

# 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 - 23**

## Welcome to the October edition of the West Wilts BKA newsletter.

– I hope your beekeeping preparations for the winter are going according to plan. What about your preparations for **Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025**? The last date for entry is 6<sup>th</sup> October at noon – sort it out now if you haven't done so already! Are you going to the **National Honey Show 2025**: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at Sandown Park? If you haven't been yet it's a great experience!

The photo this month is of a honey bee on a dahlia in the grounds at Prague Castle!. The ivy is growing strongly on my garden fence. In September/October it provides a focal point of activity at this time of the year, with a great number of red admiral butterflies sipping the ivy nectar beside bumblebees, mason bees, solitary bees, and wasps. What's going on in your garden and apiary?

# DIARY OF EVENTS

## October 2025

**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025 LAST DAY FOR ENTRIES UP TO 12 NOON**

**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025:** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> October, each year **The British Beekeepers' Association celebrates National Honey Day**

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

## November 2025

**Monthly Meet Up:** The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone 1200 onwards on 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month from November

**Skittles:** The Crown, Westbury Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November (time to be confirmed)

## January 2025

**WWBKA Annual Dinner.** Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025: The Long's Arms, Steeple Ashton (menu and time to be confirmed – save the date!)

# Need to know

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monthly meet ups at The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone 1200 onwards on 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month from November

**Saturday 8th November for skittles at The Crown in Westbury.**

**Monday 26th January for the dinner at The Long's Arms, Steeple Ashton**

## PAST LECTURES

If you are able to access the internet you will find links to past BKA lectures you might like to review over the winter months.

# Good to Know

## Apiary News



Honey is still available by the bucket (£6/lb) through Den Pictor our Apiary Manager. Please liaise with the Treasurer to pay before collection and contact Den via his WhatsApp account to arrange for collection from the apiary

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP YOUR CLUB?



Tom Kenyon has kindly offered to take over the AHAT role from Dan Young – we thank Dan for all he has done in the AHAT role in the past and thank Tom for taking this on.

Liz Gwinnell is stepping down from “Membership Secretary” could you fulfil this role?

If you can help by taking over the role of Membership Secretary don’t hesitate to get in touch with the club secretary in the first instance for information - WWBKA Secretary:

[Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

## **Amanda Leworthy invites members to contact her about taking on the role she is relinquishing as County Secretary at the WBKA AGM in February 2026.**

### Secretary Job Description

The Secretary of Wiltshire Beekeepers' Association becomes a Trustee and Officer of the charity (WBKA became a charity in April 2022). The standard term of office is 3 years.

An overview of the key tasks follows:

1. Organisation of quarterly Trustees meetings (currently held in March, June, September, and November) to include:

Booking the venue

Preparation of the agenda in consultation with the Chair

Collation and circulation of papers to the Trustees before the meeting

Writing and circulation of the minutes to the Trustees after the meeting

2. Organisation of the AGM held in January/ February to include:

As above, plus responsibility for counting any votes on the night.

3. Being the point of contact for the Charity Commission and updating details .

4. Monitoring the WBKA Secretary's Inbox regularly.

5. Liaison with the Trustees between meetings as required.

Amanda reassures us that the responsibilities listed above could be fitted into evenings and weekends.

Amanda is happy to discuss any aspects of the role in greater detail with interested parties.  
**Please contact Amanda at [leworthya@gmail.com](mailto:leworthya@gmail.com) to arrange a phone call.**



## **No more apiary club meets until 2026.**

**Here is a message from our apiary manager Den Pictor:** Here we are at the end of the club's Apiary season, and we can only say that it's been a great summer for bees and honey production.

In general, all colonies seem to be in good health. There is some feeding going on with the ivy just showing signs of life, but not sure how good it might be, as the ground is still very parched.

A good amount of honey is in stock, and some has already been sold at £6 per lb.

All colonies have been treated for Varroa, and at the last check, they were all queen right, so fingers crossed.

With the huge honey crop here and at my home apiaries, I was struggling to cope with the extraction of both, so a big thanks to Donald and Ruth, as well as Katie, for stepping forward and helping out this year. Thanks again.

Many people have contributed to the running of the apiary again this season, which I'm very grateful for and thank you to them all.

