

September 2014



MEMBERS' COUNTY NEWSLETTER

# West Sussex Beekeepers' Association

## National Honey Show

We hope you're having a bumper honey harvest this summer and as you admire the hard work of your bees (and yourselves of course) do start to think about how you can further celebrate not just by eating it all. With stunning presentation walk away with prizes at both your local honey shows and also at the National Honey Show.

If you're new to all this, your local shows are a good place to start. Talk to all the other exhibitors, they are usually willing to share their tips for getting the last air bubbles out etc. etc. Offer to steward for the judges, and observe what they are looking for. The same goes for county shows



and also the National Honey Show. We always welcome offers of help, so do contact us if you are interested in stewarding! It's a good way to learn. The best judges have a long history of exhibiting, stewarding and willing-

ness to learn as much as possible, and have a lot to offer.

When all the judging is over by Thursday (sometimes late) lunchtime, we still have the rest of the show to enjoy with the full programme of lectures and workshops, and the golden opportunity to browse the wide range of show stands, as well as collect any pre-ordered goodies, saving the cost of carriage. The Schedule should land on your doormat any minute now if you are a National Honey Show member. It's not too late to join and you can download a form (and/or the Schedule itself) from the website [www.honeyshow.co.uk](http://www.honeyshow.co.uk). Membership also includes entry to the Show and attendance at any of the lectures for all three days.

***Fiona & Helen***

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## 'Rosemary & Porkbelly' visit Central Sussex Division

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While doing our show at the Bluebell Railway Food Festival on Horsted Keynes' station platform we were approached by 'Rosemary & Porkbelly' and were asked if they could do a feature on us for their online Food Travel & People magazine.

Well two weeks ago they came to our apiary meeting, had a look through some bees, did some honey harvesting and tried some Honey & Ginger, Devonshire Honey Cake and Honey & Peanut biscuits made by our members.



Rosemary commented, "‘Enthralling, fascinating, engrossing, enjoyable’ – these are just a few of the words the members use to describe their hobby and when it comes to tasting the fruits of their (and the bees'!)labours there are even more superlatives. And their admiration for the bees themselves shines through'.

Read Rosemary's full length feature on their visit to our training apiary at [www.rosemaryandporkbelly.co.uk](http://www.rosemaryandporkbelly.co.uk).



**Melvyn Essen** [chairman&centralsussexbka.org.uk](http://chairman&centralsussexbka.org.uk)

*Photographs courtesy of 'Rosemary & Porkbelly'*

## Bees For Sale

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2 colonies plus equipment (Langstroth) for 5 hives. 4-frame extractor, veils, bits and pieces all in small shed (for sale as part of price) on small friendly market garden (not for sale) in Mid-Sussex. Ring Geoffrey Main, Central Sussex BKA, 01444 831562 (not Sundays) £800 ono.



## BBKA Worker Bee

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The latest edition of the 'Worker Bee' should have dropped into your inbox recently if you have registered your email address with the BBKA. If not you can do so on line.

The publication will be available to view on the BBKA's website in due course.

## Around the Divisions

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

### Central Sussex Division

**Saturday 6th & 20th September** - Apiary meetings at Peas Pottage training apiary 10am - 1pm.

**Saturday 13th September** - Southwater Church Fete.

**Saturday 20th September** - West Grinstead Ploughing Match off Robin Hood Lane, Warnham.

Further details from Melvyn Essen: [chairman@centralsussexbka.org.uk](mailto:chairman@centralsussexbka.org.uk) or the Central Sussex website: [www.centralsussexbka.org.uk](http://www.centralsussexbka.org.uk)



### Chichester Division

**Tuesday 9th September** - *Agro-Chemical Update* by Graham Phillippo of Bartholomew's Agri Foods Ltd. 7:30pm at the Fishbourne Centre, Blackboy Lane, Fishbourne, Chichester, PO18 8BE. Further details from Henrietta Currey: [secretary@chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:secretary@chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk) or the Division's website: [www.chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Wisborough Green Division

**Sunday 7th, 14th, 21st September** - Meetings at 2:30pm at the Division's teaching apiary.

Details from Sue Elliott: [sj.elliott@ukgateway.net](mailto:sj.elliott@ukgateway.net) or website: [www.wgbka.org.uk](http://www.wgbka.org.uk)

### Worthing Division

**Saturday 13th September** - Honey Show at the Findon Sheep Fair.

**Wednesday 24th September** - Apiary meeting at Holt Farm. 5:30pm.

Further details from Phil Carter: [philange5180@btinternet.com](mailto:philange5180@btinternet.com) or the WBKA website: [www.worthingbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.worthingbeekeepers.org.uk)



### ... and Dates for your Diary

**Friday 26th - Sunday 28th September** - BIBBA 50th Anniversary Conference. Article in July's newsletter.

**Monday 6th October** - London Honey Show. Article in the June newsletter.

**Sunday 26th October** - Dorset BKA Convention - Article in last month's newsletter.

**Thursday 30th October - Saturday 1st November** - 83rd National Honey Show. Lead article in this newsletter and last month's edition.

