



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



# “The Leeds Beekeeper”

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The first full inspection of Spring is always a good occasion – how have the ladies coped through the Winter, what should my priorities be in the coming weeks? A 100% (2 out of 2) Winter survival rate ensured a happy beekeeper. Not a great deal to report – a bit of blue mould on the outside frame, a family of woodlice taking up residence beneath the crown board. Plenty of stores left after the winter and a good amount of pollen ready for the hungry brood.

So beyond the other half getting stung on the nose whilst returning a pollen patty the dog had run off with, which was not remotely funny for anyone involved.... (honest), nothing much to report.

### CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

In May the beekeeping season is in full swing and the management you now give to your colonies will determine the success or failure of your endeavors a good honey crop or a poor one. May is the start of the swarming season. Swarming can occur as early as April but this is unusual; the likelihood of swarming increases throughout May, is at its peak during the second half of the month and throughout most of June and then diminishes in July swarm control is the main target of management over the next two months and is arguably the most difficult skill in beekeeping bar none and I include varroa control in that assessment.

The Colony will be building up to maximum brood size during May and hopefully will be collecting plenty of nectar from the spring flowers. The nectar can still be relatively low in sugar content and can therefore take up a lot of storage space when initially brought in. It's very important to ensure that there is sufficient space in the hive both for the increase brood area and for storing of nectar. At this time of the year there cannot be too



*Dandelion Breakfast*

much space in the supers so put supers on early, a lack of space can promote swarming.

Regular inspections become very important at this time of the year. Seven day inspections are best and they will soon give you a chance to perfect the swarm control measures that you have been thinking about over the winter period.

If your colony is making preparations for swarming then knocking down the queen cells may delay the process but it is unlikely to prevent it and the chances are that you will miss one or two cells because bees seem to be very good at hiding them. It is better to be ready to control the situation by carrying out an artificial swarm than to lose half of your bees and most of your honey crop. You do not have to use a standard Pagden method use whichever method of swarm control works for you.

Many beekeepers see swarming as a bad thing; bees out of control and potentially causing a nuisance to neighbours. Swarming is a natural process of colony replication and without this process, honeybees would have died out many years ago. It is one of the most important activities of the colony that we must understand and we must work with the bees to help them through the process. There are many methods of swarm control that have been proposed over the years and it is incumbent on us to learn one or two of these so that we may be prepared when the colony is in a position to swarm.

Comb exchange should be continued as the brood nest expands old frames can be moved gradually to the outer edges of the brood nest and when empty removed from the hive. They can be replaced by frames with clean drawn foundation but if new foundation is used it is better to have the replacement frame one in from the end. This is because bees often make a mess of end frames as they have less room to work in the gap against the hive wall.

So till next time happy beekeeping.

*Regards*

*Duncan Brearley*

### **PUDSEY HONEY REQUEST**

Hi, My daughter suffers from hayfever quite badly and I have been told that if I give her local honey it might lessen the symptoms. I am struggling to find any in our local shops including farm shops. I just wondered if you have any details of local beekeepers that I could get in touch with. We live in Pudsey, Leeds. Thank you for your help

Joanna Duffy

*If you think you can help Joanna then please contact the newsletter ([newsletter@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk)) and we will put you in touch with her.*

## THERE'S A HORNET IN YOUR CAULI

Unless you have spent the last month living under a rock in outer Mongolia, it will have been difficult to miss the fact that Asian Hornets have once again been spotted on UK shores and this time a bit closer to home. A hornet was found in a cauliflower in Bury, Lancashire which had been transported in cold storage from Boston, Lincolnshire. The member of public who spotted it took photos of it and sent them to the NNESS, unfortunately the hornet concerned absconded once warmed up and remains at large in the Bury area.

For more details please follow the link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-identified-in-lancashire>

The following comes from Margaret Wilson, Chair of the trustees of the BBKA.

