

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

- Old Fart in the Out Apiary
- Apiary Manager - a vacancy
- More from Lady Whistledrone
- Out-apiary opportunities
- MBBKA at the Apiary, Fairs 'n Fetes
- BBKA Updates
- Asian Hornet ID chart
- Go Green with Octopus Energy
- Bees in the News
- For Sale

Items for the next Newsletter to be sent in by

August 25th.



60th ANNIVERSARY MBBKA BBQ

SUNDAY 12TH JULY 2026, 1PM - 5PM. Stoke Mandeville Apiary

This will be the eigth social that I have organised where, apart from one, the sun didn't shine! So hopefully, with the recent warm weather, 2026 will be a sunny one. We decided, as it was our 60th, to have a BBQ so everyone can bring their own food to cook as they like. **We will be supplying two barbecues** - one for meat and one for vegetarians/vegans. Please could we ask for contributions for salads and sweets.

A few suggestions - coleslaw, potato salad, pasta and for sweets something that can be eaten without using bowls. We would also like a cheeseboard with grapes which would be appreciated, and we will be needing sauces to accompany the BBQ. We are also looking for a volunteer chefs as well. Baguettes and baps are also on our list to bring along. We will supply the paper plates, plastic glasses, napkins and cutlery. This is an event to bring along your spouses and partners. (Please note that we have to advise you that our insurance does not cover young children or non-members.)

Please could you let me know as soon as possible if you will be attending and how many are in your group, so that we know how many to cater for and what food you will be bringing to share. Could you also bring picnic chairs and tables and, most importantly, drinks to keep you hydrated - alcoholic or otherwise! We have volunteers to help with getting the gazebos up and tables to set up, but we would welcome more especially when taking down and packing up. See you all soon.

Tina Hood-Liles tinahoodliles@mbbka.org.uk

Celebrate Our 60th Anniversary

MBBKA

Join us at the Apiary for a summer BBQ

Bring your own food to cook on the BBQ.
Contributions for salads and puddings will
be coordinated to ensure we don't duplicate.
Please let Tina know what you would like to bring.

Sunday | 12TH JULY | 1–5PM

RSVP tinahoodliles@mbbka.org.uk



Beekeeping Weather???

I was asked by a fellow beekeeper about the weather we are experiencing and did I think it affected his bees?

At the time I had my head in one of his hives and a thunderstorm was about to begin!

One brief moment of reflection and I replied that judging by the amount of unripened honey in his hives, and the fact that further supers were required almost immediately, the weather was affecting his bees in a positive manner.

Sadly, I wish the same could be said for all my hives. True, some are doing exceptionally well, whilst others are lethargic.

I often comment on the weather but this is not the only factor affecting the bees.

The first hot dry week in the year had the weather forecasters in a right tizzy and I must admit I thought that lack of water would affect the volume of nectar produced by the plants.

The following week of heavy and persistent rain confined the bees to their hives for much of the time. The resulting large honey flow most of my hives are currently experiencing is a result of the rainy spell.

We are now in our second spell of hot weather and Monday night's thunderstorm may well prove to be a blessing.

I am not sure of the forecast for July, and I would not place much faith in it anyway.

None of our 'forecasters' mentioned the possibility of the thunderstorm, until late on Monday afternoon when it was throwing it down to the West and on its way to us!!!

I can however tell you that the weather in Cornwall will be very mixed the second week in July when I am on my holidays!!!

The 80% Rule

I have lost count of the number of times I have mentioned the 80% rule in newsletters and to individual beekeepers.

You all know the rule…

8 frames of brood full of brood the bees are becoming overcrowded. Take action to increase the brood space. (This can be by going to Brood and a Half, Double Brood or splitting the colony.) 8 frames in a super full of honey, add another super.



Marbled White Butterfly in the wild-flower meadow.

Its confession time!!

Last month I told you about the colony that we thought had swarmed but had not. I opened it searching for queen cells, of which there were none.

Ten days later they swarmed! As usual the swarmed rested where they were uncollectable and then disappeared.

The following day I opened the hive and found 4 queen cells.

I removed a frame with queen cells, a frame with stores and 4 frames of bees and created a NUC which I moved to the woods.

