



THE BUZZzzzz



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Welcome to the February 2026 CSBKA Newsletter!

I hope those of you who have attended our recent Winter Meetings have found them both interesting and enjoyable. Your committee works hard to organise a varied and engaging programme, and we are always keen to ensure it reflects the interests of our members. As we begin planning future meetings for our 2026 Winter Programme (*yes we really do start this early in the year!*), we would very much welcome your feedback. It would be helpful to know which meetings you particularly enjoyed, whether there are any speakers you would like to hear again, and what topics you would be interested in for the future. Your comments will help us shape a programme that continues to inform, inspire and support our members.

The **West Sussex Beekeepers' Annual Convention** is just over a week away, and there's still time to secure your place at the discounted rate of £30, (£40 on the day if there are any tickets left!). I'll be attending and hope to see many of you there for what I know will be an excellent day.

Finally, please help spread the word about our **2026 Beekeeping Course for Beginners**. This year will follow the usual format with two half day classroom sessions followed by an afternoon apiary experience held over two Saturdays 28th March and 11th April.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon!

Yolanda Noye



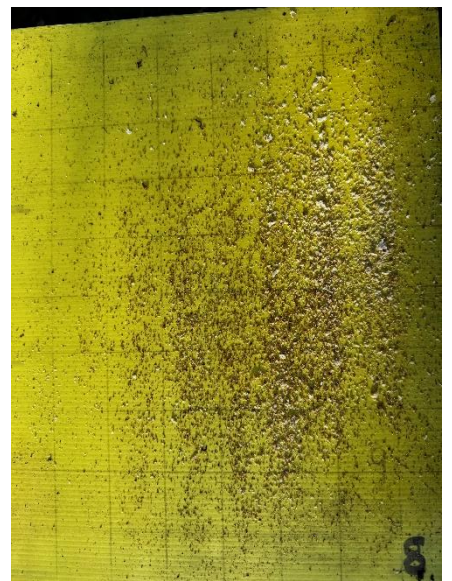
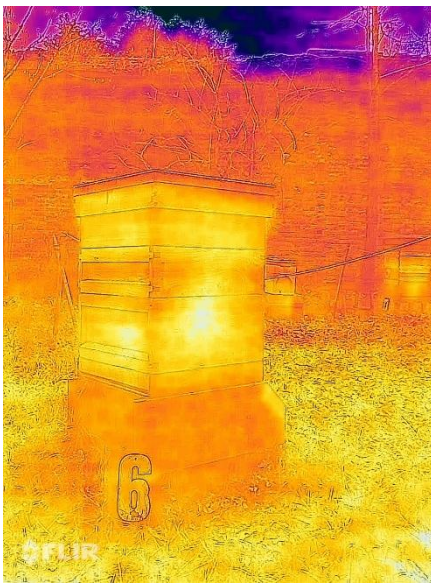
NEWS FROM THE APIARY – Carl Slade



Over recent weeks, Melvyn and several members have been carefully monitoring the colonies in the apiary while taking great care not to disturb the bees. Observations have been carried out by examining the bottom boards and by using infra-red cameras to gain insight into colony activity and behaviour.

We're pleased to report that all appears very encouraging at this stage, with indications that we may only lost one colony over the winter. We will continue to monitor progress closely, but the signs so far are extremely positive.

Two hives below, 6 & 8, as examples





SEASONAL BEEKEEPING TIPS – Melvyn Essen



February in the Apiary:

The first spring flowers will soon be bursting into life — a welcome sight for both beekeepers and bees alike. On mild, sunny days, crocuses and snowdrops provide a vital early source of pollen. Seeing pollen being carried into the hive is always an encouraging sign, as it usually indicates that the queen has begun laying.

Pollen is an essential component of brood food, and it is unlikely that much will remain in the brood nest from last autumn. The ageing winter bees rely on their internal fat reserves, along with freshly gathered pollen, to produce the rich brood food needed to nourish the developing larvae during this critical early stage of the season.

Prepare equipment

The new beekeeping season is fast approaching, so now is an ideal time to start preparing your equipment. Many of us are guilty of putting kit away at the end of the season without cleaning it or carrying out minor repairs, so make the most of this relatively quiet month and get your scraper and blowtorch out.

Wooden supers, brood boxes, floors, crown boards and roofs can all be sterilised with a blowtorch. The aim is simply to pass the flame over the woodwork until it is lightly singed — you are not trying to set it alight (!). This method is highly effective at destroying potential pathogens such as nosema and will also deal with wax moth larvae hiding in corners and joints. Stainless steel queen excluders can also be cleaned with a blowtorch. However, do not use a blowtorch on zinc slotted or plastic excluders, as these are likely to warp.

Polystyrene hives should be cleaned by first gently scraping away any propolis and wax, then scrubbing with a strong solution of washing soda. If you wish to sterilise them, you will need a plastic container large enough to fully submerge the hive parts. Fill it with a strong bleach solution and immerse the components for at least 20 minutes. They will need to be weighted down, as they will float.

A little effort now will pay dividends when the season gets properly underway.

Set some new goals – Proactive Swarm Management

Taking the time to plan some goals for the forthcoming season is a very worthwhile exercise at this time of year. Consider what you would like to achieve and prepare accordingly, so that you can be proactive rather than simply reacting to events as they unfold.

This is particularly relevant when it comes to swarm control. Deciding in advance which method you intend to adopt will make the process far less pressured when colonies begin to build rapidly. You may wish to try pre-emptive swarm control by making splits, which can be an effective way to manage strong colonies and reduce the risk of losing half your bees to a swarm.

However, it is important to think through the implications. Making splits can quickly increase your colony numbers — potentially doubling them. Do you have sufficient time, equipment and apiary space to manage additional colonies properly? A little forward planning now can make the season smoother and far more rewarding.

Rear your own queens

Queen rearing can be a very rewarding process and need not be as complicated as it is sometimes made out to be. A little research and forward planning will give you a method to try with confidence.

Don't be discouraged if it isn't entirely successful the first time. Like many aspects of beekeeping, it often comes down to experience and refinement of technique. With practice, you will quickly gain the confidence to adjust and improve your approach.

I will be demonstrating this again at the Training Apiary this season, so do come along and see the process in action. It's always far easier to understand when you can observe it firsthand and ask questions as you go.

Building skills, one step at a time

Overall, my advice would be not to make your list of goals too long. Choose one or two areas to focus on at a time and give yourself the space to develop them properly. Over time, these incremental improvements will build your confidence and skill, helping you to become a more capable and thoughtful beekeeper.

Step by step, those small advances will add up, making this rewarding hobby even more enjoyable.



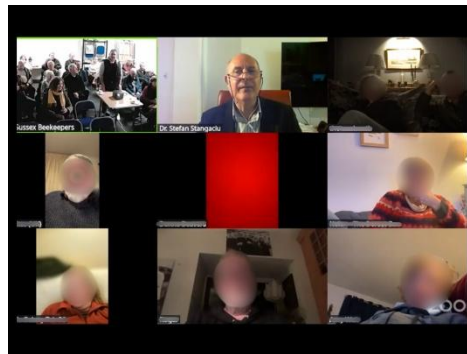
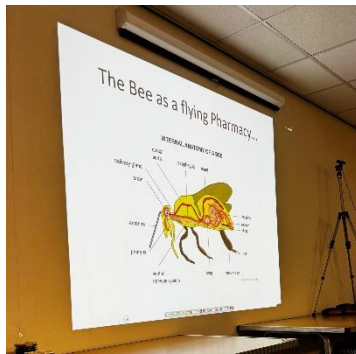


