

West Wilts BKA News



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



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"Fun" items, news, and
reports page 4 to 18

On the left – Chris Rawlings observation
hive gave much pleasure to so many
people at the Bath and West Show –
thanks Chris

Can you believe the weather we have been having! Colonies of honey bees are unpredictable at the best of times – and as beekeepers we are having to prove how versatile we are and try to keep up with their antics.

Did you make any entries for the Royal Bath and West show? I understand there were around two hundred entries. It certainly takes a lot of effort and preparation to get entries ready, well done to all entrants. It has to be mentioned that although a great deal of effort goes into putting in entries, a huge amount of organisation goes into making the event proceed smoothly – so much time and effort from so many dedicated people – judges, stewards and volunteers to man the stands – to provide a refreshment stall and for so many other purposes.

Put away your entries carefully – they could well be extremely useful for the WWBKA show and also the County Show in Devizes!

DIARY OF EVENTS



JUNE

June 16th BBKA June Talk at 7pm. 'The Hive in July' with Jack Silberrad – more details on page 4

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

October 10th 10am to 4pm Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day, The Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS.

APIARY MEET DATES ON PAGE 5



Good to Know

Read on for our monthly update from the Swarm Coordinator, David Raines:

Not surprisingly, May has been a busy month, not only for me as the Swarm Coordinator, but for individual members who have also been out and about collecting swarms on their own patches. I particularly appreciate what they have done because it has saved me getting even more calls to organise a collection. These calls range from genuine pleas for help from worried grand parents wanting a "swarm" (cast?) of bees in their bird nesting box removed before their grandkids arrive for a birthday party through to a request to relocate their much-loved honeybee family from the cavity wall by the back door to "somewhere half way down the garden". Diplomacy and calm education remain two of the vital skills in this role!!

At the start of the season, we had twelve members requesting a swarm, and at the time of writing on 28 May, we had satisfied nine of those. I would like to make the point that not all those members who requested a swarm were able to receive the offered swarms at relatively short notice, but I am hopeful that we may be able to provide some more before the swarming season draws to a close. For those still waiting, please ensure you have a hive ready and that your contact phone number has the voice mail activated.

My thanks go to those West Wilts swarm collectors who have turned out to provide this invaluable voluntary service to the public, but I must offer special thanks to Danny Young who went above and beyond in sorting out a particularly complex situation which was far removed from a straightforward swarm collection. More anon next time we meet in the pub!

I remain open to requests for swarms - just in case the bees haven't read the books and decide to continue their swarming antics well into June - and perhaps even July. Who knows?

Diane Sleigh will be at our June 6th apiary meet in case you are running short of supplies. Have a look at the notice at the end of the newsletter for more details – you can contact her to check stock and that it will be available to you at the apiary – Diane cannot bring all supplies with her, but if you alert her to your beekeeping requirements she will try to help you out.

BBKA June Talk

The next in our monthly series of Zoom talks is: 'The Hive in July' with Jack Silberrad, NBU Regional Bee Inspector, on Tuesday 16th June at 7pm.

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 afterwards for those unable to watch live.

DO YOU WANT A SWARM?

IF SO PLEASE CONTACT OUR SWARM COORDINATOR DAVID RAINES

david.raines@hna.uk.com or 07711018440

THUS ENSURING YOU ARE ON THE SWARM LIST



Apiary meet dates...

Please find the dates and advice for attending apiary sessions below....

Apiary sessions start at 2pm - please arrive slightly earlier so that you can be kitted up and ready to go for the start time.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Apiary sessions are subject to the weather conditions and how the bees are on the day - Apiary Manager Den has the final say on whether or not a session can go ahead. If a session should have to be cancelled, we'll send an email to let you know, so if the weather is looking iffy on the day of a scheduled session, please check your emails and WhatsApp to see if the session is still going ahead.
2. Please park in the lane outside the apiary, not on site.
3. Please remember to bring all your protective kit: suit, wellies, and rubber gloves - no leather gloves - and a mug for the post-inspection cuppa and catch-up.

The dates below are the dates of the club apiary sessions; these are also listed on the club website <http://westwiltsbka.org/> - these are the corrected apiary dates from Geoff Cross. For the avoidance of doubt, all apiary sessions are on a Saturday.

