



West Suffolk Beekeepers' Association

NEWSLETTER March 2020

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01359 269652 mq4mike@btinternet.co, Philip Draycott, Mike Shave, Alan Wren.

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, nor of the Association

Notes from the Editor

Hello, and welcome to the March edition of the WSBKA Newsletter. If you have any suggestions about improvements or have contributions to offer, please let me know at least two weeks before the June issue. Some words of advice from both experienced beekeepers and stories by new beekeepers would be welcome. If anyone has a story to contribute in the context of "Blunders in my Apiary" I would be very happy to consider it as part of a series on this subject. If you don't like writing give me a call to discuss it. In the next Newsletter I am hoping to publish an article about Mike Graystone and his life in beekeeping.

I hope that all of your apiaries have survived the recent high winds and storms. I have been unaffected, but I know that our Chairman had an incident which he talked about at our last meeting (see below).

As you will have heard, Gordon Chapman-Hatchett sadly passed away on 20th November 2019. I spent a couple of hours with Sue, Gordon's wife, at their home in Daisy Green, Great Ashfield talking about their life together and their interest in beekeeping and how they got into it.

Their home, the Grange is set in an acre of ground. Apparently, they completely dismantled the 1803 timber framed farmhouse after attending classes on restoration run by Essex County Council and rebuilt it using traditional techniques. It is a monument to Gordon's newly researched skills and it is apparently typical of him as a self-made man to attempt such a monumental undertaking.

The lovely garden is planted with apples, pears, greengages, plums etc. and when they had finished the restoration project it struck Gordon and Sue that they should use it for something to help honeybees and the environment. As a bonus, there were also many trees useful for pollen including Field Maple and Horse Chestnut. They initially considered getting someone to put colonies of bees on site, but after talking to Phil Mizen they decided to take it on themselves (as Sue says 'they did everything together' since they met when she was thirteen), so why change the habit of a lifetime. They attended Apiary meetings at Horringer, run by Mike and Maureen Graystone and early on Sue once said to Mike 'we don't know what to do' and his reply was 'but remember, we're all novices'! They also attended training sessions at Troston village hall and took on their first colony in 2014. It was a nucleus donated by Mike in 2012 in what was a very wet and miserable season, soon after most of the work on the house renovation had been completed.



They soon learnt that one colony was not enough, but 3-4 seemed optimum, although they did consider splitting colonies in Spring and selling the nuclei. They soon joined the Swarm Register and also caught their own swarms. They were leaving some honey on for the bees to overwinter on and still getting 40lb/hive. They always sent data to National Records and honey for analysis for the National Honey Survey. Sue gardens organically and

considered organic beekeeping but decided that it was almost impossible. Here is a picture (Plate 1 above) of Sue by one of Gordon's hives, set up for the winter.

Sue being a librarian by profession, they took on the WSBKA Library and changed past policy, developing the stock and buying in a range of new books. They were always at meetings, smiling and happy to do the job, with Gordon as Assistant Librarian. Already a member of our Committee, he also took on the job of collating and presenting apiary and honey yield data and was due to present it at last month's meeting. He was a very ingenious and inventive guy and contributed much to the workings of the Committee. He was also an avid reader of non-fiction and collected antiquarian beekeeping books.

This winter, for the first time ever, Sue says, Gordon cleaned up everything. He must have had a premonition and didn't want to leave her in the lurch! Sue has had many offers of help with their hives the Spring but as she said 'it will not be with Gordon' so she has decided to give it all up. We wish Sue well in the future.

RIP Gordon Chapman-Hatchett

Chairman's Report

Hello everyone, I hope that you are all hunkered down (bees and yourselves) in this inclement weather (see Plate1).



Plate 1 This is what happened to some of our Chairman's hives in the recent storms and high winds

Those of you registered on Bee Base will have received a message to keep an eye on winter stores – there was little ivy honey last year and we are coming into March where the bees can consume half of their winter stores building up before other nectar sources are available. If you are not registered, I would recommend it in order to get notifications of issues, including disease, in your area.

Once the weather starts to improve the bees turn to rapid build-up and swarming. As beekeepers, we need to be on our toes giving them enough space – remember supers are used primarily for processing nectar which takes up 3 x more space than honey. There also

needs to be space for the bees once the brood box is full. Having looked at past records a colony will typically double in size every 3 weeks so you need to think ahead. A frame of sealed brood will give 2 seams of bees within 12 days – is there brood and super space for these? I like to give more super space than the bees will need in April and May to avoid swarming. This is less of an issue in summer as bees have less inclination to swarm.

