



Andrew Gough

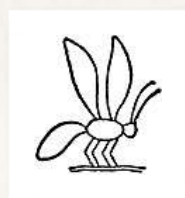
[Home](#) [About](#) [Articles](#) [Interviews](#) [TV & Film](#) [Photos](#) [Contact](#)

THE BEE: PART 3 – *BEEGOTTEN*

by ANDREW GOUGH

August 2008

My research into the Bee has revealed that this omnipresent creature has been held sacred since the year dot. Along the way I've chronicled how the diminutive insect has been incorporated into religion, government, art and literature, as well as how its symbolism – still prevalent in modern times – has largely been forgotten or misinterpreted as something else altogether. In this, the final part of the trilogy, I will review the events that have led to the Bee's present condition, and contemplate its fate in the light of its most formidable adversary yet; 21st century man.



Hieroglyphic of the Bee from ancient Egypt

Forefathers of the American Revolution incorporated the symbolism of the Bee into the very fabric of their government. This should not be regarded as unusual, however, for early American statesmen shared a bond with other more time-honoured nations that enabled Bee symbolism to be transmitted across the globe and into a new era. And that conduit was Freemasonry. The Bee

remains an important symbol in Freemasonry and was especially pervasive in Masonic drawings and documents of the 18th and 19th centuries. At the heart of the Masonic tradition are the concepts of industry and stability, virtues that were important to the Egyptians – as well as other ancient civilisations – before being adopted by the United States of America. The recurring theme stems from the stable, regular and orderly society exhibited in a Beehive. In Freemasonry, the Beehive represents all that is proper in society and could arguably be the organisation's most enduring symbol.



The Beehive – one of Freemasonry's most important symbols

Bee symbolism is a vital component of Masonic ideals, although its application within the craft is not without paradox. For instance, the 'Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry' informs us that the Bee is important to Freemasonry for the same reason it was important to the Egyptians, because of all insects; "only the Bee has a King." The quote is peculiar for reasons already discussed; namely because the Bees society is matriarchal. Are Masons refereeing to the King Bee – as in the Egyptian pharaoh who bore the title of 'Beekeeper', or do they know something we don't? Could the 'male only' tradition of Freemasonry be an extension of the movement that appears to have suppressed or at least tempered goddess worship back in pre-dynastic Egypt? The notion is speculative, but intriguing nonetheless.

The 'Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry' provides many references to the Bee, including the fact that honey is used to illustrate moral teachings. In this regard, the Masonic initiate is instructed to;

"Go to the bee, and learn how diligent she is, and what a noble work she produces; whose labour kings and private men use for their health. She is desired and honoured by all, and, though weak in strength, yet since she values wisdom she prevails."

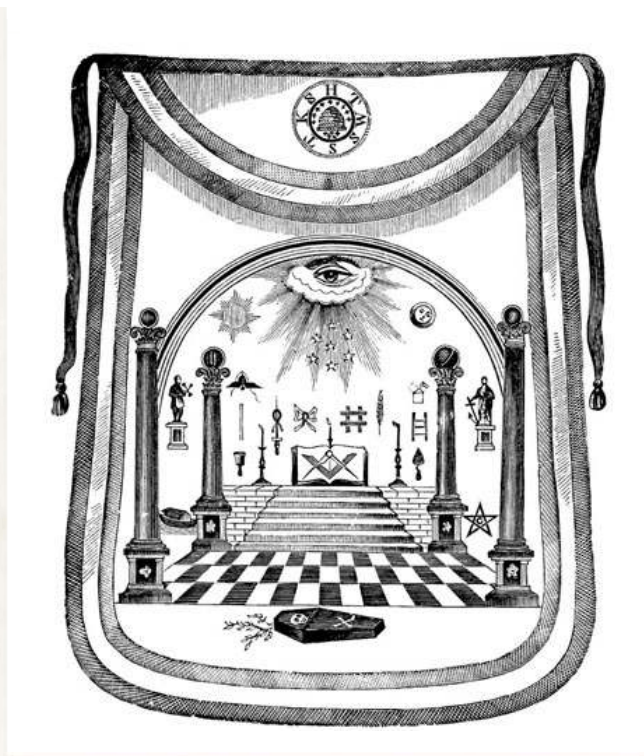
Similarly, we are told that;

“The bee hive is an emblem of industry, and recommends the practice of that virtue of all created beings... Thus was man formed for social and active life, the noblest part of the work of God; and he that will so demean himself, as not to be endeavouring to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding, may be deemed a drone in the hive of nature, a useless member of society, and unworthy of our protection as masons.”



The Masonic Trophonius of Ledadia, which commemorates two famous architects

Clearly, Freemasonry is an important reminder of the virtues that early society valued most. And this accounts for the fact that many early American Presidents were Freemasons, such as George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk and James Buchanan – to name a few. In fact, most Masonic presidents were Grand Masters of their lodges at one time or another, and as such, would have been installed into the symbolic chair of King Solomon, the historically evasive king who is said to have secured the love of the Queen of Sheba after consulting with a Bee. The Masonic regalia of early American presidents reflects the craft’s admiration of the Bee and include a Masonic apron with a prominently positioned Beehive that signified the wisdom and industry of man. The Beehive is positioned directly above an image of a coffin, a vital element of the Masonic 3rd degree ritual, and appears to allude to the Bee’s association with resurrection.



George Washington's Masonic Apron, with a Beehive located top centre

So, the forefathers of American government were stimulated by the ideals of Freemasonry, an institution that incorporated Bee symbolism into its philosophy and maintained an invisible hand in the politics of most nations. Historians inform us that French Freemasonry was particularly influential in guiding the ideals of early American statesmen, such as the political philosopher Thomas Jefferson, who shared a peculiar bond with Marquis de Lafayette, a French military officer with strong Masonic affiliations and who served in both the American and French Revolutions.

Masonic ideals permeated the genesis of American society, as they did the French Revolution, and in each instance the symbolism of the Bee was chosen to illustrate the ethos and vision of the nation. In fact, just five years after the death of George Washington, France would crown a new leader who would restore the long and illustrious legacy of the Bee in his country. I speak of Napoleon Bonaparte, who in 1804 was crowned Emperor of France in a coronation robe decorated with 300 gold Bees.



Napoleon at his Coronation, wearing a robe adorned with Bees

The Bee was a hugely important icon of Napoleon's reign, and his obsession with its symbolism led to his inevitable nickname; The Bee. Napoleon would have grown up with the symbolism of the Bee ingrained in his psyche, for his homeland of Corsica was required to pay the Romans an annual tax equivalent of £200,000 in Beeswax. The young emperor ensured that the Bee was widely adopted in his court as well as on clothing, draperies, carpets and furniture all across France. By choosing the Bee as the emblem of his reign, Napoleon was paying homage to Childeric (436 – 481), one of the 'long haired' Merovingian Kings of the region known as Gaul. When Childeric's tomb was uncovered in 1653, it was found to contain 300 golden jewels, styled in the image of a Bee. And of course, these are the same Bees that Napoleon had affixed to his coronation robe. Sadly, of the 300 Bees only two have survived.



Bee's from the Tomb of Childeric I

Fortuitously, the tomb of Childeric contained other artefacts that help put the golden amulets into a broader ritualistic context. In addition to Bees, it contained items of divination such as a crystal ball and a bull's head made of gold, amongst other unusual objects, such as a severed horse's head.

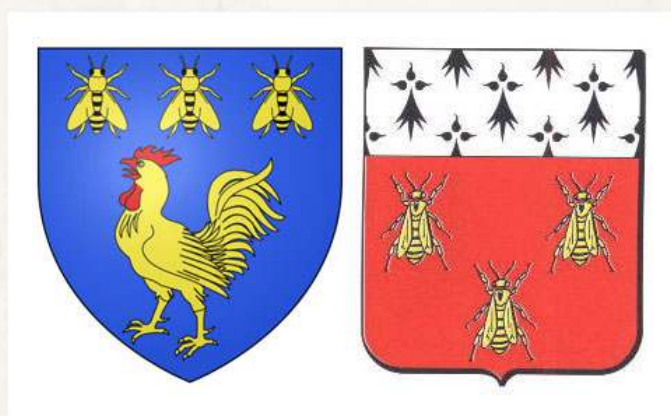
Childeric's hoard was entrusted to Leopold Wilhelm von Habsburg, a military governor of the Austrian Netherlands who was believed to have been a descendent of the Merovingian dynasty. Six years after his coronation, Napoleon married Marie-Louise, the daughter of Francis II, the last Habsburg to sit on the throne of the Holy Roman Empire.

Napoleon's choice of the Bee as the national emblem of his imperial rule speaks volumes about his desire to be associated with the Carolingians and Merovingian's; the early French kings whose funeral furniture featured Bee and cicada symbolism as a metaphor for resurrection and immortality. And as we reviewed in Part 2, the Bee and cicada represent dualism, with the Bee producing the sound of day and the cicada the sound of the night. The Bee was also a vital symbol of French industry and one of the most prominent emblems of the French Revolution (1789–1799).



The Bee / Beehive – a popular emblem of the French Revolution

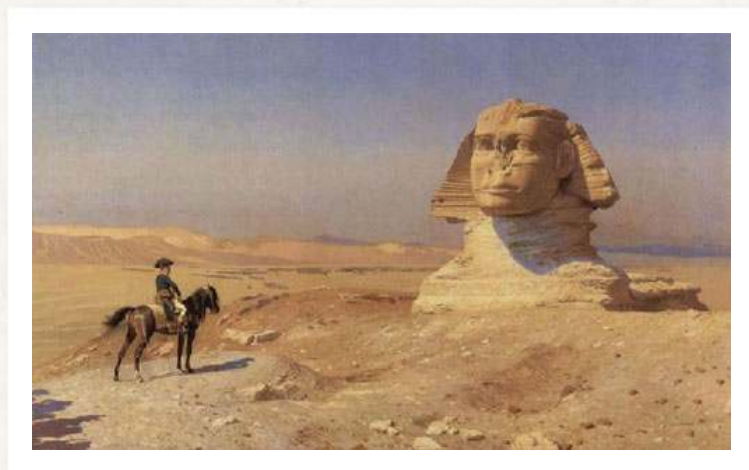
From a civic perspective the Bee was a popular emblem of Napoleon's rule, and more than 60 cities throughout France and Europe selected an officially approved heraldic shield that included three Bees as part of its template.



Two examples of French heraldry Bee shields: Mazamet and La Meilleraye de Bretagne © www.ngw.nl

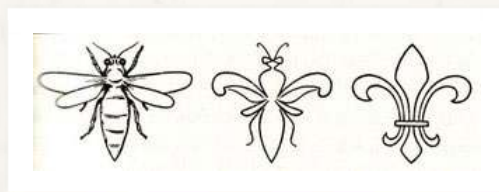
Of his many impressive feats, Napoleon is probably best remembered for a campaign he led prior to his coronation; his 1798 invasion of Egypt, a country that was a province of the Ottoman Empire at the time. One can only muse at the irony of the man they called The Bee riding horseback in the

land of the Bee, staring at an image that may have been named after the Minoans word for Bee; 'Sphex'.



Napoleon and the Sphinx, by Jean Gerome, 1862

Astonishingly, it is thought that the Bee was the precursor to the Fleur-de-lys; the national emblem of France to this day. The theory is supported by many, including the French physician, antiquary and archaeologist Jean-Jacques Chifflet. In fact Louis XII, the 35th King of France, was known as 'the father of the pope' and featured a Beehive in his Coat of Arms. Disappointingly, his efforts to have the Bee adopted as the Republic's official emblem were rejected by the National Convention due to their belief that "Bees have Queens". Nevertheless, the Bee remained a prominent element of French culture throughout the First and Second Empire (1804 to 1814, and 1852-1870) due to the enthusiastic patronage it had previously received.



