NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2025

Chair's News

I have just carried out a full check of my hives looking at stores and planning treatment for varroa. I was somewhat surprised to find unmarked queens in three of nine hives, having marked all the queens earlier in the year. So I now have one two-year-old queen, and eight queens marked blue. At least varroa counts are still low (bar one hive) and stores are healthy. There is a lot of wax moth this year, even in the strongest hives; I have never seen it so prolific.

This year's Melplash Show was a great success. There were a good number of entries, 177 in all for the judging, and we almost ran out of honey for sale. Candle-rolling was a hit, as were the observation hives. The teas, coffees and cakes flew out. Thank you to all the members who were kind enough to bake cakes to sell and also those who gave up their time to help on the day for a few hours on the other stands. It makes the show a success and fun.



I need to say a huge thank you to Carole Brown, our secretary, for all the organisation of the show, all our committee members for their sterling support plus Sarah More and Carole Astbury for the lovely floral displays, and Sally Boxall and Liz Moxom for compiling all the results the show, which they have done for many years now.



The best in show was won by Carole Astbury for her wax exhibit.



Lynne Richley — 1st prize for honey cake



The novice prize this year was won by Edward Walton

MELPLASH SHOW RESULTS 2025 — TROPHY & SPONSORED CLASSES

M C Bond Shield for WDBKA member gaining most points across all classes 465 to 498 :
Winner — Carole Astbury
Carole Brown Trophy for WDBKA member gaining most points in classes open only to members 488 to 498:
Winner — Carole Astbury
M R Wood Challenge Cup - Class 475 for honey (novices who have never won a 1st Prize):
Winner –- Edward Walton
The Dorset Challenge Cup – Class 481 for Honey Fruit Cake
Winner –- Lynne Richley
Bob Mather Challenge Cup Class 472 or **493 -** for best comb of honey ready for extraction:
Winner — Mike & Hil Jury
F W Carter Cup – Class 489 for two jars of clear medium honey (WDBKA members)
Winner –- A Hardy & C Palmer
Blue Ribbon of Merit for Best Exhibit in Show:
This year it was Class **496**
Winner — Carole Astbury
Class 466 Sponsored by Felicity's Farm Shop - 2x 1lb jars of clear medium honey
Winner –- A Hardy & C Palmer
Class 468 Sponsored by Modbury Farm Shop
2 x 1lb jars of naturally crystallised honey
Winner –- Sarah More
Class 470 Sponsored by Symondsbury Estate
3 x 1lb jars of matching honey labelled for retail
Winner — Carole Astbury Class 481 Sponsored by Waitrose of Bridport – Honey fruit cake
Winner – Lynne Richley
Class 483 Sponsored by Longs Fish and Chips – Photograph relating to Beekeeping
Winner — Carole Astbury
Class 484 Sponsored by Footeprints Bridport – Photograph of bees inside/ outside the nest
Winner — Cathy Harvey
Class 487 Sponsored by Cilla & Camilla Cookshop
Six Honey Buns
Winner — Cathryn Mills
Class 488 Sponsored by Sue and Mike English, Fruits of the Earth Wholefood Shop – 2x 1lb Jars of light honey
Winner –- Carole Astbury
Class 489 Sponsored by Co-op of Bridport – 2x 1lb Jars of clear medium honey
Winner — A Hardy & C Palmer
Class 491 Sponsored by W M Morrisons of Bridport - 2x 1lb jars of naturally crystallised honey
Winner — Mike & Hil Jury
Class 493 Sponsored by Moore Than Tea - Frame for Extraction
Winner — Mike & Hil Jury
Class 496 Sponsored by Filbertsbees.co.uk – Beeswax in 8 moulded pieces
Winner — Carole Astbury
Class 497 Sponsored by Longs Fish & Chips - No entries
Class 498 Tasting
Winner — Cathy Harvey

Membership Renewals 2025/26 for Full and Friends

As we are approaching the start of the new membership year on 1st October, we need to advise everyone that we have had to increase membership fees this year.

