



The *Apiarist*

... High Weald Beekeepers' Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

Another year, another AGM. 2019 has been my second and penultimate year as Chairman of the High Weald Beekeepers' Association.

As ever, I'm indebted to our dedicated Committee and membership who selflessly give of their time and energy in support of bees, beekeeping, and your Association.

Most of you will have seen my Chairman's report sent out before the AGM, but just to recap a little: In summary, the AGM and Honey Show went well again with a good attendance. The association continues strongly with membership now over 200. Finances are very healthy with our current bank balance just

shy of £20k. Dues remain unchanged for 2019/20, but it is proposed they be increased for 20/21 by £2.00, and we are still one of the lowest cost divisions in the area. This will help us improve facilities for the membership and to build a fighting fund to support future plans for a new apiary.

The training programmes have been very successful again, providing 19 new beekeepers. We held a Taster Day again which was a great success. In addition, we are about to commence a programme of training for the BBKA Basic Assessment.

Although the popularity of apiary

... continues on page 2



At the AGM Rosie Riley, outgoing Events Secretary surprised Peter Coxon with an unexpected gift, the book "A Book of Honey" by Eva Crane.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Jan 23 – Averting the Insect Apocalypse, a talk by Dave Goulson, professor at the University of Sussex (venue to be confirmed)

Mar 7 – SBKA AGM 2020 (Uckfield)

For Full calendar & details see <https://hwbka.org.uk/event/>

The Apiarist is a quarterly newsletter produced for members of the High Weald Beekeepers Association.

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HWBKA Committee members 2020

Committee Role	Previously	Now
President (3 years)	Brian Hopper*	Peter Leswell
Chairman (3 years)	Peter Coxon	Peter Coxon
Hon. Secretary (3 years)	Peter Halford*	Fiona Henniker
Hon. Treasurer (3 years)	Steve Adams*	Rob Gore
Apiarist Editor	Sam Bowles*	Paul Lindström
Apiary Manager (A.M.)	Keith Obbard	Keith Obbard
Assistant A.M.	Steve Davies	Steve Davies
Events Secretary	Rosie Riley*	Helen Searle
Membership Secretary	Peter Halford	Peter Halford
Training & Education Mgr	Malcolm Wilkie	Malcolm Wilkie
Committee Members.	Amanda Savage*	Steve Adams
	Helen Searle	Talha Dinc

* committee members standing down

...continued from page 1

visits has been waning for many years now, there has been a very full programme of other activities and themed visits including the usual shows such as the Honey Market at Heathfield School, the Crowborough Fair and Langton Green Fair, generating revenue for beekeepers and the Association, and more importantly generating interest in bees and beekeeping.

The association apiary at Slab Castle is in splendid fettle and now has much needed new equipment including new National Hives, a BeeHaus, new suits and a new 6 frame radial extractor for the use of the membership. Steve Davies is now gearing up to support our new apiary at Horsted Green Park.

The website continues to provide useful support for our activities and membership, and the addition of booking forms for events such as talks greatly facilitates our organisation of events. Emails are now sent out via the BDI eR2 system rather than using BCC. This had previously resulted in some email getting blocked by email systems thinking they were spam.

The newly re-vamped Apiarist

provides a valuable communication channel for those who aren't cyber surfers. It is going out quarterly, with many interesting articles

We have an AHAT (Asian Hornet Action Team). Having now seen these beasties in action during our French liaison meeting in Normandy this year, it's just as well too. There have been some very interesting talks this year about Asian Hornets, from Bob Hogg, a Jersey beekeeper, and most recently from Kay Wreford our RBI at the SBKA Autumn Convention. Suffice to say it behoves us all to be on our toes and contact Helen Searle our AHAT coordinator immediately should we see any suspicious sightings.

The HWBKA had dramatic success at the National Honey Show this year with numerous prizes.

You may recall reading in the last edition of the Apiarist, about our travails over our new apiary site at the Uckfield SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) site, now known as Horsted Green Park. The good news is that things are proceeding, and we plan to put bees up there in the spring. The prospect of having our own building there is most probably still a long way off

although we will have use of the WDC barn there. Hence, we will continue the search for other more central locations where it is more likely we'll be able to put up a building.

