

HONEYCRAFT

January 2019



Dorset County Beekeepers Association

Editor's Note

Happy New Year and best wishes for 2019. The last part of 2018 was a busy time in all branches as you will read in the reports which follow. In addition, there are reports on the county convention held in October, while Dorset beekeepers were also present at the National Honey Show. Meanwhile the winter is proving equally busy with a number of social events, talks and workshops. For those who know that they don't know enough about their bees, Terry Payne recommends some books with which to improve our knowledge as we relax in front of the fire. Thanks are also due to Chris Slade for three eclectic articles to make us all think!

Our hard-working County Secretary, Liz Rescorla, has provided an update on the South West Beekeepers Forum and you will also find a synopsis of a recent meeting of the Dorset BKA council.

But featuring in almost all reports is the underlying threat that comes from Asian hornets. Our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Kevin Pope, has provided an out-of-season report on the threat in 2018 and we all need to take positive steps to face up to the threat in 2019. There are workshops planned and action teams are being formed – let's hope that our efforts are repaid by a containment of the threat.

We are now into January and the snowdrops are out in my garden; although the weather probably has some surprises in store, it will not be long before the bees are out and about again on a regular basis – I, for one, have a lot left to do to be properly ready for that event!

I hope that you enjoy this issue and that anyone in any doubt about the queen colour for this year, should be better informed by the time they have read through this 'green –tinted' HoneyCraft.

Tim Villiers, Editor

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Chairman's New Year Message

I would like to wish all the Dorset members a happy New Year for 2019

It has nearly been three years since I was given the privilege of being voted in as the Dorset Chairman and as our constitution states a Chairman can only hold the position for a maximum of three years I will be handing the reins over at the March AGM.

My time as Chairman has been interesting and I have had a real insight as to the work that is carried out on behalf of the members of DBKA. As Chairman I could not have done the job without the support of all of the association officers who regularly carry out the sometimes mundane tasks that crop up, especially Liz Rescorla who as you will all know is the Association Secretary. Liz works tirelessly on your behalf and should be highly commended for the work that she does for the association.

This year has been particularly interesting with the formation of AHAT teams and how we are going to try and deal with the imminent threat of the Asian hornets. This will affect us all in due course and the threat should not be taken lightly as this could ultimately change the way we keep bees in the future. Just think how bad it is when we have a high wasp population attacking the hives – the AH will be far worse!

We have held three conventions in the time I have been Chairman with some interesting speakers who have covered a wide range of subjects that have been suitable for all levels of beekeeping. The attendance at the conventions has not been as high as expected. So this year something different has been planned; we intend to hold a Dorset Disease Day in conjunction with the local and national bee inspectors and we hope that this will be better attended.

As an association we have always encouraged training. With four master beekeepers and many others in the association who are prepared to give their time, we are in the fortunate position of being able to hold numerous courses and talks to enable the members to take the basic exam or take modules, under the guidance of Lesley Gasson, the Education Officer, and Terry Payne, the Examinations Officer. Many of the members have taken advantage of this and some have gone on to great success in their respective exams and I congratulate all who have taken them. I would like to encourage those of you who have yet to 'have a go' at the exams to look into this, as they are not as hard as you might think and you will be amazed at how much you can learn and this will make your beekeeping much more interesting. "So go on, have a go....". I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage you to get more involved with your respective associations and help out with the running of them. As they say many hands make light work so please don't always leave it to the same people just because they have always done the work; new faces and ideas are always welcome.

I do not know yet who will be taking on the role of Chairman but be assured they will get my support in continuing the good work that is carried out on behalf of us all.

I hope all your hives make it through the winter and that they thrive throughout the year with minimum swarming and large crops of honey.

Best wishes
Geoff

The Inspector Reports

Asian hornet update

This year's hornet season started early as the first confirmed sighting was on the 31st Aug in Fowey, Cornwall. The nest was found quickly and subsequently destroyed but three days into the required five to wrap up, more hornets were seen so the search was ramped up and again the second nest was found and destroyed quickly. It turned out that the first nest was the primary nest set up by the queen; the following one was the secondary one set up by the worker hornets. This is usual for the Asian hornet; she builds the first nest low down and then when there are enough workers they move higher up, usually in a tree, presumably to get away from predators.

We had no sooner found the second nest in Fowey than reports of a nest in Hampshire came through. The Seasonal Bee Inspector for that area went to look on a Sunday in order to get some samples to send up to the lab at Sand Hutton and then found the nest that afternoon so the rest of us turned up to do the mop-up and check there was not another nest. This nest was low down near the ground so the primary became the secondary.

The following nest was reported in Hampshire but too far away from the first Hampshire nest to be connected. It was in a small wood and the sighting of the hornet itself had been about 500m away so we had a long way to track them. We used tree climbers and a drone to fly above with a thermal camera; we also utilised the radio tracker system but in the end it came down to good old-fashioned human observation, down on the ground looking up in to the tree tops, still in full leaf. It was spotted only because the wind parted some branches and there it was, in its full glory.

Then we were off to Dungeness where 2 hornets had been spotted by birdwatchers. The hornets were right by the coast with what can only be described as extremely inhospitable terrain between them and what we would call normal landscape. In the end this became highly relevant as we did not find any more hornets in the six days we hunted in and around the area. Our best guess is that the southern winds the week before had blown them over from France.

