



# BUZZWORD

*First prize, National Honey Show*

The Newsletter of the  
Norfolk Beekeepers' Association

June 2020

## Inside this issue:

Chairman's foreword	1
Bees in the news	1
Advice for June	2
Top tips	2
Lockdown recipe	2
Cut-comb honey	3
Honey as a cure-all	4
Members' questions	6
100 years ago	7
Secretary's report	8
Facebook page	8
Local suppliers	8
Forthcoming events	8

### Next issue in July

All articles, events and things of interest to the beekeeping world should be sent to the Editor by **25<sup>th</sup> June 2020** at:

[buzzwordnbka@gmail.com](mailto:buzzwordnbka@gmail.com)

## Chairman's Buzzwords

Trevor Nash

Now that most of the oil seed rape has finished flowering, the time has come to extract some honey. I like to get any oil seed rape honey off as soon as I can to prevent it from setting in the frames. Today (25<sup>th</sup> May) I have put on clearer boards and will leave them on until this coming Wednesday morning (27<sup>th</sup>) when I will go and collect the supers.

As the weather is going to be warm over the next few days, I am hoping that the honey will stay liquid. Unfortunately, once the bees have left the frames through the clearer boards, rape honey soon crystallizes. This also happens when the temperature drops.

The swarming season so far seems to be going fairly steadily. It doesn't seem to be as busy as it was this time last year. However, things can change fairly quickly and the swarms may all come in at once!

I hope you are all still able to get on with your beekeeping this year despite the strange conditions we are living in. Please remember that if you are struggling or need any help you can contact a member of the committee.

Thank you for sending your questions into the Editor. We will try and answer your questions as soon as we can so please keep sending them in.

Best wishes to you all, Trevor ([chairnbka@gmail.com](mailto:chairnbka@gmail.com))



A quick reminder that Graham Wrenn is now the Vice-chair and can be contacted on [vicechairnbka@gmail.com](mailto:vicechairnbka@gmail.com). There may have been some confusion when Graham and Trevor swapped roles at the AGM.

## Bees in the News

*Bumblebees' 'clever trick' fools plants into flowering.*

When deprived of pollen, bumblebees will nibble on the leaves of flowerless plants. The damage done seems to fool the plant into flowering: <https://bbc.in/3eLTuaZ>

*Well-groomed bees*

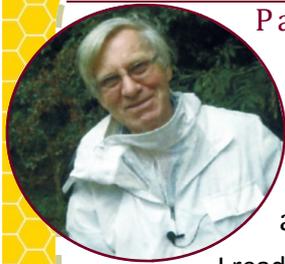
Honeybees that specialize in grooming their nestmates to ward off pests play a central role in the colony, finds a new UCL and University of Florence study: <https://bit.ly/3duH336>

### Beekeeping – If you are displaying symptoms of COVID-19

NBKA are offering support to you if you have COVID-19 and are too unwell to manage your colonies. You should contact a member of the committee or Trevor Nash (contact details above). You should always keep good records, not least to aid someone who will be temporarily looking after your colonies. For a good example of a record card, please see last month's *Buzzword*.

## A swarm of bees in June...

Paul Metcalf, NDB, President



The old rhyme says that a swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay, a swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon, and one in July is not worth a fly.

I read somewhere the other day that the writer considered May the main swarming month. I am not so sure about that. It will of course vary from season to season, but after the early flow has finished, there can be large numbers of bees in hives with little or nothing to do. Congestion can lead to overcrowding, a contributing factor to swarming. So routine inspections and swarm control should continue.

If beekeepers have not removed honey from the first flow, which may contain a good amount of rape, then they should be thinking about it. Sometimes with rape honey if you wait for it to be sealed, some of the honey may have granulated. The rule of thumb is that if it is not sealed then hold the comb horizontally and shake. If no honey comes out it is safe to remove; if honey does come out, then leave it.

There are a number of techniques that you can use to remove supers from hives. If using clearer boards with porter bee escapes in, putting an eke, the type used for apigaurd application, beneath the clearer board can help with the flow of bees.

When the supers have been removed and extracted, they can be put back on the hives in anticipation of a later flow. After removal of the early harvest, do watch the food reserves of the colonies.

So continue routine inspection, checking for swarming. Remember if you have colonies that are requeening, they are best left alone for at least 3 weeks from the time the queen emerges. If you are splitting colonies it is best to let the strongest colony raise the queen. If you hive swarms on to foundation, feed sugar syrup to get good combs drawn quickly.

