not a sight nor sound.

So I thought ok, getting more than a little upset at this point 'what am I doing here'I'm loosing my grip, my edge, where is the queen ?

I completely dismantled the hive, cleaning up the floor, and replacing with a fresh brood chamber I had with foundation and popped in some drawn empty frames and one frame of brood from the original lower chamber. One by one I shook all the bees off the remaining brood combs over a queen excluder examining each shake carefully. Just drones remained. No queen.

B***** !

I was actually annoyed. She'd died, she'd departed, maybe a swarm had emitted but surely not as the hive was bursting with bees. And there were day old eggs...

Woefully I then placed a new super above the QX, then the original brood chamber with all the brood in and a super above to see if they drew out more QC over the coming days which would likely indicate a lost/failed queen.

Disconsolately I loaded up a wheel barrow with the three poly nucs and my wax scrapings bucket, smoker, and pushed it up the hill to the truck.

I had the foresight not to try and balance two jerry cans of syrup on top of the wheelbarrow thinking after my luck they'll only fall off and spill their contents all over me.

So I walked back to the hives to pick up the jerry cans and as I made my way away from the hives I passed a sign that the recently departed wife of the owner of the orchard apiary had placed propped up against an old fork in the grass. 'Beware of the Bees' - this was to ward away any Air-BnB visitors walking around the orchard...and I spotted a very small cluster of bees on the ground behind the sign...

That's peculiar I thought. I don't recall shaking any bees into the nucs just there. I put the jerry cans down and got down on my hands and knees. Gently prodding the cluster with my still gloved hands.

Lo and behold. There was the queen in the middle of the bees! I looked to the sky and mouthed a quick thank you to the lady who'd placed the sign there.

I picked the queen up gently after she went on a small excursion into the long grass and carefully ran her back into the hive she came from...all the bees clustered on the entrance immediately changed the direction and angle of their fanning and many followed her inside into the empty lower chamber.

I couldn't believe my luck. I wondered if the fork had been the clustering point...clearly the queen had left the hive in a swarm and the bees had returned when she fell to earth. I had clipped her previously and she was faintly marked white...

So it goes to show nothing is ever simple or clear cut in beekeeping.

I was indeed saved by the sign 'Beware of the Bees'...!

Stephen Auty (MDBKA)

Production

Editor: Richard Oliver (raoliver.64@gmail.com). Any contributions to future editions of Honey Bee Times would be most welcome.