

# HONEYCRAFT

*October 2022*



*Dorset County Beekeepers Association*



## Editor's note

What a wonderful summer—as long as you were not hoping to grow abundant crops of flowers, vegetables or grass! All over the Blackmore Vale where I live, and therefore probably elsewhere in Dorset, farmers have been using up precious stocks of winter feed to keep their animals properly fed in the fields at a time when nature might be expected to provide enough food. However, the branch reports in this issue indicate that our bees have managed to find enough to forage on so that there has been a decent honey harvest for most people, even if this necessitates autumn feeding to make sure that bees get through the winter safely.

The branch reports have confirmed that life has largely returned to its pre-Covid pattern—helped by wonderful weather, three major shows have been held bringing some successes and perhaps some disappointments, while apiaries have been visited and social events have provided much enjoyable social interaction.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find that Kevin Pope has provided an overview of the season, there is an update on the South West Beekeepers Forum, the unadopted minutes of the recent Dorset BKA meeting are published and Stephen Potts has written a very informative article on bee cells, while Gordon Grant describes what he is doing to keep his bees well protected over the winter.

I hope that you enjoy it all.

*Tim Villiers*

P.S. On a personal note, I no longer have any bees and having been the editor of HoneyCraft for almost five years, I believe that the time has come for the magazine to have a new editor. So I have informed the committee that I wish to stand aside at the AGM next March—therefore this is YOUR OPPORTUNITY to take on this enjoyable (mostly!) and not too onerous task. All you need is some enthusiasm and access to a computer!

Please contact me (07979 650579) if you want more information about the role and I will talk you through what the editor does. Otherwise contact your branch or the Dorset BKA secretary to VOLUNTEER; their details can be found on p. 25 .

## Index

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Editor's note	2	Winter insulation	23
Message from the Chair	3	What's on?	24
Dorset BKA minutes	4-6	Who is who	25
The Inspector reports	8		
SW Beekeepers Forum	9-10		
Dorchester & Weymouth BKA	11-13	<b>Advertisers</b>	
East Dorset BKA	14	Becky's Beezzzs	3
Nat. Honey Monitoring Scheme	14	Maisemore	7
North Dorset BKA	16	The Bee Shop	10
BBKA module courses	17	Beekeeping Supplies UK	15
Sherborne BKA	19	Northern Bee Books	17
West Dorset BKA	20	Thorne	18
The Honeybee cell	21-22	Caddon Hives	19

## Chairman's message

What a peculiar beekeeping season it has been!

I seem to have been the recipient of a never-ending stream of messages regarding queens behaving badly (or disappearing altogether), sudden empty hives with untouched stores remaining and, as I write, a plague of wasps like no other.

It brings home the need for each and everyone of us to improve our knowledge either through the multitude of internet material available or — most importantly — talking to each other and sharing information and stories. Where and when we have improved things, it is our duty to pass the knowledge gained onto our colleagues. The Basic Assessment and module exams that the BBKA offers (see page 18) are very good ways of expanding our knowledge with the challenge of being tested on it. Dorset BKA has been keen to support Cornwall BKA in lobbying the BBKA to retain its written exams rather than converting everything to be done on a laptop! Watch this space.

And finally, I implore you to volunteer your services to your local association over the winter. However limited your time, a few hours cutting grass or trimming hedges at your apiary is a great way to lend your support. The memberships of many of our associations are thriving but one in particular is not, and I look forward to attending Sherborne BKA for their AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> October to show support from Dorset BKA to one of its fledgling organisations in a time of need when difficult decisions may need to be made. After all, that's what it's all about isn't it?

Have a peaceful winter.

*Ivor Kemp*

# Becky's Beezzz Ltd



## FOR ALL YOUR BEEKEEPING NEEDS...

At Beckys Bees we sell top quality mated queens and nucs as well as stocking a wide range of beekeeping products from cedar hives and varroa treatments to smokers and fuel and bee feed.

### All our nucs comply to the standards set by Defra and NBU.

Manufacturers of Correx boxes that take both national & commercial frames, ventilated for optimum air flow when transporting bees. Light, strong and secure.

**Stockists of** Top quality cedar hives • Polystyrene & Ply Nuc Boxes • Frames & Foundation • Rauchboy Smokers & Smoker Fuel  
Varroa Treatments & Medicines • Vita Gold & Vita Green • Ambrosia Fondant & Syrup • Pollen Substitute • Disposable & Leather Gloves • Bee Suits & Gauntlets • Feeders • Extractors • Jars and lots lots more...



**Distributors of Aulumgaards Ambrosia Beefeed & Enolapi Candipolline Gold, Competitive quotes for pallets orders.**

Visit our online shop for our full range at [www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk](http://www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk)



Discounts given where I can. Please email me at [beckysbeezzz@gmail.com](mailto:beckysbeezzz@gmail.com) or Contact us on **01264 351104 • 07973 423628**

Members of



**BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION**

# **DORSET COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

## **Minutes of a council meeting**

**held at the Colliton Club on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 2:00pm**

### **Present:**

Chair: Ivor Kemp, Secretary: Stephen Potts

Sue Billington, Sally Boxall, Carole Brown, Lesley Gasson, James Nalty, Terry Payne, Chris Slade, Tony Thorp, Judy Easedale

### **Apologies:**

Ben Benjamin, Karen Cadman, Peter Crabbe, Trevor Ford, Sally Leslie, Richard Norman,  
Tim Villiers, Jenny Wellman

### **Minutes of Council Meeting held on 8 January 2022 -- by Zoom.**

Approved by Terry, seconded by Judy

### **Matters Arising**

No matters arising

### **Report of Council Meeting held on 19 May 2022 – inquorate**

Did not require approval as this was a report rather than minutes

### **Matters Arising**

It was suggested that we reduce the size of the quorum required to eight from the present requirement of 10. This will be brought up at the next AGM.

