



WHATSTHEBUZZ

April
2022

Hello to April, to a plethora of spring flowers, and to you all

The bees and all their belongings are now at the new apiary. This is a remarkable achievement and credit is largely due to Mark Ballard's tireless work in leading teams of Saturday work parties to prepare the site and its buildings – as well as a lot of work by Mark himself between-times.

So it's fitting that Mark should be the person that WHATSTHEBUZZ chats to this month. Mark has had an interesting life and is a great story teller.

At the hives: wood pecker and mouse protection can now be removed. Weekly inspections start around this time – though some will feel that the week ahead is now too cold to be opening boxes. Be aware of the weather and if the bees are not able to forage, be sure that they don't starve. The expanding colony needs lots of pollen and honey now. At some point in the next few weeks, check for brood disease: foulbrood, sacbrood and chalkbrood. Remember that nectar needs far more space than honey. Add supers early, and if the comb is not drawn, leave the queen excluder off for a few days to get the process started. Once the bees are drawing comb, you might replace a couple of old or damaged frames in the brood box. Look for a balance in the brood box; if excess stores are left from the winter, remove some and set aside for use in nuc boxes later. You must ensure the queen has room to lay.

Inside the hive, the queen should be laying strongly if nectar is flowing. Look for drones being laid; queen rearing cannot start until, at the earliest, drone brood is sealed. The colony should now build-up fast. It's only a question of time till you see queen cells appearing. That might be the next time you open up the hive, if the weather is fine.

In the landscape, too many plants are flowering to make a list. Scattered though this issue are a selection of readers' pictures of what is flowering around their apiaries and gardens in late March. Thank you to Tim, Laura, Bob, Jane and Jen.

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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.

At this time of year, watch the weather forecast to see when it is possible to start looking inside the hive. I always look at what the weather is likely to do in two weeks' time and plan what you can do! Open a hive when you have something to do, not because you want to enjoy looking at bees.

We have had to feed a couple of our colonies as their food reserves have got low during this warm winter.

I am excited that we are at long last moving the bees from the association City Way apiary to our new apiary site at Cliffe Woods. It has been a long time in coming and we can look forward to using the site.

As this year is our centenary year, a new start on a new apiary seems appropriate for our association. Now that we have bees on the new site, Mark will need some help with running the site. Ideally, we'd like somebody who lives locally to be an assistant apiary manager and key holder. This is just in case we need to get the site checked over quickly.



The year is going onwards and on Wednesday we will have the last in our series of Winter Talks. So now to look towards the summer and *The Beekeeping Season*. If you can help, then think about becoming one of our swarm collectors. If you're able to help then contact Sonia Belsey. Also, if you would be able to give a home to a swarm let her know.

We intend to offer visits to members' apiaries during the summer months. So keep looking at WHATSTHEBUZZ for dates and places to visit. 🐝

History of Medway BKA

In this, our centenary year, Sonia Belsey goes back to our beginnings to tell the story of Medway BKA. In this episode she recounts a classic tale of beekeeper politics: The Bryden Incident.

Luckily you've only had to wait one month for the next update on what eventually became known as 'The Bryden Incident.' Readers of the British Bee Journal were left hanging for three months until July 1921, when a furious Kent Beekeepers' Association finally decided to respond to the concerns raised.

But what had they been doing all that time?

They wrote to Bryden to avoid a public argument but got no response. In their letter, they expressed



disapproval over his comments, and invited him either to give a written explanation, or to attend a further meeting of the council. Bryden did not do either.

In June, they wrote to him again; they had decided that, since he seemed unwilling to explain his feelings towards the association, he should consider tendering his resignation.

His lack of response clearly inflamed the situation, as is evident from their statement in the British Bee Journal. They claimed that 'something was rotten in the State of Denmark' and that Bryden, though a leading member in the association, had failed to mention any of his concerns to the council directly. They considered that his comments did not reflect the general



Early morning mist today (28 March). The little cherry was covered in bees all last week. Photo A. McLellan

consensus of the members. They suggested that Bryden felt bitter about that and that minority rule would not benefit the association.

They defended BeeCraft as a well-regarded publication that should continue to be produced. They did, however, agree that expert tours should be done, annual meetings should take place, and that perhaps Districts should be allowed more power and be able to host their own members' meetings. They blamed the delay in response on Bryden's continued silence and assured their readers that they would have published any reply from him.

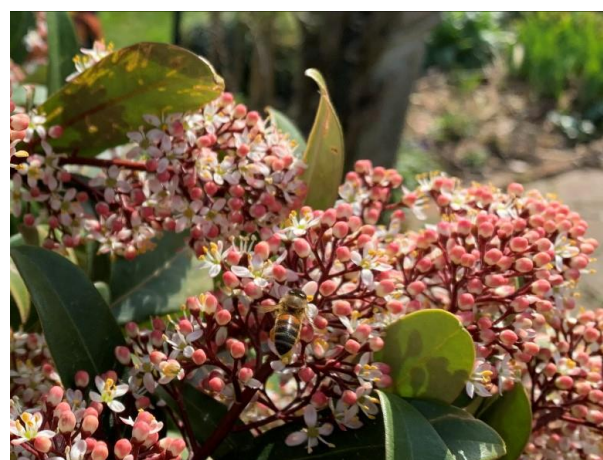
After seeing this very public response, Bryden finally attended a council meeting held on 8 October 1921. His reply, which annoyingly has been lost, was read to the council. I think it must have been good! After Bryden made a statement, he was asked to withdraw; a vote was taken with ten voting for and seven against.

The meeting minutes advise that a 'frank and free discussion followed'. Bryden stood his ground making it clear his actions were fully justified and that he didn't regret anything he had said. Another vote was taken, resulting in a final vote of 17 for and 10 against Bryden's removal from the members' list. The minute concludes with the damning comment that 'Mr Bryden did not give the [library] books back'.

This was not the end of the saga as the British Bee Journal picked up the story once again in February 1922. Mr Bryden had written to the Journal saying that

he had found out via BeeCraft that he was no longer a member and that he had received no explanation. Bryden invited the Northern Division of Beekeepers and others to an open meeting where he would defend his reputation, offer an explanation, and suggest a resolution. The title of report of the meeting in the local paper was, 'A Bee in their Bonnet'. Apparently, one meeting was not enough to go over the same old ground, so a second was called which was more or less a repeat of the first! But his resolution? An independent beekeeping association!

If you have any history of the association, old photos, stories or memories, please contact me at sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Sonia Belsey 🐝



*The bees have been all over this Skimmia this week.
Photo by Tim Higgins, 22 March*

Management conundrum

Jen Ferry, like many of us, is looking forward to her first inspection. But even without going inside the hives, she finds she is not that sure of how to deal with something that is quite commonplace. She writes:

With the warm, sunny weather we have had, it has been tempting to open the hives, but I decided, as it was still mid-March, that I'd settle for checking them externally. All 16 of my hives and my 9 nucs have come through the winter, but March is a critical month for them and lack of food or high varroa levels have dashed many a beekeepers hopes of a productive summer!

