



# WHATSTHEBUZZ

November  
2021

Hello to November, to full-blown Autumn, and to you all

My favourite introduction-to-beekeeping book is not really a book at all but an online pdf called *The Basics of Beekeeping*, by Members of Dunblane and Stirling Beekeepers' Association. The writer(s) of this brilliant book are not even named! On p72 it has a summary of the annual cycle of beekeeping – the beekeeping year – for the locality of Dunblane, Perthshire. For November, the briefest entry for any month, it states:

*A quiet month. Periodically check hives have not been disturbed by weather or vandals. Do not disturb the bees.*

So that's it, then. We can binge-watch Netflix, or if we feel like going outdoors just once, pop down to the Odeon to see James Bond.

Who's to say what the weather will be like in two weeks' time. On 13 October, in 16°C+, I spent a quick five hours (it went in so fast!) checking a number of my hives. A pattern emerged. Those that were very populous had just a little sealed brood (no eggs or larvae), and looked as if they would be completely broodless by the end of October. A few hives with smaller populations had much more brood, including large areas of eggs.

Colonies can have broodless periods almost any time from September till December. There may not be any correlation between broodless periods and cold weather – though the bees will definitely be rearing brood from January on.

Those who inserted amitraz strips in August will be removing them around now. Some would say that if the colonies are broodless, then treat with oxalic acid straightaway to mop up the remaining mites – and hopefully have mite-free, healthy colonies through till the annual cycle starts again after the summer crop.

Other items for November: review your notes for the past year, and write down plans for next year based on this year's experiences. Join a study course, or do your own winter study. At the hives, having completed protection from avian and mammalian pests, check everything is secure against strong and cold winds.

Inside the hive, the bees will move into a T-shaped cluster, particularly if there is insulation on the crownboard or in the roof. Gradually, with reduced or non-existent brood, the population will fall, and consist mostly of winter bees – a long-life caste of bees which develops from being fed a lean, low-pollen diet.

Outside the hive, the extended flowering period of ivy is not yet over. And we still have glorious yellow chrysanthemums in our garden.

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# From our Chair

*John Chapman, our Chair, speaks to the members each month, sometimes about the Association, sometimes about the bees. Today he talks about ...*

**WHATSTHEBUZZ** Welcome John. What's the topic this month?

**John Chapman** The National Honey Show. It begins this Thursday and runs till Saturday.

**WTB** Will you be there?

**JC** Very much so. I've been involved in the running of it for many years, stewarding and so on. The good thing about being part of the organising team is the people you get to speak to, like the participants when they bring their entries for the competitions. You hear some of the speakers' talks too, and you sometimes get the chance to speak to them informally. That can be very interesting.

**WTB** Tell us about the programme of talks.

**JC** There are two or three talks every morning and afternoon for the three days of the show. An unusual one is from Vince Gallo: *How to build honey comb – a bricklayer's perspective*. Torben Schiffer will talk about his perspective of the unnaturalness of modern beekeeping: the harm it does to the bees themselves, the harm it does to wild pollinators, and the loss of all beneficial effects of natural selection.

**WTB** Kristen Traynor is a major presence too.

**JC** Yes, four talks no less! Kirsten is American and a former editor of *American Bee Journal*. She founded the quarterly magazine *2 Million Blossoms* a couple of years ago. One of her talks is a sort of foil or response to Schiffer's position. She examines the current media position which is very critical of honey bees, how they outcompete other pollinators, and transmit their diseases too. She explores what the research says and what the real issues are.

**WTB** It doesn't sound as if there's much on practical beekeeping.

**JC** Wrong! Kirsten Traynor actually has a couple of sessions on *Reading a hive*, and on *A comparison of queen rearing techniques*.



**WTB** I believe MBKA has a connection with the talks programme.

**JC** Yes, our president, Pip Blaxland, is the sponsor of one of the Friday morning lectures, along with two memorial awards – one for the Best Mead in the Show and the other for the lady beekeeper with the Best Exhibit in the Open and NHS Members Classes, Honey, Wax and Mead. He set this up in memory of his first wife, Jean, who died some years ago.

