

# BOURNEMOUTH & DORSET SOUTH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



## Newsletter

## October 2020

**Hi, I hope this message finds you all well.**

I'm pleased we had a nice September and so far October has been ok too. I wouldn't say I'm a winter person at all so some late sun has been very pleasant to have for myself and the bees also. We have just finished extracting our last frame of honey, the extractor is stored, supers removed and all bees treated ready for winter some time ago. In assessing the stores of our hives this year, many seemed to take the good weather as an opportunity for extra forage and their brood box stores seem quite good so it is only the weaker ones we have had to feed.

I do feel a little sad that we still haven't seen the back of the Covid-19 problem. Due to the fluctuating restrictions and fines it is not possible to plan any further physical meetings but we will plan at least one Zoom talk a month with interesting speakers. Regarding this, one of my main worries is that with the club AGM due in January, we may not be able to hold the AGM as we normally do at West Parley Hall. Of course, the constitution does not anticipate a problem arising like covid-19 where we can't talk and vote in person. The Committee will monitor the situation in the next few months and if there are still problems meeting, we will try to suggest the best solution and I hope we would have the support of the members in doing this.

Looking back at my message in the last newsletter, I see that I mentioned trying Queen Frame Trapping. Well, Alla and I tried it and although we were very pleased with the results we saw, decided that we couldn't use it as the only form of varroa control on the larger hives. After freezing, we opened a few cells of the 2nd "trapped" frame and found each one to be infested with varroa which was impressive. We felt though that it became difficult to keep to the timetable due to work and the weather. Also when trying to gently change the trapped frame for another, forcing the propolysed frame trap open and finding/moving the Queen safely with a lot of interested bees about felt quite dicey.

Thanks for taking the time to read this and if you have any concerns or suggestions please get in touch.

Best wishes,

**Dave Neal**

Chairman@bads-bka.org  
+44 7966 891997

### Association Diary Dates

#### *West Parley Memorial Hall*

No meetings till further notice but do look at the emails for virtual meetings. Let's hope for next year.

### Commentary

#### Newsletters

Following our recent Committee Meeting we have responded to a request that the newsletter should be more frequent so as to keep closer in touch with members during these difficult times. Accordingly, the newsletter will be every 2 months rather than quarterly. For this to work, **we will need more contributors**, so please step forward. My contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

#### Fondant

Members are asking where to get fondant now that we don't have face to face meetings. You can either get this from your local friendly baker (typically a 12.5kg box) or look on the internet. It may not be pure, i.e. consisting of only Sugar, Glucose Syrup and Water. The supermarket versions for icing almost certainly will have additives. Whether such additives matter is not clear, but perhaps some of you can "feedback" on this!...pure fondant is available directly from....

<https://beekeepingsuppliesuk.com/p/1-box-of-bakers-fondant-12-5kg/>

<https://www.simonthebeekeeper.co.uk/hive-care-feeding/10071-125kg-fondant-block.html>

or via Amazon and eBay.

Fondant is ideal for use during autumn and winter to prepare your bees for cold or rainy weather, for artificial swarming, splitting colonies and stimulating activity and egg laying during early spring.

It has shelf life up to one year when adequately wrapped, stored in a cool, dry place and kept away from mice.

Also available in smaller quantities of either 1lb or 1kg, but you may need up to one 12.5kg block per colony.

To ease cutting gently warm the block. Use a strong sharp knife and cut slices to fit into individual plastic containers so the surface is up to the level of the lid. Cover with a bit of thin plastic sheet and tightly seal the lid to keep the fondant humid.

### National Honey Show

By the time you receive this Newsletter, the **National Honey Show** will have happened. The first online conference of its kind in the UK beekeeping world! Hopefully, you will have taken advantage of this free event and attended lectures, demonstrations followed by live online Q&A sessions, visits to the trade hall and taken part in other exciting activities.

<https://thenationalhoneyshow.co.uk/>

Some of the content will be available following the conference.

### Covid

Important and up to date advice specifically for beekeepers from the National Bee Unit

[nbu@beebaseadmin.fera.co.uk](mailto:nbu@beebaseadmin.fera.co.uk)

[Covid-19 and Beekeeping Update v3](#)

### Swarm Collecting

Our Thanks to Mohamed Saeed, his Father Ahmed, and to Peter Darley for their dedicated work as the swarm collectors for our Association. Their work is in the following article.

