



# Winter 2024 Newsletter

## Diary Dates 24-25

Dec 7<sup>th</sup> Christmas Lunch

Feb 15<sup>th</sup> AGM

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

## Note from the Chair

It seems like ages since our last newsletter, and I am afraid the harvest season overtook me this year. It is just about at an end here, although there are still plants to dig up, dry and process (soapwort and horseradish), and others to put in for next year.

Hopefully we all took Dave's advice and got our bees fed and tucked up for winter in August and September. Mine are all strapped down with bricks on top in case of a big wind.

Michelle has ordered and distributed fondant for



us all to use if the bees need it over the winter and early spring, when the paucity of forage may put them in danger of starvation. Thanks Michelle!

As I write, my thoughts are with those people and creatures in disaster areas around the world. I am wondering how many bees were lost in Valencia and whether beekeepers in Gaza are managing to keep going? I really appreciate where we live and just how lucky we are in this county. Our local

farmer has just planted a meadow by the river, so the soil and the water will be protected. Much better for pollinators and birds. We have great countryside and some the best people in the country, especially in our little organisation. Let's celebrate that and the survival of our bees through a couple of very damp and difficult years.

Hopefully see you all at the Christmas lunch on December 7<sup>th</sup>!

Patricia.

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## Honey Extraction Day August 18<sup>th</sup> 2024

Well, in comparison to last year, when for some reason everything went so smoothly, this year's extraction and bee produce day was a bit of a 'beemageddon'. Having pretty much copied last year's timetable and organised accordingly, the bees were simply not fully cleared when we arrived at the apiary. This meant that taking the supers took much longer. Our smart use of a trailer and decision to leave the supers outside rather than take them in, attracted the local bees, so much of the time we had allocated to learning about various parts of the produce processing was given over to getting the supers into the hall and clear of bees before we could begin extraction.

One of our members had to leave as she has had an allergic reaction and I checked with all of the neighbours to ensure they were OK and to apologise for what was happening. Many things to learn and take on board to ensure we are smarter in years to come. It's not easy taking over from

Dave and June. They did so many things and made it all look so easy.



On the plus side, we managed to harvest enough honey to give us about 250 jars for sale, thanks to Clare's good apiary management.

Gwilym will make candles with the wax and sell them on our behalf, whilst Ruth and Stephen have taken the honey and will put it in jars for our various events.

It would be great to have a little more help with this event, which is normally in August. If you would like to get involved, please let us know. We will get better at this and it should be loads of fun!  
Patricia

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### Apiary Meeting September 6<sup>th</sup>

Bronwen Hopkins, our regional bee inspector, gave a very informative talk about European foulbrood and American foulbrood disease at Shenmore last night. She showed clear slides of brood comb where we could see the difference between the 'pearl - white and curly', and the gradually degenerating infected brood which sinks losing its segmented form. If the larva is tweezered out and spread out on the hive tool the gut is white, filled with the bacteria rather than a healthy one more pollen coloured.

American foulbrood, much rarer, leads to a kind of sticky brown goo which the bees have difficulty cleaning out of the cell. A match inserted into the cell will draw out a line of the stuff. Once

infected the only solution is destruction.

There is a map available on the Beebase site of 10 kilometre squares which show in different shades the prevalence of European foulbrood in England. It is evident in Herefordshire as well as all over the country. Once discovered by a bee inspector or by a keeper, beekeepers within 3 miles are notified (if they are registered on Beebase)

The disease is carried by bacteria consumed by the bees' mouthparts. Once infected the disease is spread from a foraging bee by say feeding a nurse bee who then goes on to feed a larva which becomes infected. The disease spread continues as the cell is visited by another. It is possible to contain the problem at an early stage by shaking the colony onto new foundation frames in a cleaned brood box because there will be no brood to infect and while the bees concentrate on building comb they will defecate any bacteria. Once the disease is established affecting more than 25% the only solution is to kill the bees and destroy the frames.

Good hive management and hygiene was encouraged such as cleaning gloves



and the hive tool, inspection of the brood, not leaving spun comb outside the hive for the bees to clean off where other bees, robbers could come carrying disease. The

solution is to put the super back onto the hive for the bees to clean up, or straight into winter storage.

Andrew Hewitt

## Kington Show

We took our usual stand at Kington Show again this year, and a good day was had by all.

Much to our relief the day was much cooler than the heatwave of 2023 and we had plenty of visitors to the stand.



A couple of things went very well on the day. The demonstration hive was a great attraction, especially with the youngsters, and we dispensed many 'I saw the Queen' stickers.

