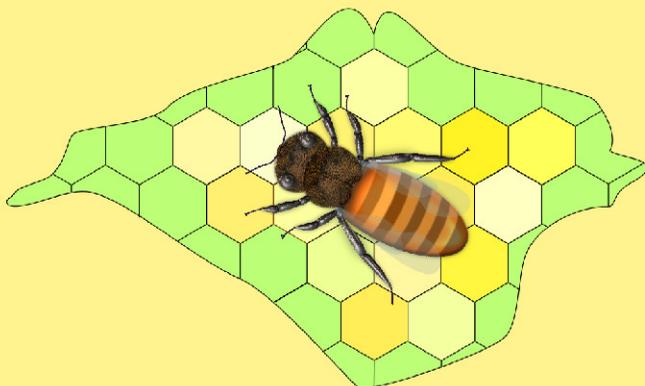


The
Wight Bee



January 2015

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Issue 112

'There are certain pursuits which, if not wholly poetic and true, do at least suggest a nobler and finer relation to nature than we know. The keeping of bees, for instance.'

Henry David Thoreau

The Journal of
The Isle of Wight Beekeepers Association
www.iwbka.org.uk

Although winter temperatures have finally start to drop, and some of us stand ready with fondant for emergency feeding, I notice that snowdrops are already in bloom. Also, following the warmest year on record, and mild weather in December, the annual New Year survey of wildflowers found 300 species in bloom in Britain and Ireland, when textbooks say there should only be about 30. The most bizarre example for me has been to see gorse in flower over New Year, smelling strongly of coconut.

Thank you to the many people who didn't mind having their arms twisted to contribute to this issue, especially those who entered the show class for 'favourite honey'. See below.

The committee has decided to send this first issue of 2015 to all 2014 members, even if they have not yet renewed. If you have lost the form, it can be found on <http://www.iwbka.org.uk/joinus.php>

Gillian Belben

What does our honey taste like?

Our 2014 show attracted 17 entries in the class judged by members of the public. We clearly have faith in our honey! We all believe that natural, untreated honey from small apiaries tastes better and is better for you, but do we have the vocabulary to describe what we are tasting and explain why one tastes better than another, or how to link descriptions of taste to particular flower sources. My unscientific research into this area leads me to think that we probably don't! With the possible exception of some very distinctive single source flavours and textures (for example heather or manuka honey), it is actually very difficult to pin down aroma and flavour and describe it in a way that others will recognise.

Deciding which honey tastes best is obviously a very personal thing, but there were winners in the class. Michael Boll came first, and George Bignell came second. I asked everyone to give me a brief profile of their entry: where it came from, what they thought the nectar source was, colour and flavour. Their descriptions can be found throughout the rest of this issue.

I also did some research in a country whose beekeepers have delved deeper in this area of honey-tasting. A brief description is on page 4.

The 2014 AGM

The IWBKA held it's AGM on the 29th November at Arreton Community Centre. The following is the 2014/15 committee

President	Mary Case
Chairman	Dave Cassell
Vice chairman	Bob Bromley
Treasurer	Barry Walshe
Secretary	Natalie Mumberson
Membership secretary	Frank Stevens
Committee	Derek Southcott
	Tony Marvin
	Arthur Waddams
	Martin Long
	George Bignell

We bid farewell to Terry Willis at the AGM. He has been a steadfast chairman over the years and will be a tough act for Dave Cassell to follow.

For those who weren't able to get to the AGM, here is the outgoing Chairman's report:

What a difference a year can make in beekeeping!

This time last year, I remember speaking about the succession of poor seasons for beekeeping.

This year, it's been a fantastic year for all bees, including honey bees, butterflies and other insects.

In fact, the only insect to lose out, has been our old foe, the wasp.

This has been reflected in the abundant harvest from our hives and the explosion of life in the countryside.

We've had well attended apiary meetings and talks, crowds at seminars, and a swarm of members and visitors at the focal point of the beekeeping year....The Annual Honey Show!

It's been great to see that our teaching apiary at Quarr is now established after their move, and is being used by a wide variety of

members old and new. I am gobsmacked at the skills and talents that the TA (training apiary) has brought out in the beekeepers running and using it.

As my long run as Chairman comes to an end, I'd like to thank all the committees for their hard work and their pledge to promoting the aims of the IWBKA. The brilliant members that we have had, can take pride in their unstinting support and use of their talents.

I'm glad to go out at the end of such a wonderful season, confident that you will all develop the Association and keep the principles and aims of the IWBKA going in the spirit in which it was formed in 1918.

