

# Beespace



**New  
Roof  
&  
New  
Floor**



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# Chairman's Chatter

Traditionally the beekeeping year ends when the year's work is done and you take off the summer honey in August - then you can put your feet up! In practice there is still much work to be done, and it continues through the winter, albeit at a reduced level. Certainly most of us will have given the bees some sort of Varroa treatment, fed them sugar syrup or replaced some honey supers, maybe united some colonies and various other tasks, and there are still mouseguards and woodpecker protection to deal with. Then around Christmas time we might consider giving an oxalic acid treatment (approved source of course), and hefting the hives and worrying as to whether the bees have enough stores to last them through the winter. I think for most of us this year has been a rather unremarkable one for beekeeping, but we'll prepare for next year in the expectation of better things to come.

It's a good time now to think about improving your beekeeping knowledge - we have a splendid library of

beekeeping books which is seriously under used - borrow a book and get up on your favourite topic. For the more seriously minded, we are intending to get a study group together to work for one or two of the BBKA module examinations held in February. This is an excellent way to learn - contact our secretary Nicola ([secretary@hwbka.co.uk](mailto:secretary@hwbka.co.uk)) if you're interested. (No need to commit to taking the exam at this stage).

At the October meeting we have our honey show and AGM. Do try to enter something in the show - it's much more fun when there are plenty of exhibits, and why not enter something in the Bucks County section of the National Honey Show? I will be making arrangements to collect entries for delivery to the NHS.

At the AGM you will be electing a new chairman as my statutory time in office will be completed. It's been a most interesting three years, and I send the new incumbent my best wishes for the success of the Association. *Paul Hurley*  
*Chairman*

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# Saunderton Apiary foaming

As part of our ongoing maintenance and improvement programme we have now successfully applied spray foam to the inside of the container roof. This should hopefully have the effect of stopping so much condensation forming on the roof, which then drips down on everything stored in the container and makes a real mess.

The foam itself is a 2 part closed cell polyurethane foam. It comes in 2 small pressurised tanks, with hoses, nozzles etc. The process is actually fairly simple. You need a warm day, the foam kit, dust sheets, overalls and safety protection. You spray the foam on in a number of passes, building up the layers. You have to leave a little time between the layers otherwise the heat build up can, apparently, cause the foam to spontaneously combust! The foam sets firm in a matter of minutes, and is rigid within a few hours.

Overall an easy job, and something possible by almost any DIYer. You can insulate roofs, floors, walls, pretty much anything using this stuff. The only think is it makes a lot of mess! cover everything you dont want foam spatter on!

Bob Grayston





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# Membership renewal:

Autumn is the beginning of our new HWBKA year and the time that all current members are invited to renew their membership for 2015-16. The speaker meetings are booked, other events will be added throughout the year and membership also offers you the opportunity to sign up to Beecraft magazine and/or the Beekeepers' Quarterly journal at a reduced rate. There are sample copies of both online - addresses are included in the notes on page 2 of the membership

form.

The form with all the details will be sent out to members, via email at the end of September, maybe with the invitation to our September meeting or with this issue of Beespace or even both! It will also be on the website. Although new members are of course welcome to join at anytime, it is so helpful if existing members can renew during the autumn so please don't delay; the form is quick and easy and can be emailed back to me

and you can pay online by BACS, or return a cheque and your form in the post, or at one of our meetings. I can take cash, but please make sure the form is completed so I can easily remember who has given me what. Any queries please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Marion Lyon - treasurer@hwbka.co.uk / 01494 437477 / 41 Spring Gardens Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 7AG

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# Steam wax extractor

Whenever you inspect your bees there will be amounts of wax that need to be scraped off and removed. In addition when brood frames get dark and dirty and need replacement there is some wax content. Old super frames are also a good source if too tatty for re-use. Finally capping's can be used. All of these sources, if kept through the year, can amass you significant quantities of wax. Some beekeepers just throw it away, but there is another option.

