
the Petersfield Beekeeper

PDBKA Honey Show 2021

11 September

Venue tba

It's the Honey Show, but not quite as we know it....

The Committee have decided that having been unable to hold a Honey Show last year, this year we will hold an informal version which will be more of a social event than a formal Honey Show. It is proposed to invite members to bring their exhibits for judging in the morning and judging will take place during the morning. Members will not be excluded during the judging but have the opportunity to look at the exhibits whilst being judged (not touching until after judging).

This will give us the opportunity to meet with other members and discuss bees, or anything else, and to renew old acquaintances. The Honey Show will take place over one day and members may come and go as they please. Most important, there will be tea and cakes!

A reduced schedule will be sent to all members shortly and there will no distinction between members classes and open classes, this is to simplify entries.

I hope that you have all been busy with your cameras as there will be one photography class for a photo in any context, but it must contain a honeybee as the central subject. In the display class, a vase of wildflowers will be required but the display must comprise bee forage plants.

The event is not exclusive to exhibitors, just the opposite in fact. It is hoped that as many members as possible will call in at sometime during the day, even if it is just to look at the products which can be produced from the hive and enjoy a chat with other beekeepers and a cup of tea with cake.



Winter Training for New Bee-Keepers

It has been a year like no other in our lifetimes and although, from the animal husbandry point of view, tending to our bees has been able to continue, the same cannot be said for theoretical training.

Back in the winter Anne-Chantal rang to ask if Percy and I would be willing and able to host training 'Zooms'; we said we would whilst hoping we would be up to the task!

The sessions went really well with 'mute' being the order of the day as 40 households getting organised for a Zoom call can be quite noisy! The speakers, without exception, mastered the technology and had made changes to their presentations, where necessary, to create the virtual lessons. The trainees were encouraged to participate by leaving questions and comments in the 'Chat' facility and, whilst Percy put the questions to the various speakers, I sat in the background making sure none were missed. We hope we did ok as part of the whole team event.

Anne-Chantal introduced each speaker/instructor and dealt with any 'housekeeping' issues. Although breaks had been scheduled into the afternoon sessions they really weren't needed as breaks were frequently used for a spot of Q&A.

So, moving forward, all the 'newbess' were excited about their forthcoming apiary sessions which have been scheduled with Covid restrictions in place; the training will continue as before although beesuits and tea and cake will have to be personally provided.

Lessons learnt ~ a pandemic didn't need to stop the new trainees accessing their education just a little innovation and it worked like a dream.

Shelagh Phelps

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main slide is titled "What is a honey bee?" in teal text. Below the title are three images: a bumblebee on a yellow flower, a hornet, and a wasp. The text on the slide reads: "It isn't a Bumble bee, a hornet, or a wasp". On the right side of the screen, there is a vertical list of participants with their names and small video thumbnails. The participants listed are: Petersfield Beeke..., Shelagh Phelps, blackburn, Alihberty, Anne Ballard, and Susie.



Passing on the Hive Tool

'Copied' in on an email requesting help moving a WBC from Froxfield to Liss I discovered that, after fifty years keeping bees Tidda Dobbs, PDBKA member since 1990, was passing on her colonies to a new member of our Association. Tidda has been involved in beekeeping since the early fifties, initially very reluctantly helping her mother, prominent Steep BKA member Leslie Sykes. 'Mrs Sykes' was a key member of the Steep Association, the forerunner of PDBKA and, before the Association acquired its own apiary, frequently hosted apiary meetings in the family garden at 'The Red House' Froxfield. In return for tea and cake her colonies would be inspected without effort!

This picture, part of our PDBKA Archive, shows Tidda, extreme left, during an inspection of her mother's colonies. In shirt-sleeves and minimal veiling it looks more like a garden party than an Apiary visit!



As soon as Tidda was 'her own boss' she abandoned beekeeping but, in 1972, when she moved a little further up Cockshott lane, a beehive in the garden and fresh honey on the table regained its appeal. Persuaded to join PDBKA Committee by John Brown, the only other beekeeper she knew, Tidda soon became a prominent member (like her mother before her!) not hosting apiary Meetings at home but as an Apiary Custodian. At that time there was only one other female member, how times have changed.

cont. over



Tidda was my first contact with PDBKA - In Spring 2002 she came with cardboard box, sheet & goose feather to collect a swarm from my garden and later, accompanied by Morag Crawley, to tend to the hive, not mine, from which the swarm had issued. Soon I was persuaded by Morag to join PDBKA Committee and by Tidda to help spin the association honey. Tidda will miss her bees but not their honey, promised as 'payment' by their new keeper. After many years of active beekeeping she too will achieve honey without effort!

