

WHATSTHEBUZZ



European Foul Brood in Medway: Mel Henbest tells how she recently lost her colonies to EFB, and outlines basic precautions for all.

A case study of a swarm collection that went wrong; a small increase in temperature can be devastating.

Plus Handy hints, Recommended reading, Ideas for retail therapy, and THE QUIZ

WHATSTHEBUZZ is the monthly newsletter of Medway Beekeepers Association.

Please send your PICTURES, ARTICLES, and IDEAS by 23rd of each month.

If you'd like to comment on anything in or about this issue, please email me.

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The MBKA website is kept completely up-to-date about the Association.

<https://www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk>

Photo above: Scabious (Knautia arvensis) is now flowering freely; here a fly and an Essex Skipper butterfly find common ground.

Hello to July, to the season's culmination, and to you all

Sometimes it seems as if beekeeping in the spring is relatively straightforward. Colonies build up, and possibly – probably? – sprout queen cells. Beekeepers then ‘nuc the queen’ (or some other form of swarm control) and remove all but one cell (or two) after a week. If there’s a decent flow, perhaps from a field crop, or top fruit trees, there might be a spring harvest.

Then spring is over, and the second flow might be some weeks away. Some colonies might have a brood break, and if you don’t see the queen you might be uncertain if that’s what’s really happening. Some colonies seem able to continue foraging while others, perhaps in a hive next door, seem unaware of any sustenance save what’s in their frames – and that disappears very quickly!

Then the second flow starts and some semblance of normality returns. In fact, the flowering gap, if it existed at all, seemed to be over in the south east this year with the arrival of ‘July’ around the middle of June. This is seen as the main honey flow. The weather may be fine for the next couple of weeks, by which time rain, when it comes, will be very welcome. New queens can still be mated for many weeks yet, but as the queen’s laying rate is now reducing, it is better to requeen colonies with a mated queen.

It is good practice to focus solely on checking for brood disease a couple of times each season. Shake the bees off the comb, and study the larvae. Even the smallest larvae should be C-shaped, curved and pearly white. If you find even one larva that does not look like that and is deformed in some way, it might be diseased with chalk-brood, sacbrood, or EFB). Note that recent research in BeeCraft this month shows that not all forms of EFB are manifest in ‘melted’ larvae. Look also at the brood cappings. Are there any sunken or greasy cappings? Or any holes nibbled by the bees? This might indicate AFB. Note that nibbled holes are not the same as so-called bald brood, which is sometimes caused by bees opening cappings to check for varroa in the cells. They might then recap the cell, or cannibalise the diseased larva.

With the present flow, be sure you keep up with the bees need for room. Add supers when the lightest super is full of bees, not honey.

Many colonies will be stressed by wasps. If you have no entrance block in place, the colony will be very vulnerable.

Many beekeepers keep an entrance block in place throughout the year. The in-season opening is c. 7x75mm, which is reduced in the late summer to c.7x20mm. If wasps and robbing become a problem, it might be necessary to reduce the entrance to a single bee space, though sometimes the only solution is to move the colony to a different site.

It used to be said ‘a swarm in July, let it fly’, and it’s true that late swarms will not produce a honey crop this year. But they can become full-size colonies before winter – if you’re looking to increase your numbers!

Inside the hive, the colony is at maximum size. Although many colonies will no longer develop a swarming urge, it can rise up suddenly, not least because of lack of space. To some extent the workers control the laying activity of the queen and may fill newly vacated cells with nectar. It’s not too late to actively raise your own queens. There are still plenty drones, and virgin queens are able to get mated.

Outside in the world, so many plants flowered in the second half of June, one might wonder what has still to come. The bramble and lime may soon be over, but sweet chestnut and *Clematis vitalba* (Old man’s beard) are flowering now. And lots of others: hebe, lavender, Michaelmas daisy, ragwort... (complete your own list with the flowering plants in your area).

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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.