Terry Willis

Honey tasting the American way

Americans have written the most about this subject, treating the 'terroir' of the apiary in the same way as wine experts study the profile and taste of wine. They say:

Honey straight from the beehive has layers and depths of flavour. So when a new honey is tasted they are looking for flavours like **fruitiness, flowers, earthiness, wood and spice. Also astringency, pungency and occasionally saltiness.** To put together a detailed tasting profile they also look at the floral source, the region it was produced and the seasonality.

This is how the determined honey-taster goes about their work:

- Before tasting, take a sniff of the honey aroma in the jar
- Spoon out a dollop of honey, less than an eighth of a teaspoon; put it in your mouth
- Allow it to dissolve on the front of your tongue
- As the taste buds respond to the dissolving honey, you may smack your lips to sort out the full range of flavours
- The flavours are enhanced when the honey flows to the back and sides of your mouth
- Take time to observe the lingering aftertaste
- When you taste several honeys in a row, drink hot black tea in between to keep the palate clear
- Give your mouth time to figure the complexities in the honey before moving on to another sample.

Recipes with honey

Honey and lemon cupcakes

CAKE

150g butter
100g caster sugar
50g honey
Zest of a lemon
2 eggs
150g self-raising flour
3 tbsp lemon juice

ICING

100g butter
225g icing sugar
50g cream cheese
1 tbsp honey
1 tsp lemon zest
(+ as much lemon juice as
it will take without
getting too sloppy to pipe
or spread)

METHOD

Cream butter, sugar, honey and lemon zest
Beat in eggs one by one
Fold in flour and lemon juice
Bake at 190C(170C fan) for 15-20 minutes; makes 12 cupcakes
For icing beat all ingredients together and either pipe or spread on
the cooled cupcakes. Decorate to taste.

Island honey tasting map part 1

Mike Sargent's honey is collected in Cowes, from mixed nectar sources in surrounding gardens. It is light in colour and taste, with a slight lemon tang.

Dave Cassell's honey is collected round Staplers, Newport, from clover and garden flowers. It is of medium colour and thick, with high pollen content.

Natalie Mumberson's honey is collected in Apse Heath, from fruit, nut and native trees. It is light in colour with a delicate flavour.

Keith Joyce's honey is collected in Chale Green, from a mixture of garden flowers, field beans and corn marigolds. It was extracted in the second week of August, is of medium golden colour with a good flavour.

Margaret Kelleher's honey is collected in Wotton, from gardens, hedgerows and woodland. It's a light honey.

Honey Shows – Some Memories

When I joined this association in the fifties, the first communication I received from Sam Heath, the secretary, was in the form of a postcard which said briefly, "*The honey show scheduled for the Drill Hall in Newport later this month has been cancelled through lack of support*". Perhaps it had been a disastrous honey year but certainly support for the show had declined since it was inaugurated in 1922. For this first show the prize money was worth £300 in today's money, and there were just ten classes in the schedule.

After some years of absence a rudimentary show was revived in Godshill village hall in the sixties. The form was simple. A schedule setting out details came out with the monthly circular. Entries and exhibits all arrived together on the morning of the show! The secretary (guess who) received the exhibits and handed the bearer a raffle ticket to stick on to his entry which was then placed on to a suitable section of the display table. Douglas Roberts then took over as judge and by the time members came back in the afternoon prize labels had been placed on winning exhibits.

If it all sounds chaotic it certainly seemed so to Harry Williams, who volunteered to organise a proper show in the new Arreton Community Centre. This proved to be a great success and since that time, even in bad years when honey has been scarce, there have been well supported shows.

Improvements have been made over the years and the 2014 show will rank among the best ever. The number and quality of the entries, the overall efficiency of the organisation and the enthusiastic remarks by the huge number of visitors reflect great credit on to the show secretary and her team.

Rob Marshall

Beekeeper interview

Chris Park—the skep beekeeper of Acorn Education



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

My grandfather had a cherry orchard in the Chiltern Hills, they were impressive standard trees. The cherry blossom hummed with bees in the Springtime. The orchard was a very prominent feature of my childhood, as

I write there are well seasoned cherry logs burning in the Rayburn.

What tempted you into beekeeping at first?

It's one of those things that I always knew I would eventually settle down and do, like playing the bagpipes. Like it is a part of my soul. The three strong roots that furthered and fed my interest in beekeeping are my love of nature, my work, and Druidry. My work incorporates ancient technologies, experimental archaeology, crafts and folklore. In fact I became a skep maker before I was a bee keeper. Honeybees, mead and their folklore are intertwined with Druidry and the native British wisdom traditions. Beekeeping is a part of all that.

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

The bees and I had an easy beginning. I didn't want to alarm anyone by simply throwing bees into a basket and hey ho! I chose a more impeccable and transparent route of joining a local association, explaining that I would like to be a skeppist, and this has been supported and respected.

