



Wiltshire BKA

# Honey Bee Times



## Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (1926 - 2022) Royal Bees

One of the quirkier stories surrounding the recent death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was about the Buckingham Palace bees being informed of her death. Beekeepers are of course familiar with the tradition of telling the bees, but 'ordinary' people were fascinated. In my role as co-editor of *BeeCraft* magazine I was besieged with requests from people wanting to know more. Information and even live television interviews were given to media outlets from around the world.

Many people were fascinated to discover that The Queen had bees in her garden and had a genuine interest in them. In fact, this is by no means a recent royal preoccupation. In 1872 Prince Albert had two hives installed at Windsor Castle. Imported from the US and supplied by a Mr Sholl, the hives were made from internally divided flour barrels. The brood nest was in the bottom half and several sections above served as supers. According to *#The Illustrated London News*, the bees were maintained by a Mr Walters who had "the entire care of Her Majesty's rare and curious collection of fowls, &c., at the Royal Aviary".

Prince Albert's aviary apiary sounds like the beginning of a delicious Victorian tongue twister – perhaps someone reading this would like to have a go at writing the rest of it.

To celebrate the centenary of *BeeCraft* magazine in 2019, I was granted access to the gardens of Buckingham Palace to see the hives and meet The Queen's Beekeeper, John Chapple. Six colonies of bees live in regal isolation on an island in a lake, having access to 40 acres of superb forage. The Queen was said to enjoy the honey for breakfast and to make a gift of it to visiting dignitaries.

The King, as we are now getting used to calling him, is known to have a keen interest in bees and beekeeping. He has commercially managed apiaries on his estate at Highgrove as well as some ornate garden hives that were a present on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. I have had the pleasure of visiting these hives too. Although they look very elaborate, they have a door in the back allowing access to standard National hives. There are hives in the garden of Clarence house as well – in this case, WBCs. To celebrate our centenary in 2019, the then Prince Charles penned a letter of congratulations to #BeeCraft# and its readers in which he revealed a surprising knowledge of the history of British beekeeping. More recently he was presented with a copy of the magazine when on a visit to the Isles of Scilly where *BeeCraft* has been taking part in experiments to discover whether drones will fly across water to mate.

The Queen Consort too has an interest in bees and is a patron of the charity Bees for Development. She has an apiary on her private estate at Lacock, the honey from which is sold in aid of the charity. I can see the Royal hives from one of my own apiaries and am slightly envious of the price that the Royal honey commands compared with my own.

Beekeeping monarchs seem set to be a thing of the future with Catherine, Princess of Wales recently reported to have taken up the hobby. She may even pass her smoker onto Prince George, a potential future king.

*Richard Rickitt (KBKA) . Co-editor of BeeCraft magazine*



### Photos

Top photo. The Queen searches for the queen on the Hill Home Farm Apiaries stand at Ludlow market, Shropshire (Agency photo)

Above left. John Chapple inspecting the bees at Buckingham Palace. (Richard Rickitt)

Above right. The two ornate hives at Highgrove. (Highgrove Enterprises)



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## ***The Wonder of Bees***

I recently took over the role of beekeeper as part of my job at Lakeside Care Farm, which is situated in the heart of the Lower Moor Farm reserve. Our apiary is in a fantastic location surrounded by over 125 hectares of unspoilt wildflower meadows, woodland, hedges and lakes - truly perfect for honeybees.

With over two years of beekeeping experience assisting at hive inspections and the honey harvest, I still found that my first solo visit to the apiary was filled with mixed feelings of excitement, apprehension and trepidation. However, I needn't have worried at all, because I instantly recalled the voice of my predecessor imparting his knowledge and enthusiasm whilst talking through the process of what I should look for and what I could see. It actually felt like second nature to me, and I soon found myself chatting away to thousands of bees as I checked their hives! I knew I had officially become a "real" beekeeper after about a month, when one day, after discovering eggs and larvae in the brood box, I proudly exclaimed, "Well done, that's amazing - you're all such good girls!"



Putting humour aside, I am definitely well and truly hooked. I find that beekeeping has so many calming and therapeutic qualities, and each time I visit the apiary it feels like time stands still, leaving me totally at one with nature. The incredible sound of a colony of honeybees communicates their mood, just by listening to the pitch of their collective buzzing. It tells me when they are comfortable with me intruding into their home, and also when they've had enough.

