



Mind The Gap!

The June Gap

How to help your hives navigate the June Gap (if it appears!)

Frame Management Tips

Keeping your hives healthy through regular frame management



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- The Asian Yellow Legged Hornet: Update from the front line
- Our 2026 AGM in summary
- Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus - a members experience
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A Message From Our Chair - Helen Swain



The exceptionally hot weather in May has now turned and June is much colder and wetter. If you have already harvested honey from your hives, ensure that your bees have enough stores to see them through these periods of bad weather when foraging is difficult. With large amounts of brood, they can eat through stores quickly and the June gap - when fewer plants are producing nectar - can mean that there is no forage available.

Thank you to all those who came to the AGM and workshop day last month and to the speakers and volunteers for their contributions. The talks were very informative and generated a lot of discussion. The Asian Yellow Legged Hornet talk by Steve Goddard will be repeated via Zoom later in the season for those of you who missed it. More information about the day can be found below.

The surveillance strategy to tackle the threat of Asian Yellow Legged Hornets (YLH) after they were found in Monks Wood, near Sawtry, in March this year is now being implemented. Please read the article below for more details of the action plan and how you can help. We need volunteers to monitor the traps so if you can spare 45 minutes a few times over the next 3 months to help with monitoring at Monks Wood Nature Reserve please sign up. Its the only chance we have to successfully eliminate the Asian Yellow Legged Hornets in our region and stop them spreading through the county and decimating bees and other insects.

Helen

From Our Archives

And other more ancient musings....

TIPS AND WRINKLES

When you have finished going through the brood chamber and are ready to reassemble the hive lay an ordinary tea-cloth over the box and frames and then place the queen excluder on top of the cloth. Now count ten and then, in much the same way as a magician removes the tablecloth from under a set of crockery, sharply yank the tea-cloth from under the excluder. You will find that the cloth has made all the bees go down thus avoiding the sometimes unseemly amount of smoke required to make the last bee disappear.

[From *Anhes*, the Newsletter of the West Cornwall B.K.A.]

HBKA Newsletter, February 1989



The Asian Hornet Has Arrived in Huntingdonshire

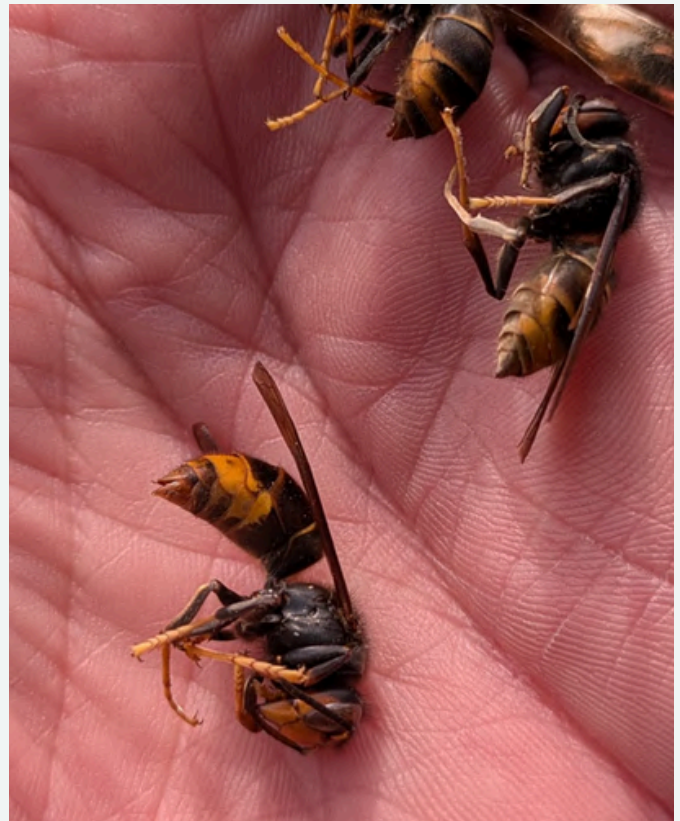
What we know, what we are doing, and what we need from you

This is not a drill. Yellow-legged Asian Hornet (YLAH) workers have been found in the Monks Wood area near Sawtry and the identification has been confirmed by the National Bee Unit. The Asian hornet is now present in our county. Every member of this association needs to read this article carefully. A 6.2km monitoring strategy is being proposed.

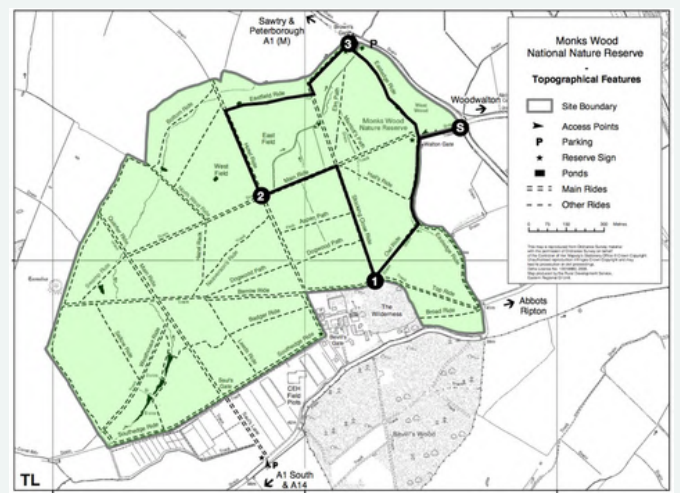
In mid-March 2026 approximately 30 dead worker Asian Yellow Legged Hornets (YLH) were discovered by Gavin Edgell from Less Pests Ltd. pest control company, associated with a dead feral honey bee colony in a building within Monks Wood. It appears that at least one YLH colony was active during the summer of 2025 in this area. Jack Silberrad of the National Bee Unit, APHA was notified and informed HBKA of this finding. He recommended that a cordon of surveillance traps is placed around the perimeter of Monks Wood at around an 800-1000m spacing between June and late September 2026 when workers from any colonies present this would be most active. A second wider cordon of traps to be placed 1000m from the edge of the wood and around any apiaries nearby.

