

# 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 - 15**

The 'fun bits': news and reports.

The photo of the honey bee on the left was taken in late November – Fatsia Japonica – the wasps were also very active!

I hope that you all enjoyed a peaceful Christmas period and that Santa brought you all the beekeeping equipment you wanted, because we can never have enough of that can we!

Now it is time for me to wish you a "Happy New Year" and hope that you all have a successful beekeeping year. Where did 2025 go? I am already looking forward to the Spring and meeting up again at the Apiary clubhouse – no doubt there will soon be kit making dates to put in your diaries – we will let you know those as soon as when they are agreed.

That was a terrifically successful social meet up at the Thoulstone Pavilion wasn't it! Will you be there for the next one – and have you got your name down for the WWBKA annual evening meal?

The next newsletter will be distributed in March and then we will be back to a monthly publication after having reduced presentation over the winter. Don't forget to keep hefting your hives, check stores when weather permits and make sure entrances are clear.

# DIARY OF EVENTS

## January 2026

**WWBKA Annual Dinner:** The Long's Arms, Steeple Ashton: Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025:

**Monthly Meet Up:** The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone 1200 onwards on **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January**

## February 2026

**Monthly Meet Up:** The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone 1200 onwards on **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February**

# Need to know

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monthly meet ups at The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone 1200 onwards on 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month (unless advised otherwise)

## JANUARY

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2026** The third Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Conference is being held in Bridgwater, cost £15. Please use link below for more details:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/yellow-legged-asian-hornet-conference-tickets-1976466398202?msckid=0ed2c0a9a4c86f790ba7d6afa5ef6e25>

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January** dinner at The White Hart, Corsley, BA12 7PH (arrive 6.30pm for 7pm)

## SEPTEMBER

**West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Show**, Southwick Village Hall. Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September,

## OCTOBER

**The National Honey Show**, Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey, UK. 22nd - 24th October

**Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day**, The Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS. Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October, 10am to 4pm

## EDUCATION

**Basic Microscopy course** The education officer for North Dorset beekeepers is running two basic microscopy days, one on the 10<sup>th</sup> Jan and one on the 11<sup>th</sup> Jan (2026). There are spaces left on each day. The cost of the course is £25. Interested members can contact Ron at [ron202briggs@aol.com](mailto:ron202briggs@aol.com)

*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

Firstly, we extend our thanks to **Alan Ridout**, the outgoing chair person of the WWBKA, and welcome to our newly elected chair person, Dan Young.

Dan has responded to a request to introduce himself – though of course he is no stranger!...

## **Dan says**

"as your new chairperson I have been asked to tell you a bit about myself – so here goes!

I took up beekeeping back in 2019 with just one hive, thinking I knew it all having watched all the YouTube channels. How wrong I was. I joined the club in 2020 and then started learning and am still learning now and probably will until I finish keeping bees.

I now run between fifteen and twenty hives, and rear ninety-nine per cent of my own queens (which I enjoy immensely). My second love is showing my honey, and best of all, beeswax models. I have now got into beeswax flowers (not easy). I am the club show coordinator. The next West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association show is on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2026 at Southwick Village Hall. This is going to be a great venue. We will have two judges, so please everyone have a go. It's not difficult. If you have any problems with what to show or how to show it, there are plenty of us to help you. Get in touch using the email addresses at the end of the newsletter – or via the WhatsApp account.

Well, that's all from me – just one more thing though... if anyone has a bee related problem or needs help, I am here to help at any time.

Let's have a good year

Dan"

## The Winter Hive

*The following article is directly reproduced from the internet... <https://araufoods.co.uk/2023/10/11/surviving-the-chill-a-look-at-honey-bees-in-the-uk-during-winter/>*

As winter arrives in the United Kingdom bringing its icy embrace, the natural world undergoes a significant transformation. Wildlife and ecosystems adjust to the cold, and honey bees are no exception.

These industrious insects face numerous challenges during the winter months. What happens with honey bees during winter in the UK and how they manage to survive this challenging season?

**Clustering:** One of the most remarkable behaviours exhibited by honey bees during winter is clustering. The colony gathers around the queen bee in a tight cluster, maintaining a temperature of approximately 33°C (92°F) through their collective body heat. The outer layer of bees insulates the inner layers, ensuring the survival of the queen and essential worker bees. They consume stored honey to generate this heat.

**Reduced Activity:** With colder temperatures and fewer foraging opportunities, honey bees significantly reduce their activity during the winter. They remain inside the hive, conserving energy and resources. This period of reduced activity is vital for the bees' survival, as they need to minimize heat loss and food consumption.

**Limited Foraging:** The natural environment provides fewer nectar and pollen sources during the winter months. Consequently, honey bees rely on the honey they've stored in the hive during the warmer months to sustain them through the winter. The bees gradually consume this stored honey to fuel the cluster's heat production and nourish themselves.

**Brood Rearing Pause:** In the colder months, the queen bee typically reduces or halts her egg-laying. This pause in brood rearing conserves resources and allows the bees to focus on survival rather than expanding the colony. As temperatures rise and resources become more abundant in the spring, the queen will resume egg-laying.

