



Wiltshire BKA

# Honey Bee Times

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### **Bath & West Shows Limited**

*(Registered in England & Wales with Number 8680261)*

Royal Bath and West Show  
Shepton Mallet

Thursday 1 to Saturday 3 June 2023

## **BEES & HONEY SCHEDULE**

### **JUDGES:**

Mrs Joyce Nisbet  
Mrs Deborah Smith  
Mr Mike Duffin

### **PRIZES:**

Classes BH1, BH4, BH5 & BH6: 1<sup>st</sup> £20; 2<sup>nd</sup> £15; 3<sup>rd</sup> £5. Prize Cards 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> place

Classes BH2 & BH3, BH7 - BH50: 1<sup>st</sup> £8; 2<sup>nd</sup> £5; 3<sup>rd</sup> £3 Prize Cards 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> place

### **Entries Close:**

**1 May @ 12 noon**

**([www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition](http://www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition))**

**NO ENTRIES, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE**

THE SHOWGROUND, SHEPTON MALLET, SOMERSET BA4 6QN  
Telephone: 01749 822200

## **Calling all Wiltshire Beekeepers - Your County Needs You** 🙌

Yes it's that time of year already, when I look to you to support your County Association in reclaiming the Bath & West trophy for the most points won at the the 2023 Show. Entries close on the 1<sup>st</sup> May and the schedule can be downloaded from:  
([www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition](http://www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition))

It's going to be a great season with honey overflowing and plenty for your entries. So have a look at the schedule and have a go. Remember a sixth place could earn enough points to make the difference between winning and losing the County Shield. If you enter you can sell your products in the Marquee.(10% to B&W)

I am collecting names for volunteers to steward in the ½ day slots for the Wiltshire Stand. Same as usual ½ day work for one day ticket. Qualification – to have completed a beginners course. By email - Send me your name/names and address, email address and telephone number with your preferred day, and 9 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. or 1p.m. to 5.30 p.m. time sessions on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> of June  
Set up is from Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May if you would like to help.

I am also looking for someone to supply 2/3 small hives for demonstrations in the Bee Garden and a demonstrator and volunteer steward to run the Bee Garden. Please help if you can, you will not be disappointed, it is a great event and the largest marquee at an agricultural show in the country dedicated to bees and pollinators.

Email [chris-rawlings@virginmedia.com](mailto:chris-rawlings@virginmedia.com)

*Chris Rawlings (West Wilts BKA) organises the Bee Tent at The Royal Bath & West Show*

## **Asian Hornet Alert**

There have been sightings of Asian Hornet in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Folkestone and, more worryingly, an as yet unconfirmed sighting on the Poole - Cherbourg ferry.

Any live Asian Hornet that is spotted now will be an over-wintered queen looking for a sheltered spot to set up her initial nest. They are best trapped and destroyed before they become established.

If you spot an Asian Hornet try at least to take a photo. If you can trap it so much the better. Alert your branch AHAT representative and also contact:  
[alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).



You can find out more about Asian Hornets from the National bee Unit at: <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/asian-hornet/>.

You can buy Asian Hornet traps from Thornes; <https://www.thorne.co.uk/search?s=asian+hornet+traps>. Normal wasp traps also work. Traps should be checked daily so that by-catch can be released.

Your branch Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT) coordinator is listed on your branch website.

## ***Eco-Future Fest a success***

On 15 April members from all four branches of the WBKA manned a stand at the Eco Future Fest in Chippenham. The event and our stand were a great success.

Elaine Lewis and Sherrill Percy (Kennet), Alison Daniels (Melksham), Kathy Hobson and Nicola Perrett (Swindon) and Amanda Leworthy, plus Nina Wilton who helped with the organisation (Swindon) provided wonderful, smiling, unflagging and enthusiastic support.

We sold £273.50 of Wiltshire honey and we gave away an astonishing 145



'Everywhere!' When I asked them to place just one coloured dot on a place, what came out was a pattern along verges, the river, parks and around schools. I also managed to talk to several visiting Chippenham councillors who were keen to support the planting of more wildflowers in the town.

*Sophie Butcher, Chair.*



candles, most with a short tutorial to the child in question. They learned about bees, pollinators, honey and wax. They hefted a full frame of honey, inspected a drawn frame and then set about rolling their candles, before holding these up for their parents to admire - even, and especially, the 'grudging' young people who looked anxious at first that such an activity might be a 'bit young' for them, until they too held up their candle for approval, their eyes shining with delight.

The crowds arrived in waves, mercifully, as this gave us all a breather for a couple of minutes every quarter of an hour before then next wave of visitors arrived. I conservatively estimated 500 people attended the event.