The Bee as precursor to the Fleur-de-lys

As an aside, the researcher Robert Lawlor studied the design of the Bee and Fleur-de-lys in his book; 'Sacred Geometry' and concluded that the $1:\sqrt{3}$ proportion of the Fleur-de-lys is also found in the design of the Islamic Mosque. Intriguingly, the mystical dimension of Islam known as Sufism maintained a secret brotherhood called Sarmoung, or Sarman, meaning Bee. Members of the organization viewed their role as collecting the precious 'honey' of wisdom and preserving it for future generations.



Logo of the secret Sufi society with a Bee near the flame of a candle

The Fleur-de-lys is not unique to France and has in fact appeared in Egypt, Rome and Israel, amongst other places. However in France, the Bee and the Fleur-de-lys were iconic and embodied the essence of the Merovingian dynasty. And not only are the Merovingian's purported to be descendants of Jesus Christ, they also linked with a popular modern day mystery involving treasure and heretical secrets in the South of France. I speak of the mystery of Rennes-Le-Château, a curious story that has inspired hundreds of books, including Dan Brown's 'The Da Vinci Code'. The legend of Rennes-Le-Château is largely beyond the scope of our discussion, but for a few exceptions – and needless to say they are peculiar.

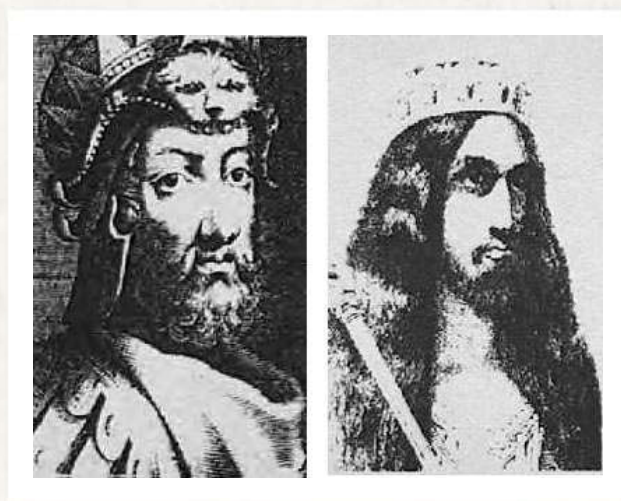


The Tour Magdela in Rennes-Le-Château; an icon of the mystery © Andrew Gough

Rennes-Le-Château is an unassuming yet sombre hilltop hamlet in the shadow of the French Pyrenees. Here, at the turn of the 20th century, a group of priests – most famously Berenger Saunière – aroused suspicion with their curious behaviour and apparent wealth, leading many to speculate that they had discovered a great heretical secret – possibly involving Mary Magdalene, the

treasure of Solomon, hoards of the Visigoth's, or a cache hidden during the French Revolution.

Although the legend of Rennes-Le-Château has struck a chord with modern audiences, its roots stem from the Merovingian kings so revered by Napoleon. And the origins of the legend go something like this: Childeric I fathered Clovis I, who succeeded his father in 481 as king of the region that now borders Belgium and France, and in the process became the first ruler to unite the previously hostile and independent Frankish tribes. A line of descendants leads to Dagobert I, king of the Franks from 629–634, who fathered Sigelbert III, who in turn fathered Dagobert II, who married Giselle de Razes, the daughter of the Count of Razes and the niece of the king of the Visigoths. The two were said to have married at Rhedae, a stronghold widely believed to be Rennes-Le-Château, although the association remains unconfirmed. Years later, in 754 AD, Childeric III died childless, marking the end of a dynasty that had been in decline since Dagobert II was assassinated near Stenay-sur-Meuse on December 23rd, 679 AD.



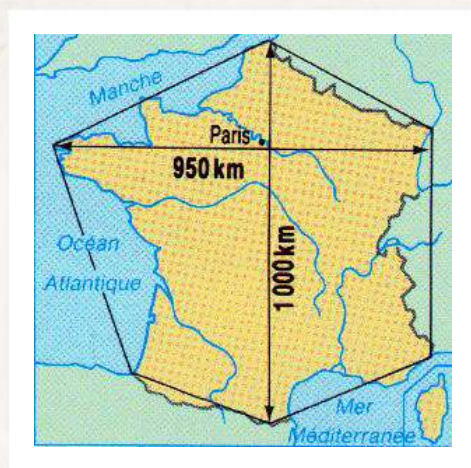
The long haired Merovingian Kings: Childeric I and III

The belief that the Merovingians were special, and that they represented a royal bloodline, led Napoleon to commission an extensive analysis of their lineage. Fascination with the mysterious line of kings continued into the 20th century when a Frenchman by the name of Louis Vazart founded an organization based in Stenay-sur-Meuse called 'Cercle Saint Dagobert II', that specialized in the study of the Merovingians and Dagobert II in particular. For its logo, Vazart chose an image of a Bee inside of a 6-sided cone, or Hexagon – the shape of a Beehive cell, surrounded by a circle. The design recalls the Mayan deity Hu-Nab-Ku, whose name means 'magical body' and whose symbol was a square / pyramid shape within a circle.



Logo of Cercle Saint Dagobert II; A Bee in a Hexagon

Vazart's selection of the Bee is entirely consistent with the subject matter his organisation was studying, for France is known as l'Hexagone, due to its natural 6-sided shape. Coincidentally, the centre line of l'Hexagone closely mirrors the old Paris Meridian, passing near Paris in the north and Rennes-Le-Château in the south. The Paris Meridian – an imaginary arc that measures the hours of the day – was later replaced by London's Greenwich Meridian as the international standard for time keeping. However, in recent years the Paris Meridian has been romanticized and somewhat merged with the notion of the Rose-Line, a mythical sort of ley-line that allegedly connects esoterically significant sites from Roslyn Chapel in Scotland to Saint Sulpice in Paris, and on to Rennes-Le-Château in the South of France. Despite its spurious invention, it is worth mentioning that the two sites that top and tail the Rose-Line; Roslyn Chapel and Rennes-Le-Château, each feature Bee symbolism in rather bizarre ways. And while we have only begun to unravel Rennes-Le-Château's connection with Bees, it would be a shame if we did not pause long enough to first discuss its Rose-Line counterpart in the north.

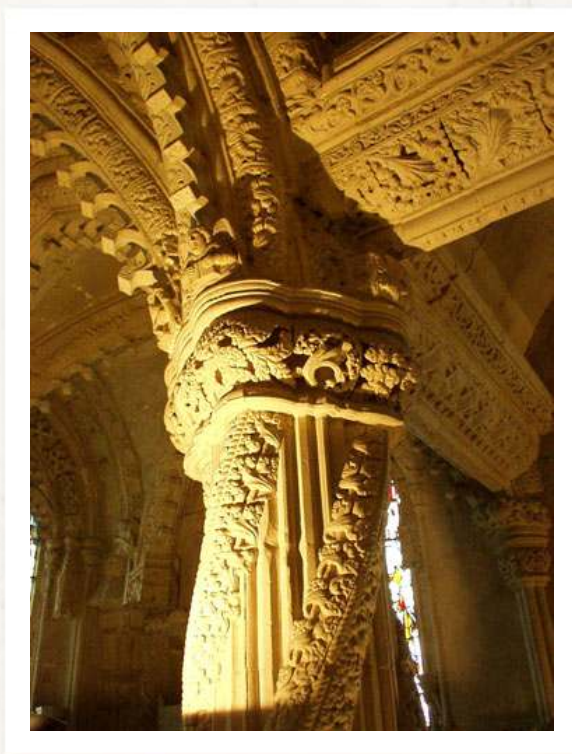


France – believed to be in the shape of a natural Hexagon

© www.sacrednumber.co.uk

Roslyn Chapel was founded by William Sinclair, 1st Earl of Caithness, in the 15th century and is renowned for what many believe to be an elaborate display of Masonic symbolism. In fact, some believe that the chapel contains treasures of the Knights Templar or even the Holy Grail itself. Hyperbole aside, Roslyn Chapel does in fact contain a splendidly carved column known as the

Apprentice Pillar, or the Princes Pillar as it was called in more ancient accounts. The pillar, which stands to the right of the church altar, is adorned with what is generally regarded as Tree of Life symbolism; two dragons of Yggdrasil – the World Tree according to Norse Mythology – reside at its base while a masonry vine spirals vertically around the column, drawing our attention to the ceiling. The Tree of Life symbolism has its roots – no pun intended – in the Jewish Cabala, a discipline that has much to say about the Bee, as we shall soon see.



The Princes Pillar – Roslyn Chapel, Scotland

Recent theories put forth by Alan Butler and John Ritchie in their book; 'Rosslyn Revealed: A Library in Stone', suggest that the ceiling above the Princes Pillar represents "paradise" on earth. And serendipitously – or allegedly by design – on the roof of chapel we find a curious stone Beehive with a lone flower petal entrance that was home to Bees for as long as anyone can remember – as least until they were removed in the 1990's. However, the existence of the Beehive in the proximity of the vine recalls a biblical account of a staff that grows into a great tree, with; "a vine twisted around it and honey coming from above." As is often the case, hundreds of years on the original intent of such symbolism is often forgotten. And in this instance, one is forgiven for speculating that the design of the roof, ceiling and Princes Pillar were intended to reflect the role of Bees and honey in the greater context of Paradise and the World Tree of Life.



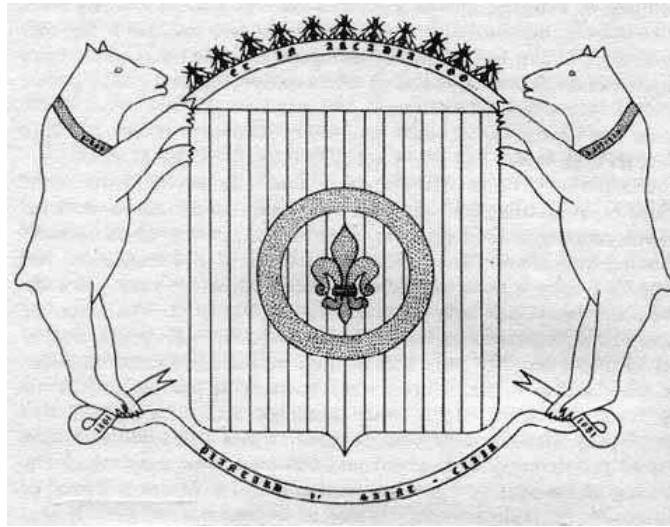
Roslyn Chapel and the entrance to the stone Beehive. © Filip Coppens

Curiously, the association of the Tee of Life with hexagonal Beehive symbolism is not unique. In fact, it is featured on the new Euro coin, reinforcing the importance of the ancient symbolism to this day.



The new Euro Coin: Tree of Life Symbolism within a hexagon
© www.sacrednumber.co.uk

From Roslyn Chapel in the north, the mythical Rose-Line reunites with Rennes-Le-Château in the south, the village with alleged Merovingian origins. History informs us that the Merovingian dynasty died out with Dagobert II. However, this has not prevented others from claiming descent, such as Pierre Plantard, a Frenchman who in the later half of 20th century promoted his association with the Merovingians – as well as with Rennes-Le-Château, and was regarded by some as the last direct descendant of Jesus Christ. Plantard also claimed to have been a Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, a controversial society with considerable interests in the Merovingian lineages commissioned by Napoleon. Curiously, Plantard's family crest featured both the Fleur-de-lys and the Bee – eleven Bees in fact – an important number in Rennes-Le-Château mythology.



