



## In this issue:

Editor's Note: Books, **northern** bees & beekeeping.

Main Theme: Learning about Beekeeping, favourite books, social media recommendations.

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Update.

Future editions:  
Cumbria Bee Times –Over to You and Future Editions

**Welcome** to the December edition of the Cumbria Bee Times. I hope Christmas brings you a chance to relax a little and allows some time to read or the opportunity to spend gift money on (yet another) book about bees. I have been reading 'The Diary of a Bookseller' by Shaun Bythell recounting the behind the scenes life in his bookshop in Wigtown. I am sure it is familiar to many of you, it brings home the message that our convenient and cheaper book buying habits via the big seller(s) on line really jeopardise our local bookshops. I think we can all think of the occasions when we have browsed a book that we intended to purchase and then changed our minds after seeing the content. Being able to handle an item before spending is still a great luxury.

As one of our specialist northern book suppliers who readily sends books or comes to our local events I asked Northern Bee Books to contribute to this edition of CBT, I hope you enjoy Richard's article and maybe discover the excellent NBB YouTube channel. Social media is a fantastic route to beekeeping knowledge but it is important that it is relevant to our northern climate and our locally adapted bees & we should never underestimate the importance of joining our local beekeeping associations

Happy Christmas & wishing you & your bees a good 2026.

Editor: Julia Hoggard Kendal & South Westmorland BKA & Cumbria BKA  
(Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor & contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the CBKA).

## Dates for your diary:

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February  
2026 Social & Learning  
Day hosted by Kendal &  
South Westmorland BKA.  
Prof. Steve Martin talking  
about Varroa monitoring  
and making the journey  
towards Varroa resistant  
bees. Contact  
[julia@bcs.org](mailto:julia@bcs.org)  
Please come and join us.

cbteditor@gmail.com

## December Edition Main Theme – just in time for your Christmas list!

### Beekeeping Books & Social Media Information for Beekeepers.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in reviews of the books they appreciate and information on social media beekeeping sites. It is very obvious to all of us who have been around the local beekeeping world for a good few years that club meetings and events that are open across the county are usually much less well attended than they were 'in the old days'. Social media channels are taking their place. I suspect that old beekeeping texts are also referred to much less often too and yet I think they can have a relevance to all of us. At this time of 'accelerating change' or 'the exponential age' a look back through these windows into the past can be both interesting and vital to our beekeeping practice. Both older and very up to date books may influence the type of beekeeper we become. Gaining a truly broad understanding of beekeeping underpins our ability to flex our ideas and methods to suit our own needs (financial options, fitting round our working lives and into our available space), to move forward if things have not worked out – maybe colony loss over winter - and once again I am going to mention, our need to be flexible during this time of climate change. Most importantly we need to be able to judge whether whatever source we are consulting provides sensible information – many are rather dubious.

Just considering older books, even though they predate the great turning point of Varroa arriving in the UK; *Sixty Years with Bees* by Donald Sims ISBN 13: 9780907908746 utterly changed my views on how many colonies/hives it is reasonable to keep and on how to manage our land for pollinators. Ron Brown's 'A Seasonal Guide to Beekeeping' (ISBN:9781849945653 for the updated version) was my favourite text because I could identify with his approach to beekeeping and the logic of his approach, it suited the way my mind works. Sadly, I lent my signed copy to someone and never saw it again – lending and losing track of books is another story!

