



Photo: Holly berries by Belinda Dale

December 2019/January 2020

WVBKA Charity Registration
Number: 517008



Diary Dates 2019/2020

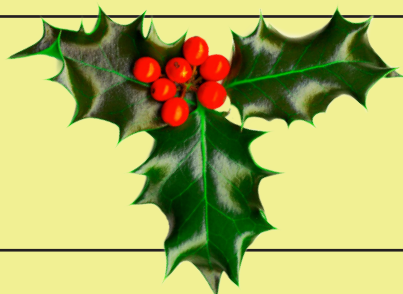
2019

- 7th December 2019 Pre-Christmas lunch, The Salutation Inn, Weobley

2020

- 24th January Winter Meeting, Association Apiary at 5.30pm
- 22nd February AGM, Moccas(TBA)
- 28th February Winter Meeting, Association Apiary at 5.30pm
- 14th March Public Information Stall, Hereford Garden Centre (TBA)

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Queen Colour of the Year

2019 is: **GREEN**
2020 is: **BLUE**

Chairman's Notes

Winter Meetings at Shenmore

This new programme has started well, with subjects including varroa management and notifiable diseases. Topics are usually decided nearer the date, with microscopy and pollen identification top of the list to come, but please contact Duncan with ideas for future meets. Agreed dates in 2020 are 24th January and 28th February. Members attending are encouraged to do some reading beforehand so that the conversation is open to all. Let's enjoy some interesting chat around the stove on these Friday evenings starting at 5.30pm, pending the arrival of next spring.

The WVBKA Newsletter

As you may have noticed that this newsletter (Dec/Jan) follows the last in October (Oct/Nov) and the next will not be issued until early February. One reason for the lull is the 'off season' so that Dave has little to comment on. The other is a continuing shortage of material submitted by members. Please would everyone think of sending anything of interest to me for consideration as the newsletter certainly does not write itself! Big thanks go to all last year's contributors and especially to Tim and Belinda Dale for their continuing efforts in helping us maintain this important communication so efficiently.

Forthcoming Events

Now we look forward to the pre-Christmas lunch at the Salutation Inn at Weobley on Saturday 7th December. There are only a very few days left to book if you haven't already done so, but maybe a late phone call to June will do it?

Next year's calendar has been under discussion by the Committee. We always start with reference to the major national and regional event dates and then see if we can find gaps (usually 8mm for an opening and 5mm wriggle room).

The first event in March will be our public information stall at Hereford Garden Centre (previously Wyevale) in Kings Acre on Saturday 14th. Volunteers please contact Patricia.

Further highlights proposed are a 'bee safari' in July, for which we are looking to recruit one more host in the HR4 area and the Open meeting in October.

In planning this we are always on the lookout for interesting speakers and topics so please contact me if you can help on either of these.

The full calendar will be available in the New Year, but don't forget the AGM at Moccas on 22nd February.

Meanwhile, Happy Christmas to everyone!

Rob Doran

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A Nasty Surprise

It was a nice sunny midday in early October. I was about to inspect one of my hives, which showed no outward signs of a problem. I was already pleased a few days earlier to see almost no varroa on the sheet beneath the mesh floor. However, when I neared the hive there was a noise of unhappy bees inside, a bit like grinding machinery.

On lifting the roof, bees poured out of the crown board. Inside there was a mass of dead bees on the floor. The remaining bees were busy on the frames and not at all aggressive. Many of the dead bees were black and shiny. I didn't see dying bees shivering and there were none on the ground. In discussion with local experts it was thought likely



that an acute paralysis virus was responsible which implies that my colony was far from free of varroa.

continued on page 4...



Membership Renewal for 2020

Now is the time to renew your membership for 2020. Thank you for supporting Wye Valley Beekeeping Association in 2019, membership fees will stay the same as for 2019.

For the first time we will be using a new online membership renewal system provided by the BBKA to all affiliated associations. Each member (no matter which membership category) will receive an email which will include a personalised link – you will need to click on the link to take you to a form to renew your subscription. You will also be able to purchase any necessary additional BDI, no passwords or other information will be required to use this. Other Association options and donations can also be recorded via this link. Please also remember to tick the box for Gift Aid if you are an eligible tax payer.

Once you have completed the form you will be taken to a page that will display the Association's bank details; these can be used so that you may pay on line (preferred option) or the address for sending a cheque.

For those of you who have an additional Partner Membership and/or Junior Membership you will need to complete the above for each category but you will only need to make one payment so you will

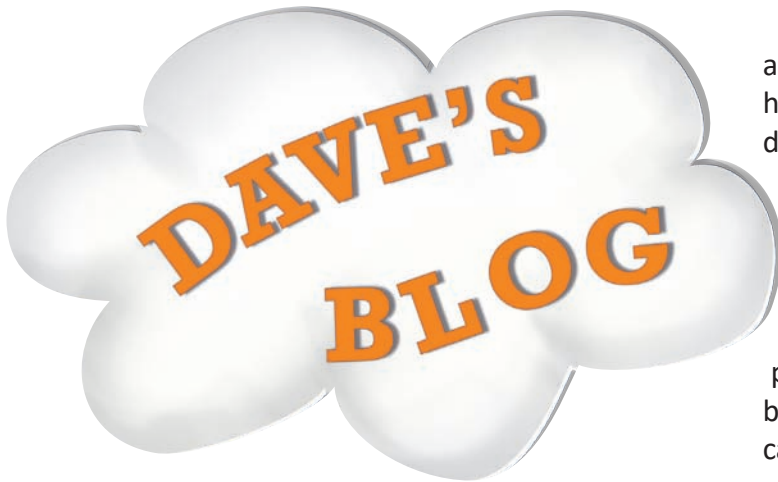
need to add up the different amounts yourselves.

