



BEEKEEPERS

NEWSLETTER – February 2025

STEERING GROUP MEMBERS 2024/2025

Tim Bullock

Stephen Greenaway

Kevin Holt

Nicola Perrett

Mick Carter

Clive Harris

Marcel Marsh

Barry Roberts

Justin Downes

Kathy Hobson

Matt O'Dell

APIARY NOTES - Tim Bullock (Chair)

Hopefully your bees are now flying actively on warm days and the queens are laying. This increased activity and heating of the brood uses more energy, so colonies will be using stores faster (for March work on around 4kg of stores for a typical colony). As the nectar sources aren't huge at the moment, it's important to keep feeding if you even think they might be a bit low. If in doubt – feed! Personally, I wouldn't do inspections in the first half of the month unless I had serious concerns about a colony. Even in the second half if you must inspect, then keep it brief. If you must inspect, make sure it's a really warm, non-windy day and keep the inspection brief - have they got food, any sign of disease, are eggs and larvae present (don't worry about looking for the queen) is all you're really likely to need to know. If the bees are flying well and bringing back pollen then I wouldn't inspect. As the weather warms it's probably worth getting Asian Hornet traps out ready for when the hibernating queens emerge. Usually this doesn't happen until 'about' April but if the second half of the month is dry and particularly warm then it's not impossible for them to emerge in March. If you do put them out then check them regularly (ideally everyday but at least twice a week) and release anything that isn't an Asian hornet. Report any queens on the Asian hornet app (and probably Mick too) but don't release them back. Have you got enough equipment for the upcoming year and is it all ready for use. If the answer is no then this is definitely the time to sort it out, rather than in a panic later - been there, done it and got the tee shirt – it's not a good one!!!

CLUB MEETINGS

- 27.2.25 An Open Forum - the main discussion will be to help new beekeepers know what to expect from the new season
- 27.3.25 Rachael Banyard – WBKA Training Officer

Don't forget that we are moving to a new venue!!! From February the Club meetings (the last Thursday of the month) will take place at The Tawny Owl Pub (Parliament Room), Taw Hill, Swindon SN25 1WR. Meetings will start at 7.30pm

SDBKA APIARIES

TWIGS

As mentioned in the January Newsletter we will be holding our annual work party in March - the date for your diary is **Saturday 29th March 10am**. Can you come and help this year? We are normally there for around three hours but with more helpers this could be less – if you can spare even an hour or so that would be great. If you can help please let Kathy Hobson know

PARK FARM – Mick Carter

On Thursday 13th February, myself and Barry Roberts took delivery of 3 large bags of 40 mm local stones to cover and level the weed suppressant that we have laid previously this month in the Park Farm Apiary. These were delivered over the hedge and straight into the Apiary and Levelled with the hive stands replaced into position. The Trees were trimmed to make access a lot easier. The Nuc was very active and the bees kept looking out to see what was going on despite the temp only being 4 centigrade. Fondant was checked on the Nuc and Hive and was found to be ok and none was needed to be added.

It's always good to see Bees in the Hive and Nuc but winter still has a while to go.

See below the before and after pictures



VARROA RESISTANCE THROUGH BEE IMPROVEMENT EVENT – Matt O'Dell

On February 15, 2025, I and several Club Members had the pleasure of attending the "Varroa Resistance through Bee Improvement" event at Ettington Community Centre, organized by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association (BIBBA). This event was a significant gathering for beekeepers and enthusiasts, aimed at addressing the critical issue of varroa mites that threaten honeybee colonies globally.

Key Presentations and Speakers

The event featured expert speakers who shared their knowledge on varroa resistance. Notable presenters included: **Stephen Martin:** Emeritus Professor at Salford University, who discussed how some honeybee colonies have naturally evolved to resist varroa mites without chemical treatments.

Steve Riley: Education Officer and former Chair of Westerham Beekeepers, focused on practical approaches to selecting and monitoring varroa-resistant traits and emphasized collaborative efforts among beekeepers.