### Adrian Rozkovec

Newsletter

### Swarm calls and Bumble Bee calls 2020.

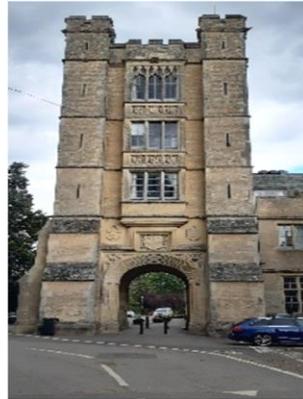
#### Honey-bees....

This year, 2020, Mohamed Saeed with his father Ahmed, took on the task of swarm coordinators and collectors for BADS BKJA. Last year there were 189 calls from the public of which one third were bumble bees. To help Mohammed and ease the burden, I was happy to take all the bumble bee calls.

Mohammed took over 50 calls, asking the caller to send a picture to save wasted journeys, passing on most of those of bumble bees and wasps to me, and visiting some 25 sites himself. In a number of cases the 'swarm' was small or a cast but he obliged the caller by taking the swarm away. Only some 7 swarms were of a decent size. One colony in a roof in Boscombe took two days to remove.

Mohammed and Ahmed's swarm collecting efforts have generated £200.00 income for the Association for which we are all grateful. One of the most interesting honeybee calls

was to Canford school....



The bees were on the third floor of the Canford tower, reached after 94 steps. Quite an effort carrying all the kit up and then back down again, this time with bees. A long and not too easy job as the bees were behind a boarded up 'arrow slit' in the wall in a tiny room containing a boiler which was off the main room where the school chaplain was about to take up residence.



Here the bee vac. proved its use. Mohammed carefully removed the bees with the vac., handed the comb to Ahmed, who rubber banded them into frames and put them into an empty brood box. Those bees that had escaped into the room and were climbing up the windows were hoovered up

and rescued. There was a second boarded up slit in the tiny room and the whole place had an unpleasant smell. Mohammed thought there might be more wildlife there so he took down the second board....



Behind it was a very large and obviously dead hornets' nest. This we also took down, and the room left tidied and hoovered. We were told later that a pest company had been called in ten days earlier to destroy the colony. This had obviously done with poison, but the poison had not killed the hornet pupae and there were still some emerging.

It seemed odd that the chaplain's room should be so high in the tower, but as someone remarked, 'At least he will be closer to God!'

#### Bumble bees....

I had 72 calls in total of which 34 were about bumble bees or other Hymenoptera, and 25 were for honeybees, the latter calls generally passed on to Mohammed. This resulted in 47 visits to various sites. Whereas swarming honeybees tend to pitch up in reasonable places, even if

sometimes a bit high up, bumble bees nest in the most unlikely places. The nest is small, generally can be held in a pair of cupped hands, and can be almost anywhere dry. Old mouseholes are a favourite, possibly found more now in the countryside than the domestic environment in which I am collecting.

#### Bumble bee nesting sites 2020 (34).....

Roofs/wall pipes/vents/soffits	9
Under sheds/decking	8
Compost heaps	6
Hedge bottoms	6
Tree roots	3
Nest box	1
Bin	1

It is instructive to note that that 25 out of these 34 sites were based around human activity. This shows just how much we as humans influence the behaviour of natural creatures, for better or worse. The natural world will always take the best opportunities, man-made or otherwise.

All these bees were either White tailed bumble bees, *Bombus lucorum*, or Buff tailed bumble bees, *B. terrestris*. I had only a couple of Tree bumble bee, *B. hypnorum*, calls. I also had one call about solitary bees, and joy of joys, a call in August to a Hornets' nest in the soffit of a bungalow in Ferndown. The occupier who said that they were there last year (?) had had absolutely no trouble at all with them and was happy to leave them to finish their life cycle, although she will block up the entrance, this winter.

I always try to persuade the caller to keep the bees and leave them to finish their life cycle. Unlike honeybees, bumble bee colonies have fewer occupants, only up to a couple of hundred or so, and they are annual insects. The big, fat bumbles you see in the spring are the previous year's mated queens that have come out of hibernation and are looking for a good nest site. The queen finds a site, produces a few small wax cups, lays eggs, and tends the resulting offspring herself. These first eggs are always workers whom on maturing, take over the foraging, and the queen never leaves the nest again. As with honeybees, workers die and are replaced, and the colony grows until late summer when the queen lays eggs that become new queens and males. These fly off to mate, the males die, and the newly mated queens hibernate, often choosing north-facing banks so that they will not be woken prematurely by winter sun. They then emerge in the spring the following year to continue the cycle.

Generally, bumble bees are quiet and well behaved, but, like all creatures who feel their home threatened, they will defend, with vigour, where they live and raise their young. The two commonest bumbles, White tailed and Buff tailed, (*Bombus lucorum* and *B. terrestris*) are generally calm, but when agitated they will pursue. They tend not follow you as

far as honey bees, about 5 metres or so, but unlike honeybees they can sting more than once. The sting is just as sharp. Tree bumbles are the most aggressive of bumble bees (see below).

The knack to collecting bumble bee colony is to excavate carefully around the nest, without disturbing it, then lifting it, entire and whole, into a closed temporary home. Fine in theory, but being pinged by half a dozen bees as you attempt to do that is trying. I use a nuc. or a specially prepared large plastic box with good ventilation holes covered with mesh and an entrance of some 20mm cut into it. This is covered by one of the rotatable discs that can be set at Open/Closed/Queen excluder or ventilation only. Having got the bees into the box, I place the box back as close as possible to where the nest was, in the same place if possible, and within a minute the bees will start going in and out. As with honeybees, getting the queen is the secret, so lifting the nest entire is key. You now have to leave the box in situ overnight and persuade the householder to come out after dark and rotate the disc to ventilation only. This is not always easy as sometimes they are convinced that the bees will come streaming out and 'get' them. But approaching quietly, no torch, and then rotating the disc takes less than a second and all is safely closed up ready for collection next morning.

Having to dig out a nest is more difficult. The nest can be a metre away from the entrance and the digging is destructive. At one of the shed calls this year, an old 8' by 6' shed, the bees were going in under the front threshold. The caller was taking down the shed, which was in a very poor state, so was happy for me to take up the floorboards. I ended taking every single board up to the very last one where the bees were happily ensconced under the floor. It was a hot day, I was soaked in perspiration and got pinged several times, but we rescued the colony.

This year, and I have no idea why, there were few calls for Tree bumble bees. A mainland European species, tree bumbles are a bee success story. They were first recorded in the UK in Wiltshire in 2011, and have since spread throughout the UK, including as far north as Scotland. One of the reasons for their success is in the name, Tree bumble bees. They nest in holes in trees and the Great British Public loves putting out nest boxes. With the warming climate and readymade apartments, they have thrived. To go from the English south coast to the north of Scotland in just nine years is phenomenal and shows, given the right circumstances, how quickly an airborne visitor can spread. If there is a call for 'a swarm of bees in a nest box' it will be Tree bumbles. The 'swarm' bit is because a large number of males will be buzzing about in front of an occupied nest box waiting for virgin females to emerge so that they can grab them and mate with them.

With Tree bumbles the technique is to arrive after dark, seal the entrance with sponge, unscrew the nest box (no holes or there is trouble), put it in a sealed bin liner and take it to a new home. Screw the box into its new position, pull out the sponge and retire to a safe distance. They come out like Exocet missiles. In contrast, when you put white or buff tailed bumbles in their new location and open the door, they tentatively appear, look round and come out cautiously.

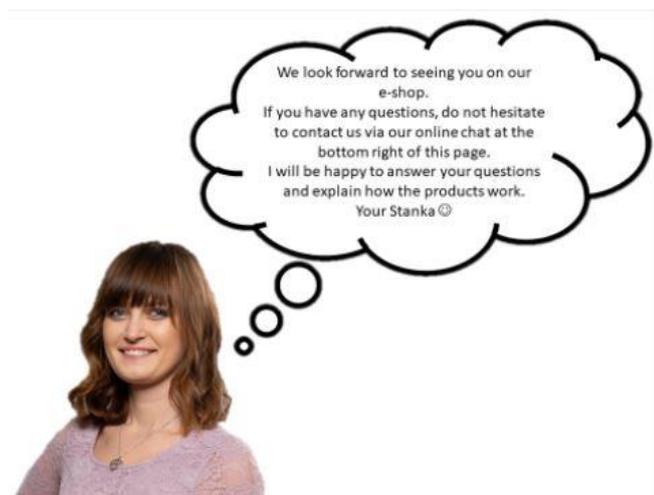
Collecting bees is always interesting and it's rewarding to rescue bees that otherwise would be destroyed.