**WTB** I get the impression that the programme is fairly heavy – not particularly geared for people who are new to beekeeping.

**JC** Wait till I finish then. I was going to tell you there's a special programme of four talks on Saturday for those who have recently started with bees. Lynfa Davies (who has a talk in the main programme on *Bee behaviour*, of interest to our Module 6 group) will talk about Nutrition, Karl Colyer reflects on *Things I wish I'd learnt earlier*, Roger Patterson talks on swarming, and Daisy Day's topic is *Wintering Well*.

There's so much going on, much of it at the same time, but you can catch up on talks you've missed on the NHS YouTube channel later.

**WTB** I suppose people spend time milling around too.

**JC** Yes, the main space is for the beekeeping trade, and for the displays and exhibitions of all the entries for the competitions.

If you want to buy any kit, or trade-in your recycled wax, you can save the postage costs by doing this at the Show.

It's a great three days, a huge organisational feat, and it will be good to have an in-person Show once again.

I hope lots of our members will visit for at least one day. The one thing really good thing that's not on the programme is the chance to see and chat with others who share our fascination with bees.



# A new series of MBKA Winter Talks has begun

*The Inspector Calls: A light-hearted but informative look at nine years of experience as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in the South East.*

This was the title of our first talk of our new Winter Series, given by David Rudland. We – all 30 of us! – were back, after 20 months, in the old venue at Wainscott Hall, to hear him.

We hear a lot about foulbrood and Bee Inspectors (BIs) in the same sentence when studying bee pests and diseases. And although finding and controlling both American and European foulbrood is a major part of their work, the work of our BIs is so much more than that.

The chat with ‘our’ BI, Kay Wreford, in the April issue of WTB, did much to clarify our understanding of the role of the BI. David Rudland in his talk gave a lucid, informative, and comprehensive survey of the history and work of the National Bee Unit, and how BIs are an important part of the day-to-day field work.

He also described in great detail the website of the NBU, [BeeBase](#), encouraging us to sign up to it, and to keep our entries with hive numbers and locations up-to-date. There is a huge amount of valuable information on BeeBase, both general advice on beekeeping, but also details of research, and facts about the incidence of disease, particularly foulbrood, with geographical and numerical data.

Being a government organisation, the history of the NBU is littered with acronyms: NAAS, MAFF, DEFRA, Fera, APHA...

David regretted an organisational change in 2013 which saw the inspectorate in APFA, part of DEFRA, separated from the research and development activity which is now in Fera. It’s now much more difficult for BIs to get quick answers to technical and scientific queries.

In 2005, there were 20 BIs. Now there are over 40. In addition to foulbrood, BIs look for signs of invasive species like Tropilaelaps and Small hive beetle. They take part in the hunt for Asian hornets. BIs check a percentage of imports of some foods, plants and animals (bees!). They also check honey samples for residues of chemicals that could be harmful in human food.

Training is thorough and ongoing and BIs are continuously monitored. Much of David’s talk was devoted to public relations: how people (beekeepers) perceive BIs, and how BIs generate support for their work and goals. He described the nitty-gritty of visiting apiaries, sometimes going through up to 60 colonies in a day, and helping with destruction of AFB infected colonies. Usually, things work out well. When they have experience of working with a BI, beekeepers tend to be grateful and form a high regard for the work they do.

David’s final message was: this is a valuable service, paid for by the taxpayer. Register your apiaries on BeeBase, and use the service, because at the moment it is free for the end-user. The best way to keep it that way is to show that it is needed and valued.

**BeeBase**

**Log in to BeeBase**  
Use BeeBase to manage your own beekeeping diary and access your NBU records and reports.  
[Log in to BeeBase](#) | [New to BeeBase?](#)

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**Welcome to BeeBase**  
BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. It is designed for beekeepers and supports Defra, Welsh Government and Scotland's Bee Health Programme. BeeBase supports the aims of [Healthy Bees Day 2020](#), which focus on protecting and sustaining our valuable national bee stocks.  
Our website provides a wide range of agricultural information for beekeepers, to help keep their colonies healthy and productive. It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts.  
We hope both new and experienced beekeepers will find this an extremely useful resource and sign up. Please provide [feedback](#) on what you think and what you'd like to see on the site. Knowing the distribution of beekeepers and their activities across the country helps us to effectively monitor and control the spread of various honey bee pests and diseases, as well as provide up-to-date information in keeping bees healthy and productive. By telling us who you are you'll be playing a very important part in helping to maintain and sustain honey bees for the future. Joining a [Beekeeping Association](#) has many advantages for both new beekeepers and the more experienced. You can also look at our [Info to Contact](#) page for more information.  
Please play your part and help us by [signing up to BeeBase here](#).

