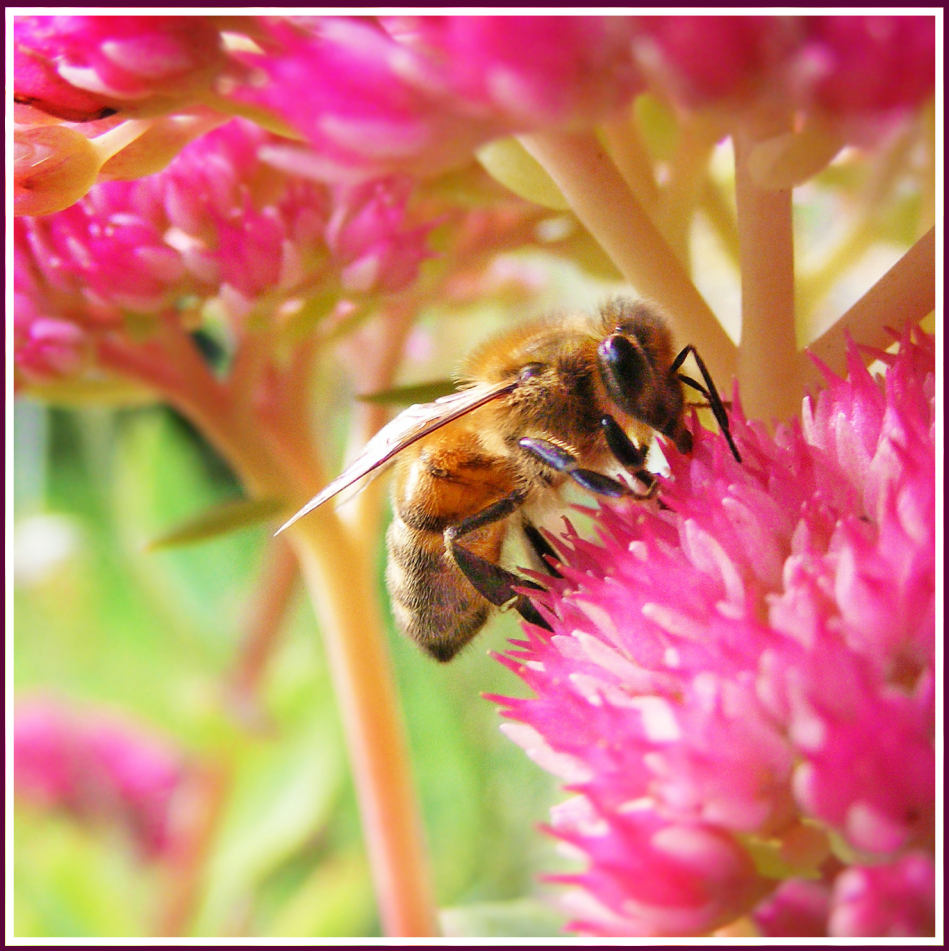
Beekeeping

The Journal of the Devon Beekeepers' Association



Vol 92 No 6

August 2026

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Beekeeping

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Devon Beekeepers' Association (DBKA)

Founded in 1875

General Secretary: **Judith Norman**
Email: **gensec@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**
DBKA Chair: **Warwick Newson**
Email: **chair@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**

Beekeeping Editorial Team

Editor: **Robert Blackmore**
Email: **editor@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**
Advertising Secretary & Diary Editor: **Michaela Eckenberger**
Email: **ads@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**
Regular contributors:
Graham Kingham
David Packham
Simon O'Sullivan

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Back Issues Previous editions of this magazine from 2018 onward, are available to download in PDF format from the DBKA website. Older editions can be obtained on request from: webmaster@devonbeekeepers.org.uk

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Front Cover Picture:
In the Pink
Honey bee on sedum
Photograph by Robert Blackmore

The next issue will be September 2026

Deadline Items for the next edition of the magazine must be with the Editor by 10 August 2026.

Your Branch Secretary or Executive Council Delegate can provide you with the log-in details for the members' area of the Devon Beekeepers' website.

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The Buzz Word

Warwick Newson - Chair DBKA



August is always a time to reflect on what has already been a busy and productive beekeeping season. Across the county, it has been encouraging to see so many members actively developing their knowledge and skills, and that can only benefit both our beekeepers and their bees.

One of the highlights has been the excellent work undertaken by our associations in supporting members through the BBKA Basic Assessment. Congratulations to everyone who has taken the assessment this year, and sincere thanks to the assessors, mentors and branch organisers who have given up their time to help candidates prepare. The Basic Assessment is often the first step in a beekeeper's educational journey, providing the confidence and practical skills that form the foundation of good beekeeping.

August also sees the BBKA's Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Awareness Week. This remains one of the most important opportunities we have to raise public awareness of this invasive predator. Every conversation, display, social media post and public event helps improve the chances of early detection, which remains our best defence. Thank you to all those branches and members who are supporting awareness activities in their local communities.

I would also like to wish everyone involved in the honey shows at Okehampton, Holsworthy and Honiton every success. Honey shows are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the quality and diversity of our members' produce, while encouraging the highest standards in beekeeping. Whether you are exhibiting for the first time or are a seasoned competitor, I hope you enjoy the event.

Last month also saw the Honey Bee Health Day at Mount Edgcumbe, and what a success it proved to be (see page 18). A tremendous amount of work went on behind the scenes to organise the day, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Events like these don't happen by accident—they rely on dedicated volunteers who are willing to give their time and expertise for the benefit of others. My thanks go to everyone who helped make the day such a success.

