



Herefordshire Buzzword

Herefordshire Beekeepers Association

March 2023

Registered Charity No:1174917



Let not your bees starve



Feeding fondant in February

April may be TS Eliot's cruellest month, but March looks to be cold this year. As we go to press, -12C is forecast for Cradley on 8th March.

As Bob Cross avers (on page 6) this is the month where our bees are at greatest risk from starvation, so checking stores and topping up can be essential.

Events

• Monday 6th March 19.30 Buckfast Zoom talk - How to carry on when things don't go as planned

• Thursday 23rd March 19.00 AGM at Belmont Community Centre
Plus talk by Marin Anastasov - 'Defensive behaviour of Honey Bees',
The ability of the bees to defend their colonies ensures colony resources are protected for the colony use. Yet, bee stings are one of the major factors that could make beekeeping an unappealing activity. We will look at the options available to beekeepers to manage overly defensive colonies and why the beekeeper should be proactive in managing defensive colonies and the consequences of doing nothing.

• April 21st-23rd BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams
(www.bbka.org.uk/spring-convention-2023)

LAN events will start kicking off shortly, so watch your emails, the HBKA website and next month's newsletter.

Wax workshop, February 2023

It was an active, creative afternoon at the beeswax workshop last Saturday in a well-appointed Bartestree village hall. With a good turnout, we were divided into three groups. The three activities, encaustic art, beeswax wraps and candle making, were well apportioned to room space available and the organisers ensured the three groups had allotted time to complete each activity. With Mary Walter on beeswax candle making, Cheryl on Encaustic art and Martyn Cracknell on beeswax wraps, everyone was eager to get started.



Wax art with Val (SU)

In no time at all the encaustic wax hills (valleys and skies) were alive and filled with colourful intricate flora, fauna, and feathers. Thanks to Cheryl's inspiration and encouragement we fashioned our pictures with intent, which soon had our group cheering at the results. As the room started to fill with the lovely fragrance of beeswax we moved on to the next activity, beeswax wraps.



Wax art with Cheryl (SU)

Martyn shared his valuable experience in creating high-quality wax wraps and carefully guided us individually as we went on to orientate ourselves with the tools to delicately fashion our wrap out of the liquid wax.



Wax wraps with Martyn (SU)

Midway through the afternoon, Mary and Val very kindly ensured we all had refreshments cake and biscuits before Mary returned to deliver an expert wax candle demonstration to our group. Following an explanation of tools and melting methods, we quickly went on to make our own out of the selection of moulds and tealights available. We were taught how to use the materials and equipment efficiently to produce professional and creative results.



Wax candle making (SU)

By this time we turned wax lyrical on the subject of wax and some useful tips and tricks and dos and don'ts were shared within the groups before we helped pack up for the day and left with our crafted candle, encaustic pictures and wax wrap. Thank you to Cheryl, Martyn and Mary for arranging the events and to everyone who took part and helped out on the day.

Kate Nieveen



Encaustic sea picture (KN)



Wax colours (KN)

Picture credits: SU – Steve Utley KN- Kate Nieveen

Hive Types – Top Bar Hive

The top bar hives is one of the the oldest, and probably the most commonly used, hive style, particularly in the third world. Natural beekeepers tend to like this sort of hive as it allows the bees more freedom to build the colony as they see fit. Top bar hives are fairly simple and cheaper to build as they are basically a single box with bars laid across the top and a roof.



They should be a minimum length of 3 ft (90cm), shorter than this and a strong colony of bees will run out of space and stores encouraging it to swarm.

No hive type is perfect and the top bar has pros and cons like any other.

Pros:

- Simple and cheap to build – as mentioned
- Less weight – there is no lifting of heavy supers or brood boxes, only a small portion of the colony is inspected a bar (full 5-7 lbs / ~ 3 kgs) at a time.
- Bees tend to be more docile as inspections are less intrusive and they are not being agitated when boxes are being moved during inspections.
- Inspections tend to be quicker
- Height – the hive is set at a single height, so no constant bending down.
- No foundation needed so the bees build their choice of comb.
- Don't require extra boxes, queen excluders, uncapping equipment or expensive extractors.

