

BOURNEMOUTH & DORSET SOUTH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter

July 2020

Dear All,

Hi, I hope this message finds you all well.

After the swarming madness of the last couple of months, let's hope people have finally realised that going on mass protests and packing public areas isn't such a great thing to do after we have almost destroyed our economy to fight covid-19. Perhaps they should think of others a little more but I am not holding my breath for that!

Our bees have become more settled now but also a little more defensive. They seem to need a little smoke where none was needed before. As you can see elsewhere in the newsletter, we have just bought some Hive monitoring equipment for the first time to hopefully gain some interesting insights.

I hope you have enjoyed the online lectures as much as I did. It's very interesting to find a few "nuggets" of knowledge in a talk that perhaps explain something you had observed or a solution that helps you solve a problem. After Stephen Riley's talk, I'm making up a few Queen Frame Traps to try on a couple of our larger colonies to see how that goes. We take it a little for granted here but it was interesting to see Randy Oliver concentrating on talking about the importance of pollen as where he lives, just North of Scaremento, they often have a dearth of it. So now when making a nuc up with not many flying bees at the start I am thinking about stores of honey/nectar + pollen to get them going, not just honey/nectar. Roger Patterson (BIBBA) also gave some interesting talks.

So far we have managed to run the beginners course online over six sessions and will soon do a few practical sessions with the beginners who are willing now that measures have relaxed a little. We hope to run the Wannabee day on the 12th September and the Honey Show on the 7th November but of course we have to keep this under constant review.

If you have any concerns or suggestions, get in touch and...Happy Beekeeping!

Best wishes
Dave Neal

Hive Monitoring part 1

Alla and I thought it was time that we dipped our toe into the water of Hive Monitoring. We wanted to see what benefits it could bring. We both work long hours and can't always get to the bees when we need to and sometimes a delay of a day or two can be crucial, especially for swarm prevention. If a hive that you are expecting to be a good honey producer swarms, what is the cost of that? At least 2-3 supers of honey perhaps before they start to recover? Can monitoring help you inspect less? To answer some of these questions we purchased a Hive Heart + scales + GSM Solar gateway from here:

<https://beehivemonitoring.com/en/>

Level of difficulty getting it set up - Medium

Monitoring parts:



The Hive heart is placed on top of the frames and is supposed to report back on and has these features:

1. hive humidity
2. hive temperature
3. bee sound analysis
4. highlights the loss of the Queen
5. swarm forecast up to 21 days
6. measurement every 10 minutes
7. memory for 2 months, after downloading the data is archived for 5 years
8. communication directly with the mobile phone via Bluetooth or GSM module

9. free mobile app for both iPhone, Android and desktop web app
10. thickness only 8mm, placed on the frames of the brood with the number facing upwards
11. reach in open air 100m, after insertion into the hive 5m to 50m
12. data can be exported to Excel
13. battery duration for one year
14. no additional fees

The Hive Scales features are:

1. hive weight up to 200kg
2. daily, weekly, monthly nectar increment / decrement, numerically and graphically
3. outdoor temperature
4. outdoor humidity
5. estimated number of flying bees
6. memory for 2 months of data, after downloading the data is archived for 5 years
7. communication directly with the mobile phone via Bluetooth or GSM module
8. measurement every 10 minutes
9. warning of unusual weight change - theft
10. free mobile app for both iPhone and Android and desktop web app
11. no additional fees
12. data can be exported to Excel
13. reach in open area is 100m, after placing under the hive 5 to 50m
14. battery life is five years on a single charge
15. weighing accuracy: +/- 0.5kg

The Hive Scales have a centre control box which I decided I would like to support. Also when it is fitted on my home made hive stands it raises the Open Mesh Floor causing a gap at the front. So after a little woodworking I solved these problems with an extra piece of wood in the centre and a small piece of wood at the front on the landing board.

Modified stand:



Open Mesh Floor and brood box on modified stand:



I should have ordered a data sim with the GSM Solar Gateway. I didn't as I thought it best to get one in the UK but now regretted it a little as their price is pretty good as I discovered after. It is not easy to find a provider, order a SIM, register and activate it plus set it up in the Gateway. A little fiddly, needing a bit of knowledge! The phone apps all worked well on my android phone. The Red diagnostic app is especially good for showing life of a component and details about it.