The time and venue of future meetings were also discussed and it was concluded that though “in person” meetings are desirable there are significant reasons to hold future meetings as Zoom meetings. These will be held in the evenings but not on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

### **Treasurer’s Report**

Thank you to all branch Treasurers who responded promptly to invitations to complete and pay their autumn capitation. All funds were received and passed on to BBKA by September 6th.

We have £10,735.28 in the bank and the only outstanding commitment that I know of is to pay for today’s Colliton room hire. Note: Room Hire was £40 and has now been paid.

Since the beginning of the year we have spent £213.63 on hiring halls for various reasons, made a grant of £2,000 to NDBKA, renewed our county Zoom subscription (£143.88) and made a donation of £22 to sponsor a prize at the National Honey Show. Subscriptions have given us a net income of £1164.

### **Exam Secretary’s Report**

Basic assessments were carried out for members as follows:-

East Dorset 5 candidates, West Dorset 6 candidates, North Dorset 2 candidates

West Dorset also entered 12 children for the Junior Certificate and I am delighted they all passed.

The following results were achieved for modules:-

Module 1- One candidate with a credit pass

Module 3 - Two candidates with one pass and one credit pass

Module 6 - Two candidates with passes.

### Membership Secretary's Report

<u>Code</u>	<u>Branch</u>	<u>2018/2019</u>	<u>2019/2020</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	<u>2021/2022</u>
22/11	North Dorset	95	97	107	133
22/12	Dorchester and Weymouth	107	112	125	131
22/13	East Dorset	98	124	135	143
22/15	Sherborne	48	51	53	56
22/16	West Dorset	112	116	113	122
22	<b>Total</b>	460	500	533	585

### County Matters

There was confusion over terminology and it has been decided that:

- BBKA is an "Association".
- Dorset is a "County Association"
- inside the County Association we have "Branches".

### Dorchester and Weymouth Branch

County Show with 170 entries – a record. North Dorset helped raise entry numbers.

Cerne Abbas Fete – a wet day

Cattistock Show – a long day (8 hours) with low footfall.

Warmwell Fete – Just the afternoon and well attended in sunny weather.

Sunflower Trail – Well attended, but only on for two weeks due to weather

### East Dorset Branch

Couple of apiary meetings

Training sessions planned for October and the spring

Recommend use of "WhatsApp" as fast communication app between members.

In the process of changing their Apiary Manager.

### North Dorset Branch

Has produced a glossy leaflet to help raise funds

Is applying to charities and others to help with apiary site development.

Has a target is £200,000 and has so far raised £20,000 approximately

Much of the increase is the cost of wood increasing so much.

Once they have £45,000 then they can start ground work.

Lease is almost signed off.

Apiary manager very active and beginners' courses all set up

Very active on Facebook

Gillingham & Shaftesbury show a great success.

#### **West Dorset Branch**

Weekly apiary meetings — with weekly invitation/reminder by email.

Will soon move to every two weeks, then every month.

Nine hives in the apiary and two being treated for varroa – rest being monitored.

Melplash Show was big success – 186 entries – a lot for one judge

Judging the day before the show is open to the public is to be considered

#### **Sherborne Branch**

Not very strong at the moment with one or two leading lights but little support

Just 56 members.

A member of the Dorset committee has agreed to attend the Sherborne BKA AGM on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October

#### **Role of Asian Hornet Coordinator**

The role of the Asian Hornet Coordinator was discussed at some length and it was agreed that Mark White should continue in his role as coordinator for the county. It was also agreed that any expenditure which the Asian hornet coordinator may incur in that role must be approved by the committee in advance.

Mark White has been informed that his role is to continue.

#### **Replacement of the Honeycraft editor**

The current editor will be leaving the role in March.

There was thanks for the role that Tim has played in editing HoneyCraft.

It was decided that the new editor would be best sought at branch level; therefore we are asking all branches to see if they have someone willing to take on the role.

#### **South West Beekeepers Forum Report**

This was accepted and the only matter arising from it was whether we supported Cornwall's draft motion for the ADM regarding the move to on-line only exams.. Nobody wished to speak against supporting the draft motion and there was total agreement that the motion should be supported.

Geoff Hardman has been notified that Dorset are supporting his draft motion.

#### **BBKA Matters**

We require a delegate for the hybrid BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting in January. It was agreed that Mark White should be approached to see if he would be willing to fulfil that role.

Mark White has been asked if he is prepared to fulfil this role and he has agreed.

Sue Billington has agreed to be the Dorset representative on the BBKA Discussion Groups.

#### **AOB**

It is hoped to hold a Beekeepers' Convention in October 2023. Sue Billington is taking the lead on this and will report back at the next committee meeting.