This month, John was indisposed and unable to record a chat with WTB. He is now fit and well again, and up to his eyes in work for the Kent Show, where Kent Beekeeping Association (including, for this event, the non-Kent BKAs like MBKA) are a big part of the Show. It's all happening this weekend. Make a (family) day out at Detling Showground; there's masses to see and do.

John also asked me to mention the Grand Opening of the New Apiary Site on Saturday 30 July at 2.00pm. The committee and helpers can deal with the organising of this. Ultimately, what's needed more than anything else is a huge turnout of our members. Make a note of the date please. We really do want to see you there.

Finally, John mentioned – because planning ahead is always essential in beekeeping – to start thinking about the end of the season, and how you are going to manage the varroa



load in your colonies. If you treat (as necessary) just twice a year, then August, after removing the summer crop, is the time to do the next treatment so that the winter bees are healthy and able to take the colony through to spring. You will probably also treat in November / December too, to mop up any that are remaining after the late summer treatment.

MBKA APIARY

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.**

MBKA NEWS AND EVENTS

A VISIT TO TONY EDWARD'S APIARY

A small but perfectly formed group met at the apiary of Tony Edwards on Saturday. Tony gave us a tour and explained the background of farming the 100-acre farm at Noke Street before taking us to rehome a split from a nuc to a full colony. As is often the way with bees the curve ball arrived. We found many queen cells in the nuc, ready to pop! We transferred the frames but now shared them, and the best of the queen cells between the two boxes!

The beautiful views and the peace of Tony's site was a lovely way to spend a Saturday afternoon.

The cherries were delicious!! *Sheila Stunnel*

OPEN GARDENS DAY AT ARCHIE AND ESTHER MCLELLAN'S GARDEN

This garden is part of a line which marks the east edge of the Medway conurbation. To those in west, like Rochester, it must seem like the Far East! The open space behind this row of houses is not visible as you approach because garages and gates fill the gaps between the houses. So the openness of the view is rather striking: Goatham's orchards, the river Medway and, most of all, the sky. There were no bees at this garden, at least not in hives! Some colonies had been brought in for a (working) holiday for a couple of weeks in early May for the apple flowers. These

and nearby fields of cherries, pears and plums have made for a wonderful spring honey crop.

Being part of a local event with fifteen open gardens, it was a busy afternoon. A quiz sheet (of course!) was handed to out to everyone as they arrived. The answers were all to be found in the garden. Those who made a good attempt received a little jar of honey.

A number of MBKA members were among the c.200 visitors that afternoon. It was good to meet up. Dave Hopper

arrived on his bike which looked as if it had been around for most of Dave's beekeeping career. I leave it unlocked wherever I go, he said, but nobody ever takes it.

APIARY SITE AVAILABLE

There is a site on allotments in Central Rochester FOR NEW BEEKEEPERS ONLY. Contact John Belfield for more info. 07886 749853. The BBKA have produced a leaflet which can be downloaded free [here](#), on *Allotment beekeeping*.

TIMES AND DATES

7 July	Thu	7.30-10.00pm, Basic exam revision, Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
8/9/10 July	Fri-Sun	8.30am-6.00pm Kent Show, Detling Showground (<i>dates were wrong in last month's WTB</i>)
14 July	Thu	7.30-10.00pm, Basic exam revision, Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
17	Sun	Basic Assessments at the MBKA Apiary
23 July	Sat	Basic Assessments at the MBKA Apiary
23 July	Sat	10.00-1.00pm Work party at the Cliffe Apiary, weather permitting.
27 July	Wed	7.30pm BeeChat at The Pier pub, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA
30 July	Sat	2.00-4.00pm Opening of the new Association Apiary
24 August	Wed	7.30pm BeeChat at The Pier pub, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA
24 August	Wed	8.00-10.00pm, Introductory Course, Session 4, Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
25 August	Thu	Closing date for entries to the MBKA Honey Show. Details here .
31 August	Wed	8.00-10.00pm, Introductory Course, Session 5, Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
7 September	Wed	8.00-10.00pm, Introductory Course, Session 6, Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
3-4 September	Sat-Sun	MBKA Honey Show, Elm Court Garden Centre, Gillingham ME7 3JQ. Details here .
24 September	Sat	Ploughing Match, Ringshill Farm, Wouldham ME1 3TP
28 September	Wed	7.30pm BeeChat at The Pier pub, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA
17 October	Mon	Winter study, Session 1, Module 2, 7.30pm. Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
27-29 October	Thu-Sun	National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, KT10 9RT
31 October	Mon	Winter study, session 2, Module 2, 7.30pm. Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG
TBD		Association dinner

