



October Newsletter

2025

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Welcome

Some excitement this week with a call from one of the Regional Bee Inspectors - they had received a report of Asian Hornets in Harwell. Would I go and check the suspected nest and let them know what I found? I duly suited up and used Google maps to navigate to the exact position the member of the public had given. This demonstrated the power of What3Words, as I found myself within metres of an obvious and very active hornet nest in the hollow of a tree trunk. But Asian or European? It was so active I wasn't sure I wanted to get too close, but they move so quickly it was hard to give a positive identification at a distance. I could certainly see a lot of yellow/orange faces staring at me from the entrance. Using the zoom on my phone camera I managed to get some clear pictures and confirm that it was indeed European Hornets. After that, I stepped up much closer and could see the distinguishing features clearly (see photo, right). Phew, panic over!

John



The distinctive yellow body markings of a European Hornet

Dates for your diary

<u>Newbury & District</u>
NDBKA members please ensure you have remembered the venue change for meetings. Meetings will be Tuesday 7:30pm-9:30pm at St Mary's Church Shaw cum Donnington in the church hall RG14 2DR October meeting - Details tbc, watch out for an email
<u>Vale & Downland</u>
Friday 24th October - 7.30pm AGM + Social Coffee/Tea/Cake Saturday 15th November – Fun Honey Show & Social
30th September Closing date to apply for BBKA November Modules 23rd – 25th October National Honey Show Sandown Park

Seen around the internet

Pesticides DEFRA has issued a press release on action to protect pollinators from pesticides - you can read it here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-action-to-protect-bees-from-pesticides>

Honeybees vs other pollinators There have been many reports over the years on whether honeybees have a positive or negative effect on other pollinators. There are concerns that in areas with lots of colonies they will out-compete other pollinators, reducing their numbers. This article in The Guardian reports on an American study that found too many honeybees were bad news....

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/18/why-saving-the-honeybee-could-be-bad-news-for-other-bees>

I guess this is what spurred the BBKA news to set out the BBKA position on 'bee competition' in the September copy. They argue (reasonably I think) that studies have mainly been carried out in countries where *apis mellifera* is non native, which includes the USA. These may, or may not be relevant to the UK, where it has co-evolved with other pollinators. I'll let you make your own mind up on that one...

American Bee Journal Article I don't know anyone else who subscribes to the American Bee Journal, but the digital version is cheap to subscribe to (\$21/year) and is full of

interesting articles that often give a different viewpoint to the 'British' one. The software is a bit clunky (in my view) and it is much easier to read on a PC screen than on a phone. There are lots of articles you can read for free (often abridged versions of the full pay-to-view version) and for anyone who ever wondered what 'fat bodies' are, here you go:

<https://americanbeejournal.com/fat-bees-and-colony-survival/>

National Honey Show 2025 A reminder that the National Honey Show will be held from Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October at Sandown Park. Most classes can still be entered apart from microscopy, which has to be entered early. I've entered a couple of pollen slides, so keep your fingers crossed for me 😊 Much more information is available online here:

<https://honeyshow.co.uk/>

As well as the competitive show, there are workshops and lectures and a trade show with, no doubt, bargains galore. See you there?



Tips for October

- Varroa treatments and feeding completed, it's almost time to put your feet up with a good beekeeping book and to relax.
- Boxes should have 35lb+ of stores to go into Winter. One slight complication is that there is a heavy ivy flow on just now. Keep an eye on your boxes to make sure they don't become completely honey bound. You may even have to take a frame of stores out to store in the freezer for when needed - but only if you have drawn comb to replace it with. Temperatures and bee numbers are dropping, and it is unlikely they will be able to draw out foundation now.
- I've mentioned treating supers and stored comb for wax moth infestation several times. Ignore this at your peril - it is a 'bad' wax moth year. Google for the best way to use sulphur strips or acetic acid.
- Clean all your spare boxes now, so they can air out over Winter and be ready for the Spring.
- It is getting too cold at times to safely inspect, so don't unless you have a very good reason on a nice warm day when bees are flying and very active. Damaging a queen at this time of year leaves you with very few options except to unite colonies.
- As nights (and days) get cold install mouse guards and if you live in an area with woodpeckers, woodpecker guards.

- Make sure hives are well strapped or weighted down if exposed. Autumn storms are coming.
- Review your hive and honey records while memories are fresh. Which hives did well and were disease free. Which hives would be good for early splits next year to make increase? Which hives don't you like and why?
- If you use hive cosies in your roof, it is getting time to put them in place. I won't mention ventilation as it's too contentious! Make your own mind up based on your experience as to what works best for you and your bees.

Vale & Downland BKA – John Broadbent

Wild Colony Vale member Matt Frost has a side hustle as a Tree Surgeon when he's not full time keeping his bees. Or is it the other way round? I get confused. This month his team got halfway through chopping a tree to bits in Steventon (there's probably a technical term for that), when they realised they were cutting into a honeybee colony. Matt did his best to get the colony into a Nuc, but it seems the Queen went and hid in the back of the hollow. The best thing to do would probably just be to shake them out, or unite, but as there are a lot of bees in the Nuc we decided to experiment with a frame of open brood, and they have drawn several Queen cells. It's probably far too late for them to successfully raise a queen now (although many hives will be sneakily superseding now that you have put them away for the Winter), but I have seen a few drones reappearing in hives in the last couple of weeks, so we thought we'd give it a go. A couple of spare frames of brood have been added to give them some young bees to keep them interested and going while the colony sorts itself out (or not!) They can always be united with the brood donor colony later if there is a warm spell.