## Lockdown recipe — Honey fruit cake

Pat Marshall

Pat has done it again with this wonderful recipe and, even though restrictions have lifted to some degree, it's sure to bring a smile to your lips (and maybe a little more 'bounce' to your midriff).

### Ingredients

- 110g butter
- 220g honey
- 220g self raising flour
- 125g sultanas
- 125g currants
- 2 tbsp rum
- 2 tbsp milk
- Pinch of salt
- 2 medium eggs

## Parkers top tips

Alvan Parker



If you are just starting out in beekeeping, you may be wondering which is the best thing to use for uncapping honey. My tip, before you spend a lot of money, is to try the thing I have found that works best for me.

The tool I use was sold in the past by bee-equipment suppliers for checking drone brood for varroa. It is actually an onion slicing fork for holding an onion when slicing it.

The way to use it for uncapping is to place the handle in the palm of your hand and grip it with your thumb, then place your fingers behind the metal prongs. Now, holding it at a right angle to the comb face, pull down the surface of the comb, working from top to bottom and side to side. It will remove the cappings with ease.

It is also very good on uneven combs with dips and hollows and you can get right into corners where a knife is difficult to use. The forks are available online for around £2. Using this method will produce very little wax therefore the bees will have less damage to repair when combs are reused.



### Candle-rolling wax for sale

The Association has a supply of candle-rolling wax that it would like to pass on to members at a heavily discounted price. Most colours are available: blue, green, pink, red, buttercup, lilac, moss, purple and sky (almost white).

Use it for candles or adding pizzazz to your broodbox!

Just £5 per 10 sheets, mixed packs available. Contact the Secretary: [secretarynбка@gmail.com](mailto:secretarynбка@gmail.com).



### Method

- Place fruit in a saucepan with milk and rum and almost bring to boil, then allow to cool.
- Cream together the butter and honey until light and fluffy.
- Add the eggs one at a time with a dessert spoon of flour with each egg to prevent curdling. Then add the salt to the flour and fold in, then add the fruit the same way.
- Place in a greased 7-inch cake tin and place in the pre-heated oven at 170 °C for 1 to 1½ hours, covering with grease proof paper after the first half hour.
- The cake is cooked when a knitting needle comes out clean when placed in the centre of the cake.

# COVID-19 aspirations: cut comb honey

George Male

Whilst I know that quite a few others are quite proficient at producing cut comb honey, I have had to learn the hard way. Therefore, I'd like to share some of the methods that I have used.

I have tried the unwired wax foundation way, but when it comes to cutting and boxing, I cannot always rely on my right-hand to cooperate! Obviously, this method is the cheapest way to go, but for me, the biggest drawbacks are that it's messy, as well as being quite awkward for me come production time.

The Hogg half-comb and Ross round systems can be quite expensive, but their advantages are that they are extremely easy to use, as well as harvest. A good strong colony is required if using any method utilizing a whole super.

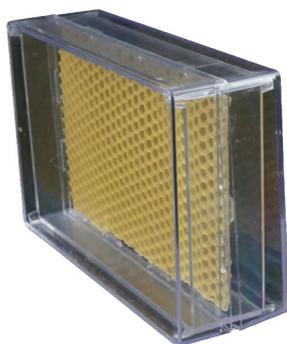
## Hogg half-comb system

This has to be simply the very easiest way of producing comb honey. A bold statement, but one which I stand behind with gusto.

Unfortunately, I cannot remember where I got ours from, but it is available in England. The cassettes are a hard clear plastic with clear sides and a clear separate lid and a honeycomb-imprinted base. It is advisable to put a layer of wax on the base.

This method is simplicity in spades.

1. Simply place the cassettes (pictured, right), without their lids, into the holding tray;
2. Fit the springs;
3. Put into a super;
4. Place on to your hive;
5. Remove from the hive;
6. Separate the cassettes;
7. Attach lid and label.



Each cassette yields approximately 280g to 340g. As I said before, it couldn't be any easier, as well as being totally hands-free, with no sticky mess to clear up. Unless you relish the enjoyment of that part of the process! For a video showing the system in use, please see: <https://bit.ly/2UG6tEf>



A special holder for 40 cassettes, "available in England" though hard to find

## Ross rounds

For hands-off honeycomb production, I find this to be one of the best for ease of use. Admittedly, the initial set-up can be fiddly, but the harvest is simplicity in itself. Simply split the carriers and place the rounds into their clamshells, then attach the label around the side to seal.