A meeting was held between YLH coordinators from HBKA, Cambridge BKA, Bedfordshire BKA, Northants BKA and Peterborough BKA in early May to discuss how these recommendations could be implemented and the resources required.

Monks Wood sits to the North of the B1090 and consists of a Nature Reserve owned by Natural England. It is primarily comprised of dense woodland with mature deciduous trees and paths and rides accessible to the public with 3 vehicle parking areas to the South West, South East and North East. Adjacent to the road at the southern side of the wood is a Training Centre containing various buildings, trees and open grassed areas. To the south of the B1090 is a further area of woodland owned by the De Ramsey Estate, again comprising of mature deciduous trees. The perimeter of Monks Wood itself is 6.2 km and the southern woodland is about one third of this.



Bodies of the YLAH workers found in Monks Wood, near Sawtry. Photo: Gavin Edgell



Monks Wood near Sawtry

Actions

- Four Gard' Apis traps will be placed near the perimeter of the Monks Wood Reserve, one just north of the South Western entrance, one west of the Northern Entrance, one south of the Northern Entrance and one near the South Eastern Entrance (see map). These traps will be monitored by volunteers from HBKA, CBKA and PBKA. Precise trap locations will be shared shortly.
- Three Gard' Apis traps have been installed within the Training Centre Grounds to the North East, North West and South East corners of the property. Feral honey bee colonies are still being located on site so will be attractive to any YLH. These will be monitored by site staff and overseen by Gavin of Less Pests Ltd who visits the site regularly and is also a member of HBKA. Posters and information cards have been shared with staff.
- Three Gard' Apis traps will be placed in the Southern woodland owned by the De Ramsey Estate and these will be frequently monitored by the Estate's Game Keeper.
- Commercial units in Alconbury Hill will be approached to host traps in the near future.
- Traps have been placed at the truck stops on the A1 near to Monks Wood.
- Members of HBKA have been asked to host Gard' Apis traps especially if they are in the local area. Beekeepers in Upton, Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Abbots Ripton, Wennington and Woodwalton are encouraged to host a trap at their apiary.
- Traps Across the County
- In addition to the Monks Wood perimeter work, around 16 YLAH traps are now deployed across our wider region, sited at members' apiaries. This network gives us broad coverage across Huntingdonshire and early warning of any hornet activity beyond the Monks Wood area.

22 Gard' Apis traps have been purchased by HBKA for this surveillance. They are designed, together with Trappit bait, to minimise bycatch and allow the Asian YL hornets to survive a few days.

Any live Asian YL hornets discovered should immediately be reported to Helen Swain, HBKA/Phillip Turon, CBKA who are leading this action and they will notify the NBU who will use Track and Trace methods to locate and destroy the nests.



The Asian hornet's arrival in Huntingdonshire is a serious development – but we have a plan, we have partners, and we have a membership community that has always risen to a challenge. This summer, we are asking you to be part of our response. Please volunteer, please check your traps, and please report anything suspicious. Together, we give our bees the best possible chance.

For more information please refer to the YLAH Guide we sent to members in May.



Volunteer
Sign Up

What you can do to help

We desperately need volunteers to monitor the traps frequently (every other/few days) to release by catch and check for dead and living Asian YL Hornets. Four traps (shown as 1-4 on the photograph) will be situated near 3 parking spaces in Monks Wood about 50-100m from the entrances at head height. They will be very easy to check and release. It is envisaged that the checks will take a total of about 30-45 minutes – the woods are a nice location to walk and suitable for dog walks too.

We appreciate it is a very big ask but the more people who volunteer to help for a few sessions between June and September the more likely we will be able to eradicate Asian YLH from our area. One nest will release on average 10 new queens who will go on to form 10 new nests the following year.

To put your name down for dates to check the traps please go to [Volunteer Sign Up](#) Please do ensure you don't miss your check as we need to catch the hornets alive to trace the nests. If you can no longer make your session, please inform chair@huntsbka.org.uk and delete your name from the calendar.

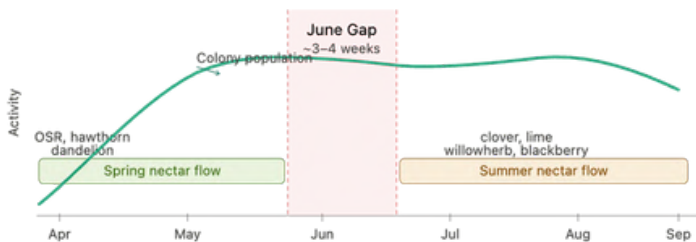
If you live close to Monks Wood, please do install a Gard' Apis trap in your apiary. It is now recommended that traps can be placed near /in an apiary as the smell of the hives will attract hornets regardless. HBKA have free traps to loan to beekeepers.

Please share posters and information with your local communities. The more people who are aware and on the look out the more chance we have.

The June Gap

What it is, how to spot it, and what to do about it

The June Gap is one of the most misunderstood phenomena in the British beekeeping year. Colonies that have built up impressively through spring can suddenly find themselves short of food – not because something has gone wrong, but because the calendar has worked against them. Understanding the June Gap is the difference between losing a colony and sailing through to a bumper summer harvest. However, it is important to note that the June Gap is not universally experienced. It will depend on your conditions and each hive must be read individually. Some beekeepers experience no June gap, whilst others report differences from hive to hive, even in the same apiary. All will depend on your local foraging conditions and your hives ability to lay down adequate stores. So the clear message is pay attention to what forage is available locally and watch your hives for signs that stores are running low.



What is the June Gap?

Through April and May, a succession of spring flowers keeps nectar and pollen flowing: willow, hawthorn, oil-seed rape, apple blossom, dandelion, sycamore. Colonies respond by raising brood at a tremendous rate, rapidly expanding their population to be ready for the main summer nectar flow. The problem is timing. By late May and into June, most of those spring sources have finished. The major summer flowers – clover, lime, blackberry, rosebay willowherb – have not yet opened in earnest. There is a gap, often two to four weeks, sometimes longer in cool or dry summers, where very little is coming in. In Huntingdonshire, this typically falls somewhere between late May and the third week of June, though it varies with the weather year to year.

