

Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

Newsletter – August 2019

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Contributions for the September newsletter should be received by Friday 30 August.

From the Editor

It seems that summer has only just got here but bees and beekeepers are turning their thoughts to Winter. Roger has some words of advice to make sure that colonies are well-prepared for the months ahead, and there is news of some in-depth learning opportunities for both new and experienced beekeepers in November. Learning comes from many sources, and this month Nell shares her guide to successfully lighting a smoker.

If you are looking for somewhere to put an extra colony or two, there is an opportunity in Wisborough Green, and don't forget to get your Honey Show entries in.

Tamsin



Image by [Capri23auto](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Dates for your diary

Apiary meetings

Every Saturday at 2pm:

3, 10 and 17 August

Bee Improvement Session - Saturday 3rd August

I have been asked by a member for a Bee Improvement session. I will have one as a special interest topic as part of the August 3 meeting. The normal meeting will take place, but one group will be devoted to Bee Improvement.

This will not be in any great depth but will include a discussion on what we are trying to achieve, what we can do and an assessment of several colonies where we will chat about their behaviour and characteristics. This will help us decide which queens to raise daughters from and which ones to replace.

Please email me roger-patterson@btconnect.com if you would like to be in this group, so I know how many to expect.

If you don't wish to be involved in the Bee Improvement, but wish to come to the meeting there is no need to contact me. *Roger*

Bee Health Day – 8 August

Details of this important training session have been circulated; places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Wisborough Green Honey Show – Monday 26 August

Our honey show takes place on Monday 26th August. One of the rules states you must use honey from your own bees. There are other classes however, such as the cake and biscuit class that include honey but it does not have to be your own. So if you are a member and wish to enter these classes, the Division has agreed to let you have a jar of Wisborough Green Honey to use for your entries - if you go along to an apiary meeting, ask Roger and he will let you have a jar.

If you are planning to be away for the Bank Holiday weekend and wish to enter, please let me know and we can make arrangements for you to either drop your entries off, or we can collect them beforehand.

I am here to help if any of you would like some advice or any information. Please don't think your honey isn't good enough, I've heard many people say this over the years and it is NOT TRUE!!! Unless you enter, you won't know, you may have a lovely surprise if you try.

Finally, entries must be made by Saturday 24th to me at Brew Cottage, Brewhurst Lane, Loxwood, West Sussex, RH14 0RJ - 07980 280852.

See you all in the marquee on the green from 8.30am to 10am when the marquee must be empty so judging can begin. GOOD LUCK!

Daisy

BBKA Queen Rearing Courses

The BBKA is organising courses for beekeepers, with at least three years' experience, at several venues around the country:

Somerset: August 3rd & 4th at Quantock Apiary near Bridgwater

Wales: August 10th & 11th at Gregynog Hall, Tygynon, Nr Newtown

Warwickshire: September 14th & 15th at BBKA Apiary, Stoneleigh

Cleveland: September 17th & 18th, venue to be confirmed

Details of other courses will be posted on the website when confirmed.

The whole course is focussed on the General Husbandry standard with the objective of each attendee going home able to run their queen rearing matched to their needs. It will not be prescriptive and will enable the attendees to make up their own mind about the method they would like to employ. It will not focus on grafting, although it is a method that everyone should at least have tried at some point.

The course will be theory plus time in the apiary when different methods of queen rearing will be discussed and demonstrated. There will also be several queen related manipulations, again to the General Husbandry standard.

There will be a maximum of twelve on each course and there will be two tutors. The lead tutor will be Sean Stephenson who has a lot of experience in queen raising and delivering courses.

The cost of the course will be £75 which will covers coffee, tea and biscuits but please bring a packed lunch with you. The timing for the courses will be confirmed later but will start on Saturday morning and end on Sunday afternoon.

If you would like to apply for a place on the course please apply through the website shop:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/departments/training-courses>

or contact the BBKA office on 02476 696679.

All Day Winter Learning – 3 and 24 November

See further details and booking information below.

Improve Your Beekeeping

Wisborough Green BKA are organising two one day courses that will cover some of the information that beekeepers need to know in order to manage their bees efficiently, with care and understanding.

Tuition in the apiary with a colony of bees in front of you is valuable for honing practical skills and putting theory and management techniques into practice. It is better if the beekeeper has a reasonable knowledge and understanding of what is being demonstrated, otherwise they are shown how to do something without knowing why, but where do they learn that essential information? These courses fill those gaps and are packed full of good sound information that is not always easy to teach at apiary demonstrations.

