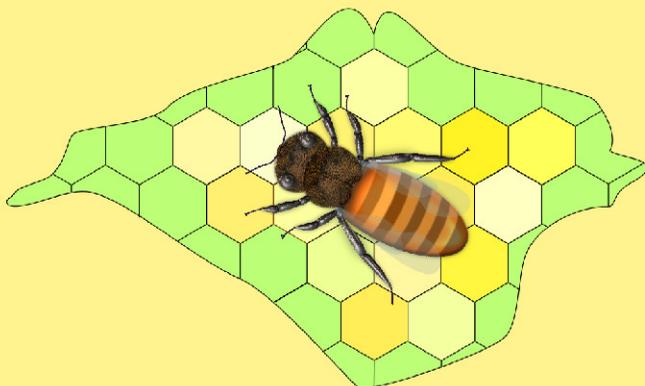


The  
Wight Bee



January 2016

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Issue 116

“They made a beeline for me, yes. It is telling that I have had more emails about this subject (use of neonicotinoids) than about the Syria debate, and I had an awful lot of those.”

**Conservative MP Rebecca Pow speaking during the Commons debate on December 7 (see page 15 for longer report).**

The Journal of  
The Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association  
[www.iwbka.org.uk](http://www.iwbka.org.uk)

**A happy new beekeeping year** to all our members, who I hope will be renewing their membership for 2016. This issue comes out earlier than usual, to include a membership subscription form.

Contents this quarter include an interview with our regular honey show judge David Sandwell, revealing a fascinating insight into one expert's 35-year experience of working with bees and developing strong opinions. For example, at a time when many of us are wondering how our colonies are faring with this wet and warm winter, and feeding them with fondant, I noticed that David's view is that he expects to lose colonies over winter, perhaps 10%, believing that a few losses are good to select a hardy good wintering bee.

Thank you very much to the six people who contributed to this issue.



The AGM in November confirmed the IWBKA Committee and discretionary posts for 2016.

**OFFICERS**

President	Mary Case
Chairman	Dave Cassell
Vice-Chairman	Bob Bromley
Secretary	Natalie Mumberson
Treasurer	Roger Hall
Membership Secretary	Frank Stevens

**ORDINARY MEMBERS**

Arthur Waddams  
Christine McClellan  
Martin Long  
George Bignall  
Derek Sothcott

**DISCRETIONARY POSTS**

Honey Show Secretary	Christine McClellan
Wight Bee	Gillian Belben
Programme Secretary	Christine McClellan

## Torpor

Torpor is a “state of hibernation” that bees go into during their winter cluster.

The core temperature of the cluster (including brood if there is any) is within 1°C of 35°C. However the outer temperature of the cluster will fall below this.

Experiments have been carried out by placing a temperature probe 8-10 inches above the resting winter cluster, indicating a temperature of 13°C. When the side of the hive was knocked sharply the temperature rose from 13 to 27°C, and remained at this level for over 5 hours.

It takes a lot of energy for bees to raise the temperature in this way, resulting in increased consumption of stores, all very worrying for us beekeepers.

With our warmer winter this year, this process causes additional demand on stored honey.

So—to feed or not to feed? Hopefully we have left enough honey on, or fed enough in the autumn. Fingers crossed?

**Ian King**

### Recipes with honey

It's the cold and flu season, so why not challenge the latest government guidelines on alcohol consumption with this:

#### ***Ginger, lemon and honey tonic***

Boil some peeled and roughly chopped fresh ginger in water.

Add lemon juice and honey.

Strain the liquid and add a slug of whisky (or vodka, or gin, or brandy).



## The 2015 Honey Show at Northwood in November

The Honey Show this year was exceptional. Despite some old codgers, (myself included), being wary of the new venue being some distance from our normal hall at Arreton, things could not have been better.

From the moment we arrived at the Isle of Wight Community Club we were met by friendly, helpful staff who gave us support and advice.

The setting up of the stalls and displays was shifted a couple of times as until Friday it had only been planned on paper, so wrinkles needed ironing out.

The team worked well and the majority of the work was done before we left at 8pm. Saturday was equally smooth running in the morning with just a few alterations to the plan.

