

## Wax and Frames for Sale



**Your association now has both deep and shallow frames plus wax for British Standard National hives. This is available for purchase at our monthly meetings which are held at the Friends meeting House Newcastle-under-Lyme**

### Cost

**10 x deep Hoffman frames...£6:00**  
**10 x SN1 shallow frames...£5:50**  
**10 x deep foundation.....£9:00**  
**10 x shallow foundation.....£5:50**

### Editor's Note

As I write we are towards the end of April and apart from the odd day there has been little opportunity to get into the hives.

However, when the bees are flying, the activity on the landing boards revelled plenty of yellow pollen going in from the Pussy Willow...this is an encouraging sign and what's more also highlights how much we can learn from observing the activity of our bees from the outside of the hive. Here's looking forward to warmer days!



For our association to run smooth, efficiently and offer its members the best services, it needs volunteers.

Please consider whether you can offer the odd day representing your association at summer events and fetes. Or whether you would like to come along to the committee meetings...there are only four a year!

## Meetings Programme

|   |  |
|---|--|
| May 4th... Monthly meeting Friends Meeting House<br>7:30pm                                | Geoff Critchley "Making Increase/Cut it Out"   |
| June ...Association Apiary visit<br>Richmond Street (date to be announced)                | Richmond Street Apiary Stoke.  |
| July 4th... Summer Social   | An invitation from association members Melanie and Justin Bishop to join them at their home. |
| September ...Monthly meeting<br>Joint meeting with South Cheshire (venue to be announced) | Celia Davies topic to be confirmed   |
| Saturday October 15th...Honey Show  | The Minton Center Hartshill  |

For further information see website

## Can you help this Keele Student

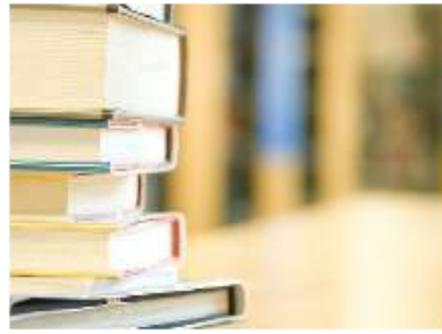
contact : "Linzi Thompson"

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I am a second year Applied environmental science student at Keele University and have begun preparation for my third year dissertation project. For my project I was hoping to study contaminants in bee honey and I am looking for donations of honey samples (approximately a tablespoon) from local beekeepers for my study, which would be gathered over summer - July/August time.

I was hoping that I could post a small advertisement in "The Hive" newsletter. I am looking to gather these samples in a way that I don't need to gather any personal information about anyone who chooses to donate also. If you could let me know if this is possible it would be greatly appreciated.

Many thanks,  
Linzi Thompson



Our Library has a selection of the most recent beekeeping publications.  
It is open at every monthly meeting.

Please remember to return loans

# Library books

**How have your bees fared through the winter was a question we put to our members. Here are a few responses**

John Wilshaw

Hilltop Apiary Fennpark.

Hi. We started in 2015 in March, and everything went well with a healthy colony given to us from the Council via Richmond street. The bees were situated within a small orchard and all went well until about June.

The hive was bursting and we took advice and split the colony making two hives. All was going well when during a hot spell, the first hive swarmed. We carried on with the remaining Bees supporting a new Queen. In July when the orchard started to fruit, we had an influx of wasps and the first hive was ransacked and all the Bees were killed and honey robbed.

We carried on with the second hive into winter. All was well until a hard frost struck one morning in February. Two days later we noticed two frozen balls of Bees. Being beginners, we were very disheartened, so we contacted the agent at the council enquiring after a colony. Luckily she provided a new one which we are now tending.

We can only put the loss down to lack of experience, and a failure to ask for advice, which this year we will put right.

Having spare hives now, we have listed with a local swarm collector, and hopefully we will progress into a Honey Successful Season.

John Wilshaw (Beekeeper)

Michael Walker

"Bottom of garden Apiary" exposed 170 meters above sea level

Total colonies: 8

Losses: nil.

All colonies heavily insulated with celotex insulation (or similar) if not poly. Minimum roof depth of insulation 100mm.

Hive cosies fitted fully enveloping celotex covering broodbox and nadired super.

All hives weighed before winter and fed where needed. Minimum weight 30KG as a target for full Langstroths and 25 KG for National.

