

THE BUZZ

CENTRAL SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

CHARITY 1051548

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Welcome to the February 2024 Edition of The Buzz.

As we welcome the beginning of 2024, it is an ideal time to proactively plan for the upcoming beekeeping season. Take a moment to review your hive records from the previous year and evaluate whether any additional equipment, or perhaps a new Queen marking pen (in the colour GREEN) are needed. On a side note, consider incorporating new nectar and pollen-rich plants into your garden.

Exciting events are on the horizon, starting with the WSBKA Annual Convention on 24th February. See inside this newsletter for more information.

Lastly, kindly spread the word that our 2024 Beekeeping Course for Beginners will commence on Thursday, 29th February. The format remains consistent, featuring six online Thursday evening Zoom presentations followed by the practical Saturday morning Apiary Programme starting in April.

Yolanda Noye



NEWS FROM THE APIARY – Ade Belcham

A New Year and a new call for help at the Apiary.



In December we asked for anyone interested in taking on the Apiary Coordinator role to come forward. Even though it is hands down the best job in the Club (OK, I might be a bit biased) ... no one got in touch.

With the AGM looming in March and the new season starting about the same time, we really need someone in place. I will need to step down at that point. There will be a full handover and the Apiary Team is waiting to help whoever steps up. So, if you think it is something you might like to have a go at, please get in touch with me or Fiona, the Club Secretary, as soon as possible.

If you're wondering whether it's for you, please don't assume you're too inexperienced, young, old, quiet, loud, shy, unorthodox etc., the best leaders are often the ones who think they're least suited to the job! Get in touch and let's talk about what's involved and how it might work for you and the Club.

As we've said before, the post does not require you to be a bee guru or have decades of experience, but you do need to be keeping, or have kept, your own bees. The role could equally suit someone with relatively little experience (that was me – three years ago) or someone with lots of experience. The Apiary Team provides a breadth and depth of beekeeping knowledge that is a huge resource to back up your own.

What's in it for you? Well for me the rewards over the past three seasons have included:

- Being part of a great team of people that generously share their time and experience and often do what is needed before I even think to ask.
- Seeing the delight and interest in each new group of beekeepers that come through, and the confidence and knowledge that they accumulate over the season.
- Learning from the Club bees and the sessions at the Apiary – both of which have developed my own beekeeping.
- The satisfaction of being an active member of the Club in its wider sense and helping to keep open for others, this doorway that has been the entrance into beekeeping for so many of us.
- The opportunity to give something back and help shape the experience of the next group of new beekeepers as well as updating and supporting the wider membership especially in the face of new challenges (such as the yellow legged hornet) and new opportunities (such as treatment free beekeeping).

Contact: adelcham@icloud.com or the Club Secretary, Fiona on secretary@centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



TIPS OF THE MONTH – Melvyn Essen

The queen hopefully will be laying again now, and the brood area can be tennis ball sized, so it's important that they have enough stores. If the hive feels light or if you are weighing you will notice a difference in the weight. If very light put some fondant above the brood on top of the frames – you will need a small eke to raise the crown board.



Check the hives for damage from Woodpeckers and after any storms. Check the entrances are clear of dead bees especially if you have mouse guards on, or you have a Paynes poly hive that has a very restricted mouse guard entrance block.

On warm days observe the entrance for activity – you may see some pollen coming in from Winter: honeysuckle, mahonia, alpine clematis and spring bulbs like snowdrop and crocus.

If you are lucky enough to see pollen going in the hive then LEAVE ALONE!



It's a good time to make some frames ready for the season, it soon comes round and can catch you out.

Selective spring trapping for Asian Hornet queens will be a regular job in the not-too-distant future, so make a start this spring (making sure any by-catch is released), every queen trapped and destroyed could be one less nest in your area. Look out for online talks regarding the hornets to keep up to date with ways of reducing the impact the hornets may have on your bees.



Honey Without bees?

*I came across this article on agfundernews.com which (to me) puts another case forward on the whole “Honey Labelling” debate. Whilst the product is marketed in several ways in Europe as hanny, ohney and h*ney it is described as “plant-based honey”. Personally I have my own opinion (!) an interesting read which may stir up some lively comments don’t shoot the messenger! Yolanda*

MeliBio rolls out plant based alternative in Austria and Switzerland with ALDI

MeliBio, a California-based startup developing honey without bees, is rolling out its first products in partnership with Slovenian food maker Narayan in the UK, Switzerland, and Austria in the first part of a \$10m, four year deal to reach 75,000 stores across Europe.