Pippa

A SEASONAL BEE INSPECTOR CALLS

The news of EFB at the PDBKA Apiary came as a blow. The weather was at long last cooperating, the training had been going so well, the new beekeepers of 2020 & 2021 were enjoying their 'hands on' experience. Now the Apiary would be closed and back as the sole responsibility of the Apiary Custodians just as they would be more involved with their own hives.

With my apiary just outside the statutory 3km inspection zone I did not expect a visit from the SBI but that week's hive inspections certainly had us concentrating on brood health, shaking bees off all frames of brood to better view the cells, even performing a lateral flow test on a suspect larva.

A couple of days later I was surprised to receive a call from Isaac Mullane, SBI for our area, booking an appointment. The statutory area is now between 3km and 5km and I am in the Apiary's 'red zone'. Hoping for the best but preparing for the worst I spent an anxious weekend preparing sufficient equipment for colony destruction/ shook swarming.

Apprehensive of their reason for coming, I have enjoyed meeting the SBIs over the years and Isaac is among the best. He explained exactly why he was with us and what he would be doing, this inspection combining a brood check with one for exotic pests. Despite the temperature in the high twenties he was happy (?) to wear a mask & disinfect his boots for this extremely hygiene conscious beekeeper. To my relief the inspection found nothing more sinister than two colonies with some chalk brood, perhaps understandable after the strange weather we have had.

With few drone cells present Isaac was unable to do a large-area drone brood uncapping to check for varroa but he did perform an exotic pest check on two hives. Unsurprisingly we found neither small hive beetle nor Tropilaelaps.

Pippa

see photos over





Isaac in disinfected boots and mask with wipe-clean tablet and clipboard, hive tool dip and protected smoker.



A close inspection.



A suspect larva, discoloured and deformed. This is probably early chalkbrood. It was dissected and flow tested



A wax moth larva fooled into emerging by a sharp tap on the frame.



Checking for exotic pests which, if present, will hide in the darkest corner of the hive.



News from the apiary

The apiary is still under the standstill order due to an outbreak of European Foul Brood (EFB).

The Custodians have been nurturing the colonies ready for reinspection by Isaac Mullane, our bee inspector on the 5th July.

Shook swarms were performed on all the colonies and we hope they should all be in good order ready for 6 eager candidates to take the Bee Basic assessment in the coming weeks! There are also three members who will be doing the Bee Health assessment on the 21st July. We wish all candidates the very best of luck with their assessments.

As soon as the standstill order is lifted from the apiary, we will be welcoming members back with as few restrictions as possible to minimize stress on the colonies and comply with Covid regulations. Please refer to the website for the latest information on the Apiary reopening.

I hope your colonies have survived the tough weather inflicted upon them. Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

A-C Ballard

Hilary Hayward was kind enough to send me a fascinating article from The Economist about the potential use of RNA (as used in COVID-19 vaccinations) to tackle varroa. The Economist is behind a paywall but the company developing the technology has an item about their research [here](#).

Di Cook still has some brood boxes and supers for sale, as well as floors, stands, roofs, etc.

Also a solar extractor on a metal moveable stand/trolley. Takes up to 6 super or 3 brood frames. Would like £100 but negotiable.

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Changes to the Newsletter

With Association news also available on the PDBKA website and PDBKA facebook It has been decided to change PDBKA Newsletter from a monthly to a quarterly publication. The Newsletter will be publish in:

July, to tie in with honey harvesting and PDBKA Honey Show preparations,
October, to report on the Honey Show and look forward to the Winter Meetings,
January, ahead of the AGM,
April, as the season begins and our Training Apiary reopens.

PDBKA Committee Meeting held on 14 June

The committee held its first face-to-face meeting for some months, on a warm June evening in Pippa's garden.

Encouraging reports were given on the progress of the apiary following the EFB outbreak.

The two affected colonies had been destroyed and shook swarms undertaken on the remainder. Thanks to all the hard work by the custodians, the bees are drawing out new foundation, and there is confidence that six/seven colonies will come through.

Also good news – Bee Basic Exams will be going ahead, thanks to an offer to host at an external apiary. Dates and venue to be announced.

No public events have been scheduled for the summer, and with no association honey to extract, our usual Extraction Day at the Petersfield Community Centre will sadly not be going ahead. But all is not lost! We will be arranging a social 'tea and cake' event in the apiary car park on Sunday 25 July. More information to be available soon, so please hold the date. A cut-down version of the Honey Show will also be organised for the 11 September. Definitely one to look forward to.

Finally, if you have any suggestions for articles in future Newsletters, Helen de Peyrecave would be very interested to hear from you. Please email depeyrecave@gmail.com

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