**Latest NBU news**  
**Asian hornet confirmed in the Ascot area of Berkshire**  
A beekeeper in the Ascot area of Berkshire filmed live insects near a hive, photographed a dead Vespa velutina and reported the sighting using the [usd](#) app.

**Information resource for beekeepers**

**Sign up to BeeBase**  
As well as being able to put the details of your bees and apiaries onto BeeBase including inspections information, you may also be able to arrange an apiary visit from your local inspector who can provide the comprehensive help and advice you need. Please bear in mind that inspectors are very busy with a prioritised inspection programme and that it may not be possible to arrange these visits straight away. This workload means that they will usually only arrange a visit if they think it necessary to see the colonies first hand.

**Send us some feedback**  
We are continually looking at ways we can improve BeeBase and welcome any feedback. Please [click here](#) to submit your suggestions.

**Advisory leaflets**  
To assist beekeepers in caring for their colonies, the National Bee Unit have produced [advisory leaflets and training manuals](#).

*BeeBase, the website of the NBU. Sign up and keep your entry up to date.*



# MBKA Calendar



The results are in from the calendar competition that ran alongside the photography class in this year's Honey Show and the 2022 MBKA calendar has been created! It may be early to be thinking about next year but it is less than 100 days till Christmas and at £9.50 the calendar will make an excellent gift! It's an A3 portrait calendar (half a page for the photo, half the dates). It includes 12 stunning images from the photography class submissions. If you wish to purchase a calendar please transfer your money to the account below and email me

(sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk) to confirm the amount you are ordering. To keep costs down I will be hand-delivering when I get them printed so let me

know the address you would like them delivered to; for those of you further afield postage can be arranged. There is a strict deadline of 31 October to send orders with payment. There may be an opportunity for a second print run but costs may go up!

My payment details:

- Miss S L Belsey
- Account number: 00380126
- Sort Code: 11-13-52



For those that may not be technology friendly, I'm happy for cheques to be sent to my address: Please contact me or WHATSTHEBUZZ for the address.

Sonia Belsey



## From the BBKA

### Protect Pollinators from Pesticides amendment update

The amendment to this bill is being debated TOMORROW, 20 October and the BBKA would like MPs to be informed about your opinions. The amendment 53 is in clause 73 and can be accessed [here](#).

Time is short but if you would like to lobby your MP by sending a letter, you might find [this draft](#) useful. You may be able to find your MPs email details [here](#) or [here](#). Thank you. Anne Rowberry, BBKA Chair

## Third party public & product liability insurance

I recently read that any (all) sensible beekeepers would have public and product liability insurance. I didn't know if that made me stupid or insured. I didn't even know where to look – until an email came from the BBKA last week on that very matter.

I googled 'Benefits of BBKA membership'. [There it was](#). In a list of 11 benefits, the fifth was £10 million third party public & product liability insurance. It's a benefit that is conferred on all members of BBKA-affiliated associations.

The recent email from Leigh Sidaway at the BBKA addresses the matter of beekeepers having a certificate to show that they did have this insurance. These certificates are not generally available from insurance companies. The BBKA are working to provide some sort of document for beekeepers who need one and it will be stored on the BBKA News website – but there seems to be a problem and it's not there at the moment. I'll get back to you next month with any developments.



## Words

*Honey bee or honeybee?*

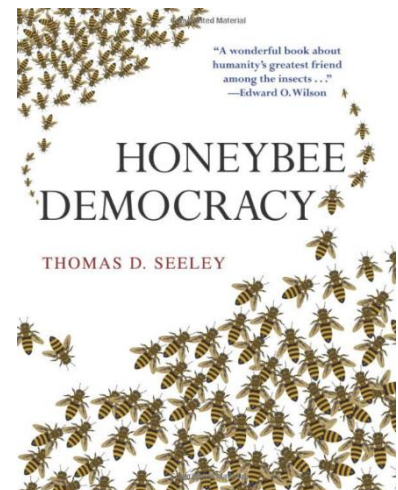
Apparently the rule is that if the name is a fair description of what the insect is, keep the two words apart; otherwise run them together.

R.E.Snodgrass, in his *Anatomy of the Honey Bee* puts it beautifully:

*If the insect is what the name implies, write the two words separately; otherwise run them together. We have such names as house fly, blow fly, and robber fly*

*contrasted with dragonfly, caddicefly, and butterfly, because the latter are not flies, just as an aphislion is not a lion and a silverfish is not a fish. The honey bee is an insect and is preeminently a bee; 'honeybee' is equivalent to 'Johnsmith.'*

Anyone care to tell this to Prof Thomas D Seeley, author of **Honeybee Democracy**, arguably the most celebrated bee book for several decades.



## Getting to know you: this month, George Zhelyazkov

*A series in which WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with MBKA members about beekeeping and life in general. This month, WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with George Zhelyazkov*

**WHATSTHEBUZZ** Welcome, George, it was good to see you at David Rudland's talk last night.

**George Zhelyazkov** Yes, it was a good talk. I had a little chat with him. I didn't like the sound of using petrol to cull a colony with

AFB, and I asked him about alternatives. My father had had to do this very thing for AFB, but I think he used some kind of insecticide.

**WTB** Tell us how you got started in beekeeping.

**GZ** As a child, I worked with my grandfather at his bees in Bulgaria, and also with uncapping and spinning honey. I was used to being around bees, not scared of



stings. I didn't take up beekeeping for myself till a year and a half ago when I joined Medway BKA, but I was ready in that I was comfortable around bees.

**WTB** So you got your own bees?

**GZ** I got a 6-frame nuc, but the seller told me the box was too small and to put it in a full-size hive. I split it and a new queen was raised and successfully mated.

**WTB** Where do you keep the bees?

**GZ** I have a workshop near Chatham station with 4-metre high wall surrounding the yard. They don't cause any problems with the people around. I have one hive there and some more near Hartley, south of the A2, below Gravesend.

**WTB** How are things going?

**GZ** Generally very well, though I did kill a queen by sliding a queen excluder in between two boxes. I should have lifted the upper box off! I didn't think the queen would be right in the space between the two boxes.

**WTB** How awful, how did that work out?

**GZ** They raised a new queen and I saw the virgin but she must have failed to get mated. Next thing I knew, I had laying workers. I united them with another colony, spraying them with dilute sugar syrup, and that was successful.

**WTB** Did you get any honey this year? Many in the SE didn't get any.

**GZ** Yes, my colony in Chatham had a nearly full super in August. I was pleased about that.

**WTB** What kind of hive do you use?

**GZ** Langstroth. It is the most common across the world. In Bulgaria, my grandfather used Dadant which is similar to the jumbo Langstroth. I thought it was a good idea to give the bees more space to develop. It's a learning curve. I don't have the experience yet to know what's good and bad.

**WTB** Do read books, watch videos etc?

**GZ** Yes, I have a couple of books, and I read BeeCraft and the BBKA News.

**WTB** Any beekeepers you admire?

**GZ** I met Marin Anastasov and he was very helpful. We've spoken a few times.

**WTB** Of course! Your compatriot.

**GZ** Yes, and I saw his Zoom talk to MBKA last year on nutrition. He has a very detailed perspective, describing how enzymes and pheromones affect bee behaviour.

**WTB** Have you had a go at queen rearing?

**GZ** Yes, after David Evans's Zoom talk earlier this year, I grafted some larvae with a Chinese grafting tool. I used the method he described – Ben Harden I think – where he put a box above a queen excluder above the brood box, and put in a frame of pollen and young brood to attract the nurse bees. Then I put my cell-bar frame with ten cups containing my grafted larvae in to it. After the bees sealed the queen cells I put cages around them.

