



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

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National Honey Show 2022

The November edition of Honey Bee Times reported some success from members of Wiltshire Beekeepers' Association at the National Honey Show. In this edition, we provide some reports on this annual event.

There is a hierarchy of shows which provide a chance to exhibit our wares and learn how to improve our produce, starting from Branch Shows, to County Shows, the to Regional Shows (ours is the Royal Bath and West) and then the National Honey Show. The National Honey Show is also a regional show for the South East of England, but the main classes attract exhibitors from all over the UK and Ireland and even overseas. It is the pinnacle of the honey shows in the UK.



In 2022 there were 2088 exhibits across 234 classes at the show covering all aspects of honey and hive produce, and images of a selection of the exhibits can be seen on the National Honey Show Website (www.honeyshow.co.uk).

The event isn't just about showing, though – there are lectures, workshops and a trade show, running in parallel...so you need to plan your visit before you attend. There are lectures by some of the influential beekeepers in the UK and from around the World, plus beginners lectures and the chance to hear some of the latest scientific research in the famous series of BeeCraft lectures. The workshops cover a range of subjects, including queen rearing, skep making, making cosmetics, microscopy, disease identification, hive product processing and the role of the National Bee Unit.

The facilities are superb. There is a large hall, which is full of trade stands and the chance to pick up some bargains.

In 2022, the quality of the lectures was up to its usual excellent standard and the quality of exhibits was fantastic – the National Honey Show incorporates a range of classes that aren't available at the smaller shows, such as wax models, inventive equipment and many different wax classes, including commercial classes. The workshops are also led by leaders in their area and well paced.

Next year's show will from 26th to 28th October and, again, will be at Sandown Park; it is also the centenary of the show, so that will be the theme. Even if you don't feel confident to enter anything do try and visit for at least one of the days.

Chris and Sue Rawlings (WWBKA) entered several classes in the show and Chris, who is working towards his Show Judge Certificate, was also present during the judging. This is their account:

Sue and I arrived at Sandown Race Course at 2 pm on Wednesday ready to book our entries in for collection by a steward. A dozen or more tables were set up ready to lay out and check in exhibits and there was a waiting queue of about half an hour. A chance to eye-up the opposition and have a quick gander at their entries, from a distance of course. Wow, wax as clean and pure as I had never seen before, jars and bottles being polished to a shine, gloves and cloths to handle the entries. Our entries were taken away except for Sue's flowers which she had to stage herself.

Thursday the Judges and stewards were given their orders and I was paired with Tony Jefferson from Yorkshire (known for his Heather honey and wax exhibits.) He revealed all manner of things for a Judge to look out for from the 'win-at-all-costs competitors.'

The judging seemed frantic with so many moving around the showing area going from class to class, never two classes next to one another. Several run honey classes were thinned down by half to a quarter; incipient granulation or under filled jars were put aside. There were 20 exhibits in the 227g to 255g cake of wax class (the first to be disqualified was 2kg in weight, but a beautiful colour. Didn't read the schedule.) Judging over by 2pm and you could see which entries had won but not by whom.

Friday; Results were posted for each class and what a surprise! Smiley faces, tears, hugs, loud laughing, congratulations all round. Sue had won her class with her Beeswax flowers (new display for the show) and it wasn't long before John Goodwin, the Judge, Author of '*Honey Show Classes' A guide for competitors*', organisers and judges, found Sue and said it was the best class of flowers he had ever judged, and chatted for quite a while. This was Sue's icing on the cake.

I had won first prize in the Dry Mead, a class open to the World, and HC (Highly Commended) in the Melomel class, so I was over the moon. (Bridget Knutson won the Melomel class.) Alan Hepper won VHC (Very Highly Commended) in the sweet mead class; well done Alan.

The rest of the day we all had lots of questions to answer from other exhibitors and the public.

Saturday we discovered we had each won a trophy and were summoned to the awards ceremony and duly given our awards and photos were taken. The cups had already been engraved. *(Chris's photo of their entries and trophies.)*



We arrived home on Sunday exhausted, but elated. Will we be returning next year? You bet we will.

Our only regret is this was only our first time exhibiting at the National Honey Show, and I would encourage beekeepers to visit next year and exhibit in the show because the standard at our County Show was equal to any on the show bench.

Gloria Pilz (WWBKA) attended two of the workshops. Chris Parks' very popular skep making day and an equally popular cosmetic workshop.

My first time at the Honey Show – what marvellous fun! Loads of interesting exhibits, lectures, workshops and shopping. Did you know that bee skep making is on the Heritage Craft's endangered list? A full day's workshop is a good way to learn how to make one, my efforts so far is looking promising (though not entirely traditional in shape) and artisanal.