Reflection??

WHAT HAD I DONE WRONG??

The first time I opened the hive I had been so busy looking for queen cells it had not registered that the brood area was wall to wall with brood. I had not applied the 80% rule.

If I had been more aware I would now have a thriving colony with a brilliant queen and 3 or 4 strong NUCs.

Inspections

During the second hot spell my bees have been working very hard going backwards and forwards with real gusto.

Different apiaries provide differing food sources.

Two apiaries are enjoying the Blackberry bloom and the one at home are foraging in the gardens and, to date, have ignored the Lime trees that have their biggest bloom for years.

As usual, my favourite apiary is the one in the wild-flower meadow.

The meadow is blooming profusely and is buzzing with bees of all sorts and other pollinators.

Driving by, I pulled in to have a quick look at the meadow. Within 10 paces I spotted at least 10 different butterfly species. I was mesmerised.

Returning to do my inspection early one morning, I found my 2 large hives needing their 4th and 5th supers, Jonathan's hive flying strongly, and the 2 hives I had written off in the Spring as dead both alive and doing well. A pleasant surprise, indeed!!

This Month

The number of bees in a hive should have reached a peak towards the end of June. This s not a hard and fast rule because the weather can affect laying by the queen.

Swarming should be nearly over.

There is still a great deal of foraging to be done by the bees so ensure they have plenty of super space. Be aware a prolonged dry spell may mean that there is little forage and the bees eat their stores. Keep an eye on them.

If you want to increase your hive numbers and/or over-winter some NUCs July is a good time for splits. You can let them raise their own queen or buy a 2026 queen from a reputable supplier.

A 'Fete Worse Than Death'????

I have never enjoyed fetes and fairs but they are something I have had to endure, particularly as a teacher.

The weather can be variable and a few years ago we were only one of about 4 stalls that braves the rain.

I know that the annual round of Fetes at which the MBBKA has a display always produces a keen response from the public and is a valuable educational tool.

I have attended many fetes over the years but recently, I have only been to the **Monks Risborough Show**. Jonathan press-gangs me every year! I must admit on a nice day it is a pleasant way to spend an afternoon. Collecting the Gazebo and all the other kit on Friday night is not my idea of fun and sorting out the Observation Nuc can be challenging.

This year the show is on **Saturday 1st. August**. It would be good to see some new 'volunteers'. If you are available and wish to help, contact Jonathan at programmes@mbbka.org.uk

Brian Bush.

EasyFundRaising - your chance to help with our fundraising



We have set up an Easyfundraising account to kick off our fundraising for our new apiary site, we are planning ahead for the future for when we do have to move from our current site.
Our long term goal is to have something we can use as a visitors centre and that schools can visit us and see the bees from a safe place. If you would like to sign up to our page, its no cost to you.
When you purchase something online you will get a prompt to ask if you want your chosen charity to receive a donation, the company you are buying from will make a donation to your charity.
It is very easy and Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association will be very grateful for all donations received. And if anyone has any fundraising suggestions or would like to help me raise money please get in touch with Lisa at fundraising@mbbka.org.uk

easyfundraising

MBBKA Apiary Manager - a vacancy



Josef Loxey has done a splendid job as apiary manager, despite not having kept bees for a long time and starting in the 'deep end'.

He has proved that we can support a keen new enthusiast and not just require long established beekeepers in the job. It is a huge learning opportunity for someone wanting to expand their knowledge by having oversight of several colonies.

There is a strong apiary support team, both of academic and master beekeepers, and of willing volunteers who help with both bees and support jobs like mowing. It is a committee post so that you can report back and be supported easily.

However, Josef needs to step down after the next AGM (Autumn ‘26) as he will have less time available next year, so we are looking for someone to take on the role. It could be a job share between two people.

Email Josef on apiary@mbbka.org.uk if you are interested or know someone who might be.

The only real requirements are

- an ability to go to the apiary regularly,
- have done the MBBKA or another recognised beekeeping course,
- have an enthusiasm for keeping bees healthy and strong.

