



WHATSTHEBUZZ

May
2022

Hello to May, to full-on beekeeping, and to you all

A warm March and pleasant April has given us a riot of blossoming trees. What worked so well? Something about the mild winter? Later, the cool nights, dewy mornings, and sunny days? Certainly, the bees have been active for weeks, and don't seem to have been adversely affected by dry, coldish conditions. We read that nectar flow is reduced in dry and drying (breezy) weather. Does the early morning dew help?

Anyway, we're now in a time of full-on beekeeping. We've already been adding supers. That's easy enough to do in itself, but can raise questions if you're removing feed at the same time. It's not enough to see flowers on plants and assume that bees won't starve.

Swarm control is the big task. Usually, that refers to reactive measures when swarm signs appear. Some of you may have averted the need by pre-emptive measures such as the Demaree. Whichever you do will involve raising queens; your approach will either be passive or active queen-rearing. With colonies building up, you'll find colony numbers increasing, deliberately or incidentally. Making nuc colonies to control swarming doubles colony numbers, at least for a while. But the Demaree method, while keeping everything together often results in queen rearing, and nucs need to be made up for mating. More colonies!

A completely different kind of swarm control is underway now: *collecting* swarms, usually following a call from a member of the public.

Do you harvest a spring honey crop by the end of May?

Keep an eye on varroa levels, as always, and do a specific inspection for brood disease from time to time.

Inside the hive, the queen is laying strongly, drones numbers are building up, colonies are expanding to

near maximum size, queen cells are appearing, bees are swarming, and virgin queens are emerging to go on mating flights – and, if their luck holds, return.

The bluebells are out. We'll soon see hawthorn, horse chestnut, sycamore, holly, field beans, and raspberry.

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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.

WHATSTHEBUZZ How did the English Festival go?

John Chapman It was a good day. At our stand were Paul L, Tony, Mark, Sheila, Nigel R, Mick H, Hilde, and me (in the afternoon). Unfortunately we were in the wrong position. Instead of being with the animals in the field, we were treated as a food stall. Someone had made a judgement based on the fact that we were selling food (honey). So we were in with the queues for the food outlets and the live music platform.

WTB Sounds painful!

JC The music was ~~excruciating~~ very loud when the singer started. But we still managed to speak to people; it's nice to have an event and engage with the public. And we rolled candles and sold honey as well.

WTB Something to check on when arranging our stand at the Festival next year! What else is on your mind?

JC We're getting towards the swarming season. So I hope people will keep an eye on their bees and try and reduce the number of swarms. After last spring being very cold and very wet I think there's going to be quite a lot around. We need to know where we can house swarms, so if anybody is keen to have another colony or can look after a swarm, please do let Sonia know.

WTB Do we have our swarm phone out on a rota?

JC Unfortunately, because there weren't enough volunteers we're not going to be able to run the swarm phone like we did in previous years. We'll just have to put things around our members as calls come in. Otherwise people will just have to go on to the BBKA website where there's a map which anyone can use to locate and contact a swarm collector near them.

WTB How are your bees looking?

JC Our bees are filling up nicely and starting to bring stuff in especially with the ones around the oilseed rape. They are working like anything. I saw the bees around Rochester Cathedral this morning. They are merrily working already. You can see exactly where they are flying. They're ignoring the apple trees but



have obviously found something else which produces a nectar which is more to their liking!

WTB You were mentioning that we should do what we can to control swarming. What do YOU do if you can't find the queen?

JC We would split the colony ensuring there are eggs in both halves of the split.

WTB How is the summer programme of events shaping up?

JC We're hoping that we'll be able to visit some of our members' apiaries. We just need people who are willing to show their bees. It needs to be in the area, and with somewhere available for parking. We can take teas and use our gazebo, so it doesn't need to have a café on site! We all do things slightly differently, so it's nice to see others at work.

I've been invited to a World Bee Day event on 20 May organised by Bees Abroad which, along with Bees for Development, is one of the two UK charities working with beekeepers in developing countries.

These charities encourage local people to start beekeeping. You can make an income from it selling honey and other hive products. The beauty of it is that you don't need to own land. You can pretty well put bees anywhere.

We're hoping to have the opening of our apiary as an event in July. We'll have more to say about that and other events very soon.

World Bee Day, 20 May 2022

From Bees Abroad 'World Bee Day was declared by the UN General Assembly to raise awareness on the essential role of bees. The occasion is an opportunity for us to celebrate how bees benefit both people and the environment and to recognise and support the role of beekeeping, which is successfully alleviating poverty through Bees Abroad projects across the world.

21 Bees Abroad
Relieving Poverty through Beekeeping

SPONSOR A BEEKEEPING PROJECT FOR
WORLD BEE DAY 20TH MAY
WITH BEES ABROAD

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH BEEKEEPING

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

BEE FARMERS ON CRUTCHES
SIERRA LEONE // PROJECT COST: £8,000

Support farmers who have suffered leg amputations during the Sierra Leone civil war. Bees Abroad is working with Sierra Leone Amputee Sports Association and Sierra Leone Permaculture & Agro-ecological Farm to provide beekeeping training in conjunction with sustainable agricultural training on a specially adapted farm. The project will increase awareness for rural changemakers on ecological, conservational and environmental issues within the local context.

ISLAND WOMEN BEEKEEPERS
TANZANIA // PROJECT COST: £22,000

Support rural and economically disadvantaged women on Kome Island in Lake Victoria. Working with Emmanuel International Tanzania, we will give beekeeping training to 60 island women in 5 villages, hanging 300 locally made hives. The project will incorporate tree planting and business development, linking groups with mainland markets in Mwanza. The project will see improved livelihoods for our programme participants, changing the lives of hundreds of dependents.

