



The **A**piarist

... High Weald Beekeepers' Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

By Malcolm Wilkie

This year the Association has been concentrating on running "Refresher Sessions" to help those who have bees improve their skills. Beekeeping is a passtime that gives many of us pleasure and enables us to feel connected to the area in which we live. See our website under the tab "Events" to see what sessions remain in the series.

Last year was a fantastic season for honey and this year promises to be just as good.

I still worry about the number of people who seem to lose colonies over winter. The Association is offering a half day's training on disease on Friday July 7th and another session on July 22nd on treatments. Disease and varroa are the unglamorous side of beekeeping but understanding what you are up against gives you a much better chance of getting a colony through winter. On the 22nd I shall be trying to pull out all the stops, so do try and come.

About ten of you availed yourself of my offer of a free virgin queen. I suspect only one or two of those will have survived. Those of you who came to my session on introducing a mated queen will hopefully now



Malcolm Wilkie, Chairman HWBKA as well as Training & Education Manager

understand why this is the case – a mated queen has very different pheromones from a virgin queen. It is a tall order for a virgin to impose herself on a colony that has gone queenless particularly if there are laying workers that are about to declare themselves and that consider themselves to be queens. Even if initially accepted she may have a battle on her hands/claws.

Look at the program attached to the magazine and avail yourself of what is on offer. It will enhance your enjoyment of beekeeping and help you feel in a better position to help these fascinating creatures survive. While extracting your honey this summer, keep back a jar or two to enter in November in our Honey show.



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

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Rent an extractor from HWBKA!
See ad on page 15 for more info

Book review

By Paul Lindström

The Dancing Bees: Karl von Frisch and the Discovery of the Honeybee Language, by Tania Munz, 2016.



When I read Jürgen Tautz's book *Communication Between Honeybees: More than Just a Dance in the Dark* last year I was recommended to also read this book, and I finally got around to it. And it was very interesting to learn more about Karl von Frisch and his work.

Tania Munz is the vice president for research and scholarship at the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City. Previously, she was a lecturer at Northwestern University and a research scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. She holds a PhD in the history of science from Princeton University.

The book has been given praise by some of the top scientists within the beekeeping community. This is what Tom Seeley writes on the back of the cover: "The Dancing Bees will surely become a classic in the literature on the history of biology in the twentieth century. It is the definitive account of the intellectual development of Karl von Frisch and of his discoveries about the ability of honeybees to communicate with the waggle dance. Perhaps most fascinating is what Munz has uncovered about how von Frisch – declared a 'Quarter Jew' by the Nazis – was able to navigate a frightening political landscape in war-torn Germany, suffer the destruction of his Zoological Institute during the bombing of Munich, and still continue conducting experiments that revolutionised our thinking about animal communication. This book also provides intriguing insights into what von Frisch thought and felt during the heated debates about the meaning of the waggle dance in the 1960s and 1970s."

Karl Ritter von Frisch ("Ritter" is a title, translated approximately as *Sir*, denoting a Knight, not a first or

middle name) was born 1886 and died in 1982. His maternal grandmother was of Jewish origin, which during the Nazi years of course caused him a lot of problems. Karl studied at the University of Vienna under Hans Leo Przibram and in Munich under Richard von Hertwig, initially in the field of medicine, but later turned to the natural sciences.

Von Frisch attracted negative attention from the Nazi regime, among other things for employing Jewish assistants, including many women, and for practicing "Jewish science". Eventually Frisch was forced into retirement, but the decision was reversed because of his research on nosema infections in bees.

The Munich Institute of Zoology was destroyed in the Second World War, and in 1946 Frisch went to work at the University of Graz, remaining there until 1950, when he returned to the reopened Munich institute. He retired in 1958 but continued his research. He received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1973, along with Nikolaas Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz.

Karl von Frisch didn't start studying honeybees at the beginning of his career, but rather how some types of fish could change colour depending what they were surrounded by. In fact he got into trouble when his observations on colour vision in fish conflicted with




Karl von Frisch circa 1920. Image through Wikipedia Commons



Karl von Frisch in traditional clothes studying honeybees. Image through Wikipedia Commons.

the authority at the time, Carl von Hess, who argued that fish are colour blind. It wasn't until von Frisch's boss at the university, professor Richard Hertwig, stood by his employee that von Frisch findings were taken seriously. But there were hints of von Frisch's interest in bees already then. He mentions the bees in his 1913 paper on "Further Examinations on the Colour Sense of Fish" where he ponders 'In this the fish's colour sense deviates markedly from that of the honeybee, which confuses the same red with black' ". Soon all of von Frisch research were focused on the honeybees.

Contrary to what I have read in many publications the discovery of the waggle dance wasn't a sudden 'Eureka moment', but rather a gradual understanding. The first indication of some kind of communicative skills by the bees came already in 1917, when von Frisch started to paint bees with different colour dots and watched their behaviour around feeders with sugar water. But his paper on this in 1923 didn't attract much interest. It wasn't until the Summer of 1944 that von Frisch and his colleagues at the university made real progress understanding more about the waggle dance. In 1950 a book was published based on his lectures during a trip to the US, and here the waggle dance was fully described. The rest is, as the saying goes, history, and well known. 

Obituary – Colonel David Murray Brown

By Robin Murray Brown and Peter Coxon

Many readers may have heard the sad news of the death of David Murray Brown on 8th February 2023 at the age of 90. David was well known to many of the longstanding HWKBA members for his active involvement with the association, from his early days as an apprentice beekeeper – he took it up in 1990 – through to his thoughtful service as our Chairman and later as President.