David Sandwell started judging the honey and wax. The work of the ladies Carolyn Hoyle who judged the cakes and Kate Wells who judged the limerick entries was well underway. Terry Willis and Rob Marshall were joint judges in the handicraft and photograph section and Carol Bradshaw judged the children's pictures.

The ladies and gents served up a bread and soup lunch for the judges, stewards and helpers. – very nice it was too.

The public were not going to be put off by a set opening time. They started to come in about 20 minutes early.

Richard Wright from the County Press opened the show and gave a short speech supporting the work our magnificent bees do to pollinate and keep crops producing. He pointed out how important they were and how people should take care in managing their gardens.

The public gave wonderful support and showed genuine interest in all aspects of the show. The honey shop almost sold out. Candles were rolled and sold. Raffle tickets were sold by the dozen.

Thank you to all members who contributed in whatever way. By competing, helping, making cakes or just supporting the event. There are many other people to thank but I think all would agree that Christine McClellan deserves special thanks for the hours she put into the planning and organising of the event.

**Dave Cassell**

## Honey Show 2015 Trophy Winners

Rosette – Light Liquid Honey	Mary Case
Rosette—Novice Honey	Terri-Louise Burt
Rosette—Most Popular Honey	Dave Cassell
Rosette – Decorated Cake	Anne Bodemeaid
<b>The Reg Gallop Trophy</b> For best article of Handicraft – Class 18	Anne Bodemeaid
<b>The Virginia Ford Trophy</b> For best Limerick – Class 20	Mike Sargent
<b>The Ray Fitchett Award</b> Best natural history photograph – Class 23	George Bignell
<b>The Roberts Memorial Trophy</b> Highest number of points for honey and Wax	Mary Case
<b>The Claude Cooper Memorial Trophy</b> Awarded for the highest number of points gained in the whole show	Mary Case
<b>Blue Ribbon Award</b> Awarded to the competing entrant who in the opinion of this year’s Honey Show Judge, has produced something for the show that is considered outstanding.	Mary Case  Awarded for Six Jars
<b>SPONSORED PRIZES</b>	
<b>BB Wear Suit – Novice Class</b>	Terri-Louise Burt
<b>Caddon Hive super frames and Kembles Wax foundation – Liquid Light Honey</b>	Mary Case
<b>Thornes £10.00 Gift Voucher - most popular honey</b>	Dave Cassell
<b>Priory Bay Hotel Voucher—most points in the cookery section</b>	Gillian Belben

## Limericks from the Honey Show

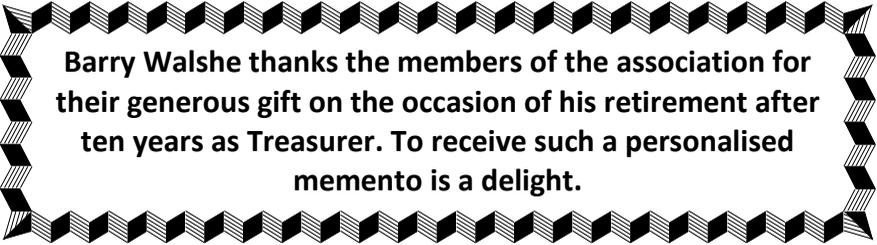
The poetry class had a record number of entries, showing that we can always 'wax' lyrical if it's only for five lines.

First prize went to a very cheeky verse by Mike Sargent, so heartfelt it must have come from personal experience.

**There was an old bee keeping bloke  
Who was puffing his hive with white smoke  
But his flies were undone  
And he found that just one  
In a personal place was no joke!**

Second prize went to Liz Van Wyk for a verse offering good advice, as befits a Teaching Apiary trainer.

**A common new beekeeper's cry  
Is, "I can't find the queen! Why oh why?"  
With a small coloured dot  
She's easy to spot,  
So give royal marking a try.**



**Barry Walshe thanks the members of the association for their generous gift on the occasion of his retirement after ten years as Treasurer. To receive such a personalised memento is a delight.**

## Quarr Teaching Apiary

### January update

By now, the bees should have been snugly clustered, surrounded by stores. However, the unseasonably warm weather has caused the bees to fly at every opportunity and the hives have become rapidly lighter as the bees consume their stores. Therefore, we at Quarr have been forced to feed the colonies with fondant earlier than usual and will probably continue to do so for quite a while. Judging by the way the bees leapt upon the fondant on New Year's Eve, it will be used up very quickly!

