

WHATSTHEBUZZ



The lifespan of the adult honey bee appears to have shrunk in the past 50 years – down from 34 to 18 days.

Make your own hives – or at least the horizontal parts!

Fully illustrated!

Shopping: the ingenious apple peeler-corer-slicer, complete with a video demo.

Plus a candle-making shop.

WHATSTHEBUZZ is the monthly newsletter of Medway Beekeepers Association.

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

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Follow us on Facebook. New posts appear all the time.

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

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



Picture above: An original painting (16.5 x 11cm) by Abigail Elwell-Sutton.

May be purchased direct from the artist. Enquiries to: abi.ailsa.art@gmail.com | Instagram: [@abi_ailsa_art](https://www.instagram.com/abi_ailsa_art)

Hello to December, to the joy of dark, cosy nights, and to you all

The past week has finally given us a hint that this long-drawn out autumn might finally be conceding to winter. But oh so slowly. Flowers are still blooming, trees still have many leaves to shed, and bees fly in numbers whenever the sun peaks out. The abundance of rain, set to continue for some time yet, means that despite warmish temperatures, there is some constraint on the bees' flying time. The MET Office stats for November won't be produced till the day after tomorrow but surely this has been a very wet month; payback for the dry summer, perhaps. It's nearly five years since the Beast from the East. Will February 2023 be another payback time?

We need proper winters. Not just for own well-being, but for our animals and plants which have evolved as seasonal. I recently heard a Kent grape grower (for wine) saying that warm winters were not good for their crops.

On to beekeeping and bees, inside and outside the hive.

Monitoring debris on the floor or board below the mesh might give an indication of the state of brood in the colony. Particles of darker cappings indicate that brood is still emerging. This makes it difficult to successfully treat for varroa with oxalic acid. Traditionally a single treatment in late December was regarded as adequate. It may be that there will be no broodless period – though some find brood at the lowest level in late November rather than December. Monitor the mite drop after treatment. Ask yourself if a repeat treatment is needed. Better to treat earlier if in doubt. Leaving it till later may be ... well, too late.

If you fed colonies properly with sugar in August / September / October, then you probably won't need to feed them again till March. But do keep an eye on things. Weigh hives with scales or heft them with three, two or one fingers, and act fast if they feel light. Feed with fondant at this time of year. Also check that hives are coping with the ravages of rain and wind.

Think about kit for the coming season. Making National hives requires proper workshop tools and some skill, but you might enjoy making wooden nucs, or the horizontal parts of hives. More about that in this issue.

Winter (not yet, but soon) is a good time to reposition hives in the apiary because the bees are not flying. Check that entrances are clear.

My beekeeping calendar states that in December, the bees are in cluster, and there is little or no brood; They will be consuming their stores and, on sunny days, flying for water and to defecate outside the hive.

Do you have a lot of honey to sell this year? Your regular outlets will be pleased if you don't run out of stock before next June. Honey does store well in plastic buckets, so there's no need to fret if you still have a lot in the garage. Perhaps you've booked a stall in a Christmas market or school fayre. Do let us know how that works for you.

Note to self: collect info now for an article in autumn next year on selling at Christmas markets.

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FROM OUR CHAIR

John Chapman, our Chair, talks about association and beekeeping issues that come to mind.

WHATSTHEBUZZ What have you got for us this month, John?

John Chapman I must bring this up first – to be sure I mention it! The ADM – Annual Delegates Meeting – of the BBKA is at 10:00 on Saturday 14 January. I have been attending for a number of years, and so has Sheila (our secretary). I wonder if you'd like to do it this year?

WTB Will it be on Zoom, or do delegates have to travel to the BBKA in Stoneleigh?

JC Either. Zoom, or in person at Stoneleigh. At our next Association event (The Quiz), we'll go through the propositions with the members, invite them to share their views, and give you an indication of which way we'd like you to vote.

WTB Oh all right then. I'll make sure the members are fully informed about the ADM and the opportunity to contribute at a meeting just before The Quiz on 14 December.

JC The ADM can be completely fascinating – in small bits – and also deadly boring.

WTB I spent a couple of hours watching it on Zoom via YouTube last year. It's a tortuous process! There were people interrupting with points of order and amendments which sometimes messed up the texts of propositions. I think Martin Smith, who manages the business on the day, must have the patience of a saint!

JC You started the process of creating a proposition to change the name of the BBKA. I thought it would be useful for you to see how the process works, and where the power bases are.

WTB I doubt my proposition could ever succeed. People who have a long-term engagement with the BBKA just don't get the point of changing the name.

JC You'd be surprised. Things have come up over the years that I never thought would get through. For instance, the proportional voting system was passed. I didn't think that would ever be supported.

WTB Sometimes the rightness of something can't be hidden any longer.

JC I think in time the BBKA name issue will get sorted and that will be good because perhaps we'll be able to have an over-arching body for all the national BKAs. I don't think there's much interest at present though.

WTB It's only fair that I take a turn at the ADM, and, as you say, I'll get a feel of how the system works – which might be useful.

JC It can be useful to have an observer from an association present too. I remember an occasion when a delegate voted contrary to the instruction of his committee and observers from that association asked for a break to challenge him about ignoring the association's voting decisions. Exciting stuff!

WTB This is going to be a Christmas edition of WHATSTHEBUZZ. Do you have any tips?

JC This is a good time to assess your equipment and see if there's anything you need for next year. You might even be able to put something on a wish list which friends and family can see, or drop a hint when someone is having difficulty choosing a present for you!

