Buzzword

Herefordshire Beekeepers' Association

November 2026



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Diary Planning

- Next Zoom Buckfast session – **1st February 2027**
- Tap and chatter – a chance to meet, exchange experiences, learn from each other, while making up frames for the new season. – February 2027 TBC

Watch your emails for more details of further meetings.

Beginners' Course 2027

We are holding the price at £100 – to include a free copy of the BBKA manual, for yet another year, and again we are offering the course free to (accompanied) youngsters. Whether you already have bees and want to learn how best to look after them, or you know someone who might be interested in taking up beekeeping, this course has it all.

Makes a great Christmas present.

Theory: 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th March and 14th April 2027 from 7pm - 9pm. – Tarrington Lady Emily Community Hall

Practical sessions: 24th April and 8th May – Holme Lacy VH and training apiary.

HBKA website will next week be open for applications.
First come first served. ***Limited spaces.***

Honey Show 2026



The 2026 HBKA Honey Show was again a very successful vehicle for members to showcase their hive products and related exhibits and receive recognition from an accredited BBKA show judge.



Additionally, because the Honey Show runs during the Big Apple Harvest Festival event at Hellens it provides an excellent opportunity to show off (and sell) our





produce to members of the general public as well as a chance to educate people on what we do as beekeepers, how this relates to food production generally, threats that honeybees and pollinators in general might face in the future and steps that can be taken to combat these.

Unfortunately, several of our regular exhibitors were unable to enter as many classes as usual this year so overall entries were well down from the 2025 high.



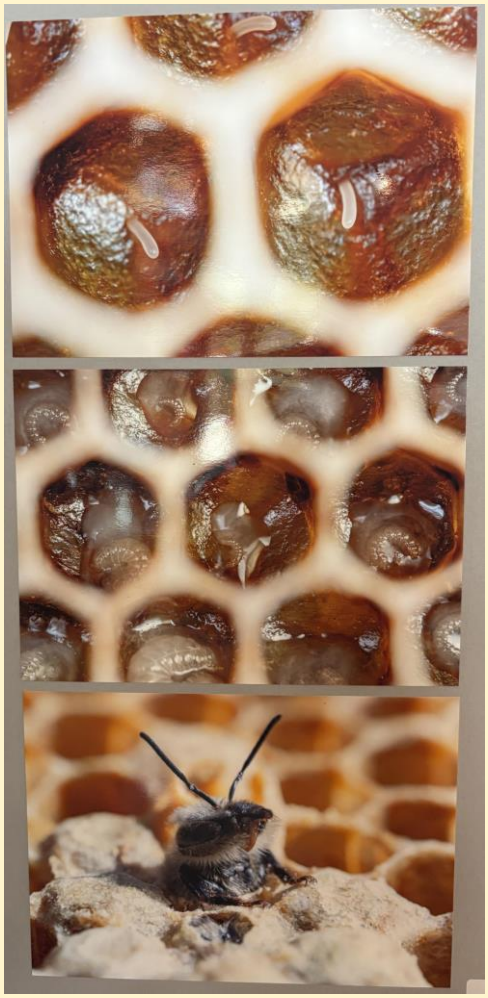


However, Michael Badger, our judge, was pleased with the quality of entries on display and was particularly impressed by the soft set honeys, awarding "Best in Show" to Rihards Krause's winning entry in a hotly contested Class 6.











Visitors to the show hall were also clearly impressed with the items on display.



As usual great interest was shown by members of the public attending the event, so volunteers who spent time talking to people in the show hall and marquee were kept very busy all weekend.





A key feature of the HBKA Marquee was live bee display which was installed on Friday evening in spite of some issues with weather at the time when bees were due to be selected and placed in the display hive at the Holme Lacy Apiary! It was the first time we have set up our own marquee as Bob Cross has done this in the past. It proved to be well worth the effort with visitors showing great interest and spending considerable time bee watching and queen spotting. (One youngster made it a mission to keep returning to check on her for most of Saturday afternoon).

Many thanks are due to all those volunteers who helped make the weekend a success by offering explanation and answering people's questions, and in particular:
Steve Uttley who was involved with all the logistics and ran the honey sales side single handed, our Stewards Chris Lambert and John Moxley who kept everything in order and fed back results as they came in and John again for all the extra help with transport, set up and take down.

Dave Taylor

Skep making workshops



München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.gall. 16_ 'Isabella Psalter'_ 1303 CE- 1308 CE_ England (Diocese of York)_ f.56r

For those new to the subject, skeps are the little domes made (usually) of straw in which beekeepers for many centuries kept their bees. One of the downsides of the method used to be that harvesting honey from a skep sometimes involved destroying the colony. Nevertheless, skeps can still be used for keeping bees, and with a little care, protecting the bees. Of even more utility, skeps can be ideal for capturing swarms.



BL Medieval Royal 12 C XIX f. 45r



Interest in the old, old ways of making skeps abounds, and both days of the two one day courses that the Association ran were sold out. One of the reasons for this was because the course was being led by expert David Wright with his wife Bron.