When brooding started in spring (IR thermometer measuring crownboard temperature), all colonies under 30KG/15KG fed.

All queens 2015 except one.

4 Lang jumbos.

1 Lang jumbo nuc

2 nationals

1 TBH.

Geoff Bainbridge

Moddersall Apiary

4 Nationals going into winter

Visited monthly throughout winter

Hives 1,2,4 already established and no honey taken off in 2015 what spare had been eaten.

Hive 4 had small swarm integrated in September

Hive 3 made up from two swarms collected in Stone and district.

Fed all colonies syrup treated for varroa before October

End December applied oxalic acid by dripping... and fed patties only 4 seemed to have reduced brood activity all others quite active...surprisingly!

January and February quick look and fed more sugar pattie. Feeding all directly onto top of frames with slices also placed onto top board.

March visit found 1, 3 and 4 active feeding ... evidence of pollen being brought back.

Hive 2 still and quiet .... on inspection found colony lost to starvation ! Sugar on the top board had not been accessed!

April planning full inspections when warm ??

And moving one hive 1 to new out apiary site in Cold Meece.

Aiming to expand to 4 colonies in Moddershall and 2 in Cold Meece will use artificial swarm if appropriate and caught swarms additionally.

Usula

We started 2015 with three colonies, all sourced locally (one from Fragile Planet) and all came through the winter. They were sold as two 'Buckfast' queens and one 'Yorkshire' queen (Steve is from Rotherham!) We use Paynes poly-hives and they are situated at the top end of our field which is in an exposed part of the Moorlands not far from Mow Cop. The house is close by so we are able to keep a good watch on activity and react fairly quickly to starvation alerts. In winter, our biggest threat comes from high winds. Hive straps are tightly closed and nailed to the bench. In the last two summers we have been plagued by wasps. The year before last we lost two colonies in one week. Strong colonies will defend themselves, the books say, so they must have been weak (our fault?). But at a Trade Stand at the Convention recently a professional beekeeper said they'd suffered several losses. We keep a good lookout for wasp nests on our land but can't do anything about nests in the fields and woodland adjacent to us. We position jam jars (with water, plum jam and over-ripe bananas as bait) far away from the hives. I have even resorted, in desperation but with some satisfaction, to standing by the hives with the pond fishing net to catch and squish any wasps that manage to get close. One tip we got last year proved to be really useful - soak a towel with clean water, drape it over the front and onto the landing board. Use a couple of bricks to keep it in position so that, having to put some effort into getting into the hive, wasps will give up, the bees will come and go as usual and can defend more vigorously. Wasps are also easier to exterminate. This year we thought we might try the dummy wasp nests we have seen advertised which are claimed to keep wasps away by emitting a pheromone suggesting an occupied nest. Anyone have experience of this?

Spring is late here - light levels may be ok but low temperatures, dampness and lack of sustained sunlight mean that our willows, flowering cherries and currants are barely in blossom. There is no blossom on the fruit trees yet. But the common laurel blossom and, especially, the hellebores have provided fodder.

When you shoot  
an arrow of truth,  
dip its point in  
honey  
Arab proverb

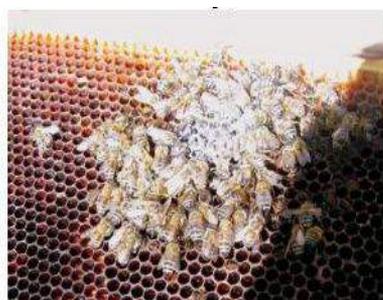
Start by doing  
what's necessary;  
then do what's  
possible; suddenly  
you are doing the  
impossible.  
Francis of Assisi

## CARRYING OUT A HIVE AUTOPSY By Tony Harris NDB

After caring for your bees all summer, feeding them in September and treating them for varroa over the winter, it can be very upsetting to find that the colony has died out, can't it? But, if you did the right things, provided some ventilation, top insulation and shelter from cold winds – you should want to know what went wrong and a way of doing that is to carry out an autopsy of any dead colonies. This winter has been an average one where I live (the Moray coast) and there doesn't appear to have been the same high losses as those experienced in recent winters. But colonies have died out, some belonging to very experienced beekeepers, and the first thing to do when it happens is to seal up the entrance to prevent other bees entering the hive and maybe spreading disease to other hives in the vicinity. It is also advisable to take a sample of approximately 30 dead bees for examination by your Association Microscopist. Put the bees in a plastic bag and leave in the freezer until ready for examination.

