

# **CONFERENCE NOTES**

Friday 14th to Saturday 15th February 2025 CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim BT41 4PS

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# **Local Queens are Best:**

**How to Simply Rear Your Own** 

by Bruce Henderson Smith

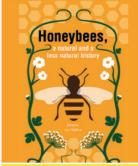
"A rewarding skill, globally relevant, and a most readable how to do it text."

Northern Bee Books, pub. 1st Edition 2023 72 Pages - £12.95

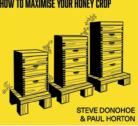
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# Local Queens are Best

How to simply rear your own





Bruce Henderson Smith

# JOHN HILL UBKA President

This year's conference theme 'Reading our Bees – the Next Chapter' reminds us of the constant challenge to all beekeepers: understanding what our bees are doing and anticipating their future intentions. But as the well-worn beekeeping mantra goes – 'the bees don't read the books!'

For 2025 we have deviated from our recent practice of bringing our keynote speakers from the United States to draw on the rich vein of talent and experience closer to home. The conference brings together researchers and expert beekeepers from across Europe, providing us with new insights into understanding our bees and how we can work with them to achieve better outcomes.

As always, the conference comprises a glorious mix of state-of-the-art lectures on the science of beekeeping, practical bee management techniques and expert workshops. Our aim is to give you the ability to chart your own conference journey, choosing at each stage between excellent speakers and well-regarded practical workshops to construct your personal conference programme.

Reflecting the title of the conference, Professor Lars Chittka, well known for his book 'The Mind of a Bee,' will be one of our keynote speakers. Lars has carried out extensive work on the behaviour, cognition and ecology of bumblebees and honeybees, and made fundamental contributions to the understanding of the drives and motivation behind bee behaviour.

Once again, we will be running targeted workshops for new and recent beekeepers, a group essential to the future of beekeeping. Our other workshops offer very practical sessions on the arts and crafts long associated with beekeeping, from candle making and mead brewing, skep making and encaustic art.

Our microscopy workshop is a must for those wanting to know about the anatomy of our bees. Places are limited so best to book when purchasing your conference pack.

The pressures on our bees from disease and the very real threat of the Asian Hornets and other predators arriving on the island of Ireland are becoming ever more acute. An important task for the UBKA in the coming year is to engage with Government direct regarding these threats and working in partnership with statutory bodies to address them.

Whilst the lectures and workshops are the main draw, do make time for the informal aspects of the conference, whether at the conference dinner, coffee breaks or Trade Show to speak to fellow beekeepers. It is often during informal networking and exchanges that the real value of the conference emerges.

Enjoy the conference!

**UBKA President** 

#### PROFESSOR LARS CHITTKA

Lars Chittka is the well known author of 'The Mind of a Bee'. He is Professor of Sensory and Behavioural Ecology at Queen Mary College of the University of London and founder of the Research Centre for Psychology at Queen Mary's.

Lars is known for his work on the evolution of sensory systems and cognition using insect-flower interactions as a model system. He has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of animal cognition and its impact on evolutionary fitness by studying bumblebees and honeybees.



In The Mind of the Bee, Lars draws from decades of research,

including his own pioneering work, to argue that bees have remarkable cognitive abilities. He shows that they are profoundly smart, have distinct personalities, can recognize flowers and human faces, exhibit basic emotions, count, use simple tools, solve problems, and learn by observing others. They may even possess consciousness.

He illustrates how bee brains are unparalleled in the animal kingdom in terms of how much sophisticated material is packed into their tiny nervous systems. Lars also examines the psychological differences between bees and the ethical dilemmas that arise in conservation and laboratory settings because bees might feel and think.

#### **DAN BASTERFIELD**

Dan grew up with beekeeping around him, earning pocket money by clipping and marking queens. After 15 years working in large companies he returned to the family beekeeping business in Devon in 2005, and with his father expanded the business and built a brand new Honey Farm as the centre of their honey production, queen raising, and teaching activities.

Dan holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB), is a BBKA Master Beekeeper, and an examiner for the BBKA and NDB examinations. He is a regular lecturer around the UK on practical beekeeping topics.



Dan wrote some of the BBKA's Course in a Case training courses, and contributed to the BBKA's Liquid Gold and Swarming videos. He co-authored the BBKA's Healthy Hive Guide book, and has just published Using Apideas, an extensive and lavishly-illustrated guide to running these mini mating nucs.