Winter Meeting Reviews – Yolanda Noye



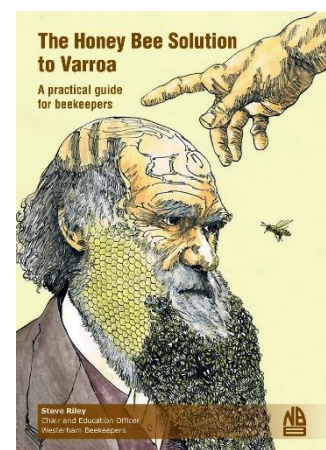
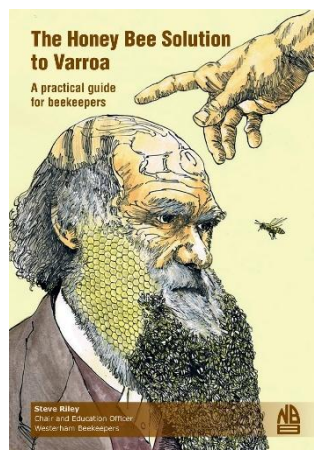
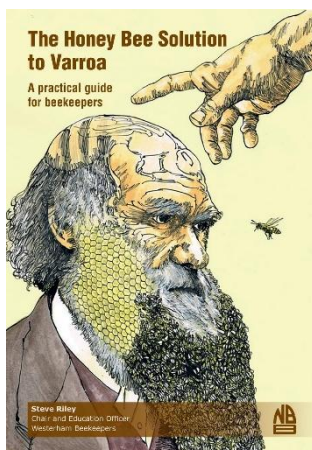
On 6 January we were honoured to be joined by **Dr Stefan Stangaciu**, President of the Romanian Apitherapy Society. Dr Stangaciu is a medical doctor specialising in preventative medicine and natural therapies, with a particular focus on bee products, and is an active promoter of apitherapy worldwide. Dr Stefan delivered an informative presentation on “The Bee as a Flying Pharmacy” which included exploring the composition of bee bread and the air within the hives and, discussing their potential uses. A first for CSBKA, we had our largest ever attendance which included a “global audience” as Dr Stefan shared the meeting across his social media platforms including Facebook and Zoom.

Whilst apitherapy is not explicitly banned in the UK, it is not medically regulated and is generally regarded as an alternative or complementary practice. As an association, we recognise that many of our members have an interest in apitherapy and other alternative approaches. For this reason, CSBKA is willing to facilitate neutral discussions on the subject. However, it should be clearly noted that such discussions are provided for informational purposes only. CSBKA makes no claims regarding the effectiveness of apitherapy or related treatments. If you would like to take part in a separate discussion outside of Association meetings to explore apitherapy in more detail, please contact Carl.



On 5th February, we were delighted to welcome **Steve Riley** back for another fascinating evening on The Honey Bee Solution to Varroa. We’re especially fortunate that Steve is also actively involved with our very own CSBKA "Let's Not Treat" group.

During the evening Steve shared how the mindset and benefits of not treating your bees are constantly evolving. Practices he recommended just a year or so ago are now being re-evaluated as research and observation reveal more about how bees naturally manage Varroa. His insights highlighted how understanding the bees’ hygienic habits can guide us towards more effective, sustainable approaches. It was an inspiring session, showing that working with our bees, rather than against them, continues to offer new discoveries and exciting possibilities. If you would like to join the “Let’s not Treat” group with a primary focus on monitoring hygienic behaviour within your hives, please contact Melvyn.



I hope those of you who attended our recent Winter Meetings found them enjoyable and engaging. Your committee works hard to create a varied programme, and we'd love your feedback as we plan the 2026 Winter Programme.

Which meetings did you enjoy most, are there speakers you'd like to hear again, and what topics interest you for the future?

Your input will help us shape a programme that continues to inform and inspire.

Please take a few minutes to click on the link below and complete the survey – thank you.

[CSBKA - 2025/26 Winter Meeting Feedback Form](#)



King Charles: Helping Criminals 'feel' again



Credit: Tara Cobham, Wed 4 February 2026, The Independent/Yahoo News



King Charles has inspired a bee-keeping project in prison that is teaching criminals about relationships and the importance of living in “harmony” within a community. The King’s new documentary about environmentalism, **Finding Harmony: A King’s Vision**, follows the monarch as he reflects on the importance of harmony between humanity, nature and the environment. The 77-year-old said he “*wasn’t going to be diverted*” from his environmental campaigning, despite the criticism he has faced over the decades, which he said had led to his activism being derided as “*completely bonkers*”.

