



THE SCOUT



moving Sussex beekeeping forwards >>>



WELCOME BACK TO

THE SCOUT – your 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.

As we approach the winter solstice there is no better use of long dark evenings than to increase your knowledge and understanding of the honey bee. A little study now pays you back all next season: calmer inspections, smarter decisions, healthier colonies and, yes, more honey. If you've had bees for 12 months or more, you already know the questions that keep popping up—so 2026 is your moment to turn experience into confidence.

Sussex is stepping up its training offer. Trainers from across the county are pooling skills and resources, and THE SCOUT is your hub for dates and sign-ups. After a brilliant Module 2 Zoom Study Group this autumn, a new Module 3 series starts in January. These sessions are open to everyone, whether you're aiming for the exam or just want to learn alongside others.

Then in spring we'll launch a six-session Zoom programme: "[Building Basic Confidence in Beekeeping with Sussex](#)." Running one evening a week 19:30–21:30, it will cover the entire BBKA Basic Certificate syllabus with a line-up of excellent trainers from across all Divisions. Finish the series and you'll be fully prepared to take your Basic assessment at a Divisional apiary. Two additional top-up sessions will follow for those planning to take their Honey Bee Health assessment.

What will we tackle? The stuff that makes beekeepers excel: seasonal colony management, reading brood patterns, swarm

12.2025

prevention and control, queen biology and replacement, nutrition and feeding, comb management and renewal, apiary hygiene, equipment choice, safe handling, record-keeping, honey harvesting basics, disease and pest recognition (including foulbrood, varroa and viruses), and the practical steps that keep bees healthy in a changing climate.

If you've been "meaning to do the Basic," there's never been a better—or friendlier—route. And if you haven't thought about it yet, ask yourself: wouldn't next season feel better with a certificate-level toolkit behind you? Join us, learn with friends, and take the step that transforms good beekeeping into great beekeeping.

SIMON TUCK

Register your interest [here](#).

> Education Officer SBKA

STUDY

Module 3: Honey Bee Diseases, Pests & Poisoning

Module 3 is crucial because it will equip you with essential knowledge to identify, manage, and prevent threats to colony health, like Varroa mites or foulbrood, ensuring bee survival, colony productivity, and upholding the reputation of responsible beekeeping.

Join my Zoom study group starting in January 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/module3study>

WHY THE BASIC?

✓ I took the Basic after keeping bees for two years and gained far more than just a certificate. From the theory sessions to hands-on time at the apiary, it cemented what I already knew and taught me so much more. I learned a great deal from others on the course and from my assessor, whose knowledge was invaluable. Simon and Ian's passion for beekeeping made the classroom feel more like an informal chat. See you next year for Honey Bee Health.

Martin

✓ I would encourage anyone thinking of doing their Basic Assessment to go for it. I took mine this year and learnt so much, from the studying beforehand through to the assessment itself. I now prop my queen excluder up in front of the hive, just in case my queen is on there and I've missed her, so she can walk back in. My assessor was lovely and genuinely wanted me to do well, sharing additional bee knowledge along the way. It can't have been too horrendous, as I'm planning to do my Honey Bee Health assessment next year!

Donna

✓ The Basic Assessment turned my inexperience into confidence — a simple step that makes caring for your bees so much easier.

Tim

✓ I really enjoyed doing the Basic Assessment and found it a great way to learn as a new beekeeper. There's so much to know, and it helped me identify the fundamental things all beekeepers should be aware of. It was also a great way to meet like-minded people, and having the assessment to work towards really helped me stay focused. When you pass (which really isn't very difficult!), you even get a lovely certificate and badge!

Sarah

✓ After a few years of beekeeping I'd never got around to taking the BBKA Basic, but I'm so glad I finally did. It sharpened my skills and taught me new things, and my assessor, Gordon, was fantastic: supportive, encouraging, and a real pleasure to meet.

Whether experienced or not, I'd say get on with it!

Paul

HONEY BEE HEALTH ASSESSMENT

WHY IT'S WORTH IT

This year I decided to take the Honey Bee Health module, and I will be honest: I was extremely nervous. The idea of a practical assessment felt intimidating, however it proved to be really, really helpful for my beekeeping, as I had always been a little confused about the different diseases and pests. I learnt not only to identify them but also how to prevent and treat them.

I took the practical exam at my local Association apiary. We were given a list of equipment which had to be on hand, so a few days before the assessment, the apiary manager and I prepped everything. This was helpful because it meant I went through all the potential manipulations on the list. I also had time to practice my running commentary whilst inspecting some frames.

The day arrived, and I admit that I was nervous about what was to come. As the weather was warming up, we went straight into conducting a disease inspection. As I opened up the hive and went through, I gave a running commentary, and the examiner asked me questions as we went along about why I was doing things, what I was looking at or looking for. This was midsummer, so I was also asked questions about what I would do or potentially see at other times of the year. Then came the manipulation. I was a little bit worried about conducting an intrusive manipulation on a colony which was happy and healthy. I was asked to conduct a Shook Swarm but was told (beforehand) to stop at the point before I shook the bees out. So that is precisely what I did, and with the equipment, talked through what I would have done if the bees had been on the frames.

The assessment really did not feel like a test/exam; instead, I felt as if I was just showing another (rather curious and knowledgeable) beekeeper what I do or would do in a variety of situations. I also received helpful feedback and suggestions, there and then. More importantly, the whole process has equipped me with more knowledge and practical skills to help keep my bees healthier and give me more confidence as a beekeeper. Therefore, I highly recommend that every beekeeper invest a little time in taking this course.

HEIDI BURGESS

> Brighton & Lewes BKA



Thinking about the Basic?

Scan here to register your interest.

