What's Buzzing?

Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association Newsletter September 2024

In This Month's Issue...

- Honey Show
- Chickens in the car park
- Monks Risborough Show
- Old Fart in the Out Apiary
- Honey Extraction
- MBBKA Events
- Asian Hornet ID chart
- BBKA Insurance
- Jobs for September
- Bees in the News
- For Sale

MBBKA

- Information about the Association

WANTED

Items for the next Newsletter
Please send to me by
September 27th

I'm not sure how well the BBKA has advertised the fact, but Asian Hornet Awareness Week runs from 2nd-8th September. A further three nests were destroyed in August, and there has been a total of 25 confirmed sightings this year. An 'Asian Hornet Beekeepers update' is taking place via Zoom on 4th September, login details can be found here if you are interested, and will also be available to watch on You Tube afterwards.

Hopefully many members will have managed to harvest some honey, which is now jarred and just waiting to be given to friends and neighbours, sold, and spread on the odd slice of toast. But before all your jars disappear from the shelf, have you though about entering some in our honey show, which is only a couple of weeks away on 14th September.

If you have not entered before the prospect can be a little daunting but there are some classes ideally suited to beginners/new entrants. These include Class 6 which is judged on taste and aroma, irrespective of looks and class 15 which is just for beginners. The full Schedule of Classes and the entry form can be found on the website.

The Association indoor meetings re-commence this month at The Church of the Good Shepherd in Southcourt, Aylesbury, with a talk by Margaret Murdin. Hope to see you there.

Godfrey - Newsletter Editor

Next MBBKA Meeting

Margaret Murdin

Genetics made simple

'This talk will seek to explain the genetics of honey bees in a straightforward way …in a way that is easily understood and useful to beekeepers'

Wednesday 18th September 2024 at 7.30pm

Church of the Good Shepherd, Aylesbury



The 2024 MBBKA Honey Show

Saturday 14th September

Weston Turville Village Hall

The doors open for staging exhibits at 09:30

Judging will start at 10:45

The show will open to the public at 13:00

The full Schedule of Classes and the entry form can be found on the website

For further information or to register an entry please contact: honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk

If you have any questions please contact Helen at honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk

"...and chickens in the carpark!" *by Russ Shearman*

I was sitting in the restaurant of one of London's finest hotels, talking to Jo, while drinking (what tasted like a very premium cup of) coffee. Jo was answering the first of what was to be an hour of my rambling questions, as I tried to gather and grasp as much information in the time that Jo had very *very* kindly set aside for my visit. "*So… how did this all come about?*", I had started with.

The Royal Lancaster Hotel, off the Bayswater Road, is 19 floors of London luxury overlooking Hyde Park, probably within ear-shot of Speakers Corner, given a favourable wind and a loud voice, and they've had bee hives on the hotel roof for 15 years. This came about from what has to be one of the earlier adopters of what has become known as a "green agenda" and a desire to start a sustainable "corporate social responsibility" initiative. "*There had been a change in management here in 2009,*" explains Jo. "*We were looking at how we could become more green… y'know, the usual stuff - using local produce, bees on the roof, chickens in the carpark…!*" She stops and smiles at that point denoting that the last item was clearly a stretch.

The hotel staff who stepped forward to make this initiative a reality had no previous beekeeping experience ("*Oh, I had done a spot of beekeeping for my DoE…*" admits Jo) and, ahead of getting bees, they needed a "local" beekeeper… "local" to the Bayswater Road…? But London BKA were able to assist and they met Luke Dixon, author of the book "*Keeping Bees in Towns and Cities.*" The program started the following spring/summer and they "went solo" the year after.

Jo, whose "day job" is in fact Corporate Sales Director, remains the last of the first group of volunteers and now runs a small team of mixed staff *("…we've even got chef involved!*") who tend between 4 and 10 colonies on a *"…mid roof*" says Jo. "*Don't worry, we're not on the 19th floor!*" However, it was high enough above the streets not to warrant too close a look over the edge.

In walking around the hotel, the consistent use of bee motifs start to leap out at you. A bit like looking for the queen, once you've got your eye in, you can spot it quite easily - from ceiling lighting decorations to cushions in public seating areas, there's even a bee in the hotel crest alongside the rose of Lancaster. "*When we refurbished, a few years back,*" says Jo "*we got in a branding agency who thought they could use the project in the design.*"

The door out on to the roof had a large warning notice on it about needing to be very careful in high winds. So, that was the first issue with the location - subject to high winds!! The apiary stands on artificial turf on the roof and whilst the day wasn't overly windy, it was clearly still windy on a day that *wasn't* "windy." To counter this, the hotel had concreted steel runners into the roof and the WBC's are bolted to the rails and the roofs and lifts are kept in place with rachet straps.



