



M A R C H 2 0 1 9

# An Hes

'The Swarm'

Newsletter of West Cornwall Beekeepers Association

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[www.westcornwallbka.org.uk](http://www.westcornwallbka.org.uk)

## From the Chair...

The Asian Hornet should be at the front of everyone's mind this season, and we as an Association are joining other beekeeping associations in raising awareness not only to beekeepers but also the public as. It is very apparent that the Asian Hornet is seen as a beekeepers problem, but when it becomes established in the UK – and it will, we will see a massive decline in our pollinators and bird population, which in turn will have an impact on our food industry. So it is very important that we engage with as many people as possible to help identify this insect, especially local organisations and those who have an interest or occupation which makes them likely to be out and about in the countryside, parks and gardens.

Worrying about native black bees and lofty aspirations for re-wilding will pale into insignificance when the Asian Hornet takes hold. Please get your traps out now, keep yourselves informed, and contact your local AHAT person if you have concerns. We will keep you to date through emails and An Hes – but it is up to you to take responsibility for this serious threat to our wildlife.

*Kate Bowyer*



"Bees are the batteries of the orchards, gardens, guard them"

**- Carol Ann Duffy**

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## Save the Date!

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Winter meeting - Asian Hornets

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Better Beekeeping-Swarming

**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Skittles Evening – WCBKA Social

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

Last Winter Meeting ?- TBC

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019**

Bee Health Day

# News

## Apicystis Bombi – Talk Postponed!

The previously advertised talk on 4<sup>th</sup> March at Marazion Community Centre by Meri Anderson from the University of Exeter has been postponed. We'll communicate rescheduling with members via email and/or in the next edition of An Hes.

## Swarm Collectors 2019

It's that time of year when we update the BBKA swarm collectors list. Swarming bees are probably the number one concern of the public and we need to make sure that we are available to collect them and allay peoples' fears. This is a public service and must be done competently by those who have signed up to carry out the task. Often, you'll be contacted by people who don't know the difference between honey bees, wasps and bumblebees and so a certain amount of patience is required. If you agree to collect a swarm, you must attend. If you are considering being a collector and have not done this before come along to **Better Beekeeping on Monday 18th March** which will include information on how to manage your colony when it wants to swarm and also how to collect swarming bees. We may be able to buddie you up with an experienced collector.

Contact Val preferably by the end of March if you would like to be included on this years list ([wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com))

## Apiary Visits

Why not let other members come and visit your bees? Each year members are encouraged to invite others to come and see their apiaries. This is always a really enjoyable experience for everyone. So, even if you have one or two hives please consider taking part by contacting [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com) The visits are usually on a couple of Sunday afternoons in May or June and afterwards we have a cup of tea and a biscuit together and chat about our bees.

*Val Hitchman*

## Skittles Evening

**Friday 29th March 8-9pm**

**Country Skittles nr Hayle TR27 6ER**

**£3.50 per person**

Come to a skittles evening with your family and friends on Friday 29th March. We have booked three alleys at Country Skittles and the cost is £3.50 each. If you have not played before skittles is similar to 10 pin bowling but is a more traditional way of knocking pins over. The lanes are shorter and there are only 9 pins to knock down and so in theory it should be easier!

Food is not included and if you want to eat there you will need to pre-order and be there for 7pm. Sample menus can be found at <http://www.countryskittles.com/food.html>

Pay on the night but to book your place please contact Val: [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com)

The WCBKA would like to extend a warm **WELCOME** to our newest member:



*Ben Joliffe*

## Volunteering Opportunities

Why not get more involved by supporting West Cornwall Beekeepers Association through volunteering? It is good fun and we seem to love talking about our bees. Every year we are invited to a range of events so that we can share our enthusiasm for bees with others, show the wider community what we do as beekeepers and inform them about the importance of bees as pollinators. All you need is a bit of time to spare. The events we are invited to include:

- The annual Farm and Country Day at Cornwall Showground Wadebridge on 27 -28<sup>st</sup> March. About 750 school children aged 7-9 years come each day to a hands-on experience of farming and food production.
- The Royal Cornwall Show (6-8<sup>th</sup> June) our part of the Bee and Honey Section will have a theme of Summer
- Kehelland Apple Day on 12<sup>th</sup> October where we also do a lot of candle rolling with the children & sell honey
- Talks at other community groups or in schools

If you are interested please contact Val on [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com) or talk to one of the committee at the next winter meeting.

