



BUZZWORD

First prize, National Honey Show

The Newsletter of the
Norfolk Beekeepers' Association

September 2020

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Next issue in November

All articles, events and things of interest to the beekeeping world should be sent to the Editor by **25th October 2020** at:

buzzwordnbka@gmail.com

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Vice-chairman's Buzzwords

Graham Wrenn

Hello everyone, I hope that you are all keeping well and that your colonies are all healthy. If you haven't already done so, you should now be treating and feeding ready for closing down for the winter.

You will have seen the recent correspondence with regard to the Bookers/BBKA arrangement having ended some years ago (the cash and carry store offered sugar at a discount to BBKA members), but in Norwich that doesn't seem to be a problem. Presumably they either haven't caught up with the ending of the arrangement or chosen not to. Many of our supermarkets, however, are often only a penny or two different per kilo and smaller bags are easier to handle than a 25kg bag.

There are quite a few varroa treatments to choose from and many of you will have your own personal favourite. To avoid the risk of building up resistance it is a good idea, from time to time, to change to something different though.

Our editor, Chris, tells me that he is having trouble obtaining Apiguard at present but hopefully, for those that are ordering it this year, that will soon be resolved. If you are less confident in doing the treatment you may want to consider using one that only requires one application. MAQS and Apivar are such but Apivar, unlike MAQS, doesn't corrode everything metal or, as some members have reported, result in the loss of queens. I have not had a problem with MAQS myself and have used it a couple of times, but I was impressed by the ease of application of Apivar when I was helping out at the Easton Apiary last year.

There are as I said plenty to choose from, the important thing is to use one to treat your colonies to rid them of Varroa. Please remember to follow the instructions on the pack, of whichever one you choose, for safe treatment and disposal and also to keep proper records of the treatment as this is a legal requirement. Graham (vicechairnbka@gmail.com)



Bees in the News

We knew it all along (it's good to be a smarty-pants!)

Scientists from Oxford University have published a study in the journal *BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine* to confirm what we beeks have known for probably centuries — honey is good for you! They conclude that honey was superior to 'usual care' and contributes to "the improvement of symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections. It provides a widely available and cheap alternative to antibiotics." They say that further placebo-controlled trials will be needed and this is only a meta-analysis of already published papers but it feels good to be a know-it-all! <https://bit.ly/2Gk4pNa>

End of the Season — Sept.

Paul Metcalf, NDB, President



The year 2020 started off from the beekeeping point of view fairly well, but in the end for many has been a poor honey year and others perhaps average or below. It has shown how dependant beekeeping is on a variety of weather conditions being right.

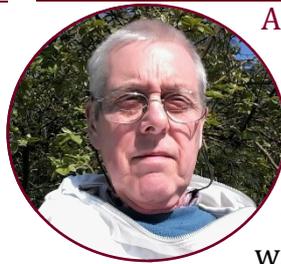
At this time of the year, NBKA usually put on a demonstration called closing down, as if it is some kind of beekeeping ritual, and when completed you can rest until opening up next spring. It is not quite like that.

However, there are a number of things that you need to perhaps carry out: wet supers cleaned off on the hives should be stored away, safe from wax moth and mice; feed the colonies approx. 13kg (30lb) of sugar made up as sugar syrup, or the equivalent – many people these days buy ready-mixed syrup (it is always a good idea to have syrup going into the hive at the time when ivy honey is coming in, to dilute it down); complete varroa treatments; entrances should be restricted to exclude mice – a mouse can get through a crack any thicker than an ordinary lead pencil; and protection against woodpeckers if they are a problem.

The winter can then be devoted to maintaining equipment, winter varroa treatment with oxalic acid if used, and visits to out apiaries just to check that all is OK. (paul.metcalf@btinternet.com)

Dealing with wax moth

Alvan Parker



In the years I have been keeping bees, the wax moth damage has been mixed. Some years it has been a lot worse than others – at their worst they are able to completely destroy the combs in a super in a couple of weeks. It is actually possible to hear the larva moving and munching inside the stored boxes of combs.

