



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

- Old Fart in the Out Apiary
- Honey Show Results
- Lost in France
- 2026 Swarm Survey Results
- ...and lots more besides!
- This month from the BBKA
- Asian Hornet ID chart
- Bees in the News
- For Sale

Items for the next Newsletter to be sent in by
October 25th.

There's only one date this month that MBBKA members need to remember... Friday October 16th

Why YOUR AGM Matters

The AGM may not sound like the most exciting event in the beekeeping calendar, but it is one of the most important. It is the occasion when members have the opportunity to hear what has been happening within Mid Bucks BKA, ask questions, make suggestions and, importantly, have their say about the future of the Association.

Much of the work carried out by MBBKA throughout the year happens behind the scenes. From organising training and talks to maintaining our apiaries, running events, supporting new beekeepers and keeping the Association's finances and administration in order, it takes a considerable amount of voluntary effort. The AGM provides an opportunity to recognise that work and to hear about the plans for the year ahead.

It is also your opportunity to influence those plans. The Association belongs to its members, and voting at the AGM is one of the most direct ways of taking part in its future. Elections, proposals and other matters requiring members' approval are decided by those who turn up and vote.

You don't have to be a committee member or an experienced beekeeper to contribute. Whether you have kept bees for decades or are relatively new to the craft, your views are valuable. You may have an idea for a new activity, a question about something the Association does, or simply an interest in seeing how your membership is being put to work.

So, if you can, please do attend this year's AGM. Come along, listen, ask questions, have your say — and cast your vote.

A strong Association depends on members who take part.

The AGM Info Pack and the link for proxy voting should be in your inbox by now as these have just been circulated.

But, of course, the "other" important date(s) that all members must remember this month - it's National Honey Day on the 21st. And, of course, the premier honey show - The National Honey Show at Sandown Park Racecourse. Are you going... ????

Old Fart in the Out Apiary – October 2026

Summer of 2026

Another month of the Summer of 2026 has come to an end - September has been unusually dry and warm.

Do you remember the time a few years ago when temperatures in the mid-twenties would be considered hot? Now we just accept them as warm days. We have also received little rain but the showers earlier in the month have encouraged some grass growth.

I am a volunteer at the local rugby club. I am a member of the Friday Club. Think of last of the summer wine!! I, fortunately am one of the fittest and amongst the youngest We manage the pitches, cut the grass, strim around the edges of pitches, paths, buildings and car parks as well as carrying out repairs to seating, machinery etc.

The summer has been terrible and despite watering we have only 2 pitches playable and they are once again looking dry. We have our own borehole and storage facility. We can draw up to 20,000 litres per day but our irrigation machine has given up the ghost.

Why am I mentioning this? Well, the chore of strimming has almost gone away because the weather has been so dry again. This lack of water has had an on-going effect on our bees.

True they now are finding sources of pollen, and hopefully nectar, but are presumably finding life difficult. So, I ask the question again, have you checked winter stores and are you feeding your bees?

Bees need a minimum of 30lbs of stores to get through the winter. This would be a full brood box and probably a super. I took very little honey off this year and returned from an inspection in mid-September with a smug grin on my face.

All my hives had at least one full super and brood boxes heavy with stores. There was large areas of brood.

So far, so good.

The colonies are still enormous. If it was the middle of June, you would be very pleased indeed. I removed the queen excluders but left at least one empty super on each hive.

A Call For Help

I had a call from another beekeeper who was concerned about her bees. The bees were spending warm nights clustered on the outside of the box. Why was this happening?

This was time for me to don my deerstalker hat, grab a magnifying glass and go into full Sherlock Holmes mode.



The careful questioning began…

- How many supers do you have on the hive? None, I have removed them all and extracted the honey.
- Are you feeding your bees? Yes, with sugar syrup
- What size brood box do you use? I use a National.
- Where did your bees come from? I originally bought a NUC and they have replaced the queen at least once.
- Were the original bees in the NUC Buckfast? Yes.

If you have ever read my previous ramblings, you will know where this is leading…

- NATIONAL HIVE 40,000
- NATIONL 14X12 HIVE 70,000
- COMMERCIAL HIVE 70,000
- LANGSTROTH HIVE 80,000
- WARRE HIVE 25,000

Using past experience and knowledge, gleaned over the years from books and practical situations I made the following deductions.

- The colony is severely overcrowded.
- The bees need winter stores and are filling the brood box combs.

Let us analyse this…

National brood boxes were designed for colonies of a maximum of 40,000 bees. They would easily take the North European Black Bee, but modern ‘hybrid’ bees have much larger colonies. I use the 14X12 National Hive Variant.

My colonies appear to have as many bees at present as they did in June.

A Colony of Buckfast Bees could easily have 80,000 bees at present. The hive needs more space so add empty supers, with drawn comb, to provide space. Continue to feed until the bees stop taking down the syrup. They need to pack away 30lbs of stores whilst nurturing the fatter 'Winter Bees' to take the colony to next Spring.

My Hive Visit

I decided to make some changes to my usual Autumn routine. I have removed the Queen excluders and ensured the colonies have lots of honey stores.

Do you remember the article by Ken Baskerville in the BBKA magazine upon which I commented earlier this year ? Ken thought that lack of pollen was a suspect in last winter's colony losses.

I had a gut feeling that he is right and advised the feeding of pollen feeds this Autumn. I spoke to Sylvia, my bee buddy, and she said she was using a Pollen Pattie produced by Hive Alive. In the past I had only knowledge of Candipolline Gold containing pollen. Thornes had sent me an advert for another similar product. Sylvia said she was using Hive Alive patties and read out the contents.

