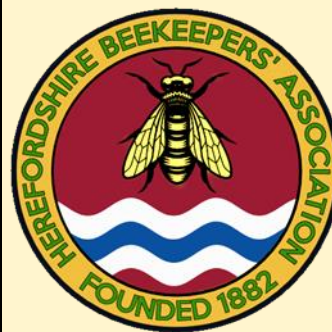


Buzzword

Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association

November 2023



Events

November

Monday 20th 7.30 pm –
Buckfast Talk –

'Simple Queen Rearing'
Zoom – Watch for email

There are mutterings afoot
for a Christmas supper, 5th
or 7th December. Check
the HBKA WhatsApp feed
for updates



Hornets

A total of 70 Asian hornet nests have been
found in 54 locations across the UK this year,
more than in all previous years put together.

This picture shows European hornets, which
are also attracted to the Trappit bait.



It is not just bees that like the ivy...

Honey show, report and pictures
pp. 2 to 10

An SBI's take on the 2023 season:
pp. 11 to 13

Bob's Beelines plus Topical Tips:
p. 14

Copy and photographs always
welcome. Please send to:
news@herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk

Honey Show 2023

Most impressive this year was the influx of new contestants. We had a total of 92 entries from 15 competitors. A slight disappointment was that there was only one entry for the LAN cup.



Fine weather favoured a high turnout of visitors, which gave us a chance to explain about the threat from the Asian hornet to many people. Bob Cross's two observation hives with live bees attracted a lot of attention.

Over the next few pages we have some comments and advice for exhibitors from Andy Hayward who kindly acted as one of the stewards.

Pictures are courtesy of Val Lilwall, who led the charge in organising the show, and Steve Utley who set up and manned the HBKA tent, and raked in lots of money from honey sales for members and for the Association



2023 HBKA Honey Show Tips and Tricks

The following tips, tricks and observations were collected from the judge during the HBKA 2023 annual honey show. Hopefully, some of these will prove useful to members for future shows.

General

- Read the class descriptions carefully to ensure entries conform to the description. If an entry does not meet the class description then it will be disqualified.
- If you're not sure whether a honey is light, medium or dark, then coloured grading glasses can be borrowed to determine which class it falls into.
- For categories which specify a size and/or weight make sure the entry is within specification, as the judge weighs and measures all entries.



Honey

- Honey should be free of debris/foreign bodies. The judge uses a magnifying glass and torch to inspect entries, and if contamination is found the honey will not be judged. It is recommended to use a fine nylon mesh type filter prior to jarring to ensure that any small particles are removed.
- Entries in the liquid categories are also judged for clarity, so ensure there is no granulation (which is most noticeable at the bottom of the jar) and try to keep air bubbles to a minimum. Air bubbles can be removed by warming - apparently putting the sealed jars in a foot spa works very well for this as the added vibration helps work the bubbles out!
- Foam or scum left over from bubbles at the surface of the honey can be removed by placing a piece of clingfilm on the surface, and then pinching the middle of the clingfilm and pulling it up quickly, to remove the top layer.
- Jars should be appropriately filled so that when observed at eye level there should be no daylight between the contents and the bottom of the lid.
- Jars and lids should be identical and should be well cleaned (or even polished...!). Some jars can have manufacturing imperfections, so it is also worth trying to select jars without these.
- Honey on the bottom of lids should be kept to a minimum, so take care when transporting. The first thing a judge does when opening a jar is smell for aroma, so avoid removing or changing lids before the show, as some of the aroma will be lost.

Soft Set & Granulated Honey

- In the soft set category the judge is looking for a fine, uniform texture, like peanut butter. This can be achieved by thorough mixing and rapid crystallisation, which happens when the honey is taken down to 12 - 14 Centigrade quickly.
- Oilseed rape and hawthorn honey are particularly good to use for these categories owing to their high glucose contents, with the latter having a nutty, almond-like flavour.
- Make sure that jars are kept level whilst the honey is crystallising and then afterwards when it is stored, so that the surface of the honey is flat when the lid is removed.
- In the naturally granulated class it is acceptable for there to be frosting on the inside of the jar, but try to choose two jars which have a similar amount for consistency.



Honey Cakes

- Darker honeys, such as Heather honey, can work better for baked goods as the strength helps the honey flavour come through more.
- Visually, the judge is looking for the cake to have a flat top, without cracking or sinking and no soggy bottoms!
- Aim for a texture that is firm, but also moist and consistent throughout.
- Storing and displaying the cake in an airtight plastic bag helps retain a strong aroma.
- Whilst the ingredients for the honey cake must be followed exactly as per the recipe, the baking instructions can be altered for better results. If the cake catches around the top or sides, then try baking at a lower temperature, but for longer. Alternatively, greaseproof paper can be used to cover the top and edges.