In amongst these calls along the south coast, a sighting was reported in Hull but again a lone hornet so we can only surmise how it came over. Watch your luggage when you travel and check your cars before you catch the ferry!

A car transporter in Guildford also had a stowaway in the form of another AH but it could have hitched a ride from anywhere en-route to deliver the cars.

Similarly a lone hornet in Liskeard—but maybe it too hitched a lift from Fowey as no others were spotted!

I nearly forgot to update on the Poole ferry hornet. So far there is no evidence that it was a Poole hornet, as no Asian Hornet has been reported in traps in and around the area. We must be aware that it could have come from anywhere in the UK, as any of the vehicles on the ferry could have delivered it.

All we can do is keep looking and trapping because the sooner we know where to look, the sooner we have a chance to find the nest. Ideally we would all start to trap towards the end of February heading in to the early part of March. The best traps are the monitoring traps but unchecked regularly they become kill traps – let's try not to kill our already pressured insect life.

This year four of the eight sightings were from non- beekeepers which is really encouraging as it shows we are not alone and the general public appreciate that we really do not want this insect to get established. I think if the AH gets established it will irrevocably change our eco system, thus affecting anything that relies on insects to survive .

Unfortunately there is little doubt that it will eventually win, but let's keep it at bay as long as possibleyou never know, a control method may be just around the corner .

Kevin Pope

Seasonal Bee Inspector for Dorset

Dorset BKA Annual General Meeting 2019

The Dorset Beekeepers' Association (DBKA) Annual General Meeting will be held at the Sunninghill Community Hall, Culliford Road North, Dorchester DT1 1EB at 3.30 pm on Sunday 10 March 2019.

All members are invited to the AGM.

The AGM will be preceded by a talk at 2.00 pm to which members and non-members are invited. The talk will be given by Margaret Murdin, NDB, Master Beekeeper and former President of the BBKA.

There will be a break for tea at 3pm when refreshments will be provided by West Dorset BKA.

An agenda and further details including the talk topic will be circulated to branches in due course and posted on the county website.

Proposals for agenda items and nominations for election to DBKA County Officer posts should be forwarded in writing to the County Secretary Liz Rescorla (winkyozz@uwclub.net) no later than Sunday 24 February 2019. Anyone making a nomination should seek the agreement of that nominee in advance.

Dorset BKA Council Meetings

A meeting of the Dorset BKA Council was held on 5 January. A summary of the business conducted can be found on page 6.

Any queries regarding this summary should be addressed in the first instance to Branch Secretaries or Branch Council Delegates

Future meetings

Dorset BKA AGM 10 March 2019

Council meetings: 15 May 2019; 18 September 2019; 4 January 2020

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Dorset BKA Council Meeting – 5 January 2019

SUMMARY OF BUSINESS

The minutes of the Council meeting 19 September 2018 were accepted and signed as a true record.

Reports were received from

- i) *County Treasurer*: the bank balance at 5 December 2018 was £7,331.58 and the Treasurer noted that this is a satisfactory level which allows for any reasonable one-off costs to be met. The costs of producing HoneyCraft have dropped following the transition to an online version during 2018 and it was agreed to propose a reduction in the county capitation fee to £3 at the 2019 AGM, to be reassessed before the 2020 AGM.
- ii) *Education Officer*: there are three BBKA Module study groups being run this winter. Liz Rescorla is leading groups on Modules 1 and 6, and Lesley Gasson will lead a group on Module 2 starting in February. Four branch BKAs are running well subscribed winter/spring courses for new beekeepers; no information was available in respect of Sherborne BKA.
- iii) *Examinations Secretary*: the closing date for the March 2019 BBKA examinations is 10 February 2019. Although the last assessment date for the Basic assessment is 31 August and the closing date is a month prior to taking the assessment, applications should be forwarded to the Examinations Secretary as early in the year as possible, preferably by end May to allow for allocation to assessors depending on their availability. It is also easier earlier in the year to find colonies that meet the assessment criteria.

County matters:

- i) *Arrangements for the Dorset BKA 2019 AGM* to be held at 3.30 pm on Sunday 10 March 2019 at Sunninghill Community Hall in Dorchester were discussed; these will be notified separately.
- ii) *Asian hornet action planning*: the County Secretary had provided a report on a meeting at the end of November 2018 which was attended by representatives from the National Bee Unit, the BBKA, the Asian Hornet Action Team steering group, the Non-native Species Secretariat and Devon, Cornwall and Somerset BKAs. Following this meeting the BBKA has produced a protocol which is available on the BBKA website <https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-action-teams>. Each Branch or Association is being asked to set up a team that can assist with local requests for help in identifying (and reporting) Asian hornets; each team should be organised with contact numbers and a team leader who can be contacted by an Area Association coordinator.

The Council elected Mark White, East Dorset BKA, as county Asian hornet coordinator. Any suspected or confirmed sightings should be reported to Mark and copied to the County Secretary, Liz Rescorla. A county information dissemination/notification network will be developed with and between branches and extended to neighbouring BKAs.

- iii) *New integrated electronic membership system*: the County Membership Secretary reported that during 2018 the BBKA contracted Bee Diseases Insurance to implement a new membership system on their behalf; the transition to the new system will affect each Branch and a meeting of Branch Membership Secretaries and Treasurers to discuss the changes will be organised in due course.

