

In this month's super soar-away issue...

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Items for the next Newsletter to be sent in by

June 25th

With the high heat in May I have received a flurry of calls requesting assistance with swarms. In one memorable call a lady informed me that she had bees in her garden as big as flying hamsters and they were frightening the dog.

I was dubious but did pop around to find a fairly busy white-tailed bumble bee colony in her garden compost heap; the dog was absent. However, we had a chat about the life cycle of the bees and ultimately, she was content to leave the colony in situ until they disappeared in the autumn. I don't think I bored her too much with my bee addiction and the need to educate her on UK bee population beyond the well-known honey bees, she genuinely appeared interested asking me lots of questions, most of which I fortunately knew the answers to.

It was only afterwards that I thought about the education element of beekeeping, educating the public and our friends; even when they "jokingly" plead you to stop, time and time again. But also expanding our own knowledge about the wildlife of the country we live in is also a natural journey for most beekeepers.

There are of course the formal MBBKA modules which centre around keeping bees healthy and the colony products which result in formal examinations, which is a route preferred by many MBBKA members and we have a steady flow of members passing them. I personally enjoy absorbing knowledgeable through the multitude of media we have at our disposal in today's tech-rich society.

Whichever way you obtain your bee-linked knowledge there is lots of it out there and it's great fun to keep expanding it to share with the public who seem to be rooting for the UK bee population. It also helps us entertain our friends who, despite their protestations, really can't get enough of you telling them and showing them at great length pictorially, once again, just how important and smart bees are.

Steve Hamilton (Education Sec)



"...bees in her garden as big as flying hamsters..."

Old Fart in the Out Apiary – June 2026

Summer

We are approaching the Half-Way point of the year.

It has been a real roller-coaster so far. As I am typing this it is over 30°C in the shade. Goodness knows what the temperature is in full sun.

My bees are carrying on quite happily but, I noticed yesterday, activity declined in the early afternoon. It picked up again at about 6pm.

Garden flowers have come into full bloom this week due to the glorious weather.



I have several Pyracantha bushes that look wonderful. The honey bees love them and when I took this photograph today, they were abuzz with my girls.

The Clematis looks wonderful and usually attracts the bumble bees.





I don't know how long we expect this heat to continue but parts of the garden desperately need water.

My neighbour's Foxgloves are flagging as are other plants. I looked this morning and the beds of English Lavender are about to come into bloom. It has to be English Lavender as the French variety has flowers the honey bees find difficult to access.

The other good news is that the Blackberries are beginning to bloom in the Lane. My main apiary relies on them for honey crop.

Be aware if you are new to beekeeping, we sometimes experience a June Gap when there is a shortage of flowers between Spring and Summer.

The blackberries blooming will probably bridge he gap this year. We do, however, need a lot of rain to ensure the flowers produce nectar and pollen.

Pollen

I hope you all read the article, by Ken Basterfield, in the BBKA news. Ken tries to make sense of the winter losses which many beekeepers experienced.

The odd thing that came up in conversation was that we lost hives with young queens and plenty of stores.

Ken has investigated his losses and has concluded that it was probably a lack of pollen stores that led to the demise of hives.

I checked 2 of my hives that had died over winter and although there was vast amounts of honey stores there were no frames with pollen stores.

I will be more wary this Autumn and feed Candipolline Gold in the Autumn and as a Christmas treat if pollen stores are missing.

What Are They Up To?

Sean Kirwan always said: “Bees have the right to do as they wish and invariably do so.” How correct he was.

I had a most surreal experience in the middle of May.

I have a hive of peculiar configuration that I place a NUC purchased at Easter in. The queen is a 2025 lady and they are some of the calmest bees I have ever had.

The configuration of the hive means that the brood area is 16 National frames and I used 8 National frames in the honey super boxes.

Sat on the bench enjoying a cup of tea with an elderly neighbour we could hear a gentle humming from the direction of the hive.

My neighbour walked past the hive and remarked that there was a lot of activity at the hive. Suddenly the noise from the direction of the hive became a roar. Oh no I said the little b*****s are swarming. There were bees everywhere and a swarm settled in the top of a conifer where they could not be reached. The swarm was small and I thought that is a cast swarm. Have I missed a prime swarm 10 days ago Within 20 minutes the swarm had gone.

Later that afternoon a visitor was leaving the house and a continuous line of bees were flying towards the hives. What was going on.

Next day, armed with smoker, tools and 2 NUC boxes I opened the hive. It was full of bees and the honey box was full of about 60lbs of honey!

I entered the brood box expecting to find queen cells or evidence of them. There were no queen cells old or new.