David also initiated our links with the Normandy Beekeepers, a shared cultural interest which brought him particular pleasure. A modest and thoughtful man to the end, his own life story is as interesting as any.

When I (PC) took up beekeeping & joined the HWBKA David was already President and I always found him to be the epitome of an English gentleman, kind, considerate and with a ready dry witty comment. Keith Obbard, our current President who probably knew David longer than most of us, summarised his own experience as follows “David was so welcoming and got on with everyone, whatever their status or station in life, treating the high & mighty and the most lowly with equal good nature and respect.”

I recently attended the service of commemoration for David in St. Margarets Church, Buxted which I have never seen so packed and I learned a great deal more about his very interesting and auspicious past,



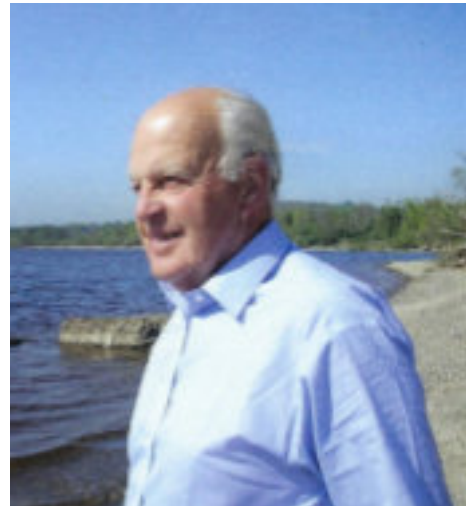
David competing on the horse Farouk, Lüneburg, 1960.

and which Robin his son has kindly summarised for us as follows.

Born in Edgbaston in 1932, David grew up in India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where his father, an Army officer, was stationed. His life as an only child in Secunderabad, Pune, Kolkata and Darjeeling gave him a fascinating view of the tail-end of the British Empire, a world of bazaars, travelling circuses and a variety of birds and animals, some wild and some (like his pony and his parakeets) only a little more domesticated. After prep school in Ceylon (where his mother kept tree rats as pets!), he returned with his family by troopship to England, a rather colder and, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, less colourful prospect.

Public school was immediately followed by National Service, although he had already decided on the Army as a career. He was commissioned from Sandhurst into the 4th Queen's Own Hussars, Winston Churchill's old regiment, and served in Germany, England, Borneo and Malaysia. His professional specialisation during most of his career was the design and development of armoured vehicles, but he was also an enthusiastic and accomplished horseman, winning show jumping prizes in Germany and at the Royal Tournament in London. He also took part in the procession for Winston Churchill's State Funeral in 1965.

His last Army job before he retired in 1983 with the rank of Colonel was to see the Challenger main battle tank brought into service, the same tank which took his old regiment (by



David Murray Brown.

now, the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars) into action in Iraq and Kuwait in 1991. His second retirement, from the civil service, came in 1994 and he was able to devote himself to his family and many other interests.

In addition to his beekeeping, he was a highly regarded philatelist, with a published book on the postmarks of the Pacific Islands; he was an enthusiastic golfer; and, perhaps unsurprisingly, he remained a keen traveller, especially when there were good family or cultural reasons for boarding an aeroplane. Even at the age of 72, he took part in a gentle ride down the Valley of Death on the anniversary of his regiment's involvement in the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Above all, David was a generous friend, a hospitable host and keen family man. He would have been the first to acknowledge the support and encouragement given over the years to his own beekeeping efforts as well as to HWBKA by his wife Jane, to whom we offer our condolences. A true gentleman to the end, it will surprise no-one that, when David reluctantly decided in 2022 that he could no longer manage to look after his bees, he wanted the proceeds from the sale of his equipment to come to the association... a mark of the man!

May he rest in peace. 🐝

The 2023 Bee Market finds a new home

By Manek Dubash, Brighton & Lewes BKA. Photos by Graham Bubloz (except where indicated)



Uckfield College is modern and fresh looking, and with the good weather there was no reasons why the event shouldnt be well attended.

A core element of the Bee Market is the equipment auction, which took place after the lunchtime lecture, and once more held out the possibility of a bargain.


This annual fixture in the Sussex Beekeeping Association's calendar, this year held on 20 May, moved to a new home this year, to Uckfield College. A fairly new facility, it offers up-to-date WiFi and mobile signal coverage — not something we might

have been too fussed about a few years back but, today without it, traders cannot do business.

The market was sited in in a fairly big hall — probably a bit too big for the fairly small number of stalls which seemed to be fewer compared to last year's event, which was held at the old venue in Heathfield

Community College, a venue noted for its poor communication technology.

The lunchtime lecture entitled "From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace" was given by Beecraft co-editor Richard Rickitt. He provided a fascinating insights into a range of locations where beekeeping has taken and does take place, including the gardens at Buck House, Buckfast Abbey, Exmoor and a host of others. Very entertaining.

After lunch came the equipment auction, a traditional fixture. 



B&L traditionally provides provender for the hungry traders and punters. Thanks to Ann Butcher (centre) for organising the tea and cake stall, and to Hilary, Jude, Shirley, Ian, Pat, Peter, Ross, Lindsey, Frankie and Mim for taking the time, trouble and effort to bake the cakes and to Ann, Hilary, Shirley, Pat, Rick, and Norman for their hard work in running the stall all day. We took nearly £600 in sales.



