THE BUZZ

Westerham Beekeepers'
newsletter

September 2026 Issue Fourteen

Welcome & Chairman's Chat:

Welcome to edition fourteen of The Buzz. I hope you have been successful in developing your bees this summer, be it a good harvest, extra colonies, or reestablishing populations lost. We probably all fretted about them during the heatwave, and I was asked several times how they were coping with the hot weather. Probably better than us, I thought.

The bees have been preparing for winter for weeks, if not months. This time of the season is quieter, and our main job is to check that we think they are on track, for our own peace of mind. Nicola sets out some of the main jobs below.

We have had three successful apiary sessions this summer, with none called off for rain – of course! Many thanks to Keith Masters, Topsy Rudd and Steve Riley for hosting. The fete season was also a success, but as ever, we need more helpers please! The people who were brave enough to do it had a great time. People are interested in bees and honey, and this is our chance to share our enthusiasm with them. If you haven't joined in this year, 2027 is beckoning …

With that, can I extend a huge thank you to all who have helped run the club events and activities this year.

The winter talks programme is taking shape. We will hopefully have three external talks. Two are already confirmed – a Zoom session on Tropilelaps from one the UK's top experts, and a practical skep making workshop. November will see the AGM and honey/bake competitions. The competition rules for this year are set out on page 17. Everyone is encouraged to take part! See below for the full calendar.

We are surrounded by European Foulbrood! Westerham Beekeepers are clear of this for now – as far as we know. But you are encouraged to read Steve McGrath's article on the subject and to stay vigilant.

Thank you as ever for your continued support.

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Winter meetings

Our winter talks and meetings are held at 8pm at Westerham Village Hall on the last Wednesday of the month, apart from December.

Below is the schedule for this winter's meetings:

- Thursday 1st October 2026 – social gathering at Carpenters' Arms, Limpsfield Chart
- Wednesday 28th October 2026 – skep making workshop with Chris of Acorn Education
- Wednesday 25th November 2026 – annual general meeting, honey and bake competition
- Wednesday 28th or Thursday 29th January 2027 – to be confirmed
- Wednesday 24th February 2027 – to be confirmed
- Wednesday 31st March 2027 – Professor Maggie Gill on Tropilelaps mite

And finally, a taster of things to come: Next Year we plan to run some articles using information from the archive kept by John Williams. Here is a photograph of the WBKA summer meeting in 1925. Looks like we are going to up our dress code for future generations to look back at us!

photo: WBKA archive

Mark Waddington

The ins and outs of running an out apiary:

What do you do with your bees if a contractor is planning to lay a sewage outfall pipe across your apiary site? This was the challenge I faced as this year we agreed with a local developer that they could lay a pipe across our land. Understandably the contractor preferred not to be in contention with five (or more) active colonies. So, we moved the bees away to an out apiary, kindly brokered by Steve McGrath, conveniently just over three miles away to avoid talented navigators from returning home. Here are some learnings from the experience to pass on.

the apiary site- photo: Mark Waddington

Move them in spring. This may go without saying, but our colonies are generally at their smallest, and lightest in spring. Mid-spring turned out to be a good time for the move for me. I didn't know when the groundwork was going to start as the deal with the developer was still with the lawyers, so they got moved in advance, when they were light and easier to carry. I have done colony relocation mid-season, and it is much harder work, potentially requiring splitting the colony for transportation. The contractor's work will be done soon so in theory, they could "come home", but they are going to be laden with winter stores, and after all, do they care where they spend the winter? So, they will stay there until spring 2027.
You need to be very organised. When you go for inspections, it's important to be ready and equipped for the next stage of their development, be that queen excluders, supers or equipment for splitting and managing swarms. Nothing is worse than having to drive home again to pick up that thing you didn't think you needed. At one stage it felt like I had emptied my bee shed into the field where the bees are. On one occasion, I left the smoker at home. There was no chance of doing anything without it! In the peak

season, no matter how well you keep your car normally, mine just became a "bee van".

Have a swarm management strategy. It's not for everyone, but for me this year involved a lot more pre-emptive splits than I have previously done. That was because I didn't want to run the risk of misreading colony development and having swarms disappear into the landowner's neighbourhood. A quick comment on that – it was successful overall and gave me both some nice queens and peace of mind, but with the early season splits, I found they took longer to establish as laying queens.

Forage is different – for better or worse. I didn't mind as I generally get a crop anyway. My bees are normally within reach of substantial OSR and/or field beans crops, whereas this site was all about woodland and hedgerow forage. So, I had no spring harvest stress, and the summer crop was as lovely as ever.