To celebrate, we are hosting a World Bee Day Luncheon on 20th May 2022 at The Wax Chandlers Hall in the City of London, working with our patron, Anthony Bickmore, Master of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers. Our Guest of Honour will be the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, who is also a beekeeper. We are inviting guests who share an interest in bees and beekeeping, be that commercial, educational, ecological, or personal.'

John, our Chair, has accepted this invitation and will represent MBKA at this event.

We look forward to a full report in the next issue, John!



Jane Wheeler, one of our members, sent this picture from the school where she works

From The Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations 'This year, World Bee Day will fall during an exceptional moment in history, where many countries continue to deal with the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the occasion of the fourth observance of this International Day, FAO is organizing a virtual event on 20 May 2021 under the theme *Bee engaged – Build Back Better for Bees.*'

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Bee Engaged

Celebrating the diversity of bees and beekeeping systems

World Bee Day | 20 May 2022

SAVE THE DATE AND REGISTER

World Bee Day
20 May 2022

Virtual event

Bee Engaged
Celebrating the diversity of bees and beekeeping systems

[More info here.](#)

The webinar is at 12.00-13.30pm BST on Friday, 20 May 2022. Anyone can attend. [Register here.](#)

MBKA Apiary

Report from the Apiary, April 2022

We have almost completed the move from City Way to Cliffe Woods (Pavilion Apiary). Just a few more things to collect from the small shed at City Way.

The work at the Apiary has been going forward at a steady pace.

The area in which the bees will be kept is now secure. All the Harras style fence panels have been erected and the gate into the area is now in place. Climbing plants have been planted along some of the fence line. We have managed to cut the grass in this area on a couple of occasions and the area is looking reasonably tidy.

Garage number 2 (the open work area) is now ready for use – making up frames, brood boxes, supers. Cleaning used brood boxes, supers, queen excluders (QEs) and crown boards etc.

Garage number 1, nearest the Pavilion is now secure. A pair of conventional timber garage have been hung. The padlock to the Garage is suited with the padlock to bee compound.

Some new racking has been fitted which should make storing/finding equipment a lot easier. We still have a lot of equipment that needs cleaning/scorching.

The guttering to front and rear elevations is now complete. Water from the rear section of roof is now stored in a large IBC. Water from the front will go into a water butt.

Both Ladies and Gents loos are clean and functional. Both doors have been primed and are ready for undercoating.

We have yet to fit a door to the outside store.

The room to the left, which the farmer will have sue of to store plastic punnets in is now complete.

The ceilings and walls to the Kitchen/sitting area have been emulsioned.

The internal secure Storeroom is nearly complete.

Racking has been fitted. The door needs a lock and architraves fitting. The wall, door and door frame can then be painted.

The next room to tackle is the old Shower Room which we hope to convert into a honey extraction room. This needs thoroughly cleaned and the floor drain sorting out. It is intended to fit a stainless-steel sink and drainer and a hand washing sink.

Once the internal works are complete the Sitting area can be thoroughly cleaned, and surplus items moved to Garage/Internal Store.

We are currently looking for a qualified electrician volunteer to carry out an electrical test

on the electrical circuits. Please contact me if you can help.

Now that we have moved everything out of the large shed at City Way, it is now surplus to requirements. The shed is approx. 12ft x 8ft, is in reasonable condition, and will require dismantling. MBKA is looking for offers around £100. Again, please contact me if you are interested.

Our next Work Party at the Apiary is on 7 May.

Jobs to be carried out:

- U/coat Ladies/Gents doors and door frames.
- Finish Internal Secure Room – fit lock and architraves. Paint door, door frame, walls.
- Hang door to external Store.



Dave Wattle working on the Pavilion gutters. Photo A McLellan

- Cut grass.
- Paint soffit/fascia. Paint woodwork internally.
- Start sorting out equipment – brood boxes, supers, QEs etc.

Looking Ahead

We still have to sort out the problem with the access track. In wet conditions access to the Pavilion will be difficult. Vehicles will be able to get down to the Apiary but will find it difficult getting back up the incline. We are hoping to lay some type 1 roadstone. We have tried various suppliers to donate the material but have as yet had no success. We will keep trying!

The roof to the Pavilion is corrugated asbestos and we would like it removed. The National Grid may be able to get contractors to carry out this work. They have a charitable department and have offered some help.

We are aiming to have about 6/7 hives at the Apiary. Currently we only have two, one of which is struggling. However, with swarms and splits we should be able to make up the numbers.

The external walls need painting and hopefully this can be carried out during the Summer months (if we are not rushed off our feet with swarms!

* * *

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

MBKA news and events

Watch this space for news of summer bee safaris, BBQs, and a Grand Opening for the new MBKA Apiary.

TIMES AND DATES

7 May	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Cliffe Apiary, weather permitting.
21 May	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Cliffe Apiary, weather permitting.
28 May	2.00-4.00pm Apiary visit
7 May	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Cliffe Apiary, weather permitting.

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:

Nucleus method of swarm control

This is the simplest method of reactive, not pre-emptive, swarm control. In addition, this manipulation can be used to make increase (one colony becomes two), and for rearing new queens.

- BRIEFLY When you find charged queen cells indicating that swarming is imminent, remove the queen and place her in a nuc box with a frame each of emerging brood and stores, no queen cells, 2-3 frames of bees, and foundation or drawn comb. Remove all but the smallest queen cells in the parent hive. Take the nuc to an apiary 3+ miles away and block the entrance with grass. On day 7, at the parent hive, select one good queen cell to retain; then remove ALL the others.

