

the Petersfield Beekeeper

Diary

9 December at 7:30	Winter Talk: Varroa	via Zoom
16 January at 7:30	Winter Talk: TBA	via Zoom
6 February	AGM and refresher session	via Zoom
21 February	New Beekeeper Training starts	via Zoom

You will receive email invitations to Zoom meetings closer to the event.

At the end of a strange old year, a word from our Chairman, Graham Rowden:

After a year of complete shutdown at the apiary we will all be looking forward to 2021. I expect many of you were very disappointed not to be able to start beekeeping this year. The only consolation I can offer you is that we have a full program for 2021. Our main focus will be new beekeepers' training. At the apiary each hive will have one dedicated owner who will be looking after it with a group of new beekeepers. We will be keeping to all Covid 19 rules as and when they need to be enforced.

Here is a brief summary of our goals for 2021 season:

- To build up the colonies for material for new Queens
- 1 hive for honey production
- Training for new beekeepers
- Helping new beekeepers to make up a hive from a new Queen or from stock where a natural instinct to swarm arises
- Training for Bee Basic
- Also we would like to demonstrate top bar hive, shook swarm, Bailey comb exchange.

This is what we would like to do but bees sometimes have a mind of their own and then we go with their instinct because more often than not you cannot change it.

**Please send items for inclusion in the next Newsletter
by 25 January to depeyrecave@gmail.com**



Our AGM is always a lovely chance to catch up over tea and cake after the evening's business has been swiftly and efficiently dealt with. The 2021 AGM will look very different and we will have to provide our own refreshments but the business must still be dealt with and it will still be lovely to see each other. Below are the reports from various members of the Committee, but first a word from Pippa.

PDBKA
AGM

SATURDAY 6
FEBRUARY

7:30PM

Via ZOOM

PDBKA was established 80 years ago by a small group of local beekeepers keen to share information and expertise. Today the Association has some 140 members continuing this tradition.

As an association, and in 'normal' years, we run:

- an Association Apiary, managed by four Custodians, where members of all levels of expertise gather on spring & summer Sunday afternoons to check the hives and swap knowledge.
- a local swarm collection service.
- a summer information stand visiting local shows to spread the word about bees and beekeeping
- an autumn honey show where the results of the bees industry are displayed at their best
- occasional evening talks on Winter Wednesdays and Saturdays covering bee-related topics
- winter training sessions for new and improving beekeepers where our library of bee-related books can be accessed

We communicate with our members via this Newsletter, our Association website and our facebook page.

These dozen core activities are managed by a committee of volunteers, currently eight strong but with space for more! New members bring new ideas, experience, expertise and enthusiasm.

APIARY CUSTODIAN'S REPORT

The 2020 season started off with the COVID-19 pandemic. The custodians had a meeting and split up the work. We lost 3 colonies over winter so started off the season with 6 colonies.

During April a shook swarm was successfully carried out for varroosis.

In early May, four Buckfast Queens, sourced by Graham, were introduced. They were well established by the end of the month.

In June approximately 95 pounds of honey was extracted by Pippa.

A number of hives were effected by chalk brood and wasps were a particular nuisance. Entrance reducers were placed on the hives.

At its peak in August the apiary had 10 colonies including one from a captured swarm from the bait- hive and another from an artificial swarm. A further 100 pounds of honey was extracted. Once again, thanks to Pippa.

In September the BBC filmed an interview with Hilary Hayward at the apiary. The apiary was treated with MAQS for varroa in late September.

Mouse guards and woodpecker protection were put on in October, and we are taking 10 colonies into winter.

Throughout the season video demonstrations were done where possible.

We hope to welcome beekeepers back next year.

Rowan



EDUCATION SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Association started its 2020 education programme with the New Beekeepers' Course. Thirty two people listened to Tom Blackburn's over view of beekeeping and 19 were present on the 4th and final session, the fifth being cancelled due to COVID 19 restriction. The other trainers were Brian Herbert, Hilary Hayward and Brad Davis.

Sadly, the teaching apiary was out of bounds throughout the season to all but the custodians, Chris Clark, Rowan Roberts, Dean Gregory and Peter Reader led by Graham Rowden. They did a fantastic job looking after all the hives and Andy Horton uploaded videos to the website. Rowan was generally the star and Chris the cinematographic director. The videos showed how regular hive inspections were carried out and included the demonstration of a shook swarm and how that colony progressed, as well as how to mark a queen and information on spacers. The reasons for going into each colony were explained and the seasonal tasks demonstrated such as judging the appropriate moment to add supers and remove honey, feeding and other winter preparations.

