



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

In this Issue

- Asian Hornet - The case for vigilance
- Wiltshire BKA AGMs
- Beekeeping tips for February
- Removing bees safely from buildings
- BB Wear discount offer
- Dates for the diary
- Education, training and exams
- Telling the bees

Asian Hornet - The case for vigilance

The Asian hornet was accidentally introduced into France in 2004. It quickly spread and, in many parts, it is a significant problem, especially for beekeepers. Few people in this country are aware of the scale of the problem being faced just across the Channel.

The Normandy Department of Manche in France is the same size as Devon. It normally destroys around 4,000 Asian hornet nests a year and, if that sounds a lot, they are just the ones that are reported! In the whole Normandy region, they destroy around 11,000 nests a year but that's only about half of the 20,000 nests that are destroyed each year in the region of Brittany which is just that bit further south.



The other region opposite us across the Channel, the Hauts de France, has suffered less but, nonetheless, the hundreds of nests reported in each department every year can become thousands in the surge years that happen from time to time. All along that coast from Brest to Ostend and even as far as Rotterdam, the Asian hornet nest numbers are steadily increasing.

Last year (2022) saw a significant surge in nest numbers right across France. Manche, with a well-established and organised nest destruction scheme, went from 4,000 nests in 2021 to 9,176 nests by the end of November 2022- it was a new record. These surge years are happening more often.



Further up the coast in Belgium, predicted to be marginal for the hornet and where it was barely present in 2017, last year they were looking at several hundred nests and the hornet is now established beyond eradication.

So far we have been lucky. Our weather indicated that we too, were a marginal environment for the hornet, but that weather is now changing in the hornet's favour and the hornet is adapting. Hence the importance of pre-briefing and for all beekeepers to be informed, aware and when to be actively looking for it.

The BBKA aim to raise awareness of the Asian hornet because if it becomes established in the UK it could decimate our pollinators including our honeybees. It is important for everyone to be actively looking for it.

BBKA have a page dedicated to the Asian hornet news and information at the following URL address: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Listing/Category/asian-hornet-vespa-velutina>

BBKA has issued beekeeping associations with a new Asian hornet briefing developed exclusively for beekeeping association members. The intention is to make this information available to all beekeeping association members, not just the AHAT teams. This information is ideally for beekeeping associations members only and not to be published as a public document per se for fear of BBKA and its associations being accused of unnecessarily spreading alarm! These presentations have, therefore, been uploaded to the WBKA website members area for Association Beekeepers at: <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/asian-hornet-action-page/>



There is an online course about the Asian hornet designed for beekeepers. The course has a series of multiple-choice questions to test individual's knowledge in identifying the Asian hornet, understanding its habits, and knowing the actions required to report a sighting. It can take about 10 minutes or so to familiarise yourselves and then to try the quiz at <https://www.ahat.org.uk/node/1/take/1>

Photos:

Top: *Vespa velutina*.

Middle: Foundress building a primary nest. John de Carteret, Jersey

Lower: Secondary nest in oak tree. John de Carteret, Jersey

All photos courtesy of The Animal Plant Health and protection Agency (APHA), Crown Copyright.

Wiltshire BKA Annual General Meetings

On the evening of 31st January 2023 members of Wiltshire BKA assembled in the Wessex Room of Devizes Corn Exchange and registered online for two annual general meetings.

Meeting One

The first meeting was the closing AGM for the old Wiltshire BKA as set out in the constitution approved on 11th October 2011. The main purpose of the meeting was to consider the following resolution:

"It is proposed that the Wiltshire Beekeeping Association operating under the constitution approved on 11 October 2014 be dissolved with immediate effect."

This proposal was approved with 45 votes in favour, no votes against and 2 abstentions.

Meeting 2

The second meeting was the first AGM for Wiltshire BKA as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Election of Secretary.

The first item of note was to elect a Secretary. Under the constitution of the CIO one of the central trustees, i.e. the chair, treasurer or secretary, is required to step down by rotation at each AGM starting with the secretary. Amanda Leworthy duly stood down but offered herself for re-election and was duly re-elected with a unanimous vote.