Plantard Family Crest

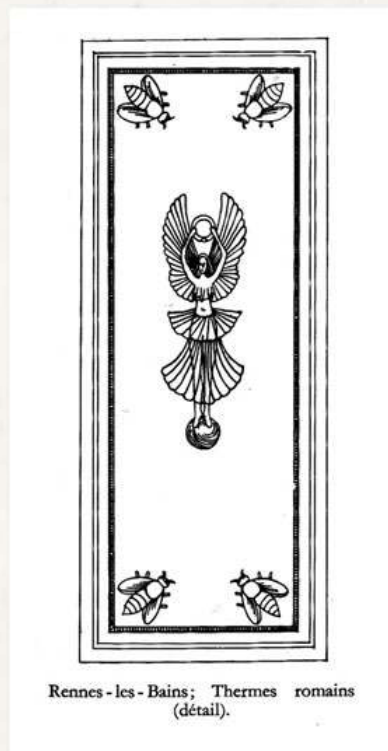
The Plantard family crest is strangely reminiscent of images of Jesus Christ crucified on a 6-sided Fleur-de-lys cross, complete with 11 stars – similar to Plantard’s 11 Bees. The artistry recalls the hexagonal symbolism of the Beehive as well as the Bee itself, the very image that the Fleur-de-lys is thought to conceal in the first place. Does Plantard’s family crest hint at a bloodline leading back to Jesus Christ, as symbolised by the Bee and the Fleur-de-lys – a hidden bloodline that the man himself promoted throughout his lifetime? To this day, as many believe this to be true as do not.



Christ crucified on a Fleur-de-lys shaped cross

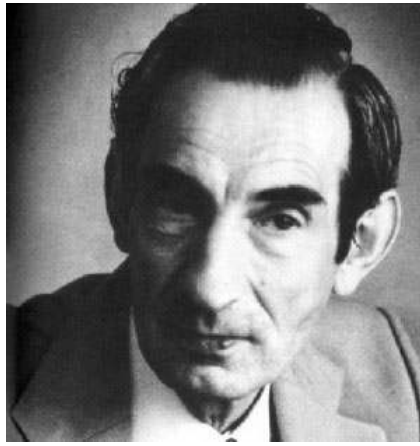
One of the more interesting links between the Bee and Rennes-Le-Château involves Henry Lincoln, co-author of the 1982 book ‘Holy Blood and the Holy Grail’ – the international bestseller that put Rennes-Le-Château on the map with English speaking audiences around the world. Back in the early days of the mystery, Lincoln had been in contact with the French author Gerard de Sède, whose 1967 book ‘The Accursed Treasure of Rennes-Le-Château’, had catapulted the story to

national prominence. The story goes that Lincoln purchased de Sède's book while on holiday in France and succeeded in deciphering one of its peculiar parchments, giving spark to the flame of the mystery that still burns today; that is, just what – if anything – do the coded parchments conceal? Lincoln later came across a 'Book Club' version with a strange photograph of Bees that was not referenced anywhere in the text. Curiously, the title beneath the photo simply stated 'Rennes-les-Bains – Thermes Romains', and no other reference to the photograph was made.



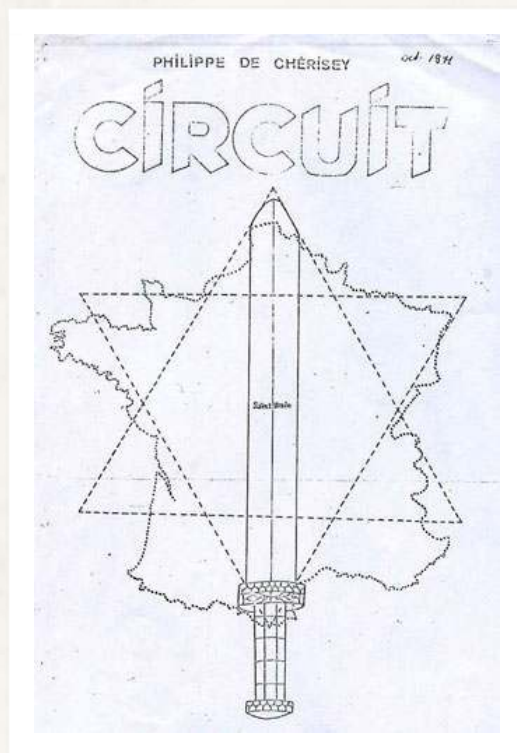
The anomaly is recounted in Lincoln's book, 'The Key to the Sacred Pattern'. Essentially, the photo depicts a wooden panel on a dining room door with four Bees, one in each corner, and in the middle, a winged female standing on a globe holding a wreath above her head like an Egyptian dancing goddess – a motif we now associate with Bee goddesses, as identified by scholars. Later, de Sède provided Lincoln with material for his BBC television special about Rennes-Le-Château, including photos taken by Plantard that de Sède's had used in his book.

In his book, Lincoln recounts how the back of the photos were simply stamped with a seal saying "PLANTARD", along with notation that revealed that the woman in the centre of the photograph was named Europa – the legendary priestess who was seduced by Zeus while in the form of a bull, and that the images of Bees represented apiculture. However, it is said that the notation on the back of the photographs also included the phrase; "We are the Beekeepers" – a detail not revealed by Lincoln in his book. The expression recalls the 'Beekeeper' title held by Egyptian Pharaohs and begs the question, was Pierre Plantard inferring the he was a Beekeeper – and if so, of what?



Pierre Plantard. A Beekeeper – but of what – the Priory of Sion?

Before departing the enigma of Pierre Plantard, it is worth mentioning Philippe de Cherisey, a friend of Plantard's who many believe created the documents that Plantard used to claim descent from Dagobert II. In any event, de Cherisey founded a magazine called *Circuit*, whose distribution was said to include the membership of the Priory of Sion. The magazine is of interest, not just for its alluring readership, but for the fact that it featured a hexagon imprinted over an image of France with a sword symbolically piercing its centre, echoing the old Paris Meridian.



The cover of Philippe De Cherisey's *Circuit*

So the founders of the Rennes-Le-Château mystery – real or imagined – believed that Bees and hexagonal Beehive symbolism were quite important. They may have even considered themselves

Beekeepers – but of what exactly remains to be determined. The notion is serendipitous, however, for the keeper of Childric’s Bees after they were unearthed from his tomb was a Habsburg; a ruling dynasty that governed Europe for centuries and which is tied to the mystery of the Rennes-Le-Château. It is said that Saunière was repeatedly visited by a Habsburg, who ultimately informed the priest where he would find his ‘treasure’. In other words, it was no accident that the priest found what he did. The theory purports that he was simply ‘reclaiming’ a previously hidden artefact, aided by a family of great nobility – the Habsburgs.

In ‘The Key to the Sacred Pattern’, Lincoln also draws attention to a series of Beehive inspired stone huts called “Capitelles”, not dissimilar to the Clochán stone huts in Ireland, as discussed in Part 2. The Beehive structures are found near a village called Coustaussa – site of a macabre assassination of a priest, and friend of Saunière’s, who appears to have become fatally entwined in the cover up of his friend’s discovery. The Beehive huts, which are largely unexcavated, are part of what is known locally as the “Great Camp”. The curious structures are one of the few artefacts that lend credence to the belief that Rennes-Le-Château may in fact have been the ancient and formidable Visigoth settlement of Rhedae. Additionally, the Beehive inspired huts overlook Perch Cardu, a sacred mountain that has long been the playground of zealous treasure hunters, and which only recently has spawned claims that the tombs of Jesus Christ and / or Mary Magdalene have been discovered there and that the ‘Temple of Solomon’ resides nearby.



Beehive styled huts near Rennes-Le-Château – Perch Cardu in the distance © Andrew Gough

Henry Lincoln is not the only writer to feature Bees in his books on Rennes-Le-Château. Christopher Dawes, author of the superb Rennes-Le-Château adventure yarn ‘Rat Scabies and the Holy Grail’, inexplicably encountered dead Bees throughout his research for the book. There are many instances of Rennes-Le-Château being linked with Bees, one notable example being the infamous Latin expression that hangs over the door of the village church of Saint Mary Magdalene; ‘TERRIBILIS EST LOCUS ISTE’, meaning This Place Is Terrible. The biblical phrase refers to the words that Jacob spoke when he awoke from his dream about a ladder that reached to heaven. To

this end, Genesis 35:1 provides the reference;

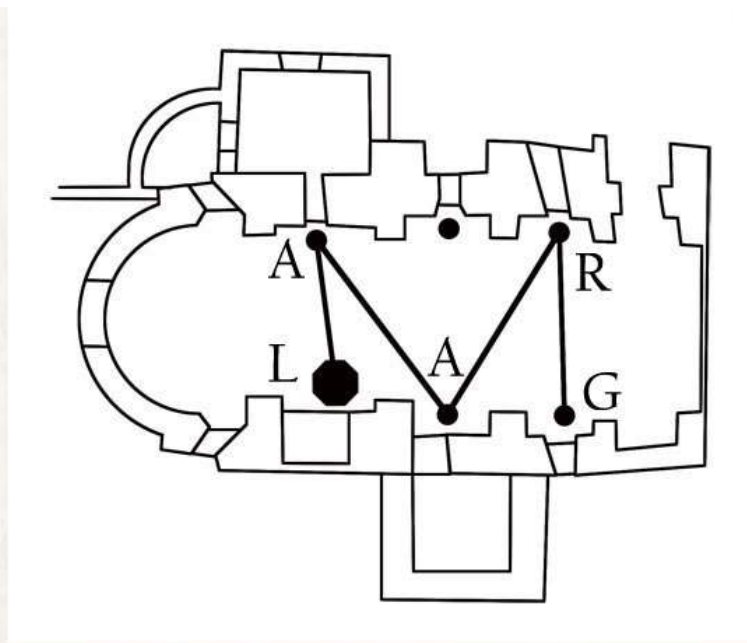
“And God said unto **Jacob**, Arise, go up to **Bethel**, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God.”

So Jacob recounted that the place was called Bethel and he had a stone erected commemorating the spot where he had fallen asleep. The biblical story relates to the Bee in that Bethel, or Bytal in Hebrew, means ‘House of God’, and the letter ‘Y’ and the letter ‘T’ are interchangeable, rendering the translation ‘Bit-al’, and ‘Bit’ in ancient Egyptian means Bee. The translation also suggests that House of God may represent a repository of knowledge – as in the Beehive. Additionally, and somewhat bizarrely, Bethel carries the same numeric value as the word ‘meteorite’, which harkens back to the notion that Bees are related to sacred stones, and stones from heaven in particular, which we will discuss more fully, shortly.



“This Place is Terrible” – above the church in Rennes-Le-Château © Andrew Gough

Finally, our last association with Rennes-Le-Château and the Bee is even more obtuse than the others, for it involves the Holy Grail, an object of desire long associated with the South of France. The well worn legend of Rennes-Le-Château purports that Saunière discovered a heretical secret and / or treasure of considerable importance while renovating his church. As previously noted, he may have been told where to look by a Habsburg; a dynasty linked with Bees. With his new found riches – apparently as a result of his ‘discovery’ – the priest renovated his village and church in a manner that seems gaudy and sensational to our 21st century eyes. The renovations included the encoding of the number 11 – as in the number of Bees found on Plantard’s family crest, and the number 22 – the feast day of Mary Magdalene, and an important number in the Cabala. As part of his renovation, the priest repositioned the statues of Saints in his church in such a way that when connected in an unbroken line, or ‘M’ shape, the first letter of each saints name spells GRAAL – or Grail in French, i.e. St Germaine, St Roch, St Antoine de Padoue, St Antoine, St Luc.



The Grail – commemorated in the Church in Rennes-Le-Château

The region around Rennes-Le-Château is ripe with Grail legends. In fact history's most renowned Grail hunter, the German Otto Rahn, explored the province extensively during the early part of the 20th century. Rahn was inspired by his understanding that Grail Romances such as Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival were written by authors who specialized in history – not fiction, and that they portrayed real historical events, places and people. To this end, Rahn believed that the Cathar fortress of Montségur was Eschenbach's historical Grail castle, the Mountain of Salvation visited by Parzival as part of his initiation into the mysteries of the Grail. While today's scholars agree that the region is indeed steeped in Grail legend, most support an alternative site to Rahn's Mountain of Salvation, and that is Montreal de Sos. The archeologically rich cave is nestled in the side of a rocky outcrop in what is known as the 'Royal Mountain', in the nearby region of Vicdessos.



Montreal de Sos – A Grail initiation cave in the 'Royal Mountain' © Andrew Gough

Much has been written about the evocative drawings on the walls of Montreal de Sos, for they mirror many of objects described in the Grail procession of Chrétien de Troyes provocative but unfinished work; 'Perceval, the Story of the Grail' – the first ever Grail Romance (1190).



Recreation of the Grail etchings on the wall at Montreal de Sos |
A Photograph close up of the Lance in the actual cave

A little known fact is that de Troyes was unable to start until he travelled to Spain and studied with a Cabalist, leading scholars to conclude that the Cabala uniquely enables the understanding of esoteric subjects such as the Grail. Some years later, Wolfram von Eschenbach wrote the Grail Romance 'Parzival', and in his account we are told that the Grail is a stone from heaven. This is interesting, given that the word 'meteorite' carries the same numeric value (443) as 'Bethel' – which translates as Bee in Egyptian.

Montreal de Sos is a double entrance cave in the tradition of the Bee goddess cave on the Greek island of Ithaca, and its location is intriguing, for it faces a peculiar looking stone in the distance known as the Dolmen of Sem, meaning the 'Palace of Samson'. In Part 2, we discussed how the reference to Samson recalls the legend of Bees coming forth from the body of a lion. Might Bees be associated with the Palace of Samson, too? The stone is curious in several respects. Firstly, it only vaguely resembles a dolmen, and secondly it is positioned in such a way as to point directly at two intriguing landmarks – each in opposite directions. To the Northwest, the Palace of Samson points at a tiny village named Orus. And to the Southeast, it points at a nearby mountain range whose summit is called the Forest of the Grail, and whose valley is known as the Pass of the Grail.



The Palace of Samson – marker stone or dolmen?
 Montreal de Sos is in the low lying hill in the centre in the distance |
 Orus, or Horus is to the right | the Pass of the Grail is to the left © Andrew Gough

The researcher André Douzet wrote about the curious stone in his book ‘The Wanderings of the Grail’, and observed that Orus transcribed as Horus – the name of the falcon headed Egyptian god, when spoken in French, and lest we forget, Egyptian Pharaohs were considered the ‘living Horus’ and carried the title of ‘Beekeeper’. When I explored the mountain a couple of years ago, I discovered that at the centre of the Pass of the Grail, in the middle of the Forest of the Grail, at the top of the mountain in a totally secluded path at the precise point where one would be aligned with the Palace of Samson and the village of Orus in the distance, an apiary – a group of Beehives – obstructed the path.



Beehives in the centre of the Pass of the Grail © Andrew Gough

Although the presence of Bees in the middle of a mountain top path is in itself not significant – as apiaries are frequently positioned in out of the way places such as this – it is serendipitous, for it calls attention to the notion that Bees are not only linked with sacred stones, they are frequently

associated with lines; Bee-lines. And as I retreated down the mountain, defeated by my fear of being 'stung' should I attempt to manoeuvre past the hives, I reflected on the symbolism of the Bee for the very first time.



Entering the Forest of the Grail | A view of The Pass of the Grail © Andrew Gough

The Bee in Esoteric Studies

Many disciplines offer insight into the study of the Bee, such as medicine, science, literature and religion – as we have seen. In the past, these fields of study drew upon equal measures of science, mystery and magic, however today any mystical elements have been relegated to the periphery of the mainstream. The study of these elements is known as the 'esoteric'; the ancient and often complex decomposition of life's mysteries. Many 'schools' of thought fall within the esoteric genre, but perhaps none as neatly as the Cabala. At first glance, the Cabala might seem like a curious choice for studying the Bee, however as previously noted, the author of the first ever Grail Romance – Chrétien de Troyes, needed to study with a Cabalist before he was able to write about the Grail. Why? Because many believe that the Cabala is the context by which complicated esoteric symbolism can best be explained.

The analysis of the Bee in the context of the Cabala will be explored more fully on another occasion. However, I have included a couple of examples at this time in hopes of conveying the general approach and method involved. On an elementary level, the Cabalistic tradition places importance on the numeric value of each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The discipline is referred to as Gematria – or the language of numbers, and stipulates that numbers are absolute while words are subject to variations in spelling, language and pronunciation. It also suggests that words with the same numeric value warrant further consideration and study. For example, we previously reviewed the synchronicity of words with the same numeric value when we observed how 'Bethel' – which means Bee in Egyptian, carries the same numeric value (443) as 'meteorite', a sacred stone from 'heaven' that is linked with Bees in mythology and literature.

Decimal	Hebrew	Glyph
1	Aleph	א
2	Bet	ב
3	Gimel	ג
4	Daled	ד
5	He	ה
6	Waw	ו
7	Zayin	ז
8	Heth	ח
9	Teth	ט
10	Yodh	י
20 or 500	Kaph	כ, ק
30	Lamed	ל
40 or 600	Mem	מ, מן
50 or 700	Nun	נ, נן
60	Samekh	ס
70	Ayin	ע
80 or 800	Pe	פ, פּ
90 or 900	Tsadi	צ, צץ
100	Qoph	ק
200	Resh	ר
300	Shin	ש
400	Taw	ת

Table of Gematria | Hebrew letter relationships

In our brief examination of the Cabala and the Bee we will review two examples of Gematria; first a letter and then a word. The Hebrew letter Alef | Aleph carries the meaning ‘thousand’ and both the Proto-Sinatic Hieroglyphic and its Pro-Canaanite symbol depict a bulls head, recalling the fact that 1000 Bees – or resurrected souls, are produced by the sacrifice of an Apis bull. Additionally, Christ – the saviour archetype of Osiris, renowned for his resurrection, is written in Hebrew as ‘QRST’ and carries the value 1000. And of course Osiris has strong links with the Bee, as we have seen. The depiction of a Hebrew letter with the value 1000 and an image of a Bulls head, coupled with the theme of regeneration and resurrection, may be coincidental, that is certainly a possibility, but at the same time the synchronicity hints at a knowledge once known to an initiate but now forgotten.

Symbol	Name				Numerical Value	Literal Meaning	Scripts							
	Hebrew	Akkonazet	Unicode	Hebrew Transliteration			Hebrew		Ancient					
							Cursive	Rashi	Proto-Sinatic Hieroglyphics	Proto-Canaanite	Phoenician	Paleo-Hebrew	Aramaic	
א	alef	alef	alef	-10	1	n. thousand, myriad (alef)	𐤀	א	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀

The letter Alef letter (א) means 1000; the number of Bees produced by the death of an Apis bull

In the previous example we looked at a single letter in the Cabala and now we shall review a word; ‘Deborah’, a biblical figure who may have represented the title / office of Bee Goddess, given that her name in Hebrew – DBVRH, means Bee. The word ‘DBVRH’ carries the value 217 in the Cabala, a number related to the sound ‘Hum’, which in turn is associated with Zumbido, or ‘Zum Zum’ – that which existed first – before the number 1 was created and which represents the infinite;

a humming sound related to the primordial act of creation that recalls the sound of the Bee. The word Briah also carries the value 217 and shares a similar meaning with respect to the act of creation, as it is known as the 'world of creation' and is associated with Archangels – figures with wings whose origins may have been inspired by earlier depictions of Bee Gods and Goddesses. In the Cabala, aspects of Briah and other words carrying the value 217, such as Deborah, would be studied for interrelatedness and further insight.

It is intriguing that the Cabala highlights the sound of the Bee, given that this is one of the most important yet underdeveloped aspects of Bee research. Greg Taylor, author and owner of an esoteric news source known as [The Daily Grail](#), explored the subject in 'Darklore Volume 1', and made some intriguing observations. In addition to experiencing the sound of Bees during activities such as Yoga, near death experiences (NDE's), and alleged UFO abductions, Taylor observed that the sound of the Bee is frequently experienced before and during apparitions. For instance at Fátima, site of the famous 1917 apparition, witnesses such as Maria Carreira recalled hearing the sound of Bees in the presence of what was believed to be the Virgin Mary. Taylor describes the phenomena;

“Maria subsequently described this phenomenon, from the June apparition, to another investigator with these words: “Then we began to hear something like this, in the manner of a very fine voice, but what it said could not be comprehended or put into words, for it was like the buzzing of a bee.”

Taylor adds;

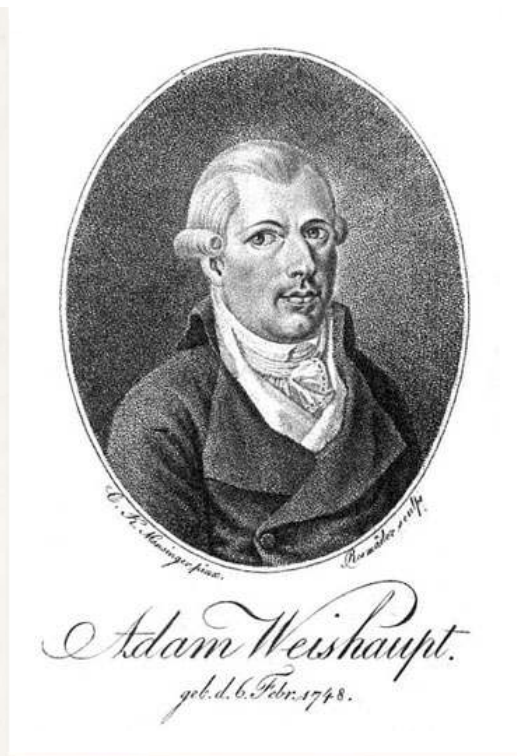
“Another witness described it as “the buzzing of a fly inside an empty barrel, but without articulation of words,” and on another occasion as an indefinable sound, heard throughout the duration of the experience, like that which is heard next to a hive, but altogether more harmonious. And another witness; “I thought I heard at that moment, a little wind, a zoa-zoa sound. While Lucia was listening to a response, it seemed there was a buzzing sound like that of a cicada.”



Pictures of the witnesses at Fátima

State changes in consciousness are known to occur naturally in about 2% of the world's population. Alternatively, they can be triggered by the consumption of organic substances containing hallucinogens, such as mushrooms. This phenomenon is discussed at length in Graham Hancock's book 'Supernatural', which suggests that the shamanic tradition provides a gateway to a consistent, if not repeatable set of otherworldly sights, sounds and sensations. Could ancient man's initial fascination with the Bee derive from the buzzing / humming sounds experienced during shamanic ritual?

Other schools of esoteric thought provide insight into the Bee, or have incorporated it into their ideological framework, such as Freemasonry, the secret Sufi Society, the Priory of Sion and the Cercle Saint Dagobert II, to recall a few. But perhaps none are as infamous as the Order of the Illuminati, a 'secret' society founded by the German philosopher Johann Adam Weishaupt on 1 May, 1776. Curiously, Weishaupt had considered naming his order 'Bees' – not 'Order of the Illuminati'. This was, in all likelihood, due to his strong Masonic affiliations and appreciation of the Greek mysteries, which of course are heavily laden with Bee symbolism. In any event, the goal of the order was nothing less than world domination and consisted of a complicated network of spies acting anonymously in what has been described as a "cell-like" structure, complete with matrix reporting to unknown superiors. Not surprisingly, from about this time onward we begin to see the Beehive depicted as a metaphor for the control of the proletariat, a word in Latin meaning "offspring". The definition is rather appropriate when we consider that a typical Beehive houses tens of thousands of newborn Bees.



Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Order of the Illuminati

It is interesting to ponder what would have happened had Weishaupt named his society Bees. It's also interesting to speculate what he intended to convey by introducing the order on the 1st of May. In the Pagan world, the 1st of May represents regeneration and is known in Gaelic as the festival of Beltane. The 1st of May is also the day of Taurus the bull, which of course symbolises regeneration, and is associated with the Bee. However, May 1st is best known as 'Workers Day', an important day in the Soviet Union, for instance, whose political and labour structure – Communism, was designed to emulate the order of the Beehive. In fact, May 1st remains the day of the Worker Bee – as it were, and is known as Labour Day in America and International Workers' Day in many other parts of the world.



May Day: A celebration of the contribution of the 'worker Bees'

The inclusion of Bee symbolism in Communist ideals is understandable given the orderly and altruistic model of society that the Beehive represents. However, it is apparent from the heraldic shields of regions that later practiced Communism that the Bee had been an important icon for some time, as the 1777 Russian shield below confirms. The proliferation of Bee symbolism around this time – and across the globe mind you – from France to America and from Russia to Weishaupt's Order of the Illuminati is astonishing. Might Freemasonry be the tie that binds the almost viral expansion of Bee symbolism at this time?

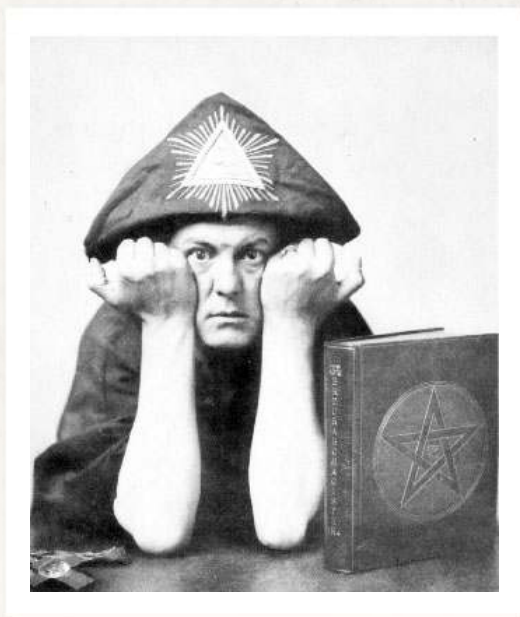


Russian Civic Heraldry dated 10 March 1777

© www.ngw.nl

The work of Weishaupt underwent a resurgence of sorts a century later when the British occultist Aleister Crowley – an important member of occult organizations such as Golden Dawn and Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), rose to prominence as 'The Wickedest Man in the World'. Not

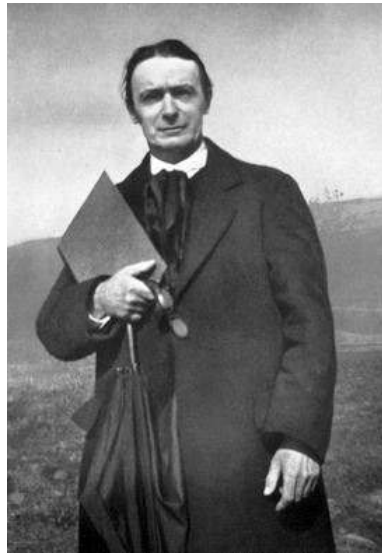
surprisingly, Crowley was renowned for his unusual Beehive inspired headdress, representing the esoteric wisdom of an initiate.



Aleister Crowley and his Beehive headdress

Numerous individuals have incorporated the Bee into their own esoteric framework – not just orders and societies. Crowley was one; another was Rudolph Steiner, an Austrian philosopher and esotericist who in 1923 presented a series of nine celebrated lectures on the Bee. Steiner was an esoteric master and a social thinker like few before him – or after – and believed that Bees were models of all that was important in life. His fascination, if not obsession with the Bee was evident as early as 1908 when he spoke in Berlin about the significance of the Bee relative to man;

“The consciousness of a Beehive, not the individual Bees, is of a very high nature. Humankind will not obtain the wisdom of such consciousness until the next major revolutionary stage – that of Venus – which will come when the evolution of the earth stage has finished. Then human beings will possess the consciousness necessary to construct things with a material they create within themselves.”



Rudolph Steiner: philosopher, literary scholar, educator, artist, playwright, social thinker, and esotericist

One of the reasons why the Bee is associated with esoteric and spiritual pursuits is that the Bee serves others before it serves itself. The Bee is altruistic to a fault, a characteristic observed by St. John Chrysostom, the 4th century archbishop of Constantinople and early father of the Church whose famous oratory skills earned him the name ‘golden mouth’;

“The bee is more honored than other animals, not because she labors, but because she labors for others. Indeed, the bee works unceasingly for the common good of the hive, and obeys without question what sometimes appears to be an inequitable hierarchy.”

In fact, the function of the Bee has been termed the ‘healer of the people’, and what better definition for a shaman, pope or esoteric mentor, whose spiritual guidance and insight is vital to the greater community?

The Bee in Folklore and Modern Society

We’ve reviewed the Cabala and other organizations that have incorporated Bee symbolism into their esoteric framework. However appreciation of the Bee is not entirely lost on society at large. For instance, many of today’s most popular expressions recall the Bee’s importance in folklore and myth. Take for example the phrase ‘Making a Bee-Line’. The Cabala would interpret the Bee-Line as representing the pilgrim’s path, the Duat of the Egyptians and the Labyrinth of the Greeks – the middle path representing balance and the Grail, the path of Osiris and the path linking the terrestrial and the celestial; the path of resurrection. In short, the Cabala would say that the Bee-line is the path of the initiate. But there are other, less esoteric explanations of the phrase.

It is difficult to say where the notion of a ‘Bee-line’ originated, although it most certainly derives from the unique behaviour of Bees. For instance, when a Bee finds a source of nectar it returns to

the hive and communicates the location to the other Bees using a technique called the waggle dance, a phenomenon that was first explained by Nobel Prize winner and Bee researcher Karl Von Frisch. Thanks to the waggle dance, other Bees are able to fly directly to the source of the food – which could be as far as 3 miles away, by making a ‘Bee-line’ straight for it.

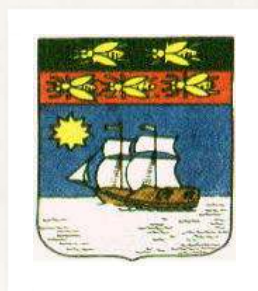


Depiction of what Karl Von Frisch termed the Bee’s Waggle Dance

The website ‘Phrase Finder’ tells us that the phrase Bee-line; “is American and all the early citations of it come from the USA.” The source cites as reference the Davenport Daily Leader newspaper from January 1808, which states;

“Gustav Stengel Sr., of Rock Island, was thrown from his sleigh on Third Avenue in that city yesterday afternoon, the horse becoming frightened and turning abruptly, ripping the cutter. The horse made a bee line for home.”

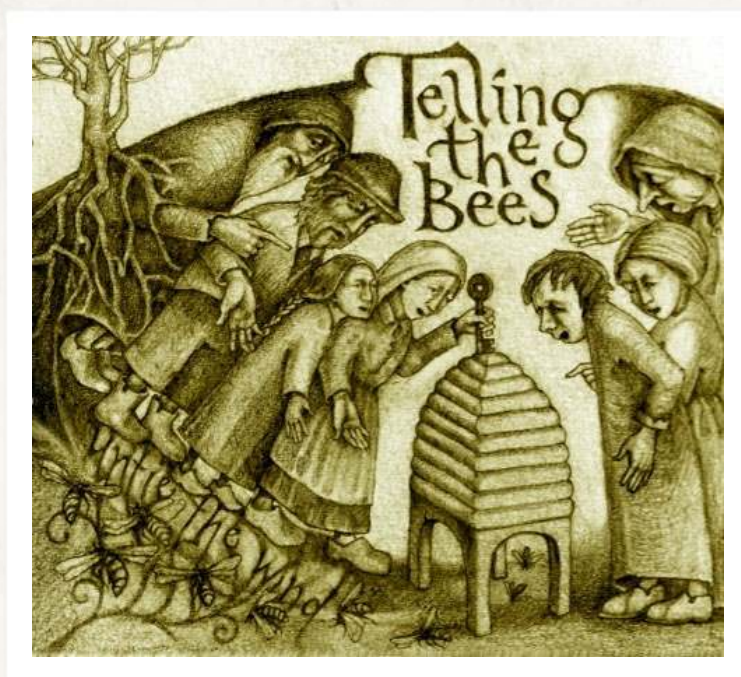
The phrase – which simply means to move directly and without hesitation, remains popular to this day. However, it is unlikely that the phrase is American in origin or a 19th century invention. Quite the opposite actually, for its origins appear to stem from the time of the Phoenicians – the ancient sea-faring people who are said to have released Bees from their ships when approaching land in order to observe the direction that the land sensing swarm would travel. The Phoenicians would then make a ‘Bee-line’ in the direction of the Bees in the hope that land would soon follow. Surely, this would be a more likely candidate for the origins of the phrase, and ancient shields of strategic port cities such as Port Au Prince in Hatti seem to suggest that this may be the case.



Do ancient shields such as this allude to the practice of using Bees to locate land?

Regardless of its origins, the phrase Bee-line appears linked with the custom of ‘Telling the Bees’. The aptly named phrase consists of the practice of promptly informing Bees of a death in the family in order to preempt them from departing the hive once they realize they have lost their ‘keeper’. The custom is more common than you would think, even to this day, as recounted by the American writer Mark Twain in his famous novel, ‘Huckleberry Finn’;

“And he said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the bees must be told about it before sun-up next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die. Jim said bees wouldn’t sting idiots; but I didn’t believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn’t sting me.”



The ancient custom of ‘Telling the Bees’

In China, Beehives are turned a different direction after the death of their keeper, hinting at a superstition that harkens back to a more ancient custom. Details vary, but the essence remains the same – tell the Bees, and quickly. In England circa 1840, a woman inquired if the Bees had been informed of the death of their keeper and upon learning they had not, proceeded to prepare a dish of spice cake and sugar and presented it to the hive while jingling her keys and reciting the following rhyme;

“Honey bees, Honey bees, hear what I say!
Your Master J.A. has passed away.
But his wife now begs you will freely stay,
And still gather honey for many a day.
Bonny bees, Bonny bees, hear what I say.”

The notion that Bees and death are closely related manifests in a variety of ways. For instance, when England's Queen Mother died in 2004, newspapers from across Europe produced illustrations portraying her as a Queen Bee, guided up to heaven on the wings of Bees. The depiction appears related to a superstition from the Middle Ages, and one that is still prevalent in parts of America, England and Germany that states that if Bees were not promptly informed of the death of their master they would fly up to the sky and seek them out there. In a similar vein, the expression "To fall into a jar of honey" is a common metaphor for "to die".

However, the custom of 'Telling the Bees' is not limited to deaths, as any information deemed important must routinely and swiftly be shared with the Bees. The practice is curious and may be a memory of the act of confiding in Bee Priestesses, shamans and priests, as practiced in ancient Delphi, Siwa and other Oracle centres around the ancient world, as well as in modern institutions, such as the Catholic Church's confessional.

Bee customs continue to play an active role in modern times. For example, the practice of holding a competition called a 'Spelling Bee' where each contestant is challenged to correctly spell a word out loud, can be traced back to the early 19th century and remains a popular pastime in English speaking cultures today. Interestingly, the whole concept of a Spelling 'Bee' refers to a gathering where a specific function is being performed – i.e. a Quilting Bee – and thus embodies the orderly behaviour that routinely occurs in a Beehive.

