

# Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

## Newsletter – December 2023

Website: [www.wgbka.org.uk](http://www.wgbka.org.uk)

Facebook Group: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/wgbka>

Library, Shop and WhatsApp group – see end of newsletter

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**Contributions for the January newsletter  
should be received by Friday 29 December.**

### **From the Editor**

As 2023 comes to an end, thanks to Kathy for her report on the work being done to track Asian hornets in Jersey; this is likely to be even more important next year. More cheerfully, the WSBKA Convention is confirmed, with some top quality speakers – something to look forward to!

With very best wishes for the festive season.

*Tamsin*



Image: Janine Coetzer via Pixabay

## Dates for your diary

### NEW: Microscopy

#### **Tuesday 5 December, 6.00pm, Clemsfold near Horsham**

The second microscopy session will be on the topic ***Pollen in Your Honey***. Please contact Martina for further details.

### Quiz Night

#### **Wednesday 6 December, 7.00pm, The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood, RH14 0SQ**

We normally have an evening social get together before Christmas each year. This year your Committee has scheduled a Quiz Night for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December. Tracey Johnson has offered to put together a general knowledge quiz for us to pit our wits against each other. It might be more fun to form teams and get a competitive spirit going!

We also plan to have tea, coffee and mince pies – and, if anyone has been experimenting with homemade mead or honey baking, all contributions welcome.

I know that the evenings are dark and, sometimes, wet and cold but please make every effort to come along (friends and family welcome too) and support this event. It's a great way to meet up and get to know each other, as well as catching up on our beekeeping problems.

Further details to be promulgated by newsletter, WGBKA WhatsApp group and email. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Maggie Turner on 0775 284 7631 or [maggie501@btinternet.com](mailto:maggie501@btinternet.com).

### West Sussex BKA Annual Convention

#### **Saturday 24th February 2024 at Lodge Hill, Pulborough**

Please see the information below; the full programme and booking form will be published next month.

## Patterson in Print

I am often critical of some of the webinars and videos that appear online, often with agreement by experienced beekeepers. There are some good ones, but they need weeding out, that isn't easy for the inexperienced beekeeper. I recently viewed an **excellent webinar** that was presented by Professor Robert Paxton *Pathogen Spillover Amongst Communities of Bees*. It was hosted by the Central Association of Bee-Keepers (CABK)

<https://www.cabk.org.uk/>, whose strapline is *Bringing science to the bee-keeper*. Brief details of CABK can be found here <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/centralassn.html>.

Although the research is not yet complete, there is good evidence to support what has been felt for some time, that **pathogens can be transmitted by insects feeding on contaminated**

**flowers**, often to different insect species. Much of the presentation concentrated on Deformed Wing Virus (DWV), because that is an easy virus to work on. This research might not help individuals keep their bees better, but it helps the understanding of pathogen transmission.

Following a comment by a WG member, I had a conversation with a Worthing BKA member (I will call them “ABC”) who had investigated the **BBKA Third Party, Public and Products Liability insurance**. This is included with the BKA subscription and we all believe covers us for up to and including 39 hives. ABC had increased to about 20-25 hives and asked other beekeepers what members are covered for. He was given several different answers, with some not knowing. He decided to find out, so contacted the BBKA office, who passed him on to insurance brokers. The representative said it was a policy for “hobbyists”. When asked what a hobbyist was, the response was they thought if income was more than £2000 over expenditure, then you were no longer a hobbyist. ABC realised he was above that.

A couple of days later, I chaired a BIBBA Zoom meeting for small-scale commercial beekeepers, when someone raised the topic of insurance. I said we should be careful, as we may not be covered by BBKA insurance and repeated what ABC had told me. Another viewer (XYZ), with a similar number of colonies to ABC, said I was wrong and looked online for the BBKA insurance FAQ, that clearly stated it covered for up to and including 39 hives. The following day, XYZ contacted another broker representative, who stated that a beekeeper was no longer a hobbyist if their income exceeded expenditure! This raised alarm bells with me, as a good beekeeper with 39 colonies can produce at least a ton of honey or 100+ nuclei. An efficient established beekeeper who sells hive products could be without insurance, by exceeding both previously mentioned definitions of “hobbyist”, which could be done with 5-10 hives, so leaving a high percentage of members, including WGBKA ones, uninsured.