The plant-based “bee-free” sweetener is sold under ALDI’s Jus Veg! private label brand in Hofer stores in Austria and Switzerland, and under the Better Foodie brand in the UK, where it is rolling out to around 200 independent stores.

In the US, where MeliBio has launched its own brand (“Mellody”) for foodservice and direct to consumer channels, the product is described as “plant-based honey” and has a slightly different formulation, says cofounder and CEO Darko Mandich, a Serbian entrepreneur and honey-enthusiast who teamed up with molecular biologist Dr Aaron Schaller to create MeliBio in 2020.



Darko Mandich. Image Credit: MeliBio

“The first versions of our product are 100% plant-based, inspired by light clover honey and acacia honey”, he tells AgFunderNews, “but we are also working on proprietary precision fermentation technology that more closely replicates the multistep enzymatic process that bees use to convert nectar into honey. A 100% plant-based approach doesn’t work for all types of honey and the plant-based product is not 100% identical to honey produced by bees”.

The plant-based formulation, which contains 80% fructose and glucose and 18% water, gets its distinct flavour and properties from a blend of plant extracts comprising the remaining 2%. In the US it uses red clover, jasmine, passionflower, chamomile, and seaberry, coupled with gluconic acid and natural flavours, while in Europe, the plant extract blend is slightly different, says Mandich.

The product is variously marketed as vegan “hanny”, “ohney” and “h*ney” in Europe, and “plant-based honey” in the US, where there is no federal standard of identity for honey (although the FDA non-binding guidance issued in 2018 notes that reference to materials define honey as a “thick, sweet, syrupy substance that bees make as food from the nectar of plants or secretions of living parts of plants”).



Left: Melody plant-based honey for the US market; top right: Better Foodie plant-based h*ney for the UK market; bottom right: plant-based ohney for the Swiss and Austrian market under ALDI's Just Veg! brand. Image Credits: MeliBio

The Case for Bee Free Honey

But why make honey without bees in the first place? Is this a solution looking for a problem?

The first argument for bee-free honey is about simple economics, according to MeliBio. Put simply, demand for honey is rising and honey bee populations are declining due to viruses, parasites, bacterial and fungal pathogens, and climate change, creating an opportunity for vegan alternatives.

“I remember back in 2012 when I worked at a honey company, we were paying beekeepers about Euro 50 cents per kilogram of honey” recalls Mandich, “today in Europe, some of the beekeepers are paid x20 that. Essentially honey will become more and more premium and less accessible. There will always be demand for honey made by bees but I predict that 10 years from now, it will be an expensive artisanal gift only for special occasions that people might be paying \$100 per jar for at the farmer’s market, while the majority of the market will be supplied by companies such as MeliBio. Beekeeping is also becoming more and more difficult. In countries such as Serbia, the average age of a beekeeper is 58 and new generations are not taking over.” He added: “What’s also exciting is that we’ve already scaled to a level of a medium-sized honey company, where we make about 10,000 pounds or more per day of plant-based honey via co-packers, and we’ve got here on less

than \$10 million in seed funding,” notes Mandich, who is aiming to close a series A round in the first half of this year.

Biodiversity and sustainability

The second argument for bee-free honey spans ethics, biodiversity, and sustainability, says Mandich, who notes that while there are thousands of bee species that can pollinate different plants, there are only a handful of varieties of managed honeybees, which are bred for high productivity and only pollinate selected plants.

This has narrowed the gene pool and increased susceptibility to disease and large-scale die-offs, claims Mandich, who claims the presence of managed bees has a negative effect on native pollinators, by crowding them out and exposing them to disease.

Meanwhile, all bees are susceptible to climate change, habitat loss, and pesticide assault, he claims.

IP strategy, global ambitions

Asked about IP, he says: “We have PCT patent application on plant-based honey composition in multiple regions in the world, plus trade secrets. On the precision fermentation side, we also have some patent applications pending along with trade secrets”.

Historically, he contends, vegan honey products were *created for vegans*. “We created MeliBio to become the most impactful, influential, and eventually the largest honey company in the world that just happens to make products that fit into a vegan diet”.

“Because of that, our approach is really to get the product as close to the real thing as possible at an affordable price point. ALDI is a massive global corporate that’s very price sensitive, so by landing this deal we are confirming that MeliBio technology can play at that level of price sensitivity which ALDI requires”



WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ANNUAL CONVENTION – Viv Sallows

THIS IS YOUR FINAL REMINDER

Time to book your places at the WSBKA Annual Convention at Lodge Hill, Pulborough on Saturday 24th February. If you haven't been before, you're missing out – it's a brilliant day out for all beekeepers, newbies and experienced, and I can guarantee that you'll leave the venue positively buzzed with enthusiasm and a wealth of newly learned information and ideas!

