

West Wilts BKA News

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



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How lovely it is to see signs of spring! The flowering cherry in my garden is full of blossom and I really hope that there will be no sudden frost to burn the petals. We are reminded to check whether our bees need fondant – my bees have ventured out, but the weather has turned cold again - forage may be a little limited – and it's still too cold locally to open the bees up and see what really is going on.

Dinner at The Duke: What a fantastic evening at The Duke for the annual branch dinner – great food and great company, was, I am sure, enjoyed by all. Many thanks go to the committee members involved in the organisation of the event.

Newsletter email address – apologies – I am having problems setting up access to this email account – a solution is on the way – please accept my apologies if you have been waiting for me to respond.....

Diary of events

April 2023

BBKA Spring Convention - 21-23 April 2023 (Thursday to Saturday), Harper Adams University, Shropshire

June 2023

Royal Bath and West Show – 1st-3rd June 2023 (Thursday to Saturday), Royal Bath and West Showground, near Shepton Mallet

September 2023

Frome Cheese Show – 9th September (Saturday), West Woodlands Showground, Nr Frome

West Wiltshire BKA Show – 16th September (Saturday), Bratton Jubilee Hall

October 2023

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – 7th October (Saturday), Devizes Corn Exchange, 10 am – 4 pm

National Honey Show – 26th-28th October (Thursday to Saturday), Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey

November 2023

WWBKA AGM, week beginning 6th November, TBC

Need to know

Reminder - BBKA Spring Convention 2023 Booking opened on 31st January.....

Friday 21st – Saturday 22nd – Sunday 23rd April 2023 at Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB (Bumper Trade Show Saturday 22nd)

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts

For further information, and to book, please visit the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

Good to know

Many thanks to a member for the following thought provoking article:-

A New Approach to Varroa Treatment?

Some of you may have noticed that there seems to be a growing body of research and articles about the use of heat, and specifically hyperthermia, to reduce the number of varroa mites in managed honeybee colonies. I have found it interesting, but hadn't, until this evening, seen any practical applications for the hobby beekeeper.

I follow some beekeeping channels on YouTube (I know, I know – sharp intakes of breath and disapproving shakes of the head!) and this evening there was a live-stream done by one of the German beekeepers whose content I have found well-informed and interesting: [Youbee Live bei mir im Studio Frage Antwort](#) (here's a link for those who are interested, but only of use to German speakers, I'm afraid)

He had invited, as guests, the founders of an Austrian company who have recently launched a product that uses hyperthermia inside the brood nest to treat varroa.

Essentially what they've made are sheets of foundation embedded with foil sheets printed with PTC heating elements. The foundation is placed in standard size frames using clips and used by the bees to raise brood in the usual way. The PTC elements can be heated to raise the temperature of the frames and hold them at 41C for a period of time. The heat source can be batteries, car battery, mains power, or even solar panels mounted on the roof of the hive!

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Automatic Zoom

CONSTRUCTION OF THE WAX FOUNDATION

1
The metal rails in the hive are used for power transmission, as spacers and as a transport lock

2
A plug is used for the safe and trouble-free supply of electricity to the hive. A voltage of 12V is required for the supply.

3 OPTION
Our control unit can optionally be used for fully automatic operation.

4 OPTION
Supply box for battery (optional: transformer), control unit, charge regulator

5 OPTION
Hive cover made of larch wood with integrated solar cell with an output of 40Wp. Fit's for DN, EM, Zander, Dadant Blatt and Dadant US.