The bees paid no heed to me and just continued their work. The hive was actually bursting with bees. BIAS was present but I did not see her majesty.

I closed up the hive and added another box as a super, with 8 National brood frames with fresh foundation. I though that this would keep them busy for a while.

I picked up my gear and started to walk away. I then noticed bees entering the ‘empty’ hive next door. I pondered this sequence of events and came to the following conclusion.

My hive had obviously not swarmed!

The swarm must have arrived from elsewhere and tried to enter my occupied hive, hence the fuss and noise being made. The swarm then moved across the road in search of a new nest site. The scouts found the empty hive so the swarm came back and set up residence

I would be interested to hear of any other scenarios!!!!

Brian Bush.

Have you got anything to tell/ask us about ?

Your Newsletter is looking for contributions from ALL its members, so if you have…

- any questions to raise
- observations to make
- anecdotes to share
- items to sell
- or pretty much anything about bees or beekeeping that you think the MBBKA readers would enjoy hearing about

…please consider sending these to the **Newsletter Editor**.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences and views on bees and beekeeping - whether this is your first year or your fiftieth! Email coments or items (plus any photos) to **newsletter@mbbka.org.uk**





Apiary Association Meetings

- **17th June** - Jonathan and Helen Palmer. Disease or general info as decided at the time
- **15th July** - Sean on honey harvesting plus anything relevant at the apiary
- **19th August** - Sean on treatments and preparing for winter

All meetings are (*currently!*) due to start at 6.30pm.

Apiary Work Days

These will be covering routine tasks such as frame making, mowing, hive part cleaning and the general stuff that goes with beekeeping. And of course checking on the bees. All help is greatly appreciated as it gets a bit overwelming otherwise. It's also a great way for less experienced beekeepers to get some practice, as well as everyone to swap stories and get other beekeepers' perspectives.

- June - Sunday 21st
- July - Saturday 18th and Fridays 10th, 24th and 31st
- August - Friday 7th & Saturday 15th

Josef, the Apiary Manager, will send out reminders and advise any cancelations due to weather via the WhatsApp Apiary Workteam Group.



The MBBKA will run a stall at the Monks Risborough Horticultural Society (MRHS) Show to be held in the field at the foot of Peters Lane in Monks Risborough on Saturday 1st August. More information – https://themrhs.wixsite.com/mrhs/event-details/mrhs-village-show

If you would like us to sell your honey from this stall. please get in touch with Jonathan Matthews on programmes@mbbka.org.uk.

The MBBKA goes "on the road"

This summer's fetes 'n fairs...

- Sunday, June 14h - Road Farm Open Farm - Great Missenden
- Sunday, June 7th - Green Living Fayre - Chinnor Village Hall
- Saturday, July 25th - Aston Abbot's Fete - Aston Abbot
- Saturday, August 1st - Annual Summer Show - Monks Risborough
- Thursday, August 27th - Bucks County Show - Weedon Park
- Saturday, November 11th - Christmas Fair - Thame

How do you number YOUR colonies ?



If you have more than a couple of colonies you will need some way of identifying them in your inspection records.

For many years we attached numbers to the brood boxes and this worked, but when we needed to move bees for, say, swarm control or replace dirty boxes at the beginning of the season the number of the colony changed with the box which isn't ideal.

And really it isn't the colony that needs numbering but the queen so that you have a full record of her history and qualities. It is possible to buy numbered discs to stick to the queen, but that seems like a lot of faffing around and anyway it would be good to know which colony/queen you are looking at without having to find the queen first.

So this year we have moved over to movable numbers that simply hang from a small hook in the side of the brood box. When the queen is moved on in a split or the box is changed, the number simply moves with the bees.

If it is a split a new number can be hung on the box with the queen cell. As Helen is into her glass fusing, we've got brightly coloured numbers fused onto squares of glass as shown below, but this is probably overkill and a simpler approach would work just as well!

They do look nice though 😊

Jonathan & Helen Palmer



Queen Rearing at the MBBKA apiary 2026

Introduction

We were a group of over 10 beekeepers keen to raise queens from the association colonies. When raising queen cells you have two approaches, use a queen right colony or a queenless nucleus, we attempted both options with mixed success.



Queen right queen cell raiser

We used colony 7 which was on a double brood box and two supers before we started. In May the simplest way to encourage a colony to raise queen cells is to use a Demaree. Colony 7 was half way there, we split the double brood with the supers and cut a miller frame for the top box. The queen in colony 7 is particularly prolific so we added a third super between the two brood boxes to ensure the queen pheromone did not reach the top box.