### Asian Hornet

There has been a sighting of an Asian Hornet in Bury, which was transported there from a farm in Lincoln. The hornet was a Queen and was spotted but not captured and has flown free to start a nest and rear a new colony.

Please can every beekeeper monitor the insects in their garden, allotment or hedgerows, it is best if you spend about 15 minutes or longer looking at one area as insects can come and go quite frequently.

If members use a monitoring trap, please check it daily, release the good insects after making sure that an Asian Hornet is not there. In Spring the preferred food is carbohydrates, so bait your trap accordingly but do remember not to use anything your own bees would eat.

If you can identify the insects trapped it would help but if you cannot, take a photograph with your phone. If you do see an Asian Hornet on a hedgerow, again take a picture but make sure that you follow its flight path and make a note of the direction as Asian Hornets fly in a straight line from food to colony.

Should you spot an Asian hornet, please call your bee inspector and alert your own branch committee so that we can extend the searches quickly.

We cannot stress how dangerous these Hornets can be to our pollinating insects.

*Margaret Wilson Chair of Trustees BBKA*



*Bee enemy number one © Jean Haxaire*

## NUMBER 42 WITH CHIPS



*What is on your bees' menu?*

the nectar and pollen that is collected from the flowers – bonus bacteria are include too.

The Brits are well known for their love of foreign food, indeed there are around 57,000 fast food outlets in England, but what about bees? Well it seems too that bees have a penchant for the exotic and that can play havoc with their digestion. Recent research suggests that it is not only the amount of flowers that we plant but also the type that is important and we should be looking towards native species. But what is wrong with a bee going out for a Mexcian dahlia or a Chinese peony? Well it is not only

The pollen is returned to the hive and with the assistance of the bacteria fermented into bee bread. This acts a little like probiotic yoghurt in bees, controlling their gut bacteria and perturbations in this delicate balance it is believed can lead to pathogens overcoming a bee's first line of defence and entering via the digestive tract. If bees are visiting plants and flowers from around the world which have been imported into the UK, then there is the potential for a different bacteria burden to be present, which leads to subsequent disturbance of the bee's gut bacteria.

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*“Bees can't ferment pollen on their own, they need a bacterial community to preserve it, much in the same way we preserve milk in the form of cheese and yoghurt.” Dr Donkersley*

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During his research Dr Donkersley compared hives in more natural environments with those in urban or agricultural monocultures and found that more diverse bacteria within the bee bread was found in more natural environments.

So next time you are reaching for the Indian takeaway menu, think of the bees.....

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ece3.3999>

## COLOSS SURVEY

Many of you are familiar with the BBKA and NBU winter surveys that are circulated annually, well now there is another to add to the list. COLOSS is a European project consisting of a network of researchers, beekeepers and government representatives that provides resources and opportunities to disseminate latest bee keeping research.

To take part in their colony survey please click [here](#).

## AS BUSY AS A BEE?

I am sure we have all heard the old adage “As busy as a bee”, but then that leads to the question how busy is a bee? And are all bees equally as busy?

Well straight away I think we can discount the drones from this discussion – one task they have..... and can't feed themselves so “busy” isn't something that can be applied in this case. A forager bee can make up to one hundred trips per day but do all apply themselves? Research from the University of Illinois studied five honeybee colonies by tagging between 100 and 300 worker bees per hive. These bees were then monitored by their small micro transponder tag to map each flight direction and the time of that flight with surprising results. Over the next few months it quickly became evident that not all the bees were equally busy. Twenty percent of the foraging bees accounted for fifty percent of the flight activity during the study. However even these bees weren't always busy, with peaks and troughs in their activity levels during the experiment. In order to determine if “busy bees” was an innate or adaptive response, researchers removed the busiest twenty percent of bees to see if the rest could take up the slack. Immediately following their intervention flight activity at each hive was drastically reduced, but by the next day normal levels were resumed as the void was filled. Some of the bees that had been sat with their feet up increased their flight activity levels by up to 500 percent.



