

The BUZZ



Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Bee Keepers' Association



Photo: Steve Hamilton

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Walk Away Splits

Want to increase your hive numbers? How to do a walk away split.



The Dilley Cup

Our highest honour for overall 'Best in Show'. Discover its history and donor.



Bee Bread: The Hidden Superfood Of The Hive

What is Bee Bread and what is its role in our hives. Explore how its made and its use beyond bees.



A Message From Our Chair - Helen Swain



chair@huntsbka.org.uk

The beekeeping season has arrived early this year. The bees are actively collecting the sudden abundance of nectar due to the recent warm weather and are storing it in the hive wherever they can find space. If you haven't yet put supers on your hives, the bees may backfill the brood area, preventing the queen from laying, triggering swarming. Some of our members have already seen swarms so now is the time to inspect your hives for queen cells, available brood space and to add queen excluders and supers if you haven't already done so. At the apiary, we have added 2 supers per hive as the nectar flow is so strong; hopefully this will delay their urge to swarm.

Its good to be prepared in advance to manage swarming. Simple swarming methods can be found in the members area of the website Simple Swarm Control Methods - Huntingdonshire Beekeepers' Association. You can also watch this HBKA online tutorial on the nucleus swarm control method (starts 6 minutes in).

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GwbQTdJLwiSWV7LQ8_XiZWWa6T-ENxmK/view?usp=drive_link

If you want to help collect swarms or want a swarm yourself, don't forget to join the Swarm WhatsApp group and for support and advice, our General and Beginners WhatsApp groups are the place to go.

BREAKING NEWS

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet is here!



Unfortunately March brought the news that the YLAH has been found in Huntingdonshire, specifically Monks Wood, near Sawtry. Jack Silbberad, our Regional Bee Inspector recovered 20 dead YLAHs from a private property. This suggests there is was a 2025 nest nearby.

Members are being asked to stay vigilant, deploy traps and spread the word. If there are sightings encourage people to report via the Asian Hornet Watch app. We have deployed around 12 traps to members and are in the process of purchasing more. If you would like to deploy a trap for HBKA and can commit to checking it daily, please contact chair@huntsbka.org.uk. Alternatively you can make or buy your own. See last month's newsletter for hints. We hope to issue further guidance soon. Helen Swain, our YLAH Co-ordinator, is attending a meeting of Co-ordinators from all the surrounding counties beekeeping associations and the NBU. We will provide more information after this session.

We are currently compiling a map of where we have traps deployed in Huntingdonshire. If you have a trap please also enter its details on Bee Base, which allows the NBU to see what coverage we have in particular areas. You can do this by logging into Bee Base and going to the section named 'My Apiaries'. Here you can enter the type of trap you have (selective or monitoring).



We are pleased to announce that Steve Goddard will present his extensive research on the YLAH in France at our AGM on the 23rd May.

Bee Bread: The Hidden Superfood of the Hive

If honey is the sweet star of the hive, bee bread is its unsung hero—a protein-packed powerhouse that keeps the colony running smoothly. Ask any seasoned beekeeper and they'll tell you: without good bee bread, there are no strong bees. So what exactly is this mysterious substance tucked away in those hexagonal cells?

What Is Bee Bread?

Bee bread is fermented pollen, created and stored by honeybees as their primary source of protein, vitamins, and minerals. Unlike raw pollen collected on a bee's legs, bee bread has gone through a natural transformation that makes it more digestible, longer-lasting, and nutrient-rich. Think of it as the bees' version of sourdough—fermented, preserved, and bursting with bioavailable goodness.



How It's Made

The process starts when foragers return to the hive with pollen pellets tightly packed on their hind legs. Nurse bees take over from there, pressing the pollen into empty comb cells and adding a splash of nectar or honey along with a drizzle of bee saliva and enzymes. This mixture doesn't just sit there—it ferments. Lactic acid bacteria from the bees' bodies kickstart fermentation, lowering the pH and preventing spoilage. In about two weeks, the once-dry pollen turns into a moist, slightly tangy paste that's stable and ready to use—bee bread!

What It's Used For

Bee bread is mainly eaten by nurse bees, who need high-quality protein for producing royal jelly and feeding brood. It's the building block of bee development—larvae can't grow without it. During times when flowers are scarce and fresh pollen isn't coming in, the colony dips into its bee bread stores to keep going.

For beekeepers, healthy bee bread reserves are a sign of a strong, well-nourished hive. Colonies with abundant stores tend to overwinter better and resist disease more effectively.