DO WE HAVE DIFFICULT BEES OR ARE WE POOR BEEKEEPERS?

This was the topic of a [recent thread on Beekeeping Forum \(BKF\)](#). We've all seen videos of beekeepers in other countries, often the US – for the simple reason that more videos are uploaded to YouTube from the US than anywhere else – where beekeepers work with gentle, almost immobile bees, without little or no clothing protection.

There was a little discussion about this at one of our Zoom study sessions last winter. It was prompted by the young Texas lady beekeeper whose videos of swarm collecting and nest removal went viral.

The question was raised on Beekeeping Forum recently too. It was interesting to see that our group and BKF covered the same ground. We noted that:

- Videos on YouTube are selected and edited. We too could select our calmest colony for such a display.
- There is a centuries old tradition of not wearing protection when handling bees. Sometimes this is because of the nature of the work; other times, because of the bravado. There is an element of the circus at play here. Remember photos of people bearded or draped in thousands of bees?
- Your bees won't be (or continue to be) docile if you do nothing. It is necessary to select your best queens and breed from them.
- The Texas lady is a regular beekeeper who uses protection for her routine beekeeping – not the impression given by her videos which are about a Wow factor.
- Bees seem to be calmer in warmer countries.

Posts on the BKF mentioned these same things. Some made the point that calm bees which can be managed without protection can be found in many other places, not just the US and Canada. There are some celebrated keepers who are regular contributors to BKF. Michael Palmer from Vermont is one of them. He is particularly well-known in the UK for his talks at the National Honey Show on topics such as [The Sustainable Apiary](#). On the topic of handling bees without protection, he wrote:

'About the Texas Beeworks lady...total scam.

'But for the rest of us, gentle bees are the norm, unless you buy the unselected rubbish that will eat you alive. Of course it comes along with proper breeder selection for temper. I don't own a suit. I don't own gloves. Neither do my employees. Do we ever get stung? Yes, of course. But so much stinging that suits and gloves and heavy smoking are necessary? Never. Honestly, I would rather die from bee stings than from heat stroke.'

Dani Akrigg (Erichalfbee) wrote that things are different here: 'I think the weather and continuous forage (elsewhere) must help. Here in the UK we get ups and downs, dearths and manic flows, and weather that keeps bees in for days/weeks when there is actually forage about. They don't know whether they are coming or going and can get tetchy. Same as beekeepers really.'

Madasafish, in Stoke on Trent, poetically described the reality of it all:

'Friday here was 27C.

Saturday was 14C and wet.

Bees were seriously annoyed – and so was I.

What can you expect?'



*The hawkbeard and yellow rattle will be back next summer.
Just out of the frame are lots of field scabious flowers.*

EUROPEAN FOUL BROOD IN MEDWAY

Mel Henbest writes about her recent experience of EFB in her colonies.

It's not a nice prospect to call the bee inspector when you see something that's not right with your colony but that's what I had to do a few weeks ago. I was concerned about one of my colonies. The open brood didn't look right: larvae had a melted, sunken appearance. It wasn't on every frame but when I looked, I could see it wasn't right.



I called the bee inspector and, after sending some photos, he attended and confirmed EFB by lateral flow test. Sadly I had to kill the colony. Then the inspector returned to oversee the burning of the brood and honey frames and to scorch remaining equipment. My apiary is on standstill for six weeks.

