



Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association September 2016 Newsletter

End of Season Honey Shows

Many beekeepers see September as the end of the beekeeping year, with the new year starting in October. To celebrate the end of the year we hold Honey Shows and this year we have three events within a 5 week period.

The purpose of a Honey Show is on the one hand an excuse for a gathering of Beekeepers to meet and discuss the season past discovering each others successes and failures, whilst on the other hand it encourages Beekeepers to develop their beekeeping skills in the products of the hive. None of us produce the perfect jar of honey in the eyes of the honey judge, but aspiring for that perfection at a Honey Show can only help us improve the products we sell or give away to our friends and family.



The 1st Honey Show of the season is the **Bucks County Beekeepers Honey Show**, which is being held on 25th September at Buckingham Nurseries. The show forms part of the annual Autumn Gathering of county Associations, this year it is being hosted by North Bucks. Full details can be found on the county [website](#). Mid Bucks members can enter classes 101-119, details of which can be found [here](#). If you would like to enter but cannot make the event please contact me and we will arrange for your entry to get to and from the Honey Show.

We hold our **Association Honey Show** on the same evening as our AGM which will be on 19th October, the schedule for the show can be found [here](#). We narrowly missed attaining a Blue Ribbon for over 100 entries last year, it would be good if we reached 100 this year. Please, particularly if you are a new beekeeper, enter at least one class. If you have any questions concerning the show please contact either Helen at honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk or myself at chairman@mbbka.org.uk.

The final Honey Show is the **National Honey Show** from 27th to 29th October at Sandown Park, full details can be found on the website honeyshow.co.uk. This event is much more than a Honey Show with Lectures and Workshops over the 3 days. Classes 221-232 are Buckinghamshire classes, it would be good if class winners from our show were entered. Closing date for some classes is this week.

September Meeting

At our meeting on 21st September, [Elizabet Samuelsen](#) a PHD Research Student from Royal Holloway University will present preliminary results from the Bees in the City study. We have invited all Associations in the county to join us for the talk. I hope you will be able to come along.

Bucks Show

A big thank you to everyone who helped out on a stand on a very busy and successful day. Over £1,000 of honey sold!

Programme of Events

21st September 2016 Association Meeting

Bees in the City

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

25th September 2016

Bucks County BKA Honey Show

Organiser [Andrew Beer](#)

9:00am

Buckingham Garden Centre

19th October 2016

MBBKA AGM and Honey Show

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

27th-29th October 2016

National Honey Show

honeyshow.co.uk

Sandown Park

16th November 2016

Things that Beekeeping Easier

Bill Fisher

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd

18th January 2017

MBBKA Annual Quiz

7:30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd



Making a Wax Cake in the Kitchen

Something every Beekeeper should do at least once, is make a wax cake for a honey show. The Mid Bucks Honey Show class 12 requires a wax cake of between 200 and 255g in weight. You do not need any specialist equipment to produce a wax cake, rather time and patience. Key items I use include; a crude steamer comprising an old pan and metal mixing bowl, a porridge steamer, three old bean cans with the bottoms cut out, roll of nappy liner, two glass bowls (the moulds) and lots of newspaper to cover the surfaces.



The wax of choice for making wax items is the cappings taken from comb at honey extraction time, however drawn super comb does just as well. The wax needs to be cleaned and separated from any residual honey. First wash the wax in water, rain water works best, then melt the wax in the steamer. Once the wax has completely melted pour it off into a container to cool, any remaining honey or debris will separate and the wax floats to the top. Once the wax is hard (it takes a long time for wax to cool) drain off the liquid and scrape any debris from the bottom of the wax block.



Return the block to the steamer and completely melt, do not over heat, all the wax must be melted and left on the heat for 5 minutes before filtering. If the wax is not warm enough it will just solidify in your filter rather than go through it.



It is best to prepare several filters ready for use, double fold the nappy liner and fix to the open bottom of a bean can with an elastic band. I usually have 3 cans ready for use. Pour the wax through the filter into the second steamer pan. Try and keep the flow in and out at the same rate so as not to leave excess in the can when the filter clogs, this is when having a second/third can ready to go makes sense.

Replenish the cans with fresh nappy liners, the spent liners make great fire lighters. Allow the wax a short period to reheat. Before pouring wax into a mould place the mould on scales, fill with water to 225g and mark the level. This is the level to which the mould will need to be filled with wax. Whilst the above activities have been going on the moulds will have been in an oven set to 70°C on gentle bake, if the

oven has a fan make sure it is not running as it will blow debris into the wax.