- EQUIPMENT One five-frame nuc box with five frames of foundation and, if available, drawn comb.
- METHOD 1 Setting up a nuc colony
 - Remove the frames from the nuc box and close the entrance
 - Remove a frame of stores with adhering bees and place in the nuc box
 - Find the queen and place her on a frame of brood in the nuc box
 - Select two frames well-covered with bees and shake them into the nuc
 - Place the remaining three frames of foundation and/or drawn comb in the nuc and replace the roof
- METHOD 2 Preventing cast swarms out of the parent hive
 - Remove all queen cells in the parent hive except for a couple with very small larvae; mark the top bar to indicate where these cell(s) are
 - Use the remaining frames from the nuc box in the parent hive; place these frames within the brood nest if the manipulation is before mid to late summer
 - Seven days later, return to the parent hive and remove all queen cells except one, selected for its quality, from which the bees will raise the new queen. Leaving more than one risks a cast swarm.
 - If the queen is not successful, unite the nuc colony back with the parent colony. Place the frames from the nuc box in a full size box, and fill the space at the sides, or use dummy boards.
- Leave the parent colony alone for three weeks while the virgin emerges, mates, returns and lays.
- Check the nuc colony periodically to ensure that it remains viable; that it has not lost bees, that the queen is laying, and that it has sufficient stores.

Words

Caste

Caste is a useless word. It means different things to different people, so it does its job very badly.

In a recent quiz question in BeeCraft, we were informed that there are two sexes of adult bees in the hive and only one sex (the female sex) has two castes. That *may* be strictly true, but for many, caste describes different *types* of, in our case, bees in a honey bee colony. Regardless of how you define caste, there certainly are three types of bees in the colony and they are the queen, worker, and drone honey bees.

A glance through some dictionary definitions suggests little difference between *caste* and *type*. In Merriam-Webster, we read that caste refers to ‘a specialized form of a polymorphic social insect that carries out a particular function in the colony.’

The only times I’ve heard caste mentioned in beekeeping circles has been in the context of a discussion on whether there are two or three castes of honey bees. It’s time to walk away from this nonsense. Just say *type*. Archie McLellan

Library

Medway BKA has a library of books curated by Sonia Belsey. She is constantly looking for opportunities to expand the library, and to publicise it to members of the association. Do you have any bee books that have outstayed their welcome on your book shelves? Then consider donating them to our library. If there’s a book you’re interested in, but are not certain about a

headlong-long leap into what can be a serious purchasing event (generally all books which can be used for BBKA Module study are ridiculously expensive), then [look it up on our website](#). If you don’t see it, speak to Sonia (sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk).

Recommended reading

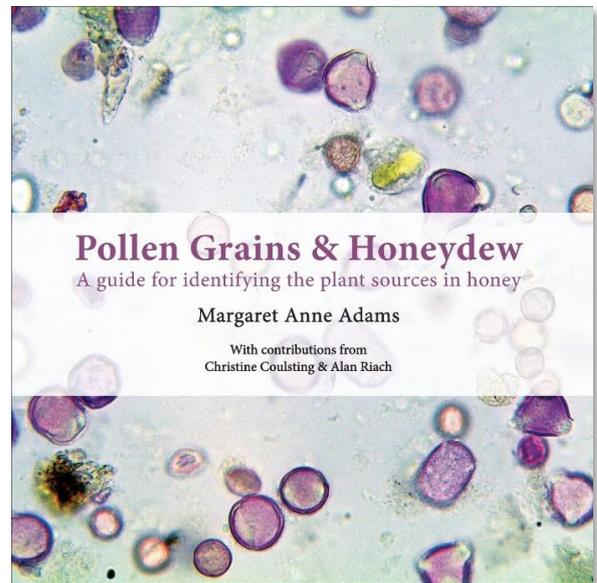
Pollen Grains & Honeydew: A guide for identifying the plant sources in honey, Margaret Anne Adams

Ever wanted to expand your knowledge but felt put off at the first hurdle by a minefield of daunting terminology, complicated procedures, and overblown explanations? If looking at pollen and the makeup of honey is of interest then this book really is a great starting point.

Right from the beginning the book breaks everything down into concise and easy to follow sections, from the equipment you'll need, how to produce slides, the make up of pollen grains, and how to identify them.

We're then shown excellent photos of a range of pollens with a brief synopsis of each. The book concludes with an analysis of a selection local honeys, outlining the plants the bees visited.

After one quick read through I feel confident that I could have a go at creating my own slides with a good degree of success. Making mistakes is part of the fun,



but this book has a very can-do attitude. However, it's still a worthwhile read for those who simply want an understanding of the processes involved in pollen identification. *Simon Woods*

It's in the post – tidbits from blogs and forums

Insight: knowing what's inside from outside

There's something romantic, magical even, about the beekeeper who can know all about the state of the colony in her/his hive without opening it up. Who would not envy someone with such a gift?

For Kirsten Traynor, you'll never know if you have the gift, if gift it be, unless you put in the time. Do you spend time being still, listening and looking, outside your hives? Five minutes before you lay a finger on a hive?

I've mentioned before the embarrassing moment at a past honey show when a revered and experienced beekeeper was asked what you could tell before opening a hive. He said, 'You can tell half, three quarters, of what you need to know. You can tell if they're bringing in pollen.' And then he dried up. I don't doubt that he really could get the feel of his

colonies by watching them from outside. He'd just forgotten how to put the experience into words.

Somebody who is able to find words for all of us who search in vain for them, is Rusty Burlew. The world's most famous bee blogger, Rusty Burlew, writing from Washington State in the Pacific NW of the US, seems to be able to speak for us all. [Here's her account, poetic and evocative as always, of what you can know and discover before you take the roof off:](#)

Most of the time you can tell everything you need know by standing near your hive and watching. You know a lot by how the colony behaves, the way it sounds, the way it smells, and the number and type of bees that come and go. You can tell even more by watching what they bring in, observing what they haul out, and assessing their temperament. If you walk by your hive on a summer's evening and it purrs like an insulated engine room, smells like heaven, and the landing board

is clean, why on earth would you open it up and disturb everything? It doesn't make sense.

On the other hand, if the number of bees is decreasing, you see dead bees or pupae unattended on the landing board, you detect an odd odor, or your bees are unseasonably temperamental, open the hive. If you see robbers, predators, or leaking honey, open the hive. If you see lethargic, aimless, or deformed bees, open it up.

