

This is an article recycled from the April 2020 issue of The Apiarist because of recent discussions on the WhatsApp group



Peter Coxon has tried a method of cleaning hive components suggested to him by Steve Davies.

Take

1. One old 50-gallon oil drum and cut approximately in half (What else are you going to do with one of these things ... except maybe make a barbeque?) – Ensure all traces of the previous contents are removed.
 2. 10-15 gallons of water
 3. 4-6kg of washing soda
 4. Enough broken branches from the garden after the winter storms to light a small fire
 5. Add to this, hive frames, Queen excluders, crown boards, hive tools and whatever else takes your fancy.
 6. Boil these for 3-5 mins or so, or until tender.
 7. Season with a modicum of elbow grease, applied via the medium of a scrubbing brush
- ... and hey presto, not a new delicacy from Jamie Oliver, but lots of lovely clean equipment in record breaking time!



Everything gets a nice even tan from a thin layer of propolis evenly distributed all over the surfaces – perhaps beneficial for the bees?!

I normally have all my equipment cleaned in the autumn and ready for the new beekeeping season, but not this year ... being retired I just don't seem to have the time anymore.

Normally, I would have cleaned everything the 'traditional way', scraping, scratching and torching, which is OK for small quantities, if a bit tedious, and requiring a great deal more of that elbow grease.

However, our genius Apiary Manager Steve Davies introduced me to an alternative methodology last summer involving cleaning the frames using hot washing soda solution ... he even cleaned a few frames for me. He had in turn been introduced to this by Michael Myszyn, and Michael by his father before him etc.

I had been aware of this method previously, but always thought it a bit of a palaver ... until Steve showed me the light and how well it worked.

I had quite a lot of equipment to clean last week when the rain finally stopped for a while, so I thought "don't be so unadventurous Coxon ... give it a go" ... and 2hrs later I had 11 Queen excluders, 6 crown boards and 18 frames all cleaned. I reckon the 'traditional way' would have taken twice as long at least.

But what's most impressive about this method is just how clean you can get everything, especially the Queen excluders, which are always devilishly tricky little blighters to clean... all those little crevices and cracks where the baddies can hide out.

It even appears as though they all have a nice even tan from a thin layer of propolis now evenly distributed from the 'soup' all over the surfaces. One could imagine that might be beneficial for the bees ... or am I drifting off into the land of optimistic fantasy here?

Steve is somewhat more professional than I am and has invested in a gas ring and bought one of those outrageously expensive metal bins to use as his boiler. (Obviously embarrassed about all his extravagance, (when he now sees it in black and white) he tells me he has found that an old water tank is large enough to fit supers and brood frames in, even 14x12.)

Me, I'm too tight... but definitely a complete convert to the Davies/ Myszyn methodology... although it must be said the Coxon adaptation to the D-M protocol is more economical, carbon neutral, it only took me an hour or two to cut the drum in half and I didn't get burnt too badly trying to light a fire under an old oil drum. I must admit the idea of an old rectangular metal cold-water storage tank as an upgrade and that would take a 14x12 brood box has me little excited anyone got one? Am I mad? ... definitely but happy in my own little way.

Peter Coxon



Perhaps a more professional take is to invest in a gas ring and one of those outrageously expensive metal bins – at least that is what Steve has done.