

Beemaster

The Newsletter of the
Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association
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Cover photo: Bee on *Kniphofia caulescens*, Stuart Humphreys

Other photo credits: Stuart Humphreys (pages 10 & 11), Paula Duckworth (p16), Darran Wilson (p18), Alan Moulton (p21)

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

First Zoom presentation scheduled for 12 October

Association in-person meetings remain cancelled until further notice.

Members should keep an eye on the excellent **NBKA website** which is regularly updated.

www.nottsbees.org.uk

The home page of the website includes the announcement of the NBKA's first venture into Zoom with a meeting being held at 7.30pm on **Monday, 12 October**. Mick Flower will give a presentation on Top Bar Hives, about which there is a great deal of interest, especially amongst newer members. Mick's talk will start at 7.45pm. The invitation will be emailed out via the eR2 system. If you have unsubscribed to such emails but would like to join the meeting, then please let Janet Bates know by email and she will send you an invite.

The next Council meeting is being held on 15 October, also by Zoom.

The website contains back issues of *Beemaster* from January 2019 onward.

As a reminder, in light of COVID-19, the BBKA Exam Board has cancelled the autumn round of exams. The BBKA website has useful reminders about matters such as 'Your apiary is a place of work for your volunteers.'

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/tending-hives-during-covid-19>

The 89th **National Honey Show** will be held virtually on 22-24 October.

www.honeyshow.co.uk

From the Editor

Stuart Humphreys introduces this month's newsletter

As the last vestiges of summer disappear amongst the wind and rain, welcome to October's *Beemaster*.

Many thanks to this month's contributors – some familiar faces and some new ones...

Firstly, **Alec Thomson** writes an appreciation of Glyn Flowerdew who, sadly, passed away in August.

Griff Dixon has a nightmare of a journey back from the heather moors with his bees and owes a debt of gratitude to Maurice and Linda Jordan.

In my 'View from the Vale' I am happy to see our bees not being bothered by wasps, but am upset at having to deal with a colony of drone-laying workers.

Penny Forsyth reminds us of the essential tasks as we continue to prepare our bees for winter. Penny also provides an update on the Asian Hornet Team with, significantly, the first verified Asian hornet of 2020 having been sighted in Gosport, Hampshire.

Treasurer **Paula Duckworth** continues our 'Meet the Council' series with an entertaining account of her (mis)adventures in beekeeping, to which she is a relative newbie.

Speaking of which, in this month's 'New members' corner' **Darran Wilson** and **Ollie Rea** explain what they've been up to since they joined NBKA; following his first encounter with a swarm, Ollie sings the praises of Mick Flower.

Alan Moulton ponders the fate of farm shops – essential lifelines during COVID lockdown, yet deserted in favour of supermarkets when restrictions eased.

And **Linda Jordan** supplies us with a recipe for apple and ginger upside down pudding to warm us up as the nights draw in.

Incidentally, editors of the various association newsletters around the country share their newsletters via something called the Beekeeping Editors Exchange Scheme. This allows articles published by one association to be reproduced by other associations. I am pleased to report that many of the excellent articles prepared by NBKA members for *Beemaster* are being picked up and included in other BKAs' newsletters, including Penny's 'This month in your apiary' series, Anne Mason's 'Bees in my garden', and the recent article on European foulbrood by APHA's Phil Khorassandjian. That reflects well on our Association, so please keep the submissions coming!

I hope you enjoy the read. And stay safe.

Obituary: Glyn David Flowerdew (1939-2020)

An appreciation by **Alec Thomson**

As reported in last month's *Beemaster*, sadly Glyn Flowerdew died on 20 August, eventually succumbing to motor neurone disease which had debilitated him since the summer of 2019.

His funeral service took place on 11 September at Gedling Crematorium attended by 30 mourners. Eulogies were given by Lewis Flowerdew, Patrick Bates, Alec Thomson and Paul Martin, each reflecting on Glyn as a family man, friend, beekeeper and esteemed clinician.

Glyn was born on 13 February 1939 and during his early years he lived and was educated in Norwich. Hard work and parental guidance enabled Glyn to gain a scholarship to Christ's College, Cambridge and on completion of his degree he commenced his medical training at St George's Medical School in London. During this period of his life Glyn developed a love of nature and the world around, spending many holiday periods exploring Norfolk and then onto Europe. In later years this urge to travel continued along with his wife Eileen, including trips to the Amazon basin and, more latterly just prior to the onset of his illness, Bhutan and the foothills of the Himalayas.

In his medical career Glyn specialised and developed skills as an anaesthetist and a career move brought him to Nottingham and the newly opened Queen's Medical Centre. It was here that he pursued a further development as paediatrician anaesthetist. This team, of which Glyn was a leading member, soon developed a worldwide reputation in pioneering childcare and many hundreds owe their survival to their work.

On the approach of his 60th birthday and in preparation for future retirement, his son Lewis purchased a hive and a colony of bees which were then located in the large home garden at the Newstead Abbey park. In Glyn's own words his 'ingrained professional training', coupled with diligence and expert training from David Kemp, meant he soon found himself immersed in the world of honeybees.

He undertook several BBKA examinations and his expertise was soon recognised by members of Notts BKA: he was enrolled as a member of Council and then appointed County Education Officer, undertaking both theoretical and practical training for potential new beekeepers. He carried out this role for several years as well as being an examiner for the BBKA. Glyn was also a competitive beekeeper and was proud of the fact that he attained 21 firsts, 18 seconds and 4 thirds in the Nottinghamshire honey shows but was even more proud of a 2nd and a 3rd he attained in the National honey show in London.