*How busy are your bees?*

So maybe bees aren't as busy as we think maybe they just “do enough”

## NEONIC BAN UPHELD

Since its introduction in 2013, the restriction of neonicotinoid use has proved somewhat controversial with neither side able to produce definitive evidence as to the effects, negative or otherwise of their use. Indeed, research conducted last year by the manufacturers of the three neonicotinoids covered by the ban, imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam, suggested an overall negative impact to the environment despite pockets of inconsistent results.

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*"Bee health remains of paramount importance for me since it concerns biodiversity, food production and the environment." EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis.*

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The extension to the ban comes as a result of a recent report by the European Food Safety Authority, which concluded neonicotinoids posed a major threat to bee species regardless of where and how they were used outdoors. As a result, the current ban has been upheld and extended largely restricting neonicotinoids to greenhouse use.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43910536>

## BUMBLEBEE CAKE POPS

Many thanks to David Mack who contacted us to alert us to Lidl's recipe for bumblebee cake pops – I am sure some of the talented Mary Berry's amongst our members can modify them to be honeybees?

<https://recipes.lidl.co.uk/Recipes/Bumble-bee-cake-pops>



*Bee pops for tea?*

## ROOM FOR ONE MORE?

We have all transported bees in cars and had “a few” escape but Wallace Leatherwood had an interesting journey when an entire swarm escaped inside his car.

<https://news.sky.com/video/man-drives-with-swarm-of-bees-in-car-11360451>

## BEE SURVEY



*Bee pops for tea?*

From 17th May until the 30th June Friends of the Earth are running their annual bee survey once more. This is a chance for you to log any of the 270 species of bee resident to the UK during your travels. So if you know your carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*) from your tawny mining bee (*Andrena fulva*) then get logging your sightings. Alternatively, if you aren't sure what bee you have spotted the app provides a handy reference image.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bee-count>

## POLLINARIUM

The Pollinarium will be a parametrically designed greenhouse pavilion and public laboratory and experience running throughout this summer 2018 in the gardens of York Art Gallery – so if you find yourself in York it should be well worth a visit.

## SIAFS

Stimulating Innovation in the Agrifood sector' (SIAFS) is a fully funded ERDF business support project running till end March 2019 for SME Agrifood businesses in West, North and East Yorkshire. They run a range of workshops and networking events and have a link with FERA at Sand Hutton offering a £5000 voucher for any business who might find it useful to look at some science? For more details please see their website.

<https://www.agrifoodinnov.com/vouchers/>

## DAHNT'APIARY

### Masterclasses in full swing



*Cleanliness is next to godliness*

It was a cold, damp and misty night in mid-April but a few brave souls ventured to the apiary for Andy Gowdy's presentation on Apiary hygiene. With a bottle of bleach, a container of Flash, soda crystals and gas canisters with a variety of hoses, Andy was able to demonstrate cheap and easy methods of disinfecting a hive and beekeeping equipment. All products available at local stores for a minimal payout.

By 7.45pm the light was getting low, the kettle was boiling and the chill was setting in but at least it didn't rain. Thanks to Andy for an informative talk and practical demo.

For a link to the NBU hygiene factsheet please click [here](#).

### Winter course get 'hands on'

A wonderful sunny evening on 18th April, enabled the Winter course delegates to start their practical sessions in the apiary. Andrew Dart, Helen Lowry, Andrew Hebden and Dave Cook were the tutors instructing the potential new Beekeepers on good practice during hive inspections. The course delegates listened attentively and participated in the inspections by handling the frames of bees and identifying honey, pollen and brood within the honeycomb. With their enthusiasm fired up the course delegates are eagerly awaiting their next inspection, hopefully on an equally sunny evening next week.



*New beekeepers look on as Dave Cook talks them through the hive.*

### Taster Day

Saturday 12th May 2018 saw 65 delegates attend the Leeds Beekeepers Taster sessions. After an apprehensive start the 'wannabee' beekeepers soon settled in and eagerly investigated the contents of the hives. The lovely sunny day brought out the best in the bees - no-one received any stings.

At the end of the session one delegate declared 'it was the best Christmas present ever'- she'd been gifted a place on the course several months ago. She's now hoping to follow-up her session by booking onto the beginners beekeeping course in the near future.

The next Taster session on Sat 11th August still has places left in the afternoon but the morning session is already full - clearly an indication of public interest in bees and beekeeping.

## COUNTRYSIDE LOVERS – CAN YOU INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION?

Leeds BKA are joining Barkston Ash BKA in a marquee at Ledston for the 2018 **Countryside Live** event **Wednesday 23rd and Thursday 24th May**. This is a great event that puts smiles on so many young faces that may have never before visited the countryside.

Countryside Live is an agricultural fair for children on the Ledston Estate, near Castleford thanks to support from the Wheler Foundation, (a charity encouraging agriculture, forestry and rural industry for the benefit of the public). The event is organised by Countryside Learning, a national charity that connects children, families and teachers with the countryside, it delivers education outside the classroom giving inner city children the chance to experience the countryside around them.



*Can you inspire the beekeepers of the future?*

The event on the Ledston Estate will include a host of exhibitors such as the Ferret World Roadshow, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Waterfowl (meet the ducks), The Bat Show, The Bug Lady, Willow Weaving, Corndolly Making, National Trust, West Yorkshire Police – Wildlife Crime, Beagles, Gundogs, Xtreme Falconry, The Sheep Show, Environmental Explorers – Owls in the Countryside and many more including Leeds & Barkston Ash Beekeepers.

Each day 8-10 groups of approximately 30 children from Yorkshire schools attend the Beekeeping marquee. After a short presentation the children visit each of the four stations, i.e. Honey tasting, an Observation Hive, a Cut-away Hive and Dressing-up in beekeeping suits. LBKA will look after the Honey tasting but volunteers may also assist at the other stations if preferred.

I'd really appreciate it if you could participate in this event. Volunteers need to be on site just before 9am each day and leave just after 3.00pm. Unfortunately, half day attendance is not permitted unless you can walk off-site as there's no movement of traffic during the day due to the large number of children circulating throughout the day. Equipment will be taken care of; you just need to turn up on the day.

If you think you can help please contact me ([education@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:education@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk))

Regards,

*Cath Graham*

## ARE YOU A BEEKEEPER?

It's that time of year again. I've learned to answer the phone with care. If it starts with "Are you a beekeeper" or "You don't know me but..." or "A friend says you might be able to help me?". Then I know it's a bee call and I need to tread warily. Their description tells whether or not it's wasps or bumbles or honeybees. If it's the latter, I need to find out where they are (cavities in walls or lofts are a no no for me). And how far away. Then I might confess to being a beekeeper 😊



*Dovecote in the apiary*

I had one of these calls yesterday. The bees had overwintered, always a good sign, but they were in a dovecote, and about 5 miles away. So it passed the key tests and I agreed to take a look. The dovecote was home-made and the owner gave a good and detailed description of its construction. As you can imagine, this helped enormously when I was undoing it to get to the bees. I was given permission to remove sections and with an understanding that there might be some damage. After they'd finished flying I simply (simply! it weighed a ton!) took to my apiary and released the bees to fly.



*Dismantling begins.....*

A couple of days later I decided to tackle it. The accompanying photos will help "tell the tale". The cote came to bits in sections. Thankfully there was little damage. I quickly got to the bees and started to cut out the comb. Then, after shaking off the bees into their new hive, the comb was cut to size. I fitted/wedged it into super frames and tied with string around the frame to help secure. They filled seven such frames. They didn't have much honey. And I tried, but failed, to spot the queen. I'm hoping that



*Nearing the back of the brood nest*



*Comb secured in a super frame*

the bees will improve on my efforts and will anchor / secure the comb overnight.

