

# HONEYCRAFT

*July 2020*



*Dorset County Beekeepers Association*



## Editor's note

Not surprisingly, this issue is shorter than normal, because the Covid-19 lock-down has resulted in the cancellation of many events. Since mid-March all face-to-face training has been suspended and apiaries have been looked after by small dedicated teams, as you will read in the reports from all branches. But the bees did not understand lock-down and have been about their normal business; there are reports, and pictorial evidence, of swarms collected as well as honey harvests.

There are also reports of electronic ingenuity as branches and others harnessed IT to provide instruction and mentoring. Many readers will remember Dan Basterfield speaking at the Dorset Convention some 18 months ago. He and his father Ken are now running a series of webinars covering a variety of beekeeping topics—details of these and how to enrol are given on pp 19-21.

As I write the world is slowly beginning to unlock—those living near Bournemouth and Durdle Door have seen ample evidence by the population at large of the need for fresh air and a day out after weeks of confinement. Those of us who live in the countryside and have livestock (bees) to look after are very fortunate in that we have been able to get out and about, without too much restriction. While we do not yet know the future of this year's Dorset Convention on 4 October (see p.4), there are signs of local and relevant life—there is to be an open-air Food and Crafts Fair on the Turnpike Showground near Shaftesbury on Sunday 26 July — more information can be found on p.9.

Elsewhere in this issue, there is an interesting tale of perseverance and ingenuity in re-homing an abandoned hive. Chris Harwood has written his fourth and final article on beekeeping videos—thank you Chris for all those hours you have spent trawling through Youtube and sorting out the informative from the idiotic! Terry Payne has kindly written some relevant words of advice about re-queening, aimed particularly at newer beekeepers, and as usual, our Seasonal Bee Inspector brings us up-to-date with his responsibilities in these curious times.

Happy reading.

*Tim Villiers*

Editor

## Index

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Editor's note	2	Training—requeening	19
Chairwoman's chatter	3	Training—beekeeping videos	20
From The Secretary's desk	4	Training—webinars	21-23
The Inspector reports	5	Who is who	24
Blandford & Sturminster BKA	8-9	<b>Advertisers</b>	
Raw honey?	8	Northern Bee Books	3
Dorchester & Weymouth BKA	10-11	The Bee Shop	5
East Dorset BKA	12-13	Thorne	7
Sherborne BKA	15	Caddon Hives	13
West Dorset BKA	16	Maisemore	14
A rescue operation	17-18	Becky's Beezzz	15

## Chairwoman's chatter

As we have not had many meetings for some time it is hard to tell how everyone's bees are doing. This year as the swarms officer I have not had as many swarms as I had in previous years. Many of those I have had calls for are uncollectable because they were out of reach, or have taken off before anyone could catch them or have gone into a wall or cavity before they could be collected.

The other problem is swarm control. Most people who keep bees know how to make an artificial swarm or put the queen and a few frames in a nucleus box. The problem comes later. How many hives do you want? At some point you have to decide when enough is enough or you will find yourself with an ever-expanding apiary. In the past there were often new beekeepers looking for a colony or two which meant we could offload swarms or surplus colonies onto new beekeepers who were thrilled to have their first colony.

Now you must decide which colonies are worth keeping with young, good-tempered, hard-working queens and which you are going to unite with something else. Do not just go for the colony that produces the most honey. Sometimes these colonies do well because you are so frightened of them you almost never open them. Beekeeping should be a pleasure not a fight. Assess your colonies for a number of traits: good temper, disease resistance, productivity, longevity and provenance (do you know where they came from and their history?). The other way of looking at them is to see which are the ones you have had to battle with most and get rid of them.

Good luck

*Lesley Gasson*



**OVER 400 TITLES AVAILABLE**

**[www.northernbeebooks.co.uk](http://www.northernbeebooks.co.uk)**

## From the Hon Secretary's desk



### Dorset BKA

The May meeting of the Dorset BKA council did not take place because of the Covid-19 lockdown. The next meeting is currently scheduled for 16 September, and there will be a need for the council to meet in some form, particularly to consider propositions and nominations for the 2021 BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting.

We may not be able to hold our meeting in its usual format, depending on government directions at the time and/or the availability of venues, and in any case it is possible that some council delegates will not want to attend a physical meeting if they feel vulnerable, so we are considering using Zoom for the next council meeting.

In addition to making contingency arrangements for the September council meeting, it is apparent that Zoom or something similar could have potential in a number of other areas including beekeeper education; it is increasingly being used by associations for meetings, lectures and study groups

In his role as county webmaster, Stephen Potts has researched this and has suggested that the county should purchase Zoom Pro, which is the lowest level of subscription and will give more ease of use and flexibility than the free version.

Zoom Pro currently costs £12 per month or £119 per annum. Only the organiser needs the paid version, not invited participants in a meeting. If a meeting has more than three participants then the free version is limited to 40 minutes. More than that and the host (organiser) needs a paid licence.

Using Zoom the participants can see and hear each other, thus satisfying the legal definition of a meeting; so as far as the council is aware there is nothing to prevent electronic meetings being regarded as valid, provided that quorum requirements are satisfied and those who would be eligible to attend such a meeting can attend and speak, and vote if appropriate.