At exactly this moment, the colony's population is at or near its peak – tens of thousands of bees to feed – and the incoming nectar has dried up.

How to Recognise It

The signs are subtle at first, then quickly become urgent. Check your hives every seven to ten days through late May and June:

- Reduced forager traffic. The landing board should be busy on a warm, still day. If there is noticeably less coming and going, pay attention. A few returning foragers with little or no pollen on their legs is a telling sign.
- Bees clustering at the entrance. Sometimes called "bearding," bees loitering outside the hive in large numbers during the day – when it is not excessively hot – can indicate that the colony is anxious about its stores.

- Low stores on inspection. This is the most reliable indicator. Open the hive and work through the frames. Capped honey should be present across at **least two to three frames** in a National hive. If stores are down to a single frame or less, act now.
- Increased aggression. A colony that is normally docile may become noticeably irritable when it is under nutritional stress. Note any change in temperament.
- Bees robbing. If you see bees fighting at the hive entrance – a scrappy, frantic kind of activity quite different from normal coming and going – your colony (or a neighbour's) may be desperately foraging. Robbing behaviour is a red flag.

What to Do

Once you suspect or confirm a June Gap is affecting your hives, the response is straightforward – but speed matters.

- Heft the hive. Before you even open the hive, lift the back edge slightly. A well-stocked hive feels reassuringly heavy. One that wobbles up easily is a warning sign.
- Check and record stores on every inspection. Note how many frames of capped honey are present. If you are below two full frames in a full colony, you are in the danger zone.
- Feed with a light syrup (1:1 sugar to water by weight). A light syrup mimics a nectar flow and stimulates the bees without tricking them into thinking winter is coming. Use a contact feeder or rapid feeder placed directly over the crown board. Check it every two or three days and refill as needed. Do not use thick winter syrup (2:1) – this signals the wrong season and can interfere with brood rearing.
- Add fondant as an emergency top-up if stores are critically low and you cannot visit frequently. A 500g block placed directly over the cluster through the crown board hole is quickly accepted and acts as a buffer between inspections.



The golden rule of June: when in doubt, heft. A light hive is a hive asking for help. Feed sooner rather than later, reduce the entrance, and keep your inspections purposeful. The summer flow will come – your job is simply to make sure your bees are alive and strong when it does.

- Reduce the entrance. A smaller entrance is easier for guard bees to defend against robbers attracted by the smell of your syrup feeding. Reduce it to about 2–3 cm using an entrance block or foam strip.
- Do not add supers if stores are low. Bees will not move up into a super when they are stressed about food. Focus on the brood box first.
- Avoid unnecessary inspections. Every time you open the hive, you disturb the cluster, cool the brood, and stress the colony. Keep inspections purposeful and brief during a dearth.

How Long Does It Last?

As mentioned previously, in Huntingdonshire, the gap typically runs from around the last week of May until mid-to-late June, though in a cold or dry year it can stretch into early July. You will know it is over when:

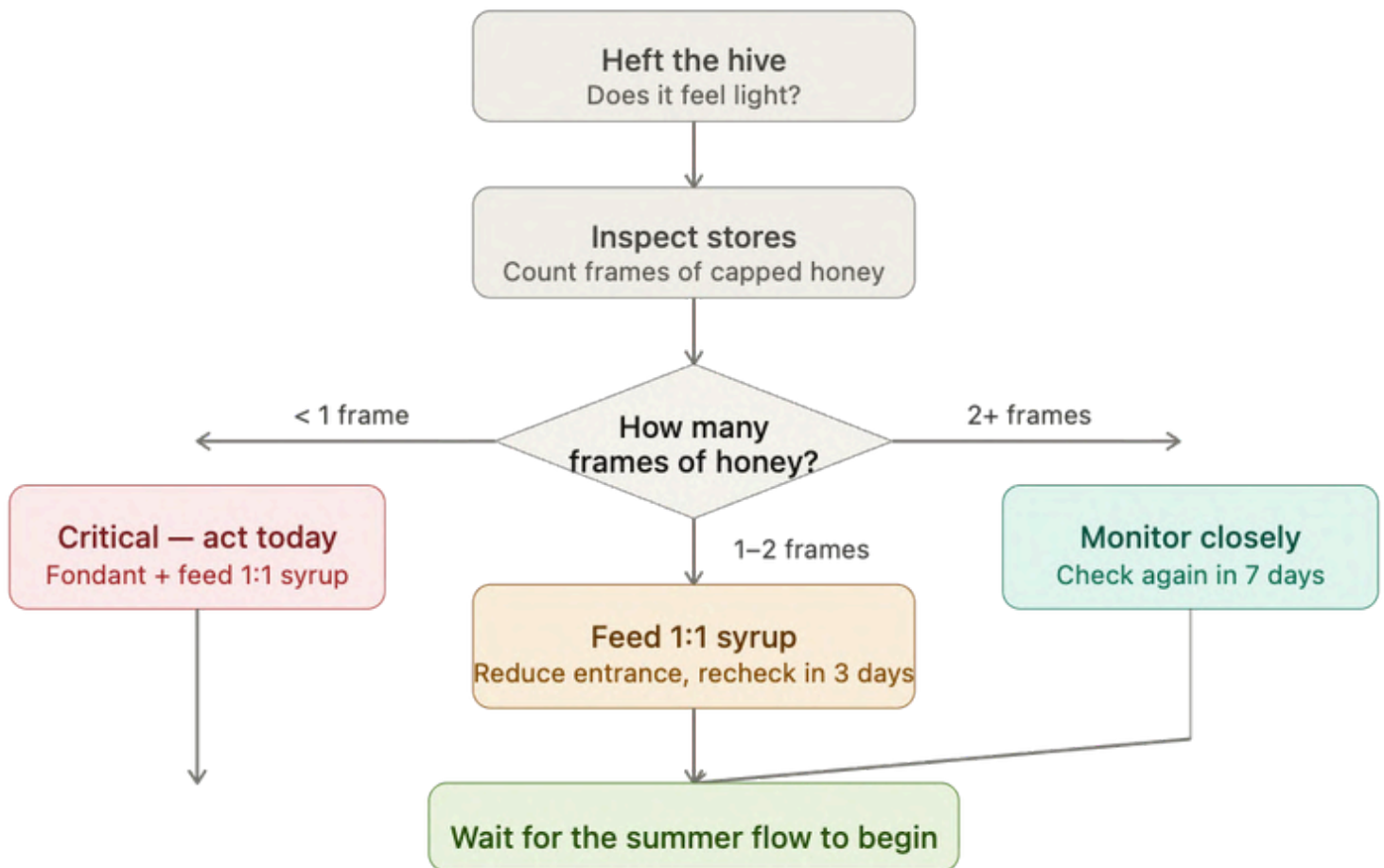
- Forager numbers pick up noticeably at the entrance
- Bees are returning with large pollen loads
- Your rapid feeder is no longer being emptied quickly
- On inspection, new nectar (shiny, uncapped) is being deposited in cells

