



Photo: daffodils by Tim Dale

March 2019

WVBKA Charity Registration  
Number: 517008



### Diary Dates 2019

- **March 16<sup>th</sup>**  
Meet the Public at Wyevale Garden Centre
- **March 29<sup>th</sup>**  
Apiary meeting and first visit to the new lodge
- **March 30<sup>th</sup>**  
Welsh Beekeepers' Association Spring Convention at Builth Wells
- **April 16<sup>th</sup>**  
Committee meeting

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Queen Colour of the Year  
2019 is: **GREEN**

### 2019 Annual General Meeting

There was a good turnout at the meeting on Saturday and firstly we enjoyed three excellent short talks. Malcolm Nevett has raised the important topic of the threat to us all posed by the arrival of the Asian hornet in the UK. He has offered to set up and coordinate an action team (AHAT) and is liaising with the Herefordshire Association on this.

The first action for us to take as beekeepers is setting traps in time for the emergence of hornet queens in March. These can be plastic bottle wasp traps, which it is possible to adapt so that smaller insects can escape. Information on how to do this is available on the BBKA website at:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk>

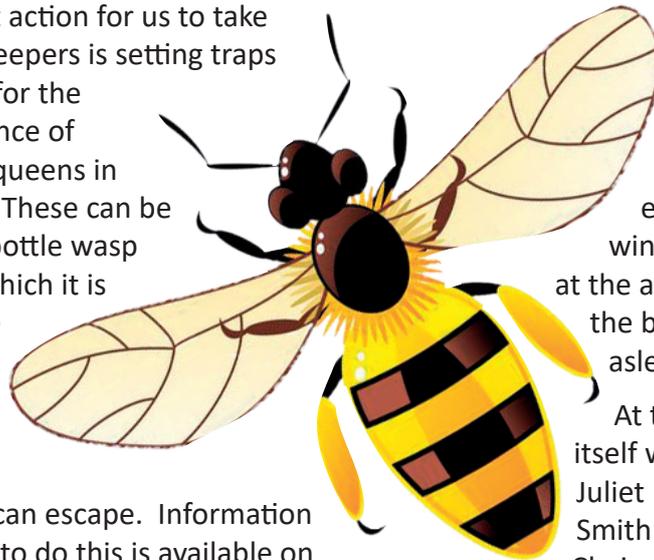
The other important action is to publicise the Asian hornet by using posters and leaflets so that we and the public know what to look out for. Information is available from BeeBase by emailing:

[nbu@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Jonathan Axe our Regional Bee Inspector introduced himself and

joined in the discussion on hornet precautions. He is now Chairman of the Forest of Dean Association and recommends members look at BBKA qualifying modules to advance their knowledge.

Finally, Peter Woodward showed the new audio visual equipment which will be installed at the lodge for demonstrating microscopy



of bees, parasites and pollen. Something for us to enjoy on cold winter evenings at the apiary when the bees are asleep!

At the meeting itself we elected Juliet Parker-Smith as new Vice Chairman and

Patricia Ronan as Hon Secretary and a new Apiary Team under Dave Williams' leadership. We still have vacancies on the committee (see WVBKA Officers on the back page) and anyone who can help will be most welcome to apply. Please contact me.

*Rob Doran*

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## The PVC 'Wasp Guard' – Simple and Effective



Last year, I wondered if I could do anything to help the bees fend off pesky wasps and possibly Asian hornets. It was then that it occurred to me that I had read an article in the BBKA magazine from July 2016, entitled 'Wasps: Our Solution'. A beekeeping couple in Lincolnshire had used a piece of clear, corrugated PVC roofing to put on the front of their hives to protect against wasps.

*(Sorry about the hive looking less like a hive and more like Alcatraz! Mouse guard and snow fence also in place.)*

The bees could get in and out of two entrances that were easy to defend and the wasps 'couldn't hack it' as the writer put it. So, I decided to try it for myself. I went to a local builders' supplier and bought a piece of roofing.

It had to be transparent in order to fool the wasps. I cut it to size and drilled holes for drawing pins to fix the guard in place on the front of the hive. Sure enough, it worked! The bees of course had to get used to it, but once they did, I saw barely any wasps getting into the hive. It also serves other purposes as it protects against prevailing winds, rain and snow and helps to keep the bees nice and toasty, which is why I still have it on.



I really think it works and is extremely effective in keeping wasps and bad weather out and more importantly, the food for bees in. The wasps hover up and down in front of the hive but the clear PVC expertly fools them, and they just can't see how on earth the bees can get in and out.

I hope this was of use to some of you and all the best for this season!

*Fletch*

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## Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT)

Malcolm Nevett gives details following his presentation at the AGM.

In 2019 the BBKA wrote to all organisations asking each of them to form an Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT). Each team would have a contact number to help the public who needed assistance with identification of the hornet. Positive sightings would be passed to the NBU. Would any WVBKA members willing to assist with forming an action team please contact me on [nevett139@btinternet.com](mailto:nevett139@btinternet.com) or 08709 568816.

It would be wrong to assume there will no Asian hornets emerging in the UK this spring. The BBKA has further asked all beekeepers to be confident in

identifying the Asian hornet and to register hives on BeeBase for the purpose of personalised hornet alerts.

Trapping and or the use of bait trays has been strongly recommended. Traps and bait are available commercially but both can be made inexpensively. Traps should be set in March and monitored frequently, particularly as this will help minimise losses to indigenous species. The effort beekeepers make setting traps for emerging queens and monitoring hives will determine whether or not the hornet is contained.