## Asian Hornet Action Team – March 2019

Look up into trees for old Asian Hornet nests before bud burst after which foliage will make seeing them more difficult. Queens rarely, if at all, hawk in front of hives, therefore early in the season you are more likely to see an Asian Hornet elsewhere than in your apiary.

Queens feed on tree sap and floral nectar in spring when they come out of hibernation, keen to replenish energy reserves used up over the winter. It is well worth keeping an eye on spring flowers frequented by our native pollinators in gardens, parks etc. to check whether this non-native invader is amongst them. Similarly, the first cohort of workers (raised by the queen on her own) produced early in the season (eg May/June) are smaller than workers later in summer and are also unlikely to hawk in front of a hive at this time of year.

Look at flowers in your garden, parks etc, and put out monitoring traps using a sweet bait of fruit juice and beer. **Don't put out traps if you are unable to check them at least once daily and release the bycatch.**

## Asian Hornet Meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Just a reminder about our next meeting is on Monday 4th March. It could be the last of our winter meetings and it is really important to come along because the topic is the yellow legged Asian Hornet and in 2018 they were here in Cornwall.

There have been nine confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in England in 2018, beginning with an individual hornet found in a cauliflower by a householder in their kitchen in Bury, Lancashire, confirmed on 13th April. The cauliflower was grown in Lincolnshire but it is thought that it may have been stored with vegetables from France.

After a quiet summer a beekeeper in Fowey on the coast in Cornwall found a dead Asian Hornet in a trap in his garden apiary. He contacted his local Bee Inspector and a positive ID was confirmed on 3rd September by which time the South-Western inspection team had already been mobilised. Following an NBU surveillance operation, a nest was found in dense brambles within a kilometre of the initial find and destroyed on Sept 6th.

Nearby in Liskeard, Cornwall, a single drone was caught in a trap reported by a beekeeper, ID was confirmed 7th September 2018. After prolonged surveillance no further hornets were seen in the area.

Meanwhile back in Fowey, Cornwall, all was quiet following destruction of the nest on September 6th until after a week later when a few further hornets were caught in traps in the same area and suspicions were aroused that these were more than stragglers from the first nest. Within two days a second nest was located in woodland adjacent to the first and on 20th September 2018 it was also destroyed. It should be emphasised that although close to the first nest, the terrain was extremely difficult to carry out surveillance and the second nest could only be seen in the tree from one viewing position at the bottom. Analysis shows that the two nests in Fowey were primary and secondary nests from the same queen and so the same colony.

Would you know how to identify one?

I have attached a few essential newsletters and there will be more information on the night. So please have a look at the ID chart, the recent letter from Anne Rowberry at BBKA, and one way of making an Asian Hornet trap.

Our West Cornwall Asian Hornet Action Team is co-ordinated by Anne McQuade

Looking forward to seeing you on Monday 4th March at 7.30pm at Marazion Community Centre, Gwallon Lane, TR17 0HW. If you can bring a raffle prize it will be most welcomed and after the talk stay and chat with a cup of tea.

## Medicinal Honey at the Central Association of Beekeepers



Last month, I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend the Central Association of Beekeepers (CABK) Spring Meeting at Roots & Shoots, an Environmental Education Centre in the inner city of London. For those not familiar with CABK, it is a beekeeping association focused on keeping members in touch with the latest research and ideas about bees, and consequently act as a bridge between beekeepers and scientists. Look out for details of their autumn conference, typically in November, when these become available.

Getting there early meant I had a chance to hear Dr Shona Blair, an Australian microbiologist now based at Imperial College London, talk about “*Medicinal honey – a sweet solution against superbugs?*”. Skipping over her fascinating summary of the history of our attraction to bees and honey, it was amazing how medicinal use of honey was commonplace into the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, until the discovery of penicillin and subsequent antibiotics. Thereafter, honey was regarded as ‘alternative’ and largely a remnant of folklore, even though its many medicinal properties were already recognised by the ancient Egyptians. Shona’s talk focused on its particular use in wound dressings, where its low water content and low pH in itself creates an environment unsuitable for many bacteria but the glucose oxidase added by bees to honey helps generate hydrogen peroxide – a very useful antimicrobial – under the right conditions. Most of Shona’s research was based on the honey of *Leptospermum* spp. (commonly known as tea trees and belong to the myrtle family). *Leptospermum scoparium* is otherwise known as Manuka, but many won’t realise that while there is one species in New Zealand, there are over 80 species of *Leptospermum* in Australia, at least a dozen of which have high antimicrobial activity. What sets *Leptospermum* honey apart is that, aside from hydrogen peroxide, it also has non-peroxide anti-microbial activity. This seems to be down to dihydroxyacetone (DHA) in the *Leptospermum* nectar that is gradually converted to methylglyoxal (MG) as the honey ripens. The MG has fantastic properties on wounds (but is pretty useless eaten).

