

THE IPSWICH & EAST SUFFOLK BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter for

January – March 2025

Hon Secretary, I&ESBKA: Richard Allen,
11 Jupiter Road, Ipswich IP4 4NT
☎ 07889 028573; secretary.iesbka@suffolkbeekeepers.co.uk

Hon Treasurer, I&ESBKA: Jackie McQueen,
643 Foxhall Road, Ipswich, IP3 8NE
☎ 07847 688775; jackie.mcqueen44@gmail.com

Acting Newsletter Editor: Jeremy Quinlan,
The Old Rectory, Dallinghoo IP13 0LA
☎ 01473 737700; Email: JeremyQ@tiscali.co.uk

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those either of the Editor or of the Association.

The Suffolk Beekeepers' Association is an Area Association of The British Beekeepers' Association. <http://www.bbka.org.uk/>

I&ES BKA Trustees:

President:	Currently vacant	
Chairman:	Jeremy Quinlan	01473 737700
Hon Treasurer:	Jackie McQueen	07847 688775
Hon Secretary:	Richard Allen	07889 028573
Other trustees:	Barry Crabtree	07484 101021

Mentors:	Sal Thurlow	07721 625313
Safeguarding:	Jon Tuppen	07710 561043
Apiary:	Phil Ramsey	07879 667867
	Helen Thorne	07814 506988
	Mark Dua	07733 363442
Committee members:	Gillian Leung	07776 307000
	Sam Williams	07887 405731

BBKA's Basic Assessment

The British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) asks beekeepers to have at least one or two years of experience before taking the Basic Assessment. The assessment is a practical and oral test of basic beekeeping knowledge and takes the form of an hour's conversation with an experienced beekeeper – valuable in itself.

We have been discussing for some time why we have so few takers for the assessment - especially when our association has 3 assessors (Jeremy Quinlan, David Adams and Barry Crabtree).

Before deciding what we should or could do to persuade more people to get involved, working with Jane Corcoran and the county education group, we devised a questionnaire to get some detailed feedback. The first questionnaire was handed out at our November Kesgrave meeting. They will be available at other meetings and from our website. Here are the initial results - and some thoughts about possible ways forward.

Most people were aware of the assessment, and of those (only 41.7%) who had taken it, their reaction was positive; it was encouraging, a confirmation of their skills, and highlighted areas to work on. Interestingly, several of those who had not taken it said they were hesitant as they didn't know what it involved.

From the replies, it did not appear that cost was an issue; if it were, we would be happy to defray that.

Most of the 25 who answered, had several years of experience and when asked what might persuade them to take the assessment, most cited support in the form of apiary

training, mentoring, and online study / videos of what an assessment actually was. So, we plan to:

1. Promote the assessment both at the Teaching Apiary and at Kesgrave meetings. (Most of those who come to the Teaching Apiary are beginners with too little experience to qualify.)
2. Dispel fears, and give an idea of content and how straightforward it is, we will produce a video that shows a typical Basic Assessment.
3. Offer personal mentors who have taken the assessment, and who can offer training / advice.
4. Offer practical 'practice run' sessions in the Teaching Apiary, a familiar one, followed by a 'dummy' assessment conversation.
5. Implement other good ideas offered by you, the members. Suggestions, please!

If you haven't already completed the questionnaire, it is now available on our website so please do so and we will add responses as they come in. If you feel you are interested in having a go at the Basic in 2025, direct application can be made to the Suffolk BKA Examinations Secretary, Mark Dua, markdua674@gmail.com. For more information, please contact Jeremy or me or any other committee member - and we will set the wheels in motion!

Helen Thorne

We need more speakers for our meeting *Ten Minute Tips*

If there's a beekeeping subject that interests you, please tell Jeremy or Richard. The floor will be yours!

We need a new Speaker Finder

Tim Wilmshurst has also been doing an excellent job but also wishes to retire – he says at the end of the year – a date that is almost upon us. Again, is there someone ‘out there’ who will take the job? In consultation, you would be free to invite

interesting speakers from all parts of the UK. Naturally, the Association pays speakers’ expenses. Either Richard or I would be delighted to hear from you. *Jeremy*

We also need a new Newsletter Editor – could this be you?

Barry Crabtree did an excellent job as Editor for, I think, six years – for which he has our very grateful thanks - but he thought that was long enough and resigned. Following that, one possibility would be for the Association to run without a newsletter. As the newsletter is a good way of publicising future events, airing questions and a platform for information and amusement, I don’t want that to happen unless there really is no other option. If anyone ‘out there’ feels they could be our next editor, please tell me or Richard, our

secretary. You would have a free hand to include whatever bee-related stuff that takes your fancy. If you think that might be hard to find, Northern Bee Books offers BEES – the beekeeping editors’ exchange scheme – so you could use the best of what other local association newsletters print. Please don’t be put off by the high standard Barry maintained; you would receive whatever help you needed from other members and would, I am sure, grow into the job. In the meantime, I will be Acting Editor. *Jeremy*

New Members

We welcome the new members who have joined us since the publication of the last Newsletter. They are: Louise

Cook, Stephen Garwood, Cameron McIntyre and Gemma Parrott.

