

Beemaster

The Newsletter of the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association
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In this issue

- 4 Diary dates
- 5 From the Editor, *Stuart Humphreys*
- Local news and advice**
- 6 Notes from Norwell, *Griff Dixon*
- 8 View from the Vale, *Stuart Humphreys*
- 10 This month in your apiary, *Penny Forsyth*
- 12 Safe in their hands, *Alec Thomson*
- 13 The mystery of the NBKA's centenary banner, *Alison Knox*
- 16 Honey harvesting time, *Tony Maggs*
- 17 Unofficial photo competition, *Diane Kidger, Maurice Jordan*
- 18 An alternative approach – Part 2, *Mick Flower*
- From further afield**
- 21 Into the West – Part 1, *Penny Forsyth*
- 25 The Reverend Tickner Edwardes, *Alan Moulton*
- 26 Recipe of the month, *Linda Jordan*
- 26-29 Advertisements

Cover photo: Bee on *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue', Stuart Humphreys

Other photo credits: Stuart Humphreys (pages 8 & 9), Alec Thomson (p12), Alison Knox (pp13-15), Tony Maggs (pp16-17), Diane Kidger (p17), Maurice Jordan (p17), Mick Flower (pp 18 & 20), Penny Forsyth (pp21-24), National Portrait Gallery (p25)

Please note:

Beemaster is published monthly. Contributions by 25th of prior month, please, to the Editor. Copy received after this date may have to be held over to the next Beemaster. The Editor retains the right to amend submitted articles or to reject articles which appear, in his opinion, to be unsuitable. Views expressed in Beemaster articles are not necessarily those of the Editor and may not reflect the opinions of the Council of the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association.



Diary dates

Some key dates for the rest of the summer

The **Nottingham region** holds its meetings on the first Monday in each month.

The **Newark region** meets on the third Monday of the month.

No formal meetings are scheduled for August.

Monday, 5 September
7.30pm

Nottingham Region meeting

Eagle's Nest Community Centre, Gedling Road, Arnold NG5 6NZ
Varroa resistance with Steve Martin

Monday, 19 September
8.00pm

Newark Region meeting

Ferry Inn, North Muskham NG23 6HB

Thursday, 22 September
7.30pm

NBKA Council meeting

Brackenhurst College, Southwell NG25 0QF

Members should keep an eye on the excellent **NBKA website**: www.nottsbees.org.uk

The NBKA website contains back issues of *Beemaster*.

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From the Editor

Stuart Humphreys introduces this month's *Beemaster*

Welcome to (drum roll...) the 400th edition of *Beemaster*! I've only edited 30 of them, so our thanks and appreciation should go, of course, to my illustrious predecessors **Penny Forsyth** and the late **Stuart Ching**, and to those who preceded them.

We have a veritable smorgasbord on offer this month, with the widest range of beekeeping-related topics imaginable. So, thank you to everyone who has taken the time during the busiest part of the season to contribute articles to this landmark issue.

Griff Dixon reports that the apiary he established this year at Nottingham Castle has been a tremendous success and finds – surprise, surprise – that acquiring an additional apiary from another (presumably ex-) beekeeper adds to his already humongous workload as the honey harvest approaches and the heather moors beckon.

Penny provides her invaluable 'In your apiary...' column, replete with ever handy 'to do' list. Not content with that, she has been working overtime on our behalf (see below)...

In my 'View from the Vale', we discover that what we had thought to be a colony of drone-laying workers may, in fact, have been a drone-laying queen who has apparently now reverted to producing normal brood. A relief, but quite a mystery nonetheless.

Showcasing the award-winning collage by a local schoolgirl, **Alec Thomson** reminds us of the excellent work being done in primary schools to educate children about the importance of the natural world and, in this particular case, bees.

Another piece of artwork forms the centrepiece of a mystery that **Alison Knox** is trying to solve, namely who made the fabulous NBKA centenary banner, of which she has, quite by accident, become the custodian?

With the honey harvest upon us, **Tony Maggs** provides us with a timely step-by-step guide to uncapping. He sells all the equipment you'll need at The Honey Pot, so don't forget to support him and, indeed, all the businesses that advertise in these pages.

Diane Kidger and **Maurice Jordan** have kindly submitted a couple of photos: a honeybee 'photo bombs' Diane's picture of a bumblebee, whilst Maurice's apiary is ready to harvest.

Mick Flower continues to explore alternative approaches to beekeeping. The second part of his odyssey (Part 1 featured in May's *Beemaster*) takes him to back Turkey where the countryside is awash with beehives and swarming is encouraged.

Penny has, of course, been on her own journey of discovery and writes passionately about her feelings upon leaving behind her beloved bees in deepest Nottinghamshire for a new life in Cornwall. Evoking Tolkein (admittedly more highbrow than my Laurel and Hardy suggestion last month), Penny's article is entitled 'Into the West, Part 1'; Part 2, which features the Duchess of Cornwall, follows next month.

Alan Moulton shares his fascination with famous beekeeper and man of many talents, the Reverend Tickner Edwardes.

