

THE IPSWICH & EAST SUFFOLK BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter for

October – December

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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/>

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Note from Jeremy: Welcome to the Newsletter

I am sure all 247 members of the Ipswich and East Suffolk BKA will join me in very warmly welcoming Gemma Parrott, the new I&ES BKA newsletter Editor. It is really great when someone comes forward to fill a vacancy.

Incidentally, it is not the editor's job to write the newsletter but to put together your thoughts and questions so, please don't be shy but get writing. If you can put it in WhatsApp or Facebook, you could drop her an email gemma.parrott@hotmail.com. Too much material would be a most welcome problem for her.

BBKA Update

Contacting your local MP regards YLAH

The BBKA is suggesting that in the lead up to 'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Week' and 'Yellow Sock Day' members may wish to contact their local MP.

Lucie Chaumeton, AHAT Coordinator for North London Beekeepers and point of contact for all AHAT Coordinators, has written to her local MP and has kindly shared the letter template. This can be downloaded from the Noticeboard on the WSBKA website: www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/

The BBKA asks us all to write to our own local MP to help galvanise them into action with regard to the Yellow-legged Asian Hornets and also highlight 'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Week'. There are sections of the letter where you will need to add relevant information, and it is also important to include your name and address. The following links may be useful to help find the details of your local MP: <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>
www.writetothem.com/

'Feeding, Winter Preparations and Uniting Hives' Talk

Lesley Jacques NDB recently gave an excellent talk, as part of the BBKA 'Get General Husbandry ready for 2026' initiative, entitled 'Feeding, Winter Preparations and Uniting Hives'.

This is a timely talk which will be of interest to all members not just those working towards their General Husbandry assessment. A recording of the talk and a copy of the presentation is available on BBKA Learning <https://learning.bbka.org.uk/> (Training Resources for Members > Beekeeper Training > General Husbandry 2026).



Exam Successes

Many of our members have undertaken exams this year and congratulations to all, including Brett Bayliss, Rosina Cleave, Elizabeth Robertson, Sharon Hadley, Paul Cooper, Lorraine Harrington, David Parrott, Gemma Parrott and Andrew Race.

Suffolk BKA Conference 2025; My Take-Aways by Sal Thurlow

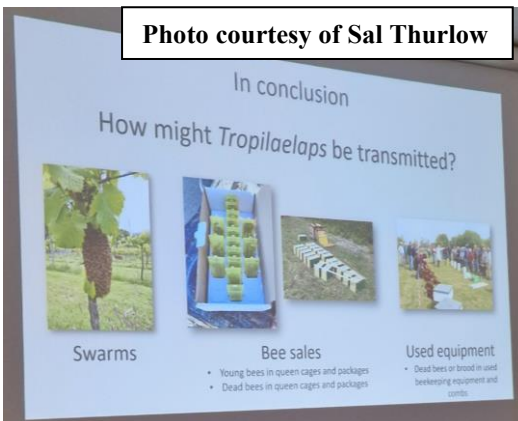
Those of you who read the emails that Richard sends, or attend the Kesgrave Meetings, will have heard us advertise the Conference, organised by Jane Corcoran, our County Chairman (a lot of work!). It took place on 6th September this year in the very pleasant Great Barton Village Hall.



About 20 of us from IESBKA attended and I think we would all agree it was really excellent. Passionate speakers, bang up to date reports on research and clear messages on how things have changed and how we should be responding differently in managing our bees.

The first speaker was Thomas O'Shea-Wheller of Exeter University who had been researching the effectiveness of varroa treatments. There were various reports on which treatments were more effective, at which time of year and the impact of varying the dosage. He explored resistance - dosing below that recommended builds resistance in varroa, as does leaving the treatment on for longer than you should - the dose weakens and the varroa that did not die, become accustomed to it, (a Covid comparison popped into my head). The key finding in the UK, based on responses to survey data, is that following the instructions for the treatment you use is key to whether it works or not. The bee medicines on the VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) Approved list have paid to test and optimise the release potency, dosage, the times of year and duration of treatments, along with impact on honey. WE SHOULD FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS.