*Julia Hoggard.*

### Richard Searle from Northern Bee Books.

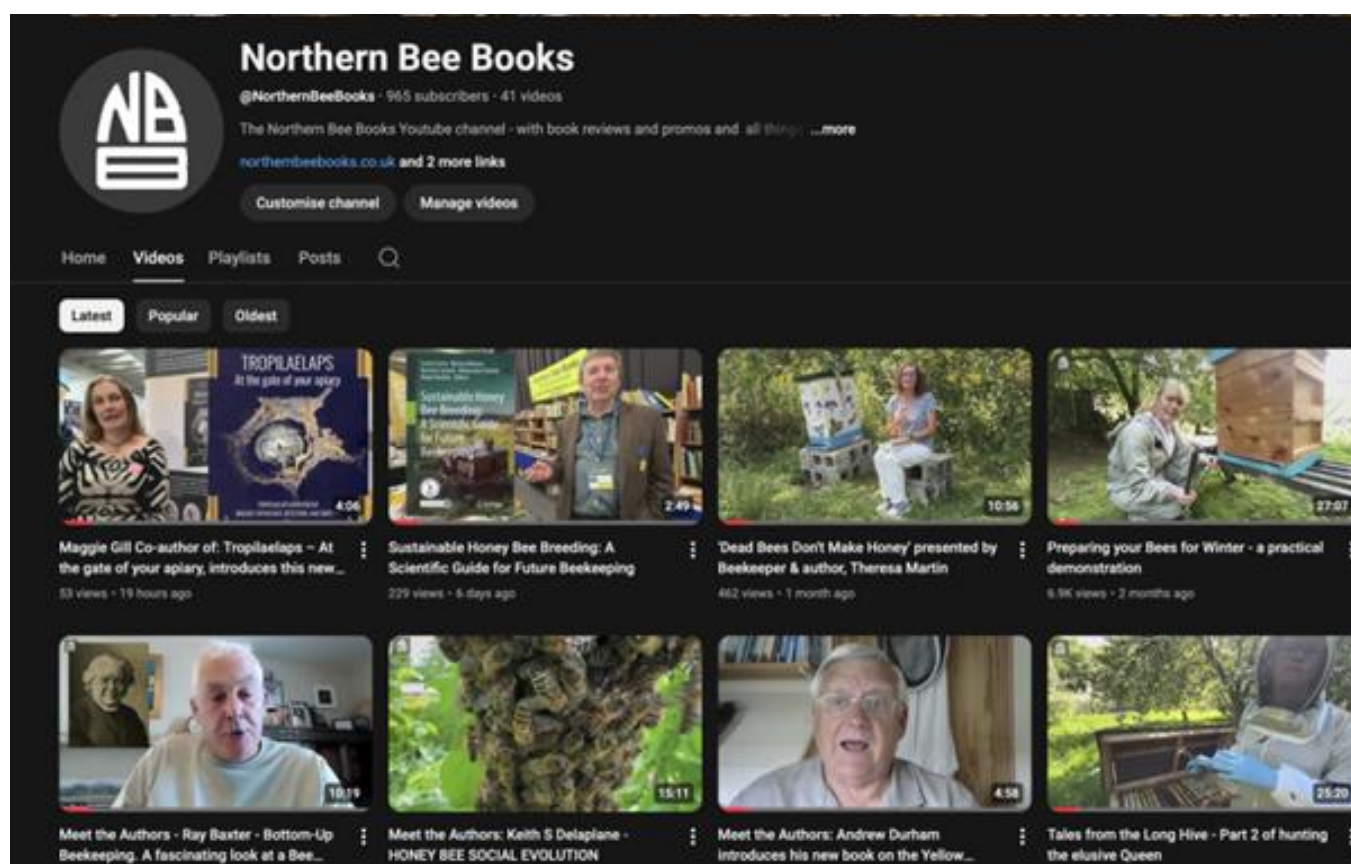
There cannot be many beekeepers in the UK who haven't bought a bee book of some sort from Northern Bee Books in the last 30 years or so. A Northern Bee Book stall has been a regular feature at the BBKA Spring Convention and the National Honey Show. NBB also publishes *The Beekeepers Quarterly*, now in its 40th year, which won a Gold Medal at this year's Apimondia event in Denmark.

I've been buying bee books from Northern Bee Books since 2013 before I moved to Yorkshire 7 years ago, and could even properly pronounce Mytholmroyd, the village in the Upper Calder Valley where Northern Bee Books is based. After 30 years working within front line Homelessness services for large Local Authority, it is a positive delight to be working at Northern Bee Books. I now work a relaxed, stress free 3 days a week, packing books in envelopes and boxes, to send to beekeepers around the world. In the last week of October, I've posted bee books to Norway, Ireland, Hungary, Canada, Portugal to name but a few.

However, a challenge to this small global trade in apiculture literature has come this Summer from Trump's Tariffs, which means anything exported from the UK to the US automatically attracts a 10% tariff, pushing up the cost of books to US beekeepers. The US government has made all national postal and courier services collect these tariffs on its behalf. But if the book is one published by Northern Bee Books, it can now be printed in the USA, using an insta-print service, and then posted directly to the customer from inside the US, which then avoids the tariff.



