

West Suffolk Beekeepers' Association is non-profit making, aiming to support all levels of beekeeper, from the absolute novice to the long-established apiarist. Our membership reflects this and much advice and assistance comes from the members themselves. A structured course for new beekeepers is available as well as a programme of training for the BBKA Basic Assessment and subsequent modules. During the summer our own apiary is open to view (by arrangement) on alternate Sunday afternoons and in winter, a monthly series of talks on all aspects of beekeeping takes place. If you're not sure whether beekeeping is for you, get in touch with us anyway on wsbka@yahoo.co.uk or telephone 01449 736362 - we are happy to advise you on the first steps.

To access our Constitution, see main website

Benefits of membership

Beekeeping can be a very solitary activity but joining an association enables you to keep in touch with others locally and keep informed. This is also essential for bee health especially if there is a challenge such as disease or predators such as the Asian hornet. It can also enhance your knowledge and enjoyment of keeping bees.

As a member of West Suffolk BKA you automatically become a member of the Suffolk Beekeeping Association. This comprises six branches and you are welcome to attend most events and meetings organised by those other branches.

If you sign up for full membership, you automatically become a registered British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) member and your beekeeping activities will be covered by 3rd party liability insurance. You will receive their monthly magazine to help keep you informed about beekeeping nationally and globally.

Our own newsletter is published three or four times per year and is available directly to members and put on our webpage shortly afterwards.

We run an apiary at Nowton, Bury St Edmunds, which is open to members at fixed times during the summer. Our flourishing education programme gets new beekeepers off to a flying start after which they can join our mentorship scheme. During the winter we hold monthly meetings, generally at Hawstead, with a programme of talks and the chance for members to catch up on each other's bee-news. Nuclei (new colonies) of bees or swarms can be supplied depending upon availability.

For our membership form, see the website or ask for a paper copy from

WSBKA Membership secretary: Carol Williamson, 01449 736362 or wsbka@yahoo.co.uk

NB Members' details are held on computer unless instructed otherwise. This information is only available to our committee and contact details etc are only forwarded elsewhere

once permission from the member concerned has been obtained. If you do not wish to have your details kept like this, alternative arrangements can be made upon request.

Education

This is an essential part of our association, with the intention of producing knowledgeable and confident beekeepers. A structured beginners' course is available as well as a training programme for the BBKA Basic Assessment and subsequent modules. Further training courses are being developed for 2018. Our winter programme of talks and the fortnightly summer sessions at our apiary enhance the education programme.

Mentoring: We encourage members to sign up to our list of mentors and make every effort to match up new members with more experienced beekeepers who are willing to guide them through their first year or two.

The Apiary Located in Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds, our apiary of 7 – 12 hives is open for members / potential members to visit on alternate Sunday afternoons, by prior arrangement with our head apiarist Mike Graystone – email mg4mike@btinternet.com . This is weather-dependent. Beesuits are available for loan so you only need to bring wellington boot and rubber gloves for protection. Usually, groups of 6 or so are taken on the hive inspections and the findings are explained and discussed. This is very useful for novices to improve their handling skills and for anyone still unsure about keeping bees. Many experienced beekeepers like to attend to keep up their skills and discuss their bee problems with friends.

Events: See main website for details

Winter meetings are usually held at Hawstead Village Hall from October to April, excluding December, on the second Thursday of the month. Speakers in the past have included a national honey judge, our local area bee inspector, the creators of Zest Hives and skep-making demonstrators. See the Suffolk Beekeepers calendar for details.

Safari: this is held annually in the summer and involves a group of usually led by a bee inspector, visiting members' apiaries in an area of West Suffolk – usually five or six of them – looking through their hives and discussing their apiaries, local conditions etc. This is always very sociable, car-sharing being essential, we enjoy a picnic lunch, brilliant sunshine and plenty of cake!

The Suffolk Show: We always support this annual event at Ipswich Showground and encourage all our members to visit one of the most popular attractions: the bee and honey display tent! This year's show is on May 31st / June 1st.

WSBKA Honey Show: our own show is part of the very popular Pakenham Water Mill Open Day, held in early September. This is a good opportunity to talk to beekeepers,

view the honey exhibition and competition, displays of bees, honey and wax products, many of which are for sale. It always makes a wonderful finale to the beekeeping season.

Honey jars (members only): as we buy in bulk we are able to supply 8oz, 12oz and 1lb jars by the box (6 dozen / 12 dozen jars) at our cost price. Contact wsbka@yahoo.co.uk

Extractor loan (members only) We have two manual, tangential extractors for hire for a small remittance – contact mikefshave@gmail.com

Club library: (members only) a varied selection of publications old and new for free, time-limited loan

Useful links:

Suffolk Beekeepers: <http://www.suffolkbeekeepers.co.uk/>

British Beekeepers Association: <http://www.bbka.org.uk/>

www.beekeepingforum.co.uk/ : discussion and advice on bees, an excellent insight into the joys, trials and tribulations of beekeeping

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm>: an essential information resource for beekeepers

<http://www.bee-craft.com/>: a useful and entertaining monthly magazine

<https://bumblebeeconservation.org> as fascinating as honey bees, bumble bees and their habits are well worth knowing about.