

West Wilts BKA News

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



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This is your 'go to' section that will describe the things that you need to know about.

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The 'fun bits': news and reports.

The picture above is sadly not a winter one – a honey bee on *Doronicum Caucasicum*, a hardy perennial daisy producing an abundance of yellow flowers attractive to pollinators.

This February newsletter is produced in haste because of personal commitments this month. I very much hope that everyone attending the WWBKA annual dinner has had a wonderful time – perhaps someone will offer an account ad photos for the March issue?

Keep an eye on your bees – we have been having some very weird weather – make sure their entrances are clear and they have enough supplies, happy beekeeping!

DIARY OF EVENTS

April

The BBKA Spring Convention 2025 Friday 4th – Sunday 6th April 2025. Harper Adams University, near Telford, Shropshire, TF10 8NB [Spring Convention | British Beekeepers Association](#)

May 2025

The Royal Bath and West Show 2025 Thursday 29th May to Saturday 31st May 2025. [Royal Bath & West Show | The Bath & West Showground](#)

October 2025

Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025: Saturday 11th October 2025. 10am to 4pm [Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025 - Wiltshire Beekeepers Association](#) at The Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS (incorporates the County Honey Show).

BBKA National Honey Day: on 21st October, each year **The British Beekeepers' Association celebrates National Honey Day**

National Honey Show 2025: Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October 2025 at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey, UK [National Honey Show homepage - National Honey Show](#)

Need to know

Lectures

You can see the "Preparing for Winter" BBKA zoom meeting on YouTube by searching on the BBKA website you can also see 'Mead' with Michael Badger(from Tuesday 15th October 2024)

The BBKA zoom meeting from 19th November (Kirsty Stainton – varroa) is not available at the moment due to a problem with the website, it is hoped that it will be available online sometime in the future

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

18th February 2025: Keith Bartlem, 'An Inspector Calls'

18th March 2025: Jenny Morgan, Preparing for Exams

Further details for each talk will be available nearer the time.

PLEASE EMAIL THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR WITH ANY INTERESTING EVENTS OR FEATURES IF YOU WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INCLUSION...MANY THANKS

Good to know

February Plant of the Month.

Mahonia japonica (Japanese mahonia) An evergreen shrub, (Family: Berberidaceae)



Frost hardy shrub, Height: 1.5m **Spread:** 2.5m

Flower colour: Scented Yellow flowers, green leaves, Attractive to wildlife

I do not have a mahonia in my garden border at the moment, though I am planning to find a place for one. I love the fragrance and the long flowering season (from late autumn to early spring. Mahonia is grown for its attractive foliage and fragrant, showy racemes of lemon yellow, lily of the valley scented flowers. These flowers provide an invaluable source of pollen and nectar for winter colonies of bumblebees and other pollinators. Mahonia is a popular shrub, easy to grow almost anywhere, even in shady spots.



The Improvers Study Group.

You may recall having received the following email from our Education Officer – here is a reminder

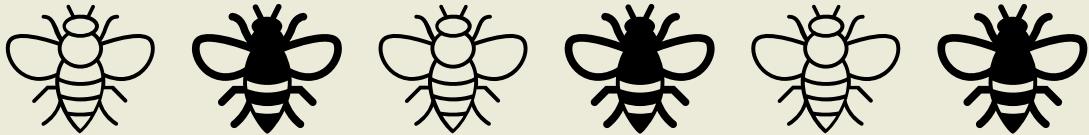
“Chris Rawlings will be running the 2025 Improvers Study Group starting on the 18th of February. The Improvers Study Group provides beekeepers who have one or more seasons of beekeeping experience with the basic knowledge and skills to prepare for the BBKA Basic Assessment.

The Improvers Course is also an excellent refresher course for more experienced beekeepers who feel that their knowledge or skills might have become a little rusty!

The 2025 course begins on Tuesday 18th February 2025 at 19:00 and runs every Tuesday evening for 6 weeks. The cost for the course is £30.

The sessions take place in the Oratory Room at the Bratton Church Institute, Tynings Lane, Bratton BA13 4RR.

Feedback from members who have attended the Improvers group has been consistently positive, with people finding it a very supportive and encouraging environment in which to share ideas and improve their beekeeping knowledge and skills. We'd really like to encourage any of our members with more than 12 months' beekeeping experience who hasn't yet taken the course to do so - you don't need to take the Basic Assessment if exams aren't "your thing", but the course itself is enjoyable and well worthwhile. If you would like to enrol, please contact me on education-WWBKA@outlook.com as soon as possible.



WWBKA HONEY FOR SALE!