Photo credit: Josh Pollen

Types and Variations

Not all bee bread is created equal. Its colour, flavour, and nutrient profile change depending on what flowers the pollen came from. In spring, you might find pale yellow cells packed with willow or dandelion pollen, while late-summer bee bread can be almost burgundy from heather or chestnut sources. Mixed-flower bee bread—essentially a wild 'pollen cocktail'—is common in diverse foraging areas.

How It's Stored and How Long It Lasts

One of the wonders of bee bread is how well it keeps. Thanks to fermentation and honey's natural antimicrobial properties, bee bread can stay fresh in sealed comb for months, even through winter. The low moisture content and acidic environment deter mould and bacteria.

Bees usually seal old stores with a thin wax layer, but even uncovered, bee bread remains usable for a long time as long as the hive stays dry and temperate. Once removed from the comb, however, it's best used quickly or refrigerated to preserve nutrients.

In the Apiary and Beyond

Some beekeepers harvest bee bread for human use—it's sold as a health supplement for its amino acids, enzymes, and probiotics. But most prefer to leave it where it belongs: in the hive, fuelling the next generation of bees.

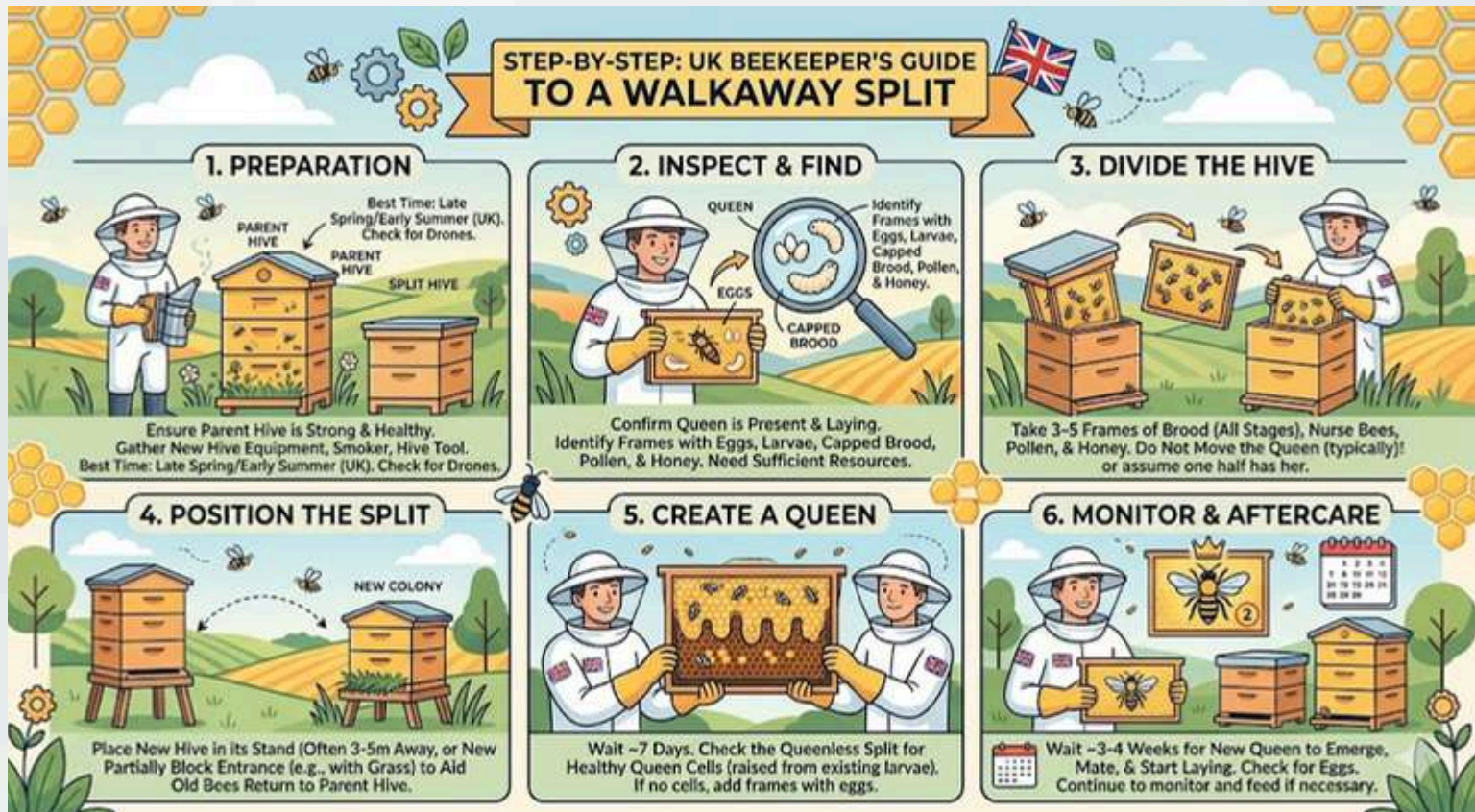


Photo credit: Edinburgh Honey Co.

Walkaway Split Guide

I completed my first walkaway split recently. This simple method lets you increase your hive numbers without worrying about where the queen ends up. With a double brood setup where the queen is laying in both boxes, you can lift one box onto a new floor in a different spot. After 5-7 days, you'll know which half has the queen—one will show fresh eggs, the other will be building queen cells.

This guide walks through each stage of the process so you know what to expect and how to support your bees as they grow.



- Step 1: Preparation: The best time for a split is late spring to early summer in the UK. Ensure your original colony is robust and healthy, and have your new hive equipment ready before you begin.
- Step 2: Inspect & Find: Locate the frames containing eggs, larvae, and capped brood. It is crucial to confirm that your original queen is active and present to ensure a smooth split.
- Step 3: Divide the Hive: Create the new split by taking several frames of brood at all stages, nurse bees, and honey. Standard practice is to leave the old queen in the original hive, moving only the resources but it will still work if your queen is moved.
- Step 4: Position the Split: Move the new hive to its new location. In a true "walkaway," this can be as little as three to five meters away. The visual shows using grass to partially block the new entrance, which helps the old bees reorient.
- Step 5: Create a Queen: After about a week, inspect the new, queenless split. The bees should have started raising new queen cells from the existing larvae you provided. If you split without knowing where your queen is you may need to inspect both boxes.