I would strongly recommend that you have your queens clipped. The reason for this is that I have seen bees swarm 4/5 days after inspection, as they can prepare swarm cells from day old larvae and don't always start from eggs. Seven-day inspections work but are not foolproof unless queens are clipped. If you are not confident you might want to ask a more experienced beekeeper to help or go along to the association apiary for advice. Also, I've found that queens don't always swarm on the

first day that a cell is capped, even in good weather, which is some comfort if you don't have clipped queens and inspect every seven days.

If your bees do decide to swarm, there are many ways to control this. In my opinion the easiest way is to move the old queen into a nucleus on a frame of brood, plus one of food and make up the number of frames with drawn foundation. If the colony is to stay in the same apiary shake in a couple of frames of bees: the flying bees will go back home.

Having prevented your bees from swarming, before allowing your colony to make a new queen – STOP AND THINK! Is this a good colony? If you have a better one in your apiary why not raise a queen from that instead? To do this – destroy all the swarm cells in the colony and wait a week. Then destroy all the emergency queen cells that they produce and give them a frame of eggs and larvae from your best colony. After a week reduce the queen cells to just one, or they may still swarm.

I hope you all have a great Spring when it arrives!

Kevin Thorn

Philip Draycott has been on the WSBKA Committee since 2004 and has given great service to our association and further afield. As retiring President he has written this article to help us understand his role and also help the new incumbent.

The Role of the President

At the AGM on 13th February Sylvia Pettitt was warmly welcomed by all members as our new President. She has 20 years of experience with bees and has proven herself to be an outstanding beekeeper in many ways. Not only is she running upwards of 100 colonies but has been a DEFRA Bee Inspector, mentor for many beginners and runs our Honey Show. She will make a great job of the presidency. All past Presidents have brought their own talents to bear on West Suffolk beekeeping, particularly since becoming 'working presidents'. When the Association was formed in 1946 it was the fashion to ask a titled person to become President, usually neither beekeepers nor with any intension of doing anything other than appearing each year at the AGM (to collect a present of honey). For the first 40 years Lady Magney and then Lady MacRae were titular heads of WSBKA, the latter when I joined in 1965.

Since then we have had five practical beekeepers who have been thoroughly involved with the Association and have thrown their skills into putting us in the strong position we now find ourselves. Most outstanding was Mrs Joyce White (1990 – 2004), incredibly hard-working and a national figure, known for her expertise in honey cookery. In my memory, she seemed to run WSBKA entirely herself!

I have enjoyed my six years as your President and have been honoured to have the opportunity to see membership reach records, not in just numbers but in outstanding financial health. We go from strength to strength on all fronts due to the efforts of many members. I feel happy that this will continue under Sylvia's leadership and I look forward to celebrating our 75th anniversary next year with you all.

Philip Draycott

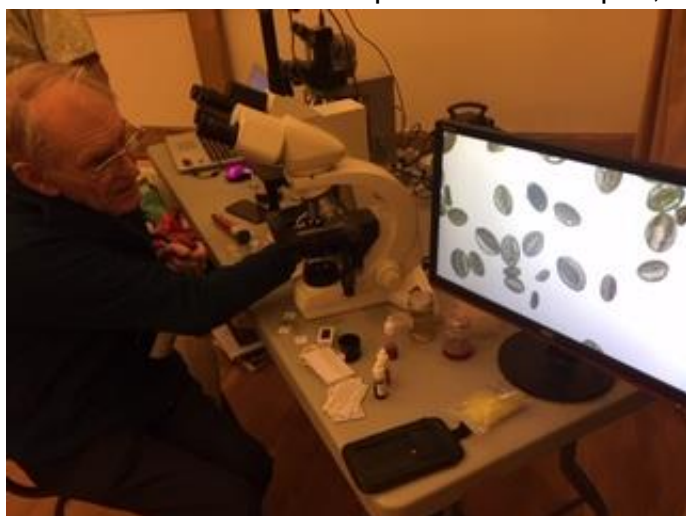


Plate 2 Chairman Kevin Thorn presenting the James Mason Martin Rose Bowl to Past President Philip Draycott. This is a Suffolk-wide award each year to the person deemed to have made the most outstanding contribution to beekeeping. Philip deserves it and we wish him well in the future, but he is not giving up beekeeping.