All of our equipment has been cleaned in readiness for the new season and extra supplies - frames, foundation and so on - ordered and ready. The numbers wanting to attend the two beginners' courses have exceeded previous years, thanks to interest from the Honey Show, taster sessions and general enquiries. Anyone who thought that the interest in beekeeping was diminishing is mistaken! Final numbers have been confirmed; many thanks to those of you who have encouraged people to contact us. The theory course is intended for those who intend to take up beekeeping and we hope that the taster sessions in the summer will satisfy those who are just curious to know more but don't wish to keep bees. There is a definite need for mentors and bee buddies; though several of us are only too happy to help out when needed with new beekeepers, and do so frequently, it would be good to be able to pair "newbees" up with a more experienced beekeeper. If you can help, please let a committee member know.

On the subject of committees, the Quarr committee, or Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association Teaching Apiary committee, to give it its full name and to reflect that it is a sub-committee of the IWBKA main committee, meets about every two months to make sure everything at Quarr runs smoothly. The committee consists of Bob Bromley as Chair, myself as Secretary, Dorothy Haynes as Treasurer and Christine McClellan and Frank Stevens as committee members. We are also indebted to our regular helpers at Quarr: George Bignell, Lynne Churchill-Slough and Georgina Broadhead in the TA, Derek Sothcott with the Abbey's hives, Mags Kelleher, Tony Marvin, Ruth Green and new recruit Carol Bradshaw in the rearing apiary. Bob is the master grass cutter, and Arthur Waddams is always happy to pitch in when called upon. Frank keeps trying to retire from beekeeping but gets pulled back in regularly, as well as being a dab hand with woodwork. It's a large team, kept going with Dorothy's tea and biscuits, but it works. Besides plying us with tea, Dorothy does all the extracting and jarring of honey which then goes into the tea shop at Quarr for sale.

A happy beekeeping 2016 to you all.

**Liz Van Wyk**

## **Beekeeper interview**

### **David Sandwell**



#### **When do you first remember being aware of bees and honey?**

When I was seven we went to stay with some cousins in Devon for my Great Aunt's golden wedding anniversary. Uncle Bob was the local builder, decorator and handyman. He also had a few hives that he kept behind his workshop. His house had been in his family for a few generations and the workshop had been used to build and repair horse drawn carriages but was then used as winter storage for boats and caravans. We used to play hide and seek in the garden and I was always found hiding

next to the bee hives. I spent hours watching the bees coming and going at the hive entrance.

#### **What tempted you into beekeeping at first?**

When we purchased our first house it had a long plot of about 300ft in length and the neighbours both sides only came at the weekends, if at all. I had an extensive vegetable garden which was essential because the mortgage rate was 15.75% and the repayments took most of my income. The broad bean flowers did not set very well, also the runner beans. I had noted a distinct lack of bees around the Garden and thought it would be a good idea to get some.

#### **Did you have an easy beginning with lots of help or did you struggle?**

While reading the local newspaper I came across an article promoting The Droxford Horticultural Show when the Meon Valley Beekeepers would be holding their annual honey show. We went for a walk one Saturday and we just happened to go past the show ground, met some very friendly and enthusiastic people and were invited to the next apiary meeting. The meeting was at a little cottage in the country with an immaculate garden. We borrowed some veils and looked into hives bursting with bees and full of honey. Then it was time for afternoon tea in the garden. Everyone was talking about bees offering us advice and encouragement. It seemed a wonderful hobby. We meet some old beekeepers, Frank Vernon, Captain Jack Treadwell, Sid Trenchard and Stuart Scott would all make a contribution

to my beekeeping in the future. The early years were not easy but I had plenty of advice if needed.

### **What hives do you use and how did you choose which format?**

After extensive reading and talking to various beekeepers I was under the impression that everyone used Langstroth hives, so I bought four empty hives and related equipment. I soon found out that these were not the hives in general use in Hampshire as they used “Jumbo Langstroth”. I could not find any bees for sale in Langstroth hives so I bought a colony in a National hive that was advertised in the local paper. It came with a spare national brood box and two commercial supers. I was then given a WBC hive and purchased enough bits to use it at a bee auction. I then found that all the bits did not fit together; there were large gaps everywhere. All the appliance manufacturers made their hives to a slightly different size.