Unfortunately, the plan for new hives belonging to new beekeepers to be populated by Association bees and tended by the new beekeeper owner with the help of a mentor was postponed until 2021 when we hope to accommodate 10 to 12 new hives. This would be open to new beekeepers bringing their own brand new hives (essential for bio security) and buying a queen via the Association.

At the beginning of the year, the 5 people that had shown interest in doing the Bee Basic Assessment attended 3 study sessions before lock down. A WhatsApp group was created by them to maintain the momentum. This spawned an interest in zoom meetings to complete the topics of the Bee Basic syllabus and was led by Brad Davis. On completion, the weekly zoom meetings continued with topics taken from the Improver series of BBKA, again with Brad leading. Among others, Percy Phelps hosted a zoom that gave tips about dealing with wasps with very interesting additional information about the wasp life cycle and their stings.

In 2021:

The New Beekeepers' Course will run from 21st Feb to 28th March but it will be online...

The training Apiary will be open but subject to Covid-19 restrictions; we are all working hard on the protocols required to make that happen.

I would like to thank the custodians for the work in the apiary, Rowan and Chris for the training videos and all those that contributed to the 'Forage of the week' on the website.

A special thank you is due to Brad for all the training and encouragement he gave through the lockdown.

Anne

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT

In 2020 it seemed all the news was happening elsewhere so I am more than ever grateful to my trusty regular contributors. If you've never sent anything to me before, I would love to hear from you with accounts and photos of your beekeeping experiences, good and bad, or snippets and links to information from the wider world of beekeeping.

Helen

Reports continue over....



HONEY SHOW MANAGER'S REPORT

This year, as you may have noticed, has been quite unusual in many respects. Not only have our activities been severely restricted, the weather also contributed to the level of our activities. Travelling between apiaries was permitted, but visiting the Association Apiary was not permitted, at least not in groups of more than 2 Custodians.

By now you would normally have removed all your main honey crop and prepared it and entered into what would have been the Association's 79th Annual Honey Show. Mind you, out of about 150 members only about 20 to 25 members actually enter. They do however manage to enter in excess of 100 entries. A proportion of the remaining members do however attend for the social gathering and prize giving at the end of the Show. It would be good and an encouragement for beekeeping, if some of the remaining 125 members could make at least 1 entry into the Honey Show.

This year there were to be some new classes including wax wraps, lip balm, furniture polish and a hand cleanser or soap; to broaden the type of classes and to encourage more members to enter. Some of the older classes such as cut comb, sections, chunk honey, candles and mead have a low number of entries. Traditionally the main products of the hives were for wax production for the monasteries. The tenants could pay their tithes with wax and mead was used to quench their thirst and given to bridegrooms during their honeymoon. As beekeepers we do not utilise these resources to the best advantage. Most of our wax is traded in for replacement foundation and the surplus unwanted honey poured into the drain.

Candles can easily be made. When you have bottled all your honey there is always honey left from draining wax or when reheated, a froth on the top of the container and other residual honey left over and not suitable for sale. All this honey can be used to make mead. It is not difficult: you just boil it with water add some wine yeast and leave in a demijohn for a few months. There are refinements to the above basic method but simple traditional recipes are all that is required to enter the Honey Show.

The hot weather in the early part of the summer worked to our advantage as beekeepers since most of the early crop when tested was 18% moisture content as compared to last year which was more than 20% and needed to be dried out. You may have noticed when tasting your honey this year that it has a taste with depth and a strong sweet floral flavour. I was speaking to a National Honey Judge earlier in the year and she also remarked that the crop this year was one of the best she had tasted. If you have saved some of your crop this year you could win next year.

During the winter and indeed any period of time in which you may find yourself confined at home; it may be good time to read books (yes books those old fashioned things), to improve your skills in preparing honey, wax and mead in readiness for the Show next year. The preparation of the hive products gives us a greater insight and knowledge of the fruits of the products of our bee's labour.

I do not know if you had a good harvest of honey this year with the variable season we experienced during the year. The early crop poured into hives in abundance, but in the latter part of the year it was slow, and smaller than the usual crop. In some cases, we had to be cautious in removing the honey crop too soon in anticipation of more inflowing crop. The honey flow suddenly stopped and later started again due to the dry weather more than once during the summer. By removing too much crop too soon, there is a risk of starvation and you would need to feed your bees. There would then be the risk of contamination to your honey crop if you had not removed the supers prior to feeding.

