



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITORS MESSAGE

What a busy month April has been! The weather hasn't been overly kind to our bees with this persistent north easterly wind keeping everything on the chilly side, but this is the time of year when everything starts to 'take off'.

Your regular inspections have started by now with the mantra in your head 'never inspect a colony without a purpose'. Perhaps you like me have that slightly nervous feeling of 'do I still remember how to do this? Running through your mental check list of what to do and what to look for.

If your bees are building up fast, you'll be looking at the brood to make sure there is enough space for your queen to lay and that the brood looks healthy – a good sign that your queen is active and performing well. Inspecting under and between each frame looking for any signs of queen cells with those glistening little grubs, and if yes, going into swarm control activities. Keep an eye on their stores too, this chill wind is playing havoc with their foraging flights,

There were the lectures from the BBKA spring convention, this time on zoom, so you could sit in comfort in your own home. The lectures this

year provided an excellent range from helping the newly fledged beekeeper to more experienced 'beeks'. The lectures are still available on YouTube for a few weeks, so if you missed the live events, spoil yourself and have a look at the catchups.

In our own branch meetings, we've been lucky enough to have two zoom meetings on 'Understanding the evolution of natural Varroa tolerance mechanisms in various beekeeping populations' with research from Izzy Grindod and 'The Amazing Honey Bee and LASI research aimed at helping the honey bee' from Professor Francis Ratnieks. Both excellent – we've had a feast this month!

We've also have an opportunity to help provide intel to identify the underlying causal factors of bee losses. Let's help where we can by providing our own results. (Survey link provided later in the newsletter)

Finally, we had a little excitement earlier in the month when it was realised that we have to register our hives with the NBU where Varroa is present in our apiaries, Dougal Hendry provides more insight and rationale for this later.

April has certainly been busy on all fronts! Lisa

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The easiest way to contact us is via email using the links above, but you can also use the contacts page on the website.

Contact [Newsletter Editor](#) to contribute articles.

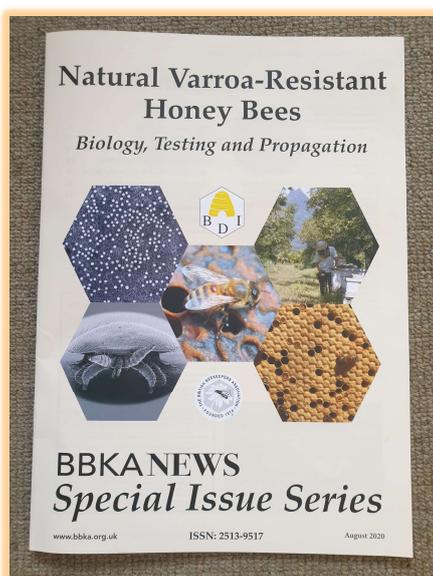
APRIL 2021

A newsletter for friends and members of the Canterbury branch of Kent BKA

newsletter@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk

2021 YEAR PROGRAMME

Understanding the evolution of natural Varroa tolerance mechanisms in various beekeeping populations – Isobel Grindrod - Branch zoom meeting 7th April.



Isobel is a PHD student conducting research with Professor Stephen Martin investigating the spatial patterns of recapped brood cells and its association with Varroa infestation to understand in what way the uncapping of non-infested cells occurs. Isobel provided a highly interesting perspective on her work with displays and explanations of how she conducted her work. Her explanations explained how early treatments for varroa focussed on invasive chemical compounds and whilst these still have a place, the emphasis is changing to biological methods of control, wherever possible. This latest research looks at ways in which bees and the mites can co-exist. An invaluable talk for anyone interested in non-chemical means of Varroa control and what the future may hold.

If you would like further information, a special edition booklet by Professor Martin and his team is available from the BBKA - <https://www.bbka.org.uk/shop/bbka-special-edition-natural-varroa-resistant-honey-bees-new>

The Amazing Honey Bee and LASI research aimed at helping the honey bee' - Professor Francis Ratnieks – 21st April



Francis Ratnieks, the UK's only Professor of Apiculture, and his team at the University of Sussex carry out ground-breaking research into honey bee health and well-being, breeding hygienic honey bees to multiply the hygienic stock. The University of Sussex is now the leading UK centre for research on the honey bee and other social insects. We were very privileged therefore that he was able to spend an evening with us, sharing his findings. You can see more about Professor Ratnieks work at <https://youtu.be/tTm1s2dITPQ>

MEETING IN MAY

We are hoping to hold more branch based, practical meetings at the branch apiary. Keep a look out for invitations coming to your in box soon.

