

Never meet your heroes...

A couple of years ago, on the club twitter account we noticed a few posts from a group up in Kendal that really got us interested and so we started to follow them. The group in question are the 'Bee Team' at Heron Hill Primary School in Kendal, led by Jacqui and Karen. On Twitter they are known as [@beekeepingkids](https://twitter.com/beekeepingkids)

What got us hooked is the work they are doing with the children at the school. By establishing an apiary within their school grounds and using their own beekeeping experience and enthusiasm they have managed to set up an incredible, exciting experience with their bee club.

Giving children beekeeping skills is great for the future of beekeeping but what is really refreshing to see is how much time they spend teaching the children about the importance of all our other bees and pollinators. It is something we should all be thinking about.

But above all, the confidence, resilience, practical and life skills the children will gain from this experience are priceless. I for one know it is something I would have benefitted from, if exposed to as a youngster.

Their apiary works as an extra classroom and they have even introduced bees into many areas of the school curriculum such as maths, science, art, English.

What is not to love?



In 2019 they were deservedly awarded the DEFRA 'Bees' Needs Champions Award which recognises and celebrates exemplary initiatives to support pollinators.

These few years later we are still hooked and follow their progress intently. We had planned to go and visit a while back but with that damn Covid putting a spanner in all our lives it was put off but with restrictions easing an opportunity arose.

The club was recently invited to speak about bees to year 4 children at Stonyhurst

College. This led to an interesting talk afterwards with Angela, the teacher, who had invited us to school. They were interested in setting up an apiary for the school. Who better I thought than the 'Bee Team' to offer some advice and as a bonus, I got a chance to finally meet Jacqui and Karen in person.

What do they say? Never meet your heroes... rubbish!

To see the words, enthusiasm, passion from a twitter post come to life in person is something truly wonderful.

I think someone also said never work with animals and children. But again, the sheer the joy and pride that Jacqui and Karen showed when talking about the children and the apiary was evident and rightly so. It is an amazing, calming set up where the children can only flourish. The bee hotels were full of residents and the boxes planted for pollinators with flowers and vegetables growing. It even has an amazing glass viewing area where interested visitors can watch the team go about their work.

But what struck me most was the determination and love for what they are doing. I can only imagine the hours they put into the club but the determination in fighting for grants, the determination to do things right for the children and the bees is inspiring.

From the honest advice they gave to Angela about setting up in school to the amazing cake, it was the perfect afternoon with the two of the loveliest ladies you could meet.

We also chatted about our BBKA groups, and it is clear we are not alone in having a distinct lack of junior members in our respective clubs, but with ladies like Jacqui and Karen and the foresight of Heron Hill Primary School they are starting our future beekeepers on a wonderful grounding to hopefully carrying on keeping bees in the future. I guess it can sound quite glib to say that children are the future, but it is true. As beekeepers we love talking about bees so why not pass our knowledge and enthusiasm on to the next generation, they are the future, and it is something we should be thinking about.

So, if someone does say to you, never meet your heroes. Ignore them and give it a try... you may end up smiling all of the drive home.