Punters headed for tea and cake, together with a good old chinwag about this and that. Photo: Manek Dubash

What To Do With Angry Bees

By Malcom Wilkie

I have always tried to help others as I see beekeeping as a journey and we pick up knowledge along the way, no matter how long we have been travelling. Each one of us has to work out what works given the time constraints we have and the apiary site we have at our disposal. Oh, and quite often the bees surprise us, as they did in the case outlined below.

Dealing with an aggressive colony is one of the most awful parts of managing honeybees. Mark Ballett contacted me last year as he had let a queen expand into two 14X12 brood boxes – he only had single 14x12s and, at the time, wanted to try a bigger colony. He certainly got honey, but he also got a colony he couldn't handle as they were aggressive. So, he contacted me as he wanted to buy a replacement queen.

I knew that he would need help. However, to start I told him to come down and fetch a mated queen that I would give him in a queen introduction cage. He came down and fetched her. I gave him instructions about what to do but somehow this got lost in translation and he did something else. No doubt I was to blame as my explanations weren't as clear as they might have been.

Surprise, surprise

Surprisingly, what he did worked really well! On arriving back home with his new queen he split this humongous colony into two hives placing them about 10 foot from the original hive in a shady glade out of sight of any foragers from the original hive. He then placed an empty hive where this humongous colony had been. He put one frame of drawn comb in the hive and he then placed my mated queen on top of the crown board, placing the roof above that.

When he told me what he had done I was alarmed as I assumed that the old foragers are the ones that sting and are going to kill a queen that is not related to them. Well, how

wrong I was! The bees looked after this queen precisely because they had no other choice and when, three days later, I went to try and sort out the mess we could see the bees showing great interest in the queen that had come from my apiary and still in her queen introduction cage.

Di Newham had come over to help and so there were three of us. Having discovered that my queen was alive and well I decided we would now start to re-combine everything. The timings – which are crucial – were as follows:

Day 1: Mark split his colony into two hives hiding them from sight behind the shrubbery. He placed a new hive on the original site.

Day 1: Mark fetched a mated queen from me and placed her on top of the crown board on the original site.

Day 5: Mark tried to go into his two colonies but they were still super aggressive (We had had bad weather and the bees had not been able to forage). Sorry Mark, I forgot to tell you about that.

Day 6 the cavalry arrived (that's me). A beautiful sunny day. As if by miracle the bees were biddable: the foragers had gone back to the original site and we did the following:

- We found which box had the aggressive queen (no queen cells), found her and killed her.

- We went through the other hive. Equally biddable as they too had lost their foragers. We shook the bees off every frame and destroyed all queen cells.

We then took this colony (that no longer should have the capability of making a new queen as all queen cells had been destroyed and the larvae were now too old to be made into queens) and we placed it back on the old site, shaking the bees off every frame in front of the hive before putting the frames in the hive.

We didn't include for the moment the hive which had contained the aggressive queen as there were eggs

and young larvae that could have been used to make a queen. We then placed my mated queen between two frames on the original site but did not snap the tab.

I left Mark with instructions to check all frames on the original site in two days' time and if there were no queen cells to snap the tab. He was told to leave the original hive where the aggressive queen had been killed for 8/9 days and to then go in and destroy all queen cells. Then the following day combine this with the colony on the original site, shaking off all bees in front of the hive before placing the brood frames in the hive.

It worked a treat and this year the colony has remained calm and been very productive, in both splits and honey.

A few notes

1. A warning. To find and kill an aggressive queen you need to move the hive away from its original site, placing a new hive on the original site.
2. The queen can be found easily after two days as the hive that contains her will have lost its older bees as it is no longer on the original site.
3. Don't leave searching for the queen for longer than three or four days as the shock of losing all the foragers causes the hive to put the queen off lay and then you will have a devil's own job finding her as she could be anywhere in the box.
4. Bear in mind if the weather is bad and the bees cannot get out to forage then the colony may not be very happy.
5. In this case, a slow introduction of a queen was important, so the bees realised that they had no other choice.
6. This manipulation was done fairly late in the season. September, I think.

I do like helping others – you just learn so much.



DIY: Kewl Floor (underfloor entrance)

By Steve Davies

Compared to solid floors, open mesh floors provide improved ventilation and varroa management, but not all open mesh floors are the same...

Kewl floors are similar to the Dartington long hive (and probably others), where the bees gain access through the floor emerging underneath the frames.

The design of these floors appealed to me for several reasons; a) the underfloor entrance is protected from the weather, b) the entrance gap is too narrow for mice to gain access and c) they can provide additional protection from wasps (especially with a Correx entrance reducer).

Materials:

Timber (22mm x 94mm x 2.4mtrs) - £8
National Open Mesh Floor Correx (budget) - £3.60
Expanded Galvanised Mesh 18" x 18" - £8.60
Metal Frame Runners - £1.60 (stainless steel £3.50)

Total material cost £24
New unit purchase price £60

Preparation:

From the 22mm x 94mm timber, cut the following pieces:

Sides - 2 x 460mm long
Landing board - 460mm (length) x 70mm (width) x 10mm (thick)
Landing board back plate - 420mm (length) x 70mm (width) x 20mm (thick)
Top entrance - 460mm (length) x 62mm (width)* x 20mm (thick)

Construction:

• First, cut a notch on both side panels to match both the width and thickness of the landing board.