The Training Apiary is at the heart of our educational programme. It provides a safe and supportive environment where new and developing beekeepers can gain practical experience, build confidence, and learn the skills needed to become successful beekeepers. As Training Apiary Manager, you will play a key role in shaping the next generation of beekeepers and helping the Association fulfil its educational mission.

This is a highly satisfying role for someone who enjoys working with people as much as with bees. You will have the opportunity to share your knowledge, influence good beekeeping practice, and see firsthand the progress made by students and members throughout the season.

You’ll lead a small but enthusiastic team of volunteers who are passionate about supporting beekeeping education. You will coordinate their efforts, helping to create a positive and welcoming environment for learners while ensuring the apiary operates smoothly and effectively.

A MBBKA Committee role, responsibilities include overseeing the management of the training colonies, planning apiary activities, supporting training sessions, maintaining equipment and facilities, and ensuring high standards of bee husbandry, safety, and biosecurity.

You will work closely with the Association's education and committee teams to ensure the apiary continues to develop as an outstanding learning resource and experience.

For you, you will enjoy the satisfaction of making a lasting contribution to local beekeeping, working alongside dedicated volunteers, developing your own beekeeping skills, and becoming a central figure in one of the Association's most important and rewarding activities.

If you are passionate about beekeeping, enjoy helping others to learn, and would like to play a leading role in the future of our Association, please contact **Josef** directly or **Jane**, the assocation chairman.

A Letter from a MBBKA Swarm Collector



Dearest gentle reader, what a difference a month can make.

The sunshine has finally remembered its invitation to the season, and with it the ladies have thrown themselves into their work with admirable enthusiasm. This author's spring honey has been flowing most generously and has been warmly received by friends, family, and the local stockists fortunate enough to secure a jar before supplies mysteriously disappeared. Queen Elizabeth's successful split has flourished beyond expectation.

Her daughter appears every bit as industrious as her royal predecessor, laying a beautiful pattern of brood in every stage. Despite several inspections, however, Her Majesty herself remains delightfully elusive and has so far avoided the indignity of receiving a coloured mark. One cannot help but admire such determination.

Two further young queens have now embarked upon their matrimonial flights. Society eagerly awaits news of their successful return, for every beekeeper knows there is no greater suspense than watching the hive entrance and wondering whether Her Majesty has safely returned from meeting her chosen suitors.

The recent heat has tested even the most devoted beekeeper. On more than one occasion this author has looked longingly at the bee suit before deciding that observing the busy activity at the hive entrance from a respectable distance was the wiser course of action. Fortunately, the ladies appear blissfully unconcerned by the temperature and continue about their business with admirable diligence.

Curiously, June produced but a single swarm call. A pest control friend reported a swarm in Luton, but as every good member of society knows, one must occasionally pass an invitation to someone better placed to attend. A fellow beekeeper closer to the scene duly obliged.

As we gather to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association, this author is reminded that such milestones are best marked not only by reflection, but by the pleasure of shared stories, well-earned applause, and perhaps a slice of cake or two. After all, queens may come and go, honey harvests may vary, and the weather will forever delight in testing our patience.

Until next month, dear readers, may your queens return safely, your supers grow ever heavier, and your veils remain mostly unstung. Yours most observantly,

Lady Whistledrone

Wot, no flowers?



A week or so back my neighbour said she had seen large numbers of (my?) bees going into her hedge and asked me to take a look.