Super Frames

- The presented frame should have uniform, even cappings that are proud of the frame, which would be easy to uncap.
- The honey within the frame should be the correct viscosity for extraction, so there should be no evidence of dripping or crystallisation.
- Like the jarred classes, the frames are also inspected by shining a torch through them, so the frame selected should have a consistent colour of honey throughout.
- The woodwork of the frame should be clean and free from markings. If propolis has to be removed from the frame then use pure alcohol to do this, rather than scraping. This gives a better finish and ensures that the woodwork isn't scratched.
- Select the better side of the frame to present as the front and ensure there are no signs of wax moth larvae (e.g. silk webs).



Photographic Competition

- Pay careful attention to the focus on the subject of the image. For example, digital cameras will more often focus on a flower that a bee is on, rather than the bee itself. Macro modes can help with capturing fine detail in focus.
- Consider cropping photos to improve detail of the subject and the overall composition.
- The background that the image is mounted on should work with the image, and not detract from it.
- Brightness, contrast and saturation adjustment can be used to enhance the image, but take care to keep the image looking realistic.
- It is a broad category so consider images or themes within beekeeping that are novel.

Candles

- When inspecting the bottom of the candles, the bases should be flat and the wick central. If they are not flat then they can be levelled by pressing the base into a hot pan. Voids or holes can be filled by topping up with additional wax after the initial pour.
- Candles will be lit and then relit by the judge so check that they burn well. If the wax contains any traces of water then the flame will hiss and spit.
- The wick should be the appropriate thickness for the size of the candle. If the wick is too thick the candle will burn too fast and drip, if the wick is too thin then the candle will cup.
- Wicks should be waxed so that they are easy to light and stand straight.

Beeswax cakes & bars

- Choose wax from a source, or combination of sources, that provides an attractive colour. Wax should not be overly dark or light.
- Ensure the wax is well filtered to ensure that it is as pure as possible. This generally means filtering it at least twice.
- Wax cools most quickly at the mould edge, which then leads to the middle of the wax becoming sunken. If the wax is cooled down very slowly after pouring (e.g. in an oven) then the surface will be more uniform.
- In the beeswax bars category it helps if the moulds are filled whilst they are sat on kitchen scales to ensure all five blocks are an identical weight
- If displaying a beeswax cake in a wooden box, take care that the wax doesn't take on the smell of the wood.



Honey Show 2023 – more winners



Words: Andy Hayward

Photographs:

Val Lilwall and Steve Utley

The 2023 Beekeeping Season in Herefordshire

A Seasonal Bee inspector writes...

I am sure many will agree this has been among the most disappointing bee seasons in recent memory, with all the wrong weather at all the wrong times. I was recently told by a beekeeping colleague that a number of older beekeepers and farmers warned him early in the year that the stellar hawthorn bloom was a bad omen for the weather and crops in the rest of the season, and that nothing much would follow it. Certainly in this part of the world that proved to be starkly accurate. Last winter seemed to drag on until May, but beekeepers in Herefordshire have broadly reported that when the weather finally broke the bees set to work to achieve a decent late spring flow, while swarming was particularly pesky as the bees 'woke up' with a vengeance. The damp and cold July and August that followed left many finding their summer honey polished off by the bees before they had chance to crop it.

Correspondingly, any swarming or requeening that took place around June has yielded mixed results, with lots of drone-layers showing later in the season. Starvation and related brood-breaks were reported in various locations by early September, with reprieve arriving only with the shock October mini-heatwave bringing the ivy out. Late season brood is essential for colonies to have the special extra-fatty bees to take them through the winter, and many beekeepers resorted to feeding syrup and even pollen patties to stimulate brood rearing.

Based on observation alone I haven't noticed as much varroa damage this season as last; one could guess at the effect of poor weather causing brood breaks and interrupting the varroa mating cycle, but I would stress that this is purely anecdotal!



© Crown. Courtesy National Bee Unit

Disease-wise, after making a surprise appearance last year no American Foul Brood has been found in Herefordshire this season. Nonetheless, the county's pattern of persistent pockets of European Foul Brood at low levels has reproduced itself again in the same places, and I would strongly urge any beekeepers with apiaries in the Trumpet/Much Marcle, Ross on Wye/Peterstow and Staunton on



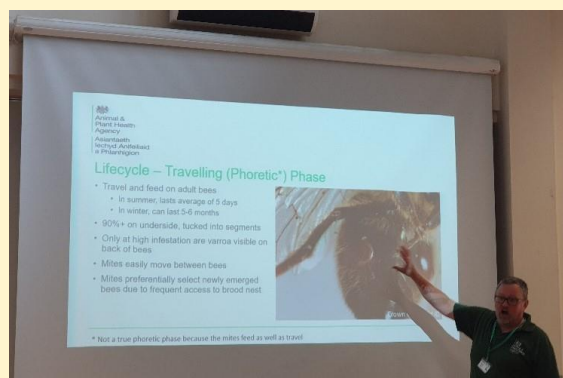
© Crown. Courtesy NBU

Wye/Tillington areas who have not yet registered on BeeBase to please do so following this link: [Register » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase](#). Bee Inspectors employed by the NBU are expert beekeepers with lots of experience of identifying disease, and though many beekeepers do make call-outs having noticed symptoms of foul brood themselves, EFB in particular can be easily missed and I would ask unregistered beekeepers in the aforementioned high risk areas to please register. Remember: membership of a beekeeping association does not automatically sign you up to the National Bee Unit's database, which is completely confidential and allows us to target our inspections to areas with a demonstrated disease risk, and work with beekeepers to find and deal with cases of foul brood and keep levels low, as per the aims of our [Healthy Bees Plan](#).

