

West Wilts BKA News



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



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

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The 'fun bits': news and reports.

The honey bee on the snowdrop on the left was very shy!

The wet weather continued for far too long, but from what I have heard, bees are out and flying in the milder temperatures at the moment.

Apiary meeting dates will be found on the club website when they are available. No kit making sessions are planned for this year.

Will you be at Thoulstone Pavilion for the March meet up? It will be the last before the season starts – and most likely will start again towards the end of this year – watch the newsletter and your email inbox for more information about that.

STOP PRESS! Dan Young, our club chair, was elected as a Trustee for the WWBKA Club – this is very good news for members.

DIARY OF EVENTS

MARCH

The last winter monthly meet up at The Pavilion Cafe, Thoulstone will be March 7th - from 1200 onwards

Need to know

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

Spring 2026 Convention will take place on 17th to 19th April - **Harper Adams University Shropshire** – more information on page 15.....

MAY

The Royal Bath and West Show will take place on May 28th to 30th – **more information on page 8.....**

SEPTEMBER

West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Show, Southwick Village Hall. Saturday 19th 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 10th October, 10am to 4pm

EDUCATION

A free bat talk taking place on 13th March at Chippenham Town Hall, 6.30pm

Book here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/rootedchippenham/2052768>

- fantastic speaker and free wildflower seeds and native trees are being given away.

'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet' with Lucie Chaumeton on Tuesday 17th March 2026, 7pm. Details follow on page 3 of this newsletter

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

Good to Know

DO YOU WANT A SWARM?

IF SO PLEASE CONTACT OUR SWARM COORDINATOR DAVID RAINES

david.raines@hna.uk.com or **07711018440**

TO ENSURE YOU ARE ON THE SWARM LIST

We received the sad news that Janice Scull died. Janice and her husband, John, were active members of West Wilts BKA for many years and generously provided space on their land at Town Farm, Westbury for the club apiary before the move to its current location. Janice took an active interest in what was going on with the colonies and would always join us for the post-inspection tea, cake, and bee chat. Members of the West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association attended to represent the club.

BBKA March Talk

The next in our series of Zoom talks will be 'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet' with Lucie Chaumeton on Tuesday 17th March 2026, 7pm.

Lucie is a BBKA Trustee, Vice Chair of the YLAH Committee and AHAT Coordinator for North London Beekeepers. She will be covering YLAH awareness, spring trapping, and monitoring.

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81233819992?pwd=DYmZxTlmJjpRCLJjYjvblxgybQQdSZ.1>

Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992 Passcode: 527929

A recording of this talk will be available on the BBKA Member Hub for those unable to watch live together with recordings of all previous talks.

Grateful thanks to **Tom Kenyon** for the following Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Update

Feb-26 update on YLAH threat to WWBKA

I hope everybody's bees are well. We are making progress with preparations for a possible incursion of YLAH into our area. I hope that, if you have a smart phone, you have the Asian Hornet Watch app. It is particularly good at explaining what YLAH can be confused with. 24 nests were found and destroyed in 2024. In 2025 163 nests were found and destroyed. Yellow-legged hornet 2025 rolling update » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase.

DEFRA have commissioned FERA Science to support the campaign against the YLAH. This is mainly with DNA testing. The Defra Bee Health Policy team released a FERA report on 11thFeb. This explained that 32 nests were destroyed on or after the 30th September 2025. These are deemed to be "Risk Level High" i.e. a high risk of having produced sexual adults. Two of these late-season nests were found either side of Weymouth on the Dorset coast: Ringstead on 14th Oct and Swyre on 19th Nov. In theory, and it depends on the weather, overwintering YLAH queens will emerge from hibernation and be on the wing once the temperature is consistently over 13 °C. In March / April they may migrate ~ 20 miles up the A350 to the south of our area.

As advised by the NBU, we are not spring trapping. We have been improving awareness. I have started discussions with the Cranbourne Chase National Landscape – who have 700 volunteers, across our southern boundary. I have made contact with the AHAT people in Frome – and will give them our monitoring station details – once

they are confirmed. The next step is that I will contact our 9 Validators and check that they are still happy to validate. I will also be in contact with the 24 West Wilts members

(YLAH UPDATE contd.)

who have bought 63 Guard Apis traps between them. Ideally, these members will supplement our Verifiers. The Guard Apis owners will provide the core of our formal monitoring capability. I just need to contact them and find out where they intend to set-up their monitoring stations and if they are happy that I stick these details on ER2. ER2 is our BBKA data management tool and has a pretty good mapping interface. For the moment, we will use ER2 to capture our YLAH data. This may change in the future.