I went to Thornes at Windsor and checked the pollen patties available for myself. I purchased the Hive Alive product. It contains real pollen, glucose and artificial protein made from Soya flour etc. I have used Hive Alive liquid in Autumn syrup feeds in the past.



I have also referred to it as 'Snake Oil'!!

I do, however, grudgingly admit that it does have a beneficial effect on the bees. It contains Thymol and seaweed extract and other components that could have been included by the 3 witches in Macbeth.

The Thymol in the liquid when added to sugar syrup stops the rapid build up of mould. The other beneficial ingredients help reduce the effects of nosema in the hive. (I actually think this works).

To my delight the patties contain the components of the liquid as well as the desired pollen for providing the protein necessary for the bees.

So I spent money buying this product!!

My other purchase was Apivar, for countering the Varroa Mites.

I took the advice of Mr. Barber at Honeyfields Bee Farm. He said that with warmer winters the ability to find a period of no brood and use Oxalic Acid was becoming difficult.

He had switched to Apivar 3 years ago and was delighted with the results. I have duly inserted strips in all my hives and found it much easier that dribbling Oxalic Acid in the dead of winter.



On reading the instructions I have to leave them on for 8 to 10 weeks. This will be the middle of November!! Mr. Barber also suggested replacing the 2 strips with another one until Spring to ensure that Varroa levels were kept very low and hopefully non-existent.

The Beekeeping Community is generally friendly and helpful. I really enjoy a discussion with another beekeeper and always consider their suggestions hoping to improve my beekeeping. Never be afraid to seek help and advice.

Brian Bush.

PS…

The date is September 28th and I have been called to a swarm in Aylesbury ! The Swarm Line closed last month and I have had no swarms to collect all summer. Surely this is a hoax call or Miner Bees sunbathing ?!
A swarm has been on a door window at a Storage Mart since Friday. When I arrive there is plenty of bee activity and from the inside, they have been drawing comb on the glass. Bees were collected in the usual way, spray of water, brush into dustpan, place in hive and collected later.

The Mid Bucks Honey Show - Saturday 12th September 2026

This year's show took place on September 12th at Weston Turville Village Hall, judged by Claire O'Brien. We welcomed an impressive **124 entries** in total, with judged directly by Claire. This qualified the event for both a National Blue Ribbon Award (Best in Show) and a Novice Award for the winner of the beginner's class.

A huge thank you to Claire for her thoughtful feedback—her notes left under exhibits provided fantastic tips for improvement. It was also wonderful to see a strong surge in mead entries following Lisa Hurley's workshop, led by Caroline Luxford, two years ago!

Once judging wrapped up, the doors opened to the public and visitors were able to enjoy:

- Exploring the observation hive
- Candle rolling
- Voting in the People's Choice classes
- Tasting and buying members' honey at our hugely popular sales table

Thank you to everyone who entered, volunteered, and supported the day.

Save the Date:
It will be Mid Bucks turn to host the Bucks Honey Show next year on September 18th, 2027.

Maria Ward - Honey Show Secretary

MBBKA Honey Show 2026 – Results

A big thank you to everyone who entered this year's Honey Show, and congratulations to all our winners and place-getters. The results were as follows:

Classes 1–17 – Judged Classes

1. **Light Honey:** 1st Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 2nd Stephen Drotske; 3rd Heather Mullins; HC Jane & Paul Newman
2. **Medium Honey:** 1st Heather Mullins; 2nd Sean Stephenson; 3rd Helen & Jonathan Palmer; HC Steve Oakley
3. **Dark Honey:** 1st Stephen Drotske
4. **Naturally Crystallised/Soft Set Honey:** 1st Maria Ward; 2nd Richard Bates
5. **Chunk Honey:** 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Maria Ward
6. **Honey Judged on Taste & Aroma:** 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 3rd Jack Franks; HC Jane & Paul Newman
7. **Frame of Honey:** 1st Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 2nd Jane & Paul Newman
8. **Honey Labelled for Sale:** 1st Sean Stephenson; 2nd Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 3rd Stephen Drotske; HC Heather Mullins
9. **Cut Comb:** 1st Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 2nd Jacqueline Tolley; 3rd John Dadswell; HC Maria Ward
10. **Sweet Mead:** 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Steve Oakley; 3rd Lisa Hurley
11. **Dry Mead:** 1st Jane & Paul Newman; 2nd Steve Oakley
12. **Cyser/Melomel/Methaglin:** 1st Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 2nd Jacqueline Tolley; 3rd Steve Oakley
13. **Beeswax Cake:** 1st Maria Ward; 2nd Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 3rd Jacqueline Tolley
14. **Matching Candles:** 1st Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 2nd Maria Ward; 3rd Lisa Hurley
15. **Matching Beeswax Blocks:** 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Helen & Jonathan Palmer; 3rd Maria Ward; HC Stephen Drotske
16. **Honey from a Beginner:** 1st Jean Hildred; 2nd David Hardern; 3rd Jack Franks
17. **Honey Cake:** 1st Maria Ward; 2nd Richard Bates; 3rd Stephen Drotske; HC Steve Hamilton
18. **Home Produced Food Item:** Heather Mullins
19. **Bee-Related Photograph:** Jonathan Palmer
20. **Bee-Related Craft Item or Invention:** Helen Palmer
21. **Other Hive Product:** Louise McManus

