

Bee Scene



August 2025

NEWSLETTER of HASTINGS & ROTHER DIVISION
Sussex Beekeepers' Association

Address box for Bee Scene by post.

Next Meeting

General Apiary Meeting
Divisional Apiary
Seven Fields Farm, TN33 9QH
Saturday 2nd August 2025
2.30pm
What3Words: solves.mindset.screeches

Beekeeping Notes for August 2025 – Amanda Millar

I had hoped to have removed my honey by now as the nectar flow has more or less finished round me. The blackberries are ripening even. Any further nectar I would leave for the bees' winter stores. However, I have been so busy with my baby bats I have not yet had time. I was going to make a start yesterday, but it was quite warm and by the time it was cool enough I was too tired. Ditto today, and there is always tomorrow!

But I did think and plan so I will be better prepared tomorrow. Because of the serious wasp problem and the fact that they will be all around when I open the hives up and the bees will be correspondingly defensive, I shall use crown boards with porter bee escapes for a day or two. For the honey I removed in May and as the bees are not particularly busy in a fully capped super and as most of my bees are reasonably well tempered I have normally just shaken or gently brushed the bees off each full frame, sorted them into fully capped, not capped and leaving for the bees, then transferred it to a covered super and then carted them off to the garage. This time I shall have to quickly decide which or how many boxes I shall remove, move the top super down above the brood, put the crown board with porter escape above and then pile all the supers back on top and cover. In most cases I believe the top super is either unfinished or with some foundation thus providing the displaced bees with space and somewhere to work. Because of the wasps I don't want to spend time sorting through the supers out in the apiary but will do that when I get the supers back to the garage and if necessary, return any unfinished frames I find that day before I start the extraction. I shall also try to estimate how much honey they have and return sufficient for their winter needs (45lb for an average good-sized colony). The queen excluder, if you use one, can be removed at this point. The Apiarist website has a very useful blog on wasps this week, their problems and how to deal with them. I put up wasp traps a couple of weeks ago and checked them today. I had used the yeasty dregs of homemade ginger beer, some plum jam and water and was sad to find this brew had attracted several moths as well as the wasps. So, I have tipped them out rather than deplete the moths which are needed to feed the 50+ young bats I shall be releasing in a few weeks.

Although I have had my entrance blocks in with 5.5mm high entrance and 10-12cm wide for the last few weeks (once all trace of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus had gone as they needed to remove dead bees) I shall put some foam in tomorrow, reducing the width to 1-2cm in the 3 smaller colonies as they are being bothered by wasps and could easily be

robbed out. I shall see how busy the other colonies are and reduce the entrance width accordingly.

Once the honey has been extracted, I shall put the supers back on the hives for the bees to lick dry for a couple of days. I am hoping that the honey will be a low moisture content, following the dry warm weather we have had, so frames not completely capped may still be sufficiently low moisture to extract, but I will have to test both by shaking to see if drops of nectar fall out and also using my refractometer, before I extract. Normally I expect to leave frames less than 80% on the colony for a bit longer to be 'finished'.

I must also monitor the varroa drop. I think from the insert daily count I did a month ago, that a couple of colonies will need treatment straight away. This is probably because the colonies seem to be larger than usual, and the warm weather has kept the queen laying well. This is in spite of the Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus seeming to cause more drone deaths. Mites preferentially reproduce in drone brood where the longer development time enables more mites to survive. In previous years I have been able to wait until the middle of September before treating with oxalic acid vapourisation (OAV), but not only has the weather encouraged the mites but everything seems to be a couple of weeks early throughout the natural world so we must adjust our activities accordingly. I have no idea what sort of temperatures we will have in the next few weeks so do check the optimum range for whatever treatment you use. OAV can be done when it is cooler, eg early morning or evening, and a day or two adjustment for the 5-day repeats (because there is still a lot of brood and it does not kill the mites in the brood), but some treatments are in for several weeks and what do you do if we get another heat wave? As it will take several weeks, whichever treatment you use, I want to get my mites low before the winter bees are produced which could be as early as mid-August to late September. Winter bees are produced in response to dwindling pollen resources. If everything is early by a fortnight it follows that many things may finish early. So probably winter bee production will be early too. Don't delay, get the honey off and the treatment on.

