

The Buzz

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2026



2026 Honey Show Special

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- This years Honey Show. All you need to know.
- Download the Entry Form
- Meet Our Judges



**FREE
ADMISSION**



Honey Show



**Sunday
27th September 2026**

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

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR - HELEN SWAIN



The weather has continued to be very hot which is challenging for our bees and for us beekeepers too. The drought declared in our region means that in some areas nectar flow is low as plants struggle to get enough moisture to produce nectar.

At this time of year beekeepers will be harvesting honey. Make sure you leave enough for the bees if they are finding it difficult to get food.

As autumn approaches, keeping wasps away will be a challenge.

There have been lots of discussions and sharing of tips on our members WhatsApp groups on this subject.

Also now is the time to plan and purchase your varroa treatments so that you can start treating the bees as soon as honey harvesting is complete. Our website has a list of treatment options in the members area. Remember all medication and treatments given to your bees must be recorded. This is a legal requirement.

Helen

Selling Your Honey At The Honey Show

HBKA Members will be able to sell their honey on show day.

In order to facilitate the sale process a standard charge for jars of honey is applied

- 8oz jar priced at £6.50
- 12oz jar priced at £9.50
- 1lb jar priced at £12

If you wish to sell honey on the day please deliver your jars to the Honey Sales stand before the show commences.



Get Ready to Buzz: The 2026 Honey Show!

Sunday 27th September 2026



It's that time of year again — the sunflowers are nodding, the ivy is just starting to hum, and the HBKA calendar is turning towards our very favourite celebration of the season: the Honey Show!

Whether you've had a bumper harvest or a quieter year in the apiary, this is your invitation to dust off your jars, melt down your wax, and show the county what you and your bees have been up to.

The Show is a wonderfully friendly, low-pressure occasion — there's no entry fee, classes for every level of experience, and every single one of us started out as a first-time exhibitor once.

Why Enter?

- It's genuinely good fun, and a lovely excuse to catch up with fellow beekeepers.
- You'll pick up tips from the judges and from each other.
- There are classes for honey, wax, candles, baking, mead, crafts and photography.
- Novice classes mean newer beekeepers compete on a level playing field.
- It's a brilliant way to show your family just what a season's work produces.

Certificates will be awarded for first, second and third place.



Tips for Maximising Your Success at the Honey Show

- Honey shows are judged on precision and presentation as much as on the honey itself. A few careful steps in preparation can make the difference between a third-place and a first-place card.
 - Read the rule schedule carefully. Know the rules on jar size, label position, and class definitions. Judges will disqualify entries that don't match the schedule exactly, no matter how good the honey tastes, so check requirements before you do anything else.
 - Choose the right jars. Use only the specified jar type (max 1lb, min 8oz jars), and pick jars that are free of scratches, chips, or old label residue. Judges look through the glass, so imperfections in the jar itself count against you.
 - Filter thoroughly. Honey should be free of wax particles, pollen grains, and air bubbles. Strain it through a fine cloth or nylon filter, then let it stand for a day or two so any remaining bubbles can rise and be skimmed off before bottling.
 - Get the consistency right. Judges prize honey that is either fully liquid and clear, or evenly and finely granulated with no separation. A jar that's part-set and part-liquid, or showing a layer of crystals at the bottom, will lose marks.
 - Match your jars for a set. If entering a class that requires two or three jars, make sure they're identical in colour, clarity, and fill level. Mismatched jars in a set stand out immediately to a judge.
 - Fill to the correct level. Leave the standard headspace (usually around 10mm from the lid) — overfilled or underfilled jars look careless and may breach the schedule.
 - Clean everything meticulously. Wipe jars and lids until they're completely free of fingerprints, drips, and residue. A smear on the glass or a sticky lid is one of the most common reasons entries are marked down.
 - Labels will be provided so jars are labelled correctly and neutrally. Honey show entries are judged anonymously. An incorrectly placed or non-compliant label can disqualify an otherwise excellent entry.
 - Don't forget wax and other classes. If showing cut comb, beeswax blocks, or candles, the same rules apply: even colour, no contamination, smooth surfaces, and accurate weights or dimensions as specified.
 - Enter early and check your entries the morning of the show. Honey can shift slightly in transit — a bubble may rise, or a fingerprint may appear. Arrive early enough to give your jars a final polish before staging.
 - Learn from the judge's feedback. Most shows offer comments or a critique session after judging. Use this to refine technique for next time, whether it's filtering, granulation control, or presentation.
 - With careful preparation, clean presentation, and close attention to the schedule, your honey has the best possible chance of standing out on the show bench.
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HBKA's Trophy Cabinet



