

BUZZ NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020.

From the Editor

My apologies for this newsletter being late, December snuck away from me, I discovered I had lost a week six days before Christmas which made for a hectic time and this newsletter suffered.

Talking of newsletters, has anyone tried something different with their bees; found a new piece of kit; had a bright idea for making beekeeping easier? If 'yes' please write a short piece about it for the newsletter, was it a howling success or an utter failure or neither? Without club meetings I am having difficulty in finding members to write articles.

I hope you all had a fun Christmas and wish you a very happy and prosperous new year.

Versotile

I keep my bees in a field and use a wheel barrow (or a car if it is dry) to take equipment to and from the hives. The first time I got a super of honey for extraction I had bees getting in the cleared super because the crown board I used as a cover kept sliding off. I also got sticky drips in the car boot. To solve the problem I made loose lids of thin ply cut in a square larger than the super with batten tacked around the edge. It works well both over and under the supers, but over the years the ply has warped and they are not the easiest things to keep clean (essential with food).

Earlier this year I saw Mike Dillon's Versotile covers in his bee room. Mike is pleased with them. Made of plastic they are easy to clean and don't warp. You can buy a trolley to go with the covers. It has a foot brake and can carry loads of 550lbs (250kg). The photo is one for national hives but I believe they can be made to order for other hive types. You can find the company at:

info@versotile-beehive-cover.co.uk

Phone: 07598 877223



David Pearce



David is still isolating but provided you are masked you can buy equipment and supplies from his workshop. To keep himself busy he has been making bird boxes of different designs. They are made of cedar to his usual high standards so take extra money with you and be tempted.

His number for orders is: 01984 623851.

Cutting Out a Hive in a Wall. 6.4.20

by Vanessa Woodford

A builder, Gary, contacted me about bees in an office that was being refurbished. Could I remove it without killing the bees? He had got my name from the swarm catcher list.

'I'm not a builder' I told him, 'I can't knock down walls.'

'No problem' he said, 'It's timber cladding that has got to come off and the scaffolding makes reaching the hive on the second story outside wall easy.'

We agreed on a time and, as he wanted to watch, I brought along a spare bee jacket and he pinched his wife's marigolds.

A quick inspection suggested that Gary was right and the cladding would be easy to remove. I handed him the jacket and explained about being bee tight. While I got a hive and tools from the car Gary donned the bee jacket. When I returned I realised how seriously he had taken my brief explanation on being bee tight, there was so much gaffer tape wound round ankles, wrists and waist not even a flea could have got inside his clothing and he still had his makeshift mask on inside the bee jacket (social distancing on scaffolding is easy and in my book, going out to save bees is an essential journey).

I had brought my swarm catching buddy with me and he and Gary easily pull off the cladding to expose the comb.



I measured the comb against a brood frame and carefully cut out a section of honey filled comb. Two elastic bands held the section inside the frame (making sure I had the comb the right way up) and I placed the frame in the hive. This is a two man job, one to hold the comb in place and the other to manipulate elastic bands without squashing bees. A bucket of water is essential as sticky honey gets everywhere.

There was enough space in the wall for four layers of comb. I kept the honey filled comb and all the worker brood, which was less than I had expected. I discarded the drone brood and empty comb. I ended up with six frames of comb and a lot of bees on the back wall of the cavity. I used a dust pan to gently scoop up these bees and drop them into the hive. At the end there were a few hundred bees in the air and wandering around the cavity. Despite hunting for the queen throughout I didn't see her but bees were fanning at the hive entrance. Hoping for the best I placed, the hive on a stand so the hive entrance was as close to the cavity as possible and left. I returned after dark to find no bees outside the hive so I closed it up and took it home. The following day I put all the oddments of honey comb in a tub above the crown board for the bees to take down.

Six days later I inspected the hive. Some of the cut out comb had moved a little during transport and needed gently separating from the next frame. The bees had attached most of the comb firmly to the top bar of the frame and had started filling in gaps. Some of the elastic bands had been chewed and/or snapped. I found one outside the hive entrance and a couple of others had been glued onto the frame. I removed all bands that were no longer needed. One frame contained a solid block of eggs so we had got the queen (yahoo!). I spotted a couple of bees with deformed wings. Judging by the comb I think these bees were from a 2019 swarm so they would not have had any varroa treatment in the autumn. I was very pleased I had discarded the drone brood as that should have removed most of the varroa.

06.06.20

Two months later the bees had drawn out a brood box of comb and the queen had laid up 10 frames but they were not yet using the super. I did not see any more bees with deformed wings and the hive was as gentle and calm as when we cut them out.



(Notice the gap around the sides and bottom of the comb. The bees never filled in this gap. Is it because they get a better sounding board for vibration communication if comb just hangs?)

Oops

Last spring I was sent this photo of a hive roof as a warning of what can happen. Janet lives in an area with oil seed rape and gets lovely early rape honey but this means you have to be very quick off the mark with adding supers. Because of work commitments and rain she got to her last hive a little late and found the bees had found their own extra space!

Luckily she was able to cut out the comb (a nasty sticky job) without damaging the queen. And the moral of the story is 'be fast at adding supers in OSR areas.'



Mike Gambier

As some may know Mike Gambier had a stroke in mid September. He did not recover from it and died at the beginning of December. Mike was a long time member of Taunton division, a retired Guards officer and a charming man. He always helped at the Taunton Flower show and the auction, quietly doing the heavy work. He will be missed.

Taunton Division Speaker Schedule

The committee have prepared a monthly speaker schedule for 2021 starting on 25th April.

The speakers have been booked and will give the talk at the apiary unless covid restrictions are still in place, in which case it will be via Zoom.

The annual auction has been booked on a provisional basis for the end of April. It will have to be cancelled if covid restrictions are still in force.

Zoom Lectures.

Covid has wreaked the social and learning opportunities of all divisions, but in Somerset Lynne Ingram has been instrumental in developing a series of lectures via Zoom. The idea has been picked up by many other counties and there are now some amazing talks being given. You can find many of these on Eventbrite. However Zoom is no good without reasonable internet access.

SBKA's next lecture is 'The Black Bee – our Past or our Future'

It is on Thursday January 7th at 7pm. The speaker is Jo Widdicomb who is President of BIBBA.

'Darwinian Beekeeping' will be Prof. Tom Seeley talk on Saturday February 13th at 7pm.

Beekeeping equipment for sale

Jenny and Sid Gammon 01823 270465

Smoker	£15
3 x Nux boxes	£20 each
Small fridge (can be used in car or in house electric)	£15
10 x 30lb used honey buckets and lids	£10
3 x Trolleys for moving supers	£5 each
various travelling screens	£3 each
Various other items for sale (National) / floors / 2 Nuc crown boards	
2 tin plate roofs / snelgrove boards / bags of spacers.	

Services also available:

Repair beekeeping veils Ring Jenny 01823 270465 / 07788407497

