NEWSLETTER
December 2025



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2025/2026

SUBS were due 1st October

Please note this will be the last Newsletter & correspondence you will receive if you have not renewed your membership by the end of December 2025. Sadly there are several of you who have not paid yet. You can pay online, or cheque or cash to our membership secretary Sally Gray.
Full details are on the membership form on how to pay via our website under "membership tab". Thank you to all those who have paid promptly.
Carole

Please check with Sally if you aren't sure whether you have paid.
membership@westdorsetbees.org.uk

CHAIR'S NEWS

I make no apology for yet again focusing on the yellow-legged hornet in this newsletter.

544 credible yellow-legged hornet sightings have been reported in the UK in 2025 and 162 nests have been found.



The latest nest was found in Swyre in late November (see above). Prior to that one was found in Ringstead north-east of Weymouth. This is a wake-up call to beekeepers in West Dorset and surrounding areas. If those nests have produced new queens there is a severe risk of incursion into our area.

Worryingly, there has been a total lack of contact from the NBU regarding the nest found in Swyre. As your coordinator, I should have been notified. To date we have no idea who found the nest or where it was located. If we knew this, local beekeepers could then be alerted to put out bait stations and/or traps. I will be raising the matter at the next meeting of hornet coordinators this month.

We have prepared a pack for members to use in educating people in their area. It contains various posters and a letter that can be adapted to local needs. Your committee has a pack each and you can contact me for copies.

I also want to remind you that I am happy to give talks to local groups who are interested (or should be interested).

In other news, thank you to Chris and Deborah Childs for hosting a boil-up recently. It is a very efficient way of cleaning and sterilising frames.

Lastly, we have a Christmas get-together on Tuesday 9th December at the Christian Fellowship hall in Bridport starting at 7.30 pm. We would love to see you there.

Despite my doom and gloom, have a happy and peaceful Christmas,

Kindly by Peter Crabbe



CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER 7.30PM
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP HALL

Time to catch up with activities and bee tales during the year

Please can you bring a plate of food for a finger buffet with you to share — savoury or sweet

There will be mince pies, mulled wine and tea/coffee provided by WDBKA
The bee library will there too



Apiary report —November 2025

There were two checks of the colonies in November. Thanks to Mike and Hil Jury for undertaking both of these.

At the beginning of the month, it was difficult to assess the varroa trays as it had been four weeks since the previous check. Two weeks later, varroa counts varied between two and seven per day, with the two colonies that didn't have an autumn treatment having the highest drops.

The plan is to do a winter treatment of all the colonies at some point in December when they are broodless.

There were a few wasps still about at the mid-month visit. Four of the six colonies were heavy and two have been given fondant.

The Apiary inventory will be undertaken in early December. At that point we will also check a few colonies to see how much brood is present. If there is none or minimal brood we will administer the winter varroa treatment.

Kindly by Carole Astbury

And another thing….

So what next?

Well, the cold weather is here at at last. The honey is all potted up and a lot of it has been sold. The queen excluders have been removed, so the queen isn't separated from the hungry workers. (Oh, no. Really? Hmm. It's a bit late now, if we've forgotten to do this.)

We've dosed the hives to cut down on varroa. We've removed and cleaned off all those horrible old dirty frames. We've carefully stacked the drawn supers from which honey has been extracted, and isolated them from wax moth and put them outside in the cold. We've ordered more jars, hoping for a good harvest next year.

So what now? There are another three months to go before the start of 2026's beekeeping season. Suddenly there's nothing more to do. It's a good feeling – but, if you are a devoted beekeeper, it's easy to feel suddenly bereft.

There's Christmas to plan for, of course. And the dark evenings give us less opportunity for gardening and more time for social life. We may have a chance to read a beekeeping book – or even have a holiday somewhere a bit sunnier.

Maybe this is a moment to look to the future. What is the plan next year, if the yellow-legged peril gets a firm grip, and we have to change our routines to cope with its onslaught? The other Beast from the East, tropilaelaps, looks as if it will pose even more of a threat when/if it arrives in Britain. Can we adapt to these horrors, and still get pleasure from our beekeeping? We've managed to survive thus far despite varroa – but only by careful management, and after more than 30 years of trying, and a lot of failures and dead bees.

