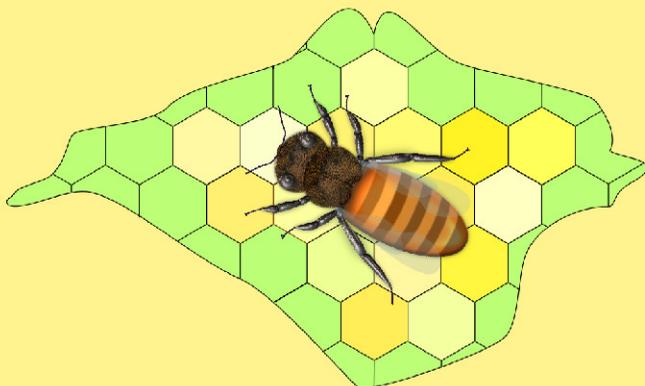


# The Wight Bee



October 2015

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Issue 115

Ivy is the main autumn source of pollen and nectar for flower-visiting insects, with up to 90% of pollen collected by honey bees sourced from ivy. The most common visitors are honey bees, social wasps, hover flies and flies, followed by bumble bees, other bees, solitary wasps and butterflies. In the South you may also see the beautiful ivy bee which has colonized Britain from Europe.

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

As we close the beekeeping year, many of us regretting the way our bees gobbled up so much of their own stores before we could take anything, (how dare they take their own honey!), and then finding their seemingly bottomless demand for sugar syrup, it was a welcome

2015	56lb
<b>2014</b>	<b>112lb</b>
2013	61lb
2012	41lb
2011	70lb
2010	57lb
2009	52lb
2008	43lb
2007	26lb
2006	39lb
2005	62lb
2004	64lb
2003	78lb

diversion to attend a full meeting of around 30 people at Arreton on October 10 to hear a talk from **Mary Case** entitled '**2014—a year to remember**'. And for most of us, 2014 really was special, it began with high rainfall, and then plenty of heat, which meant that the nectar flow remained strong throughout the season, even in areas with sandy soil which usually dry out early. Mary noticed brood patterns at the end of February that were more typically seen in June. In April she had three full supers on hives working OSR, and eventually ran out of kit to house all the new colonies. White clover was well worked, and this is a crop that needs plenty of heat and moisture to make nectar. Even the horse chestnut was flowering well and being worked. Mary has a scale hive, a report on this produced the most astonishing statistic of the talk, that it increased in weight by 24lb in one day; by morning the scale showed a 17lb increase, thus demonstrating the point that nectar needs to lose 20% moisture in weight to convert into honey. We ended with a slide (see table on left) showing a record of Mary's average annual honey yield per hive, from 2003 to the present. In 2014 her 80 hives

yielded an average of 112lb each. There are clearly many variables that affect yield - not only the weather as discussed during the talk, but also what crops are flowering within flying distance and hive management by the beekeeper. Mary's yield figures of average pounds of honey per hive over 13 years will seem daunting to many of us. In 2014 this is what good weather, combined with beekeeping skill and the placing of hives in several apiaries close to flowering crops can achieve.

## IWBKA QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

The questionnaire sent out in August was answered by 23% of our 120 members. Below is a review of the answers and some representative comments, each one followed by the committee response (in italics).

### **1 & 2. Do you attend home apiary meetings? Do you attend Quarr apiary meetings? If you don't please could you give a reason?**

Some members don't want to plan too far ahead and so the booking system was too formal. Others rather liked the booking system. Overall though the many commitments we all have meant it was difficult to carve out time to attend weekend meetings. Also, some new members were finding it daunting to turn up to a home apiary meeting when they didn't know anyone.

*Committee response - we need to decide if we are going to have a booking system next year – the ones who held meetings last year welcomed the fact that they knew how many were coming beforehand. A couple of home apiary meetings last year were conditional - people had to book to put a cap on numbers, overall though no one was turned away.*

### **Question 3. Do you have any suggestions which if actioned would make you more inclined to attend some of the meetings?**

Start earlier 13.30 or 14.00 hrs maybe; maybe one or two midweek; often weekdays are preferable to weekends.