- Step 6: Monitor & Aftercare: Wait several weeks for the new queen to emerge, mate, and begin laying. Keep a close eye on both hives, feeding them as necessary to support their growth.

When We Were Young...

Our association was formed in 1882 which means we are 144 years old! The following paragraphs are reproduced with permission from the pages of the British Bee Journals at which time included lengthy accounts of the activities of the county associations. Ours is one of twelve of those Associations formed in 1882. Most are written by our founder - Mr Charles Nettleship White, a schoolmaster from Somersham.

The following paragraphs are reproduced with permission from the pages of the British Bee Journal of a hundred years ago at which time it included lengthy accounts of the activities of the county Association. Ours is one of twelve of those Associations founded in 1882.

Vol. 10, p. 164
1 December 1882

ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVING BEEKEEPING

After a great deal of correspondence and deliberation, the officers of the British Bee Journal Association for 1882, have decided to hold a meeting on the 1st of December next, at the residence of Mr. C. W. White, at Somersham, in the county of Northampton.

The first meeting, on the 1st of December, will be held in the Town Hall, Northampton, kindly placed at my disposal for the purpose of the meeting, and in the afternoon, at 4 o'clock, the meeting will take place at the residence of Mr. C. W. White, at Somersham, in the county of Northampton, at which the meeting will take place, and it is hoped that the meeting will be well attended, and that the objects of the Association will be fully carried out.

The following list of names of those gentlemen who have, by their efforts, rendered aid in the efforts of the Association, is published for the information of the members of the Association, and it is hoped that a number of the members of the Association will be present at the meeting, and that the objects of the Association will be fully carried out.

I believe it is possible to improve the beekeeping in the county of Northampton, and it is hoped that the meeting will be well attended, and that the objects of the Association will be fully carried out.

Vol. 10, p. 168
1 January 1883

THE NORTHAMPTON ASSOCIATION

The meeting, on the 1st of December, was held in the Town Hall, Northampton, for the purpose of the Association for 1882. The objects of the Association, as stated in the bye-laws, are to improve the beekeeping in the county of Northampton, and to promote the interests of the beekeepers in the county.

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Our First HBKA Officers

In the early days of the HBKA whilst there was a President and a Chair, the real drive behind the association was the Honorary Secretary. The President in many respects was a figurehead and important sponsor and the Chair often rotated amongst the several Vice Presidents on the Committee.