At that point, stop feeding immediately. You do not want to end up with frames of sugar syrup mixed into your honey harvest. Remove feeders, put supers back on, and let the colony do what it does best.

A Note for Huntingdonshire Specifically

The June Gap can vary. Last year many of us felt no such gap. Our county has good mixed forage: hedgerow, arable margins, and garden flowers provide some trickle during the gap, so not every colony will suffer equally. Hives near clover-rich pasture or large gardens may experience the gap as only a mild slowing of foraging. But urban hives, hives near intensive arable with few field margins, and hives in exposed situations are more vulnerable.

The OSR crop that finishes in late May has been a particular issue in recent years: it brings colonies to peak strength very quickly, then abruptly stops. Keep a close eye on any colony that came through OSR in good shape – they are especially likely to feel the gap hard.



According to the National Bee Unit (NBU) best practice guidelines, a "thin" 1:1 sugar syrup is made by dissolving 1 kg of white granulated sugar in 1,260 ml of warm water (or 2 lb of sugar to 2 pints of water).

Frame Management: Keeping Your Hive Clean from the Ground Up

Old comb is more than an eyesore – it is a genuine threat to colony health. Here is why regular renewal matters, and how to approach it practically.

There is an old saying in beekeeping that a clean hive begins with clean comb. Yet comb management is one of those tasks that is easy to let slip – another season passes, the colony is doing well, and those dark, elderly frames stay in service for another year. The trouble is that old comb does not just look uninviting; it is a genuine risk to colony health. Recently, Tony Shephard and Karen Sutherland attended a CBKA Practical Apiary Management session on Frame Management run by Roy and Peter the CBKA Apiary Managers. Here is a summary of what was covered.

Why frames should be replaced regularly

Every time a worker bee is reared in a cell, she leaves something behind. Larval skins, faecal matter, cocoon silk, and propolis all accumulate with each brood cycle. A single cell can be used hundreds of times over several years, and each use deposits another microscopic layer. Over time, the internal diameter of the cell narrows – studies have suggested cells can shrink by as much as 10–12% after repeated use – meaning the bees reared in older comb tend to be slightly smaller.

More seriously, old comb becomes a reservoir for pathogens. Spores of *Melissococcus plutonius* (European foulbrood) and *Paenibacillus larvae* (American foulbrood) can persist in wax for many years. Nosema spores, chalkbrood cysts, and the detritus of *Varroa* infestation all accumulate in the same way. Pesticide residues – particularly fat-soluble compounds from agriculture and hive treatments – bind to beeswax and build up over time.

The National Bee Unit and the BBKA both recommend that brood frames should be replaced on a cycle of approximately three years. In practice this means that, at any given moment, roughly a third of your brood frames should be new or near-new, a third middle-aged, and a third approaching retirement.

The rolling replacement method

For most hobbyist beekeepers, a straightforward rolling replacement programme is the simplest and least disruptive approach. The principle is easy: mark your frames when you introduce them, and remove the oldest ones each year.

A dab of paint, a drawing pin, or a colour-coded system works well. Many beekeepers use the same five-year colour code used for queen marking. Each spring, during your first thorough inspection, identify the frames that are oldest and most heavily used. Any frame that is very dark, heavily propolised, misshapen, or shows any evidence of disease should be removed immediately.

"Place new frames of drawn comb or foundation at the edges of the brood nest, not in the middle – and never between frames of open brood."



Aim to remove and replace three or four frames per colony per year from a standard National brood box of eleven frames. When removing an old frame, do not add an empty frame of foundation at random. Place new frames at the edges of the brood nest, not in the middle. The bees will draw out fresh foundation naturally as the colony expands. Work from the outside in, and let the bees do the drawing at their own pace.

Old frames should be removed from the apiary entirely and the wax rendered down promptly. Do not leave old comb lying around – it is an invitation to robbing, wax moth, and the spread of disease. Wooden frames can be scorched with a blowtorch and reused if they are sound, or discarded if they show any sign of disease.

The Bailey comb change

The Bailey method offers a more thorough renewal of all brood comb while avoiding a sharp shock to the colony. It is particularly useful in spring when the colony is building up, and suits situations where the beekeeper wants to move to a fresh set of frames without losing bees or brood.

The technique works by moving the queen up onto a new box of fresh foundation, allowing the existing brood below to hatch out naturally, then removing the old box entirely once it is empty.

Step 1 – In early spring, place a new brood box filled with frames of fresh foundation directly on top of your existing brood box.

Step 2 – Find the queen and move her up into the new box, placing her on a frame of fresh foundation. The bees will follow her upwards over the following days.

Step 3 – After about a week, place a queen excluder between the old and new boxes. This prevents the queen from returning downward to lay in the old comb.

FRAME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

1. ROLLING REPLACEMENT METHOD



2. BAILEY COMB CHANGE



3. SHOOK SWARM METHOD



Step 4 – Once all the old brood has hatched – typically three to four weeks – the old box will be empty of brood. The remaining bees will have moved upward. Remove the old box and all its old frames.

The Bailey method has the advantage of being gentle on the colony and carrying it through the transition without interrupting brood rearing or foraging. Its main limitation is time – you need the better part of a month – and it is best done in spring before the main nectar flow. It also requires a spare brood box and a full complement of new frames, so preparation is key.