Now, let's have a look at some of the signs and probable causes of colony loss over the winter. The first thing to be aware of is that bees can still starve if there is plenty of stores in the hive – it is known as 'isolation starvation' when it has been just too cold for the bees to move onto the next frame for example.

So, if the remains of the dead cluster contain bees that are positioned head first in cells with any remaining honey two or more inches away, starvation is the likely cause of their demise, and it is 'isolation starvation'.



cluster of dead bees



heads in cells - starvation?



wax moth damaged brood comb



drone laying queen?



sign of dysentery or nosema



bee with K wing



deformed wing virus - varroa?



pepper-pot brood pattern

If there is no honey left in the hive and wax cappings from the stored honey area have been ripped open with jagged capping pieces on the floor board, it is likely that the hive died out or was too weak to defend its stores from robbing by other bees or wasps.

If combs, brood or dead bees are covered with mould or mildew it is a sure sign that the hive died out a while ago or was just too weak to maintain the combs. If you discover a build-up of webbing on the combs containing small black pieces of debris; remains of old cocoons and rounded elongated indentations in the wooden ware; disintegrated combs or grey moths either dead or alive, you can be sure that Greater or Lesser wax moths moved in once the colony succumbed. Although considered a pest of the honey bee, wax moths do perform an important function in destroying the combs of feral and neglected colonies which have died out from disease, thus removing the disease organisms.

If you find remains of numerous drone brood cells sometimes scattered within worker brood on the same comb it indicates an old or failed drone laying queen, and the colony would have been unlikely to make it through to spring but some do!

If you see significant brown spotting or large patches of brown staining on frames (like diarrhoea), combs or at the hive entrance it indicates dysentery or *Nosema apis* disease, although *Nosema* can only be confirmed by microscopic examination.

Numerous dead bees lying in front of the hive, maybe combined with the brown staining described above and bees that have disconnected their two pair of wings and rotated them into an orientation that resembles the letter 'K' is often attributed to tracheal mites, *Acarapis woodi*, but it is more likely to be Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV), possibly brought on by varroa.

If you find small pin holes in brood cell cappings; numerous dead bees with deformed wings and/or short abdomens, with numerous varroa mites on dead bees, in sealed brood cells or on the floor, your colony has likely succumbed to the varroa mite or associated viruses. This condition is known as Parasitic Mite Syndrome and highlights the importance of keeping varroa numbers under control.

So, what about your dead hive? Why did the bees die? Don't just accept it if you have lost bees or continue to lose bees over the winter. Carry out a 'hive autopsy' and after identifying why they died, take measure to ensure the chances of the same problems occurring next time are eliminated or reduced.

Article; thanks to Moray beekeepers Association...via eBees.

### KEY CONTACTS

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### QUEEN CELLS.....HAVE A CUP OF TEA!

As a beginner in beekeeping there comes a time when despite all your swarm prevention efforts your bees start to build queen cells and you have the shock of seeing them there....what do you do?

You are on your own and the word panic springs to mind however this panic can be avoided by having a cup of tea in your tool kit.

So what I am suggesting is this: When those cells appear make a note what stage they are at, are they open, are they charged and have any been sealed etc maybe take a photo and then carefully reassemble the hive.

Now is the time to dip into your tool kit and bring out that cup of tea, take a chair, sit down and consider what action you are going to take what method of swarm control have you planned what equipment will you require.

This short spell of contemplation will pay dividends when you return to the hive to implement your swarm control action.

For further information on swarm control see links

### Equipment for sale

National Beehive less than one one season much unused.

2 x brood boxes  
2 x super boxes  
1 galvanised gabled roof  
2 x queen excluders  
2x Hive tools  
1 x crown board  
1 x beekeeping jacket  
2 x beekeeping smocks  
Frames and foundation  
Contact feeder  
Spacers, Varroa treatment  
Miscellaneous bits  
Smoker

Top Bar Hive  
unused with legs and waxed bars

Contact: Graham Lymer  
Tel: 01270820060  
Betley CW3 9BH



[http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/swarm\\_control-I003\\_1342859999.pdf](http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/swarm_control-I003_1342859999.pdf)