

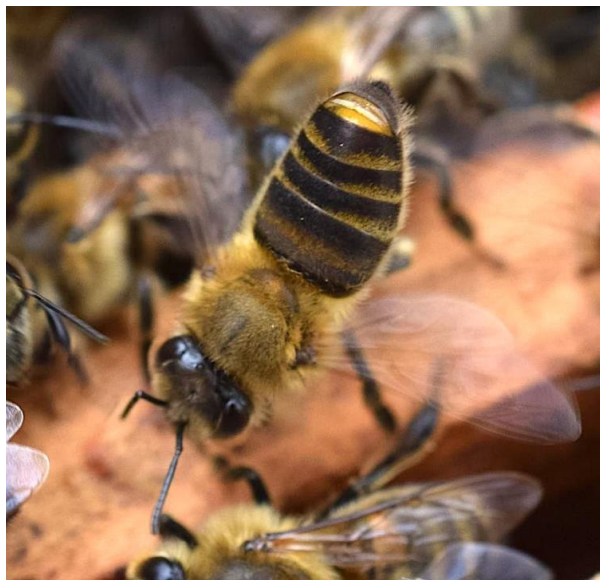


THE VALE & DOWNLAND BEEKEEPERS' NEWSLETTER

in association with Newbury & District BKA



SEPTEMBER 2026 • Season's end, winter prep & the ivy flow



A worker returns to the comb as the season winds down. [Sample cover — drop in your own seasonal photo]



IN 60 SECONDS

- ▶ **No members' session this Saturday** — the apiary road is closed. Next one Sat 6 Sep, 1pm.
- ▶ **Wax & Candle Day, Sat 14 Sep** — £10, three candles to take home — a few places left.
- ▶ **Feed the light hives now** — the drought stopped the flow; heft every hive this week.
- ▶ **Asian hornet is at its peak** — 82 sightings, 21 nests so far in 2026 — keep traps out.

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🏠 Welcome

A warm welcome to the September newsletter — and to a fresh new look for the association's monthly read.

Alongside the sections you know, you'll find a few new regular features we hope you'll enjoy — a member spotlight, a reader's tale from the hive, and a "Forage of the Month". They only work if members get involved, so please do send in your photos, stories and questions. This is your newsletter.

And what a strange end to the season. After the long drought the nectar simply stopped, and many of us face lighter hives than we'd like. The ivy is only just coming into flower and the bees are all over it — that late flow may be what saves a few colonies. If your treatments are in and working, the most valuable thing you can do this month is heft your hives and feed the light ones now, while it's warm enough for the bees to ripen syrup.

Enjoy the read, and happy beekeeping.

The Editor

Contributions & letters — news@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk

🏠 Dates for your diary

Newbury & District

Sat 19 & Sun 20 Sep — The Newbury Show & Berkshire Honey Show, Newbury Showground.

Sun 11 Oct, 2-4pm — Members' meeting, Oare Apiary (tbc).

Mon 20 Oct, 7.30pm — Winter meeting series begins, Shaw Church Hall.

Vale & Downland

Every Saturday — Red Barn: 1-2pm Beginners with Bees, 2.30-4pm open members' session.

Sun 14 Sep, 10-3pm — Wax & Candle Day, Red Barn. £10 — places still available.

Sat 10 Oct — Fun Honey Show & AGM, Drayton Village Hall.

22-24 October — The National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher.

◻ In the Spotlight: My Apiary

DRAFT / SAMPLE PLACEHOLDER — A new monthly feature — one member, a few questions, a photo. Sample shown; each month I'll format the answers a member sends back.



Sarah at her out-apiary near Wantage

This month: Sarah, three years in

How did you get into bees? A swarm turned up in my apple tree the summer we moved here. I called the association, someone came out to collect it — and I was hooked before they'd closed the box.

Best thing you've learned? That doing less is often better. My first year I was in the hive every few days "helping". The bees do fine without me.

Worst beekeeping moment? Dropping a full super of honey in the car park. We do not speak of it.

