

Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

Newsletter – June 2019

Website: www.wgbka.org.uk

Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/486401598062884

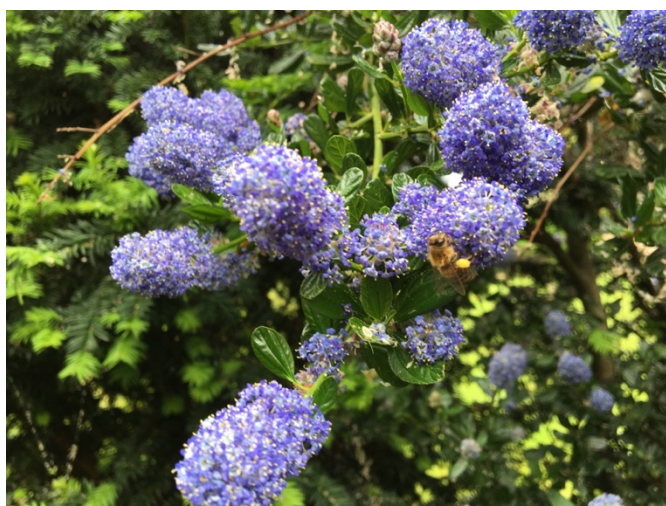
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From the Editor

As summer approaches, there is literally a buzz in the air as the bees work tirelessly to bring in all the pollen and nectar they can; I can hear the hum from the ceanothus in my garden (below) several metres away. It is an especially exciting time for new beekeepers, including me, as we start to set up our own colonies; Lisa has written about the experience in this month's newsletter. For the more established beekeepers, you may want to start thinking about your entries for this year's Wisborough Green Honey Show: see Daisy's notice below.

We will be taking off the OSR honey from the teaching apiary colonies next weekend, so please watch out for emails and help if you can. You will also want to keep an eye open for further information about some important disease identification training in a Bee Health Day later this summer.



Tamsin

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Contributions for the July newsletter should be received by Friday 28 June.

Dates for your diary

Apiary meetings:

Saturday 1 June – 2pm at the Apiary

Tuesday 4 June – 4pm at the Apiary to transfer queen cells into queenless colonies/nucs

Friday 7 June – 10am at the Apiary to put on clearer boards in preparation for extraction and to do some colony inspections

Saturday 8 June – **honey extraction**; please watch out for an email with details of times and locations and attend if you can. Assistance will be required throughout the day: removing supers in the morning, extracting the honey and replacing supers in the evening.

Bee Health Day – 8 or 9 August (tbc)

Please see below for an outline of this important training session led by bee inspectors, with examples of Foul Brood and other diseases.

Wisborough Green Honey Show – Monday 26 August

The Wisborough Green Honey Show will take place this year inside the Grand Marquee as part of the Wisborough Green Fete and Horticultural Show. A Schedule is attached to this newsletter for your information - you will see there are a few changes this year:

Firstly, I (Daisy) have taken over as Show Secretary.

The biscuit recipe has been changed to a recipe that doesn't contain lard (yuck!) and the honey cake is now a honey fruit cake.

Also, you will note that Class 7 (3 identical jars offered for sale) is not restricted to 1lb squat jars - in fact as long as they are the same, you can enter jars of any size or weight (in line with the National Honey Show schedule).

You can enter at any time - the **deadline is Saturday 24th August**. Open to members and non-members. Also, if you're planning to go away for the Bank Holiday weekend and you would like to enter the show, you can drop off your entries to either myself or Roger before you go and we will stage them for you on the day. So no excuses!

Let's make it a great show ... more details to follow in the next newsletter but in the meantime you can peruse the schedule and decide which classes you are going to enter.

If you would like to help on the day, please drop me a line. Details can also be found on the WGBKA Facebook page.

Many thanks in advance.

Daisy

Equipment

We now have a page on the website for equipment sales wgbka.org.uk/equipment. 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

Bees often swarm when the weather is warm, giving the impression to some people, often including beekeepers, that it is the weather that is the trigger for swarming. It is true that following a spell of cool weather for several days, bees often swarm when it warms up. This is because they are holding back until the weather is suitable, often aborting their attempt by destroying their queen cells if the improvement doesn't occur. They may make another attempt later.