As was mentioned last month the association has recently purchased a steam wax extractor. The concept is pretty simple. You use steam to melt your surplus wax for re-use.

I borrowed the unit to try it out. The Association rents the unit out for just 5 for a whole week.

The unit comprises of a number of parts. There is a large stainless steel chamber, which has a small spout on the bottom which lets condensed water drip out, a spout on the side which lets wax out, and a screw on connector which is the steam inlet. Inside the large chamber is a lift out mesh cage and a fabric bag. A lid and a set of legs completes the main unit. In addition there is a separate steam generation unit, and a flexible hose.

To use the unit you stand the main unit on a firm level surface, preferably outside. Place a bowl underneath the small bottom spout to catch the condensate and place a suitably sized container under the wax spout. The wax that you want to melt down is placed inside the fabric bag, which in turn is placed in the mesh cage. Connect the hose to the steam generator and the main unit ( a word of caution here – the thread on the steam generator and the hose are both plastic so care must be taken not to damage them by screwing on wrongly) Fill the steam generator with water (if you use boiled water from a kettle its a lot quicker) and plug the unit in. The steam will gently warm your wax, and after a time it will start to drip out of the spout into the container. It should be clean and ready to either re-use or swap with your chosen supplier for cash or foundation

Uses for your clean wax include:

Make candles – use candle moulds and wick to make a vast range of beautiful wax candles. These are extremely saleable, and also make great presents for friends and family.

Furniture polish – either on its own or mixed with turpentine (which makes



it softer)

Cosmetics and soaps – many recipes for these will use some beeswax. Make your own foundation – not done very often, but you can!

All in all this is a very useful unit. You can hire it for a week at only £5. Please contact Paul Hurlly to book it.

Bob Grayston – Vice Chairman  
HWBKA!

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# Renovation of the Apiary

One facility our Association has lacked is good dry storage. At the Saunderton apiary we have a large shack with an extended porch which served as a clubhouse to the previous users of the site, but it was in a state of disrepair. Rather than leave it to rot, or knock it down and replace it, I personally thought that the best option would be to restore it and use it for our own needs, and our committee agreed.

A survey by an expert in the renovation of old buildings showed that the shack, although in a state of disrepair could be fairly easily brought into a usable condition without a large expenditure, if Association members provided the labour force.

Leaks from the roof had rotted some of the timber and also the floor boarding, allowing entry to wildlife from above and below, and the millboard roof lining had been partially destroyed by squirrels and glis-glis.

The first job was to remove the remaining millboard lining and clean out the debris. This was a few hour's work for four people, in the course of which the resident squirrel was evicted, and its entry hole sealed up. It was decided to re-roof the building using dark green resin coated steel

sheets, these blending in better to the surroundings. Fortunately, one of our members could obtain these at a reasonable cost. We decided to retain the roof boarding, although rotten in places : it would provide an insulating layer and reduce condensation inside the roof. In the event this was a wise decision as we could then walk on the roof when installing the sheets.

Unfortunately the squirrel's place of residence was taken over by a pair of glis-glis which we found a couple of weeks later at our open day. These mysteriously disappeared after an encounter with one of our committee members! However, their place was quickly taken by yet another pair: one of these had a rapid demise during an encounter with Olwyn's dog, Bramble. The other escaped through a hole under the eaves while we were clearing out the equipment. The holes have now been sealed!

Installing the roofing sheets in position was fairly simple over a straight run. However, the building does not run true, and the front extension has a definite dog-leg which had be accommodated. Fortunately the roofing sheets have a degree of flexibility! As always, the small details took up the time and the roofing took three days work for three people.

The floor was in a poor state and it was decided the most cost effective solution was to cover the whole area with 18mm OSB3 sheet. We stripped out the fixtures and fittings left behind by the archery club – a built in closet (?), a sink unit and a breakfast bar, and down went the floor boarding – not as easily as hoped because the corners of the building are not square, and the front doors had to be removed for adjustment, but otherwise this job was fairly straightforward.

