



August 2025

Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Bee Keepers Association

A Message from Our Chair Helen Swain (chair@huntsbka.org.uk)

“Despite the recent high temperatures, honeybee colonies are starting to prepare for the winter months ahead. The colonies in the Association Apiary have produced a lot of honey this year and my bees have too. Whilst it is tempting to harvest as much honey as possible, make sure your colonies are left with enough stores. In some areas nectar flows are still plentiful but in others there is little nectar available, and bees are eating through their stores. If they have been left with little honey after harvesting, there is a risk those bees will starve or won’t be able to produce sufficient winter bees to see them through until next spring. If you want to know how to prepare your colonies for winter, please sign up for our Winter Workshop, details below. Our Association Apiary will also be doing honey extraction on the same day so we would welcome volunteers to come and help”.



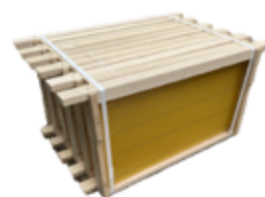
It's That Time of Year: Preparing Your Bees for Winter



As autumn settles over Huntingdonshire, beekeepers are gearing up for the important task of preparing hives for winter. Now is the time to ensure colonies are strong and healthy, and for those who plan to treat their hives for varroa, consider the available options. A list of varroa treatments can be found in the members area of the HBKA website (or click [here](#) if you are online [Varroa Treatment Chart](#)). Check that your hives have sufficient stores—aim for 20-30lbs of honey (roughly equivalent to one full super) or supplement with sugar syrup if needed. Inspect brood patterns for signs of a healthy, laying queen, and unite weaker colonies to bolster their chances of surviving the cold months ahead.

Hive maintenance is vital as temperatures drop. Ensure hives are watertight. Our local temperatures usually mean we do not have to wrap or insulate our hives but you may want to ensure hives are strapped and lids secure so they can withstand the occasional strong winds. Secure hive entrances against mice and other pests, and for those in flood-prone areas, elevate hives to avoid water damage. These small preparations can make a big difference in colony survival.

Beekeepers should also keep an eye out for potential threats. Watch for signs of robbing, especially in weaker hives, and reduce entrances to deter invaders. Late-season swarming can still occur, so monitor for queen cells during inspections. Nosema and other diseases can flare up in damp conditions, so maintain hygiene by cleaning equipment and avoiding spilled syrup. If you're new to beekeeping, our workshop on the 13th September is a great opportunity to connect with the HBKA for advice and support.



Finally, take a moment to plan for next season. Order equipment or frames now to avoid spring shortages and consider sowing pollinator-friendly plants for early forage. By acting now, you're not just protecting your bees through winter but setting them up for a thriving 2026. Let's keep Huntingdonshire buzzing!

Join us on 13th September from 2:00pm at the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, for a Members' Workshop where we'll dive deeper into these winter preparation topics and share ideas with fellow beekeepers. Attendance is free, and the workshop follows our Honey Extraction event, where we'd love to have volunteers—come lend a hand!

HBKA News Round-Up

Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Apiary Upgrade

A significant upgrade is underway at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, with a special focus on enhancing the visitor experience. Funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and capital budgets, the £2.9m investment will deliver wide-ranging improvements to the park's 150 acres of open grassland, woodlands and lakes. As well as enhancing the natural habitat the redevelopment will expand car parking facilities, improve accessibility by resurfacing footpaths, building new toilets and changing places and expanding the Countryside Centre with café, dedicated community spaces and indoor and outdoor seating. You can find out more by visiting the website ([Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Investment](#)) or by using your phone and click on the QR code in the picture.