While the kids were looking at the bees, we were able to sell plenty of honey to the adults and make a decent contribution to club funds. My favourite conversation of the day

**Me** 'Would you like to taste our honey?'

**Customer** 'No thank you I don't like honey.'

**Me** 'Go on just a small taste.'

**Customer** 'I don't like the taste.'

**Me** 'But this is proper honey.'

**Customer** 'OK then.' so she takes a small taste and exclaims 'Oh that's gorgeous can I have two jars.'

WVBKA defeating cheap supermarket 'honey' one customer at a time!

A couple of things we need to improve on next year. While we had good footfall all day fewer people than usual seemed to be interested in attending our beginner's course. A few took away forms, but nobody signed up on the day.

More importantly we were short of volunteers to staff the stand for the day. It is a great day out, and volunteers receive a ticket to the show. Ideally we

ask volunteers to do either the morning or the afternoon, leaving the rest of the day to enjoy all that the show has to offer.



So please consider volunteering for next year's show.

Bob

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## Hergest Autumn Fair – 2024

For those who have never visited Hergest Croft Gardens, it comes well recommended. In the Spring the gardens burst with colour, as the azaleas and Rhododendrons come into bloom and in the Autumn the golden colours are just fabulous.

The garden owners organise a plant and craft fair, twice a year, and for the past two or three years WVBKA have had a stand there. One of our most successful events, both in the terms of educating the public and honey sales.

This Autumn, yet again, we were lucky with the weather as Andi and I set up our gazebo



next to Pat's botanicals. Good honey sales and much interest in what we do, made for another successful day. Thanks to Clare and Leanne for helping out. We'll definitely be back again next May, for the Spring Fair.

Juliet

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### WVBKA Honey Show



Although it had not been a great year for bees it was still good to go to the honey show and put some entries in. Helping the show judge was amazing and I learnt a lot from doing it.

At first, I felt a bit daunted by helping but the show judge made me feel at ease. It was interesting learning about all the



procedures that you must go through to judge honey and hive products. Judging is very complicated, but the judge was very clear and made it less complicated. They judge things such as what the honey looks like and how clean the jar is and then they taste it.

This year I did not get any honey, but I still put in entries such as wax crayons and a picture of a bee which won me best in show. I chose to put a bee picture in the honey show because you look at a bee far away and they don't look that detailed but up close they are very complex.

As usual the food was very delicious.

Gwilym.

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### Finance and Membership Update

Our funds remain static at the back end of the year, with honey sales being the main income.

We have transferred our main bank account to the Co-Op Bank and will ask that members pay their membership fees into this new account in 2025.

Membership fees become due on 1 January 2025 and we are asking members to please pay their fees before the end of January to ensure that we can make our BBKA and BDI payments on time.


Full details on individual membership renewal will follow by email in early January.


Michelle





**Advice for the Winter Months**  
Courtesy of BBKA


**Hands off now till spring**


 Leave alone, check after storms


 Sugar syrup feeding normally stopped some weeks ago, fondant, if required, from now on till Spring


 A warmer autumn has meant some colonies have been getting through stores quickly, so it's worth a check.

 Watch for blocked entrances especially when mouseguards are on

 Monitor varroa drop using inspection boards. This can indicate if treatment with a licensed oxalic acid product is needed when colonies broodless

 Suggested threshold for treatment is ~10 mites average daily natural drop.

 Any treatments used should be logged in Veterinary Medicines Directorate records


 Consider if you may need additional apiary space next year and who you might approach

 Start planning for next year.

How many colonies do you want?

How much new equipment will you need? Is your aim honey or producing nuc's?

 Clean up/repair equipment

 Read the books you never had time to in the summer.

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***Wishing you a merry Christmas and healthy and happy New Year***



**WVBKA Officers for 2024/2025**

**Chair:**

- Patricia Ronan:  
[wvbka@gmail.com](mailto:wvbka@gmail.com)

**Deputy Chair:**

- Vacant

**Secretary:**

- Bob North:  
[wvbkasecretary@gmail.com](mailto:wvbkasecretary@gmail.com)

**Events Secretary:**

- Felicity Hearn

**Honey Show Secretary:**

- Felicity Hearne

**Treasurer & Membership Secretary:**

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

**Association Apiary Management Team:**

- Clare Penkey
- Dave Williams
- Duncan Penkey

**Committee:**

- Duncan Penkey
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams
- Andrew Barnes
- Juliet Parker-Smith

**Catering Committee:**

- Margaret Woodward

**Mentoring Team & Technical Advisors:**

- Peter Woodward:
- Clare Penkey
- Duncan Penkey
- Julie Crickmore
- Andi Parker-Smith
- Juliet Parker-Smith
- Andrew Barnes
- Fletcher Barker
- Andy Strangeway

**Honorary Auditor:**

- Stephen Purse