They will be held early in the winter, so those who feel they have gaps in their knowledge will have plenty of time for further study.

There will be two levels, "**The Early Years**" and "**Intermediate/Advanced**". This is to suit all beekeepers although it is expected that many will attend both. If you aren't sure which one is for you then ask Roger.

The tutor:- Roger Patterson

Cost:- Free to WGBKA members inc refreshments. Bring your own lunch. There is a fee for non-members, so on the booking form state that you are from "WGBKA" and £0 fee.

Venue:- Rudgwick Village Hall, Guildford Road, Bucks Green, West Sussex. RH12 3JJ

Dates:-

Sunday November 3rd 2019. "The Early Years"

Sunday November 24th 2019. "Intermediate/advanced"

For further information and to book (essential) please see www.wgbka.org.uk

Equipment

We now have a page on the website for equipment sales <http://www.wgbka.org.uk/Equipment.html>. This indicates how to order with a price list as a printable pdf. The pdf will be updated from time to time, so please make sure you use the latest version.

Patterson in Print

In the past it was always accepted that little or no nectar would come in after 8th August, but in recent years this has been extended by a week or so. It has meant that thymol varroa treatment has been pushed back a bit. It is unwise to feed during treatment, or the early part of it anyway, making August and September hectic months for beekeepers with extracting, feeding and treatment.

Once the summer flow has stopped there is a **possibility of robbing**. Most nectar flows towards the end of the summer stop abruptly, so the beekeeper can be caught out. The mood of the bees changes and they search everywhere for food. If they find a source that is poorly guarded, such as a nuc or weaker colony

they will quickly set about it and rob it out. Beginners are unaware how quickly robbing can happen, but observation is the key.

Bees behave abnormally at the entrances of all hives. I won't go into detail here because I do it regularly at apiary meetings, but I think beekeepers should adopt a policy of observation, observation, observation. If you see something different then try to find the cause.

Carelessness during extracting can quickly cause robbing. Any unguarded honey will soon attract plenty of bees. If you move the source away the robbing bees will try to find where it has gone, so may attack your weaker hives. The trick is to put a spoonful of honey on something solid in the place of the source you have moved away. When the bees are satisfied that they have cleared it up they will calm down.

From now on don't leave a comb in front of the hive as that will very soon start off robbing.

We have attended several **shows** again this summer. They are a good way of speaking to the public about our craft and gives us the opportunity to recruit potential beekeepers and sell our honey. The Cranleigh Show is the largest we attend. This is reputed to be the oldest one-day agricultural show in the country. Although on the edge of our territory there are many people from our area who go, so it is worthwhile.

We have attended for about 15 years and I have been to every one. I have seen a gradual change and no two years are the same. This year attendance started very slowly, then picked up later in the morning with a steady stream of interested people. There were those who showed their fear of insects, but many, especially children, were genuinely interested.

As usual there were the standard questions of "do you get stung?", "I've got bees under my shed or in the chimney", "are they wasps?", "how many bees are in there?". Then there are the same old comments of "I've always wanted to keep bees" or "my husband/wife/partner is allergic" and "I can't eat honey because I'm diabetic". One parent said to the children "Come and see the bumblebees!" We always get the odd gem and the best one I heard this year was "I live in a flat in London. I used to keep bees but the dog ate them"!



I had an eye infection and I couldn't take much light. I felt rather uncomfortable as if a shovel of sand had been chucked in my eye. I decided to lay down, but I fell asleep and there I stayed for some time.

I went to a bee meeting in London. I usually stand up in the tube even if there are empty seats. In one crowded carriage on the way to my destination a teenage lad with earphones, odd hairstyle, tattoos, etc offered me his seat. This shows how kind some people are and that you definitely can't go by appearances. On the return journey a lady in her thirties, without earphones, odd hairstyle or tattoos did exactly the same. If I had been sitting down I would have offered her my seat. This has happened to me before, so perhaps others should give me the message, rather than leave it to strangers on the underground to do it!

I have recently been given a book "The Lore of the Honey-Bee" by a kind member who no longer wanted it. This is one of the beekeeping classics and is the 9th edition dated 1919. It was written by **Tickner Edwardes** who was the vicar of Burpham, near Arundel.

On 28th August 2018 I went on a walk starting and finishing at Burpham. Being a beekeeper and knowing some of the history, I wondered if Tickner Edwardes was buried in the churchyard there. It wasn't long before I found his grave, so I took the photograph below.



Tickner-Edwardes is one of many famous Sussex beekeepers, but he might have been forgotten without a book to be remembered by.