Jo had emailed the BCBKA last August looking for out-apiary opportunities around Princes Risborough. In fact, they had the location, they just wanted a local beekeeper who could assist with a project to run a second apiary so that the hotel always had access to bees in lean years and was able to transport bees back out to the country when the hives at the hotel were filling up. Jo knows there's a practical limit to the number of colonies that can be

run from their location and, whilst the number of hives isn't so much the problem (they have extra hives for splits for swarm management), overcrowding, where it can be avoided, is better managed with access to alternate open-spaces.



I had been able to reconnect with Jo this Spring, when a recently arrived member to MBBKA, based in Princes Ris. was looking for an out-apiary close to home. It looked like a perfect match, so I put the two in contact. By way of a thank you, Jo had said that, if I was ever passing, to pop in. I have always found bees in unexpected locations to have a draw for me, so the opportunity to visit was something I had to do.

Clutching for my next question, I asked "*…and how's it going?*" "*Some years it's been very difficult - last year wasn't great. I don't think we took any honey at all. And this year's been similar… although we did manage to take 5 supers off in late July.*" The honey is light in colour, not as thin as you might expect (i.e. it stays on buttered toast !!) and tastes utterly delicious. The forage available in Hyde Park presents lime trees in abundance and wild flower opportunities from the numerous park's rewilding areas.

"*What about spinning out?*" "*Oh, that's simple… with chef on the team, we've got access to the banqueting kitchen downstairs… everything's stainless steel… with big sinks and lots of running hot water…!*"

The conversation ranged from swarming to SBI visits, other apiaries in the vicinity, the persisting question about the proliferation of urban beekeeping in London, the challenges of forage, care over winter and the general questions and concerns we all have about our bees.

On the back of one of the hives I had seen a reference to a (very!) famous music artist. I pointed to the hive and looked quizzical. "*He's a frequent visitor…*" Jo admitted. "*We had just got a new queen in and we gave his wife a bee experience… so that's now Queen Nancy in that one…*"

I think it's too easy for us country 'beeks' to sneer at these types of corporate initiatives… because, boy, when they work, they do work extraordinarily well and provide many spin-off benefits. The hotel apiary is twinned with a beekeeping initiative on Kome Island, Tanzania, established by Bees Abroad, and the hotel regularly makes donations. This is no longer a 'CSR initiative.' This is a true and persisting apiary, manned by experienced beekeepers who know what they have in their care and know how to best manage and maintain their bees in all weathers and in all seasons, in a very unique setting.

The visit seemed all too brief and I can see me wanting to go back and don some kit to look inside. "*Inspections are Fridays,*" grinned Jo. This being a Thursday, it was clear she was already looking forward to tomorrow's inspection. Pausing briefly in reception on the way out, Jo suddenly asks "*What do you do with your cappings?*" I grinned as I gave my stock answer to a question I've been asked before. "*Simple… put them in a big kilner jar, pour over a bottle of vodka, give it a good shake and leave it for a several weeks, sieve out the wax, leaving honey vodka!*"

As I left through the huge revolving door in the foyer and walked down to the Bayswater Rd. I was hoping that perhaps I'd been able to add a small something to the continuing story of the bees at the Royal Lancaster Hotel. And, as I walked past the entrance to the underground carpark, I was sure I could hear the sound of the contented clucking of happy hens... but surely that was just my imagination…???

More information about the hotel and their apiary can be found at https://www.royallancaster.com/about/from-a-to-bee/

Monks Risborough Horticultural Show 3rd August 2024

It turned out to be quite a lovely day, better than last year where we had high winds and rain and most of the stall holders abandoned the Show!

Thanks go to Jonathan Matthews for organising and setting up the gazebo with the help of Jon Theobald, Lisa Hurley, Sarah Oakley and myself. We managed to set up in record time and had a lot of visitors both young and old. People are always fascinated with the Observation hive and we offered candle making which the children loved doing. Apart from ourselves there were all sorts of stalls selling plants, jewellery, even another stall selling honey in competition with ourselves! There was a Silver Band and a dog show as well as the flower and vegetable judging. Thanks also go to Jane and Paul Newman for helping to pack up and transporting gear back to the Apiary.