The Apiary's 2024 honey is still available to members to buy by the bucket

£5 per lb

If you would like to buy apiary honey, please pay the Treasurer direct after checking with Den the weight of buckets available (this can be done via WhatsApp)

You can contact the Club Treasurer by email at Treasurer-wwbbka@outlook.com

PLEASE NOTE ALL GOODS TO BE COLLECTED FROM THE APIARY ONLY.



HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR BEEHIVES RECENTLY?

Milder weather in previous “winter” months has meant the bees have been more active outside the hives – have they sufficient stores to see them through until the spring? – You can still buy hive alive and fondant to the bees through the winter months... **Go to page 6 and check how to order supplies...**

Still looking for a contact who might be able to help



wanted for a WWBKA member –

an out-apiary opportunity for 4 hives preferably within a 5-mile radius of Warminster.

Please direct any responses to newsletter-wwbka@outlook.com

Thank you.



A message from the Apiary Manager

A reminder that there is Hive Alive still available in 1 kilo ready to use packs at £4 and fondant in 12 kilo blocks at £20 a box - no postage to pay!!! All available for collection from the apiary, payable to the Treasurer prior to collection.



REMINDER!

Members wanting to buy WWBKA clothing can now order directly from the suppliers as the link to ordering clothing is now “live” on the shop website.

All four Beekeeper Products (Fleece, Sweatshirt, Polo Shirt and Cap) are available to order from the OHM website using the following

link: <https://ohmclothing.co.uk/shop/workwear/wiltshire-beekeepers/>

Alternatively, you can go onto the OHM website, click ‘Workwear,’ then ‘Wiltshire Beekeepers’ and you will find all the items listed there.

Please note that all queries will be handled by the shop.

Customer Support - Devizes | OHM Clothing Ltd and OHM Charities

01380 825355

Opening times: 10-5 Tuesday-Friday, 10-2 Saturdays.

Shop: 31 Sheep Street, Devizes, SN10 1DJ

Workshop: Unit 6, Axis Business Centre, Westmead Ind Est, Swindon, SN5 7YS



Wiltshire Beekeepers
West Wiltshire
Beekeepers Association
Unisex Polo Top

£16.19



Wiltshire Beekeepers
West Wiltshire
Beekeepers Association
Unisex Sweatshirt

£25.79



Wiltshire Beekeepers
West Wiltshire
Beekeepers Association
Cap

£10.19



Wiltshire Beekeepers
West Wiltshire
Beekeepers Association
Unisex Fleece

£33.79

Winter repairs.

I bought a couple of metres of elastic last month to renew the elastic in the wrists and ankles of my bee suit. A quick and fairly cheap fix – just a bit of effort to take out the old elastic and secure the new in place. Job Done!

During my bee keeping visits to my beehives, I spend a great deal of time reminding myself to zip up my hood to protect my face from stings, but at my hives last year I spent a whole session with the bees and did not realise until I took off my bee suit at the end, that I had a tear in the top of my veil. Whew – a lucky escape. I thought about how this might have happened, and I eventually recalled walking under a tree and sort of “catching” my head as I passed under a branch. I had given the incident no more thought until I found the tear. Veils do the job, but I suppose you get what you pay for, possibly expensive bee suits have stronger veils? I confess my bee suit was part of a beginners package which I had bought at the start of my bee keeping journey.

I now remind myself to check my veil when I put my bee suit on, as well as making sure I have done up all the zips! As many bee keepers do, I carry a roll of “gaffer tape” in my kit bag, it is especially useful for all types of unfortunate incidents – and I used it to cover the hole in my veil until a new hood could be delivered. I also bought a roll of insect mesh, and I intend to replace the veil of the old hood with this when I get the spare time.



Buying a Bee Suit.

Leading on from my ramblings about bee suit repairs.... Are you thinking of buying a new bee keepers suit this year?

My first beekeeping suit came as part as the package I bought as my introductory forage into bee keeping. I was a little naïve when it came to the subject if the truth is known. I have a disability in my left shoulder, so had to unpick and add inserts to the suit I bought to enable me to get my shoulder easily inside. I also bought a thick pair of painters trousers and a bee keepers smock with a hood so that anyone who wanted a look into the hives or fancies a “close encounter” with the bees, would be safe if wearing them. They do the job.

I wash my bee suit in the washing machine, in a big laundry bag, with the veil put carefully inside one of the sleeves. Aware of the advice against using fragranced washing liquids, I use washing soda to launder with and have always found this effective.

I decided to invest in a new bee keepers suit this year. When I started to look for a new bee keeping suit I discovered the vast range of styles of suits available. Perhaps the most immediately obvious differences are the hoods – fencing style or the round style. It seems to me that choice of hood style is related to personal preference. The round hood and the flat fronted fencing style hood appear to offer a different range of vision. Many bee keepers – particularly those with the fencing veil type hood, wear a baseball cap to hold the veil away from the face, with the express intention of keeping inquisitive bees away from the face.