Branch Apiary visits coming soon – watch this space!



BRANCH NEWS

A bee keeping novice in lockdown

Ian Small

Some years ago I gave a beekeeping book to a long-time friend after head overruled heart and I realised that I really couldn't manage another hobby. So in the Spring of 2020 having acquired some additional garden, said friend pointed out that "there is plenty of room for bees and I'll help you with everything!". Many of you will recognise this enthusiasm as Martin Name set about sourcing me a hive kit, gave me a book and started listening out for an available swarm.

Then the Coronavirus pandemic arrived and we all suddenly went into lockdown but the bees certainly didn't and Martin duly arrived with a swarm in a nuc I'd made up earlier to a printed pattern he'd supplied. My learning curve took off rather acutely just as all the normal learning opportunities disappeared.

Overnight I learned so much, firstly locking them in to build wax and reduce disease, syrup mixing and later installing them in their pristine new Langstroth down the garden. Rapidly gathering that bees don't always do as they're supposed to, it became evident that we were hopelessly queenless.

Having taken to YouTube as a surrogate teacher I came across the concept of a bait hive and knocked one up from leftovers, leaving it on a plank at above head height between two cherry trees. Over the next few days I watched and watched until I saw a single bee checking out the inside for about 5 minutes. The following morning fifty or so bees by the trap caused me to excitedly telephone Martin. "I've got bees!!! They're here!!! Little did I know but they were merely the advance party scouts. You might picture the scene last May with beautiful lockdown sun, kids home from University and sunbathing nearby when the sky turned dark with a hum I'd never experienced as the main swarm arrived and swiftly moved in. One of the most exciting natural phenomena I've ever seen and quite a scary thing to video as a novice without a beesuit close to hand.

I then set up the vacant bait hive on the roof of my practice outside the staffroom window in Canterbury and within two days a small swarm had moved in, much to the delight of the staff. I

marked my first queen and despite being a small swarm with virtually no stored honey, they've made it through my first winter on fondant and are currently expanding and bringing in pollen by the basket load!



My first ever swarm arrives

The new home colony once again met with a problem as somehow I lost the queen. Using my inspection notes and a careful analysis of brood timings, Martin taught me to calculate the last laying date which very sadly coincided with a previous inspection when I may inadvertently upset or killed her, I'll never know. However..... We had emergency cells, we got queenright again and they too have made it through the winter and are actively building up fresh foundation on my first ever super.



Winter on the Practice roof

As a novice beekeeper, the pandemic has had a significant impact. With minimal opportunity to observe others I have slowly progressed from unconscious-incompetence to the early stages of conscious-incompetence as I start to realise just how much I really do not know. Isolation has forced a degree of independence and a chance to try things out. I do however look forward to the resumption of club meetings and the opportunity to pick up some of the knowledge and experience that I know is out there..... somewhere?

2021 New Season – Beekeepers' health

Magdalene Mei Halkes, Ministry of Body Wisdom

We beekeepers often keep an eye on the bee health, varroa count, nosema, sac brood, chalk brood, various pests, EFB and AFB etc etc. 2020 was an interesting year. We slowly woke up to the pandemic that was coming our way; the Government and everyone worked together on damage control and prevention. After one year, we are so used to: Hand washing, social distancing, and ventilation.

Have you ever wonder what the real benefit behind Hand Washing?

We were told to wash hands often to keep germs away. There are instructions everywhere showing us to wash the palms, back of hands and in between fingers for at least 20 seconds. Do you know, every time you do that you are massaging your hands? In reflexology, massaging palms helps to stimulate our digestive system. Washing the back of your hands helps to stimulate the respiratory system and the lymphatic system. There are 6 meridians at our finger tips, meridians are like the internal wiring systems, transmitting and receiving electronic messages between the brain and body parts connecting to different internal organs. Next time when you are washing your hands just think about the wonder you are doing to yourself, you are stimulating your internal systems, energising the efficiency of the heart, the lungs and 4 other meridians, quietly improving your own body efficiency without realising it. You can massage your hands as often as you can without waiting till you need to wash them. Your wise body will surely find a way to reward you. All you need is to 'Remember'! You will soon discover bees' health and beekeepers health are intertwined.