Meeting Reports

WSBKA Meeting 9th January 2020 Bees and Microscopy

This meeting was arranged and hosted by Jane Corcoran with talks and demonstrations by two speakers. Jane gave an excellent introduction and the first to present was Lewis Woolnough, who talked on the principles of microscopy and lenses. He described compound microscopes, which are best where higher



magnification is required and oil immersion is a necessity with higher powered studies.

The second speaker, Gordon Brown, talked about applications and the equipment needed to perform different types of studies. He also demonstrated their use. Members were invited to try their hand with the equipment afterwards. The microscopes had been collected by the speaker who bought up ex-research microscopes and interfaced them with a computer, allowing on-

screen viewing of detailed structures. He used a process whereby multiple images were built into a single three-dimensional image of, for example, pollen grains. A very interesting evening.

Meeting 14th February WSBKA Survey 2019

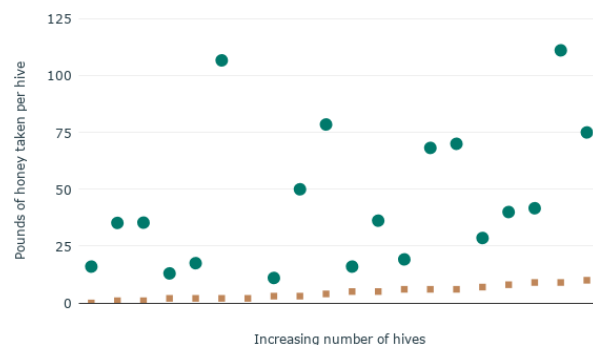
Kevin asked Barry Crabtree (Ipswich and Est Suffolk Beekeepers Association) to analyse the WSBKA data and present it graphically. Kevin presented it at the meeting.

The typical WSBKA beekeeper will have between two and five National hives, will feed a mix of syrup and fondant in late Summer/early Winter. Apiguard and oxalic trickle are the most common varroa treatments. They may or may not feed in spring, syrup being preferred if they do, and will take off a total of 46 lbs of honey in late August, and possibly some at the end of May/early June. The majority of the swarming impulse will be seen and dealt with by splitting colonies during the second half of April. Swarms will be seen in May (not their own hopefully!)

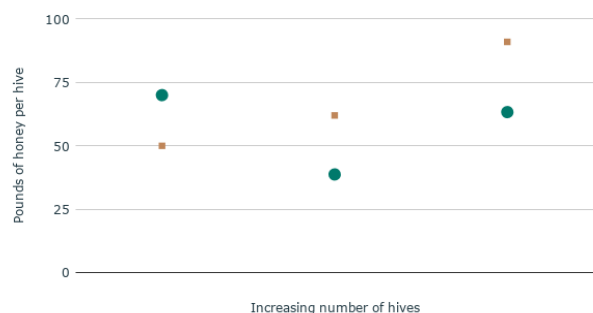
There were 23 responses this year, down from 31 last year. Hive numbers started at 310 and went down to 272 going into the 2019-2020 winter.

Honey Yields

Honey yield vs number of hives (up to 10)



Honey yield vs number of hives (over 10 hives)

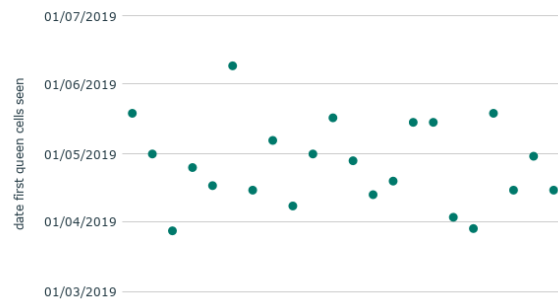


Looking first at the 'Up to 10' hives graph, the circles show the amount of honey taken per hive for each respondent. Vertically aligned with that circle is a small square, the number of hives. The data values are sorted from the lowest to the highest number of hives from left to right. There was a slight trend - more hives generally giving more honey per hive, but there was a lot of variability. The average was 46 lbs of honey per hive.

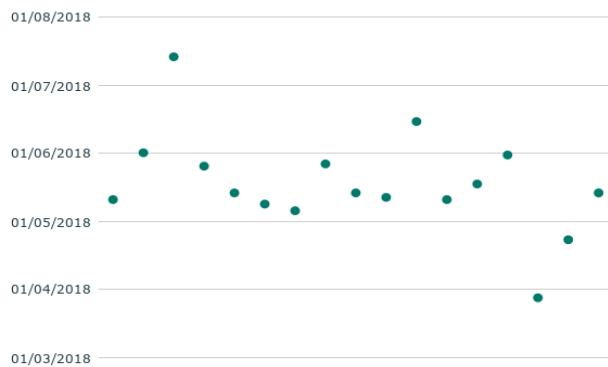
Only 3 beekeepers with over 10 hives gave their honey yields, and the honey per hive was greater - on average 57 lbs per hive

When does it all happen?