Finally, any dubious areas which may have provided entry for wildlife were sealed up and we now have at relatively low cost, a sound dry storage shed for the Association equipment, also somewhere to hang damp bee suits to dry out, and with the extended porch a useful shelter against the occasional shower. The outside of the shack will be given a couple of coats of wood treatment to improve the appearance and help preserve the timber.

My thanks to everybody who helped on this project: Olwyn and Richard French, Graeme Summers Phil Clarke, Keith Ray, Janet Nicholl for obtaining the roofing, and above all Angus Williamson who led the work parties and provided his expertise and most of the tools and equipment needed.

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## Steam Wax Extractor

HWBKA have recently purchased a large Thorns steam wax extractor which members can hire out for £5 for a whole week! This will give you the opportunity to extract and purify your wax to a high standard. A reservation for the unit is essential as we expect demand to be high. Everyone should make use of the wax that the bees produce.. Please contact Paul Hurley for further details

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## FOR SALE

Complete deep national (14 x 12) vented varroa floor, brood box, crown board, queen excluder, 2 supers. good quality kit and NOT your cheap stuff.

2 x thornes ashforth feeders ( 1 new other used once.

sherriff green bee suit ( veil needs a little attention)

14 x 12 wbc inner brood box

wbc supers

pitched national roof (not wbc)

6ft x 4ft trailer wooden metal framed 500kg weight load. with spare wheel and lighting board.

large cultivator 4hp good condition various accessories

workshop compressor 13amp 150cfm large air receiver.

**please call Scott on-07748788241**

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# AGM/Honey Show

Just a reminder that the AGM/Honey Show this year is on Friday the 30th October at Trinity Church

For the Honey Show our Guest Judge is Frank Rickett (president of Bucks County) and in keeping with previous years it's first and foremost a fun event, however for the competitive amongst us there are 10 categories including a members judged black jar category, entries will be taken from 6.45 to 7.15 followed by the AGM which commences at 7.30

For the photograph in category 6 we are trying a new idea to allow digital photographs to be displayed on a laptop or similar as a slide show, hopefully this will encourage some more entrants

See the following list for categories and rules for the Honey Show, There will be Vouchers for the winners and in most categories there is a Trophy for you to hold for the next year

## AGM Honey Competition Classes

- 1 Frame of Honey
- 2 Black Jar
- 3 Honey, Creamed, Run and Crystallised
- 4 Honey Cake
- 5 Wax Product
- 6 A Bee related Photograph printed and digital
- 7 Home produced Food Item containing Honey
- 8 Craft Item, made by exhibitor, clear bee related subject
- 9 Other Hive Product
- 10 Mead

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# AGM/Honey Rules

Honey must be exhibited in traditional 454g (1lb) BS 1777 Jars

## Honey Cake

- 170 gms (6oz) honey
- 2 eggs beaten
- 142 gms (5oz) butter
- 198gms self-raising flour
- 85 gms (3oz) soft brown sugar

Measure the honey, butter and sugar into a large pan, and heat gently until melted, remove from the heat

Mix in the eggs and sieved flour. Turn mixture into a greased and lined 18cm (7") diameter round cake tin, bake in a moderate oven 180c gas mark 4 for 40-45 minutes or until the cake is spongy in the centre and just shrinking from the edges of the tin, before turning out on to a wire rack

The cake must be displayed in a plastic bag and on a paper plate (which will be provided by HWBKA on entry)

Labels for the exhibits will be provided prior to the Honey Show and should be placed as follows:

**Jars** Horizontally 12mm up from base of Jar (Black Jar under sleeve)

**Frame** On top frame bar

**Cake** On plastic bag

**Photographs** Bottom right hand corner, see additional notes on digital entries

**Craft Item** Anywhere clearly visible on the item

**Other Hive Product** Anywhere clearly visible on the item

**Wax** On bottom of product

**Mead** horizontally 12mm up from base of bottle

Entries can be placed between 6.45 and 7.15 on the day of the show, Photographs can be sent in by e-mail in a JPEG format to the e-mail address below at anytime up to 3 days before the show

Thank you for entering, if you have queries, please contact me by e-mail [clarkwithane@ntlworld.com](mailto:clarkwithane@ntlworld.com) or by phone text or call 07736 597188, or evenings after 7.00pm or leave a message on 01494 639835

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## For sale - Buckets of local honey

30Lb approx weight buckets of local honey available.

Contact Bob Grayston for details

## QUESTION ?

"did other local beekeepers have much darker honey than in the last few years? And if so, any ideas about the cause? I'm assuming there must have been more one type of plant or less of something else than other years, but don't know what might have such a major effect."

Marion Lyon - [treasurer@hwbka.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@hwbka.co.uk) / 01494 437477

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# SEASONAL TIPS and REMINDERS - Sept/Oct 2015

## Key Tasks for

### October

- **STORING HONEY SUPERS.**
- **ANTI-ROBBING AND ANTI-WASP MEASURES.**
- **ROUNDING OFF ON VARROA CONTROL.**
- **PREPARATION FOR WINTER.**
- **IVY NECTAR AND POLLEN.**
- **SUGAR SYRUP.**
- **ENSURING COLONIES HAVE SUFFICIENT STORES.**
- **MOUSEGUARDS NEEDED SOON.**

The main topic I need to review this month is preparation for winter. Unfortunately I'm rather late starting this topic, because of the time-positioning of this Beespace issue. However, let's start with some other issues that need action at this time of year.

Storing Extracted Supers. In essence you have two options. Either they can be returned to the hives soon after extracting, for cleaning-up by the bees. Alternatively you can leave them 'honey-wet' until you use them again next year. If you put them back on the hives, do it in the evening. All the colonies in the apiary must get supers to clean, or have a small feed. They must also have the hive entrances reduced to minimise the risk of robbing. Working like this means all colonies in your apiary are at a similar state of alert / excitement. Leave the wet supers on the colonies for a few days, then use a Clearer Board to clear them again, and remove them for storage. You need to minimise wax moth attack. A standard routine is to store the dried supers in a stack, with a sheet of newspaper between each box. The very different alternative routine is to store the supers still wet with honey, because honey-wet combs are much less likely to get attacked by wax moth. If you do this, you must make

sure that the stacks of supers are bee-proof; and that any honey won't cause a mess if some seeps out from the bottom. You might also have to ignore some 'mead-like smell' due to fermenting honey while the supers are being stored.

**Protection of colonies against robbing.** With a dearth of nectar, honeybees (and wasps) will be hunting round for food. Wasps haven't been much in evidence during this summer, but there are quite a few of them on the prowl at present. Both wasps and honey bees can rob weakly defended colonies, so causing them to die out. Small nucleus colonies are particularly vulnerable to such attacks. The best way round such problems is to use minimal size entrances. The hive must still have good ventilation – but mesh Varroa Floors work wonders here, even if the mite-drop tray is in place. If a colony is being badly attacked, you can substitute the normal slot entrance block by a similar sized piece of plain timber which has just one simple 9 – 10 mm hole drilled through it. This will make the guard bees defence work much more effective.

**Rounding off Varroa control.** Our Apiguard anti-Varro treatment regime should already be completed for most of us. The usage instructions refer to "two to four weeks" in-hive dwell time for the second tray. This allows for slower evaporation of the thymol active ingredient, should the weather become cooler. You can read more about this under 'Products' at Vita's website; where the FAQ information is particularly useful. <http://www.vita-europe.com/>

When we all moved to using Apiguard because the mites had become resistant to pyrethroid type treatments, Vita's Technical Director, Dr Max Watkins, came to visit HWBKA to give us a Talk. At that time, since it was judged extremely unlikely that the mites would become resistant to thymol, he told us you could get

some useful extension to varroa control by leaving in place any treatment trays which still contained residual Apiguard at the end of the treatment period.

