



**THE LEEDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION  
BRANCH OF THE YBKA  
AFFILIATED WITH THE BBKA**



# *“The Leeds Beekeeper”*

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*Fennel on the menu*

“To the Heather” was the cry early one Sunday morning at the end of July and thus Queen Camilla and her royal subjects have departed for their Summer residence in the Otley hills to feast and gorge themselves upon the delicate heather – at least I hope so, the proof will be in how difficult it is to stagger down the hill with my supers in early September.....

Meanwhile at home “The bee man cometh”, well the inspector anyway, as my apiary has been deemed and I quote “to be in an area at risk of exotic pest incursion (anywhere near freight terminals, or timber, fruit or veg importers) due to the Asian hornet incursion last year.” Anyway a clean bill of health (apart from a few pesky wax moths) was declared by Dhonn and Queen Deidre can rest easy whilst supping a G&T down the Rovers Return.

## CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

Here we are, two blinks of an eye and another month is gone and September is here. Last month was a very busy time down at the apiary. We had an excellent masterclass presented by Andy Gowdy on “preparing your colonies for Winter”. We had another taster day with 72 prospective beekeepers attending organised by Chris Barlow our education officer. The Winter course for the new members has started and there were 25 very excited faces in the apiary last week and even bigger smiles after completing their first inspection. Last month I mentioned we had a number of members taking their colonies to the heather. They had a little bit of a shock as EFB was reported in the locality of the colonies. Dhonn Atkinson, the regional bee inspector, was called and after examining all the colonies the all clear was given. The 20 colonies that are at the heather should be returning in about a week’s time and I will let you know how they all got on.

As September arrives it forms part of a continuous process of ending one season and ensuring a successful transition into the next and so autumn arrives. Winter preparations are now upon us and we should be doing our best to ensure all colonies have enough winter stores and are large enough to survive the winter ahead.

Treatment of the colonies for varroa should be well underway. Depending on which method of treatment is being used the aim is to get the colonies as free from varroa as possible before the eggs that will become winter bees are laid.

By now most of us will have removed our summer crop of honey on the colonies and the question we must ask ourselves. Is there enough stores for the long Winter ahead? If not you will have until the end of September to liquid feed with sugar syrup made from 1kg white sugar in 600ml water.

The last apiary day of this year will be the 20th of September, so may I remind anybody that has a nuc can you please remove it before that date. The 27th of September is our first Winter talk at the Newman Center at Crossgates. Not to be missed, it is by Jim Pearson on Skep making. Look forward to seeing you all there.

*Regards*

*Duncan*

## **LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!**

No April Fool's Day hasn't been moved this year.... researchers at Bangor University are indeed developing backpacks for bees to help track them in the wild to identify their pollination habits. Up to now the weight of batteries have prevented small tracking devices from being attached to bees as they are simply too heavy. However, researchers have found a way to harness the bee's own energy in order to recharge the devices potentially providing limitless energy (at least for the life of the bee). Such devices would still be attached to the bee with glue but at the size of a match head and weighing less than two grains of rice, the impact to the bee is minimised.

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*“We have proven our ability to harvest the bee’s electrical energy to enable us to do away with the need for a battery and our end product will weigh only a third of the bee’s body weight, or less than a raindrop.” Dr Cristiano Palego, University of Bangor*

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The device would then emit a signal which could be received by a small follower drone allowing the bee to be tracked, as well as filmed, in real time during its flight. It is hoped that the devices will help to establish the effects of neonicotinoids and other insecticides on bee's abilities to navigate over long distances.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-35103475>

## **NOWT TO SEE HERE**

It can be a strange concept for humans yet alone insects, but now a group of scientists have been able to prove that bees understand the concept of “nothing”, the first invertebrate shown to do so. Researchers at RMIT University in Melbourne first trained bees to differentiate between two platforms that had between one and four shapes on them (Four was the upper limit as that is the maximum number bees have been shown to be able to count to – but that is a tale for another day).

The platform with the least number of shapes on also had a sweet sucrose reward solution associated with it, whilst the platform with the most shapes on had a nasty tasting quinine solution “reward”. It has previously been shown that bees learn quicker if they are “punished” for wrong choices as well as being rewarded for correct choices, a bit of carrot and stick. The bees were trained until they could find the platform with the lowest amount of shapes on it 80% of the time.