Basic full membership (BBKA/BDI for three hives/WDBKA) will go up to £35. This is due to an increase in BBKA fees.
Friend membership will go up to £10

There are no changes to any of the additional BDI costs.

Please make sure that any standing orders or direct debits are updated to reflect the new amounts before your payment is due, to avoid any confusion.

New membership forms are available on the website in the membership section if needed.

Sally Gray
membership@westdorsetbees.org.uk

Dorset Beekeepers Association Convention

Dorset Beekeepers Association invites you to their convention on 11th October at the Dorford Centre in Dorchester.

There will be a full day of talks and demonstrations covering everything from wax flowers to tropilaelaps research, Apidea queen-rearing to varroa resistance in bees and much more.

Details of trade stands will be released nearer the date.

The price will be £5 for members of DBKA and £10 for non-members.

Booking and payment can be made using Ticket Tailor hosted by North Dorset Beekeepers Association. The URL for bookings is: https://buytickets.at/northdorsetbka/1793471

Members rates' can be reached by adding the discount code **DBKAC2025** when making a booking.

Date: 11th October Venue: Dorford Centre, 2 Bridport Road, Dorchester, DT1 1RR.

Parking: Top O' Town car park.

Agenda: 9.15 am Welcome

9.30 am Kevin Pope

Kevin will be talking about his visit to Thailand with Maggie Gill from PHIRA Science to study tropilaelaps. If he has time he will also review the latest information on disease outbreaks in Dorset. Kevin was a respected seasonal bee inspector for many years in our area. And still keeps 20 hives.

10.30 am Coffee. Time to browse the stands

11.00 am Ken Basterfield

Ken will be talking about marketing honey. Ken Basterfield NDB has been keeping bees for over 40 years and, in addition to running Blackberry Farm in East Devon, is an examiner for the BBKA and a member of the BBKA Husbandry & Education Committee.

11.45 am Break

12,00 pm Dan Basterfield

Dan will be talking about his book on Apidea queen-rearing. Queen raising is one of the most rewarding aspects of beekeeping, allowing beekeepers to propagate the desirable characteristics of their best colonies throughout their apiaries.
Father and son commercial beekeepers Ken and Dan Basterfield, both holders of the National Diploma in Beekeeping, have been using Apideas to raise their own queens for 40 years.

12.45 pm Lunch — Bring your own or pop into town.

2.00 pm Two workshops will run at the same time; take your pick.

Maggie North will be demonstrating making wax flowers

Ron Briggs will be discussing setting up a honey house

3.00 pm Steve Riley will be talking about varroa resistance.

Many of us have been working towards our bees becoming resistant to varroa. Steve has published a book "The honey bee solution to varroa"
Steve is the current Chair and Education Officer for Westerham Beekeepers. A group of like-minded beekeepers started a project in 2017 to select for varroa-resistant traits in honey bees, identified from research on long-established, naturally resistant colonies and from their own data.

4.00pm Tea and cake!

And Another Thing…….

A view from the bee tent

Wandering round the Melplash Show offers a feast for the senses: cows so clean and barbered they are hardly recognisable, gleaming tractors, piglets nuzzling up to a grunting matriarch, ferrets racing through pipes, hawks flying, horses jumping, crowds guzzling snacks or screaming from the scary tops of fairground rides, toddlers cuddling day-old-chicks, expensive specialist cheeses in the food tent -- and endless competitions to giggle over. Those 12-foot-long leeks and monster onions, no doubt obsessively nurtured for months! And how do the judges distinguish between all the lovingly crafted jams and exquisitely arranged flowers? Part of the fun is disagreeing with their misguided verdicts and deciding which entry really should have won.

And a lot of the fun is in people-watching. This year I was astounded by the sheer bulk of the average visitor. But any further comment here would be unacceptably fattist.