Mr Charles Nettleship White - HBKA Founder & First Honorary Secretary

Charles Nettleship White can rightly be credited as the founder of the HBKA (and CBKA). He was born on 16 November 1855 at Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, and trained for the teaching profession at Carnarvon College. After marrying Miss Mary Jane Selvage of Hainton, Lincolnshire in 1878, he held the post of schoolmaster at Tealby, Lincolnshire, before moving to Somersham, Huntingdonshire, where he spent eighteen formative years. It was here that his passion for beekeeping truly flourished. From the archives it seems his passion was to extend the benefits of beekeeping to the working class of the day. Many of the early reports reflect his frustration that the value of the working class beekeeper is not being appropriately recognised and appreciated. He said in 1883 "I hope to get all the cottagers into our Association. There is plenty of scope for the Association in this neighbourhood, and I hope before the autumn much will be accomplished",

White was instrumental in founding both the Cambridgeshire and the Huntingdonshire Beekeepers' Associations – a remarkable double legacy that still resonates today. He served as Honorary Secretary of each: ten years for the Cambridgeshire association and an extraordinary twenty-one years for the Huntingdonshire association, giving up only when his growing responsibilities made it impossible to continue.

A prolific and respected writer on the subject of bees, he contributed articles to the British Bee Journal under the nom de plume "Ivo," and was also the author of a book on bees 'The Pleasure of Beekeeping'. He was a long-standing member of the British Beekeepers' Association (B.B.K.A.), and the early reports of our Association published in the British Bee Journal stand as a testament to his dedication to putting Huntingdonshire beekeeping on the map.

In 1895, the community of Somersham recognised his outstanding contribution to local life by presenting him with a gold watch and a testimonial in appreciation of his services to the town and neighbourhood. His obituary reads 'Mr White was a man of great ability, activity and straightforwardness of purpose. Into whatever movement he entered he threw himself with heart and soul, and his interests were so varied, and extended in so many directions, that he became well known over a wide district, and made many friends in all classes of society. And an excellent friend he was'.

After leaving Somersham in 1897 to become Master of St. Neots Union Workhouse, he continued his involvement with the beekeeping community. He attended the B.B.K.A. conversazione in October 1913, where he spoke warmly of meeting old friends and making new ones among fellow beekeepers – one of his last public appearances before his sudden death at his residence in St. Neots on 18 November 1913.

C. N. White was, in the truest sense, the energetic founder of organised beekeeping in Huntingdonshire. Our Association owes its origins to his tireless enthusiasm, and his legacy endures in every meeting held and every hive tended across the county to this day.



Our First HBKA Officers (cont...)

John Montagu, 7th Earl of Sandwich - HBKA First President



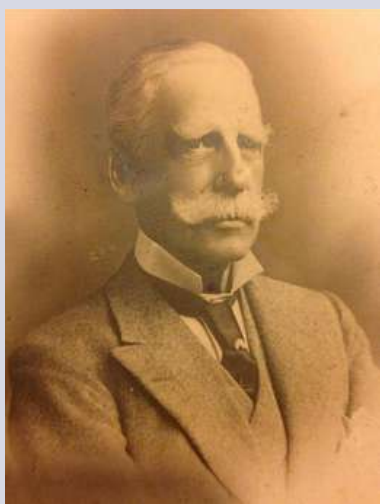
John Montagu, 7th Earl of Sandwich (full name: John William Montagu, PC; born November 8, 1811 – died March 3, 1884), was a prominent British peer, Conservative politician, and landowner closely associated with Huntingdonshire (now part of Cambridgeshire).

He succeeded to the earldom in 1818 and was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He served as Member of Parliament for Huntingdonshire in the 1820s–1830s era, held the position of Lord Lieutenant of Huntingdonshire from 1841 until his death in 1884, and was involved in local militia affairs (rising to Colonel and later Honorary Colonel). As a major local figure based at Hinchingsbrooke House, he supported various community and charitable initiatives in the region.

In 1884, he became the first President of the Huntingdon Beekeepers Association. This role reflected his patronage of rural and agricultural interests in Huntingdonshire, where societies such as ours often relied on aristocratic support for establishment and credibility.

His presidency was brief, however, as he died just months later in March 1884 at age 72. He was succeeded by his son, Edward George Henry Montagu, as 8th Earl.

