



The *Apiarist*

... High Weald Beekeepers' Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

Hello everyone. I hope you are keeping well and avoiding this latest round of Covid. I hope you are also managing to avoid some of the pitfalls of the beekeeping season. We have had mixed fortunes ourselves. Our bees at home started swarm prep fairly early in the year and through a combination of failed mating flights and miscalculating when to cull excess queen cells, we had about a 50% success rate. We are now into our second round of swarming, and fingers crossed will fair a little better!


Last year at the national honey show Rob and I took part in the skep making workshop. Despite the fact that it is a national show, and the workshops are small, some HWBKA friends were also learning to make straw skeps. It was a fun day, and prompted the formation of our "Skep Club". We met regularly over winter, enjoying good food and good company, and occasionally progressing our skeps. Eventually, in spring this year, they were finished, and I am pleased to report that they are all well built enough to have withstood their first use for swarm collection!

Making new bee friends is one of the things I enjoy about beekeeping, so it's great that our monthly Bee Banter evenings have started up in person again. It was really nice last week to catch up with some familiar faces, and meet some new ones too. They are also a brilliant opportunity to talk through any challenging situations you are facing in your apiary with a bunch of like-minded people who are always happy to help and offer a range of potential solutions. It's also

somehow comforting to know that we are all facing the same problems, with mixed levels of success, no matter how new or experienced we are. Why not come along to the next one? They are held on the last Tuesday of the month at the Rose & Crown in Mayfield – look out for the helpful reminder emails that Peter Halford sends out, or check out the Events page on our website.

As the Bee Banter meetings are getting going again, so are a whole host of other events that we used to attend as an association pre-Covid. One of these was the Heathfield Bee Market run by the SBKA. If you've never been to one of these before, it is definitely worth the effort. As well as some local trade stalls, there is an auction of bee equipment where you can often source a bargain, a bee-themed talk, and food stalls run by our partner Sussex divisions. We ran our usual plant & honey stall, and set the observation hive up. Selling honey to a group of mainly beekeepers feels a bit like selling ice to Eskimos, but nevertheless it was an extremely successful day, and we probably could have sold somewhat more! We have also had stalls at local events in Withyham and Langton Green, and will be in attendance at Crowfest. We are often on the lookout for helpers at these type of events, which are also often an opportunity to sell honey, so please so let the committee know if you are interested in volunteering.

I hope you enjoy reading another fantastic edition of the *Apiarist* that Paul has put together, and hopefully see you at a Bee Banter soon.

Jo Gore 

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Most "live" events are still cancelled until further notice. We will try and arrange seminars via ZOOM though, so please check our web site now and then, and watch your email in-box.

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

The *Apiarist* is a quarterly newsletter produced for members of the High Weald Beekeepers' Association.

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Next issue: October 2022

BBKA Modules – Are they worth it?

By Lorraine Patel

I was probably always destined to become a beekeeper.

When I was a little girl I was constantly asking my father to show me the cine films he had taken. There were films of me as a baby, my older sisters playing in the garden and some seaside holidays. In one cine film, I vividly remember an older man walking towards the camera with a smoker and puffing some smoke and then walking away to his beehives. It was my grandfather. It fascinated me.



Grandfather Miller – Hiving a Swarm – 1949

My mother told me that when he died my grandmother had to go and "tell the bees". How strange and intriguing. My grandfather was a beekeeper in Scotland. He died before I was born.



Grandfather and Grandmother. No bee suits!

Fast forward to my late 40's and I stumbled across a series of beekeeping talks to be held at an old stable in Barnet, London called

Whalebones. I dragged my husband along and we sat and listened to some rather elderly gentlemen talking about beekeeping. I remember worrying that some of these beekeepers might not make it to the end of the talks.

Unfortunately, there was no practical course I could attend at that time and so I did not pursue my interest any further.

Fast forward to my late 50s and by accident I saw an advertisement in the local paper about a beginners beekeeping course run by the Barnet and District Beekeepers Association. I immediately signed up.

I consider myself very lucky indeed as the Association ran an excellent course. After completing the course, those people wishing to start beekeeping were offered a place in one of the Association's apiaries. They had five apiaries each managed by an Apiary Manager. This was really helpful in our first year of beekeeping. However, the requirement was that you had to take the Basic Assessment to remain on the apiary. Most beginners chose this option and attended the follow-up study sessions to help with the Assessment. But it didn't stop there. After taking the Basic, members were also encouraged to start taking the Modules. It was the culture of the Association. I followed suit.

I began my Modules in January 2019 and sat my first exams in March 2019. I have now worked my way through Modules 1,2,3,5,6,7, and in March 2022 Module 8.

