

West Wilts BKA News



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



IN THIS ISSUE

Diary of events **page 2**

Need to know **page 2**

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

Good to know **page 3**

The 'fun bits': news and reports.

The honey bee in the picture on the left is on the shrub known as *Symphoricarpos Albus* – otherwise known as snowberry – did you know it was related to honeysuckle?

Dear Newsletter readers – sitting down to write the first newsletter of 2025 it is hard to believe that 2025 is almost upon us. Looking back on the events of 2024 I hope you have good things to remember? I certainly learned a great deal during this year and will take that knowledge forward. I expect to face different challenges in the coming year and learn new lessons. What is certain is the support I enjoy from the community of members and friends made through the WWBKA. I am looking forward to hearing from Den Pictor our Apiary Manager when he has gazed into his crystal ball and can give us dates for our Apiary meets. Unfortunately, that will not be for a few months yet, though it gives us something to look forward to. However – there is the Annual Branch dinner to cheer you on 20th January – I hope you will all have a wonderful evening together. In the meantime, there is only one thing left to do - and that is to wish you – and the bees in your care – a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

DIARY OF EVENTS

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

The Wiltshire BKA AGM. Tuesday 28^h January 2025: at 7pm at the Corn Exchange, Devizes SN10 1HS

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 see the "Preparing for Winter" BBKA zoom meeting on YouTube by searching on the BBKA website you can also see 'Mead' with Michael Badger (from Tuesday 15th October 2024)

The BBKA zoom meeting from 19th November (Kirsty Stainton – varroa) is not available at the moment due to a problem with the website, it is hoped that it will be available online sometime in the future

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

Annual Winter Lecture (following the AGM) Bumblebees and Honeybees" Tuesday 28^h January 2025
Dr Richard Comont

Tuesday 21st January 2025: 7pm Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus': Giles Budge

18th February 2025: Keith Bartlem, 'An Inspector Calls'

18th March 2025: Jenny Morgan, Preparing for Exams

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

PLEASE EMAIL THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR WITH ANY INTERESTING EVENTS OR FEATURES IF YOU WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INCLUSION...MANY THANKS

Good to Know

PLEASE NOTE:

As previously circulated in an email from our WWBKA secretary, here is a reminder that The Wiltshire BKA AGM will take place at 7pm on Tuesday 28 January 2025 at the Corn Exchange, Devizes SN10 1HS. WBKA members are invited to attend.

The WBKA Chair, Sophie Butcher, has to retire by rotation at this AGM but has offered herself for re-election.

The final agenda and supporting papers will be circulated to all members no later than Tuesday 7 January 2025. Please note that only fully paid-up members will be eligible to vote at the AGM. Zoom will be available for the AGM.

The AGM will be followed by our annual Winter lecture on this occasion to be given by Dr Richard Comont, ecologist and author, who since 2013 has led the scientific work of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. His lecture is entitled "Bumblebees and Honeybees" and will explore the potential impacts of honeybees on wild bees and how these can be avoided.



Good to Know

A Visit to Lark Rise Community Farm.

I expect many WWBKA members already know that Larkrise Community Farm (set up in 1987 in association with Larkrise Special School), is an establishment supporting students and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In 1999 the farm became a separate entity and operates as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed by a Board of Trustees.

In December I paid a visit to Larkrise Community Farm. The principal reason for my visit was to learn about the bees kept on the farmland – but there was much else to see while I was there. Richard Green and Lucy warmly welcomed me – (Lucy is the Business Manager I am afraid I have unfortunately forgotten her surname) and was taken on a tour of the site, where I was privileged to meet staff and students. A wonderful supportive atmosphere is palpable throughout the site! Everyone was busy – though I did witness a coffee break, so it is not all hard work! I saw donkeys, ducks, geese, and hens; horses being groomed, goat stalls being “mucked out” and fresh straw being put down.

A great variety of animals and livestock was being cared for by students under the supervision of caring and professional staff. Other activities include the development of growing beds - so there is the potential for produce to be grown and sold in future, (and plenty of manure on site for fertilising the soil. On my tour I saw sheds and facilities for workshops to be carried out (carpentry for example), there were many interesting activities going on within the farm, for students of all abilities.

(A Visit to Larkrise Community Farm contd.)

