the Petersfield Beekeeper

DIARY

EVENT	DATE	VENUE
ALL APIARY MEETINGS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. The current situation has led to the cancellation of some of the summer shows which the association usually attends. Let us spare a thought for the organisers and for the stall holders whose livelihoods are at risk and hope that some of the shows that take place later in the season, including our own Honey Show, may yet take place.		

Please send items for inclusion in the June Newsletter by 25 May to depeyrecave@gmail.com

Remembering Mary and Bill Dartnall

Sadly, long-time beekeepers Mary and Bill Dartnall passed away on Sunday, 12th April, 2020. Their family will be arranging a Memorial Service later in the year. Messages of condolence can be sent via Felicity Irons Smith
Mary and Bill were both Presidents of Southampton BKA and Mary was Vice President of HBA, a Past President of the BBKA (1996-97) and part of the National Honey Show team for a number of years, but if, like me you have been a PDBKA member for ten years or more you will fondly remember Mary and Bill Dartnall as very enthusiastic Confectionary Judges at local & County Honey Shows. When this picture pops up on my screen-saver it always brings a smile.

There is a lovely piece about Mary and Bill on the BBC News site **here**

Pippa

PDBKA Website

In January Andy Horton took over managing the **PDBKA website.** Andy may not be as experienced a beekeeper but he is streaks ahead of me in computer skills and, with Covid-19 disruption, he arrived just in the nick of time!
The site now has a 'forage of the week' page, this week featuring oilseed rape around Clanfield. Check out his posting and send him your bees forage choices. Mine would be apple and bluebell in the orchard surrounding my apiary, the scent is amazing!

Andy has introduced a page where film, photographs & information on activity in members apiaries can be posted. Send in interesting beekeeping happenings and Andy will upload. Andy has also added links to the PDBKA Newsletter and the PDBKA Facebook page and, on a 'resources' page to BBKA and NHS lectures. With all this extra information at our fingertips 'lockdown' will fly by!

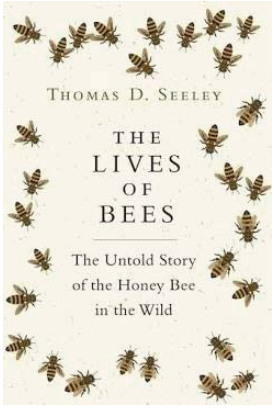
With the Apiary closed, the Trustees have been videoing the hive examinations and posting them on the Apiary Blog page. With Chris Clark behind the camera, Rowan Roberts inspecting and Graham Rowden advising, they make a great team. The latest, a shook swarm performed by Graham, is something I will be copying this week to improve the laying pattern in one of my hives.

Swarm Photos Needed

With the swarm season upon us can I request photos of swarms and collection for Facebook please? As one of our public faces I would like to show people what a swarm looks like, to make it seem exciting and not scary, to express how wonderful it is, and pictures tell the story so well. So please can you send me pictures (that you don't mind sharing with the world) of swarms in all their forms, large or small, in the perfect position and the worst, at rest or mid collection. Thank you, Elizabeth
(elizabeth.eveleigh31@gmail.com)

BOOK REVIEW

I was enthusiastically telling Helen how much I enjoyed Tom Seeley's book 'The Lives of Bees' forgetting that as she is our editor, it was an open invitation for a request for a review!



I found it to be a remarkable book which describes how in a patch of forest near Ithaca, New York, the author spent decades studying the behaviour of wild honey bees. He describes how those feral bees have much to teach us about how to manage our struggling colonies. Then he explains how to be a better partner with honey bees using nature as a guide. He describes what has been learnt in recent decades about how honey bees live in the wild and how by applying this knowledge, some of our beekeeping practices can be revised in ways that are mutually beneficial for bees and beekeepers.

This book is one of a good selection that we have in our Association library. Currently, they are being looked after by our librarian, Martin Smyth ready for the day when we can all get out and about again!

Anne Ballard

Beyond being a beekeeper, and PDBKA Hon Secretary, Mel Espin has a day job. Mel is one of those who, in these uncertain times, leaves the security of a locked-down home to help keep the services essential to 'life as we know it' running smoothly.
Mel is a local postie, working unusually long hours so that we receive the letters, magazines, parcels and bills(?) that may be our only daily contact with the outside world.
Mel says 'In some ways I feel quite lucky as it means I can legitimately be out and about and have some sort of social contact with the team at work'. We are lucky that there are people like Mel prepared to continue working whilst most of us remain at home.
Mel is one of PDBKA's 'essential workers', there must be more. If you know someone else working away from home for the benefit of the rest of us, send Newsletter

Thank you to Morag Crawley for drawing our attention to this particular and rather depressing vision of our future:

Reuters report that farmers in Israel, worried by the the decline in pollinator numbers, are using a mechanical pollinator instead. Details *here*

David Parkinson shares his Experience of Beekeeping in Lockdown

Last month, to enable me to adhere as best as possible to the lockdown rules, I decided the day before that I would visit both my out Apiaries and place 2 supers on each hive to ensure that there was plenty of room. This I thought would give me plenty of time before I needed to inspect the hives again. I am sure that by now some of the very experienced beekeepers have a knowing smile on their face in the expectation of what happened next. I had also checked each hive to ensure plenty of room.

