



“The Leeds Beekeeper”

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A bit snowy out.....

Well what could say “Happy St David’s day” better than a thick covering of the white stuff. Late February had seen Queen Camilla’s subjects out in force taking advantage of the crocuses and other early spring blooms. Deidre’s gang were a little slower to respond but that maybe reflects her slightly shadier pond-side residence. The snow covering saw all but the most dedicated kamikaze pilots confined to barracks for a good 10 days, so it was pleasing to see plenty of activity as the sun returned at the weekend. Plenty of pollen arriving at the hives, which means the queens are busy.

CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

So what do we expect in March, nice weather and Spring, well the official day of Spring has come and gone and we have had some nice weather. Warm enough that the bees have been flying and when watching the bees coming back to their colonies many have pollen in their pollen sacs. Then it arrived “the Beast from the East” and “the Beast from the East Mark II” and what weather we got -5, rain, snow like I’ve never seen. Suddenly I thought I had moved to the Antarctic and I am sure that this very, very cold spell has claimed quite a number of colonies. Hopefully all this has now passed and we can settle down to some normal March spring weather.

The spring build-up of the colony can only be successful if the number of new bees being born exceeds the number of old winter bees that are dying. If for any reason this is not achieved, then a colony will quickly dwindle and die out. In colonies that are going to survive the amount of brood being raised starts to increase sharply at the beginning of March so does the consumption of stores. There's a saying in beekeeping that "the spring feed is best done in the autumn" so if your autumn

management was done correctly you will have no worries about stores.

Now the weather in March will usually not be warm enough for a comprehensive colony inspection. If you have done your job properly at the end of last season it should not be strictly necessary to do a full inspection until well into April

If there are serious problems other than a shortage of food you cannot do much about them at this time of the year anyway. Any inspection you do make should be restricted to lifting up a few frames to check that there's plenty of healthy brood in all stages in the hive. You should already know there is brood from the amount of pollen the bees are bringing in

Extra space may well be required towards the end of the month and I would certainly have at least one super per hive ready. I often put them on at the end of March if the weather is not too cold and the Colony is obviously expanding this also helps in swarm prevention as congestion within the hive is one of the factors that may lead to swarming.

So until we meet again happy beekeeping and get ready for your busy time ahead.

Regards

Duncan Brearley

MASTERCLASSES

And as Spring has sprung now is a good time to start thinking about which areas of beekeeping you want to improve on during the coming year. We have already begun to add masterclasses for the forthcoming year with more to be announced – keep an eye on the website and/or Webcollect. If there is a topic you would like a masterclass on, or a topic you think you could deliver a masterclass on, please contact Cath Graham (education@leedsbeekeepers.org.uk).

4/4/18 - Artificial Swarm by the Pagden Method - Chris Barlow

2/5/18 - Apiary & Colony Hygiene - Andy Gowdy

4/7/18 - Artificial Swarm by the Demaree Method - Andy Gowdy

BULK HONEY AVAILABLE

Roll up, roll up! LBKA have approximately 100 lb of Summer honey available to buy in bulk at a cost of £3 per lb, ready to be put into jars. If anyone is interested in this, please speak to Duncan or David in the shop.



What skills do you wish to improve?

GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW

Information regarding this year's Hive and honey section is now available, so if you have a tasty jar of honey, or an attractive bar of wax, get it entered! [Click here](#) for link.

TOPICAL TIPS - MARCH

It seems like only yesterday that I was quietly very pleased that the season was now over. It was mid-September. I was tired and ready for a Bee-break! And now I'm refreshed and really looking forward to the forthcoming season. This "mood swing" happens every year. And what are we going to do different this year? Well I'm going to:

- create more nucs for queen rearing purposes
- continue to try to prevent swarms / artificial swarms whilst the oil seed rape is in flower (my three apiaries have fields of it adjacent to the hives)
- IF most colonies survive the winter then take some to the beekeeping auctions in Spring

So to Topical Tips

The days are now noticeably longer, a fact that will not have been missed by the bees. The queen will have increased her laying rate considerably during the last few weeks. This means that the growing brood nest will have to be fed. That involves extra work for the worker bees. They will need to collect water to dilute the stored honey to feed the larvae. This can be a fatal activity for some as the water (in puddles or streams) is cold and when ingested causes a lowering of their body temperature and fatal chilling results. There's nothing you can do about this, and they should be strong enough to withstand such losses. In addition, the workers will now start to bring back pollen from early crocus and pussy willow. Although the colony will have stored pollen from last year there's nothing like freshly gathered pollen to boost colony development. The best tip that I can give this month is to resist temptation to interfere with the bees and do nothing. The internal hive temperature is carefully controlled by the bees. If you remove the lid, or worse start to move combs, then you will set back their development. They'll have to work hard to re-establish the correct temperatures/ humidity and some of the brood may become chilled or neglected as a result. Not only that but if the combs are moved / the bees disturbed they may "ball" the queen. This is a strange phenomenon where the bees seek to protect the queen by grabbing her and forming a tight ball around her. Sometimes the ball is so tight that the queen is killed during her period of "protection". The old adage used to be not to inspect the bees until the flowering current bush was in flower. Sadly, the seasons are not so reliable these days and indeed I saw one of these bushes with an odd flower in the middle of February this year!

