



LUNE VALLEY COMMUNITY BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER JUNE 2022

New Members

Welcome to new members Pat Broadberry, Jim Hutchinson, Helen and Nick Martin, Linda Sharples.

Chairman's message



May is usually the start of the swarming season and from what I am hearing, there have been a lot of swarms in the southern counties. In our area it has been very much quieter with relatively few swarms being reported so far. Those that have, do not seem to have settled for very long. This may have something to do with the very changeable weather we have been having, hot one minute and pretty chilly the next. June, of course, may be entirely different!



Father's Day, 19th June 2022

- 1) It's such a time to be alive
When father opens up his hive
To check on bees, you get the gist,
The actions of an apiarist.
- 2) So with caution and care to boot
He gets into his keeping suit,
An all in one, to do the job'll
Make him seem he's from Chernobyl!.
- 3) His smoker has been lit and propped
And down the garden he has crept
Until behind the shed he sees
The corner where he keeps the bees.
- 4) And covered so his skin is hid
He gently raises up the lid
Making sure to be aware o'
Swarms of Apis Mellifera.
- 5) The super sat atop the brood
And when he looked inside he cood
The contents were all gold and runny,
Every cell was filled with honey.
- 6) Such produce you have never seen
From worker bee and drone and queen
To put it simply, there was lots
Filling more than seventy pots.
- 7) And there's a tale, told to please,
About my Dad who keeps his bees.



Fred Ayres, Editor & Chairman
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June Meetings

Sunday, 12th June 2022

Open Day for visiting Bee Clubs –The Apiary, 10-00am to 4-00pm

Over the winter I have given talks to a number of beekeeping clubs and some have expressed an interest in seeing our approach to beekeeping in practice. This will be an opportunity to meet and talk to other beekeepers and show them around our apiary. **If you would like to attend, please let me know.**

Friday, 17th June 2022, 8th RotaKids Conference 2022, University of Cumbria, Lancaster

Rotakids is a youth initiative within schools, organised and sponsored by local Rotary Clubs. Its purpose is to help build children's self-esteem and community service ethics by introducing Rotary concepts of service, understanding and citizenship. Children also have an introduction to project, team and leadership skills. Each year, Carnforth Rotary Club organises a conference for a number of RotaKids clubs in the area. Around 100 children from 5 or 6 local schools usually attend. This will be the third time we have been asked to contribute a session. Our involvement is to present three sessions over the course of the morning to three different groups.



Sunday, 19th June 2022,

Summer Apiary Inspection, The Apiary, 11-00am to 3-00pm

This will be the summer inspection of both the Training and Breeding apiaries this year and will provide new beekeepers with an insight into how the colonies develop. The Spring inspection was very well attended. **If you would like to come along, just let me know.**

Wildflower Meadow Manager Wanted!

In the autumn of 2016, we commenced the task of creating a 900 square metre wildflower meadow. All the top soil was scraped off the site and the sub-soil surface scarified. The following spring the site was sown with a mixture of native annuals, perennials and meadow grass. The results in 2017 and 2018 were impressive!

The meadow has been maintained by a main cutting in early September with the cuttings raked off and a lighter cut in late March/early April, again with any cuttings raked off. In 2019 and 2020 further seed sowing took place, together with the planting of several hundred plug plants. Despite this the quality of the meadow has deteriorated steadily.

We are seeking a volunteer with an interest in organising and overseeing the improvement of our meadow for the benefit of pollinators and other wildlife. We hope to have a number of volunteers from outside of the Club, interested in helping with this work. **If you are interested, or would like more information, please give me a call.**



May activities

Caton Gala 2022



We had a stall at Caton Gala, the first time it had been held for three years. Despite being a cold but dry day, there was a good turnout from the public and we had a steady stream of visitors to our stand. The observation hive, as usual, attracted a lot of attention as did details of our forthcoming Open Day.

During the day we had a surprising number of lengthy conversations with couples expressing a serious interest in taking up beekeeping and our on-line and practical courses. We also received a number of requests to speak to schools and youth groups.

Many thanks to David and Audrey Wareing and Fred and Glenis Ayres for manning the stall all day, and to Peter Henderson for arriving early to help us to erect the gazebo.