Hopefully, this new system will save us all time so please use the online facility, rather than sending your information in the post as this removes the need to enter your details manually. It will also hopefully be easier than the online renewal system on our own website which will remain active for the time being but please don't use both! If you have any problems using this system then do let me know as soon as possible. An "old style" renewal form will be emailed initially just in case you are unable to use the online system.

Bearing in mind that it is easy to overlook the renewal amongst the myriad of emails we all get, reminder emails will be sent at periodic intervals for those members who had not as yet renewed at this time. If for some reason you get a reminder and you think you have renewed then do also let me know.

Remember that your subscription includes £10,000,000 public and product liability insurance, BDI cover for three hives and BBKA news delivered to your door once a month.

Rob



December/January Notes

Yet another dismal morning, I don't think I have known a worse downpour for many years. There is always something that can stimulate thought; I would often think about how the bees are passing the winter period and from my observation most are quite tightly clustered with hardly any movement, this is normal and nothing to worry about. If they aren't in cluster they are probably consuming stores, even though it may be small amounts. You may even see them taking what we call cleansing flights on warm days, this is quite natural. In the main there is not much beekeepers can do at this time of the year except make sure that they aren't unduly disturbed. If the hives are watertight with lids tied down most will be fine however, there is one nasty little beast which will continue to be a problem in certain areas. They have a very pointed beak and a long sneaky tongue which they use to probe inside hives and once they have made a hole, they can be quite destructive in a short time. You will need to protect your hives and there are many ways of achieving this with various meshes.

What else can we do at this time of the year? Of course there is always the cleaning and storing of equipment. While it is still fresh in your mind you could consider any additional equipment for next year, always order any items well before the coming season. With foundation being wrapped in sealed polythene bags it will keep fresh for many years. In addition, there are many subjects which are well worth a read to bone up on your knowledge. Pollen identification is always very interesting, of course that leads you into microscopy which is a big subject on its own. Many beekeepers are interested in this side of things, however let me point out that if you follow microscopy it can be very time-consuming and costly. You will need a dissecting microscope

and a compound microscope which will cost many hundreds of pounds. We undertook in-house diagnostic work many years ago and invested in microscopes for diagnostic work i.e. the brood diseases and indeed some pollen identification but before you start, I would urge you to look at the requirements which are necessary to undertake this kind of study. Staining of slides, preparing slides, dissection are all very fascinating but are very time consuming and expensive. Think carefully before you spend your money and if you decide to follow this through, the BBKA offer certificates to successful candidates. We in the WVBKA can help in this direction but be prepared to undertake some study yourself.

The Association Apiary

Most of you will be aware that we are trying to keep the bees without chemicals to control that little beast so watch this space for any developments. Of course this doesn't fit very well with our Disease Inspection Officers, who are still recommending we treat our bees. There is a debate as to the rights and wrongs of this issue. My view is very simple, if we prop bees up with the various treatments they are to some extent not building their own immunity to the disease. To cite an example from the early 19th century there was a big problem with what was then called the Isle of Wight disease which again caused widespread damage to bees, beekeepers went to extraordinary lengths to control this, now we don't see this as a problem anymore. Isle of Wight disease was caused by a mite that gained entry through the breathing tubes of the honeybee. In recent years it has been given a new name called the tracheal mite. As far as I'm aware it doesn't present us with a real problem in our indigenous bees now. However if you use imported queens expect problems to occur, they simply have not managed to become resistant.

Study Groups

Most of you are aware that we are running study groups at the Association Apiary. The idea behind these groups is that it will reinforce and improve our knowledge on various topics, most of which are well documented in many publications. You are welcome to join our groups where the subjects chosen will be relevant to our current beekeeping needs.

Dave

WVBKA Officers for 2019

Chairman:

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- Juliet Parker-Smith: 01497 847214

Secretary:

- Patricia Ronan: 07903 054699

Honey Show Secretary:

- Vacant

Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

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wvbkamembers@gmail.com

Librarian:

- Vacant

Association Apiary Management Team:

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- Duncan Penkey
- Geoff Dutson

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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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A Nasty Surprise

I rehoused the survivors on the existing frames and reviewed them a couple of days later. They remained active and looked healthy but queenless (I'm pretty sure of this as she was marked) and I had to decide whether to combine them with a healthy hive and risk contaminating the latter or not. In the end, a combination of indecision and very inhospitable weather has left them to eventual ruin.

Timing is everything.

Rob

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Remembering Wallace Knowles

Jane Matthews, Dave and I went to Wallace Knowles' funeral on 19th November. We represented WVBKA and Geoff (Dutson), who unfortunately was unable to make it. It wasn't a large funeral but that's how it is when you reach 90. We met the family who were pleased to see us there and told us how much Wallace's bees and the Association had meant during his life. It was a very cold afternoon and we were all glad for the welcoming warmth and fire in the Kilpeck Inn where the funeral tea was provided. I feel we are slowly becoming extinct, as when older or past members die off it's really only us four who remember them! Wallace was Chairman and also Secretary of WVBKA for a few years. He was a kind, funny and generous man who did a lot for the Association.

June

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