With the overuse (and misuse) of antibiotics, we have seen a huge rise in antibiotic resistance of bacteria, resulting in the so-called superbugs like MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) or VRE (Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococci*). Antibiotic resistance represents a huge global threat and, by 2050, is predicted that it will be the cause of more deaths than cancer and diabetes combined. At this point, medicinal use of honey is gaining a lot of interest due to its ability to act where antibiotics have failed. And when used in combination with antibiotics it has been shown to be even more powerful. A striking case study was an 80-year-old lady with persistent leg-ulcers for over 20 years, where the prospect of constant reinfection was drawing doctors to consider amputation as the only resort. A last ditch attempt with honey resulted in significant healing within 5 weeks and the lady able to walk within 10 weeks!

But Shona did recommend that people obtain medicinal honey from the pharmacist rather than bathing in their own honey. Not all honeys have the same properties and medicinal honey has been sterilised by gamma-irradiation just to ensure we don’t add anything unwanted into wounds.

Dr Pete Kennedy

## Products of the Hive:

### Tamsin Harris Shares Her Secrets about Beeswax

Marazion Community Hall, Monday 4th February 2019



Tamsin started out as a hobbyist 23 years ago but has now given up her day job & is a commercial beekeeper with 90 hives. Tonight she came to talk to us about wax. Her products have appeared in many Honey Shows: wax-bars, candles, hand, lip & even beard balms! Bees produce wax themselves and in abundance. Tamsin spends her winter months making things from beeswax which is a valuable by-product of the hive. After collecting wax from her apiary she stores it in big buckets until after Christmas. Not only is it good hygienic practice to collect wax from your hives but also it's great fun to make things over winter when there's more time to do such activities. Wax is actually worth more than honey pound for pound & it's lovely medium to work with.

Cappings wax from super frames make beautiful coloured wax, great for candles or bars. There's a lot of honey still stuck to cappings after removal. How to go from sticky gloopy mess to a lovely wax bar? Tamsin uses her "Rayburn", which has a constant low heat from the hot plate, or the oven itself. She puts her cappings into a deep stainless steel trough (fish-poacher size) pot & puts this in the bottom of her oven. Wax melts at 63 degrees & sits on top while the honey sinks to the bottom of the pan. The separated honey becomes "Bakers Honey" (which can't be sold as normal honey). Tamsin lets the wax set (which can happen quite quickly) drains off the honey into another container. Once the wax has set she washes it, & puts it back into the pot in the oven. Bits of detritus (bees legs, pupa casings, etc) will be mixed in with the molten wax, but by using net curtains or tights as a fine mesh you can strain it. Tamsin uses a double-boiler or "bain-marie" with hot water bubbling under a sealed container on top. She pours liquid gloopy mess through tights and takes the filter off & pours the molten wax straight into silicon molds. A traditional mold is the ingot (or wax bar) with "beeswax" written on it. These are very popular & sell well. People buy them for sewing, for threads to go through easier. Surfers use on their wetsuit zips. In the home some use the bars to make beeswax wraps to seal food, while others use them as polish on furniture and floors.

For making candles Tamsin uses hard silicon molds. Although they are quite expensive they will last for ages (hers are 17 years old and still going strong!) You could buy cheaper molds made of other materials but they don't last as long. Tamsin finds that her hedgehog molds are very popular. A honeybee mold will only set you back £2.50. Tamsin may try her hand at making her own silicon mold one day. Anne McQuade uses a glass mold, which she warms up first. It can make a perfect candle "occasionally"! There are different wicks for different widths of candle so when buying molds from Thorne's or Maisemore's, check the label that comes with it to get the correct wick size. If the wick is too thin the candle won't burn; if it's too big candle will burn too quickly leading to a flood of wax! Some people pre-soak the wick, but Tamsin never does. Just top up the mold with molten wax & centre the wick. It takes a little while to set, so don't be in a hurry to open up. Some have a lot of details in the mold which will be lost if too hasty. Be patient!