As well as being so knowledgeable about skep making, as method and its history (he translated the best book on the subject into English) David also happens to be a renowned expert in beekeeping, including judging at the National Honey Show.

We were very fortunate that David and Bron were prepared to run these courses for us, for which they did not charge for their time. The course was excellent, David told us some of the history, and explained what materials were needed.

On the day we were using long stem straw for the coils and rattan cane for the binding. David explained, and demonstrated, how we could use the cheaper, and more traditional, bramble stems for binding.

Fortunately for us, David and Bron had brought with them ample supplies of long stem straw and rattan cane for us to use. These had been soaking overnight and were ready and waiting for us as we came into the room.





David had evidently put much thought into the course preparation, with consideration not only for risk management but also for coping with those of us who are not very good at this sort of thing. After the courses he also provided every participant with detailed instructions as well as advice as to where to obtain tools and materials.

We each then started off making our own skeps. Some were swifter then others (I was slow) and some coiled and bound their bundles of straw more tidily than others (I was one of the others).





Fortunately, David was there, patiently coming round, helping us when we went wrong and complimenting us when we got it right.

Bron was ever in attendance, providing us with more wetted straw and wetted cane as soon as we were likely to need it.





By the end of the day, we all had made a good start on a skep, and were able to take away with us sufficient straw and cane to complete our skeps



Very many thanks to David and Bron for such a well thought through and fascinating session.

And many thanks to Steve Utley for organising the courses.

Rider 1: Some people did not take home enough straw. If anyone has any left, please contact our secretary Janelle Quitman honsecHBKA@gmail.com

Rider 2: Bundles of long stem straw are not amenable to being supplied by post or carrier. Does anyone know of any farmers or smallholders in Herefordshire who may be looking at growing long stemmed rye or wheat next year? If so then we would like to look at the opportunity of harvesting a very small corner of a field (a couple of metres squared perhaps), by hand to provide skep straw for our members.





Seasonal suggestions

With the very mild autumn that we have had, keep an eye on your bee honey stores, especially if your bees did not have access to ivy. Spend bit of time observing your hive entrance, wasps can still be a problem.

Have a look at Northern Bee Books* they have fantastic range of books to read over winter.

Look around and gather up all of your equipment, I bet it needs cleaning up. The longer you leave it the harder it is going to be to sort it out and it could attract unwanted attention like wax moth or rodents.

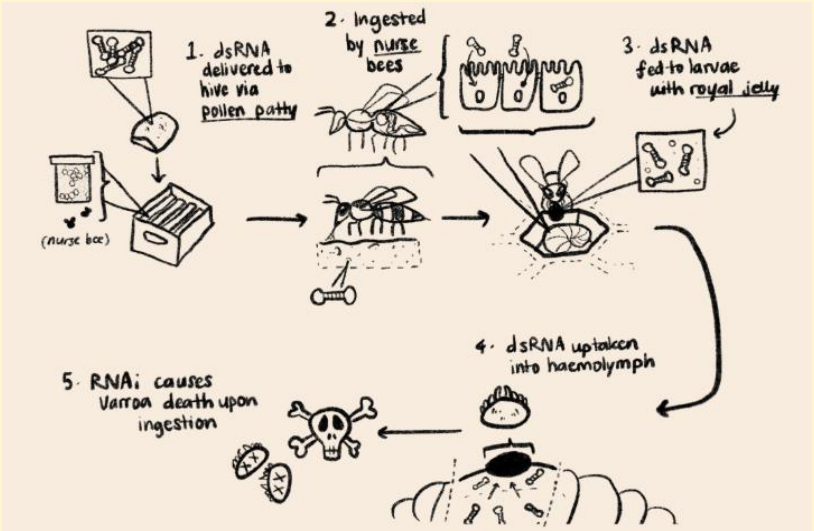
Rihards Krauze

*including David Wright's skep making book (translated from Dutch)

Treating Varroa without Acaricide.

Some current treatments for Varroa can harm other beneficial insects, and many are becoming less affective as Varroa evolve to build resistance.

What if we could come up with something that would kill Varroa without harming any other organism, and which Varroa would be unable to evolve to avoid? Scientists at Oxford University are working on developing just that. It could be added to a pollen patty given to honey bees, and which when ingested by Varroa kills them.



This is project NECTAR, and the team developing the concept are attempting to work closely with beekeepers to ensure that they succeed.

More about it here;

Committee Members

Chairman : Vacant **Secretary** : Janelle Quitman

Treasurer : Roger Gill **Membership Sec.** : Steve Utley

Committee: David Taylor, Simon Durrant, Roger Woodhead.

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LAN CO-ORDINATORS

North LAN: Mary Walter

East LAN: Simon Durrant

South LAN: Steve Utley

PATRON: Ellie Chowns, MP

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, pictures, ideas to propose for this newsletter, please contact Roger Gill at: news@herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk



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

Caroline Coughlin t. 07500 891423

caroline.coughlin@apha.gov.uk

Our two sterling Seasonal Bee Inspectors; Ben Bowen and Liz Gardner have now gone into hibernation for the winter