West Wilts BKA News

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

IN THIS ISSUE

In this March issue of our WWBKA newsletter Tom Kenyon has written about his personal experiences of using the Snelgrove board. I am certain members will be fascinated to read this, thank you Tom for sharing your knowledge.

If any other members have items of interest to offer, please send them in to the editor at the newsletter email address.

The photo above is of a honeybee on Sarcococcus in a pot in my garden in the recent warmer temperatures. The shrub does not have particularly striking flowers, but it has a wonderful scent – another reason for keeping it by the garden gate – the honey bees have found it and appear to appreciate it's presence! I saw a splendid Red Admiral butterfly sunning itself on the garden wall yesterday, and plenty of Bumble Bees buzzing around the garden too. I hope the weather stays warm and they come to no harm.

I am sure members will be happy to read about provisional dates for apiary meetings – let us hope for continued good weather and thriving colonies at the apiary – watch out for additional messages as dates approach…

Registered Charity No. 1198735.

DIARY OF EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE - PROVISIONAL DIARY DATES FOR APIARY MEETS ARE ON PAGE 4

April

The BBKA Spring Convention 2025 Friday 4th – Sunday 6th April 2025. Harper Adams University, near Telford, Shropshire, TF10 8NB Spring Convention | British Beekeepers Association

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

The BBKA zoom meeting from 19th November (Kirsty Stainton – varroa) is now available (having previously been unavailable due to technical issues. You should be able to find it by clicking on this link Varroa Management: Biology, Monitoring, Treatments, Husbandry Methods, Kirsty Stainton

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

18th March 2025: Jenny Morgan, Preparing for Exams (more details in this newsletter on page 3).

15th April: 'Swarms' with Lesley Jacques

20th May: 'Building a Strong Colony' with Roger Paterson

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... THANK YOU

More information follows, from Jane Medwell, (Chair, Education & Husbandry Committee, BKA), about the forthcoming BKA lecture planned for 18th March 2025 at 7pm…

BKA March Talk: 'Preparing for Exams'

The next in the BBKA series of Zoom talks will be 'Preparing For Exams' with Jenny Morgan on 18th March 2025 at 7pm. A recording of this talk will be available on YouTube for those unable to watch live.

Jenny Morgan has worked in Secondary and Tertiary Education for over thirty years as Head of Science, Physics teacher and Teacher trainer. I have been a beekeeper for over 14 years and am a Master Beekeeper. I currently manage 35 hives. I am active within my own association leading groups studying for modules and practical beekeeping assessments. I am keen to assist other beekeepers to increase both their theoretical knowledge and practical expertise. I also spend time educating the public through talks and demonstrations. I find bees fascinating and am always keen to learn more. I am an Exam Board Member. I also mark BBKA exam papers as well as conduct practical assessments.

Ways of Preparing For BBKA Exams ...Beyond Rote Learning

My talk will focus on strategies that can be used to help people prepare for assessments. We shall look at the importance of reviewing the syllabus. The development of the vocabulary associated with a topic. Mind maps, diagrams and other techniques for helping develop key links. Examination techniques will be discussed.

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81233819992?pwd=DYMZxTImJjpRCLJjYjvblxgybQQdSZ.1

Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992 Passcode: 527929

Provisional dates for the club apiary sessions 2025.

How wonderful it is to be including the following message about club apiary sessions – I bet everybody is keen to get going!

We have to remind members that the dates are dependent upon the state of the bees, and the weather… so watch out for messages.

"We know that spring is well and truly here when we're able to open the club apiary up to members for our regular Saturday sessions. Although at the time of writing the weather is still very grey and dreary, we have a provisional list of the 2025 dates, so hopefully better weather and sunnier days are on their way!

These dates are, as always, provisional. If the club colonies haven't reached adequate strength, or the weather isn't good enough to open the hives we might have to cancel, sometimes at short notice. If we do have to cancel a session we'll send out a mailshot and update the webpage. But fingers crossed we'll be able to open on the following dates:

12th April
26th April
10th May
24th May
7th June
21st June
5th July
19th July
2nd August
16th August
30th August
13th September

We're looking forward to welcoming you back to the apiary, finding out how your bees have fared in the winter, and getting back to working with our bees together.