Apiary site owners want rent. This is normal and the rent isn't high – generally a one-pound jar per colony. The owners wanted it unlabelled so that they could do their own labels and sell it or share it with friends. But they were also very grateful for honey as rent, it brings more smiles than just the money!

contractor at work in the home site – no room for beehives! – photo: Mark Waddington

I would do it again. It tested my organisation skills, but I learned from that and enjoyed the different honey.

Mark Waddington

Recent Events:

Summer Apiary Visit 25th July
Location: Steve Riley's apiary
Demonstration: Varroa resistant

On a very hot Saturday afternoon in July, Steve and Christine, generously hosted a wonderful apiary demonstration, on Varroa resistance.

It is always very educational to spend time with Steve, and this occasion did not disappoint. Steve took us through how he has developed a way to assist the bees Varroa resistant traits, his uses of custom-built drone frame, queen frames and his varroa monitoring.

He made it all sound very simple, but Steve's extensive experience made it seem that way; it was clear to see his bees have good genetics and very strong varroa resistant traits. The bees demonstrated this for us all to see upon inspection, with the detector bees uncapping and removing the Varroa from the brood.

If you would like to read more about Varroa resistance, please see the following links:

https://www.varroaresistant.uk

https://bibba.com/varroa-resistance/

Photo: Nicola Spreckley

Photo: Nicola Spreckley

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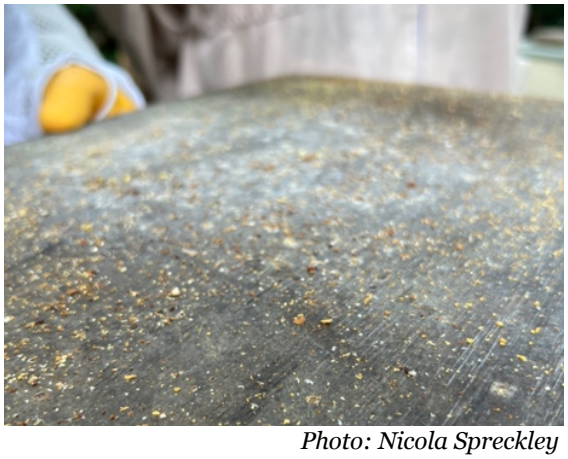


Photo: Nicola Spreckley

Photo: Nicola Spreckley

Photo: Nicola Spreckley

Nicola Spreckley

Summer Fetes & Shows: The Edenbridge and Oxted Show 2026

For two days over the August Bank Holiday weekend, Westerham Beekeepers and members of the yellow-legged hornet awareness group shared a marquee at the Edenbridge and Oxted Show educating the public on honeybees, beekeeping and problems facing beekeepers, ranging from honey adulteration to invasive species threatening our pollinators.

photo: Fiona Ambroziak

There was huge interest in all aspects of beekeeping with the observation hive being particularly popular. People were also keen to taste the range of local honey we had on offer and were genuinely excited to identify the different flavours they tried. It was interesting to note that visitors to the stall showed an increasing awareness of adulterated honey and were becoming more suspicious of supermarket "honey" and its authenticity. This meant that people were eager to buy local honey and understood why our premium products cost more than supermarket brands. Another feature of interest was WBKA's promotion of treatment free honey.
Many people were also interested to find out more about Asian hornets, how to identify them and what to do should they encounter one.

photo: Fiona Ambroziak

On Monday, BBC Local Radio visited the stall and interviewed Steve McGrath, who explained some of the issues facing beekeepers to an even wider public. We also had a visit from a very different species of bee! See below!

photo: Fiona Ambroziak

Thanks to all the people who volunteered their help over the course of the weekend. It was lovely to hear how much those who attended enjoyed themselves. The good news is that we have already been contacted about next year when the show is on August 29th and 30th 2027 so, please put those dates in your diary now!

Fiona Ambroziak

Things to do: Jobs for the months ahead:

After an extremely hot summer, the bee jobs are slowing down and it's all about finishing winter preparations and then leaving the colonies alone. After these are complete this is a great time to study for upcoming BBKA exam modules, which take place in November and March.

🐝 October – Winter Preparations

- Stop feeding syrup early to the middle of the month, depending upon the weather. If stores are low, Fondant is a good back up. Place this on top of the hole in the crown board.
- Heft the hives to check stores. You are looking for Around 20Kg or stores.

  ☐Brood frames weigh around 2.5kg.
  ☐Super frames weigh around 1kg.

- Fit mouseguards/appropriate entrance blocks and make sure entrances aren't blocked.
- Check the hives are secure against autumn storms and strong winds.
- Consider top insulation, particularly if your hive setup/site benefits from it.
- Don't routinely open the hives unless there's a good reason. External observations are best and you can tell a lot from looking at the hive floor.
- Keep an eye on Varroa, do a Varroa count by looking at the hive floor.
- Clean and repair spare equipment, replace damaged boxes/frames and sort old comb ready for spring.
- Protect hives from woodpeckers if you have an issue with them in your apiary.