In my view, someone has caused the problem by using the word “hobbyist”, where it isn’t needed. BBKA is an organisation for all beekeepers, whether hobbyist or commercial. “Hobbyist” doesn’t appear in the BBKA constitution anyway. I suspect it was caused by inexperienced people dealing with insurance. As a result of this, I persuaded West Sussex BKA to put a **resolution to the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM)** to ensure that all members with 39 colonies or less are covered. If passed, then the issue can’t happen again. Since this has been raised, the insurance renewal covers members as previously intended and the online FAQs reflect that, so someone at BBKA is listening.

I believe that **2023 was a good year for us beekeeping-wise**. The main downside was we didn’t do much queen rearing, but apart from that, everything has been positive. The bees did very well, producing a good crop and plenty of teaching opportunities. Martina has been a great help with running the apiary and was made a demonstrator, where her inquisitive nature has introduced different ideas and points for discussion. Andrew Huntly has also

joined the management team and helps me between meetings as well as making syrup. We have recently set up an apiary maintenance team that includes Chris Thomas and Neil Mariner. We need a safe apiary where we have space around the hives with no trip hazards, but I prefer to see opportunities for wildlife to thrive, rather than some of the closely mown apiaries I often see elsewhere.

We had a well-known beekeeper, **Randy Oliver**, visit us to see how our bees, hives and methods are very different from his in California. I first met him in 2016 and this is the first time he has seen English beekeeping. We were together for 4 days at the National Honey Show, where I hope I weaned him off the idea that all bees are kept in double brood Langstroths.

The **Bee Health Day** was a great success, being full. We had a good crop of people pass through Prelims and I hope they will maintain their enthusiasm through the winter, ready to take a beginner's pack early in the spring. There are three options, bees only, bees and brood box and the same with two supers. If you would like to book one, then please email Martina. **I would like to thank those I have mentioned, plus demonstrators, Richard, Maggie, Murray and Gordon for their help.**

*Roger*

## **Beekeepers' Attitudes to Varroa**

John Futch, a PhD student at Kingston University, London, is looking into how computer vision can help beekeeping. He is currently conducting a survey into beekeepers' attitudes towards varroa.

The survey is available at [https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_80vE6ONgUFZiljU](https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_80vE6ONgUFZiljU). John says "it is non-judgemental and does not ask questions about losses, just about monitoring and treating techniques, and how open the beekeeper is to using computer technology e.g. a smartphone, to help monitor varroa levels. The survey is completed anonymously, and no personal identifying information is captured. The survey will close on the **16<sup>th</sup> December 2023**."

He would be extremely grateful if members would please complete the survey.



## Asian Hornet Action in Jersey

Following a recent visit to Jersey, I spent an afternoon with John De Carteret of the Asian Hornet Action Team. I took a few photos and hope that by sharing them, it may help with identifying this invasive species, which is undoubtedly on its way to our area.



An Asian hornets' nest with the outer covering removed. It shows the thick insulated roof with 'plates' of comb and the 'stalks' holding them in place.



The circular brood pattern shows white capped brood.



Drone brood comb is common at this time of year ensuring newly mated queens have time to search for a winter hibernation site. All other hornets die.

Bait traps are put out in early Spring to catch the newly emerged queens before they start building nests.



A drone (stingless) sitting on my finger.  
Workers have 5mm stings.  
NOTE the yellow legs (appropriately called “yellow legged hornets” in the USA).