Community Payback Team



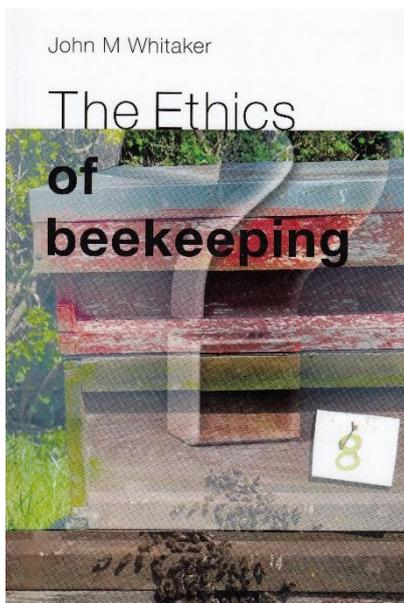
We are delighted to see the return of the Community Payback Team after a long absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For the next few visits they are going to concentrate on removing the ground and tree ivy from the woodland area and the fallen branches.

Training Course



On Sunday, 15th May we held a practical training course for those who had completed our on-line course. To ensure that everyone had ample opportunity to ask questions and talk to other participants, numbers were restricted to seven. Three of the participants had travelled up from Nottinghamshire. We were fortunate in having a warm and sunny day, although gusts of wind in the mid-afternoon succeeded in blowing the gazebo over several times! Feedback from the course has been very positive.

The ethics of beekeeping



I recently, and entirely unintentionally, got involved in a group discussion about ethics. Things got complicated when one of the group started to use beekeeping as an example, especially as I was the only beekeeper present! His argument was that it was completely unethical to steal honey from bees and to keep bees for the purpose of stealing their honey was even worse! The counter argument was that God (Jewish, Christian, Islam) has given all creatures for the benefit of Mankind. Only Hinduism seems to regard human beings and animals as equal creatures upon earth.

I have often thought that some beekeeping practices, such as the clipping of queen bees' wings were unethical but the more you think about ethics, the more complicated and clouded the situation seems to become.

One brave man, John M Whitaker, has made a bold attempt to sort things out for us. His recent book "The ethics of beekeeping" explores a diverse range of issues that face beekeepers and explores the various ethical perspectives on each. It is a fascinating but mildly disturbing read. The book can be obtained from Northern Bee Books.

Hive damage

Earlier in the year the Lune Valley Long hive of one of our members was damaged when the strong gales we experienced blew the hive roof open. As far as I am aware, this has never happened before. The traditional method of ensuring this does not happen is to place a heavy brick or slab on the hive roof. An alternative method is to fit the hive roof with car bonnet catches as used on many classic cars. These are available from many car accessory shops or on-line, and come in various designs and styles. The ones illustrated are made from stainless steel and cost a little over £10.



New piece of kit

We have a new piece of kit at the apiary! So, if you see various members trundling up and down pushing the thing, it is not a new form of keep fit or dementia, just people trying to measure up the site in order to enable us to produce a reasonably accurate plan of the whole apiary site and so we can better plan out what we do.



Nuc floors

I have been using Maisemore's poly nucs for many years and been very happy with them, although their current cost is making me look at alternatives. One feature of them which I do not like is their mesh floor. I usually resolve this by covering it, on the outside, with a piece of wood 30cm by 15cm by 2cm with the corners slightly cut off.



Earlier last month two members reported that having housed swarms in these poly nucs, a significant number of bees clustered underneath the nuc box, and even after some days, made no attempt to enter the box through the opening. One cluster even started drawing out comb attached to the mesh. Presumably they were detecting the queen pheromone through the mesh.

The situation was resolved by shaking these bees into another poly nuc which had the mesh sealed off and then transferring the bees inside the first box into the second. This worked well and now all the bees are seemingly happily housed in one box.

Is your colony queenless?

Earlier this year a number of members reported that they had inspected their bees and found plenty of worker and drone brood, ample stores but no eggs and few larvae. Their question was, "have I lost my queen?" Well, maybe you have or maybe your queen has just gone off-lay for a while. The widely fluctuating temperatures and lack of available nectar can cause a queen to temporarily stop laying.

However, if your colony really is queenless, there are a number of indicative signs to watch for:

- Worker bees flying outside the hive seem more irritable than usual
- When you open the hive, you hear a distinctive roar
- Bees inside the hive seem lethargic and bad tempered
- Few brood cells appear clean and ready for the queen to lay in
- Stores are not increasing
- The colony size is decreasing
- After 30 days eggs from laying workers may appear.

If your colony becomes queenless and the bees do not produce emergency queen cells, the colony will be lost unless you take action to remedy the situation. The sooner you do this, the better the chances of succeeding. Your options are to:

- introduce a new queen
- introduce a queen cell from another colony
- introduce a frame of eggs from another hive.