Officers and branch representatives were asked to consider the proposition that Dorset BKA should buy Zoom Pro for the county, that as county webmaster Stephen would be the account holder and host, managing the computer side of any meeting, and that it would be used for county business; any Branch that wishes to start using Zoom will be asked to either make use of the free 40 minute version or buy their own version of Zoom Pro. This proposal received unanimous support, and so the county webmaster will be asked to take it forward.

### BBKA

The BBKA has recently consulted on changes to the rules on voting at the BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting (ADM). Lesley Gasson, who is the county representative at the ADM, took part in a Zoom meeting to discuss the changes which are described on p. 240 of the July issue of the BBKA News.

*Liz Rescorla*

## Dorset Convention – Sunday 4 October

The Dorset County BKA convention remains scheduled for Sunday 4 October at Blandford School. However, public meetings, such as this, are currently not permitted. The situation will be kept under review and a decision on whether this convention will go ahead will be taken and announced in August.

*Geoff Buckland*  
County Education Officer

## The Inspector reports

Hi everyone

Firstly, I hope that this finds you all well.

There is not a great deal to say about bee disease at the moment. We have four areas of European foul brood (EFB) between Wareham and Dorchester, Wareham and Swanage, Bournemouth and Ferndown, Poole and Wimborne. That does not mean it is not anywhere else; it just means we have not found it.

With the Covid-19 restrictions I have been told to concentrate on the at-risk apiaries and not the ones more than 5km away from known disease or an exotic risk point such as a port or queen importer (of which there are quite a few in Dorset). But it does curtail my scope somewhat. One thing that does help me to get out and about in the areas that have not had disease recently is for a beekeeper to call me in. So, please have a good look at the brood in your hives and if you are not happy with it, call me or send me a photo, or both.

At the moment we are still keeping two metres apart when inspecting. I am waiting to hear if there will be a change to this.

As I write this, there have been a few reports of Asian hornets but nothing has been confirmed. Of course, we are coming to the time of year when the nests get big enough (in numbers of hornets) to be more noticeable. All we can hope for is that beekeepers and the general public are vigilant so that the hornets are spotted and we can get lucky in finding the nests.

I think that doing these reports for HoneyCraft four times a year is probably too much as there is not enough to talk about, so I will cut this to twice a year unless you, the readers, think otherwise and suggest some topics you want discussed in this forum.

P.S. Just a thought: please to let me know if anyone has spotted some "braula" in their hives this year, as I have seen them in several apiaries.

*Kevin Pope*

**[www.thebeeshop.co.uk](http://www.thebeeshop.co.uk)**

***Quality Beekeeper Clothing At Affordable Prices***

**Full Suits, Smocks, Bee Vests & Veils**

**Full adult suit - £55 (with free postage)**

**From Somerset**

**Email: [michaeljohnduckett@gmail.com](mailto:michaeljohnduckett@gmail.com)**

'tis the season for swarms ....



www.thorne.co.uk  
sales@thorne.co.uk  
01673 858555

# THORNE

HELPING BEEKEEPERS  
KEEP BEES FOR OVER  
100 YEARS

Hives, Bees, Frames, Foundation  
Hardware and Clothing  
Processing, Labels, Packaging  
Queen Rearing, Health and Feeding  
Books, Gifts, Hive Products  
Candlemaking

## ORDER ONLINE OR IN STORE

**RAND** Beehive Bus Pk, LN8 5NJ  
sales@thorne.co.uk 01673 858555

**DEVON** South Molton, EX36 3RD  
devon@thorne.co.uk 01769 573086

**SCOTLAND** Fife, KY14 6HA  
scotland@thorne.co.uk 01337 842596

**STOCKBRIDGE** SO20 6BU  
stockbridge@thorne.co.uk 01264 810916

**WINDSOR** Oakley Green, SL4 4PZ  
windsor@thorne.co.uk 01753 830256



## Packaging

Crystal comb containers and 4C:  
packaging for all products of the hive



## Labels

Give your products that professional finish



## Hives and hive parts

W.B.C., National, Commercial, Langstroth,  
Dadant, Smith, Warre, Top Bar

## Blandford and Sturminster BKA



As with many associations we have been no meetings since March and our courses have been on hold. People continue to enquire about learning beekeeping but that will have to wait until next season. Our indoor courses will start again once the national restrictions are removed.

Because we have not been able to run our courses, which usually run from April to August, there will be a hiccup. People who had booked to go on a course this year will have to wait until next April and there will be a demand for nucs and bees. Others who had hoped to take the Basic Beekeeping Exam will have to have kept bees for a year. In this case some may have had bees for two years or some will have missed out on getting any bees at all.

Dorset is fortunately a low-incidence area for Covid-19 so we should be able to return to normal again fairly soon. Our tutors have been looking after the apiary which continues to produce honey to be sold in Stalbridge. The arrangement that the same person goes up to the apiary twice with someone else means that there has been a degree of continuity, which is difficult to put on a record sheet and we have all learnt from each other.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, Steve Toop, one of our members, had the magnificent idea of donating honey to the local food bank and by his example encouraging others to donate too. As a result of Steve's efforts more than 100 jars of honey have been donated. When I took some of our honey to the food bank the managers were ecstatic; nobody had ever given them honey before.



