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MEMBERS' COUNTY NEWSLETTER

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association

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Inside this issue:

<i>Canine Partners—Correction</i>	2
<i>WSBKA Annual Convention</i>	3
<i>Chairman's Chat</i>	4
<i>Around the Divisions</i>	5
<i>Dates For Your Diary</i>	5
<i>Asian Hornet Update</i>	6
<i>West Sussex BKA website</i>	7

A Very Happy New Year to our members around the county and to those of you reading our Newsletters from farther afield. May 2024 bring you everything you wish for yourself and your families.

The world is still an uncertain and dangerous place and we should value the peace and stability we all enjoy in the UK, allowing us to enjoy our beekeeping to the full. Once again our thoughts go to the beekeepers in Ukraine.

Many of us are again looking forward to the Convention next month. The organising team has again come up with an outstanding group of speakers. The Auction in April will provide the opportunity to clear out surplus kit from the bee shed or bid for bargains at Brinsbury. And it's never too early to volunteer!!

This is probably the year in which we see the Asian hornet begin to establish itself along the south coast of England, and maybe further inland. We are going to be in the forefront of the onslaught waiting just across the Channel. Let's hope we are ready to provide our bees with the very best protection we can. It's a sobering thought that wherever the hornet has become established beekeepers are spending up to 30% of their income from honey sales on anti-hornet strategies to protect their bees.

Hampshire Beekeepers recently organised a conference to review their experiences of the hornet in their county and invited West Sussex BKA members to join them and to consider what 2024 may have in store for us all. A brief update is on Page 6 of this Newsletter.

I was not beekeeping in 1992 when *Varroa* was first identified in the UK, but I understand many beekeepers left the craft finding the fight against the mite too challenging. Those who persevered with their beekeeping now take *Varroa* control in their stride and we have begun to see a degree of resistance developing in our honey bees, a growing number now not treating for the parasite. Maybe we will experience the same with the Asian hornet—but let's hope we don't have to wait 30 years!

Good Luck with your beekeeping this year. May your colonies be gentle and your honey harvest good.

Canine Partners—Correction



Further to last month's article concerning the recycling of postage stamps for the benefit of this charity; I have been told that the training centre in Heyshott has now been closed.

However, stamps are still being accepted by Canine Partners at their main headquarters in the West Midlands. The address is on their website:

caninepartners.org.uk/recycle-used-postage-stamps/

West Sussex BKA Convention



Saturday 24th February 2024

9:30am – 4:30 pm

Lodge Hill, Pulborough, Watersfield, West Sussex, RH20 1LZ

As promised last month, further details of next month's Convention.

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is pleased to invite beekeepers and those interested in bees and beekeeping to its Annual Convention. The event is designed to suit beekeepers of all standards. We have a renowned group of speakers and an impressive mix of lectures and seminars with something for everyone. We hope you will be joining us.

Reception open from 9:00am. Introduction and Welcome at 9:30am.

Main Lectures

- *The Queen* – Margaret Murdin
- *The Mind of the Bee* – Professor Lars Chittka
- *Know your enemy* – Lynne Ingram

In addition to the Main Lectures there is a choice of seminars

Seminar 1 (You can attend one of these)

- 1) *The Importance of Drones* – Lynne Ingram
- 2) *Where do Honey Bees travel for Pollen* – Sue Remenyi
- 3) *Simple Queen Rearing* – Andrew Gibb

Seminar 2 (You can attend one of these)

- 4) *Keeping Healthy Colonies* – Margaret Murdin
- 5) *Wasp Control in the Apiary* – Sue Remenyi
- 6) *Environment, Food and Bees* – Andrew Gibb

A simple lunch will be included and there will be many opportunities to catch up with fellow beekeepers from around the County and beyond.

It is a full day that promises to be both educational and entertaining. We are hoping for record numbers to attend and encourage you to book early to ensure that you secure a place on your preferred seminars.

Advance booking per person, WSBKA members £30
Members of other Associations and non-members £37
On the day if space allows £37

Full details, speakers' profiles and the booking form are on the website:

www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/convention.html

or contact Viv Sallows on 01293 871092 or 07749 265944

or email: wsbkaconvention@gmail.com

Chairman's Chat



Chairman, Roger Patterson writes for the County News.

Now we are into the new year, we have another beekeeping season to look forward to, not just our bees, but lots of things that surround them, such as wildlife and gardens. It is always worth looking at what bees are foraging on and when, but don't assume that every year is the same, as springs vary considerably in timing. When out, look at what bees are foraging on elsewhere and perhaps make a note, so you can plant good sources of nectar and pollen, or encourage others to do so. Plants in one garden probably don't make much difference, but with many others, they will and it is always interesting to see bees at work. There

are the well-known favorites, such as snowdrops, crocus and winter aconites, as well as flowering trees and bushes that are a good food source.

It is always worth breaking off a few twigs of pussy willow *Salix caprea* and pushing them into damp ground, as they readily strike root. Don't take too many from the same tree, as they vary in timing and are dioecious, meaning trees are male or female, the former producing pollen, the latter nectar. If you do this when out for a walk, push the cuttings into the ground away from the path.

There are plenty of online sales, so make a list of your equipment needs and order in plenty of time. There are some items you never seem to have enough of, such as queen cages, so it's always worth having a few extra. It's very frustrating not to have enough when you need it. And remember the Auction at Brinsbury in April.

If you are a beginner, have a look at last year's colony records. They should give you useful information, where you can build up knowledge on how your bees do in your area.

Roger

chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

Around the Divisions

All Members are welcome to attend any Divisional meeting, but please advise the organiser if you plan to attend.