RIP

Our sympathies go to the families of **Barrie Powell** – who died on 29th December – he would have been 90 on 3rd January - and **Richard Powling**.

Richard’s equipment will be offered for sale in the Spring.

14 x 2½ kg packs of fondant for sale now @ £5/pack – [contact](#).

Barrie’s funeral arrangements will be circulated when they are known.

Phil Ramsey, Barry Crabtree, Nicola Turland-Noble and John Days are minding Barrie’s bees.

My Beekeeping Life by Barrie Powell

I have been keeping bees since 1946 in the days of ration books when we were allowed 7 lbs of sugar for spring feeding and 7 lbs for winter. I have kept bees without a break ever since; at one time I had in excess of 300 hives.

During the latter years of the War, I was a paper boy delivering papers along Humberston Avenue, a very long road. This was just south of Grimsby with no street lighting and lots of cold easterly winds straight off the North Sea. I remember having 38 papers to deliver before cycling a further 3 miles to school. Anyway, half way along Humberston Ave I had a distant uncle who was a Commander in the Navy. One Saturday morning in the spring he was attending his bees when I called and I watched from a good distance away. After being given a jar of honey, he told me had to go to sea before the end of the week and could I help by feeding the bees for him? I must admit I found much interest in this new found job and managed not to get stung.

Sometime later he was opening the local fete and I heard my name mentioned over the loud speaker system. Would I go

to the organisers’ tent? There he met me with a request: Could I get a swarm of bees for him? Trying to explain I had never seen inside a hive let alone caught a swarm, he calmly explained the procedure, gave me a cardboard box and a veil and I was on my way. Luckily, the swarm was in a very easy position and I managed to get it in the box which I carefully closed and returned to him. To which he said: “There, your first swarm!” However, I remember my mother being quite horrified.

I built a hive out of bits of wood and managed to make a good colony out of it. Returning to school the following week, I told the teachers of my experience and was immediately put in charge of the school apiary which consisted of 3 WBC hives. This gave me the experience I required and I was able to construct good hives with the expert tuition of the woodwork teacher. During my last year at school, the headmaster contacted Buckfast Abbey and Brother Adam who I had the great pleasure of meeting and spending a few days with travelling around Dartmoor. From that time, I have never looked back and have enjoyed every moment with the bees.

After leaving school, my parents retired and moved to Colchester where they bought a small-holding which proved a perfect place for keeping bees. About this time, I was called up for National Service. During this time, I travelled extensively, although I was never actually being posted abroad, and was able to get home often enough to look after the bees with a little help from my younger sister and a Yugoslavian man who had been a prisoner of war but now worked for my father.

After completing my service, I returned home to help with the small-holding I found that Bob, the Yugoslavian, had become very interested in the bees and, after much talk, my father offered to finance us if we wished to increase the number of hives. Well, we did, and for £500 we were able to produce 300 hives. We visited Taylor's of Welwyn who were in the process of running down their stocks (before the sale of their business) and purchased 100 colonies of bees. Not the best tempered bees but bees anyway. After two seasons we had filled all the hives with a few to spare. Hoping to improve our stock, I again visited Buckfast Abby where Bro Adam had just put his new Anatolian bees on the market; I purchased 50 queens from him and re-queened about 3 apiaries. The bees were superb yellow queens with

brown workers and black drones. Then came disaster; we tried to breed from them. The queens threw back to the strongest strain; black as coal, but lovely looking queens. We decided to give them a chance – the worst thing I ever did in beekeeping - they were the most vicious insects I have ever known. They made the so-called African killer-bees look docile. This meant a very extensive queen rearing programme which took several years to complete. We never did find two of the queens but successfully used these colonies as guards. We were having a little trouble with Gipsies taking combs of honey out of the supers. This very quickly cured the problem!

Some years later I moved to Ipswich and opened a hotel. I kept 100 of the hives and Bob had the others. As time went on, I became interested in queen breeding and eventually came out of the hotel business and moved to Shotley where I have been ever since. I did get some of the original bees back when Bob moved back to his home country but have since reduced down to about 150 which I still keep. My bees are mostly of Buckfast origin and a pleasure to keep.

The British Beekeepers' Association Annual Delegates' Meeting January 2025

Our Brett Bayliss has been appointed as the Suffolk BKA Delegate for this meeting on 11th January. Thank you for volunteering, Brett.

Details of the meeting may be seen at:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/bbka-compliance>

A permanent INNS Inspectorate

Invasive non-native species (INNS) are a large and growing biosecurity threat to Great Britain, driven by increasing trade and movement of people. There are already 2,000 non-native species (NNS) established in GB, about 200 of which are invasive, and around 12 new NNS establish in GB each year. We need to stop the arrival and establishment of yet more NNS but we are currently failing to do this. Without greater controls and education, the situation will continue to deteriorate. Unless stronger measures are taken to prevent this, an estimated 30-50 INNS are expected to become established in the next 20 years.