The 90-minute Prime Video film focuses on Charles’ harmony theory, which encourages audiences to see ourselves as part of nature rather than apart from nature. The project, which began decades ago at the monarch’s private country residence, Highgrove House, in Gloucestershire, in the early 1980s, has now spread as far as HMP Bristol, where prisoners run a bee-keeping academy.

Muhammed Foulds, head of chaplaincy at the Category B high-security prison, explains to viewers: “*we are seeing these individuals coming here because society’s broken, the family’s broken, so of course you’re going to get broken individuals. All these bees work in harmony, hence the harmony project here.*” He adds: “*99.99 per cent of prisoners are here because they have no understanding of a relationship – husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, family breakdown. The natural world is going to teach them about relationships, how to think as an ecosystem.*”

The audience see prisoners in protective bee suits, tending to their hives, which have produced honey. Inmate Andrew says: “*when you see them all working as one, it is quite a fascinating thing. I feel quite relaxed, even though they could attack you. They just go along with their daily thing.*” Mr Foulds adds: “*the whole life of a hive is a system, is a city within a city. And they make that connection – you’re not just an individual, but you live within a community. Then we make that link with wider society, and we keep emphasising the umbrella of every step is harmony.*”

The documentary, made in collaboration with the monarch’s charity, The King’s Foundation, for Amazon MGM Studios, became the first film to premiere in a royal residence when a cast of stars joined the King for a screening at Windsor Castle. Actors including Benedict Cumberbatch, Sir Kenneth Branagh, Dame Judi Dench and Stanley Tucci were among the guests, alongside musicians Sir Rod Stewart and Jools Holland, plus Oscar-winner Kate Winslet, who narrates the

documentary. The film, the King's first documentary with a streaming platform, describes how Charles, as Prince of Wales, emerged as a key figure on the environment, making regular keynote speeches. In new footage, he says: *"I just felt this was the approach that I was going to stick to – a course I set, and I wasn't going to be diverted from."*

This commitment to the cause came despite *"cries from some that he should take a back seat"*, Winslet says. Archive footage shows Charles describing how he talks to plants, which Winslet describes as having *"haunted him ever since"*.

Reflecting on previous depictions and perceptions of him, the King says: *"all these things were considered completely bonkers to say the least."* But now, the King's warnings about the planet are accepted facts among the mainstream.

When asked if he is concerned about the state of the world, Charles replies: *"of course – that has been my main motivation for a long time, and you can see what's happened. The principles underlying what I call I harmony, I think we need to follow if we're to ensure that this poor old planet can support so many."*

After an academic comment that the world is not on the "trajectory" needed to limit the worst effects of climate change, Charles issues a call to action. He exclaims: *"it's rapidly going backwards, I've said that for the last 40 years, but anyway, there we are ... I can only do what I can do, which is not very much – anyway. People don't seem to understand it's not just climate that's the problem, it's also biodiversity loss, so we're actually destroying our means of survival, all the time. To put that back together again is possible, but we should have been doing it long ago. We've got to do it as fast as we can now."*

The King ends his documentary with an expression of hope that *"by the time I shuffle off this mortal coil, there might be more awareness of the need to bring things back together again"*.

Finding Harmony: A King's Vision is released on Friday on Prime Video in more than 240 countries and territories worldwide.

Watch the Episode here:

[Finding Harmony - A King's Vision](#)



EVENTS



Upcoming Events!

Below are some dates for your diary.

This list will be updated monthly, so be sure to check back for updates and latest details.

February

21st Beekeeping Show 2026 at the Telford International Centre, TF3 4JH

28th West Sussex BKA Annual Convention (9am – 4pm @ Lodge Hill Centre, Pulborough)

March

12th **CSBKA** AGM, Social and Prize Giving (7:30pm Millenium Hall, Roffey, RH12 4DT)

28th **CSBKA** 2026 Beekeeping Course for Beginners (Day 1) (10am – 3pm MacNaughton Hall, Pease Pottage, RH11 9AH)

April

11th **CSBKA** 2026 Beekeeping Course for Beginners (Day 2) (10am – 3pm MacNaughton Hall, Pease Pottage, RH11 9AH)

17th – 19th BBKA Spring Convention at the Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

25th WSBKA 50th Annual Bee Market & Auction/CSBKA Cake Stall

May

20th World Bee Day

October

22nd – 24th National Honey Show at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey



NOTICES



CSBKA – AGM/Social and Prize Giving

Last year our AGM and Social Evening was very well attended. We filled two key vacant Committee positions and welcomed two additional members to the committee, who although they do not hold specific roles, their input and support has been an asset to the team throughout the year.