WTB Yes, that worked well for me last year. Have you seen my extractor?!

JC I'd like to wish everybody a Happy Christmas and New Year. If I don't see you (our members) at the December meeting, I'm looking forward to seeing you at some meetings in 2023, *especially the AGM!* I hope we get a better beekeeping season in 2023 where the temperature and weather is easier for working with the bees. And because many of you have so much honey from this year's harvest, I hope you manage to find markets for it and got yourself lots of profit.

WTB Thanks John, and Merry Christmas to you and Sue when it comes.



TO OUR READERS AND MEMBERS OF MBKA-

OUR BEST WISHES FOR A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

THE BEE CAROL

Silently on Christmas Eve,
the turn of midnight's key;
all the garden locked in ice –
a silver frieze –
except the winter cluster of the bees.

Flightless now and shivering,
around their Queen they cling;
every bee a gift of heat;
she will not freeze
within the winter cluster of the bees.

Bring me for my Christmas gift
a single golden jar;
let me taste the sweetness there,
but honey leave
to feed the winter cluster of the bees.

Come with me on Christmas Eve
to see the silent hive –
trembling stars cloistered above –
and then believe,
bless the winter cluster of the bees.

Carol Ann Duffy
(Poet laureate 2009-19)



MBKA APIARY

Mark Ballard writes with his update of work completed, and planned for the near future, at the Association Apiary.

Work on the Association Apiary is now almost complete.

Two significant jobs remain to be undertaken:

- Upgrading the access road so that vehicles can drive to the apiary after a period of wet weather
- Upgrading the roof of the Pavilion building.

The hives will be monitored throughout the winter by the team who do hive inspections throughout the year. The

frequency of these visits will be reduced from weekly to monthly.

We hope that from April, the building and apiary will become a gathering place for Association members. We plan to hold social and educational events there and information about these will be shared in early spring.

The MBKA 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

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW LATE RESULT

WHATSTHEBUZZ was awarded *Very highly commended* in the Association newsletter class. More on this on page 8.



There will be five rounds plus a bonus picture round. The questions are for everyone – not just specialists!

We will have tea / coffee and Christmas goodies (mince pies / sausage rolls / cake). There will be a raffle and prizes for the winners.

All this – and it is free!

18 January Wed 20:00 David Evans on Zoom: Swarming and Bait hives

1 February Wed 20:00-22:00 John Chapman, Simple showing

18 February Sat 14:00-16:00 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

15 March Wed 20:00-22:00 Film Night with Tony Edwards

ANNUAL DINNER ON 10 NOVEMBER

WINTER EVENTS

14 December Wed 20:00-22:00 MBKA Xmas Quiz 2022

Come and enjoy a pre-Christmas get together!

The evening will begin with a short summary of the propositions to be voted on at the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM). This is your opportunity to share your opinion on these matters. You can read more about the ADM on page 18 and on the BBKA website. This will influence the voting cast by our delegate at the ADM.

Our QUIZ will be based on tables of six. You can form your own team, or teams will be made up as people arrive.



Much hilarity at this table with Bob and Leslie Bruno and Simon Marshall. What is Simon's wife planning to do with her napkin?!!
Photo S Stunell

The Annual Dinner was at the Bridgewood Hotel on 10 November. It was a cheerful and sociable occasion. James Smith of Loddington Farm spoke about being a fifth-generation fruit farming, and how a changing world has radically altered his perception of and approach to farming his land. His interesting and stimulating talk was followed by the presentation of the trophies and certificates by his wife, Helena.

100 YEARS OF MBKA – A TALK BY SONIA BELSEY ON 16 NOVEMBER

Sonia is interested in history and has done some research on the beginnings of MBKA in 1922. Her previous articles for WHATSTHEBUZZ covered this in some detail, and she produced a display of copies of archive photographs and contemporary press reports for the Grand Opening of the Association Apiary last summer. Her talk was a fuller presentation of that material and included people who are remembered, at least by name, because a trophy was created in their memory. In some cases, they donated a trophy to the Association because they had an interest in a particular aspect of beekeeping.

It is wonderful that Sonia has assembled this material, not least because paper records such as minutes of committee meetings have been lost. I'm sure Sonia would agree that this is a work in progress, and we look forward to hearing of any further archival material she discovers.

COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS

The committee met on 1 November mainly to check that the plans for the dinner were in hand. (They were.) There was time for an update on the education group's plans for the beekeeping taster day in May, which is to be followed by the Introduction to Beekeeping course.

More recently the committee met on 24 November to discuss the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (more on this on page 18). There will be time for the members to share opinions on these matters at the start of the next MBKA event on 14 December, before we all get stuck into the Quiz.

Topics included the place of an Annual Dinner and what alternatives there might be, lessons from the last Ploughing Match, problems using our Sumup card reader, the cost and completion of the upgrades to the road to the Association apiary and the roof of the pavilion building, insurance for the apiary building and contents, and the current state of the bees at the apiary.

We discussed future events in general (and the AGM and Film Night in particular), the need to find people to oversee organisation of both winter and summer events, the possibility of holding an Annual Lecture, where to host it, and the hope that our members would visit and use the facilities offered by the new Association apiary.