BBKA Matters

The Dorset delegate to the 2019 ADM will be Lesley Gasson. The Council considered the nominations and propositions (available on the BBKA website), and agreed that the nominated Delegate would

- ☐ second the nomination of Stuart Roberts for the Examinations Board as requested by the nominating BKA
- ☐ second Wiltshire BKA's proposition that BBKA Enterprises should be wound up within 12 months of the BBKA becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, as requested by Wiltshire BKA

L Rescorla, County Secretary

7 January 2019

South West Beekeepers' Forum (SWBKF)

20 November 2018

Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 21 August 2018:

Peter Darley, Chairman stated that he had deferred contacting the BBKA as agreed on behalf of the SWBKF asking for the Standing Orders Committee to be reconstituted until after the 2019 ADM, as the BBKA's current preoccupation is with the revised Constitution.

The meeting on 21 August had considered a short article in BBKA News August 2018 titled "Bullying" Concern had been expressed that the BBKA trustees had misreported the events of the ADM to the Charity Commission and had given the impression that Association Area Member delegates to the meeting had condoned bullying in the BBKA. It was agreed that the Chairman of West Cornwall BKA will draft a letter to the BBKA on behalf of SWBKF detailing concern regarding the perceived misrepresentation of delegates' views to the Charity Commission. It was noted that the policy and procedures in respect of trustee discipline and dispute resolution, which incorporate trustee removal, have been substantially revised as part of the review of the BBKA Constitution and will go to the 2019 ADM for approval.

BBKA 2019 ADM

The meeting was disadvantaged in considering nominations and propositions for the 2019 ADM because some papers had not been available to download from the BBKA website. However on the information available the following was agreed:

Applications for Membership: by Luddingford and District BKA (Kent) and the Ellan Vannin Friendly Beekeepers' Society (Isle of Man). The SWBKF considered that approving affiliation of small 'splinter groups' contributes to fragmentation of and increases costs for the BBKA, and generally should not be supported

Nominations for the Executive Committee: it was noted that there are more vacancies than nominees, so under current procedures all nominees will be successful. Currently there are 6 vacancies and 3 nominees; the Executive Committee can co-opt, but co-opted members are not trustees and do not have voting rights

Nominations for the Examinations Board: there are 5 vacancies and 5 nominees, all of whom were known to the meeting and considered to be strong applicants

propositions:

	Association	Brief Summary of Proposition
1	Executive Board of Trustees	That the BBKA adopt the new Trustee Discipline and Dispute Resolution Procedure (incorporating the Trustee Removal Procedure) SUPPORTED
2	Executive Board of Trustees	That the BBKA adopt the constitution as amended to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

2 (cont)

**SUPPORTED ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOTED THAT FURTHER
AMENDMENTS WILL BE SOUGHT**

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---|
| 3 | Executive Board of Trustees | That section 19.5 of the current BBKA proposition be replaced with the new Trustee Discipline and Dispute Resolution Procedure (incorporating the Trustee Removal Procedure)
SUPPORTED |
| 4 | Executive Board of Trustees | That the new category of Schools & Educational Establishment be admitted as a category of membership into the current BBKA Constitution
SUPPORTED |
| 5 | Executive Board of Trustees | That the non-recyclable plastic wrapping on BBKA News magazine be replaced with a recyclable alternative
SUPPORTED |
| 6 | Dorset BKA | BBKA to participate in the Bee Trade Exhibition at Stoneleigh Park
SUPPORTED |
| 7 | Wiltshire BKA | To wind up BBKA Enterprises Limited company within twelve months of the BBKA becoming a Charitable Incorporate Organisation SUPPORTED |
| 8 | Cleveland BKA | That video conferencing be available for all trustee meetings
SUPPORTED |
| 9 | Cleveland BKA | That at least four hours of every ADM be dedicated to debating propositions from Area Associations
NOT SUPPORTED |
| 10 | Devon BKA | If the intention of this proposition is not included in the BBKA Constitution, whether new or existing, then the minutes of all elections, appointments and committee meetings of the Charity trustees, both draft and final, be available on the BBKA website as soon as they are composed for all members to see
SUGGESTED AMENDMENT – MINUTES TO GO TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS TO BE PUT ON THEIR WEBSITES, WITH QUERIES TO GO BACK TO THE BBKA VIA ASSOCIATIONS |
| 11 | Warwick BKA | Contact suppliers of beekeeping equipment to ask them not to supply leather gloves in beginner kits
THE BBKA IS ALREADY WORKING WITH SUPPLIERS TO ASK THEY SUGGEST USING DISPOSABLES OVER LEATHER GLOVES |

Liz Rescorla,
Dorset County Representative

Blandford and Sturminster BKA

This has been a mild autumn so far and I would not be surprised if there was not a low level of brood rearing going on in our hives. Bees come out on cleansing flights but there is little forage for them to gather so in spite of mild weather they conserve their energies in the hive.

There has been increased interest in insulating hives in winter. Derek Mitchell, a researcher into Heat Transfer at the Leeds University School of Mechanical Engineering, spoke at the National Honey Show about heat transfer in hives. He explained how and why our hives were made of such thin wood as a result of timber shortages during the Second World War. He said that the Reverend Langstroth himself had originally built hives out of much thicker timber recognising that bees need insulation in winter. If we take the trouble to insulate hives they use less honey during winter to maintain colony temperatures and arrive in spring ready to expand the brood nest. He suggested that putting an insulating layer over the crown board would conserve heat but ideally the whole hive should be insulated. He used polystyrene boards cut to fit over the whole hive. In his research he measured the temperature transfer from the inside to the outside of the hive under a variety of different hive materials. National Hives came out worst at retaining heat. Hollow trees were obviously the best insulated and most natural nest for bees.