Eureka! I had found the answer to the problem, it's top bee space. I started to build new equipment from Water Bonded Ply, these were Commercial hives, National hives (not to be confused with modified national) and lots of Commercial supers. After a few years I was beginning to realise that beekeepers held extreme views on hive types, they generally had experience of only one type of hive and that was the best in the world. How can one argue with such conviction about a subject when they have no experience? I decided to try various different types of hives; I had 5 to 7 Jumbo Langstroth, 5 WBC, 30 Nationals both BS and Modified and 12 Commercial. Which hive is best? They all produce about the same amount of honey. The best hive is the one in use in your area. I still run National and WBC brood boxes with Hoffman spaced frames, supers are mostly commercial with Manley frames. I sold the Jumbo hives and Commercial brood boxes as I could not lift them when full of honey.

### **How many colonies do you hope to start this next spring with, and what sort of a journey has it been to build them up?**

I aim to put about 20 to 24 colonies into winter and come out with about 18 to 20. A few losses are good to select for a hardy good wintering bee. I have to unite colonies in the autumn to reduce numbers. They always seem to increase throughout the summer due to division and swarms coming in.

### **What has been your happiest discovery along the way?**

Finding out apiary sites is a challenge; you have to get to know the right people. Eventually after a lot of hard work some wonderful sites became available. Some with good views across the Solent to the IOW.

### **Do you have any ‘rules’ that you observe every year leading to recommendations you could pass on?**

1. Disease control. Keep all parts for each hive together, do not transfer frames, supers, QE or boards between hives unless sterilised first. Extract individual supers in one go, do not mix with frames from another hive, put wet supers back on their original hive.
2. There are super frames and brood frames—do not mix them. If the queen gets into a super and lays some eggs, replace the comb with fresh foundation. Do not use brood and a half. It should normally be one brood box and for swarm control queen replacement you need two.
3. Manage the space as the hive builds up in the spring. When the bees occupy 5 to 8 frames in the top super add another empty super on the top. Every colony needs sufficient space and a large brood box is not necessary. A national is large enough apart from about 2 weeks in the year when they decide to produce a new queen or two. A couple of nucs or another brood box will sort them out. With a bigger brood box the queen rearing period is delayed, it does not prevent swarming. I find that a WBC hives needs 7 supers, a national hive 5 supers and a commercial or Jumbo hive 4 supers. They all need another brood box to raise a replacement queen, unless you have a very extensive beekeeping operation and a dedicated queen rearing operation. In this situation a bigger brood box for honey producing colonies may be better.

### **What has been your worst beekeeping mistake?**

Apart from starting beekeeping! Believing what is written in beekeeping books. Some of the general advice is good but you don't need to know anything about beekeeping to write about it. Keep to one book such as "Guide to Bees and Honey" by Ted Hooper. Don't become confused by reading other books until you have a few years experience. When you know the book is wrong, that is when you are beginning to become a beekeeper.

### **How has beekeeping fitted in with the rest of your life?**

Beekeeping is an affliction once you have caught "Bee Fever" it takes over your life. You wake up in the morning and look out of the window and say, "Nice day for bees". If the weather is cold, windy or wet you have to go and see them just in case they need some attention. If you get a bad infection of bee fever it lasts for many years. After 25 years I began to recover and now after 35 years I think I'm in remission.

**What other aspects of your life are important and enjoyable to you?**

It is surprising that beekeeping has fitted in with a fairly normal family life. Working was a problem as I should have been looking after the bees. When the children were young they went to lots of apiary meetings. They looked around the garden and always found the bees. When we went to a family birthday party they again walked around the garden and came back rather perplexed, "Daddy, where do they keep their bees". I had to explain to them that not everyone keeps bees, this was like finding out that there is no tooth fairy or that Father Christmas does not bring Christmas presents.