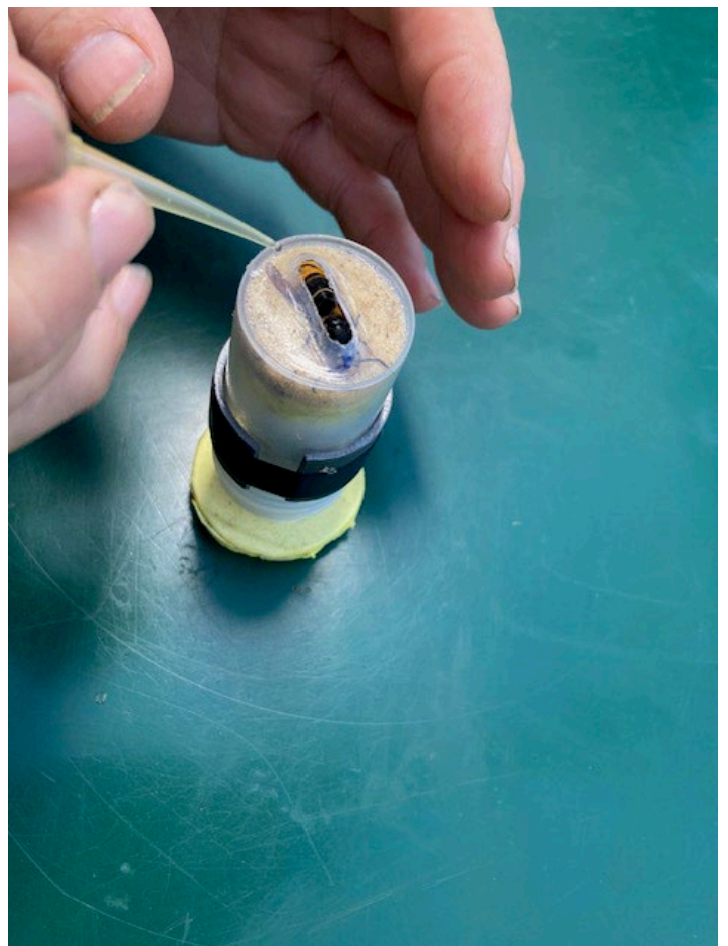


A cage of Asian hornets kept alive with food and water for research purposes.



### Tracking:

A worker is put in a converted homemade queen catcher.





Glue is dabbed onto its thorax.



A colourful silver ribbon is attached (cut from a birthday banner)



The worker is released and the direction it takes followed (with binoculars). The nest is usually within one and a half kilometres of the the bait station. Once found it is destroyed.

Initially it was thought the nests were found only in tall trees, but increasingly they have been found on the ground ,amongst for example, brambles. This poses a danger to the general public as Asian Hornets aggressively defend their nests from 10 metres away!

This year, the small island of Jersey has found over 300 nests and destroyed them. This is undoubtedly due to the concerted endeavours and cooperation between the States of Jersey government, pest controllers and volunteers (who track and locate the nests).

*Kathy Haigh, Bury Bees (all photos are Kathy's)*



## WSBKA Annual Convention

**Not to be missed. For your diary!**

**Saturday 24th February 2024, 9.30am – 4.30 pm**

**Lodge Hill, Pulborough, West Sussex.**

The Convention has again attracted exceptional speakers to cover a wide range of topics with the main lectures being presented by **Professor Lars Chittka**, **Margaret Murdin** and **Lynne Ingram**. There is something for everyone, beginner to expert.

**Lars Chittka** is the author of the book *The Mind of a Bee* and Professor of Sensory and Behavioural Ecology at Queen Mary College of the University of London. He is also the founder of the Research Centre for Psychology at Queen Mary. He has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of animal cognition and its impact on evolutionary fitness studying bumblebees and honeybees. Lars regularly appears in the media, gives lectures and is author/co-author of books and many journal articles. Lars will be giving a main talk on ***The Mind of the Bee***.

**Margaret Murdin** holds a degree in biological sciences, is a Master Beekeeper and holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping. She was previous Chair of the BBKA Trustees and past president of BBKA but for all the high positions she has held, describes herself as an ordinary, practical beekeeper who is naturally interested in furthering the education and training opportunities available to our BBKA members. Margaret is an examiner for all levels of BBKA exams and also moderates the practical exams. Margaret will give a main talk on ***The Queen*** and will also run a seminar on ***Keeping Healthy Colonies***.

**Lynne Ingram** is a Master Beekeeper with over 30 years' experience in beekeeping. She is an active participative member of Somerset Beekeepers Association, where she is very involved in the education of fellow beekeepers and is also the Asian Hornet Co-ordinator. She recently organised the first South West region AHAT training event. Lynne was elected to the BBKA Exam Board in 2019. She is an examiner for the Basic, General Husbandry, Microscopy and Bee Health assessments, as well as for the written Module exams and is also a Correspondence Course tutor. Lynne will give a main talk on the Asian Hornet, titled ***Know your Enemy*** and will also run a seminar on ***The Importance of Drones***.

Apart from the three main lectures, you can choose to attend two out of the six seminars and in between times it is a great opportunity to catch up with beekeeping friends throughout the County and beyond.

Seminars:

- Margaret Murdin - *Keeping Healthy Colonies*



- Lynne Ingram – *The Importance of Drones*
- Sue Remenyi – *Where do Honey Bees travel for pollen? Results of a community study*
- Sue Remenyi – *Wasp control in the apiary*
- Andrew Gibb – *Environment, Bees, Food*
- Andrew Gibb – *Simple Queen Rearing*

The day promises to be both entertaining and stimulating. Tea and coffee will be served during the breaks and also a simple lunch. **Advance booking per person for WSBKA members, £30.** Members of other Associations and non-members, £37. On the day if space allows, £37.