Set-up:

1. Split the Visicheck frame along the seam;
2. Put a section ring into each hole, eight required, noting the alignment notches;
3. Place a thin sheet of unwired wax in on to one side;
4. Place the other half of the Visicheck frame on top, noting the alignment pegs;
5. Place the Visicheck frames into their carrier;
6. Fit the three springs to maintain the correct spacing;
7. Place into a super;
8. Put onto your hive.

It is as simple as that. One thing to remember though, only put onto a hive after the rapeseed flow has finished, or you will end up with a comb of rock-hard set honey! I tend to use this as the first super, and adding additional supers on top as necessary.



The Ross round system, showing the Visicheck frame in foreground

For a useful video, please see <https://bit.ly/3053EPF>

## Unwired foundation

As I said previously, this is the cheapest way to go. Whilst putting the foundation into the Ross-round frames, I thought, why not put a sheet of foundation into a super frame? Probably what most others do. So, I put a couple of sheets into a couple of frames. Whilst doing this, I had another bright idea, why not try a starter strip? So, I cut a piece of foundation into 4 lengthways, then put these into frames. I tend to put into the first super, 2 starter strips, 2 frames with unwired foundation, then 6 wired frames, 3 either side, to complete the box. For me this has worked satisfactorily, producing sufficient comb for my needs.

## English Sections

This is the way that the old-time beeks used to do it. My father gave me some of these, but I can honestly say that I have not tried this method yet. From what I have been led to believe, an exceptionally strong hive is required to produce a super of these sections. For those who do not know, you get strips of wood that you dampen with water on the places where you need to fold them, folding the strips into a square. You then get a square of ready cut foundation and place into the square. These are placed into empty super frames, or special frames for the purpose, then put onto the hive. The filled squares are put into special cartons for sale. Another way, could be to place just one or two frames into the super, however, I seem to recall my father saying that some form of blanking plate is required to prevent the bees building brace comb to the next frame.



# Just a spoon full of honey may heal what ails you

Sylvia Dekker, independent writer and beekeeper



This article is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor of the *American Bee Journal* ([www.americanbeejournal.com](http://www.americanbeejournal.com)) and the author (and features our very own Venetia Rist, Master Beekeeper, Examinations Secretary and Chair of WNKLBKA).

“Good morning, how are you feeling today?” Your nurse has come in to change your bandages. As you exchange friendly chit chat, she unravels some fresh dressings and slathers them with a generous amount of sweet, thick honey. Your wound is sticky, smells like the inside of a hive and is looking much better.

You could be a burn victim in ancient Egypt, a wounded World War I soldier, a dog who got in a fight with a big coon, or a surgery patient in Uganda. Wherever, whenever and whoever you are, you’re being treated with honey.

When Bees Abroad volunteer Venetia Rist visited Uganda to teach beekeeping and value addition skills to the people of the Batwa Tribe, she learned just how important honey was to the local hospital staff and patients. Anyone scheduled for surgery at the Bwindi Community Hospital in Buhoma, Uganda, must pack some honey in their hospital bag. Whether it’s their own or they purchase it from the hospital gift shop, it is local and unpasteurized. If the patient’s surgery wound becomes infected, dressings are soaked with honey and applied to the area.

This isn’t a new idea. Straight from the hive, honey has been used as a medicine as long as humans have been burgling honey bees. It even has a fancy term: apitherapy. The term apitherapy covers the use of any hive product as alternative medicine, including propolis which has antifungal properties and is effective for treating a wide range of things, such as ringworm in cattle.

The oldest medical writings from as early as 2100 BC mention honey as a drug and an ointment. Aristotle himself said it made a “good salve.” Nearly all ancient Egyptian medicines contained honey, and in the First World War the Russians used honey to prevent infection and speed up the healing process.

Abandoned as a medicine in favour of more advanced medical discoveries, honey stayed a humble tea com-

panion for decades. However, using honey as more than a sweetener is making a comeback. As conventional, modern methods and medicines fail and antibiotic resistance erupts, honey steps up to the plate. Soaked into gauze pads, it is an excellent non-adhesive dressing that does more than keep the area moist.