There was some discussion on changes coming soon in the Association. The Chair and Vice-Chair are retiring from the



This wonderful photograph is of an early MBKA meeting in the garden of founder George Bryden's house. Notice the size of the gathering, the importance of the social aspect with teas set on long cloth-covered tables, decorated with flowers.

committee. To some extent, these roles can be allocated among the present committee. The main function of the Chair is to chair the committee meetings and see that the work of running the Association is spread across a range of people, both in the committee, and among the members generally.

Next meeting: 19:30, 11 January 2023 at 28 Wallace Road.

Minutes of past meetings and past editions of WHATSTHEBUZZ can be found on the MBKA website.

If you have any difficulty signing in to the members' area of the website, please contact Paul Lawrence.

(paul.lawrence@medwaybeekeepers.co.uk)

TIMES AND DATES

Please note there are some changes to the dates for the Module 2 Winter study course.

Unless stated otherwise, all events are at Wainscott Memorial Hall, 16-18 Holly Road, Wainscott ME2 4LG

12 December	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 5, Module 2
14 December	Wed	20:00-22:00 Notes on the BBKA ADM, followed by the MBKA Christmas quiz
9 January	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 6, Module 2
18 January	Wed	20:00 David Evans on Zoom: <i>Swarming and Bait hives</i>
23 January	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 7, Module 2
1 February	Wed	20:00-22:00 John Chapman, <i>Simple showing</i>
6 February	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 8, Module 2
18 February	Sat	14:00-16:00 AGM
20 February	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 9, Module 2
6 March	Mon	19:30-21:30 Winter study, Session 10, Module 2
15 March	Wed	20:00-22:00 Tony Edwards, <i>Film Night</i>
20 May	Sat	10:00-15:00 Beekeeping Taster Day, MBKA Apiary, Lee Green Road, Cliffe Woods ME3 8EX
5 Jun	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 1/6
12 Jun	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 2/6
19 Jun	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 3/6
26 Jun	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 4/6
3 Jul	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 5/6
7-9 Jul	Fri-Sun	Kent County Show , Kent Showground, Detling, ME14 3JF
10 Jul	Mon	19:30-21:30 Introduction to beekeeping Course 6/6

MBKA ARCHIVE

AND THOUGHTS ON NEWSLETTERS IN GENERAL

All [MBKA Newsletters since 2017](#) are now on our website. They're in the public area so you don't need to fret about having lost your password to the Members' area. Paul Lawrence, our Vice-Chair (and many other things), produced the newsletter from February 2017 through February 2021. Four years, without missing a month!

WHATSTHEBUZZ, the present form of the newsletter, has been going for just under two years. A bit to go, then.

Newsletters describe the goings-on in the Association. We read of the events, talks, projects, courses, outings, dinners, social occasions, and shows; names are everywhere: committee members, speakers, mentors, course attendees, prizes winners, and certificate award winners; then there are documents 'from above': campaigns and beekeeping advice the BBKA, and seasonal cautionary notices from the National Bee Unit. Association newsletters are not so much a snapshot, more a scrapbook, of life in our local beekeeping community at a particular time. They are the raw material from which history is written.

We can't do anything about missing or never-written documents from the past, but we can ensure that there is a good record of our times for people after us to delve into. Not everyone wants to write history but it is important. The history of an English beekeeping association 100 years ago is the subject of a fascinating book by a present-day American historian.

WHATSTHEBUZZ gained *Very Highly Commended* in the Branch Newsletter class at the National Honey Show this year. That's a slight improvement on last year's *Highly commended*. The winning entry, BeeTalk from Warwick & Leamington BKA has a professional journalist editing and designing it and it really does look splendid. My guess is that the one important criterion for the judges is *the range of contributors and contributions to each issue*. And BeeTalk scores highly in this, with around eight contributors to each issue.

It is not unusual for local newsletters to be produced by a small number of writers. Their *raison d'être* is to be read, not to provide an opportunity to write. It's wonderful that occasionally a reader does create an article. Paul Newman's piece in last month's issue described events in his life over the past year: a combined *annus horribilis* and *annus mirabilis*.

I can't finish without one tiny exhortation. If you do come across a sentence, or an idea, or a claim that disturbs or delights you, quickly drop me an email with your reaction.

To every one of you reading right now, my thanks for simply managing to find time to dip in when you can.

Archie McLellan (*Compiler, WHATSTHEBUZZ*)

WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING?

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF BEEKEEPERS

Bob Smith writes with news of the CABK events. Members and non-members welcome to attend. There is no fee.

7 December, 7.30pm [The return of Beekeepers' Question Time](#). Your chance to pose those tricky questions to our expert panel of Lynfa Davies NDB, Prof Robert Pickard, and practical enthusiast Roger Patterson

19 January 2023, 7.30pm [Wood Ants – a talk by Jacob Podesta](#). We tend to forget that Hymenoptera includes



bees, wasps and ANTS. this talk will highlight the similarities and differences between the lives of bees and ants and move on to examine the impact of forestry plantation management upon the establishment of new nests, on the North York Moors.

13 February 2023, 7.30pm [The Perilous Life of a Drone – a talk by Alison McAfee](#). Drone honey bees get little attention from workers, queens or even researchers! Yet they are clearly a vital resource for a healthy colony.

11 March 2023 [Spring Meeting 2023, Norton Priory, Runcorn](#). The CABK Spring Meeting travels around the country – 2020 in Arkendale, North Yorkshire, 2022 in Nottingham and we are delighted to announce that the 2023 event will be held at Norton Priory, near Runcorn, Cheshire.