Finally, I would like to recognise the tremendous contribution made by the trustees and committee members across all our associations. Their work is often unseen and, at times, can be a thankless task. They organise meetings, maintain apiaries, arrange speakers and training, oversee finances, deal with governance, answer countless emails and generally keep our associations running smoothly. Most do this quietly, without seeking recognition, simply because they care deeply about supporting beekeeping and their fellow members.

To every trustee, committee member and volunteer across Devon—thank you. Your commitment and generosity of time are what make our associations thrive.

Warwick Newson

Devon Beekeepers' Day (formerly President's Day)

Saturday 26th September at Boniface Centre, Crediton EX17 2AH

Booking Now Open (see page 8 for details)

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Beekeeping the Journal and the C-Word

Robert Blackmore - Editor

In the last issue of Beekeeping I warned that you might be receiving your copy late, after its due-date of 1st June. My own copy arrived on Monday the 1st, and thank-you to Michael Archibald who emailed me to say his copy arrived on Saturday 30th of May; so, just in time then, thanks due to the efforts of InkPrint for making up the time.

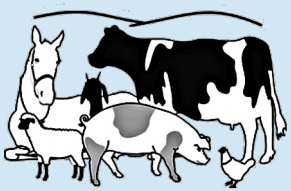
The only other feedback I received was from Jeremy Barnes who writes from Pennsylvania; not the suburb of Exeter of that name, nor the village in Gloucestershire, but the one in the USA. Here is a brief extract from his email:

"*I am one who feels honored and privileged to receive **Beekeeping**, especially as a non-Devon resident. I appreciate the varying and different perspectives compared to local issues, and learn something significant from every issues, as well as being inspired by events which we can replicate here in south-eastern Pennsylvania.*

*… There are a few state-wide organizations in the US that produce quarterly publications of note, but none of the state monthly newsletters compare in quality with **Beekeeping**. It is easy to take that for granted, not to express appreciation of the work involved…*".

My reply to Jeremy opened with:

"*It is not compliments about the quality of the publication that are needed (very much appreciated as they are) but the belief that [**Beekeeping**] is serving a useful purpose. Quality is not there for its own sake, it is functional; to engage the reader and give useful information. **Beekeeping** is the JOURNAL of Devon Beekeepers, so as I see it, it should be a valued tool for communication within the organisation to inform, educate, report and convey the pheromone that glues us together as one association.*"



118th Okehampton Show 2026

Thursday 13th August

Stoney Park Showground, Okehampton, EX20 1SW

www.okehamptonshow.co.uk

Honey Show

Hosted by Okehampton Beekeepers

Bee Entry Form & Schedule

www.okehamptonshow.co.uk/other-competitors

For the DBKA Executive Council (EC) meeting of 26 March, I asked the that the journal, its purpose and whether it was meeting that purpose was discussed. As yet, I have not had feedback from the EC other than sight of the unedited AI generated Zoom Assets *(which, if you don't know, are automatically generated notes to aid the compilation of 'minutes')*. From that, I can see that the issues regarding this magazine were discussed, but what I can't see is any recognition of a serious problem or any implementation of effective solutions. The 'assets' also report that "*participants [debated] whether to maintain the paper version or transition to a digital-first approach*": **The DBKA 2025-26 Budget** shows there is a budget "*to allow for development of a more sophisticated digital version of the magazine*". My conclusion at this stage is that there is no mood to make any changes because the aspirational 'sophisticated digital magazine', when it arrives, will solve all problems. Leaving aside my belief that that aspiration is misplaced, I think the essence of the problem is being missed: …Well maybe not entirely; the 'Zoom assets' report that one EC member "*…raised concerns about the magazine's low readership and suggested focusing on making the publication more relevant as a communication tool…*"; and there you have it, the '**C-Word**' - **Communication**.

For communication to happen there are three essential components; a sender, a receiver and a medium to convey the message. All three components have to function. If senders don't send and/or receivers don't receive then communication doesn't happen however effective the medium. It doesn't matter whether the medium is paper, digital, website, email, socials or smoke signals - if the association doesn't communicate its aims, values, instruction, news, or record its activities through whatever media it chooses, to all members, and the membership doesn't receive that communication and actively engage with it, then the medium (**Beekeeping** in this case) becomes ineffective.

OR maybe I'm looking at this all wrong - **What do you think?**

I'd especially like to hear from Pennsylvania, Exeter (*no offence Jeremy*), or anywhere really.

Robert Blackmore *Editor* **editor@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**

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Devon Beekeepers Day

September 26th

A day of lectures, of meeting up with old friends, lots of honey bee talk, pastie lunch and probably the best selection of cake to be seen in the county. What more could you ask for?

Boniface Centre, Church Lane, Crediton EX17 2AH

Booking is now open through **Eventbrite**

Your speakers:



Lynne Ingram NDB

Lynne has kept bees for over 30 years, and runs 10 colonies in Somerset. She is a Master Beekeeper, holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping, and is an examiner for the BBKA written and practical exams. Lynne is involved in educating beekeepers, running study groups and curating the popular Somerset Lecture series. She is a knowledgeable and engaging speaker.

The Truth About Honey?