- Warmth in winter – horizontal design means the heat tends to stay more around the bees which means less work for the bees. In vertical hives the heat always rises.

Cons:

- Help – If there are particular issues with the hive, it is more difficult to find help from an experienced beekeeper who is an expert with top bars.
- Size – space in the hive is finite, boxes cannot be added to increase space.
- Frameless – a lot more care and attention is needed as the comb is fragile without a frame to support it.
- Regular inspections – bees may curve the comb which could lead to awkward comb attachment leading to beekeeper difficulties, this needs quick attention. Also, less likely to attach comb to the sides with regular inspections.
- Sharing – although many say this shouldn't be done anyway, comb cannot usually be moved to supplement another hive as it is unlikely to align properly with the second hive.
- Harvesting – extracting the honey is basically crush and strain.



Top bar comb

Management is different in that during the season the colony space would be 'grown' using a divider board to add bars, after a honey harvest the colony space should be shrunk to give less room to heat in the winter. Propolis and comb should be removed from the walls regularly to discourage them connecting their comb to the walls. Feeding of fondant or syrup should be done using two divider boards either side of the food with one divider board have a small hole for the bees to get access from the brood area.

You may have some different views from these points, but hey! That's beekeeping!

Steve Utley

Steve runs the top bar hive, and various other hives, at the HBKA training apiary at Holme Lacy

Bob's Beelines



The weather has been very good for our bees, too good in fact the queens are laying and the colonies are very strong for this time of year. BUT March is a dangerous time of year more colonies are lost through starvation this coming month so please check the stores and feed candy if needed. At the end of March and early April you could feed warm syrup to weaker colonies this will give them a better start.

I hope you have a plan for the coming year and all your equipment ready. I have frames foundation and much more in stock. On the 19th of February bumble bees and queen wasps were out flying about which is a bit early for this time of year.

I have for sale one Langstroth hive, no bees, complete with three supers with frames and a good stand £120-00

That's all for now

Bob and Kath Cross

Topical tip – March

If you intend to take part in "no mow May" this year now is the time to think about which patch of lawn to dedicate to it. It is important not to use herbicides, moss killers or fertilisers. If moles have been busy the earth can be raked, and a few native perennials introduced as plug plants. We find cowslip do well and seed themselves freely. Native perennials can be sown in small areas of bare earth. Self-heal, white and red clover, dandelion and knapweed are all good nectar producing flowers. If you are lucky and keep the same area unmown for a few years you may find orchids appearing in the sward. It is probably too late to sow yellow rattle this year, as the seeds need a period of cold to trigger germination (vernalisation). Once established yellow rattle self-sows readily and will help keep height of the grass reduced. Later in the season, after the perennials have set seed, you can go back to mowing, but we usually find that one or two cuts are enough.

Mary Walter

Committee Members

Chairman : vacant

Vice Chairman : vacant

Secretary : Mary Walter

Treasurer : Roger Gill

Membership Sec. : Steve Utle

Committee:, Rob Williams, Deborah Smith, Rod Ellis, Tony Ravenhall, Val Lilwall, and Kate Nieveen

LAN CO-ORDINATORS

North LAN: Mary Walter

East LAN: Sue Garrett

South LAN: Val Lilwall

PATRON: Councillor Ellie Chowns

To contact a member of the committee please look on our website for the appropriate email address: <https://www.herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk/>

The Herefordshire Beekeepers Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Members of the committee are also trustees.

Further details at: <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1174917&subid=0>

If you have contributions to propose for this newsletter please contact **Kirsten Ellerby** at: news@herefordshirebeekeepers.org.uk



If foul brood is suspected, contact our Regional Bee Inspector (RBI),

- Jonathan Axe - Tel: 07867 151 641
jonathan.axe@apha.gov.uk

Or, during the season, a Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI)

- Liz Gardner Tel: 07867 351610
elizabeth.gardner@apha.gov.uk

or

- Bronwen Hopkins - Tel: 07796 433 626
bronwen.hopkins@apha.gov.uk