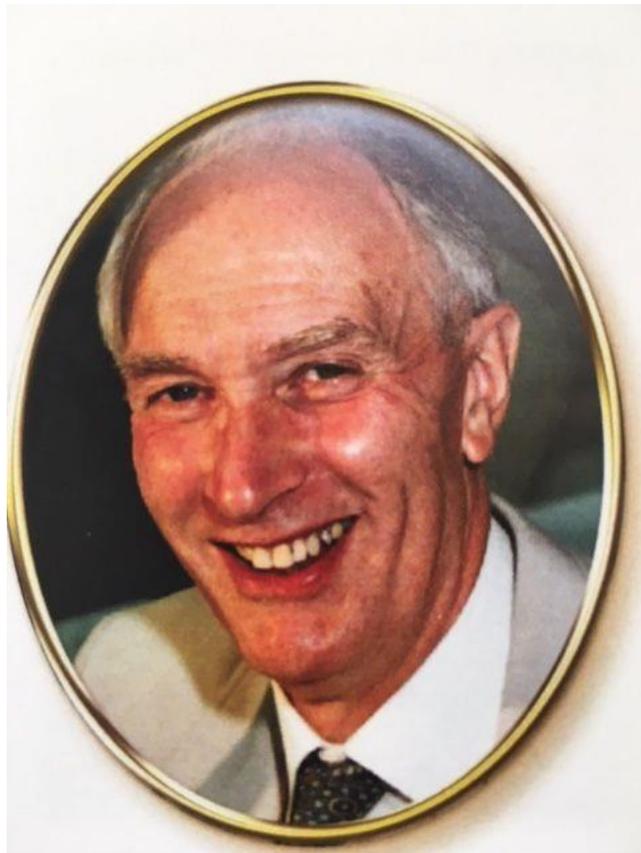
With the onset of his illness Glyn recognised his future dilemma in being able to handle and manage his colonies; he was highly enthusiastic and agreeable to the suggestion that they be relocated to the training apiaries at Woodthorpe and Hucknall, thereby perpetuating his legacy for development and training.

Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown I was able to visit Glyn on several occasions and although he was only able to communicate by written response, during one of our 'discussions' I asked what was the fascination with bees. He responded 'It's all about beauty and my father's love of butterflies and moths which made such an impression on me.'

It was some weeks later that the Post Office issued a series of stamps featuring lines from romantic poets. One such stamp seemed so apposite to Glyn's thoughts, this being from William Blake's 'Auguries of Innocence':

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower*

There are quite a few of us who have to say many thanks to Glyn for opening the door to our wonderful hobby and for our love of honeybees and their interaction with the world around us.



†

Notes from Norwell

By **Griff Dixon**, including his Honorary Secretary's report

NBKA matters

September has been a bit of an odd month all round. No sooner do we think we are coming out of COVID-19 and the Association can start to think about an **NBKA Restart Strategy** than things start to dip the other way and the brakes get put on.

The Association still ticks on with apiary managers and volunteers maintaining the Brackenhurst, Woodthorpe and Hucknall apiaries. Efforts are being made to hold interesting events on-line, with Mick Flower putting together an event on 12 October around the Warré hive. Other on-line events will follow once we find a route that works for us. Anyone familiar with on-line media set-ups should contact me so we can be guided by experts. I have set up a Norwell Apiary YouTube channel but have yet to decide what to use it for – any suggestions?

Beginners courses are appearing on-line through other suppliers such as Buckfast Abbey. Hopefully, NBKA will be able to put something together for next year; also hoping that apiary sessions in May 2021 will be hands-on rather than having to worry about social distancing. Let's hope the vaccines promised by the end of the year will have materialised so we can relax a bit and get back to social interaction and do what beekeepers do best, which is to exchange knowledge and ideas to make us all better at what we love to do.

In the apiary (and getting back from the heather moors)

I did say I would report on how the heather went after collection from Beeley Moor in the Derbyshire Dales...

I had to collect the 13 hives in two visits. The first six with Maurice and Linda Jordan's help, and the last seven on my own. The first collection went well with the two hives with two supers proving quite heavy and the four poly hives also showing well although one was quite light. The second batch were reasonably heavy except one that only had four frames of bees left in it!

This is where the story gets interesting as the second batch journey home was quite eventful. I knew I was running a bit low on diesel and I had noted a slight diesel smell on the journey but that was not the main problem. One of the hives had sprung a leak and I had opened both windows to allow for them to escape. I was only a few miles from my apiary when the engine appeared to splutter and I was convinced I was running out of fuel – I had not fancied stopping at a garage as I usually have at least 50 miles on the empty light and bees buzzing around a petrol station was not a good idea.

I accelerated downhill hoping to use up the last drops of fuel to enable a left turn into an adjacent village; the van juddered quite a bit but I managed to get it into the turn and parked the van.

On getting out I discovered I had not run out of fuel but – to my horror – I had shredded the nearside rear tyre... and the bees were starting to get interested. I shut the cab windows and immediately thought of Maurice again to come to the rescue. In the

meantime I attempted to release the spare tyre under the rear of the van and contemplated the last time I had changed a tyre which must have been 30 years ago. I found the jack and tyre wrench and the nut to release the tyre and duly started something I was not looking forward to. Part the way through Maurice and Linda called by and assisted getting me back on the road. After an hour (although it felt a lot longer) the shredded tyre was back in the van and I was on my way to the apiary.

Got there fine and unloaded the hives and set off back home. A few miles later I ran out of fuel!

Better call the Jordan RAC team as Angela was busy socialising in Doncaster and never hears her phone. Maurice turns up chuckling to himself at my misfortune and provides a can of diesel which was duly poured into the fuel tank. After much messing around with purging the air out and priming the engine it was back on the road again and many thanks to Maurice for his help. But the story does not end there!