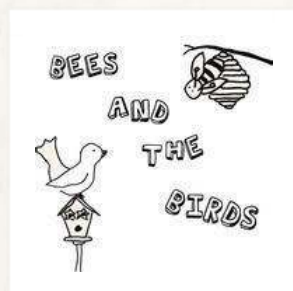


Spelling Bees – a popular pastime

Another custom involves presenting a bride with a Bee skep as a wedding present and token of good luck in her marriage. Similarly, it is customary to place a piece of wedding cake at the entrance to the Beehive after the ceremony. Yet another custom relates to death – or at least a funeral – underscoring the perceived relevance of Bees during life's most notable milestones. In this instance, it is customary to leave a biscuit dipped in wine at the funeral for the Bees to enjoy once the guests have departed. Bees are also believed to be good predictors of the weather, for example, and many have observed that they choose to remain close to the hive when rain is imminent.

Perhaps the most famous Bee folk tale is the expression; 'The Birds and the Bees', a phrase commonly used to describe the fundamentals of sexual union, as a parent would share with a child in the context of sex education. The source of the expression is unknown, although many plausible explanations have been put forward, including the 1928 song by the American song writer Cole

Porter entitled 'Let's do it', which featured the then provocative lyric; "Birds do it, Bees do it. Even educated fleas do it. Let's do it, let's fall in love."



The popular slogan – The Birds and the Bees

Upon reflection there might be another explanation for the expression. Birds and Bees are mysterious creatures. For example, Birds are said to have their own language – the Language of the Birds, which is believed to have been a divine and mystical language spoken only by initiates. And with respect to Bees, well we have examined them in considerable depth and their symbolism is nothing if not mystical. Thus, could the expression simply refer to sexual union as something magical and sacred, something that needs to be learned by an initiate and which is unknown to a virgin?

Appreciation of the once sacred Bee has diminished in modern times, save for the odd bit of pop culture. Take for instance the ancient practice of a Beekeeper encouraging its hive to rest on their body as a form of bonding and trust. In recent times the custom has morphed into a contest to see how many Bees an individual can attract and physically sustain, especially on the face. The practice of 'Bee Bearding', as it is known, was reintroduced by Peter Prokopovitch, a Russian Beekeeper from the 1830's. The rekindled tradition was soon mimicked in 'freak' shows in American carnivals and remains a genre of dubious merit to this day. In fact, in 1998 an American animal trainer by the name of Mark Biancaniello broke the Guinness Book of Records for "most pounds of bees worn on the body" by successfully wearing 350,000 bees, weighing nearly 90 pounds.



Bee Bearding – the ancient custom of creating a bond between Bee and Beekeeper

Perhaps the most popular and endearing account of the Bee in the 21st century has to do with a bear, which is somewhat ironic as the bear – known in Saxon times as a Bee-wolf, which later morphed into the epic poem Beowulf, is a natural enemy of the Bee, known for not only eating honey, but the entire hive as well. Bees and all! Of course I speak of the celebrated children's story 'Winnie the Pooh'. The popular tale consists of a honey eating bear named Winnie the Pooh and his best friend, a young boy by the name of Christopher Robin. The story is based on the real life account of Harry Colebourn, an Englishman who immigrated to Canada in 1905 and served as a Canadian Lieutenant before returning to England to fight in the First World War. While on his way home Colebourn purchased a bear from a hunter for \$20 and named it after the town where he had been living – Winnipeg.

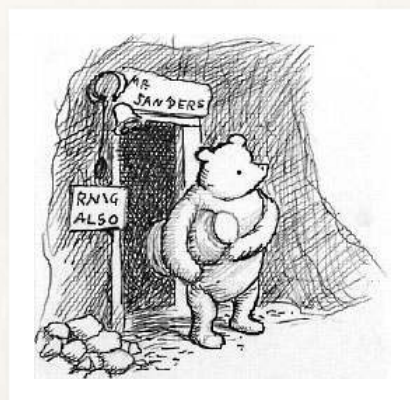


Harry Colebourn with the original Winnie

Back in England, Winnipeg became the unofficial mascot of Colebourn's regiment. However, as war beckoned, Colebourn was forced to donate the bear to the London Zoo. Winnipeg proved to be an exceedingly popular attraction and amongst his many admirers was a young boy named Christopher Robin Milne, who was so smitten with the loveable animal that he named his own stuffed bear Winnie.

Christopher's father was Alan Alexander Milne, a successful English writer who had trained under H.G. Wells. Inspired by his son's affection for the bear, Milne wrote two very successful children's books that featured the beloved animal – the first of which was published in 1926. After his death,

Milne's widow sold the rights to Walt Disney, who transformed the story of the honey eating bear into an international sensation. For the setting of his Winnie the Pooh books Milne chose a forest close to his home in East Sussex called Five Hundred Acre Wood. Although there are no bears in Sussex, Five Hundred Acre Wood is a natural home to hundreds of thousands of Bees.



Winnie the Pooh stealing a jar of honey – from the original etchings

It is remarkable, if not peculiar, that this simple children's story highlights both the Bee and the Bear, for the Bear was also revered across the ancient world, especially by the Merovingians. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln comment on this fact in a section of their book 'Holy Blood and the Holy Grail' entitled 'The Bear From Arcadia'. They argue that the Merovingians originated from a region in Greece known as Arcadia – a land with mystical associations with bears;

“It is also worth noting in passing that the bear, in ancient Arcadia, was sacred animal – a totem on which mystery cults were based and to which ritual sacrifice was made. Indeed, the very name 'Arcadia' derives from 'Arkades', which means People of the Bear. The ancient Arcadians claimed descent from Arkas, the patron deity of the land, whose name means bear.”

The authors highlight that Arkas was also the name of a Greek nymph linked with Artemis – a goddess whose association with Bees is beyond refute. The trio build on the theme:

“Given the magical, mythic and totemic status of the bear in the Merovingian heartland...it is not surprising that the name 'Ursus' – Latin for 'bear' – should be associated in the 'Priore documents' with the Merovingian royal line. Rather more surprising is the fact that the Welsh word for bear is 'arth' – from whence the name 'Arthur' derives.”

Clearly the bear has strong esoteric connotations and like the Bee it was revered by the Merovingians. Of course the 'Great Bear' refers to the constellation of Orion; a series of stars

depicting a 'Hunter' fighting a bull (Taurus). In this context, might the celestial stage of Orion represent the earliest form of Mithraism? Is the symbolic slaughter of Taurus the source of the myth that 1000 Bees are produced by the death of an Apis bull, and that each Bee represents a soul? Just as the number 40 in the bible serves as a literally device to convey 'a considerable number', might the number '1000' be a similar convention used to suggest 'infinite' numbers? The notion that stars in Orion represent souls of the deceased king, shaman or initiate on earth dates back to the ancient Egyptians, if not earlier. Might the 'infinite' number of stars in the night sky have been regarded as celestial Bees, born with the processional passing of Tarus into Aries? In any case, the esoteric association of Bees with bears is interesting, especially in a children's story.

While Winnie the Pooh bear laboured against all odds to acquire his beloved honey, by the turn of the 20th century the popular nectar had become a mass produced article of trade widely available in towns and cities the world over. As a result of the ease in which it could be acquired, the alchemistic like process of producing honey became less and less apparent to its patrons, rendering the Bee a marginalized and somewhat exploited commodity. The abstraction of the product from its source hints at the genesis of the Bee's gradual demise in modern society, not only figuratively but also quite literally, for Bees, as we know, are dying in alarming numbers.

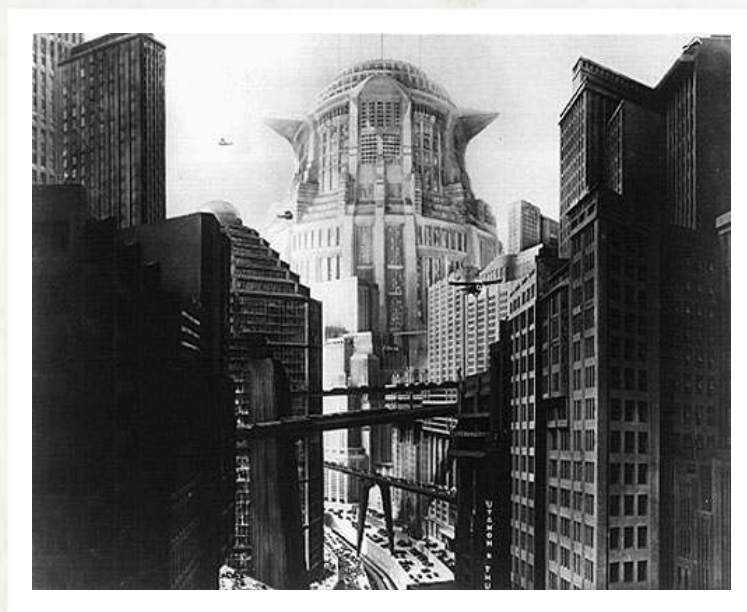
In her recent and sadly overlooked book, 'Bee', Claire Preston draws attention to the media's systematic demonization of the once sacred insect. Preston cites the popular 1901 novel; 'The Life of the Bee' by the Belgian poet and playwright Maurice Maeterlinck as a catalyst for altering public opinion on the Bee, from tranquil and benevolent creature, to an impersonal political and corporate role model. Maeterlinck, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1911, was famous for writing 'The god of the bees is the future'. Preston comments;

“Maeterlinck’s simultaneous enthusiasm for and dismay about the nature of bees takes its cue not only from the Romantics, but also from the sort of Utopian scholars, including Marx’s, which yielded the exhilaration of 1917 and eventually the horror of Stalinist communism.”

With the advent of motion pictures, the themes cited by Maeterlinck and others of his generation soon morphed onto the big screen in ominous fashion, as Preston recounts;

“Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) imagines a future city of the year 2000 whose workers are enslaved in underground factories where they perform repetitive tasks enclosed in tiny, staked cells. The rigorous order of the hive and the comb in obedience to an overarching national imperative was later captured by Leni Riefenstahl in *Triumph of Will* (1934) with pictures of Nazi Rallies. Political and social metaphors, so easily attached to the bee and the hive, have by this moment become disquieting. Victor Erices’s cult film *El Espíritu de la Colmena* (The Spirit of the Beehive) (1973), set in the early days of Franco’s regime, adapts this disquiet specifically to bees, with the frequent cutaway

shots to a glass beehive and the voiceover of the anti-Facist beekeeper recognizing that the gentle civility and industry of bees under a benevolent queen is doomed in the wasteland of tyranny. The Beehive becomes a figure for the entrapment of the workers under Franco, and an equivocal metaphor of the Republican spirit.”



The ominous urban landscape of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* where workers performed repetitive tasks for the benefit of the 'hive'

The use of Bees as political pawns, coupled with real life – albeit rare and wildly misconstrued instances of South American Killer Bee swarms – resulted in the Bee's shocking treatment by mainstream Hollywood. Appropriately, the sensational and overly dramatised films are regarded as 'B-Movies', and include the likes of 'Mysterious Island' (1951), 'Queen Bee' (1955), 'The Deadly Bees' (1967), 'Invasion of the Bee Girls' (1972), 'The Savage Bees' (1976), 'The Swarm' (1978), 'The Bees' (1978), 'Terror out of the Sky' (1979), 'Creepers' (1985) and 1992's 'Candyman', amongst others. And this list excludes the countless 'Killer Bee' documentaries that have attempted to create unrest and contempt with a public that struggles to tell the difference between a Bee and a Wasp, let alone a Killer Bee. Is it any wonder that most people fear Bees, and that the very sight of one arouses anxiety and the compulsion to kill it before it strikes?



