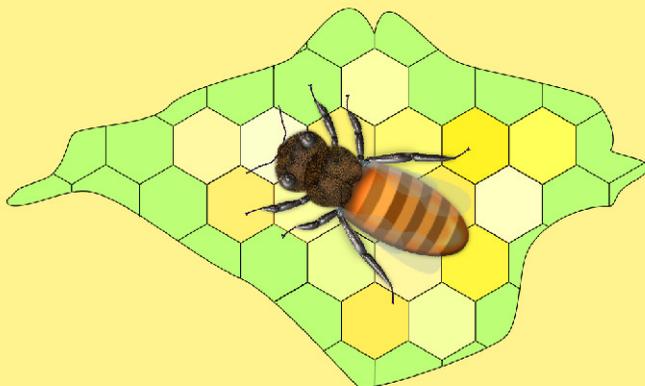


# The Wight Bee



July 2012

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Issue 102

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>APIARIES</b> | <b>TOTAL CROP</b> | <b>AVERAGE</b> |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1986        | 22              | 53                | 2LB PER HIVE   |
| 1989        | 24              | 1627              | 68LB PER HIVE  |

Extract from Rob Marshall's apiary records

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

In keeping with this topsy-turvy summer, the July issue of Wight Bee arrives late. I was unprepared, when the warm weather finally arrived, for the swarms emerging, in the second half of July, from swarms collected two months earlier in May. The hives that did not swarm were wallowing from the effect of drone-laying queens. I started shopping around for bargain sugar, in bulk. On the positive side in the last week, after searching in vain for honey bees on the abundant bramble flowers along the hedgerows, and only seeing bumble bees, I am finally seeing large numbers foraging. At least it's going to be a good year for the blackberry, if not the apple to go with it. In an extraordinarily challenging year for anyone keeping bees, the front cover extract from Rob Marshall's apiary diary shows how dependent we are on climate, how adaptable we and the bees need to be, and also perhaps encourages new beekeepers to persevere; who knows—2013 could be a bumper year.

We put out a call for members to send in their anecdotes about nectar sources on the Island and interesting honey crops, but you are all too depressed and nothing came in. Instead we have an article by Barry Walshe about colour recognition, and the start of a new series by Jinnie Bartlett on top bar hives.

You may have seen a letter in the County Press from our President Frank Stevens commending the decision by the IW Council to reduce verge-cutting on our rural verges to improve diversity of wild plants and address the decline in many nectar feeding insects, other invertebrates and small birds and mammals further up the food chain. There is still a long way to go in fine-tuning the cutting schedules, and the Island would benefit from a full survey of verges leading to a biodiversity action plan. The letter is reproduced on page 12 followed by an article by Sally Kenny on page 15. Thank you to the nine members who contributed to this issue.

**Gillian Belben**

**[www.iwbka.org.uk](http://www.iwbka.org.uk)**

The Quarr Teaching Apiary pages of the website have been revised in order to better explain how the apiary is being used to check, process and pass on hived swarms. It's worth a look for those who would like further clarification.

**Extracts from 'The Grumbling Hive, or, Knaves Turn's Honest'  
a 1705 poem in the book, 'The Fable of the Bees, or, Private Vices, Public  
Benefits' by Bernard Mandeville.**

A Spacious Hive well stock'd with Bees,  
That lived in Luxury and Ease;  
And yet as fam'd for Laws and Arms,  
As yielding large and early Swarms;  
Was counted the great Nursery  
Of Sciences and Industry.  
No Bees had better Government,  
More Fickleness, or less Content.  
They were not Slaves to Tyranny,  
Nor ruled by wild Democracy;  
But Kings, that could not wrong, because  
Their Power was circumscrib'd by Laws.

But Jove, with Indignation moved,  
At last in Anger swore, he'd rid  
The bawling Hive of Fraud, and did.  
The very Moment it departs,  
And Honesty fills all their Hearts;

For many Thousand Bees were lost.  
Hard'ned with Toils, and Exercise  
They counted Ease it self a Vice;  
Which so improved their Temperance;  
That, to avoid Extravagance,  
They flew into a hollow Tree,  
Blest with Content and Honesty.

(The poem ends in a famous phrase:)  
Bare Virtue can't make Nations live  
In Splendor; they, that would revive  
A Golden Age, must be as free,  
For Acorns, as for Honesty.

Mandeville was a philosopher and early economist. Many of his ideas were developed by later theorists such as Adam Smith. It caused much controversy at the time, and its true meaning is still being debated today. John Maynard Keynes believed the poem describes "the appalling plight of a prosperous community in which all the citizens suddenly take it into their heads to abandon luxurious living, and the State to cut down armaments, in the interests of Saving". In these troubled time for both bees and the economy, Mandeville's ideas are worth a look by the beekeeper.

