



WHATSTHEBUZZ

June
2021

*Hello to June, to the start of
summer, and to you all!*

TODAY, 20 MAY, IS WORLD BEE DAY.

You don't have to do anything for that, but it's nice to know that all over the world, people will pause and think for a moment, The Bees have their own dedicated day! They must be very special!

If you do want to do something serious about World Bee Day, you can join a webinar from the United Nations Food and Agriculture organisation from noon till 1.30pm. Details are inside.

It's just as well the calendar is fixed and not movable – like Easter. Or like seasonal weather, which can be very unseasonal! Somehow nature has managed to keep up, despite the extremes of April (coldest, sunniest, driest and frostiest for 99 years). Forage for bees was abundant these last two months. But bees foraging and pollinating were much less in evidence. They grabbed all available opportunities when they could. And just sometimes, in some places, they did succeed in filling supers wall to wall with capped honey.

June would normally be like May for beekeepers, though sometimes without a honey harvest. (This year, we are hoping for a very different June to the May we're experiencing just now.) We still need to manage swarming by checking for queen cells every 7 days – or is it 5 for you? Or 9? If we haven't monitored for varroa recently, it might be worth putting the boards in over the next week or two and using MAQS if supers are on and treatment is needed now. The recent weather has made life – particularly mating – difficult for queens. For that and several other possible reasons we might be requeening some of our colonies.

Inside the hive at this time of year, the queen would normally be laying strongly, and the colony be at maximum size. For the bees, life just now is about colony build-up, making and storing honey, making queen cells, swarming, and virgin queens heading out on mating flights.

For the foragers, there's borage, dead nettle, bramble, privet, rapeseed, white clover, cotoneaster...

Little wonder that some say there's no such thing as a 'June gap'!

In this issue

From our chairman	2
Myths? In beekeeping? Surely not!	2
Getting to know you: this month, Jason Cakebread	4
The MET Office: not just for forecasts	6
Talks and courses	6
What did you do in the apiary last week?	7
Famous beekeeper's day jobs	8
Honey Bee Colony Losses: the COLOSS Survey 2021	9
MBKA apiaries	9
The Beekeeper's Checklist: a pot-luck series on almost any beekeeping topic	10
Beekeeping news	11
Trivia	12
Book review: Nicola Bradbear's new book	12
Quiz	13
Handy Hints	13
Do you know when to stop?	13
Comments	14
Contact details	14

From our chairman

John Chapman, our chairman, speaks to the members each month, sometimes about the Association, sometimes about the bees. This month, he talks about the weather, not just in the usual conversational way, but about how it might be affecting our bees and beekeeping.

WHATSTHEBUZZ Challenging times!

John Chapman This kind of weather is extremely difficult if you haven't experienced it before. The weather and the temperature are key factors in the bees' development, and if they have started building up you need to keep a very close eye on their food supply.

Sometimes I've had supers on in May when it has turned very cold. I have to ask if I should be taking the supers off and putting a feeder on instead. You've just got to be very careful. And to check if they have enough room.

WTB Many of us are finding lots of queen cells these days.

JC I would make a split; maybe do what Wally Shaw suggested, a vertical split with an entrance at the top. But it just depends on what the weather's doing. If it doesn't work out, you can always put it back together again.

You also have to keep an eye on the varroa level, and watch for any varroa damage.



WTB What are the signs?

JC The bees chew the cappings and expose the larvae. The cell is basically abandoned. If you see a lot of this, then you might need to monitor and possibly treat.

Quite often the stress level in the hive is related to the food they have.

WTB If there's honey in the super, won't they be fine?

JC Yes, if it's liquid honey. If it's capped it might be a good idea to uncap some to encourage them to come get it.

Beekeeping is like a tightrope walk sometimes! You can learn a tremendous amount at times like this by adapting to find the best thing to do. In a really good year when everything goes well, life is so much easier. What we've got just now is the difficult end of beekeeping, when the weather and temperature seem to conspire against you.



Myths? In beekeeping? Surely not!

Some weeks ago, I mentioned to Esther (my wife) that some people advise not to remove snow from the entrance to beehives. This is because the bees might misread the situation out there. Apparently the bees will see all this snow-brightness as brilliant, warm sunshine, and head out for whatever they usually do on these winter excursions.

I had read this piece of advice just that very morning on Ann Chilcott's blog, *The Beelister*. I had heard it before, of course, many times including the February issue of *BeeCraft*, but it was nice to get confirmation yet again.

Esther was highly sceptical. Sounds like something plausible that just took hold without anybody checking it, she said.

A few days later someone posted on [Beekeeping Forum](#) that they had been taught... (the same thing about snow). The reply was direct and unambiguous:

'I was taught... that it was all just a load of made up nonsense – from the usual culprits.' (jenkinsbrynmair)

Well, it's easy to say 'nonsense'; and who are the 'usual culprits' anyway?

I decided to do a search on Beekeeping Forum for 'myth' from this member of the forum.

I discovered he has dismissed people's ideas and posts as 'myths' in around 150 of his own posts. Sometimes, he gives his reasoning, or points to research. Other times... well, life's too short.

I should say that he's not the only one to complain loudly and often about myths in beekeeping: advice and dogmatic statements that people have received in their early beekeeping years have been accepted as gospel, and never been challenged or tested. [David Evans](#) frequently promises (threatens?) to publish a book of his '101 Beekeeping Myths'. [Roger Patterson](#) never tires of telling people not to believe everything they're told, but to question everything.

So here is a selection of the commonly held beliefs that are dismissed as myths in this member's posts on Beekeeping Forum, **followed by his brief explanation why the statement is a myth.**

Do you think he's wrong? If so, the only way you can argue the point is to show that you have experience to the contrary. I'm sure he'd be very interested to hear it!

Myth #1 Swarm cells are always on the bottom bar. [Not so. Swarm cells can appear anywhere. It is naive to assume just because they're in the middle of the frame that they are supersedure cells. Rule of thumb is, if there is more than one cell, assume swarming.]

Myth #2 Queens stopping laying before swarming. [Not so. A queen will lay eggs up to the minute they swarm.]

Myth #3 The queen excluder may be the reason the bees are not going into the supers. [Not so. The bees will go up if/when they need to and not before.]

Myth #4 Foundation can dry out. The bees like it fresh and smelling sweet. [Not so. This is more about what beekeepers like rather than the bees.]

Myth #5 Stored ivy honey is difficult for the bees. [Not so. Bees and ivy have coexisted for millennia. All my nucs this year were fed on surplus crystallised ivy stores left in the spring.]

Myth #6 Bees don't store fondant; they just eat it when they need it. [Not so. They will take it down and store it, sometimes a whole 12.5kg block in a short

time. It looks no different to honey stores as they use water to liquefy the fondant then assimilate/invert it in their stomachs before storing it as 'honey'. The little cells full of white stuff mingled in the stores that some people believe is fondant that bees have moved down are in fact pollen gone mouldy.

Myth #7 Aggressive colonies make more honey than calm ones. [Not so. They were like lambs when most of that honey was collected. They've just had a sudden change of temperament.]

Myth #8 The bees are still active and bringing in pollen so they are still raising brood. [Not necessarily. My colonies usually have a brood break mid to late August. They still work as hard as ever.]

Myth #9 Smoke causes bees to gorge on honey prior to escaping a fire. [Not so. This 'Forest fire' theory of them filling their bellies in evacuation mode and thus making them calmer is another story which should be catalogued under 'beekeeping myths and magic'. I use very little smoke. In my opinion lots of smoke pumped into the hive usually just winds the bees up rather than calms them.]

There's lots more debunking on Beekeeping Forum. (There's a lot of spleen-venting too, and badge-wearing. Beekeeping Forum does contain a lot of serious discussion, not always heard elsewhere. Still, it might not be your cup of tea.)

It easy to be persuaded by people's certainty. Is it really the case that all these (and many other) tenets of traditional beekeeping dogma all to be regarded as myths, ideas that have taken hold without being properly questioned?

Or might it be that people have found that statements about bee behaviour and what works in beekeeping don't hold up in **every** situation? Perhaps there is some wisdom and experience behind these 'articles of faith' – but they should not be relied on unquestioningly in all situations.

If you want to say anything, either in support or rejection of the above, do let us know. Call or email the newsletter compiler please.