So, please tuck into **Linda Jordan's** honey plum crumble and enjoy the read!

Notes from Norwell

Griff Dixon gets to grips with queen rearing

In the apiary

I don't know what happened to July but it seems to have vanished so quickly that my comfortable feeling about where I was with my season has now turned to panic as I am behind where I thought I might be. Heather is still in front of me next week but the preparations and 'jiggery pokery' required to bring the hives up to a 'heather ready' standard mean I'm just not there yet.

All my out-apiaries have been phenomenally heavy with honey and I need to assess how many supers to take off which would mark the end of the summer flows. To compound my habitually poor time management, I purchased someone else's apiary lock, stock and barrel. This meant securing and moving hives to another location, bringing my Floralmedia site up to ten hives once manipulations are completed. Red clover honey came with the apiary which has a faint red hue. There is a bit of work to do on these hives as they are all single brood and I run brood-and-a-half; quite distinct different brood spread when you break them down for inspections. By the way, an almost new electric 3 frame extractor will be for sale shortly...

Then I ran a very successful Beekeeping Taster at Floralmedia (you'll recall that Andrew Barber did last year's for me, kindly stepping in at the last minute). I imagine numerous smartphone snaps of the participants holding a frame of bees with the queen on probably hit the airwaves that day. Hopefully, many potential beginners course members will sign up next year. I have now produced a full two-hour Powerpoint presentation combining the BBKA course material on a memory stick.

As for Nottingham Castle – those bees worked overtime in Nottingham city centre and produced some amazing honey. I wish I knew how to identify some of the aromas! They were stacking supers like nobody's business and we were having to take them off before they got too heavy and collapsed the stands! The Castle honey is now in the shop with their unique labelling (thank you, Thornes) and is expected to fly off the shelves during the summer holiday period.



The site staff have asked me to produce some clips of the extraction and jarring process so they can run this in the shop and online. They are also proposing to do a tasting session against local supermarket honey to demonstrate the difference between that and real Castle honey.

Eden Hall Day Spa are revamping their shop and have asked for some jars to test sales so I am waiting for their labelling design. As usual the 12 hives at this location, whilst suffering early swarms, all seem to have recovered well especially the polys with super skyscrapers.

Daisy Farm Orchard has ten hives stacked high ready to come off – when I can find time to organise it.

Sconce and Devon Park took part in the Newark in Bloom competition and with careful timing we arrived on site with the first batch of Park honey which we duly presented to the judges who were inspecting the area where the hives were located. This really hit the spot as we had an opportunity to discuss the benefits of local honey and the pollens that often help hay fever sufferers. Whilst we were there the local primary school, Holy Trinity, were holding an outdoor session; we were invited to talk about beekeeping and demonstrate the smoker. By coincidence, Devin, my work experience student who was with me that day, was identified as having gone to school with the teacher and she used him as an example of what you could aspire to if you worked hard and become a beekeeper. The Park honey should be on sale at Rumbles Café very shortly.

Yes, it's been a very busy month with the heather to look forward to and the start of winter preparation: keeping wasps and robbers at bay; adding the first varroa treatment; mouse protection to follow; starting the mammoth task of extraction; and, then winter feeding after I have cleaned and prepared all the feeders. Plus I must not forget to do a video for Nottingham Castle! Potential upgrade from my 8-frame electric to a 24-frame one and the possible purchase of a 'creamer' – liquid honey in one end and creamed honey out of the other rather than a hit-and-miss by hand method.

NBKA matters

Onto Association matters... Beginners Course enquiries have started – Newark has booked the hall for next year. There have been lots of school enquiries – Council must decide how to find another Penny to look after School Enquiries.

Please note: as I steer myself towards retirement my business phone number will cease so I will only be available on my mobile/text/WhatsApp (*Editor – see page 2*).

View from the Vale (of Belvoir)

How bees are faring in the south-eastern corner of Notts by **Stuart Humphreys**

Last month I wrote about our ‘catastrophic’ intervention in hive No. 3 when – having reduced the number of post-swarm queen cells to a single one – the colony had apparently become queenless and, as a result, turned into bad-tempered drone layers. Having resolved to “throw them in the hedge”, to quote Marin Anastasov, we ended up leaving them in situ for a few weeks, thinking that to take such drastic action in the middle of a heatwave would be unusually cruel and harsh.

Anyway, upon finally preparing to disperse them at the bottom of the garden, we made a final inspection of the colony (to see how many bees we would be dealing with) only to find – to our astonishment and delight – the bees well-behaved and brood in all stages on several of the frames in the upper box of our brood-and-a-half formation.



A seemingly miraculous change from the scattered drone cells we had seen on our previous inspection. Quite how this came about we can only surmise...

Perhaps a virgin queen did, after all, emerge from the cell we left behind but took an undue amount of time to mate, causing the workers themselves to lose patience and start laying? Or maybe the virgin queen mated and started laying on schedule but was using up some dodgy sperm from an unreliable drone?

“Clever bees,” we concluded.