No Mow May!



Whilst most environmental organisations were busy promoting No Mow May, our County Council was busy mowing endless grass verges within the Lune Valley. Whilst there is clearly a case for mowing the vegetation at junctions and roundabouts in order to improve visibility and safety, the need to carry this out on straight stretches of road, regardless of the cost and the carbon emitted, escapes me!

Club diary for 2022

Friday, 8th July, 2022

Working Party to prepare for Open Day, The Apiary, 10-00am to 4-00pm

Saturday, 9th July, 2022

OPEN DAY, The Apiary, 10-00am to 4-00pm

Sunday, 10th July, 2022

Working Party to clear up after Open Day, The Apiary, 09-30am to 1-00pm

Sunday, 24th July, 2022

An Introduction to Practical Beekeeping –The Apiary, 10-00am to 4-00pm

For those who have completed *An Introduction to Beekeeping*.

Sunday, 21st August, 2022

Club BBQ, The Apiary, 2-00pm to 5-00pm

Come along, relax and reflect with other members about your beekeeping season and anything else that you want to chat about.

Sunday, 4th September, 2022

Autumn Meadow Mowing, The Apiary, 10-00am to 4-00pm

With a dry day and sufficient helpers, we should be able to mow and rake off the meadow, get the strimmings into the compost bays in preparation for winter.

Sunday, 18th September, 2022

Autumn Apiary Inspection, The Apiary, 11-00am to 2-00pm

This will be the last planned inspection of both the Training and Breeding apiaries this year and will provide new beekeepers with an insight into the hive before winter.

Wednesday, 12th October, 2022, Speaker Meeting @ 7-30pm

Speaker, topic and venue to be confirmed.

Wednesday, 9th November, 2022, Speaker Meeting @ 7-30pm

Speaker, topic and venue to be confirmed.

Wednesday, 14th December, 2022, Speaker Meeting @ 7-30pm

Speaker, topic and venue to be confirmed.

Further activities will be announced as they are arranged.



LEARNING FROM THE BEES CONFERENCE

It's Time to Meet Again
Monday 3rd - 4th April 2023

The first Learning from the Bees Conference took place in Holland in 2018 and the second in Germany in 2019. The third Conference was planned to take place in England in 2020 but was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Both earlier conferences attracted over 300 delegates, literally from all over the world, and were regarded as huge successes. Next year's Conference, in England, is restricted to 150 delegates, again because of Covid-19 concerns.

If you are interested in attending next year, you are strongly advised to register an interest as soon as possible. You do not have to make a firm commitment until tickets go on sale on 1st September 2022.

Learning from the Bees 2023 will be an intimate contemplative gathering of 150 people at Sheepdrove organic farm and conference centre, Hungerford, UK. For this third conference dedicated to learning from the bees we will converge in a spirit of reflection, celebration and enquiry as we acknowledge the honeybee's place in this world as a creature worthy of respect and protection. We will bring together natural beekeepers, conservationists, scientists, philosophers, and artists. Together we shall explore the wider ramifications of rewilding the honeybee in the context of deepening our own relations with the natural world. What are the spiritual imperatives of our time? How do we tackle our collective estrangement from the well-springs of our existence?

We will showcase the practical work of outstanding individuals whose entire focus is on serving the honeybee in a spirit of selfless giving. Besides there will be workshops and classes aimed at widening our perspectives on mindful and artistic approaches to the bees in our lives. Be inspired by the manifold gestures of giving back to the bees that you will learn about at this event and rejoice in meeting one another in a beautiful bee-centred space.

Tickets will go on sale September 1st 2022. Before then, there will be an opportunity to pre-book spaces. If you would like to stay in touch and be informed about future events please register your interest here: [Learning from the Bees Conference 2023](#)

Festival of Bees



The Organisers of BeeTradex have just announced the 'Festival of Bees' in 2022. The festival will take place on Saturday, 3rd September at the prestigious and historic University of Greenwich, Medway Campus in Chatham, Kent. "As the world of beekeeping and pollination moves forward with new and innovated ideas, we thought why

shouldn't our shows be the same? We are looking for small businesses, traders and charities in the beekeeping or related industries to be involved in our festival. Interested in having a stand at the festival or want to know more? Contact Mariee here or simply give us a call on 01227 831220."

Tickets are available now at a cost of £9. If you want to keep up to date with festival plans and what events will be happening on the day, you can follow progress on social media -[@festival.of.bees](#)-

Apiary vicinity mating – fact or fiction?