*Lesley Gasson*

### **Afternote:**

The Shaftesbury and Gillingham Show has been cancelled this year but the show society is planning to run an open-air Food & Crafts Market on the Turnpike Showground, between Shaftesbury and Gillingham, on 26th July. All will be welcome at this market; more information can be found on p. 9.

## Raw Honey?

Paul Hill, a BSBKA member, came across an interesting discussion on honey in the USA, when browsing the internet recently:

“Raw Honey” is what we would call honey, harvested from the hives, filtered and bottled, nothing else, and, according to the internet, very hard to find, in the USA. “Normal honey” is processed high temperature pasteurised, filtered to the point where there is no pollen and with added high fructose corn syrup, did not say how much is added, but expect a lot.

There was also discussion about it being cheaper to feed the bees sugar solution, which can be harvested and called “raw honey” and is much more profitable than waiting for the bees to collect nectar.

The view was that as honey is mostly sugar, so to feed the bees sugar solution produces a perfectly natural product, as honey is mostly sugar. The solution used is HFCS, sugar made by processing corn flour.

Gillingham & Shaftesbury's  
**FOOD & CRAFTS MARKET**

**SUNDAY 26 JULY 2020**

10:30 - 16:00 | TURNPIKE SHOWGROUND, SP7 9PL

**Socially distanced shopping in the countryside!**  
Food & Drink Producers • Open spaces • Artisan Craft Producers • Support Local

Car Parking Charges  
Advance Price: £3 per Car  
Arrival Price: £5 per Car  
\*The parking price is to cover the cost of ground maintenance & Covid-19 precautions\*

www.gillinghamandshaftesburyshow.co.uk/market  
Brought to you by: GILLINGHAM & SHAFTESBURY SHOW

The Blandford & Sturminster Newton Beekeepers' Association will be running a honey and hive-products stall at this market – which will not only enable us to sell members' honey, but also remind those present that bees and beekeeping have not been in lock-down and have an important ongoing contribution to make to the production of food.

## Dorchester & Weymouth



Two quite different and difficult swarms were collected earlier this year, one far too spread out and the other far too confined. The one on the left was our first swarm of the season, at Chickerell. It was collected with the use of a “bee vac”. The other was in a compost bin hidden away in vegetation. It took three of us nearly three hours to sort out.



Our swarm collectors have been busy and practically all our members who wanted swarms have now got one. For the past two years I have been directing people to the BBKA website (swarm removal) and I think now more people are finding the swarm collectors themselves online which has saved some phone calls.



A few years ago Weymouth seafront seemed a popular place for swarms. Two landed on pushchairs on the beach (luckily both times without the baby in it!). The one on the left was the day after the Dorchester Show and the one on the right on a Bank Holiday Monday. On another day two members went to collect a swarm from the top of the Punch & Judy stand: they had quite an audience when collecting it.

Dorchester & Weymouth cont.

It has been a very strange season so far with a lack of socials and apiary meetings. Strangely, despite not having any events or promotions, we seem to be attracting new members all the time. We have had nine new members join us since the last Honeycraft edition in April.

As with all the other agricultural shows, there will be no Dorset County Show this year which means no honey show which will be a shame. It is our main opportunity to showcase our honey and we always manage to do quite well when selling it. We have managed to rebook our judge for next year, Jack Mummery from Barnstable, who is a fully qualified judge we met at the Honiton Show last year. The only time I remember not having a county show was during the foot-and-mouth epidemic in 2001. However, we did hold our own small honey show at Wyke Infants School.

#### **COLONIES FOR SALE**

One of our members, Sarah Wootton (Swanage) has two colonies for sale.  
They are on standard Nationals with one super on each.

She is asking £200 each colony for the complete set -up.  
They have been checked by our SBI, Kevin Pope and are healthy colonies.

Her phone numbers are: 01929 421433    Mobile: 07801747814

It has been a very dry season so far and it will be interesting to see what effect this has on the honey yields. The past two years we have had dry summers and the yields have been very good. There has certainly been no shortage of swarms around. Hopefully we can start to relax a bit once the swarming eases off and ,with the right weather, concentrate on giving the bees enough room to store some honey.

*Sally Leslie*

## East Dorset BKA

Covid-19 precautions and lockdown continue to interfere with normal club activities and so EDBKA has come up with some novel ways of keeping members in touch. We have been holding our committee meetings via the tele-conference platform Zoom, and we have two WhatsApp groups on the go, one of which is specifically for this year's trainees, the other for all members.

They have both proved very popular, and many questions have been asked and answered via this platform, as well as being used for arranging swarm deliveries, meetings with mentors etc.

One of the many innovative projects East Dorset beekeepers completed during lock-down has been the installation of bee hives at Sheiling School in Ringwood, which is a special needs school, college and children's home on the Hampshire and Dorset border.

We have coached Tony Hatcher, facilities manager, and his team with their inspections after bringing swarms to them and homing them in the school's hives.

Tony's colleagues Gary and James don't wear gloves at all when inspecting their National and Warré hives and are gaining confidence all the time. Fourth member of the team is Sylwia who has to balance her time with the bees and children.

Highlight of this week was when Tony thought he saw a queen fly from the National hive, which could have been the queen's mating flight!

Their bees are very docile and are taking in plenty of stores and pollen.

Tony and his colleagues are all so keen and taking pictures and videos which are sent to the Head of Media at the school and are shown to the special needs residents there. On their Warré hive they have fitted an observation panel with a sliding door in one of the supers, which will be an educational treat when their young people return to the school.