(contd. The Winter Hive...)

## Challenges and Threats

While honey bees have evolved to survive the UK's cold winters, they still face several challenges and threats during this season:

**Varroa Mites:** These parasitic mites continue to pose a significant threat to honey bee colonies throughout the year, including winter. The reduced bee population during winter can make colonies more susceptible to infestations.

**Starvation:** Inadequate food stores or early consumption of stored honey can lead to starvation among honey bee colonies during the winter. Beekeepers must monitor the colony's food supply and provide supplementary feed when necessary.

**Moisture and Mold:** Winter can bring excess moisture to the hive, leading to mold growth and other issues. Adequate hive ventilation and insulation are essential to prevent these problems.

**Cold Snaps:** Unusually cold and prolonged cold snaps can be a challenge for honey bees, especially if they occur early or late in the winter season. These conditions can lead to excessive heat loss and increased honey consumption.

## Conclusion

The winter months in the UK are a critical time for honey bees as they hunker down to survive the cold and unforgiving conditions. By forming clusters, reducing activity, and conserving resources, these remarkable insects adapt to the challenges of winter. Beekeepers play a vital role in helping honey bee colonies thrive during this season, ensuring they have sufficient food and a protected hive environment.



## **Swarm Collection and Coordination – an article by Davd Raines**

### **(Swarm Coordinator).**

During my first year in the role of Swarm Coordinator, I have noticed several misconceptions amongst our membership and therefore I thought it might be helpful if I offered a few thoughts on the subject.

### **Going back to basics.**

At a national level, the British Beekeepers Association operates a 24/7 swarm collection service which can be accessed by members of the public who require help to remove swarms of honeybees. This service is provided by locally based 'approved swarm collectors' who are experienced and competent beekeepers selected and appointed by local area associations on behalf of the BBKA, and who undertake the task on a voluntary basis. Members of the public can access the service by visiting the BBKA website [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk) where they are guided to a map on which the location of each swarm collector is indicated by a 'pin' on the map. By inputting the postcode of the swarm location and clicking on the pins nearest to that location the enquirer can obtain contact details for their nearest approved swarm collectors.

### **West Wilts Branch**

In Wiltshire, the onus for recruiting suitable beekeepers rests with our Branches and, within the West Wilts Branch, WWBKA members who wish to become 'approved swarm collectors' on the BBKA's list must:

- a. Be a registered member (or partner) of the West Wilts Branch, and
- b. Have achieved the Basic Beekeeping Certificate, or
- c. Have kept bees for at least five years, and
- d. Have proved their competence by having successfully captured and hived at least one swarm, and be familiar with the BBKA's:

**(Swarm Collection and Coordination contd...)**

- i. Guidelines on swarm collection in the BBKA leaflet L004: "Collecting a swarm", and
- ii. "Swarm Collectors Protocol" and be committed to work to the standards of that protocol.

Members on the list of swarm collection beekeepers are approved individually and formally by the West Wilts Committee. The current eighteen members who are approved beekeepers are recorded on the BBKA membership database system which in turn also generates the information on the BBKA's website map when the public enter their postcode in the section entitled "Find a Local Swarm Collector." Please note that when renewing your membership, you may recall seeing a tick box saying "I wish to be on the BBKA swarm collectors list." This is purely for the use of the Committee when they approve a member to join the approved swarm collectors list, and NOT the mechanism to request a swarm during the upcoming season. See the penultimate paragraph of this article if you "Want a Swarm?"

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Whilst the primary purpose of the swarm collection is to provide an important service to the public, a secondary benefit for us in the Branch, is to provide a useful source of bees for other Branch members who need them – especially Beginners who have completed the course at the beginning of the season. I maintain a close liaison with the Branch Education Officer and generally give priority to Beginners at the beginning of the swarm season. Obviously, the collectors may sometimes need a swarm themselves, but they should not allow their own needs (i.e. whether they need a swarm, or not) to determine whether to go out to collect a swarm.

**Process of swam collection and coordination**

Requests for collection of a swarm can come from many and varied sources ranging from individual members of the public via the BBKA website, the police, Wiltshire Council (Pest Control!) through to farmers, builders and local letting agents. These requests can, and do, arrive with



**(Swarm Collection and Coordination contd...)**

approved swarm collectors, individual WW members, or me via the WW website, so this is where the Swarm Coordinator must work his or her magic. Our team of approved swarm collectors in West Wilts have two or three methods of communicating quickly, but no two situations are the same, so great flexibility and common sense is required to solve these requests.

**Want a swarm?**

If any WW member would like a swarm during the 2026 season, please let me, David Raines, know with details of 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, I will ring the next West Wilts member on the list. If that person cannot be contacted quickly, I 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.

I hope this explanation of the swarm collection processes and organisation has been helpful, but as ever with our wonderful hobby – there are no silly questions in beekeeping, so please feel free to contact me on 07711 018440 or [david.raines@hna.uk.com](mailto:david.raines@hna.uk.com).