#### **Next Meeting**

Next Dorset BKA Committee meeting will be Zoom on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January at 19:30

The meeting closed at 15:38

*Stephen Potts*



# MAISEMORE APIARIES LTD

Manufacturers & Suppliers of Beekeeping Equipment



- \* ROCK BOTTOM HIVES
- \* BEES ON COMB
- \* QUEENS
- \* HONEY
- \* CEDAR HIVES & HIVE PARTS
- \* POLY HIVES & HIVE PARTS
- \* POLY NUCS & NUC PARTS
- \* FRAMES
- \* GIFT VOUCHERS £5 £10 £20
- \* SMOKERS
- \* HIVE TOOLS & HARDWARE
- \* JARS
- \* CONTAINERS & CUTTERS
- \* PARTS & ACCESSORIES
- \* MARKING & QUEEN REARING
- \* BEESWAX FOUNDATION
- \* PROTECTIVE CLOTHING
- \* EXTRACTION
- \* MEDICINES & FUMIGATION
- \* FEEDERS
- \* BEE FEED
- \* LABELS
- \* BOOKS



OLD ROAD, MAISEMORE, GLOUCESTER, GL2 8HT TEL: 01452 700289  
 sales@bees-online.co.uk www.bees-online.co.uk  
 www.woodenbriquettes.co.uk

## The Inspector reports

This time of year seems to come round far too fast, and yet again it has been an interesting year with ups and downs for all of us beekeepers.

The season has been just as odd as last year, yet for completely different reasons: it was mainly hot and very dry and incredibly, we are still in desperate need of rain despite the fact that it is pouring down as I write this.

This season has been difficult but interesting for me as I have been working not only in Dorset but also in Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Hampshire. In fact, I have found a total of nine apiaries with disease (all of them European foul brood), but only three of them were in Dorset. This does concern me somewhat as historically that would be very low numbers for Dorset; my fear is that it is festering somewhere in the county that we do not know about. So please, if you are doing any late inspections, check the brood very carefully. Nowhere across this patch is immune; it can crop up anywhere (as it keeps proving to us). If you are not planning to check your hives until next spring, please, as always, be very vigilant at that time.

The honey yields have been generally good to very good with a smattering of very poor if the bees are on light soil which dried out very quickly.

One thing that does concern me is that even with what we would call almost perfect weather for queens to get mated I have seen a large number of drone laying queens, also queens that have just disappeared. This could, of course, be due to swallows, swifts, dragonflies etc. Last season we all put the bad mating down to the weather which certainly did not help, but what else is going on? When I started rearing queens, if I had 20 queen cells to put in nucs after 14 days, I would expect 12 to 15 of them to be laying. It appears that now I am lucky if five are.

My point is this: after a season such as this with above average good weather, what is going on? Is it chemicals, is it disease, lack of drones or something else? One beekeeper on the Isle of Wight when I visited told me that they had 20 nucs with young queens, all of which were drone layers.

I would be very interested in any feedback on how beekeepers in Dorset have fared getting queens mated this year compared to last year, and, moving forward, how that impacts on next year as most of last year's queens have been superseded; will the same thing happen again, considering the extreme difference in weather conditions?

I have received a few emails this year asking me if I am retiring, as there have been adverts out for new seasonal bee inspectors but the answer is "No, not yet"! The adverts are for the high number of vacancies we currently have across Devon, Cornwall and Somerset in the South West and then in Hampshire in the Southern Region.

There may be information you are seeking or ideas that you have for inclusion into these brief articles — if so, please let me know. I'd rather put together something you want to read than something that bores you to tears!

In the meantime, stay vigilant: if brood doesn't look right, it probably isn't. Take immediate action and ring someone to get help.

*Kevin Pope*



## Notes on the South West Beekeepers Forum meeting - held on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022

Note: It was originally intended that this would be a hybrid meeting – part Zoom, part face to face – based at Taunton. The cost of fuel and pockets of Covid resulted in a Zoom-only meeting.

Dorset was represented at the meeting by Ben Benjamin and Stephen Potts. There were approximately 17 people present – some dropped out during the meeting and others joined.

John Lauwerys was welcomed as the representative for Hampshire Beekeepers and Megan Seymour as a recently appointed Regional Bee Inspector (RBI).

There were apologies for the late arrival of the previous minutes and the agenda but when you have just three officers and problems occur there are not many people to whom you can delegate tasks.

Concern was expressed that we were not discussing the neonicotinoids issue though the feeling seemed to be that we had said just about all we had to say. We were fearful that a derogation may be the thin end of the wedge. The ban was meant to be in place whilst alternative, less harmful controls such as integrated pest management (IPM), were found. We wondered what the research had achieved. Later in the meeting when we discussed future speakers it was suggested we get speakers who can help inform our debate on such matters.

There was also concern that the Asian hornet did not figure in our discussions. It was agreed to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

At the previous meeting there was concern that integrating the eR2 membership and distribution database and Beebase would allow a sharing of data which members may not find acceptable. Anne Rowberry pointed out that the information shared is for the purposes of insurance claims and we have agreed to that individually when we take out insurance.

The matter of the invoice for the subscription to SWBKF was raised. It was decided that the invoice should be sent to the SWBKF representatives who would be asked for the contact details of the treasurer to whom the invoice could be sent.

There was a lot of discussion on the subject of the BBKA exams. There were two areas of concern:

- Do beekeepers who just want to keep bees need to know the chemical name for a pheromone? In other words has the syllabus become too academic and too far removed from just keeping bees?
- The planned move to online exams only has advantages but may exclude those who have issues with online exams.

