

The Essex Beekeeper

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Essex Beekeepers' Association
www.ebka.org

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Queen introduction at Coggeshall Grange Barn with Clive de Bruyn

by Maria Little, Braintree Division

Braintree division beekeepers always try to include interesting locations for summer apiary meetings and the latest was no exception when we were invited to the impressive medieval Grange Barn at Coggeshall.



Grange Barn, Coggeshall

On arrival we were given a very interesting talk on the history of the 13thC barn and its painstaking restoration from total dereliction to the magnificent vaulted-roofed building it is again.

After a little time to look around, we were joined by renowned beekeeping expert, Clive de Bruyn, for an introductory talk about the topic of the afternoon: requeening the resident beehives.

The hives are some 100m from the barn, which is open to the public every day. Because of the proximity, the onus is on manager Brian Grigg to keep good-tempered, non-following bees. This had proven to be a problem recently, with two or three visitors having been stung, and consequently Clive's advice sought on requeening.

Clive began the session with an introductory talk on best practices in Queen Introduction. It wasn't a prescriptive list of Do's and Don'ts but, rather, a recommendation of tried and tested methods which can help to promote queen acceptance

Firstly, Clive talked through some basic questions:

What are our reasons for requeening a colony? In this particular case it was to introduce a better-tempered strain but there are many other reasons, e.g., to improve health where a stock is prone to chalkbrood or nosema, or to introduce a less 'swarmy' strain

Where should we get a queen? Clive advocates queens raised from locally-adapted stocks as these are likely to be genetically suited to the forage/weather conditions in the part of the world where they will be living. If you have a good stock and are able to raise your own, so much the better. Otherwise, try to buy from a reputable queen-rearer with stocks which flourish locally and will over-winter well.

Be mindful that bees bought in from other countries may not only be less suited to the local climate but can also increase the possibility of bringing with them pests, which are not endemic here.



Uniting a mini-nuc with the main colony

Having verified that the hive is definitely queenless (disastrous for the new queen otherwise, not to mention the possible £50 paid for her), how long should the beekeeper wait before requeening?

As little time as possible, says Clive, and preferably immediately if a queen is available. This is when the bees will be most receptive to accepting her.

What if a queen is ordered and arrives by post during a period of bad weather? Should the beekeeper hold off introduction?

Unless conditions are abysmally poor, Clive advises to proceed as planned but with sensible caution, i.e., don't just run the queen in at the entrance (even if this has had the luck to work previously in

the middle of a honey flow). On the day of our visit, we had recently had a run of record high temperatures and were awaiting predicted thunderstorms: not usually conducive to good bee temperament but all the more reason to take care to optimise conditions.

There are a variety of cages available to protect the new queen until the colony accepts her, ranging from ‘hair curler’ types to bamboo, plastic or the popular wire butler cage, amongst others. The choice is up to the beekeeper: they can all work as long as the bees don’t have immediate full access to the queen, whilst still allowing free feeding through the mesh. Newspaper secured with an elastic band is an easy and effective way of closing off the end of a butler cage although Clive advocates ‘Goode’s paste’, a fondant made of icing sugar mixed with honey.

After the talk we went out to the apiary to see the theory in practice.

Two hives needed requeening, enabling Clive to demonstrate two different methods of introduction with queens he had brought to the apiary in mini mating nucs.

The first queen was transferred from her nuc into a butler cage which was then sealed with a nominal amount of Goode’s paste, ready to go into her new hive. The old queen was found quite quickly and removed to a spare cage. Clive advocates keeping the old queen as a safety measure until the new one has been fully accepted rather than dispatching her immediately with possible regret - in this instance she was put into the newly-vacated mininuc. The new queen’s cage was then lightly wedged between the top bars of two frames of brood and the hive closed up.

