

O C T O B E R 2 0 1 9

# An Hes

"The Swarm"

Newsletter of the West Cornwall Beekeeper's Association

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## From the Chair...

Excellent BOAD again this year, with key talks from Tony Harris and Ben Woodcock. With over 100 beekeepers on the day, the Conference had a real buzz about it. New ideas are always welcome – as are indeed volunteers to get involved in the planning and delivery on the day.

So the winter season has started – and I haven't quite finished putting the bees to bed. Still trickle feeding, and have tried Apivar for the first time this year on some of my hives. Disadvantage so far is that it needs to be on there six – 10 weeks, which means opening up the hives to remove the strips. Not something I want to be doing right now on double brood boxes. The first Winter Meeting kicks off on Monday with a talk on Honey Fraud, which I have to say I find absolutely shocking. The more I research, the more I am committed to making sure I promote the value of locally produced honey, by small honey producers such as ourselves.

Anyway, this will be my last post as Chairman - having completed my four years at the AGM this November. Looking forward to getting on with my own beekeeping and interests. No doubt I shall pop up now and again, but in the meantime I wish you all happy beekeeping for years to come!

*Kate Bowyer*

## In this issue:

News in Brief	Pg 2
AHAT Update	Pg 3
Apimondia	Pg 4
Apimondia, pictures	Pg 5
Science Article	Pg 6
Library Update	Pg 7
What's On?	Pg 8

## Save the Date!

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

First of this year's Winter Meetings

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

Keheland Apple Day

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

WCBKA's Annual General Meeting

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019**

WCBKA's Honey Show & Christmas Party



"I eat my peas with honey  
I've done it all my life  
It makes the peas taste funny  
But it keeps them on the knife!"

- Ogden Nash

# News in Brief

## NOTICE of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

**The WCBKA's AGM will take place on:  
Monday 4th November 2019 - 7.15pm for 7.30pm**

**Venue: MARAZION COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
GWALLON LANE, MARAZION, TR17 0HW**

At the AGM on 4<sup>th</sup> November the West Cornwall Beekeepers' Association Committee for 2019/2020 will be elected. There will be vacancies, so why not step up and get more involved behind the scenes in managing the Association. Our existing Chair and Membership Officer (Kate Bowyer and Mac Rowley Hawkins respectively) have completed their time in these roles and now have to stand down. I have already received one nomination for Chair and we need new committee members who have been members for less than three years. The committee meets about 6 times a year for a couple hours in the evening. If you want to find out more please contact Val: [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com)

The AGM will be followed by a talk from Ben Penberthy entitled "**How to make mead**". Mead is experiencing a resurgence. The ancient alcoholic beverage is making a comeback thanks to the popularity of fantasy series like "Game of Thrones," with which it's associated. If you have had a good honey crop this year maybe now is time to have a try at making mead? Ben can show you how!

## More Asian Hornet Sightings in the South

The Asian Hornet Action Teams in Dorset are busy this week. Following on from the confirmed sighting in New Milton, Hampshire in July a sighting was confirmed just down the train line in Christchurch, Dorset this week. The National Bee Unit is working with East Dorset Beekeepers Association to locate the nest and you'll find photos and updates of their progress on their association's Facebook page.

## Equipment & Plants for Sale

A member is selling two Smith hives (one with bees resident), two bee suits, a smock, hive tools, a smoker, feeders and extra frames. Also for sale: a variety of plants (fruit trees, fruit bushes, herbs & flowers) in ceramic pots. If you are interested in purchasing the equipment or the plants, please contact Val who will put you in touch with the seller: [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com)

## Kehlland Apple Day 2019

Don't miss Kehlland Apple Day on Saturday 12th October, 11am to 5pm at Kehlland Trust near Camborne TR14 0DD. It is a great day out with music, food, stalls, apple pressing etc. and West Cornwall Beekeepers have a stand there. If you can volunteer to help on the day then please contact val: [wcbka.val@gmail.com](mailto:wcbka.val@gmail.com)

## South Devon Beekeepers Convention

South Devon Beekeepers Convention will be held in Totnes on Sunday 3rd November. Always interesting and well worth the journey. There will be three speakers with talks to interest all beekeepers no matter how experienced. The programme can be viewed online and tickets purchased through Paypal (Paypal also accepts payment by credit card) by clicking on this link:

[South Devon Beekeepers Convention 2019](#)

Any enquiries, please email: [lilahkillock@btinternet.com](mailto:lilahkillock@btinternet.com)

Early bird discount tickets can be bought before 20<sup>th</sup> October.