This year my colonies have reached unmanageable heights, and it is going to be exhausting to remove the honey supers from the top. I should not complain I suppose, as there will be more honey, providing the wasps have not got it. Once they are down to a sensible height I shall check them over for health, and ensure I left sufficient honey for them to overwinter with. I cannot assume that they will collect more nectar, and an ivy crop is never guaranteed. I also need to decide how many to keep. I have 12 mated queens including the swarm, two artificial swarms and two Apidea. I really only want 7 or maximum 8 colonies so when they are smaller, I shall be able to get down as far as the brood and inspect for health, brood pattern, temperament, honey crop result and a few other things and decide which to merge or requeen. I still have a somewhat grumpy colony which I may need to requeen again. The requeening last autumn did not improve their temper much unfortunately. I may find that there is a nearly empty dark box at the bottom which can be removed for recycling, allowing them to use the cleaner boxes above. I hope you have a good crop, and your bees are in good health.



Amanda's hives!

Yellow-Legged (Asian) Hornet Update

Message from the BBKA.

As a Trustee of the BBKA and Chair of the Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Committee, I want to take a moment to acknowledge both the growing challenge we face and the incredible response we've seen from beekeepers and the wider community.

This year, we have recorded more confirmed sightings and nests of *Vespa velutina* – the Yellow-legged Asian hornet – than at any previous point. It is a sobering milestone that underlines the seriousness of the threat we are dealing with. The Yellow-legged Asian hornet is a highly effective predator of honey bees and other pollinators. Its presence poses a genuine and growing threat not only to our colonies, but to biodiversity, agriculture, and public well-being.

However, despite the concerning rise in activity, I remain personally optimistic. We have the tools, knowledge, and determination to slow the spread and minimise the impact of this invasive species – but it will require continued vigilance and collaboration.

The attached document provides a summary of results from the NBU's spring trapping programme following analysis. I would encourage branches in these areas to extend their monitoring work where possible.

One of our most powerful defences remains public awareness. The work beekeepers and local associations have done in recent years to educate the public, report sightings, and support monitoring efforts has been extraordinary. Your efforts have directly led to the discovery and destruction of nests, and you are a vital line of defence in this fight.

Let me be clear: this is not just a beekeeper issue. The Yellow-legged Asian hornet is a wider environmental and economic threat, and all stakeholders – from landowners and farmers to local councils and the general public – have a role to play.

I urge all beekeepers and BBKA members to continue engaging with their communities, sharing the signs to look out for, and promoting reporting through the Asian Hornet Watch app and other channels. There is a wealth of material available to support you – from posters and leaflets to online webinars and local training events.

I am pleased to report that the BBKA trustees have approved a budget of £12,000 for a further poster campaign on the back of buses. This advertising in Kent and surrounding areas will run during September and follows the success of a similar campaign two years ago.

Together, through vigilance, education, and swift action, we can still make a real and lasting impact. Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you need any additional support at any time: outreach.officer@bbka.org.uk

With appreciation and resolve,
Luke Whyatt
Trustee and Chair, Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Committee

Summary of Results of Spring Trapping – note results in Udimore

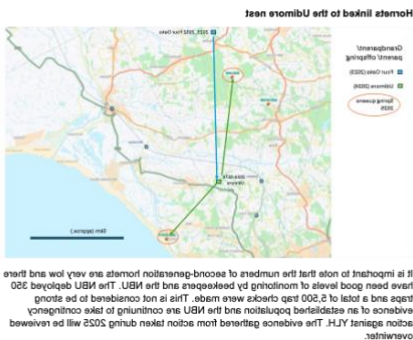
Summary of results from spring trapping for Yellow-Legged hornets in GB in 2025
A total of 22 individual Yellow-Legged Hornets (YLHs) were confirmed between January and early June 2025. Some of these hornets were captured during spring trapping led by the Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) which was carried out for 8 weeks from early April 2025 to early June 2025. All these hornets were sent for further analysis.

There were 20 spring queens, one damaged individual that was likely a queen and one lone worker.