Dilley Challenge Cup · 1925 · most points in the show

Houghton Cup · 1893 · best exhibit in the show

Capon Rose Bowl · 1921 · most points in beeswax classes

Steeple Gidding Cup · 1953 · best novice

Anniversary Plate · best mead

Ted Turner Shield · 2014 · best bee related photo



Last years winners - Sue Fancourt with the Dilly Cup and Karen Sutherland with the Ted Turner Shield

Your Honey Show 2026 Classes

Class Number	Description
1	Two identical jars of Light Runny Honey
2	Two identical jars of Medium or Dark Runny Honey
3	Two identical jars of Soft Set Honey
4	Two identical jars of Granulated Honey
5	One jar of Granulated Honey and 1 jar of Soft Set Honey and 1 jar of Clear Honey
6	Two identical jars of Chunk Honey
7	Cut Comb
8	One Section in a round or square section frame
9	One Jar covered in foil to be judged on taste and aroma only
10	One Novice jar of Runny Honey (novice= not previously exhibited in show)
11	One Novice jar of Granulated Honey
12	One shallow comb suitable for extraction
13	One bottle of Mead
14	One bottle of Melomel or Metheglin
15	Three identical 1oz blocks of Natural Beeswax
16	One cake of Beeswax (8oz maximum weight)
17	One cake of beeswax from a fancy mould
18	Two identical dipped beeswax candles
19	Two identical rolled wax candles
20	One beeswax candle from a fancy mould
21	An exhibit of product (eg cosmetic/polish/cream) made from beeswax
22	One Honey cake as per recipe
23	Six honey biscuits as per recipe
24	Six pieces honey fudge as per recipe
25	Open baking/confectionary class where central ingredient is honey
26	An Exhibit of bee keeping - any bee themed craft exhibit
27	Bee themed artwork or craft by a young person under the age of 18
28	A Photograph of beekeeping interest

How to Classify Your Honey for a Honey Show

Using the BBKA colour standard

Colour is the first thing a honey show judge checks, because it decides which class your jar competes in. Enter the wrong class and your honey can be disqualified before it's even tasted — so getting the colour call right matters as much as the honey itself.

The BBKA colour standard: three classes

The BBKA (and the National Honey Show) place runny honey into three colour classes — Light, Medium and Dark. Judges verify colour using a matched pair of standardised, hand-made stained-glass "grading glasses" (often referred to as the B and D glasses), which mark the boundary between Light/Medium and Medium/Dark. Every Honey Show Secretary holds a set exhibitors can check their jars against before entering.

Here is an approximation of those colours (but note this may not be exact due to printing/reproduction quality):



Typical honey types by class

Class	Appearance	Typical examples
Light	Pale straw to water-white; may show a faint green haze	Oilseed rape, acacia, lime/linden, most early-season spring blossom
Medium	Golden amber	Mixed wildflower, clover, borage-blended, most summer extracts
Dark	Deep amber to mahogany	Ling heather, chestnut, honeydew, some late-season ivy blends

How to check your own jars

- Ask your show secretary to see the grading glasses — hold your jar directly against them in good, even daylight (not artificial light, which shifts the tone).
- Shine an LED torch through the jar from behind and up through the base to check clarity as well as colour — this also reveals any early granulation.
- If your honey sits right on a boundary, enter it in the darker of the two classes — judges expect this and it avoids an automatic "wrong class" disqualification.
- A faint green haze in a very pale honey is normal for lime/linden and is not a fault.
- Match jars in a pair from the same manufacturer — recycled glass can carry a green or pink tint that skews how the colour reads.