🍂 November - is essentially "hands off" month.

- Check the apiary externally after high winds, heavy rain or storms.
- Occasionally heft colonies to identify any becoming light.
- If a colony genuinely needs food, fondant can be placed above the crown board.
- Make sure entrances remain clear.
- Avoid opening colonies unless there's an important reason.
- Keep an eye on Varroa monitoring.
- Clean, repair and organise equipment for spring.
- Review your records and start planning next year's colonies, queens and equipment.

Key Points: Make sure your hives are secure, colonies have adequate food, entrances are functioning, and the bees aren't unnecessarily disturbed.

Nicola Spreckley

Training Apiary:

I really can't believe we are almost at the end of the season with just two more Training Apiary Sessions left this year.

After losing all our colonies last year (except for one weak colony, which did subsequently die out) our aim this year was to build up the number of colonies we had. Our donated colony has produced two daughter colonies as well as sixty pounds of surplus honey. Together with two swarms (one from Alban – thank you Alban) we will be going into the winter with five colonies.

The other swarm was a bit of a surprise as it turned up between sessions and hived itself in the stack of equipment which is awaiting cleaning and repair. Luckily it picked a brood box and a super box with a floor, a roof and a jumble of drawn comb, foundation and empty frames. Over the course of a few sessions the frames were straightened out, and the hive was moved to one of our stands. There were lots of different things to learn here and, maybe, the best one was "don't do this at home"!

photo: Michelle Ernoult

We've bought some new floors with varroa boards for the hives which were installed just in time for a visit from Steve Riley. We had a good session learning about varroa resistance and the traits to look out for. Thank you, Steve.

Since then, we have been monitoring mite drop and looking for uncapping behaviours. Based on this we have decided to just treat one of our colonies this year.

The "in between" sessions as I call them have been helpful. These are the weeks in between the "official" TA sessions. For each of these sessions a couple of beginners have volunteered to come along and give me a hand with checking the

colonies. It has been great to have the help with the lifting, and I hope all those who have helped at these sessions have enjoyed them and found them useful. These sessions are something I plan to continue next year.

photo: Michelle Ernoult

The final date for this season is Sunday 27th September 10am until 12 noon. During this session we will make sure the hives are winter ready with plenty of stores.
Now that we are coming to the end of the season we will be planning some winter work parties to clean up equipment and to check on the hives during the winter months.
We will also be looking at how the TA was run this year, seeing what worked well and making plans for next year. If anyone has any suggestions, comments, anything you liked or anything you didn't I'd love to hear from you. I promise you'll still be allowed cake at the TA for any not so good feedback!
I'd like to say a very big thank you to all the volunteers who helped at the TA. It wouldn't be possible to run the TA without you.

For anyone who is thinking of taking one of the BBKA Module Exams this year, the date is 14th November 2026. Registration for exams closes 30th September so don't forget to register soon. The cost per module is £50 (except for Module 3 – Honeybee Health) and you can take a maximum of two modules at a time.

And, finally, please see our new Beginners' Winter Beekeeping Course.

WESTERHAM BEEKEEPERS BEGINNERS' WINTER BEEKEEPING COURSE

This course is for anyone interested in keeping bees. If you are new to beekeeping it will give you a good overview of the craft. If you have attended the teaching apiary during the summer the course aims to consolidate the practical knowledge you have acquired.

Zoom sessions will run weekly for 10 weeks on a Tuesday evening from 7.30 to 9.00pm, starting Tuesday 26th January 2027 until Tuesday 30th March 2027.
The cost of the course is £125.00.

Sessions will cover:

- Equipment including different hive types
- Siting and setting up an apiary
- Where to obtain bees
- The beekeeping year
- Inspections & handling techniques
- Swarming – prevention & control
- Basic bee biology
- Pests & diseases including varroa & varroa resistance
- Raising your own queens & colonies
- Products of the hive

To register for the course, more information about the course, or to visit the teaching apiary, please email wbkatrainingapiary@gmail.com

Michelle Ernoult

Yellow-Legged Hornet Update:

There have been fewer sightings and nests found this year than in 2025 but there is evidence that YLH have established a

breeding population in the southeast, which is bad news.

Primary and secondary nests were destroyed by NBU in Tunbridge Wells on 6 Sept and a secondary nest in Bletchingley on 9 September.

photo: Topsy Rudd

We have been actively giving out identification cards and hornet traps to the public at all the fairs we have attended and were very kindly assisted in this by the AHAlert team at the Edenbridge & Show. There seems to be an increased public knowledge about YLH which is good news.