#### Advantages of on-line exams

More flexible – can include more graphics and video.

Cheaper to administer – do not have to hire rooms and invigilators.

Suits those who type better than they write.

Was requested by many before the lockdown.

Candidates do not have to go to a regional centre.

#### Disadvantages of online exams

Not inclusive → “digital exclusion”.

Not everyone is happy with IT.

Not everyone has access to suitable IT or broadband

Users on tablets and phones may not have keyboards.

Solutions proposed included trial exams a month before the exam, lending out hardware or IT mentors. It was pointed out that the exams do not require you to type much as it requires short answers.

Anne Rowberry said that anyone with concerns should let the BBKA know. Inclusion of all is very important to the BBKA. It was agreed that we would like more information as to why the exam board are moving to online exams.

There was discussion about the roles of the SWBKA officers. The treasurer is leaving at the end of November but hopefully a replacement has been found. The secretary, Kathy, is hoping to leave in February 2023 or a year later at the latest. The chair will pass to Somerset after Chris has done his stint.

The constitution was discussed and it was felt this should be reviewed regularly. Is it too complicated for an organisation which has no powers? We were advised that for historical reasons it has to be thorough. It was decided that four representatives should meet to review the constitution.

The sterling work put in by Liz Rescorla on matters such as the constitution was acknowledged by the chair.

Speakers for the later this year and beyond were discussed. It was appreciated that many of us are now very comfortable with Zoom lectures but some prefer face to face lectures. Suggestions for speakers included reports from those we have funded, BBKA officials and those who can inform our discussions.

Sharon Blake’s valuable contribution to the BBKA News and local beekeeping was acknowledged with thanks.

Under A.O.B. Megan gave us an account of the change in the task of the Regional Bee Inspectors. At the moment the organisation is undergoing significant changes as it moves to put more information on social media and You Tube. They are also facing funding, recruiting and retention issues so we are asked to send photos of issues in the first instance if we have a problem.

Finally we decided on upcoming meetings. The next meeting will be November 30<sup>th</sup>, which we hope to hold as a hybrid meeting. The dates for the 2023 meetings are to be as follows: Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February, Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August and Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November.

*Stephen Potts*

**[www.thebeeshop.co.uk](http://www.thebeeshop.co.uk)**

***Quality Beekeeper Clothing At Affordable Prices***

**Full Suits, Smocks, Bee Vests & Veils**

**Full adult suit - £55 (with free postage)**

**From Somerset**

**Email: [michaeljohnduckett@gmail.com](mailto:michaeljohnduckett@gmail.com)**



## Dorchester & Weymouth BKA

### Events

We attended a total of five events this season, some being more worthwhile to us than others, but until you try out an event you don't know how successful it will be. Also, of course the weather has to be factored in and two of the earlier events were surprisingly cold and wet. The Sunflower Trail event was not as successful for us as last year as the sunflowers had suffered with the dry weather so the event was cut short after two weeks. Two hives that had been put next to the field did not get as much forage as expected with consequently less sunflower honey.

### The Dorset County Show:

After an absence of two years the County Show was back. The Saturday of the show weekend was exceedingly busy; we sold out of honey and rolled hundreds of candles. Sunday was quieter as the forecast had not been good but luckily it didn't start to rain until the very end. After a two-year break, it was encouraging that it all went smoothly and we had a large number of volunteers over the two days and when setting up on the Friday.



The Honey Show was very successful with over 175 entries.

Our judge was Jack Mummery from Devon and we had a trainee judge and two stewards.

**This outstanding exhibit of a wax sunflower (pictured here) deservedly won 'Best in Show'.**

The Dorset County Show is our best opportunity to showcase what we do, show the quality of our honey presentation and generally engage with the public on all the issues we have around bees and beekeeping.

It seems the public actually are interested in all the different types and colours of honey and all the different things we can do with wax but, of course, it is the observation hives that draw the most interest. We managed to have two in the tent.

We are lucky in that we have a good relationship with the Dorchester Agricultural Society. They are very generous, providing us with a large marquee, electricity and tables. In return we put on a good honey show display and make sure there is plenty to interest the public in the tent.

AND FINALLY ON THE SHOW, A POEM WRITTEN SPECIALLY FOR US BY ALISTAIR CHISHOLM, WHO GAVE OUT THE PRIZES AND DELIVERED THE POEM IN HIS BEST TOWN CRIER MANNER:

OYEZ ! OYEZ ! OYEZ !

Bees are blooming marvellous and important to us all

But their future is threatened – t’would be the end for one and all.

They buzz around in summer collecting nectar from the flowers.

They pollinate like FURY and make honey – Oh such powers !

We salute our local beekeepers for the vital role they play

In keeping us all going in a very special way.

Today we’re giving prizes to the best in every class

But everyone’s a winner – they’re all of them first class!

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN





### **Apiary meetings:**

We had two very enjoyable apiary meetings this August. These meetings are great opportunities to see how other beekeepers manage their bees and, potentially, to pick up new ideas and tips. It is also good to see different sites and hives.



## East Dorset BKA

As I write our association has just started a second new members' training course, such is the demand to join us and start a new and exciting hobby. Mark White leads an indoor six-week course followed by practical training at our apiary in the spring. We are already nearly full for our usual February to April course in 2023.