Earlier in July we had been worried that our No.1 hive wasn't queenright: plenty of capped brood but no eggs or larvae. Classic signs of a swarm (or swarm preparations perhaps), except that there hadn't been one – bear in mind the apiary is in our garden, so we would have noticed. Anyway, we had inserted a frame of eggs from queenright hive No. 2 and, as Griff remarked last month, 'Bob's your uncle!' – nice brood patterns in that one too – there's no better sight.

In anticipation of last week's heatwave, and following the sensible advice given in Janet Bates' email, we removed the varroa trays and the one entrance block that we had left in. As it happened, despite the 40C+ temperatures two days running, our bees didn't seem unduly concerned. I imagine they were working hard ventilating the hive and, certainly, I had never seen so many of them collecting water from the pond. We counted 30 bees on this small patch of oxygenating plant alone...



And they remained busy on plants such as the *allium sphaerocephalon*, pictured below.



Finally, a word for our No. 2 colony, the only one that (touch wood) has been steadfastly queenright throughout the season: it quickly recovered from being 'shook swarmed' and, as Alec suggested might be the case, has been busy producing a surplus of honey – five full supers at the last count! As we did last year, however, we will ensure we leave one on for the winter – we're sure the bees much prefer their own honey to sugar syrup...

This month in your apiary: August

Penny Forsyth tells us now is the time to start looking after the all-important winter bees

August is a quieter month for the bees as in many areas the summer flowers are coming to an end and the nectar flow is finishing – unless you have Himalayan balsam nearby or are taking your bees to the heather.

There's still forage about: sunshine will encourage willowherb, blackberry, red clover, borage, golden rod and garden flowers and the bees will work them enthusiastically while they last. There is ivy still to come to provide a late season boost to stores but we should be mindful of our bees' needs as we take our final honey harvest: that golden bounty has not been gathered for our benefit but to ensure the well-being and survival of the colony.

As the forage decreases, so will the laying rate of the queen and the brood area will decrease and fill up with winter stores. Drones are no longer needed and the workers throw them unceremoniously out of the entrance to starve: the focus now is on the winter bees. These bees are different for they stay within the hive all winter and do not pass beyond the nurse bee stage, meaning that their hypopharyngeal glands remain full of brood food ready for the spring rush of brood. The survival of the hive during that critical time in early spring is entirely dependent on these winter bees: for them to survive they must be well fed, healthy and free from varroa mites and the viruses they bring. This means that, for the beekeeper, there's plenty to do in August.

This is the month to take off your last honey crop, treat for varroa and start autumn feeding. Now that most of the supers are off, it's the ideal time to make a full disease inspection and also to assess the size and strength of each colony – do you need to unite or re-queen?

It's the time to take steps to prevent robbing by other colonies and wasps by reducing entrances and setting up wasp traps. It's also a time for preparing equipment and comb for storage; for cleaning and repairing everything that needs it; and for making a list of what you need to buy in the late season sales. It's also a good time to review your beekeeping year and, dare I say it, your beekeeping practice to see what worked and what didn't and why. It's easy (and comforting) to follow a routine or a timetable but it's good sometimes to stop and think – do I really need to inspect today? Put on another super? Take so much honey? Keep so many colonies on this site?

We all know to avoid opening hives in cold weather but opening up when it's very hot disrupts thermoregulation and creates unnecessary stress. Taking off the entire honey crop at once may be labour-saving but the spring and summer starvation warnings from the NBU of recent years should be telling us to look more closely at forage and weather conditions before we do: an abundance of blossom does not necessarily mean an abundance of nectar.

And at a time when the natural world is facing more and greater challenges it is now more important than ever that we view our managed honey bee colonies as part of the wider ecosystem and consider their impact on other pollinator populations.

Asian hornet queens should be busy in the nest now but workers could be out looking for food to feed hungry mouths: keep an eye out for hawking activity around your hives and maintain traps with protein baits. For a sobering look at what we will have to face if and when this invader manages to establish populations in mainland UK, go to the Jersey Asian Hornet Team Facebook page and prepare to be scared...

Jobs for August



Reduce hive entrances to help the bees defend against wasps and robbing by other colonies; if you haven't already done so, set up wasp traps: a mix of beer and jam works well, plum seems to be particularly attractive to wasps.



Check hives carefully for gaps and small holes that could allow wasps or robbing bees to enter and plunder their stores: seal them up tightly. I use beeswax and propolis scrapings or small pieces of foam as a temporary fix but gaffer tape and Blu-Tack are also useful. Don't forget to check floors and roofs, too.



Finish taking off the honey harvest, clean extractor & equipment and put away.



Return wet honey supers at dusk to prevent robbing; put them over the crownboard on the hives they came from.



Check the bees have sufficient stores, clean & prepare feeders, buy in fondant/sugar/syrup.



Carry out a thorough disease inspection, ask for help if worried.



Decide on your varroa treatment plan, buy in what you need – and use it properly! You can download the leaflet *Managing Varroa* free from *Beebase*.



Keep a treatment record: you can download and print a record card from *Beebase*.