AHAlert advised us to stop trapping once the Ivy is flowering, as hornets will go to that in preference to bait, so please put your bait stations and traps away now until queen trapping starts next year and focus on checking out any flowering ivy near you!

The latest advice from the BBKA:

What to do if you find a yellow-legged hornet

Reports from the public are the cornerstone of work to eradicate yellow-legged hornet (YLH). If you suspect you have found a YLH, you can report it by:
• Using the Asian Hornet Watch app for iPhone or app for android
• Filling in the online recording form
• Emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk
Between July and September please do not attempt to kill individual hornets. A live hornet is essential to help our teams locate and destroy the nest. Finding and removing the nest is the most effective way to protect honeybees and other pollinators. Dead hornets cannot be tracked.
Where it is safe and practical to do so, in the period following a positive sighting you may be asked to assist with monitoring by replacing monitoring traps with a simple bait station. Although this may feel counter-intuitive, YLHs often return repeatedly to a reliable food source, so trying to establish this behaviour pattern by feeding rather than trapping allows direction and timing information to be acquired, assisting trained personnel to track their flight path and identify the location of the nest.
Safety advice
• If hornets appear aggressive or you feel unsafe, move away immediately.
• Do not attempt to follow hornets through difficult terrain, onto private property or into unsafe areas.
• Do not disturb vegetation, structures or potential nest sites.
• Never attempt to remove or destroy a nest yourself; report any suspect nests via the Asian Hornet Watch app.
By reporting sightings promptly and allowing trained responders to track hornets back to their nest, you can play an important role in helping to protect the UK's pollinators & wider ecology.

FAQ:
Why shouldn't I kill the hornet? A live YLH can help responders locate the nest. Destroying the nest removes many more hornets than killing individual insects and is the most effective way to reduce the risk to honeybees and other pollinators. Nest destruction also prevents release of new hornet queens, who can start new nests, killing workers does not.
Why shouldn't I use a pest controller to destroy a suspect yellow-legged hornet nest?
Please report suspect nests through the Asian Hornet Watch app so the National Bee Unit knows where hornets are being seen and can arrange any necessary follow-up. The National Bee Unit does not charge for confirmed nest destruction.

Privately destroying a nest without reporting it risks losing important location information and risks a less-coordinated national response.
Is the 'yellow-legged hornet' the same insect as the 'Asian hornet'? Yes, both names refer to the species Vespa velutina nigrithorax. The current name of yellow-legged hornet was adopted to help people identify the hornet and to differentiate this insect from other species of hornet from Asia.
How can I help? More information about how Yellow legged Asian hornet teams can help can be found here: The role of Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Teams » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase

Topsy Rudd

Membership:

The end of the beekeeping year has rolled around again; honey harvest collected, queen excluders removed, drawn-out frames wax-moth proofed, bees filling every available space with winter stores, beekeepers can go on holiday, etc.... well, that's what the books suggest!
The membership year runs from October 1st until September 30th, so by the time you read this (unless you have been very quick with renewing) your membership will soon have expired, along with all the advantages that membership brings!
For newer members, we are using the online membership system ('eR2') for renewals, and I have outlined the main steps below. Note - there are (again!) some cost increases this year; full membership fee is now £64, and partner membership is £21. Friend membership remains at £5.

Full details of membership and the various classes for the year ending 30 September 2026 are on our website, here.

These details will be updated for 2026/7 shortly.

Online Membership Renewal 2026/27.

1. During the first week in October you will receive an automated mail from Kent Beekeepers Association - Westerham Branch, with subject 'Membership Renewal Invitation'.
(Please set your mail system to accept such mails and not dump them in the Junk folder.)
2. The mail will contain a link to the online renewal system and your details within the system. The link is unique to you only and does not allow access to any other member's details in the system.
3. Click on the link in your Renewal Invitation to view your details. The left column shows your current details (i.e. for 2025/26 year), and the right column shows new details (for 2026/27 year). Check the details in the right column are still valid and amend, if required.
4. Below your personal details there is a box for Renewal Options. Select which options* (membership type, insurance, gift aid, etc.) apply to you. The total cost of your selections is shown at the bottom in the Summary of Fees Due box. Note; there is a discount for only receiving the digital version of Beecraft.
*** The 'Donation to Branch Funds' option helps cover items such as running the Training Apiary, hiring of Westerham Hall, fees for speakers at winter talks and so on. Anything you can donate here will be much appreciated.**
5. Once happy with your selections, click the 'Submit Renewal Application' button.
6. You are now taken to the payment page. Complete your personal details and card details and click the payment button.
7. That's all there is to it - your membership is renewed for another year!
8. Shortly after your payment, you will receive a receipt from the payment system used by KBKA.
9. Once the payment has been confirmed by the Branch Treasurer, you will receive a Membership Certificate.

