# Newsletter December 2025

Committee members: Pat Coleman (President), Ken Jeanes (Chair), Chris Andrews (Vice Chair and Programme Secretary), Mike Craddock (Treasurer), Anne Collyer (Secretary), Jane Jeanes (SBKA Trustee), Tony Johnstone Jeremy Lee (Apiary Manager), Brian Magor, Hannah Thwaites, Dennis White and John Wood

Welcome to the December Newsletter and welcome to our new committee member, Hannah. Hannah has lots of ideas and we look forward to putting those in practice next year.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this month's issue, and we welcome any ideas for future issues. Please let me have articles, notices etc by the 25th of the month for inclusion in the next issue. The next newsletter will be issued at the end of February, but I will circulate any information as necessary.

As ever, if anyone needs more information or has a question to ask, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will put you in touch with someone who can help. Anne Collyer, Branch Secretary SESBKA
sesbkasecretary@gmail.com 07803 243643 Presscombe, Shepton Montague, Wincanton, BA9 8JG

*As the calendar year comes to an end and bees are slowing down on colder days, I have been reflecting on the season.*

*The spring promised much and delivered, with oil seed rape flowering well in the sunshine and then the sun continued to shine, and the rain stayed away. Flowers went into survival mode until September, when blooms were at their best, but honey flow had long since slowed up and bees have kept their foraged goods. I have said many times over the past few seasons that beekeeping is getting more unpredictable due to the changing climate, and this one has convinced me. We are all in uncharted waters and the bees alongside us are having to learn to adapt quickly. Whatever next season brings we need to be prepared for it; so, spend these dark days cleaning equipment, writing your wish list and encouraging family, friends and neighbours to plant bee friendly plants next year. Be vigilant in looking for pests, catch up on training and be prepared to give it a go even if your bees do not come through the winter - for the one certainty is that the sun will begin to rise higher in the sky and it won't be that long before we are looking for the first signs that snowdrops are starting to show above the ground.*

*Jane and I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and a prosperous 2026.*
*Ken Jeanes, Chair*

# Subscriptions for 2025/26

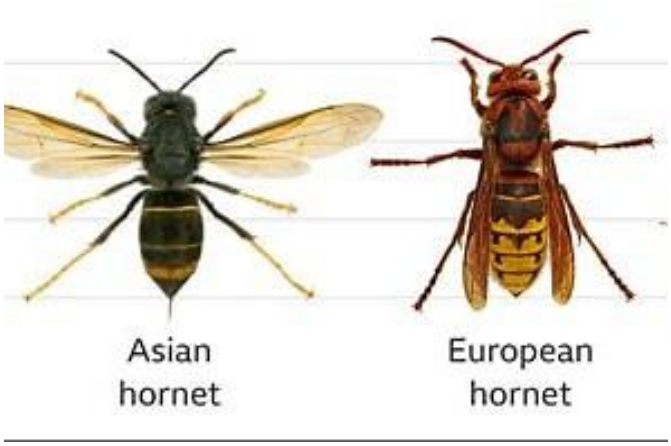
Over half of our members have renewed their subscriptions – many thanks!

If you have not received the renewal email, please check your spam/junk folder - the email originates from noreply@membershipservices.org.uk - if nothing has been received let me know and I can resend.

It would be very helpful if all subscriptions were paid on or before 1st January 2026.

*Mike Craddock – Treasurer* *romibrcr@gmail.com*

# Lionel's December Notes




There has been another update from the NBU. A further two nests have been found and destroyed, the total now being 161 this year. One was found in East Sussex but more important to us, the other was found at Swyre in Dorset a village close to the coast between Weymouth and Bridport just 17.5 miles from Yeovil.

A reminder of what you should do if you spot an Asian Hornet seems appropriate so: -

a) Any suspected sightings should ideally be reported with a photograph via the Asian Hornet WhatsApp or online.

b) Don't kill an Asian Hornet as the crushing of the body releases a pheromone which will alert the colony, it's best to notify the Non Native Species Secretariat and let the insect go and maybe put a monitoring station with bait to attract it back again so that it can be tracked to its nest and then the whole colony can be destroyed.

An Asian Hornet is easily identified by its dark brown or black velvety body, dark abdomen with one yellow stripe on its fourth segment, yellow tipped legs [yellow socks] and is smaller than the European Hornet.

Asian Hornets are just about as aggressive to humans as are the native wasp unless you get within 5 metres of the nest when they will get very protective.

Now is the time when queens have emerged, mated and are looking for somewhere to hibernate for the winter and this could be anywhere dry and quiet such as your garden shed or your garage so, please be aware when disturbing boxes etc during the winter.

This is a good time to remind members of the Asian Hornet conference at the Canalside Centre Bridgwater on January 24th when you are all welcome and can be updated on all things Asian Hornet.

