

Wharfedale Beekeepers' Association



# COMBINGS

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Patron The Duchess of Devonshire



*Peter Longbottom, Winner of the Wharfedale Trophy, presented by Bruce Speed*



Honey Show Results



Membership Report



Diary Dates

**Queen Colour for 2016 is WHITE**



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### FERA Bee Inspectors for 2014

Regional Bee Inspector Ivor Flatman 01924 252795 or 07775 119436

Combings is the newsletter of the Wharfedale Beekeepers Association and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association or editors. Combings is usually published three times a year, in April/May, September and December. Contributions from the members are always welcome and can be sent to the editors.

## Editorial

Beekeepers new to the hobby must be wondering what they have taken on, the past season having tested the skills of more experienced members. It is not unheard of to feed colonies in late summer because of limited nectar flow, but many beekeepers were surprised to find that they had to do so in August. It has been an unusual year, but I was surprised to see apple blossom on a three-year-old tree in our community orchard on 11<sup>th</sup> October. According to the secretary of the Northern Fruit Group, late blossom has sometimes been recorded on cherries, and vines severely damaged by hail storms in France have been known to replace their leaves and produce a late crop of grapes. Beekeepers have learned to manage colonies to cope with varroa; now the climate is adding to the challenge.

It was, therefore, not surprising that entries to the honey show were down on last year. Our show judge, Ivor Flatman, praised the high standard of many entries and it was encouraging that the NOW/WOW Group mounted a close challenge with 7 first prizes and 150 points to the MOB/COW Group's 168 points in the Halsall Trophy. Well done to all the prize winners.

I always enjoy the Annual General Meetings when we hear what our association and its members have achieved in the past year and it was a pleasure to hand out BBKA Basic Certificates to several members. Three Committee members resigned this year. Val Ogden has looked after our apiary site near Ilkley and managed liaison with schools and youth groups for several years for which we are very grateful. I believe Peter Longbottom has held most, if not all the key positions during his membership of the Association. Secretary, Chairman, editor of Combings, organiser of social occasions at Askwith village hall, Membership and Education Secretary, and our delegate at YBKA, to say nothing of his knowledge passed on at apiary meetings, training sessions, articles in Combings, etc. That is a substantial contribution by any yardstick and is why your Committee decided that he should be given life membership and the position of Honorary Vice President by way of thanking him.

At our recent Committee Meeting we welcomed Anita Banks as Hon. Secretary who replaces Andrew Prior. Andrew took over the role from the late Allan Thompson – not an easy task when many of the records had been lost in a flood and Allan did not use a computer. During his tenure, Andrew made a substantial contribution to running our association and produced programmes full of interest and variety appreciated by members.

Best wishes to you all for Christmas and the coming year.

Bruce Speed





## **WBKA Membership Report 2015: Thriving and Active!**

I have been involved in organising training and membership in the association for about three years so I thought I would pass on some information that indicates that we are a thriving, learning and active organisation. This is a picture in numbers: We currently have 118 members, made up of 3 life, 89 full, 8 associate, 6 social and 12 student memberships. We know the numbers have grown substantially over the last 10 years but there are no detailed figures to hand. Most, but not all, of our new memberships come through people joining the Beginners' classes and going on to join the Association. Most of our losses in membership arise from people moving out of the area. Quite a few of those that stop practical beekeeping stay on as social members, some for many years.

Recently I asked all members about the beekeeping training they had done and had 65 responses from members so I can give you at least half a picture. Of the 65, 62 had done a Beginners' course, 28 had done the Basic and 6 people had studied higher level courses, though not necessarily taken exams. Two thirds of respondents want to carry on learning in various ways. We will run the Basic course annually (rather than biennially) to meet some of this demand and encourage higher level learners to join the Yorkshire Beekeepers' classes in Harrogate.

The primary measure of participation in the Association must be in practical beekeeping and, as far as I can tell, around 95% of our members seem to be active beekeepers. We have various regular meetings and a lot of cyclical and one-off activity through which we collectively enjoy and promote our beekeeping. Typical attendance at our whole-association meetings in Ilkley is around 30, though more attend special talks and joint meetings with other groups. Similarly around 30 people attend one or other of our two local groups which meet approximately monthly.

