



Photo by: Myrabella / Wikimedia Commons

June 2016

**WVBKA Charity Registration
Number: 517008**

Buying Bees

At this time of year beekeepers, both new and established, are looking to buy some new bees. We would advise that you look for a supplier of bees in your area that has bees that are adapted to your local conditions. Bees with this background will have more chance of survival if conditions are adverse. Further information and guidelines are available on the BBKA and the NBU [web site](#) about what to look for when buying a new package of bees.

Diary Dates

June 3rd

- Talk by Jim Vivian-Griffiths:
Healthy Bees

June 8th

- Committee meeting

June 17th

- Association apiary BBQ and open discussions 7pm

June 19th

- Visit to Welsh Botanical Gardens

July 8th

- Apiary meeting 6:30pm

July 15th

- BBKA Basic Assessment

July 16th

- Talk by Val Vivian-Griffiths:
Queen Rearing

July 22nd

- Apiary meeting 6:30pm

WVBKA Association Apiary

Plans for use of the apiary are slowly coming together. The ideas we have are to hold meetings at the apiary on a regular basis throughout the summer and to try to cover practical and relevant topics with a bit of chat and a bit of hands on. To start the ball rolling, there will be an open evening at the apiary on Friday 17th June at 6.30pm when all members are invited to come along. There will be short demonstrations of capturing and hiving a swarm and Dave will bring the microscope and show how to test for Nosema (see separate article) and there will also be a BBQ and some refreshments. The main objective of this evening will be to get ideas from members of what topics they want to cover at the sessions so we can set up a rota to provide this. We have already planned the next meeting for 8th July which will cover making increase and setting up a nuc.

Outline of future meetings

There will be two sessions per month from May through to September. These will be on Friday evenings, starting at 6.30pm and held on the second and fourth Fridays of the month. Details will be published in the newsletter

ahead of the month's meetings giving some background to the reason for the session. The sessions will be a mix of discussion and practical and should be relevant to the time of year.

Future topics will come from the members' plan which will be circulated via the newsletter. Spontaneous events may be added to the schedule based on what is happening with the bees and these will be advertised by email to members.

There will be tea and coffee (or beer) and a discussion period afterwards. The aim is for the sessions to be enjoyable and informative so that members increase their bee keeping knowledge. There will be the opportunity for members to stay and chat as an alternative to going into the bees if they prefer.

We are currently building up the numbers of bees at the apiary. Nucs have been created by splitting down the two good sized colonies. Dave and David have put a lot of effort into this for which we are very grateful. The hives are currently off limits until the new queens become established and we know how successful this work has been.

Peter Woodward

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**Queen Colour of the Year
2016 is:**

WHITE

What is Nosema and should I be worried about it?

Two *Nosema* species have been identified in honey bees in England and Wales, *Nosema apis* and more recently the Asian species *Nosema ceranae*. Both are highly specialised parasitic microsporidian fungal pathogens. *Nosema spp.* invade the digestive cells lining the mid-gut of the bee, there they multiply rapidly and within a few days the cells are packed with spores, the resting stage of the parasite. When the host cell ruptures, it sheds the spores into the gut where they accumulate in masses, to be later excreted by the bees. If spores from the excreta are picked up and swallowed by another bee, they can germinate and once more become active, starting another round of infection and multiplication.

Nosema ceranae infections are characterised by a progressive reduction in the number of bees in a colony until the point of collapse. The beekeeper may also see a significant decline in colony productivity. In the final phase of decline, secondary diseases frequently appear, including Chalk Brood and American Foul Brood. Eventually the affected colonies contain insufficient bees to carry out basic colony tasks and they collapse. Mortality in front of the hives is not a frequent symptom of *N. ceranae* infection. Dysentery and visible adult bee mortality in front of the hives are reported to be absent in *N. ceranae* infections. Colonies can fail to build up and even dwindle away. This can sometimes be rapid or take place over several months.