Maggie Gill was next up, talking about her study undertaken at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Wales. Exploring the amount of nectar, and which pollinators use it, was very interesting, but for me, the unexpected take away was that the bees collected the nectar highest in Glucose, rather than the received wisdom that it would be sucrose. She didn't get a chance to follow up with things like replenishment frequency (I was thinking borage) so the amount of nectar reflects that present first thing. The question about whether inverted syrup was better for the bees than homemade was a yes, probably.



Maggie went on to give us an early report back on her most recent research into Tropilaelaps - the mite, smaller and much more destructive than varroa, that is spreading west across the Balkans. She is presenting at Apimondia, later this month, but the big take-away is that the received wisdom that the mites die if they can't get into Brood within 2 days to breed, is not always the case. Her research found mites surviving in dead brood and on dead young adult bees - and she rang big alarm bells because we (the UK) have no regulations to stop the importation of secondhand beekeeping equipment that has not been cleaned or emptied properly from infested locations! I feel a letter to my MP coming here.

With the power going off for the remainder of the afternoon, there were no slides (all praise to the couple doing the catering, and managing to provide hot water for drinks, BTW!) - together with the passion and evangelical presentations. First by Jane Medwell on immunity in bees - it is local, and our locally adapted bees are the best bees. - If you need to buy queens, buy local. You don't know where the Queens you buy in April come from - they are not UK bred in that year (you know this, as there are no mature drones yet!

Last was Chris Milton, our Regional Bee Inspector, who was talking about the importance of Fat bodies in winter bees - ensuring they are free of varroa by treating early, as soon as the summer nectar stops, so the eggs that will

become your winter bees are not accompanied into their cells by varroa, feeding on them as pupae (and reproducing to increase your varroa load as the number of bees in your colony reduces) and setting up feeding stations so that the adult bees are fed on through winter, causing 95% of the spring failures he sees, along with starvation. Good quality Autumn Pollen is essential too, so that the winter bees are fed the best possible brood food. Our gardens, along with the green manure and late flowering hedgerow plants like Ivy are vital for this. Why do bees starve in Spring when everything is waking up? because the winter bees were depleted in strength and length of life due to the conditions when they were made. The forage they were fed and the varroa that fed on them.

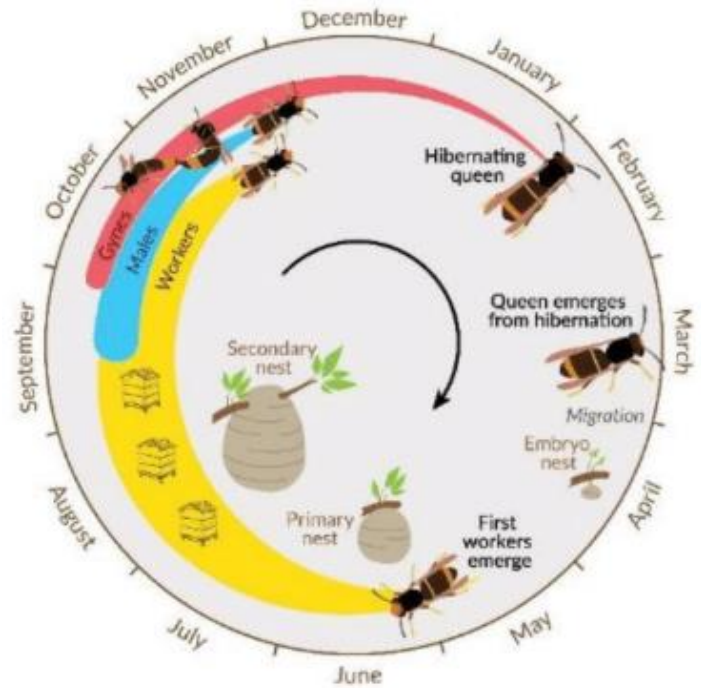
Finally, for those of us who attended, our brief pleasure at being recognised was tempered by the question; where are the other 700+ members of Suffolk BKA - so I am spreading the word - it was excellent, you missed out. You really should come next year!

What's Happening with Yellow-Legged Asian Hornets Right Now?