Unite small colonies.



Start reducing the number of supers on each hive: consolidate or put over the crownboard for the bees to move stores down.



Ensure that your bees have access to a reliable source of water: in very hot weather the workers spread water on the combs and evaporate it by fanning their wings to help with thermoregulation.



Maintain vigilance for Asian hornet activity: although the queens are confined to the nest at this time of the season, workers will be out looking for food and hawking around your hives. Baits should be protein – e.g. cat food/tuna – and changed regularly.



Put empty supers and drawn comb into storage protected from wax moth.



Clean and repair equipment before storing and make a list of needs & wants.



Look back and take stock – what could you have done differently or better?

Safe in their hands

Alec Thomson is inspired by a young girl's award-winning collage

I keep hives at an out-apiary near Burnt Stump. The owner of the land has a grand-daughter, Alea Bland, aged 7, who was inspired to enter an art competition featuring bees at her school. The collage is made up of a variety of miscellaneous items and drawings ranging from scabble tiles, photos, pieces of plants, etc.

It was entered into a National Bee Inspired competition organised by the Independent Schools Association and was awarded Second Prize.

This is an excellent example of how many schools encourage children to think and learn about bees. Alea and her school deserve congratulations as well as a big well done!



The mystery of the NBKA's centenary banner

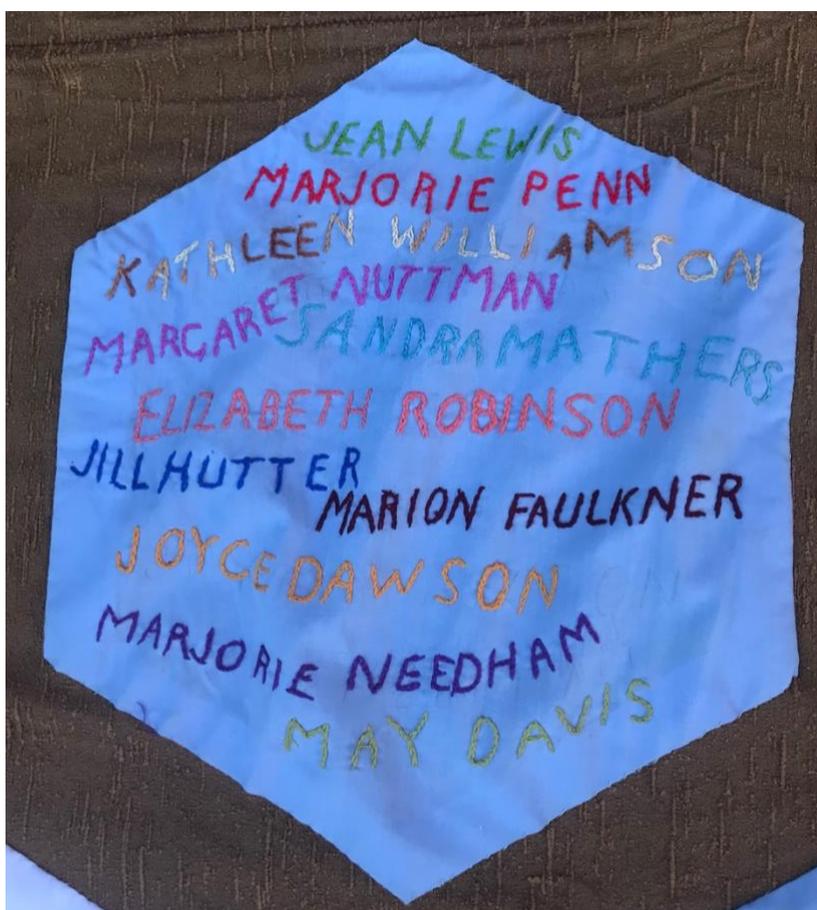
Alison Knox looks for help in solving the puzzle of an important NBKA artefact

As this is the 400th edition of *Beemaster* I felt inspired to share the 'mystery of the NBKA Centenary Banner' with members... Somehow, I seem to have become the 'custodian' of an important piece of NBKA history: a wonderful work of art created by a group of ladies in 1984 to celebrate 100 years of the Association's existence.



One of the panels has these names embroidered on it:
Jean Lewis, Marjorie Penn,
Kathleen Lee, Margaret
Nuttman, Sandra Mathers,
Elizabeth Robinson, Jill [sic]
Hutter, Marion Faulkner,
Joyce Dawson, Marjorie
Needham, and May Davis.
Aside from Gill Hutter, I don't
recognise any of those names.

The banner (in 3 long sections)
used to be a centrepiece at the
Moorgreen Show and I would
have first seen it in 2009 when
I entered my first Honey Show
where the late David Kemp
was our judge. It was a
stunning backdrop to the show
exhibits.





Sadly, once the Moorgreen Show disbanded, none of the venues we subsequently used for the Honey Show were able to accommodate the banner, and so it was carefully rolled up and put away.



A couple of weeks ago, during the sunny, windy weather, I got the banner out of storage and gave it a good airing and did some running repairs to the panels which were coming adrift.