HC - Highly Commended

Trophy Winners

🏆 **Stuchberry Shield**	- Best Exhibit in Show (for Class 4):	Maria Ward
🏆 **Laurie Webb Rosebowl**	- Most points in Classes 1–17:	Helen & Jonathan Palmer
🏆 **Laurie Webb Cup**	- Highest award for a sealed frame of honey:	Helen & Jonathan Palmer
🏆 **Peter Smith Prize**	- Highest award for a wax cake:	Maria Ward
🏆 **Chandlers Cup**	- Most points in wax Classes 13–15:	Helen & Jonathan Palmer
🏆 **W E Jones Cup**	- Highest award in the honey cake class:	Maria Ward
🏆 **Apiary Cup**	- Best beginner's exhibit in Class 16:	Jean Hildred
🏆 **Pink Lady Plate**	- Most votes for Other Hive Product:	Louise McManus
🏆 **Barbara Tweed Cup**	- Best honey judged on taste and aroma:	Jacqueline Tolley

The Mid Bucks Honey Show Event Photo Gallery



Above - just some of the 124 entries in this year's Honey Show.



Above - entries covered all aspects of art and craft, both edible and admirable.



Above - a strong surge in mead entries following Lisa Hurley's workshop, led by Caroline Luxford, in 2024.



Below - the queue for sales and tasting was eager and ongoing throughout the period the show being open to the public.



*Above - It was particularly good to see some faces, that we've all missed very much this past season, being able to come along to the show. Seen above - the assoc.magazine editor **Godfrey**. We continue to wish Godfrey all the very best and are hoping he might be back to his "usual" post very soon.*

Editors note - As usual, limited space prevents us from including all the photos from this event. To see more please go to the MBBKA Facebook page. Photos courtesy of Tina Hood-Liles.

The Bucks County Honey Show - Saturday 26th September 2026

The **Bucks County Beekeepers' Association Honey Show** 2026 was hosted this year by High Wycombe BKA and held at the Godstowe Preparatory School in High Wycombe. The show featured **26 classes**, covering honey, mead, beeswax, candles, food, craft, photography and other aspects of beekeeping.
A special thanks go to HWBKA for getting the results through so quickly that these could make this newsletter.

Classes 1–17 – Honey, Mead & Wax

1. **Light Honey**: 1st Helen Cave; 2nd Paul Hurley; 3rd Jane & Paul Newman; VHC Paul Verrier; HC Bill Fisher
2. **Medium Honey**: 1st Steve Oakley; 2nd Rashmi Patel; 3rd Heather Mullins; VHC Evelyn Summers; HC Jacqueline Tolley
3. **Dark Honey**: 1st Sue Carter; 2nd Bill Fisher; 3rd Paul Hurley
4. **Naturally Crystallised Honey**: 1st George Raymond; 2nd Sue Carter; 3rd Bill Fisher; VHC Amanda Dray; HC Helen Pethybridge
5. **Soft Set Honey**: 1st Maria Ward; 2nd Amanda Dray; 3rd Graeme Summers; HC Evelyn Summers
6. **Chunk Honey**: 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Graeme Summers; 3rd Maria Ward; HC Helen Cave
7. **Honey Judged on Taste & Aroma**: 1st Wendy Barrett; 2nd John Barrett; 3rd Sue Lang; VHC Steve Oakley; HC Jane & Paul Newman
8. **Capped Honey Frame**: 1st Jane & Paul Newman; 2nd Paul Verrier; 3rd Rachael Hulme; HC Marilyn Freeman
9. **Cut Comb**: 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Graeme Summers; 3rd Jason Herriott; HC Evelyn Summers
10. **Sweet Mead**: 1st Jacqueline Tolley; 2nd Caroline Luxford; 3rd Paul Hurley; VHC Steve Oakley; HC Graeme Summers
11. **Dry Mead**: 1st Steve Oakley; 2nd Caroline Luxford; 3rd John Barrett; HC Paul Hurley
12. **Beeswax Cake (200–255g)**: 1st Maria Ward; 2nd John Barrett; 3rd Nix Stephens; HC Heather Mullins
13. **Matching Beeswax Candles in Holders**: 1st Bill Fisher; 2nd Rachael Hulme; 3rd Helen Cave; HC John Barrett; HC Caroline Luxford
14. **Matching Rolled Candles**: 1st Wendy Barrett; 2nd Cathy Bryant; 3rd Evelyn Summers
15. **Novice Honey**: 1st Graham Uttley; 2nd Beaconsfield HS)
16. **Beginners Honey**: 1st Amanda Royds
17. **Honey, Sultana & Apricot Cake**: 1st John Barrett; 2nd Helen Pethybridge; 3rd Bill Fisher; VHC M & J Nurse; HC Cathy Bryant

VHC - Very Highly Commended, HC - Highly Commended

Classes 18–26 – Other Classes

18. **Honey Label**: 1st Helen Cave; 2nd George Raymond; 3rd Sue Carter; VHC John Barrett; HC Helen Pethybridge
19. **Microscope Slide**: 1st Graeme Summers; 2nd Sue Lang; 3rd James Chew; HC Jacqueline Tolley
20. **Home-Produced Food Item**: 1st Simone Capell; 2nd Heather Mullins; 3rd M & J Nurse
21. **Craft Item**: 1st Amanda Dray; 2nd Simone Capell; 3rd The Barefields
22. **Decorative Wax Item**: 1st Nix Stephens; 2nd John Barrett; 3rd Evelyn Summers
23. **Bee Photograph**: 1st Amanda Dray; 2nd Bill Fisher; 3rd Jacqueline Tolley
24. **Four Jars of Honey**: 1st Amanda Dray; 2nd Heather Mullins; 3rd Helen Pethybridge
25. **Beekeeping Gadget**: 1st George Raymond; 2nd The Barefields; 3rd Amanda Dray
26. **Home-Produced Drink Item**: 1st Simone Capell; 2nd Amanda Dray; 3rd Heather Mullins

For Mid Bucks, Steve Oakley won the Raven Shield for best in classes 1-5, Jane & Paul Newman the Blue Ribbon.