Got home leaving a trail of diesel behind me including a puddle on my drive (which I still need to clean off). The van was picked up by my local garage who had to haul it onto their tow truck as there was absolutely not a drop of diesel left in the tank. The whole can of diesel had lasted about seven miles. A new fuel line from the tank to the pump has solved the issue.

You may be thinking what's the moral of this story...?

1. Knowing fellow beekeepers is like having a lot of friends who are willing to help whether it's a new queen or a can of fuel. They will come to your rescue – that's beekeeping!
2. Always check your vehicle before you travel. Make sure you have enough fuel and you know where everything is if you are caught out in the middle of nowhere.
3. Beekeeping can be lone working. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back. Always call in every couple of hours to let them know you are OK.
4. Take a drink and something to eat as lifting hives about and moving supers can sap the energy levels.
5. Always sort out an issue while you are there: it's all too easy to just get back in the vehicle and go home with the intention of sorting stuff out the next day. Sometimes it's important to solve a problem there and then rather than leave it for another day – your bees may have gone by then.

Health and safety is important when beekeeping. We all do on the spot instant risk assessments as we do inspections, taking into account the circumstances of the open hive and what you are confronted with in a particular colony.

All NBKA activities will have had risk assessments undertaken with procedures in place if certain events happen. This will be even more so as and when we come out of the COVID pandemic and start to move things on with the green shoots of the NBKA Restart Strategy.

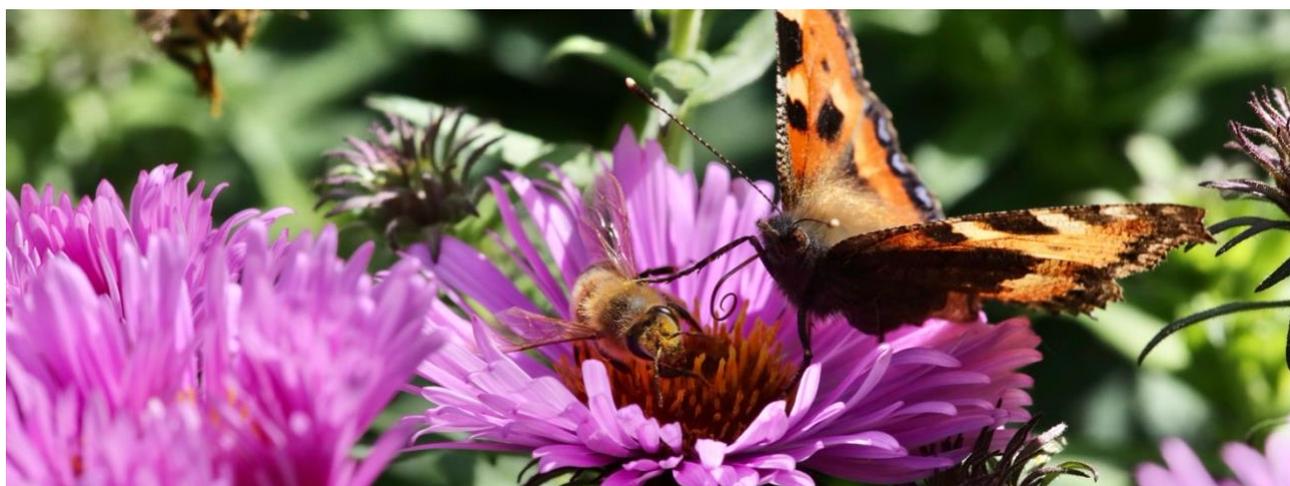
Finally, I got 8½ supers of heather honey – around 100 frames which I still have to extract. Quite good on the one hand but an expensive experience on the other with a new tyre and fuel line!

View from the Vale (of Belvoir)

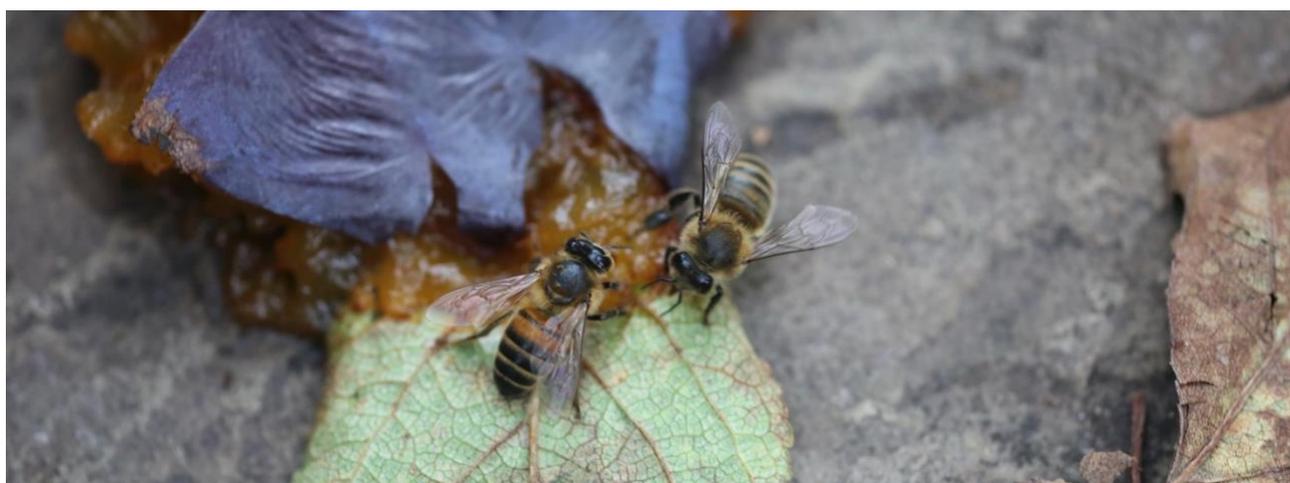
How bees are faring in the south-eastern corner of Notts by **Stuart Humphreys**

As we continue with our winter preparations, things are a lot quieter in our garden apiary. Happily wasps don't appear to have been a problem at all. Of course, there are always a few of them scouting round the hives looking for a way in – right from dawn through to dusk, regardless of how chilly it might be – but with entrance blocks back in our colonies are (touch wood) more than strong enough to keep any such intruders at bay.