Den Pictor

**Thanks Den for your unfailing attention to the apiary throughout the year.**

**A message to the club members – keep attending -**

**it's great to meet up to share successes and find solutions to problems.**

**Waxing Lyrical** (by Liz Gwinnell after attending the workshop provided by Sophie Butcher)

Members from all four branches of Wiltshire Beekeepers attended Sophie Butcher's Candle and Wax Masterclass held near Chippenham on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September. At the class on 20<sup>th</sup>, half the attendees were from West Wilts, determined to learn skills to make entries for honey shows and challenge members from other branches!

The masterclass focused on how to clean and prepare beeswax ready to make a variety of candles, wax blocks, and food wraps.



Equipment for cleaning beeswax

Precision, care and patience were needed to prepare the beautiful long tapered candles which have clinched prizes for Sophie at many honey shows. It is essential to keep the beeswax at the correct temperature, dip the wick many times and carefully roll it in between applications to achieve a polished and precise result. To make the perfect tapered candle, it seems essential to have the right candle making equipment such as a honey warmer and dipping jig but for the other items made on the day, many items are

(Waxing Lyrical contd.)

simple household items or can be purchased at a reasonable price.



Adam tries candle dipping

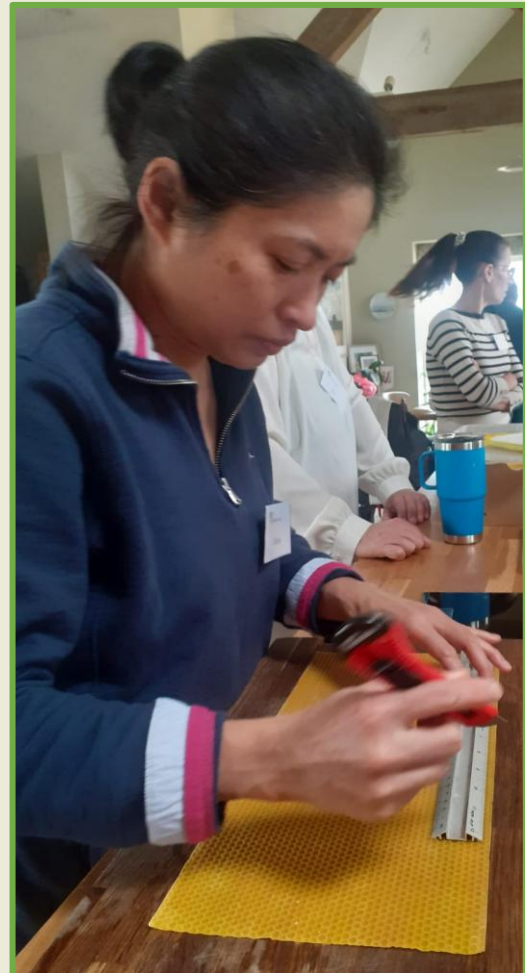
For making wax blocks and beeswax cakes, it is essential to carefully measure the wax to ensure it meets competition rules and pour it slowly to avoid air bubbles. It is also crucial to work on a clean surface to avoid dust and pet hairs being incorporated into the finished design.

Sophie also showed the group how to make moulded candles: recommending silicon as the easiest material to work with; rolled candles from beeswax sheets and beeswax wraps using a square of cotton and a hot iron.

The overall results were impressive given that the workshops took place during the course of just one morning and hopefully all those attending left feeling inspired to try their hand at making beautiful things with beeswax.



(Waxing Lyrical contd.)



Left: Sophie pouring wax into a mould; Right: Gloria measuring beeswax sheets

Sophie's final words of advice to everyone entering shows are to read the rules and pay particular attention to stipulated weights and dimensions. And then, read them again!



Beeswax items made at the workshop

**Liz Gwinnell**



**Recipe of the month for October:** Baked Figs with Blue Cheese (Sorry I didn't have time to make the date cake as I had promised – hopefully, next month!)