Recipe of the month –

Honey Banana Bread

Ingredients

¾ cup honey

3 tbsp sunflower oil

1 egg

3 ripe mashed bananas (or 1 heaped cup of mashed banana)

½ cup + 2 tbsp milk *(I had some whipping cream left over, so I used 2 tbsp instead of milk)*

2½ cups Self Raising flour *(I used SR flour instead of plain flour and reduced the baking powder suggested)*

1tsp baking powder

½tsp salt

Method

1. Preheat oven to 170 C (325F), grease and line a loaf tin.
2. Place bananas in a large bowl and mash thoroughly with a fork. Add honey, milk, egg, and oil, stir to combine.
3. Add flour, baking powder and salt. Stir until just combined.
4. Pour into a greased loaf pan and bake for 55 min to 1 hr 10 min, until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean.
5. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before inverting onto a wire rack to cool. When completely cold, remove lining paper and slice.

Verdict! My banana loaf was a good texture and browned nicely. I adjusted the oven temperature to slightly below the suggested temperature as my oven cooks quite quickly.

Plant (s) of the month – (hoping I haven't gone "overboard" and have plenty more plants to talk about next month!)

Sarcococca

There are several species of this woodland shrub to choose from, most with fragrant white flowers in winter, and preferring similar shady growing conditions. They differ mainly in overall size and shape. The two most widely available are **S. confusa** – a glossy-leaved, dense, and slowly spreading shrub with white spidery flower clusters, highly scented, followed by black berries. It grows to 1.5–2m (5–6½ft) tall, and **S. hookeriana** – a suckering shrub with a more upright habit, growing to 1.5m (5ft), it has narrow leaves, fragrant white flowers, and black berries. Some of its offspring, such as S. hookeriana var. digyna 'Purple Stem,' have purple stems and pink-tinged flowers. Additional information about planting, watering feeding and pruning can be found on the RHS website by clicking on the following link How to grow sarcococca / RHS

Recent weather has been a couple of degrees warmer and the honeybees in our hives are venturing outside…. An abundance of willow and hazel catkins are evident in the hedgerows, maybe the bees are "grazing" on these as they pass by… The following are not my own photos, credit to the sources under the photos.

1. 

2. 

3. 

1. Photo credit to File:Honey Bee on Willow Catkin (5419305106).jpg - Wikimedia Commons
2. photo credit to Focus on Hazel catkins – Bredfield Wildlife
3. Photo credit to Willow catkins: early pollen for bees — rosybee - plants for bees

Royal Bath & West 2025 - Bees and Honey Section

The Schedule is out for the Honey Show, and you will notice major changes. No entry fees!

Prize cards and/or rosettes, but no prize money.

The schedule has some extra classes suggested by exhibitors last year.

Cyser, Beeswax Flowers 1-5 stems(restricted to non-NHS winners). Plus, some other class changes.

Well worth a look!

The Wiltshire Stand, organised by Gloria, will be looking for volunteers again, 6 per day.

Half day's work for full day ticket.

Help will also be required at **The Bee Garden**, and **Marquee Demonstrations**. (Bring a clean Bee suit if interested)

Setting up the main layout is another time that we look for **help in the marquee** from 10a.m. on Sunday 25th May, any one is welcome to join us with Somerset and Avon members.

If you would like to volunteer to help in a session, please e-mail me at kingbee.cr@gmail.com

stating which day, ***which session*** (morning 9am to 1.30pm or afternoon 1pm to 5:30pm) from Thursday 29th, Friday 30th, to Saturday 31st May.

First come first served.

Any **help with breakdown** after 5.30 Saturday would be appreciated.

I am hoping you will all support WBKA entries in the show as we will be looking to win the County with most points again.

Good Luck All!

Chris Rawlings Chief Steward, B&W Honey Section (kingbee.cr@gmail.com)

Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger - Commentary on taking back control of my apiary from one of our members **Tom Kenyon**

Tom Kenyon liives in East Knoyle, just South of the A303 / 350 junction, he has been keeping bees for about 15 Yrs. In Tom's own words, "I talk a good game and see myself in the upper end of the BBKA intermediate box. And others may not……!"