Back plate/varroa tray - 420mm (length) x 70mm (width) x 20mm (thick)

Top edging strips (20mm x 20mm) - 2 x 460mm and 2 x 420mm

* Top entrance width is approximate, cut at 70mm and full details will be given within the construction.



- For simplicity, I will be using frame runners for the varroa tray but, if you have a router, then you could route a 10mm groove along the bottom edge of both sides (opposite edge to the notches).
- With the back plate section, measure down 40mm along one long edge and cut this off. Save the off cut as this will form the back plate to the varroa tray.
- Glue and pin the landing board to the notches of both side panels. This will be the bottom edge.
- Turn the frame over then glue and pin the 40mm back plate to the other end of the side panels but at the TOP.
- Check to make sure the framework is square. Measure diagonally between corners, if one measurement is different, slightly push the appropriate corners until true. NOTE: this is easier to do than explain 😊



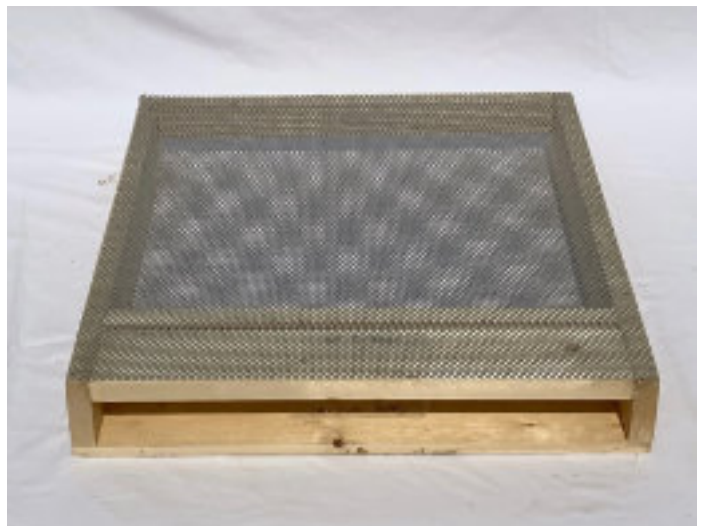
- Position the landing board back plate behind the landing board. Glue and pin the back plate to the rear edge of the landing board and to both sides making sure it is perpendicular to the landing board.



- Next is the varroa mesh. For simplicity, you could place the mesh on the top of the unit, but you will need to cut a section out for the entrance gap. You may also need to seal the mesh edges afterwards to prevent rain ingress.

- The landing board top plate will now need to be cut to size, hence the * in 'Preparation'. The optimum gap for the entrance is 8mm so reduce the top plate to the necessary width to obtain this gap (mine worked out at 62mm).

- Glue and pin the top plate to the front edge of the framework ensuring you keep the 8mm entrance across the full width.
- Again, check the unit is square and adjust accordingly.



- I prefer to secure the mesh inside the hive and therefore routed out a groove around the inside edges.



- In both cases, staple the mesh firmly into place along all edges.

- Next, pin the edging strips around the outer edges of the framework. Do not glue these as they will be subject to the most wear and may need replacing at some stage.



All that remains are a few finishing touches.

- Cut two frame runners to length and pin these 1 – 2mm from the bottom edge of the side panels.



- Cut a piece of Correx sheeting to size but not too tight as you want to be able to slide the tray in/out smoothly.

- With the Correx in place, position the wooden off cut from the back plate, mark then trim to size. Again, leave a little space for movement.

- Glue and pin them together, screw a cup hook into the wood and you're done!



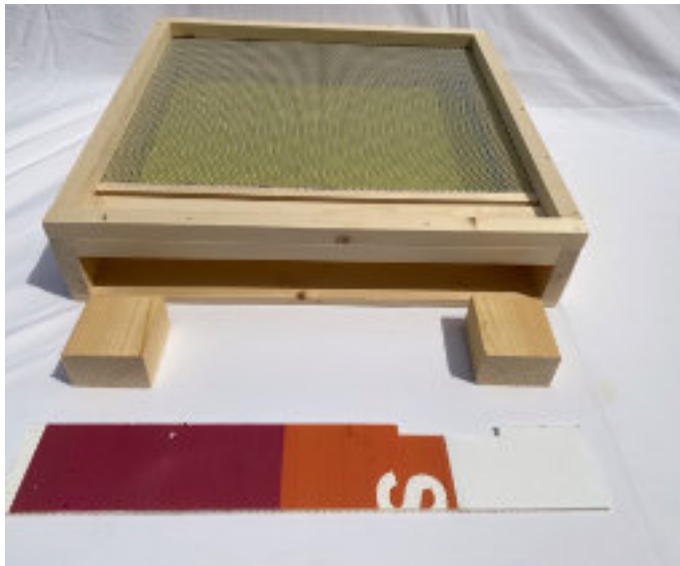
Note: Varroa trays are often made from 6mm plywood, but these need painting on a regular basis. I now use Correx as it is light and easy to clean. One caveat, a variety of insects (including wax moth) take up residence in the hollows so I would recommend sealing these with tape or filler.

If your carpentry is anything like mine, then the final task is to fill any gaps with good quality wood filler, sand down and stain.

Added Extras:

Although the entrance is more 'secure', some of my hives are in an area with mice and several wasp nests. Also, I prefer not to have the entrance fully open throughout winter. The solution to both is simplicity itself.