Poole Grammar School had a small donation of wax from one of EDBKS's members, who kindly dropped it off at school. The school used wax from their own hive plus donations of wax from Thorne and the EDBKA member to make over 500 tins (and counting) of hand cream, which was sent to NHS frontline staff.

Earlier this year, EDBKA were successful in their latest application to Waitrose Wimborne to be accepted on their Community Matters promotion. However, due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the promotion was suspended. Each of the applicants receiving £333. So a big thank you Waitrose for your support again!



Tony, Sylwia, Gary and James with the school's two hives

East Dorset cont.

EDBKA's new bit of shiny kit for our members to use this season, our new extractor, is available for members to hire for £5 per day. Please email our association secretary, Jenny Wellman, to book this out.

Our swarm collectors have been busy, and almost all the people on the association's swarm list have now had a swarm – the association gives priority to new beekeepers (without bees) to enable them to keep down the cost of starting out by not having to purchase a colony of bees.

All those new beekeepers that want one have been allocated a mentor or "bee buddy" who will help them do their first inspections and is on call to answer any questions they may have about beekeeping. This system works really well, and enables beekeepers to get through that all important first year, and the fall-out rate has been quite low, with most of the new beekeepers continuing on in the hobby.

We would like to remind members that now is the time to start looking at changing the bait in your Asian Hornet monitoring traps to protein, such as shrimp or cat food. Make sure you check your traps at least daily, and change the bait regularly.

Hopefully, things will start getting back to normal in the not too distant future, especially with lock-down regulations being relaxed, and we can return to business as usual.

I'll sign off by wishing all readers a good beekeeping summer, and hoping you all have a good honey crop.

*Jim Dunne*



**Caddon  
Hives**

# Caddon Hives

Quality hives made from  
Western Red Cedar.

Langstroth  
National  
Smith  
WBC

Beekeeping accessories also  
available including:  
Clothing, Frames, Feeders, Smokers, Tools etc



[www.caddon-hives.co.uk](http://www.caddon-hives.co.uk)  
or call 01896 850 755



# MAISEMORE APIARIES LTD

Manufacturers & Suppliers of Beekeeping Equipment!

## Buy your Quality Extracting Equipment from us! At great prices!

**STD STEAM  
UNCAPPING  
TRAY+STEAM  
GENERATOR  
£292.00**

**CRANKED S/S  
UNCAPPING  
FORK  
£11.76**

**UNCAPPING  
ROLLER  
£11.81**

**80Z CUT COMB  
CARTONS-PER 50  
£16.02**



**EXTRACTORS  
4 FRAME S/S £215.81  
4 FRAME S/S+LEGS £259.97  
4 FRAME S/S+FILTER+TANK £325.91**



### 2 FRAME PLASTIC EXTRACTOR BUNDLE

**CONTAINS:-**

**2 FRAME PLASTIC EXT  
60lb PLASTIC HONEY TANK+TAP  
UNCAPPING ROLLER  
3 x 30lb PLASTIC HONEY BUCKETS  
& NYLON DOUBLE STRAINER**

**£171.00**



**COLD UNCAPPING  
TRAY £138.92**



**OLD ROAD, MAISEMORE, GLOUCESTER, GL2 8HT, TEL: 01452 700289  
sales@bees-online.co.uk www.bees-online.co.uk**

## Sherborne Beekeeping Association

From the Sherborne arm of the Dorset, Hampshire and New Forest AHAT group **Tony Thorp reports:** "After two week-long hornet monitoring sessions, there were no reports of any Asian hornets. This could be taken as good news, especially since there were similarly no reports from any of the other groups. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that the Asian hornets are not here: they just haven't been trapped!

By now, the queen hornets will have raised their initial brood of workers and will be relocating to build secondary nests. Therefore, now is the time to be ever more vigilant for their presence – don't mistake a European hornet for an Asian one!

The bait liquid that is supplied with Thorne's hornet traps has been reported as being rather ineffective, so the AHATs group is in the process of obtaining a supply of the much more effective Trappit liquid, previously known as Sutera. When I have my requested 10-litre supply, I will distribute it to my team, along with instructions for adapting the Thorne traps."

Our apiary has been ticking along nicely under the ministrations of our apiary manager, Mark Caretta. The apiary is sited on a cider apple farm and the bees have been very busy doing their stuff. To date we have more than 125lbs of honey, extracted by Richer Baker and Kara Higgins.

Lock-down has meant that people are taking up hobbies they have thought about and never had time for before, with the result that we have had six new beekeepers sign up.

Like all the groups we look forward to return to normality and resuming with our winter talks.

*Judy Easdale*

# Becky Beezzz Ltd



## FOR ALL YOUR BEEKEEPING NEEDS...

At Beckys Bees we sell top quality mated queens and nucs as well as stocking a wide range of beekeeping products from cedar hives and varroa treatments to smokers and fuel and bee feed.

**All our nucs comply to the standards set by Defra and NBU.**

Manufacturers of Correx boxes that take both national & commercial frames, ventilated for optimum air flow when transporting bees. Light, strong and secure.

**Stockists of** Top quality cedar hives • Polystyrene & Ply Nuc Boxes • Frames & Foundation • Rauchboy Smokers & Smoker Fuel  
Varroa Treatments & Medicines • Vita Gold & Vita Green • Ambrosia Fondant & Syrup • Pollen Substitute • Disposable & Leather Gloves • Bee Suits & Gauntlets • Feeders • Extractors • Jars and lots lots more...



**Distributors of Aulumgaards Ambrosia Beefeed & Enolapi Candipolline Gold, Competitive quotes for pallets orders.**

Visit our online shop for our full range at [www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk](http://www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk)



Discounts given where I can. Please email me at [beckysbeezzz@gmail.com](mailto:beckysbeezzz@gmail.com) or Contact us on **01264 351104 • 07973 423628**

Members of



**BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION**

## News from West Dorset BKA—July 2020



Here we are halfway through the year already, which I must say has been all a bit surreal for all of us with the Covid-19 pandemic. On reflection, we beekeepers have been some of the lucky ones being able to tend to our bees and travel around. So the lock-down has not been so onerous, thank goodness.

We have managed the teaching apiary with four of us going in pairs every week. It has worked well so far — we took some early honey off in May which has a lovely flavour. Still more to take later; another messy job in my conservatory! What we have noticed this year is that a few colonies in the teaching apiary at Netherbury and some of our own have built queen cells early in the season, which we have made a split from either in nuc boxes or a vertical split. All was well for a spell after that, with new queens and old queens (last year's) still laying well, but some of these now have decided to build queen cells again, not supersedure ones — so once again we made another split. Has anyone else had this experience this year? Some of the nucs which were made up, we found are running out of stores with the spell of rainy weather we had a couple of weeks ago, so don't forget to check them. A fondant block is good feeding.

It is a great shame that our 2020 students have not be able so far to come and see our new set-up at the apiary and help tend to the bees. Several of the confident students have managed to sort themselves out with hives and bees this year, which has been super, with a little help from our committee members. There were several swarms around a month ago, then all went quiet but just recently they have been at it again! We have managed to home them all so far.

We are hoping that all the members and students are tuning into all the Zoom lectures which are now available online — some of them have been excellent. I personally have enjoyed just sitting in my own home, with a glass of wine listening to them — saves all the petrol and traveling around in the dark! You can always learn something. If you are not on Zoom, why not go onto the National Honey Show website and watch their online lectures, which are excellent. <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/lecture-videos.php>

Let's hope that when we write the next articles for Honeycraft we will be all back to normal — whenever that will be!!

*Carole Brown*



## Job done .....

### Preamble

A few weeks ago, BSBKA was asked to help by someone who had taken over the family farm near Shaftesbury recently. They knew that Grandpa had kept bees in the past, but they had not been mentioned and had not been seen for more than 20 years; therefore they were deemed to have died out or moved elsewhere! But not so: when the owners went to look at some dead trees in a small copse which needed felling, they came across masses of bees around a totally overgrown hive. Paul Hill, a BSBKA member, was asked to have a look as he lived nearby.

### The problem – as reported by Paul

“I spoke to the widow of the beekeeper. They had lived there for 60 years, running as a smallholding; she could not remember how long the bees had been there, untouched. I’ve now been to look at the bees. The hive is in a small sheltered wooded area, but there are two trees, one dead, over the top of the hive that at some point will fall onto the hive. So, where to start...?”

The hive looks to have been a high quality hive, with a metal roof, still intact and in good condition and a metal feeder the same. There is a hive base, and an unused one next to it, with a metal base plate for the hive to sit on. The wood, I think cedar, is completely rotten, with any



attempt to open the hive it will just fall apart.

To me it's not 20 years, more like 40 or more.

It is packed full of bees. I could see inside at the base and saw some comb, black with age.

Bees were as quiet as I have seen,. I pulled off the ivy around the hive, and had a poke around; they never reacted. I took as much off the top of the hive as I dared; they then did come to see what was going on, but were not angry. I did not use any smoke.

What to do...?

If I try to move the hive it will disintegrate.

The owners are happy to buy a new hive. The old one looks to be a National.

How to transfer the bees? I could see no sign of any disease.

There is no queen excluder that I can see and no frames, they must be long gone.

It does not look as if they have swarmed.

If I shake the bees into a new hive, there is no way to tell initially if the queen is there: she will not be marked and I could lose her. There is no way to find her without destroying the hive.

### My initial ideas

I could put new boxes with frames on top and try to draw the bees up – but the hive may collapse – or try to transfer the comb as is to a new hive with no frames, then put new frames on top or use a different, more

open hive, top bar maybe, and transfer the comb and bees to this and leave the bees to sort themselves out. I could wait until they are likely to have swarmed, then try to transfer the rest; again there is no chance to find if they have a new queen without destroying the old hive.

So, after a couple of attempts to solve the problem on my own I realised that we had only one chance to get it right and that some help would be good.

### **The solution – devised by Paul and Gordon Grant, and reported by GG**

I went over to Shaftesbury today to give Paul Hill some help in tackling a hive that hasn't been touched for about 30 years. It was under some dangerous trees that were due to be felled and needed to be moved. I'm not sure what type of hive it was other than it was cedar and comprised of three brood boxes that each held 14 BS deep frames. The hive had resisted previous attempts to move it as it was completely rotten and seemingly held together by the frames and wax. The new owners were keen to rescue the bees and had already bought a new national hive with the intention of transferring the bees to this so that it could be gradually moved away from the trees. Our plan was to rip off one end of each brood box to expose one face of the frame, then use a knife to cut through any brace comb holding the frames in place and remove the comb. Any with good brood in them would be fitted into new empty frames with elastic bands. Some honeycomb would be put above the crown board to give them some stores and old comb would be ditched. Whilst cutting out the comb we could vacuum the bees into a super containing a number of new frames with foundation.