In the following article Tom shares his first-year experiences of using the Snelgrove board and applying LE Snelgrove's methods, (detailed in his book/pamphlet: SWARMING Its control and prevention). Tom comments "apart from the fact it worked (ish) – what was fascinating was applying his "fund of practical ideas" (back cover) from 1930s through to the 1950s".

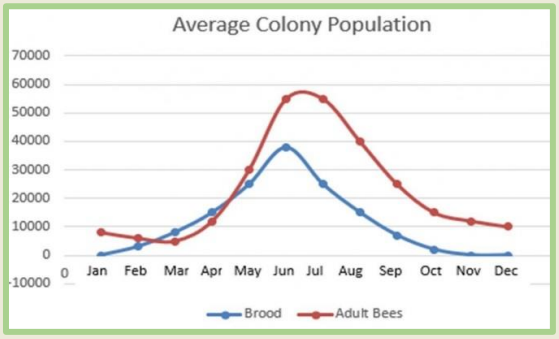
The Snelgrove board is an adapted crown board with bee space top and bottom, a central air vent and a series of double doors on 3 sides allowing you to "bleed" foraging bees from the top box into the box below. The idea is, as per all manipulations, to try to separate one of the three key colony components (1-queen, 2-Flying/foraging bees, 3-house bees & brood). Snelgrove seems to be convinced that when you bleed off the foragers you turn off their desire to swarm. He appears to have a 3-4% failure (swarm) rate as opposed to my 40%+ failure (want to swarm) rate. The Snelgrove board is a tool with which to manipulate the foraging bee population.

Tom asks "Why buy 5 X pricy Snelgrove boards from Thornes in winter 2023/4?"

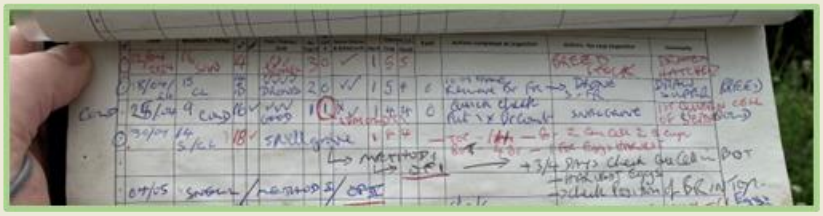
(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

Tom's personal account follows…

In the 2023 season, I was getting to my wits end. My first proper inspection was 25th April in 14°C. The late spring did not slow down the build-up. I spoke to Richard Oliver (Ex head of Wilts BKA Training) – who gently reminded me of the Average Colony Population graph. Tom says that he went into May splitting 10 colonies into 20 boxes of bees and his season never really recovered. He says he had massses of bees and was unable to find and mark most of the 2022 queens. A succession of poor matings (weather) followed by supercedures meant that beekeeping was proving to be unnecessarily hard work. Some Queen Rearing at the tail-end of the season had mixed results. Tom asks where were the halcyon summers of the 1950's (excluding rationing and the Suez crisis!)



Tom remembers (possibly from one of Roger Patterson's presentations), a picture of an apiary that had been completely "Snelgroved". This got Tom thinking it was time to deploy the "great deal of sound research" (back cover) of the President of the BBKA 1956…….. Tom decided "less is more" and cut down the number of colones to 5 per apiary and bought the Snelgrove boards. In his 2024 season Tom started 13 days earlier than 2023, on 12th April 2024.



By 25th April 2024 it was 9°C – he had his first (not sealed) queen cell of the season in his favourite colony (Milton #1) and another "giant pants" start to the season! However, what the girls didn't realise was that was all about to change – the boards had arrived……. size does not matter…..

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

A few points on the hives: Tom has Langstroth Jumbo brood bodies (poly and wood) and shallow supers. Tom remarks that when he started off, he didn't mind the weight but now uses a wheelbarrow. He says he had languished under the supply-chain misapprehension that using the world's most popular hive type – life would be cheaper.