This year I have already had some problems and I think this may be a sign of what is to come. Both greater and lesser wax moth larva feed on drawn wax comb. They seem to prefer combs that are dry and previously had brood in. The larva will also damage the wood on both the frames and hive, making boat-shaped grooves in them. I have also found to my surprise that they will damage polystyrene in the same way. The only product sold by bee-equipment suppliers to control this pest, Certan-B401, has been withdrawn from sale for regulatory reasons (*BBKA News*, August 2020). As yet no product replacement has been licensed.

It was rather expensive in my view, costing about 17 pence a frame to treat. It worked by killing the larva when they eat the wax. The wax became toxic to the moth. This treatment lasted through the winter storage period. The ingredient used to make Certan is also used to make sprays for organic control of garden pests.

There is a licensed replacement in America, but at the present time it has not been approved for use in the UK.

This leaves two other ways of dealing with an infestation. One method is to fumigate the combs with acetic acid, at a cost of about 4 pence per frame. This treatment also helps to control nosema and EFB, which can be transferred in the dry combs. To achieve this low cost you would need to buy the acid in bulk. My favoured method is to check stored combs regularly after the autumn harvest. At the first signs of damage put the wax combs in a deep freeze, starting with the ones with moth larvae in. This will kill all larvae within a couple of hours.

However, to kill the eggs produced by the adult moths will take longer, around 4 days should do it. If freezer space is at a premium my tip would be to try to acquire an old chest freezer. It need not be in tip top condition as it may only run for a few days each year. If you can find space for one in a shed or garage, add a piece of plywood on top and it can double as a work bench for frame and hive assembly. And with the addition of a heater and thermostat you could also use it as a warming cabinet to melt honey and wax.

It is not the most obvious piece of beekeeping equipment but could prove to be very useful.

Apiary sites offered

June lives near Watton, postcode area IP25, and has 5 acres which includes 3 large fields that aren't really used. She loves bees but doesn't want to keep them herself. If anyone is interested she can be contacted on this email address: junie.desborough@gmail.com.

Sanctuary Church (St Albans, Grove Walk, Norwich) is keen to provide a site at the sanctuary garden for a bee hive to a local beekeeper. We have a parishioner willing to invest in a hive on behalf of the church. If you are interested you can contact the church: Catherine Hendra 07828 164306 or catherinehendra@gmail.com.

Michael has a small farm in Ellingham with approx. 10 acres of grass and a veg patch as well as the garden. You can contact him either by phone on 07428548858 or email at m.jobson@hotmail.co.uk.

Helen has 5 acres of woodland in Foulsham and is keen to create a nature reserve on the site. To speak about the possibility of siting some hives in the woodland, contact Helen on: 07918710205.

Bella and family are farmers living on a farm in South West Norfolk between Thetford and Attleborough. They wondered if anyone would be interested in keeping some bees on their farm. Contact: bella@roudhamfarm.co.uk.

Readvertisement: **Ian** lives on the edge of Aylsham and has just under an acre down a quiet farm lane. He is preparing some areas for wild flower seeding this autumn. Contact: 07944 915310.

John is interested in setting up an apiary on a farm in the Attleborough area and employing a full- or part-time beekeeper. If anyone is interested, contact: gibbetfarm@gmail.com.

Poly hives versus wooden hives

Elaine Gibbs

With most beekeeping supplies firms now offering versions of polystyrene hives, Elaine Gibbs here describes the advantages of poly over wooden ones.

Poly hives are equally strong but much lighter than wooden boxes in all weathers, especially when it's soaking wet. In fact the polys are better in all weather conditions as the perfect insulation provided ensures that the bees can easily adjust the temperature/humidity inside to their needs – never too hot nor too cold despite weather extremes and never damp. No black mould growing on the inner walls of boxes not fully occupied.

When assembling poly boxes for the first time (for those versions that do require assembly) you really do have to watch what you are doing as it is very easy to get it wrong and separating and starting over requires concentration and patience. The joints on the polys are a very tight lock-on fit but I do 'glue and screw' anyway. The poly hives need no repairs/upkeep once in use, well I can't think of any mine have ever needed!

The floor of the poly hive is great; it has an integral mesh below and slots that mean you can, from the rear of the hive, slot in the correx board to collect the debris that falls through. Pulling that out regularly tells you by the debris 'stripes' how the colony is expanding in time. Naturally this as an easy way of monitoring varroa – just count, record, wipe down with a damp cloth and slide back in (see *Buzzword* May 2020 p9).

The floor also has a projecting landing strip in front and it is quite fascinating and informative to watch the traffic in and out, scrutinised thoroughly by the door keepers. The bees returning land and have to walk up the ramp to the hive door opening before they can actually enter the colony. The guard bees will often come out and meet them on the ramp to check them out as 'ours' or to beg a sample of the nectar they are bringing in.

[I am sure this kind of thing happens in all hives but the wooden types rarely have a landing platform to be crossed by incomers before the actual opening is reached. Those who have come to the wrong colony are vigorously examined by the guards, roughed up and hurled off the platform or stung if not recognised and are reacting aggressively.]

Very novice 'lost' bees returning from their early foraging missions can save themselves by offering nectar to the guard, behaving submissively by tucking their tails under and not responding when being pulled about. They are then eventually allowed to run in. Any resistance/fighting back is of course fatal! Checking can be repeated more than once until they finally enter the hive door itself. For more information, the NBKA library has a copy of *At the Hive Entrance* by H Storch.]

Nucleus boxes

The nuc boxes need no assembly apart from the optional 'rotating door disc', which I thoroughly recommend – you can fix it to the front of the box by a central screw so that the disc can be rotated, giving the different options to

cover the entrance hole itself. It can be turned to fully/partly open, completely shut, shut but ventilated and shut with queen excluder slots – a really useful idea!

It makes moving easy: you rotate the disc so that the entrance is closed off and then put drawing pins through at intervals to prevent the disc shifting round as the colony is moved. I have to say being a 'belt and braces' type I also stuff the actual small door opening on the nuc box with damp tissues.

The only thing I do not find useful is the internal feeder compartment which runs the length of one side. Other boxes can be slotted in on top making double brood or brood-with-super, and a shallow eke box to take a feeder/treatment dish on top. All of these lock on simply and then it can all be strapped up for transport. There is an integral mesh in the floor below for monitoring events.

In both the main hives and nuc boxes the crown boards are high-quality Perspex with or without a feeding port.

What with the draw tray below and the transparent crown board above and the landing strip with its daily 'conversations' (on the full size hive) the need to open up and pull everything apart is reduced – you know a lot without a puff of smoke! Now tell me the advantages of wooden hives...

Further questions from the Editor:

Q: Do you find that the hive tool 'frays'/chews up the edges of the poly when separating the boxes (or is that a particular design fault of the Payne's poly hives)?

I am afraid I consider the chewing problem the fault of the user conditioned to using wooden boxes. Yes I did find it a problem until I found such force was not really needed. Ease up gently all round the edge and make sure not to leave debris behind on the joining surfaces as you lower the upper box down.

Also don't expect you can lever just at one point. Unlike wooden boxes they interlock in most types. If necessary and it is full of really heavy frames and it seems to be sticking take a few out. Whatever hive I am working on I always have a spare box to hand I can safely unload a few frames into so that I can examine the rest at leisure, e.g. separating gently to look for brood pattern, look for queen etc.

Yes I did find this a change at the start where I am afraid the wooden boxes had encouraged me to use what a novice described to me the other day as 'the thump and dump' technique of examining frames/colonies.

Q: Does the Perspex crown board come with the hive or do you have to buy them separately or even make them (my Paynes hive – about 10 years' old – came with an adequate but flimsy sheet of Perspex)?

Some will sell you the whole set up complete with crown boards or you can select the specific bits you need. Crown boards come with or without a single circular port for access to a feeder. They can also be made if you want to try. Homepage and similar outlets sell a range of different qualities for those who want to do their own. Some double glazing or other firms supply similar online but you really need to see to get the thickness/quality you want.