I returned home and left these hives for 16 days believing (or rather hoping) that all would be well and there would be no surprises on my next visit. I visited the first Apiary, and all was well. I was hoping that the visit to the next Apiary would be just as simple.

I arrived at the Apiary where there are 4 hives. I commenced my inspections and the brood boxes in the first 2 hives were fine. Although the supers were empty, there was a halfhearted attempt to draw out the foundation and all seemed fine. Until I opened the third hive.

The third hive had 14x12 frames, except for the middle 5 frames which were BS frames. These 5 BS frames were from the nucleus last year. All the BS frames had drone comb on the bottom as you would expect, the drones had emerged. A large proportion of the worker bees had emerged in all 5 BS frames and 3 of the 14x12 frames. As you can imagine there was quite a crowd in the hive. There were 4 open queen cells on the BS frames. Both supers had been filled to the gunnels and it was getting late in the afternoon. First thing, don't panic.

I did not have a nucleus box with me as I had not expected to be greeted by a mass of bees and a hive full of honey. Although I prefer WBC hives, a disadvantage of a WBC now became apparent. I had a spare BS brood box in the car, but because the hive had a 14x12 box it would not fit inside the hive even by removing one of the supers, without another lift which I did not have with me. I should mention that I am not very fond of 14x12 frames as they are clumsy and inflexible. I always use BS frames as they are interchangeable between National and WBC hives. These four hives do not belong to me and are a mixture of 2 BS frame hives and 2 14x12 frame hives. This means for the purposes of an artificial swarm they are a nuisance.

I tried one or two arrangements with the spare BS brood box with a super to accommodate the 14x12 frames, but nothing would fit. So, in spite of the overcrowded hive and lateness of the hour, I decided to find the queen. I thought at least I could stop them swarming if the queen couldn't leave with them. I went through all the frames and, as you can guess; no queen. She had probably had enough of all this messing around with boxes and frames and wanted her dinner, as I did by this time.

Again, I went through the frames and as I was about to replace the last frame there, hiding amongst the workers, emerged the queen, about to escape on to the other side of the frame. I grabbed hold of her and as she was wildly protesting and the workers were becoming objectionable, I pushed her into a queen cage. I placed the cage to one side which was now covered in workers. At least I was not covered in workers they just kept head butting me in a show of defiance.

I had a spare super so placed it in a shaded cool place and extracted the full super frames one by one brushing off the bees. I think they were distracted by being denied their queen, so all went smoothly even when I stole another super from the adjacent hive to put the remaining full super frames. Just in case they wanted to fill some more boxes, I placed two boxes of undrawn shallow frames on the hive to occupy them during the night. I took away the full supers for extraction. I placed the queen cage over the queen excluder with her accompanying entourage. Closed up the hive.

I then had the fourth hive to inspect by this time it was about 6pm so the occupants were not particularly welcoming but all was well. When I returned to my car which was parked about 200 metres away with the full supers and the rest of my kit. All was well, but when I was taking off my bee suit and trying to undo a leg which was stuck, they came and took their vengeance for my interference. I was attacked by at several bees and was sung 4 times before I could escape into my car. I suppose that will teach me not to mess around with bees at supper time. I returned home and extracted the super frames which produced 11kg of honey.

The next day I returned with a nucleus for the BS frames. I opened the hive and the queen was still in her cage with all her entourage. The queen seemed to be lively and fine despite her ordeal. I removed some of the frames in the supers to reach the queen cage, but when I looked into the

queen cage it was empty. As I removed the queen cage, I had not noticed that the cap of the queen cage had been attached, with propolis onto to the queen excluder and when I lifted out the queen cage the cap remained on the queen excluder. The occupant and assistants had seized the opportunity and the queen had escaped. I feared all my efforts had been to no avail. I carefully examined each remaining super frame as it was removed. I then notice a bundle in the corner and there was her ladyship with her head stuffed down between the queen excluder. I unceremoniously pulled her out squirming and struggling and pushed her back into the queen cage.
I was then able to remove the BS frames with the open queen cells into the nucleus box. Because of the restriction in space I had to place the nucleus hive the other side of the 4th hive. I had examined all the 14x 12 frames to confirm there were no more queen cells. Replaced the BS frames with 14x12 frames of foundation in the hive and returned the queen. I had brought some candy with me as I thought I may need to re-introduce the queen. But no, she could not wait to get back into the hive and the workers did not want any more messing around or being deprived of their queen. On my next visit I will see if all has worked and settled back to normal.