The 2019 Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) enquiry into invasive species concluded that two main reasons for

this lack of success were low resourcing and the lack of an inspectorate dealing specifically /with non-native species. Highly successful inspectorates already exist covering other areas, for example reducing the risk of destructive pests and diseases affecting plants and animals entering GB and causing environmental and economic damage.

Earlier last month it was announced that a permanent INNS Inspectorate has been established. This is a significant milestone for the environment as the inspectorate has a vital role in increasing biosecurity and preventing further INNS from establishing. See:

<https://www.nonnativespecies.org/about/inspectorate/#>

APIMONDIA

SCANDINAVIA

2025

SWEDEN | DENMARK | NORWAY

23-27 September 2025

COPENHAGEN



Would you like to join us for Apimondia in Copenhagen in September?

If you would, please tell Jeremy Quinlan JeremyQ@tiscali.co.uk. We already have nine who say they are interested but eleven would attract a small discount.

Apimondia said in a statement: "We will celebrate honey in many ways at the congress, but honey will no longer be a category, and thus no honey judging, in the World Beekeeping Awards. This change to remove honey as a category was necessitated by the inability to have honey fully tested for adulteration."

EBA is fighting for almost 400,000 beekeepers



The European Beekeeping Association's (EBA's) main goal is to STOP counterfeits. The revised Honey Directive introduces requirements for uniform and clearer labelling of the origin of honey blends by country with the respective proportions, which is an excellent achievement. Additionally, Directive (EU) 2024/1438 states that harmonised methods for honey authentication will be selected, a European

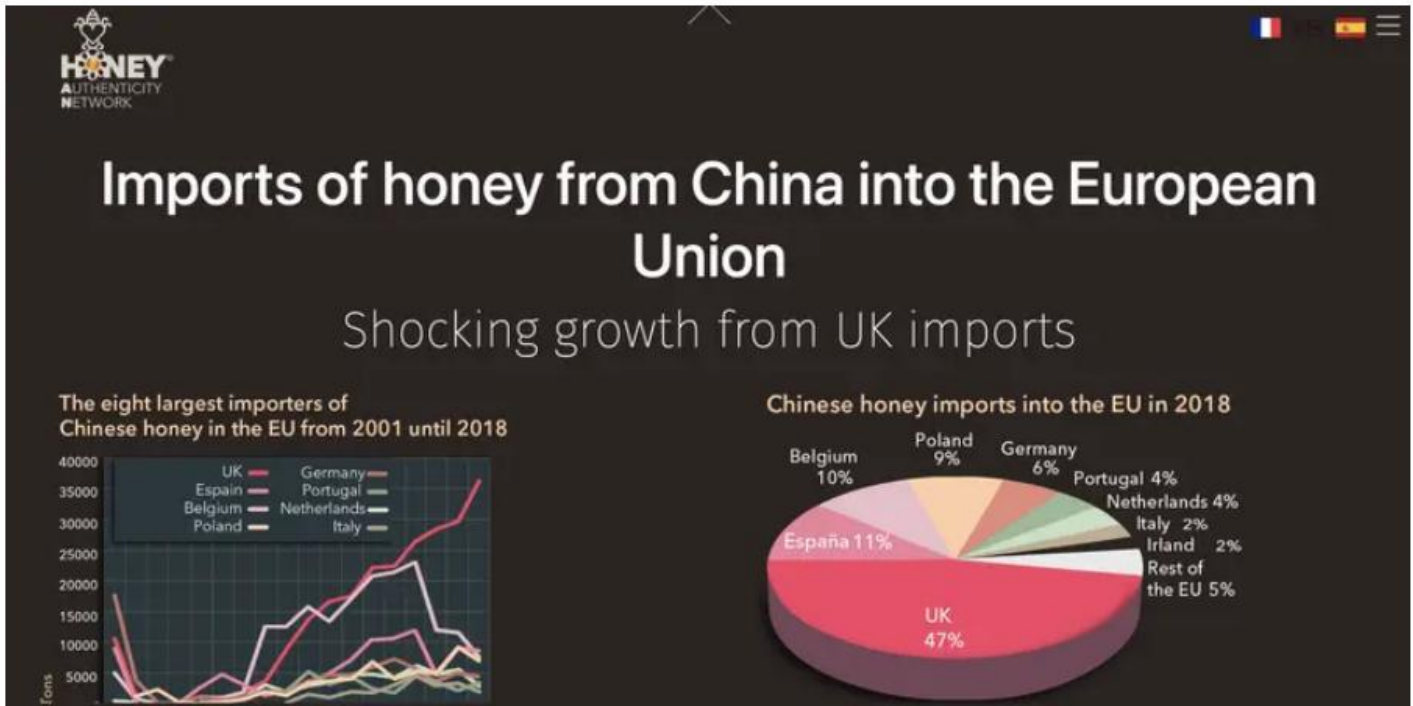
Reference Laboratory will be established, and recommendations will be issued for a traceability system to the importer and producer. (*I hear it is effective from 30 Nov 2024 - Ed.*) The EBA will direct all efforts to ensure that all commitments from the Directive are realized as soon as possible in the EU.