If you have any queries/concerns, please contact me: email: members.westerhambeeks@gmail.com
Phone: 07403 538724

Note: The online system is entirely optional. If you wish to use the original paper-based system or use an alternative payment method (e.g. a cheque), please contact me, as above.
Best wishes for a stress-free (and prompt, please!) membership renewal.

Robert Ambroziak

Book Review: Grey Bees by Andrey Kurkov

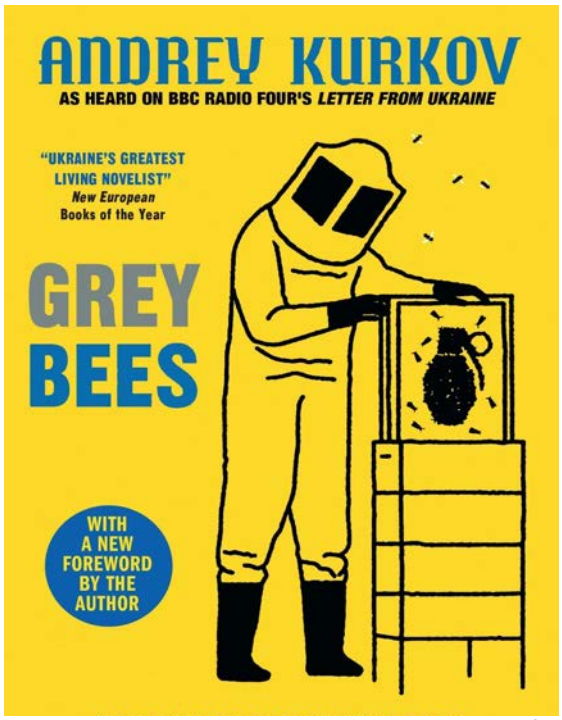


image: Quercus Books

Ukraine has a long history of beekeeping and Andrey Kurkov wrote this book a few years after Russia had captured the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea.
It is an engaging story about a beekeeper that lives alone in the war-torn Donbas region, with his six hives of bees. He lives by rules but eventually realises he must do something to protect his bees. He needs to find a place they can forage in peace, where plants are not covered in gunpowder and there are no explosions. The beekeeper embarks on a journey with his bees away from the Grey Zone. This is an extraordinary tale into a complex world centred around protecting one man's bees. I was given this book by a new beekeeper based in Oxfordshire who was being helped by a Ukrainian beekeeper. I was delighted to note that a few of our members have also read this book and recently mentioned it on the WhatsApp group. The book has also been turned into a film; and is available on Amazon Prime Video.

image: FILM:UA

Another book which may be of interest is The Beekeeper's Dictionary – see **Last Word** below.

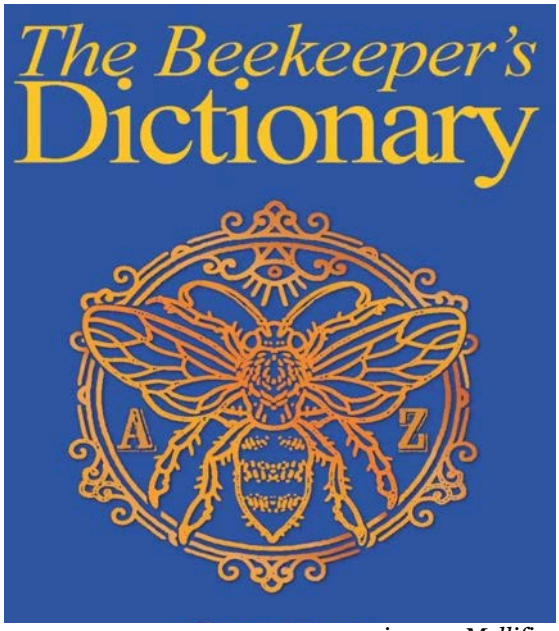


image: Mellifica

Sally Doyle-Linden

Photo of the Month: The Tipsy Colony?

photo: Topsy Rudd

Recipe: Apple and Honey Chutney

photo: Mark Edwards

Ingredients:
750gm of diced peeled apple - *could be any type. I've gone with one diced eating apple, and the rest was cooking apple.*
80 gm dried cranberries (or raisins or use any suitable dried fruit up in your cupboard.
300 ml cider vinegar
100 gm honey
80gm dark molasses sugar
3 Tomatoes diced
2 red onions diced
1 bay leaf
2 tsp salt flakes
5 cloves
approx. 1/5th grated whole nutmeg
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp all spice
1 tsp chilli flakes

Method:
Place all the ingredients in a heavy based pan and bring to the boil, and simmer for approx. one hour on a gentle heat.