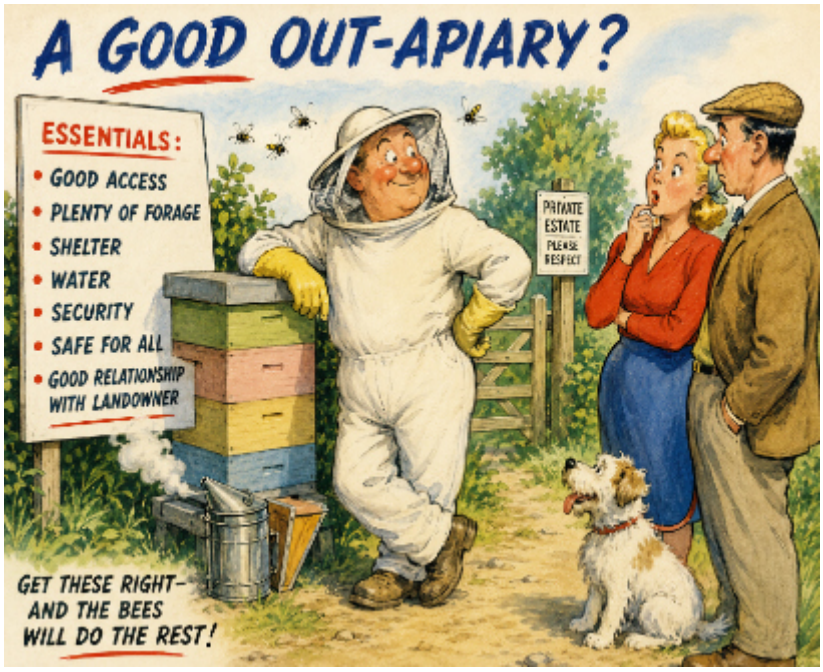
As there were so many bees and there weren't any flowers she was concerned that there was a swarm hiding in there. The clue in this case is that it was a Laurel hedge and whilst Laurel does flower in spring there weren't any on this hedge, but it also has another trick up its sleeve (or leaf in this case) known as 'extrafloral nectaries'. In common with a number of other members of the Prunus family as well as several other species it has small nectar glands near the base of the leaf, these appear as very small spots or patches where the leaf blade joins the central petiole.

So what's in it for the Laurel? In this case it's not trying to attract pollinators but bodyguards like wasps and ants which help to ward off herbivores like caterpillars or other leaf eating critters.

With the low morning sun hitting the hedge full-on it was obviously generating copious quantities of tasty nectar!

Out-Apiary Anyone ?

For many beekeepers, an out-apiary offers the opportunity to expand beyond the confines of the back garden. Whether keeping a few extra colonies, producing honey crops, or managing breeding stock, choosing the right site can make the difference between a pleasure and a persistent headache.



The first consideration is access. A site that looks idyllic in summer can quickly lose its appeal if it requires a half-mile trek through mud in February carrying a box of fondant. Ideally, an out-apiary should be accessible by vehicle, or at least be within a short walk of a safe parking area. Remember that hive equipment, supers full of honey and replacement colonies all have to be moved at some point.

Good forage is, of course, essential. Mixed farmland, hedgerows, woodland margins, gardens and areas of unimproved grassland can all provide excellent nectar and pollen sources. However, even the best forage is of limited value if the site itself is exposed to prevailing winds or prone to flooding.

Shelter is another important factor. Bees benefit from protection against strong winds, while partial shade can help prevent hives from overheating during prolonged hot weather. A site with a hedge, trees or natural windbreaks nearby is often ideal.

Security should not be overlooked. Hives situated out of public view are less likely to attract unwanted attention, vandalism or theft. At the same time, the beekeeper must consider public safety. Hives should be positioned well away from footpaths, play areas and places regularly used by dog walkers or livestock.

Equally important is obtaining the landowner's permission and establishing a good relationship from the outset. Clear communication about access arrangements, responsibilities and expectations can avoid problems later.

Finally, perhaps the best test of any prospective out-apiary is simply to ask yourself: "*Will I still be happy visiting this site on a cold, wet Sunday afternoon in November?*"

If the answer is yes, you may have found yourself an excellent apiary location.

Out-apiary Opportunities for Members

Church Farm - Weston Turville

The owners of Church Farm are looking for an experienced Beekeeper to set up an apiary on the farm. They would like to sell honey produced on the farm for sale in their shop.

Please contact Gill Peacock who has managed an apiary there for some years: **gillstitch@gmail.com**

Rose Dales Organic Farm - Chearsley

Rose has 3 WBC hives on her land that were being looked after by a Beekeeper that's now emigrated, she's looking for someone to take them over.

Emaill at **president@mbbka.org.uk** if you're interested.



Apiary Association Meetings

- **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.

- 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

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

And if you would like to sell honey at the Bucks County Agricultural Show at the end of August. please contact web@mbbka.org.uk

The MBBKA goes "on the road"

This summer's fetes 'n fairs...