Thorne's have arrived in Kent!

Canterbury member George and his wife Lisa have always liked Thorne products but found it frustrating that the nearest stores were hours of driving away. There was always the one thing you forgot to order and needed but you didn't want to wait for delivery or pay for the carriage costs. The thought was always, if only there was a Thorne shop more locally! So this year, they decided to become distributors for Thorne's and are delighted to announce that they are now open with a small range of the basic essentials.

This will be a phone and collect service 7 days a week 9am to 6pm from their apiary in Preston.



Stacked and ready to go!

Lisa said "We see the service growing organically as we understand more about what our local beekeepers needs are, but call us and we will try to help on 07977442282 or email us on lisa@honeybees.work".

Beautiful pollen colours - Debbie Burton



Debbie was amazed at the beautiful colours of the pollen coming into the Waverley hives.

Swarm update - Dougal Hendry

Fool that I am, I have volunteered to administer CBKA's 'swarm response' for another year.



And the swarm season has now officially started - I had my first call on April 29th - and wish to record my thanks to Carey Jack for collecting it (in Ashford) and getting some photographs.

I can take the calls, filter out the ones about bumblebees, bees in the roof, bees drinking from the hot tub, etc and only pass on those calls that

seem to be genuine honeybee swarms.

But, I do need to 'pass on' those calls - there is no way I could possibly respond to them all myself! (And I certainly don't want more bees to look after.)

So - this is where YOU come in - I need your assistance in any of three areas - getting calls, collecting swarms and giving them a new home.

If you want to give a home to one or more swarms this year, please register on the website, so that I know you have a vacancy. Of course it is helpful if you only register when you are fully ready to take bees immediately - swarms don't hang around while you make up some more frames! After a very difficult and long Winter, I am surprised how few members seem to be wanting swarms. If you want bees, register that fact on the website!

Going out and collecting the swarms from trees, bushes, fences, garden furniture or whatever strange stopping point they have chosen, is the most fun part - but also the most demanding. If you can help, even if only at weekends (for example), please register! If you haven't collected a swarm yourself (yet), note that on the webform and I will try to send you along to learn from someone who has. The more collectors we have registered, the shorter distance a collector should need to go, the less the bother for those at risk of too many calls, and the greater the spread of experience within the club. You don't even need a nuc box (but it does make it easier!) I will be posting some swarm collection hints, tips, do's and don'ts on the website (under the Swarms menu for logged-in members).

"Getting calls" is asking the least of you. The BBKA has a public map that people can turn to to report a swarm. The more 'dots' we have on that map, the more chance that the call will come to CBKA, and ultimately the more bees will get fed through the system to CBKA members. If you register as a "proxy only" and make that clear in the comments, you can put a dot on that map and get more calls for CBKA while you yourself shouldn't normally be bothered by calls - but hey if I get a call from someone down the road from you, I just might let you know where your bees have gone!

So, if you can help with swarm response, whether collecting, rehoming or simply being a dot on the map, please register on the website at <https://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/control/>

If you don't have (or have lost or forgotten) your CBKA website password, contact secretary@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk to sort that out first.

Thanks for your help, and let the fun begin!

Dougal



Two swarm in their new homes - Photos from Carey Jack with thanks.

Ants Ants Ants... Jan Soetaert

I have had most problems to beekeepers thrown at me. Wasps, Varroa, diseases, storms, vandals and large game but this was a new one to me.

I moved my hives to a new location on the farm bordering a wood. At first there were a few ants on the hives but nothing serious. After a week or so, one weak colony was overrun and died on me. I was not worried as the other colonies were all nice and strong and I was sure they would defend themselves. The week after I went over to put the hives on their stands as I had not had time to move those yet. The Colonies nearest to the 2 ant hills nearby were completely covered in ants. I did my inspections and saw that in some the brood had a few dead larvae (browning with an orange gut, so not indicative of EFB where they would have a grey, whitish gut) and a few

emerging bees that were dead with their tongues out (Starvation because bees had no time to feed them?). 1 colony had perished but overall the colonies were thriving. I vowed to treat for varroa as some DMV and to put the hive stand in oil containers to stop the ants.