Dan is a member of Devon BKA, and a founder member of the Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG). Since 1979 he has been an examiner for BBKA Basic, General & Advanced Husbandry, and for the National Diploma in Beekeeping. He is Chairman of the BBKA Examination Board, a BBKA Trustee, an NDB Board member, and Trustee and Chairman of the International Bee Research Association.

#### COLM O'NEILL

Colm has been a beekeeper for over 50 years and a member of North Kildare Bee Keepers Association for almost as long.

As the NKBKA's education officer, his aim is to pass on the knowledge he has gained over the years to new and existing beekeepers alike.

Colm has also been closely involved in The Native Irish Honey Bee Society, which focuses exclusively on promoting the native Irish honey bee, Apis Mellifera Mellifera. NIHBS's aims are to increase awareness of and appreciation for the native black honeybee, to discourage the buying and importation of non-native honeybees.



#### **RUTH WILSON**

Ruth started as a Farmland Pollinator Officer in 2021 to assist in the implementation of the farmland actions of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Ruth grew up on a mixed farm in Co. Antrim, which led her to study horticulture, then land and environmental management. She has over 20 years' experience working in local biodiversity planning and nature conservation with local government and non-government conservation organisations.

This All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Farmland Officer position has been funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.





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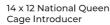
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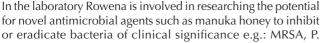




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#### **Dr Rowena Jenkins**

Rowena is currently working at the Swansea University Medical School as a lecturer/researcher. She is involved in providing research led teaching in microbiology and molecular biology on both the undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Outside of the lecture room she also gives talks to other interested groups as part of events like the National Science and Engineering week, as well as presenting her team's latest findings about manuka honey to beekeeping groups across the country.





aeruginosa, and A. baumannii. She has studied the cellular morphology, physiology, biofilm prevention/disruption, adhesion/invasion, virulence expression and proteomic/genetic expression profiles of these organisms in response to varying treatments with honey.

The data generated could give an insight into the mode of action of the novel antimicrobial agents tested and how these treatments could be applied in real world situations.

In parallel to those studies she is exploring the capacity of manuka honey to potentiate antibiotics already in use, especially those which alone, now have reduced efficacy. She is particularly interested in the way this work could be implicated in the progression of infection and have translational potential.

When Rowena's not in the laboratory or lecture theatre she can usually be found out and about on a horse in the Black Mountains or at the local rugby club cheering on the team.

#### **Associate Professor Dalial Freitak**

Professor Dalial Freitak, an Estonia born biologist, currently works as an Associate Professor at the Institute of Biology at Karl Franzens University of Graz, Austria.

She has been studying insect immunity for over 15 years and her desire to understand how organisms adapt to stressors has led to a paradigm shifting discovery of the underlying mechanisms behind immune priming in honeybees.

She is currently leading the honeybee pathology lab in at the University and is teaching students about immunology and social insects. Outside of basic research, Dalial is a founding



member and CSO of Dalan Animal Health, Inc. – a company pioneering the development of a first vaccine for honeybees. In her free time she likes to travel, read books and cook.

#### **Richard Noel**

Born In Jersey, Channel Islands Richard moved to Brittany France 20 years ago. Escaping from the "Rat Race" he concentrated his efforts on running a landscaping business. During that time he started keeping bees and 12 years later he now completely depends on his beekeeping to produce Honey from his 200 plus production hives, producing around 120 nucleus colonies annually. He uses the Mini-Plus mating nuc system to raise beautiful queens which he uses in his operation.

Richard says "he got the break of a lifetime": when he spent a week at Mike Palmers operation in Vermont in 2015. "I have to this day, only ever bought 3 colonies!" I make all my bees from my own bees". Sustainability is key!



Richard is keen to help others and share his beekeeping skills. He also loves raising queens. His YouTube channel is full of good basic tips on a wide range of beekeeping topics. "I relish the chance to help others, I feel I can give something back. Practical help is what most beekeepers really need! Bridging the communication gap will fix many of the beekeeping issues that we face.