- Firstly, cut another piece of Correx to size so that it covers the complete length and width of the landing board.
- With the Correx placed on the landing board, cut two small blocks to size ensuring a reasonable fit but without restricting moving the Correx in/out.
- Remove the Correx, screw the blocks to each side (and the landing board below). Do not glue as you may need to remove the blocks for cleaning.
- Slide the Correx on top of the blocks and mark out a notch to correspond with the entrance gap. The notch can be whatever length you decide, mine tend to be around 70mm. Cut out with a sharp knife and consider sealing the tube gaps as per varroa tray.

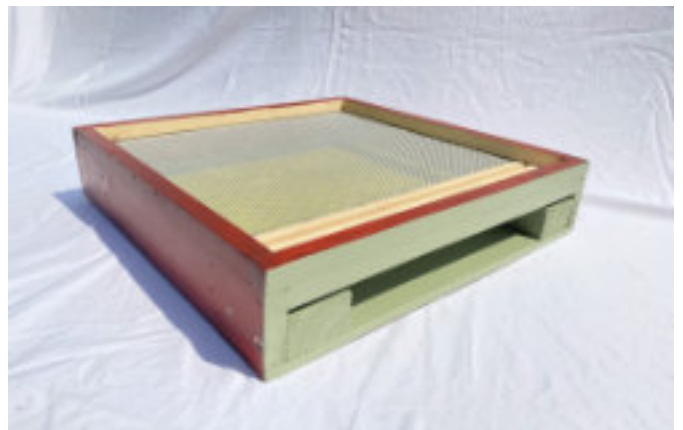


That's it. The Correx is left out during the season but inserted during winter. If I need to move a hive, or sublimate, the Correx is simply reversed blocking the entrance completely (pin/tape the Correx if moving a hive).

The next 'improvement' is for those who sublimate using a Gas-Vap device. Instead of sublimating from the varroa tray (and all the issues involved in sealing the gap), drill an 8mm hole in the wooden edging above the mesh. When not in use, this hole can be sealed with either gaffer tape or an appropriate sized cover cap. This method does not disturb the bees and all of the sublimation fumes are dispersed throughout the hive with none adhering to the mesh.



Final product, painted and ready to go.



One of the concerns with this type of floor is that the entrance can become blocked with hive debris/dead bees. All hives have this issue but, as the actual Kewl entrance is not clearly visible, checking for blockages requires high tech intervention – a bent piece of wire, in this case, a coat hanger!



Dates for your calendar

Refresher Session – Identifying a queenless colony

July 1 Sat 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Meet at Cherry Garden Hill farm shop at 9:45am (outskirts of Groombridge) or at 10am at Slab Castle apiary.
[Please register on our web site.](#)

The Crowborough Summer Fair

July 15 @ 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Place: The Summer Fair will take place at Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. There will be over 30 stalls where people can sell and display their products and share their information. This event is aimed to the whole family so there will be several ring performances and children's activities. There will be food and drink onsite, but people are always encouraged to bring their own picnics if they wish. HWBKA will have a stand here.

Refresher Session – Varroa control options

July 22 Sat 11:00 am-12:30 pm
Place: Slab Castle Apiary Cherry Garden Farm, Groombridge, Kent
[Please register at our web site.](#)

Bee Banter – Blue Anchor, Crowborough

July 26 Wed 7:30 pm-10:00 pm
Place: Blue Anchor, Crowborough Beacon Road, Crowborough
No need to book; just come along and chat.

Summer BBQ

August 20 Sun 12:00 pm-
Place: Black Shed Studios Sunnyview, Nursery Lane, Fairwarp, East Sussex
This is at Sandy Infield's place. There will be a charge for food – payable in advance. Bring your own drink.

Includes "The President's Charity Raffle" – see ad below.

Please register by clicking [<< here >>](#)

Bee Banter – Rose and Crown, Mayfield

August 30 Wed 7:30 pm-10:00 pm
Place: Rose & Crown, Mayfield Fletching Street TN20 6TE, Mayfield
No need to book; just come along and chat.

Bee Banter – Blue Anchor, Crowborough

September 27 Wed 7:30 pm-10:00 pm
Place: Blue Anchor, Crowborough

Beacon Road, Crowborough
No need to book; just come along and chat.

Refresher Session – Varroa control options

September 30 Sat 11:00 am-12:30 pm
Place: To be confirmed
[Please register at our web site.](#)

Refresher Session – Preparing honey for selling and for show entry

October 7 Sat 11:00 am-13:00 pm
Place: To be confirmed
[Please register at our web site.](#)

Refresher Session – Wax workshop

November 4 Sat 10:00 am - 16:00 pm
Place: To be confirmed
[Please register at our web site.](#)

HWBKA AGM and Honeyshow

November 19 Sun
Place: To be confirmed (just for your diary at the moment – details to follow . . .)

More events might be listed [on our web site](#) – check it regularly for the latest updates.

The President's Charity Raffle

We are running a raffle at the Summer BBQ to raise some money to send to the beekeeping charity 'Bees Abroad'.

Bees Abroad is a UK based charity that operates mainly in African countries to help people raise their standard of living through keeping bees.

The charity works with local community partners to train householders – mainly women – in best beekeeping practice, production, sale and marketing of hive products, and associated business skills.

This gives people the extra income to pay for things such as schooling, transport, tools and other essentials, in regions where there are few opportunities to earn a cash income.

The projects have other spin-off benefits such as greater resilience in hard times, increased independence for women, more co-operation between communities and improved tree cover and biodiversity.