I recently went to Wales to give an apiary demonstration and two lectures. I was away for four days. The weather started to improve a couple of days before I went and was good when I was away. On my return I had 18 messages on my 'phone, 13 of them swarm calls! If I am out for a few hours I usually return calls, but there is little point if the message is more than a day old, as either someone else has collected the swarm or it has found a home of its own.

One lady called me on behalf of a school. She described the swarm in detail and asked if I could come and remove it, "but don't worry if you can't" she said, "I will get a beekeeper to do it!". I keep telling people that Beekeeping is fun!

Whilst in Wales I stayed near Lampeter with beekeeping friends, Susie and Peter Jenkins, both of whom are great characters. Peter has been involved in beekeeping all his life, as his father was a well known Welsh beekeeper. In that area the locals speak Welsh, which I think is great to hear. Whilst there, Peter had a call from the local vet's to say they had a swarm of bees on the side of a shed in the car park. We turned up and everyone spoke Welsh, no matter what age they were. Peter delivered 20lb of honey to his local butcher. He invited me to meet his butcher. He said "This is Mr Roger Patterson. He is a honey inspector!". The response was in Welsh, with some laughter. Apparently the butcher has to deal with so many inspectors that he didn't think he would have any problem with me! There was a blackboard on the wall stating which farms the meat came from. I suspect it tasted much better than supermarket meat.

Peter normally runs about 50 colonies and is suffering badly from mongrelisation caused by bees that belong to English bee farmers who are using imported queens. They bring their colonies in for the summer, then take them away in the autumn because they won't survive the harsh winters. Of course their drones mate with local queens, so causing problems with the toughness of local bees, so winter losses are very high. In an attempt to overcome it Peter has made arrangements with the MoD to put some queen rearing colonies on their large training grounds where there are few other bees. He has to supply names of people who are authorised to be there, so he named someone from 150 miles north and me! Something else for my CV. In the last few years his winter losses have been high. He lost 50% of his bees during the 2017/18 winter, so in spring 2018 I gave him 3 nucs. They all built up and produced a crop of honey without re-queening, then survived the last winter, which rather surprised me.

The 2019 auction is now history and I thank the WG members who helped. In the 45 years since the first one it has become one of the major bee auctions, certainly in the south. Beekeepers travel long distances

to attend. Having attended every one, I find they are all different. Graham Elliott lets me look at the draft catalogue before the event to do a few final tweaks. I noticed there was a lot of National kit and I wondered if prices might be depressed, but overall they were very high. There was a good crowd and it wasn't as difficult to attract bids as in some previous years. As usual there were silly prices paid, both high and low. In the last couple of years Angus Farquhar has shared the selling with me. The only problem we had was competing with the wind that was part of Storm Hannah that caused havoc in other parts of the country.

At the sale three people said they enjoyed my article in **BBKA News** about children picking blackberries during WW1. One said they only scan BBKA News because they consider so much of it is "standard drivel" and one referred to it as "The comic". I feel this is a little unfair. I have known the editor for well over 30 years and in fact she is a former WGBKA member. She can only publish what is submitted. I know she is very conscientious, as she often asks experienced and knowledgeable beekeepers to look at submitted material for comment.

I am pleased to say that **my book** "*Beekeeping. A Practical Guide*" is back in print and widely available. For some strange reason it has been unavailable for around 12 months, but hopefully the publishers will maintain supply now.

Roger

The Apiary and Learning

We will soon be removing and extracting the **OSR honey**. At the time of writing this part (16th May) nectar is still pouring in, even though many fields are showing predominantly green. Timing is critical. Too soon and the water content is high, too late and granulation is a problem. I don't think I can remember such a variation in the crop as I have this year. Some fields are nearly over, others are still showing mainly yellow.

Despite **apiary meetings** being fairly low key so far this year we have managed to see quite a lot of different things in the hives. Hopefully attendees have been able to learn from them as oddities are not often found in books. In one colony we have had a queen laying well, with both swarm and emergency cells. This should not happen, as the bees are getting two different messages. In another colony we saw a marked queen, another unclipped and unmarked and one supersedure cell. Again, something that should never be seen and a new one on me. At the following meeting the marked queen wasn't seen, but the queen cell had emerged. 56 years a beekeeper and bees still throw things at me unexpectedly.