The day after, I met up with Magdalene and we set out to save our colonies. To my surprise, the colony closest to the ant nest that had 9 frames of BIAS the day before and a full 14x12 brood box with bees was now completely dead (absconded?) and ants dragging out dead bees and larvae. Surprisingly, the stores were still present. I wonder if the ants are also building up for spring and are just after protein.

We put the remaining hives on the stands and filled the plastic tubs with oil. A week onwards, the ants have lost interest according to Magdalene. We'll be monitoring the situation as I have no idea what is going to happen if the tubs fill up with dead bees and ants or if it rains and the oil runs out of the tubs.



Online "research" and chatting to colleague beekeepers give us other alternatives to try out. According to Michael Roberts who had a similar problem, sticky tape for fruit trees is effective for as long as ants don't bridge the tape with dead ants. Diatomaceous earth was suggested by a beekeeper in South Africa as well as ant powder under the hives. I have no doubt both would work to a certain degree but I am reluctant to destroy ants or their nests. They have a very important role to play in the woods. According to the literature I read, a wood ant colony devours about 20,000 insects a year (looks like they met their quota early this year) and collects up to a 1000kg of honeydew a year. They clean up dead and diseased animal carcasses and play a vital role in the carbon cycle of the woods. Better to create a barrier between my farmed bees and the ants than to try and alter nature. That is my stance for now at least. See how it goes...

Bee research

I met a very interesting chap on a walk around Patricxbourne. I noticed an orchard full of tiny red flags and it tickled my curiosity. Before long, I spotted a young man with flags in his back pack.



As any PhD student, he was passionate about his subjects so I learned they he was studying miner bees and their preferred habitat. He **pointed at** several tiny holes in the ground and that they were from different species of miner bees. He discovered that ones with 2 broods a year prefer sunny spots and the slower producing ones go for shaded areas. The preferred soil type differs for the species and so many more things we do not know yet. But, what was more surprising is that these miner bees are more important for apple pollination than honey bees and contrary to prof. Ratniecks findings with bumble bees, our honey bees DO compete for forage with them! I am grateful to have met the guy and I am kicking myself for not having asked him to do a talk on miner bees for the club...

Varroa reportable in England from April 21st - Dougal Hendry

As most of you are hopefully now aware, Varroa is now a statutory reportable pest. This caused a great deal of concern as this was an unexpected announcement.

Dougal Hendry has been on the case to the RBI.

"OK - what I'm being told (as the RBI said "with my work hat on") is that it seems that there is a Brexit involvement - and specifically concerning EXPORTING bees to Europe... (I suppose it might possibly happen).

As a result of the way we have drafted our Animal Health legislation to cover the new situation of "animals" that might enter the EU, (instead of moving within the EU), someone in the Government's legal offices has decided that means that Varroa status has to be recorded by the beekeepers, all the time, not merely by an occasionally visiting inspector.

Our RBI is going to ask to be provided with the specific references to which Laws are actually requiring this, and pass that on.

As I eventually discovered for myself "a notifiable pest" in S3 of SI 2008/342 (which triggers the S4 standstill order) doesn't actually mean **any** notifiable pest - it is defined to mean **only** SHB and *Tropilaelaps* - so this new Amendment does NOT impose a nationwide bee lockdown as I had at first sight feared.

For ordinary registered beekeepers, what is happening is that a checkbox will appear on our BeeBase data page, where we can "notify" our knowledge or suspicion that we have Varroa. The NBU will be sending out an email to all those registered on BeeBase to tell them when the box is available to be ticked.

Sandra Gray couldn't tell me anything about any uses beyond export facilitation that the new legislation might enable.

So nutshell upsum, if you aren't already registered, register... and then, when it appears, you can tick the box! (If it hasn't already defaulted to 'ticked')

News and views from Womenswold Neighbourhood Group.

Stuart and I had the Canterbury local group Zoom meeting on 28 April 2021. We had a very relaxed time sharing our encounters with our bees this season. It is worth mentioning that **Michael Roberts** who no longer has bees, continues to support our local group, joining us too.

A lot of us saw Jan's Facebook video post on 18 April about the ant attack in our apiary. Jan and I had an emergency operation on the 19th and put tubs of oil underneath each leg of the hive stands. We are happy to say the plan works so far. Jan lost 3 colonies over this including a large colony with 9 seams of bees!

Hugh Larkins is keen to have a go at harvesting OSR this year but the unusual cold weather this April is evidently slowing down the foraging process.

We also had a discussion on the possibility to organise pollination hives for the local farms among our club members. The feasibility of it could be an interesting study.

It is exciting that we may be able to meet in person in May. Let's keep our hopes up.

Below are reports from some of our group members.

From **David Cockburn**. Here it was a beautiful sunny Tuesday on the 27th of April with hardly any wind I went through my problematic hive recently queenless. The bees from the nuc which Hugh kindly gave me had made their way through the newspaper and combined with the hive below. I took 5 frames of stores out of the hive and moved the five frames, some with brood, from the nuc into the hive. Not only was there brood but lots of eggs so I have hopes that my colony has a good future.

Andy King. Andy reported that he had saved his marriage by moving most of his colonies to an out-apiary, but in doing so somehow mangled one of his queens.

Lesley O'Brien. Having received the swarm last May this was our first winter and spring inspection. We had seen the bees flying on the warmer days so knew they were still alive! When we opened the hive the bees were quite active at the top, although there was still a lot of fondant left from the feed I gave in early March. We checked the brood box first and found about 6 frames had some sealed brood and stores. I managed to see some larvae too. Didn't manage to identify the queen, but she's not marked and we have never seen her so that is something we'd like to change this season. Jan has volunteered to come and help me find her. The frames either ends of the box were mainly drawn comb. We had a super under the brood box, so I took that out and surprisingly it still had some honey in it! I have put that back on top of the brood box now for extra space as we did last year. I also found lots of dead bees on mesh floor, removed them, replaced lid and insulation and left them to it.

Sam and Olivia Eskenazi. We are also hoping for an OSR harvest as we are reasonably near some fields, so nice to know that we aren't the only ones scratching our heads wondering when the harvest begins! Got some uncapped honey in the supers at the moment, plus a couple brood frames of capped OSR.

Our hives are doing well - we have a Buckfast bought queen in Hive C, and a replacement mongrel that Andy gave us in Hive D. Our expectation was to re-queen using C's genetics this spring, but D seems to be doing better! Both have copious drones, and D has a lot of queen cups, one of them with an egg, so we are keeping a close eye on them and monitoring every 5 days.

Might be splitting D soon, and then re-queening D as well when necessary, as she is a red queen, so this is her 5th year.

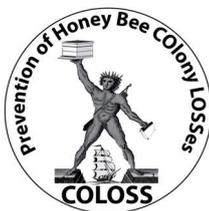
Christopher Ricketts. I did a quick inspection on 25 April and changed over the floor and brood box of my hive as had a lot of extra comb under several frames securing them to the floor. There was evidence of brood on 8 frames and lots of bees, probably more than I had last year. I didn't do a thorough inspection as it may have been sunny, but not that warm and as I was having to remove the drone brood comb from the underside, I didn't want to be any longer than needed. I hadn't considered the slight issue of repositioning the new brood box, now filled with the old frames, back into position so the bees could still find their way home. A full brood box was a little on the heavy side!! I have added a super filled with foundation to give them some more room and have another ready to go if needed. Hopefully, next weekend it will be warm enough to be able to take my time and make better notes of the brood pattern.

And I experienced my first sting, a bee got stuck between my Wellington boot and my trousers as I was inspecting. At least I now know I'm not allergic but was hoping to last an entire season. I may well choose to wear work boots on the next inspection to avoid this in the future.

Information from our branch secretary - Jan Soetaert

(There are several survey requests which help provide information on our bees, so please do support by completing.)

Monitor Honey Bee Colony Losses spring 2021 - Letter from COLOSS



Dear Beekeeper.

