



The **A**piarist

... High Weald Beekeepers' Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

By Malcolm Wilkie

Despite problems with CBPV and wax moth the association's apiaries are thriving. This is largely due to the work done by Peter Coxon and Keith Obbard and his helper Roxanne. No beginners course this year but refresher sessions have been well attended. There is a lot of sharing of information among members on the general discussion group and this is a useful forum for us all.

As we begin to prepare hives for winter it is alarming to hear of the number of Asian hornet nests that have been discovered in the last few months. Every single member of the Association needs to listen to Andrew Durham's presentations on the Asian hornet. The fact that alarmed me the most was how quickly the numbers build up. An Asian hornet nest produces 1000 Queens at the end of the season: 5% of those queens make it through the winter. That means from one nest there are a potential 50 nests the next year. If those survive and each of those nests produce 1000 Queens, then we are quickly overrun. The beescape of the High Weald is going to radically change in the next few years.

The High Weald is holding its AGM and Honey show on Sunday, the 19th of November. You can enter a jar of the honey from your bees. There are wax candles and cakes and even a



Malcolm Wilkie, Chairman HWBKA as well as Training & Education Manager

category for a novel Beekeeping item. I definitely want to see that wasp entrance excluder entered that a member showed us on the general discussion group – it looked fantastic. On November 4th there is a wax workshop, so come and make dipped candles and these could even be entered.

Sharing is what the Association is so good at, so join in the fun. I certainly enjoyed the Summer barbecue at Sandy's and talking about your bees and the season's ups and downs.

Look forward to seeing you at the AGM in November or possibly at the National Honey Show at Sandown Park. Richard Noel from Brittany will be at Sandown talking about the Asian hornet and how as a beefarmer he copes – I won't be missing that talk! If you don't make it up to Sandown at the end of October, I shall report back on what Richard has said at our AGM.

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For Full calendar & details see <https://hwbka.org.uk/event/>

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Online symposiums: Honey Bee Watch

Review by Paul Lindström

I have followed the activity of this organisation for a while, and thought I should share a bit on what they are doing.

Honey Bee Watch wants to report on “wild” (feral) honey bees around the world – where nests can be found and how the colonies are doing.

In June they held a symposium to invite more organisations and individuals to take part in reporting on “free-living” and untreated honey bees world wide. This is how they describe their intention: (we are) “An international coalition tasked with better understanding the biological, behavioral, and environmental traits that favor survivorship among free-living and untreated colonies, with the aim of becoming the world’s greatest repository of, and authority on, these populations to ensure their protection and conservation locally”.

You can read more about them on their web site

www.honeybeewatch.com.

Steve Ross made the introduction and explained the vision and objectives for this group.

He was followed by Dr Jovana Bila Dubaić from University of Belgrade, at the Faculty of Biology. She described the work done in Serbia and said that one problem was that many beekeepers in Serbia didn't like wild honey bee colonies because they thought they spread Varroa (this was later countered by Tom Seeley who claimed that wild honeybees in general don't give managed colonies any diseases).

Another short speech was given by Grace McGormack from University of Galway. She stressed that this is a collaborative work and listed a range of Irish organisations involved in the work. She said that in 2014 the native *Apis mellifera mellifera* was thought to be extinct or almost extinct, but luckily that was found to be wrong. As of 2023 there are 452 feral nest reported and monitored across Ireland, and the hope is that more will be found over time.



Honey Bee Watch

The Honey Bee Watch logo



The next speaker was Filipe Salbany who had his first experience of honeybees in the forest of Portugal as a six year old. The tradition was to place cork bee hives in the pine and eucalyptus trees around a small village called Paião in Portugal. Since then he has worked with honeybees in Africa, Europe, North America and since 1999 in the UK. Among the places in the UK is at the Blenheim Palace. In one oak tree there he has found 3 wild colonies in the same tree.

The last speaker was Tom Seeley. He has studied “free-living” colonies for many years, and written several books about his experiences. He limits his own studies to a forest near the university where he works, at the Arnot Forest Research Preserve. There is about one wild colony per square kilometer. Already in the 1970s he begun studying wild honeybee colonies, in part inspired by the work of Jane Goodall on wild chimpanzees, rather than chimps in zoos. His first reports on this was in 1976.


Tom Seeley monitors free-living colonies mainly in trees but also feral colonies living in buildings. He inspects three times yearly and wants to learn where the bees chose to build nests and how they cope with Varroa. The inspections are

made early Spring, before the swarm season, to assess winter survival.

He then do the next inspection after the swarm season, in late July. The third inspection is done in the Autumn, normally late September, before winter.

One of his findings is that wild colonies based on a swarm (what he calls a “founder” colony) in a new site is poor, only about 25%. But established colonies has a survival rate of about 82%. These colonies he describes as “established” colonies, and he makes a point of differentiating this in his notes.