Members take on all sorts of specialist roles, and I have a list of 32 people who take on one, and very often more than one, responsibility in supporting and promoting the Association. These roles include (in no particular order) various roles on the WBKA committee, volunteering as swarm collecting officers, editing and creating Combings, tutoring on courses, mentoring beginners, organising and supporting stands at local shows, giving talks and other activities connected with youth education, organising the local group meetings, preparing the annual programme of events, looking after refreshments at our meetings, preparing the accounts, looking after the association apiary, the honey show, managing the association web-site, equipment and library and, of course, organising the annual dinner.

A number of around 30 members seems to recur in this description though we do know that it is not always the same 30 individuals. Our membership is geographically widespread, a higher proportion is of working age (and we have bees to look after!) so perhaps this is what you would expect. As an Association we do seem to be thriving, our members are interested in continuing learning and we successfully promote the cause. No doubt there is more we could do, so if you have a view please make your voice heard, and above all put your hat in the ring to help out in any way as we always need new people to be involved in every area of activity.

Jill Campbell

## The WBKA Honey Show

The 2015 WBKA Honey Show took place alongside the AGM at the Clarke Foley Centre in Ilkley and was judged again by Ivor Flatman our regional bee inspector. Overall Ivor reported a good standard of entries although a few were borderline on the water content. As happened last year some of the entries in the 'as for sale' class did not meet the current labeling requirements and Ivor gave us some good guidance on this for future entries.

Overall there were 57 entries from 16 entrants and most of the classes were well supported although the Novice class dropped to just 3 entries this year. Also the 3 wax classes only attracted 12 pieces so perhaps there needs to be some encouragement in this area. The number of entries was down on last year reflecting the difficult season that some beekeepers have had.

The '*Best in Show*' came from the Heather Honey class - a jar of Ilkley heather honey entered by Simon Halliwell who is only in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of beekeeping. '*First Novice*' was won by an entry from Jill Campbell. Congratulations to both.

The *Wharfedale Cup* was reclaimed by Peter Longbottom and the MOB/CoW Group retained the *Halsall Trophy* by a very small margin.

Ray and Gina Finlayson

### 2015 WBKA Honey Show results

#### **The Wharfedale Cup – awarded to the competitor with most points overall**

1<sup>st</sup> Peter Longbottom 22 points  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ray Finlayson 12 points  
3<sup>rd</sup> Monty Pugh 4 points

#### **The Halsall Trophy – awarded to the Group gaining most points in all classes**

1<sup>st</sup> MOB/CoW 168 points  
2<sup>nd</sup> NoW/WoW 150 points

Breakdown of points won	MOB/CoW	NoW/WoW
Entries (1 point)	34	23
1 <sup>st</sup> in class (10 points)	5	7
2 <sup>nd</sup> in class (7 points)	7	6
3 <sup>rd</sup> in class (5 points)	7	3

**Class Results:-**

\* Best in Show    \*\* Best exhibit of beeswax    \*\*\* First Novice

Class 1	Light Honey	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Ray Finlayson 3rd -
Class 2	Medium Honey	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Brian Spence 3rd Ray Finlayson
Class 3	Dark Honey	1st - 2nd - 3rd -
Class 4	Set Honey	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Monty Pugh 3rd Ray Finlayson
Class 5	Heather Honey	1st Simon Halliwell * 2nd Peter Longbottom 3rd Spohie Van Berckel
Class 6	Super Frame	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd 3rd -
Class 7	Cut Comb	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Monty Pugh 3rd Jenny Liston
Class 8	As For Sale	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Brian Spence 3rd Monty Pugh
Class 9	Block of Wax	1st Peter Longbottom 2nd Ray Finlayson 3rd -
Class 10	Wax Exhibit	1st Ray Finlayson 2nd Jenny Liston 3rd Peter Longbottom
Class 11	Pair of Candles	1st Ray Finlayson ** 2nd Peter Longbottom 3rd Raymond clarkson
Class 12	Novice	1st Jill Campbell *** 2nd Sue Hobson 3rd Sophie Van Berkel
Class 13	Photograph	1st Gina Finlayson 2nd Peter Longbottom 3rd Sue Hobson
Class 14	Honey Cake	1st Jenny Liston 2nd Sophie Van Berkel 3rd Gina Finlayson

## **Yorkshire Beekeepers Association, Annual General Meeting, 28.11.2015**

This full day meeting took place at the Honey and Bee Pavilion at the Yorkshire showground; approximately 70 people were there from across the region. I went as your representative, though this meeting is open to all members of the Yorkshire Association, if you are a member of Wharfedale, you are welcome to attend.