The surprise event for me was that the committee had decided give me a present for my efforts in this enterprise, "The Book of Honey" by Eva Crane – and very good it is too – thank you!


All the above, and more, was reported on at the AGM using the usual PowerPoint presentation.

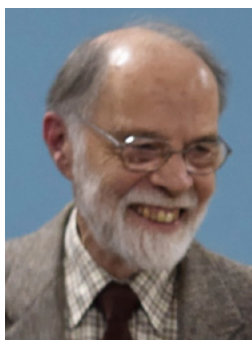
At the election that followed this part of the agenda several changes to the committee were made. Our constitution dictates that certain roles rotate every 3 years and some other long-standing committee members also finally decided they needed a break.

So, it's with regret, appreciation and deep gratitude we say farewell but not goodbye to Brian Hopper as President, Rosie Riley as Events Secretary, Amanda Savage as committee member and Sam Bowles as Apiarist editor. And we say hello to Peter Leswell (President – see page 3 for Peter's hello statement for those who don't know him that well!), Fiona Henniker our new Honorary Secretary, Rob Gore our new Honorary Treasurer, Paul Lindström our new Apiarist editor and Talha Dinc as committee member. Steve Adams remains on the committee and Peter Halford continues as Membership Secretary (see table above!).

Rather unusually we also had an invited talk from the local MP Huw Merriman, who gave us a very interesting insight into the All-Party Group on Bees & Pollinators. It was edifying to learn a little more about the power of lobbying and how it works in our parliamentary system (see article page 4!).

Finally, we had the customary prize giving from the Honey Show – see the roll of honour in the Honey Show section! (page 4).

Peter Coxon 



Meet Peter Leswell, new President HWBKA

I've been asked if I would write a piece for this issue of the *Apiarist*, by way of introducing myself to those relatively new members who do not know me. So, here goes.

I joined 'Crowborough & Uckfield Beekeepers' – as our division was then known – in the Spring of 1997. The second apiary meeting that season was at the home of an elderly couple, neither of whom I'd met previously. Joe, an experienced beekeeper, was just recovering from a heart attack and so had been unable to join us down in his apiary. After looking through his seven hives, we all retired to our host's conservatory for tea & cakes, and I found myself seated next to him.

We got chatting and soon discovered that we both had a scientific background, albeit in different disciplines, and we quickly developed a rapport. Since it was obvious that Joe was going to struggle for a while with the physical effort involved in hive inspections, I suggested that we might do one another a good turn; I offered to be a gofer and another pair of hands for him, doing the strenuous work, and in return, I'd get to learn from him about the ways of bees. This offer he gladly accepted, and we became good friends, enjoying a good many years' beekeeping together, trying out this and that, until a time came when, eventually, he had to give up both his beloved bungalow and garden, and his bees.

By this time I was Hon. Secretary of the division and, for a number of seasons, I organised and led an annual tour of members' apiaries, in conjunction with the Regional and Seasonal Bee Inspectors from the NBU – the National Bee Unit. Each year we'd inspect some 40-50 hives in the course of a full weekend, and in this way I had the chance to examine a large number of colonies, in various situations and conditions, to observe the inspectors' methodical approach to hive inspections, and to hear their recommendations regarding any problems encountered; all very interesting and informative. If you should ever have the chance to accompany an NBU inspector on such a tour, I'm sure your beekeeping would benefit from it, just as mine did.

During those years, beekeeping nationally was in decline and we lost a good many long-term members of the division as they aged and/or just gave up the craft. It was a time when Britain's beekeepers were still learning to cope with the recent advent of *Varroa*, and many decided

that it was time for them to give up rather than to adjust. For those of us left in High Weald division, we arranged several day courses on bee disease recognition and IPM (integrated pest management), run in conjunction with the NBU inspectors, who acted as tutors.

In my final year as Hon. Secretary, I remember reporting that our membership had declined to just 23 – a situation that was becoming non-viable – and we wondered if we'd have to amalgamate with another division.

