

# North Shropshire Beekeepers' Association

# BEELINES

[www.nsbka.org](http://www.nsbka.org)



## October 2025

### Forthcoming Meetings:

**NSBKA AGM: Tuesday 21st October, 7.30pm at Tilstock Village Hall, followed by a short talk by Gareth Newns** of South Clwyd BKA about sadly finding European Foul Brood in his hives, the emotions along the way, and what he learned.



Gareth grew up on a farm in North Wales and always had a great passion for the countryside and what it offers but then he got stuck in the rat-race moving and travelling with work. He always had

a dream of keeping bees but couldn't until he returned to N. Wales, bought a small-holding, and with his wife and family, now keeps bees.

**NSBKA: Tuesday 18th November, 7.30pm at Tilstock Village Hall: "Solitary Bees in Shropshire" by Nigel Jones of Shropshire Entomology Services**

**Shropshire BKA:** Mon 20th Oct, Meole Brace, Trinity centre, SY3 9HF. 18.45 for 19.00. The (Original) Simon The Beekeeper: My Journey So Far

### IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

**It's Renewal Time.** Please keep an eye on your in-boxes as the link to renew membership should be with you by 7th October. If you haven't received a link by then, please check your spam/junk and if still not there contact Carol Bates as below.

The BBKA has put most subscriptions up, increasing £2.00 (to £23) for a registered member, with an increase of £1.50 (to £15) for partner members and £1.00 (to £11) for country membership. Junior BBKA membership has been almost halved to £5. Other aspects remain as last year, with NSBKA still at £15.00 (with automatic £5 discount to £10 if you renew by 30 Nov 25). BDI (Bee Diseases Insurance) rates also remain unchanged, with up to 3 colonies included in the basic £2 premium. Additional colonies can be included at higher premiums.

If you have any questions about your membership please contact Carol Bates [membership@nsbka.org](mailto:membership@nsbka.org)

## Bulk Fondant Order



Once temperatures get down to about 10°C, it is too cold for bees to process syrup, so for winter feeding, it becomes necessary to change to fondant. This is often bought in boxes of 12 x 1kg pouches and with P&P, small amounts can be expensive.

This year NSBKA will be submitting a bulk order for fondant to which members are invited to add their own requirements. The details are:

- Boxes of 12 x 1kg pouches of Fondabee fondant @ £23 (or single pouches at £2.00 each)
- Orders with payment by no later than Sunday 12 October should be submitted to Ann Moore at [treasurer@nsbka.org](mailto:treasurer@nsbka.org) Payment should be made to: North Shropshire Beekeepers Association, Sort Code 20-77-85, A/c 60277185
- Collection: at the AGM between 6.45 - 7.30pm for non-Committee members. Anyone unable to collect at the AGM or arrange for others to collect at AGM for them, could collect directly from Pete Rawlinson by prior arrangement only via: [chair@nsbka.org](mailto:chair@nsbka.org) / 07494 860562
- (For Committee members collection will be at the next Committee meeting on 11 November)

## NSBKA website upgrade

The Association's website has been renewed. The web address is still the same [www.nsbka.org](http://www.nsbka.org) The old website used individual logons to access some pages but this was found to be unnecessary.

The new site is still taking shape with items being added but if you need to log on to access the newsletter etc., then use username: nsbka and password: Br00db0x (This is case sensitive so use a capital 'B' and the o's are all replaced with zeros).

The password may change if necessary, but any change will be published in Beelines.

## Recent Meetings NSBKA Honey Show

Sunday 7th September 2025

*Ann Johnson*



There were some very high quality entries into the honey show this year, class A 'jar of light honey' was the prize to aim for. Pete and Alison had a long discussion about labels before Joyce arrived.



The show started with a delicious warm apple cake brought by Joyce. Wearing her judges' white coat she then worked her way through each class. She explained the judging criteria (such as the use of grading glasses) for each, and was assisted by Megan, my Californian niece, who stewarded.



The winners were-  
Class A 'light liquid honey'  
Class B 'medium liquid honey'  
Class E 'crystallised honey'

AlisonH  
Pete  
Pete/AnnFran  
joint second)  
Dennis  
AnnFran (second)  
Pete  
AlisonH /AnnFran  
Pete

Class F 'Jar of honey for sale'  
Class G 'cut comb'  
Class H 'cake of beeswax'  
Class I 'beeswax candle'  
Class J 'photograph'

Class K 'black jar' Pete  
Class L 'run honey' Pete  
Class M 'novice' Dennis  
Class N 'cake' Gill  
Class O 'fudge' AnnFran (second)  
Class P 'cinder toffee' Pete  
Class Q 'Mead' Pete

Alison was delighted to win class A. The candles managed to burn to the end even though a few struggled. Thankfully Tilstock village hall is draught free!

Marcus and Dennis came to my rescue in working out the results for the 'run honey', thank you!



The winner of the Hammond cup was Pete once again, but I did manage to get him a little worried this year. Well done to Dennis, who won the novice cup.

(And thanks to AnnFran Johnson for organising! Ed)

## Pimhill Tuesday evenings *Joyce Nisbet*



The final Tuesday evening Association session of 2025 on 9th September saw a couple of colonies being united, the previously placed Apiguard being checked and feed topped up as required.

Further checks will now be carried out over winter by a rota of Committee members, with second trays of Apiguard already having been given.

The next apiary session is planned for Sunday 7th December. Please see Beelines for more information nearer the time.

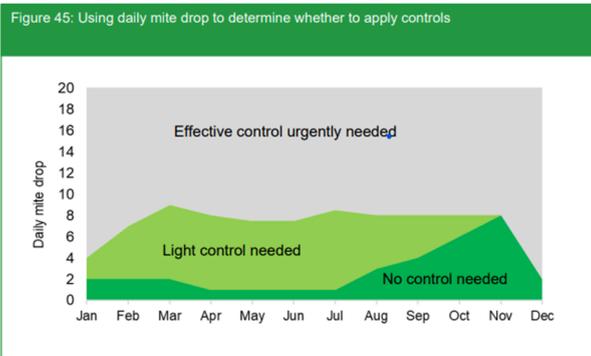
## Winter is Coming by Lesley Jacques

The first of our indoor meetings was a timely talk from Lesley. While it might sound early to talk about Winter, preparations need to start now (if not before!). There are 5 key factors to consider: Colony strength, Health, Nutrition, Location and Protection.

**Colony strength:-** One strong colony has a better chance of surviving winter than 2 small ones. Small colonies struggle to generate enough heat in the cluster, which may mean they are too cold to move to stores, resulting in isolation starvation.

Smaller colonies can be united in autumn, but check both are disease-free, and remove the non-preferred queen prior to uniting. If one colony is a nuc, move the frames into a full-size brood-box first to make uniting easier. Move colonies closer together beforehand to avoid losing flying bees and unite in the evening when foragers are home. If stores are low a super of stores can be placed beneath the brood boxes (nading), and the colony will gradually consume stores and move upwards.

**Health:-** It is essential that varroa levels are minimised at this time of year as this is when winter bees are being reared. Varroa is a vector for diseases, eg Deformed Wing Virus, and left unchecked can eventually cause colony demise. Monitor the levels using varroa boards under a mesh floor and by counting the daily mite drop. The NBU Beebase website has lots of useful information on this subject, including what actions are required



depending on the mite levels and time of year.

From APHA booklet 'Managing Varroa' © Crown copyright 2025

Available/licenced treatments fall into 3 main categories: Essential oils (eg Thymol), Organic Acids (eg Formic acid) and Synthetic Pesticides (eg Amitraz). Treatment durations vary, some are temperature-dependent, some are known to have issues with localised or widespread resistance, plus most will only kill phoretic mites (i.e. those on the adult bees rather than in sealed cells), so reading the instructions before treating is very important.

Lesley described physiological differences between summer and winter bees. While summer bees only live for around 15-30 days, winter bees survive for

around 140-150 days. This is made possible by their enlarged fat bodies which are storage organs for fats/glycogen, enabling the winter bee to be nourished for a longer period. Vitellogenin is also found in the fat body, which enables storage of protein reserves. The fat body diminishes in Spring and the winter bees die off. This is when the colony is at risk with more brood to be fed than adult bees.

**Nutrition:-** A colony will require approx. 40lbs of stores to get through winter. If all supers are extracted, the colony will require feeding. In autumn, thick syrup can be fed (i.e. 2lbs granulated sugar to 1pt water), or commercial pre-prepared feed, eg Ambrosia. There are various types of rapid feeder that can be used.

Winter stores are not consumed evenly; much more is consumed in spring as the colony size and activity increases, compared with Nov/Dec/Jan. As a result, March/April will be the time when the risk of starvation is greatest.

**Location:-** Consider the apiary site; is the ground firm, at risk of flooding, in a windy spot or a frost pocket? Make sure hives are weighted down and the boxes strapped together; that way if the hive falls over the boxes will hopefully remain bee-tight until they can be righted.

**Protection:-** In addition to protection from the elements, colonies can come under attack from various creatures. Mouseguards can be used to prevent mice getting in and making a mess of the frames. If green woodpeckers are a problem, add a layer of chicken wire to the outside of the hive to prevent them getting access to peck the boxes. Badgers can also do a lot of damage if they attack hives; robust or electric fencing will keep them out.

**Winter checks:-** These should be non-invasive. Check regularly that entrances are clear of dead bees/debris/snow. Are the bees flying on warmer days? Heft the hives to judge the weight of stores remaining; fondant can be used if stores are low. Inspect below open-mesh floors for signs of debris which can indicate colony activity, eg uncapping of stores. An oxalic acid treatment for varroa can be applied when the colony is broodless (or when brood is at a minimum).

Lesley summarised the essentials for successful over-wintering; colonies should be queenright, healthy, have adequate stores, be weatherproof and be undisturbed.

This was the first talk this year where we had invited members from Shropshire BKA to join us, and it was good to see a number of their members with us. Word about the great cakes on offer must have spread!  
*Ann Moore*

## Bee Compliant

### Tropilaelaps anyone?

Guy Preece

“For decades, beekeepers have fought a tiny parasite called Varroa destructor, which has devastated honeybee colonies around the world. But an even deadlier mite, Tropilaelaps mercedesae – or “tropi” – “is on the march.” The Independent, 10 September 2025.

These mites can only survive on adult bees for around three to six days before they die of starvation, as they need open brood to be able to feed. This need to continually access brood was thought to act as a barrier to Tropilaelaps moving into our colder climes, as winter usually means a brood break occurring at some point. However these mites seem to be thriving in very cold areas and there is concern that they may be overwintering on another host.

Your average Tropilaelaps is barely one-third the size of a Varroa mite. I often struggle to see varroa on inspection boards, so there is probably no hope of me seeing Tropilaelaps there. Beekeepers might also worry about tiny ‘pollen mites’ that are sometimes found there. However, unlike varroa, Tropilaelaps are very fast moving and while I was an inspector, I saw videos of Tropilaelaps taken by bee inspectors on their phones when they visited Ghana, showing Tropilaelaps scurrying around on the brood frames. Any small mites moving fast on comb must be reported.

Bee inspectors normally carry out a series of surveillance inspections during the season for ‘exotic pests’ by visiting high risk apiaries, such as those near garden centres and other import points (sentinel apiaries). Until recently the National Bee Unit used an alcohol wash to detect the presence of Tropilaelaps, as this quick method of testing works well for varroa, which float to the surface. But the bee inspectors who tried this in Ghana found that Tropilaelaps tend to sink! So the use of the sugar roll test quickly replaced the old alcohol wash.

Although Tropilaelaps is tiny it has the capacity to easily outcompete Varroa and can more rapidly overwhelm bee colonies. Tropilaelaps are able to reproduce at a more rapid rate, which in turn leads to the quicker collapse of the colony due to the damage that their feeding does to the brood, together with the associated transmission of harmful viruses, just as happens with varroa.

In 2022, a beekeeping association in Russia (and also in neighbouring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) reported significant losses of bee colonies linked to Tropilaelaps. In 2024, a study confirmed the presence of Tropilaelaps in the northwestern part of Georgia and concluded that it must have been

present there for at least the previous season. The study found some very high infestation rates in the three apiaries they studied, with up to 24% of capped brood infested with Tropilaelaps in some cases. The Turkish border is only 125 miles (200 km) from the region where Tropilaelaps was detected in Georgia. According to official records there were 57,897 beekeepers in Turkey in 2021.



*A truckload of bee hives in Turkey - Photo by Gill Rich*

Turkish beekeepers have 6.8 million colonies and a whopping 75% (approximately 42,000) of Turkish beekeepers practise migratory beekeeping, which corresponds to around 5.1 million bee colonies, all being carted around hither and thither, with potentially very unwelcome hitchhikers on board.