Question time: your questions answered

Q1: *I have a strong colony with a queen from last year, laying well on 7 or 8 frames. At my inspection (end of July) the queen was present but I found two, elongated, sealed queen cells plus three early stage queen cells with larvae. Should I a) remove all queen cells and wait until the next inspection, b) remove the queen and all the queen cells, c) remove the queen and the sealed cells or d) something else? I decided on option a) but wonder what was the best thing to do.*

A1: My guess would be supersedure. Are the cells on the comb face or along the bottom? That is usually but not always a clue. I would be tempted to leave one sealed cell with the queen and see what happens.

A2: This is a difficult one, whilst I think that this might have started out as supersedure, quite often supersedure turns into swarming, and what makes me think that might be the case here, is that there are two distinct ages of queen cells. The only way you would have known would have been to leave it. I think that I probably would have done what the beekeeper did in this case, take out all queen cells and see what happens.

Q2: *I have only recently started beekeeping and have 2 hives with supers on. In one, there are about 8 frames in total with sealed honey spread out over 2 supers, and in the other about 5 full frames spread over 3 supers. The other frames are just unsealed honey, some pollen or empty. There are no stores in the brood box and not much brood either. My question is how do I get the bees to move the stores from the supers into the brood box? Should I extract the honey (I don't need it) and feed it back to them or should I put the supers underneath the brood box?*

A1: I would firstly remove the sealed frames of honey for extraction. Put a crown board over the brood chamber and reduce the feed hole to a tiny space (an old cd over the hole works well) and fool the bees into thinking that the super frames of uncapped stores are outside their hive. They should then 'rob' them out and take the food down into the brood box, in the same way that we return wet supers for cleaning out after extraction. If they are reluctant to move the stores initially, place an eke or empty super between the crown board and the first super of uncapped stores to increase the distance.

If there is a lot of food in the supers, you could alternatively put one of the supers underneath the brood chamber for the winter (undersupering or nadiring) and they will gradually move it up into the brood chamber.

A2: It is most unlikely that the bees will move the honey down, so if you want to use this honey for winter feed, there are as you suggest any number of options open to you. You could consolidate all the stores into one super, and I would leave it on the top of the brood chamber and not underneath. Do not leave a queen excluder on the hive. Next spring you will be faced with the task of getting them off the super and on to a single brood chamber, at this stage the super can be placed underneath. Any remaining honey can be stored, it may granulate or ferment, or alternatively it can be extracted. Alternatively you could remove all the honey and extract, and feed back or feed sugar syrup. If you feed honey it will need to be diluted down.

Feeding honey is not the best solution, and remember if you are going to feed honey it should only be back to a colony that it was taken from. Never feed imported honey to your bees.

A3: This is very similar to a question printed in August *BBKA News* page 283.

Q3: *I have been moving old brood frames to the end of the brood box and gradually changing them for new frames containing undrawn foundation. The bees have refused to draw out this foundation and I am now left with five old frames full of brood and six frames of undrawn foundation. There are four supers above the brood box. As we are moving towards the Autumn I am worried that the bees will have insufficient stores for the winter if I remove all the supers.*

A1: Once the nectar flow is over, the bees are reluctant to draw foundation and if there are supers above the brood box they certainly won't draw it as they tend to 'chimney' their way up through the middle of the hive, ignoring outside frames.

With only five old frames of brood, I wonder how many bees are now in the hive. It may be worth putting them into a nuc for the winter and then getting them onto new comb in the Spring. However if the hive is filled with bees, they could possibly be united with another colony or nuc to give you a complete set of brood frames in the hive for the winter. Sort out whatever food is in the supers and extract capped frames and feed back the contents of the other frames as described in Q2, A1.

If this is your only hive and it is full of bees and you have no spare drawn brood frame combs, there is still time to push all the bees down into the brood box under the crown board. Then simulate a nectar flow by fast feeding them a 1:1 syrup mix to get them to draw the foundation, followed by getting them to rob out their supers as described in Q2, or feed a heavy 2:1 syrup solution for them to store for the winter. The ivy is just about to start flowering which should help fill the brood box in the next few weeks. I hope that has covered every possible scenario!

A2: If you remove all the honey, it is most likely that the colony would have insufficient stores. If you have no drawn combs to replace the frames of foundation (which they will not draw at this stage) to accommodate sugar syrup that you can feed, then leave a super of honey and sort the problem next year. Do not leave a queen excluder on the hive. For bees to draw foundation the colony needs to be strong, plenty of bees, plenty of nectar, or sugar syrup coming in and the temperature up.

