



AWARD

April's winter meeting was presented by Ian Jobson, giving a well received talk about how much he has gained from tackling the beekeeping modules. Ian told Alnwickdots - *"I've learnt so much more about the behaviour, lifestyle, biology and management of honey bees, by doing the modules, and would recommend them to anyone with an interest in keeping bees. Beekeeping gets more fascinating the more you learn and can quickly become as passion!"*

Ian was also on the receiving end of his own presentation, certificates for Module 5 "Anatomy & Biology" and Microscopy. Sue Richardson snapped him being awarded his certificate by Glyn Scott. He still has to pass module 8 and the Advanced husbandry assessment to be a master beekeeper... watch this space!

APIARY PREPARATION DAY

Just a note to thank all who came to the Apiary-Preparation Day on Saturday the 22 April. Everyone worked really hard and much was achieved. By the end of the morning the apiary had new brood-boxes constructed, frames assembled, hive part cleaned and scorched, sheds painted and grass cut. Afterwards - a feast of savoury scones, quiche and cakes!

-Glyn Scott



BEEES IN THE NEWS

Bees and beekeeping seems to make the news regularly. Here's a few links to some recent articles. Subjects include wax moth larvae helping wage war on plastic bags, counterfeit flow-hives (and some impressive stats about crowdfunding), beekeeping in schools, and some impressive street bees. Although some of these were published in April, none appeared on the first. Unless you know otherwise!

<http://louismasai.com/project/bee-16/> | <http://louismasai.com/project/save-the-bees/> | <http://louismasai.com/project/honey-bee-london/> | <http://louismasai.com/project/bumble-bee-taunton/> | <http://www.endoftheline.co/save-bees-art-project-louis-masai-jim-vision/> | <http://www.smh.com.au/small-business/entrepreneur-flow-hive-stung-by-chinese-ripoffs-20170411-gviygz.html> | <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2017/mar/03/creating-a-buzz-how-uk-schools-are-embracing-beekeeping> | http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-39694553?ocid=wsnews.chat-apps.in-app-msg.whatsapp.trial.link1_.avin

Links may not work on some mobile devices - May require copy & paste into browser.





THE ALNWICK GARDENER

Peter Edge, waxes lyrical about bees in the context of the lauded landscape of Alnwick Garden.

It's well known that gardens can be a great habitat for bees and so the Alnwick Garden ought to be and is a great place to keep bees. As well as the floral ornamental gardens we also have a fruits and vegetable education garden, our 'roots and shoots garden'. This is open to the public yet hidden within an old walled area.

We use this garden to teach children about the benefits of gardening as part of a healthy lifestyle. Children come in, grow their fruits and veg, harvest and eat their produce as well as have fun. They learn that their food comes from the soil and not just the supermarket. Where growing fruit and vegetables it does make sense to keep bees- they are fascinating and for not much extra space we can harvest the extra crop of honey. More importantly they pollinate and fertilise the fruits. We explain to our groups that without them our diet would be much more impoverished. We also show them that the lovely blossom on the trees in spring becomes the tasty fruits of autumn.

The children do activities while they are here. They get to pot on bee friendly plants or herbs and take them away with them as well as tasting the honey. From May onwards, through the summer, we also have an observation hive where it's possible to see the bees safely behind glass, within a bee hut. For the general public it's possible to find the Queen, see wax being made and pollen being brought, feel the warmth of bees behind glass and hear their buzz.

There are always challenges when dealing with our observation hive in a public environment. We have to be careful to have bees with a good temperament and bee management, particularly swarm control, can be very difficult in a hive which can't be opened up or moved around like others can be!

The roots and shoots garden is open to the public and is within walking distance of the town. To arrive walk from Greenwell road into the garden and turn left before the castle gate. In reality a garden ticket is not necessary as nobody would ever check you. Many visitors consider this garden to be more interesting than the main ornamental garden.

As part of this project we advertise ADBKA and any of the gardeners encourage local visitors interested in beekeeping to get in touch with the association. Hopefully we can continue to inspire and educate the gardening public into beekeeping.

We are indebted to Gerry Parkin to help with setting up the project and to ADBKA for their support. - Peter Edge





COOK'S CORNER

Glyn Scott came across some recipes incorporating honey in a copy of Country Smallholding magazine dated March 2003. They're included below. (Glyn: I call your 2003 magazine and raise you a Country Living dated July 1998 that's on my kitchen windowsill - ed.)

HONEY CAKE

Different types of honey subtly change the flavour of this moist cake

300g heather honey
75g butter
350g wholemeal flour
2 teaspoons mixed spice
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
50g candied orange peel, chopped finely
3 eggs
3 tablespoons milk
Finely grated zest of 1 orange



Keep 4 tablespoons honey for glazing and heat the rest in a small pan with the butter until just melted. Sift the flour, spice and soda into a large bowl and stir in the candied peel. Beat the eggs, milk and orange zest and add to the dry ingredients with the cooled honey mixture. Beat until well mixed and pour into a greased, lined 20cm round deep cake tin. Bake for about 1 ¼ hours at gas 3/170°C/325°F until cooked through. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes then turn out onto a rack. Prick the top of the cake with a skewer or fork and brush with reserved honey while the cake is still warm. When cold, wrap in greaseproof paper or baking parchment and keep in an airtight tin. Keep for a few days before eating to allow flavours to develop.

HONEY, RAISIN & WALNUT LOAF

50g butter, melted
125g clear honey
125g light muscavado sugar
300g plain flour
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 teaspoon ground mixed spice
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
110g walnuts, chopped
50g raisins
1 egg
150ml milk

Stir together the melted butter, honey and sugar, mixing well. Sift the dry ingredients into a mixing bowl and stir in the nuts and raisins. Beat the egg with the milk and beat into the honey mixture. Pour this into the flour and beat well until smooth. Pour into a greased 1lb loaf tin and bake for 1 to 1 ¼ hours gas 4/180°C/350°F until cooked through. Cool in the tin for 5 minutes then turn out onto a rack to cool. Serve sliced with butter.





PAIN D'EPICE

A chewy French spiced gingerbread.

The recipe may take more or less than the 350g flour specified. Candied peel can also be added or used to decorate, along with nuts or angelica when glazing. It suggests a strong flavoured honey like chestnut or heather (if you would use such a thing to bake with!)

350g Plain Flour

400g dark strong flavoured honey

3 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch ground cloves

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground aniseed (optional)

1 teaspoon grated orange or lemon zest (optional)

1 tablespoon milk to glaze



Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Heat the honey in a small pan, bring to the boil, skimming any foam off with a spoon. Pour the hot honey into the flour and mix to a thick paste (some flours are more absorbent than others so you may need more honey or flour). Place the paste on greased cling film, wrap tightly and leave at room temperature for 1 to 1 ½ hours. Unwrap the paste, which should now be more like dough. Sprinkle the baking powder over a clean worktop and place the paste on this. Knead for a few minutes until the baking powder is mixed in. Repeat the process with the spices and zest and knead until well mixed in. Press into a greased fancy tin or mould to a shape you like.

Bake for 20-45 mins at gas 5/190°C/375°F until golden brown and hollow sounding when tapped on top. Exact cooking time will depend on the depth of the tin or mould. Turn off the oven and remove the gingerbread. Brush with milk and return to the warm oven for a few minutes to set the glaze.

SHOP!

The apiary shop will be open from 10:00am until 12 noon on Saturday mornings until 22nd July, for the sale of frames and wax, some hive parts when available, and sundry other beekeeping tools. Apiguard is in stock if you need to treat for varroa (recommended without supers to avoid tainting honey). Frames, wax and Apiguard are always available, but other stock can vary.

A Saturday morning visit to the apiary is worthwhile as there's lots going on and people to see, but if you intend coming on spec for 'other stock', use the form on the website to specify frames and wax needs or drop me an email beforehand to check what's in and avoid disappointment.

I'm looking for volunteer shopkeepers too, so if you have an inner Arkwright locked away in a temperamental till, and can spare some time on the odd Saturday morning, please get in touch!

- Susan Hathaway

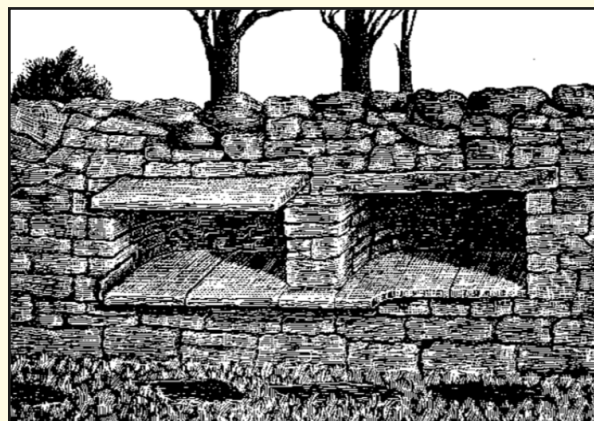




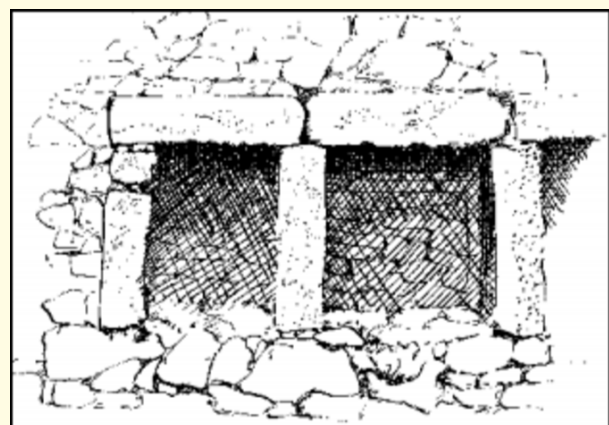
BEE BOLES

General Information

Until the late 1800s bees were kept in straw skeps, mostly on benches in the open, or on a shelf in an open-fronted shelter. But in wetter and windier parts of Britain, some beekeepers kept them in bee boles. These are recesses built in a wall specifically for housing skeps, usually around 45cm by 45cm by 35cm deep, although there is considerable variation. A few bee boles are wide enough to hold two or three skeps. The opening is rectangular, or may have a curved or pointed arch at the top.



