

# September: Not so Quiet.

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Apologies this month's bee blog is a tiny bit late, I have of course a brilliant excuse of the Wigtown Book Festival which I volunteer at and some others of the Association also take part. This is a great experience, which I highly recommend but time however gets sucked into the festival and is never seen again.

Anyways enough of excuses, before I start I want to share some blog "admin". The next bee blog will be after our Honey Show of 2024, this will also be my last blog of the year and yes this will be my final bee blog but it will not be the last bee blog. The baton of writing the novice bee blog will be passed on and rightly so. There is nothing like a new perspective of beekeeping to keep things fresh with new ideas and insights.

So to September, traditionally the start of the quiet time as the autumn takes hold and the bees start to slow down, err well no not in my case and I know from speaking to a few other beekeepers that the bees are still very active. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September the sun was shining and I took a moment to enjoy the warmth. The bees however were not taking any time to stop and savour the autumn sunshine; they were busy bringing in pollen from the ivy flowers which like last year was in abundance. I had already narrowed the hive entrance but with the bucket loads of pollen that was coming in, thought that it was not quite yet the time for a mouse guard making it harder for the bees to squeeze in with their late harvest.

On inspection of the frames however there were signs of the Queen slowing down a bit with egg laying, whilst there was some freshly capped brood there was now more cells being filled with nectar and even more of the top of the brood frames with capped honey. Winter is coming and these girls are certainly getting their house in order.

Now some of you may have noticed that I have a slight disability, my right arm and hand doesn't work as well as it should (falling off a motorbike in my youth will do that) and most of the time it isn't a problem. Recently though I have been having a spot of trouble of lifting out the frames, the bees were getting trapped between the frame lugs and the floppy bits of the gloves at my finger tips. This doesn't make the bees very happy and when I am doing a hive inspection on my own it often results in the occasional sting, thankfully I do not react badly to bee venom. This inspection started out well enough but there seemed to be a lot of propolis/bee glue and my gloves were becoming very sticky and the bees were getting stuck no matter how careful I was. Let's just say by the time I had nearly finished the inspection the bees were not happy with me at all. I had taken a number of stings to my left hand as it does most of the work but just as I was putting back the last frame I took a sting to my index finger on my right hand and this is where I discovered I have a different type of reaction.

My good old marigold's have been okay but with having hands that are diffident sizes depending on the weather makes finding gloves that fit well a little troublesome. I have even considered going naked, just bare hands mind but this inspection was going to prove that I really need to get this glove issue sorted. As I have said I don't react badly to bee stings, yes it hurts and a slight swelling maybe but nothing out of the ordinary but it turns out that slight swelling is a problem. I don't have a lot of

feeling in my fingers on my right hand also the blood flow and lymph system is damaged, (I promise this won't get too technical medical) so when the bee gave me a sting for my clumsiness on my right index finger, my finger swelled and unfortunately my impaired systems mean that it can't properly remove the venom and repair the damaged area. Well it can but it is very slow and requires some massage, and plenty of sensitive skin lotion. Of course I then moped about the house "woe is me" brandishing my bandaged finger. Okay that bit is not quite true as the next day I was repairing the shed roof with my partner handing me up the tools one by one.

Oddly now that my finger has healed from the sting my right hand is a lot more slender and gloves fit me a bit better but this does mean I will have to be extra careful and have good fitting gloves from now on. Maybe that bee which gave her life to sting me and it is important to remember that when a honey bee stings it is the ultimate sacrifice, has actually done me a big service.

So this quiet September has also seen; wasp attacks; unintentional open feeding; badger scent marking and to cap it all at the beginning of October I was at the hive when there was a low pitched humming. I knew what it was straight away but my mind was saying surely not this is October! Yet there on the landing board two drones took off into the air and still not quite believing what I had just saw a third drone decide to fly round my head a few times before disappearing into the tree tops that were still holding onto their autumn coloured leaves. Bees' clearly don't read books about beekeeping!

As always take care now and Bee safe.

PS. I didn't mention rolling your own candles using wax foundation sheets at the Honey Show workshop which was loads of fun; I even got to use a hairdryer!