

The National Honey Show

Brenda Davies looks at what will be happening at the last big bee event in the calendar

WHAT are you planning to do this October half-term? Meet friends? Go shopping? Learn something new? If you are a beekeeper you could be doing all these things and more.

Here are a few suggestions:- visit a honey show, find out more about bees and beekeeping, listen to talks by experts from around the world, learn how to use your spare beeswax, discover how to take better bee pictures, learn how to make a straw skep, buy some beekeeping equipment or maybe even start your Christmas shopping.

What's more you could be doing all these things in one place if you go along to the National Honey Show, which is being held from October 28 to October 30 at St George's College in Weybridge in Surrey.

The National Honey Show is the last big event in the beekeeper's annual calendar and beekeepers from all over the country will be meeting up to compete against each other, to stock up on bee supplies, to learn more about bees or to simply just enjoy being beekeepers.

If you are a new beekeeper and you have joined a beekeeping association between August last year and July this year, you should have received a free annual membership of the National Honey Show.

As well as free entry for the three-day duration of the show you will be entitled to attend the lectures and workshops (free but pre-bookable) and to enter your exhibits in the competitive classes free of charge. If you have not entered a honey show before, check out the 'Show tips for first timers' box at the end.

Free entry to the show? So what's the catch? I'm pleased to say that there isn't one. This is a genuine offer to encourage new beekeepers who know nothing about the show to go along and see what it is all about. Hopefully having experienced what is on offer, many will then become regular visitors, supporters, future competitors or maybe even all three.

The National Honey Show is not just a display of honey. In fact there are four separate parts and each part compliments the others. There are:

- Competitive classes
- Lectures about bees and beekeeping
- Trade, educational and charitable stands
- Workshops

As beekeepers soon discover, keeping bees opens the door to lots of other hobbies and interests. Many of these have a competitive side and there are classes for some of these hobbies at the show alongside the classes for



■ Honey can be many different colours

honey. Honey dominates of course; there will be classes for honey in the jar, honey in the comb, honey in the frame, runny honey, set honey and lots more.

If you produce honey you will produce beeswax as well and there are classes for different uses of wax: big blocks, small blocks, beeswax candles, beeswax models, beeswax flowers as well as cosmetics, lotions and potions containing beeswax.

Most beekeepers use honey in the kitchen so there are classes for honey cakes, honey biscuits and, of course, honey wines. Many beekeepers like to take photographs of their bees and beekeeping activities and these are catered for in the eight photographic classes which range from black and white prints to DVD productions.

As well as the international and open classes, some counties have their own competitions, with their own classes, within the main show so that there are over 200 classes altogether.

The show secretary Reverend Francis Capener told me that in 2009 there were 1,180 entries. These exhibitors came from all over the UK and Ireland and from as far away as Rodrigues (a small island in the Indian Ocean) and from the Ukraine.

He is delighted that The Brotherhood of Ukrainian Beekeepers has formed close links with the show and that they have endowed

one of the classes and presented the show with a special medal.

In all there are over 70 trophies and awards to be won. The most difficult being the Smallholder County Challenge Shield which is awarded to the county beekeeping organisation gaining the highest points in the open classes nine to 88. Yorkshire beekeepers are the present holders.

As well as the competitive classes there will be a full programme of lectures given by top speakers from around the world. Speakers this year include Kim Flottum from Ohio USA, Dr Mark Goodwin from New Zealand, Hans Ulrich Thomas from Switzerland, Jim Ryan from Ireland and Dr Nigel Raine currently at the University of London.

With such a lot to see and do it is not surprising that the show is going from strength to strength and attracting more and more people each time. A few changes are planned this year so that there will be more space for everyone.

The lectures will be held in the theatre which has tiered seating for about 200 people and the show will be expanding into the college sports hall in order to accommodate the increased number of trade, charitable and educational stands, which are expected to attend.

