



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

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Royal Bath and West Show - Chief Steward's Report

Well! What a show. A new marquee (clear span) no tent poles, fixed sides like curtains, and so light and airy. Plenty of room for displays and sales, so good to see old friends and new. The atmosphere was really friendly and the marquee was full of smiles from all.

The honey show was well supported by Wiltshire members and we gained 180 points between 10 of us. However, we were beaten by Somerset who saw the opportunity and gained 430 points. Well done Somerset. We had success with Alan's Mead winning both Dry and Sweet. Sue Rawlings winning the Blue ribbon with her wax flowers, never been done before at the B&W. Point of interest: Claire O'Brien from Reading gained 143 on her own by entering most classes. Could you do that for us?



The President of the B&W visited us (see photo) and spent some time at the Observation Hive which is part of our WBKA stand in the back ground where we demonstrate candle making etc.

I must thank Alan for camping at the showground for the three days and completely organising the Bees and live demos. Also that intrepid duo Amanda and Gloria for helping set up on Sunday before, on duty all three afternoons and then breaking down on Saturday staying until after 8pm. Without these three I would have been in serious trouble. A big Thank You to all the other volunteers, without you Wiltshire BKA would have struggled to maintain the high level of respect we have in the South West.

So, looking forward, it's time to start improving our showing preparation and to learn how to show off your products. We have Branch local shows followed by our County Show.

I will be at Kennet and West Wilts showing you how to prepare with some tricks of the trade. Next year we can start our comeback or let's be positive and regain that County Shield

Chris Rawlings, President WBKA. Chief Steward/Chairman Bath and West Bees and Honey.

Bath and West Show - A Volunteer's Report



Gloria and I arrived on the Sunday morning before the show to help with the set-up and entered a large empty marquee with a carpet of lush green grass, a pile of flat tables and a number of stands for the honey show. Suzi Perkins from Somerset produced the layout plan and we set to work. The contents of Chris's trailer contained everything we needed and the transformation process began. By the end of the afternoon, everything was roughly in place, the tables and stands had been dressed ready for Chris and Suzy to finesse in the run-up to the show's opening on the Thursday.

Gloria and I were speculating about how busy it would be as we travelled down for the afternoon shift on the Thursday and were concerned that all the other Platinum

Jubilee activities on offer might mean attendance would be low. How wrong we were! We practically had to fight our way through the crowds to get to the Bees and Honey Marquee, which was packed. The morning team had been busy making candles and keeping the candle rolling stand supplied with wicks, Alan was giving live bee demonstrations and there was a constant crowd around Chris's wonderful observation hive with its 2 frames of bees and built-in information boards. A personal highlight for me was seeing the queen reverse into a cell and lay an egg! All the activities and beekeepers involved with the stand engaged the public's attention and helped to promote our passion and what we do. My favourite customer had to be the keeper from the Cotswold Wildlife Park who looks after the giant tortoises and wanted to buy tortoise candles, the smallest in our range, for his colleagues.

The other stands covered a wide range of topics including Bees Abroad, Asian Hornet awareness, skep making and there were bee-related products for sale, as well as honey.

The actual honey show itself was well worth a look. The exhibits were such a high standard and some were really creative. Special mention must be made of Sue Rawlings' wax flower arrangement which was amazing. Wiltshire had some winners, but our overall points total at 180 was quite a way behind Somerset's total of 430, highlighting the need for greater participation if we can muster it next year.

I really enjoyed getting involved with this year's show and you get entry for the whole day so can have a look round when you've finished on the stand. Chris is a great champion of the show and works tirelessly to make it the success it is, but he needs our support and I would urge you to get involved next year if you can.

Amanda Leworthy (WWBKA)



Dates for the Diary - County and Branch

Wiltshire BKA

3rd September - WBKA Honey Bee Health Day. Market Lavington Community Hall, SN10 4DG

A series of talks in the morning led by John Geden, our Regional Bee Inspector, assisted by other bee inspectors from neighbouring counties. Workshops in the afternoon will allow members to view frames contaminated with either AFB or EFB, be updated on Varroa and reminded of the importance of apiary hygiene. There will also be an opportunity to discuss any aspect of honey bee diseases, pests and pathogens with the panel.



Doors open 09.30 for a 10.00 start. Finish by 16.00.

Tea and coffee available. Bring a packed lunch.

As the hall has limited capacity this will be a ticketed event. To apply for a ticket visit:

<https://bit.ly/beehealthwilt>

Volunteers required to provide refreshments, help with car parking and sign in attendees.

Contact: Richard Oliver, raoliver.64@gmail.com.

8th October 2022 - WBKA Bee and Honey Day. The Corn Exchange, Devizes.

A day for beekeepers and the general public with something for everyone. Two talks by Bob Smith NDB. A talk by Richard Rickitt for those thinking of keeping bees. A bee experience area and lots of stalls in addition to the County Honey Show. The day is sponsored by Eden Renewables and Dr Guy Parker, a research scientist who oversees the company's ecological implementation will give a talk on the 'Future of Bumblebees in the British Countryside'.

