



Top: A large bee was one of the spectacular art exhibits entered into the National Honey Show.

Bottom: Ruby Bolter-Griffin took second prize in Class 140 for her artistic rendering of her mother Helen, their friend Nicole, Cat Pip and herself with their bees in rural Dorset.

Everyone was delighted to be back at Sandown Park for the National Honey Show in 2021; this was reflected in the upbeat atmosphere, despite a few differences from usual. We prearranged admissions to avoid queues in the foyer, we were spaced further apart, and we sorely missed international visitors, including many friends and show exhibitors from Ireland. Lectures were well attended, socially distanced, and were live-streamed for members and interested parties who were unable to attend the Show. The lectures will be scheduled for usual release on YouTube; look for the next ones on the first Friday evening of each month. Workshops were popular, with some held downstairs in another, larger hall, safely distancing the active soap-, polish- and candle-making activities. Although we missed some of our favourite traders, we had a vibrant trade hall with some new stands and lots to visit, browse and traders to chat with.

Standards were high across the board

Beekeepers and supporters had obviously been busy in lockdown; we were impressed with the quality and quantity of competitive exhibits. The inventive and beautifully crafted art exhibits made such a breathtaking spectacle; a credit to all who sent their entries to the Show. This year, several newer beekeepers were not only brave enough to enter the Show, but they did well, earning prizes, and in some cases, trophies.

Jo Ramsey, a Dunfermline and West Fife beekeeper, started keeping bees two years ago, ending up with more collected swarms than space for in her garden. Mentored and encouraged by neighbouring Enid Brown, our National Honey Show Judges' Referee, she took two hives to an apiary close to ling heather. Enid encouraged her, a first-time exhibitor, to enter a frame of her ling heather honey in Class 40, for which she won first prize. Jo was not able to attend this year's Show, but beekeeping friends, acquaintances and mentors are usually willing to bring exhibits to the Show on behalf of others.

National Honey Show 2021

By Val Rhenius, NHS Publicity Officer

Magnificent entries of honey, wax, candles, soaps, artworks, cakes and much more, accompanied by fascinating lectures, workshops and a tempting trade show. The National Honey Show was enjoyed by all.



Kt Brewster, a new beekeeper, entered several classes and did exceptionally well, including winning the Combing Cup.

Kt Brewster's interest in bees was sparked during a visit to Australia in her late teens, but she was inspired to take up beekeeping during lockdown. Disabled from a serious horse accident and no longer able to show horses, the prospect of showing honey and hive products gave her a new goal. She watched videos, contacted local associations and suppliers and, unable to lift from the ground, successfully used poly hives and a long hive stand to manage her bees. Having been bitten by the 'showing bug' she contacted Jill, our Entries Secretary, who shared useful tips. Kt decided she might as well bring as many entries as she could to the Show. She entered several classes and did exceptionally well, having no show experience. Her entries were



Richard Lee's six wax blocks won him third prize in Class 56.



The Keast family did very well, with Michelle winning first prize for her decorated sponge cake (middle) and Trevor (above) winning several prizes for honey and candle exhibits.

placed in several classes for honey, winning first prize in Class 354: Two jars Naturally Crystallised (Suffolk BKA members only); and for Class 41: One container Cut comb free from Ling Heather, she won first prize and the Combing cup.

Helen Bolter-Griffin, her bee buddy Nicole Collins, her six-year-old daughter Ruby, and cat Pip host their bees in a rural location not far from the sea in west Dorset. Inspired by similar experiences of a swarm taking up residence nearby, Helen and Nicole took a course with their local association, joined the BBKA and now keep their hives in an ancient apple orchard. The decision to enter this year was driven by daughter Ruby, who was really hooked on the bees. They thought it would

be lovely to show their honey for the first time along with Ruby's exhibit and their wax wraps. Helen took third prize in Class 5: Two jars Liquid Honey, and first prize in Class 57: Two Beeswax wraps. Ruby took second prize in Class 140: Artistic, Decorative, Interesting or Instructive Exhibit junior school age.