The University of Illinois Veterinary teaching hospital always has a big jar of honey on hand,<sup>1</sup> as do many vets in the UK. One told me that currently it is routinely used for open wound management. Combined with regular dressing changes, vets believe that the honey kills the harmful bacteria and clears infections. They happen to be right.

Every beekeeper knows honey is essentially bee vomit: a mixture of nectar and enzymes from the bee’s honey stomach which is dehydrated down into that sweet thickness we love to steal licks of in the bee yard. According to all the research I combed through for this article, go right ahead and sample that honey. It’ll do you good.

Honey has an inhibitory effect on approximately 60 species of bacteria, some fungi and some viruses.<sup>3</sup> Being full of floral, natural goodness and complex ingredients, it is partially the physical properties and partially the chemical properties that contribute to honey’s medicinal qualities.

It’s thick, forming a protective barrier to prevent infection.

It’s sweet. So sweet that the sugar content is high enough to hinder the growth of some microbes.

It’s hygroscopic, meaning it draws water to itself. When applied to a wound, it extracts the moisture from the area to reduce inflammation, plus it dehydrates bacteria.

It’s acidic, which gives it extra antibacterial activity.

It produces hydrogen peroxide, the result of a reaction between glucose and glucose oxidase, which is an antimicrobial agent that effectively sterilizes the area.

It contains a plethora of complex compounds such as flavonoids and other polyphenols, peptides, organic acids, enzymes, vitamins, and on and on. Together, these compounds work to give honey an anti-everything quality.

What our ancestors, the doctors at the Bwindi Community Hospital and the vets in Illinois have realized is that honey is an affordable, available, effective catch-all.

Dripping from a humble, sticky week of extracting in the summer, honey can go on to do great things. Recently studies have been finding that at very low concentrations honey seems to be able to stimulate white blood cells, which are our immune cells, and phagocytes, which are a type of cell that engulfs bacteria. In essence, it helps activate and basically hand-feeds bacteria to our immune system.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond helping to keep out and fight infection, using honey on wounds seems to reduce pain, speed up recovery and reduce scarring, even with skin grafts and gangrene cases.<sup>3</sup> Somehow, the fact that honey is good for scars and wounds dropped off medical maps for years but didn’t escape the attention of health and beauty gurus. Many DIY face and hair mask recipes include honey.



Nurse at the Bwindi Community Hospital in Uganda applying honey to a wound (photo provided by Bees Abroad volunteer Venetia Rist)

Maybe it's the result of having multiple modes of action, but microbial resistance has never been reported for honey, unlike so many modern antibiotics. Many major pathogens are beginning to show resistance to antibiotics and it is a huge issue in the modern medical world. Several burn wound bacteria, for example, are showing increasing resistance to commonly used antimicrobial agents.<sup>4</sup>

One paper based on clinical experiences in a university children's hospital in Germany told a story about a young boy who had had an abdominal operation. The site became infected with a type of bacteria that was antibiotic-resistant and was not responding to local antiseptics after almost two weeks of treatment. Medical grade honey was used and two days later the wound was bacteria-free!<sup>2</sup>

Over the years I've advised my share of skeptical, hoarse people to use honey. I've claimed that honey has kept me from suffering from many colds. If I get a sore throat, I swallow a spoonful of raw honey before bed and let it slowly sink down my throat, soothing and healing as it flows. After all this research, I have the "why" to back me up.

Wound care is the most common use of honey medically, from amputation to septic wounds to bedsores to leprosy. But honey can also be used for internal infections — for example tuberculosis — and intestinal issues such as gastric ulcers, *E. coli* and salmonella infections. Eat honey, and diarrhea and other gastrointestinal issues can apparently quickly disappear.<sup>4</sup> It also seems to help regenerate healthy levels of mucus in the intestines while keeping inflammation down. When honey is added to rehydration fluids, it helps with potassium and water uptake but doesn't increase sodium uptake.

Most of these issues, both external and internal, stem from bacterial infections, but honey is useful with certain fungal and viral issues as well. Ringworm and dandruff seem to be relieved with honey treatments, and it's not half bad at managing herpes lesions either, apparently.

There are so many studies on honey use in the medical field, concluding and proving a variety of positive effects. These include everything listed above, plus cardiovascular, blood pressure, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.<sup>5</sup>

So why don't we North Americans use it more as a medicine?