At the following AGM, it was decided to try to organise a beekeeping course for beginners for the coming season. A sub-committee was formed and we met on a number of occasions during the winter in order to devise a course comprising both theoretical and practical aspects of beekeeping for up to 20 students, with Keith and myself as course tutors.


We were fortunate in our timing, for it coincided with a burst of publicity in the media about the plight of bees and other pollinators, and our first course was over-subscribed. A few students dropped out after the initial 'taster' session, deciding that beekeeping was not for them, at least for the moment; but to give them that insight was the point of splitting the course into 'Taster' and 'Main' sessions. For the rest, the course was generally well-received, with a number of the students renewing their membership of the division the following year. As word got around, the course for the second year was also over-subscribed, and this success has been repeated subsequently, with membership snowballing year by year so that by now, it has increased ten-fold compared with that nadir of 23.

Although I played a part in this success and its attendant improvement in divisional finances, we are indebted in particular to Keith who, in addition to acting as tutor, also shouldered the burden of student recruitment. Latterly also to Malcolm, who took over from me after the first five years.

Those of you who took the course during any of those early years will recognise me. Some, however, got to know me a little better, for in addition to my role as tutor, I raised a number of nucleus colonies for them when they were just starting up and wanting their own bees – Peter Coxon, Helen and Malcolm among them. It's rewarding now to see the continuing enthusiasm of so many of you and to witness the major contributions you are making to the success of our division and to our bees.

Although for various reasons I don't get to meetings as often as I used to do, if you see me, please come and introduce yourself if we've not met before, and tell me how you're getting on with your bees. Forgive me if I forget your name – it's something that I've always had a bit of a problem with, and I find it doesn't get any easier as the years go by – but I shall be pleased to meet you.

Happy beekeeping!

Peter Leswell 



Huw Merriman, conservative MP in the Bexhill and Battle area (covering most if not all of the HWBKA areas) informed us about the special interest group in Parliament for Bees and Pollinators.

Parliamentary group on Bees and Pollinators

By Paul Lindström


At the recent AGM, Huw Merriman, the conservative MP for Bexhill and Battle told us about the special interest group in the Parliament in support of Bees and Pollinators. Huw told us while he wasn't a beekeeper himself he had helped his wife a lot over the years, and so learned quite a lot about bees.

There are many interest groups in the Parliament, close to a thousand according to Huw, but none dedicated to the welfare of bees and pollinators. So Huw initiated such a group, and is now the chairman of this cross party group with the full name All Party Parliamentary Group on Bees and Pollinators. As with other APPGs this is an informal group of members who join together to pursue a particular topic or interest and so have no official status within Parliament. Nevertheless Huw chaired the Parliament Office of Science and Technology's 'National Pollinators' update in Parliament in December 2015, where four leading academics in this field discussed the current issues facing bees and other pollinators.

Among other projects for this APPG on Bees and Pollinators is to lobby for an "ecological wildflower"

roof to be installed on the planned temporary replacement building for the House of Commons, to be used by the UK Parliament when the restoration work on the Palace of Westminster starts, probably in 2025. While Huw and his colleagues in the APPG on Bees and Pollinators really would have liked to place some bee hives on this roof, they realize that this might be too radical for the civil servants in charge, but hope to have some bee homes installed for solitary bees at least. Meanwhile the group plan to install one bee hive in a park nearby, to be managed by MPs trained in hands-on beekeeping.

Huw follows the discussions and decisions regarding the impact of neonicotinoids, and told us that in his experience the EU regulators tended to be more proactive in banning suspected pesticides, while in the UK decisionmakers generally don't ban until solid scientific evidence is presented. For now the ban on neonicotinoids is in place in the UK, but the question is what will happen after Brexit.

We hope the APPG on Bees and Pollinators will be successful in their plans, and hope to hear more from Huw on the matter in the future. 