**WTB** Were the grafts successful then?

**GZ** Yes, I got 8 sealed queen cells from ten larvae, five virgin queens, four of which got mated. I made a mating box with four compartments, four feed holes, and an entrance on each side.

**WTB** Any plans for next season?

**GZ** I got a contact from WHATSTHEBUZZ: Robin Bromley at Elmcourt Garden Centre. He's happy to have an apiary there so I'll be moving bees there soon.

**WTB** You obviously like to have a go at things.

**GZ** Maybe. My 50th birthday present to myself last year was to climb Mont Blanc.

**WTB** Could you tell me a little about your family?

**GZ** We came as a family from Bulgaria in 2003. I have a masters in economics and was working in the trade department of a sugar factory. It was not work I liked so I started as a labourer when we came here, then that evolved into carpentry, and now I have a building firm doing work such as loft extensions. I prefer this to office work in front of a computer all day.

My son is in Warwick University now studying biochemistry. Our daughter is still in school. We're happy with what we've done for them. So it's up to them now to work and make a life for themselves.

**WTB** It has been difficult for the association to function during the pandemic. Do you have any thoughts on what the association could be doing better?

**GZ** I like to see people and to learn. Every opportunity for that is good for me. I enjoy learning. I cannot suggest anything else. It's all good for me.



# MBKA news and events

## Module 6 study group

For winter study this year, a group of us will be looking at [Honey Bee Behaviour – Module 6](#). This group has now started its course. *There is a strict requirement that everyone prepares every topic for every session, whether or not they are the leader/presenter.* The Q&A sessions are designed to catch out those who have not done their homework!

I thought I'd mention that. Reading it, those who did not succeed in signing up on time may well feel relieved rather than disappointed!

**To those who are doing this course**, I have just had a brilliant idea on how you can feel better about all the reading and writing you're presently engaged in. When you've covered a topic, if you found it interesting, why not go through it to make sure it's readable and captivating, **and send it in as an article for WHATSTHEBUZZ**. Keep it below 800 words. If you can't do that, divide it into two articles.

## Winter Talks

The next talk in the series will be given by Bob Smith on **Wednesday 10 November at 8.00pm**. His topic is *Botany for Bees*. Look out for an email with full details and a link to register for this talk on Zoom.

## Times and dates

<b>19 October</b>	7.30pm Module 6 (Bee Behaviour) study group on Zoom (leaders Jen, Veronica)
<b>21-23 October</b>	National Honey Show in Esher, Surrey.
<b>23 October</b>	10.00-1.00pm Work group (fortnightly) at the Pavilion Apiary. Contact Mark Ballard for info.
<b>31 October</b>	Closing date for orders for MBKA calendar
<b>2 November</b>	7.30pm Module 6 (Bee Behaviour) study group on Zoom (leaders Archie, Sue V)
<b>6 November</b>	10.00-1.00pm Work group (fortnightly) at the Pavilion Apiary. Contact Mark Ballard for info.
<b>10 November</b>	8.00pm Zoom talk in MBKA Winter Series. Bob Smith: <i>Botany and Bees</i>
<b>16 November</b>	7.30pm Module 6 (Bee Behaviour) study group on Zoom (leaders Archie, Sue V)
<b>20 November</b>	10.00-1.00pm Work group (fortnightly) at the Pavilion Apiary. Contact Mark Ballard for info.
<b>30 November</b>	7.30pm Module 6 (Bee Behaviour) study group on Zoom (leaders Veronica, Sonia)



## MBKA apiaries

### The Pavilion Apiary

The pattern of Saturday 10.00-1.00pm sessions every two weeks at the Pavilion is now well established. Put the dates in your diary from now till Christmas because we plan to work on all these days, weather permitting.

At the last session, on 9 October, we managed to plant all the trees and bushes in a line – which we hope will become a hedge – between the field on the left and our plot. The line-up includes holly, willow, beech, pyracantha and more, probably in excess of 40 plants.