# AHAT Update: October

Those nests that did not generate queens in September are likely to do so in October/November. The urgency to destroy Asian Hornet nests before the new queens (up to 300!) disperse to hibernate over the winter is all the more urgent. There is also the chance of catching queens, building up fat reserves, by feeding on floral nectar or other sources of carbohydrates. Please be extra vigilant and watch out for potential sightings around the hive but also around nectar-rich flowers. Put traps in your apiary with a sweet bait containing fruit and beer. **Don't put out traps if you are unable to check them at least once daily and release the bycatch.**

Download the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app – it's free and available from the [Apple](#) or [Android](#) app store. If you observe an Asian hornet hawking at your hives snap a picture, swat the insect and scoop the remains into a jar for DNA testing!

The National Bee Unit (NBU) only require a small piece of an Asian hornet for DNA analysis so if you catch one in a net you can happily squash it. Be careful though - if you do capture a live one it is actually against the law to purposefully release it back into the wild!

## ASIAN HORNETS ARE KILLING OUR BEES!

**ASIAN HORNETS HAVE BEEN SIGHTED IN BRITAIN, INCLUDING SEVERAL IN CORNWALL, SINCE 2016. THEY POSE A SERIOUS RISK TO BIODIVERSITY AND OUR ECOSYSTEMS.**

### WHY?

They are a voracious predator of our native pollinating insects, especially honey bees. They capture flying insects, bite off their heads and carry the remains back to their nest to feed their young.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Without control, it is likely that they will become widespread in Cornwall, and therefore it is vital that the general public are vigilant and report any sightings. Email a photograph of a sighting to [alertronnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertronnative@ceh.ac.uk). If you have a smart phone, download the free app 'Asian Hornet Watch' where you can report a sighting and find information and photographs on how to identify the hornet.

### RECOGNISING AN ASIAN HORNET



### WHERE YOU ARE LIKELY TO SEE ONE

When a queen comes out of hibernation around March, she constructs a small 'primary' nest of papier mâché, in which she raises her brood. These early nests are typically in sheltered locations, such as a garden shed. They can be mistaken for wasps' nests. In spring and early summer, the Asian Hornet may be seen on flowers collecting nectar.

Later in the year a larger 'secondary' nest is established (up to 90cm in diameter), typically high up in trees. From July onwards the Asian Hornets may also be seen capturing bees and other insects in flight. Whilst Asian Hornets do have a sting, they are not aggressive to humans, unless their nests are approached.

# Apimondia Montreal September 2019

Last month Anne and I spent 4 days in the beautiful city of Montreal at the superbly organised International Apicultural Congress , held in their magnificent Palais de Congres,—just 2 of us amongst 5000 delegates from 134 countries, not to mention around 1000 traders, speakers and staff. The theme this year was ‘Beekeeping with Agriculture’, but that included everything from technological innovations to “Apitherapy”. With keynote lectures by the great and the good of the bee world, concurrent symposia, roundtable discussions and hundreds of poster presentations, it felt an impossible task to try and do more than scratch the surface. And then there was “Apiexpo”, for equipment manufacturers and world honey producers--from Denmark to Brazil, China to Ethiopia.... and Cornwall! Brian Sheriff had a stand, where our own Tamsin Harris was working her socks off...and BBWear, who came away with a gold medal in the Honey Show for their innovative bee suit. So many congratulations to them and their teams.

Apart from the above, the Honey Show itself was disappointing. (Most of the entrants had clearly not had tuition from either Rodger Dewhurst or Bruce Henderson Smith). It did highlight though how difficult it must be to judge products from such a great diversity of beekeeping worlds. Shockingly 47% of the honey entries were disqualified because they were adulterated.