Derek then went on to examine water vapour in the hive. He distinguished between humidity and condensation. Humidity is essential for brood rearing and the usual level of humidity in a hive should be about 80% as this keeps the larvae moist; at 90% humidity varroa die. With thin-walled hives the cold penetrates the hive wall and cools the inside surface of the hive and causes condensation. This has an adverse effect on the level of humidity in the hive and on the bees as they have to increase both the temperature and the humidity to keep the brood safe. The stress increases the incidence of chalk brood and the condensation encourages mould in the combs.

I have put quilts on my hives and polystyrene insulation on two of them. I hope this means they emerge from winter in reasonable shape; a great deal depends on the sort of winter we have. If we have snow towards the beginning of spring when brood rearing increases, winter losses will be increased.

We had our AGM and annual dinner on Friday 16th November. The thought of the dinner means that the AGM is a reasonably rapid affair with reports and ideas dealt with efficiently. The committee was re-elected with the addition of a new web master, Chris Harwood, and an additional apiary manager, Gordon Grant, whom we welcome. Beekeepers are good cooks and the annual dinner is a social affair we all enjoy. We do not meet in December but keep an eye on the apiary all the same.

In the New Year there are a number of talks that I hope will be of interest to more than BSBKA. Members from other Dorset associations are welcome to join us. All our meetings are in the Shillingstone Church Centre and start at 7.30pm.

15th January Ian Condon will be showing us how to make Asian hornet traps ready for use in early spring when the first queens emerge.

12th February Margaret Ginman, the Bee Farmers General Secretary, will be talking to us about the work of bee farmers in both pollination and honey production. They are as concerned about the Asian hornet as we are.

10th March. The Dorset BKA AGM at 2pm in Dorchester and Margaret Mordin, the President of the BBKA, will be giving a talk. She is an able speaker; come and listen to her if you can.

Lesley Gasson



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Dorchester and Weymouth

dorchesterandweymouthbka.com

Events: One of our last events of this year was an interesting and enlightening talk by Derek & Elaine Mitchell on hive insulation. Derek gave a bewildering amount of mathematics, science and physics in support of his theory with Elaine talking about the practical application of it in their apiary. One of our members has followed Derek's theory on his own hives this year by making the insulated jackets and confirmed at the Talk that his bees have benefitted greatly. Hopefully we can arrange a visit to his apiary next year and see this method in action.

In early December we held our Christmas Ssial which was one of our monthly get-togethers, with a game of skittles and a buffet thrown in. About 20 members attended and a good time was had by all.

The AGM was held in October. Some changes were made to the committee so the make-up of the new committee is as follows:

President: Chris Slade; Chairman: Andy Stillman; Vice-Chairman: John Chittenden; Secretary: Sally Leslie;

Treasurer: Roland Benjamin; Membership Secretary: Richard Norman;

Committee: Lindsay Burstall, Mike Hill, Nicky Payne, Stephen Potts, Andy Ranson, Nick Knight & Liz Rescorla

The AGM was preceded by an update from Kevin Pope on his year's activities and in particular the latest on the Asian Hornet.

Asian hornet plan: we have purchased 100 monitoring traps which we will be distributing to members. We will also be asking members to let us know where they will be putting the traps. We can then map this information and subsequently look for any areas that are not covered. At the AGM we gave out some A4 laminated posters on the Asian hornet, the idea being that members will put these posters around their location in appropriate places. This will be an ongoing activity.

Education: five of our members passed the Basic this year and another member passed Module 5 with Credit. Congratulations to all of them. Continuing, we have quite a few members who are taking sessions for Modules 1 & 6 throughout this winter.

Every year it feels as if we have been busy and this year has been no exception. Looking back, we have had a get-together every month, regular Saturday afternoon apiary sessions (from April to July) with a further three apiary meetings hosted by members during July and August, and an extraction afternoon. We attended a nature & wildlife event in April in Radipole Park Gardens in Weymouth and ran a two-week display at Poundbury Garden Centre in May to coincide with World Bee Day. Not forgetting our auction earlier in the year and, of course, the Dorchester Show. We also ran a six week beginners' course from mid-March to mid-April.

We are now busy planning our 2019 beginners course as well as starting to plan a programme of events, the most immediate of which will be our annual auction (flyer attached). All events will be published in due course on our website and members from other associations are welcome to attend.

Sally Leslie, Secretary

ANNUAL AUCTION OF BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT



SATURDAY 2nd MARCH 2019



at

Sunninghill Community Hall

Sunninghill Prep School, South Walks Road, Dorchester, DT1 1EB

An auction of beekeeping equipment and bee-associated paraphernalia to be held within the hall.

A Thorne's stockist, Diane Sleigh from the Bee Depot will be there. She will be happy to take pre-orders and will also be running the Thorne's wax conversion/exchange scheme, this shall comply with the tables listed in the Thorne's catalogue. Please contact Diane approximately a week prior to the auction to confirm the weight and what is required to be exchanged.

Contact details:

Email diane.sleigh@thebeedepot.com

Phone 01373 430458

Mobile 07879 811967

Please Note: Wax needs to be clean and rendered (no hive scrapings) with the crud removed from the bottom, it also needs to be free from wire, stones etc. Colour irrelevant but no pre-coloured wax.