The colony was in a VERY large willow

It's great that Matt is a beekeeper and tried to save these bees - it made me wonder how often trees are felled and the bees just abandoned to their fate?

New Members We are still signing people up for the Winter Beginners' Course. Please welcome new members:

- Duncan Basterfield
- Martin Simmonds
- Mike Greenaway

- Ruwan Pathiraja
- Donald Tibbets

Education

Wax Day 14th September I'm pleased to report that the wax day went very well. In the end we had 6 Vale and 2 Newbury members. We started with a 'show and tell' on how to process wax cappings into nice clean wax, followed by breaking up into groups for each of the wax 'work benches'. We got through a lot of wax and made a lot of candles. Many thanks again to everyone who donated either wax or cappings - without these it would have been a lot more difficult to put the day on and a lot more expensive. Huge thanks also to Simon and Helen who manned two of the tables. In the end I was on the rolled candles and wax wraps table, Simon did the moulded candles and Helen the dipped. The candles produced were very good and the feedback very positive, being mainly along the lines of we should have charged a lot more as they weren't expecting to get much for £10! For me, the advantage of the association is that we can do things like this at cost and can use the association facilities for free. It was quite cold in the Barn though - if we do this again, maybe we'll do it in August rather than September.



Some of the wax ready to go - about 30lb of candle quality wax here



Talking through what we would be doing

Helen supervising the dipping station. Sarah and Lucy's candles look ready for first rolling.





Simon melting yet more wax at the 'Moulded Candle' station. We also made container candles in glass jars with wood 'crackling wicks

Teena ironing grated wax into a cotton square to make a wax wrap



With Halloween approaching 'Scary Pumpkin' was a popular choice

Why not try making your own candles - once you have the basics sorted, it's not too difficult. If we do the course again next year, please do come along - we'd love to see you.

Helen successful again at the Berkshire/Newbury Honey Show. For the second year in a row, Vale member and Trustee Helen Davison won the 'Overall Winner' prize with a fantastic selection of entries across all areas. This really is a fantastic achievement - well done Helen.



Newbury Chair Adrian Doyle presents a jubilant Helen with the 'Overall Winners' Trophy

It certainly is a lovely Trophy - and best of all she gets to keep it (and put it next to last year's 😊)



Vale & Downland 'Fun Honey Show' Our own 'Fun Honey Show' is coming up - make sure Saturday 15th November is in your diary. Watch out for an email in the next couple of weeks with the schedule and more details.

AGM The AGM is also being held very soon. The date is Friday 24th October. It's really important that members come along and support this event. It is your chance to say what you want from YOUR association and maybe stand up as a Trustee to help with running the various events and overseeing how the association is run. As a registered UK

charity, it is very important that we have Trustees in various positions to demonstrate everything is organised in accordance with the regulations. More details soon.

Adverts

Beeswax Workshop – Candles and Polish

Award-winning candle-makers and commercial bee farmers, Rob and Jo Nickless from Meadow Honey Farm, are back again with their annual beeswax workshop on Saturday 22 November 2025. During the workshop you will learn about cleaning and preparing wax; making rolled, moulded and dipped candles; and also how to make beeswax polishes. More details, and information on how to book is at:

www.meadowhoneyfarm.co.uk/events

“Informative, absorbing and great fun.” 2024 attendee feedback. *“Was really good fun, learned loads and made some really lovely [beeswax] things.”* 2024 course attendee.

Karin Hall Equipment Sale

Approx 5 complete Langstroth hives, all cedar parts, purchased mainly from Thornes and last used 6-7 years ago. Wood is sound, but needs a clean up. Also various feeders, boards, unassembled super frame packs, manual 3 frame extractor and associated extracting accessories. Prefer sale as single lot, but can sell extracting equipment separately. Buyer to collect from the Racecourse Estate in Newbury. Please contact Karin via email karinhall@hotmail.co.uk or mobile 07557 534713 for full details, pictures and pricing.

Ben Tichband - SIPA Honey Bees Limited

We have Buckfast mated queens, virgins, Nucleus and full colonies for sale. We can supply on National or 14x12, alternatively as packages for top bar and other hive types. All our bees are raised in our own West Berkshire apiaries. We offer a 10% discount to members of NDBKA and VDBKA. info@honeybeenucs.co.uk

John Belcher

Please call John Belcher on 01189842321 or 07929586037 or email john.r.belcher@talktalk.net for bees, hive equipment, extraction supplies, feed, and general requirements for beekeeping, mostly in stock in Pangbourne RG8 7LB or available online from supplier.

Beckys Beezzzs Ltd

Nucs of bees, UK Bred mated queens, beekeeping equipment, bee feed & treatments beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk 01264 351104

Please note: All Newbury & Vale members can place an advert free of charge for up to 3 months. Adverts should preferably be 5 lines or less.