Having cleaned out garage no. 2, I have had second thoughts about demolishing it. The plan is to straighten

it up (a couple of Acrow props should do it) and then bolt it back to garage no. 1. It will make a very useful open covered work area. Somewhere that we can clean brood boxes/supers/frames etc whatever the weather.

We were a team of nine last Saturday. Sonia has started prepping the main room for painting. She has managed to get 20L white emulsion and a £20 voucher from Wickes!

We burnt more timber, bracken, and rubbish and I loaded my trailer with non-combustibles to take to the tip.

At the next session we plan to sort out the rear gutters, start erecting the fence, start erecting the stud wall in the 'away team changing room' (this will be the farmer's store) and we'll get to the painting of the Main Room.

The next session is on **Saturday 23 October**. Those who are at the National Honey Show are excused.

*John Chapman (Chair) and Mark Ballard (Apiary Manager)*



## CBPV – trialling a new remedy

Two of my colonies have chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV), type 2 – the one that has bees with shiny black bodies and stunted abdomens, and creates a pile of corpses on the ground in front of the hive. I *think* that these colonies will survive. I've seen photos of huge piles of dead bees from CBPV, and I don't quite have that. Both colonies are very populous ('strong' doesn't seem the right word for a diseased colony) which could be a problem (close contact) and a cause for hope.



Let's deal first with the elephant in the room: Did I spread the infection from the first to the second colony? Who can say? The two hives are a few hundred metres apart. I always clean my nitrile gloves and tools between hives, and launder my suit every time I go home.

The traditional treatment of caging the queen and shaking the infected colony into the air some distance from the hive has now been discredited. Apparently there is some evidence that CBPV-infected bees lose their

homing ability. After this, they may well find themselves begging their way into any old hive that will have them.

The new treatment being suggested by some Bee Inspectors is an extension of the idea of giving the bees more room, so that they have less physical contact with each other. The treatment is to remove the floor and place the hive on a proper stand. This is what to do:

1. Set the boxes of the hive to the side, and remove the floor from below the brood box



2. Place an eke (or an empty super) on the stand, which must support the hive well clear (300mm min.) of the ground.

3. Reassemble the hive but without the floor.

The infected bees will now drop through the opening at the base having been handled minimally by the undertaker bees.

4. There is no entrance as such. The bees will eventually reorientate themselves to enter the hive from below. Robbing is a possibility.



*Confused bees searching for an entrance.*



*The reassembled hive. The upper of the two brood boxes had been filled with foundation for the bees to draw in late summer. It was left in situ to give plenty room. There is still a little fondant in the top box.*

5. Remove dead bees from the ground below the hive. After about ten days, or longer, till no more dead bees are being removed, reinstate the floor.



*A frame of foundation from the middle box, drawn and filled the in last six weeks. All photos by A McLellan*



# My story, part 1: readers write about their bees – and themselves

*An invitation to a random selection of our readers to write about their beekeeping in recent weeks produced a larger than expected ~~erap~~ response. Enough for two issues of WHATSTHEBUZZ in fact. Look out for Part 2 next month.*

**From Margaret Smith** I have two hives and my friend Nicky has one. Foraging where we are at this time of year is not great so we've been feeding sugar syrup. One hive has guzzled like mad, but the other is not interested. This week though I found loads had drowned as they couldn't get up the funnel. I brought the feeder home to disinfect it and try and make it more bee friendly.

The bees have been very mellow until this week. Yesterday was quite warm and all three colonies were very active with the bees coming to us as we approached. It looked like they were trying to orientate themselves. They weren't aggressive, just buzzing around. On each check we've lit the smoker but not really used it.

Treatments have been done, though varroa counts are small.

My last full check was about a month ago, and the stores had been taken to the brood box. The bees were very grumpy so it was just a quick check to make sure the hive was queenright. (Hurray it was.)

Next week Nicky wants to take her hive home. This was a late swarm, so a small colony. We're going down late in the day to put the colony in a poly nuc to transfer the hive.

Last year I had a massive problem with wasps. This year I've only seen a couple and the bees dealt with them. I didn't put traps down this year but last year had loads down. Maybe I encouraged the wasps?

Plan for the next few weeks: wrap the hives and feed, feed, feed.