The full poem can be found here:

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/hive.html>

**Recipes with honey**  
**Date and oat beehives**

Sally Peake sent this to the Wight Bee, it's an excellent and simple recipe for beekeepers young and old to try.

"I recently inherited an old Scott's Porage Oats cookery leaflet from my mother, originally published in the 1950s. This recipe works well!"

2oz honey(2 tbsp)  
4oz butter or margarine  
2oz sugar  
4oz chopped dates  
8oz Scott's Porage Oats

Melt the honey, margarine and sugar, then stir in the chopped dates and oats. Shape into beehives by putting into a wet egg-cup and inverting onto a greased baking sheet. bake in a slow oven (300F/Regulo 1- I used 150C in my fan oven) till golden brown - about 20 minutes.

The leaflet suggested this made 20-30 but I made 16, perhaps because my eggcups are quite large!

**Sally Peake**

**Jose and his technicolour hives**

Back in August 2008 we had the good fortune to have Emmanuel and Claire Baruchello staying with us. Emmanuel is one of the Normandy beekeepers who visited the Isle of Wight that year. He is not only a Master Beekeeper but also one of Normandy's senior show judges.

He was concerned that I had painted my hives red, using red-cedar coloured wood preservative. The reason he gave is that bees, though not colour blind, use a different part of the light spectrum from humans. We use the spectrum from red down to violet. The bees see lower down the spectrum, being able to detect ultra violet but not red or infra red. This means that they have problems identifying red hives, particularly if the hives are all the same size and shape. The problem is overcome by separating the hives and facing them in different

directions. I also, as a result of his comments, painted my brood boxes and some of my supers white.

When I was in Portugal recently it suddenly occurred to me that the local beekeepers had long lines of hives all closely packed together. How did they get away with it? I had also seen this in Spain, Italy, France, Greece and Cyprus - all places with warm, reliable summers that result in serious honey production and where time for individual hive management is at a premium. I also noticed that the hives were different colours, as were the supers. I had always supposed that these different colours were the result of using job lots of left-over paint. On making enquiry of Jose, the eminent local beekeeper, I understood that this colour differentiation was deliberate, not the use of dregs out of the tins. Only white and pastel shades were used, yellow down to blue, with variations in between, never red.

This meant that every hive could be made different in its colour scheme e.g a blue brood box with a green super and a blue super, with the next hive being yellow, green, blue and so on. As every hive pattern was different this allowed the bees to instantly identify their own particular hive. As a result the hives could be closely packed together in long straight lines, anything up to thirty or forty at a stretch.

Now we do not have long hot summers, at least not often, but painting hives different colours is an interesting concept. At least it would bring a bit of variety to the apiaries.

Interesting chap Jose.

**Barry Walshe**

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## Island beekeeper interview—Sian Morris



Visiting Sian and Kevin Morris for this interview I felt that I had slipped happily into another era. Their small cottage home is heavily influenced by their love of 15th and 16th Century artefacts and decorated to recreate a comfortable and coherent setting for the lovely pictures and period items that surround them in their everyday life. From fireplaces lined with Delft tiles, to a heavy Jacobean settle, to an exquisite stumpwork picture, the scenario is delightful. Here and there among the pictures and tiles are references to bees and other insects, a passion that Sian says has always been with her.

Sian came to the Island from Bedfordshire in 1991 and was working in Ventnor creating hand-made kaleidoscopes that were exported all over the world, when she met Kevin. There was little chance of beekeeping when they were first

married as they were living on a boat in Bembridge Harbour, but on moving to a shore base at Arreton, then Niton and on to Whitwell they eventually found themselves in a position to keep bees.

After thinking and dreaming about it for several years Sian and Kevin did a course with Terry, who fuelled their interest. They bought in two colonies from Gloucestershire in 2010, and were then given a swarm by Terry, so they started with three hives. The local bees fared much better than the imports, Sian says. Now in 2012 they have twelve hives of lovely dark bees, 21 ducks and 18 hens, divided between an out-apiary and their garden, which is full of bee-friendly plants (and weeds), and Golden Rain, Eucalyptus, Apple, Ash, Willow and Yew trees. The family are heavily involved: Riann (14) and Lily (13) each have their own hives, and Poppy (9) and Daisy (8) have their own bee-suits and help with inspections. They are all learning something new every day.