Further details will be available on the WSBKA web site at the end of December and the Booking Form and Programme will be attached to next month's (end of December) newsletter.

## Opportunity – Horsham

### SWAN WALK

**Opportunity to be the next  
Swan Walk Shopping Centre Horsham  
Beekeeper!**



We have successfully worked in partnership with a local beekeeper producing Swan Walk honey on our shopping centre roof.

We now have an opportunity for a new Beekeeper to work with us.  
If you are interested and would like more information,

please contact; 01403 210014  
Donna Newman  
DonnaNewman@swanwalkshopping.co.uk

Bee Cosmetics also make bee bi-products, which Donna is also interested in, so lots of potential at the site.

Ideally, they would like 3 hives (using your own hives); there is a lift to the roof or stairs.

They ask for 1lb honey jar for each hive which they will give to charity. They will need to see a Public Liability Certificate. If you are interested, please contact Donna (details on the flyer). She understands that nothing is likely to happen until early Spring.

## The Teaching Apiary

For ease of teaching, I have always placed hives at the apiary singly and far enough apart so two groups can inspect adjacent hives without getting in each other's way. I do some of my thinking when forcibly taken for walks by border collies, where I thought that many beekeepers place their hives on some sort of **double stand**, as I have for 50+ years, so why not do it at the apiary on a few hives? My stands are simply two concrete blocks, 440x215x100, on end, with wooden rails (or scaffold pipes) between. One block has metal rods or pipes driven into the ground either side to prevent "windscreen wiper" collapse.

I have bought six 75x75x1.8mtr treated fence posts, so we can have three pairs. This will replicate what some members have at home and I hope will allow a group to be taught without inconvenience.

I find this arrangement works well and gives several management options. Although I try to avoid it, there is room for a third colony on a temporary basis, but I often have a nuc in the middle. If I need to move a colony to the side, then all I do is slide it along the rail without lifting. Nice and easy. I store my supers outside in the winter and between two colonies is ideal.

It was suggested the bees at Dounhurst, that are mainly used for Prelims, are transferred to the Roundstreet Common apiary to make it easier to manage. We currently have bees and equipment on two sites, which isn't very easy.

To make these changes, **I need some paving slabs**, both 600 x 600 and 600 x 900 and **6 metal stakes** 2-3 feet long as above. If you have any spare, or know of any that are unwanted, I would appreciate them please.

*Roger*

## Beekeeping

In the last few weeks, a couple of members have asked me about **partially granulated honey**, assuming there is something wrong with it, one asking if syrup had got into the supers. By partially granulated, I mean the formation of large crystals, often at the bottom of the jar, with liquid honey dispersed. Granulation and crystallisation are the same thing.

A comprehensive answer needs someone with more knowledge than me, so I will keep this to the simple and practical level. Honey is largely a mixture of different types of sugars, two of them being in roughly equal quantities, some granulating a lot quicker than others. It is the **balance of sugars** that determines how the honey granulates. The rate of granulation depends on the floral source, some, such as brassicas, granulating very quickly. In general, the quicker the granulation, the finer the crystal. Some honey is so coarse that it's rather like

eating coarse sand. It doesn't look very attractive in the jar and is a problem for amateur beekeepers who sell honey, as when it partly granulates on a retailer's shelf, it looks as if it has "gone bad". Commercially packed honey is heat treated to prevent granulation, so extending the shelf life.

To return any granulated honey to liquid, all it needs is **gentle warming**, though in my experience, partially granulated and coarser grained honey needs longer or a slightly higher temperature. Too high a temperature and you will damage the honey, so be careful. I suggest you obtain figures from reliable sources.

*Roger*

## **WGBKA Shop**

The shop is for members only and open at WGBKA apiary meetings. In an emergency, please contact Martina. You can see the price list at <https://sites.google.com/view/wgbka-shop/home>.

## **WGBKA WhatsApp Group**

If you would like to be a part of this informal members only group, please contact Martina with your mobile number and she will add you to the chat. It's a great way to compare notes, get advice from others and generally keep in touch with members.

## **WGBKA Library**

The Association has a collection of books for loan to members, covering not only many aspects of beekeeping, but also guides to hive products, honey recipes and memoirs. The full list is [here](#); to borrow any of the books, please email Martina [secretary@wgbka.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wgbka.org.uk).