



**West Sussex Beekeepers  
Association**  
**Wisborough Green Division**



## **Newsletter February 2008**

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### **MEMBERSHIP FOR 2008**

**Final Reminder.** Your forms and cheque should be sent to Andrew Riley - his address is at the bottom of the membership form. Any questions on the forms contact Judy Knight (contact above).

### **Winter Meeting – Tools of the Honeybee**

**Wednesday February 21<sup>st</sup> 7.30pm The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood**

### **Winter Meetings**

**7.30pm The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood (unless otherwise stated)**

<b>21st February</b>	Tools of the Honeybee - John Hendrie
<b>1st March</b>	West Sussex Beekeepers Convention – Lodge Hill, Pulborough - see note below
<b>20th March</b>	AGM to be followed by 'Mead-Making' by Roger Patterson and Derek Ready

### **Beginners' and Improvers' Day.**

**Everything you've ever wanted to know about bees, beekeeping  
and honey but were afraid to ask.**

Following the huge success last year, our division is running the course again.  
If you'd like to come or you know anyone that would, it's not too late but let Roger Patterson or  
Andrew Riley know

Saturday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pulborough Village Hall 9.30am start

## **Apiary Meetings** (Dounhurst Farm, Skiff Lane, Wisborough Green)

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2.00pm

The second apiary meeting this year will be on Sun 9th March 2.00 at Dounhurst. This will be preceded with Sunday lunch for those who wish. **Roger must know in advance for booking lunches**, preferably by Wed 5th. We will do the normal winter checks on the bees i.e. food, dryness, etc. I do not expect the meeting to take any more than 2 hours. There will be no tea. Some of our colonies are strong and others weak. Come along and see how they have progressed since the last meeting in January.

## **Bee Auction**

Now is the time to start collecting your unwanted kit for the auction, and when sowing seeds, transplanting, splitting, etc to remember the plant stall. The date this year is 10<sup>th</sup> May – further details in the next newsletter

## **Patterson in Print** – Roger Patterson

In the last month I have lost another couple of colonies myself, both were full honey producing colonies last year, and both with 2007 queens. This just shouldn't happen, but it has. If you scan the bee press you will see this is a problem worldwide. Those who came to the last winter meeting will know I am trying to develop a system of management whereby you have your main honey producing colonies, and "support" colonies that can be used for replacing losses such as this, as well as many other uses during the season. I hope to use four colonies with a support colony as a unit at Dounhurst this year, and I hope others will give it a trial, but if you need any help with it then ask me. I know some are already planning along those lines. Until we know what is causing the problems we will have to find ways of getting round them, providing we don't ignore the causes.

At our last apiary meeting we found a colony dead with plenty of food on it. The adult bee population had dwindled badly. Due to the mild day we briefly opened many of the colonies. This is the first time I have ever done this on such a scale during winter, and it wouldn't be a good idea if it were cold, so for those who attended, please be careful what you do with your own bees. Remember that Dounhurst is a teaching apiary, and sometimes we do things to show members what is happening, and occasionally there will be sacrificial colonies.

At that meeting it was nice to see yet another past member return. Kathy Hines brought her daughter Maria, and grandson Jack, and they all handled bees. Kathy dived straight in as if she had never been away, showing that beekeeping is a bit like riding a bike! The other returnee is Astri Sharp, who brings her daughter Sigrid.

Richard Dyer has recently done a mite count, and things are looking good. At the moment the colonies that were treated with thymol patties seem to be doing as well as those treated with Apiguard, and as the cost is about 15p against £2 it might be an option for those with a large number of colonies. It's also showing that oxalic acid is working.

At the moment it's looking as if the spring is going to be early, we saw many clumps of primroses in flower at the Jan meeting, and I have seen the flower heads appearing on oil seed rape. Make sure you and your bees are ready for an early season, even though it may be on time in the end. Clean up the supers and hive parts and mend them, so you can spring clean without panicking because your equipment isn't ready. Make up your mind how many colonies

you are going to have and do your planning now. Don't worry about frames and foundation as we will have them for sale at meetings.

Some of our beginners from the last couple of years now need to move on and learn more. It has become increasingly more important to know what is happening in the hive and there are plenty of opportunities to learn. There are many of you who will benefit from the "Beginners and Improvers" day. There is much in the content that will be a benefit to all. Don't forget the WSBKA Convention March 1<sup>st</sup>. There is a good programme that Christine Stevens has put together, and this includes a few interesting fringe subjects that are part of the mini seminars. We are constantly adding good books to the library, and these are available at most meetings. The BBKA Basic Assessment has also shown those who took it last year there are areas they needed to work on, so don't ignore that as the spread of subjects is wide. We hope to repeat the Assessment day at Dounhurst again this year. See Daisy for details, but hurry so she can plan in conjunction with WSBKA Exam Sec Rosanne Blacklock. We all need to learn more – yes, including me.

