


Bee thoughtful

Special Newsletter of the Halifax Beekeepers



May 2020



**Blimey!
Where have
all the
people gone?**



Bees under lockdown

Welcome to the 1st edition of this special Halifax Beekeepers Association e-newsletter. It's no exaggeration to say that this is a very, very strange, surreal and scary moment we are all living through.

We have all had to deal with the lockdown in different ways, as business as usual has been suspended on so many levels.

Nevertheless, our bees need beekeepers, even if it's just to prevent them swarming and disappearing over a neighbour's hedge. So we all have to adapt. I for one will never be so profligate with nitrile gloves again.

Collective beekeeping is not on the cards at present: training courses, events, lectures and examinations are all suspended. So we all have to rely more on our own resources and knowledge to get us through this beekeeping season.

So hopefully, this newsletter can make a small contribution to that process. We have a veritable melange of contributors, who have penned a few words, offered advice and shared some photos with you.

The design and layout of the newsletter is by my younger brother, Clive. He gave up beekeeping in the mid-1980s after they tried to kill him. I have promised to reward his efforts by paying him in beer and honey.

Richard Searle, Editor



Socially-distanced beekeeping

One beekeeper doing the inspection, the other in the bushes taking notes

Setting up a new Apiary

If you are setting up a new apiary this year, good signage can help keep the neighbours on board.



Old to new

Steaming frames

Spring Equipment focus by Elaine Robinson

I gave a Thorne Easi-steam its first outing, to recycle a couple of boxes of old brood frames I'd collected during autumn and spring inspections. HBKA 'bought' the kit with Thornes vouchers won by our association, from the YBKA Basics initiative, for the most Basic assessments entered by any Yorkshire association, last summer.

The kit worked well. See photos. All you need except for the Easi-steam kit which comes from HBKA with a national floor, roof and tray / filter, is an old hive stand, a bucket to collect the wax and slum-gum, plus ideally some insulation to keep the heat in

You need a couple of brood boxes of old wax brood combs to



HBKA Thornes Easi-steam comes complete with steamer, national brood box, floor and filter tray. You need to provide your own hive stand, bucket and insulation.

make it worth your while to set up the equipment. I collected wax from 2 old brood boxes of wax combs, probably worth a few frames of foundation but satisfying to recycle rather than burn or throw away! Plus you can retrieve old frames to then fit with new foundation. The larger beekeeping suppliers such as Thornes have a wax for foundation exchange system. The wax isn't good enough quality to make candles or wax blocks.

I dug a pit in the garden for the old bee cocoons that are left after the wax is melted from the combs and safely disposed of the syrup / water crud from the frames and extraction process. Yuk, I don't want my bees anywhere near that!

I was also left with sterilised brood combs that can be fitted



Wax and crud melted from the steamer.

with new foundation after removing the old wire and scraping off any cocoons left on the edges.

Ran the steam through once more after I'd cleaned & scraped it all out, then cleaned the floor box and filter tray, almost like new, clean & ready for the next user.

Recycled sterilised combs, which can be fitted with new foundation.

A full 5 minute video is available on YouTube via the Thornes website under the Easi-steam product entry, which gives a step by step description how to use the equipment. If I could follow, you can!

Members can hire this equipment to borrow / use by contacting Elaine on 07734306895 or elainemary1@hotmail.co.uk to discuss how to pick up utilising safe distancing precautions.

Elaine Robinson is Education secretary, Halifax beekeepers.



Old bee cocoons are left behind in the brood box once the wax has melted, scoop this out & dispose of it in your compost heap or dig a pit in your garden and bury.



Old 'Honey' stores and water crud left in the bucket, after the wax solidifies on top overnight. The only way to dispose of this is safely down an outside drain or in a hole in the garden. NEVER feed this or let bees have access to it.



Wax collected from the old brood frames which can be collected and traded in for foundation with some of the major beekeeping suppliers such as Thornes.



Recycled sterilised combs, which can be fitted with new foundation.

A 2019 Green Queen

Don't forget to order your marking Pens, 2020 is a Blue year.