In the second stage of the experiment, the bees were presented with two platforms, one with two or three shapes on (and the quinine ‘reward’) and the other with no shapes and the sugary reward. The bees consistently picked the platform with no shapes on it. To further increase the stakes the bees were then presented with two platforms, one again with zero shapes and the other with a number of shapes between one and six. In this case when there was a large difference between the number of shapes e.g zero on one platform and six on the other the bees could distinguish and went to the ‘zero platform’. However when there was only one shape on the platform the bees struggled to distinguish it from zero. This implies that the numerical difference between the two numbers affects how challenging the bees’ find the problem strengthening the view that bees do consider zero as a number.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2142884-bees-are-first-insects-shown-to-understand-the-concept-of-zero/>

## **WORLD RECORD ANYONE?**

Juan Carlos Noguez Ortiz recently set a new world record having sat for an hour whilst covered in bees, despite getting stung twice during his attempt. The record was set in Canada, where Juan sat for an hour in a plastic bubble on the street. “Bee bearding” as the process is known involves suspending the colony’s queen from the chin in a small cage, the rest of the colony when released can smell the queen’s pheromones and crowd around.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-41127644/how-long-could-you-sit-covered-in-bees>

## WHAT IS THE POINT OF WASPS?

It is the perennial question, usually asked during the first al fresco dining experience of the summer when a black and yellow striped individual decides they want to share your jam sandwich, or gate crash your barbecue hunting for a sugary treat. Why are wasps such a picnic pest when bees couldn't care less about your jelly and ice cream? Of course there is then the ability of wasps to impose multiple stings on their victim, which endears them even less to the picnicking Brit. So what would a world be like without them?

There are actually a wide variety of distinct wasp species, over nine thousand in the UK and a hundred thousand globally, but what we would consider as a wasp is *Vespula Germanica*, or the European wasp and it is these which are likely to be the unwelcome picnic guest. The European wasp is a social wasp, living in a colony with a very similar structure to honeybees; one queen is responsible for laying all the eggs in the colony which are then tended to by sterile female workers. The queen overwinters in much the same way as some species of bumblebee do, emerging in the spring and building a small nest to raise the first batch of workers herself. The nest is constructed from wood pulp, formed when collected wood fibres are mixed with water, in contrast to the wax used by honeybees, but the cells are still hexagonal in shape. Incidentally the cells are sealed with a silk cap spun by the larvae. Upon emergence this band of workers can extend the nest as the queen begins to lay more eggs and tend to the larvae leaving the queen to her regal duties. Queen wasps lay around 100 eggs per day in contrast to the 2000+ a typical honeybee queen will manage at the height of the summer. The social side of a wasp colony is very similar to that in a honeybee colony; the workers cooperate and communicate to defend the nest, collect food and tend to the queen.



*The dinner guest no one invites.....*

When the colony reaches a certain size workers begin to give eggs, laid in larger queen cells, a much greater amount of food, these larvae then go on to develop into virgin queens which will then mate with the males and further the species the following year. Obviously male wasps, much like male bees play no role in the running of the hive; they have but one task..... Male wasps are also incapable of stinging, just like their distant male honeybee relatives.

That is all well and good I hear you say, but I still don't want them at my picnic! Now bees spend their time foraging for nectar, bringing it back to the hive turning it into sweet honey (which the beekeeper the steals), wasps in contrast forage for insects like greenfly or juicy caterpillars. This protein rich food is returned to the nest and fed to the larvae, who digest it and then secrete a sugary droplet which is fed upon by the adults. At this time of year, the queen wasp has stopped or drastically reduced her egg laying as the colony will die off and only the queen will overwinter. As a result there are many less larvae in the nest and thus the adult wasps cannot satisfy their sugary needs and thus

need to find an alternative dealer. Fortunately up and down the land, humans have taken to their gardens/parks etc, sugary treats in hand and the wasps arrive to get an easy fix.

It is estimated that social wasps in the UK are responsible for consuming 14 million kilograms of insect prey across a typical summer. That is a lot of greenfly on your roses or cabbage whites on your brassicas if there were not wasps to eat them. Their varied diet, which may include the odd dead honeybee, enables them to efficiently compete with other species in areas it invades.

This year scientists from University College London (UCL) and the University of Gloucestershire are conducting a large scale research project looking into the spread of wasps and their preferred nesting locations. It is hoped this will become an annual event to track how this important ecological species is affected by our changing environment.

<http://www.bigwaspsurvey.org/>

### ANYONE GOT A BUCKET?

Well it isn't what you would normally expect to drip through the ceiling, but for one family in Market Harborough it was honey not water that began to ooze through the light fitting. Naturally beekeepers were called to discover an extensive colony within the roof space which had clearly been in residence for a while.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-41036111>



*Just paper over it; no one will notice © Ecclesiastical*

### BEES ON THE BOX

For those of you that missed it, a recent episode of Countryfile Summer Diaries, followed an urban beekeeper in Bristol showing that you don't need green spaces to keep bees (35 mins into episode).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b093stcr/countryfile-summer-diaries-2017-episode-5>

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*The record number of sustained stings one person has had, and survived to count them, is 2,243 a Guinness World Record set in 1962 by Johannes Relleke in Zimbabwe.*

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## LBKA AT YORKSHIRE DAY

One of the many activities of the Association over the summer was an LBKA stand at the Yorkshire Day festivities at Lotherton Hall on Tuesday 1st August.

This was an opportunity for local organisations to come together to create an event for the whole family with thirty-five arts & crafts stalls including Silk painters, Glass crafts, History groups, Garforth in Bloom, Photographic societies, Knitting groups, WI and many more.