Following the AGM, we held a relaxed award ceremony to celebrate the achievements of our Class of 2024. This year the ceremony will be to celebrate the achievement of the **Class of 2025** so if you were a Beginner last year, please make a concerted effort to attend as there is a well-deserved surprise in store for you!

As the social evening continued, our very own appointed Honey Connoisseur and Sommelier, Andy Campbell, took on the sweet task of judging the entries for our honey competition. Honey entries were anonymously labelled for a blind tasting, ensuring a fair and impartial assessment! Andy evaluated each honey's taste, aroma, and texture with expertise - and wasn't swayed by a rogue jar of decanted 75p supermarket "honey" slipped in for fun! Will it make a return this year you will have to wait and see Andy!



Despite the challenge, there was one standout entry. The winner of the first-ever CSBKA Golden Hive Award, and recipient of the Best Honey 2024 title (along with a roll of stickers to proudly label their jars) was

our President

Melvyn Essen



The challenge this year is to try and knock Melvyn off his pedestal – don't forget to bring an unlabelled sample of your honey and enter the challenge for the Best Honey of 2025!

Good luck!

CENTRAL SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No: 1051548

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Central Sussex Beekeepers Association will be held on Thursday 12th March 2026 at 7.30pm at Roffey Millennium Hall, Crawley Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4DT

All Members are invited to attend the AGM.

At the AGM, you, as a member who is entitled to vote at the AGM, will be asked to consider and vote on the following resolutions below. Please note that Resolutions 9 & 10 on the Agenda shall be proposed as ordinary resolutions

Nominations are invited and welcomed for any of the officer positions listed to undertake Committee duties and to act on behalf of Central Sussex Beekeepers Association:-

Re-Election of Officers

The following persons will be re-elected as officers and continue to stand for the said positions unless further nominations are received.

1. President - Melvyn Essen
2. Chairperson - Simon Randall
3. Hon. Treasurer - Robert Williams
4. Hon. Secretary - Fiona Canty & Elaine Allen
5. Membership Secretary - Pip Edgcombe
6. Apiary Coordinator - Carl Slade
7. Buzz Editor - Yolanda Noye
8. Website Coordinator - Simon Randall
9. Show/Events Coordinator - Pip Edgcombe
10. Marketing & Fundraising Coordinators - Matt & Glynis Arbuthnot
11. Volunteer Auditor - Brian Lambert
12. Schools Liaison Officer - *Vacancy*
13. Committee Members - Viv Sallows & Annette O'Connell

AGM Agenda

- 1 Welcome and opening remarks from Melvyn Essen as President
- 2 Apologies for absence.
- 3 Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes.
- 5 Chairman and Trustees Report.
- 6 Treasurers Report
- 7 Apiary Report
- 8 Show Report
- 9 Election of Chairman and Committee
- 10 Close of Meeting

Dated: 13th February 2026

By order of the President

Central Sussex Beekeepers Association



NOTICES



WSBKA Annual Bee Market & Auction – 25th April 2026

Advance Warning: CALL FOR HELP!



Bake for the CSBKA Cake Stall at the WSBKA Annual Bee Market & Auction – 25th April 2026!

We need your help to stock our legendary Cake Stall with delicious homemade treats. Sweet or savoury, all contributions are welcome!

Homemade Bakes: Please provide a full list of ingredients (including any decorations) to help customers with dietary requirements.

If you can contribute, please let Yolanda know as soon as possible:

☎ 07775 841535

✉ buzz@centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

If you're unable to attend on the day, Yolanda is happy to receive your baked goods at her home in Horsham (RH12 4AP) on **Friday, 25th April** to ensure they reach the stall safely.