You will notice that there is no Module 4. It was removed from the syllabus a few years ago and the content spread across the other modules. It has taken me just over two years to gain my Advanced Theory Certificate. (Awarded when all 7 Modules are passed). By the way – you get lovely certificates.

So why did I put myself through all of this? Well, there were four main reasons. 1. I was losing my mentors in my move here to East Sussex. 2.

My undisciplined approach to reading. 3. Time 4. Money.

The most important reason however is I wanted to learn more.

Mentors

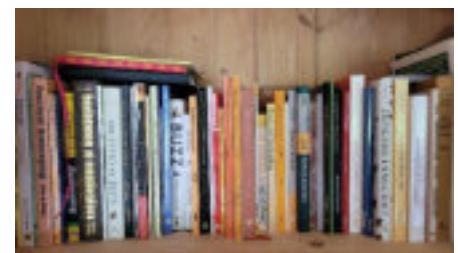
In London I was lucky to have two mentors. Both were very experienced beekeepers and so I made a nuisance of myself by constantly asking questions and also asking to help out with their inspections. I didn't mind doing the lifting, carrying, holding the smoker, etc., etc., if it meant that I could act like a sponge and absorb some of their knowledge. My mentors however were also constantly studying as was their nature. They were not content to "rest on their laurels". The problem for me was that I was leaving London and therefore my mentors behind. So I had to do something for myself.

Reading

I have read a LOT of books while studying for the Module exams. I had to! Left to my own devices I might not have read as much and perhaps not in such depth and certainly, I would not have read things that didn't interest me. (I am not that interested in Honey for instance!)

However, there is a structure to the Modules and therefore the associated reading. This helps with focus and also understanding. .

For Module 3, you need to understand the life cycle of Varroa and how it affects the Fat Body. For Module 5, you need to understand the function of a Fat Body. This ties together so that you can fully understand the impact of Varroa.



Some of my books

So having read and studied all of the above Modules I feel I can make informed decisions about my beekeeping. For example, whether I treat my bees for Varroa, when to treat and what happens if I don't. I also understand the discussions around Varroa Resistant Bees, Varroa Sensitive Hygiene, and the results of the "Bond Experiment". I probably would not have understood as much as I do had I not studied the Modules. This is just one example of many.

Time

I will be 63 this year and I have not got much time left in which to learn. Had I started beekeeping in my early 30's I would have 30 years of experience by now. I didn't and so there is a lot of catching up I need to do. People usually learn from someone else; someone else's mistakes and experiences or through their own mistakes and experience. For me, reading and studying for the Modules has helped me gain knowledge and I hope to reduce some of the mistakes.

Money

Beekeeping is expensive and I never want to buy bees again if I can help it. This year I saw that Nucs were selling at £300. I want to keep my bees healthy, happy and alive and it is not easy. There are so many things that can go wrong. Disease, Swarming, Overwintering, Starvation. Anything that I can learn, I want to, if it can help me keep my bees.

The Practicalities

To help with my study of the Modules I signed up for the correspondence courses. You are allocated a Tutor and are sent a set of 5 or 6 question papers. The idea is that you answer the questions and submit your answers to your Tutor for marking. It is a great way to work through the syllabus to ensure you have covered everything. But more importantly, you also benefit from the advice of a very experienced beekeeper as the Tutors are generally Master Beekeepers. They are also located in different parts of the country and so you also get different approaches to beekeeping. Useful and interesting.

I also joined the Facebook study groups which enabled me to ask

questions of my fellow beekeepers who were sitting the exams at the same time as me. There is a huge amount of information on these pages. Again, getting a lot of help and knowledge from people across the country. However, I avoided looking for answers on the more general discussion groups and internet. It turns out that quite a lot of the information circulating is very poor and often wrong. I produced my own booklets from my correspondence course along with notes and articles from respected researchers They are now a very useful reference to me now and I refer to them often.

I did buy a lot of books!

Studying

I generally found studying quite easy but there were times when I did get a bit tired. Sometimes I also wondered about the relevance of some of the parts of the syllabus in the respective modules. But I think the BBKA is attempting to give you an all-round approach to being a better beekeeper.

