North Shropshire Beekeepers' Association
BEELINES
www.nsbka.org

March 2026

Forthcoming Meetings:

NSBKA Apiary - The Next Tidy Day

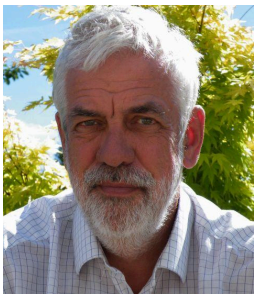
Saturday 7th March, Pimhill Apiary, 10am-1pm

Come and lend a hand. We'll be doing general tidying around hives and getting things ship-shape for the apiary opening. Even if you can only come for a short time, your help would be greatly appreciated. Weather dependent, bees may be flying so remember to bring your beesuits/boots. Tea, chat and good company expected.

NSBKA Meeting

Tuesday 17th March, 7.30pm, Tilstock Village Hall - 'Integrated Pest Management for control of varroa mites' by John Adams

This talk will briefly look at the history of varroa in Shropshire and why it is important to control numbers in a colony. John will then explain what IPM is and look at the various options within IPM for the control of varroa, how and when to apply.



John has kept bees for 20 years, currently having 18 colonies across three apiaries to the west of Shrewsbury. He is the Chair and Education Lead for Shropshire BKA and in BBKA terminology a 'Qualified Beekeeper' with the Advanced Theory certificate.

NSBKA Taster & Basic Courses, 2026

Taster Course:

NSBKA will be running a Taster in Beekeeping Course over the weekend 28/29th March at Tilstock Bradbury Village Hall. It will be an all-round introduction to keeping bees and will be mainly theoretical, with some practical sessions. The weekend finishes with a session at the Association apiary on Sunday afternoon, (weather dependent).

The course cost (including the apiary session) will be £100 per person, £170 for a twosome and/or £50 if under 16 (must be accompanied by a fee-paying adult). The cost includes membership of NSBKA.

Basic Course:

The same weekend, 28/29th March, we will also run a series of tutorials for those interested in the BBKA Basic Assessment. There is no charge for members.

The course is about practical beekeeping and allows lots of opportunities to ask questions. There is no pressure to take the assessment, but for those who do, it is usually in early summer at the Association apiary. It's a practical session with questions, no writing skills required! Please contact me for more information: education@nsbka.org *AnnFran*

Tuesday 14th April, 6pm Pimhill Apiary. Weather permitting, provisional date for reopening of weekly apiary meetings.

17th, 18th & 19th April! Spring 2026 Convention

Harper Adams University, Shropshire TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops, Seminars, Honey Tasting, Scientific Posters, Historic Films, Saturday's Trade Show & Speakers Corner

Places on workshops and seminars are booking fast, but booking is not needed for the 23 Lectures, Expert Panel, Honey Tasting, Saturday's Trade Show, Speakers Corner, Friday's Historic films and Scientific Poster presentations. For more information, please see www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention

A few stewards are still needed, particularly for Saturday 18th's busy Trade Show - If you could help for half a day, please ASAP contact scstewards@bbka.org.uk

Land available for hives: near Malpas (SY14 7JN) Grassland field with good access from the road Contact John Irving on 07896 481856

Needing bees? High colony losses are being reported this winter. With no guarantee of availability, but to help to gauge whether a **'bees offered'** section in Beelines might help members, ASAP please e-mail newsletter@nsbka.org if you expect to want to buy a nuc this season.

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet (YLAH)
As of 21/01/2026:
544 credible yellow-legged hornet sightings and 163 nests were reported in the UK last year. https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/about-us/beekeeping-news/yellow-legged-hornet-2025-rolling-update

A dead nest has recently been found near Wrexham (see P6 for more information), which is worrying! We must not be complacent and should be prepared for the possibility of YLAHs in our area. The Spring months will be the time to consider monitoring traps. I will have a supply of "Trappit", an attractant for YLAH, for your use. I will bring some to Association meetings and Apiary sessions when they start. Please bring a suitable container to decant into (100ml should be sufficient, you don't need much).