We are trying to improve the level of tuition at Dounhurst and on Saturdays we will be having two sessions, with the beginners at 12.00, and advanced at 2.00. There will be more about this later, but it has proved quite difficult having mixed groups, and we need to service the members better.

### **Helen Griffin. An Appreciation.**

Helen Griffin, our longest serving member passed away peacefully on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January aged 88.

When I joined the Division in 1963 Helen was a stalwart member, and quietly served us very well over a long period. For the Divisions 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary I gave a talk on our history, and when I scoured our archives for information the earliest Helen was mentioned was when she was co-opted onto the committee in 1952, but I think she was a member for some time before that. Apart from a brief rest she had been on our committee for 52 years.

Over the years Helen has done many things for the Division, most of which have not been noticed, simply because she never made a fuss, but just got on and did what was needed. In fact it was her idea that led to the annual supper. At the time we had no winter meetings and she suggested something at the end of the season similar to a harvest supper. Over the years she has contributed greatly to its organisation, together with many other similar events, as well as a spells as Minute Secretary, Newsletter Editor, and President between 1987 and 2004. As President she didn't taken a back seat, and was always happy to offer advice when needed. Latterly she didn't keep bees, but remained a member and kept a keen interest.

In my early days as a member we didn't have a teaching apiary as we do now, but we visited about 3-4 members during the summer, and George Wakeford always opened the hives. Helen and her late husband Jack had a rather noisy motor cycle and sidecar, and I still remember hearing them some way in the distance. They had four children all within 6 years, and I once asked Helen how they got all six of them on the machine. Her reply was something like "Well in those days we managed" which was absolutely typical of her approach to most things.

When I was Chairman I found her to be one of the most helpful and reliable members. If she couldn't do something for whatever reason she would tell me, yet if she could do it she would say so, and I knew it would be done without any fuss. Never would we get to a meeting and hear Helen say "I haven't had time".

I often heard Helen say she “Wasn’t much of a beekeeper”, and surprisingly I never saw her open a hive, but in conversation it was obvious she knew a lot of the theory. She kept about four well maintained WBC’s in her garden and always had good crops, so much so that although she used a lot herself she still had enough to sell in 28lb tins, so I think she was probably a much better beekeeper than she gave herself credit for.

Helen was indeed a very remarkable lady. As well as her beekeeping she was a very keen gardener, with a very productive vegetable and fruit section. She was a good cook and virtually everything was used with little waste. She was an accomplished winemaker, and of course mead was also made. Her flower section was what one might describe as “naturalised” and whenever I visited there was always something of interest in flower. She gave several talks to us, mainly with titles such as “My Kind of Gardening”. She was an extremely good plantswoman, and also knowledgeable about wildlife.

Failing eyesight put a stop to the main interests in her life, and being very active this must have been very frustrating, but whenever I saw her she was always very cheerful.

For some time Helen was a moderator for a mathematics correspondence course. I knew she had a degree, and once asked her what the subject was. Her reply was of the nature “I never use it unless I need to”, and as I knew of her interests I assumed it was one of those. On speaking to her youngest son Joe when I heard the sad news I found out her degree was in Physics, and during the war when rubber was in short supply she was working on research for synthetic rubber. What a surprise, and what a remarkable lady.

**Helen's funeral will take place at the Guildford Crematorium on Wednesday 6th February at 10.30am. The family have requested that there be no flowers and that any donation be made to Oxfam through the Funeral Directors, Freemans of Horsham.**

### **BBKA modules Reminder**

Those who wish to apply to do a BBKA modules need to return their applications by 15th Feb. Exams on 15th March. The Wisborough Green co-ordinator for this is Daisy 07980 280 852 [wellingtondays@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:wellingtondays@tiscali.co.uk)

### **WSBKA Annual Convention**

Don't forget – March 1<sup>st</sup> – see previous newsletters and county news below

### **County Diary – Around the Divisions – all Members are most welcome at all Meetings**

**Chichester** –Contact Mrs Chris Burnett on 01243 514642 for details.

**20<sup>th</sup> February** “So you thought you might take a Beekeeping Exam?” by Carolyn Farley. How many of us have thought about taking a beekeeping examination, but didn’t because we didn’t know what was involved or because we doubted our own ability and thought we would look stupid. Carolyn, who has passed her first BBKA exam and is now on her way to Module1 (whatever that is), will explain all.

