



Wiltshire BKA

# Honey Bee Times

## ***In this Issue***

- Wiltshire Beekeepers is now a charity!
- Dates for the Diary
- Wiltshire BKA Honey Bee Health Day
- Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day - Part 5
- Beekeeping Tips for June
- Swarm Collection

July Issue. Articles, photos etc gratefully received. Send to: [raoliver.64@gmail.com](mailto:raoliver.64@gmail.com) Ed.

## ***Wiltshire Beekeepers Association is now a charity!***

Way back when, Wiltshire BKA Treasurer Frank Lenert (WestWilts BKA) decided that it might be a good idea to benefit from Gift Aid on membership subscriptions.

Gift Aid is worth 25p in the £1 for people who pay income tax and tick the relevant box on the membership form. Even if only 50% of members ticked this, that represented over £1800 a year of additional income. Just imagine how we could improve our club apiaries with this extra income.

The more we found out, the more we realised there were many benefits beyond Gift Aid. We would be in a better position to apply for Lottery Funding, say, to build a branch club house. We could approach businesses for sponsorship on projects that enhanced their green credentials while, for instance, we educated young people in schools about bees and pollinators in general.

After a lot of toing and froing, blind alleys visited, and myths exploded, we found that WBKA had to become a full charity in order to recoup Gift Aid. There was an option for the smaller branches to claim Gift Aid provided they never grew beyond an income of £5000, but that wasn't realistic.

The WBKA Council set up a dedicated subcommittee led by Tony Awdry or Melksham BKA and comprising the treasurer and other committee members from each of the four Wiltshire branches. Their task was to research the options, and write new rules and a new constitution for the association. The latter turned out to be much more detailed than our existing constitution, but it brings the organisation into the 21st century. This took days-worth of discussion via Zoom until everyone on the subcommittee was happy.

Martin Smith, a former BBKA president and chair, and president of Bee Diseases Insurance, was incredibly helpful in the early days of the investigation, which kicked off at the beginning of Covid. He recommended we explore the charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) route because, as a separate legal entity, the members and trustees are personally protected from any liabilities incurred by the CIO - which is not the case under our existing constitution.

With regular updates to the WBKA Council, at last we were ready to engage our members through branch meetings. Here Tony and the new WBKA Treasurer Ceri Gosling of Kennet BKA addressed their questions and dispelled myths. A persistent one was that the new organisation would load branch treasurers with massive amounts of extra work. In fact, the BBKA database eR2 was designed to make reclaiming Gift Aid really easy. Yes, we will need to change the way we present accounts, but once the new format is designed it will be pretty easy going forward, even though there will be an Annual Return to be prepared for the Charity Commission once a year.

Finally, at a meeting on 8 March, we asked you, the members, to decide. The majority voted to change the current organisation into a CIO. The next stage was to make all the changes happen, and astonishingly on 26 April, just three days after submitting the paperwork to the Charity Commission, they formally declared us a charity.

As WBKA Chair, I cannot express deeply enough my thanks for the sub-committee's hard work. Days and weeks went into making this happen, and without their dedication and hard work we could not have done it.

Sophie Butcher

## ***Dates for the Diary - County and Branch***

### **Wiltshire BKA**

- 21st June - WBKA Council Meeting** - Bishops Cannings Village Hall
- 3rd September - WBKA Honey Bee Health Day** - Market Lavington Community Hall
- 13th September - WBKA Council Meeting** - Bishops Cannings Village Hall
- 8th October - WBKA Bee and Honey Day** - The Corn Exchange, Devizes

### **Branch Events**

#### **Kennet BKA**

- 6th July - Bee Chat** - Bishops Cannings Village Hall
- 3rd August - Preparing honey and bee products for show.** A talk by Chris Rawlings. Bishops Cannings Village Hall.

#### **Melksham & District BKA**

- 27th June** - Details to be confirmed. See: <https://www.mbka.org/mbka-meetings>

#### **Swindon & District BKA**

- 30th June - Skittles Evening** - Haydon Wick Club
- 28th July - Honey Extraction Demonstration** - Park Farm

#### **West Wilts BKA**

- 16th June - A Comparison between beekeeping in UK and Africa** - Lecture by Trisha Marlow

## ***Dates for the Diary National***

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

## **Wiltshire BKA Honey Bee Health Day**

The day will be led by John Geden, Regional Bee Inspector for Central England.

### **Programme.**

The programme is being prepared by Avril Earl, the Seasonal Bee Inspector for Wiltshire. It will include a series of talks in the morning and workshops after lunch including an opportunity to see frames contaminated with AFB and EFB. Exact timings to follow.

### **Location**

Market Lavington Community Hall, St Mary's Road, Market Lavington, SN10 5DG  
Car Parking at the Hall is limited. Overflow arrangements to be confirmed but probably in Lavington School, The Spring, Market Lavington about a 7 minute walk from the Hall.

### **Refreshments.**

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available.  
Bring a picnic lunch.

### **Volunteers**

Information Technology. The Hall has an in-built system and a volunteer is required to join me for a meeting with the Hall's IT expert to be briefed on the system and help run it on the day.

Refreshments. Small number of volunteers required to provide tea and coffee at various times during the day.

Car Parking. Two or three volunteers required to direct attendees to the car park at the beginning of the day.

If you are able to help, please contact Richard Oliver: [raoliver.64@gmail.com](mailto:raoliver.64@gmail.com) or 07974 816947



## ***Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – part 5***

As we all start to deal with the Spring honey harvest, once you've finished extracting, you may want to consider what you want to do with the wax cappings you're left with. Well there are several classes at the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day Honey Show that rely on wax. These include:

- Wax blocks (three 28 g (1 oz) blocks, or one 225 g (8 oz) block).
- Candles.
- Furniture cream.
- Furniture polish.
- Beeswax flowers.
- Beeswax wraps.
- The composite classes of a counter display or six bee products.