There are no outward symptoms of the disease. Dysentery is often seen in association with *N. apis* infections; this may be seen as 'spotting' at the hive entrance or across the frames. The dysentery is not caused by the pathogen, but as a consequence of infection and can be exacerbated during periods of prolonged confinement during inclement weather, especially during the spring. This can lead to the bees being forced to defecate in the hive, therefore contaminating it further.

The simplest method of diagnosis of infections is by microscopic examination.

Dave Williams will be briefly showing members how to identify this problem on June 17th at the association apiary. Anyone with concerns about their bees should bring a sample of bees with them

and if time allows there may be an opportunity to test your own bees for *Nosema*. Anyone bringing a sample of bees for testing, needs to collect about 30 adult bees in a container the day before and keep them in the freezer overnight, so that we do not have any live bees. We suggest collecting the bees by placing the container over the hole in the crown board after removing the cover or bee escape.

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Practical beekeeping course student feedback

"We would both like to thank you, Dave and June, Peter and David, so much for your hospitality and guidance through the bee course over the past two weekends. Having wanted to join a course for some time we are very glad we came to WVBKA for what proved to be a wonderful introduction to beekeeping.

The location and facilities were excellent, we were spoiled by June with tea and biscuits and Dave's tuition was really fun and informative. He entirely took away any fears we may have had prior to the course and each day we came away looking forward to our next visit and were thoroughly enthused! It was great to have the opportunity to ask all sorts of questions and to have so much 'head-in-hive' time talking to the bees, which we loved. This was particularly helpful in educating us as to what to look out for when looking after our own bee colonies.

We now feel well prepared, with notes from the course, further reading and the guidance of our mentor, and are very excited to be buying our hives and bees for our first season as bee keepers. We are also looking forward to further participating in WVBKA talks and events."

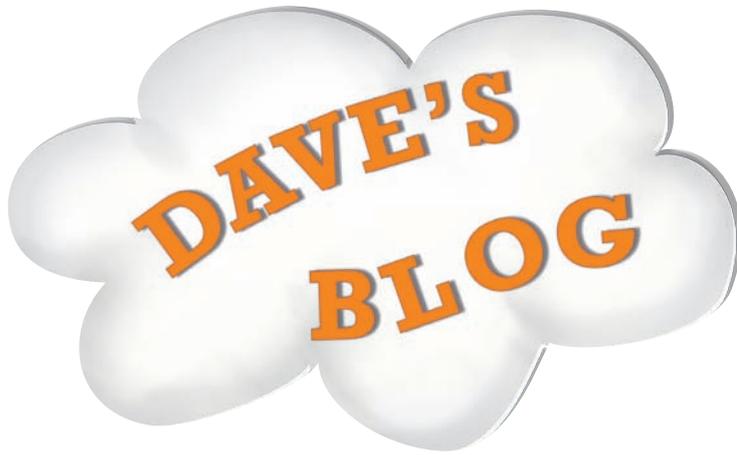
With very best wishes

Lizzie Cook

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In memorium

Arthur Taylor a long time beekeeper and supportive member of our association, passed away on 28th March. A service for Arthur was held in Staunton Church and he was then buried in Greenfields Woodland alongside his wife Mabel who passed away in January 2016. Our thoughts are with Arthur and Mabel's family.



June notes

At last the season has opened up and true to form the bees have already produced queen cells, so how are we going to manage these hives which have already prepared to propagate? There are many ways of dealing with this, the method you use will depend on how advanced they are.

If they are sealed or about to be sealed, you probably will find it difficult to find the queen anyway. If it is a colony which you like, then simply split it into nucs. Make sure there are sufficient stores to last at least two to three weeks, by which time you should have a nice laying queen. The golden rule for those two to three weeks is to leave well alone. Please, please do not interfere at this stage.

The reasons are very simple – you probably have a virgin queen running about within the nucs and any disturbance could lead to loss. Remember, young queens are very nervous until they have been mated and become more sedate in their maturity.