- Saturday, July 18th - The Lee Flower Show - The Lee
- 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

This month's BBKA Zoom Meeting

Tuesday 21st July at 7pm



The next in the BBKA monthly series of Zoom talks is: '***Honey Bee Nutrition***' with **Dr. Thierry Bogaert**, CTO and Chairman of APIX Biosciences, on .

Thierry has been active in the seed and crop protection industry for decades. Thierry holds a MSc degree from the University of Manitoba and obtained his PhD at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, where he also held a faculty position. He founded the biotechnology company Devgen in 1997 and built into a global agro-biotechnology company. He discovered and brought to market the first RNAi technology in crop protection and with Devgen developed and commercialized high-performing hybrid seed varieties in rice, sorghum and pearl millet throughout South and South-East Asia.

Throughout his career, Thierry has combined deep understanding of the complex science – including biochemistry, plant and animal genetics, biology, and pathology – with the understanding of different agronomies and agricultural practices to bring innovations to farmers.

Having worked for decades on insects and insects-plant interactions, he understands the complexities of the honey bee nutrition challenge, the underlying scientific work, and what it takes to bring novel solutions to market.

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 two weeks later for those unable to watch live.

Update on our nemesis!

Coming to a hive near you soon!



The BBKA run a YLAH discussion group for Asian Hornet co-ordinators across all the beekeeping associations in England.
The presentation at the June meeting was entitled **Hive Defence**.

The presenter was **Richard Noel** who lives on the north coast Brittany and now makes his living from his bees. He has been living with the hornet problem in France and this is an interesting view on what it looks like on the ground and what does and doesn't work for him. This is available on YouTube for you to watch at the following link – **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lY0obrGnNCs&t=41s**

Have you seen this insect?

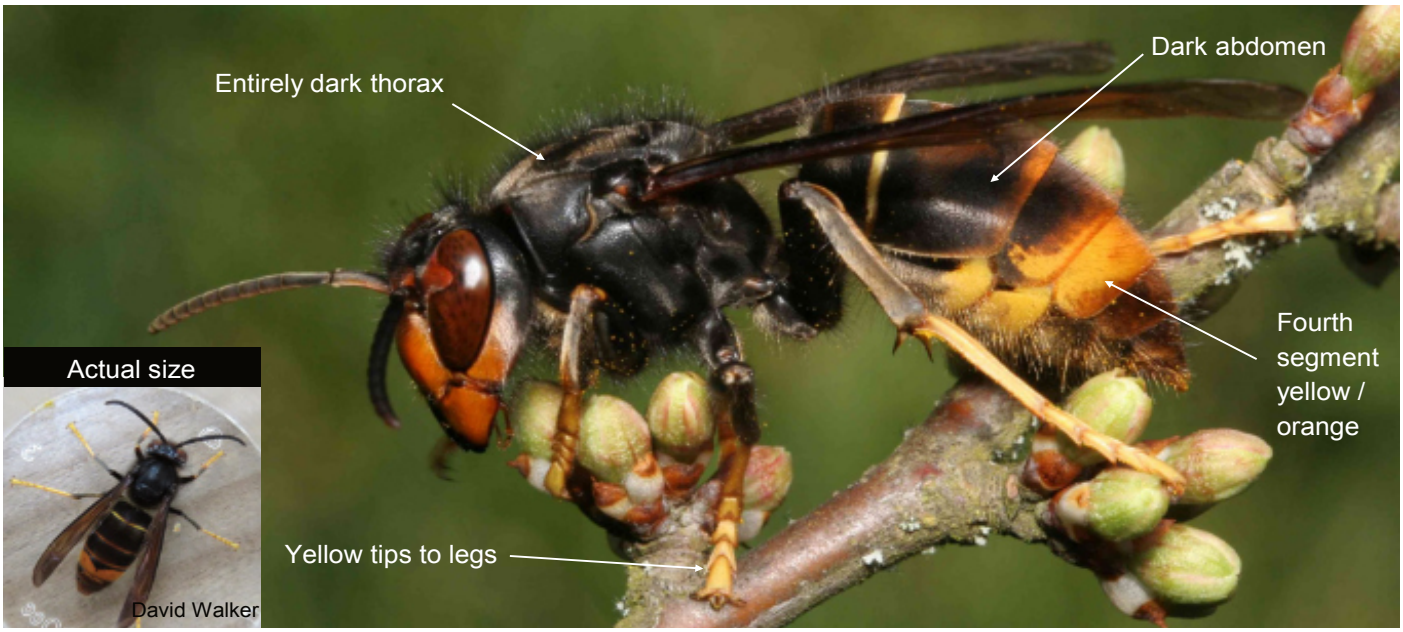
ASIAN HORNET

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?