The National Honey Show is constantly



■ Coloured beeswax sheets ready for candle making at Christmas

changing to reflect the needs of today's beekeepers and the recently introduced workshops have proved to be immensely popular. They were started to help new or less experienced exhibitors to learn some of the necessary skills of showing. Each workshop being designed to identify and discuss methods of preparing and improving exhibits for the show bench under the guidance of either a qualified Judge or an extremely experienced exhibitor.

Not everyone wants to be a competitor though so other workshops of more general and educational interest are also available this year. A full list of the workshops can be found on the website www.honeyshow.co.uk. Workshops last about two-and-a-half-hours and must be booked in advance. Tuition is free but there may be a charge for materials used.

Bernard Diaper, who first started exhibiting more than 30 years ago, has done a brilliant job organising the workshops this year and he has put together a varied programme with something for all levels of beekeeping ability. Back again by popular demand is Peter Schollick one of Britain's most successful showmen with 'Preparing honey for the show bench'. Liz Duffin makes a welcome return demonstrating how to 'Make your own wax flowers', Dr Sarah Robb will be demonstrating



■ The Smallholder Shield can be seen at the back of the trophy display

how to 'make your own toiletries' and Claire Waring will be sharing her expertise when it comes to 'taking better bee pictures'.

Bernard is particularly excited that Kathy Summers is coming over from America for the new workshop entitled 'How to use your spare wax'.

Other workshops include: skep making, wax modelling, honey show judging technique, Apideas (mini mating hives), pollen identification and the subject of moving on from hobbyist to commercial or semi-commercial beekeeper.

There will also be several workshops covering exam technique for the BBKA Basic Assessment and modular exams.

To ensure each person receives proper attention and in view of the limited space available, the number of places in each workshop will be limited.

Because these workshops are so popular it will be necessary to pre-book no later than Saturday, October 23, by contacting Peter Matthews to be assured of a place on the day. You can book either by email silverhive@btinternet.com or telephone 01461 205525. All workshop participants must be NHS members or have purchased a day ticket for the show

That's half-term sorted then. Next month I'll be looking forward to Christmas ■

Show tips for first timers

If this is your first National Honey Show, here are a few tips:

- **Rules.** Do read the show rules carefully so that you don't miss something important. Some entries such as the photographic ones will be required for judging prior to the show.
- **Labels.** Exhibitors must label every jar, section, or other exhibit with the labels as supplied by the 'Entries Secretary' before delivery to the show. It is very important that you attach the identification labels in the right place and that you put them on straight.
- **Jars.** Unless otherwise stated in the schedule only use clear 454g/1lb squat jars (glass or plastic) with standard gold lacquered lids. They can be screw off or twist-off but must match.
- **Jars should be filled so that when the jar is help up there is no air gap visible between the surface of the honey and the lower edge of the lid.**
- **Extracted honey.** Clear honey should be crystal clear. Shining a torch through the jar will reveal any granulation which is starting. Set honey should not have any visible specks when the jar is turned and the base examined.
- **Where the class sates 'honey as for sale' you can use your own labels but they must comply with all the current regulations.**
- **Mead.** For the wine classes use clear glass punted bottles, approx 26 fluid ounces with rounded shoulders, not sloping, and without lettering of any kind. Use only cork stoppers with white flanges.
- **Candles.** Candles should be displayed flat. Be aware that in some classes one candle will be lit by the judge.
- **Cakes.** All cakes should be displayed on a white paper plate together with the card and label supplied in the clear plastic bag provided by the 'Entries Secretary'.
- **Photographs.** Check the rules for the photographic classes carefully especially where exhibits incorporate music, as there is a need to comply with the copyright regulations.

A full programme and show schedule can be downloaded from www.honeyshow.co.uk ■



Further information.

The 79th National Honey Show will be held at St. George's College, Weybridge Road, Addlestone, Surrey, from October 28 to 30.

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

By road via Walton and Kingston. Take the A3050 towards Weybridge. Drive through the town and take the A317 towards Chertsey. After about a mile turn right at the roundabout into the College.

By rail. To Weybridge station and change for Addlestone. As the College is a five minute walk from Addlestone station and rail connections from Weybridge to Addlestone are not guaranteed, you may prefer to take a taxi from Weybridge station. ■