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

I use many different hive types, but I am most known for experiments with skep beekeeping and log hives. I had a sense that skep beekeeping would unearth some buried beekeeping treasures. I have colonies in WBC's, Nationals, 14/12s and a top bar hive.

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 subscribe to the superstition that it is unlucky to count, but around a baker's dozen I reckon. I don't treat them with anything, and don't suffer winter losses, but do lose the odd swarm in the summer. Sometimes a colony will carry on swarming down to nothing, so I'll clean out the honey comb ready for next year. I allow them to swarm, and they appear to benefit greatly from it.

What has been your happiest discovery along the way?

Making and enjoying metheglin. Not simply spiced mead, but batches that are herbal and pollen rich... As strengthening as meat!

Do you have any 'rules' that you observe every year leading to recommendations you could pass on?

Golden Rule: To find one's own way of keeping bees, whilst at the same time accepting the differing practices of others. Folks keep bees for many different reasons, and practices will differ according to those practices. It is sad to see folks squabbling, especially between 'natural' and 'conventional' styles as there can be zealots and stalwart critics on both sides of the fence. The fence though need not be there, a circle can be drawn around the whole beekeeping community. Every beekeepers brings something of value into the 'hive'. We all want healthy bees and do what we think is best. Live 'n' let live by the golden rule.

What has been your worst beekeeping mistake?

Years ago my eldest daughter got six bees stuck in her hair, I thought she was off walking the dog around a field, but she came skipping around the corner into the apiary as I was inspecting a WBC during wasp season. It was traumatic, but she didn't react to the stings at all badly.

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

It fits in well. My main apiary is here on the farm, I teach skep making and skep beekeeping, enjoy talking to clubs and associations and actively work with beekeeping heritage.

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

Family, making folk music, ceremony and celebration, nature, arts and crafts, peace, storytelling and folklore and organic food... and metheglin.

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

I once made a coracle from horse hide and made a pilgrimage in it along

the river Cole, the Thames and then out to sea... actually, that may not surprise you, folks might be more surprised to learn that I won a break-dancing competition at the age of 10!

What are your beekeeping hopes and plans for the future?

Encouraging the representation of British beekeeping history and heritage. We have just merged the British Beekeeping Heritage Society with the Beekeeping History Trust, and there is much to do. It would be wonderful to see some of you form a group to plan an "Isle of Wight Beekeeping Museum".

News from Quarr Teaching Apiary

January update

Colonies fed, mouseguards on, hives tied down – like everyone who keeps bees, we at Quarr now have our fingers firmly crossed that our charges come through winter well. With the weather so mild, the bees have continued to fly, even bringing in a little pollen as late as early December. Now we heft them regularly to check whether we need to feed fondant. In the meantime, we have been busy tidying. It's amazing how things get themselves disorganized when you're busy caring for the colonies during the season so the bee shed and the milking parlour are now remarkably tidy and inventoried. We are also trying to get ahead of ourselves for the beginning of the season by getting everything clean and sterile and frames made up, though with no foundation until the weather warms up.

It's also a good time to assess how the colonies performed in 2014 and to make plans for how best to use them in 2015, including re-queening. Up to this point, we have worked with the bees we have, but now want to begin to improve the stocks. We will share as much of this process as we can with the membership during apiary meetings. However, the first apiary meeting at Quarr, in early May, will once again reflect the BBKA's Bee Health Month. There will be demonstrations of how to identify healthy brood or problems, including how to inspect for Small Hive Beetle, and with the help of Ian King's microscopy group, we hope to offer diagnosis of nosema

and acarine on the day if members bring in samples of bees. Planning is in the early stages, but we hope the membership will support this initiative well; please watch out for further details.

Plans are also in place for the next round of theory classes for beginners. Interest and demand does not seem to be diminishing and this year, thanks to taster sessions run back in the summer and the food event at Northwood House, we have a waiting list for places. With my Association education co-ordinator's hat on, I am keen to encourage people to study for the Basic Assessment and there is a small group of people who have already registered interest in taking the Assessment at Quarr this summer. Anyone else interested who will have kept bees for at least two seasons can contact me by email at elizabethvanwyk@aol.com.

2014 was an amazing year for honey and may not be repeated for some time. However, we beekeepers are an optimistic bunch and we hope to have a good season in 2015.

Liz van Wyk

Island honey tasting map part 2

Dorothy and Richard Haynes' bees are in the remains of an ancient wood close to St Mildred's Church at Whippingham and are surrounded by farmland. They forage on native hedgerows—predominantly hawthorn with a smattering of wild roses, honeysuckle, and native trees, as well as an abundance of wild flowers in the spring.