Sophie Evison, an evolutionary biologist from the University of Sheffield gave a presentation on her research into the relationship between the fungal parasite 'acosphera apis' (known by many of us as chalkbrood) and apis mellifera (the honey bee). There are over 100,000 strains of chalkbrood as it mutates/evolves in much the same way as the 'flu virus does. Her presentation was very interesting, however she will give much more information about her research at the YBKA Spring Conference on 19 March, in York. You are warmly encouraged to attend, email secretary@ybka.org.uk for further information.

After Sophie's presentation the AGM proper began. There were 23 items on the agenda! Much of the agenda was bureaucratic, rather than of substance, however it is important that we are aware of the work that is done on our behalf and I am grateful for their accountability. The association has three working groups covering the topics of Training, Governance and Communication, and Honey Show. Members of these groups are appointed by the General Purposes Committee (GPC) and the association has a membership of approximately 1800.

A new treasurer has taken up the reins and he seems to be doing a very good job putting things in good order and I was impressed by him.

Officers were elected for the next year and there was some controversy and evident undercurrents which I did not understand, but the chairperson managed the situation modestly and with little fuss, impressive given that it could have been inflammatory. The chairperson, Tony Jefferson was appointed as the Yorkshire representative to the British Beekeepers Association Annual Delegates Meeting which is where the development work of the National Association takes place. Associations are able to make propositions and this is where they are heard and debated. Most of my experience of national organisations is based on my work with the Quakers, so I found it surprising and discomfiting to hear a great deal of negativity and mistrust pointed towards the BBKA.

We discussed some of the propositions which are headed for the 2016 ADM, and again I was disappointed by what struck me as an attitude of curmudgeonliness, which seemed to be negative towards development and new things. I was particularly frustrated at the negativity that the meeting had for youth work. One association, Somerset (I think) proposed that BBKA and English Beekeepers host the 2017 World Meeting of Young Beekeepers, one of the comments was 'who here received training as a young person' I was surprised at the 'inward lookingness' of this, and I made that clear. The sentiment could be summarised as education is wasted on the young!

BBKA asked in a proposition to increase the cost of capitation (membership fees) this was not supported as there was a feeling that BBKA is unable to manage its finances.

With regard to training, 72 Yorkshire members who have passed their basic (needless to say they were adults!), no one failed, there has also been a great deal of success with people passing the modular exams in beekeeping.

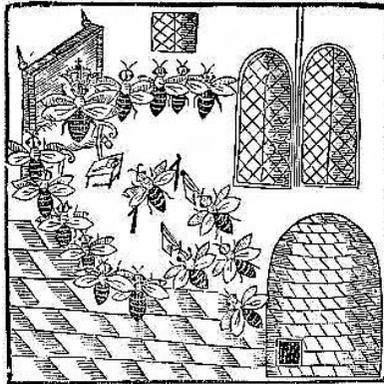
Chris Hardy was elected as the editor of the Yorkshire Beekeepers newsletter, her email is oldsalmon@gmail.com. She welcomes articles and news. Local secretaries are asked to print off

copies for those that do not have access to email.

I left the meeting feeling saddened by the partisan feeling of the meeting, where it seemed that Yorkshire was against pretty much anything that OUR national organisation does. There is a great deal to be done to heal this rift, my opinion is that BBKA is us, we are BBKA, and if we want change we should engage and promote, rather than watch and criticise.

I am happy to be Wharfedale BKA's representative to the Yorkshire Beekeepers Association, but I am not one of those that is able to sit quietly and nod, I will speak up for what I think right, if you disagree please come along, or tell me!

Rob Claxton-Ingham



### **‘Apiaries Like Castles and Palaces’**

#### **Beekeeping Notes from the Seventeenth Century**

Modern hives devised by Dadant and others, including the National hive, that so many beekeepers use, enable honey to be removed without destroying the colony unlike skep beekeeping, common in the past and often blamed for losing some of the beneficial characteristics of previous strains. It appears, however, that there was a type of hive used in the past that did not require destructive methods to harvest honey. John Evelyn's diary from July 13<sup>th</sup> 1654 records his visit to Oxford:

“We all dined with that most obliging, and universally curious, Dr Wilkins at Wadham. He was the first to show me the transparent apiaries, which he had built like castles and palaces, and had so ordered them one upon the other that he could take the honey without destroying the bees. These were adorned with a variety of dials, little statues, vanes, etc, which were very ornamental: and he was so abundantly civil at finding me pleased with them that he presented me with one of these hives that he had empty, and which I afterwards had in my garden at Sayes Court.”