A set of bee boles (those built into one wall) usually contained from three to six recesses although larger sets are known. Bee boles have survived in walls dated to every century from the 1100s to the 1800s.



Here's a link to an interesting article about bee boles in North Yorkshire: <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/looking-after/our-projects/bee-bole-conservation-project> -If you spot any in Northumberland, please register them using the link to the left!

Bee boles were built mostly in walls of stone, but where stone was not the common building material (e.g. Kent), they were made in brick walls. The wall often bounded a garden or orchard. The bee boles usually faced south to south-east so that the bees would be warmed by the morning sun. The base of the bee boles was often two to three feet from the ground, thus at a convenient height for working, although skeps of bees were rarely handled except when the honeycombs were harvested.



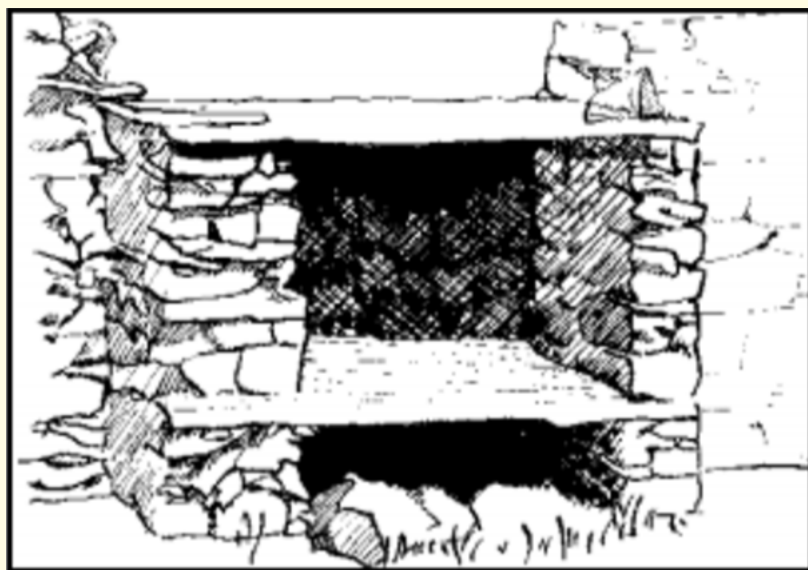
The skeps sometimes stood on a flat stone slab with a projecting lip to provide a landing place for the bees. The top could also be a slab. Where large stones were not available, arches or pointed roofs could be formed. Frequently the roof and base had overhangs to provide additional protection. A few examples of styles are shown in this leaflet.

Location of Bee Boles

Bee boles seem to have been a speciality in Britain, where over 1280 sets have been recorded. If you know of any bee boles, or other structures that may have been used for housing bees, please record them for the IBRA Bee Boles Register using the digital form below

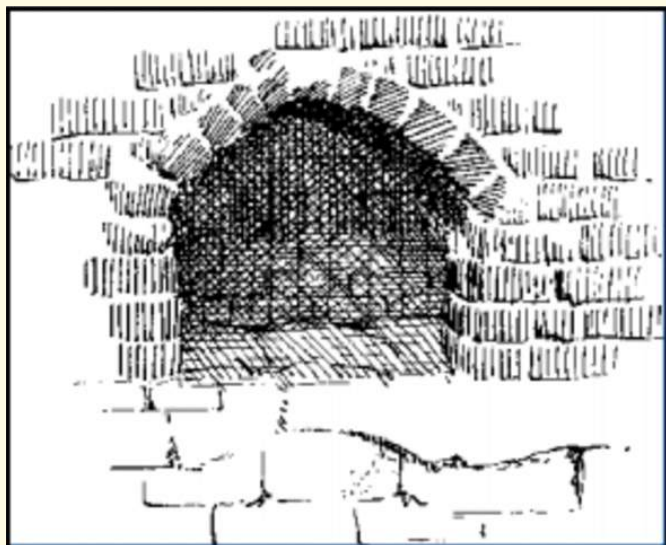
http://ibra.beeboles.org.uk/search_choose.php





Building or repairing bee boles

Those who have bee boles within walls on their property are encouraged to preserve these structures. Dry stone wallers are interested in projects involving the repair or construction of any unusual features. Some beekeepers have recently commissioned boles following traditional designs, although the detailed construction is left to the craftsman's inspiration, local style and available material.



COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

Peter Edge has suggested that the Alnwick Education Garden with the hives would be ideal for teaching schools about beekeeping.

Using the garden as a venue, school staff can bring students for afternoon sessions to learn with the hives.

Please get in touch with the committee via any of the emails on the website, or using Lisa Hamlin's email from one of her regular circulars. At this stage we are looking for some volunteers who are able to offer a few hours on school day afternoons to pass on the craft of beekeeping to the next generation.

When we have an idea of who is available, we can look at details like days and times, and get together with Peter to make detailed plans.

- Susan Hathaway