10 days after starting the process we returned to the apiary to see if we had any success. Sadly, we only had two queen cells. The number of queen cells produced is down to two factors, lack of queen pheromone and the number of young bees available to raise the cells. We had enough bees, but obviously three supers between th brood boxes were not enough!

We made up two mating nucs in a single BS Honey mating nucleus box, using bees and frames from the top brood box. We also made a second queenless nucleus using the remaining frames and a miller frame cut from suitable material in the bottom brood box. Hopefully we will have more queen cells for distribution on 23rd May.

Raising queen cells in a queenless nucleus

We also took so frames from colony 4 on our first visit and tried to raise queen cells using a queenless nucleus and grafts. The grafts were good, but there were not enough bees in the nucleus to raise queen cells from the grafts. Instead, they raise two queen cells from their own material. We decided to remove the graft frame and let the queen cells develop and emerge, allowing the colony to decide the preferred queen.

Conclusion

We have ended with 3 queens which we hope will successfully mate and have an ongoing second attempt which we hope will produce sufficient queens for the apiary needs.

Starting queen rearing is always a risk, but the purpose of our exercise was to train members on queen rearing techniques so they could follow through with their own colonies later in the season. June is always a good time to raise queens and where possible employ colonies that have started to make swarm preparations as they are ready to produce queens. Neither of the colonies we employed were making swarm preparations, a factor in our outcomes.



A Letter from a MBBKA Swarm Collector

Dearest gentle reader,

This author is delighted to reveal the successful collection of a couple of swarms this season.

One particularly frantic call began: "*I've got a swarm of bees — how long will you be? I can't let the dog out!*"

Alas, this author was two hours away and forced to summon reinforcements. A trusted beekeeper answered with the sigh of a gentleman already resigned to his fate. "*At this time of year,*" he sighed, "*I know exactly why you're calling. Where is it?*" And with admirable haste, the swarm was collected, safely housed, and relocated. They now reside in what can only be described as a most desirable detached residence.

This author also experienced a rather dramatic visitation whilst standing peacefully in the apiary, when a vast cloud of bees suddenly appeared and settled, most obligingly, into the plum tree — evidently their usual rendezvous point. Patience was required whilst the ladies gathered themselves, after which a trusty nuc box and ladder were swiftly employed to collect the swarm. They entered with such enthusiasm that it became immediately apparent Her Majesty herself had safely gone within. However, it soon became clear this was no modest gathering, but an enormous swarm deserving of far grander accommodation. By the following day, they had been rehoused into a full-sized hive befitting their impressive numbers.

Queen Elizabeth continues to reign magnificently, her colony flourishing so well that a healthy split has now been achieved. A triumph indeed.



Editor's Note - now this is a rare sight indeed ! Beekeepers can go a whole 'career' and never come upon a swarm looking like this. Our compliments to the lucky collector!

The hive is positively alive with gossip, for whispers from the garden suggest the season's most eligible young queens may already have embarked upon their nuptial flights. One can only imagine the scandal unfolding high above the hedgerows as eager drones pursued their chosen ladies with astonishing enthusiasm and very little decorum.

There has also been sweet reward this season, with glorious liquid gold finally harvested from the overwintered hives — each jar feeling nothing short of victorious.

May has provided a banquet for the bees, with vast fields of oilseed rape pouring nectar into the hives at astonishing speed. Fruit blossom has drifted through the gardens like confetti at a society wedding, while green alkanet and faithful dandelions have kept the ladies occupied from dawn until dusk. I have also sown phacelia in the borders, much adored by both my ladies and the bumblebees.

And now, dear readers, society prepares for the social event of the year, not to be missed. To celebrate Mid Bucks Beekeepers' magnificent 60th anniversary, there shall be a splendid bring your own food to cook on the BBQ upon the apiary lawn on Sunday 12th July. One anticipates fine company, cheerful conversation, and perhaps just a little bee-related scandal beneath the summer sun.

So, dear readers, may your queens thrive, your supers overflow, and your flowers bloom.

Lady Whistledrone

Two Items Received from the BBKA this month.

Circulation: Area Association & Branch Secretaries and AHAT Coordinators

Dear Assoc. Secretary,

Yesterday we received the email attached from DEFRA via our participation in the Bee Health Advisory Forum. In essence, this informs us that although DEFRA will continue to follow up YLH reports made through the Asian Hornet Watch app to find and destroy nests, they are stopping genetic analysis of samples going forward.

This means the public are no longer required to preserve all YLH caught and send them to NBU - anyone may destroy a YLH, but you may want to try preserving them for educational purposes.