As I write this today, I have called the bee inspector back. I thought my other colony had succumbed and sadly my fears were confirmed.

COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS

The committee met on 23 June. The agenda includes regular items: approval of minutes of the last meeting, Treasurer's update, recent correspondence, and membership – which now stands at 147. The main discussions were on:

The signs of EFB are visible in open brood. Healthy larvae are pearly white, C-shaped, and with visible segment lines – though it can be difficult to see these traits in very young larvae which may be floating in a pool of royal jelly.



Although it's not nice to tell others that you have diseased bees, I thought I would tell you my experience so you can be vigilant with your own colonies and feel confident in calling the bee inspector if you are worried about anything you see. The bee inspectors are helpful, knowledgeable and provide reassurance.

Finally, if you have not already done so, register on [BeeBase](#) now. You will then be informed of any outbreak of foulbrood in your area, and an inspector will call to check the health of your hives. *Mel Henbest*

THE NEW ASSOCIATION APIARY

The work on upgrading our new apiary (the 'Pavilion') is almost complete. Currently there are seven colonies on site made up of our association colonies, and some swarms and loans. The Bee Inspector has yet to return to lift the stand still order following the outbreak of EFB. Once this is done, the colonies can be rationalised and sort out the numbering.

The security cameras are now up and running. One of our new members, Lachlan Berntsen (Lock), has offered to install a new alarm system free of charge – for which we are very grateful. The double bowl sink and drainer is now installed and we have an under-sink heater.

THE OPENING OF THE ASSOCIATION APIARY

We propose to plant a tree in memory of Terry Clare, and the bench at the apiary will have a commemorative plaque. We plan to have this done no later than the opening on 30 July.

We will provide a buffet, and we will invite members, neighbours and others to attend. We will ask Kent Messenger and other members of the press to cover the event.

EVENTS

These are listed on the Times and Dates on [page 4](#)

INTRODUCTORY COURSE

The committee spent some time rethinking the current Introductory Course, and it was suggested that in future we might do a taster day in May and enrol for the course at that point. This course would then take place over four/five consecutive weeks in June and July. It would include practical sessions and an increase in practical experience of bee inspections. The Education team will look into the details of this.

WINTER TALKS

Sonia felt unable to undertake this and so we need to look elsewhere. There is no reason why this role should be filled by a committee member. We hope that one of our members will feel inclined to take this job on.

Date of next meeting: 7.30pm, Thursday 14 July 2022, at 7 South Avenue.

Minutes of past meetings and past editions of WHATSTHEBUZZ can be found on [the MBKA website](#).



There is an apiary here. It's not unpleasant to tunnel through Lavatera flowers to get there.



Half way through the 'entrance'. Hives are now visible.

A SWARM COLLECTION THAT WENT WRONG

You collect dozens of swarms over a few seasons. You feel you've cracked it. It's routine and simple – but never boring, because you enjoy chatting with the people who've called you to pick up 'their' swarm. Then, on an occasion that looks as routine as all the others, a few things combine to produce a disastrous outcome. Let's start by describing the job that fateful day.

The call came at 9.30am on a sunny morning in June. The swarm (medium-large) was in a little tree, about 10 feet off the ground in a street in a residential area. I (time to change to the first person now – now point in hiding any more) had a little step ladder with me and, standing on the top of the ladder, I cut away small branches to allow the cluster to fall cleanly and tidily into the box. With one hand I held a nuc box below the cluster. It was fully contained. I

felt sure that almost all the bees would soon be in the box. And so it was. I ran my hand between the cluster and the branch and the whole thing dropped into the box. Still, quite a number of bees took off. I lowered the box to the ground, inserted a few frames of foundation and a comb with some honey. (What was I thinking. I know you don't feed a swarm!) I placed the lid over it loosely, and checked that the nuc box entrance was set to 'workers only' (the queen excluder entrance, or in this case, queen includer). Then I climbed up the ladder again and liberally sprayed the branch with air freshener. That was new for me, and it comes from the now popular replacement for newspaper for uniting colonies. It worked a treat. The bees ignored the branch where they had been clustering just moments before.