Place into a sterilised jar unless using within the week and keep for Christmas (presents).

photo: Mark Edwards

Mark Edwards

Recipe: Apple and Cinnamon Loaf Cake - makes two 450g/1lb loaves or one 900g/2lb loaf

photo: Fiona Ambroziak

Ingredients:
200g/7oz self-raising flour
75g/3oz butter
100g/4oz light muscovado sugar
1tsp ground cinnamon
3 dessert apples 350g/12oz (before peeling) peeled and cored
3 eggs beaten
2 tbsp warmed honey

Method:
1. Grease/line 2 x 1lb loaf tins (or 1 x 2lb tin). Heat the oven to 160°c (fan).
2. Rub the butter into the flour with fingers or a food processor until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar and cinnamon.
3. Dice 2 ½ apples and stir into the cake mixture along with the eggs. Beat until combined.
4. Divide the mixture between the two tins. Then thinly slice the remaining apple and arrange in a row on top.
5. Bake for 40-45 minutes until golden, risen and firm to the touch.
6. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes and then brush with the warmed honey. Turn out of the tin and leave to cool on a cooling tray.

Fiona Ambroziak

Breeding Apiary:

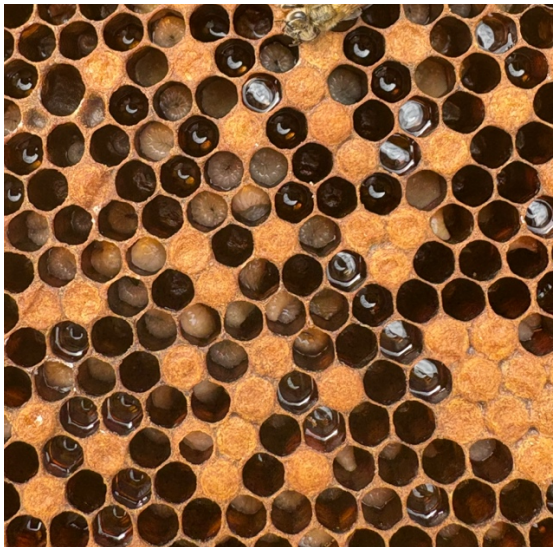
We're wrapping things up for this season at the breeding apiary, ensuring the bees are well prepared for winter. It's been a successful season, with the first five nucs sold to club members as well as some queens, and these will hopefully provide them with many productive years ahead with their new varroa resistant bees.
If you have one of the nucs, please do remain vigilant and continue to monitor varroa levels, and for the key traits of uncapping pupae at the pink/purple-eyed stage and chewing out of infected pupae as evidenced by pupal remains on your insert trays.
Now we have hit our base level of colonies in the apiary, next season we want to raise more nucs and queens for members. You can register your interest at any time.
We already have some demand for spring nucs from neighbouring associations, although club member demand will be met first.
The project is going to get national exposure next month as I am extremely honoured and humbled to have been invited to present one of the lectures on the Saturday at the National Honey Show. My lecture will be about the bee breeding project and will hopefully encourage many more clubs, associations and groups to replicate what we are doing. Wouldn't it be great if every area across the UK had a source of locally adapted varroa resistant bees?
The success of our own project is down to our team of volunteers, and I want to again thank our regulars – John Marshall, Robert Ambroziak, Mark Waddington, Linda King and Topsy Rudd, as well as anyone else who has helped this season.
We always welcome new volunteers, and in particular, I am looking for someone who can help me lead the project. It's a perfect opportunity to learn new skills.
Please let me know if you would like to be involved in any way, even if you can't give too much time. Any little helps and we need a multi-skilled team.

Steve McGrath

European Foulbrood: stay vigilant and know how to spot it

I am writing this a day after another regular disease inspection visit from the

seasonal bee inspector from the National Bee Unit. Another twenty-two of my colonies checked and given the all clear. It always feels good to have that official confirmation my bees are healthy.



EFB – photo: Steve McGrath

However, back in June I did experience the opposite when three colonies I was managing on behalf of another beekeeper were struck down with European Foulbrood. It's an experience I don't want to have to repeat as I had to euthanize the colonies with petrol before helping the NBU regional inspector with the cleanup the following day - dead bees and frames sent for incineration and hives all scorched. A very unpleasant experience for a beekeeper who is focused on the wellbeing of these amazing creatures.