I'd hate to have to give up the craft. Apart from the fascination of the bees themselves, there is all the entertainment that comes alongside: the friendly get-togethers with other beekeepers; the honey, and the fun of meeting the quirky strangers who call in to buy a pot; the money (not to be sniffed at, though we do work hard for it); and the new skills we've had to learn in order to keep our bees housed and healthy.

No sense in being gloomy. We'll find a way to carry on, I'm sure.

Kindly by Caroline Dilke

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BOIL-UP

We had approximately 350 frames to boil up this time. Our thanks go to Chris and Deb Childs for the use of their premises and equipment. We were lucky with the weather too, which made it enjoyable!



Trevor in his element!!



Steam cleaning them off — good fun



QUEEN BEE COLOUR MARKINGS

The sequence is easily remembered with the following mnemonic:

Will You Raise Good Bees

- **White – years ending in 1 or 6.**
- **Yellow – years ending in 2 or 7.**
- **Red – years ending in 3 or 8.**
- **Green – years ending in 4 or 9.**
- **Blue – years ending in 5 or 0.**



Skep making course 2026



We're pleased to offer a **two-day Skep making course** with Vanessa Woodford on **8th and 15th February**, from **12–4pm** each day.
The cost is **£50 per person** including materials.

This is a great opportunity to learn or refresh your skills in traditional skep making in a relaxed and supportive setting. **Tea and coffee** will be available, but please **bring your own packed lunch**.

Spaces are limited to 12, so early booking is recommended.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Address: Buzzard's Nest, Street Ash, Combe St. Nicholas TA20 3JA **Parking is limited**, so please **share transport where possible**.

Please contact Suzie Mutch — suziemutch@hotmail.com — if you have any questions and to reserve your place.

BUYING IN BULK IS A GREAT SAVING FOR WDBKA MEMBERS!

FOUNDATION will be the next bulk buy!

Now is the time to get organised for next season.

Please check what foundation you require.

The order form will be sent out with the most up-to-date prices soon.

Don't forget it is a good idea to change your brood comb on a regular basis — also not to stockpile as the bees accept fresh foundation better.



SAVE THIS DATE!
SOMERSET LECTURE DAY
7th FEBRUARY 2026

SBKA 2025 Lecture Day is taking shape! They are putting together a programme of speakers, workshops and a trade hall all in a comfortable, purpose-built conference centre with ample parking and refreshments at The Canalside, Marsh Lane, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 6LQ

Email sent out to you all 26th November to purchase a ticket
or
Go to Somerset BKA website & buy now, not to be disappointed
Excellent day out

EAST DEVON BKA PROGRAMME FOR 2026 — WHICH WE CAN ATTEND TOO

Thursday 8th January 1930 hrs	Kilmington Village Hall	Keeping Healthy Bees	David Packham	How diseases are spread and how to avoid them. Comb management. Dealing with varroa and the arguments for and against treating.
Saturday 17th January Time: TBA	Virtual	DBKA AGM	TBA	DBKA business, reports and elections, plus talks.
Thursday 5th February 1930 hrs	Kilmington Village Hall	**JOINT meeting with WD beekeepers "Asian Hornet: Fit2Fight and Integrated Colony Management"**	Alan Baxter	Alan first experienced Asian (yellow-legged) hornets at his apiary in the Loire valley and later learned a system of apiary management to survive the hornet problem from Maître Apiculteur André Blatier. Asian hornets are likely here to stay. It's not the end of the world but changes to beekeeping practices will be needed.
Thursday 5th March 1930 hrs	Kilmington Village Hall	Hive Products - Preparation for Showing	Liz Westcott	How to prepare honey and beeswax to a good standard for showing or for making candles, 1oz blocks or a cake of wax, as well as preparing honey for the showing together with pointers on how to achieve success at your local honey show.
Thursday 2nd April 1930 hrs	Kilmington Village Hall	Use of Bait Hives to Catch Swarms	Richard Simpson	Lost your bees overwinter or simply want more, or to catch your own colonies' swarms? Instead of taking a swarm (if you are lucky) why not tempt it to come to you? Richard will discuss how it is now a regular success for him and how you can maximise your chances too.

