NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

www.westdorsetbees.org.uk

Chair's News

Netherbury Apiary

I want to say a huge thank you to the Apiary Management Committee for their hard work in maintaining the apiary at Netherbury. It is set up to give new and old beekeepers the chance to learn new skills and to gain experience in managing colonies of bees. It is disappointing to see so few members coming to the sessions each weekend, as those who do come get the chance to swop ideas and discuss problems. We have now added a WBC hive alongside the 14 x 12s and the standard Nationals to provoke the debate on which hive is the best!

If you can spare the time to help maintain the apiary, your help would be appreciated.

Yellow-legged hornet

There have been 30 sightings of the yellow-legged hornet in the UK so far this year as well as six nests. The majority have been in the South East but there have been sightings near Southampton. To understand the potential severity of the problem, you only have to check the situation in Jersey. As of 22nd June, they reported 1369 individual hornets captured since the start of the year compared to 256 in the same period last year. They have also identified 157 nests compared to 35 last year.

The BBKA maintain a map showing all sightings: search for https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-incursion-map. Thankfully all the local reports are negative so far.

The beekeeping year

Several members (me included) have reported that splits and swarms collected earlier this year have built up so much that they have also swarmed or needed splitting again. Equally, new queens are taking a long time to start laying. It is never routine in the world of beekeeping!

Kindly by Peter Crabbe

m. 07484 103055

BBQ with a Hog Roast

Sunday 20th July 2025 — 12noon

Chris and Deborah Childs have kindly again said we can use one of their fields to hold the event, which will be great. (Fingers crossed for fine weather like last year — but if not, the Corscombe Hall is booked just in case we need it.) Their address is Catemwood House Corscombe DT2 0NT — very easy to find, just go past The Fox pub and take the next turning right down a lane and you will find them on the right nearly at the end.

WDBKA will provide the Hog Roast and the salads like last year — vegetarian options will be available — so all I need to know are numbers for catering. Partners are invited too.

Please let me know by end of play on 13th July, via email secwestdorsetbees@gmail.com **if you are coming.**

What we would like you to bring, as we do not want any washing up!:
A picnic chair if you wish to sit in comfort
Plate
Knife & fork
Your own drinks and mug/cup/glass
Doggy bag for any left-overs

CONGRATULATIONS

TO JON HARVEY, WHO PASSED HIS BASIC EXAMINATION

And Another Thing…

Surprising facts about bees

Like most other beekeepers, I enjoy showing off the hives to any friend who shows an interest and is willing to don a bee suit and help with lifting the boxes.

Obviously, I try to make the experience entertaining as well as safe and enjoyable. It's fun answering their questions and blasting them with astonishing statistics.

We all have our favourites. Here are some of mine:

One level teaspoonful of honey represents the lifetime's work of 12 bees.

If we had to pay workers the minimum legal hourly wage, for collecting and processing the nectar, each jar of honey would cost tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands of pounds.

Drones had no dad, and will father no sons.

The cheap honey you can buy in a supermarket is most probably illegally contaminated with sugar and can often contain pathogens.

The queen excluder usually succeeds in keeping the queen below in the brood box because her "child-bearing hips" prevent her passing though it.

These fun facts elicit an "ooh aah" response from non-beekeepers, which is satisfying; but the real, lasting shock and horror comes after they innocently ask how it is that a standard, fertilised bee egg can be magically given the status of a queen cell and I know they expect me to trot out a spiel about the special properties of royal jelly. Instead I reveal the gloomy fact that if bee larvae are destined to be workers, they are systematically starved during development to prevent them becoming fertile.

Somehow it's impossible for the general public not to think of this everyday apian strategy in human terms. Images from "Brave New World" come to mind, with babies being produced in a factory. Suppose we did this to our human children: imagine picking out one or two babies to be fed a full diet, and keeping the vast majority hungry so they never reach puberty, so never reproduce? It's a shocking thought, and I find it entertaining when showing off my bees that, from being an enjoyable outing for my guests looking into a hive for the first time, suddenly they are confronted with an inappropriate moral dimension to the innocent life of these colonial insects. It's nothing to do with us, how bees regulate their society, but somehow we care, and don't think it can be quite right. Also, like it or not, the more we think about the implications, the more it raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions about human societies. So let's step away, and leave the bees to their matriarchy. They are happy the way they are, and so should we beekeepers be.