Sir Arthur Wellington Marshall - HBKA First Chair



On November 30th, 1882, A.W. Marshall, Esq., chaired the inaugural meeting of the county Bee-keepers' Association in Huntingdon's Town Hall. By 1903 he was Colonel Sir Arthur W. Marshall, chairing the Huntingdonshire Beekeepers Association and hosting its honey show at Buckden Towers. He held several committee positions during his time with the HBKA including Treasurer.

Born in 1841, Sir Arthur co-owned Marshall's Brewery and married into a local banking family. His father, James Marshall, provided both the brewery and Buckden Towers. He rose to Lt-Colonel in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and, after resigning in 1886, was allowed to keep his rank and uniform as Honorary Colonel. He was knighted in 1898. He was very active in local politics, being President of the Huntingdon & Godmanchester Conservative Association.

Sir Arthur later became Deputy Lieutenant of Huntingdonshire, commanded the Huntingdonshire militia, served as High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire & Huntingdon in 1890, and was mayor three times. In 1893, he was elected the first president of the Diddington and Buckden Horticultural Society and welcomed their first show to the Towers' grounds.

At the inaugural meeting Sir Arthur was quoted as saying that though he was not a practical bee-keeper himself, he felt a very great interest in the subject of bee-keeping, and he was sure that a Bee-keepers' Association would do good work in the county. Our records report him as saying:

'To those who kept bees partly for profit and partly for pleasure, the interest of watching these busy and clever insects, and sometimes tasting of their sweets, was very great indeed; but to the agricultural labourer and the cottager there was a much greater benefit. His moral and intellectual status would be greatly heightened, whilst pecuniarily he would benefit largely. He thought that beekeeping would greatly tend to counteract the atheism and socialism that was spreading so much among this class through the publication of cheap literature.'

Photograph of Sir Arthur used with permission of the Marshall family

The Dilley Cup

A short history...

Awarded each year to the HBKA member awarded most points in the Honey Show, the Dilley Cup is the foremost prize on offer to our members. But have you ever wondered what the history is of this splendid silver trophy? In January 1926 Mr (later Sir) Arthur Dilley offered the then HBKA Committee 'either £5 or a cup' as prize for members exhibiting at the annual shows. The Committee gratefully accepted the offer, decided upon a cup and The Dilley Cup was duly offered as a reward for the 'Best exhibit of honey put up in any class'. Only HBKA members would be eligible for the award. At this time the Association held at least 2 Shows per year and it was decided the Cup should be awarded to the best overall performer. If the points were found to be tied between two individuals then the Cup would be held for 6 months per person.

The very first winner of the Dilley Cup was a Mr E Hodson who went on to win the cup at least an astonishing 7 times between 1926 and 1948 (as far as the archives record). Mr Hodson seemed to be an active member of the HBKA in those early days, regularly attending meetings as a committee member and serving as our reoresentative to the BBKA. These days can be found proudly sitting on Sue Fancourt's shelf.



Sir Arthur Dilley (1854-1938) was a key figure in early 20th-century Huntingdonshire. Known for his work in local business, public life, and Conservative politics, he earned an MBE for his wartime service and was knighted in 1927. His lasting influence is reflected in community spaces like Dilley Hall. Sir Arthur was born and raised in Huntingdon and he married Elizabeth Ashton, also of Huntingdon settling to family life (3 sons) in Market Hill later splitting their time between a London home and CHeswick House in Huntingdon. Arthur did not forget education, health or leisure pursuits in his interests. He was President of the Literary and Scientific Institute and provided a bowling green for members. In 1927 he was also the oldest member of the Huntingdon Boat Club. In addition to being an active member of the HBKA he was a loyal supporter of Huntingdon library. He also sat on the Huntingdon Hospital Committee.

Update from the HBKA Apiary



The new season has begun!! It felt rather good to pull on the suit, boots and gloves and do our first inspection of the year at our apiary in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. We did pick the warmest day of the year so far so it was very hot work. Whilst we were working we had a considerable number of visitors given the Easter holidays and good weather so we were able to show a few frames off.

I'm pleased to report that all 4 of our colonies made it through the winter and were looking strong. All of our hives showed good quality brood, eggs and some surplus stores suggesting we got the feeding right over the winter months.

There was a lot of drone brood in at least two of our hives - is anyone else noticing this? I also noticed my own hive had a lot of drone brood at this first inspection point.

We moved the supers back on top and left three on double brood for now. We didn't see any queen cells but Helen's feeling is they cannot be that far off given the volume of bees we were seeing. We added two supers to three of the hives to create additional space down below.