Of course, all the foregoing depends entirely on the state of the colony when examined. There seems to be a great emphasis on healthy bees, I ask the question *'what is a healthy colony of bees?'* If you expect your colonies to be boiling over with bees at the beginning of the season, you will probably be very disappointed; bees are no different to any other form of livestock. You will have some colonies which are very strong, some colonies which are very weak and some colonies which are somewhere in the middle. To expect all colonies to be the same, well you are simply living in 'cloud cuckoo land' – this will never happen.

Brother Adam practised this method of equalising all his colonies early in the season; he wouldn't have done that if he didn't feel it was necessary. I am not, I repeat not, recommending that you try to do this,

because it involves moving comb from one hive to the other with all the inherent risks that entails.

There is no doubt that bees have been struggling so breed from your best. Keep comb within your hive in good order, replacing three or four combs per year is adequate. Keeping the mite population low will help and if possible head your colonies with a good, young queen and feed well in the autumn. It is almost impossible to avoid all losses in the winter, so be aware that you will have some losses, whatever you do.

Dave

Honey extraction equipment for hire

The WVBKA has a honey extractor available for hire, as well as an electric uncapping knife.

A deposit of £50 plus a hiring fee of £10 is required for the extractor. For each subsequent hiring in the same season, a fee of £5 is chargeable. The knife is hired out at £10. Deposit for both the extractor and the knife is £50. To check if the equipment is available for hire, you can contact June on 01981 550320.

BBKA Basic Assessment

The BBKA run a series of training modules designed to increase the knowledge of beekeeping. This training is open to all members of the BBKA. Before you can start on the modules it is necessary to pass the BBKA Basic Assessment. To take the Basic Assessment you should have managed at least one colony of bees for a minimum of 12 months.

The Basic Assessment syllabus can appear daunting at first glance but closer inspection will show that it merely lists the basic things which all beekeepers should know.

The assessment is both practical and oral and takes place mainly at the hive in a local apiary.

If anyone is interested in taking this test then WVBKA will provide additional training to make sure the candidates are prepared.

For more information contact [Sue Quigley](#) or [Peter Woodward](#) or go to the [BBKA website](#).

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Swarms Season is upon us

If you want a swarm or are willing to collect swarms from peoples gardens in your area please let June know on 01981 550320

'Healthy Bees' talk – Friday 3rd June, 7pm at Moccas Village Hall, HR2 9LQ

Jim Vivian-Griffiths is a former member of WVBKA and has been involved with us over a long period. Jim is a Master Beekeeper and is part of the training team in the Dean Forest Beekeepers Association. Jim will be talking about the importance of keeping your bees in a healthy condition and how to recognise signs and symptoms that need to be addressed. This is another very important education opportunity for all members to understand a bit more about the management of their bees. This is a member's only event without entry fee. Following Jim's talk there will be tea and biscuits followed by an opportunity to test your knowledge of bee-related pests and diseases in an 'Identify the Photo' quiz.

We now have a stock of the IBRA Disease Identification Cards, which have good photos and a description of disease. The cards are laminated so can be carried out to the apiary. These will be available on the evening at £4 which is a 20% discount to the IBRA price. §

Summer trip on Sunday 19th June to the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthen

For beekeepers, gardeners or family day-outers there is something amazing to see in this wonderful garden whatever the season. Come rain or shine there is a great mix of indoor and outdoor attractions: Contact June Williams on 01981 550320 to book your place on the coach. §

Car Boot sale

Once again the god of car boots was not smiling on us. Saturday morning started wet and the rain continued on and off for the rest of the day. We still had a few intrepid booters but we also opened up access to the hall for those with goods not suited to getting wet. Attendance was good and there was plenty of beekeeping equipment on offer but the large numbers of buyers seen in previous years were not there. For the first time we had sellers going home with equipment and hives that did not sell. Usually it has been the other way around.

Anyway, the tea and cakes were excellent and Rosie and June did a great job. Mr Chairman produced tasty bacon and sausage rolls which helped keep out the rising damp. It was a good morning's event. §