*Response – we are debating whether to start all QTA and home apiary meetings at 2pm. All home apiary volunteers for 2016 have been asked if they would like to hold an evening meeting but so far there have been no replies.*

### **4. What else would you like to see at the IWBKA training apiary at Quarr?**

An active local queen rearing initiative, so that we don't have to go to the mainland to import bees.

*Response -currently the time involved with the work already required at the apiaries prohibits extensive QR. The Rearing Apiary does produce queens which are then sold in colonies, but can't produce enough to sell them individually.*

More examples and discussion of disease identification.

*Response - this can be discussed with the TA committee.*

Perhaps a greater variety of hive types.

*Response - we currently have four commonly used hive types in the TA (Langstroth, National (cedar and polystyrene), WBC, long hive.*

A small point but it does look a bit scruffy and ramshackle by the TA shed so maybe some benches. Perhaps an information board for passers-by to read by the lane end of the TA.

*Response - all old chairs and unwanted bits and bobs have already been taken to the dump – the area does look tidier now and will continue to improve. They may already do this but they could the TA act as a 'matchmaker' agency linking beginners with more experienced beekeepers who sign up to the scheme so they have a few sessions together.*

*Response - this is why the TA was set up, matchmaking beginners with the more experienced is on offer.*

More practical training.

*Response - this is again why the TA was set up. This summer we offered all newbies the chance to look after their 'own' hive and of 19 newbies only 2 took up the opportunity.*

Probably already in hand but an open day - or a family day -and a children taster day; maybe some children's days/events??

*Response - bees and children don't mix on a large scale, also insurance limitations prohibit this.*

##### **5. What else would you like the IWBKA committee to organise?**

A trip off the island to a place of interest to a beekeeper.

*Response - good idea – suggestions please.*

How about the odd winter talk/lecture about a particular bee keeping subject? Perhaps one before Christmas and one after?

*Response - this is already available but attendance is low – suggestions please.*

As a novice learner, it would help me - and I am a little surprised that there is none at present, - if there was more 'mentoring' in that an experienced beekeeper would invite a learner over to see him/her work on his hives from time to time.

*Response – again this is why the TA was set up and efforts are regularly made to do this.*

I am interested in making various things from bee by-products and I find it hard to get information on a lot of things. If someone has the knowledge, I think it would be a great idea to have a workshop, before Christmas and after the honey harvest; more demonstrations or workshops, eg skep and candle making.

*Response – we might need to find IWBKA members who are able to teach these skills – also experts are available at the national honey show and BBKA spring convention; this needs to go to committee.*

Maybe next year's programme could include a BYO food and drink meeting.

This might encourage more people to host events. Maybe a Quiz at the après

to meetings would be a good idea. I'm sure one or two of the usual suspects or even asking any members to devise one would be possible.

*Response –good suggestion, this is in hand for 2016.*

School visits/talks - as a school governor I know they would go down really well especially if linked to school allotments/pollination etc.

*Response – is there anyone in the association who could offer this?*

**7. Please feel free to make any other comments/suggestions that would be helpful to the committee.**

*See Chairman's response on purchase of varroa treatment in article below.*

The price of nucs should reflect the market value - eg if bees are plentiful then there should be a lower price.

*Response - The RA team spend all their spare time during the summer to rear bees, they are unwilling to then sell them at the end of the season to those wanting want cheaper bees.*

It would be useful, as new members, to be introduced to at least committee members at the beginning of meetings so we can put a face to the name.

*Response - this is a very useful suggestion, and should be carried out.*

*The committee can also wear name badges at meetings.*

Presentations/talks on what to expect during the beekeepers year e.g swarming, honey extraction, forage to plant in garden, what to expect from robbing bees and wasps. Practical everyday issues that may occur and problems to look out for. It would also be useful if this information was on the iwбка website.

*Response – the monthly newsletter, the TA and home apiary meetings regularly cover all these things. The committee can also discuss placing useful articles on the website on for example robbing.*

**Chairman's comment on the IWBKA questionnaire results**

Many thanks to the 28 members who answered the questionnaire. It was designed to help the committee understand your needs and improve the annual programme of meetings and other support. In particular we wanted to find ways of increasing attendance at apiary meetings.