Congratulations to everyone who entered, and to all the winners and place-getters who contributed to such a varied and interesting 2026 Honey Show.

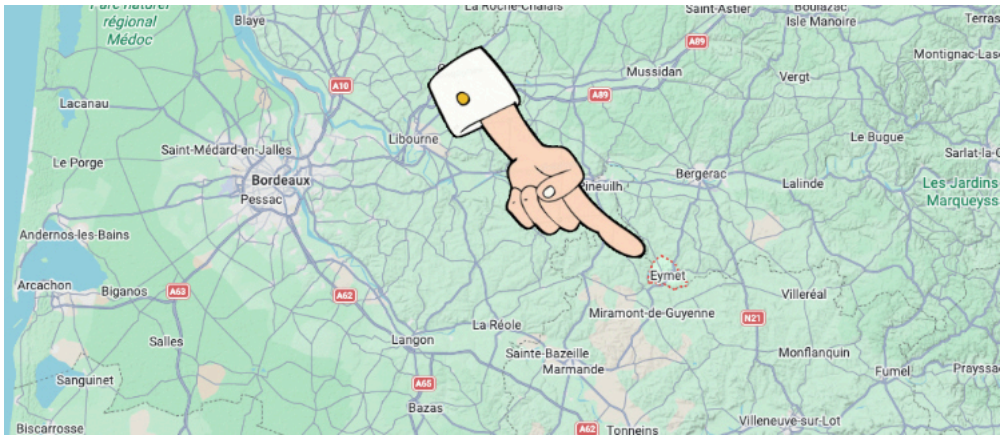




Editor's Note – Many of you may know about, or have perhaps downloaded for your own study, the BBKA Module exam study notes that are available on the Mid Bucks website.
These study notes have a long history (more of which can be read on the website) and have been very popular, with more than 900 requests from over 700 beekeepers being received in what will be 2 years this December. And these requests have come in from quite far afield, with beekeepers in Bulgaria, Canada, Channel Islands and Switzerland placing requests.
There is also a GoFundMe webpage associated with this initiative, where beekeepers can make donations for accessing these notes (donations are entirely voluntary) with proceeds going to our new apiary fund.
One of the requests we have received came in earlier this year from Bordeaux in France – Helen Thorpe, an ex-pat beekeeper is working with fellow beekeepers 150km west of Bordeaux and requested our Basic Assessment notes to assist with a local study group.
Curious for more information on their success this summer (a summer where temperatures locally have regularly been over 40°C), Helen very kindly sent us some more information on their background and beekeeping…

Lost in France: Bordeaux, Beekeeping, Basic Assessment & Blistering Temperatures

We are a group founded by Dr. Bridget Beattie PhD DMB who moved to France in 2004 (a fateful year as it turns out!). You might have come across Bridget through her regular articles in Bee Craft. An eminent beekeeper in the UK she was happy to pass on her knowledge of bee keeping. From this came the idea to form an Association - as at that stage all the 'students' were beginners and this would be a good way to further their knowledge.



Location - Association Apicole de la Vallée du Dropt - 50 miles SE of Bordeaux on the border of Lot and Garonne and Dordogne.

The Association was officially registered with the French Authorities in 2010 when it appeared in the 'Journal Officiel' - the official daily gazette of the French Republic where new laws, decrees, ordinances, and official administrative notices are published. An apiary was set up, a committee elected and a constitution drawn up.

The association has both French and English members. The main functions of the group, as stated in the Constitution were to:

- To promote and further the craft of beekeeping.
- To educate the public in the importance of bees in the community.
- To promote the integration between English speaking and French speaking bee keepers.

Several took the BBKA Basic certificate under Bridget's tutoring and qualified examiners from the UK. The Association grew and soon had a membership of over 30 - not bad for a small geographical area!

Over the years the Association flourished and held monthly meetings as well as regular weekly meetings in the apiary. The monthly meetings took the form of talks on beekeeping, demonstrations of beekeeping procedures or visits to other apiaries, honey houses or museums. We once even had a visit to John Keefus down near Toulouse – during this visit John showed us how he grafted (with adapted matchsticks), made fondant, filled mini nucs, put them out for mating and placed mated queens in travel cages ready for the post, an extremely interesting day, which as often happened with our outings, included yummy lunch in a typically French restaurant. Each autumn we held a Honey Show with 26 different classes – which someone once compared to a large County Honey Show in England. This was judged by Bridget, and a local French Beekeeper/ Sanitary Inspector and his wife. Certificates were awarded at the end of the day which of course included a social evening with an 'Auberge Espagnole' where everyone brought food and drink to share. Over time, Bridget felt she needed to withdraw from the Association, then led by President Bob Truman.

During Covid, the committee continued to maintain the apiary, it being one of the permitted movements during the lockdowns. We had to complete a form for every 'sortie'. You can imagine the surprise of the Gendarmes who stopped my husband and myself on a routine check as we

travelled home from an apiary inspection – in full bee suits!!! We duly provided our forms and were allowed to continue. On the first day of the first lockdown, I had to take the car for it's C.T. (Contrôle Technique or MOT) and was able to do some shopping on return. However, I forgot to buy the beer ingredient of our hornet trap bait, and decided to stop at our village shop to get some. Unfortunately, the police stopped me, I felt a little awkward explaining I was going to buy beer to protect my bees!