You can though determine what is going on inside by simply observing activity at the entrance. Here there are two good signs. The first (and most important) is to watch the returning bees to ensure that some are returning with pollen balls on their back legs. This is a sure and certain sign that there is a) a queen present- she's not died during the winter months and b) that the queen is laying –as the bees are bringing back pollen to feed the rapidly developing brood nest. The early pollen producing

flowers, dandelion, pussy willow, crocus etc are eagerly brought back to the hive to boost brood production.

The second is to look for the “dust” created by the bees chewing the cappings off the honey comb to feed the developing larvae. You can sometimes see this at the hive entrance. This is not always visible though as the wind might have blown these cappings away – or the bees might be ultra clean and remove it from the area themselves.

- If you're feeling energetic March is a good time to apply (bee safe) preservatives to your stored hives.
- If you want to be really good, you can start to assemble frames in advance of the season ahead. When the season starts and there are combs to be replaced and artificial swarms to create / swarms to hive you'll be glad that you took the time in the quiet season to do this work. Don't though put the wax in the frames just yet as it will tend to go “stale” if put in much before it's needed.
- You can also make up spare brood boxes etc. ready to house our artificial swarms / swarms. I tend to pre drill / countersink the hives whilst they are still flat packed then it's just a few minutes work to assemble during the season when they're needed.

And those of you that recently did the Skep Making Course and haven't yet finished it off (you know who you are!), you need to get a move on as it's only about six weeks to go before the first swarms start to appear.

Happy beekeeping

Dave Barrett

NIDDERDALE IN THE CITY

Leeds Beekeepers are joining several other organisations in bringing nature to the city in the cloisters of Kirkstall Abbey on Saturday 7th April. Other organisations at the event will include Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Edible Leeds, Upper Nidderdale Moorland Group, The Oral History Project and others. Activities on display will include dry stone wall building, birds of prey displays, stone sculpture and wild food foraging. There'll also be bands providing entertainment.

Leeds Beekeepers will provide candle-making, explanation of the bee colony using the cut-away hive, items of basic bee equipment and, depending on the prevailing weather, an observation hive.

A few volunteers from LBKA will be participating, if you can spare a couple of hours more volunteers would be appreciated (contact Cath Graham malcath@btinternet.com). If you have a family to entertain then why not just join in the fun and have a day out? [Click here](#) for poster link.

HONEYBEES: THE ENEMY?

There is no doubt that at a time of pollinator decline the surge in urban beekeeping has gone some way to retard the rate of decline in honeybee numbers. However, researchers from the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge are now beginning to question what impact this is having on wild bees.

In addition to *Apis Mellifera* there are several hundred species of bees resident in Britain, both solitary and social. The researchers question if the ‘farming’ of honeybees by both the urban beekeeper and more commercially minded bee farmers is actually having an impact on other honeybee species. Are honeybees becoming the pigeon of the bee world? The intervention of the beekeeper allows honeybees to exist within an area at a much higher density than would occur naturally and as nectar sources become available they can quickly mobilise and exhaust it to the detriment of other pollinator species.

The researchers propose there should be greater controls on managed hives – but it is difficult to control where a bee may fly!

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/01/25/urban-beekeeping-harming-wild-bees-says-cambridge-university/>

SPIRAL IS THE NEW FLAT

As beekeepers we don’t allow creativity from our bees, lines of parallel comb are desired and templated for by the use of frames. Such restrictions would not go down well with *Tetragonula Carbonaria*, one of over 500 species of stingless bees, and a species that have a bit of artistic flair when it comes



Spiral hives of Tetragonula Carbonaria

to hive building. Their hive structure is instead based on a spiral design, initially starting from eighty cells. It is believed that this structure enables the queen bee to navigate the hive more efficiently.

Now for those of you who may be worried that stingless bees will not be able to defend themselves fear not as rather they have a couple of different tricks up their sleeves. Firstly, they can bite their enemies injecting irritating formic acid, much like ants. Secondly they collect a sticky substance using their pollen baskets and use it stick any hive intruders to the spot.

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/02/australian-stingless-spiral-bee-hive-construction-tetragonula-carbonaria-spd/>

SKELTON GRANGE BEE AND MOTH ART WORKSHOPS 2018

All of our courses are set in the Environment Centre's beautiful light & airy eco-building set in a nature reserve with ponds, meadows, woodland, vegetable garden and fruit orchard. If the weather is inviting, you are very welcome to eat your lunch or drink your cup of tea and wander around...We will sustain you with tea & coffee, and some very gorgeous cake from [That Old Chestnut](#), a friendly Leeds-based bakery that uses organic ingredients 100% free from animal products. Please bring a packed lunch with you - local options are limited. All proceeds will go to support the great charitable work of The Conservation Volunteers at Skelton Grange Environment Centre, which you can read more about on our [website](#)

Printmaking with Laney Birkhead 'Bee block carving and stamping'

Sunday 22nd April 10am-5pm £70

Explore the ancient art of block carving and create several small Bee 'blocks' with beekeeper and artist Laney Birkhead, to keep and print again and again. Print your designs using hand burnishing, stamping and using a small etching press onto a range of specialist papers and textured surfaces, then turn them into 3D stand up cards. A wonderful introduction to this diverse printmaking method allowing you to make beautiful cards to keep or give away, helping to raise awareness of the importance of bees to our human food chain.