June 6th and 20th

July 4th and 18th

August 1st 8th and 15th

12th September.



Asian Hornet App

Articles recently published in the press suggest there could be a greater number of Yellow Legged Asian Hornets in the coming months as a result of the extreme high temperatures – spread the word – are your traps baited?

Have you got around to downloading the Asian Hornet Watch App onto your mobile phone? It is worth reinforcing the importance of the app. Both bee keepers and the general public need to remain vigilant – if you can share your knowledge of the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet (YLAH) and educate others that will be a job well done!

Here's another reminder... if you know of a gardening club, school, or an area of local government who would benefit from a YLAH Awareness presentation, please point them in the direction of **Tom Kenyon** ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk **07967 552025**



Volunteers still needed for Bishopstrow Fete Saturday 13th June – please contact Amanda –

secretaryWWBKA@outlook.com for more information



Ecofest Chippenham Sunday 14th June – **there are still vacancies for volunteers** - please contact

Amanda – secretaryWWBKA@outlook.com for more information

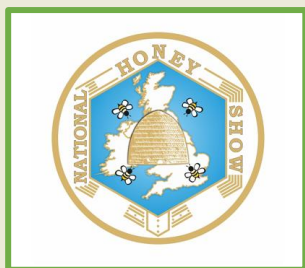
West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Show 2026

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

Flower of the month, June: Common Comfrey (*Symphytum Officinale*)

Comfrey is a perennial flowering plant found in damp areas. "Comfrey's spring blooms support nest-building bees and help hoverflies and butterflies refuel after winter. The bell-shaped tubular flowers are ideal for long-tongued bees such as the hairy-footed flower bee.

Bumblebees also feed on the flowers, sometimes stealing nectar via small holes they chew in the side of the flower. You may remember this is a technique that has been mentioned before in the newsletter - shorter-tongued bees use this method to access nectar in tubular flowers such as comfrey and salvias, though this shortcut means the flower misses out on pollination, so it's known as 'nectar robbing'."

If you choose to grow this in your garden you need to keep a close check on its growth as it can become invasive. If you "Google" comfrey you will find that it is possible to use the leaves to make a feed for your garden plants.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/plants-we-love/why-comfrey-is-the-superplant-you-need>



Having mentioned in a previous newsletter that the BBKA dissuade the importation of queens from other countries in the hope of reducing disease, it was suggested to resurrect the following article.... I cannot currently find the source of this to acknowledge authorship – as soon as I do I will let members know.

In answer to the following question **“I want to raise queens next year and I understand I should record some desirable attributes to pick my breeding stock,”** read on...

What is best?

This is another question that is unfortunately answered by another question – “What do you want from your bees?.” Only when you have decided that can you decide how you will select you queen mother (and then without 100% success because of the way queens mate). There are several attributes that can be chosen, but the most popular are:

- Temper – do you need two bee suits and a suit of armour to go near them or are they nice and quiet?
- Quietness on the comb – do they run around everywhere or sit there nicely when you handle them?
- Productivity – do they produce more or less than the average?
- Swarminess – is their answer to everything to try to swarm? (Note: you need to consider the age of the queen when answering this...and, of course, what you may have done, or not done, that would encourage them to swarm).
- Disease resistance – do they always seem a bit more sickly than other bees (signs of varroa, chalkbrood, Nosema, etc.) or are they amazingly healthy?
- Over-wintering – do they come out of winter strongly or are they down to their last cell of honey, only a small cupful of them left and a messy hive, so you must intervene?

(Raising new queens contd...)

- Thriftiness – do they need little stores, especially over winter and when you have a bad spell of weather, do they seem to do well?
- Propolis – is their answer to propolise everything or do they keep the hive gunge-free?
- Build-up timeliness – do they build up at the right time for your area, or do they only build up when the main crop has gone or there are vast numbers of bees when there is no available nectar?

Note: you can only compare many of these across one single apiary...there is no point in comparing against two different sites.