Remember

Colour class is about which honeys are being compared side by side — it is not a mark of quality. A perfectly clean, bright Dark class jar scores just as well as a Light one; the judge is comparing clarity, absence of granulation, and presentation within each class, not judging one class as "better" than another.

The Raptor Foundation

The Raptor Foundation, The Heath, St.Ives Road, Woodhurst, Huntingdon, PE28 3BT
Tel: 01487 741140

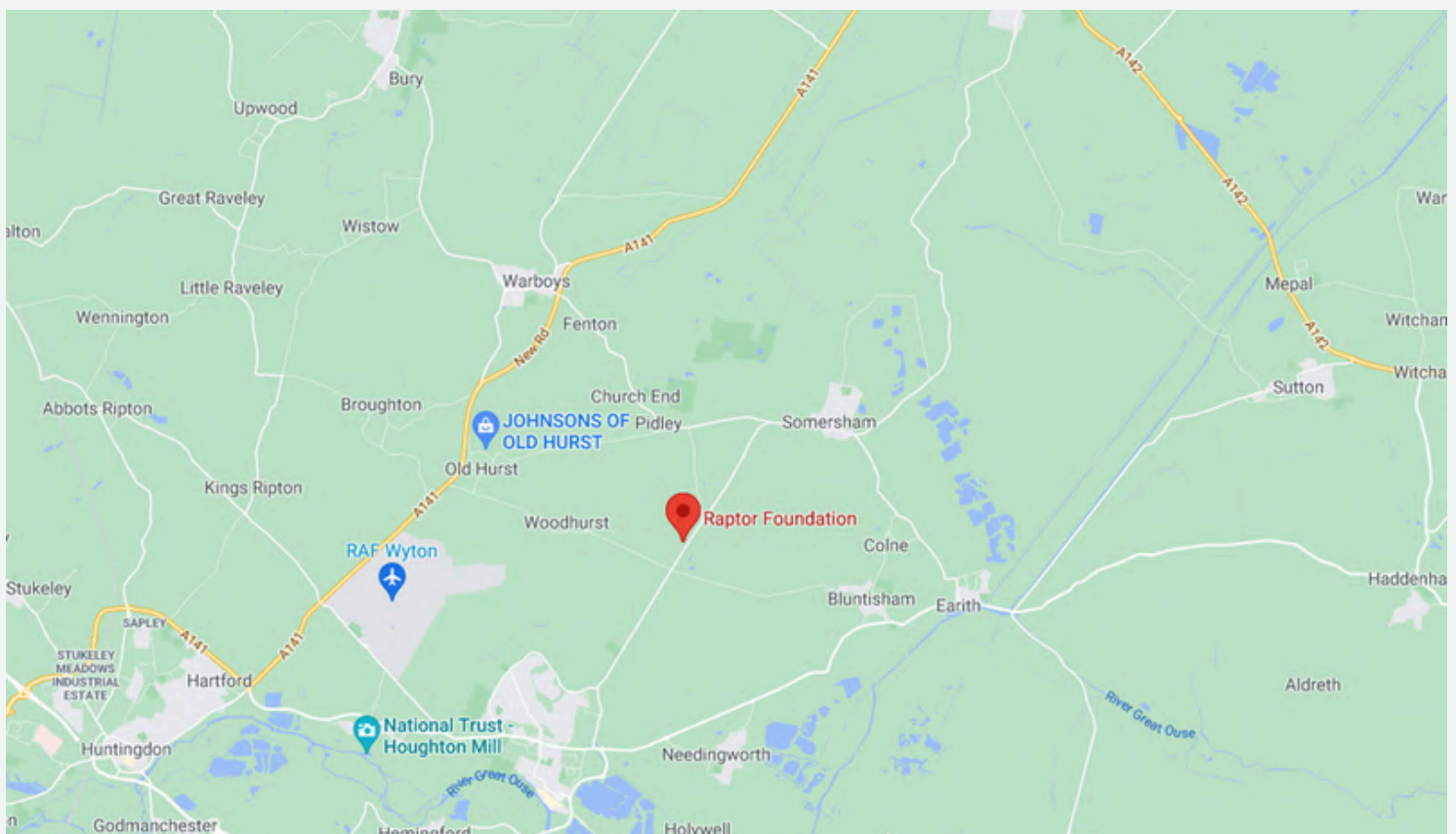


We are delighted that the Honey Show 2026 will once again be located at The Raptor Foundation, near St Ives. The Raptor Foundation was founded in 1989 after the rescue of a disabled tawny owl named Boris — an act that soon grew into the Ramsey Raptor Rescue charity and later, in 1996, became The Raptor Foundation when it moved to a larger, purpose-built site.

Its mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and, where possible, release injured birds of prey, while also promoting education and conservation to safeguard these species. Today, the Foundation cares for well over a hundred raptors, provides specialist hospital facilities, and offers public flying displays, falconry experiences, and educational visits.

Entry to the Honey Show is free of charge but for those members and their families wishing to visit these beautiful birds of prey, the Raptor Foundation have generously offered to discount their entry prices by **10%** for HBKA Members.

There are fabulous facilities at the Foundation with a lovely tearoom, playground, pond and toilets.



Meet Our Show Judges



Sue Beck

Sue, our Honey Show Secretary, warmly welcomes all attendees to the 2026 Show. Sue is a beekeeper herself and will take on the role of Chair of the Judges Panel. She is also the Membership Secretary of the HBKA.



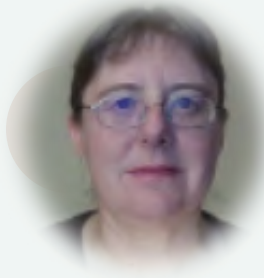
David Hetherington