Many of these classes are reliant on good quality wax, so if you keep the best of it (cappings) separate it will put you in good stead to win a prize. Other wax can be quite acceptable if suitably filtered (possibly several times).

There are a couple of tricks to make sure your wax remains as pure as possible:

1. Make sure that when you melt the wax, do it in rainwater as most tap-water will discolour and may denature the wax
2. Don't overheat it – that will discolour the wax.
3. Filter out any impurities (hairs, particulates, etc.) using a fine muslin or a clean, dry j-cloth. If you shine a strong torch (such as an LED) through your product when it is filtered, it should highlight any issues.

There are a variety of useful tips on making beeswax products on the internet, and our own Chair has produced an excellent video on how she makes her (prizewinning) dipped candles (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOkndf8vWP4>). She makes them in batches of four, which is a great idea because you enter two, but the judge will light only one candle to watch it burn correctly – having four means you have one from each show that is untouched and as a result you have enough candles left to enter at your branch show, the Wiltshire County Show as well as the Royal Bath and West (but that'll be next year now)!

The crucial thing to remember is to ensure that you have the right size wick for your candles.

If candles aren't your thing, don't forget you can make some furniture polish/cream, beeswax food wraps or even try your hand at making some beeswax flowers. If you don't win a prize, they also make great presents!

### **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 event 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](mailto: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 June

### First Honey Crop

Last year very little oil seed rape was grown in the Lavington area as farmers struggled to discover how best to manage the crop and keep the destructive flea beetle at bay. This year they succeeded spectacularly. However the fields that were bright yellow a week ago are now green: it's time to take in the honey crop and process immediately.



Honey containing OSR has a high glucose content and crystallises rapidly. Any frame with fully sealed honey can be safely removed and processed. If the frame is partly sealed, apply the shake test. Hold the frame horizontally over the other frames and give a sharp shake. If no drops appear, it's ready. If there are drops then a further check with a refractometer will give you an accurate reading of the percentage of water in the nectar. Anything under 20% is safe to harvest. (Refractometers are not expensive, easily calibrated and give peace of mind.)

### Stores for the Bees

'Honeyland' is a lovely film set in Macedonia in which Hatidya, a local beekeeper, is always careful to harvest only half the available crop and leave the rest for her bees. Remember this when harvesting your honey. If you take more than your share you will need to replace it by feeding syrup. This is clearly most important when harvesting the summer crop but needs to be borne in mind now when taking the Spring crop and run up to the 'June Gap' when **nectar** may become scarce. If you do need to feed then it will be for immediate use so light syrup (1kg sugar:1.25l water or 1lb sugar to 1 pint water - always use white granulated sugar).



Sometimes **pollen** also becomes scarce. If the queen seems to be laying less or not at all, don't panic - check for pollen. This is likely to be a short term problem until the weather changes and it should not be necessary to feed a pollen supplement or substitute.

The bees will turn to their own sealed stores first and to metabolise this they will need a source of **water**. It is good practice to have a source nearby to prevent your bees using your neighbours paddling pool.

### Weekly Inspections

Across the country beekeepers will have been pre-empting and preventing their colonies from swarming. If this applies to you, weekly inspections can now be relaxed to a certain extent. However if your colonies have built up more slowly then continue your weekly inspections until you are confident that none of your colonies are likely to swarm. Not least because swarms can be a real nuisance and very expensive to clear when they take up residence in unwanted places.



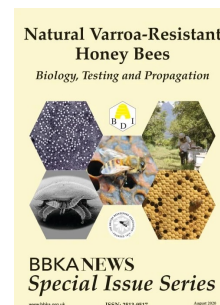
## Varroa

Directly or indirectly Varroa leads to more colony losses than any other pest or pathogen so it is important to keep it under control. Towards the end of June check for Varroa in your colonies. If you use the mite drop or drone brood removal methods there is guidance on the BeeBase website as to when and how best to treat an infection ([www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm))

No doubt a few members prefer not to treat their bees with Varroacides and rely on biotechnical controls such as comb trapping, shook swarm or an extended form of an 'artificial swarm'. In this case it is still good practice to check Varroa levels in the colony two or three times a year.

For those of you that would prefer not to treat at all in the hope that your bees will be resistant to Varroa, it is important to be realistic. The advice from Professor Stephen Martin of Salford University, an international expert on Varroa resistant bees, is to treat half the times you would normally but monitor twice as often. If the monitoring shows a high infestation then treat. If you don't you will lose your bees.

There is a BBKA News Special Issue on Natural Varroa-Resistant Honey Bees that is available from the BBKA Shop.



## Shook Swarm

One way to reduce the Varroa load in a colony is to carry out a shook swarm. This puts all the bees on to new comb thus removing all the Varroa sealed in the cells at the time. The Varroa left on the bees can be treated with oxalic acid before the first batch of brood is sealed. The best time to perform a shook swarm is when there is a flow on, e.g. when the brambles are in flower. Late June/early July is often a good time though there are already signs of brambles on the verge of flowering. To learn more there is an excellent article on the shook swarm in the 20th May edition of The Beelister (<https://www.beelister.co.uk/varroa-treatment/shook-swarm-for-apiary-hygiene-and-swarm-prevention-control/>) also a video by Kevin Pope on BeeBase's YouTube site.

## Swarm Collection

Finally a big thank you to the branch swarm liaison officers and all members that have collected swarms in the past few weeks. It is an important service and much appreciated by the public.