We had a good honey crop from our apiary this year and we have made inroads into expanding the size of our land in West Moors to accommodate more hives which will be needed for the influx of new members to the group. Our honey show is on 12 November at West Moors Memorial Hall. Do drop in early afternoon to see our exhibits and enjoy tea and cake served by our members.

As with most societies we look forward to our autumn meetings, which include a skittles night when we take on the might of Bournemouth and District Bee Association in the annual clash of the neighbouring rivals. November 21st sees a Quiz Night at Broadstone Royal British Legion (which is fast becoming our regular meeting place) organised by Treasurer Chris Williams when teams of four battle it out to be association champions in an evening where no beekeeping questions are guaranteed!

In advance of our AGM at the end of October we see some changes in personnel on the committee. We have said goodbye to Robin Oliver as our apiary manager and we thank him for keeping things ticking over, particularly during the pandemic. Ideally, we are now looking to appoint a new person or couple who will not only look after our apiary but also work in a cooperative and positive way with our members. There will be a working team of experienced beekeepers helping out. Ivor Kemp will take a break from the chair's role but remain on the committee.

*Ivor Kemp*

## National Honey Monitoring Scheme

What our bees forage on is always an interesting question and last year, in an attempt to find out more, I took part in the National Honey Monitoring Scheme. I submitted samples straight from the comb while extracting in August and the results arrived recently—not quick I agree, but a lot of analytical work went into providing my results and those of the many other participating beekeepers. I live in a village full of keen gardeners who frequently tell me that all my bees are on their “whatever plant happens to be in flower at the time”. Therefore, I expected the honey analysis to reflect this. But far from it—70% of the honey came from brambles! The balance came from 15 named plants, including heather, which is not a common plant in the Blackmore Vale! Apart from any other consideration, the huge predominance of bramble shows the importance of hedgerows to bees — a message worth putting over to farmers when a suitable opportunity occurs!

The scheme is run by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, a not-for-profit environmental research institute. It is too late to submit samples of this year's honey, but interested beekeepers can register now for inclusion in the 2023 survey.

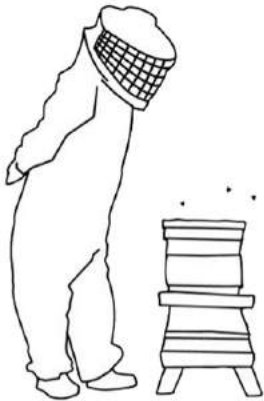
[National Honey Monitoring Scheme](#) | [honey@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:honey@ceh.ac.uk) | [@CEH\\_Honey](#)  
[UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#) | [www.ceh.ac.uk](http://www.ceh.ac.uk) | [@UK\\_CEH](#)

*Tim Villiers*



# BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES UK LTD

[www.beekeepingsuppliesuk.com](http://www.beekeepingsuppliesuk.com)



Beekeeping Supplies UK



2C Brunel Way, Minehead, TA24 5BY

[sales@beekeepingsuppliesuk.com](mailto:sales@beekeepingsuppliesuk.com)

01643 705801

# North Dorset BKA



## Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show

The reintroduction of a Bees & Honey marquee at the 2022 Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show was a great success, allowing the staging of a full honey show as well as several exhibits and activities to entertain the public while providing information about bees, honey and pollination.

The honey show was open to all beekeepers with a variety of classes for honey, wax and honey-infused culinary creations; several classes were restricted to NDBKA members and novice exhibitors. Many congratulations to Gordon Grant who won several classes and was winner the overall Bayliss Shield and the Blue Riband.

Members of the public were able to observe a beehive containing a queen and live flying bees, view beekeeping equipment provided by Geoff Buckland, taste a variety of honeys, roll beeswax candles and purchase honey, other hive products and small bee-related gifts.



The marquee was generally busy all day, with many very interested visitors able to talk to knowledgeable stewards about bees and related subjects.

## New apiary

We have been busy fundraising for our new apiary, with our New Apiary Working Group meeting very regularly to develop ways of making the plans a reality. To date, members have given donations, Ian Condon opened his garden and served cream teas and Dikes supermarket in Stalbridge, which sells our training apiary honey, has made a generous donation. To date we have raised about half of what we need to put in the foundations, so there is still a long way to go. But having recently visited two impressive divisional apiaries in Somerset that have been built in the last six years, we believe that it can be done. We remain committed and enthusiastic!

*Bees a' Swarmen* was a concert given by well-known local musicians Tim Laycock and Colin Thompson on Saturday 3rd September in the Portman Hall in Shillingstone. Tim and Colin gave us an entertainment of bee songs and poetry as well as reminders of Dorset in earlier times with choruses to join in. The hall was full and a wonderful evening was enjoyed by all. The evening raised over £1,000 towards our new apiary.



## Talks

We had hoped that Liz Duffin would come to talk about how to make wax flowers in mid-September but she was ill at the last minute so we had to resort to a Beekeepers' Question time which was well attended with plenty of seasonal questions about feeding bees, the price of honey and what to do about wasps.

## Module studies

With winter on the way we are planning various study courses. Details of these, which are open to all Dorset beekeepers, can be found on page 17.