I often visit the apiary with colleagues or students, and I am proud to pass on my knowledge to them during their beekeeping experience. Recently, during one of those apiary visits, a fascinated eight year old student summed it up perfectly when he said, "Please don't hurt the bees, they're beautiful."

Every time I leave the apiary I feel liberated and full of respect for these awe-inspiring creatures that work so incredibly hard during their very short lives. We can learn so much from honeybees, and I am looking forward to continuing my beekeeping journey for a long time to come.

*Terri Fosker (KBKA)*

## Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – part 8

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day is fast approaching. We hope to see you there on Saturday 8th October at the Corn Exchange, Devizes. Here's a synopsis of the day:

### Activities

- Talks beekeeping, pollinators and the environment and how to get started in beekeeping
- The annual county honey show with open classes for the kids – see downloads below
- Candle rolling – perfect for Christmas presents
- An model of a solar farm with solar-powered toys and experiments for children
- Craft-making: helping children make flowers and insects for a pollinator display
- Exploring inside a virtual hive
- Honey beer for sale courtesy of Wadworth brewery
- Mead tasting
- Exhibitors offering bee related food, drinks, gifts and products as well as beekeeping kit.
- A silent auction with a number of items, including a Brunel MX4LED dissection microscope.



### Timings

- 08.00 Doors open for exhibitors
- 10.00 Show opens
- 10.00-11.00 TALK
  - **Managing the Workers:** (Improving Productivity, Managing Good Industrial Relations and Avoiding Disputes). As beekeepers, we have responsibilities to the livestock in our care, responsibilities that we discharge through active management of the bees. This talk looks at various aspects of the ways we can work successfully with our bees, recognising their needs while keeping within the constraints we might have set. What are the key issues we need to be aware of? What are the key skills we need to develop a successful partnership? This talk aims to make you think about what you want from your bees, and to set you on a path to achieving that.
  - **Bob Smith NDB:** Bob has been keeping bees since the late 70's, currently managing 9 colonies in 14x12 WBC's, in 3 quite different apiaries in North Kent. He was a Seasonal Bee Inspector for 6 years, is a holder of the NDB and has served on several Government panels concerning bees and pollination. He has been involved in providing training opportunities for "Improver" beekeepers in Kent through both theoretical and practical handling courses. Bob's scientific training as an analytical chemist impacts his whole approach to beekeeping; experimentation and record-keeping are fundamental to chemistry and beekeeping!
- 11.30-12.00 TALK
  - **So, You Want To Keep Bees?** An introduction to the amazing world of the honey bee and how to go about becoming a beekeeper. An entertaining talk that will answer all your questions if you are thinking about keeping bees.
  - **Richard Rickitt** lives in Corsham and keeps about thirty colonies of honey bees. He is a member of Kennet Beekeeper's Association.



- 12.15-13.15 TALK
  - **Botany for beekeepers:** A colourful exploration of flower families with emphasis on those of value to bees. If you have a dog, a cat, a hamster or a parrot you will expect to buy them the food they require and feed them every day. If you have pigs, sheep, cattle or maybe a horse then you expect to provide them with grazing or in some other way, provide for their nutrition. If you have 50,000 bees in a box, it is not automatically the case that their nutrition is down to them alone. Okay, bees can fly up to 3 miles to locate suitable food but in some parts of the country, there really is nothing suitable in the immediate vicinity. Accordingly, the location of your apiary is fundamentally important – does it allow year-round access to sources of nectar and pollen or are there going to be gaps? This is where botany for beekeepers comes in – not all plants are good for bees and those that are, have limited flowering periods so it is important for beekeepers to have at least some knowledge of their local forage, whether there is a continuous supply of pollen during the spring and whether there are good nectar plants that will give an excess of stored honey. This talk will explore some of the important families of flowers for bees, whether they be weeds, in herbaceous borders or exist as shrubs and trees. The overall aim is for a beekeeper to assess the suitability of a possible apiary site, before putting in a colony of honey bees.
  - **Bob Smith NDB** (biography above)
- 13.45-14.45 TALK
  - **The Future of the Bumblebee in the British Countryside.**
  - **Guy Parker:** Dr. Guy Parker is founder and co-director of Wychwood Biodiversity Limited. He started his career in wildlife conservation in Africa and has been working with land managers in the UK since 2009, promoting biodiversity on private and public land. His passion is restoring habitats on renewable energy sites to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. He is the UK's leading ecologist specialising in research into biodiversity management within solar farms. Guy oversees the implementation of the ecological management plans at all the Eden Renewables solar farms and their ongoing monitoring, including establishing beehives and pollinator-friendly wildflower meadows. He has also pioneered the use of solar beehives on some community solar farms.
- 15.00-16.00 Open viewing
- 15.15 Prize giving and certificates on the stage
- 16.00 Show closes