EFB – photo: Steve McGrath

Having spent a lot of time with the inspectors over the last two seasons (some of my own colonies have been inspected twice a season for the past two), I have become acutely aware that while the Westerham area is hopefully largely free of this notifiable bacterial brood disease, areas all around us have been marked red by the NBU due to the high prevalence of the disease. The colonies I was managing that were struck down were south of Uckfield, just 17 miles from the south of our area, across the Ashdown Forest, a 'red' area. North Kent is a known hotspot, while outbreaks have been reported around Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. If you want to know the prevalence of the disease, login to your Beebase account and you will find maps. They show just how surrounded we are by areas with high prevalence.

I think it's very important for us as a club to be highly vigilant to this easily spread disease. These are the simple things we can all do:

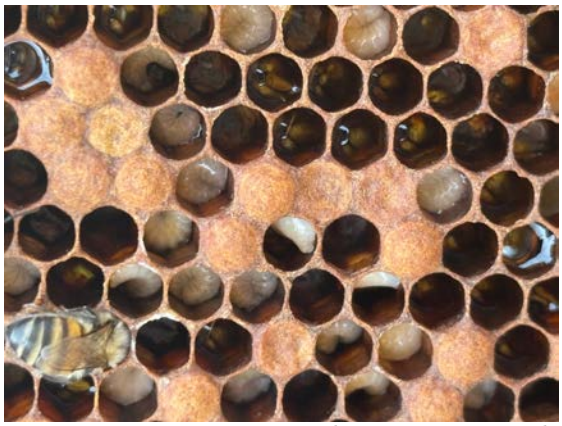
- Know how to spot EFB and the much rarer AFB. The NBU have this guide https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/foulbroods-notifiable/how-to-spot-european-foul-brood and you can find many more pictures by googling EFB and clicking images.
- Know who your bee inspector is (they are listed at the end of this newsletter) and save their number – EFB is a notifiable disease; you mustn't ignore it and must report it.
- Register on Beebase and keep your records up to date (personally, I think there should be mandatory beekeeper registration as there is for all other 'livestock').
- Alert your inspector if you have any doubts whatsoever about the health of your brood, even if it's just one cell. You can send them a picture and they will respond. They are on our side and there to help.
- Do your own brood health inspection regularly. Shake the bees off frames and look closely at the larvae and pupal cappings.
- Maintain good apiary hygiene. Have bleach as well as soda crystals in

your hive tool buckets, don't use leather gloves, wash your bee suit and boots regularly, etc.

- Don't bring bees in from outside the area – we can provide members with local bees and queens.

This last point is really important. EFB is sometimes known as the "now you see it, now you don't" disease. A colony can appear completely healthy, only for EFB to make an appearance as soon as it's under any sort of stress.

Spotting EFB early may mean the colony can be saved, so suspicions raised by just a single misshaped, discoloured, or off-centred larvae could mean the bee inspector helps you save the colony through comb replacement. A more developed outbreak will always result in euthanizing the colony.



EFB – photo: Steve McGrath

Closing up the colony and hoping for the best when you have concerns is not an option. Your bees will be visiting the same flowers as your neighbour's bees and could pass it on through mouthparts, while your drones could spread it in congregation areas or by deciding to overnight in colonies that aren't yours. To coin a well-known phrase: see it, say it, report it.

Steve McGrath

Planting for Bees:

Following the hottest and driest summer on record, most of the bee's usual forage has bloomed early and gone over quicker than we would have hoped.

I am probably not alone in my garden looking like autumn has come early. The recent rain has brought out the Ivy and has given our Verbena a refresh and both honeybees and bumbles are all over it.

With the changing climate, we as beekeepers are always looking of ways to assist our bees and one way it to try to plant more bee friendly plants / flowers.

The BBKA specifically identifies asters, sedum and ivy as valuable autumn forage, with ivy flowering from September.

Verbena – Nicola Spreckley

My top three Planting recommendations are:

Crocus - Flowers: February–March
Provides nectar and pollen when there isn't much else available.

Snowdrops - Flowers: January–March
Excellent very-early forage.

Alliums - Flowers: May–July, depending on variety. Excellent for bees and gives you forage later in spring/early summer.

Plant these bulbs now/early autumn in sunny, well-drained ground.

Ivy – photo Simon Olley

Golden Rod – photo Simon Olley

Bee Friendly Plants in Flower Now		
Plant	**Main Period**	**Value to Honeybees**
Ivy	Sept–Oct, sometimes into Nov	★★★★★ Nectar + pollen
Heather	Aug–Sept/Oct	★★★★★ Nectar + pollen
Michaelmas daisies / asters	Aug–Oct	★★★★
Sedum / stonecrop	Aug–Oct	★★★★
Goldenrod	Aug–Oct	★★★★
Dandelion	Mar–Oct, occasional later flowers	★★★
Honeysuckle	Can continue into autumn	★★★
Devil's-bit scabious	Aug–Oct	★★★
Fuchsia	Summer–autumn	★★★
Strawberry tree (Arbutus)	Autumn, particularly mild areas	★★★★

Nicola Spreckley

About Westerham Beekeepers:

Westerham Beekeepers is a branch of the Kent Beekeepers Association. Our aim is to promote the craft of beekeeping by helping to educate both beekeepers and the public. While we are mostly practising amateur beekeepers, membership is open to interested members of the public. We meet during the winter months in Westerham, usually for lectures by visiting specialists and our own members. During the active beekeeping season, we meet for demonstrations by experienced beekeepers in our members' apiaries. Find our Website here.

