



WVBKA Charity Registration Number: 517008

Car Boot Sale and Technical Meeting – Saturday June 10th

As the last few car boots have been poorly attended due partly to bad weather we thought we would try and make the event a bit more attractive this year and see if this increased attendance. We have decided to combine the sale with a talk by Ron Hoskins from the Swindon Honeybee Conservation Group. Ron and his group have selected lines of honey bees which are better at controlling Varroa through grooming. Ron started this work in 1995 and gradually developed techniques which have been the basis of the work by the Swindon group. He will talk to us about this work.

We are still working on the format for the day, but do put this event in your diary as it should be very interesting.

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Diary Dates

- April 7th, 8th, 9th BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams
- April 14th Apiary meeting 6.30pm
- April 19th Committee meeting 7.30pm, Moccas
- May 6th and 7th Beginners Course
- May 12th Apiary meeting 6.30 pm
- May 20th and 21st Beginners Course

Queen Colour of the Year

2017 is: **YELLOW**

Apiary Meeting 2017

We had our first meeting of the year on Sunday 19th March. This was a well-attended session and we did some frame building so they were ready for use in the apiary during the year – the elves did a good job as the hut resounded with the sound of hammers. Following this there was a general and lively discussion about the steps to be taking as the season starts. David showed us his latest toy – a forced air oxalic acid vaporiser, a big improvement on his heated version we looked at in the January meeting.



The future time and dates for meetings will be on Fridays at 6.30pm. Meetings are open to all members and the aim is to increase practical knowledge in a friendly atmosphere.



Remember there are no daft questions and there are probably more answers than questions. So come along and be part of it. Details of the topics we will be covering will be emailed out during the week of the meeting; we will keep it flexible as topics can be influenced by weather and bees.

- 21st April 2017
- 12th May 2017
- 02nd June 2017
- 23rd June 2017
- 14th July 2017

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Honey bee with varroa mite

Basic Assessment – Is It For You?

The BBKA has an education programme which allows its members to participate in a series of modules on the theory and practice of beekeeping. The starting point for this programme is the Basic Assessment which can be taken by anyone who has been keeping bees for more than 12 months. The assessment is completely oral/practical and takes place in our association apiary.

A BBKA examiner attends and will spend 1 to 2 hours with each candidate during which time there will be an oral question and answer session and the candidate will then open a beehive and carry out an inspection while explaining to the assessor what they are seeing. It's all done in an open and friendly way.

The syllabus may look daunting at first, but when you read through it you will realise that everything covered is what you probably already know and do. There are four main sections:

- Manipulation and Equipment – practical
- Natural History and Beekeeping – oral questions
- Swarming, Swarm Control and Effects – oral questions
- Disease and Pests – oral questions.

The BBKA syllabus is attached to this newsletter but I have also found a very well prepared expanded version on the Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association website – the link to this is:

<https://blog.mbbka.org.uk/category/education/basic-assessment-exam/b>

I will add a link on our website once I get their permission.

If you keep bees and have been through the Beginners course and some of our apiary and mentoring meetings, you will be familiar with all of the requirements. We will be running a refresher course prior to the assessment to re-familiarise candidates with the knowledge they need and how to prepare for the test.

Until a few years ago anyone on our Beginners course automatically took this assessment, but the BBKA introduced the requirement for candidates to have kept bees for a year. There are positive and negative views on that step, but overall we consider that taking this test helps to cement some of the basic information in the minds of our members and to improve them as beekeepers and we would encourage anyone interested to have a go.



Bee keeping equipment from keepingbee.org

If you want to know more, or would like to book a place on the refresher course and take the assessment then please contact, Peter Woodward or Sue Quigley.



Bee swarm - WillBees.org



April notes

I wrote last month about what you should do if you find colonies which have died out, or colonies which may have a drone laying queen. If you have closed the entrance, examined your comb and carried out the necessary sterilisation of the comb there should be no need for you to worry. Beekeeping is a constant challenge and the beekeeper should be able to read the signs and act accordingly, of course this does not come without some experience. Now what do we do about that colony which has a drone laying queen? The key factor here is what condition the bees are in. Usually they will be in a poor condition with no young bees and the colony will more than likely be completely out of balance. What do I mean out of balance? Well, simply a hive of bees is made up of lots of different kinds of bees, young bees, older bees, bees which have become foragers, bees which are wax building etc. The first thought that comes into most people's minds when they are confronted with this issue is "*oh I need another queen*" however, this is not the correct approach to rectify the situation.