As the name of the festival might suggest, visitors were 100% engaged in doing their bit for the environment, and pollinators especially. I took a poll of where residents wanted more wild flowers planted. Most, especially the children, said:

## Beekeeping Tips

### Poly or Timber Hives?

A new member recently asked this question on the Kennet WhatsApp chat and received some sound advice to help him make his decision. Looking back through BeeCraft I found an article by Gruffydd Rees, a commercial beekeeper in South Wales. He answered 11 key questions as follows:

What material will give you more honey?	Poly
What is more environmentally friendly?	Wood
Which has the lowest carbon footprint?	Wood
Which is warmest in winter and coolest in summer?	Poly
Which is cheapest?	Depends on the brand
If you don't like hive assembly?	Poly
Which lasts longest?	Wood
Which is easiest to repair?	Wood
What looks best in the countryside or garden?	Wood
Which is quicker and easier to sterilise?	Wood (arguably)
Which is easiest to lift and carry?	Poly

On this basis Wood wins 6-4

This would seem to be the agreed position for hives but there is a better case for poly nucs.

[The full article is on page 14 of BeeCraft June 2022.]

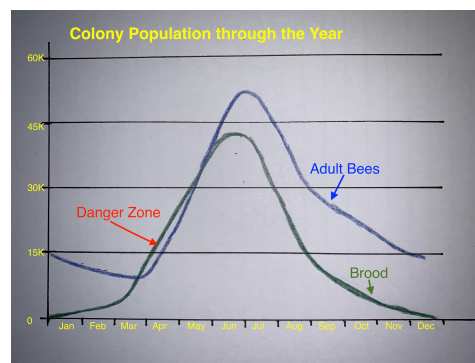
There is also a series of useful articles on the Dave Cushman website at: <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/polyhives.html>

### First Spring Inspection

The aim of the first inspection is to check that the colony is queenright and that there are sufficient stores to sustain the bees in changeable weather.

It is a precarious time for bees. The queen may have been laying well for several weeks but the winter bees that have sustained the colony since the autumn will now be dying off. As the graph shows there is likely to be more brood in the hive than bees to care for them. Increasingly newly emerged bees have to fulfil all the tasks in the colony. With this increase in brood there is a huge demand for food. The bees need to be out and about foraging. This is where weather becomes critical.

February was dry but cold. March was the wettest since 1981. This month we have had a few sunny days but the moderate to fresh north easterly breezes have kept the temperature down. The bees have been out for a few hours a day. Heavy pollen loads have been collected giving a good indication that the colonies are queenright and the queen is laying. At the same time there have been lots of bees taking in water from the birdbath and other sources near the apiary. Water is required to enable the bees to metabolise stored honey, which is an indication that they are consuming the remaining stores.





For the first inspection choose a day when it is sunny, calm and about 15°C. You will need a well lit smoker and your hive tool(s). This is not a full inspection. Remember the aim, just two of Ted Hooper's five requirements need to be checked. Is the colony queenright and are there enough stores?

Go through the hive frame by frame. Take a note of the stores on each. The colony will need the equivalent of two frames of stores to see it through to the next inspection. If the weather remains changeable then leave four frames of stores. If this is not available then you need to act (see later).

As you get to the middle of the hive start checking that the colony is queenright. Ideally you will spot the queen and see brood in all stages (eggs, larvae and sealed brood) early on. If so, great: close up and move to the next colony. If you are not so lucky you may encounter one of the following.



- Queen present but no brood. This is not uncommon. She may just be a slow starter especially in this changeable weather. Note for next time.
- Queen present with some brood but not in all stages. Again not uncommon in changeable weather. She may be laying for a few days and then stop. Note for next time.
- Eggs seen but where's the queen? Very common. Be assured she's there somewhere. Her markings may have rubbed off over the winter months or she may have been superseded. Check carefully over the coming weeks. If she is a late superseded queen she may not have been well mated.
- No brood and no queen. You have a problem. The number of bees in the colony will be dropping daily so it's difficult to rectify.
- Drone laying queen. Lots of drone brood in a regular pattern. You will need to re-queen.
- Dead colony with dead bees on the frames and the floor. Close up the hive and the entrance. Remove the hive from the apiary as soon as you can.



Low level of stores. Best to place some fondant over the hole in the crown board using an eke for extra space. You could feed a 1:1 syrup using a contact feeder but in this changeable weather best stick to fondant to avoid over stimulating the bees.