Branch Events

Kennet BKA

6th July - 7.30 at Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Bee chat.

16th July - Visit to Pertwood Organic Farm. For details see Chairman's Newsletter for July.

3rd August - 7.30 at Bishops Cannings Village Hall. Talk by Chris Rawlings on "Preparing honey and bee products for show".

Melksham BKA

See website for details of meetings: <https://www.mbka.org/mbka-meetings>.

Swindon & District BKA

28th July - Park Farm. Demonstration of honey extraction.

West Wilts BKA

9th and 23rd July. Apiary sessions starting at 2pm.

6th, 20th and 27th August. Apiary session starting at 2pm.

National Events

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

<https://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – part 6

So we've told you all about particular aspects of exhibiting in the Honey Show at the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day, but the day isn't just about the show. It's also a great place to bring the whole family for a fun day out.

There is plenty for the children to do such as candle rolling and colouring activities. This year, thanks to our sponsors, there will also be solar toys/solar experiments that children can explore and a crafts table where they can make flowers and insects to either take home or add to the display. The stall will be manned by experienced art/science teachers with insect/plant reference books available for kids to refer to with their designs.

We'll be giving away free balloons to any children we see either inside or outside the event, as it helps spread the word around the town. Last year we gave away over a hundred balloons on sticks. We designed them ourselves and managed to get them directly from a supplier at cost price but this year we are looking for biodegradable ones which are much more expensive. If you have any contacts or expertise in this area, do let us know.



There are some children's classes in the show and you don't need to be a beekeeper or have a beekeeper in the family to enter. If you know any schools or children's clubs like Brownies or Scouts that may want to get involved, have a look at/pass on the schedule. See Downloads here: <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/events/wiltshire-bee-honey-day/>

Finally, there is always a stall selling members' honey to the public. As a 'thank you' to anyone who helps out at or exhibits in the show, your produce can be sold for a fixed price, at a small fee of 10%, which goes to WBKA (to help pay for the event). In 2021 we completely sold out of members' honey, which was such a shame as we could have sold so much more!

If you have a decent honey harvest this year and have any to sell, why not consider selling it on the honey stall? All you have to do is either exhibit at the show or volunteer for just an hour and we will do the hard work of selling it for you.

We need you!

We are still looking for volunteers to help out on the day. Jobs are split into separate areas and hourly slots so that the more people who get involved, the less there is for everyone to do. Even if it is only for an so that someone can have a lunch break, we need everyone to do their bit to help. The following is a list of the areas we need volunteers for:

1. Tea and coffee
2. Children's corner
3. Candle rolling
4. Wiltshire Beekeepers Association stand and Hive Experience
5. Honey sales
6. Honey Beer sales
7. Handing out balloons

If you'd like to put your name down for a one hour slot, or even longer, please email Sophie Butcher (wiltshoneyday@gmail.com) so that we can start getting organised.

Emma Morley (KBKA) and others.

Beekeeping Tips for July

Wasps.

This is the time of year when wasps can become a problem. Their nests are breaking down and the adult workers have to go out and forage for sugary substances. If a colony of honey bees has weak defences the wasps will start robbing that hive. It's best to take action now before the wasps get active.

- Reduce the entrances to one or two bee spaces. If you have nucs then insert a short length of hosepipe into the entrance to help the guard bees do their job.
- Feed syrup late in the evening when the bees are all in the hive and the wasps are not around.
- Avoid spilling syrup.
- Keep supers covered and
- Make your inspections as brief as possible.

Summer Flow. June has been very dry across much of the county but with the brambles are now flowering there could be a good flow. Remember nectar needs time and space to allow the water content to fall below 20% and is capped by the bees. Add supers ahead of the bees needs.

Varroa. Towards the end of the month check Varroa levels in your colonies and plan your treatment once you remove the honey crop.



Honey Extraction. At the end of the month you may have supers that are ready for extraction. Have a plan. You will need an extractor, filters, some form of settling tank and honey jars if you plan to jar up straight away. If you have a good crop it is best to store the filtered honey in airtight food grade containers (15 or 30lbs) for processing at your leisure later when you know whether it is set or run honey. Make sure that the room in which you do the processing is as clean as possible (banish all animals!) It's also a good idea to line the floor with newspaper.

Richard Oliver (KBKA)

Melksham Beekeepers Association School visits in June

After a lot of preparation, we turned up at Royal Wootton Bassett Infants School at 9am on Monday morning complete with arm-fulls of bee "stuff" and were permitted to address the whole school of about 100 children and staff about who we were and why we were there.

Frances Shires (our education officer at Melksham) then gave a short 30 minute talk to the two youngest classes about what honey bees do for us as humans and why they are so important to us. This was not technical and any of us who have kept bees would have the knowledge to do this. We concentrated on the practical side, showed them a hive and passed round some pieces of wax comb for them to touch. At the end of the talk, we lit the smoker (outside) so that they could smell the smoke.