Amongst the activities taking place are beekeeping. Two hives have been kept on the land. Until Geraldine Lenert's passing, she had helped care for the bees and hives. However, since her passing the hives had become overgrown, neglected and in need of expert attention. The hives have been nurtured back to health through input from David Raines.



Now Richard Green and his wife manage and care for the bee hives, and some honey was taken this year. There is a shed from which students can safely watch activities taking place. Under close supervision and mentorship, students participate in a wide variety of activities.



Richard Green has introduced the activity of making wax melts to students and supervised making this range of products is now amongst activities an offered to students.

(A Visit to Larkrise Community Farm contd.)



Above and below are some examples of the wax melts made at Larkrise Farm



Are you able to support Larkrise Community farm by donating unwanted beeswax?

Contributions of beeswax would be gratefully received. Please contact Richard Green directly using the information below...

Larkrise Community Farm, West Ashton Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 6DQ

CIO charity number: 1193880 office@larkriefarm.org.uk Tel: 01225 751675



A message from the Apiary Manager -

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!!!)

Available for collection from the apiary, payable to the treasurer prior to collection, contact Den Pictor via WhatsApp



AND AT THE RISK OF BEING REPETITIVE –

Please does any member have a contact who might be able to help?

STILL LOOKING



for 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.





www.nonnativespecies.org

Version 1.0. Produced by Lucy Cornwell (NNSS), Nigel Semmence (National Bee Unit).
Based on 'Identification Information Sheet' Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France

Asian Hornet nest identification

Asian hornets produce two types of nest, primary and secondary:

Primary nests:

- Spherical with a small entrance hole at the base, usually 5 to 10 cm in diameter.
- Built in spring by a lone Asian hornet queen, usually in a protected place such as brambles, a hedgerow, or in / on a building.
- **All primary wasp and hornet nests look similar, only report primary nests if seen with Asian hornets. To identify a nest, watch for insects from a safe distance.**

Secondary nests:

- Pear-shaped, entrance hole halfway up the nest, up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.
- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- **Use binoculars to identify secondary nests from a safe distance. Do not disturb suspected nests and retreat from any wasp / hornet nests if flying insects are observed.**

Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*



Secondary nests in a tree canopy in summer (left)



Primary nest. All primary wasp and hornet nests look similar. **Only report if seen with Asian hornet.**



Secondary nest in a hedge



Secondary nest in a building



Alert!

Report sightings of Asian hornet and suspected nests:

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: **Asian Hornet Watch**
- online at: nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

For assistance with identifying a suspected Asian hornet nest, or to help identify nests, please contact your local Asian Hornet Team (AHT).

Report Asian hornet:



Find an AHT:



Nests of similar species

Secondary Asian hornet nests may be confused with other wasp and hornet nests, or objects in trees. If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet nest, please use binoculars to check from a safe distance before reporting. See overleaf for details of where to report nests and how to get help with identifying a potential nest.

Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*

Secondary nest:

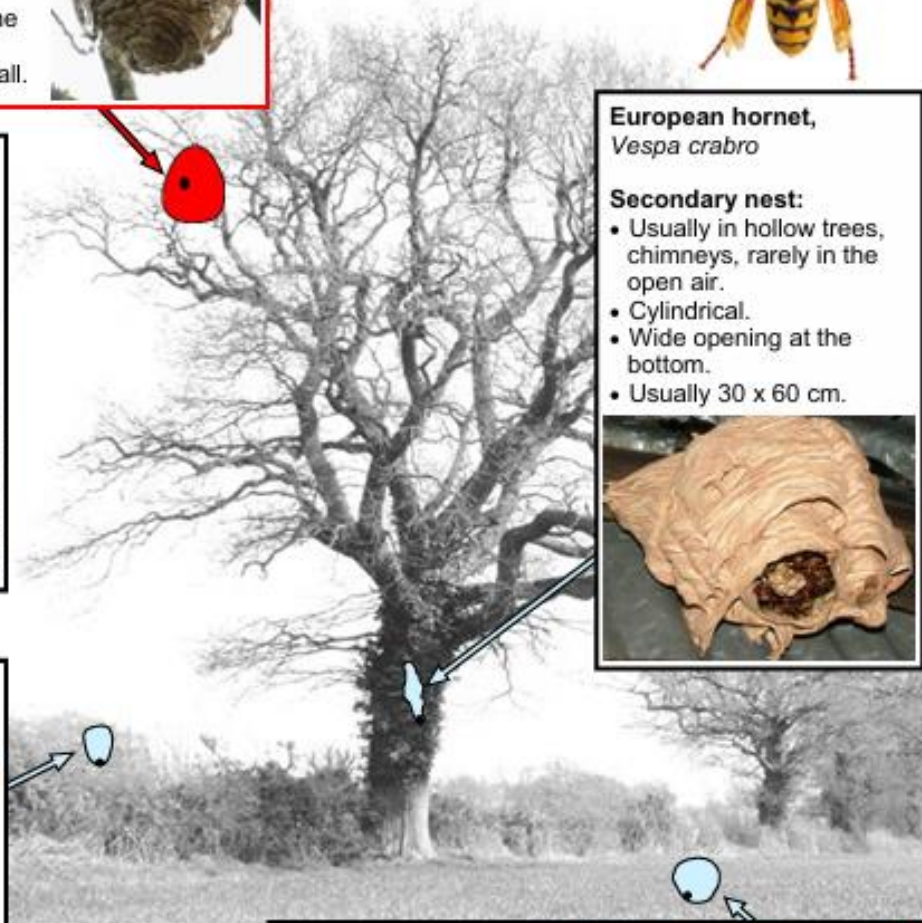
- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- Pear-shaped.
- Entrance hole halfway up the nest.
- Up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.



Other objects in trees

- Crow and magpie nests.
- Mistletoe.
- Squirrel dreys.

Bird nest in a tree:



European hornet, *Vespa crabro*

Secondary nest:

- Usually in hollow trees, chimneys, rarely in the open air.
- Cylindrical.
- Wide opening at the bottom.
- Usually 30 x 60 cm.



Median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*



Secondary nest:

- Usually in bushes that are less than 2 m tall.
- Conical.
- Small opening at lower end, off centre.
- Usually 20 x 25 cm.



Primary nest:

Characteristic tube-shaped entrance (unlike primary Asian hornet nest).



Common wasp, *Vespula vulgaris*



Secondary nest:

- Usually on the ground, or in confined spaces in buildings.
- Round to conical.
- Small hidden opening at the lower end.
- Usually 30 x 35 cm.



All image credits. Tree image adapted from: Trees in a hedgerow by Marathon, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>> via Wikimedia Commons. Asian hornet primary and winter nest images: John de Carteret - Jersey. Secondary Median wasp nest image: Sarah Smith / A Euro-wasp nest - Pendomer, CC BY-SA 2.0 Generic, via Wikimedia Commons. Primary Median wasp image: Karen McCartney. Common wasp nest image: David Jones. Other nest and insect images: Crown Copyright.

HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR BEEHIVES RECENTLY?

Milder weather has meant the bees have been more active outside the hives – have they sufficient stores to see them through until the spring? **Go back to page 7 and take another look** – you can still buy hive alive and fondant to the bees through the winter months...

WWBKA Branch Swarm Coordinator

Members would wish to be aware that David Raines has now taken on the role of Branch Swarm Coordinator from David Newell. (Many thanks to David Newell for your sterling service). Future communication regarding Branch swarms should be directed to David Raines on 07711 018440, david.raines@hna.uk.com or WhatsApp Group WW Swarm Collectors.

Want a swarm?

If you would like to provide a home for a swarm during the 2025 season, please let David Raines know so he can put your name on the list. It would be appreciated if you could also provide him with numbers for your landline, mobile and email address. Obviously, the likely number of swarms cannot be predicted, so it cannot be guaranteed that everybody who wants a swarm will get one. Swarms do not wait to be collected and therefore, once captured, they need to be hived fairly quickly so - when a swarm is reported, David will ring the next West Wilts member on the list. If that person cannot be contacted quickly, he will then ring the next member and so on. This contingency arrangement highlights that those waiting for a swarm should be spring-loaded (no pun intended) to react swiftly. At the risk of stating the obvious, remember that you will need to have an empty hive ready with frames and foundation to receive the swarm. If you hear of a swarm in your neighbourhood but you cannot collect it yourself, or if you capture a swarm that you do not want to keep, please ring David Raines so that he can arrange for it to be collected.