Advice for Beginners & FAQs here.

Contact Information:

Mark Waddington – Chairman & Events Programme - contributions for newsletters and ideas for winter talks & summer visits wbka.events@gmail.com

Robert Ambroziak – Membership members.westerhambeeks@gmail.com

Michelle Ernoult – Training Apiary Manager wbkatrainingapiary@gmail.com

Topsy Rudd - Branch Secretary & YLH Co-ordinator westerhambeekeepers@gmail.com

Keith Masters – Treasurer masterskeithmasters@hotmail.com

Alban Brindle – Swarm Co-ordinator agbrindle@hotmail.com

To join the **Westerham Beekeepers' WhatsApp group** contact Mark Waddington

To join the **Training Apiary's Facebook group** contact Michelle Ernoult

To join the **Swarm WhatsApp group** contact Alban Brindle and for **Swarm Reporting** contact Alban Brindle on 07919 843 546, or the nearest contact from the BBKA website if Alban is not available.

Committee Members:

Mark Waddington – Chairman & Events Programme

Topsy Rudd – Branch Secretary & YLH Co-ordinator

Keith Masters – Treasurer & Branch representative on KBKA Council

Michelle Ernoult - Training Apiary Manager & Education Officer

Robert Ambroziak - Membership Secretary

Alban Brindle - Swarm Co-ordinator

Peter Cobley – Branch representative on KBKA Council

Steve McGrath – Breeding Apiary Manager

Fiona Ambroziak -Fetes Co-ordinator

National Bee Unit Inspectors:

Regional Inspector: Thomas Bickerdike thomas.bickerdike@apha.gov.uk or 07775 119464
Seasonal Inspector Southern Westerham Area: Helen Hadley – 07741 168555
Seasonal Inspector Northern Westerham Area: Danyal Conn – 07584 202700

Last Word: Cast - A swarm issuing after the primary swarm (also known as a bull swarm) containing an unmated queen; a colony may cast multiple times.

Not to be confused with **Castes**, which are the two phenotypes of the same genotype (Honeybee) which form the queen and the workers – morphologically different while genetically identical. Honeybees have two genders, female (queen & workers) and male (drones).

Both taken from The Beekeeper's Dictionary by Tony Chapman-Dawe.

WESTERHAM BEEKEEPERS' AGM & COMPETITIONS
8pm Wednesday 25th November 2026 at Westerham Hall

HONEY COMPETITION

This year our judges will be made up of winners/runners up from last year. Judges will be allowed to enter the competition but not in the category they are asked to judge.
All entrant jars are anonymously registered by the steward.
Winners and runners-up will be announced after the AGM and awarded Trophies and/or certificates.

THE RULES:
•Provide two matching 1lb (454g) jars of honey WITH NO LABEL
•The Classes are

1. LIQUID HONEY
2. SET HONEY: Soft set or fully granulated
3. NOVICE: Any style of honey & never entered a honey competition

You may enter more than one class
Entries must be delivered to Westerham Hall kitchen by **7.45pm on 25th November**

If you would like to enter, please let Sally Doyle-Linden know by **20th November** on sdoylelinden@outlook.com

THE PRIZES:

LIQUID HONEY	1st	Veness Cup & Award Certificate
	2nd	Award Certificate
SET HONEY	1st	Miller Cup & Award Certificate
	2nd	Award Certificate
NOVICE	1st	Training Apiary Trophy & Award Certificate
	2nd	Award Certificate

Honey showing tips

- Jars should have **new** lids and must be clean, with no labels, and not sticky
- Honey should not contain any foreign particles or air bubbles in or on the surface of the honey
- Liquid honey should have no crystals
- Set honey should have an even consistency with no frosting
- Jars should be filled to the lower edge of the lid
- The judge will shine a torch through the honey and open one jar to smell and taste the honey

MAKE OR BAKE COMPETITION

As last year, the AGM attendees will judge the Make or Bake entries. Simply vote for the entries you enjoy.

THE RULES:
•Entries must contain honey
•Must be entirely edible (no non-edible decorations)
•Must be accompanied by the recipe (with entrant's name)
•Entries must be delivered to Westerham Hall kitchen by **7.45pm on 25th November**