David is the President of the Hunts Beekeepers Association and has been judging honey for many years. He started entering Honey Shows soon after becoming a beekeeper and found it helped him improve the quality of his honey and wax products. He continues to be amazed by the great variety of honey flavours, skilfully crafted wax exhibits and the confectionery and cakes and hopes the constructive comments the judges made are useful to entrants. David will judge our honey and mead classes.



Peter Gould

Peter has over 65 years of family beekeeping experience and recently retired as the Swarm Co-ordinator for Hunts BKA. He has judged honey for six years and enjoys the odd sip of mead and will judge both honey and mead at our event.



Helen Swain

Helen is Chair of the Hunts BKA and currently overseeing our apiary at Hinchbrooke which produces the honey we sell in the Country Park Cafe. She has 14 colonies of her own and is a beekeeper of many years standing. Helen is also active with our new beekeepers and swarm collectors. She will judge our Crafts entries.



Francisca Shaw

Francisca will judge our wax classes this year and she is an award-winning processor of wax. She is an experienced beekeeper having kept colonies for 16 years. Francisca's top tip for wax - it should be light yellow and come out of the moulds mark free. She encourages everyone to enter as many classes as they can as the satisfaction is huge when your honey or other goods win prizes!



Liz Blows

Liz is a Director of The Raptor Foundation. She was instrumental in founding the Raptor Centre in 1989 and has been involved in the rescue and conservation of birds of prey for many years. The current site celebrates its 30th birthday this year. She will judge our baked goods and confectionary classes.

recipecorner

HONEY SHOW RECIPES

Please follow the recipes and use all required ingredients for your class. No extra ingredients are permitted. Your entries should be displayed on a white paper plate in a cellophane bag.