A3: The question could be resolved if there is a good ivy flow (not always guaranteed), if not, a good feed would be required or leave the supers on over winter with no queen excluder. Depending on the amount in the supers, feeding is probably a priority.

Please keep the questions coming in. They will be answered quickly by email and then published in *Buzzword* in the next issue.
buzzwordnbka@gmail.com.

Newbie's new bees

Malwina Żuk

In an occasional series a beekeeper relatively new to the hobby describes how they came to become a beekeeper and what they get out of it. This is Malwina's experience so far.

My hives are commercials as bought from eBay (description was National standard but hey...). I have two of those and one 6-frames nuc, the colony from which will be transferred into a hive soon – and it will be a National this time.

My story started for a strange reason: my tomatoes and cucumbers didn't produce fruit and I noticed that there are not many bees and bumblebees around. I did some research and spoke with my granddad (who was my mentor when I was a teenager and he owned nearly 100 hives in Poland). I got my first nuc last year and was told the bees were Buckfast – they are very calm and strong – and I am very happy with them.

This year in late May they decided to swarm onto my bay tree so getting them into a nuc wasn't a problem. That happened because as a care worker I didn't have enough time for inspection and missed a weekly one, which gave them time to raise a new queen. After getting those into the nuc I did an inspection and found eight queen cells. I took them all down but, wanting to educate myself, I opened a few and had another queen in my hands. As I hate killing bees I tried to find anyone who would like her but with no luck. I received a message advising me to do a split (the day after a swarm – crazy!) so I took two frames out, got them into my empty hive (I was planning just to expand the existing hive) and put the queen in. Lucky me; the bees accepted her straight away and it must have been that she was just a few hours old. Days passed and all the queens started to lay eggs perfectly. For all that time I didn't have any signs of aggression or excitement – they were calm and busy as usual.

So, back to the present day, I have two hives with full brood boxes and one super on top of each and one nuc, which has five frames full at the moment. All three are located in my back garden in the corner, back to the



Malwina's set-up in her back garden

fence, south-east facing, having its own fish pond near. Also I must stress that I do observe them every day as behind my back garden there is a

school so I can't allow my bees to be nasty ones or moody. As I love to learn new things I decided to prepare for next year to possibly raise my own queens – but that's next year's plan. At the moment I just carry on with weekly inspections and monitoring.

I am nowhere near being experienced, especially when it comes to collecting swarms, but I learn as I go and I do read a lot, consult with other beekeepers and talk with others in Facebook groups. I hope one day I will be able to help other new beekeepers. I hope that's given some idea about my "apiary" and my story, Malwina.

The Albert Einstein myth

Peter Beckley

Einstein said: "If honeybees became extinct, human society will follow in four years" or, more commonly: "If, suddenly, honey bees died out mankind would die out in three years".

This statement was examined and discussed at the AGM in response to a question when I was giving the Padmore Lecture (how long ago that seems now – just before the 'shut down').

There is no evidence that Einstein said anything of the sort. Some beekeepers think it ought to be so, and so they say it is so, under the principle that if you keep repeating a formula without any clear idea of its meaning it becomes a fact.

This is the opinion of many entomologists but I would like particularly to quote Professor Dave Goulson, Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Sussex and founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust:

"...there is no record of where or when he (Einstein) said it ... he was not prone to making sweeping statements on subjects in which he had no expertise. It (the statement) is almost certainly incorrect ... if the word 'honey' was removed from this 'quote' it would be a little more plausible. In the UK, honeybees contribute at most one third of all insect pollination. If we were to lose all our bees, then our diets would be much poorer, although most of us would survive."

A more apposite observation comes from an eminent biologist, E O Wilson, who said;

"If mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse back into chaos."

It does not bring credit to the beekeeping fraternity to have this myth promulgated and produced as 'evidence' of the honeybee's contribution to the saving of human society. It just calls into question our credibility.