At this time of year, newly hatched **Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet queens** are emerging from their nests. Their main priorities are **mating** and finding **sheltered sites to hibernate** over the winter. The original colony is winding down, with fewer workers active as the season ends.

This is also the **best time to trap queens**, as they are actively moving in search of food and suitable overwintering spots. Trapping now helps reduce populations and monitor whether the hornet has reached our area.

Dr Fred J Ayres from Lune Valley Beekeepers are starting an Asian hornet trapping campaign. In addition to producing a pamphlet about the hornet which they have been distributing to primary schools and some local organisations, they have also produced a video which is freely available to view using the link <https://mediazilla.com/gMgNNnSKMr> and the password "Hornet".



'Asian Hornet Watch' App:



The best way to report any sightings is via the '**Asian Hornet Watch**' app.

The home screen of the App allows users to check similar species and report a sighting. A photo is requested as key to identification. Date and location are auto completed, and brief comments can be included. A reminder about personal safety is also included. Reporting can lead to investigation and nest destruction which is vital for eradication.

The '**Asian Hornet Watch**' app is available for both android and iPhone.

Our First Year of Beekeeping by Gemma Parrott

Our First Year in the Apiary: From One Hive to a Buzzing Success

What a remarkable start to our beekeeping journey! Beginning the year with just one hive, we ended the season with five thriving colonies and over 100 jars of honey to share. As first-time beekeepers, we faced plenty of challenges—including lost queens and two hives rejecting their new queens—but every experience taught us invaluable lessons.

This inaugural year was full of memorable moments. We had to move an out-apiary after a curious horse caused a minor fence incident, and our daughter endured a week-long “lip job” from a sting, prompting a temporary relocation to the out-apiary. Lessons learned? Never wear black gloves or boots without socks that make a noise and be careful not to slip in the mud while taking marketing photos!



Photo courtesy of Gemma Parrott

On the creative side, we designed our own labels and logos, experimented with wax, and made beeswax cloths and candles. Excitingly, we also caught our first swarms, adding to our growing confidence and experience.

Education was a key focus: we both earned distinctions in the BBKA Basic Assessment, visited the teaching apiary, and attended monthly club meetings and breakfasts, soaking up knowledge from experienced beekeepers.

Looking forward, we have ambitious plans for next year: growing to 8–10 hives at a new out-apiary, participating in events and fairs, and continuing to experiment with wax products and honey sales.

For our very first year, it's been a whirlwind of learning, growth, and sweet successes—and we can't wait to see what the next season brings!

Bee Safari - Top Tips by Sal Thurlow

I attended the IESBKA Bee Safari around Felixstowe (Kirton) this year and it was a really good day. I thoroughly recommend it. It was the first year since taking up beekeeping that we have not been away or otherwise committed. Combine that with a couple of local outbreaks of European Foulbrood, including one discovered on last year's bee safari, and I was keen to be there and watch and listen to our Regional and seasonal bee inspectors.

I wasn't disappointed and really picked up on the hygiene and cleaning changes. For those who missed it, the advice on what you should have in your cleaning bucket has been updated and should now be as follows: 1kg of soda crystals, 4.5L of water & a mug of bleach. David Burns showed us his spare readymade batch - a container he keeps in his car, just in case he either encounters a notifiable disease at a beekeeper's apiary, or (me) he accidentally trips over it and spills the contents. Needless to say, a washed out 4-pint milk carton holding half my latest batch is now part of the paraphernalia in my car (this may also qualify as the cheapest piece of beekeeping equipment I have ever acquired)! Also added to my cleaning bucket are a pair of fine-pointed tweezers, points embedded in a cork, so it floats (and does not end up in my fingers), and a piece of dense packing foam with an uncapping fork, both ready to test capped



brood. David also recommends we should scrub our hands and the tool we have just used between hives. He carries three different styles of tool in his bucket, used in turn so they get a bit of soaking (easier to scrub clean) between uses. I am doing the same thing. I also emulate his practice of cleaning my boots after each outing. And my suit is washed with my (handless) gauntlets and cover cloths at 60°C with 2 (top of the detergent bottle dispensing) cups of soda crystals.

