



NEWSLETTER

December 2018

Merry Christmas

Greetings from the chair

We had a good turn-out at the AGM in November, when once again we'd persuaded Kevin Pope to talk to us about the challenges he's faced during the year as seasonal bee inspector. There were so many thought-provoking questions, and entertaining follow-ups, that it was an hour before we got on to the routine business of the AGM – but an hour well spent.

There are no big changes in the committee for the coming year: our hardworking secretary Carole Brown, treasurer Chris Thompson, and membership secretary Sally Gray have been re-elected and appear to be happy to carry on their roles – and it is a relief to have these tasks in such capable hands. The apiary committee has also done a terrific job this year and it is set to continue. Other committee members have been adding valuable input behind the scenes. Latest news on the WDBKA course is that we have 23 students signed up. So it looks as though we shall have a full house again next year. The course begins on January 28th.

An interesting programme of lectures and talks has been put together for the winter months and we hope to see a good audience of members and friends to support them. The annual lunch at the Bridport Golf Club on January 20th is another event to look forward to. As summer approaches we shall once again be gearing up for the Melplash Show in August -- which will loom up on us sooner than we think.

As always, we committee members hope for lots of helpful and entertaining chat and feedback from the rest of you whenever we meet – and do not hang back if you think you can spare the time to get more closely involved. We can make good use of your talents.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas.

Caroline Dilke, chair

CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER

TUESDAY 11TH DECEMBER 7.30PM

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP HALL

Time to catch up with activities and bee tales during the year

Please can you bring a plate of food with you to share - savoury or sweet. There will be mulled wine, tea/coffee.



MORE Ramblings

I hope that you and your colonies are thriving and in good health.

Do heft your hives regularly. Some colonies are very strong: either they have produced lots of winter bees or the summer bees haven't died yet. I have found that hives can suddenly become light, so do watch out and get fondant on if needed.

Those of you who treat your bees with oxalic acid/Api-Bioxal during the broodless period soon need to check a few colonies to see if they have sealed brood: a quick in and out on a sunny day, no problem. Oxalic at the correct dilution is very acidic and so effective against the varroa, but not against those in sealed brood. You want to catch them all, so I would suggest you get it right.

As you may know I'm a believer in insulation both for myself and for the bees. I put the bees' insulation back on in September, when the nights were getting chilly. Brian has built it into his roofs. I couldn't see how I could with WBCs, so built out of Cellotex a box without a floor and with a removable roof, that I place on the crown board. This box will take the fondant or a feeder. Some get some bubble wrap too. The polynucs have an eke on the top that takes their fondant and bubble wrap as I think the polystyrene is rather thin. Some people use wool or wood shavings in an old pillowcase. Any insulation is fine as long as it doesn't get damp. Bees produce a lot of water vapour in the winter and even with the feedholes closed the crown board is not an impermeable membrane. I have strapped my away hives to stop roofs getting blown off. At home, I have some with light roofs, so I put a pad of newspaper on the polystyrene sheet to stop it getting blown away if the roof gets dislodged. It is a good insulator, like wool or wood shavings, but if the roof leaks or moist air gets above the crown board then it can be dangerous. My father was out in Serbia during WWII and contracted pneumonia. No antibiotics then. A kind local lady hid and looked after him. She wrapped him in wet blankets to get his high temperature down. Bees don't need a wet blanket to chill them during the winter so if you use insulation do regularly check it's not damp.

Only three of my colonies decided they wanted to swarm this year. So in the second half of June and into July I trialled removing to a new home all the brood plus some nurse bees of some of those colonies that hadn't swarmed, to reduce varroa levels so that hopefully treatment of the main colonies wouldn't be necessary. I did it then as the queens were starting to reduce their laying rate and the resultant bees would not be old enough for the remaining nectar flows. Some I did in two goes about a fortnight apart and others I did all at once. All were very strong. It reduced the queen to one brood box of clean frames for the winter, too (plus the first super), which is my favoured configuration. The bees with the brood produced a daughter queen who will I hope successfully overwinter. I treated the nucs with Api-Bioxal 26 days after removing the brood, i.e. when all the brood had hatched.

The brood removal certainly reduced the drop from the main colonies but I did have to treat most of them with Varroa three times to get the count down to an even more acceptable level. The three colonies I didn't remove the brood from, had Maqs that this year worked very well, unlike last year. The main problem I found was that the bees' income after I had removed the brood, giving the queen two drawn combs, four of stores and four undrawn, was insufficient for them to draw the comb. So I needed to get the honey off before I could get syrup on to encourage them to draw and fill the brood box. I'm hoping they can get plenty of pollen in to put under the syrup and any autumn nectar. I don't think I really need worry, though, as there is usually lots of beebread in the first super.

The other important thing for me was the production of one, or from the good colonies two, daughter queens. All got mated and came into lay and were still present in the autumn except the one I re-homed to another's apiary. In Wally Shaw's article in the BBKA News, page 356, he says their records show that young queens mated after June have a reduced probability of surviving their first winter. He thinks this is due to rising levels of deformed wing virus in drones, making it more likely that they infect the queens with the virus at mating. We shall see if mine come through the winter; I will report next spring.

Another year I probably will try again but earlier, as I think I was asking the bees to make queen cells when they weren't in the mood for it. I must try harder to work more closely with them. I am also a firm believer in too many queens rather than too few and like to have a daughter to take over from the old lady if necessary. I don't replace the old lady, as I like to breed queens that last, not select for short-term queens.

I put two poorer quality young queens and their colonies above two promising queens' colonies with a queen excluder between. The bees helped the nice colony below to build up and reduced the amount of equipment needed. According to an article by Wally Shaw, one can do this only with the more hybrid type of bee, not the little black bee. I removed the top queens in August and gave them away. In the spring I hope to have a choice of queens to head the colonies.