14 March 2023, 7.30pm [CABK Annual General Meeting 2023](#). The 78th AGM of the Central Association of Beekeepers will be held, on-line, on Tuesday 14th March 2023, starting at 7.30pm. Details of how to attend this online event will be circulated to members during February. Fuller details of all events are available [from the CABK website](#) and registration for all events is now open.

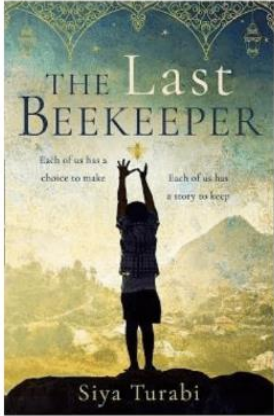

BEES ABROAD ONLINE EVENT – FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER, 7.30PM

Laurie King and Siya Turabi, writers of novels whose titles include 'Beekeeper', talk about their writing. [Click here to reserve a spot](#).

Books and Bees Evening!

Join best-selling authors, Laurie King and Siya Turabi

Friday 2nd December, 7.30pm



Free Online Event

We have a brilliant opportunity for you and other book lovers in your community!

We are delighted that several authors are supporting our campaign. Laurie King (*The Beekeeper's Apprentice*), Siya Turabi (*The Last Beekeeper*) and Dunya Mikhail (*Beekeeper of Sinjar*)

Join Laurie King and Siya Turabi as they talk about their writing at our "Bee Part of the Story" Bees and Books Virtual Event!

Contact rachel_monger@beesabroad.org.uk if you are interested in getting some books or planning a book event!

[Sign up here!](#)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Cambridgeshire BKA has hosted the longest running series of beekeeping Zoom talks in the UK. Starting just a few months after MBKA(!), the audience size for their series has grown and continues to tune in even though the pandemic is over.

Their huge library of talks is available in their YouTube channel for members. You can become an associate Member for £7.00 – possibly one of the best buys in beekeeping!



30 November [Varroa management in honey bee colonies: A talk by Kirsty Stainton](#)

7 December [My beekeeping year planner: A talk by Stewart Spinks](#)

11 January [Mutiny and other things that can go wrong: A talk by Keith Delaplane](#)

BIBBA WEBINARS

Bee Improvers and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) have several more webinars [available on their website](#).

6 December, 7.30pm Helen Mooney will talk about the Genetics of Bees.

BIBBA members can see the webinars live, and non-members can see all webinars, [at the BIBBA YouTube channel](#).

Most of these talks are given by Roger Patterson.

BEES LIVES 50% SHORTER TODAY

On the face of it, [a new study by Anthony Nearman and Dennis van Engelsdorp from University of Maryland](#), throws up an alarming statistic. The lifespan of the adult honeybee appears to have shrunk by nearly 50% in the past 50 years. Rather than read the full study, [click here for a summary](#).

The bald finding of this study is that adult honey bees in the US now live for an average of 18 days compared to 34 days in 1969.

The authors surmise that this might be caused by the high incidence of deformed wing virus which is transmitted by varroa mites, or by the effects of pesticides which differ from those of fifty years ago. They also consider the possibility that, because of disease and other stressors,

bees are evolving towards a live-fast-and -die-young lifestyle.

The authors acknowledge that this study has not been able to set up control groups at the same time and in identical conditions. 1969 is a long time ago and it may be that the historical data from around that time was gathered in a different way.

Honey bee colony loss is higher in the US than in Europe. We have the same bees, the same varroa mites and the disease they transmit, and possibly use similar pesticides. This study is being taken seriously though we cannot assume that the same findings would result from research done on bees in our environment.

BEES FOR DEVELOPMENT - THE BIG GIVE



The banner features a close-up portrait of a smiling man with a goatee. In the top left corner, there is a red triangle with the text 'Christmas Challenge' and a black triangle with 'Big Give'. The main text on the left reads 'Your donation, twice the impact' followed by '29 November - 6 December 2022'. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for 'Bees for Development' which includes a stylized tree and the text 'Bees for Development'.

BEE INVOLVED – THE BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE. Join us in our Big Give Christmas Challenge 2022 and your donations will be doubled – help us to make lives better with bees. [You can make a donation at the Bees for development website, here.](#)

FOREST FIRE

I've heard people pour scorn on the theory that the smell of smoke simulates a fire causing the bees to gorge on honey in preparation for flight. I didn't know if the theory had been rebutted convincingly so I started a thread on Beekeeping Forum UK and received some interesting

responses, [particularly this one](#) from JamezF. Every assumption ever made about how smoke works is effortlessly challenged. Where do you stand? More to the point, what is your experience of how smoke works with your bees?

The one piece of advice about smoking that I value most is from Donald Sims, in his book *Sixty Years with bees*: ‘Smoke ACROSS the tops of the frames.’ That is so different from the approach I’ve sometimes seen, DRIVING the bees down, pumping furiously on the bellows.

I don’t direct smoke down into the frames. It’s the bees that are flying, or about to fly, that you need to be concerned about. No point in disturbing those quietly going

about their business on the frames. I do find, if I’m surrounded by lots of bees, that putting some smoke in the air around me does reduce frenetic activity. Does this calm them? Maybe. Or maybe they don’t like smoke and head off elsewhere for a while. If you’re smoking style includes enveloping yourself in smoke, be sure to use a pleasant-smelling fuel like softwood chips – sold as ‘animal bedding’ in Wilco). I’ve found that some fuels are pretty noxious – egg-boxes being the worst.