Nowadays the Association has nearly 40 members and meets on a weekly basis (weather permitting) between the change of clocks in March until the October change back again. We no longer have the monthly meetings, nor the Honey Show, but have grown the Annual BBQ and instigated a Christmas/End of Season meal.

Over the past 18 – 24 months our Association has been delighted to welcome new – younger(!) and very keen members. Previously, since Bridget had left us, we had simply relied on education during inspections, but we realised that these newcomers wanted more than this.

Many of them were asking *"If it's not a silly question..."* which led us to think about more formal education. I undertook to put together a course based on the BBKA Basic Certificate – which several of us had taken under Bridget's tutelage several years ago. I still had my material from Bridget, but did not want to plagiarise her work, so began searching around for other material which would help me plan the sessions.

As an individual member, I went to the BBKA website, expecting to find material readily available to help me, but was disappointed to find that there was very little. Most of it required one to be part of an Association in the UK, which obviously we weren't. When I enquired whether we might receive the password to gain access, I was told that this would not be possible. Finally, after a lot of trawling through the BBKA website, I found that there was a mention of something which might prove useful... "*Mid Bucks BKA - Basic assessment study notes freely available at https://tinyurl.com/y3774hmn*"

I put this address into my browser, and was slightly disconcerted to discover that it too required a password. However, I sent a mail to the address on the site, explaining our predicament, and asking for access to the material, and they kindly provided me with. Once I was able to download the material, I realised what a useful resource it was, and was able to build parts of it into my course. A notice was sent to members, telling them what the course would entail, and asking them to sign up, if this was something they felt they could commit to. We had 12 people (out of 30 members) expressing interest, some of whom were first-year beekeepers, and some had no bees yet. The course took place over 12 weeks with 2 hourly sessions at my house – coffee/tea half way through (kindly prepared by my husband), together with cakes/cookies provided by the attendees. Interestingly the person who always took tea was a Frenchman!

It was most encouraging to see just how enthusiastic this group was about learning about bees and beekeeping. We did tease one participant who thought at the beginning that he didn't need to take notes, as he'd remember it all!! Needless to say, he soon changed his mind when he discovered after a couple of weeks just what was involved! I took on the same principle as Bridget had done with us, and taught some things which were not included in the Basic Syllabus, believing that you can't have too much knowledge, and this was appreciated by all members of the course.

The intention had been to get a BBKA examiner to come across to France and examine our candidates, but after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing with BBKA, it proved too complicated and costly. Apparently, no examiner fancied a holiday in SW France in exchange for examining! We then thought about how else we could 'test'. Bridget kindly offered (she was a registered BBKA Examiner) but unfortunately, she began to suffer from ill-health, so was unable to do this. Our candidates then suggested that our President Bob Truman – a beekeeper with 30 + years' experience might assess them, but to date this has not happened. However, at our recent Annual BBQ, where Bridget was well enough to attend, we asked her to present certificates to everyone who had taken the course. These simply stated that a theory course following the BBKA Basic certificate had been completed. At least this was something to mark all the hard work which they had put in!

In the summer this year, we had another influx of new, keen, members, so I ran a truncated version of the winter course for a few weeks at the beginning of our apiary sessions – time will tell if I run another in-depth course! After all, I have *plenty* of resources which I have gathered together, thanks to Mid Bucks BKA and other sources which I have researched.

I think the best part of running the course, from a personal point of view is to see how the attendees have put into practice things they have learned. We frequently hear now... "*Oh yes, that's because of...*", thus proving that all the hours spent planning WAS worthwhile!

Helen Thorpe
Association Apicole de la Vallée du Dropt

The 2026 Swarming Season - survey responses from our local swarm collectors.



As I sit down to collate these swarm collector survey results, I've just had a message from a Mid Bucks swarm collector reporting a honey bee swarm found in Aylesbury. A swarm "*the size of a dinner plate*" apparently… !?!?

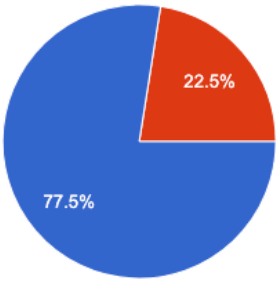
Similarly another collector near Tring reported last week "*I've had three swarm calls in the last two weeks! I've had more swarm calls in September than all the rest of the year combined!?*" Swarms into October… what on earth is going on !?!?!

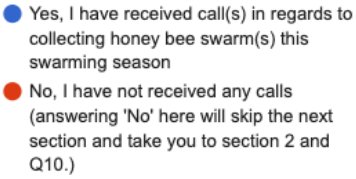
As this peculiar summer slowly draws to a close and what should be the time of year to harvest and jar any excesses (if you were that lucky!), and to put our colonies to bed for the coming colder darker months, I was going to say that it's difficult to recall, with the febrile twitchiness most of us exhibit, back to the hectic months of swarm awareness, prevention and, hopefully, retrieval. But, apparently, it's still going on !! So, while the survey results below are upto and including August, I think next year we'll have to leave the map up throughout September !!

Anyway, to the survey results…

Many of you will have ticked that box on your BBKA membership renewal about being available to collect bee swarms as found and reported by the public. In the past few years, Mid Bucks have run a sub-set map, in conjunction with the High Wycombe BKA, of the South Bucks area; this map being found on the Mid Bucks website. The rationale being that it's more local than the national map and more likely to be returned when people look for local help when a swarm is found. Also we're able to post some other pertinent details about our collectors, like distance they can travel and availability... and whether they also sell their own honey. Any collector's presence on this map is entirely voluntary and is not tied to the BBKA map in any way at all - so you can appear on the national map but decline the local map. This year, as in previous years, our local swarm reporting map closed on the August Bank Holiday...

