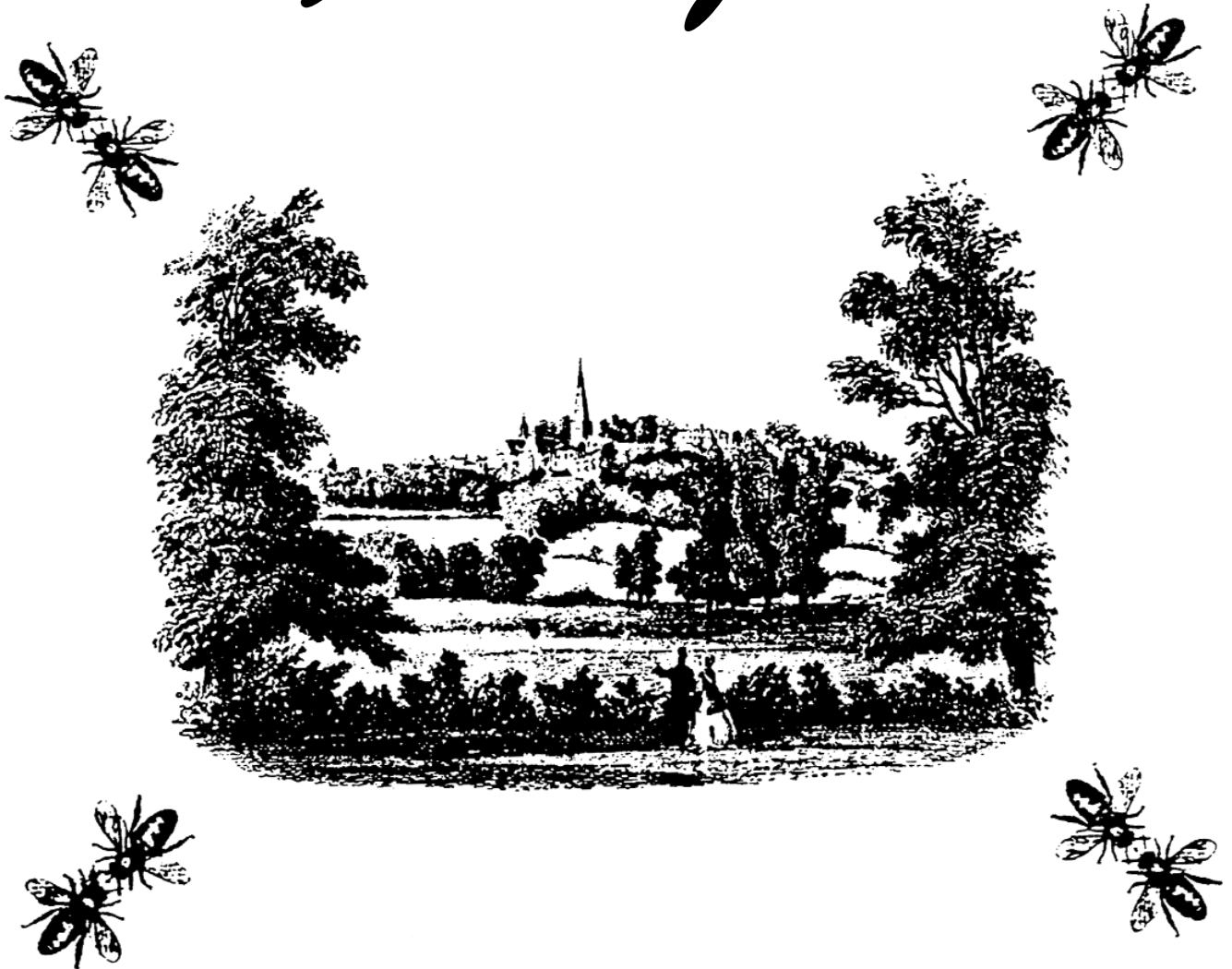


Vol 66 Spring 2011

# Forager



**The Magazine for the Bee-Keeping Association of Harrow**

**[www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.harrowbeekeepers.co.uk)**

# Forager

Published by the Harrow Bee-Keeper's Association  
by whom this magazine was founded in the year 1946

## Editors

J Moore & M P Davey (Consultant)

*All correspondence and literary contributions intended for Forager, which goes to press on the 2nd Saturday of each month, should be sent to:*

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Whilst care is taken to verify the material published, the Editors do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of all statements made by the contributors, nor do they necessarily share the views expressed.