Archie McLellan

NBU: A MESSAGE FROM APHA

[APHA: Animal & Plant Health Agency]

It is again time to update your BeeBase records with the total number of overwintering hives as of 1 November 2022.

To complete this year’s hive count [please click this link](#)

which will take you to BeeBase. Once logged in, answer the hive count questions displayed and then click the ‘Submit response’ button. It is as simple as that! Please update your records by 31 December 2022.

Note: your username to log in is NOT your email address.

ASIAN HORNET WATCH

If you find foulbrood in your hives, you contact the NBU through the local bee inspector. If you find an Asian hornet anywhere, alive or dead, you should contact the [Non-](#)

[Native Species Secretariat \(NNSS\)](#). This link opens at the Asian hornet page of their website, where you can find a wealth of information about this pest. It’s also worth downloading the Asian Hornet Watch app to your phone. Spend a little time getting to know the app so you’re quick and ready if you should ever want to use it!

There are [lots of videos from Richard Noel in Brittany](#) showing how devastating an Asian hornet invasion can be.

2022 ASIAN HORNETS - END OF YEAR UPDATE

I received an ‘End of Year update’ on Asian hornets by email. It is well worth reading and [you can download it from our website by clicking here](#).

Monitoring in the Autumn Research from Guernsey has shown that, in autumn, it is more effective to monitor by spending 10-15 minutes (around midday) watching insects coming and going from your beehives! Although beekeepers do use traps around their hives, this is not effective as a control method.



Unlike the European hornet which has an almost entirely yellow abdomen, that of the Asian hornet is black, except for the fourth segment, which is orange. This is clearly

visible in the photo. Don't be distracted by the blurred image of part of a flower bud directly behind the fourth segment.



WORDS

HAPLODIPLOID

Hymenoptera are haplodiploid.

- Hymenoptera is a large *order* of insects, comprising the sawflies, wasps, bees, and ants.
- In Linnaeus' scientific classification, *Order* comes after *Class* and before *Family*. For honey bees, the Class is Insecta, the Order is Hymenoptera, and the Family is Apidae.

Back to haplodiploid.

- Ploidy is the number of complete sets of chromosomes in a cell.

The Greek word *haplóos* means 'single', and *diplóos* means 'two-fold'.

- Haploid means having a single copy of each chromosome in an organism's cells – that is, one and only one set of chromosomes. The term Monoploid is sometimes used.
- Diploid means having two complete sets of chromosomes in an organism's cells, with each parent contributing a chromosome to each pair.

Haplodiploidy in hymenoptera means that males develop from unfertilized eggs and are haploid, and females develop from fertilized eggs and are diploid. (The honey bee queen lays eggs which have either been fertilised by sperm from her spermatheca, or not.)

This is why a drone, who is a father, has no father, but has a grandfather on his maternal side.

GETTING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE



Getting things in perspective. Beekeeping wisdom is that no matter how busy you are with your bees, remember that family comes first. Here, my grandchildren, Rose and Adam, delight in this array of trophies.

Our Association has a range of trophies which are awarded for achievements at our Honey Show. These are presented at an occasion afterwards, giving time for engraving of the award winners' names. Almost all of them are named after a member of the Association. The members at the time wanted to create a symbol of their gratitude for what these people had given to the Association. When these trophies are presented annually, the trophy names, which almost always includes their name, are read out. Their names are uttered, so in a sense, they are not forgotten.

John, our Chair, knows about a lot of things, so I thought I'd ask him what he knew.

- The Neves Silver Memorial Cup (for the highest number of points won at the Honey Show): Neves was one of our founders. It was first awarded in 1923, the year after the founding of MBKA, by The Rt. Hon. Sir Ralph Paget KCMG CVO. Paget was a distinguished diplomat (look him up), so one imagines there was general satisfaction that the highest award was first won by someone with so glittering a career – albeit not in beekeeping!
- The Bryden Memorial Cup (for the best composite entry in class 6) The Bryden Cup was created in memory of the MBKA founder, George Bryden, who died in 1929. First awarded in 1932 to G. Mungeam
- The Gowar Memorial Cup (Best Mead). The inscription reads *In memory of Charles E Gower, Founder and Expert of Medway and County Kent Beekeepers Assn. 1922-1953*. So, by the fifties, Gower is regarded as the founder of MBKA. Given that he outlived Bryden by 24 years, and was there at the start, one can imagine that he would be seen as a founding father. First awarded in 1955 to F A J Cheverst
- The Blaxland Silver Salver (best sections in class 8) Presented to the Association in 1985 by R.B. (Pip) Blaxland. First awarded in 1989 to Pip. Pip has had a long connection with MBKA. Now 1992, he has been keeping bees since he was 14. John and Sue Chapman are close friends of his and keep him abreast of MBKA news.
- The Holland Bowl (best honey in class 13 – commercial) Named after Richard (Dickie) Holland, a

long and active member of MBKA. First awarded in 1994 P R Griffiths (Peter)

- The Chapman Cup (best photograph) The Stan Chapman cup for Photography. Photography was stan's interest, so created the trophy to encourage this aspect of beekeeping. First awarded 2003 to S Marks (Steve)
- The Clueit Cup (best honey in show) Tom was a father figure and mentor to lots of beekeepers. He

- was a retired police constable. First awarded in 1995 to E.M. Clough
- The Dennis Harvey Memorial Award (best entry in the Novice class) Takes the form of a beekeeping book of the winner's choice) When Dennis died his colleagues raised funds for this memorial. John recalls that Dennis was always very good at speaking to new members. If you wanted to find a new person in a meeting, you just looked to see where Dennis was.

