



# Wealden Apiarist

Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the Sussex Beekeeping Association

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**June-July 2018**

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## High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary 2018

Date	Event	Address
Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Beekeeping Taster Day	For details and to book a space contact <a href="mailto:the.hwbka+training@gmail.com">the.hwbka+training@gmail.com</a>
Tuesday 26 June 19:30 - 22:00	Bee Banter	Crow & Gate, Uckfield Road Crowborough, TN6 3TA
Saturday, 7 <sup>th</sup> July 12am -5.15pm.	Crowborough Summer Fair Langton Green Village Fair	For details see "Fairs" below
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> July 10:00 - 17:00	Bee Safari	Various
Tuesday 31 July	Bee Banter	Rose and Crown, Mayfield, TN20 6TE

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### EDITOR'S BUZZ HWBKA Committee.

Having recently attended the Sussex Bee Festival I wanted to shout out about our wonderful association and especially our Committee. We are now the largest and fastest growing association in Sussex. That speaks volumes for the reputation we have around the County – as our members come from far and wide and, dare I say, across our boundary lines. The committee work tirelessly to ensure the needs of current and new beekeepers are met and I'll be talking more about the benefits of membership below.

In addition to organising training courses, rearing queens, being visible at fairs, distributing topical tips to keep us on our toes and hosting Bee Banter, the committee are also responsible for ensuring that we are compliant with any legislation that may affect us.

Recently, as your inboxes will doubtless have reminded you, GDPR legislation has come into effect. Despite little guidance from the BBKA the Committee have ploughed their way through the dos and don'ts and details of the new Privacy Policy is available on the HWBKA website at <http://hwbka.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

The Committee are always open to new ideas so if you have a good one contact Peter Halford, the HWBKA Secretary on [the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com](mailto:the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com). If you don't know your committee members, check them out at <http://hwbka.org.uk/contacts/>

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Other items covered in this edition:

- Wealden Community Grant Programme Award
  - Fêtes and Fairs
  - HWBKA Membership
  - The Sussex Bee Festival
  - BeeBase;
  - Beekeeping in Rwanda
  - Zen and the Art of Beekeeping
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## **WEALDEN COMMUNITY GRANT PORGRAMME 2018/19**

The HWBKA are delighted to have been awarded £1491 towards the costs of running our training programmes this season. This is an enormous contribution and will make a significant difference to our ability to nurture more new beekeepers. We are extremely grateful to Wealden District Council and in particular to Michelle Gray of Partnerships and Funding Support who was exemplary in guiding us through the grant process.

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## **Fêtes and Fairs**

HWBKA attends a number of village and parish fêtes and fairs each year. It is a great opportunity to educate people about bees and the tremendous work beekeepers do in maintaining healthy bee colonies. It is also an opportunity to sell your local honey. In the diary so far are:

- 7th July 2018 (1pm until 5pm) Crowborough Summer Fair – Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. Lead [k.obbard@btinternet.com](mailto:k.obbard@btinternet.com)
- 7th July 2018 (12 noon until 5.15pm) Langton Green Village Society. Lead: [debpark@sky.com](mailto:debpark@sky.com)

These fairs are usually great days out. All members are welcome to come along and help out. Just contact the lead.

If you would like HWBKA to attend your local fête please let us know. We can help you organize a stand and provide supplies.

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## **HWBKA MEMBERSHIP**

Are you making the most of your HWBKA Membership?

For many of us, especially those who have been association members for some years, membership can often be taken for granted once you've paid your annual subs. So here's a brief summary of what you get for less than £2.50 a month:

### **Bee Disease Insurance**

You are automatically covered for 3 colonies. If you are intending to have more (even if this is a temporary situation where you split colonies etc.) you will need to purchase additional cover *in advance* as you are only covered from the date your new colonies are registered and you don't want to fall foul of underinsurance! Full details of the insurance cover can be found on the BBKA website at <https://www.bbka.org.uk/bee-diseases-insurance>

### **Bee Banter**

On the last Tuesday of every month HWBKA hold a get together, alternating between the Rose and Crown in Mayfield and the Crow and Gate in Crowborough. Details of timings and venues are on the Events Diary on the front cover or on the website.

It's a very informal way to meet members of the committee and other bee keepers and to chat about all things relating to bees. From time to time a topic evening will be offered.

All members are welcome and an especially warm welcome is offered to new beekeepers. Why not put a date in your diary now?

### **Topical Tips**

As the season progresses regular reminders are circulated on matters you need to turn your attention to. If you have registered an e-mail address with HWBKA you will receive these electronically. If not, or if you've deleted something you later think you need, go to the website as copies TTs are accessible [here](#)

### **Improvers' Courses**

Keith Obbard, in conjunction with other experienced beekeepers, will be running a series of sessions designed to help members refresh their knowledge in key areas or assist members who have recently completed their beginner's course to progress.