TIMINGS

Sellers: Booking-in of lots from 11am – 1pm.

All items for sale must be clean, of reasonable and saleable quality, otherwise entry of items will be refused. Neither drawn foundation/comb nor live bees will be accepted.

Buyers: Buyer registration and viewing of lots from 1pm.

Selling: Selling starts at 2.00pm.

There is ample car parking on site and assistance will be available at the end of the auction to help load purchased items into your vehicle.

Refreshments will be available

For more information contact: Andy Ranson Tel: 01305 770730

East Dorset BKA

Our membership numbers have grown to new records this year, and the aspiring and experienced beekeepers alike were able to take part in our apiary sessions throughout the summer. New beekeepers were able to gain confidence in handling bees, and taking part in such things as shook swarms, Bailey comb changes and even grafting larvae to raise queens in our apiary.

Ten association members took, and passed, the BBKA Basic Assessment, including our youngest member, Ciaran Greening, at just 15 years of age. Well done to them all in maintaining our 100% pass rate!



Summer activities included apiary open days, held by Mark White at Longthorn's, followed by a cream tea, and at Helen Edbrooke's apiary, followed by the association's summer BBQ. The association had stalls at the Dorset Food and Venison Festival and Avon Heath Wild Sunday. The apiary also hosted a visit from the seasonal Bee Inspector, Robin Oliver. This was a great opportunity for members to ask questions regarding all things bee. There was also an extraction day, held at the home of our Secretary, Jenny Wellman, where the honey was taken off the association hives.

The association's Honey Show, held at Sturt's Farm, was a great success, with many new faces entering, and something near to 150 entries overall. Ciaran Greening, swept the floor in the novice section too!

November saw the association stall set up at the Barclays Bank centre in Poole for the second year running, and we have been invited back next year.

With the ever-present worry of the Asian hornet, and the possibilities that Poole could be a port of entry, the association appointed an Asian Hornet Officer, Mark White, to act as a central point for information relating to the AH, and to educate members about the AH and the risk they present to beekeepers. With this in mind, the association will be holding two Asian hornet workshops on Sunday 20th January and Tuesday 29th January both at 7.30pm, when members will be updated on the latest findings from 2018 and proposals for 2019.

The success of our training programme has seen the association appoint an Education Officer, Helen Edbrooke. In 2019, the Association is offering all members a Basic Training Course led by Master Beekeeper Lesley Gasson. This will consist of six two-hour indoor sessions at the Royal British Legion, Legion House, Tudor Road, Broadstone, Dorset BH18 8AW, followed by six practical sessions at our apiary in West Moors.

Along with our training programme and Asian hornet workshops, there will be three talks, including one on queen rearing, meaning we have plenty of opportunity for our members to keep busy over the winter evenings.

Also, for the first time, the Association will be offering a Bee Experience Day. Our Bee Experience Day, to be held on Saturday 15th June 2019, will be a wonderful introduction to bees and beekeeping. Held at our apiary in West Moors, and for only £50, it provides an introduction to bees both through some brief theory in our teaching block and then hands-on practical experience at our hives. The day lasts from 10am until 4pm and includes lunch.

To finish, I would like to quote our Chairman, Ivor Kemp: "We have worked very hard for this time. Our Association has received such an influx of new beekeepers who will ensure the long-term future of this group and be a key part of a thriving and passionate organisation".

Jim Dunne
Vice Chairman EDBKA

Sherborne BKA

Sherborne Association held its AGM in October and currently have 40+ signed-up members.

We held the first of our winter meetings on 3rd December when Lesley Gasson enlightened us on the various pheromones the honey bee has and uses.

The next meeting will be our Annual Beekeeping Dinner on 18th January at The Mitre Inn, Sandford Orcas at 7:30pm.

Other meetings include:

11th February - Andy Willis = Maximising your wax crop

25th February - Kevin Pope = update on Asian hornet + workshop making traps

11th March - Claire Waring = Beauty and the Bees.

We will be giving out packs of fondant to those who come to the meetings in an effort to increase attendance and encourage members to be more participative.

We are hoping to hold another "Introduction to Beekeeping" course starting in April.

Judy Easdale

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Members of

BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION



News from West Dorset—December 2018

Our association has been active since the last article for Honeycraft. All the apiary bees were fed in early September after their varroa treatment of Apiguard. Since then we have given the apiary a good tidy-up for the season ahead in 2019. We also this year have given each of the four colonies a pad made of wood shavings above the crown board to keep the colony warm -- it keeps the fondant from going hard, too. They have all had a kilo or two each so far this winter, since none of the colonies have clustered yet as it has been so mild. They have been still out collecting pollen in December!



Hopefully the weather will be colder in January so we can treat them all with Api-Bioxal. In October we had an excellent talk by Clare Densley from the Bee Unit at Buckfast Abbey on “Pheromone Communication”. A report of the talk kindly written by Caroline Dilke, our Chair, can be read in this edition of Honeycraft.

Next came our AGM in November. It was well attended: over 30 came along, and again I think the draw was Kevin Pope SBI giving us an update on the Asian hornet. We had no changes on our committee, as everyone was willing to stand again and there were no other members willing to stand.