The second introduction was made by uniting the queen-right mininuc colony to the hive over newspaper. In this hive, the old queen had been found at the previous inspection and was confined in a butler cage on top of the super, where the bees had been able to feed her and could benefit from her continued pheromones, hopefully minimising the chances of queen cells being raised in the brood below. After removing the old queen, a specially adapted

crown board was placed over the brood box, this board having a central square cut-out. The mini-nuc was then inverted centrally over the cut-out with newspaper between: in the time it would take the bees to chew through the paper, the scents of the mini and main colonies would have mixed, and the new queen hopefully made her way to the brood frames below. The nuc was protected by an empty super and this hive also closed up.

Clive advised that the hives should not be opened for at least 10 days to minimise stress to the bees and to allow the queen to establish her brood nest. Upon the subsequent inspection, Brian was very pleased to report that both queens had been accepted and were laying well.

For enquiries re buying queens/nucs, Clive can be contacted at Seedybrain1st@googlemail.com

Further information on Grange Barn is available at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/grange-barn> 

Articles appearing in The Essex Beekeeper are not necessarily the views either of the Editor or the Essex Beekeepers' Association

To ensure inclusion within the diary of county-wide events would Divisions provide the editor with details of local meetings by the 4th of the previous month.

Robert Silver – robert.silver@outlook.com

Divisional meetings around the County

Meetings in October 2019

03 20:00-22:00 - Gift Making for the Festive Period - Local Members, Harlow Division

Address: tbc

03 20:00-22:00 - Varroa Control 2019 - Spoilt for Choice by Robert Smith, Romford Division

Address: Chadwick Hall, Gidea Park, Romford

12 Honey Show, Romford Division

Address: Chadwick Hall, Gidea Park, Romford

20 09:30-16:30 - EBKA Conference: The Changing Face of Beekeeping

Address: Felsted School, Felsted, Dunmow CM6 3JL

22 19:30-21:00 - Monthly Meeting - Essex for Bees, CHelmsford Division

Address: Margaretting Village Hall, Wantz Rd, Margaretting, Ingatestone CM4 0EP

23 19:30-21:00 - Update on RSPB Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project, Southend Division

Address: WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED

27 14:00 - Braintree Beekeepers' Association Honey Show. Talk on Mead Making whilst judging takes place

Address: White Notley Village Hall

Meetings in November 2019

07 20:00-22:00 - Abberton Native Bee Project by Kevin Thorn, Harlow Division

Address: tbc

07 20:00-22:00 - Bumblebees,
Dr Nikki Gammans,
Romford Division
*Address: Chadwick Hall,
Gidea Park, Romford*

27 19:30-21:30 - AGM and Fun
Quiz, Southend Division
*Address: WI Hall, Bellingham
Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED*

19 19:30-21:00 - CBK Monthly
Meeting - making soap,
Chelmsford Division
*Address: Margaretting
Village Hall, Wantz Rd,
Margaretting, Ingatestone
CM4 OEP*

29 20:00 - The Asian Hornet,
Andrew Durham, Braintree
Division
*Address: White Notley
Village Hall*



22 19:30-21:30 - Christmas
Social, Saffron Walden
Division
*Address: The Three
Horseshoes, Dutton Hill, CM6
2DY*



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EBKA annual honey show results
7th September 2019
Orsett Showground, Thurrock

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
1	One section of comb honey (Gift)	1st	Not awarded	
		2nd	Roger Honey	Romford
		3rd	G Furnell	Romford
		VHC	Julia Proud	Saffron Walden
		HC	S Freeman	Saffron Walden
		C	Pauline Tidmas	Harlow
2	One jar of clear honey (Gift)	1st	Paul Abbott	Southend
		2nd	Elisaveta Stefoni	Romford
		3rd	S Freeman	Saffron Walden
3	One jar of crystallised honey (Gift)	Not awarded		
4	One pair of comb honey sections	No entries		
5	One frame of extractable honey	1st	Jim Rushbrook	Southend
		2nd	Nick Holmes	Harlow
		3rd	M J Barke	Harlow
		VHC	Pat Allen	Romford