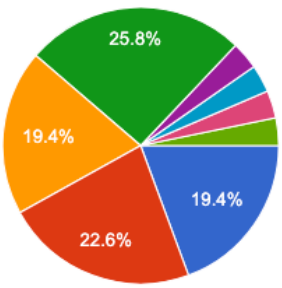
We had 71 swarm collectors from both the MBBKA and HWBKA on this year's map and all were offered the chance to report their experiences on our swarm survey. Forty of this year's collectors returned a response to the survey and their experiences are reported here. There are 14 questions in total and the headline responses are as follows…

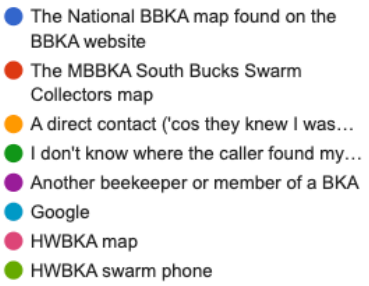


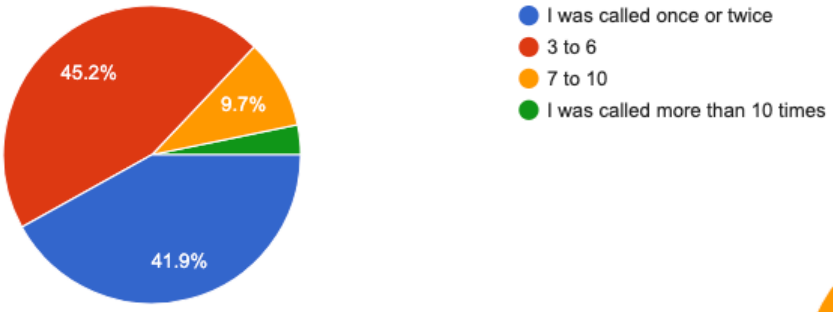


Interestingly almost one quarter of the area's collectors were ***not*** contacted this summer.

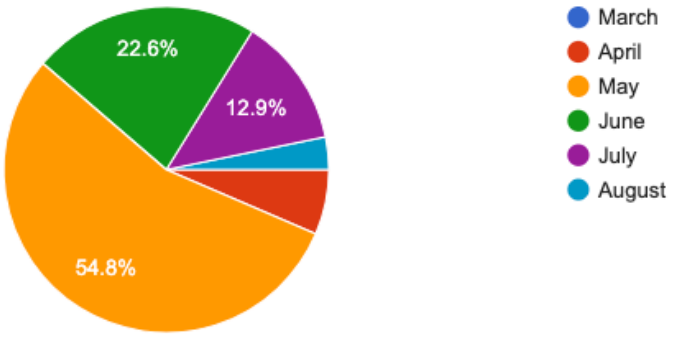
The survey looks to capture information about how members of the public have located our collectors' details. The national and local maps look to provide a similar number of referrals… but so does direct contact. But the most number of referrals, 1 in 4, came through an "unknown" route.



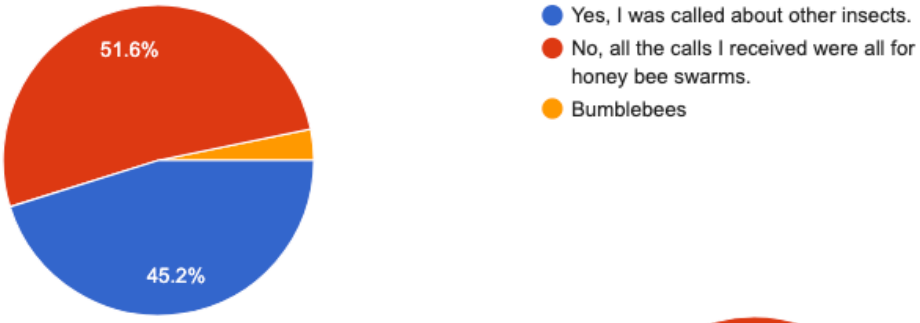




Of those who were called about a swarm, how often did people contact them ? The majority were called between 3 and 6 times, with one lucky collector called more than 10 times !