We had our Christmas get together on December 11th, which was great fun, with festive eats and mulled wine. It was lovely to meet some of our new members who joined in. On January 20th we are having our annual New Year’s lunch at the Bridport & West Dorset Golf Club -- always a jolly occasion.

January 29th marks the start of our beginners' course, which is now full with 25 applicants -- but we do have a reserve list just in case anyone drops out.

Our joint meeting on January 10th with East Devon should be an interesting event, with Dr Gerry Brierley talking on “Medicinal Apitherapy: a journey into the healing hive”. She is an accidental apitherapist and beekeeper, who opens up the hive’s natural pharmacy to produce general health and healing, and will uncover the medicinal properties of honey, drone larvae, pollen, bee bread, royal jelly and propolis. She shares her personal survival story from Lyme disease, along with scientific evidence of how bee venom has saved the lives of many thousands, including man’s best friend.

Happy Beekeeping for 2019.

Carole Brown

WDBKA Sec,



DATE	TIME	EVENT	WHERE	DETAILS
Sunday 20 January	12.30 for 1.00pm	WDBKA New Year’s Luncheon	Bridport & WD Golf Club, Bridport DT6 4PS	Bookings via WDBKA Secretary

Pheromone Communication

A talk by Clare Densley of Buckfast Abbey to WDBKA,

Clare began by confessing that she is fascinated by chemical communication, which is widespread among insects and vertebrates (but not birds). Exocrine hormones in the form of a liquid (which vaporises) or a wax carry messages from one individual to another.

For honey bees, working in a crowded, dark hive, smells are a good way to communicate. The colony, seen as a superorganism – one big, extended family – behaves as a unit. This is governed by the seasons and has one reproductive female and decentralised rule, with all bees sharing information so that each knows what job to do at any moment. Swarming – a complex and intelligent phenomenon – is a good example of this cooperation in action. More than 90% of communication among honey bees is chemical: we call the colony “eusocial”.

The bees detect smells with their antennae. Drones have an astonishing 15,000 receptors per antenna, and can smell a virgin queen at 60 metres. Workers have 2,700 receptors per antenna, and queen bees 1,500. Bees’ mouth parts can also taste, and their legs and feet.

How does this communication work in practice? In 1952 the researcher Lindauer monitored a worker bee and found she spent 56 hours patrolling, to 69 hours resting. She was picking up information as to what jobs needed to be done in the hive. Bees multitask and there is much mixing of jobs: the larvae give off chemical messages to say they need to be fed, and the queen is the source of important pheromones which particularly attract the younger workers, while workers are repelled. There are complex feedback loops and some pheromones act to suppress bees’ innate desires, for example to make queens. If the queen disappears, this brake disappears and queen cells are the result. The queen can also suppress workers from becoming foragers as they age, if it happens that she needs more attendants.

We were fascinated to learn that bees can detect, chemically, whether a queen has been naturally or artificially mated. And queen larvae give off a pheromone with the message: “Stop making queens!”

Clare also told us that a properly mated queen has sperm from many, genetically diverse drones. Restricting mating to just one strain risks losing value – so she no longer breeds “Buckfast bees”, and would always choose her queen bees by looking at their performance, rather than attempting to guess this from the genetics.

Varroa can assume the chemical identity of a host bee within 20 minutes, after which they are chemically invisible. This casts doubt on the validity of “hygienic bees”; the phenomenon is clearly complex.

Clare said swarm lures are synthetic Nasonov pheromone – and she personally would rather use a piece of empty brood comb in a bait hive to attract swarms. She also feels that thymol must interfere with communication. She prefers to use the new replacement for HiveClean: VarroMed.

We were surprised to hear that the bees that follow the queen in a prime swarm are young – 10 days old or less. This explains why they are so ready to move to a new home. In a swarm, thousands of bees emerge from the hive but a huge sorting out then takes place and many return.

Clare also told us it is a myth that virgin queens kill their sisters. And we were delighted to learn that drones are by no means useless in the hive: they serve a vital function in keeping the brood warm, for example.

We could have listened to Clare’s wisdom for many hours. Her talk sent us off re-thinking many aspects of our beekeeping.

reported kindly by Caroline Dilke Chair of WDBKA

Building a Bee Library

Previously, I described and recommended books by Ted Hooper and Clive de Bruyn which I think any new beekeeper will find helpful and should keep on their bookshelf.

However, there are many others which a few minutes online will reveal and, with the emphasis on new beekeepers, I cannot leave out the **BBKA's "Guide to Beekeeping"** by Ivor Davis and Roger Cullom-Kenyon. There are few people better qualified to write such a book. Ivor understands exactly what a new beekeeper wants and needs to know and he is straightforward and uncomplicated in meeting that need with plentiful photographs and illustrations.

These three books will take a beginner a long way towards learning how to keep their bees safely and in good health but if the Basic Assessment is in your mind – and maybe the modules later on – then **the series of books by J D & B D Yates** will prove invaluable.

There are several books in the series dealing with the modules and yet others to guide you through all the practical assessments including microscopy. An advantage of these books is that each chapter deals specifically with an item from the syllabus which makes it easy to work your way through the syllabus, knowing exactly where to look for the answers to anything that you might want to clarify.

A single (brown) book deals with the Basic Assessment and the "Purple Book" will guide you through the Husbandry Assessment.