Getting to know you: this month, Jason Cakebread

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

WHATSTHEBUZZ Even though we're in an Association, it can take a long time to get to know anything about people beyond their beekeeping.

Jason Cakebread I used to go the BeeChat at Upnor, and to the City Way apiary on Saturdays, but with the pandemic, the only contact we've had with each other has been on Zoom.

WTB Let's start with you rather than your beekeeping!

JC I'm a project manager in the oil and gas industry. I started as an apprentice in plating and welding and worked my way up through the ranks. The projects I work on tend to be in heavy engineering. I've just finished one that cost 20 odd million pounds – an extraction system for some furnaces.

WTB Family life?

JC Yes, I've got a wife, Julie. We met when I was 16. So 35 odd years ago now. We've been married for 25 years and have four daughters. The eldest, Emily, is 21. She's a police officer. Then Tilly who's 19 and at university studying media graphics, then Connie who's 12 and Sadie who's 10. She likes to help me with the bees. The girls are all still at home. It's funny with Emily working as a police officer; when she comes home and out of uniform she's just a little girl again.

WTB Do you have other interests?

JC I have too many hobbies. I like field sports, sea and coarse fishing, and riding motorbikes at the weekend; I am a member of the KAMG (Kent Advanced Motorcycle Group).

WTB So to beekeeping. How did that start for you?

JC Many years ago, in my early teens, I had a friend whose granddad was a beekeeper. I enjoyed helping him with this and that, including spinning the honey. In more recent years, I've been occasionally helping a friend, now in his mid-80s. He gave me an old hive which I cleaned up ready to use the following year but then I noticed some bees going in and out. I lifted the lid to have a look at what was going on inside and was



confronted with some wild comb covered in bees. A little cast swarm had moved in so I had to act fast. Get gear, suit, smoker, foundation, a book... and a place on an beginners' course. I phoned MBKA but was told that the course was full. Fortunately, Sheila listened to me, felt my panic, and squeezed me on to the course.

I've still got that colony. It's in my garden along with a swarm I collected.

WTB Do you have an out apiary?

JC I've got four little groups of hives in orchards just beyond Upchurch which I've recently inherited. One of the farmers grows for Marks and Spencer's. There's an incentive programme in which they get points for things like planting wildflowers between the rows of trees. As this is my first season with these colonies, I'll need to see how these bees get on when the fruit tree blossom is over.

I love the challenges that beekeeping throws at you – along with spending sunny days in blossoming orchards.

WTB What do you like least in beekeeping?

Over-thinking things. I think if you spend too much time thinking about your beekeeping (which I do) you can talk yourself out of a simple resolve and over-complicate things.

Oh yeah and getting stung. 😊

WTB You're taking part in the Association queen rearing group. Do you enjoy study courses on bees?



'I love working with my hands'

JC Very much so, but pressure of work can make it difficult. I love the practical side of it as well. I love working with my hands, fixing all these hives I've been given, making new stands and so on. I built this room I'm in just now – although it's a kit from Dunster House.

WTB Books, blogs?

JC I rely heavily on the BBKA Guide to Beekeeping and the Haynes Beekeeping Manual. The basics are clearly presented in as brief a way as possible.

I find Stuart Spinks (Norfolk Honey Company) makes very practical videos. He doesn't need to go into chemistry or anything like that, he just explains how it is. And he makes mistakes.

WTB Do you have a treatment plan for varroa?

JC Nothing special. I treat with MAQS in the spring and Apiguard when the supers come off in August. I'm looking into oxalic acid trickling in winter but haven't tried it yet. trickling seems safer than vaporising! So far my mite counts haven't been too high.

MAQS is convenient because you can use it with supers on but it does seem to affect queens. I notice that brood goes a bit patchy when I use it, even with queens which normally laid a nice round circle on the frame.

WTB Is the Association all that it could be for you?

JC It will be nice to get to the nice new apiary and start doing some work there. Before the pandemic, I used to enjoy going to the City Way apiary afternoons. They are a good bunch of people and with the study groups and winter courses, there's always a friendly atmosphere – and the best cake with a cup of tea or coffee!

WTB What are your plans for your beekeeping?

JC I want to get my apiaries set up properly. I've been getting good feedback from the farmers, and also from members of the public who say they are glad to see well-maintained bee hives in the area. I'd like to go into the winter with ten colonies. That seems about right, but knowing me, there might be more. I'm in the queen rearing group so I hope I'll be able to improve my colonies gradually. And I like building – making things to do with beekeeping. So I hope that I'll be able to get my apiaries looking good as well as the bees in good condition. I have a couple of fiery colonies so having everything running smoothly would be good.

I love honey, and am amazed how easy it is to sell it. When I last worked at a large site, I couldn't even get past the security guards without them wanting to buy lots of my honey – 10 jars please! Because they knew I had only so much, they couldn't buy it quickly enough. They've had to get used to the fact that honey is seasonal!

I love that you produce something that is so natural, and you package it beautifully, and you sell it to someone who appreciates it and gets the benefit of it. It is so rewarding, looking after the bees, maintaining your hives, hopefully raising your own queens, and then at the end you've got the honey. It's lovely! 🐝

The MET Office: not just for forecasts



What's the forecast dear?

We tend to think of the MET Office as the source of weather forecasts. But there's lots of information too about weather in the past.

April 2021 was frostier, sunnier, colder, and drier than usual. In fact it was the coldest April for 99 years. [This press release](#) shows the stats for April's weather. And in the table on the right you can see that, compared to the average for April over the last 140 years, this April was 1-2°C colder, 19-39% drier, and gifted us with c.150% of the average hours of sunshine.

Provisional April 2021 statistics	Mean temp		Rainfall		Sunshine	
	Actual °C	Anomaly	Actual mm	% Anomaly	Actual Hours	% Anomaly
UK	5.7	-1.7	20.1	28	225.1	152
England	6.2	-1.9	11.0	19	229.8	148
Wales	6.2	-1.5	16.8	19	231.8	150
Scotland	4.6	-1.5	35.4	39	216.6	160
Northern Ireland	6.5	-1.1	24.8	33	217.0	147



Talks and courses

MBKA Queen rearing group

The group continues to meet on Zoom on Tuesday evenings. The formal material has been covered but the group continues to gather to share stories and air problems – not least because recent cold weather has resulted in most of us not being as far down the road of raising our own queens as we might have hoped by this stage!

MBKA Winter Study

Sonia Belsey, Exams Secretary, reports that the poll for which BBKA module to cover in the next Winter study course showed:

- Module 5 (Bee biology) 1 vote
- Module 6 (Bee behaviour) 3 votes
- Any module 1 vote

So Module 6 is the leader at the moment. If you're thinking of joining the course, send in your vote!

BBKA Spring Convention Talks

There is still time to catch up on the talks and market place from the [BBKA Spring Convention](#). All 20 talks will be available till the end of May for those who paid to attend – but those who didn't can still pay the entry fee £12 to access the talks.

Some of the highlights include:

David Aston's talk *Tipping points and Perceptions* in which he asks if our current practices and perceptions are fit for purpose and in the best interests of our honey bees;

Dr Rinke Vinkenoog's talk *Pollination syndromes – a bee for every blossom?* in which he explores how flowers and pollinators have adapted to each other over the course of evolution;

Marin Anastasov's talk on the management of mini mating nucs, including stocking, feeding and queen introduction;

... and many other captivating topics and speakers.

Advanced courses Ken and Dan Basterfield

There are [short and residential courses](#), but the [webinars](#) at £3.50 a time are likely to be the most popular. This year, Ken and Dan will be covering topics such as Processing Honey, Managing mini-nucs, Making and using nucs, Handling skills, Microscopy for beekeepers, and Double brood colonies.

BBKA training courses at Stoneleigh

[These 1, 2, and 3 day courses](#) will cover these subjects: Advanced Queen Rearing, Basic Queen Rearing, Advanced Husbandry Training, and General Husbandry.



What did you do in the apiary last week?

– where members tell us about recent happenings and experiences in their apiaries.

From Tony Edwards My partner in crime last Wednesday was Simon Marshall. We visited Pump Farm apiary in Rainham.

One of my colonies swarmed very recently and another one was queenless so we moved a frame with queen cells into the queenless colony.

One of the Langstroth hives was rammed with brood – ten frames full to the seams. We found the queen and marked her and then placed her in a cage into Simon's pocket. We then split the hive in half making sure the second box had eggs, and then returned the queen to the first box.

My double brood Langstroth had got too tall and tricky for me to work so we split that in half. We could not find the queen so we made sure both boxes had frames of eggs.

Despite the low temperature the bees were quite good tempered.

We look forward to seeing if our manipulations have been successful.

From Paul Newman

- transferred collected swarms to nucs
- inspected two Nat hives – ok but nothing stunning, no queen cells
- found and marked a queen
- got very wet

Short, succinct, frustrating.

* * *

From Paul Lawrence

I have 4 colonies, 14x12 brood frames in WBC hives.

Colony A built up very quickly during early Spring. Last week I found the inevitable queen cells, so I decided to make up a 5-frame nuc box by taking out the queen with 3 frames of brood and a frame of stores plus a frame of foundation. I left one lovely big open queen cell and marked its position with a drawing pin. I returned 3 days later and knocked down 3 more queen cells leaving my original choice which was now capped. I will leave them alone for 3 weeks before checking them again.

Colony B is my best colony. It has built up steadily over the Spring and I have changed a few manky brood

frames with fresh foundation which they had almost drawn out the during previous weeks. With the Ambrosia feed gone, I put on a queen excluder and a super box of drawn frames from last year.

Colony C is struggling to build up. She is an older queen, still laying, but the colony is slow. So, I reduced the colony to 6 frames and a dummy board. I am still feeding them and may put them in a nuc in a couple of weeks if no improvement is seen. It will give them a chance at least.

Colony D is my new nuc.

Famous beekeeper's day jobs

Most beekeepers have day jobs. Those who are not enchanted with their day job daydream about making their beekeeping profitable enough to sustain them. Those who succeed are called bee farmers.

Some beekeepers are bee scientists. Some bee scientists are beekeepers. Perhaps it could be said that this group also make their living from beekeeping – but their work as scientists is distinct from their beekeeping.

So let's leave bee farmers and bee scientists out of the picture for now. Is there any common ground in the day jobs of famous beekeepers over the last couple of centuries? Let's have a look, starting in the 1600s.

WILLIAM MEW (1602 – 1669) developed one of the first modern hives in 1649, and also produced a design for a transparent hive. He was an English clergyman (Rector).

SAMUEL LINNAEUS (1718 – 1797) was younger brother Carl Linnaeus (von Linné), the father of modern taxonomy. Samuel was called 'the Bee King'. He kept bees for many years and in 1768 wrote (in Swedish) a hugely influential book called *A Brief but Reliable Guide to Beekeeping*. It was he who pointed out to his older brother the error of the name *mellifera*. As the honey bee carried nectar, not honey, the name should have been *mellifica* – honey-maker. He was the Vicar of Stenbrohult, Sweden.

The weather has been a nightmare and I am lucky that my bees are in the garden so that I can just pop down and check them when I get a chance. One advantage of being retired during Lockdown I guess!

* * *

From Sonia Belsey

Ended up doing an artificial swarm after finding 6 queen cells. Turns out the weather doesn't stop the bees so now I'm accidentally queen rearing!



LORENZO LANGSTROTH (1810 – 1895) is regarded as the father of American beekeeping. He was a Congregational minister.

JAN DZIERŻON (1811 – 1906) is considered the father of modern apiculture and apiculture. Although his name does not survive in a world-famous design for a beehive, all modern beehives are descendants of his design. He was a Roman Catholic priest.

GREGOR MENDEL (1822 – 1884) is now seen as the founder of the modern science of genetics. When he realised that tall pea plants produced more tall pea plants, he tried and failed to improve his peas but found that he could not make sense of honey bee genetics – not least because it was not yet known that drones have no father, workers are half-sisters, and the queen has two grandmothers but only one grandfather. He was an Augustinian friar.

KARL KEHRLE (1898 – 1996) developed the famous Buckfast Bee. Better known as Brother Adam, he was a Benedictine monk.

ABBÉ COLLIN, the inventor of the queen excluder in 1865. He too was a monk.

Nuff said?