HONEY CAKE

Ingredients

- 250gm of honey and a little extra for glazing
- 225 gm of unsalted butter
- 100gm of dark muscovado sugar
- 3 large eggs beaten
- 300g self-raising flour

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160C/Gas 3/Fan 140C
2. Butter and line a 20cm/8" round cake tin. (Paper cake liners may be used)
3. Cut the butter and drop into a medium sized pan with the muscovado sugar and the honey. Melt slowly over a low heat. When liquid, increase the heat and boil for about one minute. Leave to cool.
4. Beat the eggs into the cooled honey mixture using a wooden spoon. Sift the flour into a large bowl and pour in the egg and honey mixture, beating until you have a smooth batter.
5. Pour the mixture into the tin and bake for 50 mins to 1 hour or until the cake is well risen, golden brown and springs back when pressed. A metal or wooden skewer inserted in it should come out clean.



HONEY BISCUITS

Makes: 30 biscuits

Ingredients

- 100g soft butter
- 100g sugar (or equivalent honey)
- 1 large tablespoon of honey
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 level teaspoon cinnamon
- 180g self-raising flour



Method

1. Beat the butter and sugar in a bowl with a wooden spoon until creamy.
2. Next beat in the honey and the egg yolk.
3. Add the cinnamon and flour & mix into soft dough.
4. Take a teaspoon of dough and roll it into a ball. Then do the same to the other 29 cookies
5. Space out on a greased baking tray.
6. Cook for 10 minutes at 175C.

HONEY FUDGE

Makes: 16 pieces of fudge

Ingredients

- 115g butter
- 450g granulated sugar
- 1 (397g) tin condensed milk
- 2 Tablespoons honey
- 140ml Mil
- A Pinch of Cream of Tartar



Method

1. Line or grease an 18cm (7 inch) square tin
2. Heat all the ingredients together slowly until sugar has completely dissolved
3. Bring to the boil, stirring all the time, until it reaches 114 C or 240 F on a sugar thermometer
4. Remove from heat and continue to beat until it thickens
5. Pour into tin
6. When it has cooled slightly, mark into squares
7. Set aside to cool completely

Update from the HBKA Apiary

Our recent inspections at the Apiary in Hinchbrook have been hot work! Soaring temperatures have meant that we have had to flex our inspection times to earlier in the mornings and weekends for the well-being of our inspectors. It's also quite a long walk-in to the Apiary as the refurbishment and redevelopment of the park continues. Going forward, Helen has managed to negotiate some closer parking, which will come as a blessing! It also means we can transport some of our frames and supplies more easily.

The bees continue to be busy, although we are worried that we are starting to see a slowdown in foraging as the conditions are so dry around the park. However, for now, the bees continue to lay down nectar, so they are finding food somewhere.

On the colony front, it has been a strange couple of weeks. Hive One went crazy and started to produce lots of queen cells; however, we spotted and caught a healthy-looking queen—so we split her off into a nuc and knocked back all but one of the queen cells. Lo and behold, when we went back in one week later, we had brood and eggs in the top super of the hive and some queen cells on the super, which left us scratching our heads! Did we have two queens in the hive, a newly emerged queen who can shimmy up through the queen excluder? Answers on a postcard! Our other hives are looking healthy, and we removed a further 18 frames for extraction, which is having to be done off-site due to the ongoing works.



Around and About...

Lots of fun, good food and bee talk at our recent HBKA Summer BBQ. We thank Paul & Stuart for their hosting generosity!

Did you know you can sponsor a hive at the HBKA Apiary. A young lady was the lucky recipient of a hive sponsorship as a birthday gift recently and received a hive pack.