Of late he has started to do genetic analysis of the colonies together with a fellow scientist called Sasha Mikheyev who has a Ph.D in evolutionary genetics and is a professor of the Australian National University of Canberra. They have found that the genetic profile has changed dramatically after Varroa came to this area in the 1990s. Here was a massive colony mortality and the new colonies who survived shares more of the DNA than before.

I think the Honey Bee Watch initiative is a good one, and have join the work as an individual. We have a “free-living” colony near us, and I monitor that and report my finding to Honey Bee Watch through their app. 

Seminar – HWBKA Bee Disease Day

By Paul Lindström

In July HWBKA arranged a seminar on bee diseases. Well, we had so many applicants that we had to do two seminars – one in the morning and then one more in the afternoon. It was led by David Rudland from [East Surrey Bees](#).

East Surrey Bees has a license to handle infected combs which is what we wanted – to be able to look at how different bee diseases looks (and smells) like in real life, not just what they look like in pictures.

David worked as a bee inspector for 9 years, and run the company together with his wife Celia. They have 250-300 colonies and sell products based on beeswax and honey as well as running seminars and lectures.

Before the hands-on labs David gave an introduction on the different common bee diseases. He ended this lecture with some tips and recommendations. Those are:

A. Remember that the single biggest threat to honey bees is Varroa.

B. Change foundation every 2-3 years.

C. Look for disease at least twice a year – early Spring and then in the Autumn are good points.


D. Don't split or move frames without first checking the colony for diseases.

E. If you have a suspicious colony – seal it up and have the bee inspector to come and have a look. Don't buy a test kit and test on your own before you report it to the bee inspector.

F. Be suspicious of a strong swarm that comes by and try to invade the apiary.



We then continued with the hands-on labs and looked at infected frames.

It was very interesting and useful to be able to look at how infected frames and cells look like, and learn what is to be done in the different scenarios. Hopefully we won't need to do this in our own apiaries, but since especially EFB (European Foul Brood) seems to be on the rise, there is a clear risk that it might happen. A very interesting and useful half-day I would say. 



The seminar started with a lecture on the most common bee diseases. Speaker was David Rudland from East Sussex Bees.



We then looked at (and smelled) frames infected with Foul Brood. Precaution were made not to spread those live viruses and bacterias outside the lecture hall.



We then tested for AFB (American Foul Brood) but that test was negative (fortunately). We concluded it was EFB.


HWBKA on “Weald on the Field”

By Sandy Infield



A windy day at the “Weald on the Field” event – Pete Coxon holding on tight to the gazebo so it doesn’t take off on its own.

We had fun running the HWBA stand at the Weald on the Field festival in Uckfield on Saturday 12th of August. There was a lot of wonderful people who were fascinated by the bees in the display hive.

It was a blustery day and as you can see in one of the pictures Peter Coxon had to hold the gazebo down now and then! Overall a huge success – we sold all the honey that had been brought, even cooking honey. In fact Peter actually sold the taster jars at the end of the day. 



HWBKA Summer BBQ

By Paul Lindström

This year's Summer BBQ was hosted by Sandy Infield in Fairwarp and attracted a good bunch of people.

One item on the agenda was a raffle initiated by our President Keith Obbard. The Raffle at the BBQ raised £154. This was doubled by a matched donation, so the sum of £308 was sent to this year's "President's Charity," "Bees Abroad".

The charity has thanked the HWBKA members for their generosity, and more information about Bees Abroad can be found at; <https://beesabroad.org.uk/> A big thank you to all the people who helped to make this event a success.





DIY: Being a Bee Cleaner

By Peter Coxon

I do love bees and for the most part I still love beekeeping too, however there is one aspect of beekeeping I find really onerous ... cleaning up after them! ... it's even worse than having teenagers!

Consequently, I'm always looking for shortcuts and labour-saving tricks. In the summer it's not too bad as I simply pop the frames in my home-made solar wax extractor. The wax all melts, gets filtered and ends up quite clean enough to exchange for foundation, and the frames also come out reasonably clean too, and all with

minimum expenditure of elbow grease, although they still need scraping, torching and or boiling. However, even though the wax extractor has a double-glazed glass lid, it really doesn't get going until the sun shines and the outside temperature is >18o. The last Apiarist included a re-print of something I wrote a while ago about boiling frames in washing soda but that's only worth the hassle for BIG jobs i.e. ≥ 20 frames say.

For smaller clean ups I've been trialling a new method using steam.

Method

1. Take a well-insulated box and fill with old frames. Now where can we get one of those? ... a Polynuc of course and there are additional benefits (see later).

2. Sit the nuc on a plastic tray larger than the varroa mesh floor

3. Plug in a steam generator (? 🤔 Errr?) into the hive entrance. I happened to have a Kärcher (other brands available) steam cleaner bought as present for me some years ago.

As an alternative use a steam generator for wallpaper stripping. The latter being much cheaper than the former; £30-£50 versus >£140.