We then progressed up the school with four older classes and Frances had adapted her talk to suit the children who were more inquisitive. The final two classes displayed a huge amount of knowledge of the role of insects and they knew about pollination which meant that their questions became more technical.

On Tuesday afternoon, we visited another school, this time Winsley Acorns Pre-School. This is a small school of 20 children and we were able to hold the talk outside under the shade of a huge Sycamore tree. Frances had adapted her talk again to suit the youngest audience, who sat fascinated for 30 minutes. This was a long time for such young children but they were spellbound and very interactive.



I had forgotten how receptive and rewarding presenting to a group of children can be. They are a ready audience and many schools are already adding nature and the environment to their curricula.

As beekeepers, we do not realise how knowledgeable we are and how often we talk about our bees endlessly to anyone who will listen. The schools are a ready and receptive audience and at the end of the 2 days, I was surprised how relaxed I was about being Frances' assistant and answering some of the many questions the children fired at us. Tony Awdry (MBKA)

Kennet Beekeepers Bee Safari June 2022

On Saturday 11th June, a number of Kennet beekeepers embarked upon a bee safari. The purpose of which was to offer both new and existing beekeepers the opportunity to visit other members apiaries and look at ways of housing bees that are different from standard nationals. It is always interesting to see and learn about the different environments in which our bees are kept even although there may only be a few miles in-between.

We started the day at Mark Fife's nursery area which is at the rear of his truly English garden in the village of Wilsford, bordering the chalk plateau of Salisbury plain. Mark has many hives around the plain but uses his back garden to tend to those colonies that need that extra bit of attention when for example, the hive has become queenless.

Here Mark's Bees are kept on Langstroth hives which offers around 20% extra space to the bees and helps to avoid having to move to double or brood and a half when the colony expands.



It was interesting to learn that due to the microclimate around the plain, Mark is able to delay his summer harvest often to around late October as the flow in the area continues that late into the season. No wonder Mark is able to harvest so much honey! And having many hives helps as well of course. Members of the group commented that *“it was delightful to see the different locations and forage around Mark’s hives and how different it was to the environment around their own bees.”* After a quick inspection of a couple of hives and the bait box, and some light refreshment of home made elderflower cordial off we went to the next location in the lovely village of Pewsey. Here we were warmly welcomed by Nettie Brown and Rob Bottom who keep



their garden bees in WBC hives.

Over the last few years Rob & Nettie have kept bees in WBC's and Nationals. Whilst not a scientific study, they have noticed that the WBC hives tended to over winter better and get off to a good start at the beginning of the new season. Could this be down to the double insulation? The group watched on whilst Rob carefully demonstrated the component parts to the WBC and the inspection of the frames, looking for the queen or at least eggs! His inspection was ably assisted by Nettie who was hot on his heels with note taking and referencing back to what had previously been found last time the hive was opened. You can never under estimate the value of keeping accurate notes. Good news in this case, an extra super was required. After the addition of the super the hive was carefully reassembled making sure that all the parts were correctly aligned before closing the hive. Interesting discussions took place ranging from the types of smoker fuel that we all use, Rob and Nettie use grass pellet with lavender seed heads, to how to create your own DIY wax extractor for use in the garden. It was also interesting to chat about queen rearing and the different methods and equipment available. In a blink of an eye the visit was over and the group made it's way across the county to meet Emma Morley at her home in Gastard.

How blessed we were with the weather, but for a couple of spots of rain we mostly endured a pleasant sunny day and by the time we reached the north of the county the welcome drink at Emma's was very much appreciated. We brought along our own picnic lunch's and were treated to an enormous piece of coffee and walnut cake made by one of our group, Andrea, for which we were all very grateful.

After a short break we proceeded to look at Emma's bees kept in a mixture of WBC's, Nationals and Nuc's. When it came to looking in the hives, I for one looked on with dismay as Emma approached the hives gloveless and bootless. Bare ankles indeed!! There is no way I could have gotten away with that with my bees, but I had no reason to worry as the temperament of Emma's bees was just delightful. Emma proceeded to show the group a Snelgrove split which was in progress, and Emma explained that this was a bit like a Padgen split but carried out vertically.

Finally, Emma was able to show us around her extremely organised honey shed which is used to extract her honey and store her bee equipment. Very impressive indeed.

In summary of the day, it was an enjoyable few hours spent with like minded people who share a common interest but have different ways of approaching their craft. The take away comments from some of the group are that whilst *"it was an interesting and informative event which served to highlight how much more knowledge there is to learn and that they definitely need a bigger shed."*



Our thanks go out to Mark Fife, Nettie Brown, Rob Bottoms and Emma Morley for your hospitality and to Robert Carpenter Turner, for without you all we could not have done it.

Elaine Lewis (KBKA)