HWBKA Honey Show 2019

Ribbons & Lynn Moore Cup kindly sponsored by Andrew Moore

Winner of the Vera Becvar Honey Cup – John Miller (Presented to the overall winner of Classes 1, 2 & 3)

Winner of the Lynn Moore Memorial Cup – John Miller (Presented to the High Weald member, not serving on the committee, who has contributed most to the benefit of the Club over the year)

CLASS ONE – Clear Honey – Open

1st – John Miller
2nd – Helen Hadley
3rd – John Preston
Highly Commended – Stuart Goddard

CLASS TWO – Set Honey – Open

1st – Samantha Bowles
2nd – Helen Searle
3rd – Rob Gore
Highly Commended – Chris Chandler

CLASS THREE - Cut Comb - Open

1st – Malcolm Wilkie
1st – Rob Gore

CLASS FOUR – Clear or Set Honey – Novice (Voted for by the attendees of Honey Show)

1st – Neil Underhill (15 votes)
2nd – Nick Catliff (7 Votes)
3rd – Nina Diacos (5 Votes)
3rd – Phil Edwards (5 votes)

CLASS FIVE – Cakes

1st – Chris Chandler – Russian Honey Cake
2nd – Helen Hadley – Honey & White Chocolate Traybake
3rd – Helen Searle – Honey & Poppysseed Cake

CLASS SIX – Biscuits and Confectionary

1st – Nina Diacos – Honey Flapjack
2nd – Rob Gore – Honey Chocolates

CLASS SEVEN – Preserves & Mead

1st – Peter Coxon – Honey Marmalade with Brandy
2nd – Helen Searle – Mead
3rd – Nicola Dealtry – Elderflower Champagne with Honey



Winner of both the Vera Becvar Honey Cup and the Lynn Moore Memorial Cup was John Miller (pictured to the right).



Malcolm was a bit anxious that the big softtoy bee would be won by someone else in the raffle, but he got it in the end!



All of the cakes entered to Class Five looked yummy, but Chris Chandler's "Russian Honey Cake won first prize.



Outgoing president Brian Hopper (right) took the opportunity at the honeyshow to present the incoming president Peter Leswell (pictured to the left) with a certificate.



There were several clever innovations shown in Class eleven, Handmade beekeeping "things", but Steve Davies won with his "Oversized dummy boards".

CLASS EIGHT - Dipped Candle

1st - Helen Searle

CLASS NINE - Moulded Candle

1st - Lesley Francis

2nd - Malcolm Wilkie

3rd - Stuart Goddard

Highly Commended - Chris Chandler

CLASS TEN - Any other Wax, Pollen or Propolis Product

1st - Nicola Dealtry - Beeswax Wraps

2nd - Nicola Dealtry - Pine Cone and Beeswax Firelighters

3rd - Jo Gore - Wood Conditioner (food safe version)

CLASS ELEVEN - Handmade Bee-keeping item (Voted by the Attendees of the Honey Show)

1st - Steve Davies - Oversize Dummy Boards (14 Votes)

2nd - Chris Chandler - Wasp Entry Deterrent (10 Votes)



All the entries in Class nine, Dipped candles, looked pretty good, but Lesley Francis' candle won first prize.

The Queen is dead – long live the queen – or is it that simple?

By Phil Edwards

As a beginner in the world of bee keeping this year, I am pleased to say that I and most of my bees have survived – just. So surely it must be straightforward when something goes wrong and you have the support of some of the wisest bee keepers around? Read for yourself and decide!

It all started at the end of June, when my bees decided they wanted to swarm. I carried out a split and ended up, on the one hand with the old queen in one hive with brood and young bees and, on the other hand, brood with the older workers with two queen cells in the other hive. All went well with the old queen and it appears they are now going into winter in a good state.

However in the Queen cell hive all appeared to be doing well until we had the beginners 'bee safari' visit about 10 days after the split. This showed that one of the queen cells had hatched and there were two further queen cells. To demonstrate a queen cell on the point of hatching, one of these was opened and shown to the group. A Virgin queen emerged but as there was already evidence

of a hatched queen cell and there was, furthermore, a spare unhatched Queen cell, this virgin was killed.

She would have made a lovely queen but Malcolm and Brian felt that if we left her the colony would in all probability swarm as they were a good strong unit.

Although this was not evident at the time, killing this Virgin proved to be a big mistake.