It seemed a pity to just roll it up again and put it away.

Each panel has now been photographed for posterity.

In my endeavours, I have since spoken to Gill but she says was only involved very minimally, and it was a long time ago, and she can't remember much about it. She thinks she made the panel with two beekeepers examining a frame, so she can take the credit for that... but what about the others!?



If anyone has any information about the ladies who made it, or suggestions as to how we could better use it, I would be very grateful if you could let me know.

Honey harvesting time

Tony Maggs explains his simple method of uncapping, ideal for up to 100 frames at a time

We all have our own way of doing the un-capping as the honey comes in; well, this simple and straight forward method is good for dealing with up to about ten supers (100 frames) at each session.



Uncapping tray and frame holder



Frame rest in position

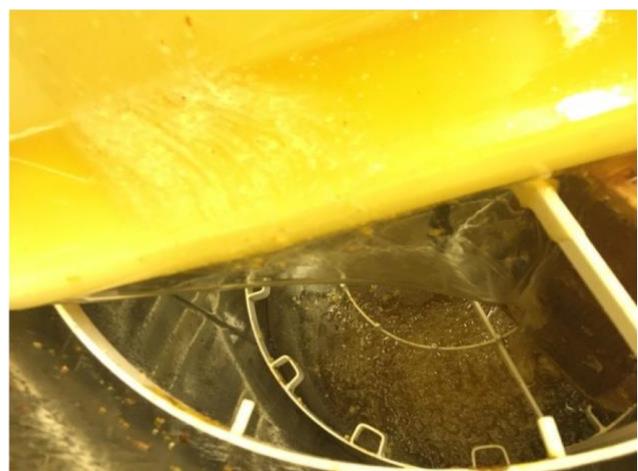


Un-capping in action, frame filling

I find that the honey gate is mounted too high to drain sufficiently, so I just lift the tray of drained honey in to the extractor the following day when most of the cappings have drained. The drained cappings are stored and pressed into a 30lb tub and sealed to process into blocks of beeswax at a later date. The trays that I sell at The Honey Pot do not come with the honey gate, but they can be purchased and fitted at extra cost; un-capping knives can be purchased at The Honey Pot too.



The next day cappings drained into the lower tray; no need for the honey gate pictured



Honey tipped into the extractor to drain and scrape; the honey gate is too high to use



If it will fit inside your extractor, lift, pour and scrape the honey



Honey drained and filtered from the extractor



Filtered honey pouring into bucket to label and store

Keeping bees out of the extracting room is important too, as they might want it all back!

Editor's note: For the eagle-eyed amongst you, the frames in the frame holder in the first photograph on the preceding page are Tony's 'virtual' hive frames from Thornes, not real bees with their brood. Tony assures me no bees were harmed in the making of this article...

Unofficial photo competition

Some early contenders for this year's competition from **Diane Kidger** and **Maurice Jordan**



Diane was preparing to take a photo of a bumblebee on some bramble when a honeybee decided to get in on the act...



Maurice's photo is entitled fittingly: 'Time to extract!'

An alternative approach – Part 2

Mick Flower's search for alternative approaches takes him from Nottingham to Turkey...

First off – does anyone know what this is? (It is beekeeping related!). Answer at the end of this article.

[Editor's note – The last public hanging in Nottingham was in 1864...]

At the time of writing, I am in Turkey and my bees at home in the UK are very much self-managing and will have done so for seven weeks by the time we get back. "Irresponsible!" I hear some of you say, particularly as I'm away for pretty much all of the swarming season. I have, though, done everything I can to dissuade my bees from swarming. I inspected my bees shortly before leaving for Turkey to ensure that they weren't producing queen cells. I moved the followers (top bar equivalent of dummy boards) back and filled the remaining space with empty top bars thereby ensuring there is plenty of room for the colony to expand.



I have two five frame nucs, that I made, set up as bait hives. One is located on the flat roof over the dining room, the other is behind the shed. Hopefully, any emerging swarms will be tempted to relocate into one of these boxes.



Also, I have written to my near neighbours explaining the situation and giving them the number of another local beekeeper who will happily come round and collect any swarms that decide the bait boxes are not worthy!

I have been following the swarming activities playing out on the WhatsApp group and it would appear that swarming in Nottinghamshire was quite active in May and June. I'm touching a large piece of wood when I say that my postcode hasn't yet featured!

In this region of Turkey there are a lot of beehives. I probably passed over a thousand as we drove round the local lake the other day. Bees swarm here naturally and the local beekeepers appear to take this in their stride. Collecting swarms does not involve specialised equipment. Whichever 15/20 litre bucket that comes to hand seems to do the trick. Swarms are quickly gathered and rehoused in an empty box.

I understand that colonies are sometimes combined but this tends to be one colony being poured on top of another and then left to sort themselves out. My beekeeping friend out here is of the opinion that the scents of the two colonies are quickly mixed and that little or no fighting takes place. I have also read that a quick squirt of air freshener will enable you to combine two colonies quickly without them fighting.