Other entertainment was provided by Donkey and dog shows, jazz bands, brass bands and choirs. A popular attraction was the 'Cake Challenge' hosted by Sandy from the Great British Bake Off 2015

The event was well supported, we had visitors to the LBKA stand throughout the day, the observation hive was a great attraction, the candle-makers never stopped and we just about sold out of honey!



*Candle making*



*Interest in the observation hive*

It was only in the last twenty minutes that we had a downpour - quite annoying as the gazebos were drenched and the afternoon helpers got a soaking as we packed away.

Helpers throughout the day included John Duffy, Sal Tipping, Michelle Priestley, Alison Elgie-Heaton, Robin Tomlinson, Katey Slater and Cath Graham.

Thanks to everyone for their support.



*LBKA stand*

## OFF T'MOORS

Eight o'clock..... in the morning..... at Sainsbury's in Otley..... on a Sunday?. Surely Chris had made a typo in his email somewhere? But no, on a bright July day a small gaggle of beekeepers assembled in Sainsbury's car park, with hives in tow ready for their heather adventure. A few striped escapees danced in the rear windscreen as the bee convoy meandered down the country lanes. In depth directions had been prepared by Dave Barrett – and given the secluded location it was probably as well!

The track got narrower, and bumpier, and narrower still, past the farm, over the cattle grid and onto the moors beyond. In the adjoining field the cows began to crowd around the wall keen to investigate the early morning invaders in their strange suits. And in case anyone was still feeling sleepy, Chris had brought his bright orange bee suit (think Guantanamo Bay); ideal if you ever need to hide in a Red Leicester factory. Four hives were unloaded in quick time onto breeze blocks and pallets then the doors were unplugged

and the hum of thousands of bees began to fill the skies orientating themselves to their new location, hunting out the best forage in the area. Indeed they didn't have far to go, with great swathes of the surrounding hillside purple in hue. Breakfast dead ahead! Tally Ho!

Over the next week additional hives were added (from those who like their duvets on a Sunday, and Mr “I am definitely not taking Bees to the heather this year” Barrett), including a rather interesting contraption (possibly straight from Wesley Pegden's shed) of six hives mounted to a trailer – the speedy way to get your bees to the heather!



*Heather just up t'hill*



*Hive with porch*



*Mobile heather hives*



*Cut comb in the making*

Beneath was two supers packed with heather honey and an army of bees beginning the capping process. Despite reading of some bees' reluctance to draw out cut comb sections, due to the confined space, my ladies had no such issue doing a grand job. Perhaps I should have taken three supers.....? (Or is that greedy?!)

All in all, it has been an interesting experience, one which I plan to repeat next year – with a bit more preparation and hopefully implementing all of Dave's tips and tricks. So for those of you that like a bit of heather honey on their morning toast, keep your eyes peeled as there should be some jars (and maybe even some cut comb) available from some LBKA members at the end of the month! And for those of you who have went to Dave's talk this year and haven't been to the heather before I would highly recommend it.



*The hive site from the air*

Personally I had gone for two supers on my hive with, several of the frames containing inserts for cut comb honey (1, because I fancied having a go at doing some, and 2, because it saves trying to extract it.....). Also following Dave Barrett's masterclass the week before I had gone for the "take them up empty", sink or swim approach; and thus had my fingers crossed for a few days of sunshine to give my ladies a chance to get some supplies in.

No sooner were the bees installed on t'hill, when an email from Chris dropped into my inbox – EFB/AFB in north Leeds; within 3 miles of our temporary apiary site. Dhonn the inspector was contacted and agreed to inspect all the colonies the following Monday (meanwhile the bees were subject to the [1980 Bee act](#) – meaning they couldn't be moved without permission from the man from the ministry). A clean bill of health was given to all, phew!

A mid-August inspection was called for to make sure there was still sufficient room in the hive. Once more it was a glorious day and as soon as I got to the field there was a whiff of heather honey in the air which became almost intoxicating as the hive lid was removed.

## ASK THE BEEKEEPER

Have you got a burning beekeeping question that you want an answer to? Then please send it to [editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk](mailto:editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk) and we will do our best to find you an answer!

## 12OZ HEXAGONAL JARS

Hopefully your bees have been busy and you now have lots of honey and not enough jars to put it in.... fear not LBKA have the answer! 12oz (340 g) hexagonal jars with lids are available in the shop at a bargain price of 23p each, they come loose so you can buy as many as you require. Please bring a cardboard box to carry them home in. If you require a large quantity, please email Duncan [thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk) or ring him on 07855 308143

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to [editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk](mailto:editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk) by 31st August.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### September

Saturday 9th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Wednesday 27th – Winter Talk – 7pm Newman centre - Practical session on working with straw / starter skep making.

### October

Wednesday 4th – Winter Course

Saturday 14th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 21st-Sunday 22nd - YBKA Honey Show

Wednesday 25th – LBKA AGM – 7pm Newman centre

Thursday 26th – Saturday 28th – National Honey Show