**Preparation for winter.** During September and October Check that the bees will have sufficient stores to keep them going over the winter period. The standard rule of thumb for beekeepers in our part of the country is that feeding with sugar syrup would usually be done during September: but early October would be OK if necessary. Your target is for the brood chamber to feel really heavy. If it is not, feed them with sugar syrup, as discussed below.

Ivy as a source of winter stores. In the Wycombe area, where we have a prodigious number of mature Ivy plants in the local hedgerows and woodland, there is currently a major nectar flow from Ivy flowers. Our bees will work these flowers avidly. It has a long flowering period from September to October, maybe longer. Given the right weather conditions honey bee colonies may be able to bring in enough stores from this source without the need for artificial feeding. A way forward in this dilemma would be to feed some some syrup, but allow a major top-up from the Ivy. If your bees are working it, they will be bringing-in copious amounts of Ivy pollen, which is a bright chrome yellow. The nectar has a strong and characteristic odour similar to the smell of the flowers on the plants. The nectar granulates extremely fast, so that combs containing it look a creamy white. If the bees need extra storage space they can fill an eke, or tank feeder with wild comb and fill it with ivy honey, so the top of the hive can look creamy white, but choked-up too. The bees can winter well on it, so as a consequence, in many apiaries the colonies will be able to stock up on Ivy nectar and pollen and would only need "top-up feeding" with syrup.



### Ensuring colonies have Sufficient Stores.

Honeybee colonies are now shrinking in numbers by natural wastage. This leaves a population of younger "winter bees" to go through to spring. A useful thing the passing "summer bees" can do is to use their time and enzymes to work up sugar syrup feed and turn it into winter stores. Working-up syrup to stores is slow process: you need to allow time for the enzyme induced inversion of the sucrose, and the reduction of it's water content to 18% - like ripe honey. But how much syrup do you need to feed? and what is the best way to do so?

**Sugar Syrup for feeding bees.** First, some facts and figures. The "standard concentration" talked about in beekeeping books is 2 lb. of sugar to 1 pint of water: but you don't need to be accurate because the bees won't notice. In the simplest format, put some granulated sugar in a container; add enough water to fill the air gaps between the sugar crystals; then stir to dissolve. Hot water or cold won't matter, but you need to stir longer to dissolve the sugar with cold water. Stir regularly to make sure that the un-dissolved crystals don't pack down into a tough layer that takes ages to disappear.

8 lb. sugar gives 1 gallon of syrup, which weighs approx. 13 lb. The water content of this syrup is 38.5%, the sugar 61.5%. The Specific gravity (density) is about 1.3. A gallon of this syrup, when fed to the bees, will

produce approx. 12 lb. of stores and this will be equivalent to 10 lb. of honey stores.

A reasonable metric equivalent would be 1 kg sugar to 600 ml water. Scaling this up, 5 kg sugar plus 3.0 litres water gives 6.1 litres. 5 litres of this syrup will produce approx. 6.0 kg of stores and this will be equivalent to 5.0 kg of honey stores.

Standard methodology would be to feed syrup as early as possible during September. Aim to finish around the end of the month, or in early October. When you feed syrup, give it in the evening, and keep the hive entrance small. Feed all the hives in the apiary, even if it is just a little for some colonies, because this will help prevent robbing. A small entrance will help the guard bees to protect the colony from prowling robbers, or wasps. (See above.)

A colony needs access to some 35 - 40 lb. (16 - 18 kg) of stores to overwinter successfully, but may only use 20 - 25 lb. (9 - 11 kg) in some winters. (It is not an exact science!)