There are many more and, of course, many of these are inter-related (...a colony that has low demand on stores, may not collect as much in the first place, or a colony that doesn't over-winter well may be susceptible to disease, etc.). It would be difficult to get everything you want in your bees, so just picking your top three attributes and selecting them. Even then, consider keeping one as a priority and only use the second and third attributes if you are spoilt for choice on the first.

So, what would be best to choose? Consider these things....

1. Temper - aggressive bees are no fun,
2. Ability to over-winter - dead bees in the spring aren't much use and
3. Low "Swarminess" - juggling spare hives and nuclei can be difficult, especially since the bees seem to know you need to do a 'quick inspection' as you are planning on going out straight after you have looked at the bees!

What you choose needs to suit you so that your stock improves. Think about what you want from your bees. If you have any questions, don't be shy – ask at one of the apiary meets.

Recipe of the month: June – Passion fruit, Lime and Honey Curd

Ingredients

3 to 4 passion fruits yielding approx. 50mls of juice

50g runny honey

37.5g unsalted butter

1 large whole egg plus one egg yolk

Juice of half a lime



Method

1. Halve the passionfruit and scoop out the pulp – press it through a fine sieve.
2. In a bowl over a pan of water whisk together the passionfruit juice, lime juice, honey, and egg, until well combined and smooth.
3. Place the pan over a low heat ensuring the base of the bowl does not touch the water. Stir or whisk constantly to ensure the eggs do not “scramble.” Pour the warm curd through sieve when it starts to thicken to remove any egg bits. Remove pan from heat and immediately drop in cubed butter and stir until it has dissolved.
4. Pour into a small, sterilised jar (approx. 200mls) put on lid and store in the fridge. Use within one week.
5. This is delicious – recipe found on the internet – I halved the quantity – passion fruits can be a bit expensive – but if you want to make yourself a jar and give one away to a friend, then just double up the recipe.

At the Royal Bath and West Show, the West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association stand looked fantastic

– what a wonderful display organised by Gloria Pilz and a fantastic team of volunteers. Thank you all, your endeavours were noticed and appreciated, many admiring comment overheard.



The Royal Bath and West Perpetual Silver Cup for the exhibitor obtaining the most points in Classes BH01 to BH36 (inclusive) was awarded to Chris Rawlings.

The Wiltshire Perpetual Cup for the resident member of the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association who obtained the most points was awarded to Chris Rawlings.

Wiltshire won the County Trophy; this year Wiltshire achieved 504 points to Somerset's 399 – well done to all exhibitors for turning out such a response to requests to enter the show.

The results from the Royal Bath and West Show are reproduced in haste on pages 14 – 15 from the "Showing Scene" website.... Please accept the editors apologies for any mistakes or omissions...

Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire- results

BH 01 Decorated display of honey 2nd Chris Rawlings

BH04 Observation hive with bees and queen 1st Chris Rawlings

(Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire- results)

BH08 Display of six bee products 6th Elaine Mairis

BH09 Two jars of light honey 1st Ruth Watt

BH10 Two jars of medium honey 1st Ruth Watt 4th G Pilz 6th Chris Rawlings

BH11 Two jars of dark honey 3rd Chris Rawlings

BH12 Two jars of creamed or soft set honey 1st Chris Rawlings

BH13 Two jars of naturally granulated honey 2nd Chris Rawlings

BH16 Two jars of chunk honey Daniel Young 6th

BH17 One jar of liquid honey 1st Alan Ridout 5th Donald Watt 6th Margaret Ridout

BH18 Two sections comb honey (square or round) 3rd Den Pictor 4th Charles Irvine

BH20 One shallow comb of honey 4th Donald Watt

BH21 5 wax blocks 1st G Pilz

BH22 One cake of beeswax 5th Donald Watt

BH23 1-5 stems of beeswax flowers 5th Daniel Young

BH24 On artistic display of beeswax flowers 1st Sue Rawlings 2nd Daniel Young 4th Sue Rawlings

BH25 Two dipped beeswax candles 3rd Chris Rawlings

BH26 Two cast beeswax candles 2nd Chris Rawlings 4th Donald Watt 5th Charles Irvine 6th Ruth Watt

BH27 A beeswax candle with a decorative surround 1st Chris Rawlings

(Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire results contd...)

