



Celebrating over 95 years of support for beekeeping and
beekeepers in and around the Medway Towns



WHATSTHEBUZZ

March
2021

*Hello to March, to the start of
spring, and to you all!*

And hello also to a new name and design for the
MBKA Newsletter.

After the coldest weather we've experienced for a
while, we're once again able to have a quick check
to see if bees are present, and feed if necessary.
(March is starvation month. Or is it April? Or maybe
June?) We watch the bees to see if pollen is being
gathered and remove winter apparel – mouse-
guards, woodpecker protection etc. We might



*Hazel is a huge
part of the winter
flowering scene.
Here, both male
and female flowers
are open. Photo
Oliver Lintott, bee
farmer.*



*Mimosa (family
Fabaceae –
pea/bean) and
below it Viburnum,
both glorious
winter flowering
plants. Are the
bees interested?
Photo mid-Feb,
A McLellan*

slip in a varroa tray too and see what that tells us
about what's going on with our bees.

Inside the hive the cluster has now broken up, the
queen is laying, and the bees are using up stores.

Outside the hive, (when the weather permits) they
are foraging furiously for nectar and/or pollen on
plants like crocus, willow, pear, and plum.

In this issue

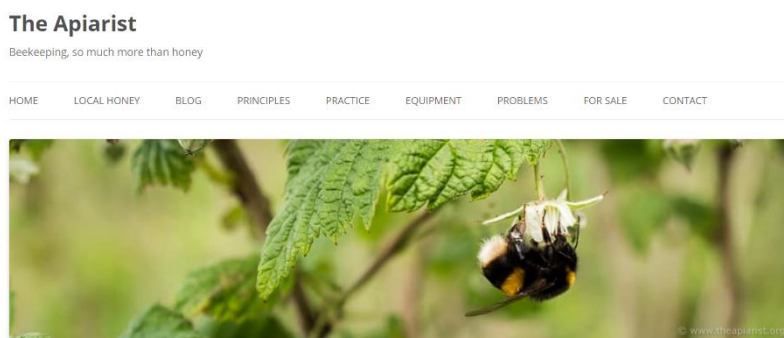
David Evans: a talk on queen raising for small- scale beekeepers.....	2
Queen-rearing – a new group in our association	2
Imports of bees in a time of Brexit.....	3
Getting to know you: this month, Simon Woods	4
The AGM: as it happened.....	5
Being controversial.....	6
The Beekeeper's Checklist: a pot-luck series on almost any beekeeping topic.....	7
WORDS: something to <i>none</i> about	8
Medway BKA YouTube channel	8
Mead: a little help to get you started	9
Who would have thought it?.....	10
The spoken word	11
Talks and courses coming soon	11
Handy Hint.....	12
Keeping up-to-date	12
Blogs and forums.....	13
Quiz	13
Comments	14
Contact details.....	14

David Evans: a talk on queen raising for small-scale beekeepers

David Evans, Professor of Virology at St Andrews University, and writer of [The Apiarist blog](#), gave a presentation on 'A gentle introduction to queen rearing'. Aimed at beekeepers with just a few colonies, David explained that the step from raising queens from colony splits to the active step of grafting selected larvae to produce a few queens need not be daunting. And the most feared step of all, the process of grafting, is relatively straightforward, and not the step most likely to be the cause of failure.

David chose the Ben Harden method as most suitable for beekeepers at this level, and there are several posts on his website covering this topic in his usual comprehensive and lucid style. It requires very little extra equipment, though the usual requirement of all methods of beekeeping for good record-keeping and careful timing must not be stinted.

Though by far the longest talk of our series (at around 85 minutes plus a short break), this talk was compelling and engaging, not least because everything was presented in such a way that we felt this activity was really possible, something we could actually do.



Queen-rearing – a new group in our association

Our association is hoping to form a queen rearing group, starting quite soon! Our two recent talks by Wally Shaw and David Evans have certainly got us off to a good start.

The plan is to have weekly meetings from **Tuesday 6 April, 7.00-8.30pm**, either on Zoom or at the Association apiary on City Way. The point of such get-togethers is to discuss queen rearing, our plans, and experiences, so this will not be a study group or course, but rather a support group for members who have decided to take the plunge – or put a toe in the water!

If I can invoke the spirit of David Evan's talk a couple of weeks ago, beekeepers should raise queens because it is enormously satisfying, not difficult (not even grafting), and sociable – if you are part of a group. And if any of that seems a step too far, our group will also cover the approach of Wally Shaw in his talk. His approach has only one intervention: split a colony so that the queenless part raises a new queen by the emergency method.

Our topics will include basic theory: life cycles, the impulses used in queen rearing, and the all-important timeline. We'll also look at the starting material – the queen you'll raise new queens from and the drones. The spectrum of methods of queen rearing has, at one end, naturally occurring queen cells such as splits and swarm cells, and at the other, larval transfer – grafting as it's usually called. There is a vast range of variations of each of the main methods, but we'll focus on helping individuals decide which method they're going to make their own at this time; there will be time in the months and years ahead to try other options.

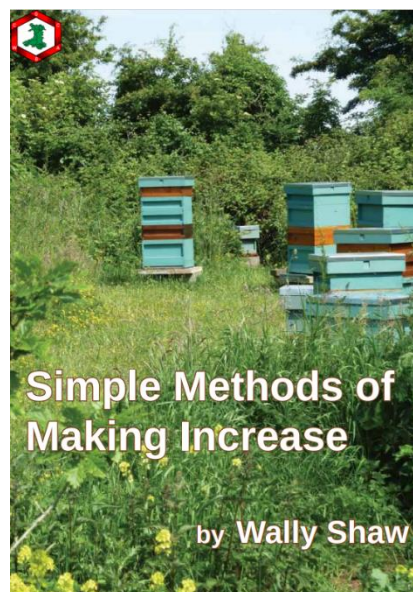
What is perhaps the hardest part, not least because you can't control the weather, is the final stage: the virgin emerges in a mating nuc; you wait for her to mature, go on mating flights, return and start laying. And then you introduce her to the colony where you need her.

You might want to read a little. Talks and lectures leave us with impressions rather than detailed knowledge and most forms of queen rearing require us to be able to retain a grasp on the detail. So here is some reading from our two speakers: [Simple Methods of making increase](#) by Wally Shaw; and David Evans's blog, [The Apiarist](#).

Could you be persuaded to give queen rearing a go? Do please contact me if you would like to join or if you have any questions. Our first meeting is not far away, so let me know soon.

Email: jen.ferry@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Jen Ferry



Imports of bees in a time of Brexit

Early in February, a story broke across the mainstream media. A beekeeping retailer, *Bee Equipment* in Canterbury, recounted how they stood to lose money and have orders for bee packages from Italy destroyed. The headlines were all similar: '[Brexit rules mean 15m baby bees may be seized and burned, says beekeeper](#)'.

The original story contained exaggerated and emotive language. For instance, what are 'baby bees'? And would they really be burned?

It seems that *Bee Equipment*, realising that since 1 Jan 2021 only queens could be imported from the EU, reasoned that it would be legal to import packages (small colonies of bees) through Northern Ireland via the Republic of Ireland.

Some days later, [Defra posted a blog](#) to clarify the situation. It stated:

'Since the end of the Transition Period, it has no longer been possible to import colonies or packages of bees directly into Great Britain from the EU. It's still possible to import queen bees.

'...all goods in free circulation in Northern Ireland qualify for unfettered access, meaning no declarations, ... or customs checks ...for Northern Ireland businesses to place goods on the GB market.

'HMRC have anti-avoidance measures in place to ensure that only genuine trade between NI and GB benefits from unfettered market access.'

The wording of this blog is not as clear as it might have been. Perhaps 'unfettered access' and 'genuine trade' should have been defined in the blog. However, it seems that most UK bee retailers are not planning to sell imported bee packages this year.

Bee Equipment on their website are clear about what they are doing, and are proceeding with orders of bee packages to be imported through Ireland. Their website states: 'There is no legal basis for DEFRA preventing the import of bees from Northern Ireland.'

Time will tell what changes or implementation of the present rules will become the pattern in Brexit Britain.

However, there can be no doubt that there is in the UK a high demand for imported bees, partly because our weather means a late start to the season, and partly because of an expectation of higher quality from professionally bred queens. Attitudes to imported queens among beekeepers in the UK generate strong opinions and are markedly divided.



Getting to know you: this month, Simon Woods

A series in which WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with one of its members about beekeeping and life in general.

WHATS THE BUZZ Hello Simon. When I first met you, you lived in the house beside the Association apiary. Did you know about the apiary when you lived there?

Simon Woods Well, that was probably the reason that I got into the beekeeping. You could say beekeeping found me as much as I found beekeeping. My sister and I bought that house in 2017. Until then, I hadn't been much out of the house or the garden for about three years because of my health. I've had Crohn's disease since I was 14. I don't go on about it. I have good days and bad days all the time but I was having really bad secondary problems with it. And they just weren't going away. So, when my sister's circumstances changed, she moved down from London and we bought that house together.

Now she lives in Gillingham and I'm in Chatham. The good thing is that I've got a great shed (from Passmore's) in her garden as a workshop and for storing bee equipment.

WTB You were on the winter study course last year.

SW I did the beginners' course in 2018. And also, I sneaked onto the Module 3 course. I turned up and I wasn't sent away! I bought three hives from Thornes and all the equipment to go with it. Jen Ferry was going to give me a nuc colony. The one thing I didn't have was a bit of land to put them on. I was all ready to go, but unfortunately, with the pandemic, everything's on hold.

WTB What were your first experiences of bees and beekeepers at the City Way apiary?

SW From my bedroom window, I could see Mark (Ballard) out there during the week and a group of beekeepers every Saturday. I needed a hobby. I needed something to focus my mind on rather than just staying in bed all day and watching all the rubbish on TV. Going to the apiary gave me something not only to look forward to, but actually get to do. And with my health issues, if I was having a problem I could literally just fall back to my house. It was an ideal thing.

I remember one day, Mark wanted me to see a varroa mite. He put a bee on top of the fence, and flicked a varroa mite off the bee. You can look at a picture of a mite but this was the real thing, walking along the top of the fence!

WTB Did you have an interest in bees for a long time?

SW Children say I want to be a train driver, or an astronaut, or whatever, but I actually wanted to be a vet. But I went to work in a bank. It was easy life really. But I was always into science and nature.

WTB It's such a pity that, you know, Jen had all these nukes ready to give out to you and the other super starting last year. And, and for you didn't happen. Did you have a place lined up for your three hives that you've got.

SW I'm still on the lookout. I'll need to find somewhere.

WTB Have you signed up for the revision sessions and are you going to do Module 3 exam this year which had to be cancelled a year ago?

SW Well at the moment I've put my name forward; you've got until 3 April to change your mind. I've been reading stuff, but a lot of it has leaked out!

WTB Do you read a lot of bee books?

SW Yes. I've got lots of starters books. And I got the new BBKA book, *Beehive to Beekeeper*, for my birthday. And Giles Fert's *Rearing Honey Bee Queens*. And a book for making bee hotels.

WTB bee hotels? Are you interested in other bees?

SW Ten years down the line, they might turn around and say what horrible people beekeepers are because of the damage caused by honey bees. And maybe some lesser-known species wiped out. There's a balance to be found because honey bees are a good thing.

WTB Do you think you'll stay with beekeeping?

SW Definitely! I need a hobby. I was a scuba diving instructor and I loved it. Sudan and Egypt were great places. With my illness, I can't do that anymore. So you start out again with something new and work your way up.

All the people doing the study courses, their enthusiasm, their energy, and their positivity makes you want to keep going too. No one treated you less because you're just a beginner. You can join in conversations and feel comfortable.

WTB I think that beekeepers always feel there's so much more to learn.

SW I've spent the last five years in the house. But I need something to do. And while I'm well enough, I'll do it.

When things get back to normal, and I have bees on some land, being responsible for them will move things on to a new level. I can still check things with others. Being at the Association apiary is great, because you see things being done by different people and in different ways.

Being in the Association has opened up a whole new avenue in my life because I've met so many nice people. Everyone's different but we're all there for the same reason: our interest in the bees.



The AGM: as it happened

The AGM in 2020 was the last time our association met in the same physical space. And this 2021 AGM, like every other association event over the past year, took place online.

24 members were present, including Ken and Audrey Beevor, who were warmly welcomed by long-standing members of MBKA. [For newer members who have not met Ken and Audrey: Ken has always been a great supporter of MBKA and Audrey was our Secretary and Show Secretary for many years. They set up and ran a bee farm on land they bought near Stockbury, using the proceeds from the business to build a house and barn. They were always ready to help new beekeepers with advice and equipment. Ken still goes to the Spring Convention and helps as a steward.]

The Chairman's report referred briefly to the work of the different sections of the Association, thanking everyone for their achievement despite the constraints of the past year.

The Treasurer's Report, presented by John Hendrie showed that income and expenditure were both about 25% less than last year because of the reduction in activities, but that the finances were healthy. Because of the increase in BBKA membership subscription, MBKA subscription will be increased by £2 for full members.

Mark Ballard gave the report about the Association apiary which has been maintained throughout the year, though of course, regular association meetings there did not take place. The planned work at the new site for an association apiary did not take place, and it is hoped that this will happen later this year.

The Education report was from Bob Smith. The first casualty of the pandemic was the Module 3 exam scheduled for last March. This is finally going to take place in April, with a new online exam, closely based on the original format. The *Introduction to Beekeeping* course was held online with some practical sessions at the apiary. An introductory course for 2021 beginners is scheduled for the five Tuesdays in March. Bob thanked all of the Education Team for the flexible, can-do attitude that made this course possible.

Paul Lawrence spoke about the website and newsletter, both of which have played important roles in communication with our members and the interested-in-beekeeping public. Sonia Belsey has worked alongside him, and maintained a Facebook presence for the association. After five years and 60 issues, Paul has now handed on the newsletter editor role to Archie McLellan.

Jen Ferry, the Meetings Secretary, along with Archie McLellan, presented a report on the much appreciated winter series of talks by well-known UK speakers. They anticipate that after the pandemic, a reduced version of an online programme would remain as part of the association's activities. Jen said that the audience for the Zoom talks was partly drawn from a different area of our membership – and that we ought to keep in mind those who were part of our pre-pandemic meetings and but do not engage in online activities.

Details of the members' meeting to discuss the ADM at the BBKA (online) on 16 January were included showing the voting and propositions which were to take place at the ADM, at which Sheila Stunell was our online delegate.

John Hendrie, our President, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, will be leaving to live in Scotland, but will continue as Acting Treasurer for the next few months. John Chapman will continue as Chairman, and Sheila Stunell as Secretary. Bob Smith has stepped down as Exams secretary, but will remain on the committee. Elaine Laight is leaving the committee but will continue her work on the Association apiary rota. Sheila Stunell proposed that a memorial for one of our most active and well-known members, Terry Clare, who died last year, would be fitting.

John Chapman warmly thanked everyone for their work, looking forward to a time when the Association would once again be able to function to the full for all its members.



Being controversial

– with the usual warning about any opinions expressed anywhere in this newsletter not representing MBKA, BBKA etc! 😊

Beekeepers who wish to treat varroa by vaporising / sublimating (rather than trickling) oxalic acid must use the Veterinary Medicines Directorate approved product, ApiBioxal. To use generic oxalic acid is a criminal offence. However, using ApiBioxal for the vaporising method presents some difficulties:

- the substances added to oxalic acid in ApiBioxal (glucose and powdered silica) leave a residue in the hot pan of a sublimator which is difficult to remove;
- the instructions for ApiBioxal state that it must not be administered repeatedly ('one treatment per year'); this limits its use to broodless periods, which do not necessarily occur in milder winters;
- the instructions for ApiBioxal state that when sublimating, it should be used according to the device manufacturer's instructions. ('It is recommended to follow manufacturer's instructions in order to achieve

maximum sublimation.’) However, the instructions for the Sublimox state that only pure oxalic acid must be used.

There is general agreement that the VMD approved products for control of varroa, which cover a wide range of substances, are effective. Further, oxalic acid products, including ApiBioxal, do not have the problem of mites developing resistance. ApiBioxal is the only product which is a source of controversy, because of the problems occurring in vaporisation. It is far from clear how this legal situation could be changed, although a group in Scotland comprising bee inspectors, bee scientists and beekeepers are looking into this issue.

Addressing the possibility that this situation is an instance of bad law, ‘Murox’ posted the following on Beekeeping Forum in a thread called Oxalic acid:

To be effective any law must be enforceable, perceived as just, and have the ability to change. The reasons for regulation that criminalise the conduct of the ordinary beekeeper, conduct that would not otherwise be viewed as intrinsically wrong or criminal, should be very clear, precise and set out in a manner that encourages scrutiny and debate of the issues. [<https://beekeepingforum.co.uk/threads/oxalic-acid.49296/page-6#post-741939>]



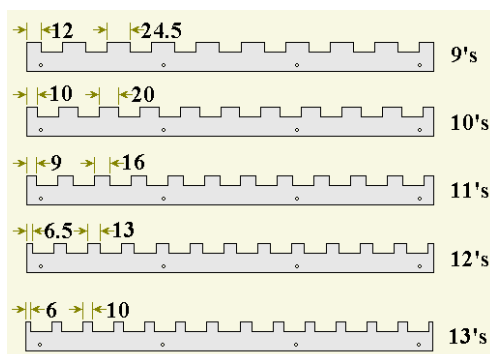
The Beekeeper’s Checklist: a pot-luck series on almost any beekeeping topic

Sometimes you don’t need to read an article. Glancing down a list of bullet points is all that’s needed to bring things back to mind. This month’s topic:

Spacing of frames

Measurements are frame centre to centre

- Brood box frame spacing is nominally 38mm in the UK although Hoffmans give 35mm
- Brood boxes should have 11 frames in Nationals giving about 37mm between centres with space for a dummy board.
- Hoffman self-spacing frames are usually used in brood boxes, though some beekeepers use castellation spacers.
- It is possible to fit 12 new frames into a National brood box. Don’t do this! Within a short time, the build of propolis etc will result in the frames being too tight a fit.
- Plastic and metal spacers can be used to set frames precise distances apart. These get clogged up with propolis and can be troublesome. Also, it’s important not to hold the frame by the plastic or metal ends as they can get detached – and the frame falls to the ground.
- Castellations can be used for 9, 10, or 11 frames in National supers.
- Super frame spacing can be up to 48mm (9 frames in a National super); however this only works with drawn comb. Foundation spaced this far apart will result in the bees drawing extra panels of comb between frames.
- Manley self-spacing frames (for supers) are 41mm apart and fit 10 frames into a National.
- Castellations keep frames in place when moving hives.
- Some frames (Manley, Hoffman) may need to be adjusted/shaved to fit extractors.



Castellated spacers for Nationals: 9’s and 10’s in supers, 11’s in brood boxes. 12’s and 13’s are rarely, if ever, used.

From Dave Cushman

WORDS: something to *mone* about

Words ending in *mone* appear frequently in beekeeping – especially the one that is the source of all colony functioning and communication.

PHEROMONE: from Greek *phero*, 'to bear' and *hormone*.

A pheromone is a chemical substance produced and emitted by mainly mammals and insects; it affects the behaviour and physical development of others of its **own species**. For example, honey bee queen pheromone keeps in check any tendency by worker bees to lay.

KAIROMONE: a word coined using the Greek *kairos*, 'opportune moment', and 'mone', mimicking *pheromone*.

A kairomone is like a pheromone, but is used by individuals of a **different species** to their own advantage, such as a parasite seeking a host. For example, honey bee alarm pheromone is a kairomone to a small hive beetle; it is this odour which draw the beetles to a honey bee nest.

HORMONE: from Greek (the same word *hormone*), 'setting in motion'.

A hormone is a chemical messenger that works in the honey bee to control bodily functions. Hormones only affect **the individual** that produces them. For example, 'Juvenile hormone' (JH) in honey bees controls development in the larva and pupa. In the adult, the same hormone is responsible for workers changing from one role to another as they age.



Medway BKA YouTube channel

After record numbers at our Zoom meetings we've expanded in the internet world on to YouTube! This not only means we can livestream meetings when we reach our Zoom limit of 100 attendees but also gives us the opportunity to create and share video content worldwide. We want this to be a member's channel, a place where we can help you learn and share all our beekeeping adventures together.



We are YouTube novices so please be patient if we have technical hiccups; if we have any experts or some budding video makers please get in touch as I'm sure we'll need your help at some point!

I also hope I'm not the only one who takes videos of my bees, so if you'd like to share them on our channel please email them to me throughout the year. Even if they are just short clips, we can then put them all together in a montage at the end of the season – or sooner if you're all mini film producers! We have some great instructional videos already uploaded so go check them out [here](#) and let us know what else you'd like to see! We can also be found by searching '**medwaybka**' on YouTube. Also please subscribe to the channel; that way you can easily find us in the future.