- March 8th      Enfield - BKA 7:30pm A talk by Alan Byham "Looking at Queen bee failure" Venue is:  
St Peters Hall, Vera Avenue, Grange Park, N21. Contact: Jo Telfer 0208 868 3394
- March 13th     A look at pollen
- March 19th     BBKA Modular exams
- March 26th     Saturday Beginners Course Part 1 Bee keeping course Full day Saturday
- March 27th     Beginners practical day - HELP NEEDED
- April 2nd       Saturday Beginners course part 2 Bee keeping course Full day Saturday
- April 3rd       Beginners practical day - HELP NEEDED
- April 10th      Work Party - Please note it is the 2nd Sunday in the month
- April 15, 17th   BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh Warks.
- May 8th         Triathlon at H. E. No access to the apiary unless on foot. Hives open after 4pm
- May 15th       Swarm prevention at the Apiary NOTE THIS IS THE 3RD SUNDAY
- June 12th       Intergrated Pest Management
- July 10th       Working with wax
- July 31st       Extracting honey
- August 7th      First Sunday
- August 14th     Mead Making
- August 15th     Preparing Honey for Show - 11am - extra session !
- August  
27/28/29th      Harrow in Leaf Horticultural Show incorporating Harrow Beekeepers Honey Show  
Harrow Heritage Centre Headstone Manor 12 noon to 6 pm
- September 11th Pheromones
- October 9th     Making soap and polish
- November 12th HBKA AGM
- November 13th No Meeting
- December 11th Mead & Mince pie      Fun Quize

# Editorial

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Well well, an enterprising young man, Matt Kane, has produced an iphone app for managing the hives (see Feb Beecraft), no more damp pieces of card in a plastic sleeve, but out with the iphone and fiddle about with the screen with your gloves on - think I'll stick with the bit of card for the time being. Having had a look in the itunes store there are a few iphon apps on beekeeping. (for those who do not have a clue what an app is or an iphone... ask the grandchildren)

Some good administrative news from Harrow Notes this month, plus news on Boris Johnson's 'London Bee Summit' in London, in 'From the Federation'. Also the South East Honey Survey on page 6.

Happy beekeeping for 2011 and hope the harsh winter didn't do too much damage to your bees.

**Jeremy Moore**  
Editor



Please note that all contributions intended for inclusion in the **Summer** issue of Forager must be with the editorial office by the **15th of March**, at the latest.

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# Articles and Notes

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## HARROW NOTES

FEBRUARY 2011.

### COMMITTEE MEETING OF 5TH JANUARY 2011

This was attended by nine committee members, including three new ones, John Lawton, Jessie Attack, and Rob Attack.

Subjects covered included:

- Replacement of the smaller extractors
- Provision of a memorial plaque for Dawn
- Purchase of microscopes
- Insurance cover from Zurich Municipal for the A.B.C. building
- Changes to website - booklist and equipment for loan will be placed on members' page
- Twickenham and Thames Valley B.K.A.'s proposition to the B.B.K.A.'s January meeting to break links with the agrochemical industry. (See Jo Telfer's article in this Forager about the problem.)
- Natural Beekeepers, a new association in East London, who wish to be affiliated to an established organisation. They allow swarming and don't use chemicals or sugar feed.
- The Capital Bee Campaign - the Mayor of London has offered 50 hives to 50 commercial food growing community groups.

- Numbers on the beginners' course are to be limited to 26.