Last week I stood and observed all the hives and nucs. All the colonies were flying and all were bringing in pollen of several different colours. There were lots of flowers and trees in bloom and the top fruit on the peninsula was starting to flower, with the apricots and plums amongst the first to be seen. I spent some time watching the bees fly; then I removed the woodpecker netting from the hives, removed the roofs and checked that they all still had fondant available. I could see when checking the fondant that some colonies were bigger than others but as they all had both protein in the pollen and carbohydrate in the fondant available to them, I was happy that they would not starve. As brood nests expand and activity levels increase, the winter bees are coming to the end of their days, so the remaining and new bees do need to be well provisioned.

My thoughts now turned to the varroa load. I'm not good at checking the levels; in the past I have relied on treating, usually with MAQs, in August after taking the honey crop off and then doing an oxalic acid vaporisation in December. However, the more I read and talk to more experienced beekeepers I realise this prophylactic approach is not in tune with what is happening in



each colony. More frequent monitoring and targeted treatment is a better approach. So, New Year, new approach, and I decided, for the first time, to monitor the mite drop in spring in each of the hives. I inserted varroa boards and left them for a week, but I didn't think this through.

Yesterday I checked 12 of the hives. Ten had a minimal drop of less than seven mites in the seven days, but two had counts of between 30-50 mites over seven days. It was clear that these two needed treating, but this was where my lack of forethought came back to bite me.

How should I treat? Biotechnical manipulations and drone culling to reduce varroa numbers do not work at this time of year, so MAQs was my treatment of choice. Unfortunately it needs temperatures of between 10 and 30°C to work, and with the current cold nights I felt this wasn't an option. Other 'in hive' chemicals are also temperature dependent but more critically, they need to stay in the hive for six weeks, and cannot be used with supers on as the chemicals will contaminate the honey. As I anticipate putting supers on in the next few weeks, that is not an option either. That leaves oxalic acid. Dribbling has been shown to harm the bees – that is not what I want when the nest is just building up – and vaporization only impacts the phoretic mites that are on the bees, and not those breeding in the brood

cells. Now I'm out of options!! I find that my new management plan for varroa has failed for not being thought all the way through!

Having walked away and chatted to some people, I'm now thinking that a series of three oxalic acid vaporizations, five days apart, on the two affected hives is my only option. That way I will get the mites that are currently developing in the cells on the subsequent treatments. Has anyone got any other suggestions? Please do let me know! Jen Ferry 🐝



Photo by Jen Ferry

MBKA news and events

The English Festival



Celebrate St George's Day at the English Festival

On Saturday 16 April, in the Easter weekend, MBKA will have a stall at The English Festival. It takes place in Riverside Country Park* and there is a whole day of festivities from 11am until 5pm.

We will be talking to visitors, making rolled candles, and of course selling honey and wax products.

Our team will arrive at 9.00am. Are you able to help with setting up and manning the stall? Just drive in and ask a steward for directions to the MBKA stall.

Even if you're unable to be part of the team, please do drop by the stall during the day. It's always good to see people. And it is free!


Paul Lawrence says: It's a good day. I really enjoy this one!

* at 333 Lower Rainham Road, Rainham, ME7 2XH

The last talk in the Winter Series



The Winter Talks series winds up with **Richard Rickitt's** follow-up to his immensely entertaining talk about his bee-oriented travels around the UK at the end of last season. His talk on **Zoom will be at 8.00pm on Wednesday 30 March** and it is called *From*

Rolls Royce to Rajasthan. He will tell us about his experiences of 'Traveling in style from the jungles and deserts of India to the birthplace of the theory of evolution, stopping off at the site of some illegal beekeeping skulduggery and taking a peek at a little local royalty along the way.' 

TIMES AND DATES

30 March	8.00pm, Winter Series Talk 8, Richard Rickitt on Zoom, <i>From Rolls Royce to Rajasthan</i>
30 March	Introductory Course 2, 8-10pm, Wainscott Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscot, ME2 4LG
6 April	Introductory Course 3, 8-10pm, Wainscott Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscot, ME2 4LG
9 April	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Pavilion Apiary, weather permitting.
16 April	The English Festival , 11:00 - 17:00, Free entry. MBKA will be there to talk about bees and honey. Riverside Country Park, Lower Rainham Road, Rainham ME7 2XH
23 April	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Pavilion Apiary, weather permitting.
24 August	Introductory Course 4, 8-10pm, Wainscott Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscot, ME2 4LG
31 August	Introductory Course 5, 8-10pm, Wainscott Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscot, ME2 4LG
7 September	Introductory Course 6, 8-10pm, Wainscott Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscot, ME2 4LG

The written word

One of the many lovely things about being a member of the Central Association of Beekeepers (CABK) is the President's Annual Report, which is included in the papers for the AGM. Prof Robert Pickard's talks were infrequent and perhaps legendary until the advent of Zoom. His 2014 talk at the [National honey Show, Energy, Honey bees and Humans](#), had the unusual distinction of having been transcribed by one grateful audience member and made available online. Since the pandemic and the introduction of Zoom in our beekeeping events, Robert has become a more familiar face on the beekeeping talks circuit. Even so, he continues to make a huge impression. He started his 2014 talk by declaring that he liked to cover a lot of ground in his talks, and that continues to be the case.



However, he is also able to cover a lot of ground in very few words. Below is a reprint of The President's Report for the 2022 AGM of the CABK. It was written before the invasion of Ukraine, but is not diminished in any way by that. Entitled *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow*, Robert has – unusually – used a poetic title. At the AGM, he recited the soliloquy [spoken by Macbeth in Shakespeare's Macbeth](#).

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

'As Europe stands poised for yet another war, we can only wonder at the power of greed and violence to create suffering and sorrow. The evolution of a humane society is constantly thwarted by the in-built biological imperative to compete for survival: Erasmus Darwin's "one great slaughterhouse: the warring world". The ability of political leaders to distort our birthright has never been greater. Whereas Science

One size fits all


No, I'm not talking about socks made from sophisticated stretchy material.

Rather, I'm musing that it would be nice to find one way to massively simplify my beekeeping AND make things work more efficiently at the same time.

seeks to establish truth, many in public life obfuscate facts and manipulate data to dissemble and mislead. And yet, in every beekeeping association across the world, in countless charities serving countless causes, we find kind, unselfish people supporting one another and working for a new tomorrow.

'The honeybee is a unique model for solving fundamental biological problems: genetic expression, ageing and cognition. The female genotype can generate two distinctly different phenotypes, where genes are being switched on and off by small food molecules. We need this capability to replace drug therapy. No biological system needs to age, intrinsically. Organisms carry genes that benefit the individual and genes that benefit the species population. Programmed death gives the population an opportunity to refresh and adapt to changing circumstances. It accelerates evolutionary change. The ageing processes in honeybees are highly modifiable by genetic action and environmental influences. We need to understand this if we are to extend human life, functionally, as well as temporally. In dementia, we now know that misfolding proteins in older brains are not reported to the immune system but in younger ones, they are.

'Only honeybees and humans can communicate navigational instructions symbolically. Knowledge of the honeybee brain is now being used to construct artificial intelligence equations, algorithms, that will be used to investigate and, notionally, predict every aspect of our lives. If we cannot apply this science for good purposes it may be better not to have it. Is an uneducated electorate a threat to democracy? It certainly is to beekeeping.'

