

Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

Newsletter – July 2019

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Contributions for the August newsletter should be received by Friday 26 July.

From the Editor

It was very hot in the Apiary last Saturday, thank goodness it's a little fresher now! After the wet and windy weather at the beginning of the month the bees are foraging again and bringing pollen and nectar into the hives; don't forget to enter your best honey and other products for the Wisborough Green Honey Show at the end of next month.

If you haven't already signed up for the Bee Health Day, don't miss the chance to get all-important disease training direct from bee inspectors.

Tamsin



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

Dates for your diary

Apiary meetings

Every Saturday at 2pm:

6, 13, 20 and 27 July

3, 10 and 17 August

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

The honey show is looming ever closer and attached to this newsletter is all the information you need to make your entries.

We have a new judge this year, some changes to the schedule have been made and entering is now even easier as we can collect or you can drop off entries before the show if you are going to be away.

Hopefully, you will have extracted your honey by the middle of August and have some lovely fresh honey with which to enter. When entering the honey classes, you must use honey from your own bees; however, if you wish to enter a baking class, for instance, this rule does not apply so you do not have to be a beekeeper to enter.

This is a great opportunity to get some feedback from the judge and meet other members and get lots of hints and tips as to how they prepare their entries. Remember, this is a local show and although the rules are the same as for the National Honey Show, you can always progress to a higher level once you've had success here. Several of our members have gone on to win first prizes at the National Honey Show.

Any queries at all please contact Daisy at wellingtondays@hotmail.co.uk or 07980 280852.

Good luck!

Daisy

Equipment

We now have a page on the website for equipment sales. 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

During June I presented four 2-day Bee Improvement Courses in North Wales, Warwickshire and Yorkshire. In visiting different parts of the U.K. I see different kinds of bees kept by different beekeepers in different climatic conditions. The part of **North Wales** is a very marginal one for bees, which those I handled in Warwickshire and Yorkshire simply wouldn't survive in. Both the latter had a very high level of exotic genes, displaying physical signs of being Italian/carniolan crossing. In **Warwickshire** the bees were so bad

tempered that a very experienced beekeeper got a hammering in removing a couple of frames of brood for a grafting demonstration. Apparently the neighbouring BKA advocate the use of Buckfast queens and their drones often cause problems when crossed with local bees. This is a well-known problem but beekeepers continue to buy in queens rather than rear their own.

In **Yorkshire** most of the colonies were being fed, when other beekeepers locally had a reasonable amount of food on theirs. The bees were very prolific and were turning what food they had into brood they didn't need.

I come across many beekeepers, especially some with what might appear to be a reasonable amount of experience, who don't seem to have much knowledge of the workings of a colony. I regularly see beekeepers of several years standing who don't know the "basics" such as life cycles, disease recognition and what happens in a colony when it swarms. I really don't know the reason - is it because they haven't been taught? Haven't bothered to learn? Whatever the reasons I find it rather worrying, as the skills and knowledge of yesteryear are being lost.

There is always learning to do and mistakes to be made as I have recently found out. I have a couple of skeps I use for **catching swarms**. I have some fairly loosely woven hessian of the type that bricklayers use in frosty weather. I have collected many swarms, probably several hundred, by doubling the hessian (it now has a few holes that bees can get through), laying it on the ground, then placing the upturned skep with swarm inside on the hessian and tying with baler twine. If I collect a swarm late in the evening I leave it until the morning to hive. I have never had a problem with the method described until this year. I took a large swarm at dusk. When I got it home I took it out of the car and placed it down with something to prop it up to give them enough air. Unfortunately in the morning it had suffocated, even though it had hessian and it was propped up. This is only the third time I have seen a swarm suffocate. The other two times were when one was collected in a plastic bucket, the other when wet flannelette was used. Even things you have done on many occasions and taken extra care over can go wrong. Below is a photograph of the dead swarm on the hessian.



A swarm of bees interrupted the recent **World Cup cricket match** between Sri Lanka and South Africa at Chester-le-Street. This is probably good publicity for beekeeping, but how much will the media concentrate on the increase in bee colony numbers instead of telling the world that bees are in decline? It reminded me of a game I was playing in at Ockley many years ago. I was fielding when a swarm flew over. Bees were more important than cricket, so I followed them, only to find they settled high up in an oak tree, where they stayed. It was a good talking point afterwards.