Honey is the second most adulterated food in the world. This talk lifts the lid on the how, why and wherefore of honey fraud and adulteration, and the shocking impact it is having on the livelihoods of beekeepers around the world. We look at why this fraud continues, and what can be done about it. We also take a look at what is happening in the UK.



Chris Parks

Chris Parks lives on an organic farm in the Vale of the White Horse. His work ranges across arts and crafts, education and ancient technologies, folk music, storytelling, celebrancy and therapy. He works with schools, wildlife trusts, local authorities, mental health projects, special interest groups, communities and families. He researches beekeeping heritage, folklore and history and lectures to beekeeping associations. Chris keeps bees in many different types of hives, ranging from log hives to a bee house and he specialises in skeps, all styles being treatment-free allowed to swarm and never fed sugar. During the pandemic, Chris worked with the bee-themed podcast **Living Bee**. Chris works with the charity **Bees for Development** teaching skep making, mead making and skep-beekeeping.

Beeswax Through the Ages

Beeswax a major factor in the development in the evolution of the genus Apis and their ability to raise brood and expand stores, has long been a boon to humanity. Dubbin your boots, wax your hair put on your lipstick for a hike through beeswax history. From ancient medicines, magic charms and early metallurgy, through cobblery, saddlery and upholstery, to holy luminance royal seals and taxes, towards anatomical models, modern science and space exploration.

Ollie Visick



Ollie is a postdoctoral researcher with seven years' experience working with bees. His PhD research generated the first quantitative data on the size and status of free-living honey bee populations in the UK. He has also developed field-based approaches for assessing the quantity and quality of natural nesting cavities in trees, contributing to our understanding of how habitat loss may influence free-living populations in Europe.

Wild Honeybee Colonies - Density, Survival and Limiting Factors

This talk starts by exploring the density and survival of honey bee colonies in the wild, providing an overview of previous research in Europe and my PhD in southeast England. I'll then talk briefly about the project we are running in the South West, concerning the evolutionary origin of wild honey bee colonies. Lastly, I will discuss the factors limiting colonies in the wild, particularly the availability of suitable nesting cavities in trees.

Lesley Jacques NDB



Lesley became an accidental beekeeper after a swarm arrived in her garden in 2011. She very quickly became fascinated by the bees she was tending, and committed to learn more about them, working her way through the BBKA Module and Husbandry exams. She was awarded her Master Beekeeper qualification in 2022 and gained the NDB in 2024. Lesley is Vice Chair of Cheshire Beekeepers' Association as well as being a founder member of Mid Cheshire Beekeepers. Lesley is an examiner for the Basic and General Husbandry assessments and is actively engaged with the Association's advanced and beginners' level teaching programmes. As a scientist by profession, she takes a particular interest in the biology and botanical aspects of beekeeping, and in conveying this to others. Lesley lives in Cheshire with her husband Tony, and manages four apiaries with more colonies than she admits to.

Where do the bees go?

Anyone who keeps bees eventually develops a curiosity with the origins of their honey – where the bees forage, and what do they return with that gives the honey such variety of colour and flavour, as well as the different pollens that we see stored in the combs.

Understanding where the bees are foraging requires good observational skills, and sometimes a bit of backyard botany to help interpret the evidence. This can help us develop a wider appreciation of the landscape around us, the forage plants that are available at different times of the year, and to make a better-informed guess at which of those plants our bees may be visiting.

This presentation looks in detail at some of those flower species that are important to our honey bees, how we determine our bees' foraging grounds and the origin of our honey.

During the lunch break you can meet up to talk bees or drop in to the hall and listen to our short presentations from our stand holders

Booking is now open through the **Eventbrite** link sent out to all members or go to the DBKA website **www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk** for the link.

If you would like to bring along a cake on the day it will be much appreciated.

In the Apiary - August

by David Packham

Introduction:

As I write this in late June the temperature outside is 36°C, the hottest temperature ever recorded in the UK at this time of year. The Indian Bean tree is a mass of flowers and I stand to look at my bees foraging on the beautiful blooms marked with orange and purple. The question is, what effect will this extreme weather have on our bees and on the nectar source? August is considered the start of the new beekeeping year; the main honey flow is over and the bees transfer their attention to preparing for the winter ahead. In fact, given the weather, I wouldn't be surprised if the flow ended by mid-July. By the time you read this my honey harvest will be complete. Any nectar gathered by the bees from the start of August onwards is theirs to keep and will be stored in the brood box replacing the diminishing brood nest. I do hope that you have had a successful year and that your honey is also safely stored away.

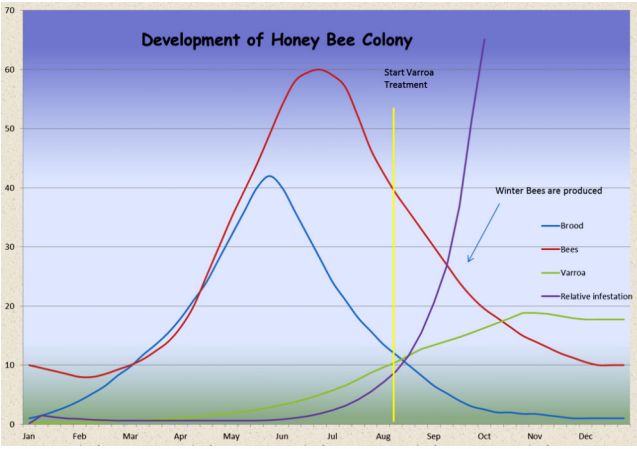


Photograph by David Packham

Indian Bean Tree

The Winter Bees:

I did promise in the June notes to explain why I am obsessed with removing my main honey crop before the end of July. This is because the colonies will start producing their very special winter bees from August onwards. To this end, the larvae are fed a diet with less pollen which triggers physiological changes and allows them to grow larger fat bodies. These bees may live up to six months and will be responsible for ensuring that the colony is able to survive the winter and that sufficient remain to carry the colony past that critical period of late March, before the arrival of the new summer bees. Therefore, it is important that they are as healthy as possible. Viruses that are transmitted by the varroa mites as they feed off the larvae will reduce the life span of these bees and threaten the ability for the colony to survive the winter and into early spring. For this reason it is vital that varroa levels are kept to a minimum during August and September. Looking at the graph we see that the amount of brood has diminished drastically by the beginning of August, but the varroa mite numbers continue to expand so the percentage of larvae with mites explode exponentially. Looking at the graph we can see the most critical time for the overwintering colony is March. If the life of the overwintered bees is reduced by viruses spread by varroa, it can be critical for the colony. I am not suggesting that we treat prophylactically but if your bees need treating it makes sense to do so early rather than waiting until the autumn. I suggest that the first week in



August is the optimum time for treating for varroa, however don't forget there is no varroa treatment which should be done whilst the supers are in place. Thus my reason for removing the honey crop at the end of July.

Whilst extracting, any frames where the honey is perhaps not ripe or is oil seed rape that has set, are put to one side together with frames that need replacing or maybe have lots of pollen. These frames are placed in a super and returned to the colonies under the brood box as winter feed after any varroa treatment has been removed.

As a bee inspector, I could not count the number of winter losses where the beekeeper explained that the colony was very good at the start of March but died suddenly later that month. There were various explanations given including the wet winter, the cold winter, the warm winter etc!

Final August Inspection:

I like to do one in-depth inspection during August ensuring that the colony is in good shape for surviving the winter. So I would advise the following.

- First that there are no notifiable brood diseases, American Foulbrood (AFB) or European Foulbrood (EFB) which I detailed in 'the Apiary in May'
- Next check that they have a nice productive queen. You do not need to find the queen herself but confirm she is laying by checking for eggs and larvae. If the brood pattern is poor or patchy, I would consider requeening or uniting. I think that it is useful to mark any unmarked queens before winter. That way you will be able to determine if the colony has superseded.
- Small colonies might struggle to maintain the core temperature and would benefit from overwintering in a polystyrene nucleus box or perhaps consider combining with another colony.
- I use this inspection to add the additional super under the brood box and to calculate weight of stores that each colony has. But I do not feed until late September.



Photograph by David Packham

Very poor brood pattern



Photograph by David Packham

Marked queen



Photograph by David Packham

A typical supersedure cell

Supersedure:

Supersedure is the replacement of the queen by the bees and takes place when the bees decide that it would be beneficial for the colony to have a new queen. Perhaps she is underperforming due to age or maybe they sense she is running out of sperm. As the colony prepares for winter, August is often the time when supersedure takes place. Supersedure cells are typically built on the face or in the

middle of a brood frame, rather than along the bottom edges but this is not always the case. So be very cautious before removing queen cells. Significantly, the colony is at no point queenless during this process and I have sometimes found two queens on the first inspection the following year. The nurse bees seem to concentrate on feeding the young queen and in time, the old queen disappears.

Wasps:

In August, wasp colonies hit their peak populations. As the nest expands during the summer the adult worker wasps are in need of copious amounts of protein to feed their growing larvae. They obtain this protein by hunting insects and in doing so provide a vital service by controlling the numbers of potential pests like greenfly and many caterpillars. In return for the protein, the larvae produce droplets of carbohydrates to feed the adults.



Photograph by Robert Blackmore

Wasp attack

In August the queen stops laying eggs and when the final batch of larvae has matured, there are no larvae to feed and hence the adult wasps experience a sugar crash which they must satisfy from elsewhere. Where do the adults look for carbohydrates? That's right, they look to your bees, in particular small colonies and nucs that are unable to defend themselves. So to assist the bees to defend their colonies I reduce the entrances to about one inch or less if required. A large healthy colony with a reduced entrance should easily be able to deal with any wasp incursion and the robbing wasps will soon move on to the smaller colonies or those suffering from disease. Stored supers will also be a target. To keep them at bay, it pays to extract the honey as soon as they are removed from the hives and to return the wet supers to the hives to remove all traces of honey and to store them in sealed, wasp-proof structures.

Asian Hornet:

A last word on the Asian hornets as August is the peak activity month for the invasive species. During this time, colonies are massive and the hornets begin aggressively hunting honeybees and other pollinators near hives. Most sightings of the hornet are reported in August. Please be observant. An open protein bait station placed where it can easily be observed from your house would be really useful. Photograph any sightings and log your location using the Asian Hornet Watch app or report directly to the NBU.



Photograph by David Packham

Asian hornet at a bate station

Conclusion:

August heralds the 'dog days' of summer when we think of nature beginning to wind down, the garden is going over to a certain degree, crops are being harvested and school holidays are in full swing.