Tina Hood-Liles







Old Fart in the Out Apiary

After missing last month, I have returned. My Mother-in-Law died in July and consequently, the bees and everything else faded into the background. The old lady died 12 days short of her 94th birthday. I will have no-one to run the honey sales when I am out this year. It was something she really loved to do.

Honey Harvest

I spent the final week of August harvesting my honey crop. I am 2 weeks late this year. I believe 2024 has been a year where the seasons have been running several weeks late anyway. Four of my hives produced a crop. I had 12 supers and a 35 litre box of free comb to extract. A couple of hives decided to fill their roof space, above the crown board, when I was not adding supers fast enough. It is the little things that provide interesting points in beekeeping. Some of you may remember I discussed the late cast swarm last year that miraculously made it through the winter. This swarm filled 3 supers with honey and were the main culprits for building free comb in the roof space.

I had 2 hives in the wild flower meadow at Owlswick that filled their first super at the same time. I put second supers on the same day and 10 days later, with the meadow in full bloom' I took a 3rd super over for each hive. One hive had filled the second super but the other had only started on a few frames. Bees were flying well from both hives. I left them to get on with it. When I went to collect the full supers one hive had 3 beautifully filled supers. The other hive was empty. No honey and just the mutilated bodies of bees on the OMF. There was no debris signs of wasps or hornets in the hive but all the honey had been cleanly removed.



Looking at the dead bees I remembered a talk from Kevin Crangles a few years ago about the pygmy shrew. I picked up the floor to examine the bee carcasses and Marc, who was helping me, spotted a hole in the grass under the hive. Investigating further there was a dead shrew in the grass near the hole. Satisfied I had found the reason for the hives demise I then wondered what had happened to the honey? Pondering this conundrum I hit upon the probable solution. The number of bees I had seen entering the hive bees from the other colonies who were recycling the honey.



To get back to the honey harvest. As I have already said Marc came to help with the lifting on Tuesday and returned Wednesday to help with the extraction. The four hives produced about 240lbs of honey. All the frames were fully filled and capped. This is probably the best show of filled frames and supers I have had for many years. It took me most of Thursday to clean up the extraction room and equipment and return the wet supers to the hives. This week will be a day of jarring up the amber nectar!!

Honey Jars

I always use 12oz hexagonal jars. I have been in a panic this year that I would not have enough for this year's crop. I have not purchased any jars for at least 5 years. Previously I would pre-order from Compaq South and pick up 8 to 10 boxes from a show. Many of my regular customers return the jars which are sterilised and re-used. I have sold jars to other beekeepers and the last jars I bought worked out at under 34p per jar. I suddenly had a doubt that I would have enough jars for this season and went to the shed to have a good check. I still have 4x84 boxes left plus a large number of re-cycled jars. This is enough for me and hopefully for Marc.

I read some of the threads on the Beekeeping Forum to be surprised at the cost of my preferred size and style of jars. There is very little variation in choice or price available. At present it appears the cheapest option would be to by them by the pallet load, (free delivery), From Freeman and Harding, and have them delivered to the unit at Westcott. This still works out at over 60p per jar. If any of you know of a cheaper source, I would be delighted to hear from you. Currently I am toying with the idea of seeing if there is a 'show price', next year at the Telford Beekeeping Show. I could rattle my way home with 10 boxes but where would I put all the other items that I purchase. There is always something I did not know I wanted!!!

If other Association members are in a similar position, I will willingly place a bulk order, to be delivered to Westcott, to obtain cheaper prices.

Old Fart in the Out Apiary (AKA Brian Bush)

HONEY EXTRACTION - BEGINNER SESSION

Morning Sunday 11 August 2024

First of all we would all like to thank Ruth and Sean Stephenson for hosting the morning and afternoon sessions at their house, and for their input in helping the beginners through the whole process from loading frames to bottling the honey. There were 8 new members at each session helped by Lisa Hurley, John Dadswell and myself in the morning, and Jane Newman, Maria Ward and Steve Hamilton in the afternoon. Everyone had a go at doing everything and this now completes their first year with us. I hope you all enjoyed it and Good Luck for the future.

Tina Hood-Liles













MBBKA Autumn Events 2024



Wednesday 18th Sep
Indoor Meeting
Margaret Murdin
Bee Genetics

5th Oct
Bucks County Honey Show

National Honey Show
24th-26th October
Sandown Park

Have you seen this insect?