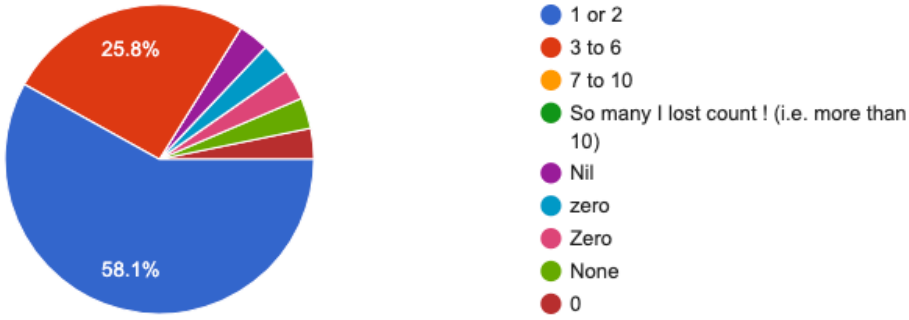


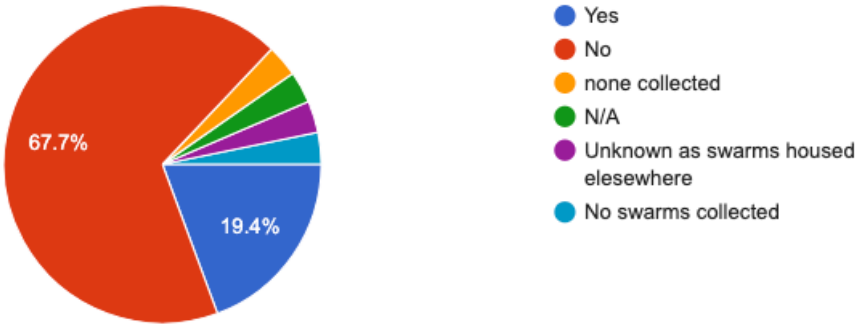
What did our collectors see as the busy month for swarms being found and reported ? Despite a late flurry of calls this past month, the busiest month during the main part of the season was May. As I say, this will have to include September next year !!



As usual, collectors were called about other insects, with bumblebee reports being more noticable this year. This number looks high enough to warrant us being better at providing identification information on the website ahead of collectors being called.

This is always an intersting question - how many swarms were you able to collect this year? Well, it looks the majority bagged a couple, but nobody reports they were able to get more than six.





Swarm retention is always an intersting question. Swarms are already flighty and there's nothing worse than bagging a swarm and getting them into a carefully prepapred hive, only to come out the following morning to find they've buggered off. Been there, done that !! But this year clearly ⅔rds stay where they put.

The last question is also one of particular interst. With the ever increasing costs of bees bought from breeders, how good are we at being able to share those feebies (free bees) available within the county, already "*locally adapted*" ? So it was good to see a fair quantity, nearly 1 in 3, of collected swarms were shared.



The 2026 Swarming Season survey continued…

Like the rest of the summer, it was a strange swarming season, coming as it did ahead of record breaking temperatures, when we were all tending and (hopefully) retaining bees in scorching weather that seems set to become the norm.

I'll leave the final word with one of the anonymous comments left at the end of the survey. It's not possible to attribute this comment, but I think we've all been there and understand the challenges of rising from and returning after a tough winter. So, whoever you are who reported this below, we all feel your pain and we stand together as an assocaition to ensure we all pull through…
"*A sad year for our bees having lost five Hives over the winter. Did a big clean up and new foundation but only one small swarm collected in Tring. I hope next year is better.*"
Whoever you are, next year ***will be*** better. Stick with it !!

Many thanks to all who took part in collecting swarms this year and especially to those collectors who completed our survey. I look forward to seeing, and hearing from, you all next year.

Russ Shearman.

Our regular column from a MBBKA Swarm Collector

Dearest Gentle Readers,

September arrived and there is a definite change in the apiary.



The great honey harvest is drawing to a close, although my girls are certainly not ready to retire just yet. They are still arriving home with their pollen baskets overflowing with bright yellow pollen, which I suspect may be from the ivy providing some welcome autumn forage.

Meanwhile, in a development that will surprise absolutely no female reader, the gentlemen are discovering that their services are no longer required. Yes, dear readers, the drones are being shown the door. After a summer of being fed, housed and generally waited upon, their invitations to remain have apparently expired.

There are other, rather less welcome visitors attempting to gain entry too. Wasps continue to loiter around the hives, clearly hoping to take advantage of somebody else's well-stocked pantry.

And now another annual ritual approaches — the fitting of the mouse guards. The ladies may have spent all summer creating a beautifully warm, honey-filled residence, but that does not mean they intend to offer winter accommodation to every passing mouse.

Looking ahead to October, our AGM will be held on **Friday 16th October**. It's a chance to get together, hear what's been happening within the Association over the past year and look ahead to what's planned for the next. Do come along if you can – it would be lovely to see plenty of familiar faces. After all, it's our members who keep the Association buzzing!

Lady Whistledrone, however, has decided that even the most devoted beekeeper deserves a little rest. So, while my ladies continue their autumn preparations at home, I write this from sunny Sardinia, enjoying a very well-deserved break, but certain to be returning for the AGM.

The social season may be drawing to a close, dear readers, but in the apiary there is always work to be done — although, for this week at least, Lady Whistledrone is leaving it to the bees.

Yours most observantly,
Lady Whistledrone

Dates for your diary - October
See the various websites for more details.



The National Honey Day - Wed 21st Oct - see the BBKA website for more details.



The National Honey Show - Thurs 22nd to Sat 24th October at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey

Wiltshire BKA Bee & Honey Day - Sat 10th Devices Corn Exchange.



MID BUCKS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The MBBKA AGM 2026 - a review of the past 12 months and looking ahead at the next. Meet the committee and have your say.
Friday 16th. - Weston Turville village hall
See the website for more information and more about voting forms.

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

octopus energy

£100 with be donated to the **MBBKA** when you sign up to Octopus using the referral link or QR Code below.

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

All funds go towards supporting our educational activities and the development of a new training apiary.

This month from the BBKA

The next in our monthly series of Zoom talks is:



'Review, Reflection & Planning' with Kathy Lovegrove
Tuesday 20th October at 7pm.

Kathy has been keeping honey bees for over 25 years and for most of this time has been involved in education at branch and association level. She brings her professional teaching background to the role of Devon BKA Education Officer and is particularly committed to supporting post-beginner beekeepers as they grapple with the complexities of the hobby. Her approach is to build confidence and boost the pleasure gained from working with these fascinating insects. She believes that using effective strategies is as important as knowledge and basic skills for every beekeeper to fulfil their potential in this rewarding pastime.