I suppose the moral of the story is not to expect the expected, as the bees are always some way ahead and do what they want not what you expect, such is the challenge of beekeeping.

If the sunshine ever returns and you have children you are currently "homeschooling", may I recommend this as an educational activity that could be made to fit many learning objectives for almost any age group? It certainly beats the pants off "death by worksheet"... Ed

Wax processing

The sun is shining as I type this, and I know that you have a pile of of frames and yucky wax that you are trying to avoid going smelly in the shed / garage / bucket. Don't feel guilty because now is the time to do something about it.
What you need is a solar extractor and you can cobble one together without expense. Basically it is a box with a clear lid. The box could be made out of wood, or plastic or even better polystyrene. Talk to your fish man and he will be happy to get rid of a fish box. Find a piece of glass, old fridge shelf, ex-double glazing unit. Prop the box up so it slopes and faces full into the sun and place your glass on top. You now have a sealed box that will get very hot. Now to play with drawing pins, greaseproof paper, old baking trays, black paint, pond liner, silver foil..... I have done them all! You want a slope so the wax moves away before it sets and you need to seal the surface so the wax doesn't soak in. Line the box with whatever you have and make sure there is somewhere for molten wax to collect.
Next take all of the old comb and odd bits and stuff it inside a pair of old tights or old sheet. You want to form a bag which holds the worse of the rubbish and can be put straight into the dustbin in the evening without any further action. Pin it up at the top of the slope.
The hope is that by the end of the day the sun will have melted the wax (and any remaining honey) into a puddle at the bottom of the slope ready for removal when it has cooled down. It will be mainly clean, and sticky. And if there is a hole there could be a lot of overheated bees and wasps in there as well – seal the holes with tape and cloth. Bin the tights and bring in the wax.
The next stage is to wash the wax in rain water. You could send it to Thornes and exchange it for foundation or money. Or melt the wax in a pan of rainwater and you will remove the honey and some more of the rubbish. Then melt the wax again and pass it through nappy liner, and then do it again and form it into candles or hand cream or lip balm....and feel proud :)

Elizabeth Eveleigh

While your editor's bees spend their days chatting on the landing board, apparently under the impression they've been furloughed, Pippa's bees are predictably hard at work....

What to look for in Spring.

No doubt by now you will have examined your colonies to see how they have fared over the winter and if they are now progressing. The flowers and trees are all blossoming and producing pollen and nectar. The bees are desperately performing a balancing act of feeding new brood and collecting pollen and nectar. This is a time of great stress when they suddenly need to do an enormous amount of work after spending several months with their feet up idly eating, mooching around and trying to keep warm. The weather was indifferent in the earlier months so the production of blossoms and thus colony development may be variable in different areas.

Last month at your first inspection you should have checked to ensure that the colony is in a good condition for the season.

1. Does the colony have enough space?
2. Is the queen present and laying?
3. Is the colony building up?
4. Are there enough stores until the next inspection?
5. Are there any signs of disease or abnormality?

Continued over...

This month the colony will or should be expanding rapidly and there should be at least 5 frames of brood but could be 6 or 7 frames of brood or more in an active colony.

During this month you will need to check for any signs of open queen cells and other signs of swarming as you may miss finding queens cells which are hidden by the bees or in crevices. Depending on the weather you can shake off the bees: this should be done with the frame still in the hive and a sharp knock. If you attempt to shake of the bees over the hive and the weather is not hot and sunny you may find you have a lot of enemies who bombard your hood.

If there is a lot of brood and still some space for the queen to lay and no eggs and older larvae, the colony is about to swarm or may have become queenless. First you should check for queen cells by a thorough inspection of each comb. If you find the queen place her temporarily in a cage or matchbox until you have completed your inspection as you will not find her again. If no queen cells, make sure that the queen is not just having a rest and ensure that there is empty comb next to the brood for her to lay. Also check adequate stores and honey flow as she may have stopped laying if the honey flow has stopped.