Four of the spring queens were identified as likely offspring from 2 of the nests destroyed in 2024. These were the nest destroyed in Coldred on 25th October and the nest destroyed in Udimore on 1st November. These 2 nests were themselves likely offspring of nests destroyed in 2023. This is the first evidence of a second generation of YLHs being produced in GB. None of the other 16 queens were likely related to known nests from the previous year.

Figures are included below to illustrate.

Hornets linked to the Coldred nest



We have also had confirmed sightings in Sedlescombe, with a second hornet found in an NBU trap which was installed after a first hornet was found in a barn. Other hornets have been found in ordinary wasp traps, so it is still worth putting some of those out.

Zoom Talks for August

The next session for BBKA's '**Get General Husbandry ready for 2026**' online course will take place on Wednesday 6th August at 7pm. In this session, Lesley Jacques will be focussing on 'Feeding, Winter Preparation and Uniting Hives'

Lesley was awarded her Master Beekeeper qualification in 2022 and gained the NDB in 2024. She is Vice Chair of Cheshire Beekeepers' Association as well as being a founder member of Mid Cheshire Beekeepers. Lesley is an examiner for the Basic assessment and is actively engaged with the Association's advanced and beginners' level teaching programmes. Lesley manages three apiaries with more colonies than she admits to.

A reminder of the zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81748693033>

A recording of the session will be available on BBKA Learning Online where there are also recordings available for all previous sessions together with further useful resources: <https://learning.bbka.org.uk/> (Training Resources for Members/Beekeeper Training/General Husbandry 2026).

BBKA August Zoom Talk

The next in our series of Zoom talks will be '**Foraging is my happy place**' with **Tom Radford on Tuesday 19th August 2025 at 7pm**. A recording of this talk will be available on YouTube for those unable to watch live.

Tom is a Forager, Content Creator, and advocate of supporting local and sustainable food. He's recently started keeping bees and is, among other things, advocating for the plight of wild bees and support for the peeking industry. He grew up in the New Forest, and there his love of nature and all things wild was born. Years of wandering those woods, climbing trees and generally getting cut, bruised, muddy and soaking wet defined his childhood. When he was 11 years old, he was given a copy of The SAS Survival Handbook by Lofty Wiseman, and that was his bible as a kid.

Tom always had a deep love of the countryside and nature for his whole life but never so much as when circumstances took him to Asia and whilst that was a great adventure, he missed home and used to watch shows like River Cottage and old Keith Floyd episodes which is where the seeds of his next project were sown. Returning to the UK in 2019 after six very homesick years in Singapore Tom had become a freelance video content director with an interest in making films. He vowed to get back to nature and make some films about his passion. Somehow this escalated into @EatTheCountry on social media which (and he's still not really sure why) currently has around 340k followers.

Foraging:

- Introduction: Tom's story, how Eat the Country got started and how it operates
- The rules around foraging and good foraging practice
- Key identifiers for both plants and mushrooms with examples
- Examples of things to forage in different environments; Meadows, Woodlands and Coastal

- Some ideas for food and drink to make with foraged wild foods
- Wildflowers and pollinators; the situation with wild bees and flying insects and steps gardeners, allotments holders and possibly beekeepers can take.
- The Plan Bees initiative and how we are trying to disrupt the narrative and develop a grass roots approach to educating people about wild bees and spreading awareness.

Zoom

link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81233819992?pwd=DYmZxTlmJjpRCLJjYjYvblxgybQQdSZ.1>

Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992 Passcode: 527929

Brighton and Lewes Honey Show 2025

Brighton and Lewes are having a honey show this year and will have some 'open' classes for non-members of B&L. The date is 4th October 2025, with full details of the show and schedule to follow.

Apiary Update

Clive and Roger have continued their excellent work at the apiary sites. The drone laying only hive has finally given up the ghost. It was given enough opportunity to re-queen, but the bees refused to comply. The other colonies are doing well, and there will be honey for extraction on our Extraction Day on 16th August 2025. All are encouraged to attend and not only help with the extraction but also get some tips on how to do it efficiently. As with last year, if you have just a small amount of honey of your own to extract and would like help with the extraction and do not want the bother of getting out all the paraphernalia at home, then bring the frames/supers along. It will also give you something to enter in our honey show in September.