Please would you donate suitable items for the raffle (beekeeping and non-beekeeping).

These can be delivered to Keith Obbard at Cherry Gardens Farm, TN3 9NY or ring Keith on 07941 578427 to arrange for collection from you prior to the event, which will be at the Summer BBQ at Sandy Infield's home in Fairwarp on Sunday 20th August."



Photo: Paul Lindström

The Bees in the Chimney

By Laurel Lindström

It began with a curious low level hum, like distant aircraft. It soon grew into a riot of sonic chaos. Bees were everywhere, flying randomly above the garden, uncertain of where they should be going, lost amongst the branches of trees and in the long silky grass. She watches them noting the irony of all this unhinged bewilderment. Another slow tear. Newly home from the wake in the pub and trying to rest. And hearing this buzz floating over the echo of her daughter's sobstrewn words honouring her father, thanking her mother, waving goodbye as she drove away back to her own world, her own normal. Later, on a wet pillow her mother's hearing unfamiliar notes to some distant song and sees small bee shadows moving across the walls.

Lying there in the dusty light Penny was numb, exhausted from the last few weeks of disease and death. She was caught in a tight mangle of sorrow and loss, of admin and organisation's dictats. Penny sniffed and watched the bees, confused and lost and bouncing crazily in the warm spring air. She got

up to go downstairs and put the kettle on. Passing a mirror she saw her ravaged face and stringy old neck with the gold necklace he had given her laying still and calm against the black of her dress. Hearing the humming start to subside a little she smiled and looked out at the hovering ladies also dressed in black and gold. It occurred to Penny that she should have been anxious about so many swirling bees. But there was too little left inside to muster fear of these fellow travellers.

The noise was shifting a semitone or so and looking out of the window Penny could see that the density of bees flying about seemed to be lessening. Warm spring sunshine dappled through the surrounding trees and the air felt thick and heavy with bees and with the quick falling pressure heralding an impending storm. They seemed benign these bees, more muddled than dangerous. She went outside to sit where she and Roger used to sit and plan what they'd do with the garden, what sort of dog they'd get. And then how long the disease would give them, how long before it would kill

him. And then what songs to sing at the service and where to have the wake. Shifting in her chair and dabbing at yet more tears, Penny could see that the bees appeared to be developing some sense of direction. No longer were their flight patterns random and untidy. They looked like they had somewhere to go. She sipped her tea and watched shrill blackbirds dashing home to their loved ones and wiped away another slow tear, chilling her cheek and marking a fresh stanza of sorrow.

Penny sipped her tea as she wandered to the end of the lawn, wondering where the bees were headed and how they knew where to go. It was getting chilly so she slung out her dregs and stood pondering how to start the process of whatever should happen next. Brushing teeth and an early night; emptying out the final drawers and cupboards; or deciding where Roger's ashes should go? Perhaps they should just go here, somewhere in the garden. Or be tossed into the small stream in the woods where they had planned to walk the dog, the dog that was now a

fiction. Was that too anonymous, too perfunctory? And the tears caress her sad chilled face to dry and fade with the light. The buzzing had stopped and there were no bees here at the end of the garden, turning back she wondered once again about the where and how. Gazing at the house, Penny saw at last the where. High on her roof she could see a dark clump and bees moving slowly down into the chimney.

The next morning Penny awoke early to their sound and the sight of bees bouncing past her bedroom window, dainty and elegant, floating on the wisps of morning light. Like her they were wearing the same clothes as yesterday, gold and black. But unlike Penny they were not tearstained and dishevelled, with the dregs of a bottle of red wine slowly evaporating on the bedside table. She sat up straighter and reached for her 'phone and opened the browser.

She was surprised the beekeeper was up so early and that he took her call, instead of letting it go straight to voicemail. "You're sure you have seen the cluster" Mr Westerham was saying. "Yes. They're in the chimney and I'm pretty sure they're planning to stay. There are more going in than coming out." The conversation was surreal not least because it was so very early in the morning and because Penny had nothing she had to do today. It was a welcome contrast to all the other conversations she had been having for so many weeks. This person knew nothing about Penny, Roger, nothing at all about their lives and Roger's illness and ending. The conversation about bees was the start of a fresh reality, instead of the grinding endlessness of an excess of it. The conversation about bees was twisting her mind into an unfamiliar shape, away from sadness and loss towards the mysterious ways of honeybees.

At the other end of the telephone Max Westerham noted the woman's tone, its matter of factness and its calm. More often people ringing him to come and deal with a swarm were worked up and did their best to hide it. He'd never met Penny Graham but

Max was sure he would like her. Something in that low steady voice, the near nonchalance as she described the scene for him. As she explained about the unwanted bees setting up home in her chimney, he did not know that most of her tone was shaped by events of the previous few weeks and days. It conveyed not so much calm as exhaustion. And she'd shown some presence of mind, lighting a fire. He liked that too. "It might work" he said as he considered the likelihood of the bees swarming once again to a less hostile space. Possible? Probable? Precedented? That was always Max's determinant for any decision. "Are you still there?" Penny said.

Momentarily confused Penny twisted a strand of honeysuckle stem, a straggler pulled from the vase on her kitchen table. She was still twisting it later as she watched him shading his eyes, watching the bees milling about at the top of the chimney. In silence they stood each waiting for the bees to take their next collective step, he intent on gauging what the bees intended, she in fascination, warm in the newness.