Central Sussex Division



Wednesday 17th January 'Bee Cosmetics' with Elizabeth & Joseph Ready. A local family-run business in Horsham. The Millennium Hall, Crawley Road, Roffey, Horsham, RH12 4DT at 7:30PM. Further details of the Division's activities from:

secretary@centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk or the Division's website:
<https://centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Chichester Division



Wednesday 17th January 'DIY for Beekeepers' with David Evans, aka The Apiarist, on Zoom at 7:30pm. Further details of the Division's activities from: Cheryl Barton,

secretary@chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk or the Division's website:
www.chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk.

Wisborough Green Division

Full details of the Division's activities from: Martina Hendry, secretary@wgbka.org.uk or the Division's website: www.wgbka.org.uk.

Newsletters may be viewed here: www.wgbka.org.uk/Newsletters.html

Worthing Division



Thursday 11th January 'Preparing for Spring' at The Glebelands Centre, Greystoke Road, Ferring, BN12 5JL at 7:45pm.

Further details of the Division's activities from: Debra Edwards,
dmcd.edwards@gmail.com or the Division's website: www.worthing-beekeepers.org

'Share your Division's activities with readers of the County News'

...and Dates for your Diary



Saturday 24th February - 'West Sussex Beekeepers' Annual Convention'. From 9:30am at Lodge Hill, Pulborough, RH20 1LZ. www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/convention.html

Saturday 27th April - 'West Sussex Beekeepers' 48th Bee Market & Auction'. From 8:30am at Brinsbury Campus, Pulborough, RH20 1DL.

www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/auction.html



Friday 12th - Sunday 14th April - '150 years of the BBKA. Spring Convention', Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB.

www.bbka.org.uk/pages/category/about-spring-convention

We are on facebook so if you would like your events featured please send details to the Editor.



Asian Hornet Update



The BBKA recently held an end of season 'wash up' meeting. You may have been one of the 360 members who joined the Association and a representative from DEFRA.

It was agreed that 2023 was a year of unprecedented numbers of sightings compared with only one single confirmed nest in 2022 and 72 nests in 2023 – all destroyed between 5th July and 15th November. DEFRA had scaled up its response with most sightings in the south-east of England. An improved track and trace protocol has resulted in nests being found in hours now compared to nearly 2 weeks back in 2016.

Breakout groups produced a number of suggestions and recommendations for this year and are being reviewed by the BBKA and DEFRA. Spring trapping has become controversial, as in France where the Asian hornet is established it has not been proved to be effective. In any event, traps should not be placed anywhere near hives or apiaries as they will draw hornets to the bees.



The BBKA is advertising for an Outreach Officer to make and maintain contact with its target audiences. An emergency levy on members will also be proposed at the Annual Delegate Meeting on 13th January with the aim of raising additional funds for publicity and awareness campaigns. A monitoring and tracking risk assessment will be written and insurance cover reviewed. Changes to the Asian hornet website map are being considered as will opportunities for further publicity campaigns following the recent very successful advertisements on buses.

Andrew Durham has agreed with the BBKA to present a '*Special Briefing for Beekeepers - Update for 2024*', on **Tuesday 16th January** at 7:00pm via Zoom. Andrew gave two very informative presentations earlier in the year and his briefing will cover:

- The situation as at the end of 2023
- The effect of beekeeping
- The prospect for 2024 and beyond
- A report on the first year in operation of the new French National Plan for fighting the hornet.

This talk is open to all members via the Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84767178392?pwd=NT1mSPDmsDEuJ06dIOF5EN0X7asjHq.1>

Finally...the '*Asian Hornet Conference*' will be held on **Saturday 17th February**. Speakers are being finalised and more information will be available from the BBKA in the New Year.

Hampshire BKA Conference



Hampshire Beekeepers organised a Conference in November on the Asian hornet in 2023. Originally this was intended for their own members following the sightings of the hornet in the county this year. However, they extended an invitation to West Sussex members and others, and over 100 people attended from the south-west, the south coast, Isle of Wight, Surrey, London and Essex.

The association's comprehensive *Containment Plan* produced by Alan Baxter has been endorsed by the BBKA and will become the model plan for all county BKAs as we move from eradication to containment. Your AHAT Coordinator has details or contact me for a copy.

secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

There is little doubt the south and south-east will shortly see a major threat from these voracious insects to our bees, other pollinators, insects and agriculture. Without a clear Government strategy there is, as yet, no national way forward. Nor is there likely to be for some time.



It is thought queens now over-wintering in the eastern and western extremes of our area will be emerging in the spring. However, it is unlikely the NBU will be able to sustain its limited work on the widening front line. They have already sacrificed monitoring for foul brood diseases in 2023 and local AHATs may be called upon to do more. Skills of tracking, marking and tracing Asian hornets and their nests will need to be acquired. However, Government policy will dictate what we can and cannot do, and who will pay??

Representatives from the BBKA joined the conference via Zoom. Annoyance was expressed by attendees that communications from BBKA and the NBU in 2023 had been vague. The BBKA committed to supporting local BKAs and all beekeepers on the front line and expressed their own frustration with the NBU/ DEFRA communication – or lack of it.



Grateful thanks to Kevin Breen, Chichester BKA Chairman and AHAT Coordinator for details of the Hampshire Asian hornet Conference.

MEMBERS' COUNTY NEWSLETTER

Thanks to all this month's contributors. If you don't have access to the internet and want further details of anything in this newsletter, please contact the Editor & County Secretary. Likewise, if you would like to contribute to future newsletters please send articles and photographs to:

Graham Elliott, Editor & County Secretary, no later than the 20th of the preceding month.
secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

We're on the web:
www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



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