I also went to the cosmetic workshop and came away with some amazing soap, lip balm, a moisturiser and the recipes to make them at home. The workshops are wildly popular, often with a waiting list – do sign up early!

After Note: I have heard in the past that it is difficult for a beginner to finish a skep in just one day. I asked Gloria if she thought anyone had signed up to both sessions. She replied:

You are absolutely right, it takes ages. I wasn't aware of any one signing up for 2 days, but there were 2 people who had been on the course before and came back a second time. One brought a wonky skep he finished over lockdown and wanted to improve. The other lady found it very strenuous and left after lunchtime despite it being her second go. Most people made something not much bigger than a teapot coaster... Chris does provide the materials for the students to take away and finish it.

Photo from National Honey Show

Facebook page of Gloria making her skep



My day at the National Honey Show (Richard Oliver KBKA)

The first lecture on the first day of the NHS was scheduled to start at 09.30. Heavy rain was forecast so I left home in good time. Just as well because there were three separate shunts in the outside lane of the M3 between Camberley and the M25. I arrived just in time to grab a coffee and head up to the Gold Suite for Dr Jeff Pettis's talk on "*Bees that Survive Varroa*" or, as he preferred to describe it "*Varroa: Biology, Resistance and Hope*".

Dr Pettis is an American research biologist based in Maryland. His recent work as a consultant has been on varroa resistant bees. He talked about the way *Apis cerana* had developed resistance over time and then discussed the findings of studies on the Isle de Groix off the coast of Brittany where they have pure *Amm* that they neither treat nor feed. He also covered various scenarios that do not require treatment. Jeff's talk will be available on YouTube from 2nd December 2022 at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/nationalhoneyshow/videos>.

The next hour or so was spent walking round the trade stands and chatting to beekeeping friends and acquaintances followed by a sandwich lunch. The Food Hall is a great place for meeting friends and catching up on their bee news.

Out to the car to collect my dissecting microscope and tools and make my way to an adjacent stand for the workshop: **Measuring recapping behaviour in your bees** led by Professor Steve Martin from Salford University. It was described in the show schedule as follows:

Are your bees showing Varroa resistance? Measuring recapping behaviour in your bees. This workshop is designed to help you find out if your bees are showing evidence of Varroa resistance. This learned behaviour is based on the ability of bees to discern if there are mites in a cell by uncapping and recapping cells. To find out if a cell has been uncapped requires looking at the underside. This workshop will teach you how to do this and assess your colony for varroa resistance.

You will be required to bring 200-300 sealed cells preferably at purple eyed stage or older for examination. This can be done by taking a brood sample in late August and freezing it in preparation for the workshop. It will be defrosted during the start of the workshop so to transport it just put it in a cold insulated box with freezer packs. Please bring a dissecting microscope and tools, all other equipment will be provided. The workshop is aimed at experienced beekeepers.

Ten of us had enrolled for the workshop with many travelling from afar so I found myself sharing my microscope with a beekeeper from Finland who breeds queens on an island off Helsinki.

Professor Martin explained the uncapping procedure and the theory behind recapping before we all started looking for signs. Sadly we found no evidence but one sample that had not been in the freezer did reveal live adult and newly born Varroa mites.

The bees' uncapping and recapping process is explained in detail in the BBKA News *Special Issue Series* Natural Varroa-Resistant Honey Bees: Biology, Testing and Propagation, which was written by Professor Martin.

It was a most interesting afternoon but more practice is needed to perfect the technique and hopefully find some evidence of recapping behaviour in my bees.

On my way back to the car I passed through the show area to marvel at the displays. This was before the cards showing the prize winners had been displayed but Sue Rawlings magnificent display of wax flowers really stole the show. (Photos below by Paul Bollen (KBKA) who was visiting with his family.)



Beekeeping Tips for December

Varroa

I make no apologies for writing about Varroa regularly in this section. I do so because it is the cause directly and more often indirectly, of so many colony losses when mite numbers are not kept under control.

The desire to discover bees that are resistant to Varroa is laudable but if you decide not to treat then it really is necessary to monitor mite levels more often. If, when monitoring, there is a significant mite drop then best to set aside your qualms and treat.

My colonies were treated with Apivar for eight weeks from late August to late October resulting in a moderate drop. The Varroa boards went back in last week so that I could:

- See if the colonies still have brood.
- Check the debris to see where the bees are clustering and the extent of the cluster
- Check the mite drop.