With fewer flowers to share amongst the various pollinators, the wasps seem to concentrate on the ivy, leaving honeybees and butterflies to 'fight it out' over the asters. In the photo below, the Small Tortoiseshell literally pushed the bee off the flower.



Another source of food has been the fruit in our orchard. Whilst the wasps will feast on anything from brown figs to pears, our bees seem to prefer damsons, especially those squashed underfoot as illustrated below. In fact, over the last few weeks we often saw honeybees and wasps 'sharing' the same damson, so we are having to revise slightly our received wisdom of the two being mortal enemies.



One of the certainties of beekeeping is that as soon as you think you are doing a good job, nature finds a way to prove otherwise. In our case we had been pleased to end the swarming season with six healthy, queenright colonies. Yet within a few weeks one of the queens has failed, leaving behind a colony of laying workers. Seeing the raised and domed cappings of laying workers' drone brood must be one of the more depressing sights one can have as a beekeeper – and a reminder never to become complacent.



Tempting as it would be to try to unite them with a queenright colony, the laying workers might well kill the queen. So the 'solution' is sadly rather drastic: namely, to dismantle the hive and shake the bees out in another part of the garden. The flying bees will return to the apiary and most likely be allowed in to other colonies; the laying workers will perish.

Last month I mentioned the 'problem' of our excess honey crop. We have decided to deal with this by leaving a full super on each hive. In previous years we have always taken off all the honey and fed the bees with sugar syrup, so this will be a first for us. It stands to reason that it must be better for the bees for them to have their own honey stores rather than that created from sugar, but it will be interesting to see how they fare during the winter. When we do finally configure the hives for winter over the next few weeks, we will make sure that the honey supers are underneath the brood boxes as that should ensure they are cleaned out by the time spring comes around. Rest assured, we will still give them their New Year's present of fondant as an insurance policy.

This month in your apiary: October

Penny Forsyth looks forward to the start of the beekeeping year

October is a month of transition: as the days grow shorter and cooler there is less forage for our bees and activity within the hives begins to slow. The foragers will still be working the ivy and late garden flowers to add to vital winter stores – any pollen going in now will be for storing rather than feeding to brood as the queens have greatly reduced their laying rate.

The colony is still large but as there are more bees to do less work, each individual bee is able to live longer. The house bees will still consume large quantities of pollen but, instead of metabolising this to brood food, will store it in their fat bodies as a food reserve that will ensure that they live through to the spring and will be ready to feed the new larvae and forage for fresh pollen and nectar.

The survival of the winter bees depends as much on the beekeeper as on the natural order: our colonies need to be strong, well-provisioned and free from disease. If we have carried out our September tasks efficiently and have fed, medicated and possibly united colonies then we can begin to relax a little and look forward to a quiet spell before next spring.

After the security of the colony comes the security of the hive: we need to protect against physical dangers. In windy areas or where there are livestock it may be necessary to rope down hives or put a hefty brick on top of the roof. A hive full of tasty bees and honey can attract badgers and woodpeckers and mice will find the well-provisioned and warm environment an ideal place to hibernate if they can get in. Green woodpeckers can wreak havoc with your hives, drilling through wood and polystyrene to get at the tasty larvae and honey inside: a framework of chicken wire or curtain of plastic strips fastened to the hive will prevent the birds finding a firm foothold.

If your hive entrances are deeper than 8mm you will need to fit mouse guards: perforated metal or plastic strips that allow bees in but keep out small rodents looking for a cosy and well-provisioned place to hibernate. Fitted too soon they can dislodge the painstakingly collected pollen loads from the corbiculae of returning foragers, so use your judgement. Sugar syrup feeding and varroa treatments should be completed by the end of the month and any poor woodwork or leaking roofs remedied.

Although winter is approaching there must be no let-up in our vigilance for the Asian hornet: workers could still be hawking around our hives and new queens may emerge to feed on carbohydrate-rich foods prior to hibernation and will be attracted to fallen fruit, ivy and other late sources of nectar. Baits now should be sugar rich (but not honey), changed frequently and monitored daily. As the leaves fall look up into trees for signs of nests revealed and report any sightings.

Jobs for October



Continue feeding if necessary if the colony has not started to form its winter cluster, use fondant if the weather is cold.



Fit mouseguards or entrance blocks with a low opening – no more than 8mm – and check regularly that entrances are clear.



Fit wire netting or plastic strips around the hive to deter woodpeckers.



Ensure that woodwork is sound and that hives are clear of the ground to avoid dampness; clear away encroaching vegetation.



Store extracted comb securely, treated against wax moth (use Certan, if available, or put in the freezer for a while).



Clean & sterilise hive parts, frames & equipment and store securely – use soda crystals in hot water (wear gloves) and scorch boxes, floors, crownboards with a blowtorch.



Maintain vigilance for Asian hornets, particularly new queens, and scan trees and bushes regularly for signs of nests.

NBKA Asian Hornet Team news

Penny Forsyth reports on the current UK situation

The first verified Asian hornet sighting of 2020 was recorded on 8 September in Gosport, Hampshire – coincidentally during Asian Hornet Week. The hornets were first reported flying around a bunch of grapes in an area north of the town. Bee inspectors quickly set up monitoring traps and tracked the hornets to an apple tree. The nest was destroyed and is being dealt with by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) National Wildlife Centre with a view to determining the genetic origin of the insects.

This is the first confirmed UK sighting since October 2019, when two related nests were detected and destroyed near Christchurch, Dorset. DNA tests on those nests and two others found in 2019 have shown that the queens all came from France. Inspectors are monitoring for any other Asian hornets in the Gosport and Portsmouth area.

Anne Rowberry, BBKA Chair, reports a very successful BBKA Asian Hornet Week during which researchers, including Dr Xesus Feas, Robert Green and Bob Hogge, contributed their photos, videos and experiences to the many resources that were made available on the BBKA website and social media channels. Associations ran local information events where they could and sent out the BBKA press release to local media with the aim of raising public awareness.

In the Channel Islands the total number of Asian hornet nests found has risen to 38 to date with a further nest suspected in the same area. Although most secondary nests have been located in trees, Asian hornet hunters have found an abundance of well-hidden primary nests in bramble patches, in the ground and in shrubbery around the island. Most have been located using radio tracking of insects feeding at bait stations with nest destruction being carried out at night. The Jersey Asian Hornet Group is now fully active whilst observing government COVID-19 restrictions. Their Facebook page is a useful source of information, pictures and some interesting video footage – well worth a look.

This month's issue of *Beecraft* contains an Asian hornet update with reports from France on the costs of controlling the Asian hornet plus some practical developments in baits and trapping techniques.

This is a key time of year for vigilance as hawking activity by Asian hornet workers in front of hives intensifies and, crucially, new queens are produced. These will be out feeding on carbohydrate-rich foods as a prelude to hibernation: look out for them among Asian hornet workers feeding on fallen fruit in orchards and on nectar-producing plants such as ivy. Traps should now consist of sugar-rich sweet baits (but not honey) on an open dish placed where it can be easily monitored. We should maintain our vigilance for hornets and nests, remembering to look up: secondary nests are frequently built in tall trees and will be easier to spot as the leaves fall. It goes without saying that we should check regularly our own sheds, porches, garages, carports, house eaves, and stacks of old hive boxes, etc. Don't forget..... See it, Snap it, Send it!

Non-Native Species Secretariat <http://www.nonnativespecies.org>

If you think you see an Asian hornet or nest be sure to report it immediately, preferably with a photo, via the Asian Hornet Watch app, downloadable for smartphones, or email details to: alrtnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and please let me know.

In light of the Hampshire sighting, I include a reminder that the BBKA has launched an interactive map giving the locations, names and contact details of Asian Hornet Team members across the country. This works in the same way as the Swarm Map and draws data in real time from the information in the eR2 database. Anyone requiring help or advice about a suspected sighting simply enters their postcode and the relevant section of the map comes up showing coloured pins: blue for the co-ordinator, red for verifiers.



Asian Hornet Team map

You will find our [advice here](#).

Please action this asap to ensure we can all help the Government in the coordinated response to this invasive species.

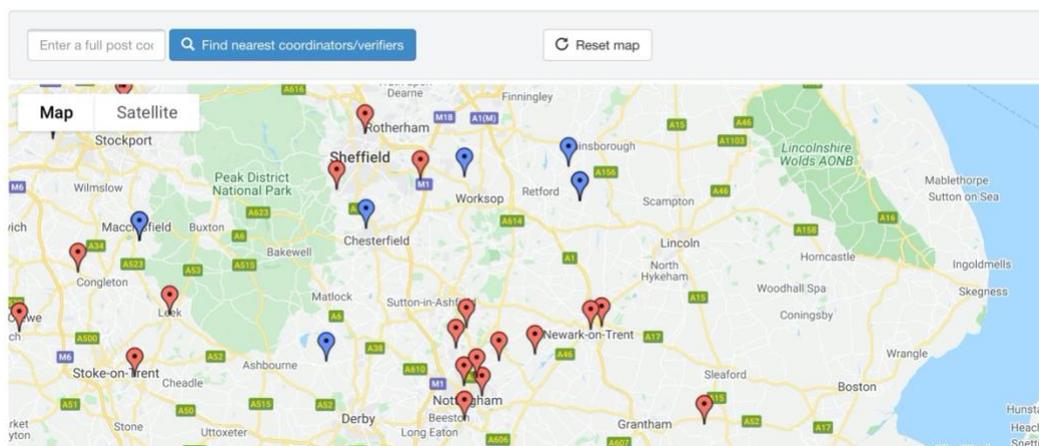
The Asian Hornet Team can arrange assistance with the identification of suspect Asian hornet sightings or leads.

[The AHT training exercise is ready for members please click here](#)

The exercise needs to be completed for you to have cover for taking part in AHT activities. More information can be found about insurance on this additional [Asian hornet page](#)

Legend: blue pin = AHT coordinator (Team Leader), red pin = AHT verifier (member of team)

NB: Changes are made via the ER2 system not the office, please contact your membership secretary



Clicking on the pin gives the name and contact details. NBKA makes a good showing with 10 members visible: you will find the map via the Asian Hornet tab on the BBKA website.

As the BBKA is now recommending 15 members per team as a desirable unit, I am looking for more volunteers from all areas of the county. The role of an Asian Hornet Team verifier is to respond to reports of possible sightings from members of the public, either directly or from me as Co-ordinator, and to liaise with local teams and national agencies in any subsequent track-and-trace operations. In order for AHT Verifiers to obtain BBKA members' insurance to cover them and the general public in the course of responding to and dealing with sightings they are required to complete a training exercise, also open to all members, and which is available via this link <https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-action-team-map>

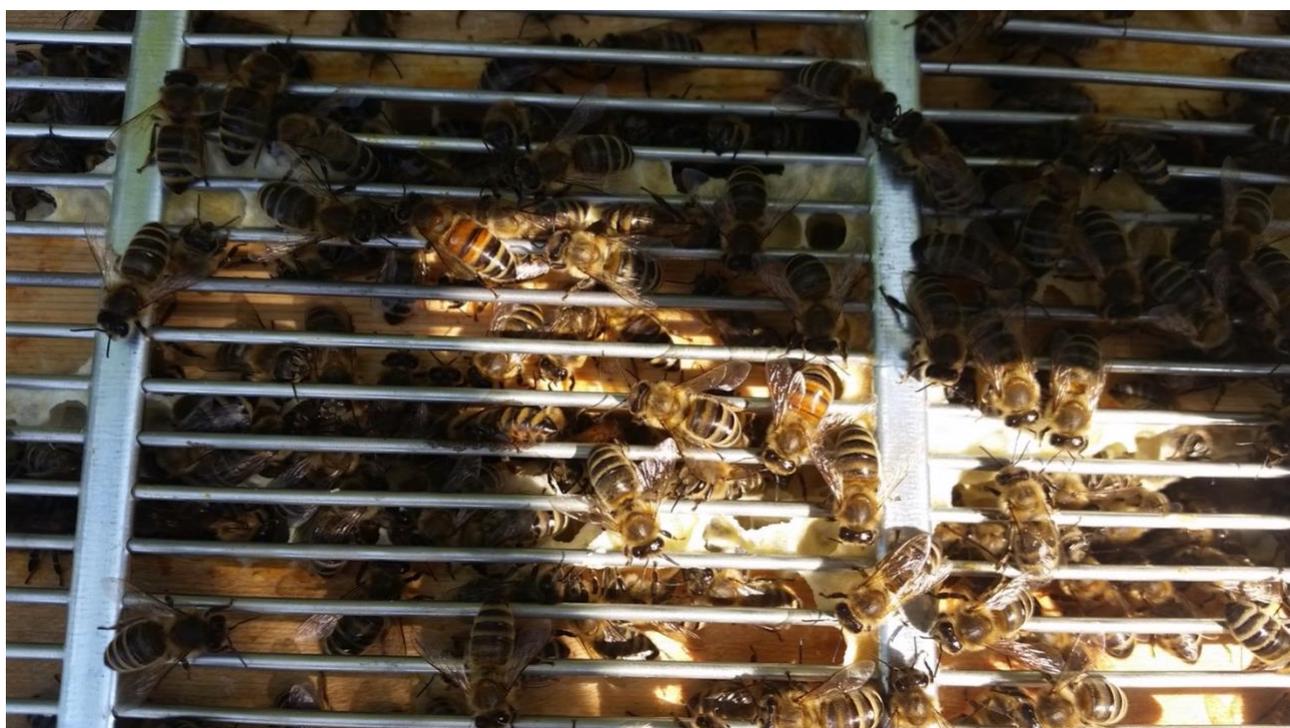
Finally, if you would like to be involved in the NBKA Asian Hornet Team please contact me at pennyforsyth16@mail.com.

Meet the Council: Paula Duckworth

Treasurer **Paula Duckworth** explains that she is relatively new to beekeeping

What on earth can I say about my beekeeping in the 550 words that the Editor has allowed? My husband very kindly suggested that I tell you about all of my mistakes this year... what a supportive man he is!

In my defence I have only had bees for two seasons, having attended Andrew and Maurice's classes and then the apiary visits each year. I am sure Andrew will tell you that I was nervous about getting too close to the bees... It's true but when you have no choice but to go up close and personal combined with having two lovely colonies – one from Maurice being Buckfast, and one from Andrew being Carniolan – then nerves eventually pass.



I now find that the field where my hives are is definitely my “happy place”. I love going there, but have had to message my boss to say that I would be late back from lunch because some grumpy bees won't leave me alone so I can't get undressed and go back to work!

Maurice gave me some very sound advice – if you go to the bees expecting to be stung, you won't be disappointed! He is right – I am at four stings per year, each slightly worse than the last.

Having suffered the results of wild comb which then collapsed into the hive, Andrew came to help out. I left the comb covered in bees to be collected at nightfall; still having bees feeding on it, I foolishly took it home. The canny bees brought their pals back the next day and my garden was then on their flight path until every bit of honey was gone.

My husband made me a clearing board which works so well when you put it the right way up – that's a lesson I won't forget because as I opened up the hive expecting a box full of honey to be clear of bees, they were keen to get out and quick!

Another time I decided to bring a few frames of honey home and so gently brushed the bees off and put the selected frames in a plastic box... Unfortunately the box had some small ventilation holes in just below the handle so those crafty bees followed their noses and soon were robbing the honey that I had just removed.

The situation quickly deteriorated as the now frenzied robbing bees were furiously robbing from the frame in my hand and, as quickly as I brushed them off, they flew round the back and got down to feeding again. It must have looked so funny to the sheep watching me in my field... I am glad they didn't film me to put it on EWE-TUBE!

Having finally got the honey home I have proceeded to get the sticky mess on my pinny, the worktop, the floor, my slippers, the kettle – how did that happen? In truth the first time we spun out the frames, we made a hell of a mess – and we were so proud because we produced five jars of honey!

We've come on a bit since then and over the season we've taken about 80lbs from two hives and my family and friends think it's just lovely. We've produced a pretty label and have repeat customers visiting our honesty box in the garden.

I've told my scouts some of the amazing facts about the bees, their numbers, their bodies, their lifestyle and they agree with me that there is nothing boring about bees!

I am a total beginner and love finding out what to do next! What a lovely hobby – thank you!