By Terry Hitchman, courtesy BIBBA Monthly

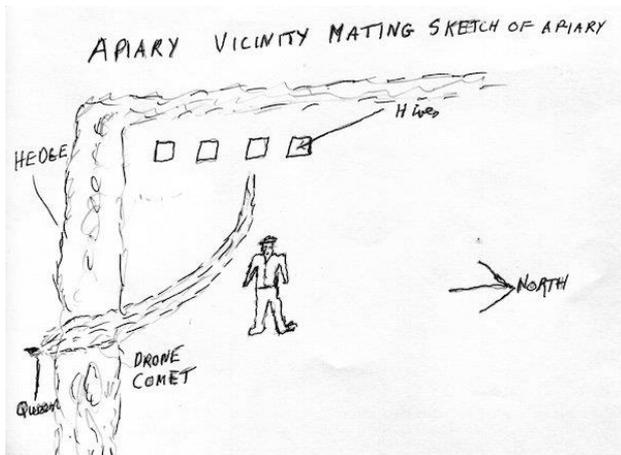
There have been many reports in the Beekeeping press about distant Drone assembly areas, where beekeepers have used some form of lure to attract drones to form a Comet formation as they would when pursuing a Virgin queen. Reports of Apiary Vicinity mating behaviour are rarely reported. Beowulf A Cooper, in his book Honeybees of the British Isles, Chapter five, page 65 states:

It seems reasonable to assume that both assembly and non-assembly mating behaviour are normal and of frequent occurrence in the native and near-native strains of honeybee.

Page 66/67 goes on to describe various beekeeper observations of apiary vicinity mating taking place and Cooper concludes:

Despite the growing evidence and personal experience of drone assemblies in our Islands, therefore, my faith in the existence of "apiary vicinity" mating remains undiminished.

I have experienced what I consider to be apiary vicinity mating behaviour. The first occasion was approximately thirty years ago, I was working at a property in early June, in a small South Warwickshire village. In the corner of a small pony paddock at the property were some beehives, to the left and rear of the hives there was a hedge (approximately 4/5 metres high) to the South and West of the hives, there was open space to the front (due East) and North. The beekeeper was a leave alone beekeeper who occasionally harvested some honey, and the bees, which were dark, had come from a First World war veteran so I assume they would be Native/near native. On the day in question, the morning had been overcast and wet, at about 1pm the sun came out between the clouds and was quite warm at times. At approximately 1.45pm I decided to visit the hives to see if there was much activity. As I approached the hives (approximately 6/7 metres from entrance), I was startled by a sudden whoosh passing close to my left shoulder, I quickly turned in the direction of the whooshing noise and saw a group of bees approx. 30cm wide disappearing over the top of the adjoining hedge in a Southwards direction.



There was no doubt in my mind that I had just observed a drone Comet pursuing a Virgin queen, and that before too long she would be caught by drones and mating would take place. I can only assume that the Comet of drones had pursued the Queen from the hive entrance, and what I had observed was Apiary Vicinity Mating in action.

The second occurrence was at my home apiary during the swarming season, I had several hives in the garden, and the day in question bees were observed flying in close formation low and at speed from the hives as if chasing something. I was not close enough

on this occasion to definitely confirm that this was a drone comet, although on reflection I am convinced that it was.

I have several out apiaries and often in the Autumn, (Sept/Oct) when I visit these apiaries it can be noticed that all hives are quiet (marking time, due to very little nectar flow until the Ivy) except for one colony where there is excited activity for a while and then bees will settle down. This, in my opinion, is when supersedure is taking place and virgins are on their mating flights. At this time of year the weather does not permit Drone assemblies to form so Minor (Local assembly) mating or apiary Vicinity mating occurs.

The above topic is often overlooked and not covered in many of the bee books. Based on my own experiences my faith in the existence of “apiary vicinity” also remains undiminished, and it probably goes a long way to explain why our native bee *Apis mellifera mellifera* thrives and survives against all the odds in these British Isles.

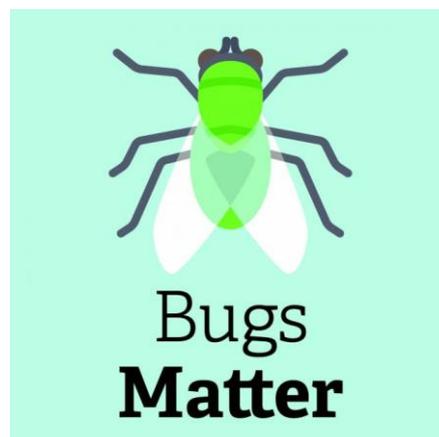
Bugs matter!