Kindly by Caroline Dilke

Apiary Update: June 2025

We seem to have spent the majority of the June Apiary inspections staring at frames hoping to see eggs, waiting for evidence of functioning new queens.

Two new queens have now been spotted and are laying well and have been marked blue, this year's queen colour. Three more new queens, have produced sealed brood and several have failed. We still have two colonies with older queens from 2023 and 2024.

We have finally managed to put one colony into our new WBC hive. There was some head-scratching involved from those of us not used to the WBC set up but the bees seem to like it! We hope that it will enable members and students to experience another type of hive set-up.

Varroa counts have remained low, possibly because of the prolonged brood breaks.

At the beginning of the month we discovered a small wasps' nest on the inside of the door frame of the new storage shed. The wasps had managed to enter through gaps in the door and unfortunately have had to be removed as they were becoming an increasing nuisance trying to defend their home.

There are around three more supers of honey ready to extract on the colonies. Carole Brown has kindly jarred all the spring honey we extracted, totalling 108lb, which will be sold at the Melplash Show.

Finally a big thank you to Chris Thompson who cleaned up a growing pile of equipment at the last session in June. Ideally we would clean up after each session but if inspections and teaching overrun that doesn't always happen. Chris has developed a reputation as our clean-up champion; he does seem to enjoy it, but his efforts and expertise are still greatly appreciated.

Kindly by Carole Astbury

HIRE OF HONEY EXTRACTORS

If you wish to hire a honey extractor, please contact first

Secretary 01308 - 456210 or m 07527781039

or

Chris Thompson Tel 01300 341888 who has a spare one to lend.

When hiring an extractor please be mindful of others wishing to use it, so do have your supers ready for extracting and return the extractor to Apiary or Chris clean as soon as you have finished with it.

Best way of cleaning the extractor is with cold water.

The Association has a new small extractor which will be kept at the teaching apiary, if you wish to borrow it please let the tutor know you are going to collect it or return it please **ONLY** when there is an apiary session being held. **Do not leave it outside the apiary gate**

Queen-Rearing Course

A couple of months ago, after receiving an email circulation about a queen-rearing course hosted by North Dorset BKA, I applied for a place. The only requirement was to purchase a particular version of an Apidea.

The first sesson was on a Saturday, 9am to 3pm, at Shillingstone village hall, a 40-odd-mile drive for me. Geoff Buckland, Ron Briggs and Lesley Glasson were the tutors. Geoff explained how and why he re-queens his own colonies yearly as well as the hives in the club apiary bees. Originally he chose a queen, several years ago, which produced the calmest bees and was a good layer, the traits for a happy colony. He bred only from her daughters, and continued to do so down the generations.

I decided to use my mobile phone and record each of the three sessions, in case I decided to try rearing myself. Students then split into three groups with about six in each.

My first session was with Lesley, an introduction to the various types of Apidea (basically a tiny, three-frame nucleus). This seemed complicated but in practice was straightforward. See pics 1 & 2.



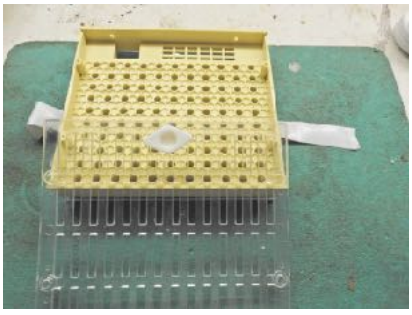


The next session was by Ron, on how to make one's own cells for egg-laying, with an incense burner, using wax rather than perfumed water. Each dip into wax added another layer of wax before a wax cell was ready for use. It was quite fiddly to do and needed practice to make a consistent standard, but satisfying all the same.

The last session was by Geoff, explaining how to cut foundation and fit it into an Apidea. Basically one uses one queen per unit, so the more queens, the more Apideas are required. See pic 3.



An alternative method is use the Jenter method, but the queen is inside laying eggs for only a maximum of 24 hours. Her age must be known. See pics 4, 5 & 6.







After lunch we went down to the club apiary for a practical session, in the various methods one can use. When grafting you basically need to remove the capping covering a larva, expose the larva, then extract it with a grafting tool and place into a cup. This is fiddly to say the least, plus you need very good eyes. Geoff & Ron demonstrated both the Jenter and the Millar variations.