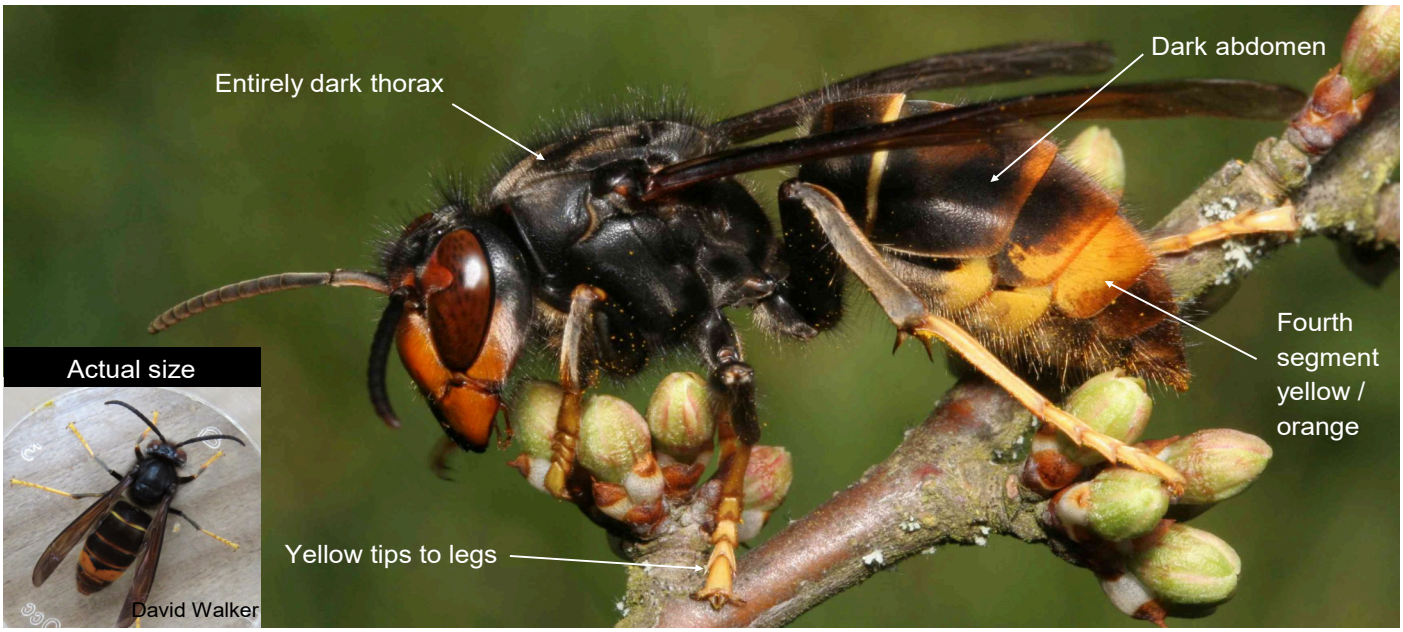
ASIAN HORNET

Vespa velutina

What is it?

An invasive non-native hornet originally from Asia. Asian hornet is a highly aggressive predator of native insects and poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators. In 2004 it was accidentally introduced to France where it has spread rapidly and into neighbouring countries. Since 2016 a number of sightings have been recorded in the UK.

Suspected sightings should be reported immediately using the details provided at the bottom of this poster.



Where might I see it?

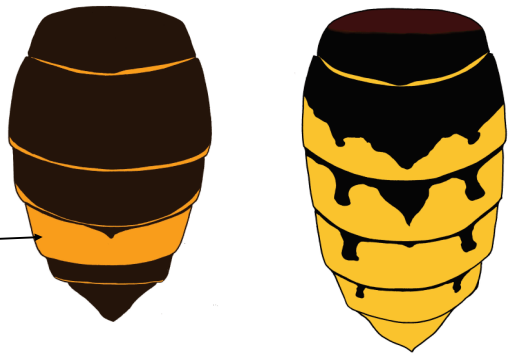
May be seen on flowering plants, around beehives, around rotting / fermenting fruit and protein, and at street markets attracted by sweet fruit and fish stalls.

Active from February to November across England and Wales.

What does it look like?

- Slightly smaller than native hornet
- Dark abdomen, 4th segment yellow / orange
- Bright yellow tips to legs (native hornet dark)
- Entirely brown or black thorax (native hornet more orange)

Asian hornet abdomen **Native hornet abdomen**



Asian hornet nest



'Hawks' outside honey bee colonies



DANGER!

This hornet stings.
Do not disturb an active nest.
Seek advice using the details below.

