



July Newsletter

2026



It still not too late to raise your own queens - either to requeen colonies after the Summer flow or to make up Nucs for overwintering...For some reason, this one is called 'Russell'

Photo: Teena Bowes

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Welcome

And, just like that, we are past the longest day. My bees have decided this is their cue to stick everything together with masses of propolis - I need a crowbar, not a hive tool on some of my hives.

There recently seems to have been a very heavy flow, with many colonies rapidly filling 3 or more supers in as many weeks, all with lovely tasty Summer honey. I wasn't sure what it was the bees were bringing in, though one colony has definitely found a stand of nectar producing Lime trees - the honey has a slight green tinge and a clear minty after taste. I'm pleased with this as I find I only get Lime every 2nd or 3rd year - the rain and sun has to be just right.

I've already had a report from someone that they have had a weak Nuc stripped bare by wasps. I think, judging by the number of Queen wasps that I saw earlier in the season (every hive roof seemed to have one at some point), that we may be in for yet another harsh wasp season. I've included a short article with some tips and a comparative trial I am carrying out with traps in my apiary. A shorter letter this month - it was simply too hot to do anything at the time I was supposed to write this.

As always, please keep those YLH monitoring traps going, there have been many reports of sightings across the south coast again this year

John

Dates for your diary

<u>Newbury & District</u>
Sunday 26th July, 2-4pm at Oare Apiary, Members Meeting (tbc) Sunday 23rd August, meeting at The Fox pub in Hermitage for bee chat and advice in preparation for the honey show Sunday 11th October, 2-4pm at Oare Apiary, Members Meeting (tbc)
<u>Vale & Downland</u>
Every Saturday at Red Barn 1-2pm Beginners with bees, 2.30-4pm open members session Sunday 5th July, Members Apiary Visit (details in V&D Section) Saturday 17th October, Fun Honey Show (includes AGM) Drayton VH
22nd - 24th October - National Honey Show

Seen around the internet

There are a couple of online zoom talks coming up which look interesting:

- Cambridgeshire beekeepers are hosting **'VespAI: Applying Deep Learning to the detection of Invasive Hornets'**

With Thomas O'Shea-Wheller, Wednesday
8th July 2026, 7pm

This needs to be booked through this link
(which takes you to the Cambridgeshire BKA
site):

<https://us.list-manage.com/xlReebPY8KJ?e=cd201d881e&c2id=aef3437d2906b2d2e82d899c12585432>

The VespAI team also have an interesting website at <https://www.vespai.co.uk/>
where you can learn more about their system.

- Secondly, this from the BBKA. The next in our monthly series of Zoom talks is:
'Honey Bee Nutrition' with Dr. Thierry Bogaert, CTO and Chairman of APIX Biosciences, on Tuesday 21st July at 7pm.

Zoom link:

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

Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992 Passcode: 527929

A recording of this talk will be available on the BBKA Member Hub two weeks later
for those unable to watch live.

- **Neonicotinoids** The Office for Environmental Protection has determined that Defra has breached the law with its previous approvals for the use of neonicotinoids:



Screenshot from the VespAI site
showing their automated
detection system
© VespAI.co.uk

<https://www.clientearth.org/latest/press-office/press-releases/defra-found-in-breach-of-environmental-law-over-bee-killing-pesticide-impacts-on-protected-nature-areas/>

I'm not sure what happens when one government body finds fault with another.
I'm sure that nobody will lose their pension over this though....

- **Bees Needs Week** On a more positive note for Defra, they have announced details for 'Bees Needs Week'. This covers all species of bee and will run from 13th to 19th July. There is lots more information about the event and what you can do to help here:



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bees-needs/bees-needs-campaign#bees-needs-week-2026-13-to-19-july>

Tips for July

My top tips for July:

- The massive flows we have seen recently can stop as quickly as they started. If you have taken all the honey off, keep an eye out when the gap hits. Large colonies with no stores can starve in a week.
 - Other side effects are cannibalising of brood and ROBBING
- Your main Summer crop should be ready this month. When exposing supers to remove frames try your best to keep a cover board over supers when you can and try not to let honey spill on the ground around or onto hives. Unless it is very hot, reduce entrances so that colonies can better defend against robbers and wasps
 - Swarm season should be over (but what about second swarm season?). If all is well with your hives you can consider stretching out inspections to 2 weeks as we head into August.
- YLH worker numbers rise rapidly in July, and they start hawking outside hives. Although we believe (hope) our area is still clear, keep an eye out and have monitoring traps set up.



Last year the V&D honey show didn't have a single entry in the 'frame for extraction' class, simply because nobody had a decent frame to enter. This year every frame looks like this - it's very strange how different each year is.

