



# What's Buzzing?

Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association Newsletter

July 2020

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## Welcome....

..... to the July edition of the MBBKA newsletter for 2020.

MBBKA members continued to enjoy Sean's series of live online presentations on queen rearing during June. Even the weather did not stop him, although beekeeping under a brolly is probably not the best idea on a regular basis! Big thanks to Sean, Ruth for operating the camera and Jon T for setting up and managing the sessions.

Sean is back again this month with a honey extraction session - at least he will be indoors! (See below).

Covid restrictions mean that we are still not able to meet in a group situation, although this will hopefully change as the year progresses. The Committee is already discussing options for safely delivering as much of the Winter programme as possible, and will keep you informed via the newsletter and email.

If there any beginners who go ahead and get bees this season, please consider full membership of the Association for the 3<sup>rd</sup> party insurance benefits this provides through BBKA, and don't forget to register your apiary on BeeBase. If you are unsure of anything when setting up your apiary please get in touch for some advice.

Another full and varied newsletter for you all to enjoy this month thanks to the contributions by the usual suspects. I will happily receive and include contributions from any one else, small 'space fillers', like the bee facts or bee quotes, would be especially welcome.

*Godfrey Clements, Secretary MBBKA*

## Next MBBKA Meeting

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July

## Sean Stephenson on Honey Extraction

Live on GoToMeeting commencing at 7pm (Helen will email the link)

# Moving Colonies *By Sean Stephenson*

One can be quite blasé about moving a colony away from an apiary, particularly if the move is only a few miles. At this time of year, I am moving a colony at least once a week between apiaries, be it for uniting colonies, moving to a mating area or just building up stocks in an apiary. The maximum distance between the apiaries is a 10 minute drive and all the hives have open mesh floors.

Usually I will close up the hive entrance about 6am, strap up the hive and place it in the back of the car. At the far end reverse the process, unstrap the hive, open the entrance and leave for a couple of days. Job done by 7am and home for coffee!

However, there are risks to moving colonies:

- Moving them a distance e.g. Milton Keynes to Aylesbury can cause the colony to overheat.
- Transporting the colony incorrectly can cause issues such as frame slap where the bees experience every turn or jolt of the transport vehicle
- Incorrect procedure at the destination can cause the bees to become disorientated, resulting in losses

The text book method of preparing, moving and delivering a colony can be summarised as follows:

## Day before the move, prepare the colony

- Ensure all the frames within the hive are tight and any space is filled with spare frames and/or dummy board(s)
- Remove the crown board and replace it with a travelling screen
- Strap the hive with two straps in parallel, ensure no movement between hive parts
- Place roof over travelling screen
- Night before the move or early in the morning of the move, when there are no flying bees
- Close the entrance to the hive, a suitable piece of foam held in place with duct tape will suffice



## Day of the move

- If the colony is to be moved later in the day place it in a cool shaded area so that it does not overheat
- Remove the roof before placing the hive in the transport
- Place a sponge soaked in water on the mesh of the travelling screen
- When placing in the transport ensure the hive is orientated so that the frames are in line with the direction of travel
- Fasten the hive in position

## Travelling

- Ensure that enough equipment and bee clothing is packed in case of emergencies
- If travelling a long distance stop regularly to top up the sponge with water or spray bees directly
- If possible, keep bees in the dark to save on stress

## Arrival at destination

- Place hive on stand
- Replace roof
- Open entrance
- Allow bees to re-orientate before removing the straps and replacing the travelling screen with a crown board, 24 hours is an ideal time frame.
- Once settled inspect colony and ensure frames correctly spaced

Not all these measures may be applicable to all colony moves but they should all be considered when planning a move.



## Old Fart in the Out Apiary

What a funny old month its been Very hot and sunny but, thankfully, some rain to save the lawns, allotments and bees.

I realised, early in the month, that the June gap had effectively started before the end of May. The late flourish of Spring flowers were actually producing very little nectar hence the bees at home were carrying water to soften stores left from the winter.

All my hives had wax cappings on and under the floors where the bees had been opening stores. After the rain the blackberries have started to bloom and there are large quantities of wet honey in brood boxes and supers.

I had been feeding my NUCs for several weeks and build up had been slow. Some NUCs were consuming 2 litres every five days but since the rain some have stopped taking syrup completely.