There was plenty of brood and only time will tell if I DID get the queen and the colony goes on to thrive....

*Dave Barrett*



*Finally in their new home*

## **INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION**

Andy Gowdy and Cath Graham recently entertained 350 children at Atherton Community Primary School in Sherburn in Elmet. A series of 6 presentations throughout the day introduced the children to beekeeping and the value of bees to the environment; this was followed by hands-on activities - dressing up in bee suits, participating in honey tasting and, most exciting of all, viewing the bees in the observation hive.

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*"Both of my children (aged 4 & 7) loved finding out about the bees - have also been talking about them all weekend"*

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The children had been studying bees throughout the week, the LBKA participation was requested to consolidate the facts on bees taught by their teachers and to provide an insight into the activities within a hive. It certainly seemed to excite the children, the level of chatter was deafening as the children eagerly moved from one station to the next. Some were very keen on the honey, even asking for more.

*Cath Graham*



*Attentive faces look on to a beekeeping demo*

## **WORLD BEE DAY**

I am sure you have already circled it on your calendar and have got your ladies a jug of sugar syrup ready to help them celebrate.... But in case you have missed it 20th May is World Bee Day. Why 20th May I hear you cry – well it is after the birthdate of Anton Janša (1734–1773), a Slovenian beekeeper, regarded amongst Slovenian beekeeping circles as the pioneer of modern beekeeping.

## TOPICAL TIPS — MAY

Well May is probably the busiest month of the year. Colonies are strong, bringing in the honey and wanting to swarm. It can be exhausting if you have a lot of colonies on the Rape – which needs regular extracting if you're to avoid solid combs! Some detail then :-

### Inspections

First inspections are simply to check that all's well. You will need to inspect your colonies regularly to ensure that they have enough room to store the honey that is currently flowing in (particularly if you're lucky enough to be near Oil Seed Rape). Most of my colonies have started the first super and two are into the second. I make a practice of leaving a spare super on each colony above the crown board. They will ignore it unless they've run out of room – and then they'll start to fill it with honey (far better than them using the roof void!).

Inspections are also vital of course for swarm prevention. Whilst you can stretch the time in between inspections by clipping the queen's wings, most beekeepers keep to the traditional weekly visits. Note the strongest colonies as these will tend to be the first to want to swarm. If time is tight you could "risk it" by limiting inspections to these strongest stocks (doesn't always work though as smaller ones can swarm too). In my own colonies (3 May) there were plenty of drones but none were producing queen cells – yet. The lull before the storm I think.

### Honey Extraction

If your bees are working the rape then you'll need to extract the honey before it starts to set in the comb. Rape is a brassica plant whose honey will set quickly. I tend to extract the honey every two to three weeks. As the rape flowers for about 6 weeks that means at least two sessions extracting / filtering. There is an alternative school of thought where the beekeeper simply leaves the honey alone until the Rape has finished flowering and then take it all off. This then has to be cut out of the frames and melted. This used to be a messy and time consuming job using a Pratley tray. I didn't care for doing it this way as it's time consuming and tends to overheat the honey. It did though allow you time to focus on other things – swarm prevention and control etc. – dealing with the honey when it better suits your availability. Recently though LBKA has invested in a temperature controlled hot air tank. The combs of solid honey are placed in an upper filter and a fan circulates temperature controlled heated air which melts both wax and honey. Its remarkably quick and efficient. But for me, its still the last resort. I prefer to extract it whilst it's still runny and keep my drawn comb intact.

### Prepare for Swarms

I've started to get my spare brood boxes out ready for the artificial swarming – and swarm collections. It also pays to prepare the frames with new foundation at the same time.