In the last decade, elevated losses of western honey bee colonies have been observed, mainly in Europe and North America, but the underlying causes still remain unclear. In 2008, European and USA honey bee experts formed a network "COLOSS" realising that efforts by individual

countries to identify the drivers of losses were unlikely to succeed, given the current consensus that causes are complex and can be different between regions and between the years. Now more than 1000 scientists are working together in this network in specific working groups.

The epidemiological working group have developed a standardised questionnaire to identify the underlying causal factors of losses and provide beekeepers sustainable management strategies.

We now invite you to fill in the questionnaire for 2021 which you will find below.

<https://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/253937>

This will enable us to compare your answers with other beekeepers. With your data we can estimate the relative risk of colony losses for beekeeper decisions such as Varroa treatment, migration of colonies and comb replacement. We also aim to identify differences in relative mortality risk between regions. This will enable follow up research projects in specific regions.

At your option your personal details may be recorded however we undertake not to disclose them to any third party to protect your privacy.

Finally your help is much appreciated. Please can I ask you to promote this survey and the questionnaire link through this open letter to as many English bee keepers as you are able to do so. Feel free to share the link by email, word of mouth, newsletters or social media and to your local bee keeping organisations. In doing so you will be making a contribution to tackling the problem of colony losses and ensuring that English data is represented as an equal partner in the COLOSS European community.

Thanking you

Dr Anthony Williams

COLOSS Survey Coordinator for England

De Montfort University

A Member of Leicester and Rutland Beekeepers Association

Email: anthony.williams@dmu.ac.uk

A social science study to support the Healthy Bees Plan 2030

We have also received a request from Defra to support a study they are conducting.

This study is designed to provide three deliverables:

- 1) Engagement with beekeepers: investigate the reasons and motivations behind people's decisions to start and stop beekeeping.
- 2) Current training and information: analyse information flow, learning methods and social media that could be used to support beekeepers and beekeeping stakeholders.
- 3) Other potential training and information sources: review information sources and resources that could be used to support bee farmers and continuous professional development.

In the context of this study, Defra and the Welsh Government are keen to gather the views of individual beekeepers and bee farmers, national and local associations, as well as information providers and those delivering training. For this purpose, ICF will conduct the following activities: roundtables, surveys, interviews, and data collection.

The contract with ICF will run from January 2021 to June 2021. During this period, ICF will reach out to relevant stakeholders to receive their inputs for the study.

We consider your input very important for the quality and success of the study. We would therefore greatly appreciate your cooperation and participation in this exercise. Your involvement will be confidential and individuals will not be identifiable in any reports of the findings. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Belinda Phillipson at

<mailto:BeeHealth.Info@defra.gov.uk> or Helene Beaujet at helene.beaujet@icf.com.

BBKA Spring Convention



Excellent - I didn't realise an online event could be so good.

That's what one delegate had to say about last weekend's virtual Spring Convention!

It's worth reminding members that, although it's over, the whole event is available to watch again at: springconvention.bbka.org.uk

All 20 plus presentations and more social events remain on offer. Choose your talks and catch-up on demand – stop, rewind and fast forward!

Catch-up until 31st May is included for all who paid to attend. For those who couldn't make it to the live event, likewise, just £12 secures access to it all until the end of May. The [Market Place](#) is still freely available too – a great way to find key exhibitors of beekeeping kit and services.

Other supportive comments we've received are:

"The Convention was well run and delivered an excellent programme - great we can see everything again."

"Well done. I feel I've had a brilliant introduction into the many aspects of the beekeeper's world."

"Was sorry it came to an end!!"

"Much preferred this way - was able to attend many more lectures."

Please also, if you attended the Convention and haven't completed the short feedback questionnaire, it can be found [here](#)

Please see the BBKA website for more [Convention News](#)

Joyce Nisbet - BBKA Trustee & Spring Convention Committee Chair

BBKA annual winter colony survival survey

The annual winter colony survival survey is open and we would be grateful if as many members as possible take part before the closing date of 30th April. The survey is very simple and only takes 5 minutes.

Here is the link to the survey: <https://forms.gle/D49RppfNYdqkpDpE9>

Kind regards

Leigh Sidaway - General Manager

This month a Wordsearch – find words related to April in the Apiary – there are 16 to find!
 Answer on the final page!