Some of you will know I have an **eye problem**. I have a pterygium in each eye that is a fairly common disease. This is a growth on the surface of the eye. The consultant asked if I had worked for long spells in a dusty atmosphere, which I did, so I know the cause. The right eye is little to worry about, but the left eye will need surgery as the growth is expanding and affecting my vision. It is a good job I can smell queens as I may not be able to see them soon!

I guess there will be other items about the **WGBKA Honey Show**, so all I will say here is that if you need any help with preparing your exhibits I'm happy to help.

Roger

The Apiary and Learning

We are coming to the end of the summer inspections. Now that **Autumn** is here there will be changes in weather and colonies, some of them rather quick. Us older folk will remember the occasional frost in August, the first one always putting an end to gathering mushrooms, but these days frosts probably won't occur until the latter half of September, often into October. Over 50 years ago Harold Wilson said that a week is a long time in politics. In Autumn a week is a long time in beekeeping too. The condition of a colony can change quite quickly and the more observant beekeeper will notice this.

There is a tendency by beekeepers that once the supers have been removed to take a bit of a back seat, but what we do at this time of year can affect whether that colony will collect nectar next year or not.

Our native type bees will probably be preparing for winter from about the middle of July. You can see the queens reducing laying, the empty cells created by emerging brood aren't always laid in straight away. They are filled with pollen and nectar, so the brood nest contracts, leaving a reasonable amount of food in the brood box. the exotic types have evolved in regions with different autumns, so the queens continue laying, even when incoming nectar is reducing. They leave little room for food, so when the supers are taken off there isn't enough income or stored food to keep the colony alive, so they can possibly starve. This is bad beekeeping, either for keeping bees that are not best suited to our climate or for not being observant.

Roger

Nell in Print

We have lots of walks and Dad often takes a bag or old rucksack to collect smoker fuel. He has just collected a big bag of hay from the leftovers in a field that has been cut a few days. He uses it for placing on top of newspaper that he lights when starting his smoker. He has an old rucksack he puts touchwood in when we walk in woodland. Like his food, he doesn't like waste!

We go to several places and see beekeepers making a mess of lighting their smokers. Many throw away what was left last time, then fill the smoker and try to light the top! I have seen it done so often that I could do it blindfolded. You need to prepare, so get together what you need:-

1. Something to light it with, such as matches or lighter*.
2. Newspaper.
3. Something that will burn well such as hay, straw or dried grass mowings.
4. Remains of last smoker charge.
5. Something that will burn well and slowly such as dried wood chippings or touchwood. This is also used for topping up.

This is how we do it.....Empty out the smoker from last time. Don't discard the contents as these are part burnt, so will light well. Screw up some newspaper, light it then place quickly in smoker. Add a handful of 3. above, then puff the smoker until it is smoking well. Add 4. then 5., continuing to puff well. That's it. All done and you don't need any beekeeping knowledge.

When you have finished, plug the nozzle with grass and lay the smoker on its side. Don't empty it.

*Dad ran out of matches once, so he lit the smoker with a magnifying glass! He's not as daft as some of you think!

Rosie in Print

We live close to the Downs Link; that is a bridleway on an old railway track. Dad, Nell and I go for walks on it quite often where we see horse riders, cyclists and other people, sometimes running or walking with dogs. We often see two Jack Russells and two boxers. None of these are very friendly to other dogs and we have to go on the lead when we are near them.

If we see runners or cyclists Dad makes Nell and me sit down until they go past. Most of them are very polite and thank us, but a few don't speak at all or give any kind of acknowledgement. We think these people are rude and Dad has a little trick for them. He waits until they go past, then he shouts in a loud voice "Nell, Rosie, come back", as if we are chasing them, but often we are still sitting down. These people always run or cycle a lot faster. He, he, he!

Nell helped me read back through the old newsletters and I find that I have been with you for 12 months now. What a lucky lot you are!

Nell has suggested that I apologise for collecting that big pile of sticks and putting them on the path at the apiary. Well, I put them there so you beekeepers will throw them for me. It's not my fault they stay there, but sorry anyway.

I have discovered a new game. There is a tennis court close to us that often has tennis balls outside the fence. I bring them home and smuggle them indoors. When I get bored I take them to the top of the stairs, then let them go and chase them down the stairs. I take them to the top and do the same again. Like beekeeping, it's fun!

Site available

A des res for bees is on offer at Lowfold Farm, Wisborough Green RH14 0ES. Any beekeeper interested in putting hives there should contact Yonit Osmaston on 07889 597232