Within moments, the bees were fussing around the entrance, then fanning, and rushing to enter the box. I got a book out – actually the Kindle app on my phone – and sat on a wall to wait. There was a steady flow of pedestrians and cars. I felt I couldn't leave the box unattended. I would wait an hour or so, and then take the box away. Any stragglers would have to find an alternative destination.

I didn't get much reading done but spent a pleasant hour or more chatting to neighbours and passers-by. Then it was time to go. There were still some bees at the entrance (probably drones who couldn't get in!) and I could see there were bees below the mesh floor. I secured the lid with a strap, slipped a sheet underneath, tied it over the whole box, and departed. I'd forgotten to close the entrance, but the bees were largely contained by the sheet. I stopped at home briefly for a cup of tea, and took the box, still wrapped in the sheet, out of the car to leave in cool shade. A little later, I placed the box back in the car and drove to the apiary, five minutes away.

At the apiary, I removed the sheet and opened the box. The bees were all dead or dying. They were all sticky and wet, and had suffocated. (I'll not waste words dwelling on how this affected me.)

I asked on [Beekeeping Forum](#) for someone to tell me what had happened. Here are some of the replies:

From Antipodes: Swarms are at more of a risk of overheating without comb, so I think a full box of comb in the nuc with or without some stores would be fine. Bees can generate a lot of heat (relatively). My understanding is that when bees really overheat they vomit (possibly in this case mainly the honey they carried with them rather than the stuff in the comb?) and that vomit covers other bees and then things get really messy. It sounds like that is what happened in your case. I think the mistake was perhaps the wrapping of the nuc with a sheet rather than the adding a drawn frame with some honey in it.

From JamezF: Adding to Antipodes comments above, metabolic processes (not just in bees) can perhaps generate far more heat than you'd expect. I've no way to be sure it's true, but I've read that internal cell temperatures in humans can reach 50°C during hard exercise for example, and to survive we need to be able to shed that heat somehow. Restricting airflow to the skin makes it much more difficult to do. Quite possibly wrapping a swarm up in a sheet has the possibility of causing similar difficulties for bees in maintaining acceptable temperatures. It's surprising how small the margin is between being able to cope or otherwise.

From Wilco: Likewise, been there with a colony I was given in a poly box. It's an awful feeling but does teach you to respect how much heat they can generate.



Collecting this swarm, happily, went to plan. As it was in a back garden, it was possible to return in the evening by which time every single bee was inside the nuc box.

[From Jenkinsbrynmair](#): I think in general beekeepers are too obsessed with carrying on using 'traditional' kit. The wrapping everything up in a sheet (an easy way to suffocate a colony) is a classic example.

There's more on this thread on BKF. I think the sequence of events might have been that the sheet reduced ventilation, and the elevated temperature caused vomiting; and the dying bees then blocked ventilation through the mesh floor.

The solution: fill the box with frames of foundation give the bees plenty surfaces to spread over, keeping the mesh floor

HANDY HINTS

DUMMY BOARDS

When to use a dummy board – or is it a division board?

Let's clarify our terms first. A dummy board is same size as a frame, and is used to fill up space not used by the frames. A division board is to divide up a box, perhaps for queen mating. It fits tight against the box so that no bees can pass.

Don't feel compelled to squeeze in a dummy board. The interiors of hives, even the same type, do vary. So does the space taken by pristine frames compared to old and sticky frames. Hoffman frames supposedly give exactly the correct spacing for brood frames. But some beekeepers use 11-frame castellations in the brood box, giving a couple of mm extra space between the frames. Find what works for you.