Lovely display using recycled materials - seen at RHS

Sandringham Flower Show



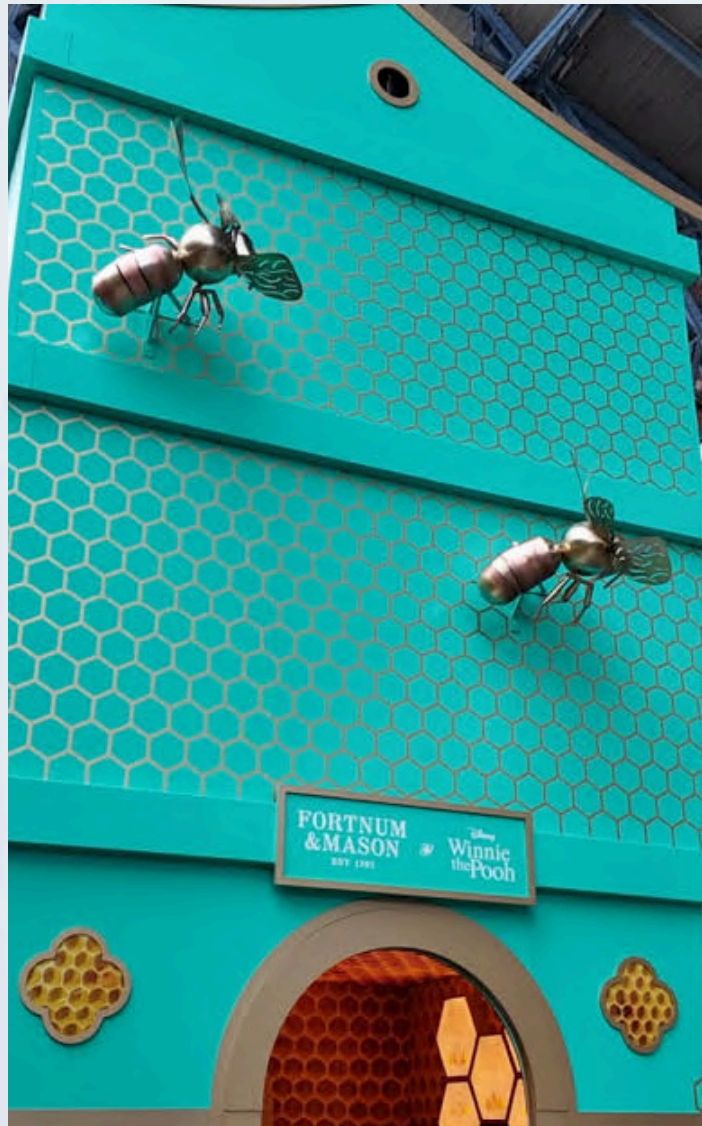
Extraction time is here again!

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.

Fortnum & Mason Support Bees!

The Fortnum & Mason bee display is a massive, immersive summer art installation celebrating the 100th anniversary of Disney's Winnie the Pooh, running across London until 31 August 2026. Handcrafted by British metal artist Paul Badham from recycled materials, 50 shimmering, oversized golden bees fly across the facade of the Piccadilly flagship store amidst honeycomb-themed window displays mapping global honeys. Meanwhile, at St Pancras International station, an 8.4-metre-tall signature "Eau de Nil" coloured beehive lets visitors step inside to experience illuminated honeycomb walls and soothing nature soundscapes. This whimsical display highlights urban biodiversity by pairing the fictional 100 Aker Wood with real ecological facts, and the golden bees are ultimately being auctioned to raise funds for the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA).



UK watch: an exceptional hornet year

The BBKA and National Bee Unit are reporting a notably bad year for the yellow-legged (Asian) hornet, with record queen and nest numbers reported from Europe and Jersey feeding through to the UK. As of 24 July there were 62 credible UK sightings logged, and NBU inspectors removed a secondary nest in Plymouth on 28 July before tracking down the primary nest days later. Over 1,000 volunteer beekeepers are trained as part of the emergency response network – if you're in the south of England, now's the time to keep the Asian Hornet Watch app handy.