**What is the most surprising thing others might like to know about you?**

We find time to go on holiday! For many years we took our family summer holiday just after the June gap. After extracting spring honey there is about 2 weeks when not much happens. This was alright for a few years but when you get a wet June it is not very pleasant. We then moved our holiday back to August. After extracting the main honey flow at the end of July and taking the bees to the heather in the New Forest there were a few weeks to spare. We went to the West Country each year and on the way we could inspect the bees and again on the way back. Now we go walking each year and are trying to complete the south west coastal path. We have completed about 440 miles of the 680 mile route. We go in September every year but have to fit it in between honey shows.

**What are your beekeeping hopes and plans for the future?**

My bees are not very productive at present. At one time I reduced my colonies to about 8 or 9 but I could not keep the numbers down. Swarms came in and I always had 20 again at the end of the season. The bees are docile but have diluted the productive strain of bees that I used to have. I need to do a bit of selective breeding again. The objective will be to produce 1 tonne of honey from 20 colonies into winter. I did manage 1700kg of honey from 29 colonies into winter one year but I suffered with a bad back. Now I always wear a weight lifter's belt when working the hives. I have put up to 40 colonies into winter but the average hive yield was less so about 20 colonies is enough for me these days. I'm supposed to be retired.

**Landmarks and events of the Isle Of Wight—56**  
**The Palmer Memorial**



Visitors to Bembridge will have seen this ornate memorial which stands by the roadside at the end of the embankment. The symbolism in the sculpture is reinforced by the inscription which tells of the local vicar whose life is commemorated here.

John Palmer, vicar of Bembridge, who died in 1896 was a popular incumbent of the village. His claim to fame and no doubt source of the funding for this remarkable memorial is due to his official duties as Chaplain to the Grand Masonic Lodge of Great Britain.

The memorial was dedicated at a ceremony conducted by Lord Alverstone who was the Lord Chief Justice of Great Britain. He was acting in his official capacity as the Grand Master of the Central Masonic Lodge. Lord Alverstone had long connections with the Island. In his younger days as Richard Webster he was a sitting member of Parliament for the Island and he owned the company responsible for the modernisation of Sandown Pier. Rising through the ranks he was at one time Attorney General and later the Lord Chief Justice.

**Rob Marshall**

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### **Dave's in Hansard!**

On December 7th 2015, during a two-hour debate on **Neonicotinoids on Crops**, brought about by a large e-petition signed by 90,000 people, Island MP Andrew Turner was the only speaker referring to the problems caused by spraying of any kind of pesticide at the wrong time of day, **"On the island, Dave Cassell is chairman of the Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association. They would plead for farmers to be given more information from the Government about what the least damaging time of day to spray is. I am told that spraying in the evening is much less damaging than in the daytime"**.

It was a wide ranging and well-attended debate, you can read all of it if you have the time, on <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151207/halltext/151207h0001.htm>

If you don't have the time, the important section to read comes at 6.01pm when George Eustice **The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** got up to speak and in particular defended his decision to grant emergency authorisation for use of neonics over 5% of the English area. A good time was had by all, the general conclusion being that "It's complicated". It would be wonderful if all our threatened bee species could benefit from all the hot air being generated by these parliamentary debates.

**A second look at Island bee boles**  
**Wootton Manor Farm - Church Road**



Our second recorded bee bole was brought to my attention by Dorothy and Richard Haynes, locate at Wootton Manor Farm.

The original farm house buildings have now been converted into houses.

Back in the 19th century they backed onto the farm's extensive orchard, one building was used as an apple store and the second and third as a brew-house and dairy.

This single Bole is south east facing and constructed from brick, built into a stone wall. The really interesting addition with this bole is the flue from the original range being directly accessed to the rear of the bole's brickwork, it went nowhere else and was used exclusively to warm the recess.

Penny Walker who runs the IBRA register feels this may not be a skep recess, although what else could it be? Records show Wootton Farm to be a "model farm", so many experiments would have been done here, by all accounts farmers from all over England used to visit, perhaps one of these experiments being the use of warmth during the winter months?

Could I please reiterate, any members who know of any additional locations of bee boles/skep recesses on the Island to pass on these locations so we can record all those remaining with IBRA. They could be in farm walls, outbuildings etc. and are usually south or south east facing.

Many thanks [idking@icloud.com](mailto:idking@icloud.com)

**Ian King**