## INGREDIENTS

- 6 ripe figs (Bursa if in season)
- a little olive oil, to drizzle
- 3 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 3 tbsp. honey
- 100g blue cheese, at room temperature



## METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/gas 6.
2. Trim the figs and cut a cross in each to about halfway down the fruit. Place them in a baking dish and drizzle each with the oil, balsamic and honey.
3. Bake for 10 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and crumble a chunk of cheese in each fruit, pressing into the cut.
5. Return the dish into the oven and bake for another 5 to 10 minutes until the cheese melts and the figs open up and release juice into the dish.
6. Serve immediately, perhaps with some crusty bread as a starter; with a dollop of yoghurt or crème fraîche if for dessert; or as a side to a meat or game main course.

<https://www.cuisinefiend.com/22/baked-figs-with-blue-cheese>

### WWBKA Honey Show September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Did you enter the WWBKA show at Bratton on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2025? So much effort and time was invested into the event – the number of entries meant that a “Blue Ribbon” could be awarded – and Chris Rawlings was the lucky (and well-deserved winner). Special thanks are extended to Dan for the organisation, David, and Gloria for arranging lunch, Chris for overseeing the judging and Amanda for stewarding – if I’ve missed anyone off please accept my apologies.

I really enjoyed seeing all the entries – I think sometimes we inspire each other to “have a go”! it is heartwarming to see how information and enthusiasm is shared about how to prepare for entering the show. I haven’t been able to speak to all winners to ask for permission to use photos – so maybe I can publish those in the next edition of the newsletter.



Above – some of the entries

## WWBKA Honey Show September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### Results

Kate Forbes Trophy: Jan Mojsa

Dick Mills Rosebowl: drawn – Elaine Irvine and Chris Rawlings

Chairman's Cup: Elaine Irvine

Sister Lucy Cup: Chris Rawlings

Aldo Cup: Sue Rawlings

Walt Conway Cup: Chris Rawlings

Geraldine Lenert Excellence Award: Chris Rawlings



Pictured above – Jan Mosja with her “newcomer entry” awards

the WBKA County Show is October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at Devizes – are you going to exhibit?

**CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS 6<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2025 – GET YOUR ENTRIES IN ASAP**

(WWBKA Honey Show September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, contd.)



**Above** – Chris and Sue Rawlings with some of the trophies they won at the WWBKA Show in Bratton on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025

*(I have been unable to obtain permission from other trophy winners to use their photos – perhaps next month?)*



## **Results for those taking the British Beekeepers Association Basic Assessment were positive...**

Congratulations to Gary Potton: Andrea Stickwell: Elaine Mairis: Tony Hill: Paul Marchant  
and Nicola Loud for passing the British Beekeepers Association Basic Assessment

**Permission was sought from participants to include their names and results in this edition -  
if there are any names missing, please let me know and I will include those names in the  
next edition of the newsletter.**

**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025:** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025. 10am to 4pm



**Follow the link below for full details**

<https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/WBKA-2025-Schedule-v1.pdf>

## **Talks**

10.00-11.00 Marin Anastasov: Honey bees – 130 million years in the making

11.30-12.30 Stephen Fleming: Understanding and combating the yellow-legged hornet threat, with a look at the latest technology making tracking easier

13.00-13.30 Richard Rickitt: Thinking of becoming a beekeeper? How to get started

14.00-15.00 Roger Patterson: The Patterson Unit – a very different way of managing an apiary



**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025:** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025. 10am to 4pm

### Activities

Honey beer tasting - made from West Wilts honey by Wadworth: Mead tasting: Candle rolling for the kids – FREE: Face painting for the kids – FREE: Dedicated children's activity corner: Bee-related gifts and products for sale (ahem, Xmas shopping?)

A chance to natter about bees up with friends over a coffee and to get help and advice and ideas from other beekeepers.

**Plant of the month: October: *Hylotelephium Spectabile* (Ice Plant).**



An herbaceous perennial to 45cm, with thick erect stems bearing shallowly scalloped, broadly elliptic, grey-green leaves and starry pink flowers in flat terminal clusters to 15cm across in late summer.

There is not much in the way of pollen and nectar around at the moment – though the bees are still out looking when the sun is shining, and we have been blessed with some warm days haven't we? The ice plant is easy to grow in the garden – and the bees are happy to forage on it.