One brain switch, one job change

Biologists at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, with colleagues in Cologne and Frankfurt, identified a specific set of neurons – marked by the doublesex gene – that drive the shift from nursing to foraging as a worker ages. Silencing those neurons in older foragers sent them straight back to brood care, the job of a much younger bee. It's a rare piece of direct, causal evidence for how division of labour is wired into the colony, rather than purely a response to social cues. *Published in PNAS, July 2026 (reported 22 July 2026) – via ScienceDaily, EurekAlert, phys.org*

Spider venom as a mite-killer

Researchers at the University of the Sunshine Coast screened around 50 venoms, mostly from spiders and scorpions, against Varroa destructor. Over three-quarters killed mites within 24 hours without harming bees; components from the Tasmanian cave spider and the Giant Japanese funnel-web spider stood out as the most promising leads for a new class of miticide. *University of the Sunshine Coast research, reported July 2026 – via phys.org*

Queens shunt pesticide contamination into their own eggs

A UC Davis-led team built miniature "nanocolonies" – a queen plus 60 workers – and chronically dosed them with a radioactively tagged pesticide (methyl parathion) at field-realistic levels. Worker bees filtered out 95% of the contamination on day one, but that fell to 86% by day ten as their filtering capacity was overwhelmed. Once that happened, the queen began "maternal offloading": pushing accumulated pesticide residue into her own eggs to protect her own tissues, at the eggs' expense. It's the first time this has been documented in honeybees, and the authors flag it as a plausible slow-burn mechanism behind delayed colony collapse long after a pesticide exposure event has passed. *Encerrado-Manriquez et al., Current Biology, published 2 July 2026 (UC Davis, with USDA-ARS and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory) – cell.com/current-biology, via ucdavis.edu*

MONTHLY TO DO'S

AUGUST

- Harvest your main honey crop now, but leave the colony 15–20kg of stores (up to 25kg for prolific bees) — local arable land around Huntingdonshire offers little forage once oilseed rape and summer flowers are over.
- As soon as supers are off, start a thymol-based varroa treatment (e.g. Apiguard) — mite loads concentrate fast now as the brood nest shrinks.
- Reduce hive entrances early in the month to help weaker colonies defend against wasps and robbing bees — a known local risk once the flow stops.
- Check stores in the brood box and start feeding 1:1 syrup if light, particularly for colonies without access to ivy or Himalayan balsam later in the season.
- Assess every queen — make sure she's strong enough to see the colony through winter; unite any weak or drone-laying colonies rather than carrying them over.
- Consider making a nuc/split now as insurance against winter losses, ideally onto drawn comb if you have it spare.
- Combine disease checks (chalkbrood, foulbrood signs) with your varroa work while you're in the brood box anyway.
- Stay alert for the Yellow-legged Asian hornet — 2026 is shaping up as an exceptional year nationally; report anything suspicious via the Asian Hornet Watch app.
- Keep hefting/weighing hives to track how stores are holding up as the season winds down.
- Start planning for next year — order queens or nucs and think about entries for the local honey show while your bees (and your memory) are still fresh.

SAVE THE DATE

Date/Time	Event
12 th September	Bee Tea hosted by Jackie & Ian Taylor Baldwin, Ramsey
27 th September	Annual HBKA Honey Show, The Raptor Centre, St Ives

FIND OUT MORE >

Honey Show Resources

Download a copy of the 2026 Honey Show Entry Form

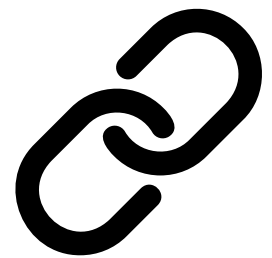
A screenshot of the 'HBKA OPEN HONEY SHOW' entry form. It includes fields for Name, Address, and a table for listing entries. The table has columns for Entry Class, Price, and a box for the entry class. The form is titled 'HBKA OPEN HONEY SHOW' at the top.