New members' corner

New members **Darran Wilson** and **Ollie Rea** explain why they've joined the NBKA

Darran writes:

I first got interested in beekeeping about 10 years ago. But it wasn't until Sleaford Beekeeping Association advertised in our local paper, saying they were holding a course at a local village hall, that I thought 'ummmm, I quite fancy that'. So I did the 'Course in a Case' in 2012 with the intention of siting a couple of hives at my place of work. Unfortunately due to circumstances that never happened.

Fast forward to 2020 and a suggestion from my wife that I give it another go. So in a matter of weeks I had bought a 'Bees on a Budget' hive from Thornes (see below), a nuc, and joined NBKA, reason being they have a Newark branch and – previously unbeknown to me – they hold courses less than two miles away as I live in Balderton. So with some trepidation I'm now a 'beekeeper'. I am looking forward to learning more and meeting other members of the Newark branch, and hopefully using their knowledge to help me avoid too many mistakes. After all you can read all the books, but there's nothing like hands on experience.



Ollie writes about his 'unexpected introduction to keeping bees':

My lady has a passion for all things bee; most of the house contains items with bee motives, or honey in them somewhere. I think the passion derives from the name Deborah, "**Deborah** (Hebrew: דְּבוֹרָה) is a feminine given name derived from דְּבוּרָה D'vorah, a Hebrew word **meaning** "bee.""

My Deb has a friend whose father keeps bees in another part of the country. The decline of the honeybee came up in conversation – changes in farming methods, fewer wildflowers and cultivated gardens, etc., impacting on bee numbers. Following this we decided to cultivate part of our garden as bee friendly, planting wild flowers to attract bees. It then seemed natural to progress to keeping bees, a decision we made in the New Year. I could, however, have timed it better...

Following Christmas we had purchased a 'starter kit' from an online beekeeping supplier. I went for the kit as the world of beekeeping seems another language to the outsider, 'supers', 'brood boxes', 'DN4 frames', 'wired foundation'... mystical or what?

As the weather improved I had great fun painting the hive and making the frames up. Having been pointed towards the NBKA it was my intention to complete the beginner's beekeeping course, buy some bees at some stage and become a new beekeeper sometime during the year, or possibly even next year. But along came coronavirus and lockdown. As we know, a totally unprecedented change to our way of lives. I contacted the Membership Secretary about a course with the hope that lockdown would be short-lived, but it soon became evident this would not be the case.

I had read a couple of introduction to beekeeping books and watched some YouTube videos and we decided to take the plunge and try to secure a bee package early in the season. Why not? We had a hive, only to find no supplier would deliver, many asked if we would collect which seemed strange given the government advice of not undertaking non-essential journeys. I then read on the NBKA website travelling for beekeeping was permissible. This led me to look for a local supplier and I came upon an ad on the Association website by Mick Flower saying he was collecting lots of swarms and he was running out of room to house them.

Having an empty hive and frames in the shed I rang Mick and offered the use of my hive if it suited him. May I say what a lovely and charming man Mick is? I admitted to my total lack of experience and limited knowledge. Mick, who is obviously passionate about his bees, offered to introduce me to his hives – following the social distancing guidelines – as a "see if beekeeping is for you" exercise. Having never seen the inside of an occupied beehive, I jumped at the opportunity. Mick has a lovely set up, a Kenyon top bar hive and a Warré hive both own made from recycled timber. A clever and talented chap.

I arranged a visit for a warm afternoon and was surprised to find on my arrival Mick on the 'phone: a lady had a swarm in her garden and was concerned for the safety of her young children. Mick (with all his hives and nucs occupied) asked if I would be willing to house the bees if the swarm could be safely collected! I had thought if Mick lacked room for a swarm I would loan him my hive until he found a good home for them. It then became apparent they would, if captured, come and live with me! Wow, this put me in a pickle. I had never seen inside a working hive and suddenly I could be a beekeeper!

Having been given the ten cent tour by Mick, I decided why not? Fate seemed to be conspiring to ease me into beekeeping and who was I to resist? So, Mick and I set off to collect the swarm (in separate cars). I was so unprepared I had to stop on the way to buy sugar to feed the bees, should they be willing to accompany me back to my garden.

What an experience, one not to forget, in a beautiful garden in Edwalton, late afternoon, sun beaming down, birds singing. The audience, not too close, waited with bated breath, comprising two enthralled children with their mother and a nervous potential newbie. On the rockery was a small green shrub, about three feet high, black and foreboding with a thick covering of bees, producing a low ominous hum and a multitude of small buzzing creatures surrounding it. The first swarm I've seen.

Now I have doubts, I'm not sure this beekeeping is the correct choice for me, my concern is there are thousands and I'm sure they sting! Should I shout thanks to Mick and beat a hasty retreat? I think it was fear that rooted me to the spot! Then the fearless swarm catcher calmly walked up, peering intently at the swarm, nose seemingly in the top of the shrub, assessing from all angles, totally cool and unperturbed. Mick then turned to his audience to share his great knowledge about the European honeybee, why they swarm and what he's going to do to remove this seemingly dangerous entity.

I'm thinking wow this guy is totally fearless; he hasn't even put his bee suit on yet!!! Impressed? I was greatly. Mick then proceeded to capture the swarm, shaking them off the shrub onto his sheet, folding the corners and carrying it across the garden to the lawn, surrounded by lots of what appear to be very angry offended buzzing creatures. Images of the film "Killer Bees" at the forefront of my mind. He then repeated this several times in his attempt to capture the greatest number of bees. To then see the astounding sight of thousands of bees calmly queue and then march into a cardboard box, nature is amazing. Mick chats way to the children, unfazed by this seemingly miraculous event. If I sound impressed it's because I was. I know many of you deal with swarms regularly and appreciate the bees are just after a new inviting home in which to settle and serve their queen. But to the uninitiated it's memorable, enthralling and probably an unprecedented once-in-a-lifetime experience.