Since I started in February 2024, I have been developing the Northern Bee Books YouTube channel, with the production, filming and editing of short films. This channel features interviews with authors, book recommendations and instructional videos. The most viewed film on the channel is 'Queen Rearing made simple - using a Vertical Split', which has attracted over 13,000 views. This was filmed with beekeepers from Halifax BKA.

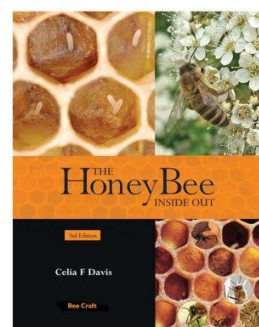


If there is one bee book I've really enjoyed this year, above all others, it is Ray Baxter's *Bottom-Up Beekeeping*. It's an illuminating look at all the debris that falls from a bee colony over the time period of year, and what this can tell us as to what is going on inside the hive. There is great interview with Ray on the YouTube Channel where he explains how the book came about as part of his work teaching beekeeping in schools. Ray has an article in the December BBKA News.

I would encourage you to sign up for the Northern Bee Books Newsletter, if you've not already done so. This can be done via the website and you'll be notified of new bee books as they are published. Please do have a look around the YouTube channel as well.

**Richard Searle, Northern Bee Books, Scout Bottom Farm, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. HX7 5JS United Kingdom** [www.northernbeebooks.co.uk](http://www.northernbeebooks.co.uk)

## 'The Honey Bee Inside Out'



### Celia F Davis

*Bee Craft ISBN : 9780900147197 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

This is a real treasure trove of information relating to the anatomy and inside workings of our friend, the honeybee. It has a wealth of clear diagrams and photographs combined with a straightforward text to explain the systems inside the honeybee.

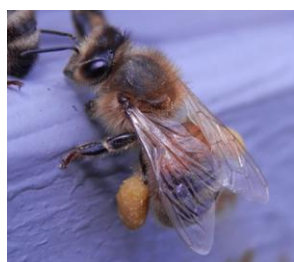
Don't be put off with the many names for different parts of the body. You'll find that the honeybee doesn't have legs; it walks about on Swiss army knives with specialist adaptations for different jobs. (there is probably one for removing stones from a horse's hoof if I look hard enough!).

If you plan to study the BBKA's module 5, Honey Bee Biology, then it's well worth investing in your own copy, so that you can highlight the various nuggets. Also try to get the latest edition (Edition 3) as it has been updated with additional useful information and this book covers the whole of the module 5 syllabus.

Even if not planning to study for an exam, it's still worth checking-out this book for useful pub-quiz trivia e.g. how many eyes does a honeybee have? (5). Did you know a honeybee can taste with its legs (True) and much more.

The better you understand your honeybees then the better you can identify problems and take action to correct.

**Clare Woowat Vice-President, Cockermouth BKA, YLAH County Coordinator, CBKAA**



## 'The Bee Manual'



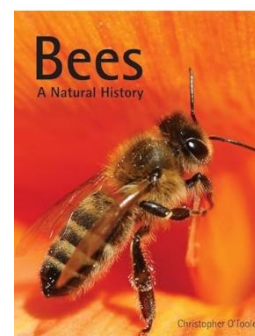
### Claire & Adrian Waring

Haynes Publ. 2016 ISBN 978-0-85733-809-9

After over a decade of beekeeping I find that this is my 'go to' book when I need to be reminded of some basic procedures. It offers practical advice in clear, step-by-step text with colourful photographs illustrating the actions that are being recommended or the bee behaviour to observe. It includes an extensive glossary of terms which are explained in detail – a particular help to new beekeepers unfamiliar with 'bee keeping jargon'. The index is detailed, indicating very clearly where the information can be found which makes referencing quick and easy when time is limited and guidance is immediately needed!

*Margaret Riches from Penrith BKA and Cumbria BKA*

## Bees : A natural history



### Christopher O'Toole

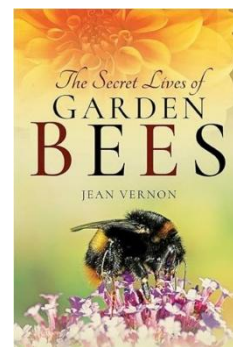
Firefly Books 2012 : ISBN: 13 978-1-77085-208-2

There are at least 20,000 species of bees found in all habitats across the globe, but most of us know little about bees beyond '*Apis mellifera*', the western honeybee. With its large, captivating, colourful photographs and fascinating text, you will enjoy extending your own knowledge about bees and the colourful cover is bound to engage the interest of others in your family . The perfect 'coffee table' book to enjoy and continue to return to in restful moments!