One tip for a beginner? Join the Saturday sessions and get your hands in other people's hives. You learn ten times faster than reading.

Would you go in the spotlight — or nominate someone? It's four questions and a photo. Drop us a line at news@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk.

DRAFT / SAMPLE PLACEHOLDER — A reader's-tale column — honest, funny, human. This is the feature people actually read to their partners. Sample written to show the tone; going forward it's member-submitted.

The day I forgot the smoker *by a member who would rather stay anonymous*

There is a particular kind of silence that falls when you kneel down at the hive, reach for your smoker, and realise it is sitting exactly where you left it — on the kitchen table, cold, a mile away.

It was the hottest Saturday of the year. The bees were already tetchy, the wasps were circling, and I had one job: a quick look for the queen before the storm came in. No smoker. I told myself I'd be gentle. I told myself these were calm bees. I told myself a lot of things.

By the third frame the tone had changed from a gentle hum to something closer to a kettle coming to the boil. By the fifth, I had a small but committed escort following me around the garden. I closed up faster than I have ever closed up in my life, walked away with as much dignity as a man being chased by insects can muster, and sat in the shed until they lost interest.

The queen, of course, was on the very first frame I'd put back. I never saw her. The moral, if there is one: the smoker goes in the car the night before, next to the veil, where it cannot be forgotten. And the bees, as ever, were completely right and I was completely wrong.

Got a story like this? A disaster, a triumph, a lesson learned the hard way — 200–300 words is perfect. Send it to news@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk. Anonymous is fine.

Forage of the Month

September — Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

If one plant defines a Downland September it's ivy. Just as almost everything else has finished, the ivy comes into its greeny-yellow bloom along every hedgerow, wall and old tree — and it can carry a colony a long way towards winter. On a warm afternoon an ivy-covered wall will be humming; stand and watch and you'll see honeybees, wasps, hoverflies and the ivy bee all working it together.

For the bees it's a genuine lifeline: a late, heavy source of both nectar and pollen exactly when the winter bees are being raised. For us it's a mixed blessing. Ivy honey granulates rock-hard, very fast — often in the comb — so it's difficult to extract and best left on as winter stores rather than harvested. Bear it in mind when you're working out how much to feed: a strong ivy flow can top a colony up more than you'd expect.

AT A GLANCE

Flowers: September–November

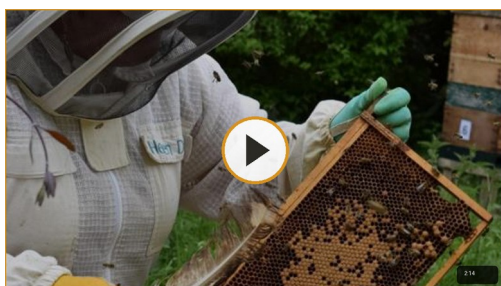
Gives: Nectar and pollen — a major late source

For the bees: Fuel for raising healthy winter bees

For you: Sets hard; leave as winter stores, don't harvest

Video of the Month

DRAFT / SAMPLE PLACEHOLDER — A new monthly feature. Video can't play inside a PDF, so we show a clickable still that opens the clip on YouTube or the Facebook page — works on any phone. The QR code lets anyone who prints the newsletter scan and watch. Sample below.



Tap the image to watch · 2:14

Watch: a summer hive inspection

Two minutes at the association apiary in July — finding the queen, reading the frames, and what a healthy brood pattern looks like. Filmed on a phone by a member.

 [Watch on YouTube](#)



Scan to watch on your phone

Got a clip? Even 30 seconds shot on your phone is perfect — a swarm, an inspection, the extractor running. Send it to news@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk or tag us on Facebook and we'll feature it.

🏠 Seen around the internet

Asian hornet — 2026 running totals

The National Bee Unit's rolling update stood at 82 credible sightings and 21 confirmed nests for 2026 as of 31 July — eleven of them secondary nests, where next year's founding queens are reared. This is exactly the point in the season when vigilance pays off.