As always the day will be filled with excellent speakers. The main talks will be:

- The Queen
- The Mind of the Bee, and
- Know your Enemy

the latter being a very relevant talk about Asian hornets (we all need to be prepared for these). Two additional seminars can be chosen from:

- The Importance of Drones
- Where do Honey Bees Travel for Pollen
- Simple Queen Rearing
- Keeping Healthy Colonies
- Wasp Control in the Apiary and,
- Environment, Food and Bees

Teas, coffees, and a tasty lunch are included in the price of the ticket, which is discounted for WSBKA members (that's you!). Booking forms and more information can be found by clicking on the following link:

[WSBKA Annual Convention 2024](#)

Central Sussex members were sorely lacking last year, so let's make the effort to support our hardworking district.

NB: Seminar places are limited by room size and are allocated on a first come first served basis so DON'T delay booking.

WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Annual Convention
Saturday 24th February 2024
9.30am to 4.30pm

At Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, Pulborough RH20 1LZ

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is pleased to invite beekeepers and those interested in bees and beekeeping to the WSBKA Annual Convention. The event is designed to suit beekeepers of all standards. As well as the main lectures, the seminars offer a choice of more specialised topics. We hope you will be joining us.

Reception open from 9.00am Introduction and Welcome at 9.30am

Main Lectures

The Queen – Margaret Murdin

The Mind of the Bee – Professor Lars Chittka

Know your enemy – Lynne Ingram

In addition there is a choice of seminars

Seminar 1 (You can attend one of these)

- 1) The Importance of Drones – Lynne Ingram
- 2) Where do Honey Bees travel for Pollen – Sue Remenyi
- 3) Simple Queen Rearing – Andrew Gibb

Seminar 2 (You can attend one of these)

- 4) Keeping Healthy Colonies – Margaret Murdin
- 5) Wasp Control in the Apiary – Sue Remenyi
- 6) Environment, Food and Bees – Andrew Gibb

Advance booking per person, WSBKA members £30
Members of other Associations and non-members £37
On the day if space allows £37

Full details and booking form are on the following pages

In addition, they are on the WSBKA website www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk
or contact Viv Sallows on 01293 871092 or 07749 265944
or email wsbkaconvention@gmail.com

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association Annual Convention – 24th February 2024

Details of the Day and Speakers' Profiles

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Annual Convention has again attracted top speakers to cover a wide range of topics throughout the day. As well as the main lectures, you can attend two additional seminars on different subjects. Please indicate your choices in order of preference as spaces on some seminars will be limited. We will, of course, do our very best to meet your individual wishes. **Please apply as soon as possible to have the best chance of attending your preferred seminars.** We hope there will be plenty to interest you.

Margaret Murdin

Margaret has been keeping bees for over 20 years. She holds a degree in biological sciences, is a Master Beekeeper and holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping.

Margaret was previous Chair of the BBKA Trustees and past president of BBKA but for all the high positions she has held, describes herself as an ordinary, practical beekeeper who is naturally interested in furthering the education and training opportunities available to our BBKA members. She enjoys teaching all levels of beekeeping and gives talks and workshops all over the UK and actively encourages members to keep up-to-date with training and take the Basic Assessment if they have not already done so. Margaret is an examiner for all levels of BBKA exams and also moderates the practical exams. She currently lives in Oxfordshire and runs 6 colonies, down from the 40 when she was younger.

Margaret will give a main talk on **'The Queen'** and will also run a seminar on **'Keeping Healthy Colonies'**.

Professor Lars Chittka

Lars Chittka is the author of the book 'The Mind of a Bee' and Professor of Sensory and Behavioural Ecology at Queen Mary College of the University of London. He is also the founder of the Research Centre for Psychology at Queen Mary. He is known for his work on the evolution of sensory systems and cognition using insect-flower interactions as a model system. He has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of animal cognition and its impact on evolutionary fitness, studying bumblebees and honeybees.