I'm sure many of you will have been keeping up-to-date with the unprecedented Asian hornet incursion the NBU has been dealing with this season (the latest information can be found here: [2023 Asian Hornet Rolling updates » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase](#)), and while I'm relieved to say that (at the time of writing) there have been no confirmed sightings in Herefordshire or neighbouring counties, I would encourage all beekeepers to be vigilant and follow the recent NBU advice around setting and monitoring non-lethal traps up until the end of October (instructions available here: [Asian Hornet Monitoring \(nationalbeeunit.com\)](#)), and reporting any sightings via the Asian Hornet Watch app, on the Non Native Species Secretariat (NNNS) website or via email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. Association honey shows, Christmas fairs and the like offer a great opportunity to educate the public on

the risk posed by Asian hornets and how to identify them. The NNSS have an excellent range of ID posters and factsheets (find here: [Species alerts » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://nonnativespecies.org/species-alerts) - printed copies of which are available for absolutely free and can be requested by emailing nnss@apha.gov.uk.

This season the Western Team and I were pleased to run an enjoyable Bee Safari at Newent Beekeepers Association's Apiary in June as well as a very successful Bee Health Day in Sutton St Nicholas Village Hall in July.



Since then, Jon Axe, who many of you will have met over his four years as SBI for Herefordshire and then Regional Bee Inspector for Western England, has left the NBU – the role of RBI has been taken on by Andy Wattam pending recruitment for a permanent replacement.



My seasonal employment with the NBU will come to an end on 31st October then resume at the beginning of April 2024, so over the winter any enquiries can be directed to Andy at Andy.Wattam@apha.gov.uk or on 07884791009. Plans for educational events in 2024 will be made presently, and I look forward to chatting bees with as many of you as possible next season!

Bronwen Hopkins

Bob's Beelines



Not much to do this time of year. Make sure your bees have plenty of stores and your mouse guards are in place and the hive roof is waterproof. Put wire netting around the hive to stop the woodpecker.

Make sure the roof cannot blow off.

Honey Show: the weather was good for us with a lot of interest and it was nice to see newcomers and beginners taking part in the show.

Big thank you to all that helped with the show. A special thank you to Steve Utley for all he has done for the show and HBKA

That's all for now

Bob and Kath Cross - **01886 880 554**

Topical Tip - November

After the beekeeping season comes clearing up time. Old black wax from brood frames is not usually worth reclaiming but will help get your bonfire going.

Reasonably clean wax can be melted down over rainwater, filtered and kept for craft projects or wax exchange. Wax is flammable so care needs to be taken to avoid a fire risk, and make sure no wax ends up down the drain. When making candles I find wax usually needs filtering several times. Firstly through butter muslin, second through a loose weave cloth and later through kitchen roll. Each time melt the wax over rainwater in a double boiler or bain marie. Any debris (slum gum) can be scraped off the underside of your block of wax once it cools down.

The last filtrate is usually through kitchen roll in a low oven into a stainless steel bowl. Once melted and filtered it is poured into a plastic take away container. Cold beeswax usually releases easily from these. I find it useful to fill one-ounce moulds when the wax is clean as these do not take long to melt if you are making candles. Wax should not be heated at temperatures above 80 C, otherwise it will discolour. Processing beeswax is a messy business, do not use your best utensils!

Mary Walter

Committee Members

Chairman : Tony Ravenhall

Vice Chairman : Deborah Smith

Secretary : Janelle Quitman

Treasurer : Roger Gill

Membership Sec. : Steve Utley

Committee:, Rob Williams, Janelle Quitman, John Moxley and Val Lilwall,

LAN CO-ORDINATORS

North LAN: Mary Walter

East LAN: Simon Durrant

South LAN: Val Lilwall

PATRON: Councillor Ellie Chowns

To contact a member of the committee please look on our website for the appropriate email address: <https://www.herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk/>

The Herefordshire Beekeepers Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registered Number: 1174917. Members of the committee are also trustees.

Further details at: <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1174917&subid=0>

If you have contributions to propose for this newsletter, please contact **Kirsten Ellerby** at: news@herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk



If foul brood is suspected, contact our Regional Bee Inspector (RBI),

- Andy Wattam (RBI) Tel: 07884 791009
andy.wattam@apha.gov.uk

Or, *during next season*, a Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI)

- Liz Gardner Tel: 07867 351610
elizabeth.gardner@apha.gov.uk

or

- Bronwen Hopkins - Tel: 07796 433 626
bronwen.hopkins@apha.gov.uk