Chair's Report

Becoming a charity was already proving beneficial for the association with one branch able to accept significant charitable donation. This would not have been possible without the hard work of the team, led by Tony Awdry, which prepared the application for the Charity Commission that was approved without comment.

Treasurer's Report

- The accounts have been reviewed, pro bono, by Lucy Wood, a qualified accountant, in compliance with the requirements of the Charity Commission.
- Total reserves at the end of the reporting period were £47,397.
- WBKA and branch monies are now held centrally.
- WBKA trustees have specified some targeted reserves that are intended to encourage applications for support from members or branches:
 - An innovation reserve to support any member who wants to pilot some new beekeeping technique or technology that is unfamiliar to WBKA's members.
 - A community fund reserve to support any collaboration with other organisations that have objectives in common with WBKA.
 - An education reserve to support improvements in education of beekeepers or of the general public.
 - A capital projects reserve that would allow us to lend funding to any branch wishing to undertake substantial capital investment (such as land purchase).

Any member with an interest is welcome to approach the Treasurer or any of the Trustees

Beekeeping Tips for February

Visit your bees.

It is good practice to visit your bees once a fortnight to **check all is well**; if you can visit once a week so much the better especially if we have some inclement weather.

We are now enjoying one hour more daylight than at the beginning of the month, which should have encouraged the bees to feed the queen to bring her back into lay. She will start off slowly at first but as the amount of brood increases so the nurse bees will consume more stores. A worker larva requires about 142mg of honey and 125-145mg pollen for development¹ all of which has to come from winter stores until the bees can forage again. The nurse bees also need to keep their energy levels up so store levels within the hive will be consumed at an increasing rate. February and March are the months when a colony is most likely to die owing to starvation. **Heft your hives** and if they are feel light **add some fondant**.

The bees will require **water** to help them metabolise either honey or fondant so make sure there is a suitable source close to the apiary.



Planning

If you haven't done it already, now is the time to plan for the coming season. Have a read through your records. Ask yourself a few questions:

- Where am I now, e.g. how many colonies do I have; how old are the queens - are they likely to be superseded etc?
- What do I want to achieve during the season, e.g. make increase; sort out an aggressive colony; produce as much honey as possible?
- Where do I wish to be at the end of the season; how many colonies; a nuc or two in reserve etc..
- How am I going to achieve this?
 - Do I need extra equipment - if so should I visit one of the trade shows?
 - Do I have the knowledge and skills to ensure success? If not then make the effort to attend branch meetings and apiary sessions to ask questions and learn from others. Perhaps attend workshops at the BBKA Spring Convention in April or attend a course such as those run by Advanced Beekeeping Courses at their base in Devon.

Removing Bees Safely from Buildings

Within Wiltshire BKA all four branches have swarm collection officers who take requests from the public who have a swarm of bees arrive on their property. Details are passed to local members on the swarm collection list who are then asked to investigate. Most situations do not involve bees in buildings but even if they do, the temptation is to try and help. **DON'T**. Avoid the temptation or at least first read this book review by Ann Chilcott (<https://www.beelistener.co.uk/book-review/removing-bees-safely-book-review/>). Then, if you are still keen to have a go, buy the book.

Title: **A Guide to the Safe Removal of Honey Bee Colonies from Buildings** by Clive A. Stewart & Stuart A. Roberts.

Published: 2022 by Northern Bee Books.

ISBN: 978-1-914934-50-6.

Paperback, 128 pages.

Cost: £17.99.

Available: Northern Bee Books. <https://www.northernbeebooks.co.uk/products/a-guide-to-the-safe-removal-of-honey-bee-colonies-from-buildings-stewart-and-roberts/>

BB Wear Discount Offer

BB Wear is offering an association discount for their range of protective clothing: 15% off their classic poly cotton range and 10% off their innovative award winning Ultra range.