The shook swarm method

The shook swarm is the most dramatic of the comb management techniques, and the most thorough. It is, in effect, an artificial swarm in which the entire colony is shaken off its old comb onto a completely fresh set of frames in a clean box. Done well, it achieves a complete renewal of all brood comb in a single operation. It also delivers a significant setback to Varroa, since all sealed brood – along with the mites developing within it – is removed in one go.

The shook swarm is best carried out in late April to mid-May in the UK, when the colony is strong, the weather is reliably mild, and there is sufficient forage or stores to sustain the colony through the disruption.

Step 1 – Prepare your new hive: a clean floor, a clean brood box filled entirely with frames of fresh foundation, and a crown board and roof. Place this next to your existing hive.

Step 2 – Remove the roof, crown board, and supers from the existing hive. Find the queen – she must go into the new box.

Step 3 – Place one frame of new foundation from the new box into the centre of the old brood box. Shake or brush every frame of bees from the old box onto this single frame, then into the new box. Ensure the queen goes in with them.

Step 4 – Set the new box on the original floor in the same position. The flying bees will return to the familiar location and bolster the colony. Feed immediately with syrup – the bees must draw out an entire box of foundation from scratch.

Step 5 – Remove and destroy all the old frames, or store them away from the apiary if rendering is not immediately possible.

The colony will effectively be broodless for the first three weeks, which is an excellent opportunity to apply an oxalic acid treatment for Varroa, since oxalic acid is most effective when there is no sealed brood present. Many beekeepers deliberately time the shook swarm with this in mind, combining thorough comb renewal with a highly effective mite knockdown – two significant benefits in a single operation.

The shook swarm's main drawback is the stress it places on the colony. There will be a gap in brood production, honey production will pause, and in a poor spring with little forage the colony can struggle. It should not be used on a colony that is already under stress. Some beekeepers also find it difficult to destroy frames that still contain open brood – in such cases the Bailey method is the kinder choice.

"The shook swarm colony will be broodless for three weeks – an excellent opportunity to apply oxalic acid for Varroa."

If you suspect disease

Our Regional Bee Inspector for Eastern England, including Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire is Jack Silberrad. He can be contacted at Jack.Silberrad@apha.gov.uk. Mobile No. 07776 165869.

Excellent resources on notifiable diseases can be found on BeeBase. Both American Foulbrood (AFB) and European Foulbrood (EFB) are notifiable in the UK.

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/foulbroods-notifiable>



Photo: Hanna's Bees

A note on disease

If you discover – or even suspect – the presence of foulbrood disease (either AFB or EFB), do not attempt any of the above techniques. AFB & EFB are notifiable diseases and must be reported to the National Bee Unit. All old frames from an infected colony must be destroyed by burning. In the case of European foulbrood, the shook swarm is in fact the NBU's recommended treatment method, as the interruption to brood rearing – combined with feeding – can allow the colony to recover. Always take advice from your local Bee Inspector if you have any doubt about colony health.

Keeping records

Whichever method you use, good record-keeping transforms comb management from guesswork into a reliable programme. Note the age of your frames, mark them clearly, and record any signs of disease or heavy discoloration. Your hive record cards should show at a glance which frames are due for replacement this season.

Clean comb is not glamorous work. But it is foundational. A colony living on fresh, hygienic wax is a colony given every possible advantage: better nutrition for developing larvae, lower pathogen loads, and a healthier environment for the queen to lay in. Three years is not a rigid rule, but it is a sound discipline – and the bees will reward you for keeping to it.



Destroying or Recycling Old Brood Frames

Old brood frames are one of the most overlooked biosecurity risks in the apiary. Over time, wax and propolis build up, combs darken, and cell walls narrow – reducing brood viability and harbouring pathogens including the spores of American Foulbrood, which can survive in old comb for decades. When frames reach the end of their life, the safest disposal method is burning: frames should be incinerated completely, including the box if disease is suspected, and the ash buried. This is the only reliable way to destroy AFB spores and prevent transmission to other colonies or apiaries.

For those not dealing with notifiable disease, recycling is a more economical option. The wooden frames can be scraped clean, scorched with a blowtorch, and reused, while the old wax is rendered down and either sold to a supplier, exchanged for fresh foundation, or used in making candles and polish. Given that a standard brood frame costs in the region of 15p to 20p when bought in bulk (and rather more for premium or plastic alternatives), large operations may still find bulk burning and replacement cost-effective compared to the labour of cleaning. Some beekeeping suppliers also run foundation exchange schemes, where old wax is accepted in part-payment for new – a tidy way to close the loop and keep material out of landfill.

Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus

What Every HBKA Member Needs to Know



Photos: Nikita Kovalskiy

Imagine approaching your hive and finding hundreds of dead and dying bees lying at the base. This was then a distressing scene for one of our new members, Nikita Kovalskiy, experienced recently (Photo 1). The diagnosis of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV) was subsequently confirmed in two of his hives – a timely reminder that this disease is very much on the rise across England. Here is what you need to know.

What Is It?

Chronic bee paralysis is a disease of adult honey bees (not brood) caused by chronic bee paralysis virus. This RNA virus replicates in nerve cells, leading to repeated patterns of movement which progress to partial paralysis, full paralysis, and then death within a week. It is not a new disease – it has been associated with honey bees for thousands of years – but it is becoming far more common. While chronic bee paralysis was only recorded in Lincolnshire in 2007, a decade later it was present in 39 of 47 English counties, with clusters of cases becoming increasingly frequent. As a county bordering Lincolnshire, Huntingdonshire beekeepers should be particularly alert.

How Do I Recognise It?

CBPV presents with two distinct types of symptoms:

Type I: Early Stage

- Bees have bloated abdomens and weak or trembling wings, losing their ability to fly and crawling and shaking on the ground or near the hive entrance (Photo 2).
- Trembling/shivering/shaking bees (if you don't know what to look for can be mistaken for waggle dance - but definitely different)
- The colony recognises the fact that bees are diseased - so they displace them to top bars/lugs away from main cluster - so that's where they usually are.
- Bees seemingly chewing on some bees hairs/wings in an effort to remove them (Photo 3).
- Said bees are unresponsive/very delayed response to smoke. They still react to strong puffs of air though.