### Downloads

- [Maps](#) – location and parking Devizes Map
- Show Schedule for [WBKA members](#) + entry form
- Show Schedule – [Schools' and families' version](#) + entry form
- [Calligram](#) templates and instructions
- Colour a bee template 4-6 years old
- Colour a bee template 7-10 years old
- [Event poster](#)
- [Honey sales registration form](#)
- [Honey sales Ts&Cs](#)



## We need you!

We need everyone's help to advertise the event. We have banners going up all over Devizes, Melksham and Bradford on Avon. We have leaflets to put in shops, cafe's, the backs of your car and to give to friends. Please, please, please help us to draw as many people in from the surrounding towns and villages in order for the event to be a success.

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](mailto:wiltshoneyday@gmail.com)) so that we can start getting organised.

*Emma Morley (KBKA)*

## Honey Bee Health Day

On Saturday 3rd September some 70 beekeepers gathered in Market Lavington Community Hall for the Honey Bee Health Day. We were joined by a few beekeepers from Salisbury, Hampshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Gwent and were treated to five excellent sessions each covering a different aspect of Honey Bee Health.

First up was Nigel Semmence, the National Bee Unit's (NBU) Contingency Planning and Science Officer. Part of Nigel's role is to prevent exotic pests from reaching the UK and if they should arrive then dealing with them as quickly as possible. Appropriately on the cusp of Asian Hornet (AH) Awareness Week he took us through the life cycle of AH, how to identify them and their nests before describing how recent incursions have been successfully destroyed. He finished with a report on the spread of Small Hive Beetle in Italy and what is being done to prevent it reaching the UK.

John Geden, the Regional Bee Inspector for Central England, covered the role and organisation of the NBU and took us through the five key points of the current "Healthy Bees Plan". He then emphasised the importance for beekeepers to register their hives on BeeBase.





John's talk tied in perfectly with what for many was the highlight of the day, a workshop enabling the handling of frames contaminated with AFB or EFB including the opportunity to try the matchstick test for AFB. Strict hygiene arrangements applied and our SBI, Avril Earl, ensured we all wore our PPE correctly before handling the frames.



There were two other equally important workshops. Kevin Pope, SBI for Dorset, brought us up to date on Varroa emphasising the need to keep numbers under control. He covered methods of monitoring and the efficacy of the many licensed products available to help keep mite levels down. He acknowledged the desire of many beekeepers to breed mite resistant bees emphasising that if you treat less often you must monitor more often.

The third workshop was an excellent talk by Robert Poole, SBI for Northamptonshire, on Apiary Hygiene. Bee Inspectors see the best and worst of beekeeping practice and are all too aware that owing to poor apiary hygiene too often it is beekeepers that spread disease between their colonies.

### Key Messages

- **Asian Hornet.** Be alert. Download the app. Spread awareness. Deploy traps in the Spring to catch any emerging females.
- **SHB** is most likely to reach this country via an imported queen. Far better to raise your own queens.
- **Brood Diseases.** Know what healthy brood looks like and investigate anything that doesn't look right. If in doubt contact our SBI, especially if you think it might be foul brood.
- **Varroa.** Keep mite levels under control. If you prefer not to treat then monitor twice as often and treat if mite levels rise.
- **Apiary Hygiene.** Be diligent.
- **Register your colonies on BeeBase** and keep the information up to date.
- **Keep learning.** You never stop learning as a beekeeper. Seize every opportunity to become a better beekeeper.