To remedy this Keith Obbard (My bee buddy) and I introduced a frame of brood including eggs and the workers duly made new queen cells from the eggs. We were now in the first week of August and when I checked a week or so later, the cells were still intact. Sadly within two more days they had disappeared and the colony was queenless still. With this occurrence I tried introducing a second frame with eggs and the workers duly performed the miracle of creating new queen cells. These however were even shorter lived and were pulled down. At this stage time is passing and the year is running through quickly and we have reached the end of August.

A generous offer from Malcolm Wilkie then came and this was that he would come and introduce a mated queen which he had hatched in an apidea. The day came and initially we took the frames of bees about 30 yards away and dusted them with icing sugar. At this stage we changed our minds (and this change of minds was probably a mistake) – instead of shaking the bees off and creating pandemonium we took them back to the hive as they were. The reason that this might have been a mistake is that, although we saw no evidence of eggs, there may have been some laying workers and laying workers, of course, will kill a queen if they are 'in charge' on their own terms.

Malcolm's (marked) queen was placed in a Queen introduction cage



Cotton pads soaked in Jägermeister to confuse (not indulge) the bees.

blocked with fondant and put in the hive. The idea being that the workers would eat their way into the cell and welcome their new queen. We also dusted everything with icing sugar and put cotton pads soaked in strong smelling drink – usually this is whiskey or brandy but on this occasion it was Jägermeister! The purpose of the strong smell is to



A Virgin Queen about to emerge.



The replacement queen blissfully unaware of the cruel fate that was awaiting her shortly after.

confuse the workers into accepting the new queen by masking her pheromone. On reflection we should have been much more radical and confused them even more than we did. We really should have chucked them all in the hedge as Malcolm had originally intended. The bees were then left to their own devices.

Unfortunately their own wishes were regicide and Malcolm's lovely queen was duly dispatched.

Malcolm believes this to be the action of Laying Workers which although not evidenced by eggs (which could have been eaten by other workers) would give a plausible reason for the previous actions by the bees.

However not all was lost because a few days before the Queen introduction, a small swarm (or more likely a cast) appeared in my garden. I had been very attentive to my bees and I am convinced this did not come out of either of my hives. I caught the swarm (not relevant to this article but this was a learning curve in itself) and put it in my home-made wooden nuc. I thought that maybe I would have a second colony to take through winter although it would be very small.

We have now arrived in September and it looked as if I was doomed to either lose the colony or face combining it with the original colony – but Malcolm advised against this as once a colony has been left for a long time without the presence of a Queen some of the workers become pseudo queens and start laying drone eggs, which become dwarf drones. These pseudo queens may attack and kill a queen if you combine a queenright colony with a Queenless colony.

The swarm made themselves at home in the wooden nuc and the (unmarked) queen looked healthy and at ease then . . . Malcolm came over again with another great idea; throw out all my queenless bees! (in a way I felt I had no choice. A queenless hive would die out and a small cast in a wooden nucleus would also

be unlikely to survive winter).

But it wasn't quite as simple as throwing out the bees. Malcolm and I took the hive 30 yards away, dusted the bees with icing sugar (does this sound familiar) and this time shook them all out onto the ground. We then took the hive back to the place where the nuc had been (about 5 yards from the original hive site) and placed the swarm bees on their frames from the nucleus box into the hive box. To this we added frames of stores from the hive we had just chucked onto the ground. Almost immediately the queenless bees tried to find their way back to the hive but were obviously confused as it was not there! Ghostly figures (icing sugar!) could be observed everywhere, searching. Over the next couple of hours or so they then searched for the hive and found it 5 yards away.


The hive still smelt like their hive (and had frames of their stores) but was now occupied by the queenright nuc. We had created utter confusion and these queenless bees were no longer in charge of their hive. Many of them were, in fact, finding it hard to get back in. The queenright nuc

sorted out which bees they wanted back and which ones (perhaps the laying workers) were not wanted. Most of the queenless bees probably did fight their way back in as the numbers of the queenright nuc were swelled considerably by the returning thrown-out queenless bees.

So did the new queen survive? Yes she did and started laying.