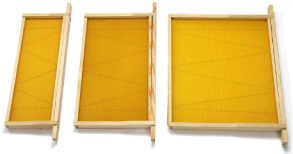
'Dog days' are often thought to refer to these creatures lazing about in the heat of the day. However the saying refers to the Dog Star, Sirius which shines at its brightest, rising and setting in alignment with the sun in the constellation of Canis Major (Great Dog). Ancient civilisations believed that the star combined with the sun caused the hot, sultry days of August.

Ensure that your colonies have honey removed, Varroa treatment is in place, consider combining small, weak colonies and you can relax in the summer heat and enjoy your own 'dog days'.

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YLAH Monitoring
by Simon O'Sullivan

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Awareness and Monitoring.

As I am sure you are aware, the threat from the Yellow legged Asian Hornet (YLAH) is getting closer to us. Last year a nest was found in Dorset at the end of the season which had gone through its complete life cycle, producing males and queens. We have in the past seen nests in Devon but they have been odd occurrences. What appears to be happening now is that an established population is slowly spreading along the South Coast towards us. I don't believe it will be long before we have regular sightings. As of 25 June 2026 the National Bee Unit (NBU) have investigated thirty-four credible sightings of this insect. As we move into later summer these figures will increase rapidly, as the population in established nests increases and we start to see predation of honeybees. The crunch time occurs in late August /September when the males and queens start to emerge from the nest.

How can I help?

We are planning a County-Wide monitoring scheme during August.

We are asking for as many as possible to get involved and to encourage friends and families to join in. It's very easy and takes only a small time commitment.

What do I need?

Monitoring bait stations are very simple to make. At the very simplest level they can be a shallow tray or saucer filled with attractant with a few stones for the insect to land on (They don't like sticky feet!).

A version that is more sustainable, (not needing the bait to be constantly topped up), is a little more complicated but not difficult. A plastic pot, (such as a supermarket soup container, with a sealable lid) works well. The pot is one third filled with attractant; a hole is made in the lid and a wick of J-cloth or similar is used to draw up the liquid. A piece of wire can be used to hang up the pot. These are simple to make: make a few and give them out to neighbours.



Bait station made from a supermarket soup container

Where should I put it?

It needs to be placed where it can be seen easily, such as from a kitchen window, so that checking does not become a chore. Then try to find a few minutes at odd times throughout the day to watch and see what comes.

Where do I get the attractant?

Your Branch Co-ordinator will have a supply of bait to give out to branch members. If you

would like to make your own bait here is a general recipe idea. We would appreciate knowing which combination you find to be the most effective at bringing in the Vespa species (Wasps and European hornets)

- 200 ml water
- 200 g sugar,
- 50 ml Grenadine/ other fruit cordial/ jam/ mashed over-ripe fruit,
- 50 ml Apple cider vinegar/ dark beer
- A little yeast will also give an aroma attractive to hornets.

What do I do if think I see an invasive hornet?

Once the insect has found the bait it will keep returning to it, so no need to panic - too much rushed activity can put the insect off from returning. Evidence is important so a photograph is ideal. This is usually easy to get on the bait. If you are not sure of the sighting contact your branch co-ordinator or the County Co-ordinators (see below).

Download the Asian Hornet Watch App

If you have a clear photo that looks like YLAH then please report it. Then tell you Branch or County co-ordinator.

The easiest and most effective way of informing the authorities is to use the app - please have it available on your phone.

The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app is available for both android and iPhone



Image: NBU

Email: Photos and videos can be emailed to: **alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk**. Please ensure you include full location and contact details as well as a photo.

Online Form: Use this link to access the online reporting form: **https://risc.brc.ac.uk/alert.php?species=asian_hornet**

Alternatively use the on-line form on the Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS): **https://nonnativespecies.org/**

Devon County Co-ordinators:

Simon O'Sullivan: **grannysmeadow@hotmail.com**
Judith Norman: **judith.norman@me.com**
Gerry Stuart: **gerrystuart@hotmail.co.uk**

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Anatomy of a Skep

by Graham Kingham and Joe McGuckin

The history of skeps goes back a long way, and Germany is thought to be the first country to use them. Before then, wild colonies in hollowed-out trees were sought out for honey and wax.

The word skep is derived from the Old Norse word skeppa, meaning basket or bushel, an old measurement of volume for wheat. These are manufactured from a coiled rope of straw into a round shape with a domed top.

As local versions evolved, the French often made the base of wood with holes drilled in the front for an entrance covered above with coiled straw or wicker rope. Wooden sticks were inserted inside to provide support for the combs.



All Images by Graham Kingham

A side elevation showing the square shape and domed roof.

Smoking the hive with sulphur in the autumn was used to kill the bees. In his book **A Treatise on the Management of Bees** (1768), available free on the internet, the Englishman Thomas Wildman noted that if the skep was upended and an empty one placed above, the bees could be persuaded to move to a new home when the old skep was repeatedly tapped with a stick, thereby prolonging their lives. Wildman's skeps were smaller than today, 7 inches high (178mm) and 10 inches (254mm) wide, his own preference and better than those imported!

There are two main types of skeps. **Cloomed**, an old defunct term meaning to cover or seal, which had a woven top hat fitted over the top and **uncloomed**, meaning uncovered, that had a purpose-made, free-standing roof fitted over the top.