Two months ago when I told you about my entrance to keep out squatter mice, you may have thought: "but WBCs have a porch and sliders"? Well, so they do. I have lots of different porches, some dating back probably to the 1920s, and sliders have got lost or don't fit. So I make more out of bits of wood I find or buy. The bees have a nice porch to keep them dry but it does make seeing the bees and checking the entrance very difficult in the autumn and winter. I like to be able to see if dead bees are blocking the entrance and whether wasps are skulking about. I drag dead bees out with a stick.

Others like the entrance block with the gap above so that dead bees are less likely to block the entrance. This is not my way; I don't like the idea of a pile of rotting bees under the brood nest or maybe a pool of water if it's a solid floor. Your choice!

Hives are homes and need to be adaptable; the WBC is probably more so than many of the others. Hives are there to be used however beekeepers, and bees, need and want to use them. I'm a firm believer in flexibility in beekeeping -- and that reminds me, I must get on with my exercises. My muscles and tendons deteriorate during the winter when I'm not humping heavy supers around.

A very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year to you and your bees.
Sarah More

News from the Apiary

The hives were all checked again on the 19th November and three out of four had taken all the fondant put on three weeks previously. They have all had another kilogram making a total of 3kg on each hive since the 7th October. We are hoping the latest lot will last them until just before Christmas.

Looking back to last year, all the apiary hives were treated with Api-Bioxal on the 5th December 2017. Last year we noted that the colder weather at the end of November should have hopefully resulted in a broodless period, essential for treatment with oxalic acid. With the forecast mild well into December this year it looks like the conditions will not be right for treatment until the end of December at the earliest.



ARE YOUR VARROA COUNTS HIGH NOW?

Have you checked?
Winter Treatment

If your counts are high, NBU advice is to treat your bees with **Api-Bioxal**. Now is the best time, between December and beginning of January, as it is so cold the bees will hopefully be clustered and the queen will not be laying very much at all, therefore the mites are mainly on the bees as there will be little brood.



Honey Jar Order 2018

Please don't forget to put in your order to get the best prices before 12th December. Prices attached

THE BEAUTY OF POLLINATION THIS IS FANTASTIC!

I did send this out last year but it is worth watching again, hope you think the same.

Be sure to watch this on the largest computer screen you have (HD if possible) and have your sound turned on.

The hummingbird doing rolls chasing a bee is not to be missed. Be sure and watch closely (around 2 min 40 sec) and check out the baby bat under its mother. Unreal.

If you never knew what goes on in the garden when you aren't paying attention, watch this - some of the finest photography you will ever see.

<http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/xHkq1edcbk4?rel=0>

QUEEN BEE COLOUR MARKINGS

The sequence is easily remembered with the following mnemonic:

'Will You Rear Good Bees'.

- **White** – years ending 1 or 6.
- **Yellow** – years ending in 2 or 7.
- **Red** – years ending in 3 or 8.
- **Green** – years ending in 4 or 9.
- **Blue** – years ending in 5 or 0.



2019 BBKA Basic Assessment



Both the BBKA and West Dorset encourage members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been keeping bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website. Follow the dropdown menu for “Members” then “examinations and assessments”. The cost is £20 and entry forms can also be downloaded at the same time.

The assessment is well within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and undertake some background reading.

Please let me know if you wish to take the exam - no writing involved - then I will inform Terry Payne, county examination secretary.

Carole

2019 EVENTS OUTSIDE THE COUNTY which you may be interested in

Somerset BKA Lecture Day 16th February - Edgar Hall Somerton
For full details please go to www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Holsworthy BKA Spring Convention 23rd February
Full details please go to
<http://www.holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk/convention.html>

BBKA Spring Convention 12,13 & 14th April 2019 - Harper Adams University
For full details please go to www.bbka.org.uk

BUYING IN BULK IS A GREAT SAVING FOR WDBKA MEMBERS!

FOUNDATION, JANUARY 2019 order

Now is the time to get organised for next season

Please check what foundation you require.

The order form will be sent out in the January Newsletter with the most up-to-date prices

Don't forget it is a good idea to change your brood comb on a regular basis - also not to stockpile as the bees accept fresh foundation better



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2018/2019

SUBS were due 1st October

Please note this will be the last Newsletter you will receive if you have not renewed your membership by the end of December 2018.

Sadly there are several of you who have not paid yet. You can pay on line, or cheque or cash to our new membership secretary,
Sally Gray.

Full details are on the membership form on how to pay via our website under 'membership tab' plus I have attached a form to this Newsletter.

Thank you to all those who have paid promptly.

Carole

ANYONE WANTING FONDANT

Please contact Sarah on 01297 489489

or

email s.more1@btinternet.com

WDBKA Annual Lunch Sunday 20th January 2019

Menu will be sent out later

East Devon's BKA Winter Programme attached
Everyone is welcome to go along

WEST DORSET BKA EVENTS COMING SOON

DATE	TIME	EVENT	WHERE	DETAILS
THURSDAY 10th JANUARY 2019	7.30PM	WDBKA & EAST DEVON JOINT MEETING Dr Gerry Brierley Ph.D MA Dip.M FCIM Speaking on Medicinal Apitherapy: "a journey into the healing hive"	WHITCHURCH CANONICORUM VILLAGE HALL DT6 6RF	Everyone welcome
SUNDAY 20th JANUARY 2019	12.30PM for 1.PM	WDBKA BEEKEEPERS LUNCH	BRIDPORT & WEST DORSET GOLF CLUB DT6 4PS	Smart casual dress please

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