R	E	C	O	R	D	C	A	R	D	M	Q	L
N	T	X	H	K	W	B	A	M	E	O	U	P
C	O	I	L	S	E	E	D	R	A	P	E	E
B	A	I	L	E	Y	C	H	A	N	G	E	Y
E	F	F	T	Z	N	G	Y	W	G	L	N	S
E	O	L	D	C	O	M	B	S	D	F	C	E
S	U	N	D	U	U	M	A	O	T	Y	E	V
H	N	J	W	C	L	D	O	X	G	M	L	T
R	D	I	V	A	R	R	O	A	D	E	L	D
T	A	W	S	Z	B	B	Y	R	V	B	S	N
A	T	E	N	O	R	D	D	E	P	P	A	C
S	I	D	C	V	G	H	W	T	X	X	P	I
Z	O	L	H	J	E	O	L	A	R	V	A	E
G	N	V	I	R	G	I	N	C	A	S	T	W

Oil seed rape

swarm

Bees

Old comb

Queen cells

Varroa

Capped drone

Foundation

Larvae

Virgin cast

DWV

Brood

Wax production

Eggs

Record card

News from around the world



Source: the Times

The once peaceful world of French beekeeping has been invaded by suspicion and fear due to a rise in hive thefts.

With the bee population dwindling and demand for locally produced honey rising, hives have been disappearing at an unprecedented rate, with beekeepers blaming each other in an increasingly toxic atmosphere.

In the Occitanie region of southern France, for example, 157 hives were stolen in seven days last month. That has been repeated in other parts of provincial France, with barely a week going by without local papers reporting a theft. Pauline Girie, 33, of Thodure in southwest France, discovered last week that half her 50 hives had been taken. She said: "I was stunned. I had to sit down. We take care of our bees, our hives, it's a lot of work and someone comes along and ruins everything in one night."

With the annual death rate of bees running at 35 per cent because of pesticides, global warming and Asian hornets, and France's 60,000 professional and amateur beekeepers able to meet only half the national demand for honey, the business has become prey to cut-throat competition.

How Dutch cities are helping bees

Dutch cities have certainly been doing their bit. Amsterdam has been working on various bee-friendly initiatives that include putting up "bee hotels" (a collection of hollow plant stems or thin bamboo that provides cavities for solitary bees to nest), replacing grass in public spaces with native flowering plants, and stopping the use of chemical weed killers on public lands. Florinda Nieuwenhuis, an ecologist at the municipality of

Amsterdam, reported in Ten years of Wild Bee Policy in Amsterdam (March 2021) that a 45% increase in the number of solitary bee species was recorded in the city in 2015, compared with a survey in 2000.

Utrecht has been building bee stops. Since 2018, 316 bee stops have been installed. bus stops with their roofs covered in native plants – that attract bees and absorb dust particles and rainwater.



A 'bee stop' in Utrecht. Green roofs of bus stops capture particulates, store rainwater and promote urban biodiversity. All of these are beneficial for insects such as bees and butterflies. Photograph: Courtesy of City of Utrecht

And Finally don't forget...

BBKA Calendar

The BBKA calendar where branches can add their own events and view forthcoming new year's lectures and much more.

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/calendar-listing-page> BIBBA lectures in the new year.

<https://bibba.com/>

Keep a look out – here they come!



Wordsearch answer

R	E	C	O	R	D	C	A	R	D	M	Q	L
N	T	X	H	K	W	B	A	M	E	O	U	P
C	O	I	L	S	E	E	D	R	A	P	E	E
B	A	I	L	E	Y	C	H	A	N	G	E	Y
E	F	F	T	Z	N	G	Y	W	G	L	N	S
E	O	L	D	C	O	M	B	S	D	F	C	E
S	U	N	D	U	U	M	A	O	T	Y	E	V
H	N	J	W	C	L	D	O	X	G	M	L	T
R	D	I	V	A	R	R	O	A	D	E	L	D
T	A	W	S	Z	B	B	Y	R	V	B	S	N
A	T	E	N	O	R	D	D	E	P	P	A	C
S	I	D	C	V	G	H	W	T	X	X	P	I
Z	O	L	H	J	E	O	L	A	R	V	A	E
G	N	V	I	R	G	I	N	C	A	S	T	w