One thing to take away: *Keep a monitoring trap out through September and photograph anything suspicious before you report it.*

→ [NBU rolling update 2026](#)

→ [So you think you've seen one? — ID guide](#)

Getting more out of amitraz — beating mite resistance

Researchers at UC Davis and the USDA have shown that pairing amitraz with a compound that blocks the mite's own resistance mechanism boosts effectiveness by around 50%, even against resistant mites. Still experimental, but a hopeful sign for anyone watching Apivar work less well than it used to.

One thing to take away: *If a treatment seems to be underperforming, resistance is a real possibility — rotate your active ingredients.*

→ [UC Davis — Helping beekeepers fight mites](#)

An RNAi treatment that leaves bees healthier

A 2026 trial of Vadescana (Norroa™), an RNA-interference biopesticide that silences a gene the mite needs to reproduce, found treated bees lived longer — 25.4 days against 21.8 — and foraged more actively, while mite numbers stayed lower than with conventional amitraz strips.

One thing to take away: *A genuinely new class of varroa control worth understanding now, as it edges towards wider availability.*

→ [Study in Scientific Reports \(Nature\)](#)

🕒 Tips for September

- **Finish your varroa treatment.** Whatever you're using should be in and completing this month, so the winter bees emerge free of deformed wing virus.
- **Heft and feed.** A medium-to-strong colony needs roughly 35–40lb (17–18kg) of stores. Heft each hive; feed thick 2:1 syrup to the light ones now.
- **Don't drown the queen out.** Over-feed and bees pack the brood nest, leaving her nowhere to lay winter bees. Leave room, and take the excluder out for winter.
- **Mind the ivy flow.** Late ivy can bring in a surprising amount — good for stores, but it sets hard, so factor it into how much you feed.
- **Protect stored comb.** Treat supers for wax moth with acetic acid or freeze frames for 48 hours before storing. Storage bags alone won't stop the moth.
- **Wasps and hornets.** Reduce entrances so guards can defend a smaller doorway, and keep monitoring traps out through the peak.
- **Plan your winter line-up.** Decide which colonies go into winter and which are better united. Two strong colonies beat four weak ones come spring.

🕒 Vale & Downland BKA News

DRAFT / SAMPLE PLACEHOLDER — Replace with your real V&D news each month — apiary update, education, members' notes. Sample below.

Wax & Candle Day — 14 September. A few places remain (open to Newbury members). £10, 10am–3pm, bring a packed lunch. Turn cappings into usable wax and make three candles to take home. Please register so we know numbers.

Apiary update. No members' session this Saturday — the access road is closed. The next (possibly last of the season) is Saturday 6 September at 1pm; we'll email to confirm. All colonies have been fed and the queenless Dartington re-queened into a 14×12.

Education. The Module 1 study group is running with eight members. Winter is the ideal time to take an assessment further — email education@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk.

🕒 Newbury & District BKA News

DRAFT / SAMPLE PLACEHOLDER — Paste the copy Newbury's editor sends you and it will format to match. Sample below.

The Newbury Show & Berkshire Honey Show. Our biggest event of the year returns to the showground on 19 & 20 September. Honey show entries are open — come and enter, come and visit, and if you can spare a morning on the stand we'd be grateful for the help.

Winter members' meetings. The winter series begins on 20 October, 7.30–9.30pm at Shaw Church Hall — talks, tea and cake. Dates through to March next month.

🏠 Adverts

Ben Tichband — SIPA Honey Bees Ltd

Buckfast mated queens, virgins, nucleus and full colonies. National or 14×12, or packages for top-bar and other hive types. All raised in our own West Berkshire apiaries. 10% discount to NDBKA and VDBKA members.
info@honeybeenucs.co.uk

John Belcher

Bees, hive equipment, extraction supplies, feed and general beekeeping requirements — mostly in stock in Pangbourne RG8 7LB or to order. Call 0118 984 2321 / 07929 586037.

Becky's Beezzzs Ltd

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

All Newbury & Vale members can place an advert free of charge for up to three months (five lines or fewer). Send yours to news@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk.