**Beekeeping**

I have kept bees when I had some spare land adjacent to a farm that we restored. One year out of 2 hives I got well over 100 bottles of honey. It was the best thing I and my family ever tasted. One year very sadly I got none. That’s bees and the weather and other things for you. Read on!

It’s an enormously pleasurable and interesting hobby. Actually, I’m not sure if you can really call it a hobby. Having lifestock is always more of a lifestyle choice than something you pick up when it suits- they the bees are always with you unless they die or swarm and maybe disappear from view and though you don’t have to do much for them all round the year, you have to start them off well ( which is not cheap- maybe an outlay of £1000 for good equipment and the bees too) and provide for them quite frequently- every 2 weeks or so- at some times of the year. In winter they need to be checked a lot less frequently though you still have to make sure they aren’t running out of their sugar supplies. On a cold day its nice talking to them a little- hope you are ok in there- see you next spring! Their community will be a small sub group keeping their family going alongside their queen who will rule for about 3 years. Chemical attachment is the rule of their bonding.

There’s nothing like the smell when you open the hive and you find you are longing to do so, time and time again. but you have to resist over interference.

In August you will be taking off some of their delicious honey and of course there’s all the extra checking and helping to manage the unfortunate entry of pests such as varroa mites and wax moths, and even bees or badgers depending on where you live.

The best way to learn is to go on courses and join your local society of beekeepers. This will be fun, sociable and a new community for you.

I am at cRxeate. ,always happy to answer questions and support you if you wish, in starting up, however a start off read would be

A HoneyBee Heart Has Five Openings by Helen Jukes. I can’t recommend it highly enough. The other place to find out more would be the county shows where beekeepers usually have stands or whole marquees dedicated to the art and science of beekeeping.

You can keep bees in most places and sometimes its easier in areas like urban landscapes or where lots of gardens are, rather than out in open country. That’s because there is more variety to forage on where there aren’t monocultures. Bees need a supply of fresh water somewhere close and they can travel 5 miles a day for their nectar and pollen. They travel at 10 foot high so its rarely a problem with people risking being stung although its best to bring all your neighbours with you and you must site the hive/s appropriately too.

They are some of the oldest creatures on our planet, awesome in their communications and structural systems, fascinating and rewarding to keep, and as you will see if you read Helen’s book mentioned above, keeping can be a complex thing. Do you ever really ‘keep’bees- maybe they keep you! Anyhow….so much more to it and….a lifetime of real joy awaits. And anyhow give it a serious go if you are inclined. Most will find it well worth the effort.

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