BH28 Two decorated beeswax candles 1st Margaret Ridout 2nd Chris Rawlings

BH29 Beeswax furniture polish 1st Elaine Mairis 2nd Chris Rawlings

BH30 Single beeswax decorative item 3rd Chris Rawlings

BH31 Display of 3 -6 decorative beeswax items 3rd Chris Rawlings 5th Elaine Mairis

BH 32 One bottle of dry mead 3rd Elaine Irvine 4th G Pilz 5th Charles Irvine

BH34 One bottle of Melomel 2nd Charles Irvine

BH35 One bottle Metheglin 1st Chris Rawlings 2nd Alan Ridout 3rd Charles Irvine 4th Elaine Irvine

BH36 One bottle of Cyser 1st Chris Rawlings 2nd Charles Irvine 3rd G Pilz 5th Alan Ridout

BH37 Honey Cake 3rd Margaret Ridout 4th Amanda Leworthy

BH28 Six Cornish honey Fairings Biscuits 2nd Margaret Ridout

BH29 Six small, decorated cakes 1st Elaine Mairis 3rd Sue Rawlings 4th Margaret Ridout

BH30 Eight pieces of Honey Fudge 1st Amanda Leworthy 2nd Elaine Mairis

BH41 One coloured or black and white photograph 1st Elaine Mairis 2nd Charles Irvine

BH42 A series of three to five photographs 4th Elaine Mairis

BH43 Mobile with a beekeeping theme 1st Sue Rawlings 2nd Elaine Mairis 4th Margaret Ridout

BH45 Matching beeswax wraps 3rd Ruth Watt

BH46 Any decorative or artistic needlework 1st Elaine Mairis 6th Liz Gwinnell

(Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire results contd...)

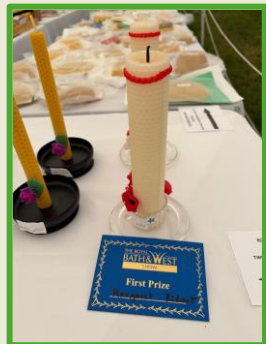
BH47 (South Western Counties) Two jars light honey 3rd Chris Rawlings

BH49 (South Western Counties) Two jars medium honey 2nd Alan Ridout 3rd G Pilz

Sorry folks - limited time to approach people for permission to use photos of them (to fulfil GDPR requirements) means that this newsletter will focus upon an assortment of photos of exhibits rather than the exhibitors...



(Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire results contd...)



(Royal Bath and West Show 2026 West Wiltshire results contd...)

Note to readers: If your results do not feature above please accept my apologies – it has been hard trying to fit everything in and co-ordinate material – plus I am on the Isle of Wight at the moment – without internet – trying to “hotspot” from my mobile phone. Please consider the Bath and West results section as “Part One” and I will amend any mistakes or omissions next month. Many thanks for your understanding, Elaine Mairis



Photo above – “After the show was over”- it looks bare doesn't it!

Many thanks once more to all the hardworking volunteers



Noted on Facebook in a discussion about borrowing and lending beekeeping equipment...

“My golden rule when borrowing is to get it back to the “lender” asap, cleaned of course, so you know where it is when you want to borrow it next time.”

Pollinator of the month: June: *Cantharis rustica*

When & where: May-August. Very common throughout Wales and southern and central England. Scarcer in northern England and Scotland. Usually found on flowers, particularly umbellifers and thistles.

Description: A fairly large black and red beetle. The wing cases are glossy black and the pronotum is red with a black heart-shaped mark in the centre. The legs are black with a variable amount of red at the base.



The above photo has been sent in by Den Pictor our apiary manager - thanks Den. Can you spot the mistake?

Beekeeping supplies.



For Your Beekeeping Supplies

Your local supplier providing a service for:

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

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

sales@thebeedepot.com

07879 811967

01373 430458

Diane Sleigh

The Apple Garden, Buckland Dinham, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2QP

[what3words poetry.unto.driveway](http://what3words.poetry.unto.driveway)

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

WWBKA Social Secretary: Social-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

Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Raines 07711 018440 1373-825560 or David.Raines@hna.uk.com)

Find us on  :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association