Use the following codes valid until 31st March 2023 to obtain your discount:

Poly cotton range discount code is: BKAPOLY15 (case sensitive)

Ultra range discount code is: BKAULTRA10 (case sensitive).

Create an account and log in for the code to work: <https://www.bbwear.co.uk/>



Dates for the Diary

Wiltshire BKA

7th October - Bee & Honey Day. The Corn Exchange, Devizes. 10am to 4 pm.

Branch Events

Kennet BKA - Meetings held on the first Wednesday of the month in Bishops Cannings Village Hall unless otherwise shown.

Wednesday 1st March - The Honey Island - bee-lore from the Isles of Britain and beyond by Chris Parks

Saturday 1st April. The new branch apiary will be open from 2pm until 4pm. The apiary will then be open every other Saturday at the same time throughout the season. All members are welcome.

Wednesday 5th April - The Plight of the Bumblebee by Gill Perkins, CEO of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Melksham BKA

See website for details of meetings: <https://www.mbka.org/mbka-meetings>.

Swindon BKA

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month in the Skittle Alley at the Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Swindon SN25 1JD, start time 7.30pm. Details are published in branch newsletter.

West Wits BKA

See the February edition of the Newsletter: <https://westwiltsbka.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/West-Wilts-BKA-News-February-2023-final-webpage.pdf>.

National Events

Saturday 25th February. The Beekeeping Show. At Telford International Centre. <https://www.thebeekeepingshow.co.uk/>.

21 - 23 April 2023. BBKA Spring Convention. Venue - Harper Adams University, Shropshire. Three days of excellent talks and workshops by some of the best beekeepers nationally and internationally. Also a trade event. Booking is now open and for some of the most popular workshops it is wise to book early: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/planning-your-bbka-spring-convention>

1 - 3 June 2023 - Royal Bath & West Show at the Showgrounds, Shepton Mallet.

26 - 28 October 2023 - National Honey Show. Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Road, Esher.

Education, Training and Exams

Closing Dates for Exams and Assessments

- If you are planning on sitting a **module** exam on 18th March 2023 then do remember to register before the closing date of 10th February.
- The closing date for **Honey Bee Health, General Husbandry and Advanced Husbandry** is 28th February.
- To acquire an application form contact Richard Oliver (raoliver.64@gmail.com) who will arrange for a form to be sent to you digitally.

Basic Assessment

All BBKA members who have been keeping at least one colony of bees for one full season should be capable of passing the Basic Assessment. It is a practical and oral assessment that lasts no more than an hour. A pass demonstrates that you are a competent beekeeper. The pass rate nationally is 96%; in Wiltshire it is 99%.

The syllabus and other details are available here: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/basic-assessment>.

A quick glance at the syllabus will confirm that it is based on the content of the Beginners course so there should be nothing that is new. It may be some time since you were a beginner. Recognising this most of the branches in Wiltshire BKA run specific courses to bring their members up to speed. (if your branch is not running a course, contact one of the others to see if they can fit you in.) For many a course may not be suitable and just a few visits to their branch apiary should suffice. Others will have acquired the knowledge and skills over time and

Telling the Bees

As some of you know, my wife died suddenly at the beginning of January following a fall. Julia was not a beekeeper but, as the Head Gardener, she took an active interest. When she died it just seemed right to follow tradition and "Tell the Bees".

The weekend following her death my three boys and I each dressed a hive in black cloth, knocked on the brood box and told the bees in our own words that "the mistress is dead but the master will continue to look after you". It was 5°C. The sun was out but there was a real bite to the breeze. Nevertheless bees appeared in the entrance of all four colonies as if to say "Noted. Thank you."

We all found the experience pleasantly cathartic.

There will be a Service of Thanksgiving to celebrate Julia's life in St Barnabas Church, Easterton SN10 4PG at 2.30 p.m. on Monday 20th February followed by a reception in the village hall. In recent years many of you have met Julia when visiting Queensfield for various beekeeping activities. If you would like to join the family and her many friends from across the country, you would be most welcome. We will not be wearing black!

(Richard Oliver - Ed)