In the bee marquee, it's all about chat. Sitting on the information desk, I must have had 1,000 conversations during the day, and ended up hardly able to speak without croaking. In the lulls between encouraging people to take a leaflet about yellow-legged hornets, dive into the virtual hive or try their hand at distinguishing between real honey and supermarket rubbish (which a disconcerting percentage failed to achieve), there were interesting colleagues to talk to. And dozens of friends and cousins called by to say hello. At the edge of my vision I saw a constant stream of jars of honey being sold and ferried away. And an eager crowd around the cake stall; and the meticulous judging of our honey, photography, wax creations and edible goodies.

It's a long, exhausting day. Some of those with the energy to stay and clear up later repaired to the beer tent for a well-deserved drink and catch-up chat.

A lovely, memorable event. But maybe it's as well that it comes only once a year.

Kindly by Caroline Dilke

Apiary Update — August 2025

There were only two members' visits scheduled in August; one on the 31st will be after this report is produced.

On 10th of August we concentrated on trying to ensure that the colonies took down into the brood box any remaining frames of honey. This involved scoring any capped frames and then putting the supers to be cleaned out over the crown board and an empty super with a small hole for the bees to access the honey frames. Hopefully this will make the bees treat the honey as being outside the hive. We also put on the colonies the last supers which had extracted frames for cleaning.

There was one very small colony in a 14x12 hive which only had four seams of bees and we felt would not make it though the winter so this was put in a nuc box and has been taken to combine with a member's queenless hive.

We also marked all the queens which we knew had not yet been marked, however.

The Melplash Observation Hive Team checked the colonies the weekend before the show to identify those most suitable to be used for the Show observation hives. A colony each of 14x12 and National were selected but on the evening before the Show the queen in the National Hive decided she didn't want a trip out and defied all attempts to find her. The only other National hive had a red marked queen who also proved impossible to find— as she had been superseded — so eventually her unmarked replacement was spotted and marked and taken to Melplash.

Looking back at our records we notes that no one had seen a queen in this colony all season. So it is possible that the queen was superseded last autumn! As we presumed the queen was marked red, were we looking for a red dot rather than an unmarked queen? As this colony didn't make swarm cells there was no pressure to find the queen and we had been happy to observe eggs indicating that she was present. It was only the necessity of needing the queen for Melplash that eventually led to her being spotted.

At the next members' session we will be starting the autumn varroa treatments.

Kindly by Carole Astbury

FREE THORNES FEEDERS

Four English Feeders from Thornes. Free to a good home!
PLEASE contact Martin Bridges Nr Hooke 07879231925



BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

- 3 complete hives, comprising stand, brood box, Langstroth extension, 3 supers, queen excluder, crown board and roof
- Surplus frames (some made up and some in kits) plus wax sheets
- 3 contact feeders
- 100 unwrapped honey jars and lids
- Smoker
- Manual centrifuge honey extractor
- Steam wax extractor
- Uncapping box/separator and uncapping knife
- 2 x 20 litre honey buckets

Also have some syrup and various varroa treatments.

This would be an ideal “starter kit” for any new members.

If interested in any of this kit please contact Alan on:
alanmorris140@btinternet.com

ONE EVENT WDBKA ARE GOING TO ATTEND — with a stall

Saturday 27th September— Green Day Beaminster
Why not come and join us, interesting day

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 21st October QUESTION TIME with FISH & CHIPS

Show dates: Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October 2025 at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey, UK

LOOKING AHEAD TO WDBKA AGM
11th NOVEMBER 2025

If any of you would like to put up for the committee, please feel free to do so.

If there are any propositions you wish to put forward, please let me know 35 days before the AGM — that is by 7th October — so that they can be put onto the agenda.

We are always willing to co-opt anyone with a specific talent to improve our association.

The existing members of the committee and the AMC (apiary management committee) are willing to stand again.

Carole Brown
Secretary WDBKA