With the apiary now at four hives we started to do a little reorganisation and hive 2 has started its slow journey to a new location in the apiary which will mean its easier to inspect and reduce congestion at the side nearest the emergency exit.

Within the Country Park, work is about to start on the extensive renovations so we are having to plan for the impact this will have on our bees. With the bottom car park being out of action we will need some help from the Rangers to move our bee equipment and water for the months to come. We are hoping that the ground works don't disturb our ladies but we have a contingency plan to move a couple of hives if we absolutely have no choice. If you are visiting the apiary in the coming weeks you will have to use the new car park which runs up behind the existing cafe.

Also a plea for some help - we need a few volunteers to help us make up some frames. We are out of brood frames in particular and some our existing stock is looking a bit sorry for itself. So if you have an hour or two to spare please let Helen know at chair@huntsbka.org.uk who can provide the materials. We can also plan a group frame making session if people prefer!

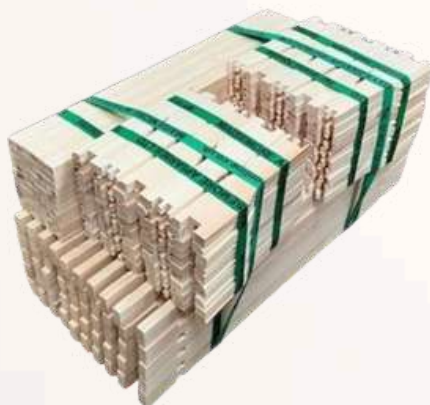
Help Needed

PLEASE!



Its the start of a new bee season and we have a number of small DIY jobs that need doing around our Apiary at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. We don't often ask for help from members but its at a point where its a bit beyond the regular volunteers. So please spare us a couple of hours to help with

- Cleaning the apiary smokers
- Repairing the mesh around the apiary
- Painting of the apiary gallery
- Making up some frames



We are also looking for an **Apiary Manager**. This role could be done by one or two individuals who are interested in furthering their beekeeping experience. The role requires approx. 6 hours a week (usually across two days) during the bee season and involves

- Working with our apiary volunteers to maintain a number of healthy colonies at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. This includes inspections and making decisions about what our bees need eg treatments/feeding etc
- Supervising a rota of volunteers to help with apiary work
- Doing our twice annual extractions (working with our team of volunteers)
- Conducting or delegating apiary visits, Adopt A hive and Bee Taster sessions
- Conducting or delegating our public demonstration sessions during the bee season (approx. 1-2 hours on a Sunday)

If you are interested in the apiary manager role and/or can spare a couple of hours please let us know at apiary@huntsbka.org.uk with a note on what you are happy to do. We will try and co-ordinate dates for the painting and frame-making if people prefer to do this as a group activity. For all activities, feel free to contact us for a chat if you need more information.

Ginger Beef Stir Fry

Prep and Cook Time

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 20 mins

This month one of my favourites and go to dishes. Quick and easy to prepare and always goes down well. For extra tender beef marinate before cooking. Serve with rice or noodles.

Ingredients

- 350 g (3/4 lb) sirloin/rump steak thinly sliced
- 5 tbsp neutral oil (I use sunflower oil)
- 1 large chunk of fresh ginger peeled and cut into thin matchsticks
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 medium onion peeled and chopped
- 1 thumb-sized piece ginger peeled and minced
- 3 cloves garlic peeled and minced
- 1 large head of broccoli cut into small florets
- 1 medium bunch spring onions/scallions chopped
- 150 g (1 packed cup) mangetout
- 1 tsp chilli flakes

Marinade:

- 1 tbsp Corn starch in slurry with 1 tbsp water
- 1 tbsp Sesame oil
- 1 tsp Baking soda
- 1 tbsp dark soy sauce

Sauce:

- 5 tbsp light soy sauce
- 2 tbsp oyster sauce
- 2 tbsp chinese rice wine
- 3 tbsp honey
- 2 tbsp cornflour/cornstarch mixed with 2 tbsp cold water