Two more cover all of the modules;-

The "Green Book" covers modules 1, 2 and 3 while the "Orange Book" deals with Modules 5, 6, 7 and 8. I expect you know that number 4 no longer exists, which once dealt with some aspects of the bee's biology, and now all contained in module 5

If **Microscopy** interests you and you have plans to tackle the BBKA's microscopy certificate, then Yates can also help you there with his **"Blue Book"** but another good book is written by **Bob Maurer titled "Practical Microscopy for Beekeepers"**. The word "practical" is the watchword for this book which is easy to read and deals with every aspect of microscopy in a manner which deals with some complicated aspects in an understandable and engaging way. The book is well illustrated with clear diagrams and many photographs together with an excellent glossary which explains the various technical terms common to microscopy but which are not familiar to most of us.

Next time I will suggest some other books which will take more experienced beekeepers further into the exploration of the honey bee and its secrets but I will leave you with a final thought (although you have probably already come to appreciate this) ; The more you learn, the more there is to discover – and the more books you will find you need !

Perhaps Santa brought you some for Christmas!

Happy reading,

Terry Payne

The 2018 Dorset Convention

As most of you know, the Dorset Convention took place at Blandford School Sunday 21st October. It was a lovely sunny day and everyone enjoyed the chance to go outside and look at the beautiful view from the dining hall.

The four speakers were very different and each gave us a different view of our bees. The hall was well lit and the microphones worked which made a big difference to being able to hear each speaker. Ian Condon managed to make the IT run smoothly and well. Another thing that added to the atmosphere and enjoyment was having Northern Bee Books send down five boxes of book for Tim Villiers to sell. We crowded round to see what was on offer. Other side shows were Thornes from Stockbridge bringing items people had ordered and selling small items they could put in their van and Dorset Wild Life Trust's stand. Finally there were more cakes for tea than we could eat.

Celia Davis talked about "In Self Defence" which was about how bees stave off disease both at the individual level and the colony level. The importance of their antibacterial saliva and propolis were mentioned and the fact that bees are good at keeping the hive clean by removing dead bodies and other detritus.

Pam Hunter talked about the evolution of bees, with the evolution of flowers and the change from wind pollinated plants to insect pollinated plants. She explained that bees had evolved over 165m years. Humans had evolved in less than 1m years.



Dan Basterfield explained that "Reading the Bees" meant looking at brood combs in the context of the local weather, local forage, where in the hive the brood comb had been found and what time of the year you were opening the hive. His was a practical talk and useful to new beekeepers.

Anne Rowberry spoke about what bees forage for and the importance of pollen in the bee's diet. She gave an analysis of the different minerals, vitamins and amino acids in pollen which ensure healthy brood and healthy bees.

The convention finished at about 4.00pm with plenty of time over lunch and tea for beekeepers to chat and catch up with each other.

Finally the on-line booking system was a success as we knew how many people were coming and which association they belonged to. With the sale of books, for which we received 10% commission, the convention made a small profit of about £15.00.

Our next convention is on Saturday 20th July 2019 when our local Bee Inspector, Kevin Pope, will be organising a Healthy Bees Day at Blandford School in conjunction with the Regional Bee Inspector and other SBIs. Put that in your diary now.

Lesley Gasson

The National Honey Show 2018

Beekeepers in the UK have two annual events. In April there is the National Conference at Harper Adams University in Shropshire and in October there is the National Honey Show at Sandown Park racecourse. In many ways they are similar; at each there are a number of eminent speakers, workshops on practical topics, trade stands and gatherings of beekeepers to meet and chat. Many of the same people are involved in both events so if you miss someone in April you will probably see them in October.

I prefer the National Honey Show; it is easier to get to from where I live, I enjoy the many entries in the huge variety of classes and the speakers are usually interesting and informative. The only drawback is that if you want to enter an item in the show it needs to be delivered to the show site on the Wednesday before the show and collected on the Saturday at the end of the show.

This year The Reverend Capener retired as President and Margaret Davis was installed as the new President. Margaret has been an eminent show judge for many years and is the judges' referee at the World Honey show at Apimondia.

The AGM of the National Honey Show, to which I am a delegate, takes about 10 minutes as it is all arranged in advance and no one has the temerity to raise any issues. The secretary reads the minutes, awards for long service are given and that is the whole of it.

Lesley Gasson



Wax exhibit



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Apimondia

Apimondia is the worldwide beekeeping conference that takes place in a different country every two years. Countries have to bid for it, rather like the Olympics. On the whole the arrangement is that it takes place in Europe every four years and in other parts of the world every four years. The last one was in Turkey in 2017 and the next one in 2019 is in Montreal, Canada from 8-12 September. After that it will be in Russia in 2021. There are a number of people in Dorset interested in going to Canada in September 2019. They have asked me to write about it to see if we can get a group together so we can obtain group booking prices in the hotels and on the airlines to make getting there and staying there cheaper.

Apimondia is a worthwhile and interesting beekeeping event. There are about four different aspects to it which make it worth going to.

- The most important one is the many talks, workshops and gatherings about different aspects of beekeeping such as bee breeding, diseases, apitherapy, beekeeping economy, bees for development and many more.
- The next is the amazing display of beekeeping equipment as suppliers from around the world come to Apimondia. Countries that produce honey for export have many items we never see here.
- Thirdly, there are often entertainments put on by the countries hoping to be nominated for the next Apimondia, as well as ones put on by the host country. When it was Ireland applying to be the next country there was a lot of dancing and Guinness available.
- Finally, on the last day of the conference there are what are called *technical tours* which are a chance to go to a wide variety of places and apiaries to see how local beekeepers deal with their bees. I find this the most interesting part of the event.

