

Mid-Cheshire Beekeepers

Welcome Pack 2022/23



Branch and County Programmes

Throughout the year we have varied events and meetings for all levels:

- First Monday in the month we hold branch meetings which include information talks, practical advice and entertaining talks during autumn/winter, and apiary visits during spring/summer
- Third Wednesday in the month there is an informal Bee Chat during autumn/winter and apiary training/education during spring/summer
- Representation at external events such as the Cheshire Show and Arley Hall Garden Festival
- County Spring and Autumn Conventions (including Honey Show in Autumn)

As well as the Mid-Cheshire Branch events, all members can also attend the other CBKA branch events.

For a current list of Branch events visit our website at: [Events – Mid Cheshire Beekeepers](#)

For a current list of CBKA events visit [Calendar - Cheshire Beekeepers' Association \(cheshire-bka.co.uk\)](http://cheshire-bka.co.uk)

Alternatively contact the secretary for details.



Training

We aim to eventually have our own training apiary (if you know of any suitable location let us know) but at present we do not have this facility within Mid-Cheshire.

We have theoretical beginner/novice training usually starting around November and continuing through the winter months while the bees are quiet. Other branches also provide beginner training – check on the CBKA website for details.

Practical training is provided during the active bee season at various members apiaries, usually beginning around April (weather permitting). These are sessions where individual aspects of beekeeping will be explained and demonstrated in a social group environment with occasional direct hands-on experience.

There are a number of good beginners books such as the BBKA Guide to Beekeeping, the Haynes Bee Manual and the Complete Step-by-step Guide to Keeping Bees amongst others. We have a number of books available in our library to loan for free (see contacts) or a mentor may be able to loan a book or two.

Specific hands-on training and taster sessions are also provided by our training partners.

Information on current training is available on our website at [Training – Mid Cheshire Beekeepers](#)



Mentors

As new members, there is nothing more helpful and reassuring than having someone to turn to for help or to ask questions.

Mid-Cheshire Beekeepers are proud to offer a mentoring service with a number of highly experienced members who will provide this service.

Please contact mentors@midcheshirebeekeepers.co.uk and they will arrange a mentor who will be local to your apiary.



Bees

- Queen – a female bee with a fully developed reproductive system, larger than a worker, she is the mother of all the bees in the hive.
- Worker bee – a female bee whose reproductive organs are undeveloped. Worker bees do all the work in the hive, except lay eggs.
- Drone – the male honey bee.