Earlier this year the Azerbaijani Beekeeping Association said that Tropilaelaps had been found in northern and western regions. It had been discovered in Bilasuvar, a district near the Caspian Sea. Bee losses of 40 to 50% had been reported there during the autumn and winter. While Varroa and associated viruses had been blamed, it now seems likely that Tropilaelaps may have been in part responsible for some of those losses.

Don't keep it to yourself. The Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006 makes Tropilaelaps a notifiable pest. The order states that a notifiable pest “means the small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) or any species of the Tropilaelaps mite.” The order goes on to say, “An owner or person in charge of a hive who knows or suspects that ... (b) a notifiable pest is present in the hive; shall immediately notify that fact...” which just means contact the National Bee Unit without delay.

One last thing. The best defence against Tropilaelaps is not to let it into the country in the first place. This is especially as management techniques for Varroa (such as brood breaks and proprietary treatments) may be less effective if applied to Tropilaelaps. So let's hope that it doesn't come to that.

## Gigantic bees in the South of France

Carol Jones

We've been coming to the Mediterranean coast in southern France for many years now and I'm used to grass snakes, massive crickets and a huge array of beetles, in recent years the yellow legged hornet too.



However, when I saw this massive insect on the sheet I'd put out on the washing line, I have to say I did a sharp intake of breath and took a picture. I'm not a great photographer, but it was black, slightly metallic and about 3cms long. Mutation, a tropical import or the start of Dantes Inferno? I called the dogs in, just in case, then sent the picture to a friend who is something of an expert on insects.

I need not have worried, I was not witnessing some weird invasion of species, it was a *Xylocopa violacea* or Abeille charpentiere (carpenter bee). Apparently it is relatively common in the Mediterranean region of France along with the less exotic looking *Xylocopa valga*. As the name suggests it is a solitary bee that nests in dead wood. The female makes a single entry hole which leads to multiple galleries. The female lays eggs in these galleries and seals each one with a pellet of pollen to feed the larvae. They are non aggressive, despite their appearance and are generally considered an environmentally beneficial species as they help destroy dead wood. Which is great as long as you don't have too many wooden beams in your house!!

Of the 900 species of bee in France, Abeille charpentiere is the largest, in fact they're the largest in the whole of Europe. Originally restricted to the Mediterranean region, with hotter temperatures in northern Europe they have spread into Germany. They have occasionally been reported in the UK, generally as stowaways in wood imports. However, with hotter summers, they may well cross the channel, watch your wood work!!!

## Module 3 Study Group – Honey Bee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning

This Study Group will take place fortnightly on a Wednesday evening, starting at 7.00pm. The group is open to anyone who has kept bees for a couple of years and who is interested in learning more about how to keep their bees healthy. The first session will be on Wednesday 29 October at the Bull and Dog, Coton. The rest of the sessions will probably be held there unless another suitable venue is more convenient for attendees.

The topics to be covered over the winter will be based on the Module 3 syllabus. The sessions will finish in time for people to prepare to sit the module exam on 21 March should they so wish, but there will be no pressure on any of those attending to sit the exam.

The Study Group will cover:

- The various diseases of honey bee brood and adults, their signs and diagnosis.
- Treatments available, their methods of use and efficacy.
- Methods of treatment and control of Varroa, including Integrated Pest Management.
- Viruses affecting honey bees.
- Signs of poisoning in honey bees and action to be taken. The steps that can and should be taken by a beekeeper to prevent disease and its spread.
- Knowledge of legally notifiable diseases and pests.
- Legislation regarding the importation of honey bees.
- Damage caused to colonies and equipment by mice, woodpeckers and other pests, including wax moth, and how to prevent this.

Please would anyone interested in taking part contact Alison Hine on [exam@nsbka.org](mailto:exam@nsbka.org) for further information.

### FREE equipment offered:

- Extracting kit, including 2 frame poly extractor, settling tank, sieves etc
- Wooden National Hive - Mesh floor, brood box, 4 supers, queen excluder, crown board, roof, & 2 feeders
- Additional wood hive parts including 1 brood box & 1 mesh floor
- Two poly nucs with feeders
- Additional poly parts including 3 Brood boxes, 5 supers & 3 roofs
- A box of frame making parts
- Beekeeping 'kit-box' with queen marking pens etc

Please contact Andy on 01948 710106

# Apimondia 2025

Joyce Nisbet



When drought prevented a planned UK canal boating holiday, I bit the bullet and paid up to go to Copenhagen for the Apimondia Congress. This huge meeting takes place every two years. In 2023 it was in Santiago, Chile and in 2027 it will be in Dubai, with 2029 to be in Germany. I hadn't been before, so Denmark seemed too good an opportunity to miss. I wasn't the only Brit to think that. Out of over 8,000 participants, there were reputedly more than 800 from the UK.