Altogether the conference was both depressing and inspiring in equal measure: The Global Challenges will surprise nobody: increasing use of pesticides, declining forage, pests and diseases, urbanisation, climate change, and aging beekeepers and farmers, lack of understanding of the public and governments.

However the conference ended on an inspiring high with Tom Seeley (the David Attenborough of the Beekeeping World!) & his lecture on Darwinian Beekeeping. His overriding message is that ‘Bees are the best Beekeepers’... and it behoves us to shift our practice to paying more attention to their needs rather than managing them for our own convenience ...and profit. His book on this subject ‘The Lives of Bees ‘ is in our library—and of course is available to buy. Four of his talks are also now available on line at [vimeo.com/ondemand/beekeepingschool](https://vimeo.com/ondemand/beekeepingschool)

So, as well as ‘Bees being the Best Beekeepers’ our take away messages were:

- The importance of forage
- American beekeeping is even worse than we thought (In Iowa 60% winter loss is normal)
- Health of bees is in conflict with industrialisation of beekeeping
- Honey adulteration is a major global problem
- We are responsible for providing bees with the nutrition they need
- Beekeepers should shape environmental policy
- A lot of really exciting work is being done in beekeeping in Africa

And finally Apimondia is a really fantastic opportunity to meet beekeepers from all over the world, and to see different perspectives on our beekeeping lives. So start saving up for Apimondia 2021 in Ufa in central Russia... and Chile in 2023—though I think Montreal will be a hard act to follow.

*Jenny Lewis and Anne McQuade*

# Apimondia Montreal – In Pictures



Empty shelves as 47% of exhibited honey was disqualified due to adulteration.

BB Wear won a gold medal for their innovative bee suit.



Anne, Tamsin & Jenny at the BJ Sherriff stand.

# From Pete Kennedy: Our resident Science Correspondent

## Are honeybees a good model for assessing the risk of pesticides to pollinators?

Just published is a thought-provoking commentary by Elizabeth Franklin (now at Cornwall College, Newquay) and Prof Nigel Raine that links well with Ben Woodcock's talk at this year's BOAD. Franklin & Raine question whether initial regulatory decisions on environmental impacts of pesticides on pollinators are rightfully made using honeybees as a model for other pollinators. The perennial and colonial lifestyle of honeybees is quite different from the majority of other pollinators and may buffer them from effects that would have more substantial effects on e.g. solitary bees. Detecting pesticide effects on honeybees requires ecologically relevant field trials conducted over extended periods and with many replicate hives (due to variability between colonies). There is currently much discussion about the minimum 7% effect on honeybee colonies that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) are insisting future field trials need to detect (requiring > 68 replicate colonies per treatment!) being unrealistic to achieve in practice. Field trials are a compromise between size of effect they are able to detect and their cost. Franklin & Raine analysed the effect size of past neonicotinoid-honeybee field trials over the last 20 years and found less than 27% had the ability to reliably detect large losses (> 35%) of honeybee workers. Field trials in recent years have improved, being able to detect medium level effects, but even Ben Woodcock commented at BOAD that the CEH multi-country neonicotinoid field trial (with 66 replicate colonies, able to detect down to 16% effects, and costing approx. \$ 3.5 million) was unlikely to become part of the standard process of assessing pesticide effects. Franklin & Raine suggest that computer models of honeybee colonies e.g. University of Exeter's BEEHAVE model, able to simulate the interacting effects of multiple stress factors on numerous colonies, may offer a solution but strongly advocate the use of solitary bees as a more reliable, sensitive and cost-effective measure to assess the impact of pesticides on pollinators.

Franklin & Raine (2019). Moving beyond honeybee-centric pesticide risk assessments to protect all pollinators. *Nature Ecology & Evolution* 3, 1373–1375.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-019-0987-y>

## Attractive garden flowers for pollinators.

With rising interest in planting in urban areas for pollinators, it is important to gain a better understanding of which ornamental varieties are truly attractive to flower-visiting insects. Rosi Rollings may have a commercial interest in the results of the study, as she runs Rosybee Plants for Bees ([www.rosybee.com](http://www.rosybee.com)), but it is hard to argue with the results collected over 5 years via 9000 observations of flower visitors to 111 different ornamental plant varieties. They found no difference in the number of insects attracted to native or non-native, annual, biennial or perennial species but did find a greater diversity of insects visiting native species. The most visited plants were *Calamintha nepeta* (Lesser calamint), *Helenium autumnale* (a North American sunflower) and *Geranium rozanne* (Cranesbill), but patterns of visitation differed greatly between different insect species or groups. Rollings and Goulson provide recommendations for what flower combinations would provide benefit different pollinator groups but rightfully warn results may differ under different environmental conditions from the 2.5 hectare nursery in South Oxfordshire.

