

West Wilts BKA News



News, the planned activities, and some advice for members of West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



Photo above - Honeybee on perennial geranium

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Need to know page 2/3

This is your 'go to' section that will describe the things that you need to know about.

Good to know page 3 - 20

What a busy month October has been – so much time and care has been lavished on the bees and their hives preparing them for the winter – and members have spent hours readying themselves to show the bees produce to the best effect at various shows...You didn't enter this year? Please try next year – it's so much fun!

I came back from a holiday having prepared some notes and worked on some articles while I was away – ready to hit the ground running to get the newsletter out in good time... However, the Gods have been against me! I have had gremlins in my computer and having sat up until "silly o'clock" one night and uploading and cutting and pasting onto my master copy, I logged out of my laptop and then found the work had not been saved. No matter how hard I searched through files I could not find a recently saved copy. My fault. However, the second time round I know exactly what I want to write and have an idea about the layout.... I saved double copies every now and then the second time round!

There have been so many successes at recent shows and over 2024, after a bit of a shaky start due to weather – many certificates and assessments gained and so much to be proud of – and the bees worked hard too didn't they!

DIARY OF EVENTS

As we head towards the end of the year you will see less events advertised to put in your diary – however, you will find already plans are being made for 2025.

November 2024

WWBKA Branch AGM at 7pm on Monday 18th Westbury Methodist Hall BA13 3JL – We look forward to seeing you for this important event. The meeting will be followed with a talk by Chris Rawlings on the subject of “Mead.” *(Please note – Diane Sleigh from The Bee Depot will be attending – should you want supplies from her do get in touch prior to arrange delivery on the night) – contact details on the final page of this newsletter.*

January 2025

WWBKA Annual Dinner. Monday 20th January 2025: The Farmhouse, Southwick BA14 9QD We are asked to meet at 6.30pm for 7.00pm dinner (FIND FULL DETAILS ON PAGE 10)

May 2025

The Royal Bath and West Show 2025 Thursday 29th May to Saturday 31st May 2025 [Royal Bath & West Show | The Bath & West Showground](#)

October 2025

Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025: Saturday 11th October 2025 – 10am to 4pm [Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025 - Wiltshire Beekeepers Association](#) at The Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS (incorporates the County Honey Show).

BBKA National Honey Day: on 21st October, each year **The British Beekeepers' Association celebrates National Honey Day**

National Honey Show 2025: Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October 2025 at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey, UK [National Honey Show homepage - National Honey Show](#)

Need to know

Lectures

You can also see the “Preparing for Winter” BBKA zoom meeting on YouTube using the following link – or just by searching on the BBKA website

[Beekeepers need to remain vigilant!](#)

[Have you downloaded the Asian Hornet Watch App?](#)

Need to know contd.

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

19th November 2024: Kirsty Stainton, Varroa

21st January 2025: Giles Budge

18th February 2025: Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus TBC

18th March 2025: TBC

Further details for each talk will be available nearer the time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Message from the Apiary Manager

A reminder that there is Hive Alive still available in 1 kilo ready to use packs at £4 and fondant in 12 kilo blocks at £20 a box (no postage to pay!!!) All available for collection from the apiary, payable to the treasurer prior to collection.

The Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day (incorporating the County Show) on October 12th at the Corn Exchange in Devizes, came hot on the heels of our WWBKA show held at Bratton on 28th September. I cannot believe it was only such a short while ago – I think all members are so busy at this time of year and the clock just seems to spin in double time!

The day presented an excellent opportunity to catch up with friends and fellow beekeepers, applaud participants and winners alike, admire skills and expertise of others, (and ask them to share their secrets), enjoy the exhibits, empty your pockets at the various stalls - and gather ideas for the next season.

Knowledgeable experts (named below) gave talks and patiently answered our questions.

Some interesting things about bees – *Professor Robert Pickard, entomologist*

Medicinal uses of honey – *Dr Lynne Hepplestone*

Thinking of becoming a beekeeper? How to get started – *Richard Rickitt*

The truth about honey – *Lynne Ingram NDB*

It was fabulous to see certificates awarded for so many successful endeavours – well done all!