Please send suggestions, clips or ideas to sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Sonia Belsey



Mead: a little help to get you started

John Chapman, our chair, is a skilled mead-maker, if we go by his success at local and national shows. Here he chats with WHATSTHEBUZZ about making mead, and learning as you go.

WTB Have you been making mead since you started in beekeeping?

JC Not from the beginning, but probably for about 30 years.

WTB Did you have any duds?

JC I've had plenty. I was told that you could make mead out of honey from washing the extractor. Obviously there wasn't enough honey there, and the result was so dreadful that I gave up making mead for some time. Then, when we got a big harvest one year, I thought I'd give it another go, and caught the bug.

WTB Do you prefer a cold or hot method for making mead?

JC I've always made mead with the hot method. You boil the honey up first. That gets rid of the wild yeasts and you skim off the wax which ends up as a scum on the top.

WTB Do you think that boiling honey could result in loss of subtle flavours?

I suppose there might be some loss of flavour, but not that much, because you're bringing out a different set of flavours by fermenting it. Boiling is done for only a short length of time. It's more like pasteurisation really.

WTB I suppose we are educated to think that heating honey is a BAD thing. And HMF is used as an indication that of how much honey has been heated.

JC If you heat honey at the start of mead-making, the amount of time that it is very hot is quite short so it is unlikely to raise the HMF level much if at all.

WTB Do you have a recipe?

JC Yes. The method I use is one I got from Dennis Harvey, who was one of our beekeepers years ago. He was really good mead-maker. [I'm quite happy for anybody else to have the recipe.](#)

WTB What different kinds of mead have you tried?

JC I've tried to make melomel with varying success – difficult to get it clear. Cyser I've tried; I quite like it, but again I found it difficult clearing it.

WTB Is clearing the hardest part, generally?

JC Clearing it and getting the mead to stop working is the most difficult thing. Sometimes after the mead is clear and I've bottled it, I find there's another deposit produced in it.

The pretty foolproof way of doing it actually is put it in a corner and leave it till it's decided to go clear. You've got to find that corner though!

WTB What about the temperature for fermentation?

JC Around 20°C. I tend to stand my mead on the kitchen window sill while it ferments. When it's stopped fermenting, I rack it. It goes into the lobby and stays there. The lobby gets very warm in the summer and cold in the winter but the mead seems to survive that.



John's prize-winning mead at the National Honey Show. The red star is a First.

WTB You rack it when it stops fermenting. How long might that take?

JC You literally have to wait and see what it's doing. Sometimes it's quite quick. Other times it takes a long time to start. The secret of success in making mead is actually to leave it and go and do something else.

WTB Is our hard tap water suitable?

JC Yes. A lot of the hardness has gone if you use boiled water. Let it cool first though! If the temperature is too high, you're likely to kill off the yeasts.

WTB Does choice of yeast make much difference?

JC You can buy some very good mead yeasts. I find that if you get a red wine yeast that's good for a sweeter mead. Use a white wine yeast for a medium mead.

If you want to really make life really exciting for yourself, you can use a champagne yeast if you've got the right bottles for it. And if you're putting it in for shows, which is fun but not the be all and end all, you can make a mead that a particular judge will like. Judging is very subjective, despite what they tell you.

WTB Do you use a hydrometer?

JC I use a hydrometer at the beginning and always at the end. The reading indicates whether the mead will be sweet or dry.

Mead-making is very similar to winemaking but instead of using fruit you're using honey. It's a straightforward form of cookery; knowing a little bit about the science makes it a little easier.

WTB Recommended reading?

JC Two books. *Practical mead making* a BBKA News Special, by Dinah Sweet; and *Home Winemaking and Growing* by BCA Turner. It's out of print but second-hand copies are available.

But what matters for me is to know what I've done in the past and to see what works.



Who would have thought it?

I caught the end of a webinar with Ged Marshall recently. Ged is a well-regarded bee farmer and queen rearer. I missed what went before because I and my equipment are challenged when it comes to watching two webinars at once. (You can spend a lot of your life on Zoom beekeeping events these days.)

Ged's talk was on swarm control and one of the questions that came up at the end was: 'Do you use checkerboarding as a method of swarm control?' Ged replied: 'I have a question; what is checkerboarding?' And we were quickly taken on to the next question.