Please stay alert, and be prepared! Please consider using labels (available from Thorne's) on your honey jars to spread the word: https://www.thorne.co.uk/labels/asian-hornet-labels
Dave Sale NSBKA AHAT coordinator

Recent Meetings
Gardening for Pollinators by Mark Patterson

At our February meeting Mark Patterson from Apicultural gave us a really interesting talk on 'zoom' entitled "Gardening for Pollinators". Mark started by explaining about the different types of pollinators which include butterflies, some birds, beetles, hoverflies, wasps and of course bees. Perhaps surprisingly, there are around 20,000 types of bee worldwide, of which about 280 are in the UK.

There are numerous reasons why we need pollinators, including: their being good indicators of a healthy ecosystem; for our enjoyment and well being; and to aid conservation. Surprisingly, in city environments, domestic gardens provide upwards of 85% of food resources for pollinators.

Mark also explained that there has been a decline in pollinators due to loss of hedgerows, an increase in the dependency upon pesticides, loss of wildflower meadows and climate change. A lot of green space is now being lost due to development of new housing estates and car parking.

Why are gardens good for wildlife? One of the main reasons is the diversity of flower types, a high degree of successional flowering and often fewer pesticides than in more rural areas. Mark suggested that when considering plant types to grow to attract pollinators, one should use reliable information sources such as the Welsh Agricultural College, National Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and National Honey Monitoring Scheme. He explained that by doing thorough research, you will more likely have plants within your garden to attract an abundance of various pollinators year-round.

Mark explained that pollinators need more than just flowers for their food source. They also require somewhere to live, i.e. decaying vegetation to lay eggs, somewhere to overwinter, shelter to hibernate and nesting sites. We can also add to our gardens a drinking pond, mud dish, bee hotels, retain decaying tree stumps and plants which in turn provide nesting materials.

When planning a garden for pollinators, there are factors to consider such as variety, simple open flowers, flowers for all seasons, plants for both pollen and nectar sources, plants in clumps or drifts, nesting areas and prioritising early spring and late summer flowering plants. At these times of the year gardens can particularly help pollinators. Early season plants include spring bulbs, winter flowering honeysuckle, mahonia and viburnums. Mark's website resources on plants for pollinators have been drawn from many years of research.

There are many more informative blogs on all manner of topics on his website (www.apicultural.co.uk) and I'm sure many of us will be looking them up. *Gill Rich*

NSBKA Microscopy Day

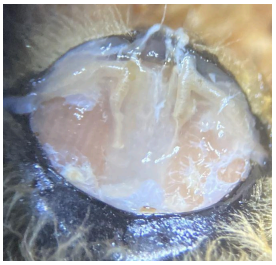
Joyce Nisbet

Saturday 21st February started early, both for our Tutor, Sean Stephenson (who had driven from Manchester in time to start setting-up at Tilstock at 08.00), as well as for Alison Hine, Ann and Guy, who opened up the hall and helped him to set up.

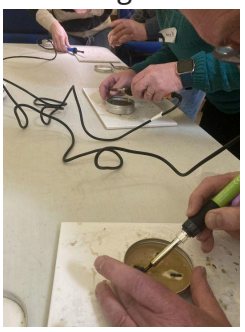
The morning started with a 'welcome' from Alison and Sean (the BBKA Exam Board Moderator) presented Gill Rich with her BBKA Module 2 Certificate - well done Gill!

Sean was tremendously well organised and had brought two microscopes for each of the 16 participants. These came very efficiently packed in his van, along with individual dissection kits, wax-filled tins to embed bees for dissection, individual bottles each of isopropyl alcohol (IPA); water and IPA/water mix; not to mention freshly killed bees to dissect; flowers; pollen; honey samples; extension leads; soldering irons with fitments for wax melting; slides; coverslips; dishes of glycerine jelly with fuchsin dye to mount pollen; relevant books; kitchen roll per table; and more!