Robert Pickard, February 2022 

I've become very interested in the KISS principle since inheriting a large number of colonies last year, more than tripling the size of my beekeeping. KISS, an acronym for Keep It Simple, Stupid, is a design principle concocted by the U.S. Navy in 1960. I'm asking myself if

I can simplify my beekeeping by using only one box size for all my hive boxes.

Hive boxes come in two forms: those at the bottom, **brood boxes**, and those above – **supers**, from superstructure – for honey. Brood boxes are often deep boxes. Supers can be deep boxes too, but are usually shallow. This is because they have to be lifted when full of honey, not just when being harvested, but whenever access to the brood box is needed. And to make the job a little harder still, being in the *superstructure* of a hive, they have to be lifted down from a height. The other reason that supers are usually shallow is that many radial extractors can only handle shallow frames, at least in the radial position.

So there are good reasons for supers to be shallow.

There are also good reasons for brood boxes to be deep. In our association, there is a recommendation to use National 12x14 size boxes for brood. They hold a large population of bees and brood so that doubling the size of the brood area with an additional brood box – a common procedure with standard Nationals – is usually not necessary. And the advantage of not having to add an additional brood box is that the number of frames to handle is only eleven, not 22. (A double brood box system does not necessarily mean 22 frames: some beekeepers will reduce the number of frames in each box to, say, eight, and fill the unused space to keep the bees out of it.)

Having a supply of drawn comb is like a gold reserve: hugely valuable in itself and an investment for the future. Sometimes beekeepers create drawn comb as and when needed by inserting a frame or two of foundation – or even a foundationless frame with a couple of skewers – into the brood box when the time comes to remove some old or damaged frames, or when excess stores have to be removed to create more brood rearing space. But this is a bit like fire-fighting: coping with the immediate situation to minimise damage.

Forward planning is better. Many would say the best place to get foundation drawn is *above* the brood box. Adam Leitch described ways of doing this in his talk a few weeks ago. You can place a full box of foundation above the queen excluder, and get every frame filled with honey (then extract it and you have your drawn comb), or you can feed to speed up the process and

then remove the comb before the bees start to store anything in it.

But getting comb drawn above the brood box really comes into its own when two conditions are fulfilled:

1. you use the same size of box for supers and brood boxes
2. you have an extractor which can process deep frames

Kristen Traynor, a well-known bee scientist and beekeeper, gave several talks at the NHS last October. They ranged from heavy-duty scientific research to very practical beekeeping.

In one talk, she addressed the need for maintaining a resource of drawn comb. Kristen uses only one size of box for her beekeeping. Her supers and brood boxes are Langstroth 'deeps'. We heard in one of our winter talks that Murray McGregor (a bee farmer with 4,500 hives) does the same.

There are three box sizes in the National family: shallow (5.5 inches), deep (8.5 inches), and 12x14 (12 inches). The terminology varies a little.

Only the middle of these boxes – the 8.5 inch 'deep' – can comfortably be used as both a super and a brood box. With medium and strong colonies, it will often be necessary to add a second brood box. A full 'deep' super will be heavy – but manageable by a reasonably strong person. A full 12x14 box, even when much of the content is brood, is very heavy indeed.

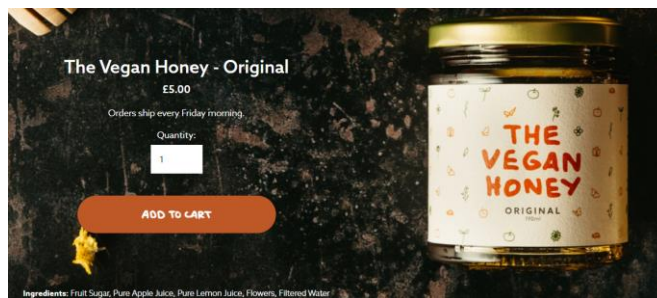
Kristen Traynor described her approach. A full deep super provides the comb for the following season's brood box. Even if you don't replace all the comb, you have created a valuable resource all within the context of your normal honey production and extraction. This is only possible if you use the same box size for brood and honey supers.

Ah, I hear you say, but who has an extractor that can take frames from a deep box. Well, first of all, you don't have to extract. You can make cut comb honey. But as we're talking mostly about drawn comb here, that's not really relevant. Most extractors can take 8.5-inch deep frames tangentially. It's a little bit more work because you have to rotate the frames, – but what else were you planning to do with that time!

In recent years, extractor prices have come down somewhat. It is now possible to get much more

extractor for your money. This means that you might be able to afford an extractor that can process 'deep' frames *radially*. A deep super will contain a little less than two shallow supers. Apart from the heavy lifting, it's much less work for you to extract, and you can use the comb the following season for either replacing brood combs as needed, or for honey production in supers.

Is this even legal?



THE VEGAN HONEY The ingredients for this concoction are listed at the bottom of the picture: Fruit Sugar, Pure Apple Juice, Pure Lemon Juice, Flowers, Filtered Water.


So, to answer the question in the title, no, of course it isn't legal. Trading Standards will be calling soon.

The Honey (England) Regulations 2015 defines 'honey' thus:

2.—(1) *In these Regulations "honey" means the natural sweet substance produced by Apis mellifera bees from the nectar of plants or from secretions of living parts of plants or excretions of plant-sucking insects on the living parts of plants which the bees collect, transform by combining with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store and leave in honeycombs to ripen and mature.*

In 6.—(3) The Regulations state unequivocally that 'A person must not use the name "honey" in trade as the name of a product if the product is not honey.'

[The website for this company has a blog explaining the vegan philosophy in relation to honey.](#) As is so often the case in situations like this, it is difficult to disagree with the statements as presented. Take this, for instance: *The queen will also often come artificially inseminated, where 8 to 12 drone bees will be crushed*

You may have already made your choice and have been beekeeping for years. But it is possible to change without losing bees or brood, though in time you might sell some of your unused boxes. New 'seconds' deep boxes in the sales cost as little as £16.50. And your old supers are still perfectly fine for the many years that the combs will last. Archie McLellan 

to death and have their semen extracted and inserted into the queen.

Even if one quibbles with this description of the process of artificial insemination of queens, somehow it feels inappropriate to make any response here, not even to ask about the fate of drones that do successfully mate with a queen.


It all points to the perennial difficulty in human relations caused by the fact that people value their opinions very highly, and it is very difficult to get anyone to think something that they don't want to think.

There is one scientist-beekeeper blogger who has had a go at answering the vegan attitude to beekeeping and



honey. Ron Miksha (left) is a talented and fearless writer, and (I suggest) his [Bad Beekeeping Blog](#) is worth subscribing to. His post [Why Vegans are Wrong](#) is informative and entertaining. But even he cannot resist descending into rant mode sometimes. Describing Don Watson, the founder of Veganism, as a 'very, very nasty man', he continues: 'he savagely attacked plants of all sorts. He

encouraged untold thousands of British youngsters to destroy stately trees (many over a hundred years old). He inspired them to cut down living denizens of the forest, strip off their bark, rip into their hearts with power tools, then hammer nails through their defiled bodies. He showed people how to turn beautiful elms, oaks, and maples into bookshelves and grandiose chairs upon which to seat their bottoms.'

I had a good laugh at that. Ron Miksha has conjured it up from a barely noticeable fact in Don Watson's cv: he was a woodwork teacher. 


The Beginners' course: An Introduction to Beekeeping

I would like to offer a warm welcome to the twenty five candidates who are embarking on this very interesting and important course. The list for this year is now closed and we have started a new one for next year, so clearly the interest in beekeeping is still growing. As before, we plan a sandwich course, with three sessions either side of the summer practical sessions at the apiary. The evening sessions will be held from March through to September at Wainscott Memorial Hall followed by small group practical sessions at the new Pavilion apiary.

The syllabus will be delivered by Mark Ballard, Sheila Stunell, Sonia Belsey, Melanie Henbest and me. The beginners course has evolved over the last couple of years but Mark has now honed it down into a very succinct and cohesive syllabus. The topics covered include a general introduction to insects and bees, a beekeepers responsibility in keeping livestock, assembling and positioning a National hive, protective equipment, working a honey bee colony, swarming, pests and diseases, stings, and honey extraction. The

Wainscott sessions will be delivered by the team with equipment and PowerPoint presentations. All members participating will be provided with the excellent BBKA Manual on Beekeeping. They will automatically become Associate Members of the MBKA and have access to our comprehensive library curated by Sonia Belsey.

Not all the participants will go on to keep bees; some may put beekeeping on hold until they have the resources or space to set up an apiary, and others may decide beekeeping is not for them. Those that do decide to keep bees will be supported by other new beekeeper 'Bee Buddies' in their new and exciting hobby. Who knows, for some, like Murray McGregor - this hobby can become a business!

We, the Education Team, are pleased to be able to provide this excellent course to all those who are interested in becoming a beekeeper or just want to be better informed about honey bees. *Tony Edwards*, Education Organiser 

Welcome to new members

The MBKA Introduction to Beekeeping course which has just started has 25 participants. Here, some of them introduce themselves.

My name is Lachlan (Lach) from Upchurch. I became interested in beekeeping after my wife took me on a honey beer tasting tour in Sussex which I found absolutely fascinating. My wife bought me a hive last Christmas which I have built and is ready to go but, I don't have the knowledge or confidence to get bees hence this course. (Lachlan Berntskin)

I'm Jo. I retired 5 years ago after a long career in IT and Education. I'm interested in organic gardening. I'm currently creating a wildlife garden using native plants, hedging and a pond to increase biodiversity in the garden. A beehive (or 2) would be a great addition to the project. (Jo Lambert)

My name is Rob, I'm born and raised in Medway and work for Medway Council. I'm interested in keeping

bees as I find the idea of observing the internal workings of a hive fascinating. (Rob Hygate)

I'm Yvonne, a 50-something Nannie of 3 gorgeous girls. I've always been an advocate for nature and wanted my own small holding. With not much space, bees seem the logical option. Plus I love the fuzzy little creatures. (Yvonne Hodgson)

My name is Rusee, I live in Gillingham and work for a fruit importer. I was interested in beekeeping from an early age and love honey. Finally I managed to find an opportunity to learn more. (Rusee Obert)

I'm Jez, from Sittingbourne. I've always had a 'must take this up sometime' interest in beekeeping. Roll forward lockdown, being gifted an empty hive, and time at home, and that was the catalyst for absorbing all things beekeeping. Really looking forward to continuing my learning on the course and beyond and hopefully getting some bees soon. (Jez Davies)

I'm Ian, I am 62, have lived in Medway all my life. Although technically working at BAE, I have been off on long term sick leave due to long covid. I have always found Bees fascinating and would like to learn more. (Ian Pope)

I'm David and recently moved to Hartlip with my family. I joined the beekeeping course as I would like to keep bees at home one day and teach my boys about them. They love being outside and are fascinated about bees and my youngest loves honey as much as Winnie the Pooh! (David Vaughan)



Plum. Photo by Jen Ferry

I'm Debbie, a primary school teacher and now the owner of a flower farm in Upchurch called Barnfield Blooms. I'm on the course as I know that my flower farm will be the perfect place for bees to live – they're going to love it here! I've never kept bees before and am excited that maybe by this time next year I might have my own hive. (Debbie Bailey)

Welcome to all the above and the all the others on the course: Florence Burgin, Lee Cahill, Christina (Skye) Dixon, David Faulkner, Phil Hunt, Neil McKenna, Darren Orpin, Julie Prior, Laura Sears, Michael Sears, David Wattle, Jane Wheeler, and Chlöe Wilson. 🐝



Stock. Photo by Laura Sears

Adam Leitch at Medway BKA

On 2 March, Adam Leitch NDB came to Wainscott Hall to give a talk on *Why biology matters to practical beekeeping*. The evening did not get off to a good start with the hall fire-alarm blaring deafeningly for around 25 minutes before it was brought under control. This was the Wednesday after Shrove Tuesday. The Brownies hadn't made pancakes yet, so this was their chance. Cooking pancakes is a hot, smoky affair!

But we did succeed in starting more or less on time and Adam began his journey through the biology of the honey bee from the antennae to the sting. And what a journey! Adam gave what some have described as one of the best talks on bees which we have had. We had a

good-size audience, but this talk was unusual in that it was broadcast on Zoom simultaneously. Although Adam has an effortless style of delivery, he covered a huge range in this talk. Having a very demanding job and teenage children, Adam rarely gives talks, and never the same talk twice. Amazingly, he accepted, without demur, a request from our chair in his introduction to speak for a mere 45 minutes, though he explained afterwards that depending on the event, his topic could sometimes fill two hours!

He started with a piece of recommended reading: *Form and Function in the Honey Bee* by Lesley Goodman. No one likes to waste a recommendation and this one

sounds very special. It is also expensive, but so many beekeeping books are.

It would be futile to attempt to summarise this talk. And listing some of the take home messages is likely to be so personal as to be almost irrelevant.


Only once did Adam seem to enter campaign mode and this was in his coverage of the Pagden method of swarm control. Pagden is taught in all Introductory courses to beekeeping, not because it's reliable, easy, or efficient – because it is none of these. Rather (I think) it's because it's prominent in the BBKA module syllabuses, especially Module 1. Exam syllabuses are a surefire way of achieving immortality for an idea and that has certainly happened for Pagden.

Adam certainly didn't pull his punches. Pagden cannot meaningfully be called an artificial swarm because it does not resemble a swarm at all. Rather it sets up a colony with a queen and old foragers, which contrasts starkly with a real swarm which contains a queen and young bees.

Adam was keen that everyone should place a high value on always having a resource of drawn comb. He had an answer for every excuse. It's best to get comb drawn above the brood box. Use an extra box the same

size as your brood box. Extract honey from it or remove it from the hive before the bees have filled it with nectar. If you can't extract the honey, let it drip out. Drawn comb matters. Don't make excuses.

Acarine is a pest many of us are familiar with because we studied it in Module 3. But we're unlikely to encounter it for real now because varroa treatments have largely eradicated it – like *braula coeca*. The consequence of that is that at some point in the future, it will become a significant pest, more so than in the past, because the bees defences against it will be diminished.

These are a few tidbits from a fascinating and content-heavy talk. I'll conclude with a snippet of interval conversation. Adam is from Reigate BKA. They have a well-known (it was featured in BeeCraft) and highly successful education program. Apiary sessions take place at 6.00pm on Wednesdays from April through September. A weekday evening was chosen rather than a weekend and attendance is high. Instructors form small groups with new beekeepers and training and practice happens at many hives simultaneously. Not surprisingly, it's a very social time too. Many end up in the pub afterwards. 