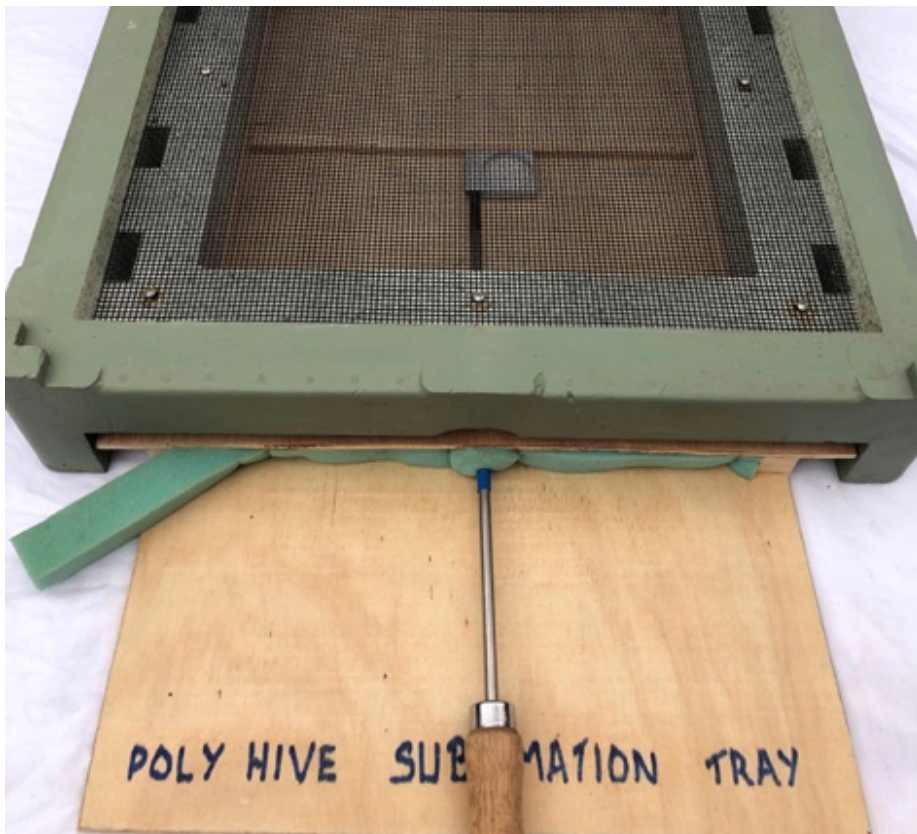
And that is the position as we head for winter – a reasonable size (perhaps on the small side) colony preparing for whatever winter may throw at them.

So, what about succession, queen cells, introducing a queen and the knowledge of experienced beekeepers? Well, there are many things I learned on the beginners' course this year and one of them (which was repeated many times by different people) is that the bees haven't read the books and will do what they want to!

But if you are prepared to make some hard decisions and create pandemonium in your garden, you can bring queenless bees back from the brink by using a queenright nucleus! 



The new queen doing well and laying.



Finished and in position showing the location of the hot plate and the entrance closed off with foam.

DIY: PolyHive Sublimation Tray

By Steve Davies

When sublimating, I normally use the underside of the varroa tray to place the vaporiser. However, this cannot be done with a Paynes PolyHive as there is insufficient space between the hive and the tray. To get round this, I built a dedicated tray which is not only simple to use, but it keeps the hot plate away from any polystyrene.

Materials:

- 5.5mm plywood – 1 piece 457mm x 417mm
- 1 piece 605mm x 360mm
- 20mm x 20mm stripwood – 1 piece 360mm in length
- 2 pieces 450mm in length

Method:

If you have a spare floor:

- Insert the shorter section of ply in the varroa runners.

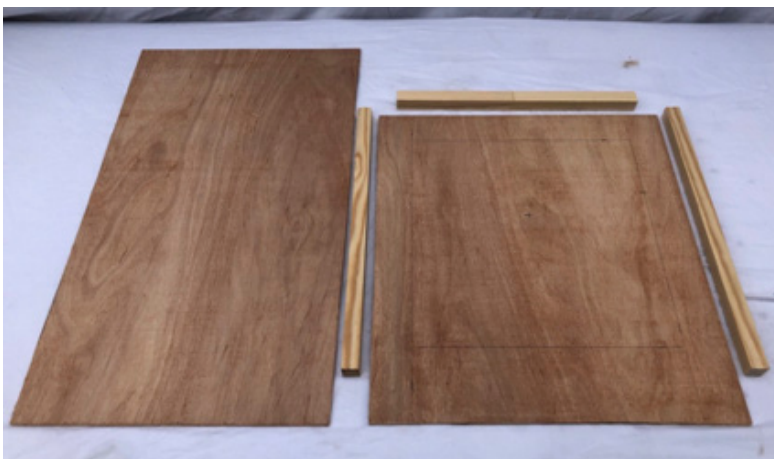
- Remove the mesh floor then mark around the internal edges of the floor onto the plywood.