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
6	Two jars of light clear honey	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
		2nd	Roger Honey	Romford
		3rd	Nick Webster	Chelmsford
		VHC	David Tidmas	Harlow
		HC	G Furnell	Romford
		C	Jim Rushbrook	Southend
7	Two jars of medium clear honey	1st	Pauline Tidmas	Harlow
		2nd	M J Barke	Harlow
		3rd	Brian Greeland	Braintree
		VHC	G Furnell	Romford
		HC	Down Doyland	Romford
		C	Linda Yeats	Saffron Walden
8	Two jars of dark clear honey	1st	Jim Rushbrook	Southend
9	Two jars of crystallised honey, natural set	1st	Elisaveta Stefoni	Romford
		2nd		
		3rd	Filippo Negri	Romford
10	Two jars of crystallised honey, soft set	No entries		

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
11a	One plastic container of cut comb honey, not set or crystallised	1st	Jim McNeil	Romford
		2nd	Pam Hughes	Chelmsford
		3rd	Jan French	Braintree
11b	One plastic container of crystallised cut comb honey	No awards		
12	Two jars of chunk honey	1st	Filippo Negri	Romford
13	One cake of beeswax 425gm - 482gm 25mm minimum thickness	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
		2nd	G Furnell	Romford
		3rd	Carol Stapleton	Southend
		VHC	Lorna Pattle	Romford
		HC		
C	Nick Messenger Jan French	Romford Braintree		
14	One bottle of sweet mead	1st	Paul G Wiltshire	Romford
		2nd	Paul Abbott	Southend
15	One bottle of dry mead	1st	Paul Abbott	Southend
		2nd	Filippo Negri	Romford
		3rd	M J Barke	Harlow

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
16	Two jars of light clear honey (less than five years)	1st	Roger Honey	Romford
		2nd		
		3rd	Mike Worboys	Chelmsford
17	Two jars of medium clear honey (less than five years)	1st	David Andrews (Friends of Cressing Temple Barns)	Braintree
		2nd		
		3rd	Carol Sissons	Harlow
18	Two jars of dark clear honey (less than five years)	No entries		
19	Novice class. Two jars of clear honey, any colour	1st	Paul G Wiltshire	Romford
		2nd	Michael Madders (Friends of Cressing Temple Barns)	Braintree
		3rd	Sheila Rushbrook	Southend
		VHC	Jean Gill	Braintree
		HC	Paul Davis-Moull	Saffron Walden
		C	Joyce Wells	Braintree

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
20	Novice class. Two jars of crystallised honey, natural or soft set	1st	S L Green	Saffron Walden
21	Novice class. One cake of beeswax, 99gm - 128gm	1st	Michael Madders (Friends of Cressing Temple Barns)	Braintree
		2nd		
		3rd		
		VHC	Carol Sissons	Harlow
22	One honey fruit cake	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
		2nd	Susan Richardson	Romford
		3rd	Julia Proud	Saffron Walden
		VHC	Nick Messenger	Romford
		HC	Zoe Bridges	Maldon & Dengie
		C	Paul Davis-Moull	Saffron Walden
23	Six honey nut cookies	1st	Millwards School	Harlow
		2nd	Susan Andrews	Romford
		3rd	Julia Proud	Saffron Walden
		VHC	Lorna Pattle	Romford
		HC	Julie Mugglestone	Romford
		C	Roger Honey	Romford

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
24	One honey sandwich	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
		2nd	Helen Hardwicke	Chelmsford
		3rd	S R H Barke	Harlow
		VHC	Linda Yeats	Saffron Walden
		HC	Alan Sanford	Romford
		C	Paul Davis-Moull	Saffron Walden
25	Four apricot and honey scones	1st	Sheila Rushbrook	Southend
		2nd	Nick Messenger	Romford
		3rd	Linda Yeats	Saffron Walden
		VHC	M J Barke	Harlow
		HC	Lorna Pattle	Romford
26	Junior class. One honey fruit cake	No entries		
27	Junior class. Six honey nut cookies	1st		
		2nd		
		3rd		
		VHC		
		HC	Daniel Holmes	Harlow
28	Junior class. One honey sandwich	No entries		