You have just read a report on the main conclusions together with a committee response, planned actions and actions that have already been taken.

Although a large proportion of the membership did not return the questionnaire, I nevertheless hope these conclusions meet with your approval.

I would particularly like to respond to the following:

**Varroa treatments should be ordered and actively promoted, I have met members who do not treat at all** The IWBKA has always promoted the active control of Varroa. We have, in the past, purchased a bulk order of treatment but the problems that were caused by members not collecting or paying on time makes this a difficult option.

**Members who wish to be paired with more experienced beekeepers.** This was one of the reasons that the Teaching Apiary was set up. Not only does it give members the chance to question other beekeepers and to pick up tips, it also gives an opportunity to offer to help the more experience beekeeper and pick up some of their skills. However. beekeepers who have a lot of hives are pushed to get through inspections and may have little time themselves to train others.

We also try to provide apiary tips to members via the monthly Newsletter and Wightbee. The newsletter in particular gives current information to help with hive management.

**Winter talks** are still ongoing but historically very poorly attended.

**Events for children** are restricted by insurance requirements.

**Poor attendance at meetings** If new members are genuinely wishing to come to meetings but are put off because they know no other beekeeper then please give a Committee member a call to meet and greet them at the meeting (or arrange for another Committee member to do this). This I have done on many occasions.

Please be assured that your Committee is always trying to find ways to assist you with keeping bees but we do also need you to be active in the care of your bees. You need to carry out hive inspections on a regular basis in the spring and summer. Be able to control your swarms. Recognise disease. You need to control Varroa especially in the approach to winter. You cannot be expected to be a perfect beekeeper straight away – in fact there is no such thing, but to attend apiary meetings and learn from others is a step in the right direction. Books do not teach you everything.

**Dave Cassell**

**What connects the law, the price of oil and Wight Farm Energy's anaerobic digester (AD) with beekeeping on the Island? (probably).** Falling oil prices and the temporary ban on favoured insecticides for OSR, mean grass and maize silage are the favoured PGCs (Purpose Grown Crops) for a hungry AD. There will be many fewer nectar/pollen rich fields of OSR in 2016 and onwards.

## Quarr Teaching Apiary October update

The clocks are about to change and our work with the bees is more or less done for the season. They have had the last of the honey removed, been fed, treated with Apivar and had the entrances reduced to give them a better chance of defending themselves against wasps, which were back in force this year. When we removed the Apivar a couple of weeks ago, I also dusted them with icing sugar as an extra precaution. We have experimented with this in the past, and with Hiveclean, and found both to be useful tools in the battle against varroa. I know there is conflicting advice about removing Apivar after the six to eight week treatment period, but I'd rather follow the advice of the vet who supplies it, and remove it. We have hefted the hives to check they have sufficient stores and have fondant on standby. The last thing will be to put on mouse guards soon, but the bees are still flying vigorously carrying pollen loads, so that can, perhaps, wait a few days yet.

Nine full colonies go in to winter. We've had similar problems to many fellow beekeepers with our queens, some becoming drone layers very quickly, some failing completely and the colonies then becoming led by laying workers. We've sometimes succeeded in putting things right by adding a patch of eggs to such a colony, but next year I want to try a tip Tony Marvin discovered on an American site and found worked for him: put in a frame of eggs and the colony will just seal the larvae when they are old enough to pupate; do the same again at this stage and the same thing will happen; on the third attempt, the bees bring on queen cells. Result! The long hive has done what long hives do, and swarmed during a meeting, but is healthy and thriving with its new queen. In addition, it supplied a new queen for a queen-less colony, she being found sitting on Dorothy's veil after the swarm was gathered. The swarm didn't want her, so presumably there was more than one queen.

With all these hiccups, Christine has helped out the TA with two extra colonies which have settled in well. She has been very selective with the remaining colonies in the RA, reducing them to six strong colonies with good queens to over-winter so that, we hope, requests for nucs early next season can be met. We should all commend her for the many hours she puts in collecting swarms, bringing them on and ensuring they're healthy. Few people would be as selfless.