Queen marking

Kirsten Traynor (right) suggests that the skill of handling the queen safely is best acquired by practising first by picking up drones with their wings and thorax, then with workers. When you can pick up 20 without being stung, you're ready to handle the queen.



To see a master at work, watch [this video of Michael Palmer](#). Although Michael uses a little pot of paint, many people use Toma (oil-based) or Posca (water-based) pens.

There is a colour code matching queens to the year of their emergence. *Write the year on the pen* if you can't remember the mnemonic (what mnemonic?), **why you raise good bees**: white, yellow, red, green, blue.

- White years ending in 1 or 6
- Yellow years ending in 2 or 7
- Red years ending in 3 or 8
- Green years ending in 4 or 9
- Blue years ending in 5 or 0

However, that's all a bit irrelevant if you're colour blind. Many of us are, especially in the green-red area. That doesn't mean that we interpret traffic lights by

Sieve the bees?!

One way of finding an elusive queen?

If you can persuade all the workers to go through a queen excluder, then you'll be left with the queen and the drones. Finding the queen will be easy then. Sometimes, it's the only way. I'm grateful to Dani Akrigg (Erichalfbee) on [Beekeeping Forum](#) for explaining the procedure.

- Move hive aside. Replace with an empty brood box on a new floor.
- Go through all the frames and shake every bee into the empty box.
- Put on a queen excluder and place the old brood box above it.
- Look in the next day. All the bees bar the queen and drones will be above the excluder.
- Some people leave one frame of brood in the bottom where they hope to find the queen.

Compare what you see on the outside to what you find on the inside until you develop an intuition. It will happen sooner than you think. And in any case, use common sense. No animal wants its home torn apart for no good reason. So before you do it, have a clear idea of what your good reason is.

their position! But you want marked queens to stand out, red and green dots are very subdued. So some of us prefer bright colours: white, yellow, and the fluorescents.

Test with a quick dab on your glove first or some other surface to avoid drenching or crushing the queen! Emyr Jenkins says: You barely need to touch the queen to get a decent dot on her. I can't understand these people who think they need to squeeze the pen down onto the queen as if they were stamping a letter.

All of which assumes you've been able to find the queen first! For some reason I've suddenly become rather successful at this. I'm not sure what's different. I use minimum smoke, take care to avoid any jerking, and look first at the frame face that was dark (not exposed to the light). I scan, keep focussed, just spend a few seconds on each side of a frame, and *expect to succeed*. I think that last bit has made all the difference.

Sometimes, however, you might need to...

Winter talks in March

Sarah Wyndham Lewis

In our Winter Talks series (seems ages ago!) we had no less than three talks in March. All were truly excellent occasions so we can't forget them without a mention here. Adam Leach visited us at the beginning of the month and I've already written about his talk. It was in the hall but streamed on Zoom for this who could not travel. This arrangement worked well, and we may look at that option for Winter study, with a course taking place in the hall, but with those participants unable to travel able to join in on Zoom.



souçon?) of their tales of people, places, bees, and honeys from their travels and it was marvellous.

During the break, Sarah and Dale set up the tables for a honey tasting. Mainly we focussed on four unusual and contrasting honeys. Asda's squeeze bottle was available for comparison. Makes you aware that honey is so much more than syrup.

And so varied! We tasted such a variety of flavours, yet you never doubted that it was honey. But what an array of sensations: colours, aromas, tastes.

A couple of weeks later, Sarah Wyndham Lewis, the writer, honey sommelier, and BeeCraft columnist visited us to talk about her work with food and drink professionals. Who knew that bartenders could be interested in sourcing unusual honeys!

Sarah and her husband Dale Gibson run Bermondsey Bees in London. Dale has spoken powerfully about London's bee problem, after a decade in which city people thought they could *Save the Bees* by placing a hive or two on top of their roof in London. Or Paris. Or many other cities. The problem of course was not that they could not save the bees, but that the bees, or at least these bees, honey bees, did not need saving. And so they created a problem because cities have limited forage sources, and importing lots more bees meant that there was not enough to go round.

Sarah and Dale have travelled far and wide in search of beekeepers and honeys. Sarah has a 'library' of 300 (if I remember rightly) honeys. She showed a picture of a large fridge stuffed full of honeys in all shapes and sizes of containers. Honey is very difficult to store, she says. Yes, it lasts for ever, but crystallisation is a problem. Her solution is to keep it at 5°C in a fridge! Not the celebrated 14°C which bee books recommend for setting honey quickly.

Have you ever found and spoken to a beekeeper on holiday? It's not easy. Sarah and Dale speak to people, by the hundred it sounded like, asking if they know a beekeeper, or someone with honey to sell. And they succeed! We heard a smidgen (or should I say



It all worked out very well for me. Shortly after the talk, I was gifted, from a friend who didn't like honey, a jar of home produced Ethiopian honey from 2019. Listening to one talk with a tasting didn't make me into a honey sommelier, but the least I can say is that this honey is so different, so special, so African!



Richard Rickitt

I'll write about Richard's talk next month. Meantime, if you missed it, you can catch up on YouTube. There is a [recording on the members' area of our website](#).

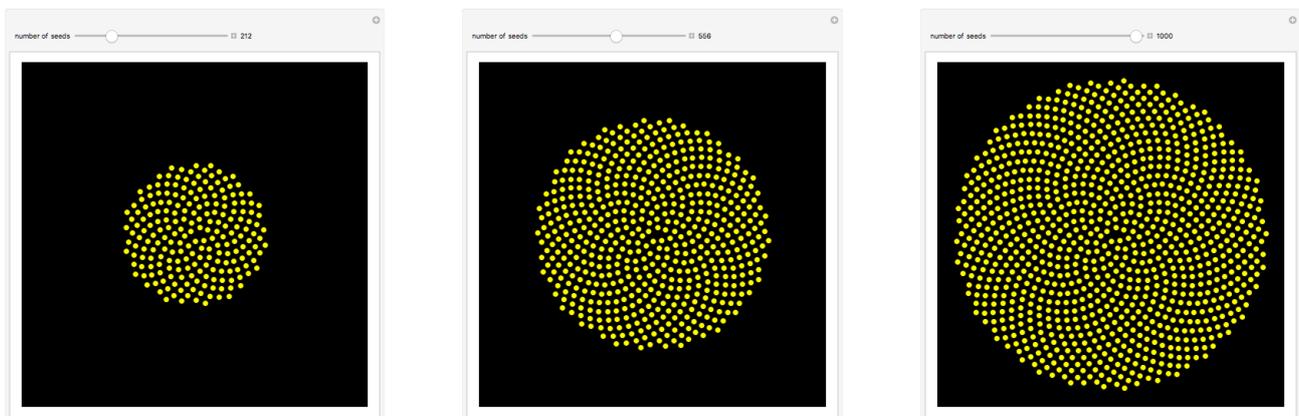
Quiz

The quiz prize for April goes to Paul Lawrence. If you would like to take part this month, email me if you got all the answers right (without looking them up!).

1. What is an aculeus? *For a word with the same origin, think about the meaning of ACUTE pain; where does that take you?*
2. What are the first two words of this sequence: ----, ----, colt, filly? *Not easy to guess if this is new to you! But it's very topical at this time of year. Although any self-respecting beekeeper would hope to be in control, it would be stretching the meaning of the word 'beekeeping' if the second, third and fourth events occur.*
3. Apart from preventing the spread of disease, why should you wash a bee suit after each apiary visit? *Obviously, the answer is so that the suit is clean – but cleansed of what?*
4. What is the first prerequisite before opening a hive for an inspection? *We're not talking about equipment here.*
5. What is the distinguishing feature of the South African honey bee, *Apis mellifera capensis*? *This has to do with a special kind of laying worker.*

Answers on page 18

Trivia



If you've ever grown sunflowers, it's likely you'll have spent some time gazing at the swirling patterns of seeds in the head of the flower. [This little program](#) allows you to build up dots in sunflower patterns increasing from 1-1000 seeds. A pleasant distraction. Something serious for mathematicians too.

In the shade

You may have read about the lowest temperatures in which bees can or will emerge from the hive. [David Evans's latest post](#) addresses this very topic. Yet there is never much information about what these figures

really refer to. Some say that bees will not forage below 8°C. Yet we've all seen bees out and about in temperatures far below that, and not complaining about the weather at all.

Of course, despite what the weather information says, if you were to ask the bee, she would say that you should go and try another weather app. She would say the temperature is far higher than you're being told.

She's right, of course. The weather app on your phone may give a reading of 6°C, and that refers to the AIR temperature – what we sometimes call the shade temperature. But the sun is shining right now, and the bee feels warm in its rays, and is happy to fly.

In fact, the temperature of the AIR does not vary much between sun and shade. The air is not really affected by the radiance of the sun. But a bee is a solid object and is hugely able to enjoy and benefit from the warming effect of the sun.

Similarly, a thermometer is a solid object and it too will warm up in sunshine. The thermometer tells you the temperature of the thermometer, which is why you sometimes see tropical readings in your greenhouse or conservatory.

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 issue, she concludes the story of how Medway BKA started. Today, 29 April, is the centenary of that first meeting!

A new Beekeeping association was George Bryden's resolution and on the 29 April 1922 they had their first meeting at The Rochester Guildhall.

That night sprang a new era and a new association with 103 people in attendance! Bryden likened himself to a



criminal who was now free from prison. The beekeeping politics of the day seem very dramatic. However his aim was to carry on the association for the benefit of its members and for the improvement of beekeepers and beekeeping, something we still have as our aim today. That night a committee of 20 members were elected ready to start the new association.

A lantern lecture entitled 'Bees for Pleasure and Profit' was carried out by Mr Herrod-Hempsall (a close friend



Fig. 819 The late Mr. G. Bryden's display of honey.

Honey Show, George Bryden on the right



Preston Hall, Mr Bryden to the left

of Bryden). Bryden's good work at Preston Hall in Aylesford was mentioned. He had taught many of those who had fought in the great war the skill of beekeeping and helped them in their recuperation.

After much searching I found pictures of George Bryden at Aylesford. This picture is actually from Hempsall's book *Bee-Keeping New and Old, Described with Pen and Camera*. Our association has a very fragile, signed copy of the book which was donated in the 1930s.

The first outdoor meeting was on 20 May that year and it sounds so wonderful. The British Beekeeping Journal recorded the following: 'The weather was perfect, and large numbers of amateur apiarists and their friends found themselves at that delightful little spot,



MBKA Meeting held in the garden of George Bryden in Rodmersham

Upchurch. No better rendezvous could possibly have been found than Mr. Wakeley's orchards, just now a mass of blossom. In fact, the whole of the Kentish countryside is at its best. At Upchurch we have still the ozone-laden breezes taking their free course from the sea, whilst the foliage of umbrageous trees keeps one cool upon the hottest day.

'Folk from the Medway towns and outlying districts arrived by motor, cycle, or on foot, after having trained or trammed to Rainham. Mr. George Bryden, the pioneer of the new organisation, was busy, as usual, and with his car made several journeys to and from the tram terminus, conveying visitors over the two miles of

road dividing Rainham from Upchurch. Meanwhile the Ladies' Social Committee, headed by Mrs. and Miss Bryden, Mrs. Semper, and Mrs. King were busily engaged with the necessary preliminary commissariat arrangements. There was also a bountiful supply of free literature.'