Worker



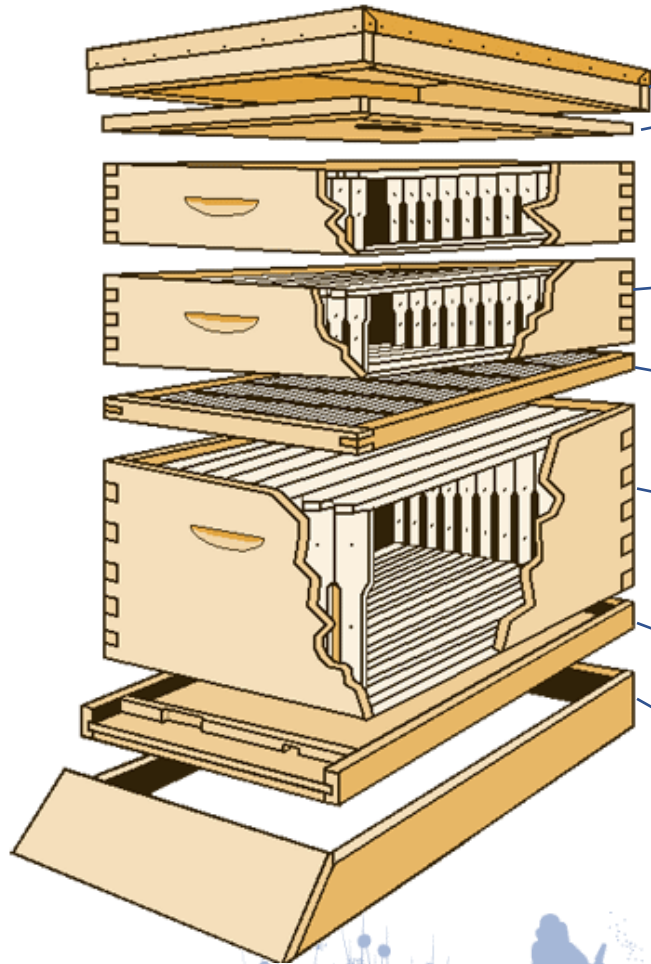
Queen



Drone



Anatomy of a beehive



ROOF. Can be flat or pitched. Protects against the elements and available in various depths

CROWN BOARD. Seals the top of the colony. May include 'Porter bee escapes' – one way bee valves so bees don't get caught in the roof space. Can be transparent

SUPERS. The honey storage area with frames. Sits above a queen excluder to stop the queen raising brood here. Use as many as necessary. Shallow frames – full supers are HEAVY

QUEEN EXCLUDER. Keeps her majesty out of the supers

BROOD BOX. The heart of the colony where young bees are raised. Usually 11 deep frames. Queen stays here so inspections focus here. Single or double brood

FLOOR with ENTRANCE BLOCK. Most are open mesh floors allowing debris and parasites (varroa) to fall from the colony

STAND. Keeps the hive off the ground and ensures comfortable working height



Hive materials

Timber



- Most common hive material overall
- Relatively high initial cost
- Cedar components need no painting – can stand massive abuse and neglect
- WBC has nice aesthetics
- Environmentally friendly
- Easy to clean and sterilise – better hive hygiene
- Easy to maintain

- Used to have lower initial cost
- No assembly required but still need to be painted
- Higher honey yield due to strong overwintering
- Weight advantage but relative difference is small
- Difficult to sterilise
- Performs well in damp conditions
- Remarkably robust though mating surfaces can damage
- Not particularly attractive (esp for the garden)

Polystyrene



Lots of variants exist...these are the most common

National hive



- Most common hive in the UK
- Construction has deep rebates – long frame lugs easy to handle
- Square footprint – orient either way

WBC*



- **Double walled hive** with brood box inside removable 'lifts'
- Attractive for the garden
- Can be impractical for some settings

Langstroth



- Most common in Europe/US
- Cheap and readily available
- Construction without rebates – short frame lugs
- Large brood boxes can be very heavy

Hive Components

Roof – Flat or gabled roof covered in galvanized steel to protect and keep the hive dry. Has a space to allow for feeding and holes for ventilation.

Crown Board – the board which goes between the topmost box of frames and the roof.

Super – a box, shallower than the brood box, which is placed above the queen excluder filled with frames, so that the worker bees can fill it with honey and no eggs can be laid in it.

Queen Excluder – is a selective barrier inside the beehive that allows worker bees but not the larger queens and drones to traverse the barrier.

Brood Box – the part of the hive where the brood is reared and where the queen spends most of her time.

Floor with entrance block – the floor can be solid but open-mesh floors are now more commonly used because they allow debris to fall out of the hive and provide better ventilation. The entrance block can be switched to provide a large or small entrance.



Equipment

Getting started in a new hobby is never easy and beekeeping is no exception. There are a lot of things to grasp including an understanding of what is needed to start (which if you are reading this, you have already taken the first or even second step...).

You will often hear the term “ask 10 beekeepers a question and get 13 different answers!” This is basically because there is no simple answer and bees being a wild animal will often confuse the situation just when you thought you had cracked it!

That said, for the beginner, there are a number of essential pieces of kit:

1. Protective clothing (no-one likes getting stung!)
2. A smoker to calm the bees down
3. A hive tool to help separate the hive components during inspections
4. At least one hive (recommended at least two)

Other kit, such as an extractor, can be borrowed from the branch or other member.



Equipment – Part 2

Protective Clothing (including gloves)

There are many different variations of a theme on this and also on the price as some can be very expensive. They come in many forms, from thick cotton to specially designed sting proof ventilated suits. They also come in both round and fencing guard type veils but that is just personal choice. If you get a chance, try some on (e.g. at one of our apiary visits) to see which you prefer. Discuss your choice with your mentor or other member first.

Tools

The simplest way to buy the tools is to get a starter pack from one of the suppliers – they all do them. These packs will include all the basic equipment you need to get going and usually include a smoker and hive tool. Like most “starter kits”, the quality may not be the best, but will be more than adequate to start beekeeping (I’m still only using a starter kit after two years!)

Other Kit – useful but not essential

Antihistamine and anti-itching cream as we all get stung eventually.

Soda Crystals – for cleaning kit – the only thing that removes wax and propolis!

Old ice cream/spread container – to collect wax scrapings during inspections and to wash tools.

Queen Marker Pen – To mark that new queen.

Queen Marker Cage – To help with the marking.



Equipment – Part 3 – The Hive

There are many different types of hive used in the UK which makes getting one a tricky choice. If you do not have any prior experience, it is also difficult to know what is your favourite. For simplicity's sake, we would recommend the national hive because they are the most widely used and as such there are lots of spare parts and experience around to support you. Please do research the different hive types (e.g. [Dave Cushman - Hives](#)) and again ask your mentor or other member for advice, as it can be difficult and expensive to change hive type once you are established.

Hives can be made from many materials too. The “standard” hive is made from red cedar as this is light and has its own preservative characteristics, but is expensive, especially the Canadian Cedar. Hives can also be obtained in pine, but this requires a lot more maintenance to prevent rotting. Hives can also be obtained in polystyrene which is good for lightness and insulation.

All the major suppliers – plus others (including Amazon!!) supply hives with a myriad of choice and expense. Often suppliers will offer budget versions of hives, which usually means the wood has knots in or is of a lower quality or type.

Generally, you can buy hive parts separately or as a full hive. For beginners I would recommend getting a starter hive (such as Thornes “Bees on a Budget” or Maisemore’s National Rock Bottom Hive Cedar (there are lots others!)) as these come as complete hives including the required frames and foundation(wax). There are others such as Cwynne Jones / Simon the Beekeeper who provide budget hives without the frames and foundation. Shop around!

NB It is personal choice on wood or polystyrene, but be mindful of being able to interchange parts if required.

Sales and Seconds Quality

The suppliers will often have sales around spring and autumn and at key events such as National Conventions and Honey Shows. These sales often have significantly reduced prices on lots of equipment and particularly on hive parts (apart from foundation). They tend to be seconds quality which usually means the wood may have knots but is otherwise perfect for use – the bees do not appear to mind!

Hive Summary

A complex selection choice and a must to speak to your mentor or other member before you purchase to ensure you do not make an expensive mistake!



Equipment Suppliers

There are many suppliers of equipment (and bees). This is just a selection of the many available (we do not endorse or dissuade purchase from any of these below)

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|-------------------------|--|--|
| • Modern Beekeeping | www.modernbeekeeping.co.uk | Local Supplier (Bollington) |
| • Hatton Lodge Apiary | www.hattonlodgeapiary.co.uk | Local Supplier (Thornes Agent; Hatton) |
| • Abelo | www.abelo.co.uk | General Supplier |
| • B J Sherriff | www.bjsherriff.com | Protective clothing specialist |
| • BB Wear | www.bbwear.co.uk | Protective clothing specialist |
| • C Wynne Jones | www.cwynnejones.com | Agents of Thornes - good for jars |
| • EH Thorne | www.thorne.co.uk | General Supplier |
| • Maisemore Apiaries | www.bees-online.co.uk | General Supplier (Mark Phillipson is local outlet) |
| • Simon the Beekeeper | www.simonthebeekeeper.co.uk | General Supplier - Good for budget equipment especially starting out |
| • National Bee Supplies | www.beekeeping.co.uk | General Supplier |
| • Beekeeping Supplies | www.beekeepingsuppliesuk.com | General Supplier |