It had also been very noticeable how queens had curtailed their laying. Normally June would be the peak of numbers in the hive but some hives had little brood by the end of May but have started laying with a vengeance in the second half of June. I am continuing to feed the NUCs and hoping for a honey crop from the main hives in August.



I thought I would share a couple of pictures with you. I have some hives that were in a pair of superb wildflower meadows. Unfortunately, mismanagement and overgrazing has diminished the number of flower species. One corner of the field where the hives are has had some protection. When the sun is shining these flowers are a mass of different butterflies and bees. I took the pictures on Monday when the temperature was 13 degrees. No insects were to be seen. Compare this corner to the 'green deserts' we normally see.

Last week I was presented with a conundrum. I needed to collect 7 NUCs from Gloucester for the TherapBee project. With the gentle easing of lock-down I envisaged two journeys, about a week apart, to collect these NUCs. The suppliers wanted them collected at the same time for convenience. Seven NUCs in the car was not a good idea. Gordon came up with the solution. He has a Pick-up truck, albeit with an enclosed cargo area, and offered his help. Last Saturday we drove down to Gloucester looking like a couple of would be bank robbers to collect the NUCs.

At Maisemore the NUCs were waiting for us and I spoke to John, the owner whilst Gordon and another gentleman loaded, strapped down the bees, and opened all the windows in the back of the truck to ensure a free flow of air. John was telling me of the issues they had experienced with bringing the NUCs up to full size. He had a similar take on the weather and nectar flow issues.

We placed the NUCs in their positions at WVP early on Saturday afternoon and opened them up allowing them to fly for a couple of days. Monday evening Jim, Gordon and I met to transfer them to full size hives.

Gordon brought along his 9-year-old son Ewan who is very keen on the bees. He smoked the NUCs, spotted queens and generally fetched frames, lids etc. One NUC had vast numbers of bees outside, presumably due to the heat. They were also a little irascible. Ewan was asked to cool and calm them using the water spray which he duly did. He also managed to cool Jim and Gordon. I did envy them!!



I was really struck by how competent and knowledgeable Ewan is. This is the age when we need to encourage young people to take up beekeeping. It made me think that Saturday or Sunday morning short courses for young people might be a popular thing. I would like to know what others think.

Have you noticed that there are fewer bumblebees around this year? I have had fewer calls regarding bumbles to the swarm-line, and there are certainly less bumbles around at home. There have also been fewer swarm calls to the swarm-line this year and no days with more than three and some weeks with none at all. I have ascribed this to better bee-keeping by our members and more members having time for their bees during lock-down. I am, however, wondering if the wet winter and dry weather this Spring have had a detrimental effect on bumblebee numbers.

Tasks for July.

I advise, bearing in mind my previous observations, continued monitoring for queen cells for the next couple of weeks. Also be on the lookout for signs of disease. Add supers if needed. Remember the 80% rule. If eight brood frames are covered in brood and bees then take action. If eight super frames are drawn and filling with honey add another super. Don't be tempted to remove large quantities of honey until you are sure that the bees are not going to need it. Wet, colder weather often occurs in July and August.

A few years ago, a friend rang me to say he had 3 full supers on each hive and could he borrow my extractor when he returned from holiday. On returning from holiday he rang to ask where his honey had gone. We had 2 weeks of 'English Summer' whilst he was abroad.

*Old Fart in the Out Apiary (aka Brian Bush)*

## Bees in the News



The BBC website reported on some recent research that revealed queen honey bees 'toot and quack'. The story, along with a clip of the sounds can be found [here](#).

It also ran a story about American beekeepers who are struggling to sell their honey, despite the price of a jar increasing quite significantly - read more [here](#).

## Bee Quotes

*'The hum of bees is the voice of the garden'*  
Elizabeth Lawrence

*'Listen to the bees and let them guide you'*  
Brother Adam

*'A bee is an exquisite chemist'*  
Royal Beekeeper to Charles II

*'Bees do have a smell, you know, and if they don't they should, for their feet are dusted with spices from a million flowers.'*

- Ray Bradbury, Dandelion Wine

*'The only reason for being a bee that I know of is to make honey... And the only reason for making honey is so I can eat it'*

Winnie the Pooh

## Bee Swarm Aware (it could still happen!)



Bees swarm because of space issues; space to lay, space to put down stores.