Please stay safe when killing any YLH caught, e.g. place the sealed trap, free of any by-catch, in soapy water, or in a freezer.

If transporting a trap place it in a zip lock bag or sealed container in transit, for extra personal safety and bio security.

Please communicate this information to your teams. BBKA will work to update all its relevant documentation as soon as possible. This includes our AHAT Onboarding guide, YLAH strategy and guideline documents. Please bear this in mind if you are using them in the near future - we will contact you as soon as the updated versions are available.

Given recent sightings, active monitoring and reporting through Asian Hornet Watch remains more important than ever.

Kind regards,
Warwick Newson and Lucie Chaumeton
BBKA Trustees Chair and Vice Chair of YLAH Committee

This month's BBKA Zoom Meeting



BBKA June Talk
Tuesday 16th June at 7pm.

The next in our monthly series of Zoom talks is: '***The Hive in July***' with Jack Silberrad, NBU Regional Bee Inspector.

Zoom link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81233819992?pwd=DYMZxTImJjpRCLJjYjvbIxgybQQdSZ.1
Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992
Passcode: 527929

A recording of this talk will be available on the BBKA Member Hub afterwards for those unable to watch live.

Kind regards,
Richard Oliver
BBKA Trustee & Chair of E&H Committee

Practical Sessions for the New Beginner Beekeepers Class of 2026



Our first session started on April 30th 2026 with our beginner beekeepers with 4 mentors.

We were lucky enough to have good weather. There was a lot of excitement, and apprehension, as they donned their beesuits, We have since had another 2 sessions on the 7th and 21st May and different Mentors.

Although I cannot go into the actual Apiary due to adverse reaction to bee stings, I can at least help set up the equipment, make sure that everyone is signed in, help with their beesuits and badges and have conversations putting them at ease.and then making sure all the beesuits are back in their boxes and help clear up. So far we've only had to cancel one session due to cold temperature on the Saturday morning session. Look forward to welcoming those that have not yet had their first go at being Beekeepers.





A **Big Thankyou** goes out to all our Mentors and also Josef our Apiary Manager who runs things in the background. Thank you also to Kathy Soulsby who does all the admin work in bringing about the Beginner Beekeepers.

Tina Hood-Liles



For all the photos from all the Beginners' Practical Sessions, do check out the MBBKA FaceBook page.

Have you seen this insect?