Tel: 02476 696679 [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)







## 3-Day Convention & Saturday Trade Show

LECTURES – WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS – TRADE SHOW – SOCIAL EVENTS

**Friday 17 – Sunday 19 April 2026**

Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB

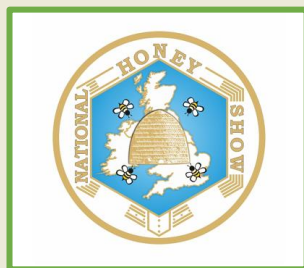
For the latest information and updates visit: [www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention](http://www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention)  
or email [scenquiries@bbka.org.uk](mailto:scenquiries@bbka.org.uk)



*Spring 2026  
Convention*



**BOOKINGS OPEN 8pm SUNDAY 25 JANUARY**



Save the date!

THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW

THURSDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> TO SATURDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2026

AT

SANDOWN PARK, ESHER, SURREY



**The post outlined below remains unfilled** – we ask you again to consider taking on the role of **County Secretary** being relinquished by Amanda Leworthy 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.

## Plant of the month January: Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)

A medium-sized deciduous shrub with long, arching branches. Leaves small, trifoliate. Flowers to 2.5cm in width, bright yellow in winter and spring

### Position

- Full sun
- Partial shade

### Aspect

South-facing or North-facing or East-facing or West-facing



## Over the coming winter months (from Wiltshire Beekeepers website)

<https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/jobs-for-the-year/>

### December/January

- When brood nest is at its very smallest (towards the end of a spell of very cold weather) carry out oxalic acid varroa treatment.
- Review past year's activity and plan for coming year.

### January/February

- Continue to heft every two weeks and feed fondant if necessary.
- Clear entrances of any dead bees (and snow).
- Watch for bees bringing in pollen on warm days – a sign that the queen is laying.
- Check for any damage to hives – e.g. rot, green woodpecker.
- Reposition hives within you apiary in cold weather – but not in temperatures below 10°C or bees falling off the cluster may not have the warmth in their bodies to return to it.
- Kit repair.

**The National Bee Unit fact sheet on hive cleaning** (link below) gives useful information on how to keep equipment free of pathogens

[https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3\\_Resources\\_for\\_beekeepers/Fact\\_Sheets/Fact\\_16\\_Hive\\_Cleaning\\_and\\_Sterilisation\\_english.pdf](https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_16_Hive_Cleaning_and_Sterilisation_english.pdf)





**No pollinator of the month this month** – but reinforcing the article from the November 2025 issue of the WWBKA newsletter

<https://pollinatorpioneers.org.uk/which-pollinators-are-active-when-the-temperatures-drop/>

Source accessed 30<sup>th</sup> December 2025

### **“How to Support Winter Pollinators” ....**

Pollinators face many challenges in winter, with resources becoming scarcer. Here are some ways you can help them thrive during the colder months:

#### **Plant Winter-Blooming Flowers**

Flowers like witch hazel, snowdrops, crocuses, and hellebores provide much-needed nectar for pollinators during late fall and early spring.

#### **Provide Shelter**

Bee houses, bumblebee hives, and other insect refuges can help pollinators survive the cold. Leaving deadwood or leaf litter in your garden can also provide shelter for bees and other insects during the winter months.

#### **Avoid Pesticides**

While you might not be using pesticides in winter, it's important to minimize their use year-round. Even small doses of pesticides can harm pollinators, disrupting ecosystems and killing beneficial insects.

(How to protect winter pollinators contd...)

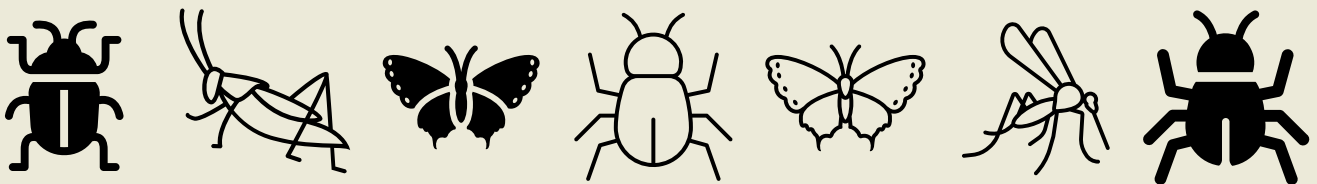
## Create a Pollinator-Friendly Habitat

Designing a garden with diverse plants that bloom at different times, sources of water, and safe shelters for insects can make a big difference. Native plants, in particular, are well-suited to local pollinators, offering food and shelter year-round.

## Provide Fresh Water

Pollinators need water throughout the winter. You can help by placing shallow dishes of water near pollinator-friendly plants or adding birdbaths with rocks or sticks to help pollinators land and drink.

While winter might seem quiet in the garden, it's still a critical time for pollinators. Honeybees, bumblebees, flies, moths, and even some birds remain active, ensuring plants continue to be pollinated and ecosystems stay healthy. By creating pollinator-friendly environments and supporting these resilient creatures, we can help them survive through the harsh winter months and continue their important work when warmer weather returns. With a little care, we can ensure that winter pollinators thrive, benefiting both nature and the crops that depend on them throughout the year.



# 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