At the above meeting, minutes of the Apiary Sub-Committee meeting of 3.12.10 were circulated. They covered topics as varied as trees and carpet tiles, doorways and water supply, generator housing and scalping on the track - the latter were felt to be greatly improved.

That so many things are done for this association (and I do not forget Moira Spiers' organisation of the A.G.M. and Judy Earl's production of H.B.K.A. calendars) shows how hard our committee members work.

If you would like to be present at the next committee meeting, it is on the 23rd March 2011, starting at 8 o'clock at the A.B.C. building.

### WORKING PARTIES

...are still doing marvellous things, clearing sheds, spreading wood-chippings, trimming hedges etc. Please keep up the good work. Your association needs YOU!

If you feel you can help, please come along on the first Sunday of each month, wearing suitable clothing and perhaps carrying gardening or D.I.Y. tools. Working in a group is fun, and so worthwhile.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

This was due in November. By January 5th, there were still 18 members who had not paid. Unfortunately, they were not able to receive the January 'Beecraft.' Even

more importantly, they are no longer covered by insurance. In an urban area like this, with people all around you, this is surely an important consideration. A single mishap could cost you a great deal of money.

If you know you have not renewed your subscription, please do so as soon as possible.

### NEWSPAPERS AND BEES

There were many articles published in 2010 helping to raise awareness of bees. Newcomers recounted their experiences; the virtues of honey extolled; garden plants helpful to bees were listed. My favourite appeared in the 'Independent' of 26th October.

A large amber deposit has been discovered in India, containing beautifully preserved insects, including bees, that lived 50 million years ago. An article describing them is accompanied by diagrams and coloured pictures.

### THIS YEAR

Let's hope it's a good one for you and your bees.

Susan Kelly



## From the Federation

January 2011

A happy new year to all readers and I wish you a joyful and rewarding beekeeping year ahead.

On 16th December a swarm of beekeepers and 'others' piled into the S. Bank Centre to the London Bee Summit which was set up as a discussion platform for the Capital Bee project which Boris Jonson launched 2 years ago. The campaign hopes to organise over 2012 places for growing vegetables including spaces for bees in the London Boroughs by 2012. One million trees are to be planted and parks etc will be put back into use with bee forage. A competition has been set up for any community with a worthy scheme which promotes the campaign to receive a beehive. 50 hives are to be awarded plus training and mentoring. ( not sure who will do all this training!)

The Summit began with Lord Henley of DEFRA encouraging everyone to sign up to Bee Base where support at any level of beekeeping may be found through their website [nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk). Only 17,000 beekeepers are registered. He deftly avoided the question put to him about Neonicotides by saying there is more work to be done, he will listen to any technical analysis and that mandatory spraying is not controlled by DEFRA. (These substances are now banned in Germany and most of the audience felt they should be banned here also.)

Mike Brown, head of the National bee Unit gave us all a comprehensive

insight into the role and work carried out by his department at Sand Hutton, York. Last year, 40,000 colonies of bees were inspected (excluding Scotland) details are all found on their web site.

Their Bee Health project is aimed at protecting bees by controlling pests and diseases, giving advice on husbandry issues and providing training for Inspectors and for those taking examinations.

Nick Mole of Pan UK's London parks campaign spoke about the loss of bees particularly in 2008-09 where 1/5 of all hives were lost. Bees contribute £141 billion to the world economy and produce 18m tons of food through pollination. India has also had a huge decline in bees and a consequent loss of crops. China too now has to pollinate crops by hand. In 1999 France banned 'Gaucho' a pesticide containing neonicotides. In 2008, Germany did likewise. What has UK done? Nothing- no withdrawal of these substances and there is a lack of research. The NBU stated there was no real evidence that it caused loss of bees. Others say that it stays in the ground and causes toxicity to bees making them more vulnerable to diseases. He said we need clear views of this substance and action now!

Nick Fraser head gardener at 2 North Yorkshire National Trust properties spoke amusingly about his work at these 100% organic gardens. He said it takes years sometimes to get the right balance but we should all try to achieve this and improve the biodiversity. This is the way forward

to improve the health of all bees. Visit Nunnington Manor and see for yourself.

