

**SUSSEX**

BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

THE SCOUT



moving Sussex beekeeping forward >>>



WELCOME TO

THE SCOUT – your new source of inspiration and information for beekeepers across Sussex. This newsletter will keep you updated on learning opportunities and help you grow your skills and confidence in the craft of beekeeping.

You may know me already, but for those who don't, I'm passionate about beekeeping – and even more passionate about helping others improve and enjoy it. Earlier this year, I became a Master Beekeeper through the BBKA learning pathway. It's a fantastic, accessible system open to all members; yet it's underused. There's no mystery to it – with planning, preparation, and a bit of study, it's achievable. As your new Education Officer for Sussex, I'd love to encourage you to take that first step – big or small – on your own beekeeping journey.

Don't let anyone tell you you're not ready. The BBKA provides a wealth of resources and I aim to align Sussex-led training more closely with this pathway. My goal is to signpost and promote more opportunities, so no one feels left behind.

Over the past three years as Chair of Eastbourne, I've led successful study groups via Zoom during the off-season. These sessions, open to all, have helped many members pass BBKA modules with great results. The format works well, and I'm eager to see more beekeepers benefit from this approach. The modules explore all aspects of husbandry in depth and offer real, practical value.

Encouragingly, more Sussex divisions are now offering training beyond the Basic assessment – a brilliant development. I look forward to supporting all branch Education Secretaries to expand

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and improve these offerings. However, we still need to boost participation in the Basic assessment. Sussex currently stands at around 22%, far below the BBKA's target of 50%.

This isn't about competing with other counties. It's about improving beekeeping standards – preventing swarms, reducing disease, managing bees responsibly within the environment, and producing better yields. Ultimately, it's about feeling confident, supported, and successful in our beekeeping.

So, stay tuned, reach out, or join me for **On Target for Your GH, an Evening for Improvers** – 16 September, 7.30pm at St. George's Church Hall, 110 Eastbourne Road, BN26 5DF. And next time you open your hive, ask yourself: do you feel confident in your knowledge? If not – there's a world of support waiting for you.

SIMON TUCK

> Education Officer SBKA

STUDY

Module 2: Honey Bee Products and Forage

This fascinating module covers everything you could possibly want to know about nectar, pollen, honeydew, wax, propolis and even bee venom. Where do our bees forage for nectar and how can we achieve an end product which will lead to repeat custom and even win awards?

Join my Zoom study group starting in September which will fully prepare you if you want to take the exam, or allow you to learn with fellow Sussex beekeepers even if you don't. Sign up here if you are interested:

<https://tinyurl.com/module2study>



BEEKEEPING IS A JOURNEY

For each and every one of us beekeeping is a journey.

Keeping prosperous and healthy hives is not easy. The first thing one can do after a year of beekeeping is to undertake the BBKA Basic assessment. But this is only the start of mastering the skills needed to keep bees well.

The BBKA offers the possibility of sitting modules. By sitting modules one's own understanding grows. I have personally completed modules on honey bee biology, honey bee behaviour, pests and diseases of honey bees and honey bee management. Each time my understanding has increased and gone on to inform the decisions I make when managing my bees. There are also practical assessments. Once you have been beekeeping for a number of years these force you to up your game even further. The General Husbandry is a practical assessment and covers a lot of ground but it will make you a much better beekeeper.

What is new is that within East Sussex we have an education officer, Simon Tuck, who is a master beekeeper. Two of the modules I mention having passed I have been coached by Simon by attending his excellent Zoom study groups. He also runs sessions for those wanting to undertake the Basic or Honey Bee Health but is keen to help all those keeping bees to deepen their knowledge including experienced beekeepers to achieve a more advanced level. For instance, I've just done a weekend course on simple queen rearing with him and it was fantastic. He seems able to make anything complicated straightforward. Anyone out there who wants to understand more about their bees and gain confidence should look out for any training opportunities he offers.

You won't regret it.



MALCOLM WILKIE

> Chair of High Weald BKA

- ✓ Perhaps this may also help you on your own journey to an even more advanced level such as advanced husbandry or even master beekeeper.
- ✓ And when you embark on such a path any knowledge gained, then cascades down to others and everyone learns better how to keep bees.

THE BASIC

SOMETHING EVERY BEEKEEPER NEEDS!

My beekeeping journey started in lockdown and I can assure you remote learning and reading books are no match for hands-on experience! I lurched from what felt like disaster to disaster with my bees and after a couple of years of struggling, my normally supportive family had nicknamed me the 'bee loser' and were urging me to quit. So why on earth would someone like me even think of taking an assessment in bee keeping?

Well firstly I love bees, secondly, I had amassed lots of bee keeping kit and thirdly I was not going to let my seemingly total incompetence stop me.... but I had no idea how I was going to improve the situation. My despair was answered by Simon Tuck who was offering classes to help people like me to become better beekeepers and ultimately be recognised for this by taking the Basic assessment - the entry point for BBKA recognition.

The classes were incredible, full of wonderful people all of whom had a passion for bees and wanted to improve their beekeeping ability. The tutors were approachable and the learning was accessible and surprisingly easy. The syllabus included some simple methods for swarm control, how to manage diseases and pests - at a practical level, and how to manage my hive throughout the year, on a what, why, when basis. And most importantly it taught me how I could add value to my bees whilst still harvesting some beautiful honey. On the day of the Basic I was nervous and yet my assessor was great - he walked me gently through the practical section of the exam, encouraging me to demonstrate what I knew and providing support where it was needed, even the questions he asked had a conversational feel to them so I felt like I learnt a lot on the exam day too and yes I passed (with a credit)! I would really encourage all beekeepers to take the Basic - it was easier than expected, I learnt loads and our bees need us at our best so we can all flourish!

SUE OSMOND

> Eastbourne BKA

BBKA LEARNING

The BBKA offers a vast array of learning opportunities available to all of us (see [BBKA Learning Online](#)):

PRACTICAL

This starts with the Basic, followed by the Honey Bee Health, General and Advanced assessments and two extras; the Microscopy and Bee Breeding Certificates.

THEORY

There are 7 core Modules which cover all aspects of husbandry plus two supplementary modules: Plants & Pollinators and the History of Beekeeping.