

An Apiary is born

By Don Honey, Newbury and District BKA

The age old question - where do you site your bees and what factors come into the equation?

For some years now, I have kept my bees within sight of my lounge window, approximately 20 metres away. What more could a serious beekeeper want? I had read the books telling me to be considerate for my neighbours and any passing members of the public, and in that respect the apiary was surrounded on two sides with high hedges as a useful windbreak, and certainly far enough away from any passing humans, or marauding cattle for that matter. I had even picked up on the direction of the hive entrance to face south in the morning, with dappled shade in the afternoon. I had easy access, and no likelihood of flooding. The hives were on gravel, with no grass or weeds growing around them. All of these factors would appear perfect. But for someone like me, who is so passionate about their bees, this was just not enough. At this point, the story takes an odd turn. Christmas was fast approaching and my wife, who is as passionate about her garden, as I am about my bees, suggested that perhaps we forgo our summer holiday in exchange for a garden re-vamp. This included the purchase of a very attractive hexagonal greenhouse, because like myself, she appreciated the looks as well as the practicality of things. To cut to the chase, we



A view from my lounge.



A firm and level base for all three of my hives.

replaced a small vegetable patch with a lawned area, did away with a path, revitalised the flower beds and opted to move “My Girls” to this new location just outside my studio window. As I write this tale, I can confirm that we are both extremely pleased with the results. She is now able to look out of her sewing room at her lovely new greenhouse, along with seeing my idyllic WBC hives and I too have a much similar view. The siting of the hives in this new location took a lot of planning and consideration for all sorts of factors. As with the original site, all the main considerations are achieved, and I am able to move



The new apiary starts to take shape early in the year while the bees are tucked up elsewhere!



The new apiary site. Enough space to mow and also little chance of drifting.

around all sides of the hives for both inspections and mowing the lawn. I also didn't want the hives so close that bees could drift between them, or for it to look like a row of tenement flats!. We undertook this project early in the year, knowing that we could move our bees the 100 metres or so at the other side of the cottage while they were in their winter cluster. I remember quite well two days after we moved the bees being totally unimpressed when nothing happened! I had been keeping an eye on the weather forecast and was quite confident that as long as we were gentle in moving the hives, then the chances of success were high. Both sides of "The move" the

weather was cold. True enough it worked.

Possible issues

So have I done the right thing, because I have possibly strayed into a questionable area. The bees exit and return path is now slightly impeded by our washing line. I say "Our" washing line, because it would be sexist to imply anything else! Also my garden shed and the new greenhouse are close by, making access to both, food for thought. Fortunately my wife and I are at ease around our bees and know not to dance around too much. We are also fortunate enough to have other spaces within our property where

guests can take in the air and not be concerned about the bees. The reality is that they too want to take in the marvel of watching our bees. With the little instruction to "Sit still" on our bench within 3 metres of the action, every one is happy.

The benefits

With being able to see my hives from my studio window, I can watch them come and go at all times of the day. I also stand a pretty good chance of spotting a swarm emerging, heaven forbid. I'll never have to remember to take extra kit at inspection times, because it's all on the doorstep in my shed, it's just a case of remembering to shut the door each time. There are so many important factors to take into consideration when keeping bees, and I must stress that siting your hive is an important factor. That doesn't mean you have to be in fear of not doing the right thing. Beekeeping for me is a hobby, and not a business or eco friendly statement, however both these things are true as it happens. Enjoy your bees.

This is not a pattern to suit all gardens, especially if you have children, but it works for me EVERY DAY!



The new and improved view of my apiary.