The next improvers session is on 2nd June at 10.30 am, weather permitting!  
Location: home apiary of Simon Barden, at 3 Warren Farm Cottages, Eridge Green, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 9JR

Topic: demonstrating one way of re-queening a bad tempered colony.

The next session will be 18th August when Keith will be discussing preparations for winter. This will be very helpful if you struggled to get your colonies through the winter this year or if it is your first winter and your unsure what you should be doing to help your bees through.

### **Events**

The HWBKA organise a number of events during the year which in any season may include a Bee Safari followed by a cream tea or barbeque, skep and / or candle making evenings, Christmas meal, French exchange

## Hire of Equipment and Library Books

Membership allows the hire of certain items of equipment from the association for a small fee and refundable deposit (e.g. honey extractor), and also to borrow books from the HWBKA library for a deposit.

## Apiary

The HWBKA apiary site is available for members to use, by prior arrangement with the apiary Manager, as a temporary 'out apiary' to facilitate moving bees in the active season.

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## The Sussex Bee Festival

Clashing this year with both the Royal Wedding and the F A Cup there were concerns that the festival would not be up to much this year. Certainly our local bee inspector was disappointed to find there were no live bees at the auction this year – but I suspect that was as much down to colonies building up a little later this season due to the inclement weather in early spring.



Keith, Helen and Lesley put the beekeeping world to right

On the HWBKA stand though there was, as always, a lot of interest in our observation hive.



Lots of honey was sold.....



And Maggie brought a tremendous selection of plants which were very popular with customers.

In addition to those mentioned Amanda, RoseMarie, Sam, Steve and Deborah all supported the event and lots of members were spotted taking advantage of the discount at the Mantel Farm Shop stand.

This event is always in mid-May, so put it in your 2019 diary now.

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## **BeeBase – Are you registered?**

BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. It is designed for beekeepers and supports Defra, Welsh Government and Scotland's Bee Health Programmes and the [Healthy Bees Plan](#), which set out to protect and sustain our valuable national bee stocks.

The website provides a wide range of apicultural information for beekeepers, to help keep their colonies healthy and productive. It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts. Here's a summary of what is available:

- About the National Bee Unit
- Advice for Beekeepers
- Apiary Inspections & Training
- Bee Pests, Diseases & Maps
- Consumer & Environmental Protection
- Disease Assurance Scheme for Honeybees - DASH
- Hive Count
- Legislation, Imports and Exports
- Medicines
- Publications
- Research and Development

It is well worth considering registering on BeeBase as this will enable you to take advantage of the free services on offer. No charge is made for an apiary visit by a fully qualified Bee-inspector. The inspector will check for signs of disease or pests, and will provide you with help and advice on good husbandry, and how to tackle any potential problems they may find. All have extensive experience of managing colonies of bees and are keen apiarists themselves. They will always try and keep any disruption during a visit to an absolute minimum and provide you with up to date information and advice.

If not more importantly, you will also have access to all the latest information regarding disease and pest outbreaks and the results of various research projects and latest advisory information.

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## **Beekeeping in Rwanda**

Beekeeping has been practiced in Rwanda for generations, normally on a small scale with barrel shaped hives woven from banana leaves with a clay lid and occasionally a sheet metal shelter over the top.

Recently there has been a push to introduce modern beekeeping techniques to increase production (currently between 4 and 14 kgs of honey per hive per year) and to respond to local and export markets. The honey and other bee products can have a significant impact on the wealth and health of the beekeepers' families and communities. The hives provide a cash income, scarce micro-nutrients essential to children's development, and the prospect of growing a business for people who are traditionally marginalised, for example those widowed or orphaned by the genocide in 1994. And of course there are all the less tangible benefits from the bees- crops and the extraordinary wild flora benefit from the pollination;

people's chickens scavenge around the hives enriching their diets; and because many of the



hives are kept on the fringes of a national park they encourage the elephants to remain within the park boundaries and out of peoples' crops, reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

Of course it is not all plain sailing as hives are occasionally attacked by furious neighbours who have been stung once too often or by the extraordinarily tenacious

honey badger and, as in many rapidly developing countries, pesticides are becoming ever more accessible and affordable with unknown consequences for the bees.

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### **Zen and the Art of Beekeeping – a short homily on how to enjoy Beekeeping by Peter Coxon**

I was on a bodging course last weekend (some already refer to me as a bodger, but now I'm a qualified bodger.... I've done the course!), a present from my wife, and rather wonderful it was too; in the greenwood, dappled sunshine filtering through the trees, mild breeze, birdsong, bluebells everywhere, the smells of the damp forest, working with traditional tools and man-sized bits of wood.