Sian works part-time at Niton Primary School and the whole family have created such interest in bees that teachers and other parents visit to see them, and villagers are now also coming in. Daisy is particularly interested in insects and animal anatomy, to the extent that she will even bring home road-kill for bones for her collection.

Beekeeping is clearly a real passion for the whole family, and next year Sian hopes to have a go at queen-breeding to promote the black bees she so loves. Meantime I guess the family will have another challenge to beat their prize-taking entries at last year's honey show, (a honey second prize for Sian at her first attempt, and a cookery prize for Riann), and they will be setting out again in 2013 to expand this family enterprise further.

**Stella Ridley**

### The Teaching Apiary at Quarr

The best laid plans .... Our carefully prepared scheme for our new bee-keepers has this year been re-written many times, thanks to the peculiarities of the weather. We offered two groups of nine students a series of six theory lessons early in the year, the nominal charge paying for an extraordinary amount of printer ink and paper for hand-outs and some much needed equipment such as hammers and a gas torch for later sessions in building hives and cleaning equipment. So far, so planned.

The twelve free practical sessions that were offered to these students and those who had taken Terry's course have been changed from moment to moment, it seems, as the peculiar weather has made the bees present us with many surprises. Much earlier than expected, we have performed several artificial swarms as previously stable colonies, some with young queens, decided to produce queen cells. No doubt the confinement brought on by days of cool, wet conditions caused the bees to go in to survival mode and divide the colony. Who would have thought, too, that we would need to feed our bees in May? Many of the new queens have taken weeks to get mated and start laying, with one colony quickly trying to supersede their drone layer. "Queen" marking proved to be fun – picking up drones and giving them a blue or green dot, much to the confusion of those attending the next apiary meeting.

The Association meetings at Quarr have probably re-assured many bee-keepers that they are not the only ones having problems with the weather. We have re-queened a colony, performed a shook swarm, united others, all of which provoked valuable discussion amongst the attending bee-keepers of all levels of experience. Ask three bee-keepers and get four different answers...! As we have been asked by the Regional Bee Inspector to become a Sentinel Apiary, we were able to show members the Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle traps we monitor. There are Sentinel Apiaries at likely entry points for these pests all around the country, and with the Asian hornet's spread to just across the Channel from us, we are, alas, a likely entry point. Make a note in your diary of the August apiary meeting if you are interested in brood diseases, as the Regional bee Inspector will be coming over to demonstrate how to detect AFB

and EFB. We have booked a local hall for him to show us infected comb after the apiary meeting itself – no charge to those attending.

Dave's swarm team has been particularly busy, sometimes coping with four swarms in a day. Some have presented unusual challenges; the photos show one being taken from inside a soffit while the other was in a fallen tree. Chris, who manages the isolation area where colonies are received, seems to have taken up residence there, attending on an almost daily basis – and sometimes more than once a day – to treat, feed and monitor the colonies. All are kept for a minimum of six weeks to ensure that they are healthy and building up well before being offered for sale, following the BBKA's criteria for the sale of nucs. The list waiting for a colony includes both new and experienced bee-keepers, though priority is given to those who have never had bees.

As always, thanks are due to the small team who give up their time freely to help out at Quarr. Their only reward is tea and biscuits, and the chat that bee-keepers so enjoy!

**Liz Van Wyk**



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## Top Bar Hives and Other Methods of Keeping Bees

Having now kept bees for a year in a Top Bar (Kenyan style) Hive (TBH), I thought perhaps you'd like to know how we (my husband and I) have got on and some of the little things we have come up against.

Firstly, the need for knowledge and back-up – where to find it? We searched for info on the internet: - <http://www.biobees.com> the home of the 'Barefoot Beekeeper' (also a book) by Philip Chandler provided a starting block and I went to Embercombe in Devon to take his 'beginners course'.

By this time we had built two Top Bar Hives and were set to go. When we were lucky to get a swarm in late July last year, we put the little cluster of bees into the TBH with 5 bars on which to start their comb. In a TBH one can have 'follower-boards' which are similar to those some people use in conventional hives. They allow the space for the bees to work in to be increased as the colony

grows but this space can start fairly small so they can keep warm. Also the boards allow for minimal disruption when inspecting the colony, by moving the board out and then lifting just a few bars of natural comb (care must be taken with this especially when the comb is new as it is very fragile!) one can discover if there is a queen and what is happening in the colony. With our hive the entrance hole/s are fairly central along the length of the hive so we are able to have a follower board on either side of the colony allowing inspections to be carried out from both sides. Feeding was a bit of an 'issue' when we started as there is no gap between the top bars and no 'super' space above for a feeder. We have found that by putting two pieces of narrow wood across the hive (the sides slope in to the bottom) and a hole in one follower board (which we close with a cork when not feeding) and placing an upturned plastic feeder on the wood works extremely well. During the winter we fed with fondant too by putting it in shallow plastic trays with discs of polythene with slits in on top and placing these directly below the colony so they did not have far to get supplies.