January Honey recipe

For a while, my Father's head offices were in Basel, Switzerland. When he had been visiting there around Christmas time he would bring home parcels of Leckerli, for me and my sisters, and my mother. Later on, my daughter remembers him bringing them for her too. Baseler Leckerli, are fruity Swiss gingerbreads, made with honey, nuts, cinnamon, Kirsch, candied lemon, and orange peel. They are eaten in the Swiss Canton of Basel all year round and are known as their regional delicacy. In Germany, it is enjoyed as a Christmas cookie. Having had a successful honey harvest this year I decided to make some for Christmas gifts – and consequently found myself thinking fondly of my father (who passed away more than twenty years ago) too.



Basler Leckerli

These are the ingredients...

225g Honey	50g candied lemon peel
125g Sugar	Juice of a lemon
1 tsp Cinnamon	Zest and juice of an orange
¼ tsp Nutmeg	50mls Kirsch or lemon juice
1 pinch clove powder	300g Flour
100g blanched Almonds	¾ tsp Baking powder
50g candied orange peel	(Icing sugar mixed with Kirsch or lemon juice to glaze)

(January Honey recipe contd...)

And this is how it is done:

Method...

* Put honey, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and clove powder in a saucepan, bring to the boil over medium heat, then remove the pan from the hob. Allow to cool a little.



* Coarsely chop almonds, add with the orange juice and lemon juice. Grate in the zest of the lemon, pour in the Kirsch, mix.



* Mix flour and baking powder, mix into the cooled mixture, knead into a soft dough.



* Dust the still warm dough with a little flour, press flat, roll out about 7 mm thick between two baking papers. Remove the top baking paper, pull the dough with the baking paper onto a baking sheet, leave and allow to dry for approximately 12 hours or overnight.

(January Honey recipe contd...)

* Preheat the oven to 220 degrees.

* Baking: bake for approximately 15 min. in the middle of the oven. While baking, mix icing sugar with the Kirsch to a glaze. Take Leckerli out of the oven, brush baked dough immediately with the glaze. Pull onto a chopping board and trim the hard edge. Cut the tidied remainder into pieces of about 4 x 3 cm. Move these with a spatula onto a cooling grid to cool.

- **A word of warning** – I found it difficult to remove the upper baking parchment after rolling the dough out between two sheets of parchment – but I persevered and won in the end!

The recipe does not give quantities for icing sugar and kirsch to make the glaze – I was a little too extravagant, but rather than throwing away the kirsch glaze I used the leftovers to finish off the mince pies I had made – they were delicious.

You can find many different recipes for Basler Leckerli on the internet – some will suggest a special mix of spices for you to use in the recipes.

The final result are delicious chewy little morsels – enjoy!



Round the Committee –

In the December newsletter I incorrectly announced that we had reached our final committee member. Whoops – to my embarrassment I had neglected to ask a very long-standing member of the committee to take his turn in the black chair – I hope that David Newell will accept my profuse apologies for this error. Read on for his interesting responses to the questions... (and if I have inadvertently missed anybody else out – please let me know).

Question: What is your role on the WWBKA Committee? **Answer:** Having just retired from full-time work, I joined the Branch (then known as the 'Warminster & Westbury Branch') in 2000. I joined the committee very soon afterwards and remained a member continuously since then – having served in several roles, including as Branch Secretary (2003-2011), Chairperson (2011-2013) and President (2015-2023). For much of that time, I was also the Swarms Co-ordinator (a task that David Raines has now taken on).

Question: How did you become interested in keeping bees? **Answer:** I had a latent interest in bees since childhood. In 1983 I went to an 'open day' at the apiary of the Stratford upon Avon Beekeepers Association, where I was persuaded to become a beekeeper – and I received my first sting!

Question: How long have you been keeping bees? **Answer:** I have kept bees continuously since completing my beginners course at Pershore College of Horticulture in the Spring of 1984. I bought my first colony (of 'Buckfast' bees) that summer – before Varroa or Asian Hornets appeared in the UK. I transferred from Stratford on Avon Beekeepers Association to Somerset Beekeepers Association when I moved to Frome in 1988 and, later, transferred to the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association when I moved to Dilton Marsh.