I must also mention the four people who took the Basic assessment this year; all of them passed, one with credit. We also have a newly qualified assessor for Basic, Ian King, who went to Somerset to take the necessary course. We had special permission for Ian to assess one of our candidates but, unfortunately, this was an exception to the usual rule as one is not supposed to assess within one's own Association. In August we held two "taster" sessions for people who had expressed an interest in finding out more about beekeeping. Twenty four people attended and were, as usual, very excited by the opening of hives. More than half of them hope to take the theory course in spring; that list is growing ever longer!

Now we turn our attention to cleaning, evaluating what has gone on, planning for next season and thinking about what needs to be ordered. So we begin again.....

**Liz Van Wyk**

**In celebration of the limerick-writing class in the  
2015 honey show—one of the best**

There once was a man of St Bees  
Who was stung on the arm by a wasp.  
When asked if it hurt  
He said, 'No it doesn't.  
I'm so glad it wasn't a hornet.'

**W.S. Gilbert**

**And the limerick that inspired Gilbert**

There was an old man in a tree  
Who was horribly bored by a bee.  
When they said, 'Does it buzz?'  
He replied, 'Yes it does!  
It's a horrible brute of a bee!'

**Edward Lear**

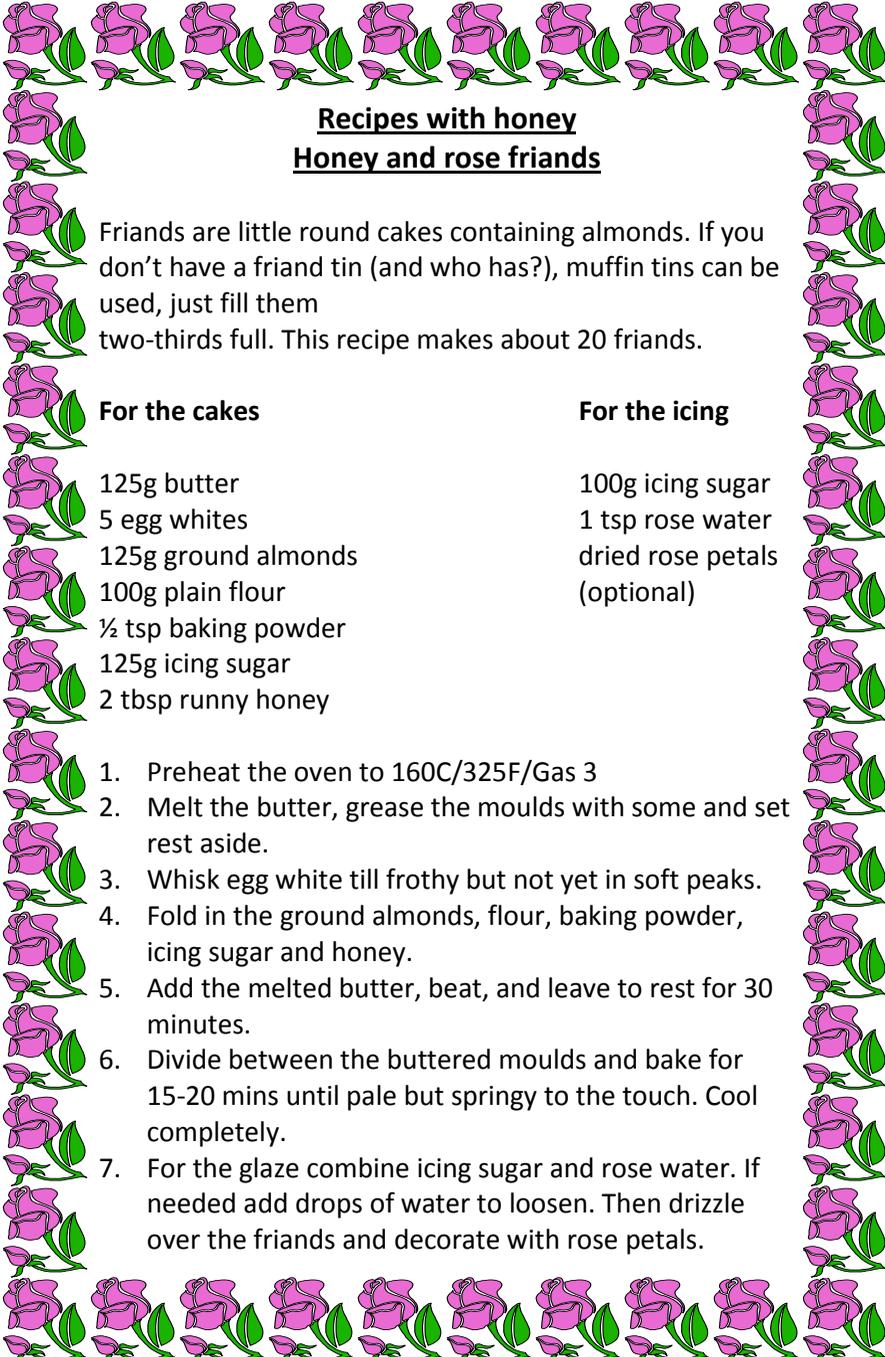
### Cutting Out

Unlike swarm collection, cutting out is the process of extracting colonies of bees that have established themselves in inconvenient or unusual places. Bees will build comb and raise brood in any place that offers them a dry shelter, sometimes not so dry. Hives are for the convenience of the beekeeper and not necessarily the bees. This season, on the IW, colonies have been prised from ceilings, barn walls, brick/stone cavity walls, hanging from soffit boards and a red leather sofa that had been left on garden decking. Bees gain access to cavities in walls via air-bricks or small cracks and can go quite a way before nest building, so there can be more than one tiny entrance. Property owners usually find these colonies or want them to be removed when they wish to renovate or demolish buildings, or move garden furniture etc .and are happy to allow the necessary access. So beeks get to meet some interesting people and see places that would normally be off-limits.