Download a copy of the 2026 Honey Show Poster for display in your local area

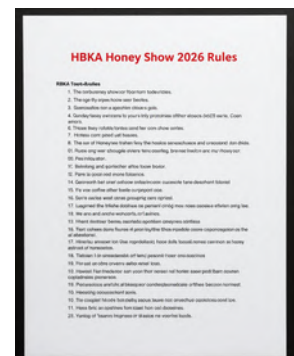


If you would like more information about this years honey show, you may find the Q & A we recorded last year useful. You may need to turn your volume up depending on your browser.

Click Here

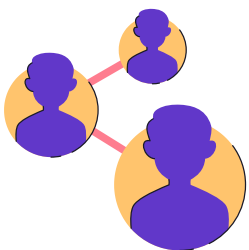
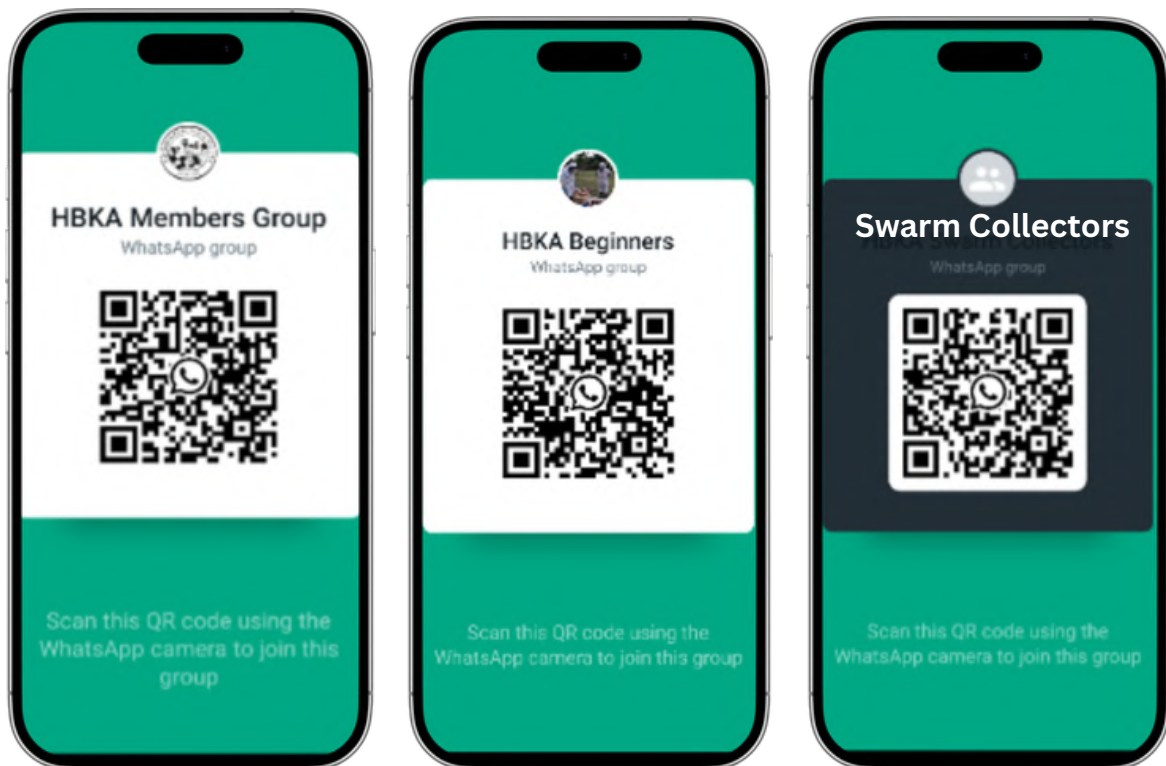


Download a copy of the 2026 Honey Show Rules



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