If you would like to go to Apimondia you need to register online. England is not one of the member countries so you have to pay a bit more than member countries. As a non-member we do not get to vote on which country hosts Apimondia after Russia. The good thing is that Canada is English-speaking and close to the USA so you can combine your trip with other interests.

If you do decide to register and go to Apimondia let me know and I'll try to get group booking prices for hotels and travel.

Lesley Gasson



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Itinerant Etruscan Beekeepers

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By JASON URBANUS

November/December 2017



(bee: iStock, honeycomb: Courtesy Lorenzo Castellano)
Ancient honeycomb

In northern Italy 2,500 years ago, Etruscans developed a unique system of beekeeping to manufacture honey, beeswax, and other products. Archaeologists working at the site of Forcello recently gained rare insight into ancient beekeeping when they uncovered the charred and melted remains of honey, honeycombs, and honeybees in a workshop that had burned down between 510 and 495 B.C. Researchers conducted chemical and palynological (pollen) analyses of the material to determine not only the composition of Etruscan honey, but also what types of plants bees were collecting pollen from two and half millennia ago. While bees in northern Italy today feed abundantly on nonnative plants that have been introduced to the region, during the Etruscan period, bees were foraging from aquatic sources such as water lilies and the flowers of wild grapevines found along shorelines. This produced a kind of grapevine honey that is

completely unknown today. Since these plants were not particularly abundant around Forcello, experts believe that Etruscan beekeepers maintained beehives on boats that moved along river courses and took the harvested honeycombs back to their workshops to extract the honey. "We have tried to study the finds and their context from all possible angles and, surprisingly, we ended up having very strong indications of a nomadic form of beekeeping," says New York University researcher Lorenzo Castellano. In fact, a passage from the first-century A.D. writer Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* mentions a town only about 12 miles from Forcello, and the historian discusses the movements of the beehives by boats. Says Castellano, "Our finds, which are more than five centuries older, appear to confirm Pliny's narrative."

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How long do queens live?

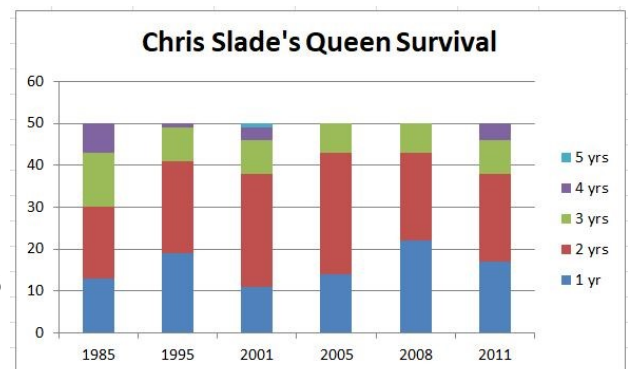
There has been discussion and some research recently on how long queens live nowadays compared to earlier days. I've just posted on:

chrissladesbeeblog.wordpress.com the record of my queens from 1985 until now. I'm not a statistician and make no claims or conclusions but would welcome comments from anyone interested.

Boiling the figures down, queens in my hives in the years 1985 - 1995 were there for 2.28 years on average. 1995 - 2003: 1.82 years. 2001 - 2007: 2.12 years. 2005 - 2009: 1.86 years. 2008 - 2012: 1.7 years. 2011 - 2017: 1.98 years.

The figures relate to the time when the queens were in my hives so those that arrived or left with swarms might have lived a year or two longer.

Chris Slade



Poetry

My collection of poems about bees and the people who keep them "*Bees vs People*" has now been published. These are all poems I've written. They're in a paperback book and I charge £5. They have some in Waterstones but I'd be happy to post copies to people at no extra cost. Please contact: cslade777@aol.com

Dorset Dates

Members of all Associations are WELCOME at all meetings. However, if it is not your parent branch, please contact the organiser beforehand, so that they can ensure that there are enough seats (cake?) for all attendees.

Date	Branch	Event	Contact	Venue
15 January 7.30pm	BSBKA	Workshop—Making Asian hornet traps	Lesley Gasson	Church Centre, Shillingstone
20 January	West Dorset BKA	Annual lunch	Carole Brown	Bridport Golf Club
20 January & 29 January 7.30pm	ED BKA	Asian hornet workshops		
12 February 7.30pm	BSBKA	Bee Farming; a talk by Margaret Ginman	Lesley Gasson	Church Centre, Shillingstone
2 March	D&W BKA	Auction of Beekeeping Equipment	Andy Ranson 01305 770730	Sunninghill Prep School, Dorchester DT1 1EB
10 March	Dorset BKA	AGM and talk by Margaret Murdin	Liz Rescorla	Sunninghill Community Hall, Dorchester
15 May	Dorset BKA	Council meeting	Liz Rescorla	
15 June	ED BKA	Bee Experience Day		West Moors
20 July	Dorset BKA	Healthy Bees Day	Lesley Gasson	Blandford School
8-12 September		APIMONDIA	Lesley Gasson	Montreal, Canada
18 September	Dorset BKA	Council meeting	Liz Rescorla	

Show Dates 2019

Gillingham & Shaftesbury	Wednesday 14th August
Melplash	Thursday 22nd August
Dorset County Show	Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th September

Who's Who in the Dorset County Beekeepers Association

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