Gateway internals:



The picture shows the Gateway opened up (6 small screws). The SIM holder is at the bottom left and I am giving it a charge with a phone charger before re-assembly. I changed the Hive Heart battery for a duracell and charged up the scales too.

We have installed the equipment on a hive that for most of the season has been hopelessly Queenless after a good start. They now have a nice Queen and we will see what happens. Until the next newsletter, bye for now...

Dave & Alla Neal

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Top Bar Bee Keeping

In 2008 I bought my first hive and bees from a commercial keeper who was retiring; he used National hives therefore I used National hives. If he had used Langstroth hives I would have ended up using those... no thought on my part went into the decision. However, I am a naturally curious person

who likes to find other and alternative ways of doing things and beekeeping has been no exception.

I eventually came across top bar beekeeping and read about Warre hives and skep hives (the You Tube series of videos about heathland skep beekeeping in Germany* in the late 70's is well worth watching). I also read about Kenyan & Tanzanian top bar hives and I eventually came across Phil Chandler's website**, videos and book about making and using horizontal top bar hives (HTBH). I don't propose to discuss Phil Chandler except to say that his plans are very good and I followed them building my first HTBH about two years after taking up beekeeping.

After, putting a swarm into this hive I quickly found out that beekeeping in a HTBH is not hands-off, especially while the bees are creating the first two or three combs. I left them for a week and came back to chaos within. I spent time rearranging the hive that the bees wanted, into something resembling what I wanted; straight comb on a single top bar. When you have two straight bars the rest is easy, but time consuming, using the two straight bars to sandwich an empty bar and repeating the process until you have straight comb throughout. Once established, the bees in this hive thrived.

These hives are incredibly cheap to make and you can use hand tools if you wish, although having access to power tools makes it easier. I have a source of free wood yielding walls & top bars that are 25mm thick providing good insulation. There is plenty of information on the internet about building HTBH that there is no need to discuss it here.

As I live in a small three- bedroom end of terrace house with little room for storage, keeping the equipment for four National hives was proving tricky and processing honey from those hives was a trial. I decided to move over to HTBH in 2013. Transferring over involved a shook swarm into the three hives I built over the winter. The first few weeks was very busy establishing straight comb but eventually the bees started thriving. I have modified Phil Chandler's plans to include a solid floor and opening at one end only.

I used to inspect weekly throughout the season for several years, but eventually realised that it was more for my enjoyment than anything I was doing for the bees. Nowadays, hive opening is limited to about twice a season plus an occasional visit from the seasonal bee inspector. Whenever I go to my allotment, I'll spend time at the hive entrance looking & listening to the bees and learning as much as I can without opening the hive.

The bees have been in the hives now for six years, in that time I've not had a single colony loss.



I use high-density insulation sheets on the top of the bars underneath the roofs to provide an added layer of heat retention. I don't control or manage swarming; I don't treat for varroa and I do not feed, leaving enough honey to last through the winter. I harvest up to three bars of honey from each hive at the end of the season, this is enough from my family & me plus a few friends.

As part of an NBU Sentinel Project, the Seasonal Bee Inspector inspects the hives several times in the season. Generally, I am not present due to work but the feedback from the SBI has always been positive with comments about how docile & healthy the bees are.

* Heatherland Skep Beekeeping:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2ljNBbLESY>

** The Barefoot Beekeeper: <https://www.biobees.com/>

Vanishing of the Bees available on Ellen Page, Prime Video and Netflix

Vanishing of the Bees is a 2009 documentary film by Hive Mentality Films & Hipfuel Films, directed by George Langworthy and Maryam Henein and released in the United Kingdom in October 2009. [Wikipedia](#)

Simon Quinton

English Oak Vineyard

The visit to English Oak Vineyard at Lytchett Maltravers organised by our Chairman, is sadly postponed till further notice because of the Covid crisis but here is a photograph from 2015 when I went with other members of the local branch of the International Wine Society for a wine tasting and education tour of the vines.

We had a very informative time touring the vineyard and then an excellent tasting session. Hopefully we can organise this in the future.

Here are David's comments....

English Oak Vineyard is run by an ex-member of our's, Sarah Pharoah. She and her Husband Andrew bought the 23 acre site and planted the 23,000 vines in 2007.