CBPV is not a notifiable disease but can pose a threat to all apiary colonies where it is present. Any suspected incidence of CBPV should be treated without delay to avoid colony loss. We suggest informing HBKA members so we can be alert to its presence. Further information is available from the National Bee Unit at nationalbeeunit.com or by contacting the NBU helpline.

CBPV can affect the strongest colonies and cause dramatic symptoms within days of onset. Once signs of infection are evident, the colony has a 50:50 chance of survival.



Photo: NBU

Type II: Late Stage

- Bees lose all their abdominal hairs and appear black or greasy. Often both types are present in the same hive at the same time.
- Infected bees do not respond to external stimuli like smoke – an important clue.
- Healthy bees nibble the wings and bodies of diseased bees as they attempt to remove them from the hive, which contributes to the shiny, denuded appearance.
- The disease can progress rapidly, leading to piles of dead and dying bees at the colony entrance and on the bottom board.

It is worth noting that at first, the symptoms can appear similar to pesticide poisoning. However, pesticide poisoning tends to produce carpets of dead bees spread across the apiary as foragers return from contaminated sources, whereas CBPV causes death inside the colony, producing piles of dead bees specifically at the hive entrance. If you are unsure, contact your local bee inspector – they can arrange laboratory confirmation.

How Does It Spread?

CBPV spreads through contact transmission. The virus is not thought to be transmitted by Varroa mites. Emerging bees are generally virus-free and contract it after hatching. Adult bees can become infected after consuming infected food or after bodily contact with diseased and dead bees. Crowded colonies are the most susceptible, particularly in spring and summer, and the virus can

spread throughout a hive before its presence is even detected. Infected corpses remain a potent source of infection for weeks or months, and other insects – including ants, flies, and commercial bumblebees – have been found carrying high levels of CBPV.

What Should You Do If You Have It?

There is currently no treatment, but good management can make a significant difference. The National Bee Unit and Nikita's own research advises the following:

- Create space by adding a brood box or super to reduce virus transmission between bees. Space your frames to have more of a gap. In this case Nikita went from 12 frames in his brood/super to 10.
- Young bees (less than 24h old) seem to be especially vulnerable to infection. Having a brood break can be beneficial to stop the disease spreading exponentially and completely wiping out your colony.
- Check regularly for a laying queen, but do not needlessly inspect. Queens can also catch the virus and die, which is common in affected colonies. Note, however, that there is no evidence that changing the queen will help manage the disease. Nikita combined a split from one of his stronger, healthier hives and this seemed to be the thing that helped most. The queen had recently mated and had just been laying for a week, thus allowing a minimum of 2 weeks before any new bees emerge (meaning hopefully disease has mostly wiped itself out).

“The presence of trembling bees and black, shiny looking bees is a characteristic sign of CBPV. More subtle signs include bees with dislocated ‘K-wings’ and/or bloated, distended abdomens”

- Improve ventilation by reducing the queen excluder and entrance reducer. This allows greater airflow and enables diseased bees to be removed faster.
- Ensure the colony has ample access to pollen. Pollen stress is known to increase symptoms, and young bees raised during times of pollen dearth can be more susceptible. Consider a pollen substitute if in a dearth.
- Increase the size of the hive entrance to help the colony remove dead bees and reduce internal spread. Removal of floors is not recommended, as this can lead to robbing of the weakened colony, particularly later in the season.
- Remove piles of dead bees away from the hive entrance so they cannot reinfect healthy bees.
- Provide good aftercare to ensure colonies enter winter strong and with sufficient stores. Colonies that survive can be weakened and may perish over winter.



Preventing Spread to Other Hives

- Chronic bee paralysis can sometimes be seen moving along a line of colonies. Limit the movement of adult bees between hives – drifting can be reduced by facing hive entrances in different directions.
- Avoid sharing equipment between affected and healthy hives, and be cautious about moving colonies from an affected apiary.
- Be especially careful with robbing behaviour from other bees - do not spill any syrup/honey as robbing can amplify disease and spread it fast.
- Avoid moving frames from infected colonies to healthy ones.

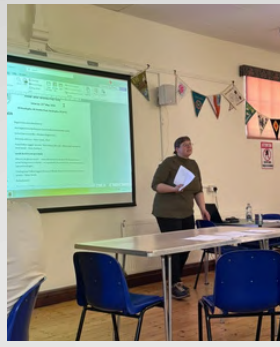
Can It Be Prevented?

- There is no ‘cure’, but good husbandry goes a long way. Avoid overcrowding, keep colonies well-nourished with access to varied pollen sources, and inspect regularly so you can catch any outbreak early. Register on BeeBase (nationalbeeunit.com) if you have not already – your local bee inspector is a valuable resource and can confirm a diagnosis and offer practical advice tailored to your situation.



Our thanks to Nikita Kovalskiy for sharing his experiences, photographs and notes. Unfortunately, colony loss occurs in 40 to 50% of cases, so early detection and good management really do matter. If anyone in the association spots suspicious symptoms in their hives, please do not hesitate to reach out to your bee inspector promptly and let us know so we can alert members.

HBKA AGM



The 2026 HBKA Annual General Meeting was held at the WI Institute, Huntingdon on Saturday 23 May. We were pleased to see about 40 of our members attend.

In the Chair address Helen Swain reported on the activities of our association throughout the past year making special mention of the increased activity we are now seeing following the confirmation of the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet in the Monks Wood vicinity. From 1 June our association along with fellow bee keepers from Cambridge BKA will volunteer their time to monitor a corridor of traps that are being placed in the Monks Wood area. For more information please see the update on the YLAH. Our Treasurer (Helen Pizzie) reported that our finances were healthy and that we had earmarked funds for the Apiary expansion project. Our Membership Secretary reported that we have 137 members.

Our President, David Hetherington offered a vote of thanks to Helen Swain who works tirelessly for HBKA. This was enthusiastically endorsed.