Lars regularly appears in the media, gives lectures and is author/co-author of books and many journal articles. Born in Germany and having studied in universities in Göttingen and in Berlin, he remains fascinated with the question of how evolution shaped advanced cognitive capacities in insects. He is quoted as saying " that the primary fascination of insect sensory systems and behaviour is not in their similarities to humans, but in their alien-ness. The fact that insects perceive the world, process information and interact with their environment in fundamentally different ways from humans is what makes them so captivating. And, of course, we cannot help but marvel at the complexity of behaviour and cognition generated by nervous systems that contain only a fraction of a percent of neurons compared with our own." Lars will be giving a main talk on **'The Mind of the Bee'**.

Most of us are aware of the hive mind – the power of bees as an amazing collective. But do we know how uniquely intelligent bees are as individuals? Lars draws from decades of research, including his own pioneering work, to argue that bees have remarkable cognitive abilities. He shows that they are profoundly smart, have distinct personalities, can recognize flowers and human faces, exhibit basic emotions, count, use simple tools, solve problems, and learn by observing others. They may even possess consciousness. He illustrates how bee brains are unparalleled in the animal kingdom in terms of how much sophisticated material is packed into their tiny nervous systems. He looks at their innate behaviours and the ways their evolution as foragers may have contributed to their keen spatial memory. Lars also examines the psychological differences between bees and the ethical dilemmas that arise in conservation and laboratory settings because bees might feel and think.

Lynne Ingram

Lynne is a Master Beekeeper with over 30 years' experience in beekeeping, currently managing 3 apiary locations. She is an active participative member of Somerset Beekeepers Association, where she is very involved in the education of fellow beekeepers and is also the Asian Hornet Co-ordinator. She recently organised the first South West region AHAT training event.

Lynne was elected to the BBKA Exam Board in 2019 and has been involved in reviewing and updating modules and exam reading lists. She is an examiner for the Basic, General Husbandry, Microscopy and Bee Health assessments, as well as for the written Module exams and is also a Correspondence Course tutor. If that wasn't enough, she has been working closely with beekeepers in Morocco during the last 8 years, which, she says, has given her a wonderful insight into their beekeeping practices. Lynne will give a main talk on the Asian Hornet, titled **'Know your Enemy'** and will also run a seminar on **'The Importance of Drones'**.

Sue Remenyi

Sue has been keeping bees for over 10 years. When not busy with her bees, Sue is an active member of her Oxfordshire village community, Governor of her local primary school and part of the editorial team for the Parish newsletter. With increasing interest in beekeeping in the Village, Sue, together with her fellow beekeeper and friend, Meryl, are active mentors and enjoy taking an observation hive into the primary school from time to time.

Already a well-published author in the field of information technology, Sue has contributed to many beekeeping blogs, articles in the BBKA News and has also published "An Illustrated Glossary of Honey Bee and Beekeeping Terminology" where she untangles the sometimes bewildering terminology of beekeeping for beekeepers.

Sue will be running two seminars, '**Where do Honey Bees travel for Pollen?**' The results of a community study and '**Wasp Control in the Apiary**'. The first of these presentations begins by explaining why bees need pollen and what they use it for and then goes on to describe a study she and a group of local beekeepers undertook to examine how the pollen in different apiaries varied throughout one year. The findings were interesting and, in some cases, a little surprising. In the second presentation Sue will talk about the ubiquitous wasp that we beekeepers tend to love to hate. After considering the creature itself Sue will go on to illustrate some methods she has found effective to minimise attacks on her hives.

Andrew Gibb

Andrew started beekeeping whilst he was at a boarding school in Somerset where the biology master gave encouragement to students to show interest in a hive he kept on the roof of his laboratory.

When he left school, Mrs B W Hamlin, a well-known Surrey beekeeper at the time, heard of his interest and gave him some hives and equipment. After keeping bees for 10 years, he attended instruction classes in Guildford run by Mrs Clark and Bob Hammond, both County Beekeeping Instructors. In due course he passed the BBKA Basic Assessment and in the process increased his annual honey yield by 50%. This led him to eventually becoming a Master Beekeeper in 1985 and he is now a BBKA examiner.

Andrew was Chief Executive Officer of Bee Craft Ltd for 44 years, the organisation that publishes BeeCraft magazine and a wide range of beekeeping books and booklets. He has also been Chairman of Surrey BKA and its Show Secretary. He recently published two books with Ann Harman, a US beekeeper, to help candidates prepare for the beekeeping history questions in the written exams.

Andrew will run two seminars. The first seminar on '**Simple Queen Rearing**' will cover the preparations for queen rearing including breeder and cell raising colonies and then concentrate mainly on the Miller, Alley and Case-Hopkins methods but include mention of other queen rearing methods.