*Margaret Riches from Penrith BKA and Cumbria BKA*



## The Secret Lives of Garden Bees



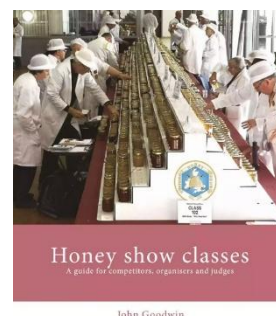
### Jean Vernon

*Pen-and-Sword White Owl 2020: ISBN: 1526711869* (Available in hardback and paperback )

As beekeepers we are aware of the importance of providing honey bees with 'bee friendly' flowers from which they can successfully source pollen and nectar throughout the year. Other bees also need similar consideration in order to thrive but the flowers and habitats that they need will be particular to their species. This book reveals the 'secret', fascinating lives of the bumble bees and solitary bees that may live and breed in your garden, with a seasonal guide to explore what you are likely to see, the plants to grow and the types of habitat that they need to build their nests. It is beautifully illustrated with coloured photographs of 'bees in action' and the fascinating story behind each bee is enthralling to read. An ideal book to while away the winter months and inspire you to think about how you might make small but significant changes to your garden to insure that these wonderful creatures continue to survive.

*Margaret Riches from Penrith BKA and Cumbria BKA*

## Honey Show Classes



### John Goodwin

A Guide for Competitors, Organisers and Judges  
*Northern Bee Books: ISBN 978-1-914934-17-9*

I loved this book! This has got to be **THE "go to" book for anyone thinking of entering or running a honey show.** As a new honey show secretary with absolutely no idea about showing honey or hive products, I was lucky enough to be given a copy before our honey show, which led me through the whole fascinating process in a highly accessible way.

John Goodwin summarises the aims of his book as follows:

'This book has been written as a guide for everyone involved with honey shows, be it organising, exhibiting or judging. If on the day of the show the book has helped to achieve successful organisation, high standards of exhibiting, well-written and unambiguous honey show schedules, increased interest in honey shows, and more applicants for the BBKA Show Judge certificate, the writing of the book will have been worthwhile.'

The chapter on show management is intended as a guide both for large shows and for minor, branch association shows. What is not understood is that larger shows are very often easier and require less work, since County, Floral and Agricultural shows have the resources, facilities and show management that make organisation somewhat simpler for the Honey Section show manager. In contrast the show manager of small shows may be responsible for all the show organisation required, both prior to the show and during the showing period. Hopefully the reader will find in this chapter a simplified but comprehensive guide of show management.

When competing in honey shows you should always enter to win. This book explains what is expected of the exhibit in each class and category. The importance of the boring exhibit containers (honey jars, boxes and bags) is stressed, in addition to their contents, the equipment, and the required method for showing and producing winning exhibits for each class and category.

Honey show judging is necessarily evolving with the requirements of modern day-to-day beekeeping. Examples include the exhibition of microscope slides, videos and on-line essays. The judging section is intended for prospective judges starting their exam portfolio or well on the path to becoming qualified Honey Show Judges. For all the categories there is a list of the equipment the prospective judge should have to hand, an advised method and procedure and the responsibilities and pitfalls of which a prospective honey judge should be aware.

I found this book to be **highly readable**, and very **well laid out**, with headings and bullet points for easy access. It is **very well illustrated** with excellent photographs, diagrams and tables, and it is full of information on presenting all types of honey and hive products; including various kinds of mead, beer, wax, and wax models, confectionary and endless tips on what details judges will be looking for when they judge produce.

**I cannot recommend this book highly enough - it is so well researched and extremely well presented. In fact, it is one of those fascinating books which captures your attention, even if you never intend to show anything at a honey show! Get yourself a copy if you can!**