Roger

The New-bee Experience – Zen Bees



Well.... June has most certainly been an interesting learning month for me with regards to getting to know my bees.... I think Stan and Tamsin may concur. Our colonies have definitely presented some interesting moments for the teaching apiary as much as for ourselves and other new beekeepers.

For myself, the Queen (I'm going to call her the First Lady) that was introduced in May has finally been accepted and she is doing reasonably well in that she is laying consistently. There have been interesting developments in that we discovered two further Queen Cells... this despite First Lady doing her thing! We then discovered that one of the QC's had emerged... so I had First Lady and a Virgin Queen roaming around ... plus another sealed QC to still emerge! Now you more experienced beekeepers will clearly know what is going on and what to do. However, for me... this is my first colony and I naturally want to do right by my First Lady and her Zen Tribe.

I wasn't really sure how to actually proceed from here, textbooks are great but in actual practicality I wasn't sure. However, with the Roger's infallible advice and guidance, we decided that this is a really great learning experience and to let nature take its course. First Lady was clearly laying well, the rest of the Zen Tribe are also doing well despite the weather being really difficult. We've added an extra frame of food stores for them and they seemed to have settled well.

Since, both the QC's have emerged so I have had two virgin queens roaming around. They have both, I imagine, found new homes but in any case they have both left the Zen Tribe for pastures new. First Lady and Zen Tribe are so far so good; I look forward to learning so much more about them and hopefully they'll grow to be a strong colony over time. Fingers crossed.

Lisa Park

The Apiary and Learning

The move to the new apiary has taken much longer than expected. Why such simple things take so long is way beyond me. I think we will leave the move until the honey has been extracted, so we don't move colonies with supers.

Where colonies were brought together I have now moved them further apart, so we can handle them better.

I hope members will attend the **Bee Health Day** as it is a great way of seeing diseases and conditions that may be quite rare. I suggest bringing a camera so you can take photographs to compare with what you may see in your own colonies.

Several years ago we had an all day **winter meeting** on swarming and colony increase. I hope to repeat it again this winter, so look out for details.

Roger

Loxwood Village Fete and Fun Dog Show

I was looking forward to my first 'WGBKA Stand' with Judy Knight, and the Loxwood Village Fete and Fun Dog Show was definitely a day to remember! Despite the 'gale-force' winds and torrential downpours we had a successful day.

Judy had bees from her own hives as display bees and they were incredible! The most beautiful 'red' queen was a wonderful attraction for beekeepers, young, old and the curious. We also sold quite a lot of WGBKA honey and had lovely conversations with folk who popped along for a chat - and those who were basically taking shelter from the weather!

WGBKA will be at various events, please do look on the website to see where we'll be. Do come and say hello, we love having a chat and sharing our 'bee love'. Why not purchase some of the gorgeous honey from our teaching apiary? Details of where we are on our website:

http://www.wgbka.org.uk/Events_Diary.html

Lisa Park

Nell in Print

Dad has been up to his tricks again. We went to the Blue Ship pub for an evening. It was rather busy with a queue waiting to be served. A couple came in who we haven't seen before. They had the sort of pseudo posh voices that Dad isn't keen on, flashy clothes and fake tans. They were standing waiting to be served and getting agitated at having to wait, then Dad said to them "Are you expecting food?", to which they answered "yes". Dad then said there will be a delay because the motorbike has broken down. There was lots of laughter from everyone except the couple. He, he, he! They didn't look as if they would make good beekeepers anyway! He does know how to embarrass us dogs.

Rosie in Print

Dad took Nell and me to the South of England Show where Maggie, Daisy and Dad demonstrated the bees to the public. I haven't been to a show like that before, but I enjoyed seeing lots of nice people. I saw another dog that looked like me.

Nell and me weren't allowed in the tent, so we were tied up to tent pegs.

During a break Maggie and Dad walked around the rest of the show. Dad wanted a new rucksack. On a stand that sold them there was one hanging on the end of a rail outside, but Dad didn't like it. He went inside and saw another hanging on another rail, so he had a look at it and a man said something like "That one is on special offer - it's mine!"

For Sale

- Tangential honey extractor with capacity for 4 shallow frames, or 2 deep frames and tank
- Settling tank.
- Strainers
- Honey jars and lids (about 30) 8 and 12oz sizes

£180. Please contact Gill Walker on 07990 898778 or 01403 563 793