Queenless or drone laying colony. These situations are difficult to resolve. New queens are unlikely to be available at this time of year so thoughts turn to uniting. OK you want to save the bees if you can but is this a good idea in the circumstances. The bees may not be healthy and what bees remain will largely be the remnants of the winter bees that will have nothing to offer if combined with another colony. When rearing livestock there are inevitably times when the best option is to thank the bees for their efforts, apologise then cull.

Hopefully all your colonies will be queenright with brood in all stages and adequate stores. The prospects for a successful season look good.

## ***Dates for the diary***

### **Wiltshire BKA**

**7th October - Bee & Honey Day.** The Corn Exchange, Devizes. 10am to 4 pm

### **Branch Events**

#### **Kennet BKA.**

Meetings held on the first Wednesday of the month in Bishops Cannings Village Hall, 19.00 for 19.30 unless otherwise shown.

**Wednesday 3rd May - Raise Your Own Queens** by Richard Oliver. This talk will cover how to select your best queen. When best to act. A few simple methods and the equipment needed.

**Open Apiary Sessions.** The Bishops Cannings apiary will be open on Saturday 29th April from 2pm, weather permitting.

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

MBKA meetings are held in Broughton Gifford Village Hall, The Street, Broughton Gifford, Melksham, SN12 8PN from 7:00pm - 9:30pm on usually the last Monday of the month.

**24 April-** Inspecting your bees with Avril Earl our local bee Inspector

**5 June-**Extracting honey including Selling

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

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month in the Skittle Alley at the Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Swindon SN25 1JD starting at 7.30pm.

#### **West Wilts BKA**

No meetings scheduled in the most recent branch newsletter.

### **National Events**

**21 - 23 April 2023. BBKA Spring Convention.** Venue - Harper Adams University, Shropshire. Three days of excellent talks and workshops by some of the best beekeepers nationally and internationally. Also a trade event.

**20 April - 20 May. Celebrate World Earth Day and World Bee Day** (April 20 – May 20) with Bees Abroad! Celebrate the role bees play, caring for and protecting our environment and support transformational projects across Africa.

Follow the story, from elephants and bees in a Ugandan village, to crop pollination for Bee Farmers on Crutches in Sierra Leone, to protected forested areas across Africa where bees are saving trees. Celebrate the value of honey, generating income and improving livelihoods for beekeepers. Get involved and help raise funds to support beekeeping projects that will improve livelihoods for economically and environmentally disadvantaged communities across Africa. [www.beesabroad.org.uk/greenstory](http://www.beesabroad.org.uk/greenstory)

**1 - 3 June 2023 - Royal Bath & West Show** at the Showgrounds, Shepton Mallet.

**26 - 28 October 2023 - National Honey Show.** Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Road, Esher.

## ***Education, Training and Exams***

### **Basic Assessment**

All BBKA members who have been keeping at least one colony of bees for one full season should be capable of passing the Basic Assessment. It is a practical and oral assessment that lasts no more than an hour. A pass demonstrates that you are a competent beekeeper. The pass rate nationally is 96%; in Wiltshire it is 99%.

The syllabus and other details are available here: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/basic-assessment>.

A quick glance at the syllabus will confirm that it is based on the content of the Beginners course so there should be nothing that is new. It may be some time since you were a beginner. Recognising this most of the branches in Wiltshire BKA run specific courses to bring their members up to speed. (If your branch is not running a course, contact one of the others to see if they can fit you in.) For many a course may not be suitable and just a few visits to their branch apiary should suffice. Others will have acquired the knowledge and skills over time and would just sail through.

There is a considerable number of beekeepers across the county who have the skills and experience to obtain the Basic Assessment Certificate. Assessors want you to pass, seeing it as much as a training opportunity as an assessment. Why not give it a go? Either contact your branch education officer or contact me direct ([raoliver.64@gmail.com](mailto:raoliver.64@gmail.com)) to arrange a date. The last day for applications is 31st July and assessments are held before the end of August.

### **Becoming a Better Beekeeper**

You become better beekeeper by doing. This can be a slow and painful process if you do it alone. It is much more rewarding and fun if you do it with others.

Your local branch is in effect a community of beekeepers. By attending meetings and apiary sessions you will develop a network of fellow beekeepers with shared interests and a range of beekeeping skills and experience. In the beekeeping season the branch becomes a 'Community of Practice'.

Branch training provides theoretical and practical instruction, ongoing support, models of practice and contributes to county and national sources. At the county level training may be provided to help members further improve their skills and knowledge. At the national level attending conventions, webinars, making use of distance learning, tapping into training and education platforms provided by the BBKA, NBU (BeeBase), BIBBA and some respected internet sites you can acquire knowledge that you can use or discuss with others.

The key point is that if you make use of what your branch offers, the regular interaction will help you become a better beekeeper and go on improving. There is always more to learn.