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# DAVE'S BLOG

## March Notes

Now the better weather is with us the bees will start consuming a little more winter stores so you will need to see that they don't run short. In addition, you will see the tell-tale signs of activity at the entrance of your hives as little bits of wax cappings will show at the entrance. A careful look will indicate these things, you do not need to pull your colony about or disturb them too much. You can tell by placing your hand on the crown board whether you have live bees or not. Of course this doesn't tell you how big or how little they are, it is merely an indicator that they are still alive. Careful hefting of the hive will also tell you if they are short of food or not. Placing fondant on any hive which is short will sustain them until they can gather enough to sustain themselves.

According to my understanding, various people up and down the country are moving away from treating their colonies with harsh chemicals to control the mite levels. There is a balancing act to be brought into play here. You don't want to leave your bees completely to the perils of this horrible little fellow but careful monitoring and use of treatments which are not harsh, will allow the bees to gather their own independence from the use of harsh chemicals. I will leave it to the experts to explain how this comes about as, I simply am not equipped to answer these questions. All I can tell you is bees have developed an immunity to Acarine which was called originally the Isle of Wight disease. Again, this was a mite which gained entry to the breathing tubes of the honeybee. Most of our indigenous bees now don't suffer from this pest but in the early part of the century it was a big problem. Seventy-five years ago many beekeepers were treating their bees with various treatments to combat this problem. Over the last 50 odd years it hasn't been a problem, or should I say, it hasn't been a problem in my bees.



Back in the 1970s I went to great expense to buy microscopes to do my own diagnostic work because I didn't wish to rely on other people to do my in-house diagnostic. After spending considerable money, in the region of £700 to £800, most of it has remained redundant for the past 30 or 40 years, although I do test occasionally for the presence of Nosema. If you stick with your indigenous bees from the area where you live, then you're less likely to come into contact with these problems. Of course any bees can get disease, they are not completely immune. However they are less likely to become affected if they are indigenous, I won't say black. I am not even sure whether there is such an animal in existence, although they do tell us there is.

Working with bees as I have for the biggest part of my life and importing and using most other strains such as Buckfast, all-American, Russian and New Zealand to name but a few, all have traits which are not conducive to our climate. The indigenous bees are by far and away the best bees to sustain most diseases. I am not saying they are the best bees to work with but they certainly are more sustainable than most of these so-called hybrids. I don't wish to get on my soapbox but put your money where your mouth is, buy a few and see if I'm not right. On the other side of the coin there is the BBKA wishing to stop imports altogether. I'm not sure that this is the right

thing to do because if you are a commercial beekeeper and wish to expand quickly you need a supply of good quality queens. Putting it simply they are just not available in this country in quantities at the moment. Many years ago when I was expanding and wishing to buy indigenous queens, they were simply not available. Through The Village Bee Breeders Association, once again I see that there are moves afoot by this association to establish various new groups to propagate our dark bees, they call it sustainable beekeeping.

Dave

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## WVBKA Officers for 2019

### Chairman:

- Rob Doran: 01432 830056  
[brandoran@btinternet.com](mailto:brandoran@btinternet.com)

### Vice Chairman:

- Juliet Parker-Smith: 01497 847214

### Secretary:

- Patricia Ronan: 07903 054699

### Honey Show Secretary:

- Vacant

### Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

- Roger Jenner: 01873 890467  
Grove Cottage, Walterstone, Hereford, HR2 0DT  
[wvbkamembers@gmail.com](mailto:wvbkamembers@gmail.com)

### Librarian:

- Vacant

### Association Apiary Management Team:

- Dave Williams
- Duncan Penkey
- Geoff Dutson

### Newsletter Editing:

- Tim & Belinda Dale: [beedale@outlook.com](mailto:beedale@outlook.com)

### Committee:

- Geoff Dutson
- Duncan Penkey
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams
- Peter Woodward

### Catering Committee:

- Jane Matthews
- June Williams

### Mentoring Team & Technical Advisors:

- Geoff Dutson: 01981 500491
- Cliff Rose: 01981 251844
- Peter Woodward: 01432 839251

### Website Editor:

- Rob Doran

### Honorary Auditor:

- Mike Price

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If beekeepers choose to ignore the BBKA's requests for action, then the opportunity to contain this voracious predator will be lost and probably within a year or so. If this happens, then the loss of hives and other indigenous species will be significant.

If you are still unconvinced by the need to follow the BBKA's advice, then please take a quick look at the video link below:

- BBKA letter sent to all Associations and Groups: [BBKA Letter](#)
- Map of AHAT Action Teams: [AHAT Map](#)
- Make an Asian hornet trap / how to make / where to hang the traps: [Hornet Trap](#)
- Video of Asian hornets in France: [Hornet video](#)

Malcolm Newett

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## Apiary 2019

The main purpose of the Association apiary is to facilitate learning about beekeeping, both for those beginners who may not yet have their own bees and for individual and group learning supervised by mentors.

This year we have a new Apiary Team led by Dave Williams and besides looking after the hives and the bees, they will arrange the apiary meetings. The plan is to have relevant topics prepared for either hive demonstrations or talks indoors according to the weather conditions and the suitability of hive opening etc.

If you wish to participate or attend a meeting then please contact Duncan Penkey on 07966 214713 so you can join the apiary WhatsApp group. This will allow any last minute changes to be notified to those who are interested.

The first meeting is on 29<sup>th</sup> March when we will have an opportunity to see inside the spectacular new shooting lodge.

Looking forward to meeting you there

Rob Doran