Two more tips I picked up on from Chris Milton (our quite new East of England Regional Bee Inspector):

1. When you are inspecting, start closest to you, and look at the inside of the frame in the brood nest first, tilting it towards you. The queen likes to be in the dark and is more likely to be in between frames than on the exposed surface. By tilting the frame, she is often easier to see because she stands a little taller than the workers
2. (this second tip was from another beekeeper in our group, but Chris agreed).
When Chris removed bits of comb the bees had drawn outside the frame, and bits of propolis he scraped off the frame lugs, he dropped them inside the brood box, so the bees had the material back, and also (more pertinent the way things are looking) so the wasps or other robbers are not alerted to the smell of debris.

I haven't quite mastered these yet, the first is habit, the second is my practice of propping the crown board or queen excluder at an angle on the ground and scraping the brace comb or propolis off. I am trying to remember to do it over the hive, but I've had one or two casualties and a good old sting to the finger in my most recent attempt.



Parasitic Mite – Photo courtesy of Sal Thurlow

Chris made sure everyone in the afternoon group with him had a chance to recognise the signs of parasitic mite syndrome – see photo. In layman's terms, this is when the varroa infestation level is severe, and has the colony stressed and reacting. He said without early intervention, he would not be surprised if the colony failed this winter. Just to add that the beekeeper whose colony this was, had deliberately delayed intervening so there was an example of the pests and diseases the day was all about (and we thank them for this). We were fully subscribed this year, and the event is always popular.

I am certainly a case in point that you are never too old or experienced to learn something new. I thoroughly recommend it to beekeepers of all experience for next year.



Trinity Fields – Bee Safari – Photos courtesy of Andy Race



Preparing for Winter: The Importance of Winter Bees

This section is adapted from an excellent article by Dr. David Evans, published on his website [The Apiarist](http://TheApiarist.com). Dr. Evans writes extensively about honeybee biology and practical beekeeping, and in this piece, he highlights the crucial role of winter bees in colony survival.

Even as summer wanes, colonies undergo a dramatic change. The short-lived summer workforce is gradually replaced by long-lived winter bees (or *diutinus bees*), designed to carry the colony through until spring.

Evans reiterates summer worker bees tend to have shorter lives than most beekeepers think, in reality 50% of worker bees die within 3 weeks of emergence and 90% of the remaining bees within 6 weeks.

What Makes Winter Bees Different?

- Longevity: They can live for up to six months or more, compared to just weeks for summer foragers.
- Physiology: They retain traits of nurse bees — with high fat reserves, high vitellogenin, and stronger resistance to stress — enabling them to survive the winter cluster and rear brood when needed.

Why They Matter for Colony Survival

Winter bees are vital because they:

- Maintain warmth in the cluster
- Protect and support the queen
- Rear small amounts of brood, ensuring colonies can expand quickly once spring arrives

If too few healthy winter bees are produced, the colony may fail before spring blossoms appear.

Queen Marking Colours – Looking Ahead to 2026

For those planning ahead in their beekeeping calendar, the queen marking colour for **2026** will be **white**.

The international queen marking system is a simple but effective way to keep track of a queen's age. Each year is assigned one of five colours, which rotate in sequence:

- **White** – years ending in 1 or 6
- **Yellow** – years ending in 2 or 7
- **Red** – years ending in 3 or 8
- **Green** – years ending in 4 or 9
- **Blue** – years ending in 5 or 0

This five-year cycle not only makes it easy to identify a queen's age at a glance but also helps ensure that beekeepers can replace older queens in a timely manner, maintaining the strength and productivity of their colonies.

So, as 2026 approaches, make sure you have your **white markers** ready. It's a small detail, but one that can make hive management much more straightforward over the years.

The Apiarist



The science, art, and practice of sustainable beekeeping ... so much more than honey

Here's a quick reference for preparing your colonies for Winter:

- ✓ Complete Varroa treatment before September ends, but better in early August
- ✓ Check brood pattern and queen performance
- ✓ Ensure adequate food stores for winter (at least 18–20 kg)
- ✓ Minimise hive disturbance once winter bees are established
- ✓ Prepare your hives for woodpecker and mouse incursions
- ✓ Consider requeening weaker colonies with vigorous young queens





Poem: Winter Hives



The hives are quiet, the bees tucked tight,
clustered together through the frosty night.
No buzzing, no dancing, no frantic flight,
just golden dreams hidden from sight.