First queen cells seen

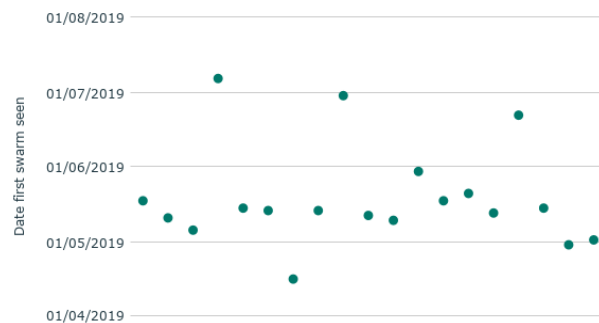


Queen cells seen 2018



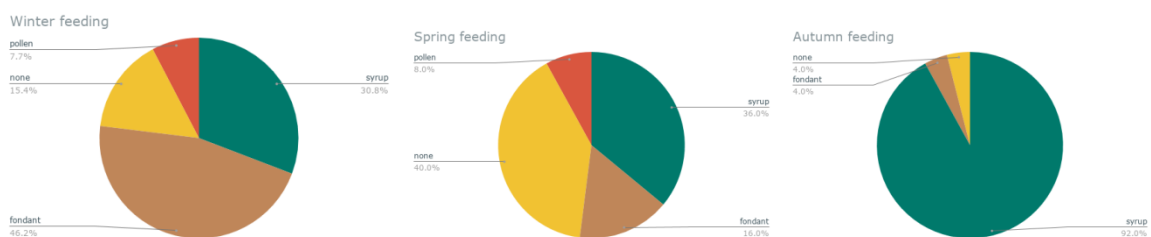
As can be seen, the first queen cells were seen throughout April to mid-May, and the usual response was to split or make up a nucleus. This was almost exactly a month earlier than in 2018.

First swarm seen



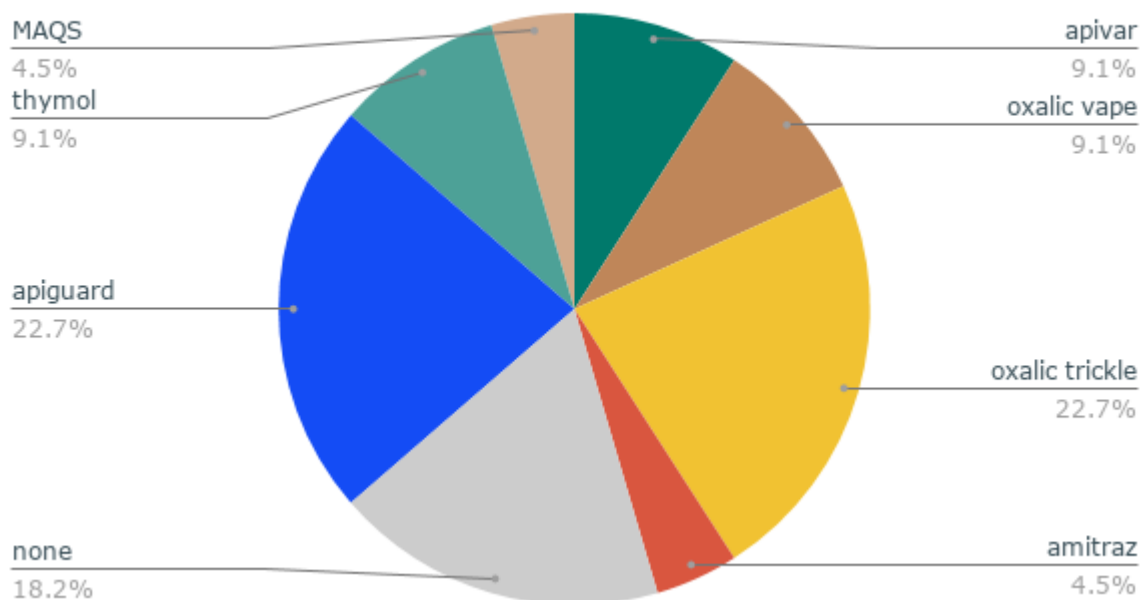
The first swarms were generally seen throughout May.