I have no problem with Ged not knowing what checkerboarding is. It was invented a long time ago in Tennessee. If it was invented here in Britain, it might well be called draughts-boarding 😊

Basically, it is a technique to delay swarming. When the first super above the brood box is nearly full, the bees might regard winter preparations as complete and prepare to swarm. Checkerboarding attempts to reduce this stimulus by breaking up this area of solid honey. Honey frames are removed from the bottom super and replaced with empty drawn comb



checker-boarding supers

or foundation from the super above. They are arranged in an alternating pattern of full and empty combs. It's called checkerboarding because of the full-empty alternating pattern of frames – both horizontally and vertically – which mimics the squares of the checker board. You can find a better description [here](#).

Do you use this manipulation at all? And what name do you give it? Do post a comment and tell us all.

Archie McLellan

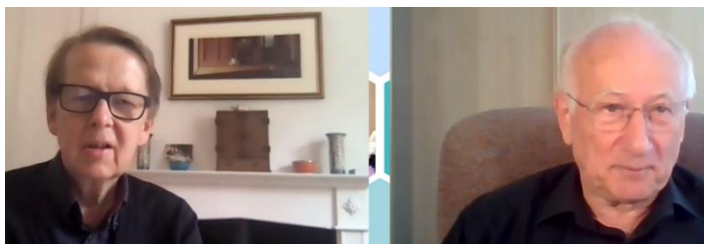


The spoken word

An excerpt from a lecture or interview. Here Professor Robert Pickard comes up with a novel manipulation for beekeepers to learn something worthwhile at the comb-face.

Bill Turnbull

If there was one single lesson you'd like to teach someone who was starting in beekeeping, what would it be?



Bill Turnbull (left) online with Robert Pickard

Robert Pickard

Well, I'd encourage them to set up a frame with a checkerboard of old comb and new comb glued together with a soldering iron, and put that in a colony. And if you do that, you'll see that the queen lays her eggs in the new comb and the bees put honey in the old comb. They're very precise about it because the bees putting honey in the old comb seals in the diseases of the previous brood and the queen laying eggs in the new comb ensures that those eggs will have the best chance of setting off with a disease-free environment. It's very important for beekeepers to understand that it's totally wrong to force bees to stay on old comb; it's totally unnatural for them. They like to put honey in old comb, and then they like to fill up a cavity and leave, and then they have a contract with the wax moths who come in and clean out the entire cavity, because the wax moth have the enzymes to destroy the old comb.

From Bill Turnbull & Robert Pickard – [Interview at the National Honey Show 2020](#)



Talks and courses coming soon

8.00PM MONDAY 8 MARCH 2021, THE FINAL TALK IN OUR 10-PART SERIES ON ZOOM

Richard Rickitt, co-editor of BeeCraft, 'From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace' – a pictorial beekeeping tour of Britain meeting beekeepers and visiting sites of historical beekeeping interest. Members will receive personal invites and registration details one week before the event.



INTRODUCTORY COURSE ON ZOOM

Tuesdays in March on Zoom, 8.00pm. Contact Mark Ballard or Jen Ferry.

BBKA MODULE EXAMS

Module 3 revision sessions on Zoom will be held on

- Thursday 4 March, syllabus 3.1 to 3.8 (the foulbroods, statutory procedures)
- Thursday 11 March, 3.9 to 3.17 (varroa, acarine, nosema, comb-changing)
- Thursday 25 March, 3.18 to 3.28 (viruses, poisoning, wax moths)

20/21 March, practice with a mock exam using the exam software

24 April, Exam day

QUEEN REARING GROUP

Tuesdays, 7.00-8.30pm, from 6 April. Contact Jen Ferry

THE 2021 BBKA SPRING CONVENTION, 16-18 APRIL

A great 'virtual' event to look forward to. Speakers include: Keith Delaplane (USA),

Steve Pernal (Canada) and, from the UK, Steve Martin, Celia Davis, Nicola Bradbear, Marin Anastasov, Jane

Medwell, Rinke Vinkenoog, Colin Pavey, Lynfa Davies, Matthew Pound, Shirley & Richard Bond – and more. Entry

to the Virtual Tradeshow (AKA The Marketplace) will be free; an opportunity to browse the latest beekeeping kit

and to take advantage of special Convention offers. Visit [BBKA online](#) for more news and event updates.