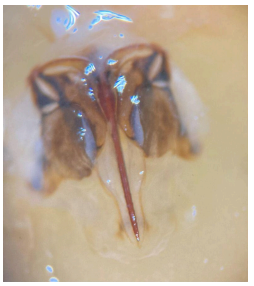
The morning started with a brief introduction to microscopes, explaining how to set up the binocular dissecting microscopes, and how to mount a bee on the sloping cork to examine it for acarine under x20 magnification. The tricky part was removing the 'collar' after easing the head from the bee.



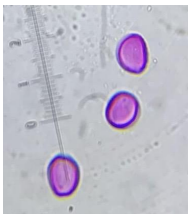
However, with care we could reveal the paired first thoracic trachea to check that they were a healthy pearly white colour and not brown, which would have been a sign of acarine mite infestation.

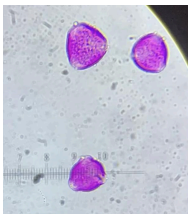


Further dissection meant embedding bees in wax and using scalpels, scissors etc to study the abdominal contents: initially the rectum (fairly full of stored waste in most of these late winter bees), Malpighian tubules, intestine and ventriculus.



Some also saw the sting, proventricular valve, heart chambers and nerve ganglia.





After instruction on the high-power microscopes and looking for nosema, the afternoon focussed on pollen - from known flowers, collected pollen loads and honey samples.

It was a great day - thanks to Sean's preparation and expertise, Alison Hine for organisation, and all who set up the kit, provided coffee, cake, washed cups, tidied up and provided photos for this article!

Dealing with the remains of a dead colony:

Alison Hine

Firstly, as soon as you find your colony has died over winter you should close up the colony until you have time to deal with it. This avoids other bees thinking that there are easy pickings in the hive and inadvertently picking up diseases.

Once you have time, all dead bees and frames containing dead brood should be burned to avoid passing on disease. Personally, I do not want to take risks so I burn all the frames from the brood box if I do not know exactly what killed a colony. Everything else should then be cleaned.

Brood boxes

Wooden brood boxes. Remove the runners and scrape the boxes clean of wax and propolis, paying particular attention to the internal corners and debris where the runners were. The bits of wax and propolis that fall off should be destroyed by burning. Disinfect the wood with a blowtorch. Use the tip of the blue flame in the middle of the larger flame and make sure any remaining propolis boils. Ensure the timber darkens to a uniform coffee-brown colour, which shows it has been heated for a sufficient time and for long enough. Once the boxes have been disinfected, replace the runners with new ones or the old ones which have been thoroughly cleaned. Runners are not expensive (and available in bundles at the Spring Convention), so I replace with new and dispose of the old (cleaned) ones at the tip.

Wooden hive parts. Similarly, scrape all hive parts clean of wax and debris and disinfect the wood with a blowtorch. The metal parts of a queen excluder should also be scraped clean, taking care not to distort the spacing, and torched. NB If possible, the screws retaining the floor-mesh should be removed so that the wooden surround may be scorched.

Poly hives: carefully scrape clean of wax and propolis and then immerse the parts in a 0.5% domestic bleach solution (one part household bleach to five parts water) for at least 20 minutes to sterilise them. NB Wear suitable protective clothing and goggles and rinse the hive parts thoroughly afterwards.

Frames

If you are 100% sure (really?) that disease was not the cause of the colony's demise, you could rescue brood frames of stores by fumigating them using ethanoic (acetic) acid. Alternatively, you could remove the wax for rendering and boil the frames in a washing soda solution before rewaxing them.

Fumigating Frames

In the absence of known disease, drawn brood frames in good condition and still light in colour may be fumigated with 80% acetic (ethanoic) acid before reuse. This process kills Nosema spp. spores, chalk brood spores and many stages of wax moth. NB this concentration of acetic acid is highly corrosive. Skin and eyes should be protected when handling - as should concrete surfaces.

Collect the boxes of frames, having cleaned off any excess propolis and wax. Any metal parts should be removed or coated with petroleum jelly to protect them from the corrosive effects of acetic acid. Stack boxes on top of each other on a solid wooden base.