*Richard Oliver (KBKA)*

## Dates for the Diary - County & Branch

### Wiltshire BKA

**8th October - WBKA Bee and Honey Day.** The Corn Exchange, Market Square, Devizes SN10 1HS. See details above

**31st January 2023 - WBKA AGM and Winter Lecture.** Details to follow.

### Branch Events

**Kennet BKA** - Meetings held on first Wednesday of the month at Bishops Canning Village Hall  
**Wednesday 5th October - 7.30 pm.** KBKA AGM.

**Wednesday 2nd November - 7.30 pm.** Talk by Kirsty Stainton "Bee viruses and *Wolbachia*."

**Friday 2nd December - 7 pm.** Skittles and Pub Night at Crown Inn, Devizes SN10 1EA

**Melksham BKA**

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

**Swindon BKA.** Meetings held at the Haydon Wick Club.

**Thursday 27th October** - AGM and Skittles.

**Thursday 24th November** - Speaker to be confirmed.

**West Wilts BKA**

**Monday 7th November at Bratton Jubilee Hall.** AGM

**National Events**

**27th-29th October. National Honey Show**, Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey.

See: <https://www.honeyshow.co.uk>. In addition to the Honey Show there is a full programme of lectures and workshops by some of the best beekeepers nationally and internationally.

**21-23 April 2023. BBKA Spring Convention.** Harper Adams University, Shropshire.

Three days of excellent talks and workshops by some of the best beekeepers nationally and internationally.

***Education and Training*****Presentation of Certificates**

Certificates for all those who have passed exams or assessments during 2022 will be presented around 15.15 on the afternoon of the Bee and Honey Day on 8th October.

**November Exams**

Seven members have applied to sit module exams in November. Five will be sitting Module 1: Honey Bee Management and one each for Module 2: Honey Bee Products & Forage and Module 5: Honey Bee Biology. We wish them luck.

**March 2023**

I plan to facilitate a course for Module 5: Honey Bee Biology starting in the last week of November. All members welcome even if you have no desire to sit the exam. Most sessions, perhaps all, will be via Zoom. If you are interested please let me know ([raoliver.64@gmail.com](mailto:raoliver.64@gmail.com))

**Improvers Course**

There is a big gap between the Basic and the General Husbandry assessments. There are also very few opportunities either within the county or nationally for beekeepers to improve their knowledge and practical skills.

The plan is to run a mainly practical course of four or five sessions to enable members from across the county to become better beekeepers. The course will also help prepare for the Bee Health and the General Husbandry Certificates. Priority will be given to those who have the Basic Certificate.

Dates to be confirmed but provisionally between late March and the end of May 2023. If you are interested please let me know: [raoliver.64@gmail.com](mailto:raoliver.64@gmail.com).



## ***Beekeeping Tips for October***

### **Varroa Treatment.**

Most approved treatments for Varroa should now be removed. Some are far less effective as the temperature falls. Apiguard works best at temperatures above 25°C. With temperatures now nearer 15°C and even lower at night, the bees are not so mobile and the product is not distributed around the hive so efficiently.

On the other hand Apivar is not temperature dependent but the strips will benefit from being scraped to remove any build up of propolis half way through their time in the hive.

### **Pests.**

**Wasps.** The number of wasps around is thankfully declining fast and those that are still on the wing seem to be acquiring all the nectar they need for the ivy.

**Mice.** Mice have oval shaped heads that enables them to squeeze through very small entrances. Your bees may still be taking in lots of pollen and nectar especially if there is abundant ivy around. Wait until foraging slows and place a mouse guard over the entrance. Alternatively ensure that the entrance is less than 8mm high or a circular entrance less than 10mm in diameter.

**Woodpeckers.** We often have green woodpeckers in the garden and fortunately they always seem to be able to find adequate food without attacking my hives. I am, however, well aware that this could change so keep a careful eye out for woodpecker activity. 20mm wire mesh hung over the hive seems to be the answer should they come under attack.

### **The weather**

**Wind.** In ten years of beekeeping I had not found it necessary to strap down my hives. They were all in reasonably well sheltered sites and protected from the prevailing wind. That changed one night earlier this year when the hives at my out apiary were both blown over. Lesson Learned.