Because of the heat, colonies out here are smaller than in the UK and don't have the rapid expansion we see in March and April. They do, though, still swarm from time to time as it is in their nature to do so.

I have a concern that, in the UK, we are very focused on swarm control and swarm management. Swarming is a natural part of the honey bee year and by deliberately trying to breed out this trait we may ultimately have colonies that are totally dependent on beekeepers.

Equally I appreciate that swarms can cause a lot of anxiety for the general public. We do though have our own superb network using WhatsApp and I don't think many swarms have been left unattended for long in Nottinghamshire. It also means that the public understanding of swarms is slowly improving. However, I am also concerned by the precarious positions in which some of our members find themselves in the pursuit of a swarm!

A swarm can also have a very positive effect on a colony. It provides a brood break when bees can focus a little more on reducing their varroa load. It will invariably lead to a new queen being created in the parent colony and will provide a source of free, locally adapted bees that are usually very quick to build comb and get themselves established.

The photo below shows a typical stack of beehives outside a near neighbour's house. He probably has an even larger number out and about in the local area. The hives in the photograph will come into play as the season progresses, either housing swarms or providing homes for colonies that he has decided to split.



Occasionally I come across two brood boxes stacked one on top of the other to accommodate a very large or very productive colony. All boxes in Turkey seem to be the same size, which makes a lot of sense – particularly if you are roping two or three hundred hives together on the back of a lorry to catch a second or third ‘spring’ in another area of the country. Queen excluders are not used and honey is harvested from the outer three or four frames which tend not to contain any brood.

The picture at the start of the article is interesting! Much of the honey produced in the Mugla area of Turkey is “Cam Bal” (pronounced, *cham bal*) which translates as pine honey. I believe this comes from the aphids that are found on the vast areas of local pine trees. It seems there is a moth producing caterpillars which devour the new shoots on the pine trees. This in turn affects the aphid numbers and hence the amount of honeydew produced. The ‘trap’ photographed is to capture the moths before they lay eggs in the pine trees. As yet, I haven’t been able to find out how it works or what attracts them!

Into the West – Part 1: Journey

Penny Forsyth evokes an arcadian Middle Earth as she settles into life in Cornwall

Anyone walking near my apiary in the early evening of Thursday, 8 April last year would have been intrigued by the sight of two beesuit-clad figures apparently engaged in some kind of arcane ritual: one resting her hands on each hive in turn and apparently making an incantation and the other looking on from a short distance away. The ritual was my own and I was saying goodbye and farewell to my bees as my friend Anne, their new keeper, stood by feeling somewhat bemused but happy to humour me, knowing how heartsore I was from rehoming my beloved geese a few days before.

In the time-honoured tradition of “telling the bees” I told each colony that I was leaving, thanked them for their labour, wished them well and told them that Anne was their master now. As I drove away I took comfort in the knowledge that the apiary I had built up over the last ten years would remain there for a few years more, sheltered by its hawthorn hedges in the lee of one of Nottinghamshire’s most ancient woodlands.



My apiary had been my place of peace and learning, my haven and refuge, especially during the COVID epidemic when life seemed so bleak and uncertain. There I had tried to put into practice what I had learnt in theory and had made the inevitable mistakes, so I watched my bees and learned more, made fewer mistakes; experimented with hive types and configurations, frames and wax; moved on to brood and a half and stopped using queen excluders; united small colonies and made splits from prolific ones; kept swarms in skeps to encourage comb building then hived and nurtured them, adding to my stock; nursed small colonies through the winter in double-insulated nucs and hives; changed comb and encouraged strong colonies to draw it; cleaned and repaired the ever-growing stacks of equipment; trapped a million wasps in summer and waded through Freelander-defeating mud and thigh-high snow in winter; took with grateful thanks whatever honey I felt a colony could spare; made notes, took photos, and never ceased to marvel at the remarkable complexity of the life of bees and their role in the wider ecosystem.

It was here in fact that my gaze was gradually drawn away from a narrow focus on the care and nurture of my honeybees to a wider concern for all pollinators and I reduced the number of hives I kept to ensure fair shares for all. The more I worked with bees, thought about bees, talked about bees and taught about bees, the more I worried about the real and potential harm caused by human interference so I observed more and intervened less, following my instincts and led by the bees. Where they would lead me next I had no idea: I left my place of peace and learning with sadness and a grateful heart and turned my face to the future.

The following day at one o'clock sharp we gave the happy new owners the keys to Beverley Cottage, our home for 20 years and for Trevor's parents long before us, and headed off into the west, to Cornwall and a new chapter of our life.

Our move, long planned but endlessly delayed by (mostly) bee-related projects, took place during the pandemic, so it wasn't without complications, but we are contentedly settled in a slate-roofed granite farmhouse in the depths of the countryside not far from Bodmin.

We live on a working farm: farmer Andrew breeds pedigree Limousin beef cattle and the rhythm of our life is underscored with the rhythms of the lives and routines of these handsome conker-brown beasts.