- It never rains, but it pours....*Varroa* numbers are now rising rapidly. Monitor numbers and as soon as you have removed the honey crop, be prepared to treat so that the Winter bees laid in late August/September have the best start.
- Although swarming should be over, now is the time when colonies will consider replacing old or underperforming queens. Inspections should be on the lookout for supersedure cells.
- If you requeen on a yearly basis, now is the time to start thinking about it, so that new queens are settled in for Autumn and in good condition to lay Winter bees.
 - You can also set up a few Nucs with new queens for overwintering insurance.
- WASPS. - see later for tips

Newbury & District BKA - Louisa Houghton

Bunting and beekeepers make the Highclere Fete a highlight!



A fantastic day was had by all at the Highclere Fete on Saturday 13 June. The sun was shining and the crowds were out. Amidst the bunting, local stalls, games and Pimm's tents, our small but mighty gazebo was buzzing with members of the public interested in all things beekeeping. After our honey collecting and extraction efforts last month, we were thrilled to sell £147 worth of honey, each jar wrapped in a new and shiny NDBKA label. Huge thanks to Stephen, Ann, Brian, Yvonne, and Mark for all their support in the day. It's always a real team effort to set up, host and pack away for these events, but worth it to see how engaged people are by the work we do to support our beloved honeybees.

Recipe of the month – Honey Water Spritz

Invented by an NDBKA member, this refreshing spritz is the perfect tippie for a warm summer evening.

Try a honey water spritz

Take some fresh honey water from cappings and add a squeeze of lemon and fizzy water. Finish with ice and a slice of lemon!

And after 5pm, a dash of Prosecco mixed in works wonders!



Checking in on our Oare Apiary

May has been another busy and rewarding month at our Association Apiaries.



Throughout the month, the apiaries have been used weekly for both beginners' training and improvers' courses, helping support beekeepers at every stage of their journey.

Alongside training, we continue to hold our monthly members' meetings, creating opportunities for ongoing learning, sharing experiences and enjoying time together as a beekeeping community.

A big thank you to Mark, who opened our latest session with an informative talk on apiary hygiene, health and safety. As beekeepers, we are often working alone, so taking time to think about our own wellbeing — whether that is safe handling, managing heat, or preparing for stings — is essential. Equally important is staying connected with fellow

beekeepers. Sharing

experiences and talking through challenges in the apiary can often provide reassurance and practical solutions.

Beekeeping can certainly be a rollercoaster at times! At Oare we predominantly manage National hives, but thanks to grant funding received last year, we have been able to introduce additional hive types to broaden teaching opportunities and encourage discussion around different approaches to hive management.



During the meeting, members worked in groups to inspect a long hive containing two colonies and two WBC hives. For many, the long hive was a new experience and generated plenty of discussion about its advantages and limitations. One colony appeared queenless and, despite subsequent checks, has not successfully raised a replacement queen. As a result, the long hive is currently functioning as one larger colony.



The two WBC hives had previously been combined but have since been reorganised and returned to a single brood arrangement with supers above.

Looking ahead, our monthly members' meetings are currently planned to continue at Oare throughout the season. However, we would love to hear from members who may be willing to host a future meeting at their own apiary. Hosting does not mean you need to lead the inspection yourself — we have successfully arranged for experienced beekeepers to

support and lead sessions in the past. It is simply a wonderful opportunity for members to visit different apiary setups, exchange ideas and learn from one another.

If you would be interested in hosting a session this season or next, please do get in touch — we would be delighted to hear from you.

We're currently finalising this season's schedule, more details to follow! For now, please put the following dates in your diaries:

- Sunday 26th July
- Sunday 23rd August (where we'll be meeting at The Fox pub in Hermitage for bee chat and advice in preparation for the honey show)
- Sunday 11th October

Ready to extract? We have Association kit for hire!

With the weather warming up, our colonies are getting busy and thoughts turn to extracting the honey harvest. We have some great equipment to make the job easy for you with options to suit beekeepers and their budgets!

The Manual

1. Manual extractor on its own - £15
2. Manual extractor bundle - £20

Includes:

- Settling tank
- Stainless steel double strainer
- Electric uncapping knife
- Uncapping fork
- Electric uncapping tray

The Electric

1. Electric extractor on its own - £35

2. Electric extractor bundle - £40

Includes:

- Settling tank
- Stainless steel double strainer
- Electric uncapping knife
- Uncapping fork
- Electric uncapping tray

If you'd like to hire any of the equipment, please reach out to **Louisa Houghton** at equipment@newburybeekeepers.org.uk or **07876 575 603**. Full instructions (should you need them) will be provided!

Help and Volunteers needed

Volunteering for one of our events is a great way to meet the public and share your passion for and knowledge of beekeeping. If you can spare a morning or afternoon to help out, please reach out. If you'd like to get involved, let us know [by completing this short form](#) or emailing Becca at chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk.