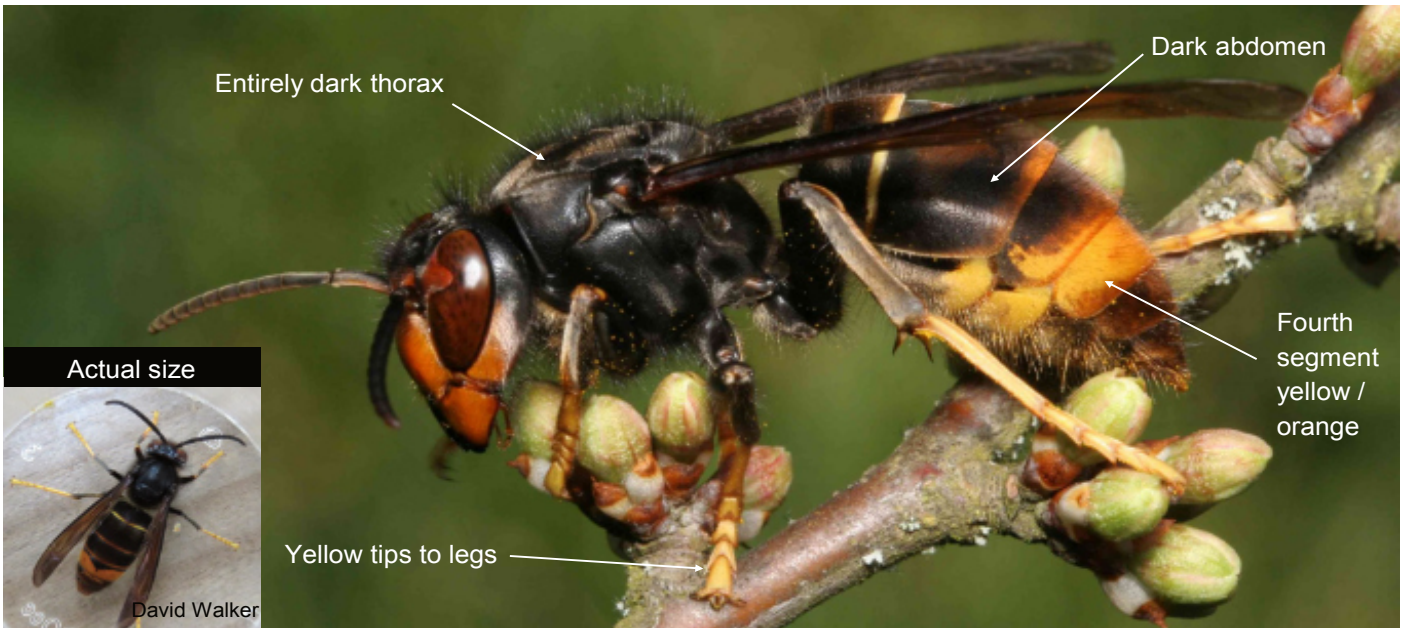
ASIAN HORNET

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?

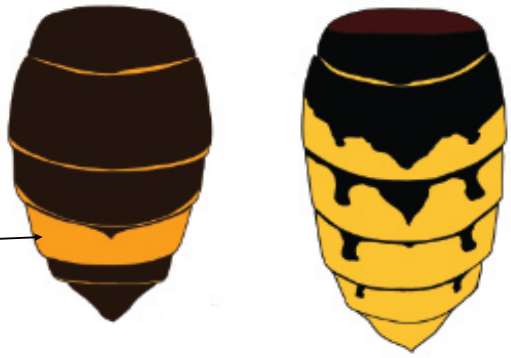
May be seen on flowering plants, around beehives, around rotting / fermenting fruit and protein, and at street markets attracted by sweet fruit and fish stalls.

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

Reminder about our Upcoming 60th Anniversary Celebrations

Hi Everyone,

For our 60th Anniversary MBBKA celebration we will be holding a BBQ at the Stoke Mandeville Apiary on 12th July 2026 from 1-5pm. We would like to have as many of our members both old and new to attend and make it a day to remember. We have chosen a Sunday so hoping many more of you can come.

I will be sending out further requests nearer the date for contributions of food like Salads, Puddings, Cheeseboard etc. We will supply the plates, cutlery, glasses which will have to be of the disposable variety as we don't have access to water at the site. Please bring your own chairs and if those of you have spare and can bring those as well it would be very welcome. Small collapsible tables would also be of help.

Above all we will need Man power on the day to set up gazebos, tables, help with the Barbecue etc a couple of hours before the event and also to take down afterwards.

Just hoping that the sun will shine!!!

Tina Hood-Liles



For Sale



National hive with resident colony

Occupied National hive with 14x12 broodbox and single super with drawn comb, currently in the corner of a meadow in Owlswick.

Requeened with unmarked Carnica queen last year. Would benefit from replacement of brood comb.

Contact Jonathan Matthews on programmes@mbbka.org.uk.



octopus energy



Switch to Green Energy with Octopus and help us to help the bees!

Get a **£50** account credit by signing up to Octopus using the referral link or QR Code below and **Mid Bucks Beekeepers will also get £50**!

Web link: https://midbucksbeekeepersassociation.octopus.energy

All funds go towards supporting our Educational activities and the development of a new training Apiary for MBBKA.

Unwanted equipment for Sale



We would like to get rid of it all, as a one off, all go together, and we are open to sensible offers.

Being sold on behalf of a non-MBBKA member, so for the seller's contact details, please contact web@mbbka.org.uk







For Sale



Complete setup inc. 1 brood box & 1 super, both with frames.
Comes with floor, stand and a pitched roof (also has a flat roof) - £125 ONO

Jordan Martin - martinjordan17@gmail.com

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

Update on Equipment and Bees for sale



I stock National frames and foundation as well as National hive parts. I also have several second-hand pieces of equipment for sale, including complete National hives, uncapping station, warming cabinet and bee suits.

My latest price list can be found here.

Queen rearing and nucleus colony production has started for the season.

Sean Stephenson

2nd Hand Poly-Nucs

£30 with feeder
£40 with extension & feeder.
Dual entrance.
Great for Queen Rearing

Contact Lisa Hurley via the Committee or on the MBBKA Facebook page.







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



Bees in the News

AI robotic beehives installed in Florida community claim 70% reduction in colony collapse threatening crops.

Collecting pollen can be as exhausting for bees as flight take-off, study shows.

Why early medieval Ireland had laws for bees.

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.

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.

Are You Registered?



Registering your hives on BeeBase is free. BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. The National Bee Unit website provides a wide range of apicultural information for beekeepers to help keep their colonies healthy and productive. It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts.

BeeBase

Read more and record your colonies at **http://www.nationalbeeunit.com**



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Committee Member	Heather Mullins	
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