We need to alert consumers to this problem. Many think honey improves their health, but fake honey is likely only to harm it.

Boštjan Noč
President, The European Beekeeping Association (EBA).
Edited

The seventh issue of the electronic monthly EBA magazine "NO BEES, NO LIFE" is now out. The [magazine](#) is completely free and is published in English.

Adulterated Honey



Honey authentication network infographic

UK beekeepers are calling for a new law to label honey's origin. We are backing proposed new rules to combat fraud in the supply chain, ensuring a jar of honey can be traced on its journey. It could be 5,000 miles from the beehive to the shop shelf. The European parliament has agreed new labelling rules and a project to establish a traceability system for honey from harvesting to the consumer. The proposed rules are part of an overhaul of the "breakfast directives", including the honey directive. Honey producers and sellers in the UK want the rules to be adopted in Britain.

Honey is one of the foods most often targeted by fraudsters, with a European Commission investigation finding last March that 46% of sampled products were suspected of having been adulterated. Lynne Ingram, chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK, said: "The changes to the EU honey directive are a positive step forward in stopping the trade in adulterated honey. It will give consumers more confidence about the quality and authenticity of the honey they buy."

Under current rules in the EU and UK, there is no requirement to identify the countries of origin for honey blended from more than one country. Under the proposed new EU regulations, the name of the country of origin will have to be on the label. Our government faces pressure to ensure honey producers provide the same information for UK consumers. The government has previously said that country of origin labelling for honey would be "highly burdensome" and increase the cost of production. Iain Millar, co-founder of the Scottish Bee Company, said: "I hope the UK will follow suit, otherwise consumers here will be given less information about their food than their European

counterparts. Country of origin labelling is a crucial part of establishing honey provenance."

China is the biggest exporter of honey, and the UK its biggest customer. China exported more than 156,000 tons of 'honey' in 2022. Of that more than 34,000 tons came to the UK. Fraudsters grow rich by adulterating produce with cheaper sugar syrup. Chinese honey is particularly suspect, with industrial units there openly advertising fructose syrup to mix into honey, claiming it can evade most of the common tests used by regulators.

In recent years, privately commissioned tests of UK supermarket honeys in German laboratories have suggested potential adulteration, but the results have been rejected by importers and supermarkets as unreliable. The Food Standards Agency says more work is required to establish reliable tests to detect adulterated honey. Last year, tests of imported honey by the European Commission, found that most suspicious consignments originated from China, with 66 out of 89 declared suspicious. All 10 samples from the UK were suspected of adulteration, but this was probably honey produced in other countries then re-exported from the UK.

It is common practice in China to extract honey before the bees have matured it, and then artificially drying it to reduce its moisture. The legal definition of honey is that it should have matured in the beehive. Prof Norberto Garcia, chair of the beekeeping economy commission of Apimondia, the International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations, said: "The production of unripe honey is an unfair mode of production that illegally speeds the process of maturation. "It impacts honest beekeepers and deceives customers who do

not receive the product they expect and pay for”. He added that Apimondia welcomed the updating of the honey directive.

A Defra spokesperson said: “We are aware of the recent EU proposals in relation to honey and, while we understand there is a provisional agreement for the proposals, they are not yet adopted. “We are considering the technical detail and working with UK producers, businesses, and stakeholders to back British exports and minimise any impact. Any decision on our own policy will focus on maintaining our existing high food standards, protecting consumers, and supporting businesses and consumer choice at a range of price points.”

The British Honey Importers and Packers’ Association said: “BHIPA and its members have for many years worked closely

Write to your MP!

Ben Tichband of Ben’s Berkshire Bees Limited has written to his MP in Newbury – see below. Please write to yours.

Dear

I am writing to draw your attention to a serious and pressing issue impacting the UK honey industry: honey adulteration. The global nature of the honey market has created complex supply chains, making it relatively easy to adulterate honey with various sugar syrups that are often difficult to detect.

The Scale of the Problem

On 9th November 2024, The Guardian reported that “more than 90% of sampled products bought from large British retailers failed pioneering authenticity tests.” The sheer volume of adulterated honey entering the UK is alarming and remains poorly understood by UK consumers. Given that 90% of honey sold in the UK is imported, decisive action from the UK Government is necessary.

Consumer Confusion

Adding to consumer confusion is the practice of marketing “apiary-washed” honey, designed to evoke the image of local beekeeping while often being bulk imports. For example, a well-known brand label says “This tasty [name withheld] honey is as pure and natural as the day [name withheld] first collected honey from his Oxfordshire hives, over 50 years ago.” Yet the honey in the jar is a blend of non-EU honeys. Although I do not imply this specific brand sells adulterated honey, consumers are left unaware of which brands may be affected, as specific names from tests were not disclosed.

Improve your Bees!