Having prepared three more bean cans pour the wax into the mould and place it in the oven, I always fill two moulds. I use a foil lined tray in the oven, just in case of spills. Turn the oven off and allow the wax to cool slowly, do not be tempted to move the mould before it has completely hardened. Place the wax and mould in the freezer for a few hours and then into a basin of cold water, the wax should float out of the mould. The cooling effect shrinks the wax ever so slightly. Some beekeepers rub a thin layer of washing up liquid into the mould before pouring in the wax and then place the finished product in cold water to release the wax.



A good cake should be free from impurities, have a lovely bouquet and a light golden colour. I would be lying if I said it works every time, but it is great feeling when you produce a good cake.

BBKA Modules Winter Study Groups

This winter we will be running study groups for BBKA Module 2, Honey bee Products and Forage, and Module 6, Honey bee Behaviour. Studying the BBKA Modules is an excellent way to build your knowledge of beekeeping, there is no commitment required to sit the exam. In my opinion Module 6 is the best way to start one's studies as it gives an insight into some of the reasons we do things the way we do in beekeeping.

The only pre-requisites for joining a study group is that you are a member of the MBBKA and have attained the BBKA Basic Assessment Certificate. If you are interested in joining one or both of the study groups please contact Jonathan at education@mbbka.org.uk

MBBKA Committee Vacancies

At the AGM in October several of our committee will be standing down. Our constitution requires there to be a novice beekeeper on the committee. If you have taken up beekeeping in the last couple of years and would be interested in spending a year as part of our committee please contact Liz at secretary@mbbka.org.uk. The committee meets 4-5 times a year. As well as Officers of the Association there are places on the committee for members without portfolio. We have a busy Association so having a full committee is always useful.

The 2016 MBBKA Honey Show **by Helen Palmer, Honey Show Secretary (reprint of 2015 article)**

As the active beekeeping year starts to wind down and the bees are prepared for winter it's time to turn your attention to showing off the produce from your hives!. The honey show this year is on the 19th October at the Church of the Good Shepherd, starting at 19:30. We had nearly 100 entries last year and it would be lovely to see such good support this year as well.

If you have not entered before the prospect can be a little daunting but there are some classes ideally suited to beginners/new entrants. These are highlighted below so please do give some thought to entering this year. The full Schedule of Classes is attached. Summarised below are some hints, tips and comments on this year's show classes. For further information or to register an entry please contact: honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk

Honey Classes; [Here](#) is a link to an article detailing the 8 attributes a honey judge is looking for in honey. These mainly apply to Classes 1-3, liquid honey but uniformity, aroma and taste apply across all the 2 jar classes. For Class 8, Three jars of Honey as offered for retail sale the judge will be looking for 3 matching jars, correctly labelled, consistency in product, also taste/aroma. Classes 6 and 14 are good Classes to start with if it is your first Honey Show, Class 6 is judged irrespective of looks and class 14 is just for beginners.

Honey cake; Class 15 the Honey Cake is a another good entry for beginner beekeepers and novice show entrants. If you do not have your own honey it is possible to buy Association honey to qualify for entry in this Class. A key point about this Class is that you MUST follow the recipe and where it says 7 inch cake tin it has to be 7 inches, otherwise the entry is disqualified. For Association honey contact Andrew at: apiary@mbbka.org.uk.

Frame of Honey; Again a good entry for beginners as new supers often produce frame of honey that is clean and evenly capped. The frame must be shown in a bee proof display case and the Association now has 3 of these available on first come first served basis for those wanting to give this class a try. Contact honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk if you would like to reserve one.

Cake of Wax; Class 12 is a one that provides a real sense of satisfaction when you have produced that beautiful disc of wax. It is the simplest of the wax Classes. To prepare a wax cake you will need patience (lots of patience), a smooth and unbranded mould and a means to filter the wax (steamer, baked bean can, nappy liners and paper towel). Capping wax is ideal as it is pale in colour and easier to clean. Ask any experienced beekeeper for tips.

People's choice; Classes 16-19 are more light hearted and again suitable for new members, as in Class 15 the honey for Class 16 can be Association honey. After the AGM and during coffee the attendees are all asked to vote on Classes 16-19 and the entry with the highest vote for each Class wins £5.

Process to enter; to enter the Honey Show please complete the entry form attached to this Newsletter. For Classes 1-3 do not worry too much about which Class as we can juggle things on the night. On the night the doors open at 7:00pm and all entries need to be in place by 7:30pm. Entrants will be given a unique number for each entry, which must be applied in accordance with the rules given in the schedule. This means judging is completed without the knowing who has entered.

If you have any questions please just contact Helen at honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk