



WHATSTHEBUZZ

July
2021

*Hello to July, to the summer
flowers, and to you all!*

I hope by now – after some weeks of good-for-queen-mating weather – that you have answers to unknowns that have beset many of us, possibly more than usually, this year. I am of course talking about colonies without open brood. Are they queenless, or just temporarily broodless? If all is well, you'll have the answer in the form of new brood. And if that didn't appear, let's hope you've been able to act in time to save the colony.

In July, it is customary to expect the main honey flow, weather permitting. After all the top fruit and tree flowers of spring which ended with walls of hawthorn along the sides of the M2, it might seem strange that the main event is still to come! Remember that colonies are populous and feeding may be needed if the weather is poor, and particularly if you took a spring honey crop. This is the time to requeen, if needed, with a mated queen. There is still time for queens to get mated, perhaps in conjunction with making up some nucs to over-winter. If these build up too fast, just remove a frame or two of brood.

Unless you permanently keep entrances very small (and some of us have found no downside to doing this), then reduce entrances when/if wasps and robbing become a problem. Any swarms you get will do little this year ('July, a fly, August, if you must' as the old rhyme goes), but they can be viable and successfully over-winter. Be sure they are treated for varroa.

Inside the hive, the queen is still laying worker brood and the colony is at maximum size. The bees still draw queen cells, they still swarm, and virgin queens successfully go on mating flights.

And outside the hive? John Chapman, our learned and esteemed chair, talks about summer forage in his chat this month. My old Module 2 notes say that we can expect hebe, lavender, Michaelmas daisy, ragwort, Old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*) and of course, bramble.

But of course, it depends...

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From our chairman

John Chapman, our chairman, speaks to the members each month, sometimes about the Association, sometimes about the bees.

WHATSTHEBUZZ So, what are you going to talk about for this month's WHATSTHEBUZZ, John?

John Chapman Summer forage. As we've just had a lot more rain, the nectar is going to start flowing again. Make sure your bees have enough room to store it all!

With the cold spring, a lot of flowers are appearing later. In some ways the June gap was in April when it was so dry and cold. I hope we don't have an early autumn. That would make life difficult. You have to start thinking about winter preparations then, not in January!

In autumn, you make sure they've got enough food, enough room, and that disease level is manageable, particularly with varroa control.

WTB What are the flowers in this area that the bees will forage on in July?

JC In July, in farming areas, you've got soft fruit like strawberries and raspberries. Obviously there's loads of bramble around which is very important, but don't forget all of the smaller flowers, the hedgerow flowers. And of course the trees. Last year there was little sweet chestnut. It came out, but weather was very hot and the nectar didn't flow.

In the gardens, any flower which is a single flower is important. The daisy (Aster) family are very good sources.

I've noticed on the allotment the honey bees are coming on to my broad beans. They're not going down the front of the flower but they've waited for the bumblebees to drill a little hole in the back. Then they go around the back, and collect the nectar from there.

Up towards Snodland they have reduced the amount of oil seed rape they grow. There are lots

of 'volunteers' along the edges of the fields and in verges.

WTB Volunteers?

JC Yes, We say volunteers for flowers from seeds that, instead of being in the soil where they should be, have been dropped anywhere else. It's a description for a seed out of place that's not a weed. So this word distinguishes between the two, I suppose.

WTB Many people would say that in this area, the season ends at the end of July. Do you agree?

JC It depends where you are. If you're in the towns, no, because people have this habit of watering their gardens, which is going to make the nectar go on. But in the countryside, if there's very little habitation, then, yes, the season will be over. But you get different kinds of agriculture and if they use irrigation, then the nectar flow will be extended.

WTB What kind of agriculture might there be in August?

JC Soft fruit. Sunflower. You've also got farmers with strips for feeding wild birds.

WTB What about ivy?

JC Yes, people do get an ivy crop in this area. The difficulty is that ivy goes solid very quickly. We continue feeding syrup because the honey doesn't go quite so hard and the bees can still use it. In spring we do the same again. If you get a massive amount coming in, you have to decide if you want it to end up in the brood box, or are you going to let them put it into a super. Difficult decision!

WTB Thanks John. What will we talk about next month?



Beekeeping Myths – part 2

My exploration in last month's WHATSTHEBUZZ of a list of myths in beekeeping which I scrounged from Emyr Jenkins's (jenkinsbrynmair) posts on Beekeeping Forum seems to have gone down without any audible (to me) howls of protest.

I thought I should begin today by making it clear what the source of these claims is. One reader said to me that she thought that I (Archie, novice beekeeper – what a joke!) was making all these claims on my own authority. No, like almost everything else that I write in our newsletter, I am presenting what others say. I choose writers whom I respect, and who I think readers might find interesting. And I indicate what my sources are.

On to the next batch of myths, then. First (in bold) comes each 'myth' – a statement frequently passed around as an unquestionable truism. Then follows, in brackets, Emyr Jenkins's explanation why the claim is wrong. Do you agree with him? Or do you think that these 'myths' might be frequently true, but not in every case. That's the problem with categorical statements; we feel cheated if we allow exceptions.

As so often in beekeeping, listen to and absorb what people say, then pay attention to your own observations.

Myth #10 Moisture/condensation dripping onto the bees and them freezing is the biggest killer. [Not so. This is one of the biggest myths in beekeeping. you should have no open holes in your crownboards, no vents in your roof, but instead stick a piece of 50mm Celotex permanently in the whole roof space. Because your crownboard is not cold, it won't get condensation. Any condensation will settle on the colder walls and run down the side walls and out of the open mesh floor.]

Woohoo!

Well done to those who finally got to sit their Module 3 exams in April 2021! The results have arrived and Jen Ferry, Veronica Owen, Sue Viner and Sonia Belsey all passed! Sonia distinction and everyone else with credit. Well done all.

Myth #11 In autumn, warm way colonies have their nest nearer the front of the hive and can slowly move through the stores to the back over the course of winter. [Not so. Exactly the same as what happens in a cold way hive.]

Myth #12 Turn your entrance block upside down over winter so that if bees die they don't block it internally. [Don't do this. It makes it harder for the bees to throw their dead out so they just lie in a bigger pile inside.]

Myth #13 Bees always travel up, not down, so tuck your trousers into your boots. [Didn't work for me! Two of the buggers pushed past my beesuit and way down into my left boot and I got stung on the bony bit of my ankle.]

Myth #14 The colony is most likely to be broodless around the shortest day of the year. [Not so. One of the more useful LASI findings was that the most likely time to find the colony broodless was late November/early December. Some of my colonies have a brood break in late August.]

Myth #15 Baker's fondant is not safe for bees. [Not so. Forget the expensive 'bee centric' fondant products; they're just bog standard baker's fondant with a picture of a bee on and a massive markup added.]

Myth #16 A newly mated queen won't start laying until all the brood from the previous queen has emerged. [Not so. I have often found eggs from a newly mated queen laid amongst sealed brood remaining from the previous queen.]

We're not finished yet! There's another beekeeping myth in the Comments section of this issue, from Bob Smith.



A massive thank you to those that organised and helped with the original Winter Study group pre-Covid and the Zoom revision sessions this year: Bob Smith, Tony Edwards, Mark Ballard, Archie McLellan and Jen Ferry.



MBKA news

Medway BKA Honey Show will be back this year. Same place and time as before: September 4-5, [Elm Court Garden Centre](#).

John Hendrie reports that the number of people who sat BBKA exam modules in April this year was exactly double the usual number. A back-log had built up, and there was an energy to get going again.

Perhaps it will be like that for this Honey Show. I hope so! Sue Chapman is the main organiser for the show



and she will be writing in next month's magazine about the Show

and how to enter for any of the classes.

If, like me, you find some of the judges' criteria for honey a bit tiresome and nit-picking, remember that if you do plan to sell your honey, it does make a difference if you can tell people that your honey is 'Award-winning'!



The Nucleus Method – of queen rearing!

First there was 'The Nucleus Method' of swarm control, where the queen is removed from the colony and placed in a viable nucleus colony, preferably in a distant apiary.

Then there is the nucleus method (no capitals) of swarm collection, where the cluster is hived straight into a nuc box without any intermediate cardboard box or skep collection stage.

Now we have the nucleus method (capitals?) of queen rearing. Inspired by her visits to Duncan Simmons, the bee breeder in Cornwall, Jen Ferry writes about how a nucleus colony can be an effective and simple means of starting queen cells as part of your queen rearing programme.