Home-made wasp deterrent

Suzanne Dickinson

I learnt last year when visiting Blickling Hall that 'waspinators' are extremely effective. I bought a couple at around £14.00 for a pack of 2 but I have made a few of my own this year.

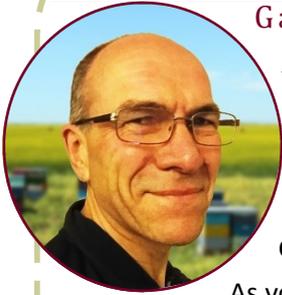
I've always been aware of the stress that the wasp invasions were putting on my bees, especially in late summer, when the poor bees already have so much to deal with. The 'waspinators' are very easy to make, they're basically a sack with a circular base and a drawstring at the other end. Fill the sac with bubble wrap, pull the drawstring and hang upside down. Hey presto!

Passing wasps think there is a nest and don't even give the area a second glance! See the photo of one of my home-made ones. I do wonder if they might deter Hornets too.



The Secretary Matters

Garry Bowler



Again, not a great deal in the way of Association matters to report. Let's hope that we can carry out our plans for a return to a more normal calendar of events for 2021.

As you will see elsewhere in *Buzzword*, we are receiving emails on a fairly regular basis from people keen to offer apiary sites. It can sometimes be a challenge to find a home for our bees if we run more hives than will fit into our gardens. So, someone volunteering a site is very useful.

Another regular topic of emails has been the frustration of people wanting to get started in beekeeping but not being able to. Presumably, there will be quite a demand for nucs and requests of help next spring as these will be added to the usual 2021 starters.

All about the fun!

I don't know about you, but my beekeeping is quite a personal hobby. I don't mind sharing a certain amount when I am asked about it but generally I like to keep things to myself. Whilst having a fairly challenging week or two I found myself wondering whether anyone else was having as much fun as I was so I am sharing some of it with you here.

This started during the last hot spell when the coolest we could get was 25 °C but not in full sun. I prefer to wear Marigold-type gloves so they were full of 'water'. Never the most comfortable feeling.

One of my colonies is pretty strong but I had noticed a number of shiny, black and orange bees. Shiny because they are being hassled by other workers. Although I haven't seen any standing around, trembling on top of frames or at the hive entrance there were higher than normal numbers of dead bees outside the hive and I suspected Paralysis Virus. This colony shares an apiary with 5 others but seems to be the only one affected.

I exchanged emails with our Bee Inspector, Regina, and she thought it could be the early stages of BPV. If this had

been early in the season then a full comb change would have been recommended. As losing winter bees would weaken the colony Regina suggested shaking the bees out 3 times over 3 weeks. So far I have done this twice, shaking the bees out about 30 metres from the hive. It is hot work and the best description for the result is chaos.

The first time, when checking the following day, the queen and a large proportion of the bees were clustered outside the hive. I encouraged her to walk into the hive and all seemed to return to normal. The second time, whilst catching the queen to put her in the hive before shaking out, I dropped her onto the ground, amongst the weeds and grass under the hive. A few minutes of panic and scrabbling about but I did manage to find her. I am looking forward to the next time!

What I have found interesting is to watch the bees as they return to the hive. Pretty quickly they are checking bees at the entrance and readily spot any of the shiny workers trying to get back in. Not many manage to make it past the 'guards'.

I have another, again strong, colony that kept building queen cells so seems determined to supersede. The existing queen is still laying very well but I have no choice but to let them raise another and see what happens. Interesting that the existing queen was herself from late in the 2019 season, her mother had vanished though. Not sure late season queens is a beneficial trait.

Have you had this much fun? Garry

Things 'For Sale'

Contact the Editor on buzzwordnbka@gmail.com

Free! Two Kenyan top-bar bee hives, brand new (although one has had bees briefly in it), home built with 2-skin ply with insulation between to reduce weight (1"-thick side walls) and varroa floors (free although something to cover the costs of materials would be appreciated). Please call Nicholas Greasely on 01842 753567.

Members will be looking for **sugar** supplies very soon. Aldi have it at 65p/Kg but QD have it at 56p/Kg. Both are in 1 kg bags. Seen anywhere cheaper? Let Garry know.

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 <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

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.