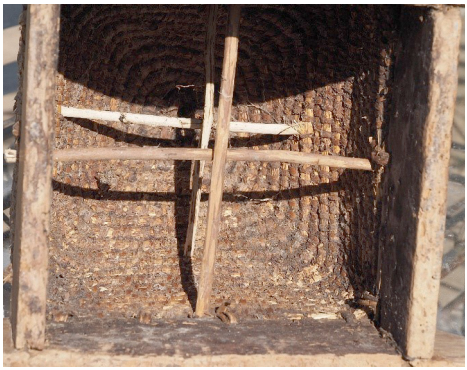
The front of the hive shows the entrance holes.

In some areas of France, round-type skeps were covered in clay to make them waterproof. Both the English and French place their skeps into stone wall recesses purposely made to protect them from the weather; these can be found today in old houses, often in gardens, known as bee boles, derived from the old Scots word for a hole in a wall.

There is no direct translation for the word skep in French; they are called ruche de paille, meaning straw hive. Another local name is cloche en paille, a bell-shaped basket hive.

We believe the hive shown, to be French it was purchased in the UK and is thought to be over 100 years old. We would welcome any further information from members.

With an external measurement of 310x310x420mm, giving an internal area of 21.68 litres.



An internal view showing the crossbars for the combs to hang from.

The inside is darkened, but the residual smell is divine!



Straw, insect frass, propolis and a few body bits shaken out of the skep x10 magnification.

To investigate further, we placed the hive on a sheet of newspaper and gently taped the four sides to collect the debris. We looked at it under the dissecting microscope, which revealed straw, wax moth faeces, a few dead insects, propolis and lots of dust. The fine dust was used to make a stained slide, which was examined under a compound microscope at x400. Several shrivelled pollen grains were seen, plus six different hydrated pollen grains.

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NBU Bee Health Day

by Ruth Stainer-Smith

An interesting and informative day was had by 60 beekeepers from Devon and Cornwall at Mt Edgcumbe on Saturday June 20th.

Through presentations and practical demonstrations the National Bee Unit (NBU) team of inspectors helped the attending beekeepers improve their diagnostic skills in recognising early signs of pests and diseases.



All Photographs by Ruth Stainer-Smith

Donning PPE prior to entering the disease area

I was fortunate enough to be steward (and unofficial photographer) at the event. Kathy Lovegrove (Devon Education Officer) and volunteers from the Mt Edgcumbe Cornish Bee Group had prepared extensively with the NBU for a smooth day. I won't mention all of the supporting team but a special mention is required for Lee (Trustee and Head Gardener) who engineered and fitted a double plastic sheeting zone in the Belvedere room. This meant that real-time infected brood frames could be shown and explained safely with beekeepers donning and doffing PPE in the ante-room.

Three tables, each with an inspector and two infected combs, meant there was plenty to see and discuss, particularly in pointing out foulbrood scale and its position in the cells after larval infection and death. The inspectors explained their actual experiences in the field and how this does not always sit exactly with the text-book. For example the roping of AFB does not always appear every time because it depends on the stage of the infection when the rope test takes place.

The 60 beekeepers were divided up into three groups of twenty. Each group had a guide (a beekeeper from Mt Edgcumbe) and four stewards to keep the group together and on-time. Breakout workshops took place across the site so walking between the activities with the necessary bee kit meant we were grateful for a mildly warm dry day.



Extracting a larva for a closer look at the gut

Annabel Lewis gave an introductory talk to everyone on pests and diseases focussing on the features of healthy brood and the current NBU priorities regarding Yellow Legged Asian Hornet. The three groups of twenty then rotated through the following activities:

- YLAH, Tropilaelaps and Small Hive Beetle discussion and slides with Annabel. Imports and their legal frameworks. Annabel shared an interesting story of a beekeeper spotting what could have been Small Hive Beetle but turned out to be Pollen Beetle (take a look at the clubbed antennae…)

- Disease inspection of Mt Edgcumbe apiary colonies with NBU inspectors Marcus Pilling and Megan Seymour showing the stages of a disease inspection, how this differs from a standard inspection and discussing the possible outcomes for the bees and the apiary.
- Diseased comb from American Foulbrood (AFB) and European Foulbrood (EFB) on show with NBU inspectors Steve Johns, Phil Jordan and Leila Goss.



Annabel Lewis pointing out how to recognise abnormal brood



Pollen Beetle and Small Hive Beetle side by side

A packed lunch was fitted in during which time the participants saw some of the beautiful trees (the lime was flowering), pollinator-friendly plants such as viper's bugloss and the barn with beekeeping equipment. Thank you John for explaining the use of fat dummies to our group.

All sixty beekeepers made it safely across the site back to the Belvedere room for afternoon tea, coffee and excellent donated bakes. Thank you Maggie and Darren for serving us. The team in the kitchen made for efficient preparation and cleaning-up which also encompassed some genius cupboard juggling when a store full of glasses lost its main contact with the wall.



Marcus Pilling demonstrating disease inspection technique

Leila Goss then showed a Kirsty Stainton educational presentation focussing on varroa, for which she asked for audience participation to demonstrate the effect on varroa load when mites invade a colony from a collapsed or weakened colony.

Kathy rounded up the day and sent us on our way with much to think about. This kind of event is logistically complex. It requires getting all the necessary people together in a venue that is able to both show diseased combs safely and be able to open and inspect hives. I know how much work went on behind the scenes from people not mentioned here by me. Many thanks to the NBU and everyone involved for this educational opportunity.

Bees & Honey Buzz!

by Tammy Skinner

Devon County Show 2026

What a spectacular year for the Bees & Honey feature at the Devon County Show! With sunshine blazing down and crowds streaming through the gates, 2026 became one of our busiest, buzziest, and most joy-filled shows yet.