If you don't have a spare floor, then follow this procedure:

- Mark a line 50mm from the top edge.
- Repeat 50mm from each long edge (sides).
- Mark a line 90mm from the bottom edge.

In both cases, remove the plywood and cut out the marked 'square'.

- Glue and pin the two longer sections of stripwood along the sides of the cutout starting level with the top of the cutout and extending to the bottom edge.
- Glue and pin the shorter section of stripwood across




the top of the cutout pinning to the side strips and ply. Make sure you apply a liberal amount of glue, especially on the cutout edges, as you will want a good seal. Sand down all cutout edges to align with the stripwood.



- Apply more glue along the top faces of all of the stripwood and then place the larger section of ply on top. Align the edges of the ply with the outer edges of the stripwood then pin firmly in place.
- Wipe off all surplus glue then sand down all plywood edges. Try to 'round off' the side edges of the shorter piece of ply as this will make it easier to move along the hive runners.
- **The next stage is optional;** glue a small piece of stripwood across the middle of the box to help put the

vaporiser in the correct position. Alternatively, you could just wrap some tape around the vaporiser rod to get the correct depth. Both methods are shown below:

Note that the larger piece of ply extends beyond the 'box'. Without this, the weight of the handle and cable tends to tilt the hot plate risking spillage of the soda crystals and contact with the mesh floors. 



Mini book reviews

By Paul Lindström

The Bees by Laline Paull

This is not a brand new book, it came out in 2015, but you might not have come across it yet.

Even as a fairly new beekeeper I have already read many books on how to manage honey bees, as well as some books inspired by bees. But Laline's book is outside the boundaries of anything I've read thus far, and I loved it. I have humoured my wife with tales of who really rules the colony, because it is obviously not the queen. I've joked about the "secret seven", or the "Seven Sisters", but Laline takes such kind of imagination and fantasies to a completely different level. While very close to the truth of how honeybees operate, this is of course a work of fiction – and a very, very good one I think. Enjoy!



Wilding by Isabella Tree

While not centred on bees this book has relevance for bees and many other types pollinators. And since the project is set up in West Sussex, at the Knepp estate, it's quite close to us in the HWBKA.

The owners, Isabella and her husband Charlie Burrell, decided to let nature regain control of their farmland which was suffering from mechanised and destructive practices. Isabella supports their findings with lots of statistical facts, but also with lovely and entertaining quotes from an array of sources. It's very well written.

The project seems to have been successful, after initial scepticism and problems. Anyone with interest in sustainability and how to restore wildlife will appreciate this book.



The first story in a multipart series called "Three Bees"

Burly, Curly & Twirly

By Laurel Lindström

"It tastes like crap this wax. And just because they told me I have to eat my way out, doesn't mean I have to." An oversized drone honey bee spat out some half chewed wax, smearing it against the wall of his cell as he did so. He paused a moment, peering through the tiny hole in the hatch at the mass of bees crawling back and forth. Within his dim view he could see that there were also loads with half their bodies deep in the honeycomb cells. He harrumphed as well as a bee could manage, and shifted his copious weight against the six tight walls of his cell, contemplating how to get out without having to chew at the wax which clogged up his mouth parts and left what he was certain were unsightly crumbs on his gleaming mandibles. After a few moments he had it.