My old Kärcher died on the first run anyway, so I was obliged to use the other unit and it worked as well or better.

Coincidentally the pointy end on both was ~25 diameter ... a perfect fit for entrance of a Polynuc. If yours isn't, an adaptor may have to be made. It doesn't have to be airtight as there's a big hole on the bottom of the box anyway, but you'll need something to stop the steam pipe falling out and scalding you.

4. Replace the lid and go away to do something useful for an hour, drink tea / beer for example.

5. On your return remove the lid, quickly take out the frames and shake what's left on the frames into the bottom of the box. This will mostly be the chintinous pupal cases.



6. Give the frames a quick once over with a stiff brush before they cool too much and put to one side.

7. It's important to dump the pupal cases and other detritus in the bottom of the Nuc by inverting the box over a bin / wheelbarrow/ compost heap before it cools down and the residual wax sets up otherwise, you'll just have to heat it up again with the steamer to get it out.




Net result

1. Clean frames ...possibly sterilised but a bit more of scrape and a torching might be a good idea

2. Cleanish wax ...in that tray underneathdon't forget that tray.

3. Added bonus mentioned earlier – clean Polynuc ! I don't know if you have ever tried cleaning polystyrene hives but scraping off old propolis often results in pulling out chunks of polystyrene and damaging the surface but after steaming the propolis will be softened can be mostly wiped off.

I also sprayed the Nuc afterwards with a weak solution of bleach as a belt and braces approach to hygiene. (Bleach – mostly sodium hypochlorite does also dissolve propolis but only quite slowly).

You may / will find the mesh in the bottom of the Nuc a bit gunked up, so invert the box and direct the steam onto the mesh to cleaning up. As an alternative refinement you could add a piece of sacrificial mesh above the mesh floor to catch most of the detritus. You could even remove the mesh completely by undoing the 6 or so screws holding it in place and using the sacrificial mesh instead ...the world's your oyster. 



Summary of last HWBKA committee meeting

The HWBKA committee met on 20 September.

Much of the time was spent on deciding on what actions should be taken regarding the alarming situation with so many Asian hornets nests found in England this year.

It was recommended that all members watch the recordings by BBKA of the talks by Andrew Durham about Asian hornets on September this year, [part one](#) and [part 2](#). (Note that the actual lecture doesn't start until some 19-20 minutes into the recording, so scroll forward to save time).

We will contact local tree surgeons to prepare for possible nest removals next year, as well as contacting

gardeners, National Trust properties and the health officer for Wealden. All members are encouraged to have the Asian hornet WhatsApp notification group activated on their mobile phone. You can join by clicking on [this link](#).

We will arrange one or possibly two sessions on the topic, one on how to make an Asian hornet trap on the 17 February 2024 and possibly another lecture at the end of August or September.

We also encourage members to circulate images of possible Asian hornets on social media as well as information about Asian hornets in general.

The finances are still strong - £23,868 in the account at the moment.

We have 9 colonies in our apiary at Horsted Green park and 4 colonies at Slab Castle.

Keith Obbard has been notified that the field at Slab Castle will no longer be available for HWBKA after 24 September 2024.

The Christmas Dinner this year will be held at Sandy Infields home with a limited number of seats available. There will be a charge for this dinner.

The next HWBKA Committee meeting will be on 1 November - you are welcome to suggest topics we should discuss. Just send an email to our secretary Holly Caetano Alves de Castro on:

the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com 

HWBKA Committee 2022-2023

President: Keith Obbard (the.hwbka+president@gmail.com)

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Acting web master: Peter Coxon (the.hwbka+webmaster@gmail.com)

Other useful contacts - National Bee Unit inspectors:

Local Bee Inspector: Daniel Morgan (Mobile: 07500 95 43 90)

For more Bee Inspectors see the National Bee Unit [web site](#).

JOIN US FOR OUR MONTHLY

COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKET

FIRST SATURDAY
OF THE MONTH
09:00AM - 11:30AM

SWAN MEADOW
PLAYING FIELDS
HAM LANE, BURWASH
TN19 7ER

Stalls to include:

Fruit & Veg
Organic Beef
Burwash Honey
Amazing Cakes
Fresh Bread
Artisan Cheese
Cordials and Juices
Community Sharing Table
And much more...

Plants
Flowers
Organic Eggs

ENQUIRIES
BURWASH.MARKET1@GMAIL.COM

Supported by
Burwash Playing Fields Association
and Wealden Food Partnership

Sell your bee products at the Burwash Community Farmers Market

By Paul Lindström

Anyone interested in manning a HWBKA stand at the Burwash Farmers Market can contact me at paul@lindstrom.com or phone or text me at 07833 088 766. If we have interest enough we might be able to attend this local market regularly and display produce made from beeswax and sell honey from the HWBKA apiaries and from member apiaries.

The Farmers Market takes place every first Saturday of the month and hopefully we can participate on the November market day (the October market day will have passed when this issue is published). 