



NEWSLETTER – March 2025

STEERING GROUP MEMBERS 2024/2025

Tim Bullock	Mick Carter	Justin Downes
Stephen Greenaway	Clive Harris	Kathy Hobson
Kevin Holt	Marcel Marsh	Matt O'Dell
Nicola Perrett	Barry Roberts	

APIARY NOTES - Tim Bullock (Chair)

The weather has been quite varied recently and the forecast says it should be bright but not particularly warm for the rest of March, so I wouldn't be in any hurry to start inspections yet. If you do, make sure it is warm day and you are fast – the last thing you want to do is chill any brood. Nectar supplies are limited at the moment so keep feeding fondant, if they don't need it they are very unlikely to take it down and fill cells with it, whereas as syrup can soon be taken down and put in cells that queens could be laying into.

When we do get to the point of making regular inspections, it's always best to have a plan before you start each inspection – what do you want to know, what are you looking for etc. as this will help to speed you up.

The main key things to check: - is there enough food (colonies can still starve at this time of year especially if the weather turns cold), is the queen laying well (and does the brood pattern look good), any sign of disease.

Colonies hopefully won't be starting to make swarm preparations yet, but if we get a good warm spell in early April it could happen so now is the time to make sure you're ready for when they do. Spare hives/nucs, bait hives etc. etc. As April progresses brood boxes fill and get more congested, then colonies may start to swarm. Once the weather warms up properly and things get going don't forget to check for swarm cells and play cups hidden away in corners and hard to get to places.

Asian hornet queens are likely to be out starting to build their first nests at some point in April – again, something that is weather dependent. Consider putting out hornet traps baited either with hornet bait or something sweet (beer, fruit etc.). Check regularly and release any catch that isn't an Asian hornet.

PLANNING THE BEEKEEPING YEAR – Barry Roberts

Please see attached a BBKA planning schedule which may be helpful, especially for new Beekeepers

SDBKA APIARIES

TWIGS

The two colonies are doing well. We hope to see some of you at the work party on Saturday 29th March 10am.

PARK FARM – Mick Carter

During the warm spell of March I checked the fondant supplies and watched the entrances of the hive and nuc at Park Farm. Pollen Candi was added to the nuc. It was noticed that the bees in the nuc were very active collecting nectar but in the main hive there was no activity. Unfortunately after lifting the crown board I could see no bees and I then lifted the bottom box off to reveal a lot of dead bees on the mesh floor. As this hive was not treated this could have been caused by Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus caused by a Varroa overload, especially as there were a number of bald dead bees seen on the floor.

DENNIS SIMPSON

Some of our members attended Dennis's funeral which was very moving but a "fitting" goodbye. As a thank you for Dennis's loyalty for over 35 years the Club has donated £100 to "Bees Abroad" – a charity supported by Dennis for many years. The poem shown below was read at the funeral

The Beekeeper

You understand the bees as someone can
Who always has a purpose and a plan.
You, who were doubtless destined to become
A brother to the underlying hum
Of giving life, within the teeming hive.
The pure mind of creation seems to thrive
In harmony, with order in the comb
And sweet abundance in a perfect home.

You witness life stages, each one brief,
Driven by instinct, with the sting of grief.
You study the arcane and gentle ways
To please the queen in her productive days.
Drawn to the bees as I am to you,
Partner in building up and making new.
You are the keeper of mysteries
Invisible as love among the bees.

THE BEEKEEPING SHOW 2025 – Kevin Holt

This was held last month at the Telford International Centre (TIC). 14 SDBKA members attended, some just making the Saturday day trip, others choosing to extend the stay to allow for food, drink and general socialising. For those who have never been the TIC is directly next to a major leisure and retail park, including lots of hotels and restaurants.

The show was billed as "The premier UK beekeeping trade show". It did not disappoint. All the big guns were present Thornes (of course), Simon the Beekeeper, Old Castle Farms, BS Honeybees, Abelo, along with a large bunch of others. All trying desperately to help you lighten your wallet, taking advantage of your 'bee fever'. Recognising that for the majority pockets are only so deep - there were a number of presentations during the day on a variety of beekeeping subjects - didn't get to any myself but those who went along reported good things.

It is well organised event, and there certainly are some fantastic bargains to be had. My tip - if you are thinking of buying in bulk or spending on a high value item, and are not in a rush. Try and make it to the show - you could save yourself a few quid.

To provide some idea of the volume of goods purchased by some of us an average ASDA trolley would have been no use - a warehouse style "Cage Trolley" was a must. Given this unbounded need to spend I think that the only thing missing from the show was a Garden Shed (aka Bee Shed) salesman. I think they would have made a fortune.

I have no doubt a return visit will be planned for next year by 'the team' - indeed I know somebody who has already booked the local Travelodge.

Watch out for an invite to come and join us later in the year

BASIC ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

Training for the Basic Assessment has now started with 6 members taking part this year. Also 5 members are currently studying for Module 3 (Honey Bee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning). At our next meeting Rachael will talk to us about the Modules etc. and, of course, answer any questions.

CLUB MEETINGS

27.3.25 Rachael Banyard – WBKA Training Officer

24.4.25 Swarm Control - tips and discussion

Meetings take place at The Tawny Owl Pub (Parliament Room), Taw Hill, Swindon SN25 1WR at 7.30pm

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.



TELFORD 2025



**"COVETED" SKITTLES TROPHY FOUND
AND PRESENTED TO BARRY ROBERTS**



TRESCO GARDENS, SCILLY ILES 2024