Clive Hudson: With 16 years of treatment-free beekeeping experience, shared his journey with Welsh dark bees and the reasons behind stopping varroa treatments.

The presentations covered a range of topics, including:

- The underlying mechanisms of varroa resistance in honeybee populations.
- Practical methods for promoting varroa-resistant colonies.
- The benefits of working collaboratively as a club to spread best practices.
- Personal experiences and challenges faced by beekeepers in managing varroa-resistant colonies.

Conclusion

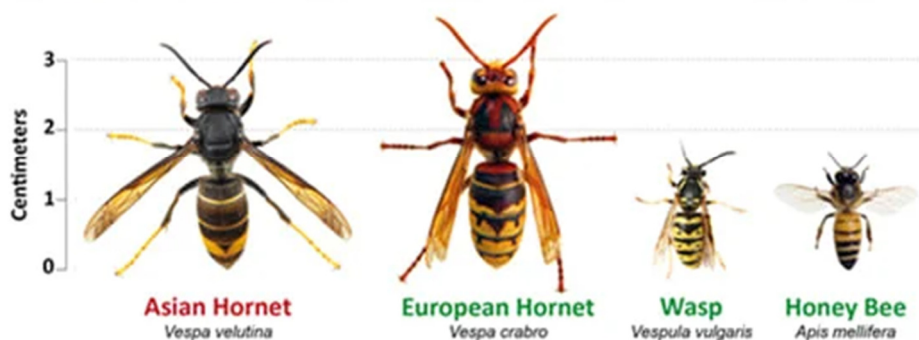
Several of the main speakers at the "Varroa Resistance through Bee Improvement" event paid heartfelt tribute to Ron Hoskins, acknowledging his pioneering work in breeding varroa-resistant bees. They highlighted how Ron Hoskins, through decades of dedicated research and experimentation, was ahead of his time in developing and promoting varroa-resistant traits within honeybee populations. His groundbreaking efforts have provided a vital foundation for contemporary beekeepers and researchers striving to combat the varroa mite menace without relying on chemical treatments. The speakers emphasised that Ron's innovative approach and unwavering commitment continue to inspire and guide the beekeeping community, making a lasting impact on sustainable beekeeping practices worldwide.

Attending the "Varroa Resistance through Bee Improvement" event was an enriching experience, offering valuable insights and practical solutions for the challenges faced by beekeepers in the fight against varroa mites. The expert presentations, combined with the interactive Q&A session, made this event a significant step towards promoting sustainable beekeeping practices and reducing reliance on chemical treatments. The event energised and empowered attendees and it was great to see that from November this year the BBKA will be changing the syllabus to 3 of their modules to ensure understanding and learning about treatment free beekeeping becomes part of their education programme.

UPDATE ON THE ASIAN YELLOW LEG HORNET – Mick Carter

Last year 24 nests were found and destroyed by the NBU, this is a great reduction on the previous year (2023) of 72 nest located and destroyed. So far one Hornet has been found in Shropshire on the 23 January 2025, which had arrived in a delivery of shallots from France. This shows how easy they can be transported unknowingly. A local beekeeper spotted and took a picture and sent it to the NBU, who then acted on it. As we move into spring, now is the time to be vigilant and keep a look out for the yellow leg Asian Hornet queens as they begin to emerge and look for food and nesting sites. For those of you that purchased the Gard Apis Sentinel traps, now is the time to refill with the lure (Trappit if you have it) and fit the orange ends which will allow the queens in but not out. The more queens caught at this time of year the less problems we will have later on. Keep your eyes peeled, and if you see anything, please try to take a picture and use the Asian Hornet Watch app to inform the NBU

Think you've seen an Asian Hornet? Report it!



Report through the Asian Hornet Watch app or www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport

SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't forget to check out our Facebook and Instagram pages. If you have any bee related photos to share please email them to Kathy Hobson

MEMBERS INPUT

If you have any articles or a meeting topic idea that you think may be of interest to members please let Kathy Hobson know.