WAX SPILLS

After extraction day, you're likely to find wax in the wrong place! How to clean it up? Turpentine or vegetable oil can dissolve beeswax. Remove as much as possible by scraping, then rub turp or oil into the wax. Then remove with a

clear. Don't use a sheet. And make a ventilation screen (or net curtain) for the top of the box.

Some might say I should use a skep or a cardboard box rather than a nuc box. However, the bees are going to end up in a hive (probably a nuc box initially) so I'm not alone in preferring to put them straight into the nuc box they're ultimately headed for anyway.

Archie McLellan

scourer, followed by soap and water – or a soapy cloth for items which cannot be submerged (such as a slow cooker).

Wax on clothes can be removed by laying sheets of newspaper or kraft paper over the wax, and then applying a warm or hot iron. Soaking in cold water or placing items in the freezer allows wax to be removed in crisp pieces.

THERE IS HOPE

Having difficulty requeening a colony? You can always insert a frame of open brood, but success is not guaranteed and it takes longer than other methods. For [David Evans](#), (The Apiarist blog writer) the (almost) foolproof method is to add a sealed queen cell.

HYGIENE AT THE APIARY

Clean your gloves and tools between hives with one of [these](#). Don't mess about with paper towels. Use an old towel, and put it in the washing machine with your beesuit at the end of the day.

QUIZ

The quiz prize for May was not claimed by anyone. Such a shame. What a prize!

1. Select the odd one out: rice, barley, sugar cane, buckwheat, rye.
2. Do *Apis cerana* bees have varroa?
3. Are there more bees in the world or stars in the galaxy (asks 4-year old Hascal on Radio 4, *More or less*)?
4. Name two places celebrated for the absence of *Varroa destructor*?

Answers on [page 11](#)

VARROA IN AUSTRALIA

You will probably have heard that varroa mites have finally been discovered in Australia. They were found on 4 July in sentinel colonies in the Port of Newcastle, New South Wales. In other words, they had already breached bio-security, and may have arrived some months earlier. The government has implemented a huge programme to attempt to eradicate the mites before they are established. Colonies over a large area near the source have been destroyed. Bait hives with fipronil may be used also. But if the mites are already in the feral population, eradication may be very difficult.

Roger Paterson of BIBBA and Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association took the chance to say that

movement and importation of bees should be avoided, though it is not known how the bees arrived.

Richard Noel, an English bee farmer in Brittany, sent a message of sympathy on the day after the announcement, and put together [a presentation about varroa](#) the following day. The Q&A after his presentation on this Zoom event is intriguing.

In an article entitled [The Varroa Mite Could Help Solve Australia's Feral Honey Bee Problem](#), Patrick O'Connor of University of Adelaide suggested that because honey bees are non-native and outcompete other pollinators, pollination might benefit from the wiping out of feral honey bee colonies from varroa transmitted disease.



An alarmingly high mite count, after four days, in winter (hence the lack of debris).

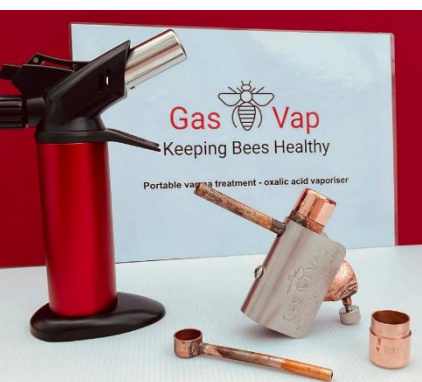
He writes: Treating the mite as an environmental biocontrol would mean diverting money for eradication and control measures to help industries live with varroa. This could be by, for instance, increasing the use of native pollinators for Australian agriculture. It could also involve releasing the mite into feral honeybee hives, where we believe a rapid recovery of native pollinators is needed, such as in areas recovering from bushfires.'

The most rounded piece on the sorry situation was from [Randy Oliver](#), who probably knows more than anyone about varroa: living with the pest, controlling it, and rearing bees which might be able to survive without chemical interventions by beekeepers.