It is important that the level of “destruction/dismantling” is clear before any work is started because beeks don’t usually want the responsibility of rebuilding or making good afterwards. I did have a chap who didn’t want any panels of his dilapidated shed removed. I’m not sure how he expected the bees to be captured because the nest could not be located without doing so. Unfortunately a magic wand is not in my bee box. The bees were left for him to deal with.

None of these extractions are exactly the same and some a bit risky if ladders are involved, (don’t allow anybody to “hold” a ladder for you). A little ingenuity is also useful and a variety of tools have been developed. Frames covered in chicken wire to hold comb, Nuc boxes using Porter Bee Escapes as a one-way valve with vacuum hose that can be attached to a wall, long handled fish slice for cutting and a wide fork for holding comb (hands will squash both bees and comb). It can be a sticky business without a guarantee of success as the queen is often hard to find but most of my extracted colonies are doing well. I’m always surprised at how docile the majority of these colonies are given that the beeks are removing and then relocating their home. Collecting these feral colonies, which would probably be destroyed otherwise, can be a time consuming but enjoyable (sometimes frustrating) and social part of beekeeping.

**George Bignell**



## Recipes with honey

### Honey and rose friands

Friands are little round cakes containing almonds. If you don't have a friand tin (and who has?), muffin tins can be used, just fill them two-thirds full. This recipe makes about 20 friands.

#### **For the cakes**

125g butter  
5 egg whites  
125g ground almonds  
100g plain flour  
½ tsp baking powder  
125g icing sugar  
2 tbsp runny honey

#### **For the icing**

100g icing sugar  
1 tsp rose water  
dried rose petals  
(optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 160C/325F/Gas 3
2. Melt the butter, grease the moulds with some and set rest aside.
3. Whisk egg white till frothy but not yet in soft peaks.
4. Fold in the ground almonds, flour, baking powder, icing sugar and honey.
5. Add the melted butter, beat, and leave to rest for 30 minutes.
6. Divide between the buttered moulds and bake for 15-20 mins until pale but springy to the touch. Cool completely.
7. For the glaze combine icing sugar and rose water. If needed add drops of water to loosen. Then drizzle over the friands and decorate with rose petals.