In Tom's opinion the extra volume in the Langstroth brood box has the following advantages:

- Brood frame has the full "shop window" or brood, pollen, and nectar
- Brood frame generally has BIAS – Brood In All Stages – when manipulated, able to take advantage of age polyethism and future differential in house bee ages and roles
- Reduce swarming tendency, Jumbo brood body is 42.75L + 2 x shallow supers (2 x 25.26L) = total volume: 93.27L. According to Winston (Biology of the Honey Bee) P197 – 50% of colonies kept in hives that are >84L will supersede and not swarm. In contrast to colonies in 21-42L where 5% supersede and 80% swarm. (Tom says he must be doing something wrong elsewhere (?): 50-70% of his colonies want to swarm, most years!!!!)
- 10 brood frames have plenty of stores in winter, including lots of honey – which is difficult to extract from a Dadant brood frame – same as a Langstroth Jumbo – he feeds little – max 10L strong feed per colony.

He cites the following disadvantages:

- Bees are slow to move-up to supers in spring – he has tried going "Queen Excluder Free" with "chimneying," resulting in complete chaos - (his words)! Impacts collection of early season honey
- Langstroth Jumbo brood frame and foundation – can distort, have to handle with care – this is a real pain on a hot day
- Heavy
- BIAS – Difficult to find frames with a single age-group of brood

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

- Supers are so big (shallow =20kg honey) and may be slower for the bees to cap to 80% + to extract. I assume smaller supers cap quicker and allow take-off of seasonal forage specific honey

- Back to Louis Edward Snelgrove (LES) of Weston-Super-Mare…

Swarm prevention, LES writes on p19-21 that, "The bees may easily be kept from swarming until the last week of May by giving the queen additional laying room in advance of requirements…. During the years 1931-2, I found two brood boxes sufficient (in total – 1 extra), but in May 1933 the weather was so favourable that the bees developed with startling rapidity and boxes were added at a disconcerting rate" (3 or more BS National brood boxes).

Last season, Tom says he moaned to a beekeeping colleague that Pre-Varroa, Pre-WW2 beekeeping appeared to be pretty straightforward: Bees were slow to build-up, they gorged on clover nectar and according to LES, only swarmed in May and June. Tom's beekeeping colleague responded by pointing out that our locally adapted bees may have evolved since the 1930s. Page 11, LES explains Spring Stimulation by feeding a weak solution form 21st April to 5th May. Tom says his bees are usually "going like a train" in mid-April having collected snowdrop, crocus and early hedgerow fruit tree nectar from March – not to mention all the pussy willow pollen. Without manipulations, swarms would start to issue from late April and a 2023 story of woe would unfold!

30th April 2024 – see the extract from the Milton #1 record. There were 9 brood frames (18 sides), drones emerged, marked / clipped queen, and the bees were filling the super – despite the conditions - there were stores coming in. Time to execute the plan and take back control……through apiary-wide "snelgroving" – Method 1 – summarised on P39.

Tom describes the following formula for each hive:- 1 x extra brood body with 6 x new brood frames and foundation and 1 x super frame with drone foundation (gives a choice of drone

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

culling later – if the queen is poor / defensive – he also uses this for Varroa testing). The only real nuisance is having to spend the winter making up 30 new frames for each apiary. Tom uses this as a chance to introduce fresh comb into the apiary. He only uses 6 frames of foundation (not wanting the brood chamber to be too big early in the season and having the bees to move up to the supers). He tries to use 8 frames in a 10-frame brood box for the majority of the season. He is a big fan of dummy boards. Tom says controlling colony size / growth is something with which he needs to experiment.

To confuse things, Snelgrove talks about Methods 1 and 2 and 1A and 2A for WBC hives. These methods are then subdivided into a series of either 4 or 5 operations. Snelgrove describes a further two methods: 3 involves "keeping close to nature", placing the hive in the shade and re-queening with a young queen. Method 4 involves bleeding the foragers out of a colony into a hive with the old queen. Similar to the Pagden method + Heddon variation.

Here Tom describes Method 1.

OPERATION 1 – start of the process:

1. Find queen and put her in a clip so she is not injured – see picture
2. Empty all bees into bottom new box and insert new foundation and 1 x drawn comb (sacrificial brood). Snelgrove proposes put in a comb with unsealed brood in the bottom box. We are passing up too good an opportunity for a sacrificial frame to combat varroa
3. Return queen back in bottom box
4. Destroy any queen cells – so that the Snelgrove timings can be followed.