**From Sheila Stunell** The thing that strikes me at the end of each year in beekeeping is the uncertainty. We spend the summer looking for eggs, larvae and beautifully capped brood. In the last few weeks of inspections in the Autumn we are seeing what is in

effect the tail end of the brood which will emerge in the next week or so. Often, now very little larvae or eggs. The stores should be coming in, nectar and pollen from ivy and sedum. I've seen bees on the fuchsia which reminds me always that the bees know what they're doing. If there is forage to be had they will find it. Of course, we feed at this time of year and they will be filling all the spaces where, in the summer the queen might have laid.

My advice to myself is always, trust the bees. If you have done your best and given them the best chance health-wise with varroa treatment and done your best to ensure that they have stores through the winter, then you have done what you can. We have to accept that there are times of the year (and this is the biggest one) when we have done what we can, remembered what we have been taught and what we have learned through experience, and we are done. That won't stop me waking in the night wondering if they are ok!

The hardest thing for all our new beekeepers is to leave them alone. Don't be tempted to open them just to look and get your 'bee fix'. Watch the door on sunny days and see if they are flying, heft the hive and add fondant if light. Spend your winter reading and cleaning your kit.

**From Melvyn and Sonia Belsey** Last month we rescued a small swarm from a compost bin and put it in a nuc box with some feed and hoped for the best. They've drawn out two 14x12' frames of comb, one with brood, the other with stores and pollen. Fingers crossed they make it through the winter now they've got their fondant. They're still out flying and coming back with huge pollen loads.

At our out apiary we have four hives. Two are very strong. We even had a second honey harvest last month giving us a total of 50lb of honey! It may have been a bad year for some but we seem to have scored lucky! We're soon to put up our woodpecker cage protection but all have fondant and two have a full super as well! They're all still flying and bringing back pollen. Not sure anyone's told them it's October!

**From Hilde J.H Koets-Edens 'My love for honeybees'**

From the moment I lifted a frame under the supervision of the late Terry Clare, I was hooked. Hooked to get to know the world of honeybees. It was the start of the journey I loved from that point. For many years I thought I would, but now had it confirmed. Till today and the time spend on it, has been worth it, despite the several 'not so kind' bee attacks on my skin. Although several of them were so

severe, I carried on. Even more eager to find out how their world works. It is not one of ego's or bragging on, not a world of judgemental or other opinions, a world pure and well working for the time they have been around. For me as a volunteer beekeeper that has amazed me. Lots I have learned, little do I know. So much more I have to learn, although this journey up till now has been amazing already. The time I have spent on them, has been worth it. An infectious hobby, in the true meaning of the word!!!



## Quiz

1. What is perga? (not Perga, Pamphylia, as in Acts 13!)
2. Why are the cappings on brood cells darker than on honey stores?
3. What is a *teneral* or *callow* bee?
4. Hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) is an organic compound that forms in sugar-containing foods. Which two functions aid its formation?
5. You have squares of foundation to insert in sections. If you don't orientate the cells properly, they bees may not be able to draw comb. Should the points of the hexagons be at the top and bottom, or at the sides?

ANSWERS: 1. pollen, fermented for c.14 days with honey and enzymes; it is also known as bee bread, though the term may be inappropriate as it consists mostly of protein, not carbohydrate.

2. The bees mix some propolis into the wax cappings of brood cells, whereas honey cells are purely wax.
3. a newly emerged adult bee whose exoskeleton is not yet hardened.
4. heat and time
5. points at the top and bottom.



## Handy Hints

Did you see in BeeCraft that an alternative woodpecker protection is hessian – the stuff builders use to protect mortar from frost in winter. You simply cut a square from the roll or pack, lay it over the hive, and place the rood/lid on top.

If it works, it will be by far the most convenient method. Chicken wire can catch on hive corners when removing or replacing – unless you construct wooden cages to hold it in shape. That's time-consuming, expensive, and creates storage problems. Heavy polythene such as damp-proof course (DPC) material has to be pinned or stapled on and has to be cut carefully to size.