Add an eke or empty super above the top box and place a solution of 80% acetic acid in a dish with a wick (a J cloth will do). You need about 120ml per brood box. About 600ml will fumigate five brood boxes. Alternatively, you could use an absorbent pad containing 120ml acetic acid between each brood box.

Put a roof on top and make sure everything is watertight and airtight – I put the stack in a wheelie bin sack. Leave for about a week.

Then remove the acetic acid containers and air the stack for at least two days in a bee-tight environment - or at a time of year when bees aren't flying. The stack may be aired by rotating the boxes at an angle so that the corners of the boxes are exposed and air can circulate. Do not do what I did and air them by placing a metal travel screen on top unless you want a rusty travel screen.

Sources of Information:

- www.nationalbeeunit.com
- NBU Leaflet: Disinfecting a hive after disease. July 2024
- NBU Leaflet: Fumigating comb. May 2025
- BBKA Healthy Hive Guide Revised 2025 (but always check with NBU Factsheets if in doubt)

Beek of the week

Guy Preece

Eva Crane (née Widdowson)

Born: 12 June 1912 Dulwich, London
Died: 6 September 2007 Slough, Berkshire (aged 95)
Education: Sydenham County Grammar School for Girls, studied mathematics at King's College London, attained a Masters in quantum mechanics, followed by a Ph.D. in nuclear physics in 1938.
Nationality: British

Born Ethel Eva Widdowson, Eva Crane was a scientist, entomologist, lecturer, author, researcher, archivist and beekeeper. Dr Eva Crane is probably best known as the founder of the International Bee Research Association (Previously named The Bee Research Association) and she was its director for 35 years, retiring in 1983 aged 72.

She initially started work as a lecturer in Physics, first at the University of Hull then Sheffield from 1936 to 1945. Beekeeping had become increasingly significant during the war years as honey was an alternative to sugar, which was subject to strict rationing. When she got married in 1942 Eva and her husband received a beehive with bees as a wedding present. This kick-started her lifelong interest in honeybees, trying to understand them and how they worked. She soon became an active member of her local beekeepers' association.

The International Bee Research Association had its origins as a research committee set up under the British Beekeepers Association. The committee was composed mainly of beekeepers who were also scientists who had experience of scientific research and research methods. Dr Eva Crane was the Secretary of the BBKA committee. The committee's main remit was to help facilitate and coordinate research on beekeeping and its related subjects, but the committee members found that they really needed to form a separate legal entity if they were to effectively apply for, secure and administer the necessary grants and funding for the intended research areas. So, in 1949 The Bee Research Association (BRA) was set up. The BRA was for a long time based in the front room of Eva's house. There she also collected and filed scientific papers, which led to a very extensive archive of more than 60,000 works on apiculture. It is a unique collection which includes complete runs of some 130 bee journal titles from all around the world. In 1955 when the Cranes had to move house it was noted that they also had to move over 4 tonnes of publications and other IBRA material to their new house. The archive itself is now housed at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

In 1966 the association moved out of Eva Crane's house to a nearby office in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire. Much later on, in 1976, the Bee Research Association charity changed its name to the International Bee Research Association and since 1985 IBRA has been based in Cardiff.

A prolific writer, Eva Crane wrote over 180 books and texts on apiculture and contributed numerous articles for other publications. In 2002 she formed the Eva Crane Trust, the aims of which are, 'to advance the understanding of bees and beekeeping' by 'providing financial support to academic researchers, citizen scientists, international conferences and the publication of specialist books'.

For anyone who missed it, there is a 'Food Programme' about honey fraud available at;
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002qh1k

Recent meeting of South Clwyd BKA

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet, with Seasonal Bee Inspector for N Wales, Thomas Birch

As well as being an NSBKA member, I'm also a member of SCBKA, and attended this meeting, held (following the recently identified YLAH nest near Wrexham) with Flintshire & Denbighshire BKA.

There was a tremendous amount of interesting information, eg. that the nest may have been killed by a pest controller around late September 2025.