From BBKA newsfeed on FaceBook -

## Yellow-legged Asian hornet update 26.9.25

11 new nests this week

129 nests in total

476 sightings

Nest finds in Kent, Hampshire & Isles of Scilly

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/about-us/beekeeping-news/yellow-legged-hornet-2025-rolling-update>

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-incursion-map?>



## October – Time to reflect on a long warm season (reproduced from the BBKA on FaceBook)

- 🐝 Feeding syrup normally stops early in the month – continuing risks stores with a high-water content fermenting and potentially harming colonies.
- 🐝 If stores are low fondant may be a backup - often placed directly above cluster on top of hole in crown board
- 🐝 Avoid inspections unless you have a very good reason, observe externally instead – inspections cause the bees to use more valuable energy reserves to reseal the hive. Alternatively, polycarbonate crown boards allow you to peek into a hive without disturbance.
- 🐝 Fit mouse guards. Some turn entrance block upside down to prevent entrances getting blocked with dead bees over winter
- 🐝 Some place a super above the floor and beneath the brood box to raise the colony from draughts on open mesh floors (nading) – if you do this queen excluders should have been removed.
- 🐝 If woodpeckers a problem consider a chicken wire 'cage' round hives.
- 🐝 Hefting, with practice this will let you gauge the weight of remaining stores – some use fishing scales, first on one side then the other, for an accurate measure.
- 🐝 Consider an cavity wall insulation board (Celotex/Kingspan) in an empty super above the brood box and crown board on wooden hives.
- 🐝 Strap & weigh down hives, Autumn storms can tip hives over easily. After any storms check colonies haven't shifted.
- 🐝 Clean up & repair any kit removed from hives ready for next season.



## **WWBKA Equipment available for loan**

Are you aware that members may borrow equipment from the club?

The following is a list of what is available – though the list may require updating. Please be aware that the equipment is often housed with other members due to lack of space at the club house – consequently a reasonable length of notice should be given – and at certain times of the year particular items of equipment may be in high demand.

Honey extractor

Honey warmer with Inkbird Digital Temperature Controller

Hand-held refractometer and case

Virtual Hive (BS brood box with frames, virtual frame pictures, QE)

Honey grading glasses

Microscope - Amscope SE120 portable binocular stereo with WF10 eye pieces

Microscope - Brunel ST1 stereo dissection WF10X serial number 1037199

Microscope - C. Baker Compound Microscope Leitz Dialux 22/22 EB

Booker cash and carry card

'Strainaway' filtering system

Posters

Projector

Electric honey extractor

Memory stick for Kronigin honey extractor

Memory stick for BBKA "Course in a case"

3 Frame Spinner (Honey Extractor)

Projecting Screen

Easi-steam wax extractor

**CONTACT THE CLUB SECRETARY FOR MOR INFORMATION**

## HAVE YOU GOT YOURS YET?

Did you know members wanting to buy WWBKA clothing can order directly from the suppliers - the link to ordering clothing is "live" on the shop website.



Any of the four Beekeeper Products (Fleece, Sweatshirt, Polo Shirt and Cap) are available to order from the OHM website using the following link:

<https://ohmclothing.co.uk/shop/workwear/wiltshire-beekeepers/>

**Alternatively**, you can go onto the OHM website, click 'Workwear,' then 'Wiltshire Beekeepers' and you will find all the items listed there.

Please note that all queries will be handled by the shop.

**Customer Support** - Devizes | OHM Clothing Ltd and OHM Charities

**01380 825355**

**Opening times:** 10-5 Tuesday-Friday, 10-2 Saturdays.

**Shop:** 31 Sheep Street, Devizes, SN10 1DJ

**Workshop:** Unit 6, Axis Business Centre, Westmead Ind Est, Swindon, SN5 7YS



*Wiltshire Beekeepers*  
West Wiltshire  
Beekeepers Association  
Unisex Polo Top

**£16.19**



*Wiltshire Beekeepers*  
West Wiltshire  
Beekeepers Association  
Unisex Sweatshirt

**£25.79**



*Wiltshire Beekeepers*  
West Wiltshire  
Beekeepers Association  
Cap

**£10.19**



*Wiltshire Beekeepers*  
West Wiltshire  
Beekeepers Association  
Unisex Fleece

**£33.79**

**An ideal birthday gift for your nearest and dearest? (I dare not suggest you buy them as a Christmas gift – If I do, I will be told December is a very long way away).**

## Combining colonies

Getting towards the end of the beekeeping season (though it never really stops does it?) I had two colonies I wasn't sure what to do about. I asked around for advice at apiary meets. I had a small colony with a queen – she appeared to be laying very well – and another strong colony that was queenless. The consensus was to combine the two using the newspaper method (I had read much about this online).