The second seminar on '**Environment, Food and Bees**' will look at the various aspects of our environment and how we look after it and how we don't look after it. Regarding food, his talk will emphasise how we can get more food from an ever-decreasing cultivable land area but with an ever-growing population to feed. Finally, concerning bees, how we manage them to ensure healthy colonies but yet aim to get the maximum honey yield and pollination benefits from them.

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The Convention fee for West Sussex Beekeepers Association members is £30 for the whole day if paid in advance (received by Monday 19th February 2024) and £37 for non-members or on the day (subject to space being available - choice of seminars may be limited). Tea and coffee during the day are included and also a simple lunch. Venue details: Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, Near Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1LZ.

Should you require further details, please contact Viv Sallows on 01293 871092 or 07749 265944 or email at wsbkaconvention@gmail.com or see the website www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk.

The following Booking Form can be used for up to two delegates. This can be completed and returned by email with payment made by bank transfer (see Booking Form below). Confirmation and map will be sent by email. Alternatively, you can post the form with your cheque (made payable to 'WSBKA') to Viv Sallows as soon as possible.

If you wish to receive confirmation and map by post, a stamped addressed envelope should be sent with your booking.

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association Annual Convention – 24th February 2024

To: Viv Sallows, 2, Normans Cottages, High Street, Rusper, West Sussex RH12 4PX

Email: wsbkaconvention@gmail.com

Please book me places for the WSBKA Convention to be held on Saturday 24th February 2024 at a cost of £ (Ticket price is £30 each for WSBKA members and £37 each for non-WSBKA members.)

You can either enclose a cheque made payable to 'WSBKA' along with this form **OR** you can make payment by Bank Transfer and return this registration form by email. For Bank Transfer, the account name is "WEST SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION", Sort Code: 09-01-29, Account Number: 64253347. Please put the first delegate's surname in the Reference Field.

In both cases, you will receive your confirmation and a map by email. If you do not have email or require a physical ticket/map, **a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed.**

DELEGATE 1

Name (please print) Telephone No

Address

.....

Post Code Email

I am a member of Beekeepers' Association (if any)

I am happy to receive emails about future conventions Yes No

Seminars - In case your first choice is over-subscribed, please indicate your order of preference

Seminar 1 (You can attend one of these)

- 1) The Importance of Drones – Lynne Ingram
- 2) Where do Honey Bees travel for Pollen – Sue Remenyi
- 3) Simple Queen Rearing – Andrew Gibb

Preference

First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third

Seminar 2 (You can attend one of these)

- 4) Keeping Healthy Colonies – Margaret Murdin
- 5) Wasp Control in the Apiary – Sue Remenyi
- 6) Environment, Food and Bees – Andrew Gibb

Preference

First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third

DELEGATE 2

Name (please print) Telephone No

Address

.....

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Preference

First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third
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Preference

First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third
First / Second / Third



BBKA – Basic Assessment Certificate

A friendly reminder to announce the imminent formation of a working party, comprising eligible members, to participate in the upcoming BBKA's Basic Assessment this summer. We extend a warm invitation for you to join this educational initiative, designed to further enhance your beekeeping skills.

To qualify for participation, individuals must have successfully managed at least one bee colony for a minimum of twelve months. Following the syllabus is an excellent way to refresh your expertise in good beekeeping practices and bolster your knowledge concerning pest and diseases that pose a threat to our precious bee species.

The participation fee for this Assessment is £25.00, a cost generously covered by the CSBKA. The deadline for completing the Assessment is 31st August 2024, with Assessments scheduled from May onwards.

It is essential to emphasize that the Assessment does not include a written test. Instead, when the group is adequately prepared, an Assessor from the BBKA will be arranged to conduct an observation of each candidate. This observation will include the proficient handling of bees and equipment at a suitable apiary. Additionally candidates will undergo oral questioning on three key topics:

*** Natural History and Beekeeping *** Swarming, Swarm Control and effects *** Diseases and Pests ***

Should you have any questions about the Assessment or wish to express your interest in joining this initiative, please email me at buzz@centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk.

We look forward to your enthusiastic participation in this educational endeavour, contributing to the continued excellence of our beekeeping community!





EVENTS

2024

24th February – WSBKA Annual Convention, Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, Pulborough

12th to 14th April – BBKA Spring Convention

20th May – World Bee Day

8th to 12th July – Bees Needs Week

21st October – National Honey Day



THE 10 STAGES OF BEEKEEPING ADDICTION