One: possible contamination with *Clostridium botulinum*, the reason why honey shouldn't be fed to infants.<sup>6</sup>

Two: concerns about potential pesticide contamination.<sup>6</sup>

Three: Honey can sting on application. This, the UK veterinarian I corresponded with told me, makes it difficult to apply to animals. Diabetic patients are especially affected, making the messy procedure of applying honey to an open wound uncomfortable.

Four: The antimicrobial activity of local natural honeys is unpredictable and can be unreliable in medical applications. Bees fly far and collect honey from all sorts of different floral sources. From region to region, the differences in the makeup of honey can be huge.

When people think about using honey for health reasons, they often think about Manuka, a monocrop honey

**Bwindi Community Hospital in Uganda** (photo provided by Bees Abroad volunteer Venetia Rist)



that has very high antimicrobial properties. Studies have shown that your own unpasteurized honey can have the same antimicrobial activity levels. However, because the exact levels and effectiveness of an unstandardized, raw honey is variable and unpredictable, selling your honey to the local hospital isn't going to be your big break.

Medical grade honey is a good supplement in wound care strategies used in some countries, but it hasn't quite taken off yet in North America. Europe and Australia have registered one of the first medically certified honeys which they call Medihoney. It has standardized antibacterial activity and is irradiated in lab-controlled conditions. Medihoney is currently used in professional wound care and both health care practitioners and patients are awed by the results.<sup>2</sup> It was the honey used in the case of the young boy with the infected abdominal surgery wound after all, and those results speak for themselves!

Although promising, honey will likely continue to be a last-resort tactic used when modern antibiotics and antiseptics just aren't cutting it. Meanwhile, where modern methods aren't available — like at the Bwindi Community Hospital in Uganda — honey continues to be an important part of medicine.

*Bees Abroad is an organization that relieves poverty through beekeeping. Find them on Facebook or at <https://beesabroad.org.uk/>*

**Sylvia Dekker** — Depending on the season, I am an alpine smells and mountain mornings lover, a beekeeper, a hunter that shoots with a Canon, and a woodburning artist. Independent of the season I write about all that and beyond! You can find me on Instagram [@syl.dekker](https://www.instagram.com/syl.dekker).

## References:

1. Giese, M. Honey Heals: Sweet Side of Wound Care, Mar 7, 2016. [https://vetmed.illinois.edu/pet\\_column/honey-wound-care/](https://vetmed.illinois.edu/pet_column/honey-wound-care/) [accessed December 2019].
2. Simon, A., Traynor, K., Santos, K., Blaser, G., Bode, U. & Molan, P. Medical honey for wound care — still the 'latest resort'? *Evid. Based Complementary Alternat. Med.* 2009;6(2):165–173. doi:10.1093/ecam/nem175.
3. Eteraf-Oskouei, T. & Najafi, M. Traditional and modern uses of natural honey in human diseases: a review. *Iran J. Basic Med. Sci.* 2013;16(6):731–742.
4. Mandal, M.D. & Mandal, S. Honey: its medicinal property and antibacterial activity. *Asian Pac. J. Trop. Biomed.* 2011;1(2):154–160. doi:10.1016/S2221-1691(11)60016-6.
5. Gunnars, K. 10 Surprising Health Benefits of Honey, Sept 5, 2018. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-benefits-of-honey#section6> [accessed December 2019].
6. Oropeza, K. What's the Buzz about Medical Grade Honey? *Nursing2014.* 2014;44(7):59. doi:10.1097/01.NURSE.0000450793.03226.fc.

## Question time: your questions answered

Please keep the questions coming in. They will be answered quickly by email and then published in *Buzzword* in the next issue. Please submit it to the Editor (or any committee member) at [buzzwordnbka@gmail.com](mailto:buzzwordnbka@gmail.com). Sometimes there is more than one answer!

Panel this month: Paul Metcalf, Trevor Nash, Venetia Rist, Garry Bowler, Pat Marshall, Ian Watkinson and Alvan Parker

**Q:** *How much is a 1 lb jar of honey at the gate selling for?*

**A1:** I think it depends what you want for it or are comfortable asking for it. I know some charge £6 (as NBKA price at the shows) although I am happy with £5 and give 50p per jar to charity. It still pays for my hobby but I know it's cheap. On the one hand we don't want to undervalue our honey but on the other we don't want to get to next year with buckets of it sitting around.

**A2:** It will depend very much on where you are; here in Reepham local shops charge £5.60 – £5.80 for local honey. Mine will be £5 this year.

**A3:** Shops sell honey for anything between £6 to £10 per lb, we sell to shops at £4.50 per lb and we sell at the same price to friends from the door. I certainly feel £6 is a very reasonable price from the door.

**Q:** *Would cutting up part of a queen excluder and putting it across the entrance to stop the queen getting out work as a form of swarm control?*

**A1:** Although this may seem a good idea it won't stop them trying to swarm. The excluder will cause congestion at the entrance, stop drones leaving and may knock pollen off workers' legs as they return.

**A2:** I certainly would not put queen excluder over the entrance of a hive as swarm prevention. Honey bees naturally want to swarm when they get strong and this should be dealt with in one of three ways (these all rely on finding the queen – other methods are available):

1. Find the old queen and artificially swarm into an empty brood hive containing frames, putting the old queen in the empty hive on the exact site she has come from. Move the hive she came from at least six feet away. The old hive should have all the brood etc. Select a good unsealed queen cell and leave alone for a minimum of three weeks. All the food should be left with the old queen. This should be done on a warm day and all the flying bees will return to the old queen. You are tricking the bees into thinking they have swarmed.
2. If you would like to make up nucs, firstly find the queen then break the brood box down into three nucs leaving the queen in the hive. This way the bees again will be fooled into thinking they have swarmed!
3. Finally if you do not require any more hives find the queen and destroy her! Go back into the hive a week later and remove all the queen cells except one. Select the best unsealed queen cell and leave the hive to raise a new queen.

**Q:** *Two years ago my family kindly gave me a Honey Flow super and I haven't used it yet. Is there anyone who can give me some advice on how to use it?*

**A:** Put the flow super on after the rape has finished (you don't want set honey). It should be a strong hive, working hard. You should see them working through the windows. When you see them sealing cells on the outer frames you can extract. A large jar or other honey container is needed, use the long metal tool provided to break open the frames and be patient as the honey runs out through the supplied tube. Some cling film or a cloth is useful to stop bees getting to it. There are very good videos on YouTube (inevitably).

**Q:** *I took a swarm from a compost bin last year. As they had several combs of brood all in a mess, I cut them out and wired them into some frames as best I could to make sure they didn't lose their brood. This year, the old brood was completely stuck together. I put a fresh brood box with foundation on top, fed them and waited. The next week, the frames had been drawn out and there was brood on 5 frames. I found the queen in the top box and put a queen excluder between the top box and the bottom box. Yesterday I went to remove the bottom box and found that it was stuffed full of honey, which I had thought that they would move upwards. The original combs are so 'meshed' together that I will have to break them up and the honey won't be extractable conventionally. I'm not keen on spreading honey/nectar around my apiary to attract predators. What are my options?*

**A1:** The bees are unlikely to move the honey up, so your best option is to melt it out, in a water bath or a honey-warming cabinet. To melt the beeswax the temperature has to be 64/65 °C, and the honey wants to be at this temperature for the shortest time possible.

**A2:** Almost a Bailey comb change that fell at the last hurdle. When you put the queen excluder on, thus trapping the queen in her brand new brood box, it would have been a good idea to block up the bottom entrance and make a new one on top of the queen excluder, above the old one. The bees returning to the bottom just run up the front and in. Also it is a good idea to remove old comb that has no brood in, and block the resulting space. It's also a good idea to check for queen cells in the bottom box a week after putting the queen up top. Then leave another 2 weeks and remove bottom messy combs, now mostly empty of brood, and put the new brood box back down on a nice clean floor on the original site.

Now, what to do with all that honey in the messy combs you have in the old box:

1. Chop it up and let it drain to harvest the honey. Much of it will be oil-seed rape so will granulate fast, in which case you will need to melt it out.
2. You could freeze it and decide later. (Beware the dreaded waxmoth – if in doubt freeze the combs before storing.)
3. You could feed it back to the bees at some point from on top of the crown board, leaving a very small hole for access (I used an old CD with the CD middle over the

feed hole). There will need to be plenty of room below for them to store it. To improve your chances of honey removal from the messy box, you could put an empty super over the CD-enhanced crown board, so that they really do think it is outside the hive and they are the only one at the picnic!

However, as the bees are foraging crazily at the moment they might rather be doing that. You might prefer to store the messy box and feed the contents in bits and pieces in a foil tray over the crown board, with an eke to accommodate it.