As it was my first year running the event, I can honestly say I couldn't have done it without Liz and our incredible team of volunteers. They were tireless, cheerful, and somehow still smiling at the end of day three. I'm still not entirely sure how Liz managed to talk me into taking over the show - but I'm very glad she did.



Photograph by Tammy Skinner

Exhibits, Entries & Awards

This year we welcomed over 220 entries, allowing us to award the prestigious BBKA Blue Ribbon, only given when more than 200 entries are received. A huge achievement for everyone involved.

We saw strong participation across the board, especially in wax blocks and photography, and it was wonderful to see so many children entering. We hope to grow the junior classes even more next year. A full list of results will appear in the magazine.

The Stevenson Trophy had two entries - Torbay and Okehampton - with Torbay proudly taking home the cup.

Honey, Tasting & Sales

The Honey Guild's tasting table was a constant magnet for curious visitors. Our honey sales hit a record-breaking £11,000, so a heartfelt thank-you to every beekeeper who contributed honey and candles. As always, 80% of sales go back to the beekeeper, with 20% supporting the association.

The Taste of Honey stand and candle rolling were buzzing nonstop. Mike Ticehurst's beautiful new café sign drew in the crowds, and the café itself was a hive of activity - we used 40 kilos of cream and 1,000 scones.

The plant stand was also incredibly busy. Thank you to everyone who donated plants and to those who worked tirelessly on the sales tables.

Candle rolling still took over £1,500, but because the screens behind the stand blocked visibility from the main entrance, we think we may have missed some passing trade. Next year, we'll move candle rolling closer to the Taste of Honey and plant sales to give it the spotlight it deserves.

Education, Engagement & New Features

The Asian hornet information stand stayed busy throughout the show. It's encouraging to see growing public awareness of the yellow-legged hornet and the challenges it poses.

Our newest attraction, the BeeVue Bee-Scope, was a runaway success. Designed by a surgeon using medical imaging technology, it lets visitors see bees inside the hive without opening it. Matt's "smiley-face-in-cardboard" demo delighted children and adults alike.



Photograph by Tammy Skinner

The Bee Chamber remained one of our most popular exhibits. This year, Mike added a double step with a safety rail so children could get an even better view.

And of course, the Flying Bees demonstrations drew big crowds twice a day. Several children suited up to meet the bees close-up, and the bees behaved beautifully. Hopefully we've inspired a few future beekeepers.



Photograph by Tammy Skinner

Sponsors & Shopping

A huge thank-you to our show sponsors, National Beehive Supplies, who brought a wonderful selection of bee-themed gifts. Visitors who pre-ordered equipment were able to collect their items at the show - and even received a free hive tool.

Gratitude & the Team Behind the Magic

I'd like to finish by thanking everyone who managed or worked on a stall. There are too many to name individually, but you are all amazing. Really sorry if I have missed any out; Special thanks go to:

- **All the volunteers** we could not do it without you.
- **Liz** and **Steve** for the past 15 years of dedication to the show you will be a hard act to follow
- **Bill Pyle** for the chamber and demo hives
- **Gerry** and **Chris** for the Flying Bees demos
- **Alan** for keeping all the money in order
- **Maggie** for organising the volunteers
- **Viv** for the honey show
- **Jack** and **Bridget** for judging
- **Gary** for the honey sales
- **Harriet** for admin and organisation
- **Louise** and **Vicky** for the Taste of Honey
- **Mike** for his wonderful signs, steps, and all his clever creations

Both Gary and Harriet would like to step down and welcome some new blood onto the committee. It's great fun working on the show - most meetings happen over a friendly Sunday lunch in a pub- and Harriet has kindly offered to shadow anyone taking over her role next year.

Looking Ahead to 2027

We're already buzzing with ideas for next year and would love to welcome more volunteers. It's a fun, lively day out - and volunteers receive free entry to the show. If you have suggestions for new features or activities, please share them with us.

Lastly, we'd love a little extra help on the Sundays before and after the show for setup and pack-down. These behind-the-scenes moments are vital, even if they're not often seen.

Here's to another year of bees, honey, sunshine, and community spirit.

Trophies & Awards
Devon County Show 2026

Special Prizes offered by the Devon Beekeepers' Association

The Blue Ribbon of the British Beekeepers' Association and the National Honey Show, the Blackmore Trophy, and the DCAA Award Card for the exhibit judged to be the highest grade in the Show	Angela Huxham
The Divisional Cup to the Branch of DBKA gaining the most points overall	Torbay Branch
The County Trophy for the Competitor gaining the highest aggregate of points overall	Liz Westcott
The Croyde Cup to the winner of the Light Honey Class 1	Heather Harris
The Langdon Beeswax Trophy to the DBKA member gaining the most points in the Wax Classes 9, 11, 13, 19, 20, 21 and 22	Liz Westcott
The Brimacombe Memorial Challenge Bowl to the DBKA member gaininmg the most points in Classes 1 to 12, 23 and 31 to 33	Angela Huxham
The Stratton Rose Bowl to the Exhibitor gaining the most points in the Honey Cookery Classes 27 to 30	Heather Harris
The Barnstaple Bowl to the DBKA member gaining the most points in classes 31 to 33	Tammy Skinner
The Joint Members' Trophy for the joint members gaining the most points overall	Liz and Steve Westcott
The Basil Salter Testimonial Trophy to the Exhibitor gaining the most points in the extracted Honey Classes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6	Angela Huxham
The Stevensons Trophy to the winner of Class 41	Torbay Branch
The National Honey Show Award Card to the Exhibitor gaining the most points in the Novice Classes 34 35 and 36	Heather Harris & Melanie Pope
Honey Cake Cup to the winner of Class 24	Viv Thorne

