

West Wilts BKA News

News, the planned activities and some advice for members of West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



Getting ready for winter

Your bees should be hard at work collecting the last of the forage from the ivy and anything else that is still in bloom, but it is also the time of year when we have our traditional shows. West Wiltshire BKA held its show last month and the Wiltshire County Show (Bee and Honey Day) and the National Honey Show are both this month.

Do try to make it to the Wiltshire event in the Corn Exchange in Devizes on 8th October. It isn't all about showing – there are trade stands, lectures and the chance to meet up with old friends and make new ones.

This month's newsletter has notice of some meetings over the coming months: a couple of Zoom lectures and an open forum meeting for the branch to follow-on from the Annual General Meeting. There is also some news about some West Wiltshire BKA clothing...something to consider when Christmas is coming perhaps? We also include a review of our honey show and the County health day.

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The 'fun bits': news and reports.



Diary of events

October 2022

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – 8th October (Saturday), all day; Corn Exchange, Devizes

WWBKA Lecture – 18th October (Tuesday), 7.30 pm by Zoom; Margaret Murdin NDB, Selecting the right qualities in your bees

National Honey Show – 27th-29th October (Thursday-Saturday), all day; Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher

November 2022

West Wilts BKA Annual General Meeting – 7th November (Monday), 7.30 pm; Bratton Jubilee Hall

December 2022

WWBKA Lecture – 20th December (Tuesday), 7.30 pm by Zoom; Martin Hann and Clare Densley (Bee Department Buckfast Abbey), What the books don't tell you and why bees change their minds

Need to know

Asian Hornet Sighting!

An Asian Hornet has been confirmed in the Rayleigh area of Essex. A local member of the Asian Hornet Team reported this using the Asian Hornet app. Bee inspectors are en route to identify the nest.

There is also an unconfirmed report of a further sighting, this time in Portsmouth.

Please be alert and if you have not already done so, download the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app available on Apple and Android.



With apologies to whoever took this excellent photo – I have used it to highlight what Asian Hornets look like (Editor).

Lectures

Selecting the right qualities in your bees, Margaret Murdin NDB – 18th October by Zoom

What the books don't tell you and why bees change their minds, Clare Densley and Martin Hann (Buckfast) – 20th December by Zoom

Hold the date – Monday 7 November – WWBKA Open Forum Meeting

After all the many and various changes over the last two years due to Covid, virtual meetings and an apiary move involving the creation of a brand-new training and meeting facility, your committee is keen to get feedback and identify what you as members want from your hobby club. It is therefore intended to hold an open forum meeting for all members in Bratton Village Hall straight after the Annual General Meeting at 7.30pm on Monday 7 November 2022 over refreshments.

To this end, it is intended to complete the formal business of the AGM as expeditiously as possible before moving on to an open discussion about what activities the membership wants – or does not want. Your committee has an open mind. Please put the date in your diary and join us to voice your opinions at this open forum – face to face!

Christmas is coming - West Wilts BKA Clothing!

Since we now have a logo, we have investigated getting some West Wiltshire BKA clothing. We have arranged for a local company to digitize the logo and so we can now order clothing from them. We have decided on polo shirts and baseball caps with the logo, which is shown in the image, but if people want other items, please let us know.

We have selected a design of polo shirts that is from a quality maker and is available in men's and ladies' styles. We have even chosen a design with a cuff on the sleeve to minimise the chance of a bee creeping up a sleeve (but we won't guarantee they are bee-proof)!

We have chosen the baseball caps so they will go under a 'fencing hood' beekeeping veil to keep the veil away from the face and provide some shade for your eyes so you can see what you are doing on those sunny days.

We have gone for Navy blue polo shirts, but other colours are available. They cost £12.75 each. The baseball caps come in a range of colours and are £7.50 each. If you would like a polo shirt or cap, please let us know at Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com and when we get enough requests, we will put an order in. The polo shirts are available in sizes from XSmall to 5XL for men and XXS-XXL for ladies. The caps are a single size and adjustable.



Good to know

Wiltshire Honey Bee Health Day – 3rd September

Saturday 3rd September saw the Wiltshire Honey Bee Health Day which is a free event held every few years to educate beekeepers on the latest diseases and pests facing British Beekeepers. Wiltshire BKA organised the event, but we had attendees from all over, including Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset and even South Wales! Seventy people had registered to attend, and we heard talks and demonstrations from the National Bee Unit staff (part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency) who conduct research and inspect hives for notifiable diseases and pests.

The Honey Bee Health Day is one of those very rare occasions when it is possible to see, handle and smell(!) frames that are infected with foulbroods under controlled conditions and appropriate supervision. This gives you a chance to actually see the distorted larvae and poor brood pattern of European Foulbrood and the stringiness, sunken cappings and remains of pupae infected with American Foulbrood.

This was supplemented with four excellent lectures:

- Exotic Pests, especially Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps, but also included the latest information on Asian Hornet incursions into the UK over recent years. This included some of the latest findings and the projected future for the UK and how we can all be observant to prevent this invasive species becoming established and some of the latest updates to the reporting mechanisms for Asian Hornet.
- The National Bee Unit, the main Foulbroods (European and American) and the main causes of colony loss over winter (Spoiler alert: They are Varroosis, Starvation and Drone Laying Queens!). This was a precursor to the chance to see infected frames later in the day but provided many good pointers for people to maximise the chance of their colonies making it through the Winter.
- Varroa, which was a thought-provoking review of chemical and biotechnical control methods for varroa control based upon the latest scientific findings and his own personal experience. This simple approach provided direct to beekeepers to plan their strategies to deal with Varroa and decide a logical way forward. This included a comprehensive review of the different medicines that are available to reduce the varroa load and the pros and cons of the physical varroa removal methods. Overall, it was a commonsense approach that increased the chance of colony survival.
- A detailed description of apiary hygiene. The summary of this talk was best given as “Any bee can catch Foulbrood, but a bad beekeeper will spread foulbrood”. The significance of this is that there is no shame in getting a foulbrood, but it is the beekeeper’s action that dictate on how far and how fast it can be spread around apiaries. This lecture gave hygienic techniques to use during hive inspections and where any shortcuts can be made.

Along with the chance to meet up with fellow beekeepers from across the country this was an excellent event, and the venue was most suitable with a large well-ventilated hall, a side room for the diseased frames and a well-equipped kitchen to ensure that lashings of tea and coffee were available.

West Wiltshire BKA Annual Honey Show – 10th September 2022

The annual branch honey show was on 10th September at the Jubilee Hall, Bratton. We had a bit of a discussion whether it should go ahead during the period of National Mourning, but we decided that since this was routine branch business we should continue.

The day was well supported with 107 entries spread across 26 of the 27 classes. The only class that didn't have an exhibit was the Young Member class, but since in previous years we had several classes where there were no entries we think we have done very well – indeed it is a few years since we have had that many entries and some years we have not been able to award some of the trophies...that wasn't the case this year.

We kept the tradition of open judging, so whilst this takes slightly longer, it supplies direct feedback and a running commentary of what the judges are looking for. This means any improvements can be made in time for the County Show! The standard of entries was good and there was excellent discussion and camaraderie.

The Branch also funded a buffet lunch including some excellent quiches and some sausage sandwiches, and as ever there was lashings of tea and coffee.



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