A short time later all safely tucked up in their box, it's off to Mick's car and home to my garden. A call to my lady en route. "Hi, we now have a colony of bees, can you get the shed open, please? I need to get the hive out!" The hive stand paint was still wet!

Watching Mick house the colony in my hive, the girls queueing calmly to march into their new home, hoping they make themselves welcome and it's to their liking! My Deb was absolutely astounded. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mick for his kindness and sharing his expertise and knowledge with me. It was a short sharp shock introduction but the bees are doing well, I have registered on BeeBase and I am desperate to complete the beginner's bee course. I love learning about bees and, I am told, seem 'obsessed' at times. I really didn't appreciate how much there is to find out.

There have been issues along the way, but the hive is thriving. I must add I love bees: they are absolutely amazing, a true pleasure to see a vast number of insects working in harmony for the good of all. If only mankind would follow suit!

Is it all over for the farm shop?

Alan Moulton bemoans a lack of customer loyalty to farm shops that stayed open during lockdown

I, like many of our members, sell my surplus honey locally to friends, neighbours and the local farm shop. No big deal and it gives an incidental income, like pin money...

Then came COVID and lockdown, with queues at the supermarket and social distancing.

I had an arrangement on a sale or return basis at one local farm shop and, also, a regular order at an establishment more distant. With lockdown the shelves emptied rapidly and completely. So much so, in fact, that when they wished to contact me for some more, they couldn't ring me because my phone number was on the label of the jar and they had sold the last one! We went to check the shelves and found the problem. So now I visit more often to replenish the supplies and I have given them my phone number!

Meanwhile, my new-found colleague who was kindly looking after my out apiary found that his own farm gate sales were out of this world and was looking round for replacement supplies for fear of losing his regular customers.



So it was like that for the last six months as lockdown persisted and there were queues which developed even at the farm shop.

Then came the recent easing of restrictions and sales and queues disappeared overnight...

It would seem to me, since I am not too sure, that customer loyalty to the local farm shops (engendered by COVID) no longer exists and the supermarkets have triumphed once again!

I had hoped there would be a change in customer habits, but no, we seem to be back to normal in some ways.

Disappointing for farm shops but in other ways a relief as I can now go back to my academic way of life, in my own normal isolation in my ivory tower.

Recipe of the month:

Apple & ginger upside down pudding

Courtesy of **Linda Jordan...**

Ingredients:

Apple topping:

50g (2oz) margarine or butter
50g (2oz) honey
A little ground cinnamon or mixed spice
3 medium or 1 large cooking apples

Gingerbread:

150g (6oz) flour
2.5ml (½ tsp) baking powder
2.5ml (½ tsp) ground ginger
25g (1oz) brown sugar
20ml (1 tbs) golden syrup or honey
35g (1½ oz) butter or margarine
125ml (¼ pint) milk
1 egg

Method:

Topping:

1. Melt the margarine and honey and put in the bottom of an 18cm (7 in) square tin.
2. Chop the apples finely and sprinkle with the spice.
3. Pack them on top of the margarine and honey and press down firmly.

Pudding:

4. Put the dry ingredients in a bowl.
5. Put the milk and syrup or honey in a pan to warm.
6. Beat the egg.
7. Rub the fat into the dry ingredients.
8. Add the milk and syrup/honey mixture and egg and mix together to a heavy pouring consistency.
9. Pour over the apple and cook at 180 degrees C (350 degrees F) for about 40 minutes.
10. Allow to cool a little before turning out onto a dish.
11. Serve with cream, yogurt or custard.

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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).

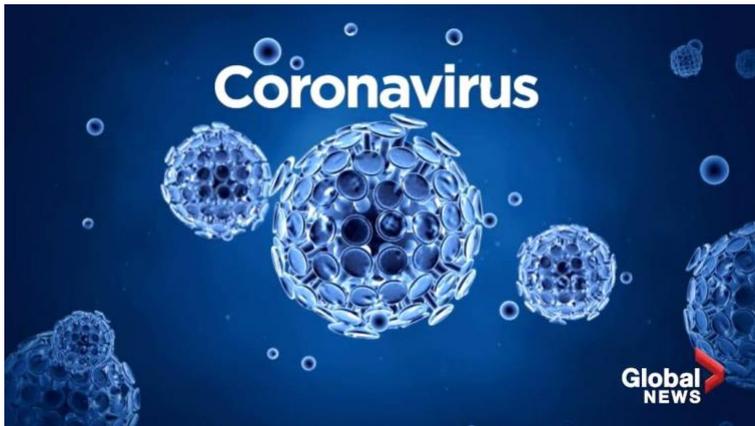
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NBKA accepts no responsibility for advertisements appearing in this newsletter. Please mention **BEEMASTER** when replying to advertisements.

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Advertisements free to paid-up members but 10p per word – minimum charge £1 to non-members. Circulation approx 300 throughout the UK and abroad.

Short adverts may be paid for in First and Second Class postage stamps which should be sent directly to the Editor. Cheques should be made out to NBKA and sent to the Treasurer.



Beekeeping has many different challenges and this year is no different, except it us and not the bees in danger this time.

Bees are unaffected but we Beekeepers have to take great care when going to and handling our bees, collecting equipment, as well as the recommended distance between other people.

During the COVID 19 Virus crisis, The Honey Pot at Canal Street is open by appointment only to customers wanting Beekeeping Equipment and Honey etc. See our web site www.thehoneypot.store for up to date information.

BEEKEEPING MUST GO ON Whilst we are closed to the casual caller, you can arrange a weekday and a time to suit and meet you there individually maintaining our social distance.

CONTACT By email or send a message from the new web site.

*Special offer extended:
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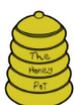
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