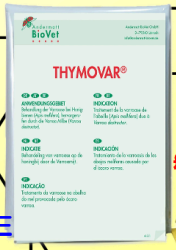
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The Showground EX14 3AW

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Details on Exeter and East Devon websites

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To place an advert or for more information, email: ***ads@devonbeekeepers.org.uk***
To advertise on the DBKA website: ***https://devonbeekeepers.org.uk/for-salewanted***

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each feeder holds 3.5 galls/13.25 litres syrup, has 2 feed holes/cups, and protective lid. Feed holes are ribbed to give the bees good grip. Excellent condition, several available at £15 each.
Contact: Brian Sharp (North Devon) - email: **bjjsharp@outlook.com**

For Sale

50 litre (approximately) plastic honey settling tank plus additional 22 litre (approximately) straining extension.
Offers
Email: **jps2008@hotmail.co.uk** - Exmouth

Colony for Sale

Strong colony of quiet bees on nation one and a half brood box plus two supers of stores
Collection from near Great Torrington
Please contract me at dhunter21@btinternet.com

For sale

Stainless steel hot water uncapping tray for sale. 85cm x 42cm x 13cm. New element, plug and lead, not thermostatically controlled. Any sensible offer considered.
Collection only from East Devon
Email: bob.muckett@btinternet.com

Events

Honiton Show, Honiton Showground EX14 3AW: Thurs 6 August
Okehampton Show, Stoney Park Showground EX20 1SW: Thurs 13 August
Plymouth Honey Show, Sat 19 September
Devon Beekeepers' Day, Crediton: Sat 26 September
National Honey Day: 21 October
National Honey Show 2026, Sandown Park: 22-24 October

Useful Addresses

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet reporting - Use the app (*preferred*) or email:	**alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk**
British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)	**bbka.org.uk**
BBKA Find a Local Swarm Collector	**bbka.org.uk/find-a-local-swarm-collector**
National Bee Unit (NBU)	**nationalbeeunit.com**
Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG)	**www.dargbees.org**
Dave Cushman's Website (Beekeeping)	**www.dave-cushman.net**

Devon Beekeepers' Association Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/882323142418671

Branch Contacts and Websites

Click to email Secretary	*Click to go to website*	*Telephone*
East Devon	*eastdevonbk.co.uk*	
Exeter	*exeterbeekeepers.org.uk*	01392 832956
Holsworthy	*holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk*	
Newton Abbot	*newton-abbot-beekeepers.co.uk*	
North Devon	*northdevonbees.org*	
Okehampton	*okehamptonbee.co.uk*	07776121938
Plymouth	plymouthbeekeepers.org.uk/	07772 656279
South Hams	*shbk.org.uk*	
Tavistock	*tavistock-beekeepers.org.uk*	
Tiverton	*tivertonbeekeepers.uk*	01884 849377
Torbay	*tbbk.co.uk*	07721182094

Diary Dates

Members may attend meetings of any Branch, but it is advisable to check the details with the Branch Secretary first. Contact details are on page 26.

August			
Saturdays	14:00	Newton Abbot	Saturday afternoon weekly hive inspections to commence (weather permitting!) All Welcome
Saturday 1st	14:00	Tiverton	Branch Apiary Meeting, Knighsthayes Court, Tiverton, United Kingdom
Saturday 1st	14:00	Torbay	Branch Apiary Meeting, Cockington Apiary, near the Drum Inn
Thursday 13th	All day	Okehampton	Okehampton Branch will be hosting our own 'Bee Marquee' at Okehampton Showground
Saturday 15th	14:00	Torbay	Branch Apiary Meeting, Cockington Apiary, near the Drum Inn
Sunday 16th	pm	Okehampton	Another of our 'awaydays'. Holsworthy Branch have very kindly agreed to welcome Okehampton Branch members to their own apiary in West Devon.
Sunday 16th	14:00	Tiverton	Branch Apiary Meeting, Knighsthayes Court, Tiverton.
Tuesdays	11:00	North Devon	Every week from now through to October at the Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
September			
Saturdays	14:00	Newton Abbot	Saturday afternoon weekly hive inspections to commence (weather permitting!) All Welcome
Tuesdays	11:00	North Devon	Every week from now through to October at the Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
Saturday	14:00	Torbay	Branch Apiary Meeting, Cockington Apiary, near the Drum Inn
Saturday 12th	10:00	Newton Abbot	**Apiary Autumn Maintenance** followed by the summer social, we will have a BBQ in our paddock area. Please bring chairs, food to cook on the firepit, drink and some food to share Sleepovers in tents or campervans are very welcome. All members are welcome.
Saturday 19th	TBC	Plymouth	Plymouth Branch Honey Show Harewood House, Plympton, Plymouth. PL7 2AS
Saturday 26th	All day	Okehampton	Boniface Centre, Crediton - Okehampton Branch will be assisting with DBKA Devon Beekeepers Day

Items for inclusion in the diary should be sent to : **ads@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**

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