Selling honey has been slow this year, unless you had a retail outlet which had remained open. Your surplus wax must be accumulating in the box ready for exchange. This means that you should have plenty of material to try out new methods of processing the products from your hives and the more successful of these items could be entered into the Honey Show. I shall look forward to receiving your entries for next year's Honey Show.

There is much more to beekeeping than just looking into your hives once a week and extracting the honey once or twice a year. To enter into the Honey Show, where your products are judged, you can learn from this experience and how you can make improvements.

David Parkinson



ZOOMING ABOUT....

A year ago I don't expect any of us had heard of 'Zoom' except in the context of 'are you zooming about today or do you have the time for a coffee/chat/cup of tea?'

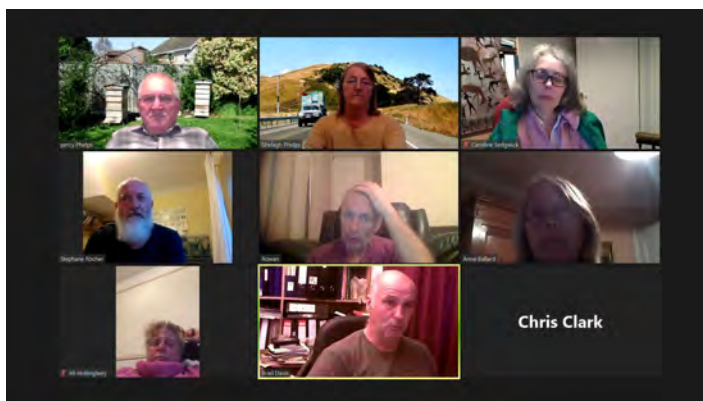
Today we have mastered the art of 'Zooming' and drinking coffee/chatting/drinking a cup of tea at the same time.

Within two weeks of the first lockdown both of us had started with regular 'Zooms'. We had learned about clicking on the links and putting in ID codes and Passwords issued for each event. I had also learnt that the webcam on my laptop was kaput and I had ordered a new laptop. I could use my iPad but as this Covid situation was not going away in a hurry the screen was just too small for proper sessions. We'd Zoomed with old school friends, our local U3A, my local stitching group and other groups

We had also accepted that we all had that searching-for-'Leave Meeting'-button facial expression, not to mention the where's-my-audio-button while everyone else says 'BOTTOM LEFT!!!'

By July we were full of confidence and very pleased to hear from Brad regarding his planned Further Training session. We have always enjoyed Brad's sessions in the hall and knew these would be worth tuning in for. I don't think any of us, least of all Brad, expected the first session to last for 2 hours! I'm sure I wasn't alone in struggling to sleep after that.

Numbers joining in varied over the weeks but there was always an attentive audience, keen, usually, to join in and engage with the group, contributing to the slide topics as Brad put them on the screen. It is always a pleasant surprise when you find you actually feel confident that you know something!



We also had the option to 'attend' the National Honey Show, free of charge, and could choose which talks to watch. There were also many Webinars from other BKAs around the country. Let's try, yes, please let's try, to see the occasional positives in things this year.

Look out for the Meeting Invitations from our lovely Petersfield District Beekeepers Association and give it a go; don't be afraid to ask if you need help to use Zoom, it really is very easy.

So, do join in with any future zooms, there will be opportunities to chat with fellow bee-keepers, many of whom we count as friends, see friendly faces on your screen and also listen to an occasional presentation. We can and will get through this and the bees will still be there.

Wishing you a safe and healthy Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Shelagh (Phelps)



THE GOSPORT ASIAN HORNET

You will remember an asian hornet nest was discovered and destroyed recently in the Gosport area. I have been given permission by the person who discovered the nest to print his story below. If, like me, you wonder why he had to google the insect for an ident, it's because he's not a beekeeper and hadn't heard about the Asian Hornet Watch app. I thought you might find it interesting reading.

"Instead of allowing ever-increasing bird and insect attacks on my white grapes to bully me into an early harvest, I decided to regularly pluck off the damaged fruit, and wait until the remainder achieved perfect mellow sweetness. Unfortunately, in early September, my efforts came to the attention of a large striped beastie, which ascended from a bunch like a helicopter to look me in the eye. Although darker and much larger than a common wasp, it had a similar build and brought to mind a sign I'd once spotted in Japan stating, 'Beware Killer Bees!'

As I retreated, the insect turned and headed off at speed. It was soon back, scooping out grape innards. So, I armed myself with a phone and lay in wait. Once I'd captured a reasonable image, a little Googling confirmed the intruder was an Asian hornet which should be reported to the National Bee Unit.