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
29	Six pieces of honey fudge	1st	Jill Speakman-Bell	Romford
		2nd	Lorna Pattle	Romford
		3rd	S R H Barke	Harlow
		VHC	Susan Richardson	Romford
		HC	M J Barke	Harlow
30	Six pieces of honey toffee	1st	Lorna Pattle	Romford
		2nd	M J Barke	Harlow
		3rd	Pauline Whitcomb	Harlow
		VHC	S R H Barke	Harlow
		HC	Victoria Conlan	Harlow
		C	Susan Andrews	Romford
31	One honey and malt wholemeal loaf	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
		2nd	S L Green	Saffron Walden
		3rd	Julie Mugglestone	Romford
		VHC	S R H Barke	Harlow
		HC	Linda Yeats	Saffron Walden
		C	Alan Sanford	Romford
32	Junior class. A poster about Beekeeping	1st	Eloise Holt	Southend
		2nd	Millwards School	Harlow
		3rd	Sienna Fletcher	Romford
		VHC	Ami Webster	Chelmsford

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
33	Divisional composite class. Minimum of three members	No awards		
34	A decorative display of honey products	No entries		
35	A pair of beeswax candles, cast in a mould	1st	Carol Stapleton	Southend
		2nd	S Freeman	Saffron Walden
		3rd	Julia Proud	Saffron Walden
		VHC	Jim McNeill	Romford
		HC	S L Green	Saffron Walden
		C	Patricia R Rowland	Braintree
36	A pair of beeswax candles, not cast in a mould	1st	Jim McNeill	Romford
		2nd		
		3rd		
		VHC	Nick Messenger	Romford
37	A practical invention related to beekeeping	1st	Filippo Negri	Romford
		2nd	Roger Honey	Romford
		3rd		
		VHC		
		HC	Jean Gill	Braintree
		C	Joyce Wells	Braintree

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
38	Twelve 454gm jars of clear honey, all one colour, labelled.	1st	JIm McNeil	Romford
		2nd	Pauline Tidmas	Harlow
		3rd		
		VHC	Roger Honey	Romford
39	Twelve 454gm jars of crystallised or soft set honey, all one colour, labelled	No awards		
40	Junior class. One colour photograph related to beekeeping, unmounted	No entries		
41	One colour photograph related to beekeeping, unmounted	1st	Carol Stapleton	Southend
		2nd	V M Wilkinson	Saffron Walden
		3rd	Mandie Lohse	Harlow
		VHC	Paul Abbott	Southend
		HC	Michael Madders (Friends of Cressing T. B.)	Braintree
		C	Nick Holmes	Harlow

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
42	One bottle of sweet melomel	1st	Garth Milford	Saffron Walden
		2nd		
		3rd	M J Barke	Harlow
43	One bottle of dry melomel	1st	Garth Milford	Saffron Walden
		2nd	M J Barke	Harlow
44	One bottle of sweet metheglin	1st		
		2nd		
		3rd	Filippo Negri	Romford
45	One bottle of dry metheglin	1st	M J Barke	Harlow
46	Honey label	1st	Nick Webster	Chelmsford
		2nd	Joyce Wells	Braintree
		3rd	Carol Sissons	Harlow
		VHC	M J Barke	Harlow
		HC	Julia Proud	Saffron Walden
		C	Paul Abbott	Southend
47	Pair of coloured beeswax candles	1st		
		2nd		
		3rd	Jim McNeil	Romford
48	Junior. Two rolled beeswax candles	1st	Joseph Holt	Southend
		2nd	Luke Ruane	Southend
		3rd	Sienna Fletcher	Romford
		VHC	Natasha Ruane	Southend
		HC	Eloise Holt	Southend

Class	Description	Position	Winner	Division
49	Beeswax polish	1st	Jan French	Braintree
		2nd	Joyce Wells	Braintree
		3rd	Michael Madders (Friends of Cressing Temple Barns)	Braintree
		VHC	V M Wilkinson	Saffron Walden
		HC	Nick Holmes	Harlow
50	Vase of flowers	1st	Helen Hardwicke	Chelmsford
		2nd	Julie Dalphinis	Saffron Walden
		3rd	Pauline Tidmas	Harlow
		VHC	S R H Barke	Harlow
51	Divisional garden	1st	Harlow	
		2nd	Saffron Walden	
52	Needlework	1st	Millwards School	Harlow
		2nd	Rosanna Seels	Romford
		3rd	Pauline Tidmas	Harlow
		VHC	Rose McCarthy	Romford
		HC	Julie Dalphinis	Saffron Walden
		C	Susan Andrews	Romford

**Congratulations to all of the above winners, and to
Filippo Negri, Romford Division,
winner of the BBKA Blue Ribbon for 'BEST IN SHOW'**

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Award	Classes	For	Winner	Division
Burt Challenge Cup	11A & 11B	Best container of cut comb honey	J McNeill	Romford
Cowan Vase	1 & 4	Section	Not awarded	
Dearman Cup	39	Twelve Jars of crystallised or soft set honey	Not awarded	
Ford Trophy	2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 12	Most points in extracted honey classes	M J Barke	Harlow
Horton Cake Cup and Knife	22 & 26	Best honey fruit cake	M J Barke	Harlow
Mallinson Cup	35 & 36	Best exhibit of cast and uncast candles	J McNeil	Romford
Ongar Cup	5	Frame of extractable honey	J Rushbrook	Southend
President's Cup		Division gaining highest total number of points in all classes	Romford	Romford
Holmes Cup		Exhibitor gaining highest total number of points in all classes	M J Barke	Harlow
Tidswell Challenge Bowl	1 to 12	Most points in all honey classes	M J Barke	Harlow
Jersey Cup	13 & 21	Best cake of beeswax	M J Barke	Harlow

Award	Classes	For	Winner	Division
W.B.C. Cup	23, 24, & 29	Biscuits, sandwich and fudge	M J Barke	Harlow
Devall Award	1 to 41	Novice gaining highest total number of points and an award in classes 19 to 21	M Madders	Braintree
Essex Chronicle Cup	38	Twelve jars of clear honey	J McNeill	Romford
Chelmsford Wine Circle Marconi Trophy	14	Best bottle of sweet mead	P Wiltshire	Romford
Alf Gunn Jubilee Shield	44 & 45	Best bottle of metheglin	M J Barke	Harlow
Walden Wine Shield	42 & 43	Best bottle of melomel	G Milford	Saffron Walden
G A Taylor Mazer	15	Best bottle of dry mead	P Abbott	Southend
Archie Horton Award	35 & 36	Most points in candles classes	J McNeill	Romford
B.B.K.A. Blue Ribbon		Best exhibit in the show	Filippo Negri	Romford
Best Novice	19, 20 & 21	Best in the Novice Classes (Honey Show entry ticket)	P Wiltshire	Romford
Special Judge's Commendation	21	Novice Wax Block	M Madders	Braintree

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Don't tell Defra!

by Lune Valley Beekeepers, via eBees

Under a proposed new law, from 1st January 2020 it will be illegal, in Texas, for anyone to catch and rehouse a swarm of bees unless they:

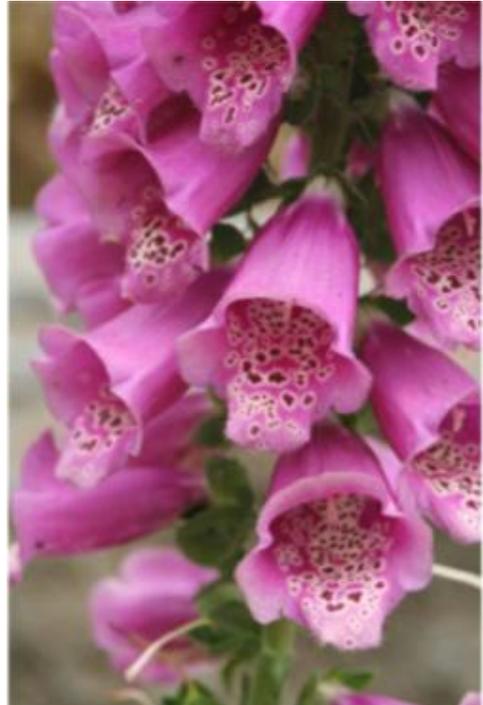
- have completed an approved 160-hour course in beekeeping and swarm removal.
- carry public liability insurance of £500,000 and employer's liability insurance of £250,000.
- have a licence issued by, or on behalf of, the Texas Department of Agriculture! 🐝