Rollings & Goulson. (2019) Quantifying the attractiveness of garden flowers for pollinators. *Journal of Insect Conservation*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10841-019-00177-3>

# ASSOCIATION LIBRARY

Now that the winter meetings are on us once more it is time to have a look at what new books have been bought for you to borrow from the Library. We try to balance our book purchases between those for people who are doing some serious studying on bee related matters, books for people who are new to beekeeping and would like to learn more, and books which will help you to get more interest out of your hobby. That could include different forms of beekeeping, using your hive products or helping to provide a better environment for your bees. This year we have purchased £250 worth of books to add to the 300 or so already on the shelves. Some of the new books you may find interesting.

For those studying for the BBKA Module 8 examination two books on the recommended reading list:

The Life of the Bumblebee by D V Alford

Communication Among Social Bees by Martin Lindauer

For those who are new to beekeeping and are looking for information to help them we have:

The Healthy Hive Guide by Dan Basterfield (how to recognise and deal with pests and diseases.)

On the Keeping of Bees by John Whitaker (A complete guide for the beginner)

To add to the richness of your beekeeping experience we have:

The Goodness of Honey by Hannah Coughlin. 40 sweet and savoury recipes.

Why Not Top Bar Hives by J R Slade. How to manage your top bar hives

The Garden Jungle by Dave Goulson - Gardening to save the planet.

Two books by Thomas Seeley, The Lives of Bees and Following the Wild Bees. Both books by the renowned scientist and beekeeper on wild bees in the USA, the first on how they survive and thrive and the second on how he tracks and finds their nests.

Two books on Asian Hornets by Sarah Bunker and S J Martin .Their life cycles and what we know about their potential impact on our beekeeping.

The Bras and the Bees by F A Notley - relating how the bee suit we now all use was invented by Cornishman Brian Sheriff.

And finally for the legally minded amongst you Bees At Law by Noel Sweeney. Noel is a Barrister and Beekeeper and he has chosen 60 case histories which could be helpful to beekeepers if they need recourse to law.

The Library is open at every meeting we hold at Marazion Community Centre. You can borrow a book for a month and return it at the next session. So why not have a look through our 300-plus books next time you come and see what there is for you to enjoy!

*Barbara Barnes*

# What's On?

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

Tea & coffee are available and prizes for the raffle are welcomed

## Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019 - Winter Meeting

Kate Bowyer and friends – “**Honey Fraud - the importance of traceability**”

Members are invited to bring along their own labels for interest

## Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

How bees spend the winter / insulation & ventilation / colony lifestyle / robbing.

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 - Annual General Meeting

At the AGM West Cornwall Beekeepers' Association Committee for 2019/2020 will be elected. The AGM will be followed by a talk from Ben Penberthy entitled “**How to make mead**”.

## Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

Pests & diseases / varroa monitoring / IPM

## Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 - Honey Show & Xmas Party

Details TBC

## Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 - Winter Meeting

Details TBC

## Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

Details TBC

## Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 - Winter Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> February: Grant McTaggart – “**How to make creamed and soft set honey**”. Grant's a Royal Cornwall Show winner for his soft set honey and has agreed to share with us how he makes it.

## Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

Details TBC

## Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 - Winter Meeting

Natasha de Vere – “**Improving Forage for Bees**”. Natasha de Vere is from the National Botanic Garden of Wales and senior lecturer in Botany at the University of Aberystwyth. She has surveyed plants visited by honeybees (and other bees) nationally from samples submitted by beekeepers and is now working on green infrastructure to improve forage in the landscape for bees.

## Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

Details TBC

## Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 - Better Beekeeping Meeting

Details TBC