I had read about the process and once when I started beekeeping I carried out the procedure with help from a mentor. But I hadn't done it myself before. I read some more and decided I should face the situation – the season was moving on and the bees needed time to combine before settling for the winter.

So, I started the process. However – I had overlooked the need for additional equipment. My small colony with the queen was in a poly-nuc. I needed to transfer these into a brood box to match the other colony I wanted to combine, to ensure a tight fit between boxes. A shout on WhatsApp for a spare brood box yielded no response. I looked on eBay – too far away and I wanted to get on with the process. Aha I thought – I'll phone Diane Sleight (our Thornes representative – she sometimes sells second-hand equipment too) to see if she has any "spares" I could purchase. Success!

So, armed with the spare WBC brood box I assembled equipment. Smoker (just in case I needed it), fuel and lighter, plus the usual bits. Ah – got the brood box – don't forget the stand to support the brood box – yes, got one of those – loaded into the car and set off. It all went well (ish).

Unfortunately I had overlooked an entrance excluder for the WBC – I didn't have a spare one – so I improvised by sticking two pieces of duck tape together sticky sides together

**(Combining colonies contd.)**

and sealed these over the entrance leaving a gap for the bees to enter and exit in the middle, (I do love a piece of duck tape!)



Having moved the hive stand into place, put the brood box on top and replaced the lid, I realised the entrance was much lower than the stand the poly-nuc had been on. The bees clustered above the entrance, but with a little smoke and persuasion they worked it out.

After a few days in the WBC brood box to let the receiving colony "settle," I got myself organised to add the second colony separating them with a large sheet of newspaper.



The colony I was about to move on top of the first colony appeared (to me) to be large. I envisaged disturbing them would result in a lot of bees in flight. I went to the site early in the morning before the bees were flying. The shoulder injury I have can make lifting and carrying anything heavy difficult, so I arranged a couple of WBC lifts beside both hives to rest the brood box on. I placed a clean sheet over the lifts beside the brood box I was moving to



**(Combining colonies contd.)**

fold over the box to keep the bees together. Not necessary I know, but it made me feel more confident and with my problems lifting and carrying, I tend to be slower than most. The planning and preparation paid off. I placed the newspaper on top of the receiving hive and moved the colony from its original site to the receiving site about 3 or 4 metres away without mishap. I reassembled the hive with the lifts and replaced the roof and left the bees to it.



After a week I went to look at the site – hoping to see specks of newspaper at the front of the hive – there weren't any visible. I carefully took the top brood box off- the bees had hardly broken through the newspaper – I hastily replaced the brood box and put the hive back together. A week later I returned – hooray – they are making progress.



Elaine Mairis

**Pollinator of the month for October:** Red Admiral Butterfly

These butterflies are often seen on Ivy and orchards, where they feed on fallen fruit or fruit opened by wasp jaws. They are particularly active in October and can be found in low numbers but remain a presence in suitable hedgerows.

I have read that peacock butterflies have often sought hibernation by this stage and are far less often seen. The Peacock Butterfly is one of the few UK native species that hibernate as adults, enhancing its chances for survival in colder months when food is scarce.



# 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](mailto:sales@thebeedepot.com)

07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP  
[what3words poetry.unto.driveway](http://what3words.poetry.unto.driveway)

## Contacts and services

### Contact details for committee and officers

WWBKA President: [President-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:President-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Chair: [Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Chair-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Treasurer: [Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Treasurer-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Secretary: [Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Apiary Manager: [Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Apiary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Honey Show Secretary: [HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:HoneyShow-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Membership Secretary: [Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Membership-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: [AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com)

WWBKA Newsletter Editor: [Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto: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](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the WWBKA Secretary: [Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto:Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com)

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at [Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com](mailto: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](mailto:david.raines@hna.uk.com)).

**Find us on**  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association