Although a small colony to begin with they came through the winter and made good progress up until June, when everybody's bees starting having trouble. We are hoping that they have managed to re-queen, some queen cells are present, but who knows? At the moment we are not sure the bees know what is happening, we will have to wait and see! I found the following and it sums up for me what we are trying to achieve: -

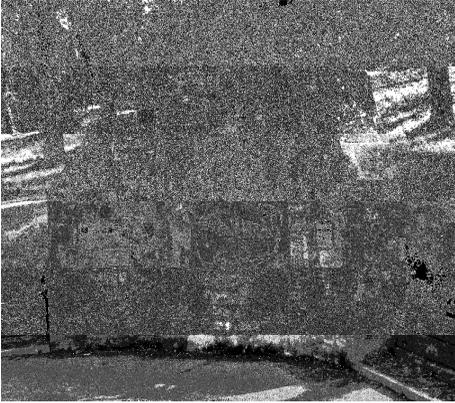
Quote from a local "Friends of the Bees"([www.friendsofthebees.org](http://www.friendsofthebees.org)) group based in West Sussex and Hampshire.

"We are beekeepers who prefer to keep bees with the minimum of intervention so as to help them to survive in an increasingly difficult environment. Our aim is to provide the best possible habitat and conditions for bees to adapt and thrive in the face of many threats by allowing them freedom to use their natural resources without constraints imposed for the production of honey."

**Jinnie Bartlett**

## Landmarks and events of the Isle Of Wight

### HMS Sirius (42)



On the seaside wall beyond the Ryde Canoe lake there is the memorial plaque for HMS Sirius which began its remarkable voyage from the Motherbank anchorage close by. Even before it left these shores the Sirius had a remarkable career. It was originally built in 1776 as a merchantman with the name of Berwick but in 1781 it caught fire and the navy then purchased the wreck and repaired it. The resulting warship fought in the

war of American independence but later the navy renamed it and prepared it for its final task.

In August 1786 a government decision had been made to send a colonisation party of convicts, military, and civilian personnel to Botany Bay. Sirius was fitted out for this voyage to establish a new colony. There were 775 convicts on board a fleet of transport ships. They were accompanied by officials including the new governor Sir Arthur Phillip, members of the crew, marines, the families thereof and their own children who together totalled 645. In all, eleven ships were sent in what became known as the First Fleet, led by HMS Sirius. They set sail from Motherbank in August 1787.

The voyage was not straightforward and it took 252 days to reach its destination by way of Brazil; but worse was to follow. The embryo colony had insufficient food and was on the brink of starvation and the nearest point which could supply more food was the colony on the Cape of Good Hope in distant South Africa. The Sirius was then dispatched on a 2000 mile voyage of desperation and in due course returned with the life saving supplies

Sirius was needed to protect the new colony but she was wrecked on Norfolk Island in 1790 and her loss was catastrophic for the new settlers.

In 1987, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of departure, the Sydney borough of Mosman commissioned three plaques to commemorate the ship. One is now on Norfolk Island, the second in Mosman Australia and the third here in Ryde.

**Rob Marshall**

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### **County Press letters page June 22— from Frank Stevens**

Many of us living on the Isle of Wight are concerned about the nationwide decline of many species of birds, small mammals and insects, as their habitats are destroyed or degraded by modern agriculture and development. As bee-keepers we are particularly worried for the plants that sustain pollinating insects, not only the honey bee but scores of other bee species and butterflies as well. This is why this year our Association congratulates the Isle of Wight Council Highways and Transport Department and their contractors for a much more environmentally sensitive approach to verge cutting in rural areas. Until 2011 there was a ten-year policy of cutting all verges three times a year. Following public concern over the inappropriate and untimely destruction of wildflowers this was reduced to twice-yearly cuts, and for two rural parishes in 2012 the Council is trialling a system of a single cut at the end of summer, thus encouraging a greater diversity of plant life in our verges and bringing the Island into line with best practice in other UK counties. Sometimes complaints are made to the Council because Island verges aren't being kept 'tidy'. However, most of us regret the loss of butterfly and moth species, of hedgerow and farmland birds, of hedgehogs and voles. These two concerns are connected. A diverse and dynamically changing bank or verge is a source of food and provides cover.