Roger Patterson points out that bees are livestock. To improve their survival skills and ability to deal with Varroa, they need to be locally adapted and have the traits you want (calm / honey gatherers / Northern European Black Bee, etc.). He recommends you:

- Have a plan!
- Assess your colonies for the attributes you want.
- Divide them into two groups: those that have these attributes become Group A, the others group B.

in a proactive and transparent manner with the regulators in the UK and continue to do so to ensure that honey supplied to the UK market conforms to legislation, which is rigorously enforced by the relevant authorities. The BHIPA supports initiatives that provide greater assurance and transparency of provenance to UK consumers. Country of origin is already declared on single source honeys in the UK. Any future decisions regarding the different methods of honey production globally would need careful consideration to ensure certain honeys are not discriminated against simply based on country of origin.”

See a Netflix video about honey [fraud](#).

And [another](#) from France:

Most supermarket honey is labelled as a “blend of EU or non-EU countries.” It might as well say “honey from somewhere”. Honey importers should be able to clearly trace and verify the sources of their imports.

Consumers do not know if they are buying honey from high-risk regions or not.

Action Needed

To address these issues, I propose the following actions:

- Changes to Honey Labelling Regulations: Labellers should be required to list the country or countries of origin. If the packer is unable to verify the source, it should be labelled as “unknown.” This simple legislative change would ensure greater transparency for consumers without significantly raising costs.
- Formation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG): An APPG could focus on supporting the UK honey industry, with initial objectives to:
 - o Investigate methods for robust honey testing, ensuring that when consumers purchase honey, it is truly honey in the jar.
 - o Explore ways to support the UK’s small-scale commercial beekeeping industry to increase the volume of domestically sourced honey, with added benefits for pollination and overall bee health.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss these matters in more detail and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

- Raise queens from Group A and cull those in B.
- Be ruthless!
- Reassess each year.
- Follow the same process every year and you will improve your bees.

This just goes to reinforce the point that you do need to know how to raise your own queens. It really isn’t difficult.

David Adams - My Beekeeping

My beekeeping begun about 65 years ago with an abandoned hive in garden of an empty farm house.

Mr. Drake (IESBKA Chairman) came and sorted out the tangled National double brood!

As he took several stings from his bare hands he said "Oh, these are stingy bees!"

I put them in my orchard, keeping up to 6 hives there for the first few years. National brood and a half, splitting them when needed using the Pagden method.

Then I moved the hives to a little wood about 100 yards behind my house where I kept them for about 50 years, (now called "The Bee Wood"). I used Demaree swarm control which was quite successful but hard work! John Blakesley (then our Bee Inspector) advised me to change to commercial hives which I did. That proved to be so much easier and better in every way,

Remember the stingy bees - I could not improve them however I tried! So, I started to buy queens. First, I had some Italian yellow bees - wonderfully quiet and productive but oh dear, how they would empty a super in a wet cold week, Then I tried some local black bees from a breeder in Norfolk, a definite improvement. I had a few BIBBA English blacks - lovely bees but so intent on swarming as soon as they had honey in the super!! Then I started to buy authentic Buckfast queens. They are amazing; they tick all the boxes perfectly. The only limitation, because they are hybrids, they need to be replaced every two years but that is cheaper than breeding your own!!

For many years I took some hives to the heather in Sutton with varying success but not till the last year there was I aware that heather honey is totally unsuitable for winter feed for bees! Which explains why so often my bees had come through the winter but were weak and took a long while to build up in the spring!

Pollen chart online

Sheffield BKA has a [neat pollen chart online](#) where you can switch on or off pollen 'colour-swatches' for a particular time

What do bees do for protein in winter?

All through the foraging season, honey bees collect pollen and nectar. They use nectar for energy to keep going from day to day. Extra nectar is turned into honey and stored in combs. The honey may be used shortly after it is stored, or it may remain in the hive for years. Due to various enzymes added by the bees, honey has an extremely long shelf life. Pollen is a bee's main source of lipids, proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Young nurse bees eat a great deal of pollen; this allows them to secrete the royal jelly that they feed to

I took my General Husbandry exam a few years ago and amazingly passed - even though I couldn't tell them what a Bailey frame change was. I did show them 5 nucs with queens established from grafted eggs which pleased them but a week later none of them were laying. So, then I spent some years testing people for their Basic assessment.

Since I retired, I have been helping people start up in beekeeping which is nearly a full-time job with over 50 people; most are still keeping bees

About 12 years ago we started a local beekeeping group in Kirton meeting each month during the winter - which has been well supported and appreciated.

8 years ago, we visited Barrie Powell at his home and saw his hives in front of his conservatory, so, on the way home I gained permission from my wife to have my hives in our garden. What a pleasure to sit in our conservatory watching the bees at work and so much easier to do the inspections.

I decided I must cut down or give up so this year I sold 5 hives in the spring, then I supplied 6 more hives to other people and some nucs, also bought more new queens, now I have 9 hives; 3 are for other people so I may have 6 to look after next year!

David Adams

David does not go into the detail of his long and magnificent support for new beekeepers in his part of Suffolk – no effort too great, no time begrudged. Nor does he mention that since 2011 he has managed the distribution of winter bee feed – several tonnes of it – for the whole Suffolk beekeeping membership. Nor that he started a winter evening study group in Kirton 12 years ago – it is still running.