Tim Lovett spoke well for the BBKA. In 2006 US losses of colonies was about 70% whilst in Europe generally it was 30-40%. Many reasons were given, which he outlined. He explained how BBKA had reacted and the outcome in 2009 of BBKA action was a £2.3 m budget towards the NBU to set up the 'Healthy Bee Plan' then followed a £10m towards the Insect Pollinator Initiative. Public awareness became massive at this time and a sea of change came about from Local Authorities toward allotment usage. Membership had declined after the Varroa arrival in 1990's but now has grown to 25,000.

He stressed the need for individual responsibility. We need more beekeepers who are competent, enthusiastic and durable.

There are problems ahead with thousands of 'Beginners' who need training. We may need more Associations but these need good sites, good Trainers, good equipment and good bees. BBKA aims to improve quality of beekeepers by support and train the Trainers courses.

Karin Courtman then spoke for London Beekeepers Association and said how much their membership had grown. They welcome new members and encourage exams and training for all including 'mentoring for the first year to provide support. She was very encouraging.

Steve Benbow then showed a

sequence of slides of his early beekeeping days on roof tops in London and how he has expanded to outer London. He keeps 400+ colonies some on Fortnum & Masons roof top plus some hotels. He stressed the extreme care needed to prevent swarms causing difficulties in the city and the removal of honey at harvest time.

The Natural Beekeeping Trust on the other hand promoted a different style of beekeeping by never feeding bees sugar, nor removing too much honey and not over farming stocks. They condemned our toxic environment for the damage it has done to bees, including use of mobile phones! They feel that the health of bees is reflecting our own life styles and this is a time for change to be more eco-friendly. We should heed the warning.

Sue Walton from Bug Life spoke lastly and in my opinion was the most fascinating. She showed us a huge variety of different pollinators explaining which plants they were attracted to. 80% of all UK plants use insects to pollinate and world -wide 90% of all crops need insects to produce seed or fruit. We need a huge variety of insects, they all have a purpose. Blue tits eat wasps and bees. Nightjars eat moths which are covered with the pollen that they have collected. Wasps combs are fed to Honey buzzard fledglings. The greater the biodiversity the richer the insect life. Evidence of things going wrong in the environment is in the fact that we are losing species all the time. Since WW2 3million ha of rich grasslands have been lost, only 100,000 ha are left. We could increase

Bumblebees populations by 30% by just planting wild flower margins around crop fields. We also do need to ban risky insecticide containing (neonicotides) as there is evidence that they stay in the soil and may affect the way plants survive.

Apparently in London, 1/3 of land area is back gardens, 1/3 is open spaces and these can provide a better area for bees than in the green 'desert' monoculture of the countryside. There is opportunity to be grabbed!!

The honey tasting competition from the London region was carried out by all who tasted and Clive Cohen from Barnet was the winner!

**Jo Telfer**



## South-East Honey Survey 2010

As usual, I would like to start my report by thanking all the beekeepers that have taken the trouble to respond to my request for honey crop and price statistics. This year the number of responses was similar to last year at 240 which again makes some of the averages sensible. As you can see from the figures below, 94 from the 240 did not give prices for honey but I am still happy to accept the figures and include the average honey take per colony. Some of these beekeepers do not sell any of their honey and may feel they are being excluded from the

survey. If this applies to you please just make a note on the form, I'm happy to receive any information you are willing to give.

The average take per colony was better than last year at 44lbs per colony, nearly equalling that of 2008 (47lbs). The early nectar flows were good and in many areas there was also a good main summer crop. Again, as last year the honey flow stopped abruptly around the middle of July, allowing me to extract supers, dry them and have my first varroa treatment on by 8th August. This sudden and relatively early cessation of the summer flow now seems to be a feature of rural beekeeping in the South East area. Of course, I know that for those of you in urban areas, the flow may well continue into August and September but this does then give you difficult choices about the timing of varroa control.

In the discussion below, I have made comparison with the final results from the previous survey asking the same questions about the 2009 season, so that you can compare this directly to last year's survey.

Results 2010

**Average Honey Yield per colony:**

240 replies ranging from 0.0lb to 211.0 per colony

2010 average = 44lb (2009 = 35lb)

**Direct Sales Price (Flower):**

146 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £10.00/lb

2010 average = £4.31/lb  
(2009 = £3.96/lb)

**Wholesale Honey Price (Flower):**

50 replies ranging from £2.50/lb to £6.00/lb

2010 average = £3.73/lb  
(2009 = £3.50/lb)

**Bulk Honey Price (Flower):**

6 replies ranging from £2.00/lb to £3.50/lb

2010 average = £2.43/lb  
(2009 = £2.40/lb)

**Cut comb:**

18 replies were received ranging from £3.50/lb to £10.00/lb.

2010 average = £7.45/lb  
(2009 = £7.78/lb)

Discussion

These results are compiled from beekeepers owning between 1 and 100 colonies with total yields between 0lbs and 8000lbs. The highest yield per colony (211lb) came from a beekeeper with 1 colony, well done to them! There is the usual wide variation in reported average honey yields – from 0 to 211lbs per colony. In fact 10 responses gave a zero return, some of which were new to the craft this season, I hope that they will be able to respond next year with improving figures. The average yield, 44lb, is a reasonable increase over the previous year's figure (36lb), which, I think, is explained by the wet winter leaving plenty of groundwater, for the warmer, drier weather of the summer.

Direct sale to customers is always the commonest method of honey sales - 146 respondents provided a figure for this. As usual there is a wide price

range, from £2.00/lb to 10.00/lb. The average price this year has finally broken the £4.00 barrier at £4.31/lb and is much nearer the sort of price that beekeepers should be asking for a premium product. Using figures from this survey, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £189.64 when sold direct at average price. (2009 = £138.60)

50 replies indicated selling honey wholesale to a retailer. I notice a rising trend of beekeepers selling to retailers over recent years. At the average wholesale price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £164.12. (2009 = £122.50)

6 contributors sold honey in bulk. At the average bulk price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £106.92. (2009 = £84.00)

Out of the 240 replies, 18 indicated selling cut-comb honey and it is assumed that the majority of this cut-comb is sold direct. This year the price per pound has dropped slightly to £7.45. At average cut comb price, an average crop of honey per colony was worth £327.80 (2009 = £272.30)

Overall, direct sales honey prices in 2010 have increased by approx 8.84% over 2009 prices to an all time high for honey prices recorded by this survey. The wholesale honey price increased by 23p, whilst the bulk price remained steady, only increasing by 3p.

Last year I had an enquiry about the total honey crop figures from the survey, so this year I will include these:

Total number of beekeepers 240

Total number of colonies 1251  
(on 31st August 2010)

Total honey crop 55558lbs

Of which:

Heather honey 30lbs

Cut comb 796lbs

Flower honey 54730lbs

This year, as last year, I have obtained figures for other regions so that you may make a comparison. These regions are the administrative regions of the National Bee Unit and can be found on the NBU website: [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)



## The New York bees that made red honey

Beekeepers in New York have been left with red honey after their bees feasted at a local cherry factory.

The bee enthusiasts, based around Red Hook, Brooklyn, were left confused after inspecting their hives to find a thick, scarlet substance that they compared to cough syrup.

One, who had the substance tested, found it contained Red Dye Number 40, a food colouring, which is also

found in maraschino cherry juice.

It is thought that local bees enjoyed visits to the vats at the nearby Dell's Maraschino Cherries Company before returning to their hives.

One of the keepers, Cerise Mayo – whose name translates to "Cherry" in French – told The New York Times: "I didn't want to believe it. I thought maybe it was coming from some kind of weird tree."

David Selig, another whose hives were affected, said of his bees: "When the sun is a bit down, they glow red in the evenings. They were slightly fluorescent." The owners of the company have hired Andrew Coté, the head of the New York City Beekeepers Association, to rid their factory of the insects.

Telegraph



## Healthy hive training offered to novice beekeepers

Hundreds of volunteers in England and Wales are to be trained to teach amateur beekeepers how to keep their hives healthy over winter.

The decline in honeybees is prompting more people to take up beekeeping, but there are concerns

that novices are not skilled at keeping their hives healthy.

Hives not kept free of disease are more likely to be lost during the winter.

The National Bee Unit said that last year 16% of colonies died over winter, compared to 14% the previous year.

Under the new project as part of the government's healthy bees plan, 400 part-time volunteers will be trained to take a number of steps in autumn and winter to ensure bee colonies survive cold weather.

The measures include checking for pests and treating the varroa mite which is a key problem for honeybee hives, checking the health of the queen bee, making sure the hive is waterproof and providing supplementary feeding if necessary.

The aim is for the volunteers to be trained to deliver courses to beekeepers through the British Beekeepers' Association's (BBKA) network of 160 local associations, using a "course in a case" full of training materials.

Environment minister Lord Henley said: "Bees are essential to putting food on our table and worth £200m to Britain every year through pollinating our crops.

"This training will help the many new beekeepers keep their hives healthy and bees buzzing."

Head of the National Bee Unit, Mike Brown, said: "More and more people are starting beekeeping, which is

*continued on page 12*



# Beelines

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A second winter with freezing conditions, which puts all our bees under stress. Thanks that the Autumn allowed our hives to build up with income from ivy and late summer flowers.

September Rainfall - 0.6"

October Rainfall - 4.25"

November Rainfall - 2.60" inc .5" of snow

December Rainfall - 3.05" inc 2.2" of snow

At the end of November the cold set in with .5" snow followed by 2.2" snow in December. Coldest month for 120 years with an average of -0.6C (30.9F). Only in 1890 the temperature was -0.8C (30.5F). In Chorleywood 20.12.10 - 14.7F (-10C) with Chesham, down the road, 3F (-19.6C). The presence of dead bees outside the hive indicated that all was well within. One apiary had a bad start for wintering. All the hives were tipped over three times. The police were called, they asked if criminal damage had been done, I would say so. Two were removed leaving one strapped up with two bands, covered with netting and roof bricks. During the Christmas break, the bricks and roof were ripped off, the netting removed and bands cut with a knife. The woodpeckers took advantage and drilled 3 holes. The bees were discovered roaring beneath the

exposed travel screen.

It is not easy to find new sites, one charity expressed interest to meet the public appeal 'save our bees'. To establish two hives, BBKA Insurance certificate, Health and Safety and risk assessment checks. An environment check that the bees would not effect the feral and other bees.

The Daily Mail reports that 1.120 people required treatment from bee stings, wasps and hornets. Well above the 24 rat bites. 6,420 people were injured with ladder accidents, this, no doubt, included beekeepers climbing up ladders to fetch swarms. Winter promotes a good time to top up with bee lore, useful to tell the public. The Jewish New Year celebrations includes dipping slices of apple into honey. It brings good luck for the coming year. In Greece there is a tradition for the bride to dip her finger into a pot of honey and make the sign of the cross, before entering her new home.

Susan Brackney's book, 'Plan Bee', priced £8.99, is well worth the purchase. The author is a beekeeper and natural history writer in the USA. It is not a book of instruction, but a jolly informed read in beekeeping. Within she reports that bees collect 5 gallons of water a year per hive. A swarm cluster on a tree requires 15 plus scout dancing bees to get lift off to a new site. J. Bromenshant, USA,

is studying hive sound production, it has been suggested that bee diseases may have different signatures, after all humans recognise a cold by sounds given off by another. Bees could have 'gut sounds' with foul brood. The same scientist in 2003 trained the honey bee to track down minute odours, the bees gave a 97% success rate. Unexploded bombs kill 20,000 people a year and it would need 450 years to remove them all. Lets hope the work at Rothampstead is available soon. The book also states that it takes 8/10 bee stings per pound of body weight to hurt a human, one man survived 2,443 stings and lived to tell the tale. Get the book and read all about the Plan Bee.