**A3:** Did you keep the entrance at the bottom? If you did it might have caused the bees to store honey in the combs in the bottom box. If you put an eke entrance in between the two brood boxes this might have encouraged them to bring it into the top box and super. You could try putting the eke entrance on now. Don't forget to block off the bottom entrance though. It may prevent any more stores being put into the bottom box. My guess is that they may not move too much store from where it is, though.

**Q:** *When we all open up in Spring and find most of our colonies thriving but a few struggling to build up or queenless – what can we do, particularly if you have only say 4 to 6 colonies?*

**A:** There are probably a few different reasons why this happens. I can think of a couple like a poor queen/small colony or the cluster not moving round to find food etc. I had a couple of colonies with lots of dead bees on the floor, one is ok and in the other I found the queen dead. The difficulty is that, unless you have a handy overwintered nucleus, there are few options.

However, four to six colonies seems plenty of cover for one or two weak ones. One option is to get rid of queens and unite, another is to get rid of queens, shake them out and then split or create a nuc from the strong ones you then have.

**Q:** *I inspected my small colony on 15th May, when I saw the queen but no eggs. I had 3 empty queen cups and removed them but no queen cells. Then I inspected 7 days later (as Paul Metcalf's article in Buzzword had recommended) and there were still no eggs but I couldn't find the queen or any sign of a queen cell but there were lots and lots of queen cups most of them having an occupant. So I decided to squash all but 1 queen cup (should I call it a queen cell if it has something in it?) because I had read that if it has already swarmed then you could doom the hive if you don't keep at least one.*

**A1:** First, if the cell contains something, either an egg or larvae, it is a queen cell. Cups are the acorn shaped calyx, bees quite frequently build them and they may get no further than that. Regarding the colony, you do not say whether there is worker brood present in the colony or what stage it might be at. It does sound as if the colony has swarmed or lost the queen in some other way, reducing the queen cells to one is the correct thing to do and then leave the colony alone for three weeks from the time the queen should have emerged from the cell.

**A2:** I would put in a test frame with eggs and young larvae from another hive and see what they do with that.

## A Norfolk Beekeeper's Record

Peter Beckley

By 1926 the number of colonies had increased to 10 (on two sites) – all of which survived the winter.

As was noted in the last article, Mr Thouless's beekeeping activity had settled down to a steady routine with the number of colonies remaining consistent and by the end of the year honey production consisted of 66 lb of run honey and 14 sections which was well down on the previous year. An interesting note is that 4 lb of honey sent through the post cost one shilling and three pence.

### 1927

The season started with 6 colonies – 3 at Hoveton and 3 at Norwich. During this season the question about where to place the section rack was still in evidence when he reports:

*"...colony 'E' at Hoveton...July 24th. Examined. Queen has passed through the section rack and has laid in the shallow frames above. July 30th. Saw Queen on shallows above sections. Removed her to brood chamber over which I placed a queen excluder."*

Perhaps the bees were trying to tell him something?

One colony continued to be 'tetchy': *"...could not take out all the frames as bees most disagreeable. Smoke and carbolic\* had little effect in subduing them."*

And his troubles did not end there as in November the apiary site at Hoveton flooded and the hives had to be moved to higher ground.

\*Carbolic was commonly used in the Apiary at this time – particularly on 'manipulation cloths'. One of Mr Thouless's cuttings from the *British Bee Journal* in the correspondence section from a Mr W.J. Farmer: *"The ordinary smoker is an intolerable nuisance to light and keep going, no matter what fuel is used, and smoke used too freely discolors clean combs. I personally never use smoke; I simply put some rags in the smoker and sprinkle a few drops of pure carbolic on them. Once charged it lasts a whole season. The smell of the carbolic puffed through the smoker is as effective as smoke. It is not a new idea, but worth repeating. It is entirely satisfactory."*

Not the sort of thing one would recommend today. Old textbooks will give examples of using a carbolic cloth over the brood chamber during examination exposing one frame at a time. Manipulation and cover cloths are still in suppliers catalogues – but I doubt many are used in conjunction with carbolic.