So has studying for the Modules been worth it for me? My answer would be a definite Yes. I have learned a huge amount in a short time. I feel very confident in understanding what is 'going on' in my hives and feel I can respond well to my bees needs. I have made friends with beekeepers up and down the country and I am pretty sure my bees have benefitted from my ability to better help them. Saying that, I still feel like a novice and appreciate that there is so much more to learn but this will hopefully come with further reading and many more years of practical experience. I hope to take the practical assessments, General Husbandry Assessment next year and work towards the Advanced Husbandry Assessment possibly the year after. Well that's the plan at this stage

One of the things that I could not help notice was that very few beekeepers study for Modules in Sussex compared to the other County BKAs. When the exam results were published in 2021 I noticed it was just me and 2 other people from Sussex. I don't know why this is? I hope that by writing this, I might encourage a few more of you to think about studying

for some Modules. Please do feel free to contact me to find out more if you are interested. Looking back, it has been a very good experience and quite good fun. I am also sure that the Modules have helped me become a better beekeeper. At present I have 20 colonies. Most on National 14x12, my preferred hive.

A quick resume of the Modules

Module 1 – Really an extension of the Basic Assessment. Covering hive design, Basic principles of swarming, collecting swarms, feeding, comb change, uniting, basic disease understanding and other fundamental beekeeping manipulations.

Module 2 – All about Honey and how to produce it e.g. Runny, Soft Set and Comb Honey. Plants, Pollination and nectar sources. Honeydew, Propolis, Pollen, Wax and Venom. Food Hygiene and labelling.

Module 3 – All about disease and how to recognise disease. Pests. Treatments. IPM. Some anatomy.

Module 5 – Honeybee anatomy and physiology. (Advanced)

Module 6 – Honeybee behaviour. How a colony works! – Feedback systems. Nectar, pollen, water collection. Mating. Dances. Orientation, Honeybee Learning, in depth understanding of swarming. (Advanced)

Module 7 – Queen bee rearing. Genetics. Breeding programmes. Problems with In breeding. Detailed egg and sperm production. More detailed mating behaviour. Queen introduction. (Advanced)

Module 8 – Everything in all other Modules plus more detailed History. Commercial operations. Advanced Manipulations. Advanced colony management. Moving bees. Heather and Oil Seed Rape.



My notebooks

South of England Honey Show

- A unique opportunity open to Associations, their members and individual beekeepers.
- Competition judged by Bill Fisher.
- Hone exhibit preparation ahead of Local, County or the National Honey Show.

Bees &
Honey
SECTION at the



Previously held in the Bees & Honey marquee at the South of England Show during June ... now more conveniently later in the beekeeping year ... and indoors at the **Autumn Show & International Horse Trials**.

Same location - **SoE Showground, Ardingly, West Sussex, RH17 6TL** - New dates

Cash prizes for each class.

Trophies awarded to the winner of the "Bounty from the Hive" class and for "Most Points in Honey Classes".

NHS BLUE RIBBON AWARD for the Best Exhibit in Show.

**Honey Show Schedule
& Honey Entry Form**

available to download via our link or the **South of England Showground** website from June 2022

Registration of entries accepted up to the 17th September 2022

Get together with your fellow members to register entries on behalf of your Association or Division.

Drop off entries at the Showground during the 23rd September.

Be smart, arrange for one person to deliver and collect entries from your Association.

Supply Honey from yourself or Association to have sold from our popular Sales Stall

Promote your Association or Division by providing flyers or notices about your Membership, Training and Taster Days.

For Enquiries & Info, contact:-

beesandhoneyinfo@gmail.com

Help as a Show Steward

for a day on honey sales & info. stands. 

For Enquiries & Info, contact:-

chief.steward@deodar.org.uk

Visit us via this link ...



<https://www.seas.org.uk/info/competing/competing-autumn-show-horse-trials>

South of England Agricultural Society,
South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TL
Tel: 01444 892700 Email: info@seas.org.uk Website: www.seas.org.uk



The South of England Agricultural Society is a registered charity no. 227033

DIY – Help for smokers

By Peter Coxon

Do you have a smoking problem – help is at hand.

Yet another manifestation of ‘sod’s law’ seems to be that smokers always go out just when you need them most. Or, more realistically the bees have been nice so far, so you’ve forgotten to pump the smoker for a while, and it has gone out!

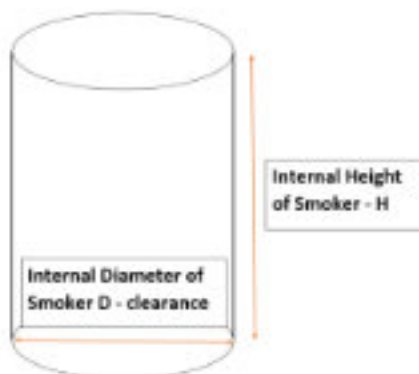
The bees, having noticed that you’ve forgotten about that dreaded weapon - ‘the smoker’- realise it’s ‘game-on’ and time to get you back for breaking up their home or for having rudely shaken them all of them off their nice frames to commit colony matricide by destroying a potential new queen.