When raising queens, the colony manipulations can be daunting. One simple method of getting grafts and larval transfers started is to use a nuc. It relies on strong, healthy disease-free donor colonies.

By employing the emergency impulse to raise queens, multiple grafts can be started in one go using just a nuc box, some stores, and lots and lots of nurse bees.

Take a 5 or 6 frame nuc and place a frame of unsealed honey against each wall. Using an eke on top (if you have one), shake 8 or 9 frames of nurse bees from multiple hives into the box, taking great care not to introduce any queens. Add a frame of pollen and

frames of foundation or drawn comb, leaving a one frame gap in the middle of the nuc to take the frame of grafted larvae. Gently mist the bees with water and close the nuc with a mesh roof if one is available. Care must be taken not to overheat them.

Leave for two hours in a cool dark position. When ready to introduce the grafts, the bees will be roaring. 'Bump' the box to take the bees off the roof, open it and insert the frame with grafts into the middle of the nuc next to the pollen and finally close the box. With no other larvae in the box the nurse bees will immediately start to draw down the cells on the grafting bar.

Leave for 24-36 hours but ensure the nuc does not overheat. At this stage, the grafts should all have been drawn down and the grafting bar can now be placed in the top box of a double queenright cell finisher, above the queen excluder. Ensure there are no queen cells on the frames in the cell finisher and that there is adequate pollen and nectar available to continue to feed the unsealed queen cells. At 9 days cover with roller cages.

The bees from the cell starter nuc can now be shaken out in front of the donor hives and the stores frames reused.

Jen Ferry



Getting to know you: this month, John Hendrie

A series in which WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with one of its members about beekeeping and life in general. John Hendrie is Treasurer of MBKA and is hugely involved in the work of the BBKA and its education activities. He will be leaving Kent soon to live in Scotland.

WHATSTHEBUZZ Has beekeeping been part of your life for a long time?

John Hendrie I was brought up with beekeeping. My father was a beekeeper. My mother said that I got my first sting at about the age of six months. I've never really known a time without bees, although it wasn't until I left university that I really got involved. And since I got caught up with the British Beekeepers Association about 30 years ago, there's been no time to do anything else!

WTB So, after university, you started your career and your beekeeping.

JH My professional career was in the water industry. I thought it'd be a nice stable career. It turned out that was not the case at all. I've been through multiple reorganisations. My first job was in 1971, and I retired in 2004.

I was quite busy with bees, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. I had upwards of 30 hives and my biggest crop of honey in one year was just under a ton. I had the appropriate outlets for that. And I used to do selective queen rearing as well.

WTB How did you manage a full time job along with this level of beekeeping?

JH I ask myself the same question now! I could always arrange to find the time. You don't need to go into your hives every day. You've just got to keep them under control.

WTB You now have a house in Scotland and plan to move there soon.

JH Yes, it's in the village of Scotlandwell which is near Kinross.

WTB I think you've just returned from a visit to Scotland.

JH Yes. It's hard work up there! I assisted my friend Enid Brown with removing 33 supers – but I moved most of them! We extracted 15 but I had to travel back for BBKA purposes and left the other 18 (another 300 pounds of honey) for others to do.

It's the first time for about 10 years that Enid has used her 20-frame radial extractor. With the amount of honey she's had over the last nine years, a little table top extractor in the kitchen was more than adequate.

WTB After the cold spring, I'm surprised that the honey crop this year has been so large.

JH I think the cold spring was an advantage; plants came later and then we had some very hot weather which flowers like clover need to yield nectar. Somebody was telling me that on hawthorn, you expect one decent crop every 40 years. I think this year was the time it all worked!

WTB How were the bees you were working with?

JH We were working with some beginner beekeepers from Fife and Dunfermline BKAs in May. The bees were really good tempered. You could handle bees without gloves. It's a bit different when we take the honey off – definitely put the gloves on then!

WTB Do you combine beekeeping with foreign travel?

JH Sevenoaks (where I live) is twinned with Pontoise in France. I've been over to Pontoise many times since 1981. We arranged that we had



a visit to the beekeepers one year, and to the official group the next year.

My French used to be very good back in the 80s. It was good enough to stand up in front of a group of French people and give an impromptu speech with no notes. I can't do that now. It's the old story. Use it or lose it.

I was at Apimondia in 2009 in Montpellier in the south of France. I went on one of the technical tours and there was a big rumpus when they discovered that we were not visiting any beekeepers. So the people on the tour made some phone calls as they knew where there might be a beekeeper. He said, 'Oh yes you can come and visit my apiary in the afternoon.' This was near the Pyrenees. So our busload of people turned up. Then it was right off with the roofs and out with the frames and there wasn't a veil in sight!

WTB You must be aware of antipathy in some circles such as Beekeeping Forum to the work of the BBKA. What's your take on this?

JH I don't do forums. I haven't the time. In beekeeping, you're never going to get everybody to agree. This is what it's like when you're in government of any sort. It's much easier to be in the opposition, whether in the Labour Party, or in beekeeping. I imagine in the angling society or any other society you care to think of it'll be just the same.

I personally think the BBKA does a pretty good job. The website is maybe not as advanced as it could be but if we didn't have Diane Drinkwater keeping it up to date, it would have cost a lot of money.

In Medway BKA, we are very lucky with our website, that Paul spends so much time doing it.

I think that's something that's worth saying: we all must work together. At the County Show, the different associations work together. Beekeeping is too small for us all to go off in different directions.

WTB Do you have any other interests?

JH I like photography and I like to travel but my travelling tends to be associated with beekeeping. I'm trying to sort out my photographs from over the last 50 years.

WTB Is there a particular book you'd recommend?

JH The Encyclopaedia of Beekeeping by Morse and Hooper – a very good reference book.

WTB Favourite speaker?

JH That's more difficult because there are many out there these days. I always enjoy listening to Pam Hunter and Margaret Murdin.

WTB What are your hopes for MBKA?

JH What I'm hoping is that the new apiary will work well. My advice in a branch apiary is that it's important to keep it simple, particularly with hive types. In MBKA we've got the 14 x 12s and the Standard Nationals.

We've been very lucky to have Terry Clare and Bob Smith running our education programme. The advantage of the BBKA exam system is that it gives you syllabuses which can provide a structure for learning.

Zoom has changed so much about our meetings. I think most associations will probably carry on with it; some of the meetings will be Zoom, and some of them will be face to face. We do need the latter for practical beekeeping.

People shouldn't rush to get their first bees too soon. They need to have a year of visiting the association apiary, handling the bees, and trying different equipment.

You need to make sure you've got a good site, and a reasonable amount of space so that you're not going to be a nuisance to neighbours. Get a mentor, and get advice on where to site hives. Medway BKA is quite good at helping people with this.

WTB Many thanks, John. It has been a pleasure to talk to you. Good luck with your move to Scotland.



MBKA apiaries

CITY WAY APIARY – Clean-up day 5 June 2021

What a good turn-out! Many thanks to all who turned up: Terry, Tim, Sheila, Simon, Paul, Peter, Darren, Bob, Nigel and Margaret. In total 11 members helped with the clean-up. No doubt Archie will be disappointed not to see his name on that list. However, in garden maintenance it's more than the thought that counts, and if you get called away to pick up a swarm just after you arrive, that's too bad!

Social distancing was observed and with so many hands light work was made of cutting the grass and strimming the edges, weeding the beds, strimming the entrance alley, cutting down brambles growing on the fences, and clearing the weeds in the corner between and behind the two sheds.

Tim and Simon cut the grass (twice!), and Paul N organised lighting the bonfire of old fence panels and vegetation; very little of the Ash tree stump now remains.



Intense concentration, Simon!

Sheila organised some welcome refreshments – water, Belgian buns and doughnuts. It was a very sunny, warm day!

Mark Ballard, Apiary Manager



Recent research



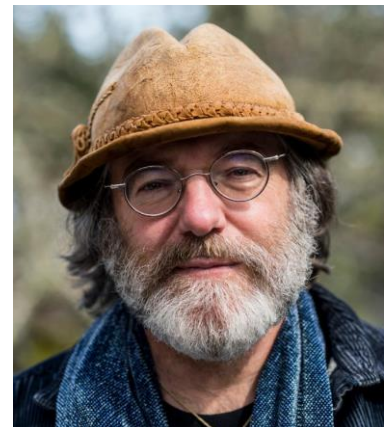
Those of you who have seen the Netflix documentary *Fantastic fungi* might remember the mycologist Paul Stamets talking about the possibility that some fungi might be effective as a treatment for varroa.

[A new study, co-authored by Stamets, and published in](#)

[Nature](#), describes research in evolving an entomopathogenic fungus (one that can act as a parasite of insects and kills or seriously disables them) which has had some success as a varroa treatment, comparable to conventional acaricides.

This is an exciting development because these fungi can be precisely targeted and have low toxicity to organisms which are not targeted. And their residue has minimal effect in the environment.

The problem is that the interior of a honey bee hive is warm – too warm for these fungi to survive – and this study reports on the efforts to evolve new strains of the fungi *Metarhizium* so that it can survive at 35°C.



The authors admit that they have not yet created a means to provide a non-chemical replacement for today's acaricides but their research shows that 'entomopathogenic fungi are evolutionarily labile and capable of playing a larger role in modern pest management practices.'



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:

SITING A NEW APIARY

Traditionally farmers, landowners and beekeepers have shared a relationship built on good will. Bees bring increased pollination for crops, while hedgerows and woodland benefit from increased pollination providing more fruits for birds and mammals as do many nearby horticultural smallholdings and gardens.

Also traditionally, rent is 1lb of honey per hive per year.

The not-very-elegant acronym for this topic is **P F E A S**. **P**ublic, **F**orage, **E**nvironment, **A**ccess, **S**pace – the five areas to be considered when choosing a site for a new apiary.

The PUBLIC

- if people get alarmed about your bees, you may have to move them with the loss of a site for yourself and others
- keep sites out of plain view, and not near public paths, or, more importantly, bridleways because of the height of mounted riders
- keep neighbours on side; be aware of problems caused by bees drinking in neighbouring ponds, or defecating on cars or clothes on washing lines
- hives kept out of sight are less likely to be vandalised
- high fences and trellises can ensure that bees fly upwards directly out of hives
- keep only good-tempered bees – and requeen any which turn nasty
- always get permission unless you own the site
- be responsible and control swarming

FORAGE

- agriculture may provide rich forage – but only for a short period. Nothing from cereals or salad leaves.

- gardens, field and road edges, and waste ground can provide all-year round forage – but possibly not if there is competition from other bees
- some beekeepers move hives for specialised forage such as heather, lime, or rape
- it's not a good idea to compete with commercial beekeepers who may well be paying for a particular location

ENVIRONMENT

- weather: protection from wind (especially from north and east); avoid frost pockets
- need for water supply for bees – though bees generally seem to be able to find water
- avoid damp sites – eg under trees
- protection from large animals: livestock, deer, badgers

ACCESS

- level ground is good, but remember that grass can get muddy, with no grip for vehicles
- car access is good, but a hive barrow can help with transporting boxes up to a certain distance
- ability to come and go when necessary, day and night

SPACE

- allow for more hives than you will initially have
- hives should face in different directions to avoid drifting
- two-hive space between hives
- plan where you will stand (not in front of hives) and where you will place roofs and boxes when inspecting; remember frames can be aligned with either the hive front/back (warm way) or the sides (cold way).

REFERENCES

<https://beekeepingforum.co.uk/threads/what-to-look-for-in-an-out-apiary.47332/>

<https://beekeepingforum.co.uk/threads/finding-site.48949/>



Become an associate member – over and over!

It costs very little to become an associate member of a BKA – typically £5-10 pa. This is because the bulk of a subscription is taken up with Bee Disease Insurance, and subscriptions to BBKA News and BeeCraft. However, if you are already a full member of a BKA with your BDI and magazine subscriptions, but you would like to be connected to another BKA, perhaps as a gesture of support or connection, associate membership is the way to do this.

At least that's how it worked in the past. The pandemic and Zoom meetings have changed all this. Now distance is no object and we can if we chose attend BKA meetings all over the country – on Zoom.

Usually you have to be a member of a BKA to enjoy these benefits: the newsletter, emails to the membership, and, most significantly, admission to talks on Zoom. This is not always the case though. MBKA ran its series of talks last winter open to any who received the link – and it was sent to a dozen of our neighbouring associations.