An advertisement for the 1967 film; *The Deadly Bees*

Refreshingly, 2007 saw Hollywood relax and produce a Bee comedy; ‘*The Bee Movie*’ – an animated motion picture starring the popular American comedian Jerry Seinfeld. The film was a box office hit, coining the line; “Bee’s – they’re only in it for the honey.” Contemporary society also pays homage to the Bee in media other than film and literature. Take fashion for instance. While Jerry Seinfeld was relaxing the public’s anxiety about Bees, the retro British singer Amy Winehouse was winning Grammy’s and Brit Awards while sporting a retro Beehive hairdo that drew on earlier Bee-inspired divas such as the 1950’s actress Audrey Hepburn and the 60’s singer Mari Wilson, amongst others such as the popular cartoon character Marge Simpson. Superficial pop culture aside, the 21st century saw all that was magical and profound about the Bee become exploited, corrupted and largely trivialised. Until that is, the Bee began to die.



© Bee Movie – DreamWorks | Amy Winehouse and her ‘Beehive’ Hairdo

Incredibly, while the 21st century has largely eroded the Bee’s once sacred legacy, it would appear that the ancient traditions continue, albeit on the fringes of society. In his fascinating book; ‘*The Shamanic Way of the Bee*’, Simon Buxton recounts his amazing hero’s journey in rural England in a story reminiscent of the 1960’s cult film; ‘*Wicker Man*’ – only with a happy ending. While walking through the English county of Somerset, Buxton encounters a shamanic society and is soon initiated into the ancient cult of the Bee, better known today as the ‘*Path of the Pollen*’ or ‘*The Forest Way*’ in olden times.

Buxton’s initiation took place at the home of his teacher and was followed by a ritual on ‘*The Nightshade Isle*’, off the coast of England. Here he was introduced to *Darkflight*, a psychotropic honey, essential to the shamanic experience. Buxton is founder of [The Sacred Trust](#), an educational organisation concerned with the teaching of shamanism. Intriguingly, some of the workshops now

offered provide a glimpse into the Path of Pollen, namely: The Way of the Melissae, The Serpent Flight of the Honeybee and Arte Triptych Melissae. In our private conversations, Buxton has confirmed that the old traditions are alive and well – especially across Europe, albeit entirely underground.



Site of the ancient chamber where Buxton received his final initiation into the Path of the Pollen (location withheld at author's request) © Andrew Gough

Buxton's journey into the Path of the Pollen should not to be viewed as 'new age' hokum for his experience mirrors that of other initiates, including his former mentor, a man known simply as Bridge, who as Buxton recounts in his book, had much to say about the cult of the Bee;

“The teachings contained within this tradition have been handed down so faithfully that it has never been in danger of extinction. The Bee cutlus was not created, but rather summoned, and the citadel of the tradition is a fortress that can never be taken. To the uninitiated, the cultus – like city of bees itself – is hidden, veiled. Nothing is known of its inner councils, of the debates and decisions, of the governors and officers, of the supervisors who allot the tasks, of the regeneration that occurs and the training that is offered.”

Buxton's account is intriguing, sincere and encouraging for it affirms that the ancient and shamanic tradition of the Bee continues. And who are we to disagree? The mountain of evidence that the Bee has been the most venerated creature in existence is certainly persuasive. Why shouldn't its traditions have continued? And anyway, do we really know as much about Bees as we think we do?



Simon Buxton – has he confirmed that the shamanic tradition of the Bee continues to this day?

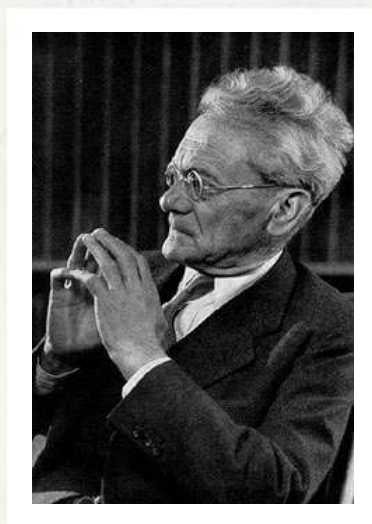
There are officially nine families of Bees and almost 20,000 species living on every continent, except Antarctica. The most famous species is the Western Honey Bee, which has been the source of Beekeeping, or Apiculture, for tens of thousands of years. Experts estimate that insect pollination, most of which is performed by Bees, is critical to over one third of the worlds food supply. Bees are remarkably productive creatures, as demonstrated in Nepal and China where the task of pollinating trees requires 25 humans, compared to only 2 Bees. Each Honey Bee produces 1½ teaspoons of honey in its lifetime and requires 50 million visits to the hive in order to produce 1 kilo's worth. The phrase "Busy as a Bee" is entirely just, as Alison Benjamin and Brain McCallum recount in their excellent 2008 book, 'A World Without Bees'; "Each Bee will fly around 800km (500 miles) in her lifetime, at times carrying loads equivalent of half her body weight; no wonder she will die exhaustion about three weeks after her first flight." A Bee's life is short, indeed, but with more sense of purpose than most humans.



A 'busy' Bee

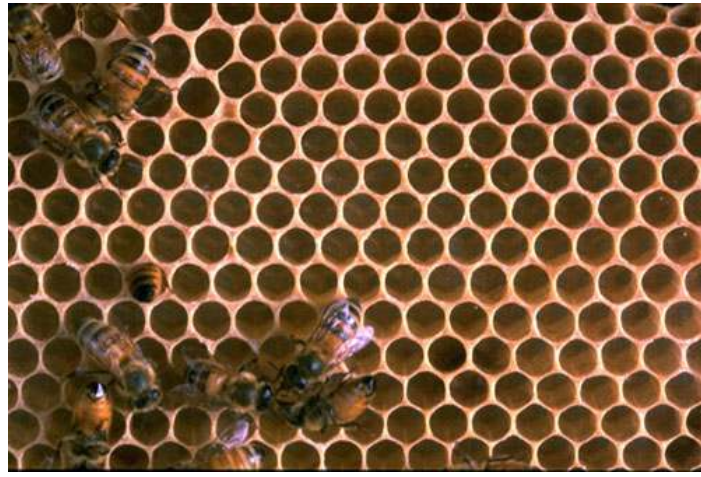
We are only beginning to understand the wonders of the Bee, and Nobel Prize winner and Bee researcher Karl Von Frisch is one of the bright minds who have studied the insect in considerable depth. Von Frisch concluded that Bees can see 10 times more images per second than the human eye, which is consistent with research by Jacob Von Uexkull, whose work in the German Journal Space and Time concluded that a Bees brain can process 200 images per second. However Frisch's

major contribution to the study of the Bee, and the reason he received his Nobel Prize, has to do with his realization that the Bee's waggle dance communicated location. That is, Von Frisch was able to confirm that the Bee actually registers its complicated flight details and communicates them to the hive, empowering the others to recreate the trip even if the food is miles away; a sort of satellite navigation system for Bees! Sadly, Von Frisch was later removed from his post by the Nazi Party when it discovered that one of his grandparents was Jewish and that his work on Bees was not contributing to the ideological framework of the Nazi Party.



Karl Von Frisch, winner of the Nobel Prize for his research on Bees

The Bee's home – the hive – is also of considerable interest. A Beehive is a fascinating matrix of hexagonal cell structures constructed out of Beeswax whose complexities we are only now beginning to understand. The work of respected Bee researcher Jurgen Tautz has revealed that wax – the building block of the hive, is actually a living, adaptive and highly intelligent entity. Tautz observed that cells are initially rounded and only transform into hexagons when the Bee has succeeded in heating the wax to 45C. Interestingly, hexagons frequently appear in nature and are unusually lightweight and stable. Is there something inherently important in the hive's shape? At the end of the day, we have much to learn about the complex and highly evolved creature, and its home – the hive.



Beehive honeycomb cells – close up

What we can say with some certainty is that Bees are big business. In the United States alone, over one-third of fruits, vegetables and nuts are dependent on the Bee's pollen. What's at stake? The value to the 2008 economy in the United States is estimated at over \$15 billion. And now the Bee is dying, which is curious indeed for there is no illness in a Beehive, at least not until man intervenes. Efforts to increase the size of Bees in the hope that they would produce more honey have in fact been successful; a 'bigger Bee' was created, however the Bees internal organs did not increase proportionally and fewer Bees were ultimately produced. In this instance, as in so many others, man's intervention has only made things worse.

Man continues to meddle with the Bee's natural habitat, and in America the pressure to produce a profit in the trade of Bees has necessitated that honey be substituted with sugar in many hives. Thus, is it any wonder that Bees are dying in America faster than any other region in the world? Literally millions of Bees have disappeared over the last few years alone, and in 2007 30% of the Beehives in the United States – and in some regions as high as 90% – were evacuated virtually overnight. In a recent interview with the New York Times, American Beekeeper David Bradshaw commented on the mystery of the dying Bees, simply stating that; "Box after box after box are just empty. There's nobody home."



A Beekeeper examines a near empty hive

Sadly, the phenomenon of Bees disappearing has given new meaning to the phrase, 'Buzz off'. Germany's Spiegel Online recently reported that; "Experts believe that the large-scale use of genetically modified plants in the US could be a factor." Others believe that polluting of the environment is to blame, particularly the use of mobile phones. However, the feeling of many experts is that mites are in fact the culprit – a theory we will explore in more detail. Whatever the cause, the effect is now alarmingly clear; the risk to the world's food source – and economy, is staggering. A February 28th, 2008 article in the International Herald Tribune entitled; 'Worries about Bees spread to the boardroom', featured companies like Häagen-Dazs, whose ice cream is dependent on the Bee for no less than 28 of its products. Häagen-Dazs is raising \$250,000 towards research into the epidemic and is not alone in seeking out a cure, if only for its own survival.

In 'World Without Bees', Benjamin and McCallum discuss Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) – the name given to the phenomena of vanishing Bees, and explain how the Bees Waggle Dance has been rendered ineffectual, causing a breakdown of society in the hive;

"Bees have a sophisticated navigation system that uses the sun and landmarks as points of reference. It allows them to travel up to three miles (5Km) from the hive in search of food without losing their way back home... But in a hive suffering from this strange plague the adult Bee does not return home, leaving their queen, eggs and larvae to starve to death."

In order to combat the situation, various task forces have been established, such as the Honeybee Health Improvement Project and the Bee Task Force; a group representing farmers who produce 80% of the world's supply of nuts. Benjamin and McCallum add that;

"With billions of dollars at stake and further expansion of the California almond crop at peril, the U.S. Congress provisionally approved increased funding totalling around \$100M (£50M) for research. But apiarists increasingly believe that the scientists are backing the wrong horse."



Studying Bees with the experts at the Twickenham Apiary, London © Andrew Gough

Many apiarists believe that the real cause of CCD is a nicotine-based pesticide called Imidacloprid that is breaking down the immune system and causing CCD in the first place. However scientists reject the theory, citing the fact that Bees are disappearing from hives where pesticides are not used and have mysteriously disappeared many times in the past, the first recorded instance being in 1869. As previously mentioned, the most likely culprit is a parasitic organism known as the Varroa mite, which has infested countless Bees around the world as migrating hives introduce the mite to local Bees who have not had a chance to gradually build up their immune system to the new enemy. Benjamin and McCallum describe the horrific scenario;

“Under a microscope, Varroa destructor looks like a cross between a jellyfish and a Frisbee, with hairy legs... To get an idea what it must be like for the honeybee, which after all is only 12mm (1/2 inch) long, to have one of these mites clinging to her, we were told to imagine carrying a monkey on our back.”