Despite the problems with the apiary this year we have had several **Preliminary sessions** already. We have passed several, so they can come to main meetings. Two were passed on their first visit, which is very rare. This year so far we have had some potentially good and enthusiastic beekeepers. Well done to all of them and I hope they enjoy their further learning at WG. As usual, with those who live closer to another BKA we advise them of their existence and suggest they take a look to see if it is more convenient for them.

WG, myself and a small number of beekeepers from around the country are providing samples of bees on a monthly basis for 12 months to a small research programme to investigate the recently discovered **Moku virus**. This has been found in honey bees and wasps. I am pleased that the scientific community are working much better with beekeepers than they used to and this is one example.

Roger

WGBKA June 2019

Bee Health Day - Advance Notification.

We will be holding a Bee Health Day in conjunction with the Bee Inspectors, where they will show us combs infected with both foul broods as well as other threats. Both Foul Broods are notifiable diseases and should be recognised by all beekeepers, otherwise if you can't recognise them how can you notify the Bee Inspectors? Both diseases are rare, which is their danger. Few beekeepers see them, so aren't able to recognise them. There will be other demonstrations too, including being shown how Bee Inspectors inspect a colony for disease.

These are very good teaching opportunities, so we recommend attendance. Details have not been finalised yet, but are **likely to be held on August 8th or 9th**. Details will probably be emailed. There is a cap on attendance levels, so early booking is advised. To make best use of resources this is a regional event. The Bee Inspectors want beekeepers from outside our area to attend too and it will be first come, first served.

The New-bee Experience

It's been a very interesting few weeks as a completely new beekeeper, getting to understand the preparation of putting my first colony together. The bees definitely keep surprising and amazing me. Three of us now have our new colonies after spending a Saturday at Dounhurst where we were shown three different methods of putting a colony together.

For myself, it was with some trepidation and much excitement (and annoying Roger). Obtaining frames from four different hives, plus a queen from another hive, in her Queen cage with her 'maidens'. Putting the frames in a brood box, literally shaking other bees in to make up a decent cohort and finally inserting the Queen cage in between two frames. Plus not forgetting to breathe and other important steps in between!

As a first-time beekeeper, I sort of had rose-tinted glasses on, telling my family and friends about the bees and being very proud of myself!! I expected the bees to be perfectly happy on Sunday, totally accepting of the new Queen and their new environment. Of course everything would be just fabulous! Why wouldn't it be?? Well, not quite! Taking her out of the Queen cage to find that the other bees were very aggressive towards her sort of blew my rose-tinted shades off. Nevertheless, she was rescued, put back in her cage and reinserted between the frames. With a lot of fingers crossing and hopefulness, thinking that she may or may not make it – we checked again on the Wednesday. She was released again, with bated breath, they seemed to be a lot calmer and off she went. So, fingers crossed all is well in bee land there.

On Saturday we had the delight of making up frames to fill our hives and that went rather well too. So, three new happy beekeepers at WGBKA.



Lisa's queen goes into the hive.

Stan's bees decided not to wait for new frames.



Lisa Park

Brinsbury Open Day



WGBKA attend a few shows and events during the summer. This promotes the craft to the general public, gives us an opportunity to recruit new beekeepers and is a sales outlet for our honey.

The Brinsbury Open Day has been attended for several years. This year it took place on May 19th and was manned by Tess, Lisa Baker and Roger. After a slow start we had a regular stream of visitors, including Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel & South Downs, whose constituency includes Wisborough Green. We had a fairly long chat about bees, agriculture and the environment and he showed a very good understanding of the issues that face us.

Nell in Print.

Dad sometimes takes Rosie and me for an evening walk that ends up in a pub where he has his dinner and something to wash it down with. We have lots of biscuits and see other dogs. We also go up and down the children's slide, but shhhh!

One evening there were three ladies on an adjacent table talking about their hobbies. One said she was a watercolour artist, another was a hand bell ringer. The other lady said she was a beekeeper. She had said a few things about beekeeping, then Dad got chatting to them and asked the beekeeping lady a few questions before saying he was a beekeeper too. It wasn't very long before she said it was really her husband's hobby and she helps him!

Rosie