Handy Hint

It can be difficult to retain the details of the various colony manipulations. Having a broad understanding of what's going on can help.

Many swarm prevention strategies involve making an **artificial swarm**; as you would expect, this comprises the queen and the flying bees. The other half of this swarm prevention split contains what's left: the nurse bees and brood. So, this handy hint is, an **artificial swarm contains a queen with flying bees**.

[A real swarm is nothing as simple as a human-made artificial swarm, of course. In nature, a swarm is setting out on a perilous journey. The bees must find a new home, and then build comb, collect stores and raise brood. That would be a tall order if all the bees were already foragers with barely three weeks left to live. In fact, many of the bees in a swarm will be very young bees. The swarm may be the first time they have flown out of the hive.]



Keeping up-to-date

Our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) have full details of our events and what's happening in MBKA and beyond.

Margaret Wilson, President of the BBKA, writes a monthly letter to all members. This month, Margaret writes on the proposed partial derogation of the use neonics ban and on queen imports. You can read [her letter here](#).

Dr Anna Oliver, of the [National Honey Monitoring Scheme](#), recently

announced changes to the sample packs used in the Honey Monitoring Scheme, so that potential pesticide



residue analysis can be done on future samples. Anyone can register to take part in this scheme and submit their honey for analysis.



Blogs and forums

A quick glance at something exceptional in the past weeks online.

On 8 January 2021, [this announcement](#) appeared: ‘The government has decided to grant an application for emergency authorisation to allow use of a product containing the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam for the treatment of sugar beet seed in 2021. This is in recognition of the potential danger posed to the 2021 crop from beet yellows virus.’

The BBKA promptly went into campaign mode and responded by writing to both the Environment Secretary and the Prime Minister, urging members to do the same and perhaps sign petitions, and producing this statement after the Annual Delegates Meeting: [25,000 Beekeepers Demand Govt Withdraw Neonic Licence](#).

It’s a common process: each side states their strongest arguments, and we end up somewhere in the middle by a process of natural selection. A balance has to be struck, but sometimes you might feel we don’t get there by the most efficient or productive process.

A blog writer, Wayward Bee, [wrote a post](#) which has a refreshingly different take on this tortured scene where farmers and conservationists are constantly battling for gains for their own side. She (her name is Jen) writes that in the long term we will have to find a better way to manage our food production, and that it will take all sides to work together to come to solutions which are less damaging to wildlife.



It’s a short read; I don’t think you’ll be able to fault it.



Quiz

1. Who wrote the song (or where does it come from) which has the same title of our new newsletter?
2. What was unusually remarkable about the achievements of the Swiss bee scientist François Huber (1750-1831)?
3. Which/who is the odd one out: Butler, Morris, Cloake?
4. Which is the odd one out: Apivar, Amitraz, Apitraz?
5. How can you know brood activity in a hive in winter/early spring without opening the hive?

Answers: 1 Email this answer to me to enter for a prize draw. 2 He lost his eyesight in his teens. 3. Butler: a queen introduction cage; the others are queen rearing boards. 4. Amitraz (a generic ingredient). The other two are proprietary products containing amitraz. 5. Insert a varroa board under the mesh floor; the lines of fallen capping debris show the emergence of brood – though darker cappings are from honey stores.

Comments

To post a comment, please email the MBKA Newsletter.

From Archie McLellan: Apologies if you are already familiar with this sentiment and analogy which I've seen a lot recently: 'The needs of wild bees are so different that rearing honey bees to save pollinators is like rearing chickens to help birds.' The place of honey bees in the affections of the nature-loving public is changing, as people become more aware that, though many insect pollinators are under threat, honey bee colonies, being a managed stock, do not by any measure fall into this category – and are certainly not in need of 'saving'.

Why, then, is there a page on the BBKA website titled 'Save the Bees: Honeybees face several threats...'? It is on a request-for-donations page.



Contact details

Chairman John Chapman, john.chapman@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Website manager Paul Lawrence, paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Newsletter Archie McLellan, archie.mclellan@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Please send items for the newsletter five days before the end of each month for inclusion in the next issue. And if you'd like to comment on anything in or about this issue, please call or email me.

Archie McLellan, newsletter compiler