There was a talk on pollination, practical demonstrations and of course, tea and cake. That's one tradition we'll always have! Medway Beekeepers Association was described as rapidly growing and all the articles I've read are very positive regarding its

efforts and meetings. Further meetings that year included a trip to Preston Hall to look at the hives and meet the ex- soldiers, more talks from Mr Hempsall, and even a picnic!

Bryden was one for entering honey shows and that year won the WBC Gold Memorial Medal for

the most points in the British Beekeepers Annual Show!

That's where my detailed dive into our history ends. I don't have further copies of the British Beekeeping Journal for the following years and it seems most of our meetings were mentioned there! If anyone has any copies, or knows where I can find one let me know! Another trip to the archives may be in order to see what else I can unearth! If you have any history of the association, old photos, stories or memories, please contact me at sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

Sonia Belsey

Ding-dong

Neonics and sugar beet

Ken and Dan Basterfield (father and son) have a unique place in British beekeeping: they both hold the coveted National Diploma of Beekeeping (NDB) as well as being Master Beekeepers and hugely experienced bee farmers and teachers. During the pandemic, their

Advanced Beekeeping courses on Zoom attracted a considerable following.

So when Ken wrote in the April issue of BeeCraft dismissing the BBKA campaign as a foolish squandering of environmental credibility on something which is not

a problem for honey bees, his remarks were not going to go unnoticed. [Steve Donohoe, writer of the Walrus blog](#), wrote a post about it, and Stephen Barnes, chair of the BBKA, replied at length in the latest BBKA News. Ken pointed out that sugar beet never gets to flower and that pollinators are unlikely to be harmed if it is dressed with neonicotinoid pesticides. He then pointed to beekeepers use of pesticides to treat varroa. 'People who live in glass houses...'

Stephen Barnes regretted that Ken was ignoring years of research and government advice regarding the use of neonics and dismissed his comments about varroacides as 'at best, spurious.' He regarded Ken's comments as an insult to the members of the BBKA who had voted against the use of neonics at the ADM last year.

Tom Seeley's review of Jürgen Tautz's text in the book *Wild Honey Bees*

For Prof TD Seeley, it is no excuse that this stunning (have you seen the pictures?) 'coffee-table' book is about entertainment, and wonder, rather than scientific education. He suggests that the text, written by the great German scientist, Jürgen Tautz, 'appears to have been written hastily, for although it is an engaging read, it is peppered with misleading statements about the biology of honey bees.' He then quotes three statements from the book which he baldly states are not true, and concludes: 'Bottom line: this is a book about wild honey bees that can be admired greatly for its photos, but cannot be trusted fully for its text.'

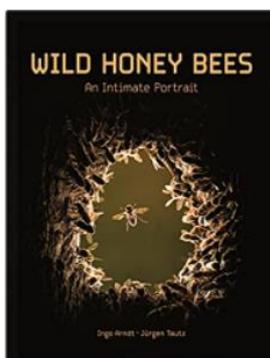
On page 7 of the latest issue of BeeCraft, Prof Tautz responds to Seeley's comments in detail, pointing to

Record keeping

At this time of year, with weekly colony inspections, you risk losing track of the details of what's going on in each of your colonies unless you keep records. You might do this with an app on your phone, or with a spreadsheet program (yes, some beekeepers have their laptop with them at the bees), or with paper and pen. I've used a notebook in the past but it is not expandable so I now prefer a separate sheet for each colony. I've not yet found the best way of keeping the

I've followed the question of the derogation of neonics and the BBKA campaign for some time the press, radio, and Beekeeping Forum. The issue is not cut and dried. The research does not prove anything conclusively.

Perhaps it is the role of the BBKA to actively campaign for a particular position, as directed by its members. That is one way that democracy works. Activists and campaigners work for the implementation of what they believe – and perhaps after the battle, we end up somewhere in the middle. I prefer the more balanced discussion on Beekeeping Forum to the single-minded voice of campaigners. Sure, you get people with strong opinions on BF. But you listen to a balance of opinion and form your own judgement, based on what you've heard. And if you don't attack others personally, you don't descend into 'politics'.



selective quoting by Seeley, and referencing a new book he has written on honey bee communication which gives a fuller account of his assertion that foraging bees emit the pheromone geraniol to mark the trail to the feeding site. Finally he concedes that in the English translation, the word 'perception' would have been a better choice than 'mental image'.

Seeley has replied to Tautz's reply! If you're a subscriber to BeeCraft [you can read what he says here](#). He's not giving an inch! Do you think it sounds a bit like point-scoring? Do they look at each other's books with a hint of professional envy, and maybe at the sales figures too?

sheets separate and safe from being blown away by the wind.

I've tried recording details to my phone and writing them up later, but that creates yet another job that I might not get round to doing before it becomes irrelevant. So I complete the record at the time, and the boxes in the table remind me of everything I should be noticing.

You can record anything of interest including weather, what plants are flowering, which birds singing etc. and if your notes are legible, you might be able to look back at them years later and make interesting comparisons.

The basic information you need about each colony is

- the number of frames of brood (and its stages : eggs, larvae, and sealed brood) and the number of frames of stores. You might record this as '7 BIAS / 4 HP' (7 frames of brood in all stages, 4 frames honey and pollen).

- seams of bees? room to lay?
- queen seen?
- queen cells?
- temper?
- health – signs of brood disease and varroa?
- action: adding / removing frames, boxes, treatments?

[Click here for a downloadable colony record chart](#). It is in Word format so you can tailor it to your own requirements and style.



In the apiary today

Meresborough cherries. Photo A McLellan

Members write about what they've found and been doing with their bees in the last few days.

From Melvyn Belsey, 16 April We were asked by a farmer to look through a couple of hives that have been on his land for a while. The beekeeper lives far away and used to come visit but hasn't been to look through them for a few years. They are two hives in the corner of a sheep field. The bees were very busy bringing back pollen, queuing up to get through the mouseguards. They were on solid floors so the smoke we blew under them didn't make much difference.