SHOPPING

BLOW TORCHES

Beekeepers use different blow torches for different purposes in beekeeping.



- Cleaning wooden boxes requires intense heat such as from a [propane burning torch](#).
- If you want to light your smoker with wood fuel and not dilly-dally with newspaper first, then you might use a [butane torch](#) (right).
- Finally, to treat colonies for varroa by vaping with oxalic acid, use a [Gas vap](#) (left), which comes with a kitchen / cooking torch. This also uses butane but can be filled with a lighter fuel dispenser.



CLEARER BOARDS

In all likelihood, you'll soon be harvesting a honey crop from your hives and the bees will need clearing from the supers. Some people brush the bees off at the time. Others use clearer boards. Don't mess about with Porter escapes; their moving parts spell trouble. Get rhombus clearers (also called Canadian clearers) and fit them to wood or Correx panels, which you can then fit over some ekes. For more info, ask [The Apiarist](#).

FRAMES AND FOUNDATION

Buy seconds in packs of fifty – and save lots of money. (Buy hive boxes as seconds in the sales too.)

Abbreviations in frame names: **DN** Deep National | **SN** Shallow National | **4** Self-spacing (Hoffman) | **1** Not self-spacing; use castellations or spacing frame-ends.

[Maisemore 2nds DN4 frames](#) for Standard national deep boxes

[Maisemore 2nds SN1 frames](#) for Standard national shallow boxes

[Foundation](#) Deep or shallow, wired or unwired, drone or worker

GLOVES



Whose hand is in this glove, much used for pre-queen-marking-Posca-pen-dabbing? Someone who rarely gets stung, that's who. [David Evans](#) says 'The sting can penetrate these gloves, but doesn't embed, so it's more of a glancing blow. Saying that, it very rarely happens anyway.' David went on to give details of the two occasions on which he has been stung this year: once on a leg, and once on an arm. He was wearing crocs and a bee jacket. I ask you!

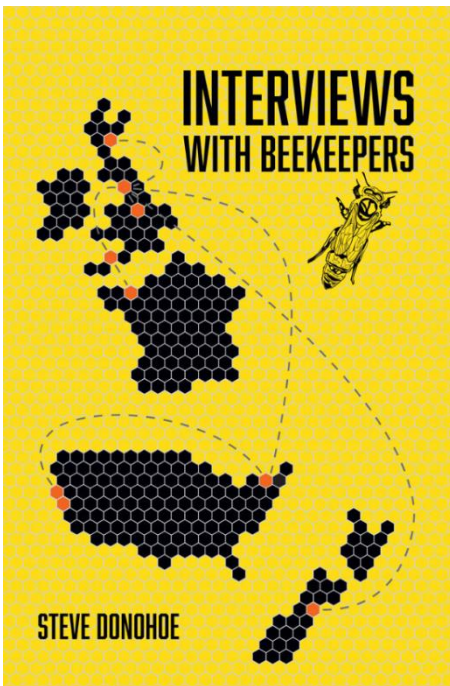
For WHATSTHEBUZZ, I sent for a sample and tested [these gloves](#) and can confirm that avoiding stings through gloves is primarily a matter of gentle bee handling and docile bees. But it is the case that these nitriles are thicker than most. From the suppliers website: *PRO UltraSAFE Violet Long Cuff Nitrile Gloves: Our UltraSAFE nitrile gloves are 6 mil thick, with an extra-long 7.6cm (3") cuff. These gloves are also the perfect beekeepers glove due to the colour, long cuff and sensitivity. If you would like a sample to see just how comfortable these gloves are, please contact us.*

ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. Buckwheat. The others are all grasses, but buckwheat is not even a member of the grass family. It is known as a pseudocereal, being used for food in the same way as cereals. Grasses are wind pollinated but bees make a dark honey from buckwheat.
2. Yes. They've co-evolved for possibly hundreds of thousands of years and can survive with varroa in hives. This may be because they have more effective grooming practices, and a shorter (19 days) pre-adult development period. As a consequence the mites have less time to breed in capped cells.
3. This was a question asked by 4-year old Hasqual on [More or less, the Radio 4 programme presented by Tim Harford](#). It's worth finding a few minutes to hear the programme's response. Start at 10.00.
4. Isle of Man and Colonsay. Australia was varroa-free until a couple of weeks ago.