Method

- Marinate your beef with marinade ingredients (velveting). I try for 2-3 hours but 20 mins will do.
- Heat the oil until shimmering hot in a wok or large high-sided frying pan. Add the ginger that's been cut into matchsticks and fry for 2-3 minutes until golden and crispy.
- Scoop out of the pan with a slotted spoon and leave to drain on some kitchen paper.
- Carefully spoon out all but 1 tbsp of the oil (reserving the oil). Bring the temperature back to very hot again. Sprinkle the salt and pepper on the beef and fry, moving around a few times until browned (about 3-5 minutes). Spoon out with a slotted spoon and place in a bowl to rest.
- Add a little more oil if needed so you have around 2 tbsp of oil in the wok. Heat to a medium heat and add in the chopped onion. Fry for 2-3 minutes until just starting to soften.
- Add in the minced ginger and garlic and fry for a further 30 seconds, then add in the broccoli, spring onions, and mangetout. Stir fry for one minute, then mix together the sauce ingredients and add to the wok.
- Allow to bubble and thicken for one minute, then add the beef back in. Allow to heat through for a minute or two, then stir in the spinach and turn off the heat.
- Serve with boiled rice or noodles. Top with the crispy ginger matchsticks and a sprinkling of chilli flakes.



Nutritional Info (approximate per serving)

- Calories: 302kcal
- Fat: 24g (saturated 17g)
- Carbohydrates: 22g (sugars 11g)
- Protein: 4g
- Salt: 1313mg (approx.)

Tips:

1. I regularly swap the sirloin for rump steak and it works well.
2. Instead of broccoli/mangetout I regularly substitute peppers, baby corn, or whatever veg I have in the fridge
3. You may need to fry your beef in two batches - don't overfill your pan.

The Wider World OF BEES

In the The Wider World of Bees, we highlight UK information, updates and research that could influence your beekeeping. Whether adjusting habitats or refining varroa treatments, these stories offer actionable insights.

Bee Venom and Breast Cancer

First reported in 2020, but gaining some traction recently on social media, laboratory research has shown that honeybee venom, specifically its active component melittin, can destroy 100% of certain aggressive breast cancer cells—such as triple-negative and HER2-enriched types—within 60 minutes in a lab setting. The compound works by rapidly puncturing the cancer cell membranes and shutting down the chemical signaling pathways they need to replicate, all while showing minimal impact on healthy cells at specific concentrations. While these results are a significant breakthrough in preclinical studies, it is important to note that the research has not yet moved into human clinical trials; scientists are currently focusing on developing synthetic versions of melittin to ensure both human safety and the protection of bee populations.

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Save The Bees!



On 17 March 2026, a semi-truck carrying over 400 commercial honeybee hives overturned on Highway 230 near Crater Lake, Oregon spilling millions of bees down a steep embankment and creating a massive, "atomic" buzzing swarm. When the transport company reportedly

declined to recover the insects, local beekeeper Tristen Tartaglia ignited a massive community-led rescue effort via social media. Approximately 50 volunteers from across Oregon and California spent over a week in rugged, diesel-contaminated terrain, successfully saving roughly 200 colonies. Supported by a GoFundMe for new equipment, the surviving bees were relocated to local apiaries, turning a potential environmental disaster into a testament to grassroots conservation.

US Bee Losses

Honeybee populations are currently facing a "perfect storm" of stressors, leading to unprecedented colony losses in the United States, with commercial beekeepers reporting a record 62% loss between June 2024 and March 2025. This crisis is driven by the interaction of multiple factors, including Varroa mite infestations, habitat loss, pesticide exposure (including neonicotinoids), and nutritional stress from agricultural monocultures.

Bees on the TV



The BBC's My Garden of a Thousand Bees is a serene and intimate exploration of pollinator life, filmed during lockdown by wildlife cameraman Martin Dohrn in his own garden. It enthralled me with its close-up footage and quiet storytelling, revealing the hidden dramas and personalities of solitary bees without the heavy-handed narration common in some nature documentaries. The film feels deeply personal, a meditation on connection and observation, reminding us that extraordinary biodiversity can thrive even in the smallest spaces.

By contrast, National Geographic's Secrets of the Bees takes a grander, global approach, tracing the intricate social structures and survival strategies of honeybees across continents. Its cinematography is polished and sweeping, offering viewers a scientific and ecological lens rather than a personal one. Together, these films complement each other beautifully: the BBC piece draws us inward to observe individual lives in a garden ecosystem, while the National Geographic documentary expands our vision to the shared struggles and triumphs of bees worldwide.