I had some frames with foundation left from last year. The wax foundation tends to go “stale” – it becomes brittle and unattractive to the bees. It’s said that swarms will work this stale foundation whereas if used in ordinary colonies as a frame replacement it will tend to be shunned / chewed into holes. There is though a simple way to restore it to soft and attractive wax – simply warm it with a hairdryer. It works. You’ll see it change from having a dull appearance to one of fresh wax – nice and soft with a shine to the surface.

### Comb Honey

I also like to produce Heather cut comb honey. As the bees are in prime wax building condition in May I give them the thin foundation to draw out on the Rape crop. Carefully extracted and cleaned up by the bees it can be stored ready for use in August on the heather moors.

Happy Beekeeping *Dave Barrett*

### SWARMS

Spring is in full swing and thoughts begin to turn to swarms and once again I am asking you to step up to the mark to help in this very busy and important time. The only way we can collect swarms within the local area is with your help. For the uninitiated this is how it works:

I will ring you with all the information as to where it is postcodes etc you pick a time convenient for you to collect and then you go and retrieve it. I will have sorted the donation of £30.00 before you go, of which you get £10.00 for your out of pocket expenses, the remaining £20.00 goes to LBKA and of course you keep the bees so really it is a no brainer. All you need to do is e-mail [thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk) with your contact phone number and the postcode(s) you wish to collect from and I will do the rest.



*Can you catch a swarm?*

The one rule I have is that you must have kept bees for at least 12 months. If you have never collected a swarm before don't worry as I will get an experienced beekeeper to show you and make sure the swarm is easy and accessible (No cherry pickers required).

Looking forward to hearing from all of you.

*Duncan Brearley – Swarm Coordinator*

## 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!

*Queen was marked last week, replaced in brood box, QX added, super on top. She is a 2017 queen, performed well last year, good honey yield, calm bees and no issues. Re-inspected this week, no eggs, no larvae, no sign of her in the brood box..... checked the super - full of brood. Clearly she has managed to sneak through the QX since the last inspection.*

*So the question is, is it just coincidence she has squeezed through or could marking her have caused a loss in condition allowing her to nip through? Secondly, if she has now found out she can squeeze through the QX is there anything that can be done to discourage her repeating the feat?*

Well the good news is that you've still got the queen, albeit in the wrong place 😊 You don't say what sort of queen excluder you've got. The old ones made out of pressed metal are notorious, after use, for the odd break between the holes which queens find and get through. But the modern plastic ones are very robust and I've had no such experience of such age related damage. So the starting point is to look for damage and replace if necessary.

Now to the queen squeezing through. There was a situation fairly recently when The trade had a faulty batch of plastic queen excluders, but these had gaps too small even for the workers to get through. So I'd rule out gaps that were too large. And I'd say that a queen who is in full lay just wouldn't be able to squeeze through a queen excluder. You describe her as in full lay both before (in the brood box) and after (in the super) so I'd rule out your queen squeezing through. And let's not forget that this same queen excluder was working as planned before your inspection. Perhaps (but never experienced it myself) a virgin queen or a queen starved to slim down in preparation for swarming could manage to, but not one in full lay.

So if it's not a faulty queen excluder? and the queen can't have squeezed through, then she's somehow got to have gained access during your beekeeping operation? Nipped out of the brood box and onto the "wrong" side of the queen excluder as you were putting it in place? Beekeeper error?

What are your plans to relocate her back where she belongs? I guess that there would still be sealed brood in the brood box and you will have simply put her back in there? Then re arranged as normal, queen excluder and the super now containing brood. This will hatch in 21 days and the box can "revert" to its proper role as a honey super. If you've lost confidence in your queen excluder, then you'll have replaced it. Then it's just a watching brief to see I'd it happens again? If she really is a "super model" and ultra-skinny then perhaps you've successfully broken the rule book...

*Dave Barrett*

## 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 May

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### May

Saturday 12th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 12th – Taster Sessions

Wednesday 16th/Thursday 17th – Countryside Live

Sunday 20th – World Bee Day

### June

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

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>/Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> – Weekend Course