A Varroa Mite; believed by many to be the killer of the Honeybee

The cause and effect debate continues, with Benjamin and McCallum adding; “More than 18 months after CCD was discovered...and billions of honeybee deaths later, what have we learned? Scientist are no nearer to finding the assassin.” The reality is that Bees will up and leave if their environment is hostile in any way, and this ‘self-sacrificing’, or flying away to die so as to protect the hive from the impact of their own stress is precisely what many experts believe is occurring in North America, and elsewhere. The bottom line is that whatever the cause, the world has just rediscovered how vital a role the Bee plays in our lives. And it’s discovered it the hard way.

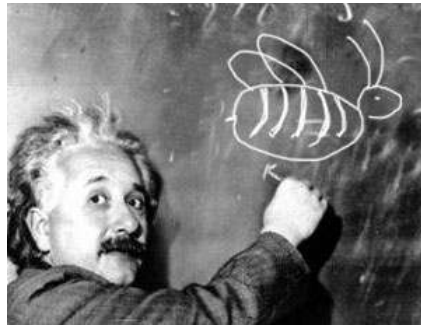


A Dead Queen Bee

Oddly enough, there are several legends of man’s destiny being tied to the fate of the Bees – and although each account has been around for many years, their origins remain uncertain. The American Indian is believed to have said that when the Bee dies, man has 4 years left. The same belief was echoed by Albert Einstein, who is attributed with the quote;

“If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe then man would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man.”

The alarming quote is dated to the time of Einstein (1879 – 1955) but curiously has not been confirmed in his writings, prompting some to question its authenticity. The photo below reinforces the skepticism.



Modified photo of Einstein. © Illustration by 'The Daily Green' – original photo by AP

Photoshop sarcasm aside, the demise of the Bee is no laughing matter, and at least one scholar is on record as having predicted the demise of the Bee nearly a century ago. That would be Rudolph Steiner, who in his superb collection of nine lectures, simply entitled 'Bees', predicted in 1923 that the newly introduced technique of breeding Queen Bees using the larvae of Worker Bees would mean that "a century later all breeding of Bees would cease." So where does this leave us? Allegedly, we have Bee folklore reinforced by a renowned man of science who predicted that when the Bee dies out, man will shortly follow. This is disturbing, yet curious, for 2008 has seen the death rate of Bees soar, and in 4 years it will be 2012, the year that the Bee worshipping Mayans predicted the world as we know it will cease and a new Golden Age of man would commence. Benjamin and McCallum offer a more optimistic perspective on the pending 'end of days', stating;

"If bees continue disappearing at this rate, it is estimated that by 2035 there could be no honeybees left in the US. In the UK, an estimated 25% decline in honeybees is not officially attributed to CCD, but that has not stopped Lord Rooker from warning that all of the country's 270,000 or so colonies could be gone in 10 years."

Clearly there is no single view of the problem, the extent of the damage, or the solution. Time is running out on the once beloved Honeybee. Is it any wonder that organizations have formed whose mantra is "Save the Bee, Save the World"?

Conclusions

My research into the Bee has led me on an amazing and unexpected journey of discovery. But what exactly does it all mean? In Prehistory, the Bee was hunted for its honey. In the genesis of society, civilizations such as Sumeria, Ancient Egypt and Greece revered the Bee as a provider of ritualistic, medicinal and agriculturally important by-products. Down through history, the Bee has been venerated as nothing short of a god whose life affirming attributes have been adopted by religions, institutions and governments alike. I've labelled the three eras of the Bee; Beedazzled, Bewildered and Beegotten for good reason. The question remains, will there be a fourth era, and if so will it be called Beegone?

Looking back, I wonder what aspect of the Bee first inspired man to regard it as unique and sacred, all those thousands of years ago. Was it something as simple as a Bee's sting? It's impossible to say really, for any one of the attributes we've discussed could easily have catapulted the Bee to its once exalted position within society. My opinions on the matter are far from crystallized, but more and more I keep coming back to sound of the Bee and the notion of Zumbido, or Zum Zum; that which existed first; the buzzing sound of the Bee that has been experienced in shamanic rituals and moments of state changes in consciousness since time immemorial. Could the collective unconsciousness of man have internalized the singular importance of the Bee over a period of tens of millions of years? Is that why its sound is experienced during moments of transcendence?

While intriguing, explanations and conclusions on a subject so vast and opaque are nothing if not futile, not to mention speculative. What is less speculative, however, is the fact that the Bee has contributed more to the physical and mental wellbeing of mankind than any other creature, large or small. On reflection, I am reminded of a quote by one of the greatest mythologists of this or any other era – Robert Graves, who spoke of the Bee and the Golden Age of man;

“The Bee has continued through the millennia as a symbol of the soul's survival after death and limitless existence in the harmony of the Golden age of the World.”

Let's hope the Bee survives – and thrives, because if it doesn't, then we only have ourselves to blame.

Postscript

The author and playwright Patrice Chaplin first introduced me to Ingrid, the Cabalist featured in her book 'City of Secrets', in the spring of 2007. We got on famously and Ingrid soon invited me to her home on the Catalan coast near Girona – home of the birth place of the Cabala – for an esoteric study weekend. As the former esoteric guide and astrologer for Salvador Dali, Ingrid has worked with a wide assortment of initiates from around the globe and from all walks of life. Needless to say, her reputation as an esoteric master du jour preceded her.

The agenda for the weekend was set and we were preparing to delve into Ingrid's 4-inch binder of detailed Cabalistic analysis on a single phrase from the Rennes-Le-Château parchments; “Shepherdess, No Temptation”. The plan was we would start after a spot of breakfast. Sitting on Ingrid's patio in the woods, overlooking the ocean a few hundred metres in the distance, we were busy exchanging pleasantries when we were visited by an extraordinary large Bee that proceeded to hover between us for what seemed like ages. Within seconds we were discussing Bees, and for the rest of the weekend – and another that soon followed, the Bee was all we discussed.



Studying the Bee with Ingrid © Andrew Gough

This three-part series only taps the surface of the Bee-related research that we've conducted. The truth of the matter is that most of the material is extremely esoteric and requires more knowledge of the Cabala than I presently possess or could easily transmit if I did. Perhaps someday I will rein it all in and publish it. Nevertheless, I hope the information presented here has provided fresh insight into the 'lost tradition' of the Bee. At times serious, at times whimsical, and at times speculative, the analysis has been an attempt to showcase the Bee's extraordinary history, and at the end of the day, to make us just a little more cognizant of the little creature that continues to fly in and out of our lives most days.

Acknowledgements

To Ingrid, for her amazing insight, patience and friendship.

To my good friend Mark Foster, who next to Ingrid is the only esoteric Bee authority I know. Thanks for your guidance, and for letting me draw upon, develop, and sprinkle my work with your original insights on the Bee and sacred stones – and Atlantis. I look forward to your own work on the Bee in the future.

To my good friend Filip Coppens, whose insight (especially Glastonbury and Roslyn Chapel) and watchful eye was much appreciated. Thanks for inviting me along on the trip to Germany, without which I would have missed out on some of the most interesting aspects of my research. Oh, and sorry if I drove you nuts talking nonstop about Bees!

To my good friend Lynn Picknett, whose insight, perspective and Bee humour were invaluable.

Thank you for putting up with my boring ramblings about Bees.

To the many Arcadia readers and friends who shared their insights, photos and suggestions throughout. Thank you!

References & Suggested Reading

Recommended Books:

Archaeology of Beekeeping, Eva Crane. 1983.

Bees: Lectures by Rudolf Steiner, by Rudolf Steiner. 1998

The Bee, by Claire Preston. 2006.

The Sacred Bee, by Hilda Ransome. 1937

The Lore of the Honey Bee – Natural History and Bee-Keeping, by Tickner Edwardes. 1908.

The Shamanic Way of the Bee, by Simon Buxton. 2004

A World without Bees, by Alison Benjamin & Brian McCalluk. 2008

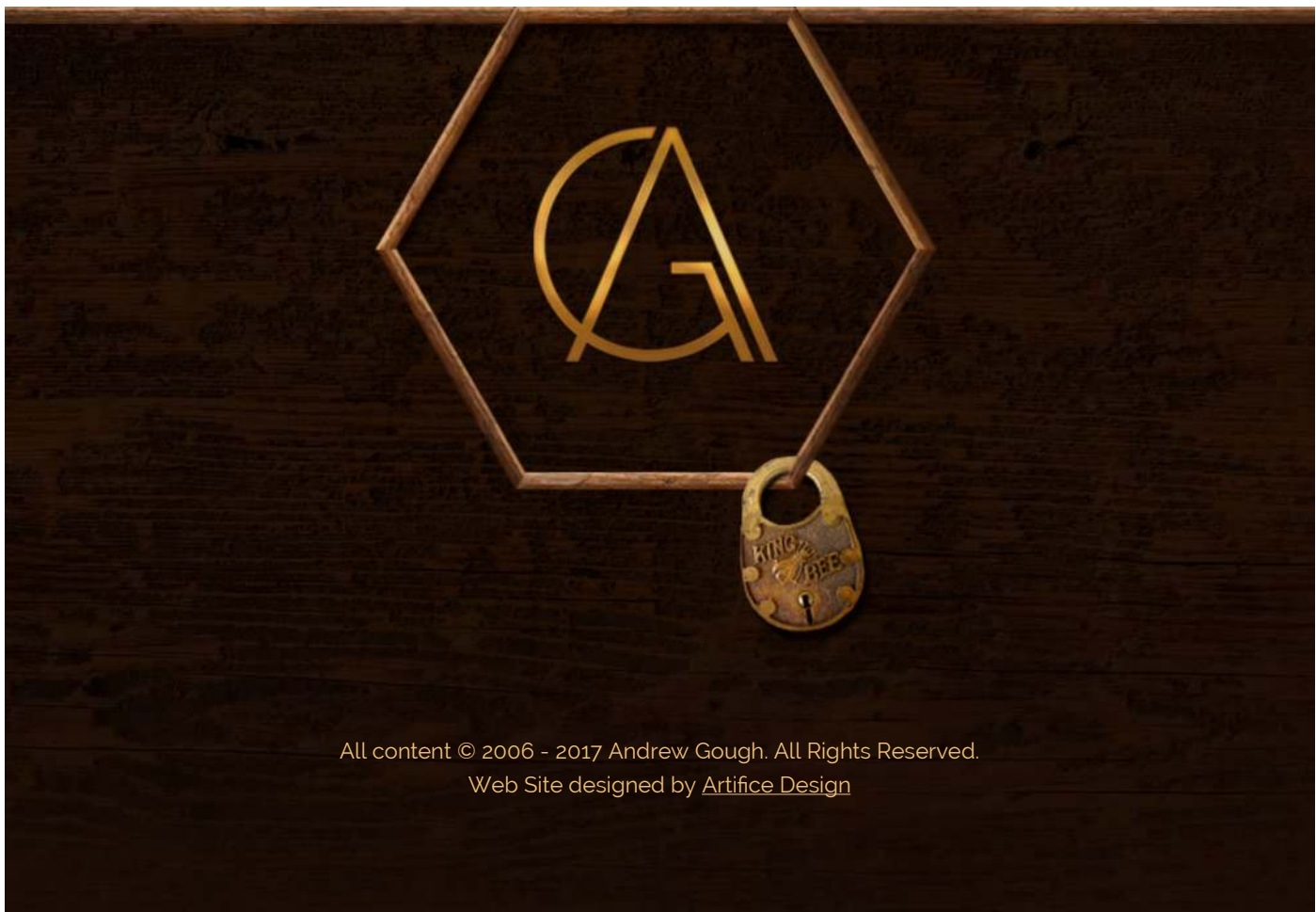
Selected Bee Related Websites:

[Simon Buxton's Sacred Trust](#)

[Freemasonry and Bees](#)

[The Delphic Bee](#)

[The Health Benefits of Honey](#)



All content © 2006 - 2017 Andrew Gough. All Rights Reserved.
Web Site designed by [Artifice Design](#)