Words

BEEKEEPING FORUM is now BEEKEEPING & APICULTURE FORUM. What's that about?! Don't both words mean the same? Is there a Gardening & Horticulture Forum, I wonder? Anyway, I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that, with a world-wide audience, BF is simply trying to increase its visibility. Perhaps one word is more used than the other in different countries.

Last month, the word 'apiology' appeared in WHATSTHEBUZZ. [Maybe this was the source of Paul Newman's broadside in the Comments!] It is an unusual word but straightforward: anything ending in '-logy' refers to the study of something, and 'apis' refers to the honey bee. Amazing how taxonomy can make you sound as if you've been to the same school as our PM.

Presently Cambridge BKA is running a series of fortnightly Zoom talks and they have garnered some big names for their programme: among others, Prof Thomas Seeley and Prof. Robert Pickard. Attendance at these talks is limited to members of CBKA only. And rather than make this a reason to exclude non-members, anyone with an interest is invited to become an associate member.

As always it was a privilege and something of a revelation to hear Robert Pickard – though he does have some themes which appear in almost all his talks, whether he's talking about viruses or the origin of the universe.

Finally, if you like reading newsletters (yes, there are some people who actually do!), then sign up to associations which produce good ones. I particularly enjoy the offerings from High Weald, Mid-Kent, and Warwick & Leamington.

Archie McLellan



But there's another word that looks as if it might mean the same: *melittology*. You can't go anywhere near a Module 3 course without bumping into the pollen mite *melittiphis*.

Melitta (note, just one 'L') is also an ancient word for bee, in this case, the Greek word. In fact, *melittology* is a branch of entomology concerning the scientific study of bees. Not honey bees, all and any bees.

This has nothing to do with any difference in the Latin and Greek words. They both mean 'bee'. Sometimes taxonomy labellers chose from Greek, sometimes from Latin.

Apiculture is another word for beekeeping. However, if you tire of referring to yourself as a beekeeper, you might be wiser to refer to yourself not as an *apiculturist* but as an *apiarist*.

No, I think I'll stay with 'beekeeper'.



Social media for beekeepers

Social media can be a foreign concept to some but it opens up so many possibilities of contacting other beekeepers, asking each other questions, buying second hand equipment and just seeing what others are up to. There are many platforms:

- Facebook have many groups where you can ask questions, post pictures, videos, things for sale and get involved in discussions (although some are more like arguments!).
- Instagram is a photo-sharing social media app, so it's much more visual with pictures and videos.

You can be as involved as much as you like; just browsing or getting involved in conversations. You can even create your own content to share with others.

Some of the amazing things I've seen recently include [The Texas Beeworks](#) videos on colony removals. This lady is brave, or just crazy, and rarely wears a bee suit.

You can see behind the scenes at many companies like BJ Sherriff and Thornes. They often have competitions on their Instagram and Facebook pages too!

Social media is great for networking. I 'follow' beekeepers from all over the world including New Zealand, Australia, USA and Norway. It's great to see what they are up to in their apiaries and in the winter

you can get your beekeeping fix watching our friends down under! I learn things from what they post and we ask each other questions. If you're on Facebook there are many groups closer to home to follow including neighbouring associations as well as

the groups 'British and Irish Beekeepers', 'Beekeepers Buying or Selling UK'. There are also study groups for the BBKA modules. Search with the format BBKA Module 1/2/3/5/6/7 Study Group.

People can also contact Medway Beekeepers through our social media pages. **This month we've had an offer of a home for a beehive or two in exchange for a few jars of honey.** Fiona Williams has 20 acres in Luddesdown grazed in rotation with wildflowers most of the year. If you are interested contact Fiona on 07837 675357, email petitparle@yahoo.co.uk.

Sonia Belsey, Committee, Social media



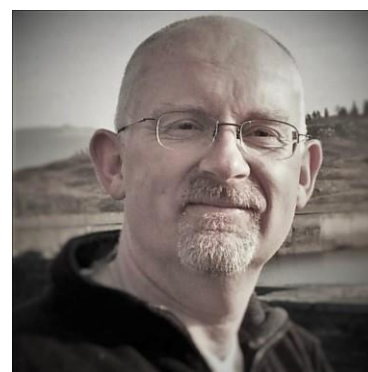
Are you looking for bees?

Perhaps some of you who have done the MBKA Introduction to Beekeeping course have yet to find bees and get started in beekeeping. Perhaps others are looking to increase or restore their hive numbers.