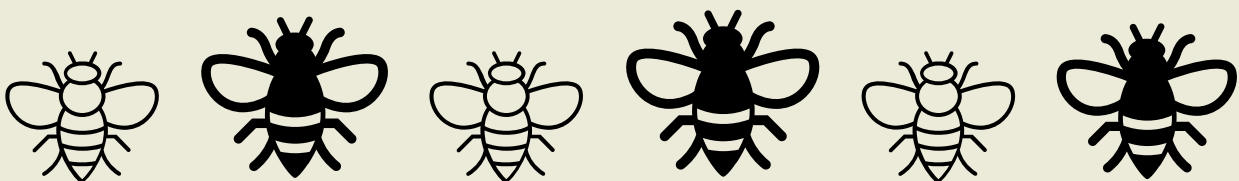


Below, for interest, is the table outlining trophy distribution and points awarded for the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day (incorporating the County Show) 2024, held on October 12th at The Corn Exchange in Devizes.

Congratulations to everyone – and if you did not get round to entering this year – please have a try in 2025

Trophy	Winner	Purpose	Notes
Methuen	Elaine Irvine	Individual Most Points	31 points
King Shield	Cressida Hemming	Best Honey in Show	Light Honey
Kennet Perpetual	Elaine Mairis	Best Non-Honey	Display of six bee products
Norman Lovegrove	Elaine Irvine	Best Mead	Fruit Melomel
David Wicks	Nicola Loud	Best Frame for Extraction	Shallow frame
Novice Cup	Nicola Loud	Best Novice Class winner	Granulated - very nicely done
Applegate	West Wiltshire	Branch Most Points	125 points of 197 (MBKA 7 pts, SDBKA 13 pts, KBKA 52 pts)
Teal Cup	Kathy Hobson	Service & Achievement	For development of the Swindon BKA
Geraldine Lennert	Sophie Butcher	Best Wax Exhibit	Dipped Candles
Blue Ribbon	Fran Kimpton	Best Entry in Show	Counter Display

A total of 280 entries were staged



The National Honey Show at Sandown Park Esher was held from 24th to 26th October

SOME EXCITING RESULTS for our branch club members...

Class 53: Two moulded Beeswax Model

Commended **Mr Chris Rawlings**

Class 55: Display of Beeswax Flowers

2nd **Mrs Sue Rawlings**

Class 63: Metheglin or Hippocras Dry or Sweet

1st **Mr Chris Rawlings**

Class 65: Cyser (One bottle)

3rd **Mr Chris Rawlings**

Class 107: Newsletter

1st **West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association**



Elaine would like to thank all members who submit articles of interest to the WWBKA newsletter – to previous editors and to sage supporters of the newsletter, for their advice, motivation, and encouragement – well done to us all!



Wonderful to hear that following her exam at the National Honey Show, Bridget Knutson is a Show judge. I have real admiration for anyone who can taste as much honey as that in a Honey Show and remain sensible!

Bees, Honey, Cairo, Aswan, Luxor, and The Nile!

I am lucky to have just returned from a trip to visit Cairo and the Nile. I spent some time as a child living in Khartoum in the Sudan. Sadly, the current troubles make the Sudan a difficult place to visit, but visiting Egypt and a trip down the river Nile brought back happy memories from my childhood – the people, the language and the culture, the climate, and surroundings.

I had to ask the question though! I asked our guide “Adi” (Adel Alfons) where there was reference to bees on the tombs and temples. At the Karnak Temples, just before the entrance, on a large tablet, Adi was kind enough to point out what he described as the symbol of a bee – it lacks the required number of legs, and it reminded me of a mosquito or a dragonfly (there are a lot of those about), but the guide books all describe it as a bee... so there you have it! Thanks Adi for pointing it out to me.



Bees, Honey, Cairo, Aswan, Luxor, and The Nile! Contd..

Having found the bee on the tablet at the front of the temples at Karnak in Luxor I then knew what to look for and far overhead I spotted more....



A close-up photo follows below....



Bees, Honey, Cairo, Aswan, Luxor, and The Nile! Contd..



Above - For breakfast at the hotel – honeycomb to add to your fruit, yoghurt or bread.... I tried to find out the source, but was unable to do so.

Of course I had to try some – (in my opinion it was not as flavourful as the honey from my own bees!)

