



Thank You

One of the Association's major events is over for another year. The 42nd Bee Market & Auction at Brinsbury was a great success thanks entirely to the great support offered by so many members and others.

This is an annual event that brings all the four divisions together - in a field (or rather, this year, in a car park!) - in West Sussex drooling over brood boxes, supers, honey extracting equipment, and even honey buckets!

Notwithstanding the weather we had an excellent attendance from members and non-members alike who clearly appreciated the opportunity the event offered to buy and sell bees and beekeeping equipment



(and one or two rather dubious lots!). Roger Patterson did his usual excellent job at dispatching 350 lots in just over four hours.



There were brief interruptions while we sheltered from the heavy showers, but it could have been so much worse! So a very big THANK YOU to all of

you involved in the event whether as a steward or by visiting the event to buy and sell.

Graham

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For some years the Association has been using a website hosted by the BBKA. This has served us well and we receive many, many questions and observations from members and non-members alike through this website.

However, your committee thought we could do better and we have now registered our own website: - www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk. This has allowed us to design a website that offers us more flexibility and we hope you like it. Some of the photographs used on the website have been supplied by members, but not all. So if you have an image that says something about beekeeping in West Sussex please send it to me and I'll see if I can use it online.

Please take a look at the new website and return to it **OFTEN**. This will help to improve its status in the internet search engines. Let me know what you think and how the website can be further improved.



With the website come a number of unique e-mail addresses. The Chairman (Jim Norfolk), Membership Secretary (Pauline Ford), Exam Secretary (Roger & Marion Brooks), Treasurer (Steve Boyce) and Secretary (Graham Elliott) can now be contacted by adding [chairman](mailto:chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk), [membershipsecretary](mailto:membershipsecretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk), [examsecretary](mailto:examsecretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk), [treasurer](mailto:treasurer@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk) or [secretary](mailto:secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk) to @westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

Graham

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

Saturday 10th May - Second part of 'Introduction to Beekeeping'. Article in January's newsletter.

Thursday 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th May - Pease Pottage apiary meetings from 5:30pm with some Saturday morning's for people that cannot make evenings.

Details of the Division's events from Melvyn Essen: chairman@centralsussexbka.org.uk or the Central Sussex website: www.centralsussexbka.org.uk

Chichester Division

Tuesday 13th May - 'Swarming'. Fishbourne Centre, Blackboy Lane, Fishbourne, 7:30pm.

Further details from Henrietta Currey: secretary@chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk or the Division's website: www.chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk

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

Wisborough Green Division

Saturday 3rd & 24th May - Apiary meeting at 1:30pm.

Wednesday 14th May - Apiary meeting at 6:30pm.

Details from Sue Elliott: sj.elliott@ukgateway.net or website: www.wgbka.org.uk

Worthing Division

Saturday 3rd, 17th & 31st & Sunday 11th & 25th May - Apiary meetings at Holt Farm 2pm.

Further details from Phil Carter: philange5180@btinternet.com or the WBKA website: www.worthingbeekeepers.org.uk

... and Dates for your Diary

Saturday 3rd May - Reigate Beekeepers' Auction from 11am at Mickleham. <http://reigatebeekeepers.org.uk/2014/01/04/3394/>

Saturday 17th May - Sussex Beekeepers' Sussex Festival of Beekeeping & Auction. Heathfield Community College. www.sussexbee.org.uk

Thursday 5th - Saturday 7th June - South of England Show. Article in March newsletter.

Monday 23rd - Sunday 29th June - National Insect Week at Newbridge Nursery Garden Centre, Horsham. Anyone willing to help at Central Sussex's display on any of the days would be appreciated. Please contact Melvyn by e-mail mrاندmj@gmail.com or mobile 07811 070294.



Jim Norfolk continues his jottings for the County News



This year I went to the BBKA Spring Convention for the first time and found it an interesting and worthwhile experience, although quite expensive. I stayed in one of the rather Spartan halls of residence on site and also enjoyed two very good dinners as well as paying to take part in a couple of workshops. I did however manage to limit my purchases from the many exhibitors in the trade hall to what I would actually need rather than load up the car with supposed bargains.

I am hoping to take the Microscopy Certificate this autumn and so attended an excellent workshop run by Graham Royle and Bob Smith on Anatomy and Dissection as well as one by Graham on taking the exam which provided many useful tips. Then there were the many lectures. One of the ones I would have liked to attend was given by Jochen Pflugfelder on *'Light at the end of the tunnel – towards sustainable solutions against Varroa'*, but this clashed with one of my workshops.