Time for a hive make-over

Bee-friendly paints to transform your hives (see page 5).



Old to new

Flights of fancy or Rainbows of hope?

No, creativity borne of necessity

by Jenny, Wadsworth Bee Group

Many of our hives became saturated during the wet winter months of 2019/2020. We found frames inside some supers and brood boxes with mould on them and sadly two colonies of dead bees. The exception - a hive with much less penetrating damp - had the roof exchanged for a painted one part way through the winter.

Our bee group decided to take action. All brood boxes, supers

and roofs which had been cleaned and sterilised but had not been used over winter were painted with non-toxic water resistant paint.

The colours - amazing what can be found in cellars and sheds in "lock down". The results are distinctive, uplifting and definitely more weather-resistant.

Super and brood frames have been housed in these fresh boxes when appropriate.

Happy bees !!!!!!!!!!!



The new owners of one of the Wadsworth Bee Group painted hives move in

The growing stack of painted supers and brood boxes



A renovated Eat Natural/Arnia Hive



Old to new

The EJ Taylor Nuc Box

by Richard Searle

To the uninitiated this is just an old box, but to those in the know, this is a piece of Beekeeping history.

While attending my first Beekeeping auction last year, I made a bid for what I thought was an old Nuc box and was successful in securing said item.

The box had a touch of woodworm and I do appreciate that some people pay a fortune to get that type of look.

The auctioneer announced that this item was made by EJ Taylors an old established firm, and those attending the auction who would fit the title of 'old timers' nodded knowingly.

I had still no idea who they were.

The Nuc box itself has an elegant sloping roof with a conical vent on the front along with a Taylors badge. It has an internal lid with mesh top with fixing screws and carrying handle. So I can only assume this was for transporting bees.

Anyway, the box sat in our shed over winter. As we have all found out of late, we've a bit more spare time on our hands, so I thought I'd give it a renovation.

I have sanded it down, and discovered that the fittings are made of brass. I've stabilised the rust on the internal mesh, and I'm now in the process of giving two coats of white bee paint. It's not faithful restoration but one I hope preserves this piece of history.

I mentioned EJ Taylors in passing in an email to Jeremy Burbidge at Northern Bee Books, to which he responded 'Yes!', he said 'we publish a book on them, they were the Thornes of the 20s. Had their own railway sidings!!'

Northern Bees Books gives this

review of their book called *Taylor's of Welwyn*.

"Thomas Bates Blow was from a working class background and leading a life with little direction until he was befriended by a member of a leading British family: with his patronage and much hard work, Thomas laid the foundation of what was to become the largest business in Europe supplying the requirements of beekeepers.

This volume charts the history of Taylors of Welwyn, from its birth through the challenging changes and large expansion in the last two decades of the nineteenth century through to the company being put into liquidation after more than a century of trading. From zero to zero in three acts, with three leading men, changing scenery and a large



supporting cast involving conflict, changes of ownership, fires, World wars, no inflation, high inflation, but mostly about bees, beekeeping and beekeepers and the vagaries that come with that fascinating mix."

So after completing the restoration we may just try use this Box for our bees even for short while, for old times' sake.



The EJ Taylor Nuc Box renovation



On yer head son!

By Roger Pool

Sunday 3rd May. During most of the year the Beekeeping Gods punish our mistakes and shortcomings. Occasionally they allow the scales to tip slightly in our favour. Today may have been one of those days.

Inspections have been delayed due to poor weather. Today I decided to look at the six colonies in my out apiary. The sun was out and all the colonies were very busy. The colonies are in a circle and I like to make my way round in the same order each time. The colony last on the list was beyond busy. Even frantic. Perhaps the last should have been first?

The colony in question, now with increasing numbers of bees in the air, was part way through a Bailey frame change. Bees were pouring from the entrance. I watched with that sinking feeling known to beekeepers who have been found wanting in the Real-World Beekeeping assessment.

Having no other option, I started to look through the upper box. Bees were running frantically in all directions. This is not a train crash. I just need to find the queen. This is not a train crash yet.

Unsurprisingly the queen was not to be found in the top box so I put that aside and started on the lower



box containing the brood. More bees in a frantic state and no queen. The sky now a roaring cloud of bees.

Having completed my futile search I became aware that the hood of my bee suit was pressing down onto my head. My arms were covered in so many bees that the sleeves were difficult to see. The weight on my hood was causing it to slip forward, blocking out the light. I had become the first staging post for a prime swarm. I was a bush or a post or the man with the bee turban.

Inspiration and desperation fused together to produce a solution. Close to the hive was a stone flag on the grass. I positioned myself above it and gave a sharp nod worthy of a

first division footballer heading for goal. Enough bees to fill a bucket fell onto the flag and spread out.

I knelt to inspect the melee on the flag. No real hope but better try. There in the middle was the queen with the smallest remnant of a red mark. She must have been on my head amongst the swarm.

Queen into queen clip. Channelling my inner Wally Shaw (an appropriate beekeeping sub-deity) the hive was re-configured into Wally Shaw swarm control and the queen returned and even re-marked.

You will know how parts of a swarm hang about in the bush when you have boxed the rest and want to go home? Lots of Nasonov pheromone probably involved. What if you are the bush and you want to go home in your car? It takes a long time, much smoke, much brushing and walking about.

I ended up driving home with my bee suit on, occasionally putting my head out of the window to strip off the remaining bees. Some passing cyclists were obviously alarmed that advanced PPE was required so far from the hospital.



Double Broods - A Cautionary Tale

By Alan Brook

After giving a short talk in January 2019 on the use of Horsley Boards and double brood boxes, I had fired up my own enthusiasm sufficiently to try it at scale.

By July, seven of my ten hives had two queens, the original one in a brood box at the bottom, several supers above a queen excluder, then an open Horsley Board with a new queen above in the second brood box, from where workers were able to descend into the supers and mingle with their cousins. Both queens were laying happily and there was lots of brood. Great, I thought, double the number of foragers will bring in twice as much honey.

The first problem was that the weather turned bad in August and all those bees ate a lot of the honey they had gathered. The real fun started when I began to remove some supers, which resulted in overcrowding in each hive and the apiary as a whole.

The bees became very nasty aggressive robbers. I was stung a lot and took to wearing a raincoat beneath two bee suits. The ground was covered with dead and dying bees. Several colonies were soon moribund and indeed only five came through winter.

The main lesson learned is to reduce each hive to only one laying queen by the end of July, as had been my previous practice. The older queen should just be disposed of by the colony when they are no longer separated, but bees of course do not always do what you want and might kill the new queen instead. I might squash an old queen, but prefer to just move one from the previous year to a nucleus from where she could be returned to the hive if the new queen fails, but is otherwise where she can over-winter.

Horsley Boards are great for dealing with queen cells or for pre-emptive splits in late Spring, but maintaining a colony with two queens for too long can be very problematic.



Bee clever quiz

1. What disease is caused by the bacteria *paenibacillus* larvae?
2. Queens and drones meet at drone congregation areas to mate. Which of the two has flown furthest from their hive?
3. For what was Carl von Frisch awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1973?
4. Workers produce wax from glands in their abdomens. What dietary component do they need to do this?
5. What does the Heddon manoeuvre add to the basic Pagden swarm control method?
6. What is the maximum allowable water content in a mixed floral honey presented for sale?
7. Which American beekeeper first used bee space in a hive design?
8. Which sub-species of *Apis mellifera* is known for its low swarming tendency but poor overwintering?
9. What disease of adult bees causes trembling, inability to fly and abdominal bloating?
10. A queen mates with an average of 14 drones. In what organ is the sperm stored for the rest of her reproductive life?

Answers on Page 11.



Regular inspections are key to preventing swarms



Where to go for Beekeeping information

You're never stuck for beekeeping information due to the miracles of the Interweb!
So here is the 4 chart topping best (Editors opinion only).

At Number 1 in the charts:

Bee Base

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/>

Their website provides a wide range of apicultural information for beekeepers, to help keep their colonies healthy and productive.

It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts.

At Number 2:

British Beekeepers Association

<https://www.bbka.org.uk>

Positively bursting at the seams, and, as a member you can log in and dine on a smorgasbord of information.

In at Number 3:

The Norfolk Honey Company - with Stewart's Beekeeping basics

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheNorfolkHoneyCo>

A huge selection of YouTube videos of all aspects of Beekeeping, you can watch on your Smart TV if have one.

Everything apart from keeping Bees on hills, but that's Norfolk for you.

A new entry at Number 4:

The Apiarist

<https://theapiarist.org/>

For those who like the science stuff of Beekeeping, produced by Virologist Prof Dave Evans, who is a genuine boffin who keeps bees.

Sign up for his weekly email bulletins, "Beekeeping is so much more than honey"

Bee Clever Quiz Answers

1. American foulbrood.
2. The queen.
3. He described the dance language of bees.
4. Carbohydrate, ie nectar.
5. Moving the parent colony to the opposite side of the artificial swarm after 1 week.
6. 20%.
7. Rev. Lorenzo Langstroth.
8. *Apis mellifera ligustica* (Italian bees).
9. Chronic Bee Paralysis virus.
10. Spermatheca.



Film Review

Honeyland

The sweetest of tales

By Kay Phillips

If you haven't seen Honeyland yet, then you're missing out on this tender story of human endurance. This film is a poignant portrayal of a woman and a vanishing way of life. Hatidze Muratova is a Macedonian beekeeper. She lives an austere existence looking after her ailing mother - the two of them being the last inhabitants of their village - apart from the dog and the cat.

We first see her making her way up the mountainside on a narrow rocky ledge to a colony of wild honey bees. Without any personal protective equipment (!), she extracts several honeycombs and secures them in a basket-woven skep and cloth and makes her way back to the village, where she places them in a cavity in a wall. She sings to the bees, talks to the bees, and when she takes the honey, always says 'half for them, and half for me'.



This delicate balance ensures the future for the bee colonies as well as helping Hatidze provide for herself and her Mum.

The peace is shattered by the arrival of the new neighbours - a noisy and chaotic family, complete with seven kids, numerous chickens, and a herd of cows. Hatidze welcomes them and enjoys playing with and teaching the children. She shows them the bees and tutors one of the older boys about beekeeping. When they get their own hives

and bees she advises them about careful stewardship, but conflict arises when they don't take her advice .

What is truly amazing about this film is that the story unfolds like fiction, but it is actually a documentary. The film-makers Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska were originally commissioned to make a documentary about conservation efforts in Macedonia, but they met Hatidze and ended up spending 3 years with her. What is even more extraordinary is that they do not speak the same language as Hatidze, and that you would never guess they were even in the room. They must have melted into the walls.

If you've ever thought you had problems with your bees, or indeed problems with your neighbours, you should watch this film. You'll soon realise how lucky you are !

Nominated for Oscars, the award winning documentary Honeyland can be found at both Amazon Prime Video or iTunes to rent or buy.



Phil Gee, HBKA's answer to Amazon writes:

Beekeeping supplies during COVID-19 lockdown

The beekeeping season has arrived and we should all be getting ready to inspect our bees.

Old comb and broken frames need replacing and supers need preparing for the advent of nectar flows.

GEES BEES at Cragg Vale is still available to supply all of your beekeeping needs, 7 days a week.

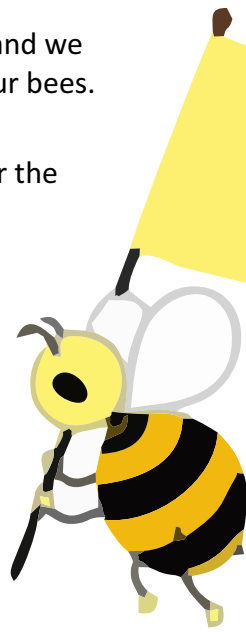
Although the lockdown has prevented customers calling to the 'shop' I have devised a system in order to supply equipment.

1. Text your order to 07769 650059 by 11.00am Monday – Sunday stating your preferred method of payment i.e. bank transfer, credit/debit card or cash (Cheques are not being accepted at this time)

2. I will confirm your order by text and tell you the cost

3. If paying by bank transfer I will text you the details

4. If paying by credit/debit card I will text you a link to my card reader



5. Once payment is received you can collect your order

6. Orders received by 11am will be ready to be collected 1pm-5pm the same day

7. Orders received after 11am will be ready to be collected 1pm-5pm the next day

8. Collect your order (if paying by cash there is a container provided)

Your order will be placed in the brown shed at the bottom of my drive. Park at the gate and you will see the shed on your right. Do not drive further than the gate.

If anyone else is collecting an order when you arrive please observe a safe distance.

STAY SAFE



Your guide to Allergy & Anaphylaxis

Looking after our own health and safety whilst beekeeping is extremely important. During the coronavirus pandemic, we are managing our bees and also being careful about social distancing, but we still should avoid inspecting hives on our own, in case of an emergency. Allergies or severe allergies known as anaphylaxis can come on very suddenly, so it's best to be prepared beforehand - JUST in CASE.

It's useful to make sure you have a **CHARGED MOBILE PHONE** with you, in case of needing to phone for help.

WHAT THREE WORDS app is a really useful in an emergency as all the emergency services use this to find an exact location. The app gives a unique 3 word address for every 3 by 3 metre square in the world. It's useful to know the WHAT THREE WORDS address for the apiary and keep the name laminated with your beekeeping equipment at the apiary.

Allergic reactions can be either mild or moderate, or for some people become a life-threatening severe allergic reaction. If someone has a history of anaphylaxis, their doctor may have prescribed Epipens® (or equivalent Adrenaline for injection pens) which they should carry with them at all times. Please be aware that these pens are only available on prescription and should only ever be administered to the person for whom they have been prescribed. They can be very dangerous for people with certain long term conditions.

Mild to moderate allergic reaction

Symptoms

- ⊙ Swelling of lips, face, eyelids.
- ⊙ Urticaria (hives) or wheals; red raised itchy rash.
- ⊙ Tingling / itchy lips, mouth, tongue.
- ⊙ Abdominal cramps, vomiting (once)

Action

- ⊙ Stay calm - sit or lie down
- ⊙ Take a non-drowsy antihistamine, 2 tablets e.g. cetirizine.
- ⊙ Call for help - ring emergency contact.
- ⊙ Have your adrenaline auto-injector (Epipen®) ready just in case, if you have one.
- ⊙ Watch out for worsening or new symptoms.
- ⊙ Sometimes mild to moderate allergic reactions may progress to anaphylaxis.

If unsure whether it is asthma or anaphylaxis -> ALWAYS use your adrenaline auto-injector FIRST, and then your asthma reliever inhaler. (If you have sudden breathing difficulty, including wheeze, persistent cough or hoarse voice, even if there are no skin signs, and have asthma and an allergy to foods, insects or medication).

If in doubt . . .

Use the adrenaline auto-injector

ANAPHYLAXIS (severe allergic reaction)

Symptoms

- ⊙ Difficult / noisy breathing.
- ⊙ Swelling of tongue (large, with breathing problems).
- ⊙ Swelling/tightness in throat.
- ⊙ Difficult talking and/or hoarse voice.
- ⊙ Wheeze or persistent cough with other signs of allergy. (if isolated wheeze, treat as asthma with reliever - blue inhaler)
- ⊙ Dizziness or collapse.
- ⊙ Pale and floppy (young children)

Action

- ⊙ Lie down, if possible with legs raised. Do not try to stand or walk. If breathing is difficult, try to sit.
- ⊙ use your adrenaline auto-injector (Epipen®) immediately
- ⊙ Call ambulance -> 999; say 'anaphylaxis'
- ⊙ Call emergency contact/family.
- ⊙ If symptoms do not improve or return after 5 - 15 minutes, you can use a second adrenaline auto-injector.

Print off this guide, laminate and keep near your bees

Write your What Three Words here.