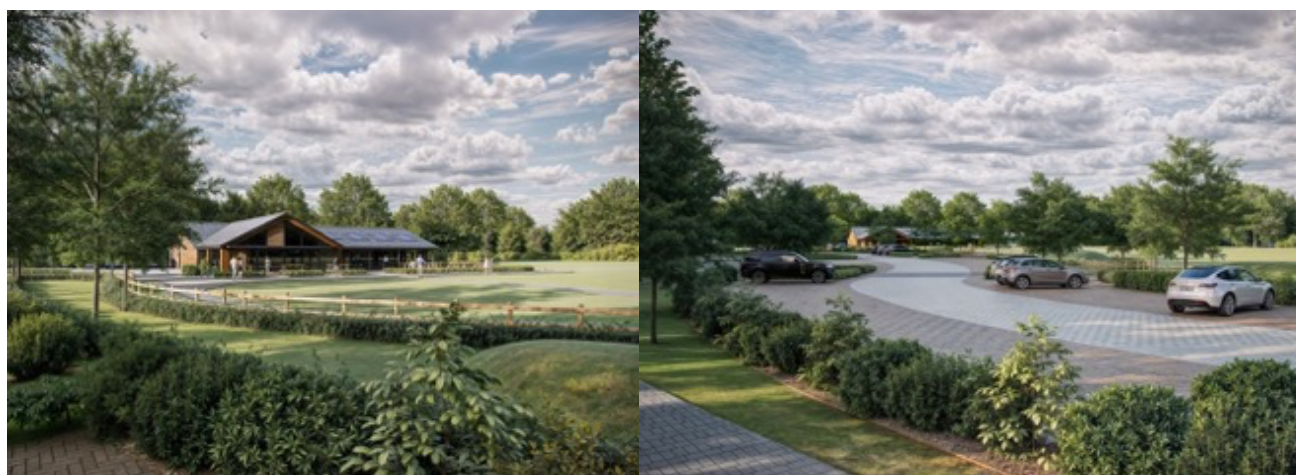
We aim to take advantage of this wonderful redevelopment of the Park by making improvements to the apiary which we hope will future proof our facilities. Over the next six months, our priority is to install water and electricity to

improve amenities and safety for all who use the apiary. Looking further ahead, we aspire to create a dedicated honey extraction room—this versatile space could also serve as a venue for educational events and a range of bee-related activities.

To facilitate these improvements, we plan to lay a concrete slab, which will provide the foundation for future expansion. Thanks to prudent management, we have secured funds to cover the initial utilities upgrade, and we are actively seeking additional grants to help bring our long-term vision to life. If any of our members have ideas for fund raising or are aware of grant opportunities please email us here at <mailto:newsletter@huntsbka.org.uk>.

Close collaboration with the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Project Team will ensure these upgrades are completed efficiently, with ongoing updates provided to keep everyone informed. The HBKA Project Group—Helen Swain, Helen Pizzie, Jackie Taylor-Baldwin, and Karen Sutherland—will be leading this initiative.

Despite the forthcoming works, we aim to maintain "business as usual" at both the Park and the apiary. Since much of the upgrade activity will take place over the winter months, we anticipate minimal disruption to members and visitors. More detailed information and progress reports will be shared as the project advances.



Green Flag Award 2025/2026



Hinchingsbrooke Country Park has been awarded the Green Flag Award, an international recognition for well-managed parks and green spaces. This is the seventh consecutive year the park has received the award. The award celebrates the park's excellent management and its welcoming, accessible environment for visitors. As part of the assessment the judges visited the apiary and were notably impressed, departing with jars of our recently extracted honey.

Honey Show Call for Entries

We're excited for the upcoming Honey Show on the 28th of September at The Raptor Foundation, The Heath, St Ives Road, Woodhurst, Huntingdon, PE28 3BT and encourage all members to submit entries! Chrissie, our events secretary, will soon share a special bonus newsletter with full details on classes and requirements. A Zoom meeting will be held on the 28th August at 7pm to discuss what's needed and answer your questions. This year, we welcome entries from beekeepers' families with kids' craft classes featuring prizes, plus novice classes for beginners. Check the members' area on our website for more information and inspiring photos – you can click the link here for quick access [HBKA Honey Show 2025](#).



The link for the Zoom call on the 28th August can be accessed by clicking on this shortcut. [Honey Show Zoom Meeting](#)

HBKA out and about in our communities



Every year we get asked by various community groups to come and talk about bees! Recent opportunities to educate have included several talks at schools and Brownie groups. Our Chair has also been on the radio. On the 12th May Helen did a spot on Huntingdon Community Radio (you can listen here [Huntingdon Community Radio - Helen Bee Spot](#) – about 6mins into the clip) and obviously went down a treat as they have invited her back on November 6th to talk about Pollinators and Solitary Bees. Helen also featured in a session at the Norris Museum in St Ives on the 1st May.