After I had split a log to make my chair legs, trimmed them with the drawing knife on the shaving horse, I was fine shaping and fluting the legs nicely on the pole lathe (What is this idiot talking about? Persevere, there is relevance here somewhere.) I had made three legs that looked good to me and was on the fourth when I realised it was going to be too small, or it would have a small flat on one side at its widest point, or I would have to reduce the other three in diameter to match. Lots of work...and I'd fall behind everyone else...what a dilemma.

I consulted Danny, our teacher, and he replied

“No-one will ever know it's there – it'll add character.”

“But I will know it's there”

“That's just the engineer in you talking”

“Hmmm...”

“It will teach you humility – never strive for perfection – it only causes dissatisfaction.”

Well, I was a tad affronted, and then I thought about it and realised, yes, there's something there to take on. This is just Coxon doing his thing again, ruining a perfectly agreeable experience by seeking perfection.

And I recalled this was how I approached beekeeping for the first year or two - and .....even still now from time to time, ruining something rather wonderful trying to get it absolutely right.

It's amazing how we unconsciously absorb stuff from our past that runs our lives. I remember once seeing a jokey cartoon illustrating all the religious / societal interpretations of 'Sh!£ happens!' – so Buddhists might say 'Sh!£ happens because Sh!£ happens.' and

Seventh Day Adventists, 'Sh!£ happens but never on a Saturday,' and there are many more on-line, one for almost any creed or religion which we'll all recognise, and many of which seem to involve guilt.

I was brought up to be an adherent to the religion of science and technology where, if you study the books and solve the equations correctly, it will work and if 'Sh!£ happens' it's because you didn't study hard enough, you screwed up and you need to try harder. By and large, this philosophy has served society well and me too, otherwise planes would mysteriously fall out of the sky, bridges would collapse spontaneously and computers would randomly crash (cough, cough maybe least said about that last one the better.) However, in some areas of life, such as beekeeping and bodging, this philosophy doesn't seem to work. Sometimes a context shift – and a little humility - serves us better.

For all of us, and especially new beekeepers, there is a lot to learn. It will take years. Even if you study everything available, things will go wrong. Bees are God's wild creatures, have their own agenda which does not generally align with ours. How very dare they? They even make mistakes themselves, like swarming immediately before a two-week downpour and having to struggle beleaguered, wet and cold at the top of a tall tree, as mine have sometimes done. You may religiously check your bees every week, miss a weekend because it was too wet and cold, then there's a heat wave the following midweek, the queen cell they created the previous week has now been capped and bingo they're off.

I'm not advocating irresponsible or lackadaisical beekeeping, just being gentle with yourself as well as the bees. It's hard to enjoy anything when you live in fear of cocking it up, or beat yourself up when things don't work out as the almighty YOU planned.

I know I enjoy this wonderful activity much more when I can pull off this context shift. Whereas previously, when I saw a swarm leave, the voice in my head would be saying - "I'm such an idiot. I should have done this, not done that, think of all those bees I've lost after all that hard work to produce them, and all that lost honey (even though I struggle to sell all the honey they produce anyway – how ridiculous! I am!)" Now, I try to think how wonderful that through my care this colony has become strong enough to produce this magnificent swarm that will contribute to the local feral colony population..... although I will then intervene to stop them casting themselves into a too weak colony or even into oblivion. As an aside, I don't know if any of you saw the YouTube video that Peter Halford sent a link for recently, Bee Audacious (<http://hwbka.org.uk/education/some-useful-on-line-media/> on our website), where the famous Francis Ratnieks, of our own University of Sussex, at a conference in California was indicating that feral bees, away from our mollycoddling, may be the first to make the evolutionary jump to immunity from some of the ailments that current plague our populations – so who knows I may have even helped there too.

I'm in danger of getting thrown out of the HWKBA, SBKA, and BBKA no doubt, for uttering such heresy.

All I know is that I enjoy beekeeping much more and am consequentially a more relaxed and better beekeeper as a result of being less hard on myself and combining my commitment to do the very best for my bees with...humility. You'd have to be slightly mad to continue doing things that don't bring joy don't you ...no?

Acknowledgments and apologies for plagiarising 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance' by Robert M. Pirsig (who died the other week by the way) and for copying the style of Rowland Malony who writes Notes from a Clifftop Apiary in the BBKA, which I find quite light hearted and amusing.

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IDEAS, PHOTOS & ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER  
ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!

You do not have to be a budding writer. Just drop me a line and I'll happily talk over the phone or catch up with you at Bee Banter

If you would like to let other members know of any bee-related activity you are involved in just drop me a line and I'll spread the word.

Contact the Editor at [the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com](mailto:the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com)  
Next newsletter out March/April

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