Harvest for the season: 104 lb run honey; 11 Sections

### 1928

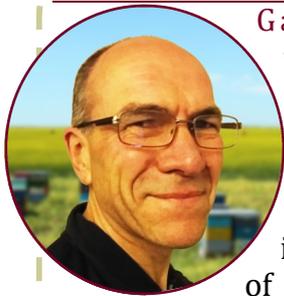
*"...commenced season with 5 colonies ... 3 are at Wroxham and 2 at Hoveton."*

From 1928 bees at Norwich are no longer mentioned but, with a new site at Wroxham, it is, perhaps, safe to assume that Mr Thouless had moved there.

The bees continue to be kept in a variety of hives and it proved to be a year when it was difficult to spot any queens. However, the honey yield for this year, run honey 169 lb and sections 42, indicate that a successful system for producing sections has been settled upon. Unfortunately, we have no idea what it was. Did he settle for keeping the section rack directly above the brood chamber – or did he put a super of shallow frames between the brood chamber and the section rack?

# The Secretary Matters

Garry Bowler



Where did the last month go? Another month on, which means another month closer to a return to 'life as we know it' – or does it? Also, I have no real idea when that might be but part of me wonders whether I would rather everything was not as it used to be.

It feels like there is more wildlife around. No doubt the weather has been a contributing factor but has the change in how we are behaving also made a difference? Less traffic, less disturbance etc. How nice it would be if the roads did not get as busy as they used to be, even in an area that does not have anything like the levels of other parts of the country.

## Extracting

I am writing this after spending the afternoon extracting some honey. I have taken about 5 supers off so far and it looks like there will be another 3 or so, still leaving enough for the bees to have plenty. Blackberry seems to be about to start to flower so maybe it will be a July gap, not June, this year. I thought I had cleaned up well but the keyboard is getting a little sticky so clearly not!

As for my bees, they seem to be doing pretty well. Although I clip my queens I don't like them to attempt to swarm so I had to split one colony this week. I was too late with another one though and lost the queen. Looking back 'properly' through my notes for the previous 3 weeks I realised the signs were there and I should have

split the week before. It shows the importance not only of making those notes but actually reading them the next time you inspect.

## Lockdown

One thing lockdown has done is make it difficult for new beekeepers to get some bees and get started, which is a great pity. Other members had plans to increase the number of colonies they are running and they have also had problems. I receive emails on a fairly regular basis from those wanting bees and also from members who have colonies to sell. Thank you for all of these. I am happy to do my best to put beekeepers with bees either by emails circulated to all or we could also post details on the website and the new Facebook page. Also, let me know if you have surplus swarms that you could pass on

Recently, the Events Sub-committee held a meeting (by video link) to discuss the events programme for 2021. We have pretty much resigned ourselves to writing off all the events we had planned for the rest of this year. However, we are looking at making videos of some of the talks we have planned which we can then make available. Watch this space.

## Candle wax

We had our Executive Committee meeting on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May so in the next Buzzword I can give an update on other Association business. We have decided to sell off some surplus stock of candle-rolling wax that otherwise would have been used at the shows that have been cancelled. Please see the advert elsewhere in Buzzword for details.

# The NBKA Facebook page

Just a quick plug for the NBKA Members' Facebook page, a place where members can "chat about beekeeping in Norfolk". This is not the same as the Association's general Facebook page, although there is inevitably some crossover. You will have to request to join — and the membership is growing daily thanks to James Page's efforts in managing the site. If you're having trouble locating it, please follow: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/578217262817067/>



# Local suppliers listing

Please bear in mind the advice of Public Health England for social distancing and essential journeys for everyone in the UK when buying or picking up supplies.

**Applebee Apiary**, Rockland St Mary

John Everett, Master Beekeeper

Large range of beekeeping equipment from Thornes and other suppliers. We breed and sell honey bees. 01508 538231 [everettapplebee@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:everettapplebee@hotmail.co.uk) <http://applebeeorchard.co.uk/>

Closed Sundays

**Don Cooper**, Roughton NR11 8QP; 01263 761517

5/6-Frame BS nucs available in May from £150

30lb Buckets of honey; advice on "all things bees"

**Glebelands Apiary**, Rocklands St Mary NR14 7BX

Peter Beckley, Thornes agent (reportedly the longest serving in the UK). 01508 480262; [orns@btconnect.com](mailto:orns@btconnect.com)

**Stephen Crowe**, Lingwood NR13 4BL, 01603 712101

Sell 1lb jars of local Norfolk honey, bees and nucs from £150 this spring. Also have 30lb buckets of honey for sale.

# Forthcoming Events

All future events are cancelled until further notice because of COVID-19.