After the main business of the AGM was concluded the members present enjoyed a very informative and well researched presentation and discussion from Steve Goddard on the French experience of the YLAH. This was followed by an interesting presentation, given by Karen Sutherland, on materials gleaned from our archives.

The Committee elected by the members is as follows for the coming year:

President: David Hetherington
Chair: Helen Swain
Treasurer: Helen Pizzie
Secretary: Jackie Taylor-Baldwin
Membership Secretary: Sue Beck
Events Co-ordinator: Chrissie Barnes
Swarm Co-ordinator: Tony Sheppherd
Social Media Co-ordinator: Sue Fancourt
Auditor: John Newman
Webmaster: Keith Ware
Newlsetter Editor: Karen Sutherland

The outstanding contribution of Peter Gould (most recently as our Swarm Collector and esteemed Honey Show Judge) was recognised by the Chair and audience and a small token of our appreciation was made. Peter has now handed his 'swarm hat' to Tony Sheppherd but will remain an active and valued HBKA member!



A lovely tray decorated by Jackie Taylor Baldwin was presented along with a bag of goodies to Peter

Our much appreciated friend Gary from Bee1st was in attendance on the day with a wonderful range of bee supplies. Many members used the opportunity to stock up on frames, suits, YLAH traps and other equipment. Some of us were seen sneaking said purchases from car to shed under the cover of darkness and hiding the bank statement!

Update from the HBKA Apiary

Well we have had quite the interesting month in our HBKA Apiary. As of recently all four of our established hives have requeened and the number of hives at the apiary has swelled to six! As we reported last month the apiary has had its fair share of swarms with yet another hive taking to the skies as we were about to inspect. We had a group of beginners in doing their practical so it was special for them to witness. It always amazes me how quickly a hive looks like nothing has happened just minutes after thousands of bees have been swirling round.

Whilst Helen was conducting the practicals Jackie T-B and I got on with the business of inspecting the hives and specifically checking for queen cells. Going through Hive 6 we found a few to knock back but took one such cell and put to one side to have a closer look when we were finished. On coming back to the cell, we were incredibly lucky to catch a queen chewing her way out. We quickly grabbed a queen clip, placed her in there and then watched her fully emerge. Hive 6 was quickly reopened, the remaining cell that we had left knocked back and our new queen released into the hive. This was such a special thing to watch and the queen was quick to disappear into the body of the hive.

All our beginner practicals are now completed and special thanks go to Helen S, Helen P and to Stuart and Paul for ensuring all our new beekeepers had the opportunity to get hands on with some hives.

The work to upgrade the park has now well and truly begun and we now have to navigate our way to the apiary via new paths from the car park. The car park will be closed to all from the 15th June to 3rd July so



this makes inspections at the apiary that little more problematic. We shall have to hike in and out from nearby streets!

Thank you to all our recent volunteers. It is wonderful to see some of our new beekeepers volunteering in the apiary where I hope they get lots of experience and tips from the more experienced. At this time of year, we inspect every Wednesday (weather permitting).



Around and About...



Helen Swain recently assisted Gavin Edgell from Less Pests Ltd in the cut out and extraction of a honeybee colony in a building roof void. The workers and queen were successfully removed and rehomed, despite the torrential rain showers.

Swarm season continues to be busy (on either side of the rain storms!). Members on the swarm collection team saw a very busy start to the season due to the hot weather. This has dropped off a little due to the recent weather but the swarms are still happening. Thank you to all our swarm collectors!

Photo: Pete



Photo: Tom



Photo: Helen P.



Lovely shot of Mark Campbell's bees sending Nasinov signals!



Photo of our newest HBKA queen. Found in the roof of the nuc she is now safely ensconced in our newest hive.

Time for a drink! Reminder how important water is for colony development.



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.

A new mite threat is moving west – and it could be worse than Varroa

Tropilaelaps mercedesae mites have recently spread from Asia to eastern Europe and pose a serious threat to honey bee colonies worldwide. Researchers warn the situation echoes the early spread of Varroa – but this time scientists have the benefit of decades of hard-won Varroa management knowledge to help detect, track and control it before losses escalate. The NBU is already monitoring UK ports for signs of its arrival. (Source: Entomology Today, May 2026)



Photo: NBU

A brand new type of worker bee discovered

A scientist's toddler asking "why do queen cells look different?" sparked a remarkable discovery. Researchers have identified a previously unknown class of worker honeybee – dubbed "royal engineers" – whose job is specifically to construct queen cells. The workers even show different patterns of gene expression, and scanning electron microscopy revealed that queen cell wax is less dense, more pliable and has a higher melting point than regular worker cell wax. The findings were published in Nature in early June. (Source: Discover Wildlife / Nature, June 2026)

Bumblebees solve problems like chimpanzees – without any training

Last month we brought you research that showed honeybees can count! This month researchers from Finnish universities published a study in Science showing that bumblebees can spontaneously solve completely novel object-manipulation tasks – with no prior training. The findings challenge the long-standing assumption that this kind of insight is restricted to humans and other large-brained vertebrates. Our bee species are starting to show us their intelligence!(Source: Phys.org / University of Oulu, June 2026)

Drought hammers bumblebees – and recovery takes years

Another bumblebee story! Two separate studies paint a worrying picture of drought and bees. A North Dakota State University study found that a severe drought in 2021 slashed local bumblebee populations by 98%, with populations still not fully recovered by 2024 – highlighting that climate-driven drought can disrupt pollinators long after ecosystems appear to rebound. Meanwhile, German researchers found that during a drought year, unfed bumblebee colonies reached an average weight of just 14 grams compared to 140 grams in a normal year – a tenfold difference – with supplemental sugar water failing to bridge the gap. (Sources: Entomology Today, June 2026; Phys.org / University of Würzburg, April 2026)

5.5 million mining bees found beneath a New York cemetery

A Cornell University researcher noticed unusual numbers of bees during a walk through a cemetery in Ithaca, New York, in 2022. What followed was the discovery of one of the largest bee aggregations ever recorded – an underground colony of an estimated 5.5 million bees. The study, published in *Apidologie*, is shedding new light on the emergence dynamics of solitary mining bees. (Source: ScienceDaily / Cornell University, May 2026)



Photo: Bryan Danforth. BBC Wildlife Magazine

recipecorner

Raspberry Honey Flapjacks

A simple but delicious recipe this month featuring our favourite ingredient! These will not last long at either breakfast time or with your morning or afternoon cuppa. The recipe makes around 12 flapjacks depending on how you cut them.