## All about HMF

HMF (HydroxyMethylFurfural) is used as an indicator of heat and storage changes in honey.

- HMF is formed by the breakdown primarily of fructose.
- Heat increases the speed of this reaction.
- The increase in speed is exponential with increasing heat.
- HMF occurs naturally in honeys, elevated concentrations of HMF in honey provide an indication of overheating, that it has been stored in poor conditions or that it is of higher age.
- HMF's occurrence and accumulation in honey is variable depending on honey type.
- HMF is slowly formed in a honey with a high pH value (Acidic levels).

<b>Time for 30 mg/kg HMF to accumulate</b>		
30°C	100-300 days	It can be seen that honey held at an ambient temperature over 30°C for 6 months will accumulate many times more HMF than the same honey flash heated to 70°C for 5 minutes and then rapidly cooled.
40°C	20-50 days	
50°C	4-10 days	
60°C	1-2.5 days	
70°C	3-5 hours	
80°C	< 2 hours	

HMF is a breakdown primarily of fructose (one of the main sugars in honey); it forms slowly during storage and very quickly when honey is heated. It is created by the thermal decomposition of sugars and can provide evidence that honey has been heated or 'cooked'.

Fresh natural honey can have varying levels of HMF. In the hive honey would normally be below 1 mg/kg but levels soon start to rise with ambient temperatures above 20°C. It should be noted that temperatures in the beehive can rise above 35°C during summer months (when the main honey crop is in progress). It is usual for HMF to be below 10 mg/kg in fresh extracted honey. Levels higher than this may indicate excessive heating during the extraction process. International food standards require that the HMF content of honey after processing and/or blending shall not be more than 40 mg/kg.

## Landmarks and events of the Isle Of Wight—55

### Whippingham Church



St. Mildred's Church at Whippingham is unusual in that its turreted exterior is such a departure from the traditional design of most churches. Although the architecture is credited to A.J. Humbert, who supervised the work, for many years it has been believed that Prince Albert had much to do with the eventual design. The revolutionary appearance was approved by most churchmen but at least one traditionalist denounced it as being, "Unsuitable for divine worship!" The present building stands on the site of an earlier church and in places some of the original structure survives.

The Royal Family worshipped at the church while at Osborne and an unusual tiny side door was constructed for Queen Victoria's use. Inside the church the royal pews are set aside from the rest of the church.

There are a number of interesting royal graves and an unusual modern one is that of Uffa Fox. The gravestone depicts a parachuted lifeboat invented by him to save airmen who had been forced to crash into the ocean far from traditional means of help.

**Rob Marshall**

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### Key moments in 1918

We all know that 1918 was the year the First World War, or Great War ended. But what else happened?

- British women were given the vote as long as they were over 30 or were (or married to) a local government elector
- An education act raised the school leaving age to 14
- 20,000 London policemen went on strike
- Spike Milligan was born

And let's not forget, 1918 saw the establishment of the Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association, when it broke away from Hampshire Beekeepers. It's not too early to start thinking about how we can commemorate this centenary. If you have any ideas for events, trips or commemorative items than can be presented to all 2018 members, please get in touch with a committee member. The centenary will be a special time for us and we need to find special ways of celebrating it.

## Your help needed on tracing bee boles



Bee Boles are recesses either individually or in rows, often in south facing garden walls, which hold a skep - a coiled-straw hive used by beekeepers before the introduction of the modern wooden hive in the 19th Century. These were used in Britain into the early 20th Century.

This is the first entry on IBRA Bee Bole Register (Registration No: 1575a) for the Isle of Wight - with your help not the last.

These Bee Boles are located at Morton Manor, Brading; and are of particular interest as they are not only in two south facing rows - containing five boles above the lower four, but are also contained within a curved wall, which is very unusual. Just imagine the extra work and skill required for its construction.

I would like to trace and photograph all remaining Boles on the Island - and of course have them recorded on the IBRA Register.

If any members are aware of any existing Bee Boles on the Island - could they please contact Ian King (T: 282818 or [rdking@icloud.com](mailto:rdking@icloud.com)) with the location.