Their sparkling wines are now sold in more than 40 hotels, restaurants and wine merchants from Dorchester, Poole and Swanage to Bournemouth, Christchurch and New Forest, including top hotels such as the Chewton Glen, the Haven, the Greenhouse and Lime Wood in the New Forest.



Adrian Rozkovec and Dave Neal

Trunk Call

It was a sunny Tuesday in the middle of April. The smoker had been lit and filled with moist half-rotted wood. We took a deep breath and, adhering to social-distancing, turned again to the stump.

The story had begun in November nearly six months earlier when David Lloyd took a call from Andy, the man from whom he bought logs. Andy was felling a row of poplars and had come across a colony of honey-bees. The property owner was not prepared to allow the tree to remain to the spring. It had to go immediately.

David attended and explained that it would be impossible to re-house bees in mid-winter. Andy, by this time, really wanted to save the colony. So first he carefully cut the tree down to the top of the brood-nest. Next he felled the stump and, having gently lowered it onto the ground, cut off rounds until he reached the bottom of the nest.

He and his crew lifted the three foot piece of trunk onto his truck with Andy saying that he would set it up in his front garden. Chances of it surviving, thought David, not high!

But in March Andy reported that the colony was flying. David recruited me and, as the weather improved, we arranged to meet with Andy in attendance with his trusty chainsaw. To the amusement of his family he donned a bee-suit and started salami-slicing the trunk under our direction.

It was at this point that Andy somewhat dismayed us by saying that about two weeks previously the number of bees flying had abruptly declined. Had the colony swarmed? We feared finding queen-cells or perhaps disturbing a newly hatched queen. By then too much damage to the tree had been done and we had no choice but to carry on.

The hollow in the trunk was from top to bottom. When the hole in the top was large enough David and I took turns to cut out long lengths of comb and brush the bees into a hive. To our delight we saw some eggs. We had a laying queen after all!



When we had extracted all of the comb no queen had been seen. Moreover there was a mass of bees remaining in the cavity and they obviously had no intention of leaving!

It was at this point that the smoker was brought into action. A cardboard box was placed over the top of the trunk and we took it in turns to pump smoke into the bottom of the



cavity. It took a long time (I think we had to refill the smoker three times) but eventually there was a noticeable stream of bees heading into the sanctuary of the box.

When we saw bees fanning on the edge of the box and the cavity seemed to be empty, we carefully put the box on the ground and moved the stump away. The flying bees began to circle and then enter the box. We began to feel confident that we had a queen!

We moved the hive that we had set up to where the stump had rested and decanted the bees into it. Bearing in mind the size of the colony we judged six frames of foundation was sufficient with a half kilo of syrup to get them started.

The temper of the bees was quite outstanding. None of us received a single sting throughout the afternoon even though our provocation could not have been worse. They had been covered with sawdust, had their comb cut out in bits and had been smoked out of their cavity.

The colony has since thrived. It has been through a complete brood cycle and is about to be moved to its new home.

Thank goodness that the bees did not realize last November that, with the advent of mobile phones, there is no longer any such thing as a trunk call!

David Aldersey

My Beekeeping Experience with the National Trust

Ten years ago, when I was looking for an out apiary for my hives, I was offered a site in a woodland copse on a National Trust tenanted farm. Over the years I have realized just how lucky I am. The National Trust encourages their tenant farmers to give sites to beekeepers and to manage their farms in a bee-friendly way. This is done by providing flower rich strips, meadows and hedgerows, and the careful use of pesticides. My bees have benefited from this approach being surrounded by a wide variety of trees, hedgerows, and flowers. If my farmer must do any spraying of crops, he will always give me time to close up the hives the evening before spraying is going to take place. The bees also appreciate an early crop of oilseed rape right next door to the hives. This is at the beginning of April when the colonies are increasing. I can carry out frame replacements then knowing the bees will have lots of stores to draw out new frames. I am also lucky enough to get an early crop of honey which has a lovely creamy texture. In the summer, the bees benefit from the blackberries, clover and wildflowers which can thrive on the farm. Of course, in return for this great location my bees earn their keep by pollinating the farmers crops and I pay a pepper corn yearly rent of a jar of honey for every hive.



My hives in the woods:

As well as managing 250,000 hectares of countryside, it is the second largest landowner in the country, it also promotes beekeeping on its many properties. Many of the large estates now have beehives located in kitchen gardens or around their estates managed by the wardens and volunteers. Kingston Lacy outside Wimborne has hives situated in the kitchen garden. These bees collect supplies from the gardens and allotments there and in the future will help pollinate the orchard which is being reinstated.

The trust garden wardens are very aware of the need to design and plant gardens which will benefit bees and other pollinating insects. Head of Food and farming for the Trust, Rob Macklin says "The decline of bees and other pollinating

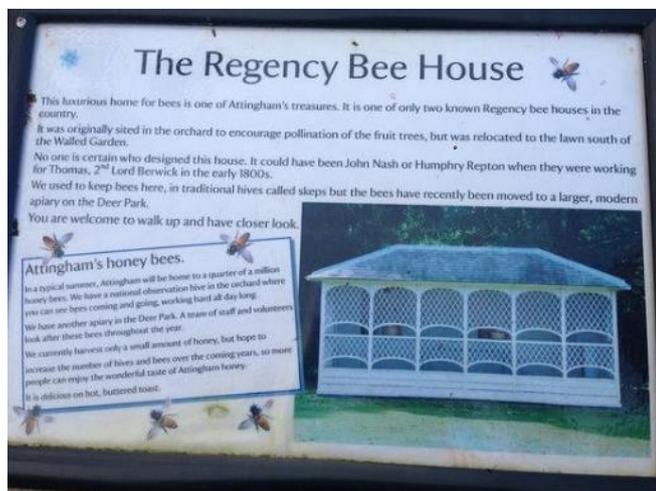
insects has been linked to the loss of flower rich habitats and to the use of pesticides. It is vital for wildlife to make space for these beneficial insects." Planting in the gardens includes a wide range of bee friendly plants that bloom throughout the year. The gardeners are leaving wild spaces for pollinators, mowing margins, and cutting hedges later to allow plants to flower longer.

A growing number of the trust gardeners have stopped using chemical pesticides in favour of bee friendly biological controls, for example garlic sprays and slug traps and many are being trained in greener gardening technics.

One of the aims of the Trust is to raise awareness, in their visitors and members, as to the importance of bees. They are doing this in various ways. Many of the trust's properties have beehives for visitors to observe some with video links. At Kingston lacy the screen for the live webcam is in one of the buildings in the kitchen garden. They also provide information on bees and ways people can garden with bees in mind. Some properties have run beekeeping courses and at Hidcote Manor inspections are carried out on Wednesdays which visitors can watch ...from a safe distance.

Other ways the Trust draws attention to bees is by labelling plants it sells as "attracting Bees" and by selling the honey produced by bees on the the estates .

Several of the Trust's properties have buildings which housed bees, in the past. An example of this is Attingham park in Shropshire which has a 200-year-old grade 2 listed Regency bee house that is now home to a bee information centre.....



Another is Trengwainton Gardens in Cornwall which has restored to working order a Victorian bee house with a wooden façade to the south with landing stages and entrances. It now houses 2 hives. Preserving these buildings helps show how bee keeping has always been part of life down the centuries being a valuable source of food.

Trengwainton garden bee house:



In so many ways the National Trust is showing how important bees are to all of us. I am very pleased to play a small part in the way the Trust is ensuring the continuation and welfare of our bees and to know the Trust is working so hard in this way is very reassuring.

Lesley Morton

Poisoned Bees?

Two years ago I gave a swarm to a new, young beekeeper who lived near Hurn.

She was enthusiastic, keen to learn, highly motivated and interested in all things natural.

The bees were kept in a Top Bar Hive on land near the roundabout at Hurn where, having come past the airport the road splits to Christchurch or the Avon Causeway. She, Chloe, had built the hive from a kit and all was going well. Circumstances meant that she had to move the hives from Hurn to her parents' house off Hurn Lane where problems began.

I received a call to say that the bees seemed very distressed. Although inexperienced, Chloe seemed to have an enviable affinity with her bees. She rang me and asked me to go to see the colony. The bees were arriving home but were quite disorientated. They were landing but were not going into the hive, they were staying on the landing board, wandering in circles and in some cases just keeling over and buzzing on their backs. Chloe was concerned that they were being poisoned, or at least picking up an insecticide that was killing them.