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

5. Put back queen excluder and super and then new brood box with all the remaining brood. House bees will move. Note: YOU CAN DO THIS IF YOU CANNOT FIND THE QUEEN – and Tom says he **has** done this!!

6. Also note use of Correx thanks to Chris Rawlings

7. From the bottom we have the old box (+foundation), queen excluder, super, new box (all brood and drawn comb), crown board and roof. – **No Snelgrove board** – at this stage.

8. Foraging bees are continuing to enter and exit the new bottom brood box through their old entrance
9. Leave for 3 days – Snelgrove reckons it takes 3-4 days for the nurse bees to pass-up through the excluder and super – P23. The super is important in that it is providing an increased gap between the queen and the house bees / brood. I think (?) this may dilute the Queen Pheromone Substance (QMP) and start to encourage the house bees to create queen cells. After 3 days

it is too late to create viable eggs.

10. The queen is now isolated from her brood in the bottom box with flying bees who are returning with forage. The House Bee / Brood component has been removed.

Day 4 - OPERATION 2

1. Remove top box carefully – there should be young queen cells

2. Check queen laying eggs in bottom box
3. Place Snelgrove Board on super (see picture) – I have to use an eke to combine poly brood boxes with wooden supers

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

Day 4 – OPERATION 2

4. Open one of the side top doors on the board and start the Snelgrove door opening and closing operation which seems to scare most people in its Duckworth-Lewis complexity.

OPERATION 2 lasts for 4 days. Foraging bees in the top box exit the Snelgrove door, go foraging and return into the main entrance in the bottom box. Foragers who were in the top box and were foraging or taking orientation flights before Day 4 and the start of Operation 2 have now joined the queen in the bottom box.

5. Be aware that as you are denuding the top box of foragers, there is a risk of starvation – I am OK: my Jumbo brood frames generally have plenty of stores – but you may not be.

Day 7 – OPERATION 3

1. Close the top door in the Snelgrove board and open the bottom door on the same side. Open the top door on the other side – there are lots of diagrams…..

2. Foragers leave from the new top door on the opposite side and return to the original side to which they were orientated. They enter the bottom door with their forage and "bleed" into the top of the original super. This solves one of my problems in that it encourages foragers to start moving into the super.

3. Day 7 of the process, we have brood, house bees and no queen in the top box and minimal flying bees. We should have sealed queen cells – created from1–3-day old eggs. The crosses in this picture show 11 Queen Cells

4. Possibly the coolest thing about the Snelgrove process, is that we leave it up to the bees to select the best queen cell. The house bees in the top box rip-down all bar one queen cell.

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

5. No need to rely on the Beekeeper judgment: how fat etc the queen cell is – leave it to the bees. – I was quite nervous with this – one of my aims for last year was to not have a swarm in this apiary. All went swimmingly.

Day 14 – OPERATION 4

1. This is the last operation. Important to do it no later than Day 14. The surviving queen cell may be made from a 2-day old egg and be at day 16 and ready to emerge. During this Operation, the virgin will take her mating flight – I hope you are impressed with the UV orientation strip "borrowed" from the RAF?
2. Close the top door on the side of the Snelgrove board and open the door below it. Open the top door on the back of the Snelgrove board – opposite the original entrance to the original bottom colony.
3. The foragers leave the rear exit and continue to bleed into the bottom colony through the bottom side door that they had become orientated to. See picture – this colony (Milton #1) had to be supered-up. Note that the hives starts to get large and heavy. Milton #1 required buttressing and propping-up. I have re-configured all my stands (4 breeze blocks) to account for this.
4. In the morning of day 14/15 when you hope the virgin is inside and not on a mating flight – dismantle hive and replace sacrifice brood in middle of bottom brood box – this should be 100% sealed (as was the only drawn frame) – inspect to see if varroa and feed to someone's chickens. This gives a change to check the original queen is OK.

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

Conclusion: What did I do with 100% successfully mated new colonies?