Then you have to fuss about emptying the wretched smoker out and trying to get it going again in order to calm the bees who are by now having a field day, egging each other on with a cocktail of isopentyl acetate (IPA), butyl acetate, 1-hexanol, n-butanol, 1-octanol, hexyl acetate, octyl acetate, n-pentyl acetate, 2-nonanol and other alchemy, also known as the alarm pheromone, all in order to guide their pals to get your wrists, ankles or wherever else there is a weak spot in your defences.

Given that heat rises and therefore also fire propagates most efficiently in an upward direction it seemed to make sense to me to try to light a smoker from the bottom rather than reload it from the top and get burnt fingers or worse still melted nitrile / latex gloves on your fingers in the process; so, I made a simple drop in basket which can be loaded with fuel, lit from the bottom and then dropped into the smoker. When it goes out, it can just as easily be lifted out, and re-lit from the base with a blow torch ... of course ... none of this messing about with matches for me! ... 30 secs maximum.

Making such a basket is quite straightforward. In terms of material, it is a good way of using up one of those nasty stamped sheet metal queen excluders, should you have been sold one with a beginner’s kit, or any old varroa floor mesh you might have kicking around... or indeed any other mesh provided it is fairly open otherwise it will clog up with ash or tar. Stainless steel would be ideal and more durable ... but that unfortunately might involve spending money.

With your chosen mesh:



1. Cut a rectangle of width suitable for the internal height (H) of your smoker body ... 150-160mm is typical.

2. The length needs to be $\pi \times$ the internal diameter of your smoker. A typical value might be 95mm but take both these measurements from your own smoker just in case.

3. Now roll the rectangle into a cylinder and provide some overlap to join the ends and make a rigid cylinder. With an overlap of 10-20mm the outside diameter D of the cylinder will be reduced of course such that it fits neatly into the smoker itself. Don’t make it too big /snug otherwise tar and such like will glue it in place.



4. Using QE mesh which has 4.5mm holes, the ends can be conveniently joined together using 4mm pop rivets – see image

5. Cut a circle of the same mesh slightly smaller so that it fits in the cylinder and fasten in place with ...wire ...or whatever you can think of. I cut the end of the cylinder making it castellated, folding alternate tabs to provide something for the floor to rest against and then folding the others on top to hold it in place.

6. It is also useful to have a handle to lift it out when hot. I used an old bit of fencing wire made into a loop / semicircle with the ends folded over and fed through small holes in the cylinder and then folded over again to lock it in place. Obviously, it either needs to be small enough to fit inside the lid or it needs to fold down ... the latter being preferable in order to make filling it with fuel easier... and I have tried both.

BINGO!

7. Fill with fuel

(Continues on the next page)


8. Apply blow torch to the base



9. Drop into the smoker ... job done!



10. When it goes out ... and smokers always go out, simply lift out the basket and re-light from the base – 20 secs.

I noticed about that same time I first made one of these that Thorne sold such an item but being a meanie, I have continued to make my own. It seems now that Thorne or anyone else for that matter has stopped selling these ...unless you know differently? ... in which case probably easier to push the boat out ... buy one and stop all this messing about ... unless you a meanie like me. 

The SBKA AGM

by Peter Coxon

The SBKA AGM was held earlier this year at the Uckfield Luxford Centre and as is customary was followed by a talk. This time, it was from Vince Gallo, entitled "How to build honeycomb – a bricklayer's perspective" which was also given at the National Honey Show last year and was very interesting... on both occasions.

Ben and Maggie Pratt - the Bee People – <https://www.thebee-people.co.uk> were there too with their trade stand and array of useful beekeeping equipment.

In the election, Pat Clowser who had been Chair for many years stood down, as did Liz Twyford in her role as Honorary Secretary. Both have served in their roles for many years and were duly acknowledged and thanked for their hard work and diligence. As a

small token of appreciation both have since been presented with a very beautiful book, *Honey Bees* by Ingo Arndt and Jurgen Tautz – the same book I was presented with on standing down as Chair of HWBKA. I highly recommend it if you have not seen it.

After some arm twisting from various quarters for quite a while, I agreed to stand as Chair and was duly elected. Jonathan Coote was nominated and elected as President and Jean Piper, Chair at EBKA agree to stand as Honorary Secretary. This is the first time the committee has been properly constituted with a full complement of officers for some time. The complete list is below (see next page) and is also now on the SBKA website at <https://sussexbeeorguk.wordpress.com/>

The most recent meetings have been well attended too.