Luckily they were very placid, considering they had been left alone for so long. The frames were hard to remove due to the amount of propolis and the age of them. There were a few wiggly wax moth larvae too but on the whole the bees were healthy which was important. We've reported back to the farmer who will try and get hold of the old beekeeper but it was a very interesting couple of hours trying to unstick them and carry out some sort of inspection.

As for our own bees, we lost two colonies over winter. We have two that are doing well including a small swarm collected in late September! One has a drone laying queen that we are hoping to rectify this week with a new queen in the post!

From Sue Chapman, 18 April Visiting our apiary in a plum orchard on Easter Monday. The plums have almost finished flowering and after all the dry weather it is now possible to drive down to the hives. As we approached the hives the ground in front of them was carpeted with the blue flowers of ground ivy. Putting on our bee suits we could see insect activity on the ground ivy and thought 'doorstep forage'! On closer inspection it became clear that the honey bees were ignoring the ground ivy and flying further to the last of the plum blossom. The ground ivy was being worked by buff-tailed bumble bees and bee-flies (*Bombylius* sp.) Bee-flies look as though they were designed by a committee and have a very long proboscis, round body and wings held at right angles to the body – very distinctive if only they would stay still long enough for you to get a good look.

When we eventually got started on the job we had come to do, two of our three hives were queenright and only needed some new brood frames, queen excluder and a super each. The third was sadly queenless; there was evidence of her being there until a few weeks ago and as there was no sign of disease we united them with the hive next door.

A mixed but enjoyable visit and great to be out in the sun.

From Sean D'Alton, 21 April Our colonies, a mix of brown and black bees, are just flat out. We recently moved them to an open area of 1mile square of yellow rape flower. To say they are busy is an understatement.

We added a super three weeks ago and a queen excluder to enhance growth and room so as to prevent swarming. The bees clearly realised this and settled down and are very relaxed and are currently replenishing the brood and a half and are now gently coming up to the new super. I feel they are relaxed, and that we are on for a bumper year – but more importantly we will have healthy and happy bees.

From Simon Woods, 23 April Checked my hive today. I was a bit worried because I had left it so late for an

inspection. The bees were booming. I had left 2 supers on for the winter without a queen excluder and it looks like the queen has laid in both supers. It was too cold for a full inspection but I was pleased they survived the winter.

From Archie McLellan, 26 April I've been thinking what it means to give the bees enough ROOM.

I noticed when looking through a number of hives yesterday that the absence of swarm cells was noticeable. How nice! These hives all had a couple of supers and no queen excluder. Some boxes were solely foundation and I wanted to make it as easy as possible for the bees to go up and draw comb. But even though some were already drawn, I didn't put excluders in place there either.

I was a little surprised how enthusiastically the bees extended the brood nest upwards through the supers. It was so energetic, I felt that this drive upwards would have gone on through another couple of boxes had they been there. It made me think that the natural shape of a brood nest is tall and oval, or perhaps pear-shape. And if we are to give the bees room, that applies not just to living space for bees, and space for the queen to lay, but space for the brood nest to expand. It is one of the main rules for swarm prevention, but maybe we forget about the last bit: space for the brood nest to grow naturally.

Thinking back to last spring, I remembered some of my 12x14 boxes, full to bursting with brood on all 22 sides of the 11 frames. I'm thinking now that this is unnatural and unfair and that I should give the bees space to expand upwards in future. After all, when brood rearing calms down a bit, a queen excluder can be put in place and these upper boxes can be used for honey storage again.

It seemed like a plan. As I mentioned last month, I've been thinking about single-box-size hives, and I've discovered someone else has gone into business with the idea: [The Rose Hive](#). (I think that hive design is terrible, by the way but we can talk about that another time if you're interested.)

Bees do nothing invariably. This morning, I opened the two hives I've moved into my garden for the apple flowers. Both were 12x14s with two supers, and *only one had an excluder*. I had a trial! What was I going to discover!?

Well, if you've got this far, you'll have realised that things became a bit anticlimactic. The box *without* the queen excluder was full of brood – ten frames, and virtually no space for pollen or honey. The supers (foundation) were empty. Hardly any drawn comb and few bees. Admittedly, they have put all their food into brood and have doubled in size over the last 10 days. But they decided to poo-poo the idea of a pear-shaped

Handy Hints

Nobody likes to waste brace comb. You can give it back to the bees if you place it above the crown board with only a tiny access. People used to place a CD over the hole in the crown board. Nowadays, in this post-physical-media era, we might cover the hole with aluminium tape, then make a little hole in it.

The bees will take what they can use. If there's honey or nectar, they'll take that down. But if they don't need

Supersedure

Gerry Collins has written a fine article about supersedure in the latest BBKA News. He covers everything – even the spelling. Despite Gerry's tolerant approach, while I'm compiling this rag, WHATSTHEBUZZ will never print a spelling of supersedure with a 'c'!

I discovered three cells in a hive a few days ago. All were sealed but I found (and marked) the queen, so I felt confident that this was a case of supersedure. But why would the bees do this? This colony looked great. Lots of bees, good-looking brood, gathering lots of nectar, and with a good temperament. And they were going to do away with her!

I decided to take the queen out and put her in a nuc to use later to requeen a colony with less-desirable attributes.

I was somewhat worried at Gerry Collins might have to say about this. In fact he says nothing, as if the possibility hasn't occurred.

But he does end his article with a comment on the practice of some beekeepers who decide that the cells they have found are supersedure cells and that swarming is not imminent. *They decide to let the bees get on with it, 'as the bees know best' rather than*

vertical nest and instead filled the brood box to the edges. Why draw comb above with empty comb available to the sides!?