We put down our smokers, our veils, our
tools,
and swap busy hives for wintery strolls.
Though we may dream of combs and sweet
streams,
for now, we savour our own little schemes.

Spring will return with blossom and sun,
and back to the hives we'll eagerly run.

But until then, let us rest and cheer,
the bees are content—and so are we here.



Bee Jokes



Why do bees have sticky hair?
Because they use honeycombs!

What do you call a bee that can't
make up its mind?
A maybee.

Why did the bee get married?
Because he found his honey!

How do bees maintain social order
in the colony?
They rely on a strict "bee-ocracy."

What's a bee's favourite novel?
The Great Gats-bee!

Quiz - How Well Do You Know Your Bees?

The **BBKA Basic Assessment** is the starting point for beekeepers looking to test their knowledge and skills. It covers everything from hive management to honey production and bee biology.

Fancy a little challenge? See how many of these basic assessment questions you can answer. No cheating by sneaking a peek at your hive... or the internet! Answers on last page.

1. **What is the difference between a queen, a worker, and a drone?**
2. **How long does a worker bee typically live in summer?**
3. **How can you tell if a queen is laying well without inspecting every single cell?**
4. **What are the main pests or diseases a beekeeper should monitor for?**
5. **Name three signs of a healthy hive.**
6. **What's the purpose of a queen excluder?**
7. **How do you prevent swarming?**
8. **What is propolis, and why do bees make it?**
9. **How do bees communicate the location of flowers to each other?**
10. **How do you reduce the risk of robbing in your apiary?**

Spotlight on Members

In each newsletter we'll be shining a light on one of our members, and this time we had the pleasure of catching up with Paul Cooper.

Paul recently achieved a distinction in his BBKA Basic Assessment - a fantastic accomplishment for any beekeeper. He is a familiar face at the teaching apiary and our monthly meetings, where he's always keen to learn and share experiences. At home, Paul keeps two hives in his garden, which keep him busy and well supplied with bee adventures.

Paul's Bio "I officially began my beekeeping journey in February 2024 at the 'Introduction to Beekeeping' course, delivered by Jeremy Quinlan, in Dallinghoo Village Hall. What started as curiosity soon became a passion. I'm still finding my way, learning from the bees as much as I care for them. They've shown me the importance of community, resilience, and respecting nature's balance. What began as a personal journey has now grown into Hive & Co. a small venture built on curiosity, care, and a love for the natural world. At Hive & Co. it's about more than just honey (we sell eggs too!!) it's about celebrating the craft of beekeeping and sharing a little sweetness from our hives in Copdock."

Congratulations on your distinction! What inspired you to start beekeeping in the first place?

Thank you. 😊 I was inspired to consider beekeeping after speaking with Yvonne and John Turner. They suggested we have bees and once we moved to the outskirts of Ipswich, they introduced a hive to our garden where my interest and subsequent learning grew.

How did you find the BBKA Basic Beekeeping training and exam process? Was there anything that surprised you?

The training was excellent and starting with the introduction to beekeeping was imperative. I followed up by regularly attending the subsequent training apiary sessions all in preparation for the basic beekeeping assessment. The surprise comes when you realise just how much there is to learn!!

What was your favourite part of going to the teaching apiary?

The training apiary gives constant access to multiple hives throughout the busy spring and summer season. The most positive aspect is the support from the wonderfully experienced and knowledgeable IESBKA members.

Can you share one thing you learned during the course that really stuck with you?

The queen bee is a truly amazing creature.

What advice would you give to someone who's thinking about taking the BBKA Basic exam?

You really need your own bees to learn about beekeeping and the introduction to beekeeping course and training apiary attendance are both vital preparations.

How has your view of bees or beekeeping changed since you started?

I am impressed how many people keep bees and as a new beekeeper just how generous people are with their time and with a real drive to share knowledge. In addition to this it is amazing to see and hear from academics and other seasoned beekeepers about the global effort to safeguard the future of the humble honey bee!