*Lesley Gasson*



## BBKA module courses

All these courses are open to everyone in Dorset. They are an excellent way of improving your knowledge, as well as keeping in touch with fellow beekeepers over the winter. Although designed as preparation for the BBKA exams, you do not have to sit the exams at the end — that is entirely your choice! Please come and join us.

Three of the courses will be run in Shillingstone and one in Dorchester (to lessen the need for those from the south and west of the county to make long journeys on winter evenings). This year we hope to cover three modules, with each course having six sessions, provided enough students/candidates are interested.

**Module 1** is always popular and follows on from the basic beekeeping course. It is called **Honeybee Management**. It has a high pass rate. It will be run by Terry Payne in Shillingstone on Tuesday evenings in January, February and the beginning of March, in time to take the exam at the end of March. It will also be run in the Colliton Club in Dorchester by Lesley Gasson , starting in January.

**Module 2** is about forage and hive products . It is called **Honeybee Products and Forage** and will be run by Sue Billington over the same period.

**Module 5** is about physiology and anatomy and is called **Honeybee Biology**. It will be taken by Lesley Gasson and will also be held in the Shillingstone Church Centre at the same time as Terry's course.

Studying modules together is always a more stimulating way of studying than struggling alone.

Applications for the Shillingstone courses should be made to Lesley Gasson ([lesleygasson@btinternet.com](mailto:lesleygasson@btinternet.com)) and for the Dorchester course, where a minimum of 10 students is required for the course to go ahead, to Sally Leslie ([dwbkasecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dwbkasecretary@gmail.com) ).



**OVER 400 TITLES AVAILABLE**

**[www.northernbeebooks.co.uk](http://www.northernbeebooks.co.uk)**



# THORNE

HELPING BEEKEEPERS KEEP BEES FOR OVER 100 YEARS

**HIVES, BEES, FRAMES, FOUNDATION, HARDWARE & CLOTHING,  
HONEY PROCESSING, LABELS, PACKAGING, QUEEN REARING, HEALTH  
& FEEDING, BOOKS, GIFTS, EDUCATION, CANDLEMAKING, AND MORE!**



**RAND OPEN & SALE DAY**  
SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER  
LINCOLNSHIRE, LN8 5NJ

**NATIONAL HONEY SHOW**  
THURSDAY 27 - SATURDAY 29 OCTOBER  
SURREY, KT10 9AJ

**ORDER ONLINE OR OVER THE PHONE NOW!**

WE WILL HAVE ALL OUR USUAL BARGAINS AVAILABLE, INCLUDING SECOND QUALITY HIVE PARTS AND FRAMES, BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES. WE WILL ALSO HAVE OUR WAX EXCHANGE SERVICE AT BOTH EVENTS.

**SHOP ONLINE, OVER THE PHONE, OR IN STORE**

#### LINCOLNSHIRE

BEEHIVE BUSINESS PARK, RAND, NR WRAGBY, MARKET RASEN, LN8 5NJ - SALES@THORNE.CO.UK 01673 858555

**STOCKBRIDGE**  
CHILBOLTON DOWN FARM,  
HAMPSHIRE, SO20 2BU  
STOCKBRIDGE@THORNE.CO.UK  
01264 819916

**SCOTLAND**  
NEWBURGH IND. ESTATE,  
NEWBURGH, FIFE, KY14 6HA  
SCOTLAND@THORNE.CO.UK  
01337 842596

**WINDSOR**  
OAKLEY GREEN FARM,  
WINDSOR, SL4 4PZ  
WINDSOR@THORNE.CO.UK  
01753 830256

**DEVON**  
QUINCE HONEY FARM,  
SOUTH MOLTON, EX36 5RD  
DEVON@THORNE.CO.UK  
01769 575086



## Sherborne BKA

We had our final apiary visit for learners in September when we prepared our three colonies for winter. Now they are being fed by the apiary manager.

We are really enjoying our new shed which is marginally bigger than the old one and it houses our equipment well.

The AGM is going to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> October at The Mitre Inn, Sandford Orcas at 7:30pm. Hopefully we will have a good turn out with suggestions of talks throughout the winter and how to provide a better service (if that is the correct word) for our members. New ideas and people will be very welcome.

*Judy Easdale*



# Caddon Hives

Quality hives made from  
Western Red Cedar.

Langstroth  
National  
Smith  
WBC

Beekeeping accessories also  
available including:  
Clothing, Frames, Feeders, Smokers, Tools etc



[www.caddon-hives.co.uk](http://www.caddon-hives.co.uk)  
or call 01896 850 755



## West Dorset BKA

Where has the year gone! I have just been chased by Tim for this article. Apologies -- time had just passed me by!

Since the last HoneyCraft we have been busy taking off the remainder of the honey and getting the bees prepared for winter at the apiary. Our honey crop was down on last year's, owing to the bees re-queening and a few queen cells being missed; then they swarmed. Still, it is a teaching apiary after all, and it helps with the learning curve if things go wrong occasionally. We had not treated all the colonies for varroa this year as their counts were low, but we did find a couple more in the last month had dropped all of a sudden more than we had hoped, so they were also treated. I expect we will treat with Api-Bioxal at the end of December or beginning of January. We will still monitor the colonies until that time. We have our clean-up session on 8th October, the last one for our members to attend until 2023. We are holding a boil-up session on 6th November to get our dirty frames all clean for next year.