*The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app is available to download from the Apple and Android app stores. You can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Non-native Species Secretariat website.*

# News from the Apiary

*Jeremy Lee, Apiary Manager*

Despite Anne's reminder I failed to make the deadline for last month's newsletter. Needy people more fortunate than most take up my time from mid-September onwards. It always amazes me that the brightest people who run some of the most successful institutions in the UK and worldwide completely lose their common sense when their long-suffering PA's aren't contactable by mobile signal once they arrive in the West Country. I had a CEO sulking in his large 4X4 by the church in Maiden Bradley as he couldn't navigate the mile and a half of country lane with the only instructions being - follow the road for one and a half miles then turn left at the T junction and immediately right!! Thank God they don't have to look for eggs and queens.

The balmy 19 degrees Celsius of last Thursday has soon turned to Baltic snowstorms and finally my bees at home have stopped flying. Brian and I went to the apiary last week to remove the treatment strips to find almost all the brood boxes and supers as heavy as a bag of cement. It has been one heck of an autumn (I assume) ivy flow and I am not sure any of them will get through all the pure white set honey they have squirrelled away over the last two months. I hope it doesn't create problems late winter should the broods become detached from their queens in such full hives. I am sure nature knows best. I would advise if anyone has any queen excluders left on their colonies to remove them as soon as on a mild day.

Last season was, as usual a game of two halves, or more correctly three thirds. Massive spring flow, very early summer flow that stopped as soon as it started and a huge autumn flow. Queen mating was the best I have known it in a long time, and we had 100% success with the early splits, not as high for the later. Colonies appeared to swarm with little, or no notice and the girls kept us on our toes as usual. No doubt next season will offer its challenges.

The AGM was well attended and some valid points raised. Firstly, the Asian Hornet threat is very real and getting closer. I met someone in the summer in Kent who had to move all their colonies 20 miles just to save them which was sobering. Lionel has been our 'branch champion' for the last few years and we should all be getting involved to support him. The clue is in the latter part of the name for the Asian/Yellow Legged Hornet when it comes to identification. I would encourage everyone to get involved in setting early season traps as they are much easier to control if caught before they make their summer nests. I am sure we will circulate information early in the new year and get some trapping kits organised.

***The NBU has some good stuff to circulate, and I would encourage everyone to sign up to Bee Base.**
**https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/about-us/beekeeping-news/yellow-legged-hornet-2025-rolling-update#tableend**
*(Please see extract from their website below for more information)*

Secondly, Hannah made a brilliant presentation about her first year keeping bees. I agree, we need to use the apiary as an educational resource and welcome any ideas members may have. Very happy to try one of James and Brian's 'modified' top bar hives or anything else (within reason) that people want to try, as long as it is on national frames. We have extraction equipment to lend to members which requires organisation due to the logistics of multiple gates and soggy ground. I will try and be more gentlemanly with offer of lifts from the car park but assumed people liked playing 'sardines' in Jame's van. Possibly there will be more room in the back now he has had to relinquish many of the 2024 honey show trophies. On a more serious note, we may try and organise an 'oxalic' fumigation session at the apiary if we can find a suitable Saturday before Christmas where I am not retrieving sulking CEOs.

**BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. It is designed for beekeepers and supports Defra, Welsh Government and Scotland's Bee Health Programmes. BeeBase supports the aims of the Healthy Bees Plan 2030, which focuses on protecting and sustaining our valuable national bee stocks.*

*Our website provides a wide range of apicultural information for beekeepers, to help keep their colonies healthy and productive. It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honeybee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts.*

*Please play your part and help us by signing up to BeeBase here.*
*We hope both new and experienced beekeepers will find this an extremely useful resource and sign up. Knowing the distribution of beekeepers and their apiaries across the country helps us to effectively monitor and control the spread of serious honeybee pests and diseases, as well as provide up-to-date information in keeping bees healthy and productive. By telling us who you are you'll be playing a very important part in helping to maintain and sustain honeybees for the future.*

# 2026 Programme of Events

*Chris Andrews, Programme Secretary christopherdandrews1957@gmail.com*

**2026 Dates**
More details will follow but please see below dates confirmed so far for 2026.
Tuesday 13th January to Tuesday 24th February at Ansford Academy, Castle Cary –Beginner's Course
Thursday 19th February at The Market House, Castle Cary – Stewart Gould on Colony Losses
Wednesday 11th March – Annual Dinner venue tbc
Thursday 19th March at The Market House, Castle Cary – Eleanor Burgess on Pre Season Preparation
Thursday 9th April at The Market House Castle Cary – Catherine Fraser on Hive Pests
Saturday 23rd May Shepton Montague Plant Sale
Saturday 6th June Annual Bee Safari with Donald Mudie, Regional Bee Inspector – venues tbc
Thursday 6th August at The Market House, Castle Cary – Suzy Perkins on Showing Honey
Thursday 10th September at The Market House, Castle Cary – tbc – Chris would welcome any suggestions for topics
Saturday October 17th at The Market House, Castle Cary – SESBKA Honey Show with judges Suzy Perkins, Mary D'Arcy and Pat Coleman
Thursday 12th November at The Market House, Castle Cary – SESBKA AGM