Members of SCBKA are gearing up to monitor or trap and one enterprising member has 3D-printed fitments for jars (at £3 to cover costs), a low-cost way of creating traps. *Joyce Nisbet*

BBKA Exam Update

Closing Dates for BBKA Exams and Assessments *Alison Hine*

The **closing date** for Junior, Basic and Honey Bee Health Assessments is **30th April 2026.** Anyone needing help or advice on exams and assessments or a link to apply, should contact exam@nsbka.org

The month ahead:

- Check apiaries after any strong winds or flooding
- Heft hives to assess stores. If low, feed fondant (if still cool) or syrup if warmer and/or colony stimulation is wished
- On a mild day, watch hive entrances around noon, to see if colonies are flying and bringing in pollen
- Resist the temptation to inspect until a few days of about 14 or 15°C
- Any obviously dead colonies should be checked quickly (to confirm demise) and have the entrance closed to prevent robbing, until the hive can be moved away and cleaned out
- If you have lost all your colonies and expect to need a nuc to restart, please email newsletter@bbka.org
- Prepare clean equipment ready for the first inspection (once it is comfortable shirt-sleeve weather)
- Monitor natural mite drop and plan treatment - if necessary. Some can be applied before supering
- Put Tues 17th March @ 7.30pm in your diary for the next NSBKA meeting at Tilstock Village Hall
- Plan to sit the BBKA Basic in 2026, email education@nsbka.org
- Ensure you have enough kit to control swarming on all colonies simultaneously. If not, plan a shopping list to purchase extra equipment at the BBKA Spring Convention
- E-mail: scstewards@bbka.org.uk to volunteer to steward at the BBKA Spring Convention on 18th April

March Wordsearch Courtesy of Guy Preece

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Beekeeper
Frame
Nucleus
Bait hive
Waggle dance
Venom
cappings
Colony
Frame runner
Queen
Nasonov
Hive
Swarm cell
Contact feeder
Nosema
Thorax

NSBKA Beekeeping Queries

NSBKA members may have occasional questions about their bees. Monthly Association meetings are good opportunities for members to compare notes and seek advice. However, Members of the Committee (details below) are also willing to answer telephone/e-mail queries from Members. Please note: such advice should not usually lead to 'hands-on' assistance. If a Committee Member is asked to visit, then a £10 charge may be levied, to contribute to call-out expenses.

NSBKA has a 'Facebook' page

To sign up to our Facebook group, please go to http://www.facebook.com/nsbka and click on the "Like" button. You will then find instructions on how to join the private NSBKA facebook group.

NSBKA WhatsApp Community Group, to be used to send out notifications and reminders. It is a broadcast channel and not a chat group and we envisage sending only a few messages per month, so you won't be overwhelmed with notifications. Join via what.nsbka.org

NSBKA Committee – 2025-26

Office	Holder	Email Address	Telephone Number
Chair	Peter Rawlinson	chair@nsbka.org	07494 860562
Treasurer	Ann Moore	treasurer@nsbka.org	01939 211660
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Education Secretary	Ann F Johnson	education@nsbka.org	07860 496836
Events Coordinator	Gill Rich	events@nsbka.org	07754 703040
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Membership Secretary	Carol Bates	membership@nsbka.org	07902 017541
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Webmaster	Guy Preece	webmaster@nsbka.org	07740 199579
Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator	Dave Sale	hornet.watch@nsbka.org (preferred contact method)	07712 087839

NSBKA Website – www.nsbka.org

To log on to the website, which among other things gives access to back copies of the Beelines Newsletter and the facility to reserve any book from the NSBKA library please use username: nsbka and Password: Br00db0x (This is case sensitive so use a capital 'B' and the o's are all replaced with zeros)

Newsletter Contributions

All original articles, photographs etc and any ideas for topics to be covered are gratefully received. Please forward any contributions to the editor via: newsletter@nsbka.org. Text should be supplied as an MS Word document wherever possible and photographs as jpeg (.jpg) files. Please ensure permission has been sought from individuals featured in images for publication and remember to include author's and/or photographer's name.

Copy deadline for the April 2026 Newsletter: 27th March 2026