



# WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Helping honeybees & beekeepers since 1946



website:  
www.wdbka.org.uk  
or scan the above code

W&DBKA Newsletter

May 2021 Issue

## *Welcome!*

Welcome to the latest edition of the Association's newsletter. It's been a while since the last one but since taking on the role of Secretary I'm keen to continue Evan's good work, including the issue of regular newsletters. The success of the newsletter depends on feedback from members and their input so please let me know what you would like to see in the newsletter and provide any contributions that can be published. (Andy Ormiston - Secretary)

## *Committee Meetings*

Regular Zoom meetings have been taking place since June last year. We are all keen to return to face-to-face meetings but the Zoom meetings have enabled the committee to continue to discuss relevant issues and will continue until restrictions allow otherwise. The last committee meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> May and the next is due on <insert date>. (Andy Ormiston)

## *Focus on Committee Members - John Waddelove (Chair)*

Where, when and how did all the interest of ours in beekeeping start? If the first introduction was anything to go by it would never have got off the ground. The story goes that my wife Felicity's father, approaching retirement, started his interest in beekeeping. He made his own kit as he was always a DIY man and keen on woodwork. I remember he bought his wood from a timber merchant on what was Woodley Airfield. As the number of his hives increased so did his request for family help in extracting the fruit of all his bees efforts. And so we went on one occasion to the family home to lend our assistance. With some trepidation I was asked to take wax cappings off frames prior to extraction. After a demonstration of what to do the very first one I handled I successfully managed to get stung on a finger and promptly withdrew from any further involvement. That was it, I was off, with an aching and throbbing finger and he could keep his bees to himself.

Years passed and with my own retirement approaching Felicity asked what would I do. "Golf - and lots of it" was my initial thought. You can imagine that didn't go down too well and the suggestion came why not take up beekeeping like Dad and an interest for both of us. After some thought I agreed with provisos. The major one was that I would investigate if there were courses available to go and learn about bees and beekeeping before embarking on what had left an indelible thought in my mind of pain from being stung.



John (right) about to offer some invaluable insight!



# WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Helping honeybees & beekeepers since 1946



website:  
[www.wdbka.org.uk](http://www.wdbka.org.uk)  
or scan the above code

And so Berkshire College of Agriculture came to the rescue and I attended their basic beekeeping course. Around the same time I decided to join W&DBKA and went to as many training sessions as I could at weekends and was given excellent support by my club mentor at the time. What fear and dread I had soon evaporated and I got the bug as they say. Our first colony came as a nuc from the College and it was kept at home in the back garden. As the number of colonies grew our apiary outgrew the garden. More in concern for our neighbours than anything else. We went down the route of National hives and have stuck with brood and half over the years, and always the cold way.

Over the years we have experienced peaks and troughs in numbers of colonies, no different from many of you I guess. Success and failures are all part of beekeeping, experimenting in a limited way, and always learning, listening to the experiences of others and doing what you find you are comfortable with. Reading a lot has helped and we seem somehow to have acquired a mini library of beekeeping books of our own! It would in our case be true that we have never stopped learning and still have all the enjoyment we hoped for when embarking on this new hobby.

Sitting in front of the hives watching their coming and goings, lifting off the crown board and saying "Hello Girls", and savouring the extracted honey- all part of the overall enjoyment. And yes we still get stung but it doesn't hurt as much now as it first did! (John Waddelove - Chair)

## *News from the Apiary*

Throughout last year we had to restrict numbers visiting the apiary and this season has started the same. The extraction day last August was limited to just a few - this was usually a fun session with coffee and cake but not this time. The annual clean-up also had to be cancelled. Currently we are meeting in groups of about 4: 1 lead, 2 club-member assistants and me as a runner. However, in due course we hope to be able to accept larger numbers and visitors from outside the club.

There are bookable slots to come to the apiary, please see the 2021 apiary schedule <https://wdbka.org.uk/category/apiary-schedule/>



Hive numbers had been reduced in order to cater for the reduced numbers of beekeepers. However, as a result of swarms and colony splits we have six hives and one recently created nuc.

Our policy this year is to try and build up the number of colonies so that we can be of more service to members as we come out of lockdown.

The portaKabin is getting a bit tired and is less waterproof than we would like; action is being taken to improve things but as we rarely enter it, this is not a high priority item. (Tony Lack - Apiary Manager & Treasurer)



# WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Helping honeybees & beekeepers since 1946



website:  
[www.wdbka.org.uk](http://www.wdbka.org.uk)  
or scan the above code

## *BBKA Basic Assessment*

We encourage all our members to take the Basic Assessment as it means that all are qualified to a basic standard of bee keeping/husbandry and have demonstrated this to a recognised and a BBKA qualified external assessor. We also encourage our newer members to attend the sessions we run (post Covid anyhow) at our training apiary, prior to them acquiring their own colonies.

The BBKA criteria for people to take the assessment is as follows;

1. To be a member of the BBKA and a local association i.e. W&DBKA.
2. To have kept their own colony of bees for at least 12 months.

Basic assessments are usually conducted at our training apiary around the end of June/early July each year. (Quentin Knowlson - Learning & Development Officer)

## *Introduction to Beekeeping Course*

The first 'Introduction to Beekeeping Course' was run using Zoom over 8 weeks, starting on 14th January 2021. The course is aimed at people interested in starting beekeeping with a view to either obtaining bees in the forthcoming year or the year after. The initial session had 17 attendees, a mixture of those without bees thinking about beekeeping and those who had acquired bees last year during lockdown. Attendance varied over the weeks due to other commitments and averaged approximately 12 attendees a week. The course covered all theory aspects of beekeeping, from choosing a hive, siting the hive, the life cycle of the honey bee, the beekeeping year, and a few things beside, including how to hive a nucleus.

I would like to formerly extend my thanks to Josh Wigmore of "What Three Words Ltd" and "What Three Words" for the use of their corporate Zoom account which made life much easier. Not having the standard 40 minute limit made my life much easier, especially as I'm want to talk when asked difficult or complex questions.

Assuming nothing untoward happens, and I have the time, and there's the interest, then I'm likely to run the course again in January 2022. (Kevin Cowley - Vice Chair)

## *Membership news*

The Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association is one of 270 associations around the UK providing support to local beekeepers as well providing training for all our members at what every level. In addition to the association support, we are also able to resource additional training and support from the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA). A wide range of information, videos and important issues related to bee welfare is available on their website. Over the past few years we have seen our membership number increase significantly to 124, of which 31 members have joined in the past year. Of these 124 members, 107 are BBKA and W&DBKA members and 17 are W&DBKA members (known within the BBKA system as "locals").

Unfortunately, during the pandemic we have not been able to meet up and discuss your key issues at either the Two Poplars during the summer months or at our winter meetings at the Wokingham Bowling Club. Hopefully we will soon be able to resume our meetings and provide that face-to-face support that we need.

Thank you for your support during these times and if you have any questions on Membership issues then please contact me via our email address available on the website. (Peter Butcher - Membership Secretary)

(To make contact please e-mail [wokinghambeekeepers@gmail.com](mailto:wokinghambeekeepers@gmail.com) )