Prep and Cook Time

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 25 mins

Ingredients

- 150g butter
- 150g light brown soft sugar
- 4 tbsp honey
- 300g porridge oats
- 100g frozen raspberries

Method

Step 1

- Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6 and line a 20 x 20cm baking tin with parchment. Melt the butter, sugar, honey and a pinch of salt in a pan. Once the mixture is bubbling and combined, stir in the oats.

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Step 2

- Tip the oat mixture into the lined baking tin and press down with the back of a spoon. Scatter over the raspberries, then lightly press them into the oat mixture. Bake for 25-30 mins until golden brown. Leave to cool, then cut into 9 or 12 flapjacks.

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Nutritional Info (approximate per serving)

- Calories: 265 kcal
- Fat: 12g (saturated 7g)
- Carbohydrates: 34g (sugars 17g)
- Protein: 3g
- Fibre 2g
- Salt: 0.3g (approx.)

Tips:

1. You can substitute raspberries with other fruits such as frozen cherries, blackberries or strawberries
2. You could also add in 50g of chopped pecans or almonds
3. For those with a sweeter tooth or for something more fancy try drizzling chocolate over the flapjack

MONTHLY TO DO'S

JUNE



- Inspect every seven days without fail – check for eggs, brood pattern and queen cells on frame edges and bottoms
- Add supers before they are needed, not after – a congested hive is a swarming hive
- Watch for the June Gap: if supers stop filling, bees become defensive or show interest in exposed syrup, check stores before considering feeding – never feed with honey supers on
- Check Varroa monitoring boards weekly and calculate daily mite drop – if it exceeds five, treat immediately
- Inspect brood frames carefully for signs of disease, particularly EFB – if anything looks suspicious, contact your bee inspector promptly
- Rotate out old dark comb – colonies are strong and will draw new foundation quickly, so use June to your advantage
- Note which forage sources your bees are working this month – white clover, bramble, field beans and lime are the key Huntingdonshire flows – building a local forage calendar pays dividends in future years
- Check hive entrances regularly for Asian hornets hawking – with YLAH now confirmed in the Monks Wood area, vigilance starts now
- Refresh apiary trap bait every 8–10 days and report any sightings immediately via the Asian Hornet Watch app
- Keep hive records up to date at every visit – June moves fast and decisions about queens, swarm control and supers are much harder to manage from memory



SAVE THE DATE

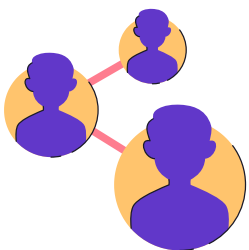
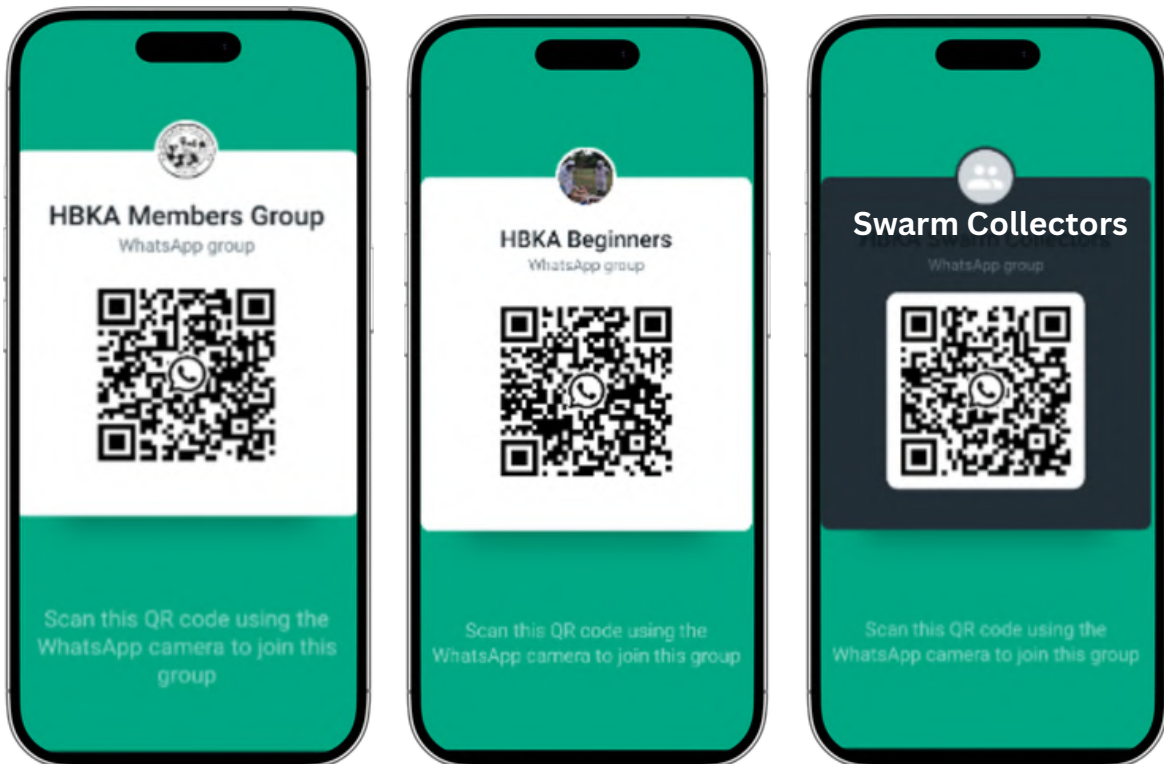


Date/Time	Event
11 th July	Summer BBQ
13 th –19 th July	Bees' Needs Week
12 th September	Bee Tea hosted by Jackie & Ian Taylor Baldwin, Ramsey
27 th September	Annual HBKA Honey Show, The Raptor Centre, St Ives



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