Informal Monitoring: Jam-Jar bait stations with a wick – I have not made or set-up these bait stations. Saturating our area with home-made bait stations (baited with an aftermarket Trappit recipe) on windowsills and bird tables is probably the most effective short-term solution for keeping tabs on YLAH. This is something we will be pushing in the summer – probably once the frenetic May Beekeeping period is over. Maybe it is only me who spends May running around re-balancing hives and pretending I know what I am doing re swarm control measures..... can get a tad chaotic!!!!



Back to YLAH: This is a picture of a YLAH eating dead insects off the bonnet of my camper van in Chartres (France) last August. I realised almost immediately what I was looking at – and so will you - to recap:

- They are busy flyers, like wasps – you just see black hornets cutting around – they are not like our European hornet (big,

(YLAH UPDATE contd.)
slow helicopter) – they are busier and significantly smaller – a little larger than a queen wasp.

- Yellow legs as if walked across a saucer of yellow paint and can be very black – this pic shows this well – they all have a yellow or orange band at the fourth segment of the abdomen. By this stage, you will know you are looking at a YLAH!

Front on – they have a distinctive orange face

- They don't fly at night
- If you see one hawking a hive (and I hope you don't) they face outward to grab a forager, replete with honey, flying into the hive.

The big thing we need help with at the moment is communication. In particular Social Media – which takes time. If anyone has any experience in this area – please give me a call?

If you know of a gardening club, school, any area of local government who would benefit from a YLAH Awareness presentation – please point them my way.

Tom Kenyon

ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk

07967 552025



It's Show Time!

Well – not quite yet, but never too soon to start thinking about it! The dates for The Royal Bath and West, our club show, the County Show, and the National Show have all been published. So, whether you are planning to submit for a new class in a show – or a new show, it's never too soon to decide and make plans for the year – the dates creep up quickly behind you. Get the dates onto your calendar and put your thinking hats on. If you have been inspired by the excellent successes of our regular exhibitors and already have meads, melomels and cyzers on the go, well done!

How about looking at some of the baking classes if you are not sure you will have any honey to enter? What about the wax classes – maybe you will enter some candles?

Do have a look at the entry requirements and read them all carefully, it is necessary that you meet all the criteria outlined for every class you enter. That means looking at the jars you put your honey in and other aspects such as labelling. Don't let this put you off – you will find that many experienced club members will be able to advise you, support you, and point you in the right direction.

There is plenty of time to make your mind up – but why not start thinking about it and begin to get organised now!



The Royal Bath and West Show 2026 - 28th to 30th May

Entries for the Bees & Honey Competition at the Royal Bath & West Show are now OPEN.

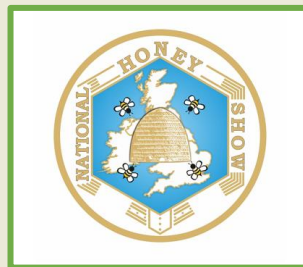
Entries CLOSE Monday 4th May 2026.

<https://www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition>

West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Show 2026, Southwick Village Hall. Saturday 19th September

Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2026

Saturday, 10th October – 10am to 4pm



Save the date!

THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW 2026

THURSDAY 22ND TO SATURDAY 24TH OCTOBER

SANDOWN PARK, ESHER, SURREY



March recipe of the month: Honey Chilli Noodles. (inspired by recent supermarket recipe card)

Ingredients

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1 tablespoon Honey

1 tablespoon Chilli sauce

2 tablespoon Vegetable Oil

2 clove/s cloves garlic, finely sliced

210g sweet and tender stir fry pack – or your own sliced vegetables for stir frying

(Optional chicken breast strips)

2 × 150g Straight to Wok Medium noodles (I only used one pack – because I added chicken)

Method

1. In a small bowl, mix the soy sauce, honey and 1 tablespoon chilli sauce with 2 tsp water.
2. Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or large frying pan over a high heat. Add the sliced garlic and fry for 30 seconds until fragrant. If using chicken breast add at this stage, stir fry until cooked and all pink has gone (5 to 8 minutes).
3. Tip in the stir fry vegetables and toss over the heat for 2 minutes.
4. Add the noodles and sauce to the pan and toss over the heat for another 2 minutes, until everything is piping hot.
5. Divide between plates and serve.



March Flower of the month - Pulmonaria (Common name: Lungwort)

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/pulmonaria>



Pulmonaria flowers start in the spring, they have small blue, pink, or white blooms and attractive silver-speckled leaves. These compact, easy-to-grow perennials are garden favourites. Ideal in partial shade as ground cover or edging plants.

Sprays of small bell-like white, pink, or blue flowers appear in spring. The oval leaves are often mottled with silver or sometimes entirely silver, providing attractive ground cover until they die down in late autumn.

Pulmonarias tolerate most soils, as long as they don't dry out excessively. They prefer light shade, although once established can tolerate more sun.

Very dry soil can cause leaves to wither, especially in full sun, and plants can suffer during prolonged periods of drought in summer.

The flowers can change colour as they mature, so you'll often see pink and blue flowers simultaneously on the same plant. They offer bees a source of nectar early in the year.



Over the coming months (from Wiltshire Beekeepers website)

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

March

- Watch for Asian Hornet queens.
- Check bees are flying on warm days – if not, check they are still alive.
- Heft regularly – many colonies die of starvation at this point if the weather is cold and they have run out of stores. If necessary:
 - Feed fondant if weather is still cold.
 - Feed liquid 1:1 feed syrup if the weather is warming up.
- Check entrances are clear.
- Remove mouse guards.
- Monitor for varroa and plan action if necessary.
- Prepare supers and queen excluders.
- Prepare spare hives for swarm control.

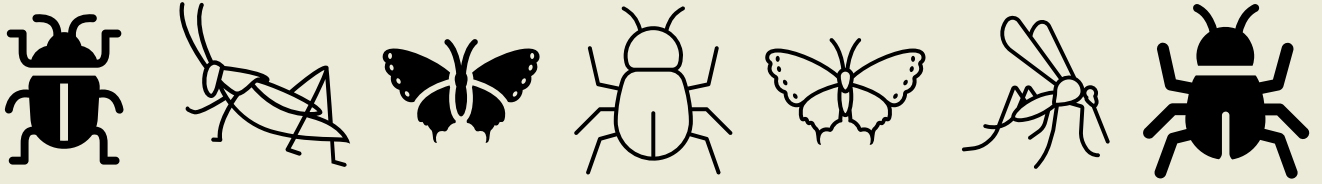
The National Bee Unit fact sheet on hive cleaning (link below) gives useful information on how to keep equipment free of pathogens

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3 Resources for beekeepers/Fact Sheets/Fact 16 Hive Cleaning and Sterilisation english.pdf>

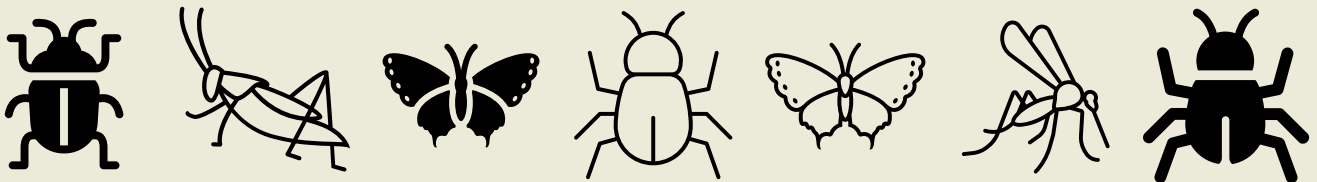


Please read the usual plea from the newsletter editor!

- any items for the newsletter are always gratefully received – these can include any visits to shows or lectures that you have enjoyed – please use the email address at the end of the newsletter – thank you



No pollinator of the month this month – have you noticed any “stowaways in your hives?
When I recently opened one of my hives to check fondant on the crown board, I discovered a cluster of about twenty ladybird beetles – they were snuggled up in the warm until the spring.



HUNGRY BEES?

FONDANT FOR SALE!

If you would like to buy FONDANT for your bees, please contact Den (Apiary Manager)

(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.



Honey still available from the apiary

(by the bucket) £6.00 per lb

CONTACT DEN (APIARY MANAGER) TO CHECK QUANTITY REQUIRED

COST TO BE PAID TO TREASURER PRIOR TO COLLECTION FROM THE APIARY.