Feeding & treatments



Fondant was the primary winter feed, with a surprising amount of syrup being used. Forty per cent of beekeepers did not do any spring feeding, and Autumn feeding, was, as would be expected, a syrup feed.

Varroa treatments used



The usual mix of varroa treatments were used, and interestingly nearly 20% of respondents did not treat for varroa. The obvious next question was how did they fare on honey yields? Pretty well. On average 44 lbs per hive were seen vs 46 lbs per hive for the treated ones.

Barry Crabtree

Many thanks to Barry for his excellent compilation of statistics.

Dates for your Diary

Thursday March 5th at **Lawshall Village Hall**, The Glebe, Harrow Green, Lawshall, IP29 4PE at 7.30p.m. A talk will be given by microbiologist Anna Oliver on the subject of her work on **The National Honey Monitoring Scheme: Using citizen science to understand the foraging habits of UK honeybees**

Thursday April 9th at **Hawstead Village Hall** as usual: Essex BKA member Ian Milligan on **Life as a Bee Farmer**.

Suffolk BKA AGM March 11th 2020 19.30 at Kesgrave Scout Hall, IP5 1JF– hosted by I&ES BKA

Offered articles

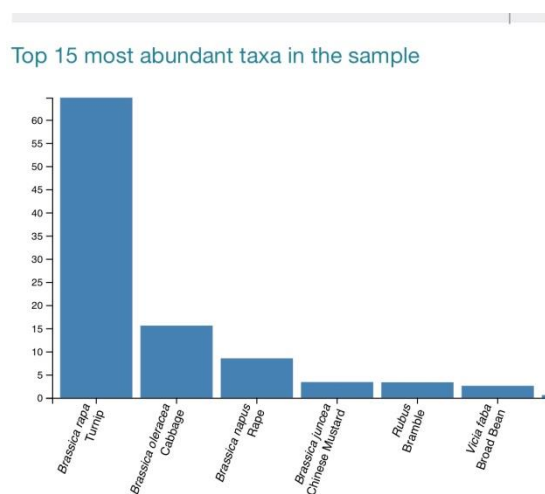
Here is a piece by our most prolific writer Giles Youngs. Without his dedicated support I would sometimes be desperate for content!

When is a turnip not a turnip? - results of pollen analysis from the National Honey Monitoring Scheme.

<https://honey-monitoring.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/high-tech-study-shines-light-varied-diet-honeybees>

I submitted a sample of recently-capped honey from one of my hives to the above Scheme on 22 July 2019 and received the results in mid-January this year. Species identification is by DNA barcoding. Thirteen taxa (species) of pollen were identified. I was surprised to read that 70% of the pollen was turnip (*Brassica rapa*), 15% cabbage (*B. oleracea*) and only 8% [oil-seed] rape (*B. napus*). Some the other species are shown in the bar chart (Fig. 1) and the rest, for example rose, field maple and poppy contributed < 1% each.

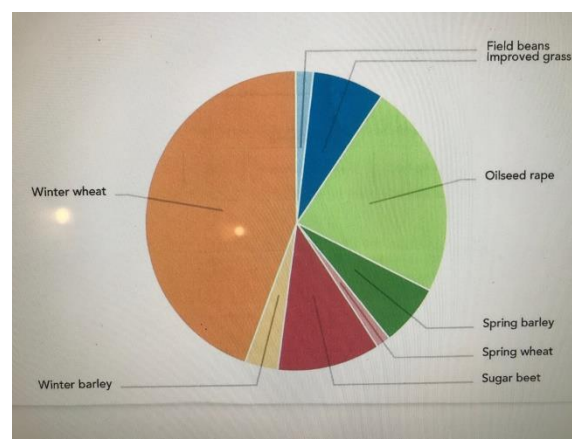
Figure 1 (See below). Frequency of species



Like most beekeepers I am aware of most nectar and pollen yielding flora within a couple of km of my apiary. I have never spotted any turnips and when this crop is grown for forage I believe it is grazed off before it flowers. Similarly, I don't think many of our local gardeners allow their cabbages to bloom!

Helpfully, included with my results, was a pie chart, derived I believe from satellite surveys. It shows types of crops within 2km of my apiary (Fig 2). Winter wheat followed by oil seed rape were the most frequent. Not a turnip or cabbage to be seen!

Figure 2 (See left). Crops within 2km radius of my apiary.



A second pie chart showed percentage cover of all 'broad habitats' within 2km. About 80% is arable land, 15% grassland, and 5% woodland.