In July we held a hog roast for our members, kindly hosted by Deborah and Chris Childs at Corscombe on a lovely sunny day. Around 70 members turned up, many of them bringing along delicious savoury dishes and desserts — the table looked amazing — and it was lovely to catch up with everyone after Covid. This may become an annual event. Who knows?

The Melplash Show went off well after a fallow two years; it was great, the atmosphere was full of happiness and it was good to be back. Our marquee was packed nearly all day with people wanting to know about bees and honey. Our honey tasting and candle rolling/children's colouring were very successful. Thanks to everyone who spared their time and effort to make it a showcase for our association. The honey show itself had 176 entries this year. We had several new beekeepers who had never shown before, winning prizes, which was superb. Peter Nardone, on the right of the picture, won the Blue Merit Riband for Best in Show with his medium honey: what an achievement for his first ever honey entry.



It will be our AGM on 8th November, then our Christmas get-together on 6th December. Both events will be held at the Christian Fellowship Hall, Bridport.

Looking ahead to 2023, our beginners course is virtually full already, which is very encouraging.

*Carole Brown*



# The Honeybee Cell

Why is the honeybee cell the shape it is?

A question that has been a source of fascination for many years.

The bees had the following problems:

- What material is it best to use to build the cells?
- What shape will divide the hive into manageable cells?
- What shape gives the maximum amount of usable storage space?
- What shape required the minimum effort in terms of labour?
- What shape required the minimum effort in terms of material?
- What shape will produce a strong structure?

The bees solved this problem a long time ago – as did several other creatures.

The question we want to answer is “Why they do what they do?”.

This is a question that has been asked and “solved” many times with many different answers. The ancient Egyptians admired the shape and in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC Roman Scholar, Varro, wrote:

*“Does not the chamber in the comb have six angles, the same number as the bee has feet? The geometricians prove that this hexagon inscribed in a circular figure encloses the greatest amount of space.”*

This is the essence of the construction of the cell though it was not till 1999 that Thomas Hales proved it to be the case. The idea that the comb is built to maximise space and minimise effort is known as the “honeycomb conjecture” – worth Googling.

Let us look at the questions and see how they have been solved.

The first problem they faced was: with what would they build the cells. Chewed paper pulp is used by many insects but in the case of the honey bee they opted for wax. Because they use the cells to store honey which is water based, they had to use a material that would not break down when wet. Chewed paper can become rather messy when wet.

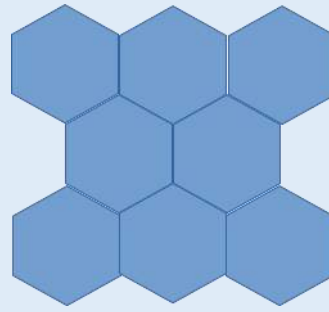
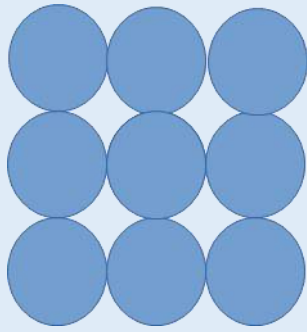
There is a drawback to using wax and that is the effort required to make it. It is expensive in materials. It takes eight grammes of honey to make one gramme of wax and a lot of work by the bees to produce the wax.

The next question they faced was: what is the best shape?

The bees need to have many cells in the hive since each one can then be a nursery for an individual bee or the factory for honey production. If that were not the case they might have been able to make do with two big irregular shaped cells – one for a nursery and one for a honey factory.

At this point we come into the area of tessellation, which means tiling. What regular shape can be fitted together without spaces? The answer is either a square, a triangle or a hexagon. There are no other regular shapes which will tessellate.

If it were a single unit being enclosed then the best shape is a circle but using a circle leaves space between the cells. This may not seem important when looked at from the front of the cell but when there are lots of cells hanging down you want them to be well stuck together and that is best done with adjoining flat faces.



The diagrams above show the result of packing circles together as if the bees built cylindrical cells whereas the second diagram shows the effect of packing hexagons. Note the lack of interstitial spaces. These spaces would soon be filled with rubbish and pests if this were the case in a regular hive. In addition the comb is only held together by small area of bonded surfaces. Clearly the hexagonal shape is more efficient.

It has been proved mathematically that the hexagon uses the least material to produce the maximum storage space with the greatest strength.

Professor Stephen Hawking's publisher is attributed as saying that every mathematical formula you put in a book halves the number of sales so, just in case he was right, I will skip the proof.

The question then arises as to how the bees arrived at this structure. There are many who like to suggest that the bees are the first geometers. Alas the answer is less profound.

When the bees start to make the cells, assuming there is no foundation, they have been observed to draw short vertical bars of wax from the top of the hive. Bear in mind that this is a team of builders all doing their best to make a cell with the minimum of material and the greatest volume. The greatest volume is achieved by making a cylindrical cell. However that involves pushing the wall of your cell out. This pushes the wall of the adjacent cells inwards. The builders in adjacent cells are also pushing out and the result is cells with straight walls in the shape of a hexagon. Evidence for this can be seen in comb that is in the process of being made. Many of the new cells will have a circular entrance.

So we have answered the question as to why the bees use the hexagon shape at the front of the cell. But what of the back of the cell?

The cell has to be shaped so that the bees can put in liquid honey and it not drip out before it sets. Clearly if the cell were horizontal then as fast as the bees put the unset, immature honey in the cell it would flow out. This is one reason why the cell slopes down from the entrance.