The frame top bars were largely rotten and the frames were the horizontal wired type. This wasn't a problem in the top brood box as the comb was largely inside the frames. However on the second and third boxes wild comb had been built at 45 degrees to the frames and all the wires effectively ran through several combs. Removing the top bar and cutting through all the wires with a long pair of wallpaper scissors freed the comb which could then be



easily cut out with a knife. The star of the show was the bee vacuum; without this it would have been nigh impossible to work through the boxes. We pulled out a lot of brood in all stages and although we didn't see the queen we are hopeful that she is in the new hive. If not, the bees have a lot of viable eggs/ larvae to raise a new one.

The underside of the last box must have been at least six inches deep in detritus that had built up over the years. There is an almost symbiotic relationship with wax moths in feral hives as they effectively destroy the old comb allowing the bees space to replace with new. It was interesting to see how bees have continued to occupy what is a finite space for so long. It was a huge colony but is now nicely transferred to a new hive. The bees will think they've won the lottery. They were a bit defensive at first but became very settled as we worked through, effectively destroying their hive. Interestingly they became defensive again once they were in their new hive.

Paul plans to inspect the hive in a week's time to see if they have a queen. We put the new hive on a trolley so it can easily be moved 3ft at a time over the next week. It will also need checking for disease and varroa, although the brood we saw looked pretty healthy and the fact they have survived for 30 years without intervention must say something about how they cope with varroa. Maybe we've found that elusive varroa resistant strain!!

A Bailey comb change in spring should get them on good clean comb for next year.

An interesting three hours, but worthwhile and successful.....

*Paul Hill and Gordon Grant*

P.S. The following morning the new owner said the bees looked very happy with their new home and asked if he could enrol on a course to learn how to look after them properly.

## Replacing queens simply

Here are a few ideas aimed at the very new beekeepers amongst us who have either lost their queen or just want to update to a newer model (which ideally should be done every two years anyway).

The approach you use will depend upon your own situation but I will start on the assumption that you have only one colony with an ageing queen.

You could just buy a new one but if your colony is otherwise satisfactory (strong and docile) you can get them to raise their own replacement by removing the queen into a nuc.

The process is the same as the Pagden method of swarm control:

First relocate your colony to a new position some feet away and put a new hive or nuc in its place

From the parent colony remove the queen and the frame she is on and put them into the new hive or nuc. This will be more easily done if she is properly marked.

Add another frame of mostly sealed brood and two frames of stores together with a frame or two of foundation but be sure that eggs and larvae remain in the hive. It is important that none of these frames have queen cells so check carefully – the bees might be ahead of you and could be preparing to swarm without you realising it.

All the foraging bees will return to the queen in her new home on the original site allowing her to begin rebuilding her colony.

Frames of foundation should be added as the colony grows and you should feed with light syrup to help the bees draw out the new comb; you should remember that they will be very short of stores.

In the meantime your parent colony, now queenless, will prepare queen cells but in their panic the bees might use larvae that are too old and any such queens will not be satisfactory. You must check after three days and remove any sealed queen cells you find, but it is critical that you do this on time. You must not be late or you might be destroying viable cells. Leave one or two unsealed cells to develop normally. Replace with foundation the frames you removed from the parent colony.

All being well, you can look forward in three or four week's time to having two queenright colonies but if your new queen fails to return from her mating flight you can still recover the situation by installing a frame of eggs and brood from your original queen, who should still be laying well (or from another colony if you have more). This can be done whenever you are uncertain if a queen is present in a hive or not.

If there is no queen present, the bees will draw out queen cells as described earlier but if the queen is there, but simply not yet laying, then no queen cells will result. It is sometimes necessary, for various reasons, to install a second frame of eggs a week or two later to get the result you want and to avoid the presence of laying workers.

I hope these notes will reassure our new beekeepers that replacing a queen is not all that difficult and I am always happy to talk over any particular problem that anyone might encounter, either by email or telephone.

Best wishes to everyone in these difficult times,

*Terry Payne*

01747 811251

[twpayne@btinternet.com](mailto:twpayne@btinternet.com)

## Beekeeping Videos

This is the fourth and last article in the beekeeping videos series. A number of new videos are appearing as people have recorded webinars via Zoom meetings during the Lockdown.

The fourth video for beginners is Getting Started in Beekeeping : the beekeeping Year Part 4 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVnKppku3-8> This talks about the late autumn and winter period and considers food stores, treatments and pest protection and repairing and maintaining your equipment.

In <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxx2pcOaRm4> we look at dealing with a colony that has started to misbehave. This is current for me because as is common knowledge bees and horses often do not mix well and my bees have started stinging my neighbouring horse owner. Unfortunately, the Winnie the Pooh saying is often true: "It's angry bees that make the most honey". In this video Stuart removes the queen and introduces a new one.

If, like me, you find locating the queen difficult, you might find <https://youtu.be/eSe3-8lUgg> useful. Paul also demonstrates caging a queen once you have found her.

As you develop your apiary you will need less help from "outside". In <https://youtu.be/nznzpiWEI8A> Mike Palmer describes "the sustainable apiary".

<https://youtu.be/yw1hPeYw-VY> is a top-bar hive review by Phil Chandler. As a result of this and Tom Seeley's book I now have a top bar hive (£162 complete from Thornes) and am practising Darwinian beekeeping.

Swarming should be largely over for this year, although it did start late in some areas and there have been swarms reported even recently. The vertical split is a swarm prevention method but is also used to break the mite cycle (a very effective part of integrated pest management) and to increase the number of colonies. If you don't want more colonies you can always merge the two halves later. The video is <https://youtu.be/NP6psd0T8Js>

For the adventurous <https://youtu.be/fBxATFjDIBA> describes raising queen bees. The video describes finding larvae of the proper age, the equipment you will need, finding suitable larvae, grafting and mating. Be warned though: you will need to find homes for all the new queens.

Then, once everything is going well, someone will discover bees where they don't want them. My neighbour loves the fact that there are bees in the void between the internal and external walls of her house, but many do not! Some people find bees in the attic, and if they don't find a willing beekeeper are likely to call the exterminator. <https://youtu.be/YxTCqE-YWKg> entitled Honey Bees in the Ceiling is an encouraging video about removing them from where they are not wanted.

As the active part of the beekeeping year starts to come to a close at the end of the month, you may want to consider your preparations for next year in terms of the equipment needed for changing the wax in the brood frames. Some just replace a third of the frames each year, but others use shook swarm or Bailey comb change, particularly if there have been problems with varroa or its resulting diseases. In [https://youtu.be/P4HtEloe\\_rg](https://youtu.be/P4HtEloe_rg) Stuart demonstrates shook swarm and in <https://youtu.be/H8BwnPTas8k> the Bailey comb change. Dave Cushman says that the Bailey Comb Change is not as inherently "clean" as the shook swarm, but it is less traumatic for the bees.

*Chris Harwood*

# Webinars

## Summer lecture programme

**Ken and Dan Basterfield** regularly give popular lectures on practical and thought-provoking beekeeping topics. They lecture across the UK and Ireland, from local association meetings to national and international conferences.

Sparked by the lock-down of 2020 and the ensuing cancellation of pretty much any form of beekeeping meeting, conference, or convention, we are offering a series of online evening lectures throughout the beekeeping season. Topics are chosen to fit with the work in the apiary, aiming to be timely and to inspire all those “thinking beekeepers” out there.

**Our webinars work best in the Chrome browser.** We recommend that you use this when connecting to either the live sessions or the replays.

**To book a place on a webinar go to:** <https://www.advancedbeekeeping.org.uk/page/webinars/>

## Replays and catch-up facility

Each webinar – and the question and answer session at the end – is recorded. Once you have registered for a webinar you can watch it live and submit questions, but also watch the replay at a later date. Indeed you can even register after the original live webinar dates and use the replays to catch-up with earlier webinars.

## Test webinar

We have a free test webinar that allows you to check that you can access our webinars before trying to join a live webinar or watch a replay. The test session also allows you to verify that your sound is working and gives some tips on how the sessions run, how to ask questions, etc.

## Vertical Split Swarm Control

Ken Basterfield, NDB

[View replay](#)

The 'Pagden' type of artificial swarm is well known and commonly used. In practice it requires a complete spare hive at precisely the time when equipment is most in demand. A vertical artificial swarm requires only an extra brood box and a modified crown board as a split board, and was a technique we learnt from Australian commercial beekeepers. This lecture also includes aspects of managing double brood box beehives - by having the extra brood box already in place in all colonies, swarm control is a quick and easy part of routine inspections.

## Queen Raising Overview

Dan Basterfield, NDB

[View replay](#)

Queen raising is a straightforward and rewarding part of beekeeping, yet many beekeepers fear it is too complicated. It can be undertaken on any scale, with varying levels of complexity, but the basics are well known and it can be started with minimal equipment. We will explore the *how?* and *why?* of queen raising, compare the various approaches and equipment used, and consider what is realistic and achievable for a hobbyist beekeeper or beekeeping association.

## [The Importance of Drones](#)

Dan Basterfield, NDB

[View replay](#)

Given the chance, colonies will enthusiastically raise large numbers of drones. But beekeepers tend to think of drones as a burden on a colony, and cut out or discourage drone comb. Worse, we often overlook that for good queen raising, we need good drone raising too. This talk explores simple methods of encouraging colonies to raise the numbers of drones that they desire, how to align this with breeding and stock selection, and of course the problem of drone brood being 'varroa incubators'.

## [Reading Bees](#)

Ken Basterfield, NDB

**[14th July 2020](#)**

'Reading bees' refers to the ability to look at a previously unknown colony of bees, to understand what has happened before, what is happening now, and to suggest appropriate 'next steps' by balancing the (sometimes conflicting!) priorities of the bees and the beekeeper. Reading bees is often wrongly treated as a black art, when in reality we start reading bees from our earliest encounters with them. This lecture uses practical examples to discuss how this reading can be expanded and refined through better observation, improving our knowledge of bees, and by always asking the question "what would the bees do next?"

## [Queenright and Broodright?](#)

Dan Basterfield, NDB

**[28th July 2020](#)**

Colony cohesion comes from having a queen and brood. In the absence of either, things can begin to break down, perhaps ultimately ending up with a doomed colony with laying workers. This lecture explains the contribution that either queen or brood pheromones make to colony well-being, how to spot early when problems are developing, and how to help problematically queenless or broodless colonies recover in good time. This lecture is aimed at the more novice beekeepers and is grounded in observation and practice.

## [Preparations for a Better Season?](#)

Dan Basterfield, NDB

**[11th August 2020](#)**

Beekeepers are natural optimists – starting each season with the hope that this year will be that perfect season where everything comes right. The cyclical seasonal nature of beekeeping makes it possible to broadly predict what equipment and interventions may be needed and when, but how many of us still play catch up with the bees? We start with the season winding down in August, review various key tasks and preparations as one season starts and the next begins, and look at some of the key skills that underpin confident and successful beekeeping.

## Double Brood Chamber Working

Ken Basterfield, NDB  
**25th August 2020**

Since the 1980's, I have been running colonies on double brood chambers, having realised early in my beekeeping career that the traditional single deep box offers too little brood space for colonies. Whilst this is common practice in much of the world, in the UK it is viewed with suspicion. Few realise how compressed colonies are in a single National brood box, resulting in excessive swarming. Instead, add more brood space and work with the bees rather than against them. I will discuss general management, swarm control, wintering, and the transition to double brood from a single brood or brood and a half.

## Bees for Honey *and* Money

Dan Basterfield, NDB  
**8th September 2020**

This lecture conveys my experiences and the observations of other small scale commercial beekeepers looking to make a living from 50-250 colonies. Beekeeping on a larger scale is all about managing bottlenecks, and prioritising time input against reward. At the end of the day, it's got to keep a roof over your head without working you into the ground. There is no silver bullet – no 'Commercial Beekeeping Approach' that is imparted in hushed tones to the chosen few. Unlike the indulgences of hobby beekeeping, it must be undertaken with an eye to efficiency and the bottom line, but that does not mean it has to be cynical or unsympathetic.

## Tools and Tricks...

Ken Basterfield, NDB  
**22nd September 2020**

[... to make beekeeping easier!](#)

My background in engineering and science, along with practical woodworking and metalworking skills, has allowed me to develop and refine many techniques and pieces of equipment to make life simpler for the beekeeper. In a series of show & tell snapshots I will cover many of these ideas - whether for migration, lifting and shifting, simple selective queen raising, warming honey, feeding, foundation making, mead and honey vinegar, and more. Come and enjoy, it is quite a journey through 50 years of my beekeeping!

## Wax Processing

Ken Basterfield, NDB  
**6th October 2020**

Beeswax is a valuable product to the beekeeper, and when one looks at the effort involved for the bees in secreting this wonderful substance it is truly amazing that we beekeepers benefit in quantity from so many tiny wax scales secreted by so many busy bees. Beeswax processing is something not generally dealt with well in most texts, and I will look at methods suited to small scale beekeeping. Beginning with raw wax recovery from cappings and old combs, through cleaning and refining processes, and on to value added applications like cosmetics, wax polishes, candles and foundation making. I am a practical beekeeper by nature and devise my own tools and methods of working in all aspects of beekeeping, none more so that with beeswax. Come along and I will "show and tell".

# Who's Who in the Dorset County Beekeepers' Association

President Richard Norman

Vice Presidents: Ken Bishop, Mervyn Bown, Chris Slade

Chair	Lesley Gasson,	
Vice-chair	Trevor Ford	<b>trevorlanners@gmail.com</b>
Secretary	Liz Rescorla, 01305 889916	<b>winkyozz@uwclub.net</b>
Treasurer	Robert Camping, 01202 849338	<b>yewcot@gmail.com</b>
Membership Secretary	Ben Benjamin	<b>chrisbenbenjamin@googlemail.com</b>
Education Officer	Geoff Buckland, 01305 567950	<b>geofbuckland@aol.com</b>
Examinations Secretary	Terry Payne, 01747 811251	<b>twpayne@btopenworld.com</b>
Honeycraft Editor	Tim Villiers, 01963 364384	<b>tim@familyvilliers.co.uk</b>
Website Manager	Stephen Potts	<b>sbfpotts@gmail.com</b> <u>web site</u> <a href="http://www.dorsetBKA.com">www.dorsetBKA.com</a>
Asian Hornet Co-ordinator	Mark White 07747 620920	<b>markaj2000@hotmail.com</b>
*****		
Blandford & Sturminster	Lesley Gasson, 01258 861690	<b>lmgasson@btinternet.com</b>
Dorchester & Weymouth	Sally Leslie, 01305 823043	<b>dwbkasecretary@gmail.com</b>
East Dorset	Jenny Wellman, 01202 873292	<b>jenny@jenny32.plus.com</b>
Sherborne	Judy Easdale, 01963 220984	<b>sherbornebee@hotmail.co.uk</b>
West Dorset	Carole Brown 01308-456210	<b>secretary@westdorsetbees.org.uk</b>
*****		
Seasonal Bee Inspector	<b>Kevin Pope</b> <b>07775 119466</b>	<b>kevin.pope@apha.gov.uk</b>