Apivar seems to have worked well as the mite drop is minimal. It is borderline as to whether or not I need to treat. Being of a 'belt and braces' disposition, I'm inclined to treat but when.

Hopefully we are in for a spell of more winter like weather.

The Varroa boards will be wiped clean and reinserted then checked regularly. The best outcome would be to treat when the colonies are broodless but this may not happen so it will be a case of judging when there is minimum brood. I'll be trickle treating with oxalic.



Stores

When checking the Varroa boards all the colonies were hefted to check for stores. I could barely raise them off their stands so all is well for the time being.

Annual Review

Now is a good time to go through your records and consider what went well this year and what you might try next season to improve things. Do you want to increase your stock? Raise some queens? Produce more honey, weather permitting? Make a plan for 2023.

Education, Training and Exams

Module 5: Honey Bee Biology.

The study group held its first full session on Zoom on 21st November with over 20 members from across the county and beyond in attendance. We covered the alimentary, excretory and respiratory systems of the adult honey bee.

These are not topics that we come across in the course of our normal beekeeping and some of the material is quite technical. With this in mind there will be recap sessions on alternate weeks to enable those interested to seek clarification on any aspects of the syllabus that were not clear first time round.

The second full session on 5th December will cover the circulatory system of the adult honey bee; the exocrine glands of the adult bee and the larva including the pheromones secreted and the nervous system - eyes, ocelli, sensilla etc.

Written Exams

The BBKA's Exam Board had announced plans to phase out hand written exams by 2025. A number of area associations objected and were supported by the BBKA's Executive Committee. As a result the Exam Board has decided that hand written exams will continue for the foreseeable future. How this will be achieved has yet to be confirmed.

Wiltshire BKA Honey Show 2022 - Full Results

	First		Second		Third	
Novice - 1lb Run Honey	Stephen Double	KBKA	Daniel Young	WWBKA	Cressida Hemmings	WWBKA
Young Members Light Run Honey	Katie Bollen	KBKA				
	Francesca Kimpton	KBKA	Sian Sims	WWBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA
Medium Run Honey	Nina Wilton	WWBKA	Andrew Tyrer	MBKA	Lucie Castleman	MBKA
Dark Run Honey	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Stephen Auty	MBKA
Soft Set Honey	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA	Alan Ridout	WWBKA	Rob Bottoms	KBKA
Two Matching Jars	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Martin McDermott	WWBKA
Chunk Honey	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA		
Cut Comb	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA		
One Section Comb Honey	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Stephen Auty	MBKA
Shallow Frame of Comb	Rob Bottoms	KBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA
Taste & Aroma	Sian Sims	WWBKA	Andrew Tyrer	MBKA	Lucie Castleman	MBKA
Three Beeswax Blocks	Alan Hepper	WWBKA	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Martin McDermott	WWBKA
Cake of Beeswax	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Alan Hepper	WWBKA	David Newell	WWBKA
Pair of Beeswax Candles	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Rob Bottoms	KBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA
Display Beeswax Flowers	Sue Rawlings	WWBKA	Alan Hepper	WWBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA
Beeswax x Furniture Polish	Elaine Mairis	WWBKA	Vicki Lowes	KBKA	Graham Davison	MBKA
Beeswax Furniture Cream	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA	Francesca Kimpton	KBKA
Two Beeswax Wraps	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Cathy Lawrence	WWBKA	Elaine Mairis	WWBKA
Bottle Sweet Mead	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Alan Hepper	WWBKA	Donald Watt	WWBKA
Bottle Dry Mead	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Alan Hepper	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA
Bottle Fruit Melomel	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Michael Carter	SBKA	Alan Hepper	WWBKA
Bottle Spiced Methalghin	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA	Rebecca Bollen	KBKA	Paul Bollen	KBKA
Counter Display	Francesca Kimpton	KBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA
Display of 6 Products	Francesca Kimpton	KBKA	Elaine Mairis	WWBKA	Elaine Irvine	WWBKA
12 Honey Biscuits	Nigel Cross	KBKA	Trudi Granger	KBKA	Michael Carter	SBKA
12 Honey Sweets	Colin Thomlinson	KBKA	Donald Watt	WWBKA	Nigel Cross	KBKA
Honey Cake	Stephen Double	KBKA	Alison Daniels	MBKA	Cressida Hemmings	WWBKA
Photo Honeybee(s)	Lucie Castleman	MBKA	Andrew Tyrer	MBKA	Elaine Mairis	WWBKA
Photo Hive/Apiary	Chris Rawlings	WWBKA	Sophie Butcher	KBKA	Terri Fosker	KBKA