Why do you think more people should consider learning about beekeeping?

Simple.....if you are going to harvest honey (to make money) then we all owe it to the bees to learn and safeguard the species.

What's next for you in your beekeeping journey—any plans to take further qualifications?

Yes, I have just started to deepen my understanding of specific pests and diseases (Module 3) as a next step towards future qualifications. There are six modules to complete, and each culminates in a 100-minute exam. (Typically taken in Nov or March)

If you could describe your beekeeping experience in three words, what would they be?

Inspired, Privileged and Fulfilled.



Your Teaching Apiary Report – by Phil Ramsey

Aims of our Teaching Apiary: To provide education to beekeepers through ‘hands on’ learning and discussion. To promote all aspects of the craft of beekeeping to the best standard to all members of IESBKA regardless of their experience and ability. To mutually enjoy beekeeping.

Management in the Apiary:

- A new syllabus has been introduced for 2025 aimed at giving attendees basic beekeeping knowledge and experience. We strongly recommend all to take their Basic Assessment before the end of August as a formal validation of their basic knowledge.
- We increased the overall number of teachers to eleven which allowed three per week to supervise students accordingly. For 2026 we will be looking to increase the teacher numbers to give greater flexibility and smaller groups. Each session started with a 30-minute tutorial with theory handout notes being available. We will continue this in 2026.
- Our Teaching Apiary has been designated as a Voluntary Sentinel Apiary which means we are expected to send hive samples to BBKA for analysis. From the last sample it was confirmed that varroa was present – not a great surprise given the fact we all have it.
- Just over 100lb of spring honey was extracted. The summer honey crop was negligible and left on for the bees to consume in Autumn. A winter feed will be given in late September.
- On average we had about twelve students per week attending, most of which attended every week and were able to get a ‘feel’ for the bees in the apiary. Furthermore, we had nine students who took and passed their Basic Assessment. Well done to you all.



Teaching Apiary – Photo courtesy of Phil Ramsey

Equipment in the Apiary:

- It is fair to say that most hives needed maintenance and a refresh of brood comb. Several Bailey Comb Changes were completed in April 2025. The remaining hives will have this done in April 2026. If not, new frames will be added to clean up the overall condition.
- All supers were introduced with fresh foundation and drawn out quickly as expected. Having drawn comb for the start of the new season is particularly important, giving you a head start when a nectar flow is on.
- We rotated all the hives by 180 degrees to help aid inspections as a group. This worked very well allowing several beekeepers to observe frames simultaneously.
- Open Mesh Floors, with inspection boards left in, has been adopted to 50% of the hives. The remainder will be fitted out in 2026. It is a good discipline to observe the debris on the floorboard at regular inspections.

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 that BKA secretary.

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

| Date | Event | Details |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Wed 1 st October | I&ES monthly meeting | Clive de Bruyn: Beekeeping Mistakes |
| Sat 11 th October | Bee Breakfast | Venue: The Anchor, Stratford St Mary. 10am – 12pm Message Sal Thurlow (salthurlow@gmail.com) for info |
| Thurs 16 th October | Kirton monthly meeting | Kirton Recreation Pavillion. 7.30pm |
| Wed 5 th November | I&ES monthly meeting | Stewart Spinks: Managing Spring Growth |
| Sat 8 th November | Bee Breakfast | Venue: Café Flex. 10am – 12pm |
| Thurs 20 th November | Kirton monthly meeting | Kirton Recreation Pavillion. 7.30pm |
| Wed 3 rd December | I&ES monthly meeting | Neil Page: Skep making. The idea is to make a start (the hard part) and take tools and straw home to finish. We have enough for 30; sign up with Jeremy JeremyQ@tiscali.co.uk |
| Sat 13 th December | Bee Breakfast | Venue: The Anchor, Stratford St Mary. 10am – 12pm |
| Wed 7 th January '26 | I&ES monthly meeting | Chris Milton, Regional Bee Inspector. |
| Thurs 15 th January | Kirton monthly meeting | Kirton Recreation Pavillion. 7.30pm |
| Sat 10 th January | Bee Breakfast | Venue: Café Flex. 10am – 12pm |

Stewart Spinks - Managing Spring Growth - Wednesday 5th Nov 2025 - Scout Hall, Kesgrave

Managing Spring Growth - Beekeepers can sometimes find the surge in Spring growth surprising and stressful. Here I talk about why it happens and how to manage it. (A surge in adult bee population causing congestion, simple splits, nucs form parent colonies and vertical "Demaree" style swarm management.)