1. I gave 2 away – shook swarm into Nationals and keep brood
2. I created 3 more colonies – This was great as I did no proper queen rearing in 2024 – as advised by Gloria – I ran out of time.
3. I replaced 4 queens – by removing the bottom (old) queen and uniting the colonies. I gave them 24 hrs, joined the brood boxes together with paper method and then reduced everything to one box and 2 supers. As both colonies are connected through the small air vent – Paper Method may not be necessary = belt and braces approach.
4. The American Snelgrove boards are double screen boards with much larger ventilation windows compared to ours. Ours have a small air vent that is the same size as a Porter bee escape.

Theirs is like the picture in a picture frame. I think the "Double Screen boards" prevent the bees from touching each other with their antenna (antenating), while also allowing the transfer of colony odour and pheromone. I have bred a number of queens, successfully, through the Queen Right Cloake Board method – but I don't really understand why there are the differences. The original 1930's Snelgrove designed board (mine / Thornes) may encourage the top box to think that it is not queen-right and create Emergency Cells – because there is a smaller aperture and possibly, less Queen Mandibular Pheromone (QMP) / Queen Substance – but I am not sure.

5. The picture shows Milton #1 with one of my Ukrainian supers before it was split – just trying to show off, but nothing like Den's Branch apiary edifice!

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

6. Benefits of the Snelgrove board:

i. Pre-emptive action – take control – Until last year I was reactive. My swarm control involved searching for and squidging the first Queen Cells and then Artificial Swarming by isolating the queen in a nuc box – as a preferred method. The process is fraught with the risk of not noticing a queen cell – until it is too late. To minimise this risk, I had been quite intrusive in my weekly inspections. I am now much gentler.

ii. Force bees into supers – better for honey collection – I still have failed to make sections work – maybe this year……

iii. Don't need extra floors and roofs

7. Challenges:

- In 2024, I completed 10 successful Snelgrove Method 1s – 4 wanted to swarm later in the season. In 1931 Snelgrove practiced his method on 23 "stocks" – 22 of which did not swarm – Page v. – Obviously, I have room for improvement.
- In the autumn, I attended a BBKA Module Study Group, hosted by the Summerset BKA. Along with beekeeping royalty (Lynne Ingram) were two other leading lights: Alan and Patricia Nelson. Alan and Patricia are Master Beekeepers, and it turns out very keen on treatment free non-invasive beekeeping which I applaud and believe they excel at. They run 50-60 colonies. I waded in thinking that they would be delighted to know that I am almost treatment free and a disciple of the past President of the Somerset BKA and BBKA 1956. I explained my extraordinary success with pre-emptive mass-snelgroving. Patricia could barely contain her horror… As with all things beekeeping: there are numerous ways of getting to the same result. I am going to do it all again this year!

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

- Method 1 relies on the production of Emergency Cells. In July, I came across a large -4-6-day old queen cell (Swarm). I am not good at judging the age of open queen cells. This was too good an opportunity. I immediately introduced an accelerated version of Method 1. Too late for OP 1. Straight into OP 2 with a Snelgrove Board: Stuck Queen in bottom box and bled the flying bees out of the top box by opening and closing Snelgrove doors. In 10 days undertook 3 iterations. If the Snelgrove board is bleeding bees, one should be able to see the bees leave one door, go foraging and return to another. As soon as bees start returning to the Snelgrove entrance, they have access to the top box and are not bleeding into the colony below. Once this is the case (after 2-3 days), I close and open the relevant doors and accelerate the process. In this case, the foraging bees were bled off, the colony did not swarm and produced an excellent queen that replaced the grumpy one in the box below.

8. Method 2 "Applicable to stocks which have started queen cells": Capt. AG Harrison an assistant to LES appears to be the Robin to Snelgrove's Batman. LES explains that they discovered Method 2 by accident when, on a couple of occasions, they found a marked queen in the top box. Method 2 involves sticking the queen in the top box with all the brood and any open queen cells and either immediately or next day, inserting the Snelgrove Board. All sealed queen cells are destroyed, and some sealed brood is put in the bottom box. The rear top door is opened on the Snelgrove board and any foragers in the top box leave the rear door and enter bottom box through the front entrance. Or as LES explains in P41, "the field bees will now leave Box A and rejoin the queenless box B below where they will quickly lose their desire to swarm." I have not tried Method 2 – and am looking forward to giving it a go this season.