The next morning, as my wife and I were preparing our house for prospective buyers, I jokingly said this would be the moment the 'hornet inspector' would arrive. Several minutes later, the phone rang. It was the head bee man, who was within minutes of reaching us after rushing down from Norfolk.

We put him off -- but not for long. Come mid-afternoon, a full investigation team in shorts and uniform sweatshirts, armed with compasses, bait and walkie-talkies, had assembled ready to track down the invaders.

By agreement, our precise location was kept secret from the national press, amusingly being reported as 'a vineyard, north of Gosport'. A quick NBU inspection revealed our garden was particularly welcoming to hornets. Apart from the succulent grapes, we also have honey bees squatting in a chimney, and ample ivy the aliens find difficult to resist.

Members of the team were sent off to investigate nearby bee colonies the predators might be interested in decimating. Sure enough, hornets were spotted at hives nearby.

They were also discovered decapitating prey at the naval institute, where, unfortunately, two of the beeteam were apprehended by human security whilst peering through the perimeter fence with binoculars.

The tracking involved capturing hornets in butterfly nets, marking them with ink, and then timing their subsequent appearances. All of which can take its toll. A female NBU operative who'd named her white-dotted worker 'blanche' was reminded not to become too familiar with the pests she'd been sent to exterminate.

Hornet feeding points were set up and staked out to record turn-around time, and direction of departure. In a scene reminiscent of the Battle of Britain, these movements were triangulated at field HQ to pinpoint the likely location of the nest.

Watching all this, I noticed that, unlike wasps, Asian hornets could be solitary feeders who didn't necessarily invite their chums to gorge on food sources they'd discovered. Also, although they were known to eat all sorts of smaller insects, they didn't bother munching through the substantial numbers of dozy grape juice-intoxicated wasps gorging on my vines.

Over several days, the bee-team slowly closed in on the hornets' secondary nest, which was eventually located high in an apple tree a short way up the road. At dusk, the hazard-suited hit-squad moved to apply poison, after which the nest was taken away for DNA and other analyses.

As yet, the primary nest has not been found."

Janelle Quitman
Asian Hornet Coordinator
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The Asian Hornet Watch app can be downloaded for free for Android via [Google Play](#) and for iOS via [iTunes](#).

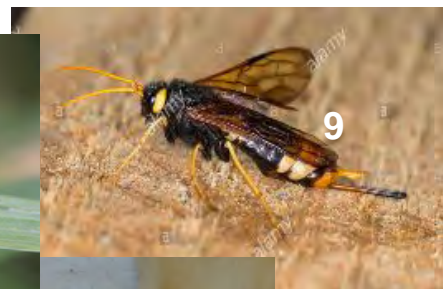
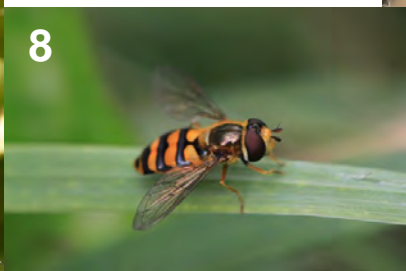
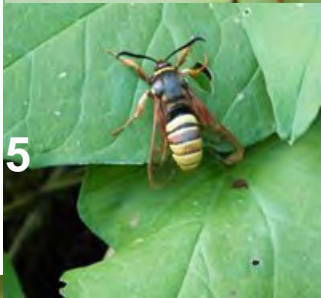
Find out more about the Asian Hornet [here](#)



Asian Hornet?

Can you tell which striped insect you are looking at?

Answers on a postcard to.....
(sorry no prize, just feeling of smugness)



Answers next time...

ANDREW BROWN: THE CORNISH NATIVE BLACK BEE

Andrew Brown, dentist and smallholder, spoke to us on Saturday 28 November about the work of the B4project group he works with in Cornwall. He acquired a colony of black bees from a local group in 2012 and became interested in the conservation of *Apis mellifera mellifera*, the European honeybee. The black bee is smaller, the brood is generally confined to one box and the winter cluster is relatively small.

Black bees survive in Cornwall because of the relative isolation of colonies and weather conditions which are inhospitable to imported bees. Finding such populations across Europe and harvesting and preserving genetic material will allow us to reintroduce them in the future.

Local bees do best. Andrew was very keen to dissuade us from importing bees from abroad or even elsewhere in the country. Local populations evolve with local conditions and pathogens. Bees brought in may bring in pathogens or suffer from local pathogens. So Andrew's message to us as an Association is to work as a group with what we have.

***Your Committee for 2020/1***

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