HORIZONTAL HIVE PARTS

HIVE FLOORS

A natural cavity for a honey bee colony does not have an open mesh floor. Traditionally, a wooden bee hive has a solid floor. Open mesh floors are a recent development, possibly to allow easy monitoring for varroa mites, and to provide an easy means of ventilating the hive. Because a natural cavity is such an enclosed space, it is far from conclusive that the bees need the ventilation provided by an open mesh floor. Indeed, some beekeeper-teachers demonstrate the flow of air entering the hive on one side of a small entrance, and out the other side, with light material that moving in each direction according to the air-flow generated by the bees.

Although popular among small-scale beekeepers, open mesh floors are far from universally popular, and it may be that we are seeing a move to replace mesh floors with solid floors in the UK. This move appears to have occurred in tandem with the popularity of home-made floors with under floor entrances (UFE), which give improved wasp and mouse protection because the entrance slot is 8-9mm wide, facing upwards.

Beekeepers building their own floors have faced the question of how much mesh, if any, to incorporate. Some opt for a 50:50 wood:mesh floor. Others manage to have their cake and eat it by building tight-fitting plywood boards under the mesh. These make the floor of the hive draught-free but the option is still available to monitor mite drop and debris by placing a piece of (greased) Correx on the plywood slider.

Here is a floor I made yesterday. I have used [100x25mm timber](#), though 75mm high is adequate too. Yes, treated timber would have been better, and I did intend to order

that. But with Click and Collect, you sometimes make mistakes. [There are excellent drawings here from Emyr Jenkins for those who want to make their own UFE floors.](#)



View from above before the mesh is stapled on. The bees enter the hive from underneath through the 8mm slot near the right edge.



View from above. The lower panel is the landing board. The bees enter at the back, and top of this lobby area.



View from the back showing the sliding drawer. It is completely draught-proof making it similar to a solid-floor. Monitoring mites and board debris is still possible by placing a sheet of Correx on the board. Although the board is a neat fit, a strip of timber is fitted below the board to provide a handle.

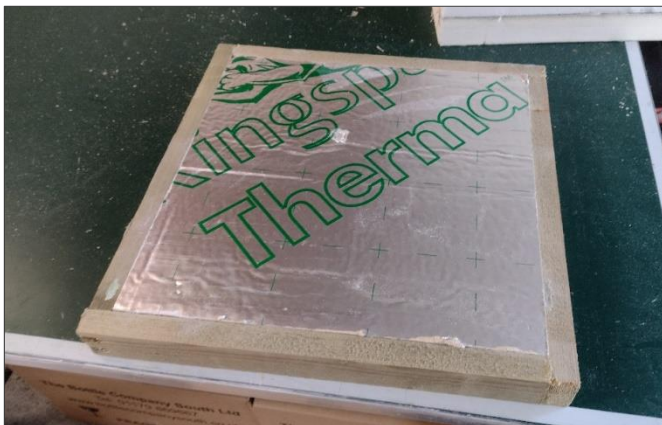
INSULATION

You can insulate a hive all-year round very effectively with an eke made from [50x25mm timber](#) into which you insert a precisely-cut and tight-fitting piece of 50mm Kingspan or Celotex. This is placed above the crown board.



Above, an eke / frame from 50x25mm timber using four pieces each 435mm long, screwed and glued together.

Below, the frame filled with a carefully cut piece of 50mm Kingspan.



A piece of 4mm Correx cut and taped makes a cheap and effective cover (roof) for this insulation frame.

A minimalist, but completely effective roof is [a piece of Correx cut according to David Evans's specs](#). But, if you prefer, you could take the inner rim out of your timber roof, and glue the 50mm insulation board (without the timber surround) to the inside of the roof. The insulation board will sit directly on the crownboard, so be sure you completely tape up any holes or feeding ports.

If you want a scientific understanding of the current thinking on hive insulation and ventilation in the UK, [the papers published by Derek Mitchell](#) are regarded as the most authoritative on the subject.

[This article in Bee Culture, written in 2016 by William Hesbach](#) gives an excellent survey of the still-current thinking on insulating and ventilating beehives and references Derek Mitchell's earlier research.

Essentially, keeping the top of the hive insulated means that condensation will run down the inner side walls and out the bottom. The bees themselves will not suffer from any effects of damp or condensation.

HEALTHY BEES PLAN 2030



In November, we marked the second anniversary of the development of the Healthy Bees Plan 2030. With 8 years remaining, it is worth looking at the objectives of the plan, and asking what measures we can take to help ensure that it is implemented as envisioned within this decade.

Click [here](#) to read the [Healthy Bees Plan 2030](#) in full. The following is an excerpt. The separate [Implementation plan](#) gives detailed and specific actions to be undertaken by all the partner organisations of the Plan. I note action no.46 states: 'Transfer association membership data (the eR2

QUIZ

1. Why are hive tools painted?
2. What is the colour for queen marking paint in 2023?
3. Should you paint cedar hives?
4. What kind of paint is recommended for poly hives?
5. Is it possible that a prime swarm might be headed by a virgin queen? If so, in what circumstances?

(Answers on [page 17](#))

database used for all BKA records in England and Wales) to BeeBase to minimise data entry duplication for beekeepers and improve accuracy of the *Current Beekeeper* list.'