I emailed the NHMS to tell them that no turnips grow locally. I received a prompt and helpful reply from their molecular biologist. She explained that the species identification by DNA barcoding used in the survey is not directly comparable with identification by melissopalynology, i.e. pollen analysis by microscopy. Brassicas have been extensively hybridised and cross-overs and mutations occur. She concludes "*So, if you get a brassica identification (and your hive is surrounded by OSR) I would rely more closely on what you see*".

I can't help wondering whether good old-fashioned eyeballing beats all this molecular hi-tech!

Come and hear the National Honey Monitoring Scheme presentation at our next WSBKA meeting, Thursday 5 March at Lawshall Village Hall.

Giles Youngs

For Sale

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE in Hinderclay near Diss (owner sadly giving up bees)
Please email Carol W - wsbka@yahoo.co.uk and she will forward on his contact details:

White jacket and veil and pair of trousers (white) Size XL VGC = £50.00

Stainless steel smoker. Intermediate quality = £5.00

Commercial hives complete with 2 supers. Approx 5/6 years old. VGC. Assembled £130.00 each. 6 hives in total

Lightweight tangential honey extractor with stand. Manual operation. Holds 9 frames. VGC. £300.00

12oz Hexagonal glass jars with twist-lids. 38 available (2 without lids) Clean. £15.00

450/1lb glass jars with lids and few spare lids (57 jars) £20.00

Box of 72 450/1lb glass jars without lids. £30.00

B.S. Shallow beeswax unopened "crimped & wired" £25.00 (5 available)

16" x 10" (for commercial hive) standard beeswax sheets "crimped & wired" £20.00 (25 sheets available)

Mixture of made-up Super and Brood frames. £40.00 the lot VGC

Supers (made up) VGC £20.00 each (5 available)

Maisemore Jumbo Rapid Feeders (green) approx. 3 years old. VGC £20.00 each (7 available)

4 pint Rapid feeders (Maisemore white) VGC £3.50 each

Nucleus Hives (made-up) VGC £70.00 each

40kg tank with nylon valve. VGC £20.00

15lb Honey buckets (4) £5.00 for the four

FOR SALE:

Two Microscopes @ £70.00 each

1 x Computer Connection Lead for Microscope

1 x Optical Refractometer (RHB 90 ATC): £35.00

1 x Dissection Kit: £5.00

Microscope extras including slides

Email Carol Williamson at wsbka@yahoo.co.uk for pictures and contact details.

BIBBA Conference - Helping bees live with Varroa

24th May 2020 – Ettington Community Centre, Warwickshire CV37 7SX
9.30am for 10am start. We aim to finish around 4.30pm

Summary of the conference

Since varroa was discovered in the UK in 1992 many approaches have been adopted to minimise the effect of the parasite and its devastating impact on our bees and the craft. Recent discoveries recognise that some bees may be developing their own mechanisms to deal with the mite. It therefore makes sense to raise queens from colonies that are showing this trait and to replace queens in colonies that aren't.

This event has been organised to help beekeepers understand how bees are dealing with varroa themselves so that we can reduce our reliance on chemicals and practices that may be hindering this development. Participants will learn from experienced beekeepers who have used non-chemical methods for varroa management. In addition, understanding the latest scientific standpoint will help us explore future options to improve and manage our bees to live with the pest.

Who is the day for?

All beekeepers will gain from attending. We aim to provide useful information for individual beekeepers from beginners to bee farmers. It will also interest

BKA Officials, Teachers and Apiary Managers. There is no minimum level of beekeeping knowledge required, as the speakers will discuss their personal experiences and what they have learnt along the way.

The Programme

Presentations will be given by several speakers, including experienced beekeepers and scientists. The beekeepers come from throughout the U.K., so have kept their bees in different environmental conditions.

What it will and will not be about

The emphasis is on beekeepers helping bees develop their own ways of living with varroa, by reducing or eliminating the continual use of chemicals that are hampering the progress of bees to survive with reduced treatment. It will be for responsible beekeepers, not those who simply abandon bees. The event will not be advocating any form of treatment. It is purely to give experiences and learning from past efforts. Attendees can then decide their future approach to varroa management.

Cost: Only £9 per person.

Limited spaces are available so book via www.bibba.com/event-list/
Refreshments will be provided on the day but please bring your own lunch.

www.bibba.com

Disclaimer BIBBA does not recommend or support any specific method of varroa control but it does support the aim of helping the bees to live with varroa. It is up to the individual beekeeper what methods, if any, they use. Any opinions given by any presenter are those of the presenter and not necessarily those of BIBBA.

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