Stewart started beekeeping in the late 1980's, is an Ex-Seasonal Bee Inspector, and now Commercial Bee Farmer. However, Stewart is probably best known for his honest and straightforward approach to beekeeping through his YouTube and Patreon videos and his Weekly Podcast "Beekeeping Short and Sweet" which he started in 2018!

Subscriptions for Next Year

The bad news is that BBKA have increased their Capitation fee. However, as we have received just over £1400 in gift aid, we will be able to keep this to a minimum.

You will be getting your renewal emails around 1st December although it will look a little different from the one you usually receive as there have been some changes to our system. You will still have to check the details and make any changes necessary. Anyone who used to pay for BeeCraft with their subscription will be receiving a renewal email directly from BeeCraft and will still be getting their discount. Please contact me if you need any details about BeeCraft.

Thank you to all of you who allow us to claim Gift Aid and keep the subscription down as well as bringing in some excellent speakers.

Jackie McQueen (jackie.mcqueen44@gmail.com)

Monthly Bee Breakfast



Photos courtesy of Sal Thurlow

Bee breakfast, coffee, and chat at The Anchor, Stratford St Mary on Saturday 11th October 10.00-12.00. Book via Sal Thurlow salthurlow@gmail.com or WhatsApp 07721 625313.

Louise and Steve undertook research to ensure the new venue was suitable with help from Sal & Geoff (and Didier Dogba).

Come join us every 2nd Saturday of the month during the winter season.

Turning Wax into Warmth

As beekeepers, we know the value of every drop our bees produce. Beyond honey, beeswax offers us the chance to craft something both beautiful and practical — candles that burn cleanly, last longer, and fill a room with a natural glow. With the season of darker evenings approaching, it's the perfect time to think about making our own. In the article below written in The Telegraph last year, we discover why luxury candles are not all they seem — and why beeswax gives us a healthier, more sustainable alternative...

...As the cold snap kicks in and the festive season approaches, scented candle season is officially upon us. With the UK market worth £418 million a year, we're faced with more options than ever before. At every conceivable price point, from less than £5 to an exorbitant £500. But are the expensive versions worth it?



Fans of Aldi's Hotel Collection think they know the answer. New festive additions to the range include a huge, four-wick, 2.5kg Hurricane Candle in Lime, Basil & Mandarin, a scent combination familiar to admirers of Jo Malone, and in packaging more than a little reminiscent of The White Company's minimalist aesthetic. At £19.99, the mammoth Aldi candle is a fraction of the cost of its luxe competitors: Jo Malone's 200g candle is a hefty £56. A smaller version of the Aldi one is £3.49, while others sold by the supermarket are just 95p. A glance at the Aldi candle's ingredients list reveals paraffinic oil and a cocktail of synthetic chemicals including hydroxy citronellal, isoeugenol and butylphenyl methyl propionyl. Indeed, the majority of scented candles available on the market use paraffin wax (sometimes labelled as mineral wax)-and not just the cheap ones.

What difference does it make? Well, often, cheaper waxes such as paraffin don't burn cleanly, and are likely to leave soot marks on the glass of the candle, or worse, on your walls. If its ingredients aren't listed-but it has an oily film when you run your finger over the wax-it's probably paraffin. More seriously, this type of wax can carry potential health risks. Christian Pfrang, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Birmingham, warns that burning paraffin candles “generates air pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter [tiny particles so small that you could fit a thousand of them across a single human hair, which can get into the bloodstream and even the brain], and a wide range of volatile organic compounds (VOCs)”. To complicate matters further, the type of



Bee Wax Candles - Photos courtesy of David Parrott

wick and fragrance added can also make an impact when it comes to a candle's safety. Occasionally, cheap candles use a metal core in their wick to keep it upright as it burns; these can release heavy metal particles into the air and are to be avoided.