*Trish Adcock from Kendal & South Westmorland BKA*

## Association Meetings

Attending a beekeeping course is just the introduction and start to most beekeepers' careers for many reasons, it is vital that new beekeepers realise that the initial course just provides the foundations that they will then need to build on for as long as their beekeeping hobby lasts. First and foremost we only retain a relatively small proportion of the information we are given in any situation. Once managing our own bees it is really essential to constantly build on initial retained information, learn from real hands on experience and then really gain some good quality know how for the difficult bits of beekeeping: awareness of pests and diseases, biosecurity and the challenging task of getting colonies through soggy Cumbrian winters. Association meetings are really a key part of this and we should never underestimate the importance of social contact for our own wellbeing. In the March 2026 edition we will look at the challenges this presents in our county where there is rarely a short or direct transport route from A to B. Likewise, group learning and peer support provide knowledge and friendship. In November Penrith Beekeepers' Association hosted a meeting on the learning available via the BBKA Learning Platform. As the BBKA update their website this month have a look at the information available. For anyone interested in taking the BBKA practical assessments or written modules the Learning Platform is the place to access the relevant information. To just join Cumbrian groups and expand your knowledge with or without 'taking exams' contact Peter Weatherill [cbkaexamsec@gmail.com](mailto:cbkaexamsec@gmail.com) or Julia Hoggard exam secretary Kendal & SW BKA [julia@bcs.org](mailto:julia@bcs.org) and we will connect you up with the right people. Kendal's learning group will get together from early January 2026.

## Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet Update

Today, 11<sup>th</sup> December, the WhatsApp groups linked to the BBKA Asian Hornet Team Community have received the very sad news that DEFRA has announced that the NBU will no longer be permitted to participate in spring queen trapping from 2026 onwards. This appears to be a huge policy change .....

**(CAHT update 1 November 2025)**

We are urging Cumbrian beekeepers to raise awareness and improve preparedness for the arrival of the Asian Hornet, also called the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet (YLAH) into our beautiful and geographically challenging county.

There is an excellent Factsheet on the National Bee Unit website, called Yellow-legged Hornet Monitoring Factsheet, which describes different bait monitoring stations and baits. Just follow the link from Diseases-and-pests / Yellow-legged Hornet page.

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/asian-hornet/the-role-of-asian-hornet-teams-ahts#AHT2>

### What to use as bait and when.

Note, if in doubt, the YLAH will visit a sweet, carbohydrate-rich bait at any time of the year!

When	Who	What
Early Spring onwards	Emerging Queen	sweet, carbohydrate-rich source, as needs energy eg sugar plus dark beer or fruit juice
July- November	Foraging Workers	Protein source to feed larvae eg mashed raw meat or fish diluted to 25% with water. Change after 3 days.
Autumn	Adult YLAHs	Sweet source eg ripe fruit, windfall apples



There are 10 monitoring traps for each Cumbrian BKA and these have been distributed to the Asian Hornet Coordinators for each branch and are available for deploying should the Asian Hornet be suspected in Cumbria.



### **Bait Recipes** (extract from *The Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet: A Handbook* by Dr Sarah Bunker)

Due to the cost of “Trappit”, many on Jersey now use home-made baits which have are just as effective. The main ingredients are sugar, water, fruit and yeast (baker’s yeast is much cheaper than wine yeast). The yeast starts the fermentation process, giving off fruity yeasty smells that hornets find hard to resist, and producing alcohol which puts off honeybees. The main thing to watch out for when making these concoctions is the carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>, that is released: any container must allow the CO<sub>2</sub> to escape, otherwise you may have a sticky mess on your hands, or even an explosive situation that could cause serious injury.

#### **Recipe 1** from Chris Isaacs

Dissolve 1 kg sugar in 2 kg water (i.e. 2 litres water). Add 50g (approx. 2 heaped dessertspoons) of cheap, bramble jelly. You can keep this mixture until needed.

When you want to use it, add half a teaspoon of baker’s yeast. In 10 minutes, it should start to froth up, becoming smelly and attractive.

#### **Recipe 2** from Bob Hogge

A weak sugar syrup, quarter to half sugar to water (i.e. 4oz – 8oz sugar to 1 pint of water) , plus 1-2 tablespoons of “dirty honey” (honey not good enough to eat from beekeeping processes such as extraction), all brought to the boil, let cool and sprinkle with yeast. Leave to ferment, perhaps making a gallon and fermenting it in a demijohn with an airlock.

## Volunteering Roles

Meanwhile, several beekeepers who have volunteered to be Asian Hornet monitors, verifiers or coordinators. A simple explanation of the roles is:

**monitors**, when requested, actively watch a given area

**verifiers** view a photo, visit a potential sighting to see if there's a genuine threat and refer to coordinator

**coordinators** are first point of contact with BBKA/NBU should they need assistance and liaise with interested parties.