Insects underpin our natural world and their numbers can help us to better understand what is happening in our environment.

BugLife need lots of people to take part in “Bugs Matter” this summer (from 1 June to 31 August 2022); collecting data and sharing findings from their journeys to help us understand more about our insect populations!

If you have a Smartphone you can take part following these easy steps:

- Download the app which is available free in both IOS and Android.
- Create an account to sign up, and you will be sent a printable grid to cut out and use.
- Start surveying on any journey you make in a vehicle between 1st June to 31st August.
- The more essential journeys you conduct the survey on the better – and counts of zero bugs are just as important to submit.



The concept is simple:

- Clean the number plate before making an essential journey in a vehicle.
- When you reach your destination, count the bugs squashed on the number plate using a ‘splatometer’ grid (this will be posted to you when you sign up.)
- A photo and details must then be submitted via the app.
- You don’t even need to be the driver of the vehicle you are travelling in – but you do need their permission.
- The app also includes a tutorial and some safety advice.



Why count squashed insects?

The number of insects sampled on vehicle number plates have declined by nearly

60%

in less than 20 years*
across the UK



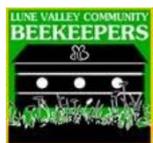
* between 2004-2021 – Bugs Matter

The methodology is based on the ‘windscreen phenomenon’, a term given to the observation that people tend to find fewer insects squashed on the windscreens of their cars compared to several decades ago.

BugLife wants to repeat this survey every year to build up a better understanding of insect populations. The survey uses an innovative insect sampling method conducted by members of the public to assess the difference in insect abundance over a number of years.

Insects are also a good indicator for measuring the success of our conservation work at landscape-scale.

LUNE VALLEY COMMUNITY BEEKEEPERS



OPEN DAY

Saturday, 9th July

11-00am to 4-00pm



Reflect on the apiary through a guided walk in which you will 'Tell it to the Bees'

Observe our training and breeding apiaries

See honey bees in an observation hive

See inside a Lune Valley Long Hive

Information about honey bees and pollination

Local honey

Craft stalls, Beeswax candles and polishes

Tea, coffee and cakes, Barbecue

Free admission - Free Parking

The Apiary, Nazareth House

Ashton Road, Lancaster LA1 5AQ

www.lunevalleybeekeepers.co.uk

An Introduction to Beekeeping

This on-line course

will introduce you to the craft of beekeeping and raise your awareness of all the matters you should consider *before* acquiring any bees!

The course comprises of a brief introduction and the following 16 sections, which can be viewed separately and in any order. Total running time 135 minutes.



- 1) Why keep bees?
- 2) Brief history of beekeeping
- 3) Types of beekeepers
- 4) The beekeeping year
- 5) Life history of the honey bee
- 6) Hive inspections
- 7) Collecting swarms
- 8) Hive products
- 9) Bees, wasps and hornets
- 10) Hives and equipment
- 11) Creating an apiary
- 12) Acquiring bees
- 13) Bee stings
- 14) Bees, the Law & Insurance
- 15) Bureaucracy
- 16) The next step



Cost £35

To book this course, please visit

www.lunevalleybeekeepers.co.uk

and complete the booking form.

60% of all the food crops we grow are dependent on bees for pollination



The Lune Valley Long Hive

An innovative but simple long hive



Essential features:

- Designed by a bee-centric beekeeper for bee-centric beekeepers
- Comfortably houses one colony of bees without the need for additional supers or brood boxes
- Has a hinged roof to avoid the need for heavy lifting
- Can be managed by a person in a wheelchair
- Comes with 14 x 12 frames (flat), but can be used with top bars
- Has a removable floor tray which can act as an eco-floor or a debris board for varroa counts
- Has 2" thick wooden walls which provide five times more insulation than a standard hive
- Roof space is ventilated
- Comes with a jumbo feeder
- Has a metal roof
- Is manufactured locally, especially for LVCB
- Is constructed from pine wood to reduce the cost but will need an external preservative or coat of paint
- External measurements: L 86cm, H 77cm, W 52cm
- Despite its high specification, it is economically priced whilst offering exceptional value for money.

Only £439

including frames and feeder

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Alternative Approaches to Beekeeping

Dr Fred J Ayres



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