The landscape here is of deep wooded valleys that run down to the River Camel with small fields and hay meadows on their flanks and tiny hamlets tucked away along steep and narrow lanes between Cornish hedges, those remarkably solid earth and stone banks often concealed by luxuriant plant growth: good reversing skills are essential and expected here.

It's an ancient landscape, formed at the end of the Ice Age as the glaciers receded from the granite faces of the high moor that heaves a menacing shoulder above Bodmin town. This high moorland is a place of myth and legend, its tors and summits laced with ancient tracks leading to dolmens and standing stones and stone circles where Bardic ceremonies are performed in Kernewek, the native Cornish language that is closely linked to Welsh and Breton.

There has been a strong revival of interest in Cornish language and heritage and the number of Kernewek speakers is rising steadily: all street signage in the Duchy is written in English and Kernewek.

The Cornish are a proud race with a strong national identity – Cornish not British and most definitely not English! The flag of Saint Piran flies proudly here. Choirs and shantymen sing lusty homage to tin miners, fishermen, farmers and wreckers; crowds sing Trelawny and Cornwall My Home with fervour and feeling – and no true Cornishman or maid will ever eat a Ginster’s pasty or break the hallowed rule of “jam first” on a scone or split: cream before jam is an abomination practised by Devonians and other lesser folk.

Crossing the Tamar, the river that marks the border with Devon, is known as “going upcountry” and is looked upon almost in the same light as going abroad. Cornish residents returning home along the A30 look out eagerly for the Nearly Home Trees – a curious circular wooded grove high on a hilltop just before the border at Lifton – and will cry: “Kernow bys vyken!” (Cornwall forever!) as they gratefully return to their beloved country.



To those who live here, Cornwall is indeed a country, complete in itself: shaped by the sea, by trade and toil, by history and legend, it has an indefinable ‘otherness’ that sets it apart. Time flows differently here and that is manifest in the Cornish term “dreckly”, which translates as “directly” but without the sense of immediacy that the term suggests. A thing to be done “dreckly” will be done eventually but you may have to wait a while...

During the first months of settling in and adjusting to a new life I was happy to have my mind free of bees and beekeeping for once: we have family just a few miles away in Wadebridge and were able to make up for the months of separation enforced by COVID.

We have the glorious north coast beaches just a few miles away and live close by the Camel Trail, probably the best-known cycle route in Cornwall and the best way to travel when the roads are jammed with “emmets” (ants), the Cornish term for tourists. It was good to lie fallow for a while and enjoy new things but once a beekeeper...

When my own honey ran out I started buying it from a very friendly chap on the farmers' market, who turned out to be the local bee inspector. Eric encouraged me to join the Cornwall Beekeepers' Association and I attended my first indoor meeting of the Bodmin group in March this year, when the speakers were Dawn and Paul from Bees Abroad – small world!

And there I was again, in the company of beekeepers at a monthly meeting – a familiar enough setting with reports and notices, news and announcements, speakers after the coffee break – but now in a new setting with new faces, new personalities and new hierarchies to get to know.

It all seemed a bit daunting but I valiantly struck up a conversation with the lady sitting next to me, who turned out to be CBKA President Mary Trace and a good friend of Anne and Rob Mason (small world again!), so not a bad start. Then home to mull it all over...

After a year and a half without bees, am I really of a mind to start again, to find my place in a new group, or is it time to leave those years behind in memory? To bee or not to bee, that is indeed the question. Whatever the answer, I know that no matter what I do here, in my quiet moments my thoughts will always return to the row of hives along the hawthorn hedge in the lee of the wood and bees returning, flying home.



Penny Forsyth
Nanstallon, Bodmin
July 2022

The Reverend Tickner Edwardes

Alan Moulton shares his fascination with a famous beekeeper from the early 20th century

Over the years I have looked after my bees, taken a few exams and, above all, read around the subject of bee-keeping, and the author who always springs to my mind is the Rev Tickner Edwardes.