In Aswan our guide went to buy spices to take back for his wife in Alexandria, I went along for a look and the smell of the spices took me back to the spice market I had visited in Omdurman when I was a child. On the shelves amongst the spices were jars of honey, again I tried to find the source but could only understand that it “came from the mountain”.



The honey available at breakfast on the cruise boat was served in little plastic pots with pull off foil lids – it was very yellow in colour and tasted to me very much like golden syrup (which I do not like at all) – I am wondering if it was one of the adulterated brands talked of at the “Bee and Honey Day on October 12th...

Elaine Mairis

Annual Branch Dinner

Now is the time to be thinking about the annual dinner, put the date in your diary!

The Farmhouse 20th January 2025. We are asked to meet at 6.30pm for 7.00pm dinner.

PAYMENTS PLEASE BY 20TH DECEMBER - ACCOUNT NUMBER 00061511 SORT CODE 30-98-75 WBKA WESTWILTSHIRE BRANCH. PLEASE ADD YOU SURNAME AND DINNER TO YOUR PAYMENT TO HELP WITH IDENTIFICATION. (e.g. SMITH – DINNER)

Please send food choices to Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com with surname and choices on your document by email by **20th December**

Please note - choices include GF and vegetarian options.

Menu

Starters

Vegetable soup

Stilton and mushrooms

Prawn cocktail

Main Course

Chicken in asparagus sauce

Steak and ale pie all served with new potatoes and vegetables

Salmon in Hollandaise Sauce

Leek and mushroom pie, with or without Stilton (please state which at time of ordering)

Lasagne served with salad and garlic bread

Dessert

Chocolate brownie

Malteser cheesecake

Lemon meringue roulade

Mixed trio of ice cream

Cost:

Two courses £23.00

Three courses £30.00

Recipes using honey...

I am always on the lookout for interesting ways of cooking with honey (though I feel that cooking with honey is wasteful and does not do the flavour justice).

I came across the following recipe on the Internet and thought it sounded interesting, so I tried it. We are fortunate to have a fig tree in our garden, whilst there are sometimes sufficient ripe figs to enjoy as there is not a reliable amount of hot sun at the right time of the season, this recipe calls for underripe green figs and there is often an abundance of those!

The recipe and comments are directly from the author. The photos are my own.

Preserved green figs - serve with cheese and crusty bread.

You'll need

40g flaked sea salt

500g unripe green figs, (hard ones that you could thwack with a stick are best)

5g bicarbonate of soda

750ml clear honey

1 lemon, juiced and finely zested

1 mandarin, zested into strips and juiced

10g fennel seeds



Recipes using honey contd.

How to

Fill a bowl with water, then stir in most of the salt to dissolve. Keep a little salt back for the next stage.

Cut any woody tips away and then cut a criss-cross on the top of each fruit.

The fruit will secrete a little milk at the cut end, as they're unripe. Try not to wipe your eyes as it's a slight irritant and be sure to wash your hands.

Using a small, pointed knife, prick the figs all over, then soak them in the salty water overnight.

The next day, drain and wash the figs, and put them in a large saucepan, cover well with water.



Add the bicarbonate of soda and the remaining salt. Gently simmer with a lid for about half an hour or so, perhaps a little longer. The figs should be quite tender when pushed with the tip of a knife.

Drain the figs in a colander and then put them back in a saucepan with the honey and a splash of water, the fennel seeds, zests, and juices from the citrus, and then bring to a boil.

Recipes using honey contd.



Turn down the heat to a very gentle simmer and let it cook over low heat for about an hour maybe a little more, stirring every so often.



Recipes using honey contd.

The figs will turn slightly translucent, the honey will get thicker and then they are ready.

You should place the hot figs in sterilised jars, pour over the hot honey then close and put away for another day.

Be warned that if you leave your windows open whilst making these, bees will know what you are doing and will come to visit, wasps as well. At least they did for me. Quite a number of persistent insects, refused to leave until they found the source of the hot honey smell.

If you can't wait for them to mature a little, take one from the jar, slice thinly along with a spoonful of the honey and eat it with slices of cheese on crusty sourdough.

Enjoy

<https://aprivatechef.substack.com/p/as-promised-a-recipe-for-green-figs>

I found it a bit of a palaver to make, but I do like the flavour of fennel and mandarin – the result is a pleasant texture and a different accompaniment with cheese – I have yet to try it with Feta cheese, though I expect that will make a good marriage as this is a Greek recipe.