With a few heavy shoves at the hatch with his big head, the burly drone heaved his way out of his too tight cell and was born. He paused a moment at the edge of the cell, letting his outer skin harden and his body become accustomed to the warmth and the space. All around him a mass of bees, all of them female and all of them muttering instructions and comments, none of which were addressed to him and none of which he could properly hear. His first thought was food, more food, and nicer food than the measly dribs and drabs they'd left him when they sealed him inside his cell to grow from grub into drone. On second thoughts, maybe it was measly in amount but it had actually been quite tasty especially in the beginning, a yummy mix of honey and royal jelly. But that ran out pretty quick and what they gave him later just wasn't the same and now here he was full of heft and hunger.

Beside him he heard a slightly gruffer mumbling, distinct from

the wider hum all around him. First checking that his chest fluff was straight and his wings fully dry, he turned to see another drone bee forcing his way out of his cell. But this bee was coming out backwards, his abdomen almost folded to his chest as he struggled to exit the tight space. Burly bee sidled over, preening his wings, giving them a little flutter, and looking over his shiny shoulder to see if any of the girls had noticed just how sleek and magnificent he was. They hadn't. "What's wrong with forwards?" he said to the slowly uncurling new arrival whose unfolding needed to be sharpish if he was to dry bee shaped and not curly shaped. "There's nothing wrong, just a bit of a wardrobe malfunction a few days ago. I got squished by some nutter human scraping at the cells. Pushed me around and the girls thought I was a goner so they left me. And I finished growing alright, except that I was crooked. It's taken longer than it should, and I'm much too small but here I am. Thankfully I didn't dry too fast. Curly waggled his antennae and set off in the direction of what he thought might be somewhere to go. Burly followed on and soon passed him by with an unintended shove. "Oy watch it would you", Curly hissed before he noticed the Queen ambling past with her retinue in train. "Is that her? Is that Mother?" he whispered, watching as Burly preened his massive eyes and straightened the slightly mussed fluff on his side. "Don't even think about it Curl, she's only interested in one thing, and it certainly won't involve you." Curly looked confused and was distracted by the frantic flaking at the hatch of a nearby drone cell. Like Burly and Curly, instead of eating its way out, this drone was taking a completely different approach to being born. He appeared to be

kicking his way, but bees aren't really made for kicking. Curly called to Burly and together they watched the new drone arrive, twisting round and round, round and round, antennae outstretched mouthparts chomping away at the wax but mostly missing. Panting, his antennae drooping and his head low the drone finally pulled himself out of the cell, landing on his back, staring up at his tiny audience. As they looked from one to the other and then all around them they realised that this little group of three were the only drones born in those few minutes and they breathed in each another's special drone smell knowing that this scent would always bring them home. Together they moved across the comb, Burly pushing his way ahead and the others following, comparing notes on the diet the nursing bees had offered, commenting on the abundance of pretty ladies bustling around them. They moved towards the Queen who was trailing slowly along looking for new empty cells in which to lay some eggs.

A buffer of worker bees was suddenly blocking their way. "What's this?" Burly pulled himself up to his full 1.3cm and stared out with what he hoped was mighty masculinity, antenna flicking, massive eyes gleaming with what he was sure was menace. It wasn't. The buffer of ladies as one murmured, "stay back, don't move any further", and one of them came forward and offered each of the boys a drink of water, mouthparts to mouthparts. They drank with relish and relief and by the time their lips were thoroughly smacked and their little bellies thoroughly filled, the queen, her retinue and the bee buffer had moved on. It was clearly time for a nap but no one knew quite how this worked now that they were out of their cells. "So what happens

next?" Twirly asked, yawning and leaning slowly into a small undulation of softly fragrant honeycomb. His huge eyes were slowly losing focus and he could see only umbrous shadows. "Well", said Burly, "we'll have a rest and then start looking for the exit. We need to get out of here, but I can't quite remember why". "It's the princesses, that's what it is, the prin-

cesses" Twirly added helpfully before drifting off to sleep while Burly and Curly made yum yum noises, as they snuggled deep into the softly crushed hexacombs... zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.



Written by Laurel Lindström as a bonus for supporters of her coming book "The Draftsman", published by Unbound Publishing House.



The HWBKA Christmas Social Event at The Mark Cross Inn pub was well attended, and both the food, drinks and company were excellent.

We wish you all a continued Happy and Prosperous New Year!