Since Roger's illness and rapid decline, Penny had not engaged with anyone who was not in some way related to disease, hospice and death. Even her neighbours could talk of nothing but the measuring of Roger's progress towards his final breath. Would it come in hours, days, weeks, surely not months they know. And roundeyed, softly sympathetic smiles and downward glances would mark the end of this day's enquiries. Awkward and embarrassed they all turn away from the garden fence. Penny would pace her way across the grass. With measured leaden steps she walked back to Roger, bundled up in his chair, eyes shut, drooling slightly, waiting. And she waited with him.

This swarmcatcher man spoke only of the bees and of their plans, so although he too was waiting he appeared not to be. Penny twisted some more of her twig enjoying the novelty of standing there with someone who didn't know about the illness, the death and the terrible journey she and Roger had shared to

reach an end. The beekeeper was smiling up into the light as the morning sun danced shadows on the wispy smoke rising from the chimney. "Do you think you could bank up that fire a little more?" As he looked down at Penny she was aware that this man was far taller than she had for some reason expected. His head silouetted against the light meant that all Penny could see of his face was a white bright smile. "Oh yes of course. I get it. More smoke less reason to stay?" she said. "Quite" he replied his eyes returning to the chimney. As she moved away she was aware of a sense of confusion and relieved that that was the end of the conversation.

Beside the fireplace there was still a lot of wood stacked and ready for the winter fires. It had been there for several months because Roger had been too frail to enjoy the secret places lost in the slow burning embers and the smoke made him cough. Two tankloads of oil had kept Roger warm throughout the winter so the logs remained, dusty and cobwebby, also waiting for their end. Now Penny loaded up the fire with logs and dried tinder to make as much smoke as she could, glancing out of the window from time to time to see what the beekeeper was doing. Between glances he disappeared. Penny stuck to her task. She moved mechanically, focused and precise, habitual after so many slow weeks of routine dedication and patience. For a moment she stayed still, staring at the blazing colours deep in the fire. No blacks or golds, discrete and individual but a full spectrum of shades dancing momentarily and fading into another new colour. Bright and alive and ever changing.

"Are you there?" she heard a tentative voice venturing to interrupt her reverie. Jumping up she tripped on a stray log and found herself on her knees at his feet as he entered the extremely warm and smokey room. Looking up Penny saw that he held a large box which he struggled to support with one hand and a knee, as he reached down to help her up. This gymnastic effort she noted, as she kicked away the stray

log. Breathless in the smoke, flushed and sweaty Penny helped him regain his balance. "They're clustering I think so we'll need a ladder and a large sheet if you've got one spare". Bemused Penny disappeared to find a sheet while he went back outside with his box, having explained neither what it was or why he was bringing it into the house.

Their balance he appreciated. The ease and elegant outstretch of hands. It didn't take much he mused but this was an unexpected thought coming into his mind; he was so very accustomed to women, to seduction. But this wasn't the same. This woman who says she lives alone now, brought something freighted and unsayable to her tone when he'd asked. "We've ... I've only been here a few months. Everything changes so fast, unexpectedly". He had thought she was talking about the bees. She returned. "Here's a king sized fitted sheet. Will that do? It's got elasticated corners. What do you plan to do with it?" "We'll use it to catch the bees," he answered "We? We, did you say?"

Back outside it was clear that the smoke was working. Gradually the bees were accumulating in a new clump on the fence, protecting their queen and awaiting instructions from scout bees, already out searching for new premises. Penny had made some tea and they sat in her two garden chairs in the centre of the lawn and in the middle of the bee mayhem swirling above their heads. She took Roger's chair and watched as Mr Westerham fiddled with the angle of the back of hers, his cup of tea placed carefully on the box at his side.

"What happens next?" "We wait until the swarm has settled into a clump and then we go in." Penny took a sip of tea and squirmed a little in Roger's chair. "And what does that involve?" Penny was watching as Max Westerham stood up and shook out her king sized sheet. "We gather the cluster in this box, using the sheet to catch any stray bees, especially the queen. Then we tip all the bees into the hive. We hope and pray that the queen is in the clump and that she stays in the hive. And then we wait


until dusk by when all of the bees should have gone into the hive. I can wait with you or I can come back later. Or we just leave them to it." "Mr Westerham I hope you don't mind, but I would be happier if you stayed to keep an eye on them please, just in case something goes wrong." He smiled over at her, eyes steady, and she looked away towards the growing clump of bees to hide the tear that came unbidden. It was the way he'd adjusted the seat back, or that he could reach for his own cup of tea. Peculiar details. And the conversation so unexpected, curiously novel.

His little lecture had begun: "You see the process is very logical and predictable to some extent. For whatever reason the bees decide to swarm. They send out scouts to find a new home for their queen and the bees that will go with her. In this case it was your chimney, and now that you've driven them out, they need to find somewhere else. In between them gathering for the journey and the scouts coming back with news, we must get them into the new hive. The queen will be at the heart of the cluster safe, warm and protected. The scent of her will encourage the others to come home. Then we wait for all the bees that might be out scouting or foraging to return and we can close the hive. This box is a nuc hive with frames ready for them. Then we relocate the bees to somewhere more suitable and hope that she'll start to lay and that the colony will thrive." He spoke with surprising ease and authority, with no gaps for interruptions or comments. Penny stared and listened, enthralled at the sound of this rich voice and its subject matter.