Fr Nicholas' colonies at Quarr benefit from the forage provided by many acres of woodland and native hedgerows on the Abbey estate where there's a large quantity of horse chestnut trees followed by native wild flowers. The honey is light in colour, thick and very sweet.

Jill Scutt's honey comes from Wootton, from a large garden surrounded by keen gardening neighbours growing vegetables and flowers. There are apple trees nearby, with woods and fields (with OSR, blackberry and wild clover) a quarter of a mile away. Coming from many sources there is no dominant flavour, and the colour between the different hives and across the year is very varied.

Obituary

In November we lost Dave Parr, a much respected beekeeper. The following has been prepared by Ian King and Rob Marshall.

Dave Parr

9th April 1947 – 19 November 2014

The widespread sadness and sense of loss that Dave had died so young was evidenced by the multitude which filled the crematorium to overflowing and who came to pay tribute at his funeral. Following six months fighting liver cancer Dave sadly passed away at home on the 19th November. He will always be remembered as a kind, humorous man, always willing to advise and assist with any problems. Following a decade working in the electronics industry on the mainland Dave returned to the Island he loved, with a total career change, working along side his father a local builder. With this knowledge and skill learnt, Dave took on many building projects, able to turn his hand to most skills required on the renovations he took on, only allowing hand-picked skilled tradesmen to assist where necessary.

On his return to the Island Dave decided to take up beekeeping, he was given a box of bees (a nuc) by one of the old boys of our association and told to return just the box after the colony had grown. The nuc was a Langstroth and Dave quickly taught himself beekeeping and how to build a full size brood and super – all out of 18mm ply. Right up until his death Dave kept four colonies in his garden – alongside his chicken, ducks and dogs.

Dave was an active member of our association – serving on the committee and as Chairman; our older members will remember the barbeques he and Robert held at Mark's Corner, and also hosting our annual auction.

Dave was very active with the IOW Foodbank, both with supermarket collections and sorting out the food ready for donation, he was also actively involved with the IOW Storeroom, using his many skills to repair donated furniture before being passed on to families in need.

Landmarks and events of the Isle Of Wight—52
St Dominic's Priory Carisbrooke



St. Dominic's Priory stands back from the Gatcombe-bound road which runs southward past the Carisbrooke Castle estate. What catches the eye when driving past is the impressive coat of arms at the entrance. This coat of arms is that of the Dowager Countess of Clare who was buried here in 1879.

During her lifetime she had financed its building and was prominent in the construction of several Roman Catholic places of worship on the Island. Although not a catholic by birth she became a major supporter on her conversion and both St. Mary's Church at Ryde and its priory benefitted from her patronage.

Until 1989 the Carisbrooke Priory was home to nuns who specialised in needlework but also set up a printing press to produce greetings cards. After the nuns left it was taken over by The Carisbrooke Priory Trust, a charitable institution which offers Christian healing and respite. Its aim is to "Welcome everyone and especially those looking for peace of mind. Some may be searching for meaning and direction in their lives, while others are as much interested in helping as being helped".

Rob Marshall

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Island honey tasting map part 3

Roger Hall's honey comes from Whitecroft Park near Gatcombe on the SE corner of the estate, bordering farm land. Early in the season nectar comes from tree blossom—Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Horse Chestnut, Sweet Chestnut, apple and wild cherry. Then, later, wild flowers in the orchard area, blackberry and plenty of ivy. It is very light in colour with a light almost lemony flavour. The first batch was extracted on the 26th July and the 2nd batch, slightly darker, a month later.



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Island honey tasting map part 4

Apart from one hive on a shed roof in Merstone **Arthur Waddams'** hives are in a garden at the Northwood end of Newport. The nectar is sourced from surrounding gardens, Parkhurst Forest and the fields stretching down to the River Medina. The gardens have blossom from the apple, pear and plum trees. There is clover and vegetable flowers, as well as what the bees can forage from the fields and hedgerows.

The honey is light in colour, with a taste not distinct enough to be from one source.

Michael Boll's honey comes from a garden in West Cowes. It is multi-floral with a pale colour.

(Despite this very brief description, there was something rather special about this honey, because it won the popular vote)

**IWBKA Spring Seminar
Arreton Community Centre
Saturday February 28 2015**

Programme

Arrive at 9.00 for 9.30 am

9.30 ***The secret army of Pollinators***

Ian Boyd—Arc Consulting

The surprising work of bees that aren't honey or bumbles

11.00 **BREAK**

11.30 ***Bee Quiz***

Mary Case

1.00 **LUNCH**

2.00 ***The plight of the Bumblebee***

Nikki Gammans—Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Life cycle, ecology, decline and conservation

The short-haired bumblebee reintroduction project

Cost £10 on the day

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Bee syrup

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