We also have to bear in mind that the bees will, in the absence of foundation, build the comb as two layers of cells back to back. For reasons which we do not fully understand the back of the cell is constructed of three rhombi. (A rhombus is just a two dimensional shape with 4 equal sides – squashed square.) In fact the end of the cell is constructed as if it were three faces of a rhombic dodecahedron.

Because the back of the cell is made like this it means that when cells are placed back to back then they are sloped up at 30° to the horizontal – and this is enough to prevent the honey flowing out whilst it is being matured and before it is capped.

The organisation that goes on in the beehive has always been a source of fascination to me – but that is why I keep bees.

For more information I suggest you look at <https://dorsetbka.com/BeeInfo/12274-Cells.html>

*Stephen Potts*

## Winter insulation

I had a go at improving hive insulation for the winter recently . I bought an 8ft x 4ft sheet of 25mm Cellotex, which I cut it into 400mm strips and then cut these further to  $14\frac{1}{2}$  which is the distance between the top rails. By removing one frame from the brood and the  $\frac{1}{2}$  you can get a sheet in each side along with the dummy board. I've also started to make up some panels that sit in the recessed piece at the front and back so that insulates all sides.



*Gordon Grant*

*Editors Note.*

Do you agree with Gordon's approach to providing winter warmth for your bees? The next issue of HoneyCraft will be published in January when we might be experiencing a very cold winter! Why not let us have your views or tell us of your approach? Comments, by 31 December please, to me at: [tim@familyvilliers.co.uk](mailto:tim@familyvilliers.co.uk)

## What's on in Dorset

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Branch/Contact</b>
10 October	Kevin Pope (SBI) talk	Shillingstone Church Centre	North Dorset — Lesley Gasson
17 October	AGM	Mitre Inn, Sandford Orcas	Sherborne — Judy Easdale
20 October	AGM and talk by Kevin Pope	Colliton Club, Dorchester	Dorchester & Weymouth — Sally Leslie
8 November	AGM	Christian Fellowship Hall, Bridport	West Dorset — Carole Browne
12 November	Honey Show	West Moors Memorial Hall	East Dorset — Ivor Kemp
15 ?November	AGM and supper	Shillingstone Church Centre	North Dorset — Leslie Gasson
21 November	Quiz night	Royal British Legion, Broadstone	East Dorset — Ivor Kemp
8 December	Christmas get-together	Christian Fellowship Hall, Bridport	West Dorset — Carole Browne



# Who's Who in the Dorset County Beekeepers' Association

President Richard Norman

Past President : Ken Bishop

Vice-President: Chris Slade

Chair	Ivor Kemp	<a href="mailto:IKemp@bsorchestra.co.uk">IKemp@bsorchestra.co.uk</a>	07932 538491
Vice-chair	Trevor Ford	<a href="mailto:trevorlanners@gmail.com">trevorlanners@gmail.com</a>	
Secretary	Stephen Potts	<a href="mailto:dorsetbkasecretary@gmail.com">dorsetbkasecretary@gmail.com</a>	07740 647945
Treasurer	James Nalty	<a href="mailto:jamesnalty@gmail.com">jamesnalty@gmail.com</a>	01747 838006
Membership Secretary	Ben Benjamin	<a href="mailto:chrisbenbenjamin@googlemail.com">chrisbenbenjamin@googlemail.com</a>	
Education Officer	Sue Billington	<a href="mailto:smhb@actt.co.uk">smhb@actt.co.uk</a>	01258 455196
Examinations Secretary	Terry Payne	<a href="mailto:twpayne@btopenworld.com">twpayne@btopenworld.com</a>	01747 811251
Honeycraft Editor	Tim Villiers	<a href="mailto:tim@familyvilliers.co.uk">tim@familyvilliers.co.uk</a>	01963 364384
Website Manager	Stephen Potts	<a href="mailto:dorsetbkaweb@gmail.com">dorsetbkaweb@gmail.com</a> web site <a href="http://www.dorsetBKA.com">www.dorsetBKA.com</a>	
Asian Hornet Co-ordinator	Mark White	<a href="mailto:markaj2000@hotmail.com">markaj2000@hotmail.com</a>	07747 620920

\*\*\*\*\*

North Dorset	Lesley Gasson	<a href="mailto:imgasson@btinternet.com">imgasson@btinternet.com</a>	01258 861690
Dorchester & Weymouth	Sally Leslie	<a href="mailto:dwbkasecretary@gmail.com">dwbkasecretary@gmail.com</a>	01305 823043
East Dorset	Jenny Wellman	<a href="mailto:jenny@jenny32.plus.com">jenny@jenny32.plus.com</a>	01202 873292
Sherborne	Richard Baker	<a href="mailto:sherbornebee@hotmail.co.uk">sherbornebee@hotmail.co.uk</a>	07770 780250
West Dorset	Carole Brown	<a href="mailto:secretary@westdorsetbees.org.uk">secretary@westdorsetbees.org.uk</a>	01308-456210

\*\*\*\*\*

<b>Seasonal Bee Inspector</b>	<b>Kevin Pope</b>	<a href="mailto:kevin.pope@apha.gov.uk">kevin.pope@apha.gov.uk</a>	07775 119466
-------------------------------	-------------------	--	--------------