If you have not already exchanged old black comb last month you may need to do a bailey exchange to replace this comb. The queen prefers nice clean drawn comb to lay her eggs. Old black comb contains pathogens and attracts wax moth if left by the bees. The wax moth larvae may still remain after winter especially if only just brought into use by the bees. The proteins from the larval skins left by the emerging bees are a food source for wax moth.

You may see the open cells called bald brood this is caused by the wax moth which has hatched and chewed its way out. The signs of wax moth are white or grey silken tunnels and chewed cell caps. Wax moths usually appear in weak colonies, the bees in strong colonies will remove the wax moth larvae before any damage. If you run your hive tool along the silken tunnel the wax moth larvae will emerge and can be destroyed.

Are there any light brown marks down the front of the hive? These are bee faeces caused by dysentery which may be a result of a disease called Nosema, which affects the bee's gut causing an increased amount of water in its rectum. If only a few bees are infected the colony will recover. The combs in the colony should be inspected and if they have the same brown stains a bailey exchange should be undertaken. An infected colony will not build up in spring and will produce very little honey.

You may see signs of sacbrood in a few cells. This has similar signs to American foulbrood. If the larvae can easily be removed with a matchstick and does not rope then it is sacbrood. The cells are uncapped, and the colour of the larvae has darkened and points out of the cell forming the shape of a Chinese slipper. There is no treatment and it will naturally cure itself. The infected bees will have shortened lives and stop feeding larvae or collecting pollen. The sacbrood virus accumulates in the hypopharyngeal glands of the bee which are used to produce food for larvae. The cycle is broken when the infected bees stop feeding larvae.

Combs should also be examined for European foulbrood which is a notifiable disease. The signs are that the cells are unsealed, and the larvae is twisted or misshapen and is an off-white, greenish or brown colour with a loss of segmentation. It will only appear in a few cells and the hygienic bees will detect and remove the diseased larvae. The bacterium infects the bee's stomach and causes it to die of starvation.

If you notice any bees with stunted wings and abdomens, then they are probably suffering from the affects of varroa. You should monitor the mite drop which this month should be no more than 6 mites per day but increases each month until September. The effect on the bees are a reduction in weight at emergence and it will have a shorter lifespan and if unchecked the eventual destruction of the colony. During a period of 50 days the number of varroa mite can increase by 10 times in worker cells but in drone cells the varroa mite reproduces at a much greater rate. If

monitoring high levels of varroa, one of the chemical treatments should be considered, bearing in mind that in most case the honey supers will need to be removed. Alternatively, you may use one of the integrated pest management procedures. The levels of varroa will need to be controlled as the varroa mite is a vector for other diseases and weakens the colony by damaging the brood and can reduce colony defensiveness leading to a risk of robbing or absconding.

During your inspection you may see bees passing on a little nectar to taste and performing a figure of 8 waggle dance, on the comb. This waggle dance indicates the direction and distance of the nectar or a round dance to indicate a nearby source. These dances are an attempt to recruit foragers for a new source of nectar that they have discovered.

If you have not already performed an artificial swarm then you should continue with 7 days inspections and look for open queen cells. If they are sealed, you may be too late. Make sure that you have the equipment available in case you suspect the bees are about to swarm.

Keep adding supers to give the bees space to process the inflow of nectar and to ensure that they do not fill any cells in the brood box and prevent the queen from laying or this may cause them to swarm. Supers should be added in advance of need because if the weather is good and there is a honey flow the bees will fill supers very quickly. It is best to put on too many supers than to return at your next inspection and find every space full of brace comb and full of honey.

If you have oilseed rape in your area, then remove supers as soon as it is ripe and especially when the oilseed rape fields turn green. If you do not it will crystallise in the cells and will not spin out. You will only do this once as it is a difficult task to remove the crystallise honey. It involves scraping out, heating and filtering a very messy job. Make sure you have permission to use the kitchen as everything gets sticky, and I do not need to mention the consequences.

David Parkinson

This month's Guest Editor is Humble, the rescued cockapoo

Your Committee for 2020/1

Chairman	***Graham Rowden***	***01730 895368***
Honorary Secretary	***Melanie Espin***	***01730 823405***
Hon Treasurer/Membership Secretary	***David Hall***	***01730 893423***

Committee Members: Pippa Barker, Anne Chantal Ballard (Education), Elizabeth Eveleigh (Minutes sec), David Parkinson (Honey Show Mngr), Martin Smyth,
Apiary Custodians: Graham Rowden, Dean Gregory, Rowan Roberts, Peter Reader, Chris Clark
Librarian:Martin Smyth
Newsletter Editor Helen de Peyrecave depeyrecave@gmail.com 01420 588675