We are very grateful to our members for giving of their time to encourage youngsters and spread the word in our communities. And always looking for willing volunteers. See the WhatsApp group for updates on our visits and the positive impact we're making. There is a PowerPoint presentation, demo hive and other resources available if you get the opportunity to do visits!

Swarm News – an update from our Swarm Co-Ordinator Peter Gould

“This year has been quite a busy one for swarms, I have not got any statistics but from mid-April onwards there has been a steady flow of reports of swarms, some easy to collect, some not. Firstly, many thanks to everyone who has been able to collect a swarm, either for their own use or to donate to someone else; and a particular thanks to those who went to inspect and then found they were bumblebees or wasps! One point that I should make is



even if you tell the bees to behave themselves and wait to be collected, they do not always wait so several times the swarm had departed before the collector was able to get there, which is understandable if they are working and can't get away till 5.30 or 6.00.

The "WhatsApp" is very useful: I normally contact members who are near the location of the swarm but failing that I put it on the app and it is nearly always followed up by one of our members, so if you need a swarm please get connected to the app.

Swarms finished quite early this year - normally they finish once lupins have finished flowering - but I did get two calls yesterday, one about bees in the roof and one about bees in a chimney pot. I am afraid I had to say we could not help in either case.

This is my last year of sorting out swarms and collectors: next year Tony Shepherd will take over; I will be in the background to help if needed.



Note from the Chair: On behalf of all the HBKA we would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter for his valuable volunteering over the years. Tony – thank you for stepping into these big shoes and we offer our support to you as you pick up the swarm baton!

Honey Extraction Day

Our bees have been very busy this season and after our first extraction day of the season in we managed to jar around 132lbs of honey which is being sold in the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Cafe. We have a further extraction day planned for 13th September and would love for you to come on down and get stuck in! We have great fun at these sessions and it's a fab opportunity to swap stories and contribute. We will be in the Countryside Centre from 9am until 1pm – bring an apron and remember to wear clothes you don't mind getting a bit sticky!



HBKA Summer BBQ

The sun shone on 12th July for the summer BBQ hosted by Paul and Stuart. We offer very grateful thanks to both them and their families for a fantastic afternoon. The food was superb, the company convivial and all agreed it was the best yet!



From Our HBKA Archives

Did you know that on our HBKA Website we have newsletters going back as far as 2008 containing a veritable treasure chest of interesting snippets from the past! You can access them here [Newsletter Archives](#)

Trawling through the archives this caught my eye from September 2008! Peter Barker – a committee member from then wrote...

BEES NEED WATER!

“I have been aware for a number of years that in addition to collecting pollen and nectar bees also need to bring water into the hive. Perceived wisdom has it that this is particularly important in spells of hot weather. Over the years I have from time to time sought to provide my bees with a tray of water whenever I judged it to be necessary. I usually placed a piece of towelling into the water and draped it over the side of the dish to assist the bees to obtain the water. I have never observed bees taking water from this set up. This year I have seen bees taking water from a bird feeder/bath which we have set up on a patio in the back garden (pictures). We have spent many interesting times watching birds visiting this for water. Now we are also able to watch the bees. The fact that this is happening quite often this year is a bit of a puzzle since it seems to have been raining every other day this summer and you would not think that there was any shortage of water”.



The Wider World of Bees...

Bee Base for Healthy Bees



🐝 Have you heard about Bee Base? It's a valuable online hub designed for beekeepers by the National Bee Unit (part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency). By signing up, you'll get access to loads of info on bee health, disease control, and top tips for managing your hives. Plus, Bee Base sends out alerts on disease outbreaks and other threats, so you can stay one step ahead and keep your bees

buzzing happily. You just need to go into the NBU website and register your hives.