(Round the Committee contd...)

Question: How many hives do you have, and which hive is/hives are your favourite?

(Why?) **Answer:** Because of my itinerant working life, I have never kept more than five colonies at a time – normally only two or three. At present I maintain three colonies in National hives. Apart from a brief experiment with an early 12x14 brood box, which was too heavy for me, I have always

used standard National hives - which I like – but with ‘brood+½’ below the queen excluder. If I were fitter, I would probably have switched to 12x14 or Commercial brood boxes years ago.

Question: Do you like your honey - what do you do with your harvest? **Answer:** I started keeping honeybees because I found them so fascinating. I was not as interested in the honey, although I liked the taste, and I still do. I sell some of my honey occasionally, but my wife gives most of it away (with my approval) to friends and relations.

Instead of answering the question “What has been the most useful to given to you that you would like to pass on”? David Newell has said he has had many tips and was not sure which to choose – instead he has proposed the question “What do you consider to be the most useful item of equipment to have been introduced while you have been keeping bees”? **Answer:** Many new, or different, pieces of equipment have appeared over that period. Opinions on them will vary, but I think that one of the most useful items has to be the ‘open mesh floor’. It has not only played an important role in the battle against the Varroa mite but, by replacing the solid floor, it also enables any moisture which might get into the hive in winter (rain/condensation) to drain away or evaporate – so that the colony and frames remain dry and mould-free.

Thank you very much for participating David.



There is still **WWBKA HONEY FOR SALE!**

The Apiary's 2024 honey is still available to members to buy by the bucket

£5 per lb

If you would like to buy apiary honey, please pay the treasurer direct after checking with Den Pictor the weight of buckets available (this can be done via WhatsApp)

You can contact the club treasurer by email at Treasurer-wwbbka@outlook.com

PLEASE NOTE ALL GOODS TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE APIARY ONLY.



Looking for a new feature for the 2025 WWBKA newsletter, "Plant of the month was suggested – so here we go!

In the **Plant of the month feature** it is planned to take a look at plants flowering in the hedgerows and gardens.

For the first month, I have chosen **Daphne Bholua**.

Ever since I have been fortunate to have a garden of my own I have had Daphne in it. Sometimes I have been able to sever and pot a runner to take with me when I have moved house, (Daphne does not take kindly to transplanting). The blossoms are pleasing in that they are very sweetly scented and additionally extremely welcome during the winter months. I confess I have always grown mine beside the gate so I can inhale the sweet scent as I pass through it – I have always thought it would be a shame to have it at the bottom of the garden and miss the perfume when the weather has been not worth a trip down the garden!

Daphne is a semi evergreen shrub – reaching as high as 8 feet (2.5 metres), depending upon which shrub you choose, some are prostrate. Most often blooms are pink or white, though there is a named variety which has yellow flowers, though I believe it is rather tender. My Daphne caught the frost very badly three years ago – it is slowly beginning to regain strength. The shrub is generally bushy in habit. As are many plants, it should be noted that it is toxic if eaten, and skin irritant. Gloves and other protective equipment should be worn when handling this, it is toxic to pets.

Full information about the cultivation of "Daphne" can be found by using the search engine on your computer. The information above is taken from the Royal Horticultural Society website [Daphne bholua | Nepalese paper plant/RHS Gardening](#)

("Plant of the month" contd...).



As you can see from the photo above – the bees approve!



Not the cheapest shrub to buy, nor the fastest growing – but I have always thought it was well worth having in my garden

Beekeeping supplies.



For Your Beekeeping Supplies

Your local supplier providing a service for:

- All Thorne's supplies
- BBWear suits – try before you buy
- Second hand kit bought and sold
- Available to attend your association, apiary meetings
 - Supporting Trainers, Improvers, Newbies
 - Payment by BACS, card, cash, cheque
 - Deliveries – subject to distance, order size

Please email your order or phone so we can arrange an appointment for you to visit to discuss what you need.

sales@thebeedepot.com

07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP
what3words poetry.unto.driveway

Contacts and services

Contact details for committee and officers

WWBKA President: President-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Chair: Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Treasurer: Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Apiary Manager: Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com

WWBKA Honey Show Secretary: HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com

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 Raines on 07711 018440 and david.raines@hna.uk.com).

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association