

Chair and President's AGM 2026 report

Many thanks to you all for attending our annual AGM. As we come to the end of our terms as President and Chair, it is our pleasure to recap on the year we have had.

Our apiaries at Shugborough and Hilton Green had a successful year bringing the majority of colonies through the winter, averaging 30 active colonies in the season. Each apiary offered a Beginner Beekeeping Course and provided an environment, with the support of experienced beekeepers that provides learning opportunities for new and progressing beekeepers. Special thanks are given to Alan Greenman for mentoring six new members following their Beginners Course and the team at Hilton who encouraged BBC participants to take a hive through into the new season.

New Beekeepers purchased seven nuclei of honeybees, created and supplied by Shugborough generating an income of £1,225.00 and the team at Hilton continued to collect factory-waste discarded sugar for distribution to members for bee food which raised over £700 during the year.

We extracted two honey crops in June and August, yielding approximately 675 lbs. This was the best yield for several years. The extracting and jarring were carried out by Matthew Ingram at Holt Hall Apiary and we will continue with this approach, led by the honey coordinator in 2026.

In July, NBU Bee Disease Inspectors visited the Shugborough apiary and inspected all colonies. Apart from a minor recommendation regarding cleaning smokers, we received a clean bill of bee health.

We remain vigilant regarding the threat of the Asian Hornet and continue to raise awareness with nests been found as far north as Cheshire and North Yorkshire.

We want to say a special thank you to Alan and Chris Brewin for overseeing the Shugborough apiary.

Education is central to our charitable object "to promote and further the craft of beekeeping". Saturday morning at the apiaries is the prime learning opportunity where new and experienced beekeepers share knowledge as together, they manage the colonies at both sites.

Our newsletters and regular e-bulletins provide factual information and signpost members to websites and courses offered by others. During the season, our BeeChat programme covers a wide range of topical issues, giving many people both the opportunity to share their learning and to ask questions.

Using the programme run by the BBKA, members are supported to further their own education studying for practical and written examinations, with teaching provided for Honey Bee Health and Basic Assessment.

In 2025 we held Beginner Beekeeping Courses at Shugborough and Hilton Green apiaries with a total of 24 attendees completing the six sessions. Many thanks to Trevor Smith, Tony Ward and Alison Stead and a team of practical beekeepers.

The Experience Day was held at Shugborough and was attended by 21 members of the public, including one enthusiastic 7yr-old, with five practical beekeepers. The programme was adjusted to cope with the excessive heat.

6 members studied with Jan Horstink to pass their Basic Assessment and 4 members studied with Dayna White to pass their Honey Bee Health.

This year we signed up to a BBKA scheme providing resources for school visits. We are grateful to Gemma for delivering most of this work. She visited 11 schools, introducing beekeeping to 1,130 children.

At the County Show we sold honey and a range of products made by the craft group. The observation hive always draws the public to the stall and we were able to share information about the Yellow Legged Hornet and education opportunities offered by the Association.

We held our annual BBQ at Shugborough with Karle and a number of other members coordinated the BBQ and providing some much-appreciated pulled pork, sides, cakes and desserts.

In September and December, we joined the National Trust, welcoming the public to try and buy our honey, raise the profile of beekeeping and the Yellow Legged Hornet, and promote our Beginner Beekeeping Course and Honey Bee Experience for 2026.

Our annual honey show was at the Northfield Centre in October. Although well publicised and a well-attended Bee chat, the entries submitted were low and we will be asking members for their opinion on how we go forward with future honey shows.

Our apiaries, education programme, committee, quartermaster, Newsletter and events, in fact everything we provide as an association happens due to the support of volunteers and we send a massive thank you to all members who support with setting up stalls, making things to sell, provide refreshments and talk about bees and beekeeping to support and share our love of bees.

Paul/Wendy and I would like to say a particular thank you to the members of the committee, who have worked so hard over the last three years. It has been a great three years and we wish you all great success in the future.