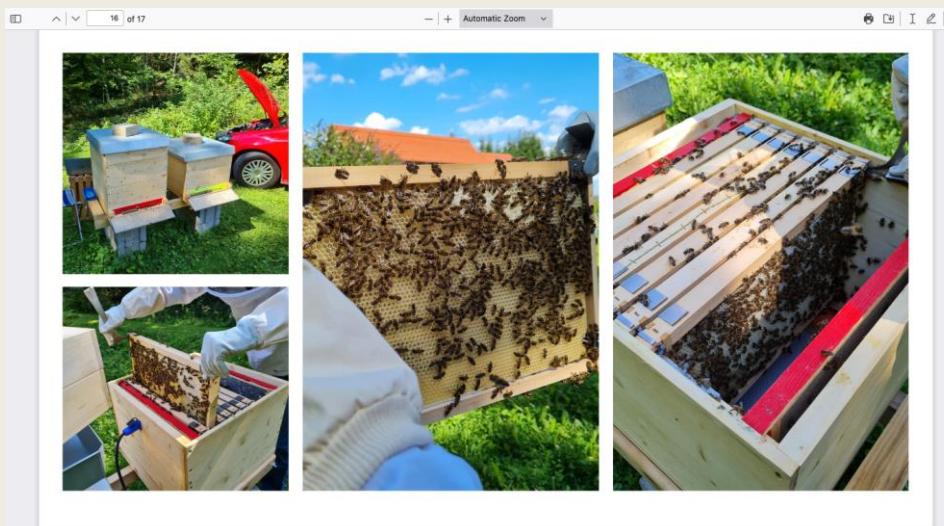
youbee

The research has shown that heating the brood to 41C for 2 – 2.5 hours is highly effective in killing immature varroa mites and interrupting their reproductive cycle, while the brood remains undamaged. Below 41C the varroa mites are relatively unharmed, and above 42C the fertility of honeybee drones is impaired; in laboratory conditions it has been demonstrated that precise temperature control and duration of the heating are critical success factors. The manufacturers say that typically this heating exercise is carried out several times in the season – once in the spring and again in the summer, and 2 or 3 times in the autumn.

There were a lot of questions from the live-stream viewers, some of whom were understandably sceptical. A big stumbling block for many of them was the price, which at €80 per hive, not including plugs, transformer and so on, is pretty steep. Several asked questions about independent testing of the product, and it would appear that at this stage there has been relatively little. The developers said that independent testing is currently being conducted by a well-respected research team at a Rumanian university.

I was concerned about how the risk of diseases such as AFB and EFB can be managed in this system. The foundation into which the conductors are embedded is wax, rather than plastic, and therefore can't be sterilised. At €12 per frame they're not a piece of kit one will want to be rotating out very often!

The system is currently only available for the frame sizes most commonly used in Germany and the US, including the Langstroth and Dadant. At the moment it's relatively expensive (e.g €120 for a complete Dadant system including transformer) and I'm not convinced that it's been around for long enough to provide longitudinal evidence of its efficacy. That said, I was really interested in the concept and I'm going to be watching its development with an open mind. If it can be shown to be effective in the medium to long term, and the concerns about price and disease risk can be addressed, I think this might be, if not a game-changer, certainly a valuable addition to the armoury of varroa treatments available to the hobby beekeeper. I would love to try it in one of my own colonies – if only because I want to have a WBC with solar panels on the roof!



(Photos reproduced with permission of YouBee GmbH, www.youbee.at)

One of our members has kindly offered to share her experiences as a novice bee keeper in the following article.....

In the Bee ginning

In 2013, my father and I attended a beekeeping demonstration in Yeovil. He was interested in keeping bees in his much loved garden and wanted to know more. At the garden centre, the beekeeper encouraged us to look for the queen. My father was unable to see her and this caused him palpable concern. As we drove home, he was quieter than usual and the following day announced he wouldn't be pursuing the hobby because his eyesight was too poor.

I was sad to see the spark of enthusiasm go out but nothing could persuade him to change his mind. Two years later, after a short illness, he passed away.

One afternoon in early 2022, I was discussing my dad and the garden centre experience with my cousin who has kept bees for fifty years. "Why don't you have a go?" he said. "You'll love it."

I thought about it on the way home. My dad had inspired and encouraged me to do so many things. Was this something I could do for him? A continuation of his rich and wise legacy?

I wasn't so sure as I arrived for my first session of the beginners course at Larkrise Community Farm on 22nd February 2022. There were about sixteen of us and everyone else seemed to have bees or hives or some sort of beekeeping experience. As the lights dimmed, I decided to keep an open mind. If I was going to do beekeeping, I needed to try it on for size first. I had never been near a colony of bees. I had never been stung. I didn't know if I was allergic to bee stings and I didn't know how much time bees needed. I also didn't know whether my shady garden would be suitable as it is close to a main road popular with dog walkers and cyclists.