Artificial fragrances made from chemicals in a lab-and used in most scented candles-can release VOCs such

as formaldehyde, acetone, and limonene, which can trigger headaches, dizziness, and asthma attacks. As scary as this all sounds, Pfrang says there's no need to throw away every candle made from paraffin. "Using a scented candle in a well-ventilated home for a couple of hours once a week is very unlikely to lead to any issues for a healthy individual," he says; There's no doubt, though, that candles made from more natural ingredients are higher quality both in health terms and the experience of burning them. Soy wax, beeswax, vegetable wax and coconut wax have a

cleaner flame, with no soot or smoky fumes, and are more sustainable. Be warned: a candle only needs to contain 51 per cent soy wax to be marketed as a "soy wax blend", and the rest can be paraffin. To avoid the latter, look for either 100 per cent of one type of wax, or a blend of different natural waxes. Natural waxes also produce a more powerful fragrance, and the scent "throw"- how far the scent reaches into a room-is better, too.



Beeswax is often rated most highly of all by experts, for burning slowly and carrying much fragrance. Many of us have bought a candle that smells divine but only for a short period; one which has a beautiful scent unlit but virtually none when burning; or one we have to be right next to, to get any fragrance at all. It's cheaper to make a candle with less oil in it, either synthetic or essential oils, and some unscrupulous manufacturers even use tricks to save money, including just scenting the top of the candle, or even just the wick. You don't need to spend hundreds for a lovely product. But if a candle looks nice, seems to smell nice unlit. and costs only a few pounds (or pence) you'll probably get what you pay for. **P. Dunbar in the Daily Telegraph Friday 29th November '24**

The National Honey Show Returns to Sandown Park



The National Honey Show will be held at Sandown Park, Esher from Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October, bringing together beekeepers, producers, and enthusiasts for three days of competition, learning, and exchange.

The event offers an extensive programme:

Show Schedule: Now available to download on the [National Honey Show website](#).

Lectures and Workshops: Full details of the lecture programme can be found on the website.

Workshop Bookings: Online booking opened on **1st September**.

David and Gemma will be attending on the Saturday and will share a full report in the next newsletter.

Quiz Answers - How well did you do?

1. **What is the difference between a queen, a worker, and a drone?**

The queen is the only fertile female, laying all the eggs in the colony.

Workers are infertile females who do all the jobs (nursing, foraging, cleaning, guarding, etc.).

Drones are males, whose main role is to mate with virgin queens.

2. **How long does a worker bee typically live in summer?**

Around 6 weeks — they wear themselves out quickly with intense foraging.

3. **How can you tell if a queen is laying well without inspecting every single cell?**

By looking for a solid brood pattern (few empty cells, eggs/larvae in all stages, capped brood in compact areas) and observing calm, busy bees.

4. **What are the main pests or diseases a beekeeper should monitor for?**

Varroa mites (and associated viruses), Nosema, European and American foulbrood, plus chalkbrood and wax moths.

5. **Name three signs of a healthy hive.**

- A steady brood in all stages (eggs, larvae, capped).
- Plenty of stored pollen and honey.
- Calm, purposeful bees coming and going with pollen loads.

6. **What's the purpose of a queen excluder?**

To prevent the queen from entering the supers, so she doesn't lay eggs in the honey stores.

7. **How do you prevent swarming?**

By giving the colony space, conducting regular inspections, removing queen cells as appropriate, and using swarm control methods such as artificial swarming.

8. **What is propolis, and why do bees make it?**

Propolis is a sticky resin collected from plants. Bees use it to seal gaps, strengthen the hive, and sterilise surfaces, helping protect against disease.

9. **How do bees communicate the location of flowers to each other?**

Through the waggle dance, which indicates distance and direction to food sources.

10. **How do you reduce the risk of robbing in your apiary?**

Keep entrances small, avoid spilling honey, don't leave equipment exposed, and work hives quickly to reduce stress and temptation for robbers.

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 September 4pm - 7pm Mon - Sat.
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