The meeting was 23-27 September in a huge conference centre (the Bella Centre) a few train / metro stops from Copenhagen airport. The main parts of the event were an enormous (over 7,000 square metres) Trade Show, the ApiExpo, with around 180 exhibitors, including some national associations. There were also over 300 oral presentations, most lasting 15 mins including questions, and taking place in about 6 separate rooms at any one time. Although the meeting has now finished, information remains available at [apimondia2025.com](http://apimondia2025.com)



There were also more than 600 poster presentations and the world beekeeping awards - an international judged 'honey show' but without individual honey classes this year, due to the difficulties two years ago of being certain that entries were not adulterated.



Among the winners of World Beekeeping Awards were gold medals to Lesley Jacques for her book: 'Where do the bees go?' and also to the 'Beekeepers Quarterly' magazine.



This year, partly to compensate for the lack of honey classes in the World Beekeeping Awards, there was a global honey bar - a huge well organised tasting area with honeys to taste from more than 30 countries.



Several representatives from Ulster Beekeepers were promoting the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB), to be held in Northern Ireland in July 2026.



There was some time for fun - the opening and closing ceremonies plus a band after the opening ceremony and an exceedingly good ice-cream stall! There were also organised tours to beekeepers and beekeeping locations in Scandinavia, but most were fully booked by the time I decided to go. Some lasting several days were also very expensive.



Instead I enjoyed a couple of days before the event being a tourist in Copenhagen, and was very fortunate with the weather.

## The month ahead:

- Keep entrances reduced to discourage robbing
- Complete and remove any summer Varroa treatment
- Place and pay for your order for fondant by Sunday 12th October at the latest, for collection for non-committee members at the AGM on 21st October
- Complete honey removal and extraction, leaving colonies with sufficient winter stores.
- Complete the feeding of any colonies that are short of stores - if they are still accepting syrup Each full hive should have ~40lb.
- Clean and store equipment and empty supers
- Tidy your shed!
- Once there is minimal pollen coming in, apply mouseguards
- Continue to monitor your hives and Asian Hornet bait station
- Volunteer to join the NSBKA Committee at the AGM on Tuesday 21st October - your Association needs you!

## October Wordsearch Courtesy of Guy Preece

Y B S B G Q O W Y E C R I W C Z X S L I	Buckfast
J I J E V I H C B W U V J M X P U V J T	Beeswax
J P B I A S Z U Z E X T A A X L H B I R	Demaree
K A L C V E W J G M C F E R Q E B A F O	Guard bees
Z O T O B E E S W A X B B K F M C V Z P	WBC hive
A O K N O B X E T K G H U I J O N R J I	Tropilaelaps
U N Q E S D N R S H C D I N Z L T A N L	Queenright
C T Y E T R A S R Z G I W G K E Q L A A	Flying bees
O S H R R A D S D O S I H P R M P V T E	Chalk Brood
M A B A Z U T O E M L B R E I B N S S L	Marking pen
C F F M C G Y L O E M A A N D D P T I A	Egg
C K H E T E L M X R B Y R O E I W K P P	Fresh stores
Z C N D Y L T X H N B G J K G E G T A S	Apistan
N U Y K X D E T Y F S K N J P G U K V Y	Larva
S B F A T D T X K Q N D L I E U Q Q A H	NSBKA
B D S Z R T N I I T L D T A Y X I H Z I	Melomel
K T Z M R X K O O J O O J T H L L P M R	
A F I Z U T J T C O V J U A R C F K T Y	
Q P V C C K C Z I Y Y Q D R N W B U X P	
W S E R O T S H S E R F L Q O B G Q D A	

## 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](http://what.nsbka.org)



## NSBKA Committee – 2024-25

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NSBKA Website – [www.nsbka.org](http://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](mailto: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.

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**Copy deadline for the November 2025 Newsletter: 24th October 2025**