RECOMMENDED READING

INTERVIEWS WITH BEEKEEPERS BY STEVE DONOHOE



Steve Donohoe is the author of the blog, *The Walrus and the Honeybee*. If you know him from there, then you can't fail to have noticed his book already. His blog is helpful, thoughtful, and disarmingly honest! His openness about things going wrong is reassuring, as well as giving hints of what NOT to do. It's possible to see in his blog posts the personal qualities that allowed him to gain the trust (and time) of these beekeeping superstars from around the world. The book consists of what appears to be verbatim transcripts of their conversations. And the way these beekeepers do things is sometimes quite different from what is found in the 'How to' books which we read when embarking on the craft of beekeeping. Here are people who have vast experience, not necessarily in years, but in the volume of their beekeeping activity. With so much at stake, these bee farmers need to be sure that what they do will be effective and, because time is money in business, done efficiently.

The surprising thing is, that though none of us aspire to be bee farmers or to produce a vast honey crop, their methods, and the rationale behind them, make compulsive reading. These guys have authority, because they will only survive if they can manage their bees at the highest level.

FROM THE BBKA

LEIGH SIDAWAY, GENERAL MANAGER, WRITES:

'Over the last few weeks we have taken several calls in the office from members telling us about the public shows and events they are attending this summer and requesting leaflets etc.

'A list of BBKA leaflets is available [here](#). Many of the leaflets are now in a format that you can download and print off but there is still the option to purchase them if you need larger quantities. The order form is available on the same web page.

'We have also created some [A4 pages that feature QR codes](#) with links to leaflets and other information that visitors can scan. Again, these are available for you to download and take to your shows.

'Lastly, there is a pull-up banner about honey authenticity available to borrow; we just ask that you cover the courier

costs. It measures approx 80cm wide x 210cm tall. If you would like more information on this please contact Erica.challis@bbka.org.uk.'

HONEY AUTHENTICITY

Two propositions regarding the authenticity and labelling of honey were passed at this year's Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) of the BBKA. You can read [here](#) about the actions and plans of the BBKA to implement the propositions of the ADM.

THE PETITION

Finally, BBKA and Honey Authenticity Network (HAN) UK have jointly set up a government petition to:

Fully review the honey market and Honey Regulations, to review evidence of honey fraud within the honey market, and reform regulations and arrangements for enforcement, to prevent future fraud.

Please consider signing the petition [here](#).

COMMENTS

TO POST A COMMENT, PLEASE EMAIL WHATSTHEBUZZ.

Beekeeping is fertile ground for opinions to grow, and there are lots of them in WHATSTHEBUZZ. As we read last month, the compiler gets the blame for what's written here, though rarely are the opinions his own. He reads widely and tends to use material from writers out there with more experience than he has. It also should be said that he usually agrees with the opinions he includes, especially if they fit with his experience.

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.

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. 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.

Regional Bee Inspector	Daniel Etheridge	daniel.etheridge@apha.gov.uk	M: 07979 119376
Seasonal Bee Inspector	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
Website manager	Paul Lawrence	paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Education Organiser	Tony Edwards	tony.ed@me.com
Swarm phone, Social media, Exams	Sonia Belsey	sonia.belsey@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Apiary Manager	Mark Ballard	apiary@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
Other committee members	Robert Frost	robert.frost@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
	Ian Halls	admin@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
	Nigel Rawlins	admin@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk

NON-COMMITTEE ROLES

Apiary Co-Ordinator	Elaine Laight	elaine.laight@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk
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