**Cold and Damp.** Bees can tolerate the cold but are vulnerable to damp conditions so make sure you hives are water tight. It does no harm to help the bees keep warm. For years I have placed carpet squares above the crown board but have now replaced them with squares of insulating board 25mm thick cut so that they fit tight inside the roofs.

*Richard Oliver (KBKA)*

## ***Wilts BKA Trustees' Meeting - 20 September 2022***

The trustees and elected officers met at Broughton Gifford Village Hall on 22nd September.

### **Reports from Officers**

**Chair.** Now that the association has charitable status it offers opportunities to seek support from local business keen to demonstrate their environmental credentials. Trustees were asked to consider any organisations that might be approached.

**Treasurer.** The bank balance is healthy with strong reserves. The Treasurer proposed a structure for the reserves designed to facilitate and encourage bottom-up applications from across the membership.

**Membership.** The total membership is 491 of which 371 are registered members. There is an unexpectedly high proportion of local members, i.e. members who support the association but do not keep bees. The Education and Examination Officer asked which categories were eligible to sit exams and assessments. (**After Note.** The BBKA has confirmed that only registered members are eligible.)

**Education & Examination Officer.** All members who took an assessment during the summer passed. It was hoped that this would encourage more members to take their Basic in future. The plans for future courses were outlined (see above).

**Honey Bee Times.** Reports and photos from members always welcome.

**BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM).** David Newell was voted in as our delegate for the meeting on 14 Jan 23. David will also continue as our delegate to the South West Beekeeping Forum.

**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day.** Arrangements progressing well. More volunteers are needed.

**Bath & West Show 2023.** It was agreed that WBKA would continue its sponsorship of the Bath & West show in line with previous years. It was also agreed that we would support the **Field to Food Learning Day** at the showground on **19th April 2023**.

**Webmaster.** The position is still vacant. Volunteer?

**AGM on 31st January 2023.** This will be held in the Corn Exchange in Devizes and would be followed by the winter lecture. Details to follow.

## ***Dr. Elton James Dyce (1900- 1976)<sup>1</sup>***

Dr Dyce pioneered work on the study of granulation and fermentation in honey which led to him developing a method for producing creamed honey on a commercial scale. A process that was patented in 1931 and is used throughout the world in honey producing countries



Dr Dyce was a native of Ontario, Canada who served as a demonstrator, lecturer and professor of apiculture at Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, now Guelph University, from 1924 to 1940. Between 1940 and 1942 he was the first manager of the Finger Lakes Honey Producers Cooperative in Groton, New York where he developed a wide market for New York State honey. He obtained his PhD degree at Cornell University.

Dyce understood that when the moisture content of honey is above 19% yeast cells grow and produce carbon dioxide and alcohol sometimes to such an extent that the honey is unmarketable.

Dyce realised that if he was to control the granulation of honey it must first be pasteurised. He discovered that the optimum temperature for honey granulation is 57°F/14°C.

A simple method of applying the Dyce method at home is described by Ken Basterfield NDB in an article on Soft Set Honey<sup>2</sup>.

- Reliquify a 30lb bucketful of honey in a warming cabinet at 50°C. This may take several hours. Check regularly as the honey does not want to heat longer than necessary.
- Allow the bucket to cool to about 30°C.
- Warm three 1lb jars of fine set honey as the seed in a microwave for about 15 seconds per jar. Leave the metal lids on and just enough time to soften it but not liquefy it.
- With a spatula empty the jars into the bucket and stir to mix thoroughly. When stirring be careful not to break the surface and pull air into the mixture.
- Allow the honey to reset, which could take up to three weeks, resulting in a hard set but fine grained honey. This completes the seeding process.
- Now for the soft set process.
- Warm the bucket of fine set honey for about 8 hours at 40°C until it is soft but not runny. You can test by squeezing the sides.
- Cut with a pallet knife to ease mashing.
- Mash with the potato masher to break up the lumps then
- Bottle immediately

References:

1. <https://sassafra-beefarm.wordpress.com/2020/07/15/happy-birthday-dr-elton-james-dyce/>
2. BBKA News Special Issue Series "Honey" pages 63-66

**Note:** Knowledge of Dr Dyce's contribution to beekeeping is included in the syllabus for Module 2: Honey Bee Products and Forage.