MONTHLY TO DO'S

APRIL

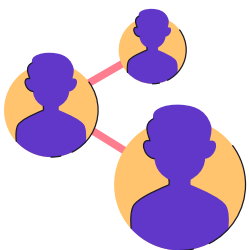
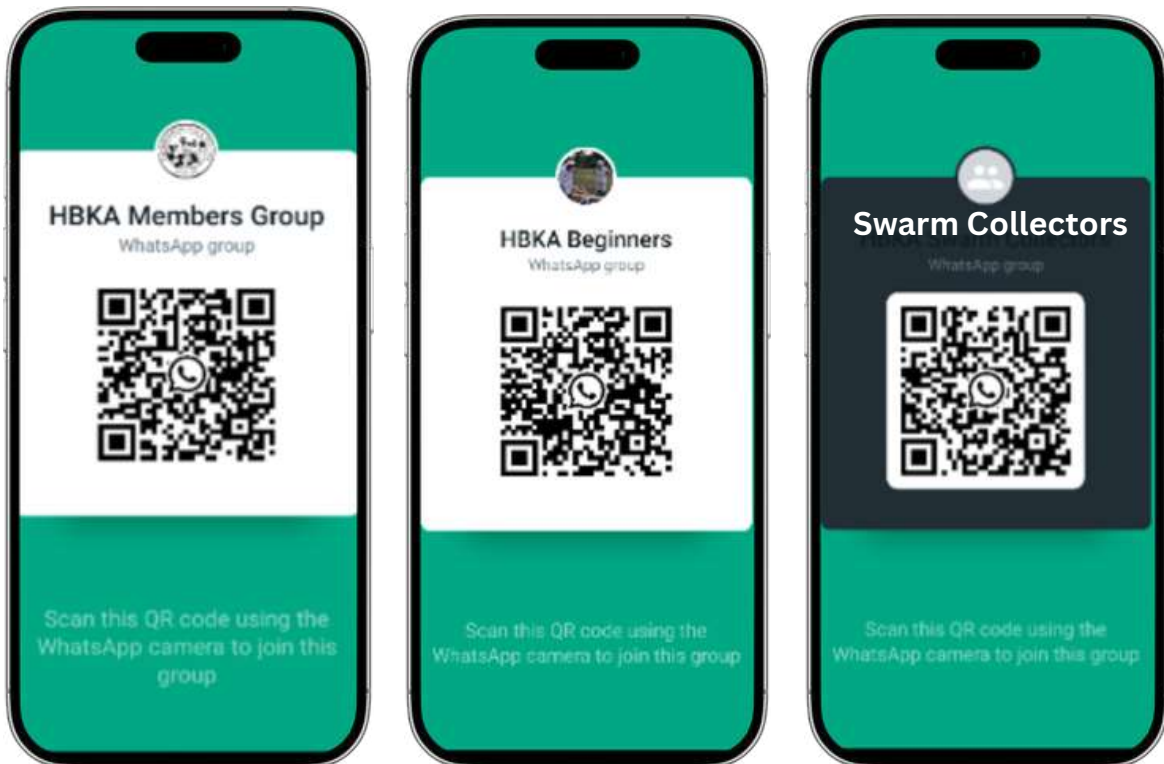
- Check colonies every 7–10 days, weather permitting, to assess brood, queen status, stores, and space.
- Watch closely for swarm signs, especially queen cups, charged queen cells, congestion, and fast brood expansion.
- Add a super when bees are covering most of the brood frames and forage is coming in well.
- Make sure each colony has enough food; heft hives regularly and feed if a colony feels light.
- Confirm the brood pattern is healthy and the queen is laying well.
- Keep an eye on varroa and carry out counts or management steps if needed.
- Prepare swarm control equipment and bait hives before colonies get too strong.
- Clean and tidy the apiary, including boxes, floors, stands, and paths.
- Replace damaged, mouldy, or very old frames as part of spring maintenance.
- Keep clear records of inspections, stores, queen status, swarm signs, and any actions taken.

SAVE THE DATE

Date/Time	Event
17th–19th April	BBKA 2026 Spring Convention, Harper Adams University, Shropshire
18th & 25th April	Beginners' Beekeeping Course, WI Institute Huntingdon
23rd May 10am – 4.00pm	HBKA AGM and Spring Workshop, WI Huntingdon (doors open 9.45am for coffee before our meeting starts)
13th –19th July	Bees' Needs Week
12 th September	Bee Tea hosted by Jackie & Ian Taylor Baldwin, Ramsey
26th September	Annual HBKA Honey Show, The Raptor Centre, St Ives

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.



Do you have news, photographs or information that would be good to share with your fellow beekeepers? Share top tips, ask questions or seen something interesting in your hives? Email us at newsletter@huntsbka.org.uk