Foxgloves - digitalis purpurea

by Somerton & District BKA, via eBees

While on holiday in North Wales recently our vice chairman Eric McLaughlin spotted this interesting article in 'Sibrydion Cymunedol' (Community Whispers), the Parish Magazine of Arthog and several other nearby villages.

Foxgloves are one of the most imposing wildflowers of the summer, with their tall spikes of richly coloured purple flowers standing head and shoulders above the surrounding vegetation. Not only are they beautiful to look at, but they are also perfectly designed



to maximise their pollination prospects. The main pollinators of foxgloves are bees, particularly several species of bumble bees, and the plants have developed a few crafty adaptations to try and ensure successful cross-pollination. Firstly, they are tall and therefore highly visible, even when crowded by bracken or tall grasses. They are a vivid purple colour, which is in the colour spectrum highly attractive to bumble bees. The trumpet shaped flowers have broad flat lower petals, which provide a perfect landing strip for the bees. Look closely and you will see a group of spots on the petals, called nectar guides, which act as sort of 'landing lights' for the insects.

Now it gets really clever. It might seem as if bumble bees just randomly buzz around from flower to flower, but they are in fact extremely methodical. They will start off at the lower, older flowers and work their way up to the upper, newer flowers. The lower flowers are 'female' and the upper ones are 'male'. The male flowers being newer are smaller and are a tighter squeeze for the bees, so although the bee is after the nectar, it cannot help but collect pollen at the same time. Then off it flies to the next foxglove, starts at the bottom and inadvertently deposits pollen in the female flower – collects more pollen from the male flower and flies off to repeat the process. So it is a win – win situation all round really. The bee gets its share of tasty nectar, the foxglove gains genetic diversity by being assured of cross-pollination and hey ho! Life goes on. Clever or what? 🐝

Distilling from honey

via The Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeepers' Association, eBees

In the distilled spirits world, the name and classification of a spirit is often determined by the type of base sugar used. Brandy is distilled from fruit, rum from molasses, tequila from agave, and whiskey from a mixture of corn, rye, wheat and barley. However, what do you call a spirit distilled from honey? And, did you know there was even such a thing?

There is, and craft distillers throughout the United States are distilling honey to create unique spirits with exceptional aromatic and flavour notes. In fact, the National Honey Board (NHB) conducted its first Honey Spirits Competition in 2018 and received nearly 30 entries into the “distilled with honey” category.

One of the most popular distillers using honey in this manner is Caledonia Spirits. Based in Hardwick, Vermont, Caledonia’s Barr Hill Vodka is distilled 100% from honey, giving the spirit a floral depth that smells and tastes like the wildflower fields the honey bees forage for nectar. Spirits distilled from honey tend to take on the characteristics of the honey used.

However, honey spirits are not sweet. The fermentation process scrubs out most of the sweetness in honey, resulting in an intensely aromatic and nuanced-flavoured product. For example, if a spirit maker distills from orange blossom honey, the spirit most likely will take on a citrusy, crisp flavour. If a spirit is distilled from Tupelo honey, it will carry very aromatic notes with a subtle floral flavour.

Through varietals of honey, different strains of yeast and various distilling processes, distillers can craft a totally unique spirit that, to date, has defied classification in the spirits industry. The growing popularity of spirits distilled 100% from honey has spurred a few craft distillers to collaborate on a definition and classification of spirits distilled from honey. Although efforts are preliminary, the NHB is excited about the potential for distilled-from-honey spirits to get the recognition they deserve. 🐝

Cleaning beeswax

via Douglas Nethercleft –Warwickshire BKA, ebees

Herewith a few ‘small scale’ techniques that I use when preparing wax for selling or showing. I do not attempt to reclaim wax from old black comb and gone are the days when I used discarded ladies’ tights and old tin cans for filtering! Beware of copper, brass and aluminium utensils which will readily discolour wax; only use stainless steel, china, glass and plastic –albeit care has to be taken not to melt the latter inadvertently!