Your committee has invited David to become an Honorary Member of the Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA

of the season. The only trouble is that your computer may not render the colours truly.

developing larvae. Without a high-protein diet, the nurses cannot raise new bees.

But unlike nectar, pollen does not store well. Even though the bees increase its shelf life by adding enzymes and nectar and turning it into bee bread, the shelf life is relatively short. Most pollen is eaten immediately after it is collected, and the rest is eaten within weeks. Bee bread stored longer dries out and loses much of its nutritional value. The bees often remove it from the hive, and you may see hard marbles of

pollen on the bottom board. In spite of this problem, honey bees survive the winter without fresh pollen. Although not much brood is raised in the dead of winter, as spring approaches, the winter bee cluster warms up and brood rearing resumes. With little or no stored pollen, how do the nurse bees raise brood? The secret to winter survival is found in the bodies of winter bees. Winter bees are so different from regular workers that some entomologists believe that they are a separate caste. The thing that distinguishes a winter bee from a regular worker is the presence of enlarged fat bodies. The fat bodies are bathed in haemolymph (bee blood) and produce large amounts of vitellogenin. In times of shortage, vitellogenin can supplement or completely replace a winter pollen supply. Just as a queen bee can be raised from any fertilized egg by providing a rich diet of royal jelly, a winter bee can be raised from any fertilized egg by feeding an especially lean diet. This occurs in the fall at the end of the foraging season. Depending on your local conditions, winter bees usually begin to appear by September or October.

The other thing that vitellogenin does is increase the lifespan of the winter bees. Whereas a regular worker has a lifespan of four to six weeks; a winter bee may live six months or more. The winter bee with her storehouse of resources, needs to survive long enough to feed the spring larvae. In essence, a winter colony stores protein not in the wax cells but in the bodies of bees. If you've ever wondered how your

Honey bees' microbiome

There has been much publicity about the positive aspects of the complex gut microbiome in humans. A microbiome is a term used to describe a complex of different microorganisms living together in a particular host. Honey bees also possess a microbiome but it is a comparatively simple community of bacteria. It's made up of about 10–20 different species that are adapted to the host and are either facultatively anaerobic or microaerophilic. The majority of these bacteria (95%) are probiotic and are identified as *Lactobacillus Firm-5*.

It seems likely that these lactic acid bacteria have beneficial effects such as suppressing problem organisms. It is proven that their gut microbiome affects their overall health by

Indigestible hydrogel microparticles counter pesticide exposure for bees

The Guardian reports:

Scientists have developed a “vaccine” for bees against pesticides – and it appears to work, according to an initial study published in *Nature Sustainability*. Hydrogel microparticles fed to bumblebees in sugar water caused a 30% higher survival rate in individuals exposed to lethal doses of neonicotinoids, and significantly milder symptoms in those exposed to lower doses that would not usually be lethal but can cause harm.

Neonicotinoids harm bees' nervous system, paralysing and ultimately killing them. They are used to control a variety of

honey bees can survive the winter without fresh pollen, winter bees are the answer.

But even a body full of protein reserves will eventually run dry. As the nurses feed more and more bees, their fat bodies become depleted. If the winter is particularly long, the colony may not have the resources to wait for spring pollen. Or, if the beehive location is shady and cool, the bees may decide to stay home instead of forage.

For this reason, some beekeepers feed pollen supplements to colonies in the early spring. Pollen supplements should be timed to coincide with the beginnings of brood rearing. If lots of pollen is given too soon, the colony may become too large for the remaining food supply, or the excess ash may cause honey bee dysentery. If it is given too late, the colony may perish from lack of nutrition. A good rule of thumb is to hold back on pollen supplements until after the winter solstice. However, if you have a healthy hive that is expanding as spring approaches, you may not need pollen supplements at all.

Just for fun, when you find some dead bees, turn some onto their backs, open the abdomens and look inside. It is clear to see the difference between a winter bee and a summer worker. A winter bee is filled with cloudy white fat bodies all throughout her abdomen, while a regular worker is not. Have you ever looked inside a winter bee? What did you find? Let us know.

From the Lune Valley BKA

helping them resist diseases and by producing antimicrobial metabolites (Motta and Moran, 2024). It also influences their social networks, with *Lactobacillus* in the gut regulating their memory and learning behaviours, by controlling tryptophan metabolism.

The gut microbiome of honey bees is relatively stable and reaches its typical composition 3–5 days after they hatch. However, there can be individual variations and high strain-level diversity across honey bees. Environmental factors can influence the structure of the gut microbiome, and some suggest that host genetics may also play a role.

Roger Merry, Editor, West Suffolk Newsletter. Edited.

pests, especially sap-feeding insects such as aphids, and root-feeding grubs.

Scientists from Cornell University in New York were trying to find a way to protect bees from the widely used pesticides. Neonicotinoids were totally banned in the EU only last year – a previous ban allowed their emergency use. The UK has allowed their use every year since 2021, but the Labour government has said this will stop. The pesticides are still used in many US states.