Committee discussions

The minutes of past meetings are – or will be – available on our website. In the meantime, here is a little summary of some of the discussion at the last committee meeting on 10 March.

Three new committee members – Robert Frost, Nigel Rawlins, and Ian Halls were present as well as Archie McLellan who is taking over from John Hendrie as Treasurer.


On the subject of roles in the committee, Paul Lawrence will now be the Manager of the database and the Membership Secretary. A 'Welcomer' to meet people arriving at meetings is a new post and Sheila, our Secretary, has taken that on.

The Education team, under the leadership of Tony Edwards, has an exciting programme for new beekeepers with the Introductory course divided between three theory sessions in spring and a further

three later in summer to give practical experience of opening hives and handling bees.

The next theory course in the winter will be Module 2, run as a continuing study course for those who recently sat the Module 1 exam. Some of our members will sit the Basic assessment this summer – the practical and oral exam in beekeeping which is a bit like a driving test. Life as a driver, or beekeeper, changes somewhat after it – usually for the better!

There are no details yet, but it is hoped that we'll have outdoor events for members at those apiaries with the necessary facilities; these occasions will allow us to spend time with bees, and socialise a bit with each other.

The main event this year will be our centenary celebration, and this will be combined with a formal opening of the new association apiary. More details about these events will be available soon. 



MBKA Apiary

Report from the Pavilion Apiary, 26 March 2022

We had an exceptionally good turnout for moving bees, hives and equipment from City Way to The Pavilion. The bees, boxes, and all the kit were transported in a fleet of cars and a couple of trailers. We decide to leave the gazebos etc. We'll be taking these to the English Festival on 16 April and will take them to the Pavilion after that.

There are now three hives on site. One standard National with a super, a 14x12 National with a super, and a polynuc. The colony in the polynuc might not survive. There is still one more colony to move from David Hopper's apiary at Stockbury. David is downsizing. We hope to have at least 7-8 hives on site eventually.

Here is a list of the work we have now completed at The Pavilion:

- Weed suppressant fabric laid along the west boundary (the ditch). Trees and bushes have been planted along this boundary to create some seclusion and protect the bees from the prevailing winds.
- The Harras type fencing (metal sectional panels) has been erected to make the Apiary area secure.
- Garage number 2 (furthest from the Pavilion) has been converted into an open covered area. The walls have been jacked back to upright and secured to Garage number 1 (nearest the Pavilion).

- A sturdy workbench has been fitted in Garage number 2. This area can be used to assemble hives, frames and to clean hive boxes.
- Garage number 1 has been fitted with a pair of timber Garage doors. This Garage will be used to store hive boxes, wheelbarrows, the mower, and general beekeeping equipment.
- The guttering to the rear elevation has been repaired/realigned and now discharges into a 1000L water tank.
- The farmer's storeroom is now complete. It is currently being used as a work area for work being carried out to the building. Eventually this room will be used by the farmer for the storage of plastic punnets. He will have a separate entrance.
- The Loos have been deep cleaned and are fully functional.
- The guttering and the fasci/soffit boards to the front elevation are in the process of being repaired or replaced.
- The Kitchen has been deep cleaned and now in use.

Work still to be completed includes these items:

- The Garage doors have been primed and need undercoating and a coat of gloss paint. The other Garage door frame needs priming, undercoat and gloss.
- Internal decoration: The Kitchen and sitting area ceilings have been painted. Painting the walls is ongoing.
- The internal secure room is being formed. This entails constructing a stud wall with a door. It will house valuable equipment such as the stainless-

steel extractors, equipment, and plastic folding trestles etc.

- We still have to convert the old shower room into a honey extraction room. The room is tiled floor to ceiling and the floor is tiled. All the old shower equipment has been stripped out.

We have completed most of the work to get the apiary up and running and with the warmer weather approaching we should be able to finish the internal decorating and get on with painting the outside.

However, there are still two major projects to be undertaken

- upgrading the access track
- re-roofing the building.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who have given up their Saturday mornings to help with this project. There's still work to be done, of course, but last Saturday was a landmark day.

We'll continue with fortnightly work party days on Saturdays, 9 and 23 April.

Work party sessions are at 10.00-1.00pm fortnightly on Saturdays (wp). Call or text me if you have any questions (07802 762121). **The Pavilion Apiary is at Lee Green Road, Cliffe Woods ME3 8EX. The entrance to the field is 2nd left off Lee Green Road.**

Mark Ballard, Apiary Manager 

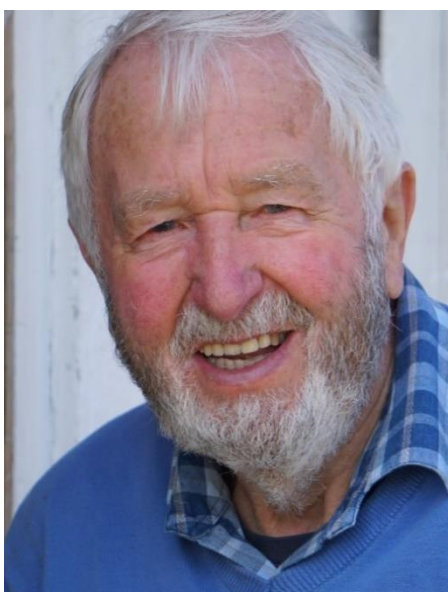


Getting to know you: this month, Mark Ballard

A series in which WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with MBKA members about beekeeping and life in general. This month, WHATSTHEBUZZ chats with Mark Ballard.

WHATSTHEBUZZ It was quite a few years ago, Mark, but how did you get started in beekeeping?

Mark Ballard It was all a bit of an accident. I moved into my present house 42 years ago. It has a big garden and I told my wife I liked the idea of keeping bees. But I didn't know any beekeepers. I was very busy. I had two children. So I didn't follow it up. But my wife had remembered, and about 18 years later she happened to be at a farmers' market



and the lady she bought some honey from was Terry Clare's wife, Pat. Trish, my wife, told Pat that her husband had always wanted to keep bees. Pat said that she knew of a lady who lived not far from us who was giving up beekeeping and was looking for someone to give her equipment to. This lady was a very proactive beekeeper. She had so much kit! When I drove to her house to see everything, her son Jamie, who had Down syndrome, started loading up my van. I tried to slow things down a bit till I had at least agreed a price. But she would not accept any payment. When I insisted, she explained that her husband was working with a team who were

renovating a barge to provide a boat for people with learning difficulties and disabilities to cruise on the Medway. If I wanted to pay something, I could make a donation to the boat team. So that's what I did, and that's how I got started. I've been keeping bees for over 20 years now. I very much wish I'd started sooner.

WTB Tell me about where you've lived all these years.

MB I live in a village called Boughton Monchelsea. It's very rural with lots of farmed land around. The bees forage on trees, fruit trees, rapeseed (after a few years of wheat!), hedgerows, and the local gardens. I have three out apiaries, one of them in a particularly lovely location by a stream. My garden is half an acre. I grow lots of vegetables and fruit. Lots to keep me going. I don't like sitting about at all.

WTB With so much to keep you busy, do you have to be very efficient with your bees?

MB I have around 18-20 colonies usually. I like to work 'with the bees' and I think regular inspections are very important. I'm gradually converting to 14x12 boxes. They should be big enough for my bees and, unlike double brood Nationals, you have only one box of frames to handle. I'm not completely sure about our association's recommendation of 14x12. A super full of honey is heavy enough. A full 14x12 brood box can be a very heavy lift unless you're very strong.

WTB I associate you with collecting swarms, especially inaccessible ones!

MB I got my first bees by collecting swarms, and that has remained a big part of my beekeeping. Because I've worked as a builder, I've made a speciality of removing swarms from buildings. I like that work very much, because you need to solve problems.

WTB So you're always very happy to take a swarm?

MB I've learned to be very careful with swarms. I did get European foul brood (EFB) some years ago from a swarm, and then transferred it to my other apiaries. I'm now very strict about hygiene, especially where there's contact with the inside of the hive: gloves and tools especially. I carry a bucket of soda with lots of hive tools in it, so they and my gloves are thoroughly cleaned between each hive.

WTB I imagine you're very strict about swarm control then!

MB I was with the new group at the Introduction to Beekeeping course last night. Even after one session, some were saying that there's just so much to learn and understand. And swarm control is one of these things. The Pagden method is always taught but my preferred way is simply to split the colony, removing the queen with some young bees and brood into a nuc box – the nucleus method. There's a bit more to it, but it's simple and effective. You have to decide later whether to build up the nuc and double the number of colonies you have, or unite them back when the swarming urge is over.

WTB Is there a Mark Ballard way of keeping bees?

MB I don't rush things. After the very first Pagden manipulation I did, I squished the queen, and within five seconds, I was regretting it. That memory hasn't faded and stays my hand now.

WTB Tell me more about your career in construction.

MB As a teenager, I wanted to go to the Customs and Excise service. But I was rejected because I failed an eyesight test. I went into depression; I was really down. And I then started to work for a builder because I needed to start earning. I worked first as a labourer in a small building company. Sometimes there might be 20 houses being built on the plot and three of us did all the groundwork and footings with a pick and shovel, and wheelbarrow. There were no diggers when I started, but eventually we managed to convince the owner to get a Ford tractor with a back actor – like the back of a JCB.

One day the owner spoke to me and said, Mark you're wasting your time. You can't do this all your life. So I went to college one day a week and became a brick layer.

I did just about everything in the construction industry and ended up as a surveyor for the government. When I left the civil service I set up my own company. We did extensions and renovations; commercial and residential.

WTB How many years did you work as a brick layer? That's back breaking work.

MB I did brick laying for about 20 years. If you're on small projects, you're probably working low to the ground – and that's harder on your back. I spent a lot of years working as a subcontractor, building houses. We could build a house within two weeks. A team of

four brick layers and two labourers could turn out an unbelievable amount of work. I was in a team that built the assault course for the army at Chattenden. We were laying literally thousands of bricks every day .

WTB You've been very devoted to study; all those BBKA modules are like getting a university degree.

MB As well as anything related to building and DIY, I like studying. I've done the BBKA modules and am now preparing for the microscopy exam. Bob Smith has taken a couple of study days which have been very helpful.

WTB Back to practical beekeeping: what do you hope to achieve in the first inspection of the season?

MB The first inspection is really about seeing what's in the hive: bees, queen, brood and stores. Then I change floors and brood boxes. Because I've had EFB, I dread the prospect that American foul brood (AFB) should ever be found in one of my hives. I mark the queens by holding the wings, as Terry taught me.

WTB Have you got particular favourites of books, speakers, kit...?

MB I love good quality tools, and I like my hive tools. I use the scraper type, not the J-tool. I get a bit fidgety when people borrow any of my tools. I tell them they can borrow the car, they can borrow the wife, but I'm a bit possessive about my tools!

WTB Favourite speaker?

MB One of the best talks about bees I've ever heard was a recent one in our series: Adam Leitch on the

practical implications that come from understanding bee biology.

WTB The Intro course started last night with 25 aspiring beekeepers. Do you enjoy teaching?

MB I'm not a teacher. I'm an old boy that has done a lot of beekeeping. I find public speaking quite difficult. Last night I was in a bit of a panic beforehand but after 10 minutes you get drawn into it; you almost forget everybody there.

WTB Do you have a family?

MB My son's married and has three boys. My daughter's got a partner. Not interested in children. She loves having the nephews – and then handing them back!

We will probably move house in the next few years. Our house has five bedrooms. There's just the two of us now although we do a bit of fostering or respite now and again.

WTB What's your vision for our association?

MB I'm very involved with the Pavilion. If we can get that up and running, we could use it as a teaching apiary and have meetings there – as well as the occasional barbecue! I'd like to see about 10 hives on site so that people have ample opportunity to open up hives and handle frames of bees. Beekeeping is a practical craft, after all.

WTB It's been great chatting to you Mark. Many thanks. 🐝

Words

Poikilothermic



Poikilothermic means cold-blooded. That sounds

straight-forward enough but, unless you are informed about non-mammalian biology, you might not really know what 'cold-blooded' means.

Bees, like frogs are poikilothermic. But cold-blooded? We know that bees have to maintain a temperature of c.35°C to raise their young. And that inside the cluster in winter, they consume carbs to generate heat. They need to be warm, and their young will die if not kept warm, even in January.

The origin of the word is a great help here. The second half of the word is easy; it's from the Greek *thermē*,

meaning ‘heat’. So much, so obvious. But the first half of the word is very revealing. It comes from the Greek *poikilos*, meaning ‘varied’.

So *poikilothermic*, and for that matter, *cold-blooded*, refers to an organism with a *variable* body temperature; one that varies with the temperature of its environment.

Bees can survive when they get cold. Unlike mammals, however, their internal body temperature actually does fall. Honey bees can survive at higher temperatures too, an ability they use to murderous effect when they cluster round an invading hornet, [raising the temperature around the invader to c.47°C](#). The hornet will die, but the bees will survive – just!

Archie McLellan 

‘Resin is exactly the same as propolis’

So says the great bee scientist, Marla Spivak, in her talk [Social Immunity in Honey Bees: How Colonies Keep Themselves Healthy](#).

This wasn’t the point of her talk, of course. Marla showed how bees collect resin and what they do with it. Plant resins are highly anti-microbial, and propolis plays a central role in maintaining a healthy environment in the nest.

Marla used the words *resin* and *propolis* synonymously. She described how ‘a nest mate yanks this resin load off with her mandibles and then together they cement the resin into the nest cavity where then we call it propolis. So actually resin is exactly the same as propolis.’

Anticipating a smart aleck response that the bees do work with resin and change it by adding substances to it when they make propolis, she stated that ‘bees are not changing the chemical composition of resin. They sometimes add a little bit of the salivary gland secretion, they can add beeswax to it, but the antimicrobial compositions are not changed once it’s in the hive.’

Not unexpectedly, humans were all too aware of propolis in honey bee nests long before they

understood it came from plant resin. ‘And so we have two different names for the same thing.

Is Marla on a Mission, to change our thinking about propolis by changing how we refer to it?

Maybe. But how can resin and propolis be exactly the same if the bees change it when they bring it into the hive?

We use the word *resin* to refer to the substance exuded by some plants, and *propolis* for that substance when the bees apply it to the interiors of their nests. The word usage indicates a difference in how we think about propolis.