Our Wednesday session was in the evening. We opened the relevant hives to see the results of any queen cells. None were viable, from the grafting method. Geoff suggested the most likely reasons for our failure: grafting in the open, a hot day etc. Using the Jenter method which Geoff had initiated prior to the course, no egg had been laid by the queen, or been consumed after she had been removed. Luckily he had a “Blue Peter” moment -- “Here’s one I made before” -- using a Jenter from his own apiary in Weymouth as a back-up, saving this rather embarrassing situation. Therefore after removing several cells, he inserted them into the adapted brood frame placed in a hive to be made into potential queen cells.

On Saturday at the club apiary, students arrived clutching their Apideas full of bees, and frames with comb, ready for the newly formed queen cells to be inserted. We were also shown how to eventually introduce our new queen to a queenless colony using a bee cage.
Unfortunately, again there were a few failures, with insufficient queen cells for all, so two of us, both local to Weymouth, will visit Geoff when he restarts his queen-rearing programme in July, and collect our Apideas.

This turned out to be a rather complicated, but certainly interesting, exercise. Geoff and Ron are now hoping to make a queen-rearing video for Ron’s YouTube channel, “Blackmore Vale Honey”.

Kindly by Jon Harvey



This is what happened when a nuc box with a frame of honey was left in a car in this heat!! Don’t forget to take kit out of the car!

THE SWARM PAGE









Both swarms were captured and re-homed
Spot the Asian hornet trap!

NATIONAL BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

10 SUPERS £10.00 each
3 x CROWN BOARDS £5 each
6 QUEEN EXCLUDERS £8 each
3 BROOD BOXES with open mesh floor £40 each
3 WOODEN NUCS £20 each
2 ROOFS £20 each
NEW PACKS 10 UNMADE SUPER FRAMES £10 a pack
1 NEW PACK 10 UNMADE BROOD FRAMES £10
1 NEW PACKS OF 11 WIRED SUPER WAX £5 a pack
1 FRAME MANUAL S/STEEL HONEY SPINNER £60
1 S/STEEL ELECTRIC WARMER/DECAPPING TRAY £40
1 S/STEEL SETTLING TANK £40
24 x 380ml NEW JARS WITH LIDS £8
3 x TOP FEEDERS different sizes £3 or £5 each
3 x FRAME HANGERS £3 each
2 x SMOKERS £4 each
4 x HIVE TOOLS £3 each
1 x S/STEEL DOUBLE SIEVE £6
2 x CREAMERS £5 each
Various books and lots of second hand frames
1 x UNCAPPING KNIFE £8

IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED IN ANY OF THE ABOVE EQUIPMENT PLEASE CONTACT BY EMAIL TO-
Ugsagain@gmail.com

VARROA TREATMENTS FOR 2025

Please check your stocks.
We will be doing a bulk order for varroa treatments soon — please look out for the email to make an order.

WEST DORSET BKA EVENTS COMING SOON ……

DATE	TIME	EVENT	WHERE	DETAILS
Saturday 5h July	10am start	APIARY MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS	NETHERBURY APIARY PARK FARM DT6 5LY	CLEAN SUITS if you have them already — & GLOVES
Sunday 13th July	10am	APIARY MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS	NETHERBURY APIARY PARK FARM DT6 5LY	CLEAN SUITS if you have them already — & GLOVES
Saturday 19th July	10am	APIARY MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS	NETHERBURY APIARY PARK FARM DT6 5LY	CLEAN SUITS if you have them already — & GLOVES
SUNDAY 20nd July	12NOON	INVITATION TO OUR ANNUAL HOG ROAST	CHRIS &B DEB CHILDS CORSCOMNBE	Full details above in this NL
SATURDAY 26TH July	10am	APIARY MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS	NETHERBURY APIARY PARK FARM DT6 5LY	CLEAN SUITS if you have them already — & GLOVES
SATURDAY 2nd August	10am	APIARY MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS	NETHERBURY APIARY PARK FARM DT6 5LY	CLEAN SUITS if you have them already — & GLOVES

Published for its members by West Dorset Beekeepers Association
Secretary: Carole Brown 11 North Hill Way, Bridport, Dorset DT6 4JX
Tel 01308 456210 email secwestdorsetbees@gmail.com