The researchers found that the microparticles physically bind to the neonicotinoids and once absorbed, the pesticides and

microparticles pass through the bee's digestive tract and are excreted, without causing the same harm, sometimes turning their poop blue. The antidote has the potential to be selectively applied to other pesticides.

Environment America says:

Okay... On the one hand, finding a "vaccine" for bees, one that can guard against the worst ravages of bee-killing neonicotinoids ("neonics"), is a good thing. It might even have limited value in the real world, especially for commercial honey bees. This first round of the study was on bumble bees. On the other hand, the infinitely better solution is to stop using neonics. To that end, 11 states have restricted the sale of the stuff to ordinary consumers, i.e., those of us without a pesticide permit or license, and 2 states have restricted neonic coatings on seeds. Let's keep the momentum going.

In case the thinking behind my skepticism isn't intuitive, let me spell it out:

1. Finding wild bees across the U.S. and feeding them microparticles seems both impractical and ridiculous.
2. This study found an increase in survival of only 30%.

Oxalic Acid

As a method of slaughtering phoretic *Varroa* mites, oxalic acid has much going for it; highly effective, cheap as chips and with no evidence of resistance. Mites have not developed resistance and are unlikely to do so.

Disconcertingly, however, plain and simple oxalic acid has now been added to the '[Explosive precursors and poisons](#)' (EPP) list. With certain caveats it is still legal to buy or sell oxalic acid, but the rules are such that it's unlikely to be available to most beekeepers.

If it is going to rain tomorrow, the colony knows

Recently, Prof David Evans, *The Apiarist*, drew attention to an interesting letter to the editor of *Insect Science* by He *et al.*, (2016) that shows that bees forage for longer, and until later in the day, on days that were followed by rain. The differences were striking; on days preceding wet days the bees were active for 25-40% more of the day, and foraged later into the evening by 20-40 minutes. These measurements were based on individual RFID-marked bee activity - though the resulting

Yellow-Legged Hornets (aka "Asian Hornets")

The first confirmed sighting in 2024 was on 11th March. She was found in a potting shed at Ash, near Canterbury in Kent. It is quite possible that one or more might find their way to Suffolk in Spring 2025.

Prepare monitoring traps for mid-March. These should **not** be killing traps which catch many - far too many - innocent insects. Monitoring traps should be baited with a small wicked jar of 'Trappit' and this sheltered from dilution by rain. Traps should be put where they are convenient for you

3. Surely, we know little about future problems that could arise from sprinkling ingestible hydrogel microparticles (IHMs) on bee habitats out in nature.

So, it's very early days & much work remains to be done.

What are hydrogel microparticles?

Hydrogel microparticles (HMPs) are promising for many biomedical applications, ranging from the therapeutic delivery of cells and drugs to the production of scaffolds for tissue repair and bio-inks for 3D printing. Biologics (cells and drugs) can be encapsulated into HMPs of predefined shapes and sizes using a variety of fabrication techniques (batch emulsion, microfluidics, lithography, electrohydrodynamic spraying and mechanical fragmentation). HMPs can be formulated in suspensions to deliver therapeutics, as aggregates of particles (granular hydrogels) to form microporous scaffolds that promote cell infiltration or embedded within a bulk hydrogel to obtain multiscale behaviours. HMP suspensions and granular hydrogels can be injected for minimally invasive delivery of biologics, and they exhibit modular properties when comprised of mixtures of distinct HMP populations.

Individuals wanting to buy some, need an [EPP licence](#), photo ID, etc and the seller has to check the licence, verify that the amount purchased is within the limits allowed and note the licence purchase record.

If the compound is to be used as part of their business activity, businesses do not need an EPP licence. As oxalic acid is not licensed for beekeeping, this is excluded.

Thorne's and many other beekeeping suppliers used to stock it - but they do no longer. Api-Bioxal and Oxybee are the only oxalic acid products legally available in the UK.

weights of pollen or nectar collected were not recorded. He asks was the additional 'work' reflected in increased stores, or were they just working harder for the same reward?

Irrespective of the answer to that question, it's clear that predicting colony activity may also require understanding how the bees determine whether the following day (or days?) are going to be suitable for foraging.

- outside the kitchen window or back door & inspected **every** day and any innocent insects caught released.

Richard Allen has Trappit and Veto-Pharma traps for sale.

West Suffolk BKA has Gard'Apis traps for sale @ £18.00. These allow non-target insects easy escape. wsbka@yahoo.co.uk



A native hornet:
Vespa crabro

A recipe from Sal Thurlow: she says it is extremely rich

Chocolate & Honey Fudge

- 450 g sugar
- 150 ml milk
- 80 g cocoa (ideally 85% cocoa solids dark chocolate)
- 150 g unsalted butter, chopped
- 50 g clear honey (not more because the mix is boiled)
- 3 -5 drops vanilla extract
- A few nuts or dried fruit + 1tbsp double cream

1. Butter or oil a 7" or 8" square pan. Alternatively, you could line it with cling film - if it tolerates heat. The pan size is not critical to the recipe, but will determine how thick and deep your fudge will be.
2. Place milk and sugar in a heavy, large saucepan (it must be able to contain 4 times the volume of the original ingredients to avoid boiling over). Stir over medium heat with a wooden spoon until the sugar has dissolved.
3. Add cocoa/chopped chocolate, chopped butter and honey. Stir the mixture until fully melted and blended together.

