Gloucestershire Beekeepers Association

SPRING LECTURE DAY

Hosted by Stroud Beekeepers Association

Sponsored by Maisemore Apiaries (https://bees-online.co.uk/)

21st February 2026

Stonehouse Court Hotel, Bristol Road, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3RA

10.00 – 10.50 Arrival, Honey Show registrations and refreshments

10.50 – 11.00 Welcome by SBKA chairman and introduction to speakers:

11:00 – 12:00 Eyal Maori – The secret RNA language of the bees

12:00 – 13.00 Lunch break

13.00 - 13.30 GBKA AGM and Honey Show awards

13.30 – 14.30 Joe Ibertson – Treatment Free Beekeeping, Varroa Resistance and Free-Living Colonies

14:30 – 15:00 Tea and coffee

15:00 – 16:00 Richard Rickett – Bees and trees – an ancient partnership

16:00 Event close

Lecture briefs

Eyal Maori – The secret RNA language of the bees

We recently discovered that honeybees do not only share food and duties within the hive; they also share molecular messages called RNA. RNA transmission between honeybees occurs through the ingestion of worker and royal jellies, which are secreted by nurse bees to nourish developing larvae.

Our research has shown that these transmissible RNAs are biologically active and can turn off specific genes in recipient bees.

The discovery of this transmissible RNA pathway has raised many questions about why and how bees exchange RNA messages. Many of the RNAs we have detected originate from infectious agents such as viruses, bacteria and fungi. We hypothesise that bees share these RNAs between individuals and across generations to protect the colony from diseases it has previously encountered. In this way, the RNA communication pathway may serve a role similar to vaccination.

In this seminar, I will discuss how this 'secret language' works and explore how RNA sharing could contribute to colony health and resilience, offering a new perspective on the origins of communication and the remarkable cooperation among honey bees.

Joe Ibertson – Treatment Free Beekeeping, Varroa Resistance and Free-Living Colonies

In this talk Joe consolidates his observations as a treatment free beekeeper and conservationist. Exploring how he has adapted his hives and management to suit his location and the bees, as a platform for 'natural' selection and Varroa resistance.

Richard Ricketts – Bees and trees – an ancient partnership

An ancient and close relationship with trees has greatly influenced the evolution and geographic distribution of honeybees. This talk reveals how trees enabled bees to colonise the British Isles and the ways in which people living here perhaps first interacted with and exploited honeybees, eventually becoming beekeepers. The talk looks at what trees provide for bees including cavities in which to nest and various essential resources, and how the relationship can work both ways. It concludes with a look at some of the most useful UK species of trees for honeybees including those that are worth planting in the garden.