Cleaning wax –Stage 1

Place odd pieces/brace comb/cappings etc., in a container floating in water heated in a slow cooker; you may choose to wash the wax first under a tap to remove any ‘stickiness’. The first of the various waxes that are present in comb starts to melt at 64°C; beeswax will progressively darken if heated to temperatures greater than 70°C. Keep an eye on the wax and when it has just all melted its temperature will be less than 70°C. Remove the container from the slow cooker and carefully pour the wax through a relatively coarse meshed metal kitchen sieve held above a warm china or glass jug covered with a nappy liner folded in two (fixed with an elastic band), which acts as a fine filter. Nappy liners can be obtained from Boots. Stop pouring the wax before reaching the water / condensate that will be at the bottom of the container. Pour the remainder, including any water, through the sieve but now into a plastic cream carton (or similar) covered with a folded nappy liner; the mix will separate out on cooling. The resultant disc of wax needs hardly any scraping to remove impurities at the water /wax interface. Straightaway, whilst the sieve contents are still warm, discard the detritus into a waste bin. Similarly, whilst it is still warm, wipe out the wax container with kitchen roll

Next, pour the liquid wax content of the jug into plastic 5 x 1oz ‘BEESWAX’ tray moulds. This wax will be free from any visible impurities and, if the resultant blocks are not kept for further filtering, can be used / sold on for use in polish, lotions and potions containing beeswax. Note: the BEESWAX trays will distort and not be useable for moulding blocks for show if the wax poured into them is more than 70°C. If there is no better paying outlet for surplus wax, then it can always be traded in for foundation.

Cleaning wax –Stage 2

Wax for the show bench, be it in the form of a block, candles or a model should, ideally, be light primrose in colour. The colour of beeswax is largely determined by its propolis content, so if you wish to end up with a light coloured block, only choose cappings or comb to be melted in Stage 1 that is pale in colour and free from ‘travel staining’ -bee footprints. Show wax too, needs to have a greater degree of purity and this is achieved by further filtering. I have calibrated my Rayburn cooker using a digital display thermocouple, (available from Maplin Electronics) and can select an oven setting that cycles in the range 64-70°C.

The wax blocks from Stage 1 are melted / filtered in the oven through lint (fluffy side up) using a small two-part stainless steel steamer; the bottom section contains rainwater to catch the wax filtering through the disc of lint cut to shape to fit the base of the top section. The processing of 8oz or so of wax at a time takes some six hours and is best done overnight to avoid competing demands for the cooker! The resulting cake of cooled wax is noticeably a better colour than the original 1oz blocks and the lint clearly shows that a surprising amount of debris has been removed. There is no way round the fact that some wax is retained / soaked up by the lint, but the impregnated disc makes a wonderful fire-lighter! Perfectionists might wish to filter the cake a further time through a fresh piece of lint. Note: if not sourced using the internet, lint in useful 18” wide rolls can be obtained through your local pharmacist.

I have four plastic buckets for wax labelled: ‘To Clean’(bits and scrapings), ‘To Keep’(for further filtering or to sell on ‘as is’), ‘To Show’(to be transformed into candles, etc), and ‘To Exchange’(for foundation)

I find that all china, glass and metal utensils are best cleaned by heating them in the oven until any wax liquefies and then quickly wiping them with disposable kitchen towel –indispensible when processing wax. Alternatively, boiling water from a kettle can be poured over the items and the ‘washings’ retained in an old bucket or similar; take care that melted / liquid wax does not find its way down the household drains. Sticky-Stuff Remover (available from Lakeland Plastics or Aldi) is not only magic for removing adhesive labels from old jars or lids (would I ever?!) but also quickly dissolves / cleans wax film from cooker tops and tiled kitchen floors –hopefully before the ‘other half’ notices. 🐝

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