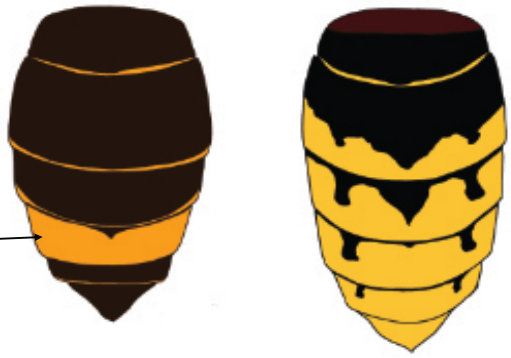
May be seen on flowering plants, around beehives, around rotting / fermenting fruit and protein, and at street markets attracted by sweet fruit and fish stalls.

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



This month's Hive Shout-Out...

...goes to...

George Bull

Retirement of our long standing trustee.

George is someone many in the association won't have met as he wasn't usually able to get to regular meetings.

However, he was a **key help in all the negotiations over the Hampden Fields apiary site**, and has aided the association over many years as a committee member and trustee.

He has now stepped down as is busy in other areas. We have thanked him on behalf of all the membership and we wanted to record this in the newsletter as we owe him a great deal.

Proving it's never too early to think about Christmas...



MBBKA CHRISTMAS DINNER
THE FIVE BELLS - WESTON TURVILLE
Tuesday 1st. December 2026

We will be organising the Christmas Dinner for the above date, so please put this date in your diary. We have booked a table for 20-25 people. Last year's event was a real success.

Still Available!
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







2nd Hand Poly-Nucs
A few still remaining

- The last 5 Nucs with extensions £120.
- 30 extensions - open to offers for them all or £10 each.
- Also large White buckets £2 each
- 1 bucket with tap £10
- Collect from Long Marston



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





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



Yes, you too can advertise here!

Got any equipment sitting around that you don't need and are not using ? Then advertise it here…

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



Bees in the News

[The Power of Honey: Food, Finance and the Golden Age of Fraud]

[Honey production is going downhill in the US]

[How honeybees really crown their queens]

[Free beekeeping workshops in Bury after 18,000 bees die]

We include these links to websites by way of general interst in bee-related news, but the destination sites remain outside of our control and any information or onward redirection is outside of the control of MBBKA. All usual advice regarding caution around websites on the internet remains the case.

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.

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

BeeBase



MBBKA Committee 2025-26		
Chairman	Jane Newman	chairman@mbbka.org.uk
Vice-Chairman	Steve Hamilton	vicechair@mbbka.org.uk
Secretary	Sarah Oakley	secretary@mbbka.org.uk
Treasurer	Rob Spiller	treasurer@mbbka.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Simon Knatchbull	membership@mbbka.org.uk
Apiary Manager	Josef Loxey	apiary@mbbka.org.uk
Education Officer	Steve Hamilton	education@mbbka.org.uk
Programme Secretary	Jonathan Matthews	programmes@mbbka.org.uk
Novice Beekeeper	Oliver Gascoyne	novicebeekeeper@mbbka.org.uk
Fund Raising & Sales Secretary	Lisa Hurley	fundraising@mbbka.org.uk
Committee Member	Tina Hood-Liles	
Committee Member	Heather Mullins	
Beginners Course Secretary	Kathy Soulsby	beginners@mbbka.org.uk
Honey Show Secretary	Maria Ward	honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk
Newsletter Editor		newsletter@mbbka.org.uk
Website	www.mbbka.org.uk	web@mbbka.org.uk