One of our members, Andy Garnham, is reducing his hive numbers. Currently he has six colonies and would rather have just two or three in his garden.

Andy says: 'The hives are Nationals with 14x12 frames. If people just want the bees (on the frames) I am happy let them go for free; if people want to take the complete hives then I am sure we can come to some agreement on price.

'Looking forward to us meeting as a group again. That will help my motivation!'



The spoken word



At a talk to Cambridge BKA, Robert Pickard was asked:

What do you say in response to the bad press sometimes surrounding honey bees? Many would say that the increase in beekeeping in recent years is now at a level that threatens other pollinators.

Robert Pickard 'I don't know how anyone could develop a bad press about honey bees. To me that's a ridiculous notion because we don't have enough wild honey bees to perform all the pollination that we require. So all the colonies that are kept by beekeepers simply help this situation. If you take a look at hoverflies for example as pollinators, their contract is not with the same species of flower as the honey bee. Their contract is with Compositae that are normally not visited by honey bees in large numbers. So it all depends on the species. If you look at all the different bees and their relationship with their flowers, you'll find that the honey bee doesn't in any sense drive out the ivy bee for example when it visits ivy or the hoverfly when it chooses to visit a Compositae flower

like a daisy. The hoverfly is the better pollinator of a Compositae flower, but the fact that honey bees are there doesn't cause any problem for the hoverfly at all. So on balance when you look at the range of pollination that's going on I can't believe anyone would think that it was a bad thing to keep bees.

'I sit on the editorial board of the Journal of Apicultural Research, and also for the journal Bee World, and there is no feeling in the scientific community (whose efforts are devoted to studying not just honey bees, but all the different bees and related insects) that there's any real problem with beekeepers producing bees. Generally speaking, honey bees are not going to interfere at all with the activities of other pollinators.

'But we still need more bumble bees and we still need more solitary bees, not because they're being excluded by the honeybees, but because we're making it harder for them. We're making it harder for mice to build nests that bumble bees can use to start off their own colonies in the spring. We're making it harder for solitary bees to survive the winter because of all the insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides that we're pouring into our gardens and onto various crops – when it's done badly. So, it's the environment that we are creating that's damaging many groups of pollinators, including the honey bee, it's not the large numbers of honey bees themselves.'

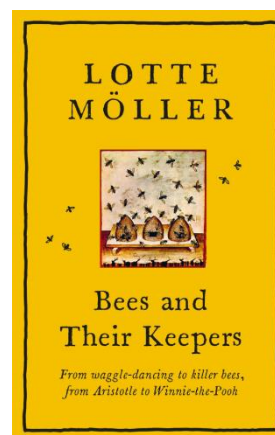


Book review

Bees and Their Keepers: From waggle-dancing to killer bees, from Aristotle to Winnie-the-Pooh by Lotte Möller.

I am grateful to John Chapman for recommending this book. It is a highly unusual book, which is something of an achievement in itself. Beekeeping has been practised, researched, and written about for millennia, and many publications amount to little more than a representation of previously published material.

Lotte Möller presents the history of beekeeping, of how people and institutions have perceived and tried to understand honey bees through the ages. Some would say that the best way to understand honey bees is to learn about their biology. In a sense this book is the polar opposite of biology. Here we encounter centuries of ideas about bees, of how humans and honey bees have interacted throughout history. It is personal too. The author tells of her own experiences with her bees, and addresses some of the complexities of modern life in the bee world. This is a beautiful book, with its own distinctive voice and wonderful illustrations.



Quiz

What do these words mean?

1. lerp
2. slungum
3. Paenibacillus larvae
4. levulose
5. perga

Last month's quiz PRIZE DRAW QUESTION

What are the first two tasks for a varroa mite to complete on surfacing from the pond of larva food at the bottom of a cell – and which two rooms of your house do these relate to?

No one sent in the correct answer to this question. At least part of it is, admittedly, rather obscure! Here is the full answer:

The first task for the varroa mother is to establish a feeding site; she does this by puncturing the cuticle of the larva. The wound does not heal so the mites are

able to feed here for the duration of their stay in the cell. This is their *kitchen-diner*.