(Deploying the Snelgrove Board in anger contd.)

You will see in the Milton #1 record that by 18th May 2024 "Snelly worked" – which may have been a bit presumptive because eggs were forecasted for 25th May and first seen on 24th May 2024

I hope you your colonies are over-wintering well. Any questions – please don't hesitate to get in touch: tomkenyon@tegk.co.uk

From the Editor: Thanks for sending this Tom, it makes very interesting reading – I am sure people will be in touch to ask questions. I hope the editing met with your approval. (Elaine)

Here is a message from Chris Rawlings…

I am looking for a few volunteers to help with the Bees and Honey Section stand in the Field to Food event at the Bath and West Showground. On April 23rd, It starts around 9am until the children leave around 3:30. About1500 children are bused in and spend about 15 minutes at each exhibit of farm food production.

We will have about 6 tables: Products, virtual hive and an observation hive. Pasty supplied for lunch.

Message me if interested

Chris

Kingbee.cr@gmail.com

A reminder.

Although it is wonderful to see the bees "out and about" it is really important that we aren't lulled into a false sense of security and that we continue to keep "hefting" our hives and checking on fondant levels. I am sure there are many amongst us who are able to remember dismal temperatures and snow suddenly occurring in the month of April!

and another thing!

We are reminded that as the weather is slowly becoming warmer, now is a good time to get our traps out to attract any Asian Hornet queens.

NNSS
GB non-native species secretariat

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:

Asian hornet,
Vespa velutina

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.**

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.

FONDANT FOR SALE!

If you would like to buy FONDANT for your bees, please contact Den

(this can be done via WhatsApp) then pay the Treasurer

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

PLEASE NOTE FONDANT TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE APIARY ONLY.

The WWBKA secretary has sent the following discount codes from bbwear.co.uk

for MEMBERS ONLY

BBwear would like to introduce your members to our protective clothing and offer **15% off our classic polycotton range**, and **10% off our innovative award winning Ultra range**.

BBwear Ultra range gives you 5mm of sting protection and maximum ventilation

Use the following discount codes at bbwear.co.uk until July 31st 2025.

Polycotton range discount code:

BKAPOLY15 (case sensitive)

Ultra range discount code:

BKAULTRA10 (case sensitive)

Discount codes are also valid for use with jackets, vests, trousers, gauntlets, replacement hoods and children's bee suits.

Do members use Instagram?

britishbeekeepers post regularly – offering interesting pointers without having to regularly visit their webpages.

On the 1st March their post suggests the following….

On a warm day observe the entrance for activity and pollen going in this can be an indicator of brood and therefore a laying queen

Inspections

Probably leave full inspections till late March or early April unless you have an urgent reason (geographical variation) or if weather warmer than average, even then keep it brief

Feeding

Stores can be running low especially with an expanding colony and limited forage When adequate forage available take off fondant

If feed required 1:1 syrup can be used Pollen patties and option but need maintaining

Pests and Disease

Remove mouse guards when main frost risks have passed

Check Varroa levels

Equipment

Find your Queen excluders and have other kit ready to go

How you will house any swarms and perform artificial swarms (splits)?

Do you have at least double the kit for your current number of hives?

Hive configuration

Did you put a super under the brood box for the winter? Think about the best time to reconfigure the hive

Other

Losses can still be high this month.

Winter bees are dying off now and hopefully being replaced

A failing queen or disease may mean the hoped for build up never happens

Monthly information about pollinators

Ladybirds are a form of small colourful beetle – the seven spot is the most common in UK. The collective name for ladybirds is the Coccinellidae, there are thought to be forty seven species in the United Kingdom, an adult ladybird may live for up to three years.

Ladybirds overwinter from October to February, so as the weather warms up you will see more of them. I often find them in piles of dead leaves in my garden – or sometimes in hollow stalks of dead plants and in the log pile!

Below is a photo of the ladybird larva.

Credit: Sabena Jane Blackbird / Alamy Stock Photo

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/animals/beetles/7-spot-ladybird/

Beekeeping supplies.

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 WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com
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