As well as the bees at the new apiary site, Clive has also been very busy tidying the old site at Ivylands. On top of organising the sheds and producing an inventory of all the equipment, he has tidied the overgrown foliage and mown the grass.

Sussex Beekeepers' Training Co-ordinator

For those who do not have email accounts linked to eR2, below is a copy of the first newsletter from Simon Tuck, our County Training Co-ordinator.



SUSSEX
BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

THE SCOUT

moving Sussex beekeeping forwards >>>



07.2025

WELCOME TO

THE SCOUT — your new source of inspiration and information for beekeepers across Sussex. This newsletter will keep you updated on learning opportunities and help you grow your skills and confidence in the craft of beekeeping.

You may know me already, but for those who don't, I'm passionate about beekeeping — and even more passionate about helping others improve and enjoy it. Earlier this year, I became a Master Beekeeper through the BBKA learning pathway. It's a fantastic, accessible system open to all members; yet it's underused. There's no mystery to it — with planning, preparation, and a bit of study, it's achievable. As your new Education Officer for Sussex, I'd love to encourage you to take that first step — big or small — on your own beekeeping journey.

Don't let anyone tell you you're not ready. The BBKA provides a wealth of resources and I aim to align Sussex-led training more closely with this pathway. My goal is to signpost and promote more opportunities, so no one feels left behind.

Over the past three years as Chair of Eastbourne, I've led successful study groups via Zoom during the off-season. These sessions, open to all, have helped many members pass BBKA modules with great results. The format works well, and I'm eager to see more beekeepers benefit from this approach. The modules explore all aspects of husbandry in depth and offer real, practical value.

Encouragingly, more Sussex divisions are now offering training beyond the Basic assessment — a brilliant development. I look forward to supporting all branch Education Secretaries to expand

and improve these offerings. However, we still need to boost participation in the Basic assessment. Sussex currently stands at around 22%, far below the BBKA's target of 50%.

This isn't about competing with other counties. It's about improving beekeeping standards — preventing swarms, reducing disease, managing bees responsibly within the environment, and producing better yields. Ultimately, it's about feeling confident, supported, and successful in our beekeeping.

So, stay tuned, reach out, or join me for **On Target for Your GH, an Evening for Improvers** — 16 September, 7.30pm at St. George's Church Hall, 110 Eastbourne Road, BN26 5DF. And next time you open your hive, ask yourself: do you feel confident in your knowledge? If not — there's a world of support waiting for you.

SIMON TUCK

> Education Officer SBKA

STUDY

Module 2: Honey Bee Products and Forage

This fascinating module covers everything you could possibly want to know about nectar, pollen, honeydew, wax, propolis and even bee venom. Where do our bees forage for nectar and how can we achieve an end product which will lead to repeat custom and even win awards?

Join my Zoom study group starting in September which will fully prepare you if you want to take the exam, or allow you to learn with fellow Sussex beekeepers even if you don't. Sign up here if you are interested:

<https://tinyurl.com/module2study>

PHONE: 07971 068 625

EMAIL: education@sbka.info

ADDRESS: 48a Wannock Lane, Eastbourne, BN20 9SD



BEEKEEPING IS A JOURNEY

For each and every one of us beekeeping is a journey.

Keeping prosperous and healthy hives is not easy. The first thing one can do after a year of beekeeping is to undertake the BBKA Basic assessment. But this is only the start of mastering the skills needed to keep bees well.

The BBKA offers the possibility of sitting modules. By sitting modules one's own understanding grows. I have personally completed modules on honey bee biology, honey bee behaviour, pests and diseases of honey bees and honey bee management. Each time my understanding has increased and gone on to inform the decisions I make when managing my bees. There are also practical assessments. Once you have been beekeeping for a number of years these force you to up your game even further. The General Husbandry is a practical assessment and covers a lot of ground but it will make you a much better beekeeper.

What is new is that within East Sussex we have an education officer, Simon Tuck, who is a master beekeeper. Two of the modules I mention having passed I have been coached by Simon by attending his excellent Zoom study groups. He also runs sessions for those wanting to undertake the Basic or Honey Bee Health but is keen to help all those keeping bees to deepen their knowledge including experienced beekeepers to achieve a more advanced level. For instance, I've just done a weekend course on simple queen rearing with him and it was fantastic. He seems able to make anything complicated straightforward. Anyone out there who wants to understand more about their bees and gain confidence should look out for any training opportunities he offers.