Beekeepers are continually pressed to breed better bees, the New Scientist, 12th June, states that the biblical beekeepers did just that - the better bee. The land was not called the land that flowed with milk and honey for nothing. The oldest beehives known came from Israel, the beekeepers selected the best bees. Two clay cylinders have been found in Tel Rehov which had remains of bees. These were not local subspecies of the Western bee, these bees came from Turkey, which produce up to 8 times more honey than Syrian bees and are less aggressive.

We are all aware of the Jap. manderin Hornet with its 2" orange and black stripes, .25" sting and 3" wing span. They are a great burden to the Japanese beekeepers, with their western bees. The hornets can fly at

25 mph with a range of 60 miles a day. A scout hornet bee finds a honey bee nest and marks the entrance with a pheromone. This attracts other hornets, which pour into the hive eating 40 inmates a minute. The local Japanese bees have devised tactics to fight the menace. The alerted honey bees group in the entrance of the hive, pounce on the single scout hornet and ball it. Temperatures of up to 47C are reached, killing the scout hornet, with the bees remaining unharmed. The European honey bee has not developed this tactic. In Cyprus, the local honey bees, also ball the hornet, but do not cook it, but instead squeeze its body until it cannot breath.

Today we are encouraged to keep bees - mountains of cheap, fresh honey, fruit pollination with the background of the hum of bees. Those who have kept bees for a long time will be surprised how much it costs to become a beekeeper.

£60-£90 for a beginner course, equipment around £400 and the bees approx £150, or try catching a swarm for nothing. One newspaper states £740 for one hive with 50lb of honey produced at £14.80 per jar (£1.68 per jar at the supermarket). Still... think of all the fun of being a beekeeper.

Sources: Daily Mail, Plan Bee, Susan Brackney and Creation Science Movement.

**M.P.D.**

brilliant - it is a release from the pressures of modern life and helps the environment.

"But it should not be taken lightly, and it's best to find a mentor with practical experience as well as getting advice from us."

BBKA president Martin Smith said: "We look forward to working with the National Bee Unit to ensure that the band of new trainers have the high-quality teaching materials they need to be a viable support to our local associations, whose teaching and mentoring resources have become strained to breaking point."

## Caring for honey bees top tips from an expert

Devon beekeeper David Milford has 20 honey bee hives, dotted around four locations in the west of the county.

Here, David offers some top tips on how you can help the honey bee thrive in your garden.

So, what is the secret to a successful hive? And, even if you don't have a hive, what can you do to help bees in your garden?

A tour of "Bee Heaven" at Buckland Abbey

David has been keeping bees for some 15 years and is providing advice and practical help in the BBC/National Trust Bee Part of It season in 2010.

Two new hives at the trust's Buckland Abbey will be tended this summer, producing honey in July and August.

David, from Shaugh Prior, is confident that - as long as we have a good summer - the bees at Buckland will provide 50 jars of honey.

We will be following the progress of the two hives at Buckland Abbey throughout the summer - visit the pages which are linked on this page to find out more about Bee Part of It.

Here are some of David's tips.

- Fill your garden with bee-friendly species. "They love fruit - cherry trees, and all berries - raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries and blueberries - and other summer fruit like redcurrants and blackcurrants. All flowering plants are also good, as well as lavender and buddleia, which butterflies also like."

- Do not use pesticides in your garden - a complete 'no-no' for bees and other creatures.

- If you want to keep bees, the number one piece of advice is to join your local beekeepers association. "They will teach you how to become a good beekeeper and they have their own apiaries for training. You can't just put a bee hive out and hope for the best - to be a successful beekeeper, you need to know what you are doing and your local association will help you."

- Wear the right gear.

- Finally, don't forget your neighbours. "This can be an issue - you must consider your neighbours. Have a strain of bees which are docile and check that your neighbours do not have an allergy to them."

BBC



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