[This seems an excellent idea. As it is incumbent on individual beekeepers to register on BeeBase, one suspects that the list of registered beekeepers does not correspond well with the numbers and details of active small-scale beekeepers in this nation and Wales.]

The plan focusses on achieving four key outcomes:

1. Effective biosecurity and good standards of husbandry, to minimise pest and disease risks and so improve the sustainability of honey bee populations
2. Enhanced skills and production capability/capacity of beekeepers and bee farmers
3. Sound science and evidence underpinning the actions taken to support bee health
4. Increased opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership working on bee health and wider pollinator needs

The NBU and other key stakeholders from the [Bee Health Advisory Forum](#) who have helped to develop the plan will be in the forefront of delivering its four key outcomes. These stakeholders include the British Beekeepers Association, Welsh Beekeepers' Association, Bee Farmers' Association, National Farmers' Union, National Diploma in Beekeeping and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

An implementation plan has been published, detailing more than fifty actions for beekeepers, bee farmers, associations and government to work on together to achieve the outcomes in the Healthy Bees Plan 2030.



HANDY HINT

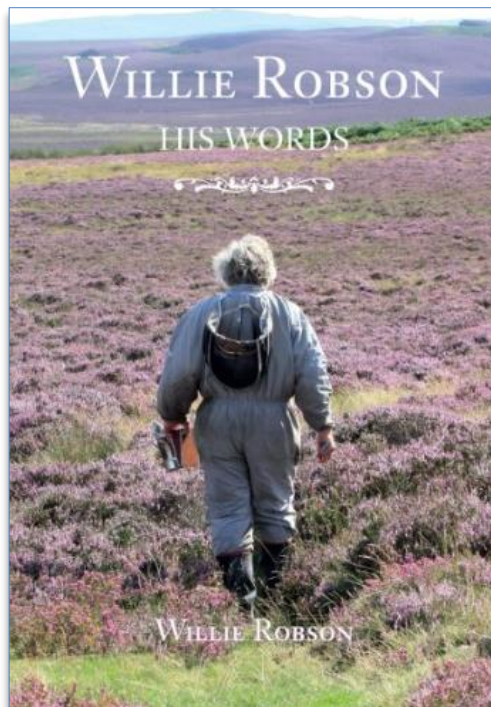
Unless you've stored your frames and comb in containers which absolutely preclude any access to wax moth, then it's possibly not enough that you treated some months ago after extraction with acetic acid, or [sulphur dioxide fumigant](#), or *Bacillus thuringiensis* (sold as Dipel, Xen-tari etc). These treatments will likely kill any wax moths on the frames at the time, but will not prevent further incursions. Since Certan B401 became unavailable in the UK, there is no 'approved' treatment available for wax moth. Such substances require approval by the Health and Safety Executive, not the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). It's not clear what beekeepers are supposed to do if the authorities don't get round to approving any substances!

The corrosive effect of acetic acid is well-known. Some beekeepers have pointed out that it has corroded the wire in their foundation. Stainless steel wire is available for frames, but in many cases, foundation manufacturers use galvanised, rather than stainless steel wire.

This article by Clare Waring (on BeeCraft website) on the Safe Use And Handling of Acetic Acid states that fumigation with acetic acid will kill a wide range of pathogens including the causative agents of chalk brood, European foulbrood, Nosema and amoeba. It will also kill all stages of wax moth except pupae. (my emphasis)

RECOMMENDED READING

It was refreshing to hear Willie Robson speak at the National Honey Show this year. This book is a collection of 'articles', though the conversational tone makes them feel more like letters. You meet the man, the bee farmer with more than half a century of experience, and listen to him tell stories about his life as a bee farmer. Knowledge and experience are no protection against the bad things that can happen in beekeeping, and it is heart-warming to read Willie's openness about what can and has gone wrong for him. There are pages on the changing nectar yield of oilseed rape, on the particular requirements of black bees and queens, on paralysis virus, and many



other subjects which are generally not found in beekeeping books. It's all gleaned from his experience of handling his bees. He might refer to ideas and research that are part of current thinking, but disarmingly implies that his sources are likely conversations with other beekeepers and farmers.

This is not a regular beekeeping book, rather a conversation between Willie and the imagined reader. If you think you'd like it, *please email me and I'll give you my copy*. I've enjoyed it but there's a limit on my shelves to the number of beekeeping books I can find space for.

Archie McLellan

ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. To help you find it when you drop it in the grass
2. Red. (Mnemonic: **Why You Rear Good Bees**. White, yellow, red, green, blue. It works if you used the right colour last year.)
3. If you want to colour them. They don't need wood preserver treatment.
4. Masonry paint
5. If a prime swarm left with a clipped queen, and the queen didn't survive, the swarm would return to the hive, wait for the first virgin to emerge, and then swarm with her; thus a prime swarm headed by a virgin. (Reference)

SHOPPING

APPLE PEELER-CORER-SLICER



The 19th century, particularly the Victorian times, was the era of amazing mechanical inventions. Some were big, like trains and ships, some quaint, like a device to turn pages for a pianist, and some ever so useful that survive to this day. Like this apple peeler-corer-slicer. I was told about it before I saw it, and I utterly failed to envisage it.

Because Esther and I live near an apple field with a public right of way through it, we collect apples after harvesting

that have been missed by the pickers. Every year, I love peeling-coring-slicing a few bags of apples, which I boil briefly in honey and mixed spices, and then freeze to keep us in apple crumble for the year .