The traditional way to check hive weights is by "hefting" them - lifting them gently and guessing the weight. (They should feel significantly heavy!) However, a better way is to use a suitable balance to weigh the hives and so check more accurately that they have enough stores. Position the balance midway on either side of the floorboard. Round head screws located in the centre at either side of

the floorboard will help you to locate the balance. Take the readings from both the left and right sides in turn, noting the balance reading when the floorboard is just eased off the hive stand. Add the two weights together to give the total weight. You should be able to get the weight data using a Luggage Scale (preferably a Digital one), or with a Digital bathroom scale and a stick to transfer the weight between the hive side and the scale platform !

To have the recommended 45 lb. (20 kg) of stores, the following total weights should be achieved. (These figures include floorboard, crown board, brood box, combs and bees.) National Brood Chamber - 68 lb. (31 kg). National Brood and a half - 77 lb. (35 kg). National Double Brood 85 lb (38.6 kg). Deep National (14" x 12") - 75 - 80 lb. (34 kg). Commercial (16" x 10") - 75 lb. (34 kg).

If you have a WBC hive, you can still weigh it as above, but since these hives vary widely in the type and thickness of wood used, the empty weight and correct target weight required is rather more problematical. Here is a way round the problem..... You need a spare floor, brood box porch lift and coverboard. Put a carton onto the bathroom scales, then load it with bricks to 50 lb. in weight - this allows 10 lb. extra for frames and bees. Put the loaded carton into the hive, then test it's weight by hefting, or by using the scales, as before.



*Ivy nectar immediately setting in cells of wild comb*



*Ivy honey wild comb in eke*

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**Feeding by leaving on a super.**

One common "wintering routine" is to leave a super of stores on the hive over winter, to feed the bees. Ian Homer, our former Regional Bees Office, maintained the best way to do this is to position the super under the brood chamber. The bees will then use the food and clear the frames, without using them for brood. In the spring the empty box is then ready to be brought back to the top of the hive, for use again as a honey super.

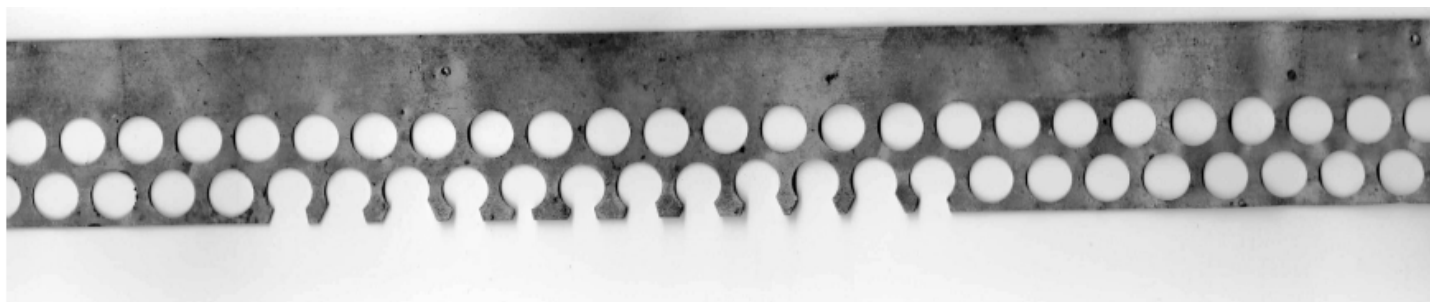
**Introducing Mouse Guards.** Mice are attracted to beehives during the low bee-activity months, since bee bodies, the combs of honey and the pollen stores are all wonderful mouse food. If all is quiet and the bees are tightly clustered, mice can even build a nest inside a hive. You can counter them by using a metal Mouse guard over the hive entrance.