Many suits are made from poly cotton material of varying degrees of thickness and ratio of cotton to polyester. A thicker suit may give the wearer greater protection from bee

(Buying a Bee Suit contd.)

stings and be especially useful to those bee keepers who react very strongly to bee stings. I would argue that an additional consideration should be whether there is enough room beneath the suit. According to our temperamental British weather some people wear light shorts and a tee shirt beneath their bee suit. There are occasions when long trousers and a long-sleeved shirts need to be worn underneath in cooler weather and according to preference.

Another aspect of bee keeper suits are the colours available. I have seen a range of colours for sale: lilac, white, beige, khaki. Again, I have heard bee keepers say they prefer to wear one colour over another, but I have not yet read research to substantiate the claims made. I am aware that bees are more partial to different colours, but the bee keeper does not wish to be especially attractive to bees – I think bee keepers prefer to be ignored and allowed to blend into the background, so a colour that would not appear to aggravate bees would seem very sensible.

Some suits are advertised as being ventilated; these are created from a layer of foam mesh sandwiched between two layers of knitted mesh. Some bee suits boast being made of organic cotton (without the use of pesticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilisers, guaranteed non-GMO and global organic textile standard (GOTS) certified. Another important feature (as I alluded to when talking about mending my bee suit), is strong elastic at the ankles and wrists, additionally the zippers should be reinforced with overlapping closures.

I have seen advertisements for bee suits with prices ranging from £55.00 to round about £148.00 – I dare say there will be some more expensive if I keep on searching. In conclusion, if you are wanting to buy a new suit, the best thing to do might be to ask

(Buying a Bee Suit contd.)

keepers about the suits they wear and consider what they recommend. From looking on the internet and looking at advertisements in magazines, there appear to be suits to meet everyone's budget. There are suits available at the WWBKA club apiary to borrow (after paying a deposit and on the understanding that it will be returned after being washed), you might find you are impressed with one of those and buy accordingly. I still have not put my order in yet – I had better make my mind up before the season starts – we might all choose the same design and then there will be availability issues!



Bee @ the hive in 25!

LECTURES – WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS – SATURDAY TRADE SHOW – SOCIAL EVENTS

Friday 4 – Sunday 6 April 2025

Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB

Speakers and Tutors include: Marin Anastasov, Andy Anderson, Geoff Blay, Shirley Bond, Dave Bonner, Maria Bouga, Enid Brown, Richard Comont, Lynfa Davies, Maggie Gill, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Ann Moore, Peter Neumann (virtual), Joyce Nisbet, Claire O'Brien, Chris Park, Roger Patterson, Jeff Pettis, Alice Pinto, Sue & Chris Rawlings, Sara Robb, Jenny Roberts, Jack Silberrad, Debbie Smith, Stewart Spinks, Sean Stephenson, Andy Wattam and many more...

Updates, full programme (mid January) and to book from **Noon 27 January**
at: www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention



Spring 2025
Convention



Enquiries to:
scenquiries@bbka.org.uk

February Honey Recipe – Apricot and Ginger Chutney with Honey

1lb stoned chopped raisins.



½ lb dried apricots

1lb onions

2 cloves of garlic

12 ozs sugar

3 tablespoons honey

1 tsp salt

1 dessert spoon of cayenne pepper



2 ozs ground ginger

1 oz coriander seeds

1tsp yellow mustard seeds

1tsp black mustard seeds

2 tsps made mustard

2 pints vinegar.



Method.

1. Soak apricots 48hrs. Chop or mince raisins, onions, cloves of garlic, apricots and cook for half an hour in half pt of liquor that the apricots were soaked in.
2. Add 1 pint of vinegar and simmer till tender then leave till the following day.
3. Add remaining ingredients (except two teaspoons of made mustard) - putting coriander and mustard **seeds** into the mixture in a muslin spice bag. Simmer in remaining vinegar for 2hrs.
4. Remove bag, add mustard, simmer 10 minutes then pot.
5. Leave for a week for flavours to mature before using.
6. Enjoy with cold meats and cheese.

(I use “ready to cook apricots and amend the recipe accordingly).

