

National Honey Show-Eighty years young

Brenda Davies wishes the show a happy birthday and hopes for many happy returns

IT'S OCTOBER and later this month the National Honey Show will be celebrating its 80th show and beekeepers from home and abroad will be gathering together in Surrey from October 27-29 to enjoy this last major beekeeping event of the year.

The National Honey Show is unique. It is a national show, an international show and has mini-shows for several counties all rolled into one. It is probably the biggest honey show in the world with international classes making it the best display of honey and apary products that you are likely to see anywhere.

This year has been a good honey year and the number of entries should be high so there should be plenty to see on the show benches. But the National Honey Show isn't just about competitive classes, there are lots of other things happening during the three day show.

If you are a new beekeeper and have joined a recognised beekeeping association between August 2010 and the end of July this year, you may have been sent an e-mail inviting you to apply for a ticket to the show for the reduced rate of £5. This is a good offer. Most new beekeepers have absolutely no idea what the show is about or that keeping bees can lead to so many other interesting things to do. So if you are a new beekeeper, why not take up this generous offer to go along to see for yourself what other beekeepers get up to in their spare time?

Although called the National Honey Show, the show classes include far more than just jars of honey. All aspects of beekeeping can, and do, have a competitive side and you will find classes for most of them here.



■ Judging a candle class



■ Two willing judges test the beer.

There are nearly 250 classes in this year's schedule including extracted honey, comb honey, sections, wax, candles, mead, honey beer, photography, needlework, handicrafts and even beekeeping inventions. You can download the show schedule and find out more details from www.honeyshow.co.uk.

During the life of the National Honey Show there have been many changes reflecting the way that beekeepers and beekeeping have altered over the years. New classes are added from time to time such as the recent addition of a class for honey beer. Although this class was restricted to commercially available beers it still created a lot of interest among visiting beekeepers.

So this year there will be another new class for two bottles of honey beer, any style, but not commercially available (Class 42). The first prize is £10 so it is sure to prove a popular class with home brewers and probably with the judges too.

Two more interesting new classes are open only to apiaries sited on National Trust properties and managed through the Bae Part of It initiative. Under this initiative the National Trust has introduced 45 new honey bee colonies at various locations all around the country. Every hive has been adopted by a BBC Local Radio station, as well as by the BBC in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. You can find out more at nationaltrust.org.uk. The show is held at St. George's College in

Weybridge which has its own theatre with proper tiered seating. Each day the theatre will be used for lectures by leading speakers from around the world. This year's line-up includes Tom Seeley from the USA who will be giving a different lecture on each of the three days, Keld Brandstrup from Denmark, who will be giving two different lectures and Erik Osterlund from Sweden who will also be giving two lectures.

Other speakers include Michael Mac Giolla Coda from Ireland as well as Robert Pickard and Nigel Raine both from the UK. You will need to check the website or the schedule to

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see which lectures are on which days although as always these things are subject to change.

A fairly recent innovation to the show has been the introduction of workshops designed to help less experienced competitors improve their skills in the art of exhibiting. This addition to the show has proved so popular that the workshops have now been expanded to include crafts and other things of interest such as help with beekeeping exams.

In the exam workshops Val Francis will be looking at exam preparation and exam techniques, Margaret Thomas will unravel the mysteries of Module 1 and Tom Salter and John Hendrie will explain the standards needed to pass the Basic and General Husbandry Assessments.

This year the show will be opened by Dinah Sweet who is president of the Welsh

Beekkeepers' Association. Dinah will also be running a workshop entitled 'Mead Making from Start to Drinking' which as the name suggests will cover all aspects of making mead. Other workshops available include Peter Schollnick's popular 'Preparing Honey for the Show Bench', Jill Tinsley on 'The Art of Honey and Wax Displays for Shows', Terry Clare on 'Sections/Frames to the Show Case' and Peter Matthews and Enid Brown will explain 'Honey Judging Techniques'. Dr Sara Robb will be back to show how to 'Make Your Own Toiletries', you can join Martin Buckle in 'Skip Making' or Dennis Ryan 'Candle Making'. Alan Potter's microscopy workshops will look at 'Disease Identification' and 'Honeybee Dissection' while Andy Pedley will help associations understand 'Health and Safety' requirements and risk assessments.