But maybe Marla has a point? Thinking of the buildings that humans make, our ‘propolis’ is something we call cement, or more accurately, ‘mortar’. Mortar doesn’t have different names for its different states. It’s called mortar, whether it’s in a cement mixer, or when it has hardened and has stuck bricks together. And it’s still mortar when stuff is added to it, like plasticiser.

By that reckoning, Marla is right: propolis and resin are two names for the same substance. But unlike mortar, which has only one name, the two words, resin and propolis, are in current usage, and do not quite refer to the same thing, or at least where that thing is to be



Resin collected from plants



Carried to nest on hindlegs



Nestmates help remove and apply inside nest cavity



found. Would you ever refer to resin on a plant as *propolis*?

Resin is now a much used word. Yesterday in a garden centre, Esther and I were looking at different kinds of plant pots. We wanted to buy earthenware, not plastic. What are these, I asked, looking at something that

seemed to occupy a middle ground. 'Resin', Esther replied.

I think I'll stick to 'propolis' for the stuff the bees use, or maybe *damn propolis* when it sticks to me.

Archie McLellan 🐝

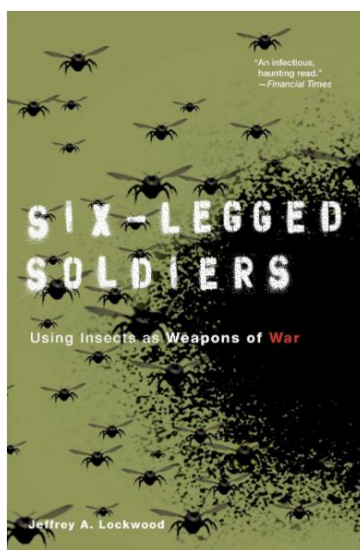
Recommended reading

Six-Legged Soldiers: Using Insects as Weapons of War

by Jeffrey A. Lockwood

I have not finished this book, not by a long way. I often read a number of non-fiction books at the same time, so I might end up spending a long time with a single book. But I was drawn to mentioning it in this issue because news and comment about the Ukraine invasion is continuous and everywhere, and when looking about for a book for this issue, I was drawn to this one.

I have never been so captivated by a book from the outset. The contents page has to be one of the most intriguing ever written. Every chapter title is a gem: we start with *Bee Bombs and Wasp Warheads*, and the author never lets up. Then there's the Preface. It



opens: 'This book is, in large part, about history and science. And I am of the studied opinion that neither venture is particularly objective. As such, I cannot claim neutrality without abject hypocrisy. So in the spirit of honest disclosure, the reader should know the following...'

Are you feeling drawn in yet?

This is a recommendation, not a review. (I've changed the title of this section to reflect that.) Don't you find that you sometimes pay more attention to a friend's recommendation than a critic's

review? If so, I think you're in for a treat. 🐝

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:

The first inspection(s)

- You know less about the state of the colony before the first inspection than at any other time. The main purpose of this inspection is to assess the state of the colony.
- Ted Hooper's five questions are a good place to start:
 1. has the colony sufficient room?
 2. is the queen present and laying the expected quantity of eggs?
 3. (a) (early season) is the colony building up in size as fast as other colonies in the apiary?
(b) (mid-season) are there any queen cells present in the colony?
 4. are there any signs of disease or abnormality?
 5. has the colony sufficient stores to last till the next inspection?
- Don't be too ambitious in the first inspection; learn what you can with minimum disturbance of the bees. The more invasive your inspection, the more time it will take for the bees to re-establish themselves.

- Ted H no. 1: Room. Does the queen have space to lay? Is the colony overprovisioned with stores leaving insufficient comb for new brood? How many frames of honey and of pollen?
- Ted H no. 2: if you see eggs, the queen was present no more than three days ago. How many frames of brood?
- Ted H no. 3: record what you see, especially numbers of frames of brood and stores. Then you can measure build-up, and consumption of stores week by week.
- Ted H no. 4: Have you monitored for varroa at times through winter? Knowing about brood diseases does matter, but colonies are far more likely to die out from varroa and its associated virus, Deformed wing virus (DWV), than from any brood disease.
- Ted H no. 5: Do they have enough stores till you come back? You can only answer that question if you know the weather forecast for the next week!
- Other thoughts:
 1. if there is an abundance of nectar and/or honey in the brood box, and you fed the bees well in autumn, it's possible that the bees will move these stores up into the supers. You might want to remove such frames from the hive if you think they originated from syrup or fondant.
 2. not for the first inspection, but some beekeepers move frames of brood and stores between hives to even out the size of their colonies. This practice always comes with a warning to ensure that no disease is present when moving frames. It's not clear how you are supposed to do this. Nosema is common, but it's not possible to diagnose it without a microscope! However, If a colony has an infestation of varroa, then that colony may well be infected with DWV. Both varroa and DWV are visible. 🐝

Quiz



I have great fun compiling the quiz. Of course, that doesn't necessarily translate to great fun for those trying to solve it! And when our chairman – who knows almost everything about beekeeping – said he couldn't do the quiz, I felt that something was wrong, or at least lacking. From today, I'm introducing hints to guide you to the answer. You might think you don't know an abbreviation or acronym, but many of them are guessable, especially if you get some pointers. So, don't give up at the first hurdle. If you manage to get

all the answers right, email me and I'll give you a prize next time I see you.

1. What defines a super: the size of the box, or where it is placed in the hive?
2. What, in beekeeping terms, is 'crossover'. (Think of the equivalent of the spring equinox in the life of the hive.)
3. What is a callow? (Not so different from the adjective, which is used to describe a particular kind of person)
4. What is QMP? (You can definitely get this, assuming you don't know already! Start with Q; that's obvious. Now think about the chemical means of regulating life in the colony, and then, whereabouts on the bee's body such chemicals come from. As a final prompt, the 'P' doesn't have its usual sound.)
5. What piece of kit is described as tangential or radial? (This has nothing to do with hives!)

Answers on page 21 🐝

Handy Hints

You don't *need* to find the queen when you open a hive for the first time after winter. It's enough to see open brood with eggs to be fairly sure that she is present and healthy, or, if you want to be pedantic, she was three days ago.

You do need to find the queen to mark her, and for most, but not all, methods of swarm control. And it's better if you are able to spend as little time as possible looking for her.

David Evans (writer of [The Apiarist](#) blog) suggests this:

- remove the queen excluder gently, check to see the queen is not on it, and lay it aside

- study the seams of bees and note where they are most crowded
- use a little smoke and remove the dummy board and first frame
- ease apart the frames where the bees are thickest leaving a 2cm gap
- there is a good chance that the queen will be on the nearer frame facing the gap, or on the far side of the other exposed frame.

It doesn't always work, but there's a logic to it, and your ability improves with repetition. 🐝

Shopping



Do you ever have difficulty opening the lid of your smoker? The resins contained in the material you burn are responsible for this. After a periodic clean of your smoker, it's a delight to have everything working smoothly again. However, your joy can last a bit longer if you use a heat resistant grease on the rim of the smoker lid. [Copper Ease](#) forms a protective coating that will not wash or burn off, even under extreme stress and high temperatures.