"Do you have bees?" one of the beekeepers asked me one evening after the lecture. I wondered whether I might be driven out as an imposter when I confessed that I didn't and worse than that, not knowing whether I would get any.

"You're doing it the right way," he said when I explained my position. "So many people get bees and a hive and buy all the equipment before they really know what they are doing or whether it is for them."

It was a sunny day cut through with a bitter North wind when I went to the opening of the new Apiary at Thoulstone on 2nd April 2022. The bees were still tucked up for winter and after some brief speeches, the ribbon was cut and the new club house pronounced officially open. Everyone was sensibly cocooned in warm clothing as we drank tea and ate cake outside. I had never seen so much cake.

After the classroom sessions, beginners were encouraged to attend six weeks of apiary sessions. The first one, scheduled at Thoulstone for 9th April 2022, was put back two weeks as it was too cold for the bees.

And then on 23rd April 2022, we were on. My first apiary session

It was a gloriously warm day. I didn't have a bee suit but I was able to borrow one at the apiary. This was it. Would I get stung to death? Would I run away screaming when surrounded by a black fuzz of honey bees? I could not have been made to feel more welcome. I joined a group of three led by an experienced beekeeper who was kind and patient and keen to share his knowledge.

I did not run off across the fields screaming and nor did I get stung. I decided the best thing to do was listen, watch and observe and despite not really knowing what to do with the hive tool and smoker given to me, I didn't need to know. I was there to learn.

Afterwards there was tea in the clubhouse. People nodded and understood when I said how I wasn't going to get bees this year as I wanted to complete the apiary sessions first and see whether beekeeping was for me.

During that long, hot summer, I listened, watched and observed. I learned about the construct of a hive – completely new to me. I learned about swarms, brood and capping and what to look for as we checked the frames. I watched new born fluffy bees emerging from their cells and I learned that all I needed when I got bees, time wise, was one hour a week. I learned which hives and frames the experienced bee keepers preferred and I got stung!

I loved arriving at the gate of the farm on alternate Saturday afternoons and smelling the honey and wax in the warm summer air. Just before my third session, I invested in a hive tool and my very own beekeeper's suit. It presented a challenge in itself when I unzipped the hood to wash it and couldn't get it back on but a quick look at a YouTube channel and a call to my hoped for mentor helped with that one.

In the late summer, two beekeepers visited my garden and reassured me it was suitable for bees. I was pleased for I had learned that keeping hives in another location might be a challenge. I had seen how heavy the Supers were when full of honey and how important it was to keep equipment near the hives. It seemed logical to keep it close to home.

Just before Christmas 2022, I bought a ready to construct National Standard hive and a smoker from Maisemore apiaries. It sits in boxes in the hall waiting for the day in early Spring when it will be put together and placed outside in the sunny spot by the peonies.

I plan to be ready for bees in early May 2023. And I'm quite sure, quite sure, that my dad will be watching.....

Thanks for sharing this with us – we look forward to hearing more about your bee keeping journey

Beekeeping supplies.



For Your Beekeeping Supplies

Your local supplier providing a service for:

- All Thorne's supplies
- BBWear suits – try before you buy
- Second hand kit bought and sold
- Available to attend your association, apiary meetings
 - Supporting Trainers, Improvers, Newbies
 - Payment by BACS, card, cash, cheque
 - Deliveries – subject to distance, order size

Please email your order or phone so we can arrange an appointment for you to visit to discuss what you need.

sales@thebeedepot.com
07879 811967
01373 430458
Diane Sleigh
The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP
what3words poetry.unto.driveway

Contacts and services

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WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

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WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

Services available to members

The following services are provided by West Wilts BKA to members:

Bee Bank (for sale or purchase of queens, nucs and colonies). Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the Chair at Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com or 07711 018440 for details.

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Library: Contact our Librarian (either direct or through the Secretary)

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Newell 01373-825560 or sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on  : West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association