



Photograph: Winter hives by Bee Dale...

## Winter 2024

WVBKA Charity Registration  
Number: 517008



### Diary Dates - Winter 2024

#### February

- 8<sup>th</sup> Apiary meet - Shenmore
- 17<sup>th</sup> WVBKA AGM

#### March

- 23<sup>rd</sup> WBKA Convention – Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells
- 24<sup>th</sup> Apiary meet - Shenmore

#### April

- 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> BBKA Spring Convention – Harper Adams University
- 21<sup>st</sup> Apiary meet - Shenmore

#### May

- 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Beginner's Course Class 1 – Shenmore
- 6<sup>th</sup> WVBKA at Hergest gardens – Spring Plant Fair
- 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Beginner's Course Class 2 – Shenmore

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Queen Colour of the  
Year 2024 is: **GREEN**

### Notes From The Chair

This is my last entry as Chair! Over the past few years, I have seen the demographics of WVBKA change, with a younger footfall being apparent – hopefully a reflection of the way society may be heading, with a growth in mindsets who are interested and value our natural environment.

Our small, friendly and active association is a vehicle for communicating with like-minded people, and this is something that I have valued since starting my beekeeping journey.

Your committee have set the programme for next year now, so keep an eye out for up-and-coming events – we kick off our calendar with our AGM in February, details to follow.

I also urge you to volunteer when we are looking for helpers to 'man the stand' at events during the year; your association needs you!

Finally, don't forget to check your bees have enough stores or fondant during these cold days.

Happy Beekeeping and Happy 2024.

Over and Out!

### Juliet

#### BBKA ADM

Those members who wish to view BBKA ADM business, the ADM pack is available for you to view and download from the BBKA News website: <https://bbkanews.com/>

How to login to bbkanews.com:

Username: enter your BBKA membership number including the dots (eg 93.10.1234)

Password: your postcode

In the drop-down menu 'Select Publication', choose BBKA Documents (top LH corner of screen)

If you wish to download the documents, there is a 'Download as PDF' button in the top RH corner of the screen.

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## WVBKA Christmas Lunch.

On a very cold Saturday, 36 members of WVBKA met at The Axe and Cleaver pub for their annual Christmas lunch. Despite the cold we had a warm welcome from the landlord and his staff with a lovely warming fire. We enjoyed a very pleasant lunch time meal with the usual festive decorations.

While eating delicious complimentary mince pies and coffee, the raffle was drawn with a variety of prizes. The cups awarded at this year's Honey Show were presented to the recipients and certificates presented to those completing this year's Beekeeping Course.

After the convivial and entertaining conversations we had, we left for home feeling very much in the festive mood, despite the temperature outside still not having risen above freezing.

*Penny Taylor*



## WVBKA Awards and Cups 2023

WVBKA Certificate of Merit- Best exhibit in Show

M&AD Williams Challenge Shield, Highest aggregate points in Classes 1-8

Sheldrake Challenge Cup, Cut Comb

Wye Valley BKA Challenge Cup, Highest points in Classes 1,2,3 –Honey

Wye Valley Rose Bowl, Beeswax

Golden Valley Apiary Cup, Interesting Exhibit

Rosemary Meehan Trophy, Highest points in Cookery Section, Classes 13,14,15

Ralph Dover Cup, Novice Class 4

The Baker Cup, Honey Cake, Class 13

Young Beekeeper Award

Becci Walker

Clare Ratcliff

Juliet & Andi Parker-Smith

Clare Ratcliff

Michelle Green

Clare Ratcliff

Ruth Wethey

Michelle Green

Clare Ratcliff

Gwilym Kaye

## Herefordshire 2023 Wrap-Up

I'm 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 several 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 have 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!

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 Wye/Tillington areas who have not yet registered on BeeBase to please do so using 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 afore-mentioned 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 are available here: [Asian Hornet » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase](#) and reporting any sightings via the Asian Hornet Watch app, on the Non Native Species Secretariat website or via email to [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto: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 \(nonnativespecies.org\)](#)- printed copies of which are available for absolutely free and can be requested by emailing [nnss@apha.gov.uk](mailto: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.

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## WVBKA Officers for 2023/2024

### Chair:

- Juliet Parker-Smith 07387 080380  
[julietps@me.com](mailto:julietps@me.com)

### Vice Chair:

- Patricia Ronan: 07903 054699

### Secretary:

- Bob North: 07715 483862

### Honey Show Secretary:

- Jane Matthews

### Treasurer & Membership Secretary:

- Michelle Green: 07889 034678  
[wvbkamembers@gmail.com](mailto:wvbkamembers@gmail.com)

### Association Apiary Management Team:

- Clare Penkey
- Dave Williams
- Duncan Penkey
- Geoff Dutson

### Newsletter Editing:

- Tim & Bee Dale  
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### Committee:

- Geoff Dutson
- Duncan Penkey
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams
- Peter Woodward

### Catering Committee:

- Margaret Woodward

### Mentoring Team & Technical Advisors:

- Peter Woodward: 01432 839251
- Clare Penkey
- Duncan Penkey
- Julie Crickmore
- Andi Parker-Smith
- Juliet Parker-Smith
- Cliff Rose
- Fletcher Barker
- Andy Strangeway



### Website Editor:

- Roger Jenner

### Honorary Auditor:

- Mike Price

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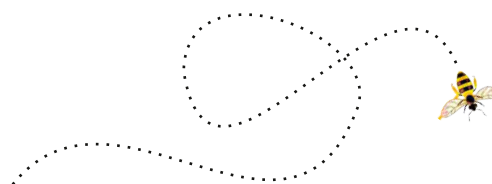
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My seasonal employment with the NBU will come to an end on 31st October then resume at the beginning of April 2024, so over the winter any enquiries can be directed to Andy at [Andy.Wattam@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.Wattam@apha.gov.uk) or on 07884 791009. 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**

(Seasonal Bee Inspector)

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## Asian Hornet Are Coming!!

We are looking for some new people to join the Herefordshire Asian Hornet Action Team. This is a joint team with HBKA and we are part of a national programme set up to support the fight against the AH.

The concept is that if there is a sighting in Herefordshire that the NBU inspector can't get to quickly, then someone close to the sighting goes and meets the person who reported the sighting and if possible, identify what has been found. They would then let the NBU know if it's a true identification or a false alarm.

This year has seen a huge increase in the numbers of AH nests found in the south of the UK. If the AH is not contained in that area, it could spread quickly and the local teams need to be ready to help in the fight to protect all of our bees.

Please contact Peter Woodward or Bob North for more information.

If you are interested, then as a first step have a look at the info on the BBKA website and try the training exercise using the following link:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-action-team-map>

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