It's really not enough simply to screw or nail your hive boxes together. You must glue all adjoining surfaces too. one recommendation is [Everbuild 502 All Purpose Weatherproof Wood Adhesive](#). That will ensure that your boxes stay solid and true no matter how much they get tossed about.



What do you burn in your smoker? It's a personal choice, but an interesting one too because it frequently features in interviews with beekeepers, such as the back page article in *BeeCraft*. One option is wood shavings, sold as [Animal bedding in Wilco](#). This pack costs £0.80 – but if you splash out you can get the huge bag for £2.50. 🐝



Photos by Bob Smith



From the BBKA

The 44th BBKA Spring Convention is back at Harper Adams University, Shropshire, on Friday 8, Saturday 9, Sunday 10 April 2022. With 20+ lectures and 40+ workshops, the programme offers topics for beginners through to experienced apiarists and something for non-beekeepers too.

[More info and the link to the full Programme here.](#)

BBKA Courses

Sarah Snelson, BBKA Deputy Manager and Examinations Officer, emailed to tell us about the training courses they will be running in the next few months:

- General Husbandry Assessment Preparation
- Honey Bee Health Course

For more info, [visit the BBKA shop.](#) 



a photo of an enormous bumble bee – size of a ping pong ball – on a Pieris. This particular bee has been visiting the plant every day and making the most of a unusual mass of flower it has this year. Photo Jane Wheeler

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 Robert Frost I have a comment that may spark a debate, regarding the 'Hive floor with under floor entrance (UFE)'. My comment on that is that surely because it is out of sight once the brood box in place, it is difficult to keep the actual entrance slot free of dead bees ? I would think that gravity means that dead bees and other detritus from the hive fall and potentially block the under floor entrance slot ? Even if the girls push the corpses into the slot to expel them, there would be a pile of the deceased in the 'lobby', potentially getting high enough to block the slot.

Over and out.

WTB replies Spot on, Robert. Any under-floor entrance floor probably gives better protection from wasps, mice and strong draughts. However, you have pointed to a problem which some have with their UFE floors.

David Evans uses a design called a Kewl floor (which he makes) and has fashioned an 'L'-shaped tool to clear slots and sweep out lobbies. But the 'lobby' on his floors is a much shallower affair than the design that is in vogue just now, and which I have copied (below). On my floors, the height of the 'lobby' is 30mm and it is easy to see if any debris is lying around. The 8-10mm slot runs the full width of the hive interior and even if it were to get a blockage at some points (not something I've found much), only in a catastrophic situation it is likely the full length of the slot would get blocked.



On the odd occasion when I've lifted a box off a floor, I've never seen bees trapped in the slot. 

Answers to the quiz

1. Where it is placed: super is short for superstructure, the upper part of the hive structure
2. [When the number of spring bee emerging exceeds the number of winter bees dying](#)
3. a newly emerged bee
4. Queen mandible pheromone
5. A centrifugal honey extractor

Remember to email me if you got the answers right and I'll set aside a prize for you! 

Contact details

Bee Inspectors

Go to [BeeBase](#), click on [Contacts page](#), and enter your postcode to find your nearest Bee Inspector

Regional Bee Inspector Daniel Etheridge daniel.etheridge@apha.gov.uk M: 07979 119376

Seasonal Bee Inspectors Kay Wreford Kay.Wreford@apha.gov.uk M: 01795 521241

Danyal Conn Danyal.Conn@apha.gov.uk

If you have not yet done so, join BeeBase now. If you haven't got bees yet, you can still enter apiary details with zero hives.

Committee

Please do feel free to get in touch with any member of the committee. We would be very pleased to hear your comments, questions, requests and suggestions. Here are our email addresses. The [MBKA website is here](#).

Chair	John Chapman	john.chapman@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
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Other committee members	Robert Frost	robert.frost@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
	Ian Halls	admin@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
	Nigel Rawlins	admin@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Apiary Co-Ordinator	Elaine Laight	elaine.laight@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

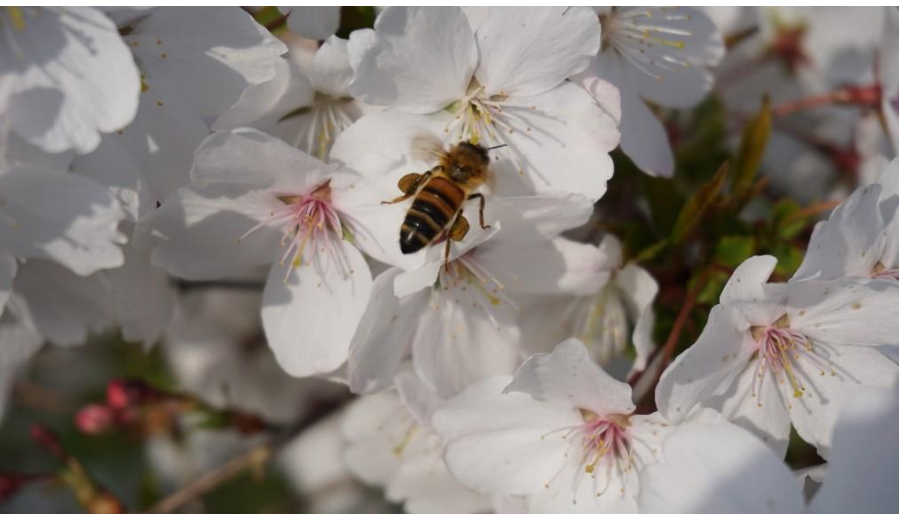
Please send your PICTURES, ARTICLES, AND IDEAS for the next issue of WHATSTHEBUZZ by 23rd of each month. And if you'd like to comment on anything in or about this issue, please email me: archie.mclellan@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Archie McLellan, WHATSTHEBUZZ compiler 

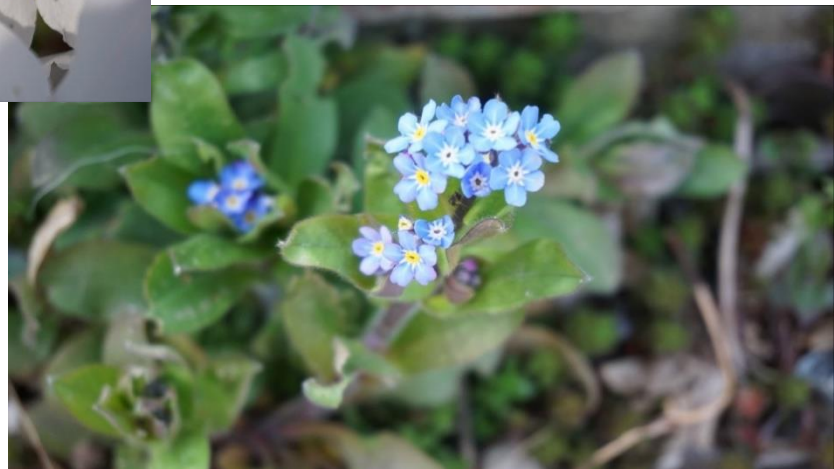
Some more photos overleaf



*Celandines and
Veronica*



*Presumably this is the colour of cherry
pollen; like apple or perhaps a little darker.*



*Forget-me-not – some yellow,
some white centres; some
pollinated, some not.*

Photos A McLellan



*many, many bees
foraged here last week*