

Hello, I'm Tony.

I have volunteered to write this blog for a year. This is a first for me. As one of the many people who have dyslexia, I do not find writing or reading easy. My hope is that I can share my bee experiences as they happen over the year. I consider myself a bee novice and so far have experienced many of the things that can go wrong when keeping bees!

I have been interested in Bees for many years but have never done anything about it. We found the bee group that met in the community centre not far from our new house so we joined the newbie course in March 2023. I have to say what a great group of people you all are. We wanted to get some experience handling bees before we decided to get some of our own. We got our first bees in 2024. Our bee journey has had many setbacks so far. Our site is not ideal being right on the coast, we only have half of the foraging area of an inland site, and it's very exposed to the wind. In the spring last year, we found we had lost our bees over the winter, as many others had. We decided not to get a new colony as we had a busy year with many things happening. However we set up a bait hive, thinking we might get lucky. A small swarm arrived although it was late in the season and went into winter with only a few stores. We moved them into a poly nuc box and gave them plenty of homemade fondant. We were not very optimistic!

Early in the year, all was not looking good. The box didn't weigh much, no sign of bees, no noise even when you listened closely. We thought the worst but resisted the temptation to open the hive and look inside. Then great news, in February we saw the bees for the first time this year. They were bringing in pollen, which should indicate the queen is laying. We had not moved the box from the bait hive location to the main stand. I had concreted the main stand into the ground as we have strong winds and deer, so I didn't want any chance of it getting knocked over. As our bee course with Linda said, when moving bees, it's either 3 miles or 3 feet. The distance was not big, however we had about 20 feet to move. In 3 foot steps, it required quite a few moves. I set up temporary stands at 3 foot intervals. I added a new potted plant near the hive entrance in the hope the bees would notice it as they flew out giving them a new visual reference point that I could move with the hive. After a few hours I moved the hive to the first step along with the plant. I was pleasantly surprised that the poly nuc box was quite heavy. They have been busy bees! We watched from a distance (we both enjoy being with the bees) There was quite a bit of flying between the old position and the new one for a while, however they seemed to get the idea that the hive had moved quite quickly. We left them for a few more hours then returned. The bees were now finding the hive well, so we moved it again. This time, some of the bees found the new location quickly, but there were quite a few that had started looking at the original site, flying over the large pallet the hive had been sitting on. I assumed they were getting a visual reference from the pallet. So I moved it close to the hive. As I did, the bees all started finding the hive again. Over 2 days we moved the hive, plant and pallet step by step. eventually arriving on the stand.

With the weight of the hive being more than last year I am concerned that they may be running out of space. The weather has not been good enough to do a full inspection, however one day it was quite warm so I lifted the lid and peaked in! There was still one frame that was empty. Enough space for now.

I want to get them into a wooden hive again but that will need to wait until the weather improves. For now I will add a second brood box to the nuc that will give them more space but still have the protection if this cold spell continues.

Hopefully, this year will continue to be successful.