# Salted Honey Fudge and Chocolate Tart

Recipe Corner

*(a My goodFOOD Recipe)*

500g pack sweet shortcrust pastry
3 tbsp cocoa plus extra for rolling and dusting
2 tsp clear honey
½ tsp good-quality sea salt
honeycomb crumbled to serve
crème fraîche or single cream to serve

**For the salted honey fudge**
140g set honey
140g butter diced3
150ml double cream
1 tsp vanilla extract

**For the chocolate layer**
400g dark chocolate broken into chunks
00ml double cream

**step 1**
Dice the pastry into chunks and put in a food processor. Sift over the cocoa, drizzle over the honey, then pulse to combine into a chocolate pastry. Roll out the dough on a lightly cocoa-dusted work surface, big enough to line a 23cm loose-bottomed tart tin with a little overhang. Cover and chill for 30 mins.

**step 2**
Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Scrunch up a big sheet of baking parchment and use to line the tart tin. Fill with baking beans and bake for 15-20 mins until sandy and the sides are firm. Remove the beans and paper and bake for a further 5-15 mins until really biscuity. Trim off the overhang and cool.

**step 3**
Put the honey fudge ingredients into a small pan and warm gently until the butter has completely melted. Bring to a gentle simmer and bubble, stirring, for 4-5 mins until more golden coloured and thickened. Stir in ¼-½ tsp good salt (to taste), then pour into the tart case. Chill for 30 mins.

**step 4**
For the topping, mix the chocolate and cream in a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water. Gently melt, stirring occasionally, until combined. Cool for 5 mins, then pour into the tart case gently, covering the honey layer. Chill until ready to serve.

**step 5**
Remove from the fridge 10 mins before serving, to soften a little. Dust with cocoa and scatter with a little crumbled honeycomb, if you like, then serve with dollops of crème fraîche or a jug of cream.

# Beginners' Course 2026

The next Beginners' Course starts Tuesday 13th January 2026 and will be held at Ansford Academy 7pm – 9pm. Places are filling fast so if you know of anyone who would like to take part – or if you want to refresh your knowledge then please let me know asap.
Anne Collyer sesbkasecretary@gmail.com

# Somerset BKA

**Somerset County Lecture Day** Saturday 7th February 2026 at The Canalside Conference Centre, Marsh Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 6LQ - an excellent day and well worth going. There is something for everyone whether you are a novice or an experienced beekeeper and is a good chance to meet beekeepers from other areas of the country.

More details to follow.

**The SBKA AGM** will be hosted next year by Central Branch on **Saturday 7 March 2006** at The Crossways, North Wooton, BA4 4EU from 12 noon onwards. There is ample parking and there will be a paid bar. A two-course lunch will be followed by a talk by Professor Claire Bethune from Plymouth University. Claire has an article published in the September 2025 BBKA News entitled '*A sting in the tail: when beekeeping bites back*'. She will be talking about her research around the development of severe allergic reactions in some individuals despite years of normal tolerance.

The AGM 2026 will then follow. More details to follow.

# BBKA News

## BBKA December Talk

The next in our series of Zoom talks will be 'Pass GH First Time' with John Hendrie on Tuesday 16th December 2025 at 7pm.

*John is a former BBKA Trustee, President and Exam Board member, Secretary and Moderator. He has kept and managed honeybees for more than 50 years becoming a Master Beekeeper in 1986. He has been heavily involved in beekeeping education ever since running courses and lecturing widely on bees and beekeeping. John is currently a Trustee of the Scottish Beekeepers' Association.*

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81233819992?pwd=DYMZxTImJjpRCLJjYjvbIxgybQQdSZ.1

Meeting ID: 812 3381 9992 Passcode: 527929

A recording of this talk will be available on BBKA Learning Online for those unable to watch live together with recordings of all previous talks.

Kind regards, Jane Medwell BBKA Trustee

# And Finally……..

*Tis just this matter of sex that these book-writing bee-masters seem to leave altogether out of their reckoning. And yet it lies well to the heart of the whole business. In an average prosperous hive, there are about 30,000 of these little stunted, quick-witted worker-bees, not one of which but could have grown into a fully developed mother-bee, twice the size, and laying her thousands of eggs a day, if only her early up-bringings had been different, but nature has doomed her to be an old maid from her very cradle, although she is born with all the instincts and capabilities for motherhood that you wonder at in a fully-grown, prolific queen. And yet the bee-masters expect her to accept her fate without a murmur; to live and work today just as she did yesterday and the day before; to tend and feed patiently the young bees that she has been denied all part in producing; to support a lot of lazy drones in luxury and idleness; and generally to act like a reasonable, contented, happy creature all the way through. Tis no wonder that the little worker-bee get crochety time an' again.*

The Bee-Master of Warrilow by Tickner Edwardes 1920

Submitted by Pat Coleman