Knowing the distribution of beekeepers and their apiaries across the country helps the NBU effectively monitor and control the spread of serious honey bee pests and diseases, as well as provide up-to-date information in keeping bees healthy and productive. By registering on Bee Base, you'll be playing a very important part in helping to maintain and sustain honey bees for the future. 🌻

Register by using this link [BeeBase](#)

As an example of the valuable information provided by the NBU – this alert was received very recently.

“Over the last few days during routine inspections, we have observed honey bee colonies that are extremely short of food stores. We urge beekeepers to check the levels of food stores in colonies and monitor closely, particularly if apiaries have not been visited for some time or if a honey crop has recently been removed. Colonies need to be checked because they can succumb to starvation very quickly.



In addition, in many areas wasps are very populous and we have witnessed lots of beekeepers across the regions who are losing colonies to wasp attack. Please read our [fact sheet on wasps](#) for advice about how to prevent wasp related losses

Feed can be prepared from refined white sugar and water mixed at a 2:1 ratio, or ready mixed syrups may be acquired from beekeeping equipment suppliers. For more information on how to

make a sugar syrup and feed bees, please read our best practice guidance: [NBU best practice guideline for sugar feeding of honey bees](#).

If you have any questions, please contact your local Inspector. Contact details can be found at <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/contact-us/>.

Suffolk Bee Keepers Association Conference Day



The Suffolk Bee Keepers Association are holding a Conference Day on Saturday 6th September 9.30am to 4.00pm. The venue is the Great Barton Community Centre, Elms Close, Bury St. Edmunds, IP31 2NR. Sessions will include 'Nectar: What's Best for Bees'; 'Do Beekeepers Make Effective Use of Varroa Treatments'; 'What is Honey Bee Immunity, and Does it Matter?' and 'The Winter's Tale: fat bees and their importance'. Cost is £25 including lunch. To register use this link and for further

information contact [Suffolk Beekeepers Association Conference Queries](#)

[Registration Link](#) (Booking closes 23rd August 2025)

Problem Corner

We would love to share your problems and solutions. If you have something from your hives or beekeeping worth sharing email us using this quick link <mailto:newsletter@huntsbka.org.uk>

Bee Stings & Safety

One of our associates had a frightening experience this summer which she is allowing us to share as a useful reminder (even for the most experienced beekeepers) that we should always be mindful of our safety (and the safety of others who are in close proximity to our bees). She has happily fully recovered but sadly has had to rehome her colonies. The key point - where possible work with a partner and if you suspect any severe reaction might be possible carry an EpiPen.



She writes...

“In early June, I went to lock my bees in at about 9pm as my neighbour needed to do some work on his fence near to the hive the next morning. As I worked, I suddenly discovered that there was a bee inside my suit which stung my face! I have no clue as to how it got inside as I am always very meticulous about fastening myself up well. I then realised that there were numerous bees inside and I was being stung all over. I dashed up the garden to call my husband for help but within a minute or so I was unconscious on the lawn. My husband called 999 and a crew were dispatched and Magpas sent out. Meanwhile, the call handler talked my husband through the process of mouth to mouth resuscitation as I was no longer breathing due to an anaphylactic shock. Following the arrival of the paramedics, administration of many drugs, oxygen, the taking of blood tests, ECGs etc, I was taken to hospital where I eventually became conscious and realised what had happened and how lucky I was to be alive.

Due to the care of my husband, the ambulance service, Magpas and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, I have fully recovered and am back to normal fitness. Sadly I am no longer able to keep bees!!

I have often attended my bees when I have been on my own in the house and garden but I do know for sure that, if I had been on my own that evening, I would have died. I was unconscious on the lawn with in about a minute and a half.

I just want other people to know what happened so that they might avoid a similar thing happening to themselves.”

So, a reminder on safety tips when working your hives...



1. Always Wear Protective Gear: Use a full beekeeping suit, including a veiled helmet, gloves, and closed-toe calf/knee length boots to minimize exposed skin. Double check your zips.

2. Use a Smoker: Apply cool smoke to the hive entrance and frames to calm bees and reduce defensive behaviour.

3. Work During Optimal Times: Inspect hives during mild weather (mid-morning to early afternoon) when bees are less agitated and most are foraging.