**Peter Darley**

## Hive Monitoring part 2

This article follows on from part 1 that was in the July 2020 Newsletter. Alla and I are trying monitoring equipment from: <https://beehivemonitoring.com/en/>

As our experience with the first set of Hive Monitoring Equipment had been positive, we bought further sets for our main hives and out apiary hives. Each set of equipment for a hive consisted of a Hive Heart and Scales. Each apiary also had a Solar charged gateway for data transport to the cloud. Setting up number one had been very easy. Getting the Gateway working had been the most complex part which involved Sim card fitting and settings fiddling. For the new equipment, when testing and charging each piece of kit before deployment I ran into problems with all of the new sets of scales. None of them seemed to automatically send data to the cloud. I could only see data from the internal Hive Heart sensor. So I needed support. Their support uses online chat at their website...



At first they seemed to think I had the units configured wrongly but later realised that the software on their servers had just been upgraded and this was causing the problem. The data was being uploaded but not linked to my

"project". We had to go through each scale device in turn with myself putting a random weight on the scale and Stanka using this value as the known key to find and link the scale device to the project which took a while.

All our hive equipment is based on National 14 x 12s. Last month we removed all supers from our hives leaving each hive very similar to another. Our base winter config is (from bottom to top):

Open Mesh Floor (OMF) + entrance block

National 14 x 12 brood body

National 14 x 12 frames x 9

Dummy boards x 2

Crown board

National shallow roof

We need to do some more work really finding out what the baseline weight of this is. It's one thing I forgot to do. In late September we did a final inspection on the hives. The ones which had enough stores in the brood box, so didn't need feeding, weighed around the 30KG mark so we used this weight as our baseline for a "winter prepared hive" and fed those hives that weighed less than this.



What do we really want to know from the monitoring equipment at this time of year and over the winter?

- Hive weight Change

- Hive status

Hardware problems we have had?...

1 - We currently have one set of scales that suddenly started to read 300KG constantly so perhaps a sensor has failed?

2 - The batteries in the Hive Hearts, which are CR2032's, don't seem to last for a very long time, 3-4 months. This was exacerbated by a dodgy batch of Duracells I bought from Amazon which were worse than from Poundland!

Currently we have an alarm on a hive that tells us the internal humidity of the hive is very wrong. It is higher than outside.



So I urgently need to go and investigate this. Water got in or hive tipped on it's side?

Anyway, now we are moving into Winter, I feel Part 3 of this article will be coming in the Spring to see what useful data we got.

Bye for now,

**Dave & Alla Neal**

## Membership Update

### Dear Members

The last BADS year has just ended and as at 30 September 2020, we had a total of 125 members. Whilst we have not been able to continue with our face to face meetings and live training sessions, we have paired up some of our newer beekeepers with some more experienced beekeepers to provide mentoring and support and I hope that this has been a success.

The new BADS year started on the 1<sup>st</sup> October and it is time to send me your renewal forms. If anyone needs a paper form, rather than electronic, please let me know (email [membership@bads-bka.org](mailto:membership@bads-bka.org)) and I will post one out.

Renewal forms can be downloaded from:

[BADS-BKA-Membership-Form-2020-2021-1.pdf](#)

Kind regards

**Anne Moran – Membership Secretary**

## Recipes

### Raspberry honey flapjacks

#### Ingredients

- 150g [butter](#)
- 150g [light brown soft sugar](#)
- 4 tbsp [honey](#) (we used heather honey)
- 300g standard [porridge oats](#) (not jumbo oats)
- 100g [frozen raspberries](#)

#### Method

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6 and line a 20 x 20cm [baking tin](#) with parchment. Melt the butter, sugar, honey and a pinch of salt in a pan. Once the mixture is bubbling and combined, stir in the oats.

Tip the oat mixture into the lined baking tin and press down with the back of a spoon. Scatter over the raspberries, then lightly press them into the oat mixture. Bake for 25-30 mins until golden brown. Leave to cool, then cut into 9 or 12 flapjacks.

**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.

Please email Adrian Rozkovec: [newsletter@bads-bka.org](mailto:newsletter@bads-bka.org)

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