Every frame of sealed brood will produce approximately 2½ frames of adult bees, make sure there is enough space in the hive for the adults.

If there are bees on every frame add a box to give the bees space.

If you wait for 9 frames of brood before adding the 1st super the bees will swarm, bees plan ahead to swarm.



Well here we are. The other side of the “Swarming Season “and I’m sure there’s more of this to come. A lot of changes taking place and a great shame these could not be shared at face to face training sessions with our newer Beekeeping colleagues.

We have a total of 13 Colonies at the Apiary and this is an update on what’s been happening since last time. Yes Thursdays is my Inspection day, and the weather has been tricky at times..... so a day before, or a day or so after has been the norm trying to fit it all in while dodging the downpours and showers.

#### **Hive No 5**

Recall I made a split with unmarked queen to Nuc. She swarmed out of nuc sometimes in following two days. Well No 5 now has a new large brown queen laying well and is now almost back up to full strength. After a few weeks from her first laying and making sure this time I did have the pens, COT, and queen cages about my person! she’s now marked blue. These temperatures play havoc with marking pens and glad I tested it first because on first press an absolute cascade of blue came out and would have drowned her if nothing else!

#### **Hive 9 -14 x 12**

They swarmed leaving 2 Queen cells one open one closed so left both . We later found a large black queen dead in cell but perfectly formed. The new Queen in there is again Brown and marked blue a few weeks after developing a few frames with a decent capped brood pattern on. We are easing out some older and damaged frames and gradually replacing with new foundation.

#### **Hive 7 – 14 x 12**

We marked the Queen in here early on and made a split soon after with her, brood, bees and stores and a frame of sterilised comb into a Poly nuc with a 14 x 12 adaptor. In the original colony, it took a few weeks from finding an open queen cell to find those circular patches of new eggs and very young larvae on the centre frames where the led torch come in useful. The colony is now developing well with good brood patterns stores and temper and another new Queen marked blue

#### **Hive No 11.**

This is the one that swarmed while I was working on colony next to it. I dropped Queen in shed looking for queen cage and she flew off ....who knows where! Well because I did pick her off and she did not go back to

the hive we only lost a few bees to the “swarm “. The next day there were a few less. Queen cells were raised, and we left two open charged cells in place. Yes, nature's wonder occurred a few weeks later and we have another new laying queen in there as well also marked blue. In Friday's heat at about 25° C at 10 o'clock am they were not very nice. I'm hoping it's not a permanent temper trait

### **Hive 2**

We did arrange this as a Demaree earlier and soon had queen cells in frames of the top box. We split 4 frames with single open charged queen cells evenly into 2 nucs with stores etc. We reunited remaining bees to bottom box with original red Queen and this is now expanding on new foundation covering 6 frames. She's still laying well too!

The two nucs H 5 and N 6 each developed good looking queen cells, you would say are textbook. However, at yesterday's inspection H 5 cells were still sealed but with nothing inside!! The other may have a new queen in but no signs yet of a lay pattern.

### **Hives No 4 , 6 and 13**

These are all expanding after being fed through the June Gap and are filling out nicely. All these are of excellent temper and 13 has remarked Queen as original green spot had all but disappeared.

### **Hives No 1 and No 3**

Both have new this years Queen now marked but unclipped and I know Sean makes it look so easy but I need to practice on a few drones so we don't get wide eyed and legless doing this .

### **Hive No 12**

This one has another red Queen and is back out to full strength with a super just fitted

### **Hive No 10 and No 8**

These two came from Ted Kirby of NBBKA and have been both split to poly nuc N2 and N3 . Both original colonies now have new laying queens in with frames of eggs, young larvae and few capped brood at present but development signs are good in both. They have been re hived carefully to our boxes and Teds Woodwork has been returned.

We have 5 full spring supers, and these are stored sealed and ventilated at the Apiary for extraction soon. We also completed 6 new dummy boards, with a few more to finish off, as some hives did not have one.

One of our challenges was to provide our New Beekeeper's with motivation and Knowledge and Skills training in these difficult circumstances . We were able to provide them with four training videos of about 30 minutes each that they can access via their own folder via Dropbox for independent viewing. They were made under the headline title of “The Apiary Sessions” and consisted of:-

No 1 - Clothing - Equipment – Skills

No 2 - Hive or Colony Inspection

No3 – Hive or Colony Health Inspection

No4 – Health Inspection Reference guide.