12

Cont. page 13



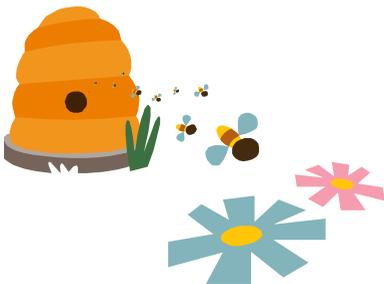
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As long as selective cutting for highway safety at junctions and bends is maintained, the new approach will go some way to redress the wholesale loss of meadowland in this country. Our verges and the hedgerows they often support are not only wildlife corridors through areas of intensive agriculture and urban development, they are also lifelines for a diverse range of species that need our positive actions to survive.

So, 'thank you' to the Highways and Transport Department for this initiative.

The verges are also looking particularly beautiful this year, and we look forward to seeing colourful plants such as scabious, knapweed, vetch, clover and foxglove as the summer progresses. The bees and butterflies will love it too.

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## **Isle of Wight verges, hedgerows and bees**

Have you ever gone to the shop, larder or cupboard to get your favourite seasonal food, only to discover empty shelves? Well, the bees must be experiencing this where your local council have stripped the verges and hedgerows of wild flowers for the sake of 'tidiness'.

Healthy verges and hedgerows have a huge role to play in aiding diversity in our lives as well as our bees, especially now agricultural land is farmed so intensively and so many meadows have gone. Some farmers do help with 'set a-side' and 'bee friendly' management areas on their land and boundaries, and we should applaud their efforts. Others do not.

Our council however, will only reflect on and act to support a diversity of flora and fauna ***if we let them know our point of view.***

There are several pilot schemes on the Isle of Wight at present that are trialling a minimum verge/hedge cutting programme within sensible health and safety parameters. Chale and Chillerton are in one such scheme, and perhaps you know of one in your area?

Areas previously cut to provide a 'lawn' type sward are only being mown when and where needed around the margins/edges to facilitate road/pedestrian safety. The remainder is left to enable local wild flowers to bloom and seed. Friends and neighbours see the verges and hedges looking rather unkempt compared to past seasons, and assume the council are being cheapskate and cutting costs purely for economic reasons. Often, when an explanation is offered they are fully supportive of the change. Honey and bees seem to hold many happy memories for people, and they are often a source of a good local yarn you may not have heard before.

Of course I appreciate that a change of direction in thought and action will not automatically follow a change in policy and that there will still be detractors, but as bee keepers I feel we have a need to make our voice heard. Please speak up for the bees!

If you feel you could make a difference and support the trials, please talk about it locally as well as contacting those at the decision making end of things.

Here are two addresses that you can use, [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com) or councillor Edward Giles who is Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, e-mail [edward.giles@iow.gov.uk](mailto:edward.giles@iow.gov.uk)

The authorities will review the trials after a year, and decide whether to 'roll out more widely' this initiative, and as it has already begun, there is no time to lose.

**Sally Kenny**

**IWBKA Honey Labels**  
**Number 7—Natalie Mumberson**



After 4 years of beekeeping, my bees came and went and never produced enough honey so I didn't have to think about a label. Then last year due to the arrival of my daughter I wasn't able to look at my bees as often as I had in the past and they seemed to flourish, sometimes less is more! Suddenly I found that I had supers of honey and with the help of friends (Martin and Caroline Long) we got the honey off. I then had the dilemma that I hadn't registered with the Council and with the quantity of honey I had I knew I would want to sell some, so I contacted the Council, and arranged a visit from the Environmental Health office, and whilst I waited for this appointment enrolled on a Food Health and Hygiene course in order to get certificated. Having got all the paperwork parts sorted I then borrowed some extracting equipment to process the honey and found that I had a big bucket, which I then jarred up. The hunt for a label started in order to be able to sell. I didn't find anything that really appealed so decided to design my own. Having also been checked by the Council to do other preserves I wanted a universal label, and maybe a brand name. I've asked friends and family but a suitable name hasn't come up yet.... As I was producing more than one product I wanted a label I could print myself as and when I needed it, I wanted the Isle of Wight to feature on the label and I had a list of basic information that needed to be present. I played around night after night until I came up with something that I liked the look of. The label was checked by the Council and I now print A4 sheets of labels as I need them. At present I can only find white labels but am looking for an alternative colour. Also I have stuck to using only black print to make it easier and cheaper; my printer is not that good! For anyone wanting to sell their own honey the procedure through the Council is pretty easy and harmless and the staff come out at whatever time is convenient for you. I had to create a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) which they advised me through, and had the paper work through within a very short period of time.

If you want to design your own label and don't have a printer or labels Staples will print an A4 sheet of them for £1.