*Chairman, Jim Norfolk continues his jottings for the County News*



Following on from last month's comments on bumblebees, I contacted the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and they implied the lack of bumblebees was due to the fact that they had produced queens early and were going for a second brood in much of the country. This sounds fine and I have seen a few more bumblebees recently. However talking to another local beekeeper they have also noted the shortage of bumblebees. I have observed two consequences of the lack of bumblebees, firstly the set on my outdoor tomatoes has been very poor and secondly runner bean flowers are being pollinated by honeybees rather than bumblebees. I also note a relative scarcity of butterflies and even wasps are not a problem where I am this year. I am left wondering why in a bumper summer for my bees, other insects have been less plentiful.

Enough negativity! What a year it has been. Last year I averaged around 25 lbs of honey per colony. This year I am currently averaging over 60 lbs per colony with some breaking the 100 lb mark for the first time. I have recently put wet supers back on colonies above small holes in the crown board, a tip I picked up from one of Tom Moore's talks and yet there has still been so much nectar, that in some colonies they have moved it up above the crown board. Some colonies have more than one super with uncapped honey and I am juggling frames around to reduce the supers to one per hive. The return of proper English summer weather should drive the bees back inside to start to use up their stores. I really want to get the surplus honey off before starting Apiguard, since one or two colonies are building up significant mite drops, suggesting I should not delay much longer. While I have been monitoring some colonies for *Varroa* drop all year, I renewed all the counting trays at the beginning of August and have been monitoring all colonies since then. What struck me is that some colonies have shown a rapid build up in mite drop over the month while others have continued to drop a few mites each day with minor fluctuations. I have started to treat those colonies which have an increasing mite drop, but what of the others? Are they *Varroa* tolerant bees and as such do they actually need treating? It's a sort of catch-22 situation, don't treat and see what happens, by which time it will be too late to treat with Apiguard. Fortunately we have MAQS and even Apistan/Bayvarol available so if I don't treat and *Varroa* gets out of control I have fall back treatments which work in cooler weather. It could be argued that I should treat all but then I won't know which colonies are the resistant ones. Last year I treated all but found that many dropped very few *Varroa* after Apiguard, as the pre-treatment mite drops suggested. If we never allow bees to look after themselves, we will continue to perpetuate susceptible bees. European honeybees are evolving to beat *Varroa*, they just need a little help to get there. At the moment I am dividing my colonies into three groups; treat with Apiguard; wait and see, and don't treat. This is not so much to save money but to see how far some of my bees have come in their battle against *Varroa*.

This year I have come across several colonies where a queen cell has emerged, but even after several weeks there has been no sign of the queen, nor any laying, but the cells were all polished and ready and the colony was calm and well behaved. Queenless colonies with no brood can become laying worker colonies and I have encountered two of those this year, one of which was a swarm. The fact that laying workers have not developed suggests there must be a queen there. I wanted to unite one of these non-laying colonies with a nuc in which I had reared a laying queen from one of my good colonies. Convention says find and remove the unwanted queen and unite with newspaper. I couldn't find the queen and even doubted her existence, so decided to try something different. I first moved the non-laying colony 6 feet away but left the two supers behind on the site. I then transferred the frames in my nuc into a brood box with a dummy board and united it over newspaper and a queen excluder above the two supers.

Bees moved from the old brood box back to the hive and over the course of the next few days, the newspaper barrier was duly breached by the bees. I then went through the old brood box which was, by then, down to a few hundred bees and there among them was a queen, barely larger than a worker. I removed her and shook the rest of the frames out in front of the combined hive, using the better frames to fill out my brood box. A few days later, I rebuilt the combined colony with the brood box at the bottom and found my new queen alive and well.

I am not sure if this method is in the books but it seems a way of uniting if you can't find the queen you want to destroy. Interesting to see if this was a one-off or whether it works in more colonies. I have one more pair of colonies to try it on, an ex-swarm and a non-laying colony with an elusive queen. Both are currently side-by-side. I am going to try this one the other way up with the queen in her own box at the bottom and unite the super from the non-laying colony over the top with a queen excluder and newspaper, before moving the non-laying hive away to bleed off the bees and hopefully find the queen. I can then unite the remaining bees.

**Jim**

[chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk)



**We're on the web:**

**[www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk](http://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](mailto:secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk)

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