Workshops last for 2½ hours and must be booked in advance. Because of the limited space available, the number of places in each workshop will be limited to allow for discussion and to ensure each person receives proper attention. If you would like to attend a workshop you can book either online at <http://snipurl.com/23jrje> or by calling 07729 424002. There will be a £5 non-returnable booking fee per workshop to help prevent spaces being booked and not taken up.

For some workshops there will be an additional cost for materials. For enquiries email: nationalhoneyshow@gmail.com or telephone as above. Bookings will be taken from September 1.

If you would like to enter exhibits for the show but are not able to deliver your entries in person you can send them by post. Alternatively if you can get them to Northern Bee Books in Hebdon Bridge or to any English branch of Thomes they will deliver them for you as they will be transporting their trade stands to the show.

The Trade Hall is a very popular part of this honey show and few beekeepers can resist a little bit of retail therapy while they are there. It

is a good time to stock up with all sorts of beekeeping equipment and perhaps do some early Christmas shopping too.

If you are a regular competitor at small honey shows you will be used to putting your honey jars on the show bench yourself but at this show it is different. At the National Honey Show the judges will be judging not just what is in the jar but also the actual appearance of the jar itself. For staging purposes the jars must be given to a steward who will be wearing cotton gloves so as not to leave any fingerprints on the jars. So polish the jars well before you hand them over.

If you are a visitor to the show then be aware that you are not allowed to touch the exhibits. When I visited the National for the first time I did just that and I was ticked off good and proper by a steward.

First timers at the show may be surprised not to see any prize cards indicating the prize winning exhibits. But with so many classes and so many prize cards the system proved to be unsatisfactory and easily muddled.

So instead of looking for the cards to see who has won you need to look for the little stars instead. Stick-on stars in different colours indicate the prize winners in each class and there is a master card by each class with all the necessary details.

Prize cards have not been done away with altogether and if you are one of the lucky ones, your cards can be collected, with your prize money from the information stand from the second day of the show.

The Smallholder County Challenge Shield will again have pride of place on the trophy table. It will be won by the county beekeeping association gaining the most points in the open classes nine to 88.

The Smallholder Shield is the ultimate test in combined showmanship. Yorkshire won it last year and they will be doing their best to retain it. Will the Smallholder Shield be going back with the Yorkshire beekeepers again? We'll have to wait and see ■



■ Honey judge checking for impurities in the jar

Further information.

The 80th National Honey Show will be held at St. George's College, Weybridge Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2QS from October 27-29.

How to get to there:

By road via M25. Leave the M25 at Junction 11, marked Chertsey, and from the slip road follow the signs to Weybridge. At the roundabout take the third turning, the A317 to Weybridge. At the next roundabout turn left into the college.

By bus via Woking. Take the A320; follow the signs to Addlestone, continue through the town, over the level crossing, until the roundabout. The college entrance is on the far side.

By bus. The bus from Heathrow to Woking passes the college gates. There are local buses connecting with Weybridge etc.

By rail. There are at least four trains per hour from London Waterloo either directly via Staines or with one change via Weybridge to Addlestone station which is a 10 minute walk from the college. Main line services from the South West connect through Weybridge. There are several underground changes along the route.

Local directions. The main road entrance to St George's College is right on the roundabout (A317). The college has a one-way system, follow the road around to the left, you will arrive at a barrier which will open automatically, take the next right into the car parking area ■

■ Keep up to date with smallholding issues by logging on to smallholder.co.uk



■ The Smallholder Shield at the back of all the trophies