#### **Professor Robert Paxton**

A graduate of Sussex University, where he undertook a PhD on sex ratios in solitary wasps, Robert postdoc-ed at Cardiff University, researching bees and pollination. He then moved Uppsala University (Sweden) to gain skills in population genetics and subsequently to the University of Tübingen (Germany) where he researched the genetics of social evolution in bees.

In Queen's University Belfast, in 2003, he expanded his research to encompass pollination by bees and conservation genetics.

Robert moved back to Germany in 2010, to take up a chair in zoology in the University of Halle, where he re-established his group working on bee biology, including their parasites.



© Michael Deutsch

Robert's main research areas are: social evolution, host-parasite relations, pollination and conservation genetics. Bees remain at the core of his studies, with a recent focus on viruses, particularly deformed wing virus, and their control. His group currently comprise 2 postdocs, 12 PhDs and a number of master and bachelor project students.

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# **UBKA CONFERENCE 2025**

# **LECTURES**

FRIDAY 14TH FEBRUARY		
13.30	Reception	Registration and Trade Show open
14.30	Main Hall	Richard Noel - Caging Queens for superior brood breaks
16.45	Main Hall	Opening Ceremony
17.00	Main Hall	Professor Lars Chitka - Mind of a Bee
18.00	Comfort Break	
18.05	Main Hall	Ruth Wilson - Pollinator Friendly Farming
19.00	Main Canteen - Conference Supper and Entertainment (booking essential)	

SATURI	SATURDAY 15TH FEBRUARY		
09.30	Main Hall	Robert Paxton - Honeybee Viruses	
09.30	Lecture Theatre	Rowena Jenkins - Therapeutic Use of Honey	
10.20	Tea/Coffee Break		
10.50	Main Hall	Dan Basterfield - Swarming	
10.50	Lecture Theatre	Dalial Freitak - Honeybee Vaccination	
11.40	Break		
12.10	Main Hall	Richard Noel - Dealing with Asian Hornets	
12.10	Lecture Theatre	Colm O'Neill - Use of Nucs	
13.00	Lunch (booking essential)		
14.30	Main Hall	Dalial Freitak - Competition with Native Pollinators	
14.30	Lecture Theatre	Rob Paxton - Breeding tolerance to Varroa mites	
15.20	Tea/Coffee Break		
16.00	Main Hall	Lars Chittka - Social Insects Ancient Civilisations	
16.00	Lecture Theatre	Dan Basterfield - Apideas	
16.50	Main Hall	Close	

# **WORKSHOPS**

SATURDAY 14TH FEBRUARY	
10.30	Microscopy – book in advance on TicketTailor
10.50	Beekeeping – Starting Off – Jackie Barry/Mark Wallace
10.50	Candle Making for Beginners – Una McNeill
10.50	Skep Making – Louise McLean
10.50	Encaustic Art – Lorraine Priestley
10.50	Mead Making – Trevor Dawson

14.30	Microscopy – book in advance on TicketTailor
14.30	Beekeeping – Starting Off – Jackie Barry/Mark Wallace
14.30	Candle Making for Beginners – Una McNeill
14.30	Skep Making – Louise McLean
14.30	Encaustic Art – Lorraine Priestley
14.30	Mead Making – Trevor Dawson

Please note that Conference admission is free to young beekeepers under 18 years of age. Contact the Conference Organiser at bgrzymek@icloud.com to arrange for tickets or go to Conference Reception on the day.

# TRADERS AND SUPPLIERS

An extensive Traders and Suppliers Show will be held on Friday and Saturday in the main sports hall of the College.

Entrance is included in Conference Tickets but can be bought separately for those who wish to attend the trade show but not the conference.

#### **2025 WORKSHOPS**

# **Introducing modern beekeeping**

This workshop is focused on helping beginners and recent entrants to beekeeping to gain a fuller appreciation of the joys and challenges of keeping bee. It offers participants practical advice, tips and insights into the world of bees and how to become a successful beekeeper.

Jackie Barry and Mark Wallace, both experienced beekeepers, will be providing a stimulating and practical workshop for beekeepers new to the game or those who would benefit from a back-to-basics refresher.

# **Skep-Making**

This ancient craft is a great favourite at UBKA Conferences. Louise McLean returns once again to weave her magic in creating beautiful skeps out of straw and rushes. Skep Making is a tradition linking back to the earliest days of beekeeping in the UK and Ireland.

# **Mead Making**

Mead is an alcoholic beverage considered to be the oldest on this planet, with an archaeological dig in China unearthing fragments of pottery that had traces of honey, rice and organic compounds, dating from 6000 BC. This workshop takes the mystery out of mead-making, introducing participants to the practicalities of the craft.

Award winning mead-maker, Trevor Dawson, will take participants through the process of producing mead and signposts some of the pitfalls along the way. An extremely popular session which may involve sampling some of Trevor's classic meads!

# **Microscopy**

AFBI will once again be providing two sessions on microscopy techniques for beginners and experienced beekeepers. They will include practical demonstrations of the procedures to investigate disease diagnosis in bees. The sessions will be of particular interest to those planning to sit microscopy exams. Booking is essential but can be done (free) when completing your on-line conference booking using our Tickettailor link. A fascinating up-close glimpse into the anatomical world of our bees.

#### **Encaustic Art**

The encaustic art, or wax painting, workshop is an ever-popular introduction to this spectacular art form. Encaustic art has been around for over two and a half thousand years, dating back to Greco-Roman antiquity. The workshop will provide participants with an introduction to encaustic art, with a detailed step-by-step guide to producing your own wax masterpiece. As always, it will be guided by the expert hands of artist, Lorraine Priestly.

# **Candle Making**

This session sheds fresh light on the ancient craft of candle making. Una McNeill is a very experienced candle maker who, with her husband Jimmy, will demonstrate a range of candlemaking techniques. Participants will be instructed on the basic do's and don'ts of candle making and be given practical advice on getting started.



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#### **WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATORS**

# **Trevor Dawson - Mead making**

A well known and award-winning mead maker, Trevor has been keeping honeybees for eight years and is currently managing more than 15 colonies. He was awarded his Preliminary Beekeeping Certificate in 2017 and his Intermediate Course Certificate in 2021.

Trevor is current Secretary of Randalstown and District Beekeepers' Association (RanDBKA) and edits the UBKA Newsletter. He was awarded UBKA 'Beekeeper of the Year' in 2021/2022.



#### **Lorraine Priestley – Encaustic Art**

Lorraine Priestley lives in the South of Scotland where she works as an Occupational Therapist. An enthusiastic beekeeper, she is keen to use beeswax creatively. Her very popular workshop introduces participants to techniques in painting with beeswax using a travel iron and other heated tools.

The workshop will give you the opportunity to produce at least one encaustic art picture, using the techniques demonstrated by Lorraine.



# **Jackie Barry – Beekeeping – Starting Off**

Jackie has been keeping bees for more than 15 years, starting off by helping in her father's apiary after her retirement.

She thoroughly enjoys beekeeping and, as a chemistry graduate who worked in the pharmaceutical industry, is particularly interested in its scientific aspects. She is a tutor with the Fermanagh beekeepers and enjoys encouraging new beekeepers to develop their knowledge and skills.



#### **WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATORS**

# Mark Wallace -**Beekeeping – Starting Off**

Mark, a County Tyrone Beekeeper, began beekeeping as a teenager and has been making his own equipment since the age of 16. A member of the Three Rivers Beekeepers' Association he describes his role as a 'bee problem fixer'.

Mark has been heavily involved in teaching the art of beekeeping at both Preliminary and intermediate levels. He brings a wealth of practical experience to this workshop.



# **Louise McLean – Skep Making**

Louise McLean is a 3D willow artist/designer of bespoke and traditional baskets with a workshop and studio on the outskirts of Portrush.

Each hand-crafted piece of her work is inspired by the rugged landscape and coastlines of Ireland. Louise integrates a wide variety of natural materials into her art.

Louise teaches basketry and skep-making courses provincewide, has exhibited and sold works internationally, and appeared on national television.



# Una McNeill -**Candle Making for Beginners**

Una lives in the Stormont area of Belfast where, with her intrepid husband Jimmy, she has been keen to innovate and promote the art of candle-making.

Una's skill in candle making is well regarded and her demonstrations of the art have been a welcome feature at the Belfast and District BKA's Summer Programme. In the workshop, Una and Jimmy will introduce the basics of candle making with helpful tips on how to get started and produce a range of beautiful beeswax candles using different techniques.