Report any sightings of this species:

with the free iPhone and Android recording app: Asian Hornet Watch

online at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet

by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

BBKA Insurance

Full members of MBBKA are are also enrolled into the BBKA. In addition to receiving the monthly magazine, BBKA membership includes 3rd party insurance . You can check out the details of what is included in this cover by following the instructions below.

The Public & Product Liability Insurance Confirmation Letter for those members who need to provide certification for eg hiring a market stall, is available to download from the bbkanews.com website. You will need your membership number and postcode to login. From the 'Select Publication' drop down menu, click on BBKA Documents.

Handmade Beehives for Sale



BROOD BOX £25.00

SUPER £20.00

FLAT ROOF £35.00

APEX ROOF £45.00

OM FLOOR £20.00

CROWN BOARD £8.00

WIRE QUEEN EXCLUDER £16.00

Hive stands made to order.

All hives made from UK sourced Western Red Cedar

Metal components from Beehive Bits.

All joints waterproof glue and stainless-steel screws.

Phone 07767304067 or e-mail

brian.bush@btinternet.com

Expanded Range of Equipment for Sale

In addition to my normal stock of foundation, frames, jars and hive parts, this year I am selling the stock from a retiring Thorne's agent.

This means that I now have a wider range of equipment and frames for Commercial, Langstroth and WBC hives. All the equipment for these hives is 1st quality Thorne manufacture.

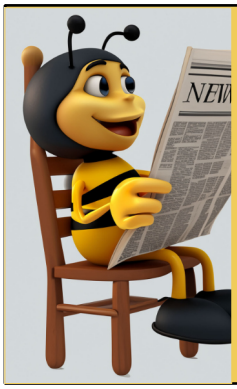
Due to the volume of the new stock, I have yet to update my prices for 2023. As always, my prices are at list price or slightly less than advertised by the supplier.

Throughout the season I am regularly purchasing new stock, so if there is something specific you require, please contact me and I can add it to an order, saving the cost of postage.



For further information please email sean@resms.co.uk

Adverts offering items for sale are published on the basis that MBBKA does not endorse any particular vendor.



Bees in the News

Thanks to John Dadswell for this this story about detecting fake honey - here

Varroa mite continues to spread in Australia - here

How does organic farming benefit honey bees? Find out here

Jobs for September

- Complete any varroa treatments, and record the details of the treatments you have used.
- Assess the level of stores and feed colonies as necessary. Feed all colonies at the same time to reduce robbing.
- Finish uniting any colonies
- Clean and sterilise any empty boxes as they are removed from the apiary.
- Store any drawn comb safely, treating for wax moth to prevent any damage.
- Note any equipment that needs replacing in case bargains can be picked up during the supplier equipment sales.
- Try to attend the honey shows and the Association indoor meeting.



Apiary Sites

The Association is sometimes approached by landowners who are keen to accommodate bees on their property, but who do not want to become beekeepers themselves.

If you have some beekeeping experience and are looking for an out apiary, (and have preferably undertaken the Basic Assessment), have a chat with John Dadswell, (president@mbbka.org.uk) as he keeps a list of all the sites that have been offered.

WBC Items For Sale

I've been asked by my local farmer to remove my bees, which have done so well this year, I've asked around my village but so far no one has come forward but I guess I've got until October. With this in mind I'm wanting to reduce my equipment substantially and I have various WBC items for sale.

Also I'm prepared to sell some hives including bees. I can be contacted on 07812356146.

Many thanks

Debbie Davis



MBBKA Committee 2023-24		
Chairman	Jane Newman	chairman@mbbka.org.uk
Vice-Chairman	Steve Hamilton	vicechair@mbbka.org.uk
Secretary	Jonathan Palmer	secretary@mbbka.org.uk
Treasurer	Rob Spiller	treasurer@mbbka.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Sarah Turner	membership@mbbka.org.uk
Apiary Manager	Helen Palmer	apiary@mbbka.org.uk
Honey Show Secretary	Helen Palmer	honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk
Education Officer	Maria Ward	education@mbbka.org.uk
Programme Secretary	Liz Tice	
Novice Beekeeper	Simon Knatchbull	
Committee Member	Tina Hood-Liles	
Committee Member	Anton Chambers	
Committee Member	Lisa Hurley	

Jon Theobold will continue as Webmaster

Beginners Course: Steve Hamilton via beginners@mbbka.org.uk

Newsletter: Godfrey Clements - items for inclusion to newsletter@mbbka.org.uk

Website: https://mbbka.org.uk/