

Newsletter September 2025

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for September '25. Well, we are approaching the end of the season and most of the honey that can be taken probably has been, but I am sure some of you will be able to squeeze a few more jars out! There is a programme on Channel Five to be broadcast this Saturday 6th and it is a series about the Isles of Scilly, part of the forthcoming program is about Honeybees on the island, I know nothing else apart from it has the 'witty' title of 'A game of drones', It could be worth a look. The Honey Show Schedule and Entry forms have been sent to you by email and I must apologise for my error in including everybody's email addresses, I will ensure that this does not happen again.

Membership

No new members to welcome this month, all the recent joiners are still throwing themselves into beekeeping.

August Events

The weather was perfect for Wigtown Show where we had a stand with 4 members volunteering – thanks to Heather, Gary B, Jenny and Linda. The stand was visited by visitors, locals, members and youngsters and there was lots of bee chat, including some interest in the 2026 Beginners course.

August the 31st saw an apiary visit to the Iain's apiary near Port William. There were about a dozen of us in attendance on a very windy day but Iain's hives were in a very sheltered spot so we were able to go into them. Iain had two hives that he had filled from nucs and was unsure if they had queens. Upon opening eggs and larvae, he found, in both hives the queen was found, caught, and marked. On Iain's third hive which was two brood boxes, again laying and larvae and the queen caught and marked. The top brood box had any frames with eggs larvae or store removed and redistributed to the other two hives to help build them up. The new frames were put into the other hives whilst being smoked, and at John's suggestion sprayed with Fabreeze. This was done to stop the host hive rejecting them, but the Fabreeze was a new one on us all. A splendid day and after the hives we retired to Iain's kitchen for tea, cake, and chat. A great day and Belinda and Iain were excellent hosts. A good end to the apiary visit season

Members meetings.

The next all members will be Sunday 28th September, it will be a combination of honey show and all members meeting which will be about preparing for winter and a reminder of how to prepare for the honey show. It is anticipated that some Members from the South of Scotland Beekeeping Association will join us for the Honey Show reminder

Dates for your diary

2nd November – AGM + different ways to manage your bees

30th November – Honey Show

Christmas lunch date to follow

2026 Beginners Course – 21st and 22nd March. If you are a newbie and still to put your name down, or if you would like to do the course again, please let us know

Kevins Bee Blog

I have just read this and I can sympathise on the bee escape in the car during transit, in the days I used to keep bees in Wiltshire I would have to occasionally move my hives as the permission came to an end, I was always concerned about driving through the town with a few full hives in the back of my van.

Things to do in September

September is the month when the beekeeping year really begins – the honey crop has been removed and our actions now will determine how well our colonies will fare in the winter months ahead. This month our inspections need to focus on the number of stores in the hives and whether our colonies are big enough and healthy enough to overwinter successfully: it is time to perhaps unite small colonies, treat for varroa and to start autumn feeding if your colonies are light on stores. Whichever varroa treatment you decide on – and there is plenty of advice out there – you must keep records for at least five years: you can download a record card from Bee Base.. Wasps are becoming a nuisance in my apiary, constantly trying to sneak into the hives to plunder their hard-won stores and being rebuffed by the guard bees: I have reduced all entrances and put foam strips in the gaps between varroa floor and brood box. My wasp traps are catching plenty but it looks like a bumper year for the pests so I will redouble my efforts – wasps can wipe out a small colony in days. This is also the peak time for Asian hornet activity so stay alert for them hawking around your hives or feeding on ivy and fallen fruit. Now that you have taken your last honey crop you will need to make sure that your colonies are sufficiently well-provisioned to get through the winter: each full-sized colony will need around 20kg (44lbs) of stores as a minimum, more if the winter is mild. I leave my bees at least one super of honey and always do a visual inspection of each hive to be sure that there are good stores in the brood box, never assume. I also take the opportunity to rearrange frames of stores to ensure optimum accessibility then use the weight of the hive as my guide as the season progresses. How do we measure the weight of a hive? Various scales and spring balances can be used but an easier, if less scientific way, is to lift one side of the hive about half an inch (hefting). If it feels so heavy you can scarcely lift it (feels as if it is nailed down), then the stores are likely to be adequate. For autumn feeding we use a ratio of 2:1, that is 2lb sugar dissolved in 1 pint of hot water (1 kg in 625 ml for the metrically-minded). Use white granulated sugar dissolved into hot water and allow it to cool before putting it on the hive – never heat the syrup. Use contact feeders (bucket feeders), rapid feeders (these have a central, covered, cone-shaped access) or large capacity feeders such as Miller or Ashworth. Feed early in the month to give the bees time to process the syrup sufficiently; too diluted and the syrup will ferment, causing dysentery. When feeding take care not to excite robbing in your apiary: ensure you do not spill any syrup, check that the box surrounding the feeder has no gaps which could allow wasps or robber bees to enter, and feed only in the evenings. If you have not already done so, reduce entrances and set up wasp traps. Small colonies – of 5 frames of brood or fewer – have difficulty maintaining an adequate temperature in the cluster during the colder months and so have a lower chance of survival than larger ones. If you do decide to overwinter them you will need to give them extra protection, perhaps in a polystyrene nucleus box. I have successfully used polystyrene blocks around the brood nest in a standard National brood box. You may also wish to consider uniting small colonies: this provides an opportunity to select for your best queens. You will find instructions on how to unite colonies in beekeeping books and magazines, online and by asking more experienced beekeepers. September Summary Estimate winter food stores by hefting hives and/or inspecting each frame. Top up the stores to at least 20kg by feeding heavy syrup. Be alert to wasp activity in and around your hives – reduce entrances and set up traps – and to robbing by other colonies. Monitor for varroa mites and treat immediately if the natural drop exceeds 20 mites per day. Monitor again after treatment to ensure it has been successful. Unite small colonies or ensure that the hive or nuc is well-insulated Remove the queen excluder towards the end of the month if you are leaving a super of honey on the hive. Clean it and store it under the roof ready for use. Remain alert for the presence of Asian hornets, either hawking around your hives or feeding on ivy or fallen fruit. Use sweet baits in any traps and monitor daily.

Dougie, Chair