Talk information:

By October there is often a sense of relief that, after months of battling unpredictable weather, erratic bee behaviour, and challenging genetics, the reality in your apiary might look nothing like the expectations you set back in April. It is easy to feel despondent when things do not go to plan but now is not the time for complacency.

In this session, Kathy will introduce a thoughtful approach using the basic '*Plan, Do, Review*' cycle. Before you can look ahead, you must look back. She will explore how to honestly review your season's ups and downs, reflect on why things happened, and set deliberate goals for next summer. Most beekeepers lack a detailed blueprint for what they want to achieve - join Kathy to discover how a structured, reflective strategy will transform your success and confidence for the seasons to come.

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

This is great opportunity to check and use your BBKA login to access the meeting details via the new and improved BBKA Member Hub. A recording of this and all previous talks is also available on the BBKA Member Hub two weeks later for those unable to watch live.

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

SAVE THE DATE

Tues 1st December
7.30pm

MBBKA Christmas Dinner

at the
Five Bells, Weston Turville

Your choice of a 2 or 3 course festive menu.

Further details to follow

Have you seen this insect?

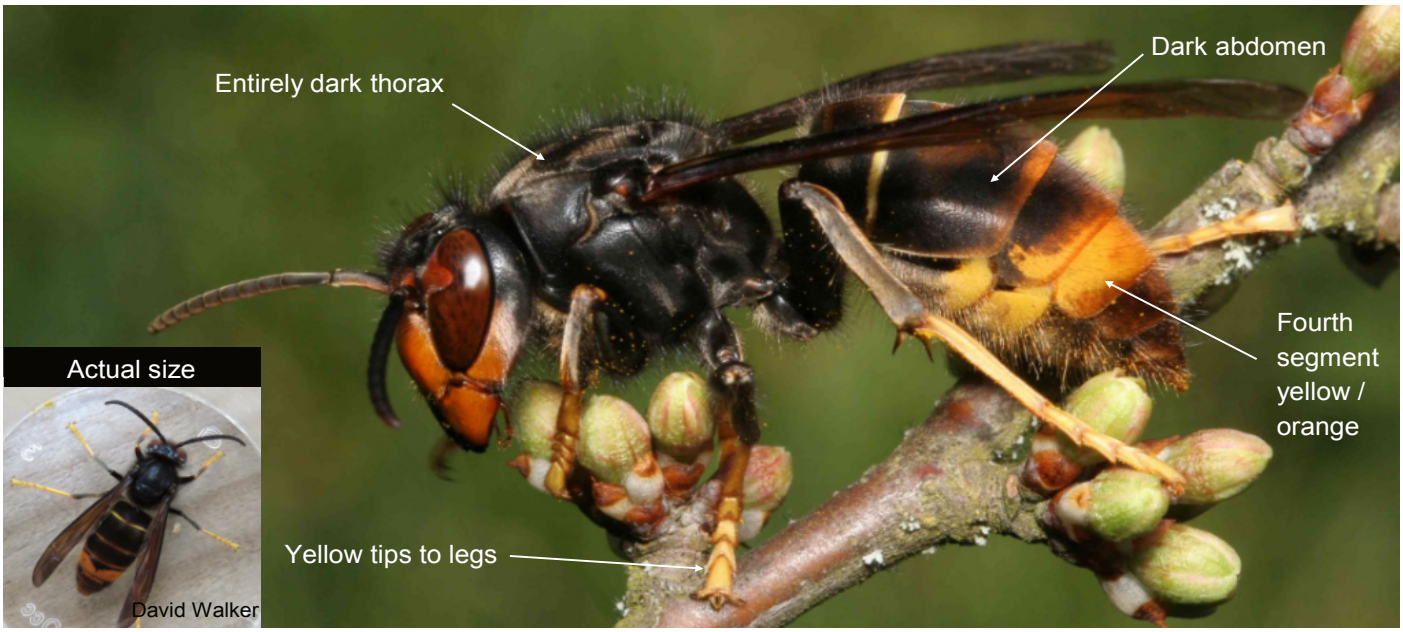
ASIAN HORNET

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?

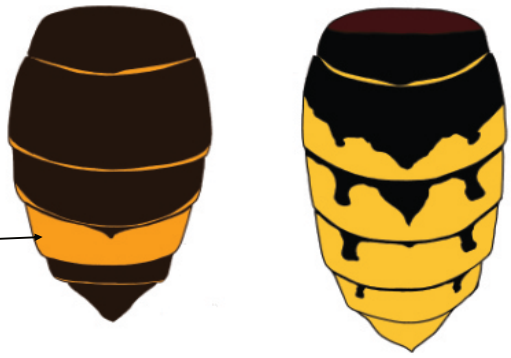
May be seen on flowering plants, around beehives, around rotting / fermenting fruit and protein, and at street markets attracted by sweet fruit and fish stalls.

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

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.

Sean Stephenson



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



You can advertise here

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

Email details and any photos to newsletter@mbbka.org.uk

Equipment for sale

Several pieces still remain - come and have a look and make an offer for individual bits or open to offers all must go.

Collection Long Marston please. 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.



This month in the media

BBC - Hummingbird hawk moths and ivy bees: The insects thriving as temperatures rise
BBC - Scything volunteers trained to protect rare bees
BBC - 'Biggest Asian hornet nest of season' removed
BBC - Asian hornets 'established' despite sightings drop

Please submit any interesting media links you might see to - newsletter@mbbka.org.uk
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.

Out-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
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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
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Committee Member	Heather Mullins	
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