## Cumbria County Coordinators

We have two County Coordinators in Cumbria:

Andy Brown from Kendal & South Westmorland BKA who covers K&SWBKA, Sedbergh BKA, Furness BKA.

Clare Woowat (Cockermouth BKA) representing the beekeeping associations in CBKAA, Cumbria Beekeepers Area Association. These are Carlisle, Cockermouth, Kendal, Penrith and Whitehaven & District BKAs.

Andy Brown is also the administrator of the Cumbria Asian Hornet Team, CAHT. You can visit the CAHT webpage, which has a wealth of information about the Asian Hornet and is accessible to all. Andy can also add you to the Cumbria YLH Team WhatsApp group, which receives weekly updates from BBKA on the UK 's YLAH position.

If you would like to be involved, and join Cumbria Asian Hornet Team, CAHT, please contact one of our County Asian Hornet Coordinators.

## GB- wide Volunteers

Asian Hornet Alert, AHA, is a voluntary group which includes non-beekeepers as well as beekeepers. They have an app called AHA Catch which shares communications and links up volunteers. There is strong encouragement for all volunteers to join AHA Catch via the app. Registration can be found at <https://catch.asianhornetalert.org.uk/login>

## Reminder

**\*\*Most Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet sightings have been reported by the general public.**

As of 30 October, Animal & Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) have received 530 credible sightings of YLAHs in 2025.

157 confirmed nests have been found.

The UK Government's position is currently to eradicate nests, however its enhanced contingency response will be scaled back with effect from 31 Oct 2025.

**\*\*SEE it. SNAP it. APP it.**

Report sightings via the Asian Hornet Watch App or [www.nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet)

**Clare Woowat County Coordinator for CBKAA Vice-President, Cockermonth BKA**

## Cumbria Bee Times – Over To Cumbrian Beekeepers.

### Why Do Bees Collect Nectar?

It's fairly obvious that with an insect with the name of **honey** bee, collecting coconuts is not its main priority! So why do bees collect floral nectar in such decent amounts on which to work their magic? For sure, it's not to please or gain favour with the beekeeper. No sir! That factor never entered the equation.

Like most living creatures, bees need sustenance — nectar to process into honey, water to dilute stores, and pollen to form the building blocks of protein for raising young bees. Except in winter, raising brood is an ongoing process. Nectar and pollen are only available from late spring to early autumn, and even then, the variations of British weather can cause substantial periods of dearth. As a result, colonies of bees need to lay down combs of stores to fall back on in times of shortage. It's their insurance against — you guessed it — a rainy day! With the great British weather being what it is, the supply can vanish faster than the sun on a Bank Holiday.

Bumblebees, wasps, and hornets leave the responsibility for their continued existence on this planet to the queens of their species. Mated in autumn, overwintered, and full of goodies in their bellies, they re-emerge after a dormant winter period into spring and single-handedly go to work to establish their colonies. This is the main point — these queens, with their fortified body stores and their 'anti-freeze' blood system, don't need vast amounts of food to maintain their vital spark of survival. Whereas for honey bees, it's the whole colony — not just the queen — that overwinters. And for this trick of nature, they need stored food. Their barrels can never run dry without dire consequences. It is the effort of the bees to fill their combs with honey in times of plenty that carries them through!

(P.S. I've already mentioned coconuts — so, by the way, what's the difference between a coconut and an editor? You can get a drink out of a coconut!)

**Ken Hodgson – Chairman,**

**Cockermonth BKA**



The next edition of the CBT is due in March 2026.

The closing date is always by the end of the month preceding the edition – so, end February for the March edition.

**It would be very good to hear what beekeepers across the county would like the CBT to cover.**

We are constrained by the data limit on information we can circulate via eR2. In a 2026 edition we will focus on Keswick BKA.

**Edition No. 31 - March 2026.**

Main Theme: Supporting new beekeepers and the challenges for meeting up in our rural county with a mass of mountains in the centre. Please send your thoughts and articles to the editor. Deadline end February 2026 [cbteditor@gmail.com](mailto:cbteditor@gmail.com)

**Edition No. 32 – June 2026.**

Work in progress – I hope some information on Cumbria's wild bee populations and learning to identify our common bumble bees.

Happy Christmas  
Best Wishes for 2026  
And a new Beekeeping Year



*Spindle tree berries on Brigsteer Bee Reserve Winter 2021*

*The flowers are much loved by honey bees.*