MALCOLM WILKIE

> Chair of High Weald BKA

You won't regret it.

- ✓ Perhaps this may also help you on your own journey to an even more advanced level such as advanced husbandry or even master beekeeper.
- ✓ And when you embark on such a path any knowledge gained, then cascades down to others and everyone learns better how to keep bees.

THE BASIC

SOMETHING EVERY BEEKEEPER NEEDS!

My beekeeping journey started in lockdown and I can assure you remote learning and reading books are no match for hands-on experience! I lurched from what felt like disaster to disaster with my bees and after a couple of years of struggling, my normally supportive family had nicknamed me the 'bee loser' and were urging me to quit. So why on earth would someone like me even think of taking an assessment in beekeeping?

Well firstly I love bees, secondly, I had amassed lots of bee keeping kit and thirdly I was not going to let my seemingly total incompetence stop me... but I had no idea how I was going to improve the situation. My despair was answered by Simon Tuck who was offering classes to help people like me to become better beekeepers and ultimately be recognised for this by taking the Basic assessment - the entry point for BBKA recognition.

The classes were incredible, full of wonderful people all of whom had a passion for bees and wanted to improve their beekeeping ability. The tutors were approachable and the learning was accessible and surprisingly easy. The syllabus included some simple methods for swarm control, how to manage diseases and pests - at a practical level, and how to manage my hive throughout the year, on a what, why, when basis. And most importantly it taught me how I could add value to my bees whilst still harvesting some beautiful honey. On the day of the Basic I was nervous and yet my assessor was great - he walked gently through the practical section of the exam, encouraging me to demonstrate what I knew and providing support where it was needed, even the questions he asked had a conversational feel to them so I felt like I learnt a lot on the exam day too and yes I passed (with a credit)! I would really encourage all beekeepers to take the Basic - it was easier than expected, I learnt loads and our bees need us at our best so we can all flourish!

SUE OSMOND

> Eastbourne BKA

BBKA LEARNING

The BBKA offers a vast array of learning opportunities available to all of us (see [BBKA Learning Online](#)):

PRACTICAL

This starts with the Basic, followed by the Honey Bee Health, General and Advanced assessments and two extras; the Microscopy and Bee Breeding Certificates.

THEORY

There are 7 core Modules which cover all aspects of husbandry plus two supplementary modules: Plants & Pollinators and the History of Beekeeping.

Diary dates & contacts

| Dates for the diary | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| The Hastings & Rother Division of the Sussex Beekeepers Association cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, injury or damage sustained by any person in consequence of their participation in any activity arranged by the Division. Persons attending field outings do so on the understanding that they attend at their own risk. | | |
| Date & time | Event | Venue/Zoom Id and Passcode |
| 2/8/2025 2.30pm | General Apiary Meeting | Seven Fields Farm, TN33 9QH |
| 16/8/2025 all day | Honey Extraction Day | Netherfield Village Hall, TN33 9QB |
| 6/9/2025 2.30pm | General Apiary Meeting | Seven Fields Farm, TN33 9QH |
| 13/9/2025 2pm-4pm | Hastings and Rother Honey Show | Robertsbridge Village Hall, TN32 5DG |
| 27/28 September 2025 | South of England Autumn Show and Horse Trials | Showground, Ardingly, RH17 6TL |
| 4/10/2025 | Brighton and Lewes Honey Show | Details await |
| 11/10/2025 all day | Hastings and Rother Autumn Convention | Robertsbridge Village Hall, TN32 5DG |
| 23/24/25 October 2025 | National Honey Show | Sandown Park Racecourse, KT10 9AJ |
| | Winter Programme – details await | Mountfield Village Hall, TN32 5JU |
| | Winter Programme – details await | Mountfield Village Hall, TN32 5JU |
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| | Sussex County AGM | Awaits |
| Dates for the diary | | |
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YOUR CONTACTS

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--|
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Bee Scene We are always looking for articles please email to address above.