REFERENCE

[Bad Beekeeping Blog, Famous Beekeepers, Ron Miksha](#)



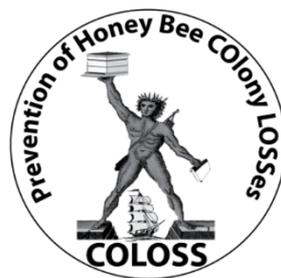
Honey Bee Colony Losses: the COLOSS Survey 2021

In England, there are three (at least) surveys of honey bee colony winter losses. They are run by the NBU, the BBKA, and this one here, by COLOSS.

COLOSS is a pan European network of researchers, beekeepers and government representatives that provides resources and opportunities to disseminate latest bee keeping research. The COLOSS Survey Coordinator for England is Dr Anthony Williams, and we have recently received a request from him to complete the online questionnaire to allow COLOSS to better understand the extent and causes of winter honey bee colony losses in England.

Those who have completed this survey before will know that it is an interesting task, not at all arduous, and it will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. It also gives each of us a useful opportunity to reflect on our beekeeping over the past year.

[The survey can be found here](https://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/253937?lang=en). The closing date to complete it is 4 June, but this year submissions will be accepted till the end of June.



<https://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/253937?lang=en>

Monitor Honey Bee Losses Spring 2021
Please complete survey by using the above link.



MBKA apiaries

PAVILION APIARY, CLIFF WOODS – MAY 2021

John Chapman and I went to the recently went to the Apiary to decide on which entrance track to use for accessing the Pavilion.

We decided that the upper gateway (the second gateway to the left off Lee Green Lane) would be the best entrance. The first section of the track is relatively level and the second section down to the Pavilion is less of a gradient than the first entrance off Lee Green Lane.

John Myatt, the farmer, has agreed that if we provide hardcore or crushed concrete he will spread and level it. This cannot be carried out until the weather is drier.

Now that some of the Covid restrictions have been lifted we will organise work parties to carry out tidying up of the site. Starting in June, typical chores to be carried out include cutting/strimming the grass, clearing up combustible material and burning it, clearing the ground where we intend to plant a hedging, making the second garage safe (removing the damaged door), cleaning the inside of the Pavilion, decorating ceilings and walls, erecting a new stud wall to the Farmer's Room, and sourcing and erecting a secure perimeter fence and gate.

We need volunteers to carry out the work (mostly at weekends but also during the week). Please tell Sonia or me if you can help.

The roof to the Pavilion is asbestos and should be replaced. The National Grid has intimated that they may fund the roof replacement – but it is early days yet.



'Somebody's' bees at City Way! Not MBKA!

CITY WAY APIARY

Covid has obviously had a serious effect on what we have been able to carry out at the site. This has been limited to monthly/weekly socially distanced hive inspections and minimum maintenance (cutting grass).

The 2021 Beginners Group has yet to experience bees close up, to open up a hive and hear the buzz.

We currently have 5 colonies: two National 14x12, one National standard and two 14x12 nucs.

Now that restrictions have been partially lifted **we will have a working party 10.00am-1.00pm on Saturday 5 June**, weather permitting, to do the usual maintenance: cutting grass/strimming, weeding, general clearing up and sorting out hive equipment.

Mark Ballard, Apiary Manager



City Way looking idyllic



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:

Introducing a queen to a new colony

IN GENERAL

- avoid creating a situation that would not happen naturally; for instance, do not replace a mated queen with a virgin or queen cells
- introducing queens to nucs rather than full colonies is more successful, especially during May-July
- best done when there is a nectar flow; otherwise feed before and during the period of introduction
- make sure the colony is queenless; test with a frame (or patch of comb) containing eggs/very young larvae to see if the bees build queen cells.
- small cages with a fondant plug can be used; but a large (c.120mm x 150mm) dedicated queen introduction cage is more reliable and the queen can start laying straight away. (Available in [plastic](#) or [metal](#).)
- virgins can be introduced like mated queens though the acceptance rate is less; use a mini nuc if available.

STEPS

- if the queen has arrived in the post, apply a few drops of water to her cage, and remove the attendant bees [or not: Dan Basterfield says they are ambassadors for the new queen];
- when making up a nuc, it is safest to find and cage the queen in the colony which will be used to supply frames for the nuc
- take three frames, all with bees: one with a small amount of sealed brood (no eggs or young larvae), one with some honey and pollen, and one drawn but nearly empty. Then shake the bees from a couple of frames from the same colony
- place the frames in the centre of a nuc box
- *if using a large cage*, pin the cage on to comb with emerging brood (these bees will accept the new queen) and insert the queen through the hole, or place her on the comb and quickly place the cage over her
- *if using a small cage*, place fondant in the chamber at the bottom of the cage; snap off the plastic tag to allow the bees access.