I'm going to treat this as the exception and continue exploring larger vertical brood nests with double (or more) brood boxes. However, I think I'll be putting excluders in soon to prevent a Tower of Babel scenario!

to draw comb, they'll leave the crisp empty remnant for you to take away and melt. You could then trade it in for foundation – but brace comb like this is of the highest quality. It would be better if you were to make wax objects with it. Or a wax block, which has no other function than to save a beekeeper from feeling guilty for wasting such a beautiful and, in the past, valuable product.



This giant cell is about 40mm long. I've read that it probably contains a problem, like a diseased pupa. The tip is puzzling too: it looks as if it has been interfered with, and underneath it is fixed to the comb. Photo A McLellan

taking the pragmatic precautionary approach of carrying out some sort of swarm control.

Thank you Gerry. I didn't take the queen out specifically for swarm control, but removing her as I did is what I would have done if I had been doing a swarm control manipulation.

A couple of other things: it's not helpful to assume the bees always know best. They do pretty suicidal things sometimes.

Also, some would say that if you see more than one cell (!), be prepared to think swarm cells.

Shopping

Hive roofs

You can make the cheapest hive roofs from Correx (4mm corrugated plastic sheet). David Evans describes the process [in his blog](#). The best source I've found recently for Correx sheets is [this Amazon site](#). Buying five sheets works out at £10.10 per sheet; that's £1.26 per National hive roof. I have a couple of sheets left

Masonry paint

Not everyone agrees but from what I've seen, poly nucs and hives must be painted. According to Dave Cushman's website, 'the paint will protect against UV light, which will degrade the surface over time; it will also seal the surface against moisture giving protection against surface frost damage and discourage the growth of algae.'

Roger Paterson recommends Sandtex Ultra Smooth masonry paint. I've always found Wilko paint very

Swienty Breeze Protector Suit

The Rolls Royce and Bentley of beekeeping suits are those made by BJ Sherriff and BB Wear. At around £160 for a full suit (there's no need to pay the higher 'list' prices – they're readily available in sales), they're about three times more expensive than a cheap suit from many other manufacturers. But many of us have found that we 'buy cheap, buy twice.'

However, these high quality suits haven't changed in their design and materials for many years, though new materials are available. It's now possible to get lightweight vented suits which address the problem of beekeeping in warm weather. It doesn't need to be that hot for beekeepers to become uncomfortable. Beekeeping is heavy work!

The Swienty Breeze has acquired a reputation as the best of the new design suits with a truly innovative veil. It's about the same price (£140) so you might want to [find out more here](#).

Yet more glove options!

Some beekeepers recommend thin latex gloves rather than nitriles. I've not found that the thickness of the glove makes any difference to the ability of a bee to sting through it (leather gauntlets apart!) so latex is an attractive option because these gloves are very easy to put on, and allow very sensitive handling of frames. I can't find where I bought mine from ages ago, so search 'long cuff latex gloves'. Like nitriles, they can be used umpteen times, and come up like new when they go through the same wash as my beesuit.

over and **you can have them for £10.10 each**. Buying them individually costs £16.00 each.

You'll need tape to bond it together. Not any old gaffer tape, but [UniBond 1668019 Extra Strong Power Tape](#).

good. The thing about masonry paint is how sticky it is – how it bonds strongly with almost any surface.



Wilko Exterior Masonry Smooth Pure Brilliant White Masonry Paint 2.5L 0362396
£12.00 £ 4.80 per 1 L
or 6 weekly interest-free payments with  [Amazon](#)
WhatsApp this?
★★★★★ 4.9 (96)
● 15 years all-weather protection
● Mould resistant
● For exterior walls and render
● New packaging, same great product! We're updating our paint tins at the moment, so the paint tin you might receive may be Pure Brilliant White or Intense White. But rest assured, it's the same great paint formula and colour inside!
Wilko Exterior Masonry Smooth Paint 2.5L gives 15 year all-weather protection. The smooth finish formulation, which gives maximum protection, is mould resistant and resists airborne dirt and grime. It dries in 4-6 hours and is also UV resistant. The...



From the BBKA

BBKA Winter Survival Survey

Diane Drinkwater, Chair of Communications at the BBKA, has asked that all members complete the [BBKA Winter Survival Survey](#) as soon as possible.

BBKA Insurance

Guidance for Taster and practical Courses is [here](#). For commonly asked questions about BBKA Insurance, click [here](#).

BBKA Module exams

Marin Anastasov has written in BBKA News about changes to the Module exams being phased in over the next year or so. We'll look at this in more detail in a separate note when you'll be invited to share your thoughts about options for Winter Study later this year.

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 (name withheld) I'm getting really fed up with the editor of this rag filling it with all his own ideas and beekeeping experiences. I'd like to see more from the readers about their beekeeping thoughts and techniques. All the better if they have a different point of view from what's usually printed here!

Answers to the quiz

1. A thorn or sting
2. Prime, cast, colt, filly. These are the names given to successive swarms. Separately, a maiden swarm is a swarm from a swarm, accompanied by the same queen as headed the original swarm. More [here](#).
3. To remove alarm pheromone from the previous visit.
4. A clear idea of what you are looking for.
5. The workers are capable of producing diploid (female) eggs parthenogenetically (where females are produced from unfertilized eggs), and replacing the queen if she dies.

Contact details

Bee Inspectors

There are six Seasonal Bee inspectors (SBIs) covering the South East England. In Medway, it is likely that your SBI will be Danyal Conn or Kay Wreford. Go to [BeeBase, click on Contacts page](#), and enter your postcode to find your nearest SBI. Do not assume you know before you have checked because the NBU have adjusted some areas for SBIs. For instance, in west Medway, such as Rochester, it is likely that Danyal's name will come up when you do a search.

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	M: 07584 202700

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
Secretary	Sheila Stunell	admin@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Treasurer	Archie McLellan	archie.mclellan@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
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	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



Garden cherry, with Goathams's apples, Meresborough

Photo A McLellan