Nadia Ismail has had a long search, but has now finally found a place to keep bees. After serious health problems recently, she had a lot of thinking to do, and one of the many things she wanted to do was to enter the National Honey Show. So, at the last minute, she entered Class 80: Display of Home-produced Products, and as a first-time exhibitor, Nadia was delighted to win first prize and the Jill Foster Memorial Trophy.

Sarah Brown entered honey and wax classes for the first time at the National Honey Show. She won first prize and the Plender Cup for Two jars Light Honey in Class 25, VHC for Class 121: Six 28g Beeswax Blocks, and second prize for Class 126: Decorated Honey Sponge. This first attempt, preparing to show wax and honey for the National Honey Show proved a great help with her studies for the BBKA Module 2 exam.

“Showing encourages the best preparation and presentation of hive products.”

Richard Lee had been meaning to have a go at wax blocks, having attended workshops on their preparation. He added it to the entry form he sent in, so felt obliged to follow through. Jill, Entries Secretary, brought the six blocks along to the show for him. Being his first time of wax block preparation, he did not expect to win third prize in Class 56, and this has encouraged him to enter again, and come along to the Show next year.

Trevor Keast and family started keeping bees and joined 'The Bucks County Beekeepers Association', in Pennsylvania, USA. On moving back to the UK and joining Reigate BKA, Trevor and Michelle became more interested in education, both passing the BBKA Basic Assessment. As well as continuing with further exams and modules, Trevor has become interested in showing products from the hive at various honey shows, this year entering into the Surrey show and the National Honey Show. Their daughter Honor's cup cake took first place in a local show, Michelle took first place in Class 126 at the National for her

decorated sponge cake, and Trevor had a number of firsts for honey and candles at the National Honey Show, winning the Surrey County WJ 1968 Cup for Reigate member with most points in NHS Open Classes.

Our National Honey Show committee member Paul Boyle from County Louth BKA, encouraged two of his fellow beekeepers to enter exhibits into the Show. Graham Lowndes, while on a roofing job, spotted a copy of *The Haynes Bee Manual* in a garage. He asked the owner if she kept bees, was introduced to a beginners' course, and obtained a nucleus from his association only this year. Asking Paul to check his bees, he realised he had benefitted from an exceptional year of bell heather bloom. Paul asked if he could bring a couple of his own hives to the spot, and encouraged Graham to enter his bell heather honey into the show where it took first prize in Class 5. Again, mentored by Paul and other Louth beekeepers, Fr Noel Kehoe started with one hive during lockdown in 2020. The hive built up quickly in the spring of this year, and was split into four hives, two of which he took to his family's land about 6km north of Dundalk, where there is hawthorn, blackberry, wild scrub and marsh land, and, on the near mountains, bell heather. His fellow beekeepers encouraged entry of his later, slightly darker honey, which took second place in Class 5. That first and second place went to honey from this locality speaks highly of their native black honey bee and the biodiversity that surrounds the area.

Videos in preparation

These stories demonstrate the enthusiasm, help and encouragement available from local associations, judges and experienced show winners. The purpose of showing is to encourage the very best preparation and presentation of our honey and hive products. To this end, The National Honey Show is planning a series of short videos on preparing for the show bench. Some of the winning 'how to' videos from previous show class winners are available to view on the National Honey Show YouTube Channel, as is the 'Cut Comb and Chunk Honey' preparation video by Christine and Peter Matthews.

Visit the NHS this year

There are an amazing variety of classes to enter for honey, hive products, crafts etc, and several classes for junior enthusiasts, giving such a thrill not just to the winners, but seeing your hard work part of the fabulous display at the Show. So, do give it a try, and we look forward to seeing you and sharing your success at Sandown Park again this year: 27 to 29 October 2022.