4. Move Slowly and Deliberately: Avoid sudden movements or vibrations that could alarm bees; handle frames gently.

5. Keep Equipment Clean: Regularly clean suits, gloves, and tools to remove alarm pheromones that might trigger defensive responses.

6. Stay Calm: Maintain a calm demeanour, as bees can sense stress or agitation through quick movements or sweat.

7. Avoid Strong Scents: Refrain from using perfumes, colognes, or strongly scented lotions that may attract or irritate bees.

8. Check for Allergies: Ensure you're not allergic to bee stings; keep an epinephrine auto-injector nearby if you are. Think about carrying Antihistamine tablets as part of your kit.

9. Inspect Hives Strategically: Open hives only when necessary and avoid prolonged exposure to reduce bee agitation. Have a plan on what you need to do before you open the hive.





10. Maintain Hive Health: Healthy colonies are less likely to be defensive; monitor for disease, pests, and adequate food stores.

11. Work with a Partner: Have someone nearby to assist or intervene in case of an emergency or aggressive bee behaviour.

12. Know Escape Routes: Plan an exit strategy from the apiary in case bees become overly aggressive.

Dates for your diary...

Date	Time	Event
28 th August	7.00pm	Q&A Zoom session on Honey Show classes
23 rd August	2pm-5pm	Bee Tea hosted by Jackie Taylor-Baldwin, Ramsey
6 th September	9.30am-4.00pm	Suffolk Bee Keepers Association Conference Day Great Barton Community Centre, Elms Close Bury St. Edmunds, IP31 2NR, Suffolk
13 th September	9am-1pm	Honey Extraction (HCP Countryside Centre, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB) Bring an apron and clothes you don't mind getting sticky!
13 th September	2pm-3.30pm	Winter Preparation Workshop (see above address)
28 th September	12pm-4pm	Honey Show (The Raptor Foundation, The Heath, St Ives Road, Woodhurst, Huntingdon, PE28 3BT)
23 rd -25 th October		National Honey Show (Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey)
18 th January	9am onwards	Apiary Clean and Maintenance Day (hot drinks and cake provided)
17 th -19 th April		BBKA Spring Convention (Harper Adams University, Telford)

Useful Resources



1. Preparing honey bee colonies for winter. National Bee Unit. June 2024
https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_19_Preparing_your_hives_for_winter.pdf
2. Feeding bees-sugar. National Bee Unit. April 2025
<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/resources-for-beekeepers/leaflets-guides-and-videos/best-practice-guidelines>
3. Feeding Bees – Water. National Bee Unit. April 2025
https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Best_practice_guidelines/BPG_7b_Feeding_Bees_-_water.pdf
4. Feeding Bees – Pollen and Substitutes. National Bee Unit. April 2025
https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Best_practice_guidelines/BPG_7c_Feeding_Bees_-_pollen_and_substitutes.pdf

On the lighter side...

If you have a favourite honey recipe/story/joke or puzzle, please share by emailing it to <mailto:newsletter@huntsbka.org.uk>. We would also love your bee photos!

Oh Honey, Honey!



Hot Honey is the ‘must have’ condiment of the moment. It’s in vogue and featured on the menu in all the hip and happening eateries! Drizzle on pizza, fried chicken, halloumi and just about anything its quite addictive with a kick both fiery and sweet. Here is a simple, easy to make at home guide...

- 200g honey
- 1 jalapeno chilli, finely sliced
- 1 small or ½ medium-large red chilli, finely sliced (if you don’t have fresh chillies to hand you can substitute with 2 teaspoons of red pepper flakes)
- 1 tbs apple cider vinegar (or red wine vinegar)

Step 1. Add the honey and chilli to a saucepan and heat on a low heat. Bring up to a simmer, then turn the heat off. Stir in the vinegar

Step 2. Let the honey sit for 10-15 minutes. Taste test and see if it’s at your desired spice level. If you don’t want it to get any hotter, strain the honey through a clean sieve into a clean jar. Alternatively, leave the chilli in if you’re happy for it to get a bit hotter

Step 3. As we’re using fresh chillies, store in the fridge and use within a couple of weeks

Tip: If it’s too spicy for your taste add more honey!