SOCIAL SCENE!

Members were made welcome by their Yorkshire hosts at the annual dinner held at The White Hart in January. The company was good, the food excellent, and followed by a highly entertaining magic show delivered by Ms Tree aka our member Jan.

The popular monthly meets ups at The Pavilion at Thoulstone give a chance to chat and relax with other members with members with good numbers turning up on the identified Saturdays. It is expected that during the apiary season these monthly get togethers will stop and recommence perhaps in October. It is anticipated that the last meet up will be on Saturday 7th March.

Liz Gwinnell

(Our next social event (quiz night on Thursday 26th February at The Crown in Westbury) will have taken place by the time this newsletter has closed for publication).



Beekeeping Courses

Beginners' Course 2026 – Dates and Venue

The course consists of a block of 6 theory sessions, followed by hands-on practical sessions. The 2026 beginners course began on the 16th February 2026.

The theory sessions will take place at the Methodist Church Hall, Station Road, Westbury. Starting at 19:00, they will run every Monday evening at the same time until the 23rd March. Each theory session lasts around 2 hours. The practical sessions will be held on Saturday afternoons at our club apiary. The dates of the practical sessions will be advertised when our apiary manager has checked that the colonies have got through the winter successfully, and that it is warm enough to open them up for inspections. This is usually around late April but varies depending on the weather.

The Improvers Study Group – Dates and Venue

The Improvers Study Group provides beekeepers who have one or more seasons of beekeeping experience with the knowledge and skills to prepare for the BBKA Basic Assessment. The Improvers Course is also an excellent refresher course for more experienced beekeepers who feel that their knowledge or skills might have become a little rusty! The course runs for 6 weeks. The 2026 course begins on Monday 2nd March (please note change of date – no longer 23rd February) 2026 at 19:00 and runs every

Feedback from members attending the Improvers group has been very positive, with people finding it a very supportive and encouraging environment in which to share ideas and improve their beekeeping knowledge and skills. If you would like to book on the course, please contact Nina, our Education Officer, on education-WWBKA@outlook.com

BBKA Spring Convention

Friday 17th - Sunday 19th April

Harper Adams University, Shropshire

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/.../category/about-spring-convention>



3-Day Spring Convention & Saturday Trade Show

Friday 17th – Sunday 19th April 2026

Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB

20+ Lectures and 70+ Workshops and Seminars for all levels of experience

SPEAKERS AND TUTORS INCLUDE: Andrew Abrahams, Marin Anastasov, Tom Bickerdike, Dan Baxter, Shirley Bond, Laura Brettell, David Buckley, Sue Carter, Lynfa Davies, Joe Ibbertson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Lesley Jacques, Jane Medwell, Ann Moore, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Robert Paxton, Sue & Chris Rawlings, Richard Rickitt, Sara Robb, Esther Ross, Jack Silberrad, Debbie Smith, Dominique Soete, Marla Spivak, Sean Stephenson, Rhona Toft, Alison Wakeman, and many more...

Book NOW – advance ticket prices and bookings close **Tuesday 7 April**
After this date, tickets only available at the convention
In-advance tickets: Friday – £17, Saturday – £23, Sunday – £12, all three days – £33

SATURDAY TRADE SHOW
& Speakers' Corner
30+ exhibitors • 8.30 – 16.30
Trade-Show-only ticket £6 on the day

Plentiful free parking - please register vehicles before arrival at www.harper.ac.uk/beekeepers



Spring 2026 Convention



For programme and updates visit: www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention or email scenquiries@bbka.org.uk

Take a look at the following link for information about spring checks - it is more about making sure that enough food is available until the weather is warm enough to perform an inspection - fondant available through Den our Apiary Manager https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Best_practice_guidelines/BPG_6_Spring_Checks_2018.pdf

An ideal gift for your nearest and dearest?

Treat yourself at the start of the new season 2026!

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

			
<i>Wiltshire Beekeepers</i> West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Unisex Polo Top	<i>Wiltshire Beekeepers</i> West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Unisex Sweatshirt	<i>Wiltshire Beekeepers</i> West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Cap	<i>Wiltshire Beekeepers</i> West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Unisex Fleece
£16.19	£25.79	£10.19	£33.79

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 Sleight

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

Contacts and service

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