Get your mouse guards looked out; and install them in late October or November. Fix the guard with several stout drawing pins so it is tightly in position against the hive woodwork and secure against strong winds. To fit a guard to a WBC, use a pair of scissors to trim the metal down, so it fits in the entrance slide way, in place of the wooden slides. Don't forget to bung-up any gaps which are 3/8 inch (9mm) or bigger - such as at the ends, where the guard fits into the slide way.

Put a mouse guard on even if your hive is on rails well above the ground. Some years back, I chanced it and left mouseguards off one winter - and guess what happened ... a mouse moved into the weakest colony: so despite their cheapness, mouseguards are really important! That unprotected hive of mine was on hive

rails, with it's entrance at knee height. The mouse wrecked many combs and the colony took ages to recover the following year.

Mouseguards do sometimes cause pollen loads to fall off the bee's legs when they squeeze past into the hive. Phil Wiggins, one of our senior members, has a simple modification to the guard. Using a pair of strong scissors, or Tinsnips, he cuts out the bottom of the central lowest row of holes, effectively changing circular hole to an inverted "U" shape. They go into use after a quick de-bur with abrasive paper. The bees can pass through the modified guards with significantly less pollen loss. In 20+ years of use he has never had a mouse get into a hive with such a modified guard. It is also easier for bees to bring out bee-corpses through the guard. See the photo for



*Modified Mouseguard 2015 (Phil Wiggins)*



# Seasonal Extras - Sept/Oct 2015

We're now at the end of 2015's beekeeping year and the transition to 2016. Autumn has started, with trees now getting their autumn colour. After a pretty dry summer we've had much recent rain, but despite this, the river at West Wycombe is drying up. There has been heavy dew most recent mornings, with mist rising from the Rye on cold evenings. Ivy is flowering and being worked by a mix of honey bees, wasps, hoverflies and some solitary bees. Honey bee colonies are shrinking in preparation for winter. Bumblebees have decreased sharply in numbers and most of them are now common carder bees. Much of the pollen going into my hives is the bright chrome yellow of ivy; but there are a few loads of pure orange, perhaps from Michaelmas Daisy, or Dahlia flowers.

The local retail price of honey has increased over the last few months from a minimum of £4.50 per 454g jar, to about £5.00. In premium outlets it has moved to £6.49 (Booker Garden Centre). My son tells me that in the Food Festival at Thame, honey was priced on several stalls at £6.00. This summer's rather poor honey crop, follows several others and I've heard that Radio 4's 'Farming Today' for 28th September will have an article on the Bee Farmers Association reporting poor honey crops throughout the country. This will be available on catch-up via the BBC website and should be well worth a listen. From simple supply and demand I suspect the retail price of honey in our area will soon be rising towards £6.00 per jar. The underlying message is "if you've got more than enough for your family's needs,

don't undervalue your product". But, do make sure your labelling meets all the legal requirements. The BBKA website has relevant guidance. And if you need an outlet, Wycombe Environment Centre is looking for some extra supplies.

The National Honey Show is from the 29th to 31st of October and is always well worth a visit. It has been at Weybridge for some years now and a short and straightforward short drive from M25 junction 11. The competitive classes are amazing, the lectures very informative and the Trade stand folk have time to talk with you if you have any questions. To find out more, visit [www.nationalhoneyshow.co.uk](http://www.nationalhoneyshow.co.uk)

We have our own AGM on the 30th of October. If you are enjoying your beekeeping, please use this opportunity to get involved and help with steering the association. Our small committee has achieved much for our membership, but this year we have a few vacancies. An AGM is a wonderful opportunity to get more involved with the association and so more out of your beekeeping.

In other ways late September and early October can be the start of the relaxed "keep an eye on things, but not too much to do" phase of the beekeeping year, so do make sure to steal a few minutes to sit beside a hive, to relax, listen, watch, and wonder.

[clivehill20@gmail.com](mailto:clivehill20@gmail.com)



*HB working Ivy flowers for pollen*



*HB working Ivy blossom for nectar*