Honey Bee Word Search



Find the word in the puzzle.
Words can go in any direction.

C X P M D O P S O R P I Q Y O
F O A I D G P X R P O N K G L
R B L W B Y E N O H L S X E B
N P V O S X J E J D L E T B M
N P D R N E J H A J I C C P O
B W B J I Y E M I S N T O M C
Z S J T H H O B N B A H B B Y
P O L L E N L R U E T M U Y E
R E P E E K E E B R E Z T N N
B N O B S U D W R E Z U O Z O
M R E T H I V E C K F R Q V H
R U I C B L W O M R D Z U I M
P N Z W T O M A D O J Q Q C M
G K J Y L A A U R W R A O T W
E J O F A D R E L G G A W U S

BEEKEEPER

QUEEN

WORKER

DRONE

HIVE

COLONY

POLLINATE

BUZZ

HONEY

BEESWAX

HONEYCOMB

FLOWER

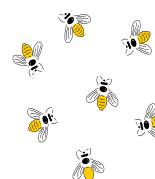
POLLEN

NECTAR

INSECT

STING

WAGGLE



Volunteer

*Please think about
volunteering 2-3 hours of your
time to help keep the HBKA
vibrant and valuable to all*



- *Weekly apiary inspections*
- *Honey extraction*
- *Apiary tidy up*
- *Hosting a bee tea*

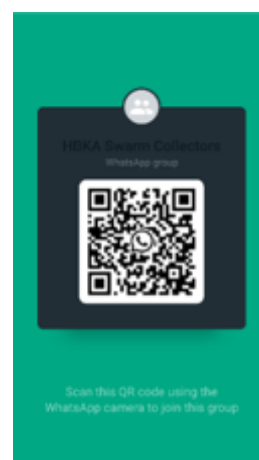
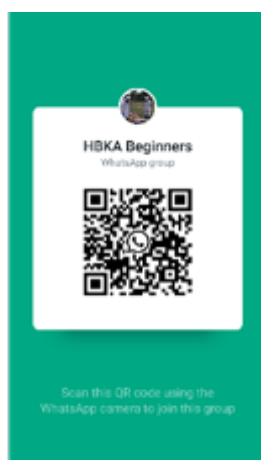
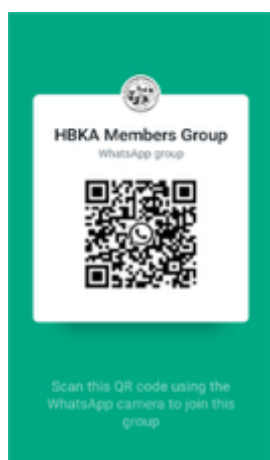
Stay Connected

There are numerous ways you can stay in touch with what's happening in the HBKA. We have this newsletter which we send out by email (and hope to make available digitally in the near future); we have our website where you can find a treasure trove of resources [HBKA Website](#) and we have our WhatsApp groups where you can find instant news and views from your fellow members. There are some great chats as members swap ideas and thoughts on everything from wasp control to winter storage bags! We have a general members group, one dedicated to swarms and another for our beginners. Scan the QR codes or use the links provided. Please note that your phone number will be visible to other members of the HBKA Members Group.

[**HBKA Members Group WhatsApp**](#)

[**HBKA Beginners Group WhatsApp**](#)

[**HBKA Swarms WhatsApp**](#)



**FREE
ADMISSION**



Honey Show



**Sunday
28th September 2025**



at

**The Raptor Foundation,
The Heath, St Ives Road, Woodhurst,
Huntingdon, PE28 3BT**

12pm to 4pm



Something for everyone !

- ❖ Ask about bees and beekeeping
- ❖ Learn about bees and how they live
- ❖ Children's games and prizes plus Raffle
- ❖ Have a look inside our demonstration hive
- ❖ Look at bees and pollen under the microscope
- ❖ Examine displays of honey, wax and other exhibits
- ❖ Honey for Sale – try our local honey



Organised by Huntingdonshire Beekeepers Association
www.huntsbka.org.uk