Many thanks to our camera man Tony “Shoot” Bishton for his sterling work behind the lens to help complete these.

Let's look forward to times when we can again assemble at our Apiary for Practical hands on training sessions

*Kevin, Apiary Manager*

# Acetic Acid Sterilisation of Frames *by Kevin Crangles*

One of the most valuable items that honeybees produce is drawn comb on the frame. It basically comes in the two formats for hive use as Brood and Super frames with drawn comb on, irrespective of the type of frame hive we may have. When cleaning up after colonies have collapsed, we may find decent comb on the brood frames and overwintered super frames that can be reused if we can sterilise it effectively. Additionally, we may have super frames from older stored supers already cleaned by bees but in need of sterilisation before adding into new season supers. The sterilisation agent must be strong enough to deal with surface residues of infectious spores, pathogens and pests' eggs or larvae some of which can remain potentially active for extended periods of time.

Old comb that is very darkened by use, with damaged wires or has holes chewed in it is best dealt with by removal for melting down, cleaning and sterilising frames in boiling soda water solution and repairing using new foundation.

Acetic Acid is effective when sterilising frames from hives where Nosema, Chalkbrood or Wax moth have been a confirmed infestation. It should be at least 80% acetic acid or higher to be effective.

**Note: Acetic Acid of the required strength is extremely corrosive in both liquid and vapour forms. It requires the correct PPE to be available for the handling of acid pouring and filling stage and final sealing of the sterilisation stack of boxes. It must also be used when opening a stack of boxes at the end of the sterilisation period and recovery of any unused liquid Acetic Acid.**

## Equipment

1. **Acetic Acid** x 1 litre (available in various quantity sizes )
2. **Old Brood and Super box** - Or boxes with metal runners, castellated spacers removed or newer ones with metal parts coated with Vaseline. All external top and bottom edges should be flat and undamaged. No holes gaps or cracks in any joints or sidewalls. Painted with masonry paint. **Fig 1**
3. **Closing boards** x 2 - 12mm plywood 46cm x 46 cm (for National boxes) Painted with masonry paint
4. **Eke 90/100 mm** x 1 or old empty super box with metal runners, castellated spacers removed or newer ones with metal parts coated with Vaseline. All external top and bottom edges should be flat and undamaged. No holes gaps or cracks in any joints or sidewalls. Painted with masonry paint
5. **Roof** 100mm or 150mm x 1
6. **Travel Screen** or Open mesh floor with closing entrance blocks x 1. **Fig 2**



Fig 1



Fig 2

7. **Shallow plastic/ceramic dishes** or containers x 2 or x 4
8. **Sealing Paste** or adhesive tape
9. **Old plastic ketchup / mayonnaise bottles with dispenser nozzle and cap**
10. **Hive Stand** or blocks to raise off ground x 1
11. **Personal Protective Equipment. Fig 3**
  - Nose and mouth reusable Organic Vapour Respirator x 1
  - Safety Goggles x 1 pair
  - Nitrile Gloves -Acid resistant x 1 pair



**Fig 3**

**12. Sealing paste recipe**

- a. 200 gm Plain flour
- b. 2 x tsp cooking oil
- c. 2 x tsp mustard
- d. Mix with Water added carefully a little at a time and beat to give a thick spreadable paste which will hold its shape while flexible. Fill Ketchup/ Mayo bottle. **Fig 4**



**Fig 4**

**Method - Sterilisation**

Scrape clean of all propolis and wax from all frame top bars side bars and bottom bars.

Place frames in boxes with suitable gap 3mm to 4 mm between frames

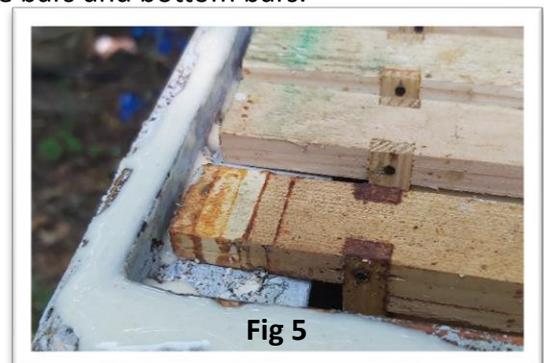
Place closing board 1 on stand and apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all edges.

