

Chairmans report

2025 – a year of firsts!

2025 brought some real challenges as well as some successes. We had a full programme of meetings at Wombledon and elsewhere with our joint meetings, with some very different approaches to beekeeping, but apiary visits were impacted by an outbreak of European foulbrood in our area. Happily, we were able to run one at Stephen's apiary, observing strict biosecurity measures, with the fascinating and very pragmatic Keith Bartlett. This was not only a very instructive meeting, but also reminded us all that biosecurity is at the heart of good apiary hygiene practices, and we should observe many of these in our everyday beekeeping, not just when disease threatens.

The beekeeping season seemed to have been quite mixed with beekeepers telling me of strange behaviour, poor honey harvest but some of success. The exceptionally dry spring warm weather seemed to have encouraged colonies to start building early and, of course, to start swarm preparations. Early honey flow was reported by some as poor and the drought conditions in the summer also had an effect. The heather was poor with moorland fires restricting access. Personally, I had one of my worst years ever with 3 of my 4 colonies lost to wasps and hives completely robbed out. Queen mating seems to have been poor in many areas and late swarms – I collected a small one in mid-September!

We attended both Ryedale and Farndale shows – many thanks to Julie, Tim, Simon, Stephen, Rhona and John Sutherland and all those who supported these, they offer important information, are well received, and great publicity for the association and beekeeping in general. They also help us to publicise the training course. Julie, Gina, Karen & Simon also heroically ran the 'Let's learn Moor' school sessions which engage children with beekeeping and are a lot of work! Many thanks too to Stephen for organising the observation hive at all these events, it is a valuable addition and a real draw! We also had a stall in Malton market to inform about honey authenticity and YLAH.

Summer meetings proved unsuccessful, so we will return to just apiary visits over the summer. We are happy to try things out, but it is important that you as members tell the committee what you want, or better still join the committee to have your say! All these events require people and it is a fairly small group who do this, so please do consider adding to that happy band!

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet: this year was an unhappy first in the discovery of a Yellow legged hornet nest in Langton. Many thanks to Kay for all her work in setting up the monitoring map, distributing information and liaising with Malton (in whose area Langton sits) to be across this. The nest was destroyed and found to be sexually immature, so the immediate threat appears to have been met, but monitoring continues and we still await the DNA to identify the source of the colony. It is vital that we all treat what may have felt like a remote or academic threat as real and present and ensure we all use the traps and monitoring stations at the correct times of year.

I now want to do some 'Thankyou's'.

Apiary Visits

Thank you to Stephen for hosting our only apiary visit in 2025: if anyone feels they can host an apiary visit in 2023 or in the future, please let us know – we can provide expertise if necessary.

Beginners course

One of the functions of a local beekeeping association is to educate and promote responsible beekeeping. One of the ways we do this is via the popular beginner's course which is now going to be presented, run and administered by the committee following the 'retirement' after many sterling years, of Rhona and John. I'd like to express the sincere thanks of everyone to them for the years they put into this course, and I am happy to say we already have enough enquiries to run it next year. The course is the major source of income for RBKA, but more importantly helps to ensure that beekeepers are equipped to manage their colonies well and safely. **Thank you then to Rhona and John for all your hard work and for those others who support as needed.**

Simon is our Education officer and he is living proof of the efficacy of the BBKA modules and exams. He heartily recommends the assessments and the modules and says he has learned much by working through them.

Bulk purchases

Bulk purchases in 2025 haven't been as well supported as they have been in the past but they always turn out to be very competitively priced so I would recommend you bear them in mind and look out for these throughout the year. **Thank you to Tim, Julie and Stephen for arranging these.**

Committee

Other than myself as Chair, the RBKA committee is made up as follows:

Julie Thompson– Secretary

Tim Phillips – Treasurer

Simon Lathlean – education

Stephen Hudson

Many thanks to Gina Bull, Kay Stephens and Philip Closier who have all, for different reasons, stood down this year, your contributions were much appreciated.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work and contribution to the smooth running and success of RBKA.

Finally I hope you all have a good Christmas, remember annual subs are now due and wish you all success for your beekeeping in 2026.

Louise Hampson

Chair RBKA

November 2025