Rectifying a drone laying queen

When you have established that you definitely do have a drone laying queen, then the first and most important thing is to establish the condition of the bees. They will be old, possibly containing many drones and quite out of balance. Do you think that this is an ideal situation to introduce a nice young laying queen, possibly costing in the region of £40 into? The short answer is very definitely no, so if you want to go down that route, first things first, you must get the bees in the right condition to accept a new queen. However, there are other ways of dealing with this situation, simply make sure that the old queen is not present and paper the whole lot on top of a queen right colony and they will very quickly sort themselves out. You can then go ahead and

sterilise the comb, this is a method which I would endorse. However you must, I repeat, must make sure that you have no disease in the bees which you are uniting. Sometimes this may be more difficult than you realise when a colony develops a drone laying queen. There are various stages which the colony will go through, which are what we call neglected drone brood, which can look like EFB.

Drone laying worker

Well the first thing is to establish that you have a drone laying worker. This is usually defined by looking at the eggs which have been deposited in the bottom of the cell. Generally, there are quite a number in one cell as opposed to a queen, which normally only lays one egg each cell. Having established that you have a drone laying worker the recommended procedure is simply to throw the remaining bees in the butt of a hedge. Another option is to simply unite by putting an excluder on the top of an existing hive and use the paper method.

My preferred method

With all the above you are working with bees which have had problems. I much prefer to work with good clean stocks with none of the above, they cannot be put right in five minutes and probably will take one or two rounds of brood to rebalance the colony. When making nuclei it is far better to make your nucs with good clean vigorous stocks with no sign of disease etc. The method I prefer to use when doing this is simply draw from the brood nest sufficient combs to make a nuc minus the queen. It will be well balanced with all the necessary ingredients for success.

Looking forward

If there are any topics which you would like me to cover then please let me know. These notes are compiled to assist you in good beekeeping. I do not, I repeat, I do not work without experiencing the issues that I'm talking about. I hold my hand up and say yes I do get things wrong, most beekeepers do. However, because I've spent many years beekeeping and have met most of the problems which I write about, this puts me in an ideal position to help others to not make the same mistakes.

Dave

WVBKA Officers for 2017

Chairman:

- Peter Woodward
peter_woodward@tesco.net
wvbkachairman@gmail.com

Vice Chairman:

- Rob Doran

General and Honey Show Secretary:

- Susan Quigley 01981 510183
New House Farm, Michaelchurch
Escley, HR2 OPT
quigley.susan@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

- Lee Howarth
47a Crossways, Peterchurch, HR2 OTQ
wvbkamembers@gmail.com

Librarian:

- TBC

Association Apiary Manager:

- Dave Williams 01981 550320
- David Williams 07875 426089

Newsletter Editor:

- Tim & Belinda Dale: beedale@outlook.com

Committee:

- Geoff Dutson
- Juliet Parker-Smith
- Duncan Penkey
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams

Catering Committee:

- Jane Matthews
- June Williams

Mentoring Team:

- Geoff Dutson 01981 500491
- Cliff Rose 01981 251844
- David Williams 07875 426089
- Peter Woodward 01981 240280

Technical Advisers:

- Gareth Baker 01600 714323
- Dave Williams 01981 550320
- John Howarth 01981 550733

Website Editor:

- Peter Woodward

Honorary Auditor:

- Mike Price



Association Website

<http://www.wyevalleybeekeepers.org/>

By now you should all have received a set of personal logon details to enable you to access the Members Area of the website. If you have paid your fees then you should have had an email about this logon, if you haven't then please let me know as I may have entered your details wrongly. (I plead fat fingers, there are a lot of members and a lot of emails to type in, I do try and cross check them but I may have missed something.)

As with all things there are a few wrinkles to iron out. If you joined as a Full member with a Partner and you only gave us one email, then I can only set one of you up with access. In these few cases as a default, I have set up the Full member with a logon; if you want another for the partner then you will need to send me a separate email address.

The passwords are generated automatically and are complicated so as to be protective. If you can't remember it, then you can amend your password once you logon to the Members Area, please try to use something complex as well as memorable for you.

Once you have logged on, why not put some posts in the Members Forum and see if we can get some chats going – the subject should be generally about bees, but other topics can be broached. We don't have a system of oversight on what is posted as I don't think that is necessary.

If there are any improvements that you would like to see or information you think we should put up there then please let me know.

Peter

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