- *if using a Butler cage*, place it with four layers of newspaper at the bottom between two frames
- finally add two frames of food or empty comb on either side and insert a dummy board
- place syrup in the feeder, close up, and reduce the entrance to the minimum to prevent robbing
- seven or more days later (not less), remove the cage carefully and look for eggs
- also check for queen cells. If there are any, can you find the queen? If so, remove the cells. If not, the bees may have killed the queen after she has begun laying, choosing to raise their own queen from her eggs.
- about a month later, unite with the main colony
- alternatively, rather than uniting, build up the nuc to a full colony

REFERENCES

Richard RICKITT, Learning in the apiary. BeeCraft Aug 2020

Gay Marris et al, NBU, Introducing queen. BBKA NEWS Mar 2013

Rudy Repka, Queen introduction. BBKA News May 2020

Amanda Millar, [Tips for Introducing queens](#)



Beekeeping news

World Bee Day

TODAY, Thursday 20 May is World Bee Day, when the wonderful nature of the honey bee, and indeed all bees and pollinators, are highlighted around the globe.

Join a virtual event to mark World Bee Day: a webinar from the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation, *Bee engaged – Build back better for bees*.

20 May, 12.00-1.30pm

This event will call for global co-operation and solidarity to counter the threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to food security and agricultural livelihoods alongside prioritizing environmental regeneration and pollinator protection.

You can register for the webinar [here](#), and view the full programme as a [PDF download](#).

Varroa Registration

As we reported in the last issue of WHATSTHEBUZZ, [The Bee Diseases and Pests Control Order](#) was amended with effect from 21 April, and the presence of varroa in hives must now be reported. This change is necessary for administrative reasons so that the UK can continue to export bees.

[A statement from the NBU on BeeBase](#) gives more information; there is a plan to introduce a tick box system to make the process of registration simple for beekeepers.

Bees for Development

Read the April 2021 edition of the **Bees for Development Journal** [here](#). It features a simple method to lay beeswax starter strips on top-bars, news from BfD hive-making work in Ghana, the reasons why BfD do not use chemicals in their beekeeping, and what a successful bee farmer in the UK learned when working with beekeepers in Zambia – plus news, book reviews and events to look forward to.

Government response to BBKA Petition: NI Bee Imports remain permitted

When the BBKA Petition reached 10,000 signatures, DEFRA issued a response. Here is an excerpt:

‘We recognise the serious threat posed by small hive beetle. This invasive pest has only been detected in one part of Europe, namely southern Italy, and exports of bees from the affected region into either Great Britain or Northern Ireland are not permitted.

‘Movements of honey bee queens, packages and colonies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain remain permitted. There is, and will remain, unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods, including honey bees, to the rest of the UK market.’



Trivia

What's the best treatment for a bee sting?

Esther got stung in our garden when hanging out the washing a couple of weeks ago. Apart from the fact that this was probably a sign that the colonies in our garden had outstayed their welcome, it was also a chance to do some research on what, if anything, could be applied to a bee sting to neutralise the venom, or at least minimise the symptoms. A long time ago, Esther had been stung and had an unpleasant reaction. She wanted to do *something* to prevent that happening this time.

I wasn't at home at the time. I'm aware that ICE comes at the top of some articles on the subject on the web. But I was surprised to hear later that the weapon of choice Esther had chosen was... plain old vinegar! She soaked some kitchen roll in vinegar and held it in place for about 10 minutes.

I asked where on earth she'd got that idea. I just thought I'd try it, she said. And it worked!

The next day, while preparing to move the hives elsewhere, one of my gloves inadvertently slipped down, and I got a few stings on the inside of my wrist – not nice. With nothing to lose, I tried the vinegar method. I got the same, happy result.

I did eventually find a web article suggesting 'apple cider vinegar' as the seventh – and last – option for treating stings. I think they missed a trick. It works better if you ditch the apple cider bit, and just go for plain old *.