These meetings will be at the Bader Arms in Tangmere and will commence punctually at 7.30pm. Do please stop by at the bar and buy a drink on the way in as we enjoy the private room free of rent.

**Worthing** contact Brian Tolworthy on 01903 241369

Website [www.worthingbeekeepers.fsnet.co.uk/org.uk](http://www.worthingbeekeepers.fsnet.co.uk/org.uk)

Winter meetings at Ferring village hall. Arrive at 7.15pm for 7.30pm start.

**14<sup>th</sup> February** A wax Evening – Making use of wax.

## **Can You Help?**

The BBKA website is being redesigned and one of the features will be a section "Hints and Tips". This is intended to be a list of the sort of things you won't find in books, not a regular feature, and it will be added to on a regular basis when new material becomes available. If you or any of your beekeeping colleagues have any suitable hints and tips on a wide variety of beekeeping subjects then please send them to Roger Patterson who is co-ordinating the section. [R.patterson@pattersonpressings.co.uk](mailto:R.patterson@pattersonpressings.co.uk) or 3 Hayes Lane, Slinfold, Sussex, RH13 0SQ.

## **Are you one of the people who don't go to Conventions?**

Since taking on the organisation of the Convention, I have learned a number of things. Some are fairly obvious, and had a lot to do with why I took it on, but some are completely unexpected. In particular I am referring to who does, and who does not, go to Conventions - and some of the thinking behind this.

As a regular at the Convention, I look at it as being a really good day with lots of interesting speakers – sort of the equivalent to six really good evening meetings, all included in one day.

But everyone does not see it this way. Some beekeepers see the event as being a bit highbrow, and technical, and aimed at those who are really keen and experienced. Others see it as being a selection of different ways to interfere with your bees – not necessarily to anyone's advantage! Either way, quite a number of people will have 'switched off' just at the mention of the Convention, and certainly not wasted time reading through the subjects and speakers.

All that seems a real shame, when the day now is designed to offer great range of subjects for beekeepers with all levels of experience. Having a choice of seminars gives us all the opportunity to get the most possible out of the day.

Paul Payne will be there with a really good range of equipment, so you can stock up with wax, frames and all your other springtime needs, and in addition Jeremy Burbridge of Northern Bee Books is coming down from Yorkshire with a good selection of books, so it should be a great shopping opportunity.

So this is a typically long-winded way to say, if you haven't considered coming to the Convention this year, do look at the attached programme. The new venue gives us the opportunity to have more people than previously, so we still have room for more bookings. If you need another booking form, just give me a call or an email, and I will let you have one straight away.

Very much hoping that you will be joining us for a fascinating day.

Christine Stevens 01243 533559 or email on [ieem@compuserve.com](mailto:ieem@compuserve.com)

## **WSBKA Annual Convention 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008**

At Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, Pulborough 9.30am to 5.15pm

The West Sussex Beekeepers Association are pleased to invite beekeepers and those interested in bees and beekeeping to attend their annual convention. The event is intended to be of interest to beekeepers of all standards. As well as the main lectures it includes some specialist seminars and also some seminars to interest those with less academic inclinations. We hope you will be joining us.

### **Main Lectures**

Bees as Flying Machines	Dr Robin Wootton
Modern Beekeeping – a personal view	Dr Stephen Palmer
Where are we now	Mike Brown, Head of the NBU

In addition you can attend three of the following seminars:

1. Encaustic Art - June Hughes
2. An Introduction to Microscopy – Dr Stephen Palmer
3. Honey Standards – West Sussex Trading Standards
4. New Queens by Simple Methods – Roger Patterson
5. How Bees fit into the Organic Farm – Karl Barton
6. Pollen and Health (in Humans and Bees) – Christine Matthews
7. Two Part Varroa Control – Alan Byham
8. The Preparation of Exhibits for Show – Peter Matthews

For all your beekeeping needs, Paynes Southdown Bee Farms and Northern Bee Books will also be present at the Convention

Advance booking per person £12, or on the day if space allows £15

Full details and booking form on the WSBKA website ([www.wsbka.org.uk](http://www.wsbka.org.uk)) or contact Christine Stevens 01243 533559 or [ieem@compuserve.com](mailto:ieem@compuserve.com)