I took a sample of bees and put them in the freezer ready to send off. The time delay between my collecting the sample and posting them to the NBU was entirely my fault as they had slipped my mind until my wife asked what this was in the freezer. I promptly posted them to Sand Hutton.

Four days later I had a call from Kevin Pope, our seasonal bee inspector, who wanted to visit and see the bees.

Apparently a report of possibly poisoned bees is something that the NBU follows up very promptly. In the interim, because of her concern Chloe, had moved her TBH some three miles away on to land owned by a friendly farmer, and the bees were now doing fine. We now had something of a dilemma. If Kevin visited and took a sample of 400 bees which is the requirement, 200 for the NBU and 200 to be kept by the beekeeper, they would show no signs of poisoning as they had been moved and were doing well, but the source of the poisoning, if it were indeed poisoning, would remain uninvestigated. Several phone calls ensued and the outcome was that the 'poisoning' report remained on the record but was unsubstantiated and the incident was closed.

Several points arise from this.....

- If you take samples of bees for the NBU, do not put them in the freezer and forget about them. You need 400 bees; 200 to post and 200 to keep as a back-up. Post them promptly after collection. Mea Culpa.
- Be advised that any report of 'poisoning' is acted upon very quickly by the NBU and you must have all your evidence and samples ready and available.
- You should not move your bees if you have reported a possible poisoning incident. The NBU must investigate the report. If you lose the bees, that is unfortunate, but they must remain where they are.
- Genuine poisoning of bees is quite rare. Most reports turn out to be not agriculturally based but horticultural, and most investigations are cases of chronic bee paralysis. One interesting item told to me by Kevin is that a report of bees being poisoned was followed up to find that indeed the bees had been poisoned. But the beekeeper, wearing gloves, had fitted his two dogs with flea collars then, wearing the same gloves had attended to his bees. The bees died. Apparently the chemicals in pets' flea collars are incredibly toxic to honeybees. If simple hygiene procedures had been followed the bees would not have been lost. A lesson to be noted.

So, if you think that there is a possibility that your bees have succumbed to poisoning, keep two samples of two hundred bees per sample in the freezer and contact either Kevin Pope or the NBU at Sand Hutton in Yorkshire without delay. The response will be fast and reflects well on the concern and efficiency of the NBU and APHA.

Peter Darley

Bees fanning



Adrian Rozkovec

Honey Show 2020

We are still hopeful that this year's honey show on 7th November is going to take place. We will keep a close eye on the guidance as it comes out and make a decision closer to the date.

We are still hopeful that this year's honey show on 7th November is going to take place. We will keep a close eye on the guidance as it comes out and make a decision closer to the date.

Volunteers Needed. As always it's a case of all hands on deck and the more people getting involved the better it is. If you would be happy to volunteer please do email me at [Fredsedgley@gmail.com](mailto:Fredsedgeley@gmail.com)

So as the honey is starting to come in do start thinking about what jars to save and wax to clean for your best exhibits.

Fred Sedgley

Honey Cake – the Best!

This my favourite honey cake as you can really taste the flavour of the honey. It produces a moist cake that improves after keeping for a few days.

Ingredients:

225g Self-Raising Flour
1 tsp Bicarbonate of Soda
1 tbsp Ground Ginger (optional)
115g Unsalted Butter, Chilled and Diced
230g Honey
115g Soft Brown Muscovado Sugar

275ml Milk (not Skimmed)
1 Medium free-range Egg, beaten

A 22cm square or 24cm round tin (not loose bottom) lined with grease proof paper

Method:

Gently warm the honey in one pan. Warm the sugar and milk in another pan until the sugar has dissolved. Leave to cool until lukewarm.

Heat the oven at 180C.

Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda and ginger (if using) together in a bowl. Add the diced butter and rub into the flour mix until it looks like breadcrumbs.

Then whisk the milk into the flour mixture, quickly followed by the honey mixture and the beaten egg, to make a smooth thick batter, the consistency of double cream.

Put the mixture into the prepared tin. Bake in the heated oven for about 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Set the tin on a wire rack and leave to cool completely before turning out. Wrap the cake in foil and leave for at least a day before cutting; it will get stickier the longer it is kept. Store in an air tight container.

Anne Moran



This is YOUR Association Newsletter. Please feel free to share your beekeeping experiences – good or bad – along with photos, honey recipes, hints and tips, anecdotes and links to any interesting articles.

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