* Like many beekeepers, our vinegar comes from a 4% dilution of 80% acetic acid from the 5L bottle of Bonneyman's in the bee shed.

Archie McLellan



Book review: Nicola Bradbear's new book

Plant Trees, Sow Seeds, Save The Bees: Simple ways to bee-friendly

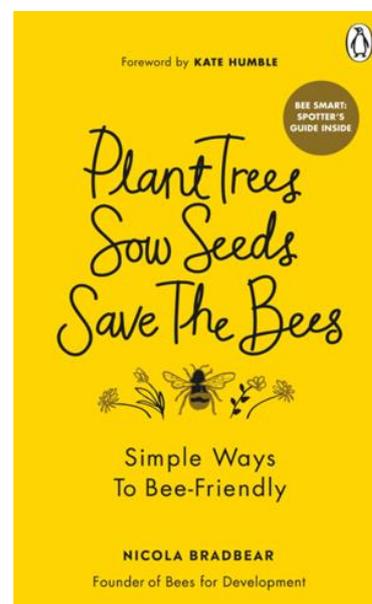
by Nicola Bradbear

Some of you may remember an inspiring talk on Zoom late last year from Dr Nicola Bradbear in which we heard about the work of the charity she founded, *Bees for Development*. So it is exciting to see that Nicola has written a book which tells how everyone can be engaged in alleviating the plight of pollinators – and, as the title of this book shows, taking up beekeeping is certainly not the first option to consider!

Loss of biodiversity is a crisis we have to address. This book offers guidelines to enable everyone to begin to make life choices to support insect populations, to differentiate between the stripey insects that they see, and to take steps to feed and protect them. Bees, wasps, hoverflies and other stripey insects are essential to keeping us, and our planet, alive.

In this little book, we can discover simple ways to help insects thrive in all green spaces – from gardens to window boxes and even pots. It is beautifully designed with illustrations of striped bees, wasps and flies.

Available from [Bees for Development](#) or booksellers.



Quiz

1. Name two varroa-free islands in the UK?
2. Name three natural compounds used in licensed varroa-treatments?
3. What is thought to be the route into the mite taken by oxalic acid?
4. How does a mite breathe when hiding, submerged in a pool of food at the bottom of a cell?
5. PRIZE DRAW QUESTION What are the first two tasks for a varroa mite to complete on surfacing from this

pond of larva food – and which two rooms of your house do these relate to?

Answers: 1. Isles of Man and Colonsay. 2. formic acid (eg MAQS), thymol (eg Apiguard), oxalic acid (eg Apibioxal). 3. through the feet of the mite. 4. Through a wind-pipe called a peritreme. 5. Submit your answer to this question by the end of May to enter the prize draw (bag of tablet/fudge).



Handy Hints

Moving hives a short distance – typically a few hundred metres.

Plan #1: (suggested by Mike Palmer - apparently!) Move the hive when the bees are at home, and place an obstacle such as a leafy branch of a tree/shrub about one metre in front of the entrance. This is to interrupt the bees flight path on exiting the hive and force them to reorientate. To gather stragglers, place a nuc at the original location with a partially drawn frame from the original hive. A day later, move the nuc to the new location. See [here](#) for more.

Plan #2: If you have several hives to move, just move one or two at a time, so that stragglers and returners might be able to gain access to one of the remaining hives. See [here](#) for more.

Plan #3: Replace the moved hives with a queenless hive with a queen cell, just a day from emerging. Block the entrances of the moved hives with grass leaving only a tiny space for a slow egress of bees. See [here](#) for more.



Do you know when to stop?

You probably think that it's a bit rich for the compiler of this newsletter to be asking – in the context of talking about bees and beekeeping – 'Do you know when to stop?' (The commonest comment about this newsletter refers to its length!)

Do you find that you go on a bit when people ask a question about beekeeping? With any luck, most of us have developed a fine awareness of eyes glazing over and realise that the time to stop was probably a minute or more ago! Sometimes, though, people can be very clear from the outset that they have no intention of encouraging even the tiniest amount of bee talk. [Here](#), John Cleese gets a very rough time from Rowan Atkinson.



Comments

To post a comment, please email the MBKA Newsletter.

No comment!



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Please send items for the newsletter by 18th 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