4. Bring slowly to a boil. Cover and boil for 3 minutes (this helps wash down the sugar crystals from the sides of the saucepan).
5. Uncover and insert a pre-warmed sugar thermometer. Boil until soft ball stage (116°C/240F).
6. Once the mixture has reached the soft ball stage, remove the saucepan from heat and plunge the base of the pan into an ice water bath (I use a clean washing up bowl). Wait for the temperature to reach 50°C/122°F.
7. Add vanilla extract (and any additions you like – nuts &/or dried fruit and a tablespoon of double cream with the vanilla in works well) and beat the mixture with a wooden spoon until it becomes thick, creamy and lighter in colour. It doesn't take long
8. Pour mixture into prepared pan and leave until almost set. Mark out squares with an oiled knife and leave to set.

Keeps (theoretically speaking) for 3-4 weeks.

Bee (For)giving – a poem

I told friends and relations that I'd started keeping bees.
Some were slightly puzzled but others were quite pleased.
It solved the tricky problem, and offered up new ways
Of finding gifts for Christmas and other special days.
So now I have a house full of bee embellished jumble,
Never mind the decorations are not honey bees, but bumble.
I've got glasses, trays and tea towels, and lovely honey pots
And as for jugs and coffee mugs, let's say that I have lots.
I have earrings, I have brooches, I have scarves of different hues.

I've bees on jumpers, bees on T-shirts. How could I refuse?
It must be much more fun to give some novelty temptation
Than source a boring voucher I could use to buy foundation.
It's not that I'm ungrateful for my bee-related stuff,
But please don't buy me anymore. Just stop. I've got ENOUGH.

... And don't mention birthday cards!

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From the Cheshire Beekeeper

Calendar

Unless otherwise specified, Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA winter talks are held in Scout Hall, Kesgrave IP5 1JF from 7:30 pm

Members of the six Associations which form the Suffolk Beekeepers' Association are welcome to attend any or all these meetings. If you do not belong to that particular local association, please introduce yourself to the secretary.

There will be other meetings but details were not available at the time we went to press.

Date	Event	Ten Minute Tips
Thursday 3 Jan	Barry Crabtree: Pollen Analysis	Jeremy Quinlan: Waggle dances revisited
25 Jan	Bees and Queens for Everyone; BIBBA ; Bury St Edmunds £12.00	
7 Feb	Fiona Dickson: Judging at a honey show	I&ES BKA AGM
7 Mar	Dale Gibson: Bermondsey Bees - how it started, how it developed, where it is now	
3 Apr	Kevin Thorn: The Sustainable Apiary for the Hobby Beekeeper	

Improving Beekeeping Skills Course 2025

A course for improvers: - see: <https://www.suffolkbeekeepers.co.uk/>

Cambridge BKA Talks & Seminar

See: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/cambridgeshire-beekeepers-association-30328239926>

Café Flex monthly meetings

We hold a monthly bee chat & breakfast at Café Flex IP10 0BF on 2nd Saturdays in January, Feb and March from 10:00 to 12:00. It is always breakfast as we take up much space for 2 hours! So we know how many are coming, please book in advance with Sal Thurlow 07721 625313 or salthurlow@gmail.com.

Felixstowe Bee Group

Our winter meetings take place on 3rd Thursdays January to April at 7.30pm in the Kirton Sports Pavilion, Back Road, Kirton, Ipswich IP10 0PR. All welcome, charge of £2 each for room hire & refreshments. Leader: Phil Ramsey:

phil_ramsey1@hotmail.co.uk.

Modules 2 & 5 study groups

If you would like to join either or both, please email Bec Kay bexjkay@gmail.com.

BBKA Zoom Talks

21st January: Giles Budge, 'Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus'

18th February: Keith Bartlem, 'A Bee Inspector Calls'

18th March: Jenny Morgan, 'Preparing for Exams'

Some excellent internet goodies

How bees collect nectar to make honey (close-up video film)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wltivmCnD5A>

Honey bee packing pollen into comb cell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8wrlSslKfA>

Videos of 18 activities in the hive:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0247323#pone.0247323.s013>

[BBKA Spring Convention Presentations 2020-2024](#)

Richard Martin Beekeeping Supplies

A large range of stock including: hives in the flat, WBC, National and Commercial; frames and foundation, honey jars, buckets, tools, bee suits, veils and gloves. Agent for Thorne's of Wragby

Little College Farm, Creeting Hills, Creeting St Mary IP6 8PX

Opening hours: 1 April - 30 Sept 4pm - 7pm Mon - Sat.

At other times, please call on 01449 720491



Box House Beekeeping Supplies

In East Bergholt, Suffolk - for the local supply of hives, frames and foundation, tools and other equipment for keeping bees. Open by arrangement - please email or telephone Paul White to discuss your requirements. 01206 299658 or 07768 634038.