Creative workshop with artist & printmaker Laney Birkhead - 'Moth mobiles'

Sunday 13th May 10am-5pm £70

Enjoy turning simple art materials into several 3D Moths with artist Laney Birkhead, using printed papers and collage materials to attach to a mobile to hang in your window at home. Design your moths using stencils and a range of creative surfaces and textures. A lovely reminder of these important and often overlooked pollinators.

Honey Comb Light-Catcher stained glass workshop with Caryl Hallett

Saturday 30th June 10am-1pm £70

Yorkshire based Glass artist Caryl Hallett will lead a beginner's session, learning how to select, cut and join stained glass using copper foiling methods, enabling you to make your own honeycomb light catcher to take home. The materials for stained glasswork are very expensive, but please rest assured that all materials and tools will be provided within the workshop price!

Bumble-bee stained glass workshop with Caryl Hallett

Saturday 30th June 2pm-5pm £70

This copper foiling workshop with glass artist Caryl Hallett builds on introductory skills with stained glass, so previous experience with glass work is advisable. You will create a light catcher to hang in your window in the shape of a Bumble Bee. The materials for stained glasswork are very expensive, but please rest assured that all materials and tools will be provided within the workshop price!

DAH N T'APIARY

We put eight colonies into winter. Most are on double brood boxes. All had plenty of food and have been treated against Varroa. I'm hoping that most survive the winter, though an odd loss wouldn't be unexpected.

These are all "teaching colonies" which means that they are inspected by a wide variety of beekeepers during the season. There is inevitably a lack of consistency not only in the inspection process itself but also in the planning/management of these colonies. Not every colony was inspected every week. Written hive records were kept on top of the crown boards but their completion was, on occasions, a bit "hit and miss".



How have your bees done in the winter?

We have decided to try something different this year. Blackboards will be fixed to the pavilion wall and brief notes kept outlining

A) the current state of each colony (queen colour, strength, food status, swarming state, etc) and

B) priorities for next inspection.

Updated weekly this will serve to better inform the volunteer inspectors not only about the state of the colony and what to expect but it will also guide them as to the main the purpose of their inspection.

In addition, it is hoped that this will make interesting reading for members of the public when they visit the apiary during the summer months.

Dave Barrett

BEES ON THE BOX

A recent episode of Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast focused on the plight of British bees, catch up with it on 4OD

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/jamie-and-jimmys-friday-night-feast/on-demand/64947-008>

The Easter episode of Countryfile comes from West Yorkshire and will feature "The Buzz Project" in Kirklees.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09yngmx>

BEE EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Due to a change in circumstances, Tracey no longer is able to keep bees and thus has the following equipment for sale:

- 1 double brood hive on stand with 1 super. Bees were from a split last year then combined before winter so unmarked queen from last year. They were treated with oxalic acid around new year. I've only glanced in so far this year but they look ok after winter.
- 1 stand (in addition to above).
- 2 hives (no bees) with brood box and 1 super, each with a wooden & a polycarbonate crownboard plus queen excluder. The brood boxes & 1 super need new frames.
- 2 plastic dummy boards.
- Syrup rapid feeder.
- 2 mouse guards.
- 2 porter bee escapes.
- Honey extractor (2 frame manual extractor).
- Honey bucket.
- Uncapping fork.
- Honey double strainer.
- Hive tool.
- Hive straps for 1 hive.
- 2 queen marking pens (green & blue).
- Beekeepers rule.
- Some plastic frame ends.
- Queen press in cage.
- 1 packet of fondant.
- Smoker.
- 1 bbwear beige suit with fencing style hood (small to fit size 12 or so).
- Beekeeping book.

I think that's most things, there may be a few other odds & ends that I'd just include.

All equipment was either from Leeds beekeepers or Thornes. It does need a bit of a scrub but all in working order.

£450 – would ideally like to sell as job lot but may split.

I'm just beyond Tadcaster rather than in Leeds but it's not too far at all for someone to collect.

Thanks for your help with this.

Tracey (tracey7190@hotmail.com)

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 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 or ring him on 07855 308143

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk by 31st March.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March

Saturday 10th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Wednesday 28th – John Chandler – Pollen in Honey

April

Wednesday 4th April – Apiary meetings restart

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

Sunday 29th – Beverley Beekeepers Auction - Viewing from 10:30 am, Auction begins at 11:00 am