Elaine Mairis



At the risk of being repetitious (!!!) – and because it is important – and there is a gap to fill at the bottom of this page – **this is another reminder for the WWBKA Branch AGM** on Monday

18th Westbury Methodist Hall BA13 3JL

We look forward to seeing you for this important event. The meeting will be followed with a talk by Chris Rawlings on the subject of "Mead."



Many thanks to Liz Gwinell for the following contribution in which she describes her experience of studying for the Basic Assessment Certificate.

Getting Down to Basics

The main reason for studying for the Basic Assessment should be because you want to learn more about the honeybee and become a better beekeeper. It isn't an academic course, and it doesn't take up much time.

I studied it with four other beekeepers at six evening sessions in March and April of this year. We didn't sit at desks and write essays. We sat in a church hall and focused on one section of the syllabus each week with all of us contributing to the session and asking lots of questions. Yes there was learning to do but it was enjoyable learning and Chris Rawlings, who delivered the course, was a fantastic tutor, encouraging and sharing his vast array of knowledge. His enthusiasm for beekeeping is infectious.

In early summer, we had several sessions at the apiary where we practised for the Basic by giving running commentaries on what we could see in the hive and improving our practical skills such as holding and turning a frame properly, keeping a smoker alight and learning to better "read" the bees.

In August, we were assessed, individually, at an outside apiary which took about an hour. When we took off the roof of the hive I was to assess, the worker bees were dragging the drones out of the hive, a sight that my assessor had never seen before and so we paused for a minute or so to watch and take photographs. After the practical session, the assessor sat with me in a cool spot and asked me questions about diseases, laying patterns and all the things we had studied with Chris.

Getting down to basics contd..

Just a few weeks later, I received my result and in October, at the Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day, we were awarded our certificates in basic apiculture.

It was quite a work of art and sits proudly on my mantelpiece and yes, I did take it down the garden to show the bees.

What did I learn? The more I learn about honeybees the more I am amazed by the complex behaviour and abilities of a creature with a brain the size of a grass seed. Learning more about them seems right: if I am to be their custodian and do the right things at the right time, it feels appropriate and respectful to step up to that task with knowledge rather than bumbling around in the dark.

Honeybees pretty much know what they are doing but one thing I have learned is that the highest risks to a colony come from its beekeeper. If I have more knowledge, if I can learn what to look for in terms of disease or better "read" what is going on in a hive, the chances of survival for my colonies must be that much greater.

Liz Gwinell

Thanks Liz – this is an encouraging read, and we loved seeing you receive your certificate at the show – well done!



David Raines has drawn my attention to the following article in Private Eye (publication number 1634) – I have attempted to precis the content to add to the newsletter for your interest.

The Agri Brigade

The relentless fall of oilseed rape production, grown for the manufacture of edible vegetable oils, animal feed and biodiesel, continues. What is causing this decline, and how long until the UK is entirely dependent on imported rapeseed oil or substitutes like palm oil - (which encourages rainforest destruction)?

Farmer co-operative "United Oilseeds" estimates the area planted to oilseed rape in the UK for potential harvest in 2025 is between 500,000 and 620,000 acres. This represents a steady decline from 700,000 acres last year and 1.7m acres a decade ago. It remains possible, (after a ban on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on the crop, imposed in 2013), to measure the acreage sown to oilseed rape, although impossible to approximate, what acreage will be harvested. Neonicotinoids were used to protect oilseed rape from flea beetle attack.

Unfortunately, these beetles are so destructive that large acreages of the crop are now written off long before harvest. It is claimed by some environmentalists and even some farmers that it ought to be possible to grow oilseed rape successfully without neonicotinoids. Farmers cannot afford the crop to fail as oilseed rape is expensive to grow. Thus, in the wake of the ban there has been a reduction in acreage sown. In 2010, the year before the ban, the UK produced more than 2.5m tonnes of oilseed rape.

The Agri Brigade contd.

Production has declined to an estimated 750,000 tonnes in 2024. There is concern that UK based industrial facilities which crush the seed and turn it into vegetable oil will no longer be viable, further speeding decline.