Asian Hornet nest identification

Asian hornets produce two types of nest, primary and secondary:

Primary nests:

- Spherical with a small entrance hole at the base, usually 5 to 10 cm in diameter.
- Built in spring by a lone Asian hornet queen, usually in a protected place such as brambles, a hedgerow, or in / on a building.
- **All primary wasp and hornet nests look similar, only report primary nests if seen with Asian hornets. To identify a nest, watch for insects from a safe distance.**

Asian hornet,
Vespa velutina



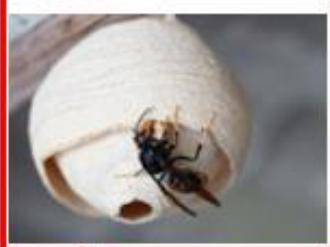
Secondary nests:

- Pear-shaped, entrance hole halfway up the nest, up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.
- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- **Use binoculars to identify secondary nests from a safe distance. Do not disturb suspected nests and retreat from any wasp / hornet nests if flying insects are observed.**

Secondary nests in a tree canopy in summer (left)



Primary nest. All primary wasp and hornet nests look similar. **Only report if seen with Asian hornet.**



Secondary nest in a hedge



Secondary nest in a building



Alert!

Report sightings of Asian hornet and suspected nests:

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: **Asian Hornet Watch**
- online at: nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

For assistance with identifying a suspected Asian hornet nest, or to help identify nests, please contact your local Asian Hornet Team (AHT).

Report Asian hornet:



Find an AHT:



Nests of similar species

Secondary Asian hornet nests may be confused with other wasp and hornet nests, or objects in trees. If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet nest, please use binoculars to check from a safe distance before reporting. See overleaf for details of where to report nests and how to get help with identifying a potential nest.

Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*

Secondary nest:

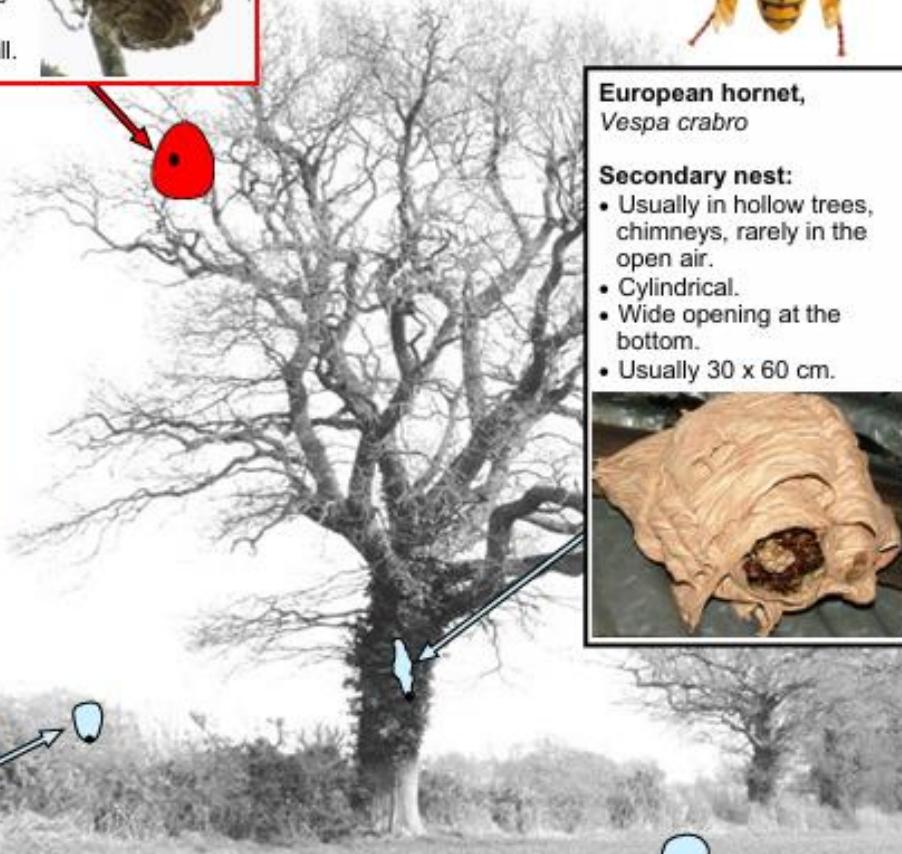
- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- Pear-shaped.
- Entrance hole halfway up the nest.
- Up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.



Other objects in trees

- Crow and magpie nests.
- Mistletoe.
- Squirrel dreys.

Bird nest in a tree:



Median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*



Secondary nest:

- Usually in bushes that are less than 2 m tall.
- Conical.
- Small opening at lower end, off centre.
- Usually 20 x 25 cm.



Primary nest:

Characteristic tube-shaped entrance (unlike primary Asian hornet nest).

Common wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*



Secondary nest:

- Usually on the ground, or in confined spaces in buildings.
- Round to conical.
- Small hidden opening at the lower end.
- Usually 30 x 35 cm.



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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

Contacts and services

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

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

Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com

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

Library: Contact our Librarian (either direct or through the Secretary)

Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Newell 01373-825560 or sj007g0836@blueyonder.co.uk).

Find us on 

:West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association

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