The mother mite then establishes a 'rendezvous' site for the whole family by depositing her faeces on the cell wall. So naturally this relates to a *toilet* – though the function of this second site may be a general go-to site, including for mating, not just for depositing waste material.

REFERENCE [Donzé, G. and P.M. Guerin 1994.](#)

[Behavioral attributes and parental care of Varroa mites parasitizing honeybee brood.](#)

Answers: 1. A structure of crystallised honeydew. 2. The residue of propolis, cocoons, bits of wax, and honey that remains after removal of the readily extractable honey and wax from honeycombs. 3. The bacterium that causes American foulbrood. 4. Another term for fructose. 5. Bee bread (pollen stored in brood cells) (usually) and mixed with saliva and honey).



Trivia

There is a Module 3 exam question in which you are asked to name **six winged pests of honey bees**. If you exclude robber honey bees (and you shouldn't), there's a list of 15 in this lovely book, *Bees and Their Keepers: Through the seasons and centuries, from waggle-dancing to killer bees, from Aristotle to Winnie-the-Pooh* by Lotte Möller. She writes:

'Great tits are far from the only creatures beekeepers are warned about in the literature of the past. They

were also to look out for swallows, swifts, woodpeckers, storks, ducks, turkeys, peacocks, wasps, bumblebees, grasshoppers, ants, dragonflies, wax moths, other moths including the death's-head moth, ~~spiders~~ (not eligible – no wings) and robber bees.'

You'll notice that in the past there was no awareness of Asian hornet or Small hive beetle as winged honey bee pests.

Archie McLellan



Handy Hints

BROODLESS OR QUEENLESS? Perhaps you feel absolutely certain that one of your colonies is queenless so you are going to introduce a new mated queen. Even so, you should probably wait for a week before doing anything, or, if nothing else, place a test frame of eggs or young larvae in the hive. Reliably – but not invariably – the bees will draw queen cells within a

day if they really are queenless. If you do introduce a queen to a colony which already has one – even one which is not (yet) laying – you will almost certainly lose your introduced queen.

[In *The Apiarist* blog this week, deciding to wait another week in **two successive weeks** will almost always end in tears.]



Comments

To post a comment, please email the MBKA Newsletter.

From Bob Smith Under Beekeeping Myths I would add this: 'The first emerging virgin queen pipes to locate other queens, then goes around and kills them'. This is WRONG but so often repeated. The first emerging queen pipes (toots) and others in cells respond (quack); this duet tells house bees that they have more than a single viable queen so they prepare a secondary swarm (cast) to leave with the first virgin queen. The second virgin emerges (or is allowed to emerge), toots etc, etc. If/when there is no quack response, there are no further casts; the virgin queen mates and returns to head the colony.

Varroa anatomy (quiz questions) – like other invertebrates, they breath through a series of paired spiracles; there is a **pair** of peritremes adjacent to the spiracles near the front of the carapace.

Keep up the good work!!

From Derek Forbes The bee sting remedy in this month's WHATSTHEBUZZ reminded me of something I tried once. I got stung on the back of the knee, and I screamed and dropped my smoker. I had read in an old book that a quick fix was to touch the hot nose of the smoker on the area that was stung. I tried it. This time I screamed and threw the smoker in a bush.

From Jane Howells Thank you Archie for this newsletter – really appreciate your time and those

others who contributed to it. Thoroughly good, interesting and informative read!!

From Robert Frost I found the section on beekeeping myths very interesting. I've long been convinced that much of what is said about beekeeping is just someone's own opinion that has been repeated enough times to be taken as the truth. (Much like the £350 million on the side of the Brexit bus, but let's keep politics out of it). Good to know that I am not alone in my questioning of these beekeeping 'truths' 😊. The bees do well despite us, not always because of us!

And after reading the 'What did you do in the Apiary' section, it definitely prompted thoughts of 'hmm, maybe that's what I should be doing'. Much better to get that sort of info from someone local, as opposed to reading advice in BeeCraft which may be given by someone in Scotland whose weather and climate are very different to what we experience down here on the Costa-del-Medway.

Thanks – keep up the good work (it is appreciated).

From Paul Newman Shorter, easier words please, Archie 😊

From Veronica Owen What a lovely newsletter again!!! I'm not sure about Quiz Q number 5... even after the Module 3 exam... I'll keep thinking.



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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