Due to concerns that, as the chemical is absorbed into the plant, it might be taken up by pollinating insects, neonicotinoid use is banned in the UK on oilseed rape, it is feared that bees and other foraging insects may be weakened if not killed as it acts as a nerve agent. Justification of the ban seems reasonable. The UK government still allows importation of rapeseed oils from countries that continue to permit the use of neonicotinoids to grow the crop, this is a problem for UK farmers. The argument continues that the UK government should ban such imports, additionally banning the import of environmentally destructive substitutes for rapeseed oils, such as palm oil.

The result of such actions might potentially cause an increase in the price of vegetable oil. Therefore, instead of a ban, (it is suggested) the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs prefers to issue misleading statements such as the following:

“All food and drink products imported into the UK need to meet our import requirements - including pesticide maximum residue levels, so that British people are always protected.”

Pesticide residue in UK rapeseed oil was never an issue and not the reason neonicotinoids were banned here; they were banned to protect pollinating insects. The question is - do foreign bees not deserve equal consideration, or does the government only care about the availability of cheap imported food for UK consumers whatever the environmental costs abroad? (“Bio-Waste Spreader”) ...Certainly Food for thought.

HELP!



(STILL) wanted for a WWBKA member –

an out-apiary opportunity for 4 hives preferably within a 5-mile radius of Warminster.

Please direct any responses to newsletter-wwbka@outlook.com

Thank you.



Asian Hornet Update

Although it is late in the season, there is still information being distributed about the Asian Hornet threat and invasion. Did you get the following message in your email? Did you read it thoroughly?

We should remain vigilant and not become complacent.

Can you spare time to monitor for yellow-legged hornets over the next 2 weeks? Help protect our native pollinators and take time to observe insects feeding on monitoring stations, fruit/fallen fruit, and flowering ivy before winter.

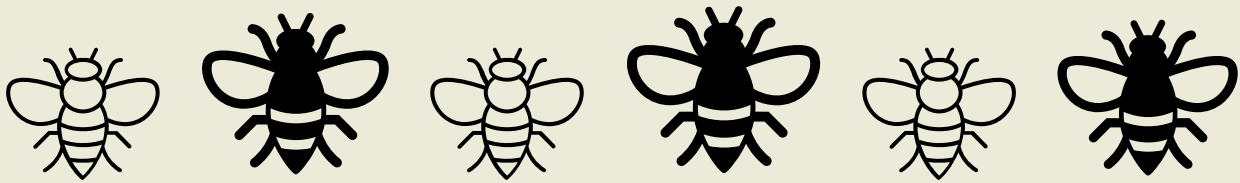
This year, **the NBU has located and destroyed 21 yellow-legged hornet nests in Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, and Hampshire.** Credible reports increase after media coverage, for example two suspect nests were found following coverage on the BBC. **Your sightings can make the difference between a nest being discovered or being unreported.**

The yellow-legged hornet is smaller than the native European hornet, and it has a dark velvety thorax, and a dark abdomen with a distinctive yellow band on the fourth segment.

Asian Hornet Update, contd.

If you think you have seen a yellow-legged hornet, please report it using the free Asian Hornet Watch App, available for [Android](#) and [iPhone](#), on the [online notification form](#) or by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. A photograph and the location of the sighting must be included for the National Bee Unit to respond. Please include your contact details so we can get in touch. For more information on how to report sightings, please visit our ['So you think you've seen a yellow-legged hornet' page](#).

Further information about the yellow-legged hornet and the work of the Non Native Species Secretariat can be found here: [Asian Hornet » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](#)



And finally, a limerick entry from the National Honey Show 2024 was noticed by a club member with a sense of humour – unfortunately, we do not have the author's name – it was photographed on the show table... credit to them – hope we can identify them at some stage...

Entitled **“Short but Sweet”**

It's a tough life being a drone,

Hunting for love “in the zone”

A moment of luck

And the pressure builds up,

Then your tackle snaps off and you're gone!

Beekeeping supplies.



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07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

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WWBKA Membership Secretary: Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

Services available to members

The following services are provided by West Wilts BKA to members:


Bee Bank (for sale or purchase of queens, nucs and colonies). Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the Chair at Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com or 07711 018440 for details.

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Library: Contact our Librarian (either direct or through the Secretary)

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Newell 01373-825560 or sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association