Going forward we are all keen to explore how the SBKA can find new ways to support the divisions. With the advent of tele-conferencing apps. such as the ubiquitous Zoom, for which we have a licence, as do most divisions, an obvious area to investigate will be fuller winter programmes of talks over Zoom, using speakers from across the country - even the world. Our own Talha Dinc and Helen Searle will be helping bring this about from the HWBKA end of things. If you have heard any good talks you might like to propose them to Talha, Helen or myself.

We would of course welcome any suggestions as to how the SBKA can better support the wider membership.

SBKA Committee Membership 2022

President	Jonathan Coote	jonathancoote1@gmail.com
Chair	Peter Coxon	chair@sussexbee.org.uk
Honorary Secretary	Jean Piper	secretary@sussexbee.org.uk
Honorary Treasurer	Harold Cloutt	treasurer@sussexbee.org.uk
ADM Delegate	Liz Twyford	treasurer@hastingsandrotherbee.org.uk
Honey Show Rep.	Norman Dickinson	memsec.blbees@outlook.com
SussexDivision Link Trustee	Julie Coleman	julie.coleman@bbka.org.uk
Webmaster	various	

Divisional Members

HWBKA <small>High Weald Beekeepers Assoc.</small>	Jo Gore	Chair	the.hwbka+chair@gmail.com
	Peter Halford	Membership Secretary	the.hwbka+membership@gmail.com
EBKA <small>Eastbourne Beekeepers Assoc</small>	Jean Piper	Chair	chaireastbournebka@gmail.com
	Ian Smith	Treasurer	treasurereastbournebka@gmail.com
BLBKA <small>Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers Assoc</small>	Graham Bubloz	Chair	chair@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk
	Ian White	Swarm Coordinator	swarms@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk
HRBKA <small>Hastings and Rother Beekeepers Assoc</small>	Sheila Fellows-Tumbull	Chair	chair@hastingsandrotherbee.org.uk
	Kerry Weller		kerry@mantelfarm.co.uk
EGBKA <small>East Grinstead Beekeepers Assoc</small>	Janice Fearn / Kevin Fearn	Chair / Secretary	chair@egbka.org.uk / secretary@egbka.org.uk
	Oliver St. John	Training Manager	training@egbka.org.uk

HWBKA Committee 2022

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 Honorary Secretary: Lorraine Patel (the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com)
 Honorary Treasurer: Rob Gore (the.hwbka+treasurer@gmail.com)
 Magazine Editor: Paul Lindström (the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com)
 Apiary Manager (Slab Castle): Keith Obbard
 Assistant A.M. (Slab Castle): Steve Davies
 Apiary Manager (Horsted): Peter Coxon

Events Secretary: Talha Dinc (the.hwbka+events@gmail.com)
 Membership Secretary: Peter Halford (the.hwbka+membership@gmail.com)
 Training & Education Manager: Malcolm Wilkie (the.hwbka+training@gmail.com)
 AHAT Coordinator: Talha Dinc (the.hwbka+ahat@gmail.com)
 Lecture Coordinator: Helen Searle (the.hwbka+lecturecoordinator@gmail.com)
 Acting web master: Peter Coxon (the.hwbka+webmaster@gmail.com)

Other useful contacts - National Bee Unit inspectors:

Regional Bee Inspector: Dan Etherington (Mobile: 07979 11 93 76 Email: daniel.etheridge@apha.gov.uk)
 Seasonal Bee Inspector: Diane Steele (Mobile: 07775 11 94 52 Email: diane.steele@apha.gov.uk)
 For more Seasonal Bee Inspectors see the National Bee [Unit web site](#).

Rent a honey extractor from HWBKA



The new SAF Natura radial 6-frames extractor

The association has three extractors available for rent. One new SAF NATURA radial 6-frames extractor, and one older tangential 3/6-frames extractor (pictured). We also have a smaller 3-frames tangential, kindly donated by Don Bastick.

You can rent them two days at a time. The newer 6-frames radial extractor cost £10 for two days (£20 deposit)

The older 6- and 3-frames tangential extractors cost £5 for two days (£15 deposit).

Included in the rent is a honey bucket, a sieve and an uncapping fork, if required + instructions for use.

Note that the deposit will be forfeit if returned late, damaged or dirty. Severe damage/repairs will be charged at cost.



The older tangential 6-frames extractor

Two of the extractors are stored by Paul Lindström in Southover (outside Burwash). The older 6-frames tangential is stored by Lynne Curtis at Lynne's Organic Farm (just outside Crowborough). Bookings and inquiries through Paul, see contact info below.



For info, availability and booking call either 01435-88 35 65 (preferred). Or call or text mobile 07833-088 766. Or email: the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com • Address: The Clock Tower, Southover, Spring Lane, Burwash, TN19 7JB