One of the most interesting talks I went to was the report by Catherine Thompson on Wild Honey Bees in Britain. It seems that after much searching in obscure parts of the country, she concluded there aren't any, since not only do feral and hived bees from the same area look similar, they also have the same DNA. This isn't actually that surprising since not only do swarms of bees regularly escape from beekeepers and have been doing so for years but beekeepers also collect many of the swarms which have emanated from feral colonies thus completing the cycle. It occurred to me that what we actually have in any area, is one population of bee colonies, which includes both feral and managed, a mix of all the various sub species of bees introduced over the past century or more since we started trying to improve our bees. This experiment in honey bee hybridization means that our current population of Sussex mongrels, is probably as genetically diverse a collection of European bees as it is possible to have. The various sub species of bees would have originally evolved in their particular areas over the millennia since the last ice age ended and bees moved back into Europe, each sub species having characteristics which suited them to their particular habitats. This has later been overlain by the selection pressures imposed by generations of beekeepers.

Selection pressures still operate, of which the most prevalent apart from the vagaries of our climate must be Varroa. I know from observations of feral colonies in my roof that out of three swarms which have settled there, over the last few years, none have endured through to the spring even in the mild winter we just had. One definitely had bad Varroa because I found a lot of DWV bees on the ground. I have since been up a ladder and blocked as many entrances to that corner of my roof as I could find, but I am sure they will be back. It is mostly strong colonies which swarm, so those that defeat beekeepers efforts to control swarming and those that have overwintered in a hole in a wall or tree and then swarmed have what it takes not only to withstand our weather but also must have a degree of tolerance to the many pests and diseases.

I used to subscribe to the view that swarms were in some way inferior to bees produced by manipulation of colonies by beekeepers. They carry disease and we don't know where they have come from or what their temperament is. While this may be true for some, I suspect most are very good bees. I picked up a small swarm very late last year and I didn't think it would come through winter as it hadn't built up much but it has now expanded to fill the brood box and currently has 2 supers. I didn't treat it with Apiguard and when I applied oxalic acid, I only got a moderate mite fall and have seen no Varroa since.

So rather than being a poor option, I now think maybe swarms, particularly from feral colonies, are likely to be the best bees around since they have adapted to the pressures that exist today. They have eluded beekeepers and survived one of the nastiest parasites around as well as our weather and all that the modern world exposes them to.

So is there a lesson in our own colonies? Some clearly have Varroa problems and a couple of mine have quite severe chalkbrood, although I haven't found any Nosema. Funnily enough Varroa seems to be the one pest or disease for which we actually have effective treatments. For the rest the official advice is comb change, re-queen from resistant colonies or the bonfire.

That brings us to Roger's talk on Bee Improvement for All. Now is the time to implement his advice and breed from the best half to re-queen the poorest half. While it seems a good, kind thing to do to persevere and try to save a weak colony in the end it is going nowhere and the space would be better taken by offspring from our best queens and by the best of the many swarms which are already appearing, particularly if they are from feral colonies.

I understand one of the main points of Dr Pflugfelder's talk was that the genes that enable bees to cope with Varroa are already out there in our local population, we just need to recognise which colonies have them and breed from them. His suggestion which I have since read in the original publication (REVUE SUISSE D'APICULTURE - No 5 / 2013) is to select colonies in which Varroa numbers build up only slowly and re-queen from these.

Wishing you a successful season with your bees.

Jim

chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



Bees For Sale

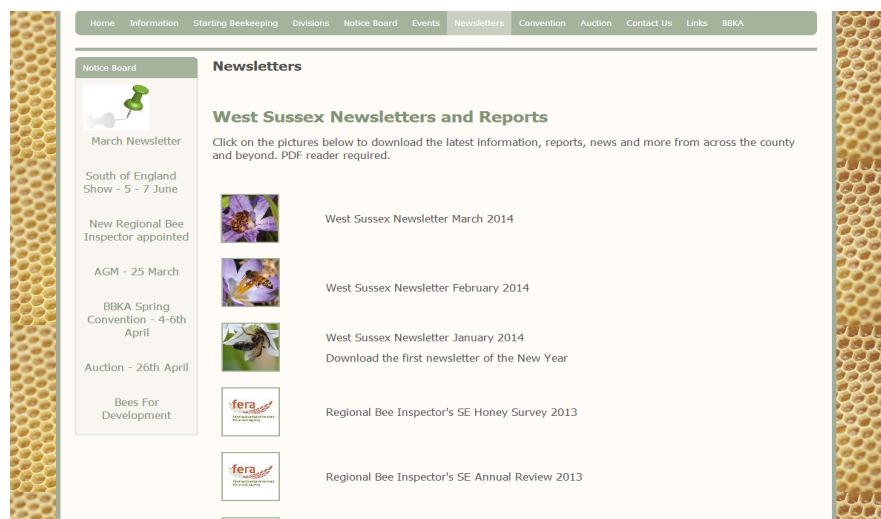


Well behaved and quiet bees for sale. Locally bred. 5 frame nuc. I will get the bee inspector in before selling to check all my bees including the nucs. Boxes are not included. Price £25 per frame + £25 per queen.

I can be contacted either on maartenboers1@hotmail.com or 07989116429

Maarten

And Finally...



TAKE A LOOK at the Association's new website

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

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

Previous newsletters from the last 12 months are available on the website.