I've [bought a roll](#) which should be more than enough for all my hives. It's 1.37m (4.5 feet) wide which will

give a minimum overhang of 450mm all round the hive. You can buy packs in smaller quantities, or you might team up with friends to share a roll.



I really hope it works!



## Don't waste old kit!



Robert Frost writes, *I now use an old hive roof to stop the rats chewing off the foil tops from the milk bottles*

*left on the doorstep by our milkman (yes, it truly did happen 😞).*



(Not sure how the roof keeps the rats out, Robert, when all the doors and windows are open – but maybe it stops them getting enough headspace to get a good chew at the bottle tops?)

Have YOU got any alternative uses for beehive kit?



## Trivia

### I've arrived!

The HMF levels in commercially available fondant have recently been discussed on the Beekeeping Forum. I'm grateful to 'loyal listener reader' (to use Radio 4's *More or Less* definition) Archie McLellan for bringing this to my attention.

The thread started with the challenging title "*The truth behind fondants*".

Look at this screenshot (above) from [The Apiarist blog on 1 October 2021!](#)

And as if the fame itself wasn't enough, David (Evans) then wrote in a comment: *Hi Archie, As a 'featured contributor' you will of course also receive 20% of the royalties that arise from subscriptions and sponsorship. With these, your mortgage will be paid off in weeks, you'll be able to upgrade that nice red Portofino of yours to at least an 812 GTS (though it's tricky to transport a hive in these ... or even a mini-nuc in my experience 😊) and you might even be able to afford a new Abel National hive 😊.*

It made my day, that.

The Beekeeping Forum thread is [here](#), if anyone's interested. It's a fine example of the brilliant resource

that Beekeeping Forum can be, with all its shallow, distracting, blunt, and off-topic contributions, interspersed with some truly thoughtful and thought-provoking comments from well-informed, experienced, and wise beekeepers. As I suggested to David Evans, if you don't want to plough through the whole thing (12 pages), cut to the chase with [this post from Into the lions den \(Murray McGregor\)](#).

It's good at this point (in the midst of this argument about fondant, HMF, and syrup) to remember that food **above** the frames is never as good as food **in** the frames. The traditional guidance is that feeding should be completed well before the cold weather arrives. This has been interpreted as before the end of September. Possibly that now needs modifying.



# Comments

TO POST A COMMENT, PLEASE EMAIL WHATSTHEBUZZ.

*Was there anything that caught your attention in this issue? Perhaps you read something that you'd not thought of before, or saw something that didn't feel right to you. If so, do please write a sentence or two for this Comments section. Items from readers are always good to hear.*

**From Tim Higgins:** Hi Archie. Just read the Trivia bit that says:

*Or do the bees become disoriented by the brightness of the snow and mistake it for the sky? Unlikely, because light from the sky is polarised, and that from the snow is not. Anyway, bees know up from down even in the dark.*

You can see from the picture below that we've had some work done to our house that involved a lot of insulation. This is how the builders stored it and I pretty quickly got them to reduce the size of the stacks so that it didn't block the hive entrances. The result was much lower than the picture, but over quite an area. All were shiny silver coloured. Later on I noticed that the incoming foragers flipped upside down and basically 'flew' along the top surfaces on their backs. They still went in the right direction and eventually off the end. Almost all made it, albeit a bit slower than normal. However, I contend that they don't always know up from down.

Keep up the good work.



Archie McLellan replies: Thanks for this, Tim. Interesting – so the shiny surface of Kingspan looks (for the bees) more like the sky than the actual sky!? Maybe the phrase quoted above should read: 'bees know up from down ~~even~~ in the dark, but not necessarily in daylight.'

A bit off-point, but I hope you're collecting up all the off-cuts of insulation. Many of us have 50mm inside the roof or in an eke above the crown board all year round.

**From Sheila Stunell** Archie, you're doing a great job with the newsletter. It feels very lively, interesting and even exciting.

[Thank you Sheila! Archie]



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**Please send your PICTURES, ARTICLES, AND IDEAS for the next issue of WHATSTHEBUZZ by 18th of each month. And if you'd like to comment on anything in or about this issue, please call or email me.**

Archie McLellan, WHATSTHEBUZZ compiler