I imagine he was describing something that incorporated a window enabling the viewer to watch part of the colony, similar to an observation hive, but how the honey was taken off and how the comb was built remains a mystery. John Evelyn (1620 – 1706) was a contemporary of that other famous diarist, Samuel Pepys (1633 – 1703).

Bruce Speed



## Beekeeping Q & A Problem Page



If you have a beekeeping problem to solve please send in your question to the editors of Combings and beekeepers of long experience will answer on this page.

**Q** What is the best way to heft a hive to check on the stores?

**A** Heft means to lift and hefty means to weigh a lot.

In beekeeping terms it describes the act of lifting one side of the hive without disturbing the bees to get the "feel" of the weight and is mainly practiced during late winter and early spring to assess the bees use of stores.

Normally at the end of the season, after the honey crop has been removed, hives are left with sufficient stores to see them through the winter. These can be either in the form of honey or sugar syrup and should be in the order of 30 to 40lbs for British National hives. So hefting the hive in October will give you the base line and an experienced beekeeper will be able to assess the colony's use of stores during the winter months by hefting regularly. This helps to decide when or if emergency feeding is necessary to avoid starvation.

The significant word here is "experienced" and hefting can only be learnt by practice. The method is to lift and hold one side of the hive just a few millimetres off the ground to "feel" it's weight. As a beginner it is helpful to equate the "feel" with actual weight. A simple method is by hooking a spring balance on to the hive edge, usually the back, reading (it is useful to have an assistant at this stage!) and recording the weight in October then regularly thereafter. Of course this is not the total weight of the hive, being roughly half, but it is enough for comparison purposes as long as the same procedure is used at each heft.

Starvation can occur at any time if weather conditions do not permit foraging but the main time is late winter and early spring when the brood nest is expanding and forage is scarce. Avoidance of starvation is the sole responsibility of the beekeeper, hefting can help in protecting your charges during this critical time of the season.

### Beekeeping Tips for the Winter Months

It is always good to have positioned your hives with some shelter from the prevailing wind, not in a frost hollow, or under drips and before the onset of winter to have checked for weather tightness.

There is a need to keep checking your hives regularly through the winter months to make sure no weather damage, especially after high winds, or damage caused by animals has taken place.

A stray sheep managed to push one of our hives quite a way out of true recently, so beware!

A piece of 1 inch thick polystyrene sheet or other insulating material under roof will act as a quilt and help to conserve heat within the hive. Some of you will have added insulation on the outside with beehive cosies.

## Annual Honey Show, AGM and Social Combo for 2016

For next year, 2016, the WBKA is going back to its roots by combining the Honey Show, AGM and the Annual Social. At its inception, and for many years, the Social took the form of a less formal affair than the evening meal at the Skipton Golf Club of recent years.

The idea of combining the events once again emerged during the recent WBKA committee meeting and it was thought that with a more casual setting more members would be able to attend the Social, staying for as long or as short a time as they wanted. The proposal was taken to the two Local Groups to be discussed and with their agreement the Combined Event has been scheduled for Friday 14th October at the Ilkley Rugby Club. For a nominal booking fee the Association will arrange for a buffet for everyone and the Club bar will be open, although you will have to pay for your own drinks!

**Put the date in your diary for next year**

### Digital Download Copy of Combings

A number of members have recently raise the question of Combings being provided as a digital download. Back issues are already available in this way from the Members section of the WBKA web site, however with this issue we are giving members the opportunity to download the current issue, to help us assess the level of demand for a digital copy.

If you would like to download a digital copy of Combings in PDF format you may now do so by following this link to the WBKA web site.

<http://www.wharfedalebka.org.uk/combings201512tempdload.html>

Laurence Truman

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*Prize winners all*

*Above: Novice Winner Jill Campbell*

*Right: Rob Claxton-Ingham with The Hallsall Trophy*

*Below: Best In Show Winner Simon Halliwell*

*All photos by Sue Hobson*