We look forward to seeing you all at the UBKA CONFERENCE 2025 ON FRIDAY 14TH & SATURDAY 15TH FEBRUARY

We will have a full range of equipment for you to browse. You can order for collection from the show, online and over the phone.

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# **CONFERENCE BOOKING**

To book a place, accommodation, food etc. go to TicketTailor online at:

#### https://buytickets.at/ulsterbeekeepersassociation

If you are having problems booking on-line, ask your Association to help or contact bgrzymek@icloud.com

#### Please note the following:

- Friday bookings include one free cup of tea or coffee plus a biscuit
- Saturday bookings include one free cup of tea or coffee morning and afternoon plus a scone
- Beekeepers under 18 years of age are admitted free
- Introduction to be keeping students are entitled to an additional discount (as set out below) but must be registered at CAFRE and UBKA
- Early Bird prices are available on all bookings up until midnight on 31 January
- Prices are in pounds Sterling. If using Euros, the exchange rate at the time of booking will apply

CONFERENCE PRICES FOR 2024				
Event	Full Cost (£)	Early Bird Discount (£) (Up to 31 January inclusive)	Introductory Beekeeping Student Rate (£)	
FRIDAY Includes Conference and Trade Show	£30	£25	£17	
SATURDAY Includes Conference and Trade Show	£48	£38	£28	
FRIDAY & SATURDAY Includes Conference and Trade Show	£68	£54	£40	
TRADE SHOW FRIDAY Excludes Conference attendance	£9	£9	£9	
Trade Show Saturday Excludes Conference attendanc	£10	£9	£9	

Greenmount B&B with ensuite accommodation:

Friday night: £45 Saturday night: £50

**Saturday Lunch** (includes tea/coffee)

£22

**Conference Supper & Social Evening** 

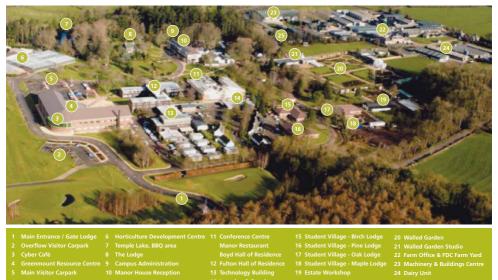
> 19.15 – late £30

CONFERENCE NOTES
USEFUL CONTACTS

# **Greenmount** Campus

#### Getting around





- 11 Conference Centre
   15 Student Village Birch Lodge
   20 Walled Garden

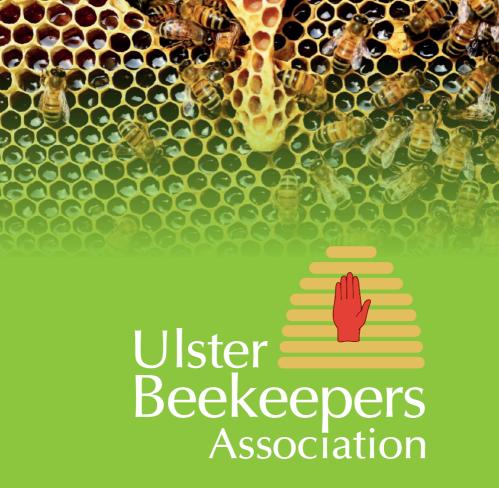
   Manor Restaurant
   16 Student Village Dire Lodge
   21 Walled Garden Studio

   Boyd Hall of Residence
   17 Student Village Oak Lodge
   22 Farm Office & FDC Farm Vard

   12 Fulton Hall of Residence
   18 Student Village Maple Lodge
   23 Machinery & Buildings Centre

# WHERE THE CONFERENCE ACTION IS

THE MAIN CONFERENCE LOCATIONS ARE:		
1	Entrance	
5	Main car park	
4	Main reception with Trade Hall to the right and workshop rooms and Lecture Theatre to the left	
3	Cyber Café on 1st floor	
11	Main Hall and main dining room (for lunch and Conference Supper)	
12	Conference accommodation	



# UBKA exists to support honey bees & beekeepers by:

- Enabling beekeepers to maintain healthy colonies and to practice beekeeping legally, safely, responsibly and sustainably
- Informing the wider public about the behaviour and benefits of honeybees and encouraging the growth of beekeeping
- Supporting environmental conservation, for the benefit of honeybees and other pollinators