Place lower brood box 1 with frames on paste bead .

Apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all top edges of brood box .

Place next brood box 2 with frames on paste bead.

Apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all top edges of brood box. Fig 5



**Fig 5**

Place next super box 3 with frames on paste bead

Apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all top edges of super box.

Place next super box 4 with frames on paste bead

Apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all top edges of super box.

Place 90 mm/100mm Eke on paste bead and place 4 plastic dish containers on top of frames.

Apply continuous 5mm bead of sealing paste 5mm in from all top edges of Eke .

Using PPE Respirator Mask, Safety glasses and Nitrile gloves  
Open Acetic and Fill each container with 120ml of Acetic Acid  
Fig 6

Place closing board 2 on top Eke and place Roof on top of closing board .

Leave sealed box stack for 7 days. Ensure outward facing boxes have adequate warning sign. Fig 7

#### **Opening and Airing boxes after 7 days**

Using PPE Respirator Mask, Safety glasses and Nitrile gloves  
remove roof and top closing board using hive tool to break  
paste seal edge. Keep PPE on

Return any Acetic Acid in plastic dishes to original bottle and  
close with sealed lid . Remove all boxes and closing boards.



Fig 6

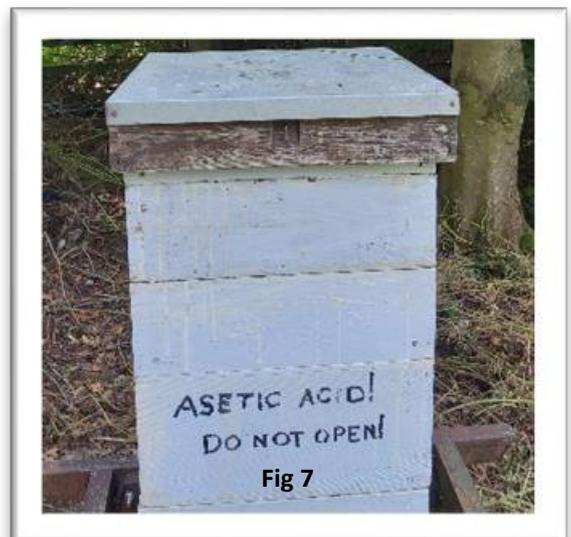


Fig 7

## **Natural Comb**

A few years ago, a beekeeper (not from MBBKA!) arranged to place a hive on a piece of land, then disappeared. The landowner knows Dorrie, and contacted her this year when she noticed it had swarmed - probably not for the first time, as it was a small cast. This was duly re-homed in a nuc, and is progressing slowly but surely.

The original hive was in a poor state of repair. The brood box had rotten frames containing almost black wax, full of honey, with nowhere for the queen to lay. The roof could only be removed attached to the super, as there had been no crownboard above the super, and there was no evidence of any frames in there either!



The bees did what bees do naturally, and built their own comb, in an artistic design, but which still demonstrates effective beespace. Considering how long this colony has been 'wild', there is no obvious signs of disease and the girls are very well tempered.

# Food for Pollinators: Quantifying the Nectar and Pollen Resources of Urban Flower Meadows

Further to Sean's articles regarding plants for bees, this piece of research was published in 2016. It is open access, so you can read the whole paper, not just the abstract, and is downloadable as a PDF document. It is quite scientific and technical in parts, but if you are looking to establish a flower meadow or encourage pollinators in your garden, this may give you some ideas of what to plant. Access the research [here](#).

## For Sale

EH Taylor Nine frame radial manual extractor. Including tangential cage. Good quality and in very good condition. £300.00  
I would appreciate no bargaining as proceeds will go to cancer relief.

Gill Peacock 07814 791656



## Bee Amazed #1



A worker bee weighs around 80 mg and can carry around 70 mg of nectar.

## Phacelia by Sean Stephenson



Phacelia is a member of the Boraginaceae family of plants, which include Forget-me-not, Comfrey, Green Alkanet, Vipers Bugloss and of course Borage. The plants are an important source of forage for pollinators,

successively flowering over a long period, making them attractive to Bees.