## Products of the Hive, cont.

Tamsin also makes lip, hand & beard balms-the latter for her son-it saved his love life! He works on Lifeboats in Falmouth. The “hairy” crew use it too as well as blocks of wax on the zips on their suits. She uses sweet almond oil for her lip balms, with 70% oil, 20% wax & 10% butter. Hand balm (solid lotion balms) are simple to make but effective in protecting your hands, repelling water and keeping your fingers soft. It’s also good for the bottom of your nose, especially at this time of year! Pauline Aslam has written a leaflet with a recipe for her



beeswax lip balm (find it in the library). Making soap with beeswax is ideal. The basic ingredients are: a third oil, a third wax & a third butter. Tamsin uses organic rapeseed oil (olive oil makes the soap go green!), organic shea butter and beeswax (not organic, but pure!) She also adds a little honey, but no essential oils. There are no scents or perfumes in her soaps as the smell of beeswax is lovely enough! She keeps it simple. Sometimes she’ll add wheatgerm or comfrey oil for family & friends for their healing properties. You could also use mango or nut oil & add chamomile & other teabags for the properties of their ingredients and their exfoliation effect. If you add water to a recipe, however, you will need a preservative too.

There are books in the association library for soaps: Sarah Robb has written “Beauty & the Bees”, at the back of which you’ll find addresses of chemists who will test recipes & license them. You will need to buy a license if you’re going to sell products but you only need to apply once. Bars of wax/ingots sell for £1.20 a piece, which works out £16 per pound (weight)! It can be a faff to collect & store wax & allocate time to make wax products but it’s worth it in the end. For Tamsin it’s an economy of scale. You can make beeswax polish for use on wood furniture & floors but also on leather, such as walking boots. Instead of using turpentine Tamsin uses linseed oil for its non-toxic properties, which she also uses to coat brood boxes every 2 years (to help preserve the wood). Beeswax wraps for food are becoming ever more popular. Tamsin uses 5 blocks of beeswax, a tablespoon of fine powdered resin & olive oil. She uses 100% cotton, bed-linen weight. Jenny Lewis has made wraps using her Aga oven to melt neat wax (without any resin) to coat paper napkins which she then uses to cover jam pots.



Not only is the collecting of beeswax good for keeping the apiary tidy, but if you have a solar extractor too, you can let the sun start the process of melting down this excess of wax. You can keep, store and reuse wax. It’s a versatile & very useful resource that shouldn’t be wasted!

*Paul J Greco*

# What's On?

The WCBKA's **Winter Meetings** and **Better Beekeeping** meetings take place on Mondays at 7:30pm  
At **Marazion Community Centre**, Gwallon Lane, Marazion, TR17 0HW

## **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – Asian Hornet Meeting**

Led by Anne McQuade this may be the last of our winter meetings and it's really important to come along because the topic is the yellow legged Asian Hornet!

## **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – Better Beekeeping Meeting**

Swarming – its prevention and management, Collecting a Swarm, Supersedure, Drone Laying Queens (DLQs) & Laying Workers

## **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – Skittles Evening**

Come to a skittles evening with your family and friends on Friday 29th March. We have booked three alleys at Country Skittles and the cost is £3.50 each. If you have not played before skittles is similar to 10 pin bowling but is a more traditional way of knocking pins over.

## **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – Avon Spring Day School**

Shipham Somerset (£10 see ABKA website or contact [annrowberry@gmail.com](mailto:annrowberry@gmail.com)) Celia Davis headlines this year's event

## **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 - Winter Meeting with Meri Anderson (TBC)**

To be confirmed by email later this month; Potential rescheduling of Meri Anderson's talk on Apicystis Bombi (a bumblebee parasite that may be present in the guts of honeybees)

## **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – Better Beekeeping Meeting**

Everything else – local flora, forage through the season, the beekeeper's year, siting hives, avoiding nuisance, stings, the importance of bee space top & bottom, equipment needed for starting out, and a noseema testing workshop

## **6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019 – Royal Cornwall Show, Wadebridge**

The show always makes for a fun day out! This year the WCNKA's section of the Bee and Honey Section will have a theme of Summer, to volunteer your time to help running the stand email Val [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com)

## **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019 – Bee Health Day**

A return to Penryn campus (Tremough) for our popular Bee Health Day, at the kind invitation of Professor Juliet Osborne. The event was last held there in 2015 and was a great success. Plenty of parking, a comfortable venue, and informative workshops, including Asian Hornet, diseased comb recognition and practical apiary inspections. More details nearer the time.