"How do you know so much about bees?" There followed another sonorous little speech in which he explained that it began as a hobby when he started the process of retiring from the bench. "KC, you see. I'm retired. Still a bit of a workaholic, but mostly with the bees. I've got just the four hives. No wife. No children. Read a lot, walk a lot and I still take on the occasional brief". He turned, beaming, watching for a familiar reaction. It's a terrible habit he

pondered. He noted the tired face and emptied eyes, and felt ashamed. Penny saw the broad smile, heard the voice, then turned towards the bees and made a decision. "If this works, could you leave the hive with me?"

Max sat very still for a moment and then slowly zipped up his beesuit and adjusted his headgear. "Perhaps. Let's see how it goes." Then quite suddenly he was on his feet, shaking out the sheet and looking up at the sky. "I think we're ready. No need for the ladder". Penny tried to smile as she replied "I'm really not sure about this being a two man job." But Max was already moving towards the fence where the bees were spread in an untidy sprawl. Watching this man, moving with such confidence, such self-assurance, so fit and strong, Penny could also see Roger's short frame and loving smile, turning back to laugh. The two images were superimposed and uncertain, quivering in the late afternoon light. Her tears made diamond sparkles across a pair of curiously interwoven scenes and she stayed still. Max was watching the bees. "As you like." And he strode bold and purposeful across the untidy grass and captured the swarm.

Within moments the sheetful of bees was being shaken down into the nuc hive. "Well, that was pretty undramatic" Penny said as she approached the beekeeper and his hive. "Now we just wait for all the bees to find their way home." "I had no idea it would be so simple" Penny said before adding "I generally have a glass of something about this time. Would you care to join me?" Max looked over his shoulder at his crumpled companion still in her black and gold outfit and briefly wondered why she was so formally dressed. But only briefly. "A glass of something about this time would be most welcome. Thank you." Then he added, "We can drink to fellow travellers." 

You can read more short stories by Laurel at her web site www.laurellindstrom.org

Summary of last HWBKA committee meeting

HWBKA now has a card reader to be used at events. We have decided to pay 45p per mile travel expense for speakers at events.

The membership is now 200 members. Five members have signed up for BBKA exams. Lorraine Patel has offered to run mock exams a couple of weeks before the actual exam. Jonathan Coote has offered a beginners session for members who have just started

beekeeping. It was suggested to use the Horsted apiary for this.

We need apiary assistants appointed. We also need more volunteers to help regularly in both apiaries with maintenance and honey extraction.

HWBKA will have a stand at the Crowborough Summer Fair, Saturday 15 July. Keith Obbard will organise our stand. Members are welcome to help man the stand. We also need someone

to look after and store all of the events items including the observation hive.

The next HWBKA Committee meeting will be on 20 September – you are welcome to suggest topics we should discuss. Just send an email to our secretary Holly Caetano Alves de Castro on:

the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com

HWBKA Committee 2022-2023

President: Keith Obbard (the.hwbka+president@gmail.com)

Chairman: Malcolm Wilkie (the.hwbka+chair@gmail.com)

Honorary Secretary: Holly Caetano Alves de Castro (the.hwbka+secretary@gmail.com)

Honorary Treasurer: Phil Edwards (the.hwbka+treasurer@gmail.com)

Magazine Editor and Vice Chairman: Paul Lindström (the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com)

Apiary Manager (Slab Castle): Keith Obbard

Apiary Manager (Horsted): Peter Coxon

Events Secretary: Sandy Infield (the.hwbka+events@gmail.com)

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Training & Education Manager: Malcolm Wilkie (the.hwbka+training@gmail.com)

AHAT Coordinator: Peter Coxon (the.hwbka+ahat@gmail.com)

Lecture Coordinator: Helen Chivers (the.hwbka+lecturecoordinator@gmail.com)

Acting web master: Peter Coxon (the.hwbka+webmaster@gmail.com)

Other useful contacts – National Bee Unit inspectors:

Regional Bee Inspector: Dan Etherington (Mobile: 07979 11 93 76 Email: daniel.etheridge@apha.gov.uk)

Seasonal Bee Inspector: Diane Steele (Mobile: 07775 11 94 52 Email: diane.steele@apha.gov.uk)

For more Seasonal Bee Inspectors see the National Bee Unit [web site](#).

Rent a honey extractor from HWBKA



The newer SAF Natura Tangential 4-frame extractor

The association has three extractors available for rent. One newer SAF NATURA tangential 4-frames extractor, one older tangential 3/6-frames extractor (pictured right). We also have a smaller 3-frames tangential, kindly donated by Don Bastick.

You can rent them two days at a time. The newer 4-frame tangential cost £10 for two days (and a £20 deposit)

The older 6- and 3-frames tangential extractors cost £5 for two days (and a £15 deposit).

Included in the rent is a honey bucket, a sieve and an uncapping fork, if required + instructions for use.

Note that the deposit will be forfeit if returned late, damaged or dirty. Severe damage/repairs will be charged at cost.



The older tangential 6-frame extractor

Two of the extractors are stored by Paul Lindström in Southover (outside Burwash). The older 6-frames tangential is stored by Lynne Curtis at Lynne's Organic Farm (just outside Crowborough). Bookings and inquiries through Paul, see contact info below.



For info, availability and booking call either 01435-88 35 65 (preferred). Or call or text mobile 07833-088 766. Or email: the.hwbka+apiarist@gmail.com • Address: The Clock Tower, Southover, Spring Lane, Burwash, TN19 7JB