Phacelia, Comfrey and Borage all have racemes of flowers where successive flowers emerge from the same stem. Boraginaceae plants are generally recognisable by their bristly stems and simple open flowers. The plants are favoured by gardeners as a great source of green manure.

Phacelia is quick growing and used in some countries as an intermediate crop to enhance the soil.

## FERA videos on You Tube

The Food and Environment Research Agency have released three videos for beekeepers, which can be viewed on You Tube.

The first is about the biology of the Asian Hornet, and can be accessed [here](#).

The second video explains what DEFRA and the NBU have learnt about the genetics of the Asian Hornets that have been found in the UK, and can be found [here](#).

The final video covers European Foul Brood, - this can be viewed [here](#).

## Bee Helpful



Kevin would appreciate some assistance with frame building from time to time. If you are able to put a few together and live reasonably close to the Association apiary, please send Kevin an email so that he can arrange provision of the necessary frames and foundation..

[apiary@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:apiary@mbbka.org.uk)

## Jobs for July

- Undertake regular weekly inspections. Have supers ready to add as necessary, as July is usually the best 'honey month'.
- The colony could still swarm, check carefully for queen cells.
- Now is the latest time to remove any old brood frames and replace with foundation so that the bees have time to draw comb for winter stores.
- Wasps may start to investigate hives by the end of the month - reduce the size of the entrance if necessary.
- Make sure honey buckets are clean and have lids that fit, order jars if required.
- Monitor natural varroa drop and plan treatments if required.
- Write on your record sheets!



## Apiary Sites

The Association is sometimes approached by landowners who are keen to accommodate bees on their property, but who do not want to become beekeepers themselves.

If you have some beekeeping experience and are looking for an out apiary, (and preferably undertaken the Basic Assessment), have a chat with John Dadswell, as he keeps a list of all the sites that have been offered.



## Are You Registered?

Registering your hives on BeeBase is free. BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. The National Bee Unit website provides a wide range of apicultural information for beekeepers to help keep their colonies healthy and productive. It provides a wide range of beekeeping information, such as the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, pests and diseases information which includes their recognition and control, publications, advisory leaflets and key contacts. Read more and record your colonies at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com>

# For Sale



Gabled Roof £30



Flat Roof



Crown Board



Super £16



Excluder



Brood Box



Brood Box 14x12 £33



Open Mesh Floor



Stand £20

All prices are approximate due to price variation in WRC. All items assembled using waterproof glue and stainless steel screws.

Contact Brian at

[brian.bush@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.bush@btinternet.com) or

phone 07767304067



I also have some hive stands for sale

Single as pictured £17.50

Double £25

Phone or text Brian on 07767304067

## Sean's Equipment Price List 2020

Foundation	Price
Brood 14x12 wired 10 sheets	17.50
Brood National wired 10 sheets	10.50
Super, wired, 10 sheets	6.70
Super, unwired, 10 sheets	5.50
Frames (2nds)	
14x12 per 10	11.50
DN4/5 per 10	10.00
SN1 per 10	8.00
Hive Parts	
National Brood Box	30.00
National Super	20.00
Open Mesh Floor (pine)	21.00
Framed Queen Excluder	17.00
Other Hive parts/equipment	On request

I always keep spare stock of foundation, frames and hive parts. The foundation is particularly well priced. I may have other pieces of equipment available, Contact Sean Stephenson, [sean@wendover.co.uk](mailto:sean@wendover.co.uk) or 07867787800

<b>MBBKA Committee 2019-20</b>		
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Membership Secretary	Jonathan Palmer	<a href="mailto:membership@mbbka.org.uk">membership@mbbka.org.uk</a>
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Honey Show Secretary	Ruth Stephenson	<a href="mailto:honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk">honeyshow@mbbka.org.uk</a>
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Programme Secretary	Liz Tice	
Librarian/Webmaster	Jon Theobald	<a href="mailto:library@mbbka.org.uk">library@mbbka.org.uk</a>
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Committee Member	Paul Spencer	
Committee Member	Sarah Turner	

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Newsletter: Godfrey Clements - items for inclusion to [secretary@mbbka.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mbbka.org.uk)

Website: <https://mbbka.org.uk/>