[You won't want to miss this little video](#) I've made of the apple peeler-corer-slicer. Fun to watch, fun to use!



CANDLE MAKING SUPPLIES AND GUIDES

Beekeepers tend to accumulate wax. Of course you can trade it in for new foundation. But if you use foundationless frames and are looking for an alternative use for



wax, then you might explore the craft of candle-making.

[4CandlesUK](#) not only sells everything you might need but also has some useful guides for the first-time candle maker.

BBKA ANNUAL DELEGATES MEETING

The Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) of the BBKA will be held at 10:00 on Saturday 14 January 2023 at the BBKA offices in Stoneleigh. Delegates can also participate on Zoom via YouTube. Observers can attend in person or online.

Members of the BBKA can download the ADM papers from the [BBKA News website](#). Note, this website does not work on all browsers. Google Chrome (among others) DOES work. How to login to [bbkanews.com](#):

- Username: enter your BBKA membership number including the dots (eg 93.10.1234) If you have lost

your membership number, it is on your BDI receipt from MBKA when you renewed your membership.

- Password: your postcode
- In the drop down menu 'Select Publication' choose BBKA Documents (top LH corner of screen)
- If you wish to download the documents there is a 'Download as PDF' button in the top RH corner of the screen.

This is a brief outline of the elections and propositions:

There are four nominations for trustees: David Mark Hunter, Clare Elisabeth McGettigan, Stephen Christopher

Barnes, and Joyce Irene Nisbet. There is one nomination for the exam board: Patricia Morgan.

There are nine propositions and their proposing BKAs for consideration:

- 1 BBKA: Pre-meeting election of Honorary Member, Trustees and Examination Board Members to be ratified
- 2 Cornwall: Exam Board to retract discontinuation of local modular examinations.
- 3 Essex: Membership survey to be held to establish impact of moving to 100% on-line module exams.
- 4 Worcestershire: BBKA lobby authorities to allow beekeepers to obtain adrenaline auto-injectors without a prescription.
- 5 Hampshire: Educate the public about the benefits of local honey and creation of a honey for sale map on the BBKA website.
- 6 Stratford: Beekeeping needs to demonstrate it is not contributing to global warming.

7 BBKA: Change to clause 13.2 (vi) of the constitution to permit elections prior to the meeting.

8 BBKA: Change to clause 14.4 of the constitution (amendment).

9 BBKA: Change to clause 14.4 of the constitution (addition) to require trustees to receive 51% of available votes to be elected

We will allocate a little time before the quiz on 14 December to give our members the opportunity to share a view on these propositions. The committee has already discussed these and the proposed votes will be shared at this meeting.

If you do plan to express a view, please ensure that you have read the proposal and supporting notes in full, by accessing them on the BBKA News website before coming to the meeting. We hope that this will be a short meeting so that ample time is available for THE QUIZ!

FROM THE NHS, BBKA, AND BEECRAFT

There are numerous sources of beekeeping talks on the web. Among the best is [the National Honey Show archive of talks](#). Some of these have accumulated vast numbers of views over the years. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Beekeeping as a Profitable Sideline* by Will Steynor, has been viewed more than 50k times. But the real superstar of the NHS in terms of view numbers is Mike Palmer whose talks 'Queen Rearing in the Sustainable Apiary' and 'The Sustainable Apiary' have both been viewed more than a quarter of a million times. For me, though, the best talk of all is, for some reason, not on the NHS but the Central Association of Beekeepers (CABK) website. It is called, rather prosaically for a talk with such an all-embracing appeal, *Energy, Honey Bees, & Humans*, and was given at the NHS in 2014 by the CABK President, Prof Robert Pickard. Check it out, as they say. It's not easy to find, and I've done that for you!

The focus of the BBKA is not primarily on providing talks on video, but it would be surprising if, given its central aim of

beekeeping education, if the BBKA did not have some talks on its website.

[It does! And they are very good too.](#)

There are two talks by Margaret Murdin, who is very helpful on genetics for those who little past education in biology. Pam Hunter's talks include *Viruses – What are they and what impact do they have on bees and human life*, and the *Evolution of Plants and Insects*. Finally, Joyce Nisbet, *Waxing Lyrical*. Joyce is the best for beekeepers who want to do crafty things with beeswax.

Finally, on the BeeCraft website, there is a range of articles in the category BeeCraft Extra. The issue of adulterated and fake honey imports might seem simple – consumers should be given accurate information on the label what is in the food they buy – but finding a solution to the problem of honey fraud is all but impossible. [In this article, Anne Pike describes the problem of funny honey and the efforts made by different organisations to combat it.](#)

COMMENTS

TO POST A COMMENT, PLEASE EMAIL WHATSTHEBUZZ.

Beekeeping is fertile ground for opinions to grow, and there are lots of them in WHATSTHEBUZZ. 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.

Does what you read here fit with your opinions and experience? Do write to let our readers know.

PHOTO CREDITS

Photos by Archie McLellan except where stated otherwise. This does not include product images and screenshots of web pages.



Verbena in November. The perfume reaches you even before you cross the road for a picture.

THE 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.
The excellent [MBKA website](#) is here.



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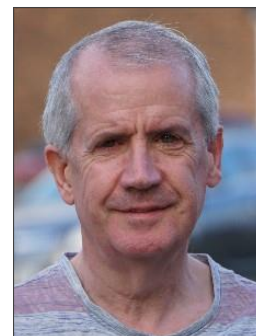
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