



## Brook Road Bees

February 2010

Weather permitting I will have put a hive of bees on the allotment during March, but it is unlikely that, with the cold weather, you will be able to see much too-ing and fro-ing from the hive. (As mentioned last month the other hive is a bait hive.) Nothing much happens in the cold winter months for the bee population.

In the hive with the bees will be a number of sheets of wax honeycomb foundation. These are sheets of wax on which the bees themselves have built (drawn out) the well-known wax honeycomb six sided shapes. Some of these hexagons are used for storing honey and pollen and others are for storage of eggs to produce larvae and new bees. The clever queen lays one egg per hexagonal tube, it is then filled and capped and looked after by her workers and hatches as a bee to join the bee cluster. I have some sheets of drawn foundation (less bees) for you to see, on my allotment plot

For the bees to survive the winter, they consume the honey that which I have allowed them to keep after harvesting honey for myself last autumn. With their honey, they keep alive and maintain a warm hive. Early last autumn, after removing the honey, I also fed them sugar syrup to supplement the honey I left them with.

I will also be feeding our new bees some sugar fondant to help them over this cold period.

The bees will occasionally emerge when the weather is warmer, but only to clear out debris from the hive (dead bees and rubbish) and carry out cleansing flights. They do occasionally forage (look for food) as the weather warms up.

It is not normal for a beekeeper to open the hive during the colder winter period since this can chill the internal bee swarm (brood) and severely weaken or kill the bees. So it is unlikely that I can let you see inside until later in the early spring.

Bees also need water to live, (the honey also contains moisture) and later in the year to help keep the hive cool, so I will put a small birdbath near the hives, which I will keep topped up. You can often see that the bees will drink from the water bath and

go backwards and forwards to the hive for water, especially during heavy foraging periods and when the weather is warm.

If you see the birdbath empty please refill it to help the local birds and our Bees.

Funny Honey

**I eat my peas with honey  
I've done it all my life  
It makes the peas taste funny  
But it keeps them on the knife**  
Anon

Best wishes

Brian  
Plot 76