The Newbury Show (including our honey show) is our biggest NDBKA event. It takes place on Saturday 19th September and Sunday 20th September and is a brilliant chance for us to come together, celebrate and educate. It's a fantastic day, and even better if you can spend a bit of time helping out in our stunning tent!

Looking for green-fingered gardeners!



As part of promoting the symbiotic relationship between bees and flowers we aim to have a display of plants that flower in September outside our Newbury Show Marquee.



If you're green-fingered or know of gardeners who are, and could plant some seeds now, then donate the plants to the display, or even create a pot with a mix of flowers for selling at the event, please get in touch with Becca - chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk



We need sponsors for the Newbury Show

There is a fee for the marquee as well as historically a prize fund for our Honey Show. I will be compiling a sponsorship pack to give to local businesses who would then be able to have their logo displayed within our marquee and a gift of honey given.

If you know a company who may like to support of Honey and Bee tent – engaging public in understanding bees then please email me for more details. Many thanks, Becca

Vale & Downland BKA - John Broadbent

Apiary Update

Just a reminder that Saturday afternoon sessions continue throughout July between 2.30 and 4.30pm. All members are welcome and, of course stay for a cup of tea and a chat. We have had a very good Summer crop this year and have a lot of supers still to extract - please come and help!

Hive 2 and 2a have gone a bit rogue - we have new queens coming on the 10th of July, so come along on Saturday 11th to see Simon's patented introduction method. Hopefully this will quickly calm the bees down again. The other hives are very pleasant to work with.



We have shaken out the demo apideas after the endless supply of queen cells in the Red Barn apiary finally stopped - thank goodness. We managed to produce a couple of nice queens though.

Training and Education

We have 2 members taking their Basic Assessment this month as well as 3 members taking their Honey Bee Health. Good luck to all of them.

Members Apiary visit

A reminder that on Sunday 5th July, Dave & Claire Parker are opening up their apiary for members to visit. Full details in the covering email for the newsletter.

YLH Update - Simon Rogers

AT the last meeting in the Red Barn, it was agreed that Saturday mornings were difficult for many. In response to this feedback, the next meeting will be held at Drayton Village Hall (Small Room) on Friday 10th July at 7pm. All welcome.

Following on from discussions over the last couple of meetings, we are busy putting together an info pack to send to all local schools, ready for YLH awareness week in September. The pack will include NBU identification cards, an A4 poster and details of the threat, including links to new BBKA produced material that fits into the National Curriculum.

Right: one of the prototype posters that Simon is working on with (a lot) of help from Richard Wigzell (Thanks Richard)

We will be asking members to be on the lookout for ways to pass ID cards on to the public and places where we can put up posters. More to follow



Wasps - some tips

- Don't leave it too late to start defensive action. Once they appear in numbers you may have already lost the battle
- The standard advice is "Keep good Queens and strong colonies". If only it were that simple. However, wasps constantly probe hive entrances and very quickly work out which are the weak colonies. After that, they are merciless. If I had 2 weak colonies, I would unite them to give a single strong colony. That way, they stand a better chance of defending themselves.
- Close entrances down to a couple of beespaces so that they are easier to defend. Be especially watchful with Nucs

Last year my Waspbane trap proved itself to be a highly effective design with a large capacity



- Make sure all boxes are well maintained and splits and holes repaired. There is no point in closing down entrances if there is a handy entrance through a knot hole at the back of a box.
- When inspecting, keep all boxes covered and to stop wasps diving in. Once they go into an attack frenzy they become killing machines that just don't give up. Any spilt feed or honey should be cleaned up immediately (or better still, not happen at all).
- There is kit that can help:
 - Various tunnel entrances are available and can work well. Bees don't seem to mind them, and wasps don't seem to like them. A tunnel full of bees is much harder for a wasp to get through alive than a slot entrance. Underfloor entrances also work
 - **TRAPS.** The wasp pressure was so high last year that I found small commercial traps simply filled up more quickly than I could empty them. In the end I found only the Waspbane trap had the ability to hold enough wasps to make a difference (as well as being a very effective design). Unfortunately, they don't seem to be available at the moment - hopefully more are being manufactured. The Waspbane site is at www.waspbane.com (but is a bit clunky). I have just bought the Wasp X from Thornes after seeing it at the Spring Convention Trade Show. This is basically a honey bucket with a cone entrance. I also have one replacement base for last year's Waspbane, so will be setting up a comparison trial at my main apiary, with the Waspbane and Wasp X side by side. I'll let you know how it goes. The Waspbane comes with its own bait. In the Wasp -X I shall be using the new VespaLure bait (again from Thornes)



The new Wasp X set up in my garden before making its way to my apiary

Adverts

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 johnthebeeman8@gmail.com 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.