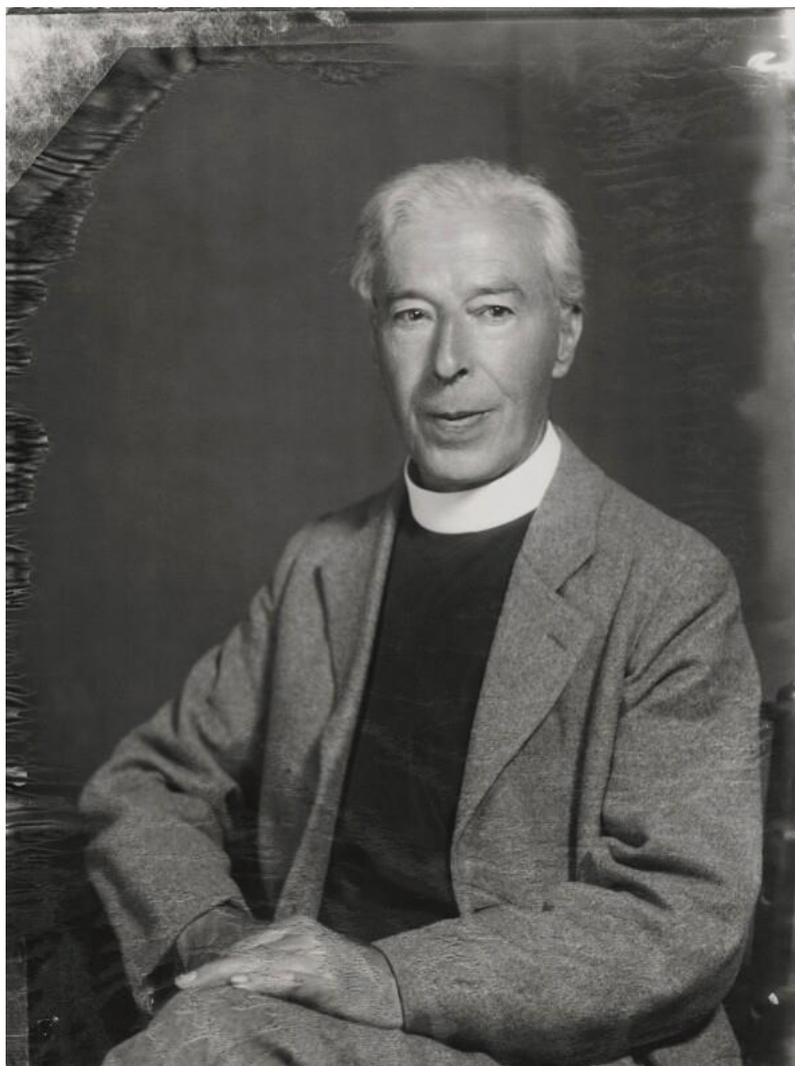
This reverend gentleman Tickner Edwardes was a country parson who had the time not only to keep bees but to travel round his parish (possibly) in a pony trap and visit all the local bee keepers. More importantly he was able to write up his observations and experiences, some of which are set out in 'The Bee-Master of Warrilow', a further copy of which I recently obtained...

So, why buy any other of the same, is it a first edition? Well, no, it is a well-read third edition but attached to the preface there is a letter handwritten on

embossed note paper from the reverent gentleman to a fellow beekeeper, perfectly legible (he was not a doctor!), given in reply to a question with a suggested solution to whatever the problem was. I will treasure this book and do a follow-up, since there must be more such correspondence, maybe in other books or lying in an archive somewhere.

The interesting thing is that the methods of keeping bees did not change over the Reverend's latter years but he spans the transition from the skep age in his earlier works. Published in 1934: recent past? (not quite in my living memory) but the first time I saw this book it was in my father's possession – a member of the nobility had given him a copy as thanks for helping with a successful harvest! I still have that copy with its inscription and it remains personal to me.

Editor's note: The above photograph is reproduced courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery. On their website, the Rev Tuckner's granddaughter writes that he served in France and Egypt during the First World War and that his bible – inscribed with his name (which was actually Edward Tickner Edwardes) and dated May 1st, 1918, Ypres – remains caked in mud. Possibly his time in the trenches triggered his sense of wonder for nature's intricacies?



Recipe of the month: Honey plumb crumble

This recipe from **Linda Jordan** serves between 4-6 people

Ingredients:

900g (2lb) plums halved and stoned
140ml (5 fl oz) water
60ml (2 fl oz) honey
Juice and grated zest of an orange
110g (4 oz) butter or margarine
225g (8 oz) plain flour
50g (2 oz) sugar
50g (2 oz) toasted hazelnuts, chopped or porridge oats

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 200C (440F, gas mark 6).
2. Place the plums, water, honey, orange juice and zest in a saucepan, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, rub the butter or margarine into the flour with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
4. Alternatively, place the whole lot in a food processor.
5. Stir in the sugar and the hazelnuts, mixing well.
6. Put the plums in an ovenproof dish and sprinkle the crumble mixture evenly over the top.
7. Bake for 35-40 minutes until golden.
8. Serve hot with custard or cream.

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EXTRACTORS

Members may borrow the NBKA extractors - 4-frame, hand driven kept at Brackenhurst and hired from Maurice Jordan. An electric one (with settling tank) is held by Glenis Swift 0115 9538617. The EasyBee extractor which is useful for extracting frames that hold honey that has granulated is held by Frank Chambers in Calverton (0115 965 2128).

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Beekeeping Equipment Available at The Honey Pot

This is a busy time of year as we're harvesting our precious crop of honey, so maybe it's worth upgrading your un-capping methods?

It's been a good summer flow for most of us here in Nottinghamshire and we have some economically priced un-capping trays and knives for sale.

One large sieve tray and placed below a second tray to drain the honey into only £65

Food grade tubular plastic frame holder only £15



We have most of the equipment needed, but with this busy season, we are getting through a lot of stock, so by contacting The Honey Pot and letting us know what you need first, will make sure we have what you need

While most of you have managed to contact me okay, please remember that we're now open by appointment only. By Phone, Text or email.

Open most days by appointment only, at a day and time to suit you.

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No Web Site

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