Local Bees

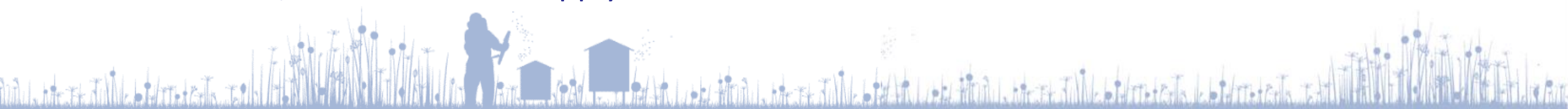
Like equipment, there are many suppliers of bees with a commercially sourced nucleus costing upwards of £250-300. It is strongly recommended that you obtain bees locally and many of our members will be able to help, usually at a considerably reduced price. A mentor will be able to help with this, both in advising and even supplying bees directly.

Bee Dating Agency

CBKA run a Bee Dating Agency whose prime purpose is to put beekeepers with surplus bees in touch with members who have no bees, either because they have lost their bees or because they are just starting out in beekeeping. The scheme is entirely voluntary and free but to participate you must be a registered CBKA member.

Most purchasers are beginners looking to buy a nucleus of bees and hence the Bee Dating Agency is not intended for the sale and purchase of package bees or swarms although some buyers may consider buying a full colony of bees.

Sellers can register with the Bee Dating Agency before they have bees for sale although they should provide some information on what is likely to be available. Their details will not be forwarded to a buyer until their bees are ready for sale, after which the principle of “first come, first served” will apply.



Glossary

- Apiary – hives kept in one location for the purposes of beekeeping.
- Colony – all the worker bees, drones, queen and brood living in a hive.
- Hive tool – a metal device used to open hives and pry frames apart.
- Nucleus/NUC – a small colony of bees, kept in a nucleus box of five or six frames; bees are often sold in this way.
- Swarm – a large number of worker bees and drones together with the old queen, which leave the parent colony to establish a new colony.
- Frame – literally a frame made of wood or plastic, used to hold the honeycomb.
- Foundation – beeswax rolled out into the honeycomb pattern, which is then put into the frame for the bees to draw out.
- Smoker – a metal device in which materials are slowly burned to produce cool smoke to subdue the bees.



Useful Links

- Mid Cheshire Beekeepers

- Website <https://www.midcheshirebeekeepers.co.uk>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MidCBK>
- Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/965810930154907>
- Twitter @MidCheshBKA
- WhatsApp Ask and send phone number to the secretary if you want to be added to the group.

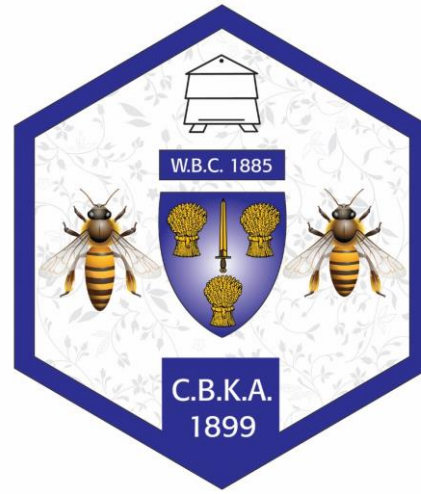
- Cheshire Beekeeper

- Website <https://cheshire-bka.co.uk>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cheshirebka>

- British Beekeepers Association

- Website <https://www.bbka.org.uk/>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishBeekeepersAssociation>





Useful Contacts

MCBK Chair

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MCKB Secretary

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MCKB Treasurer

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For Mentor Requests

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For Library Books

library@midcheshirebeekeepers.co.uk

For General Information

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For Events

events@midcheshirebeekeepers.co.uk

For Social Media

[twitter@midcheshirebeekeepers.co.uk](https://twitter.com/midcheshirebeekeepers)

