

Local Bees Only, Please

*An appeal to the landowners and
residents of Redesdale*



Redesdale Honey Bee Conservation Project

The ancestors of Northumberland native honey bees arrived when Cheviot still had permanent snow in its northern corries.

They are one of our most valuable natural treasures but their existence is threatened so Redesdale's beekeepers have come together to establish a haven for the native bee subspecies *Apis mellifera mellifera*.

Honey bees crossed the land bridge from mainland Europe before it was destroyed 9,000 years ago. As flowers and trees colonised the bare land the bees edged northwards coming to a stop before Carter Bar. There they have spent those 9,000 years adapting to Redesdale's chill, generating warmth by clustering and shivering their wing muscles.

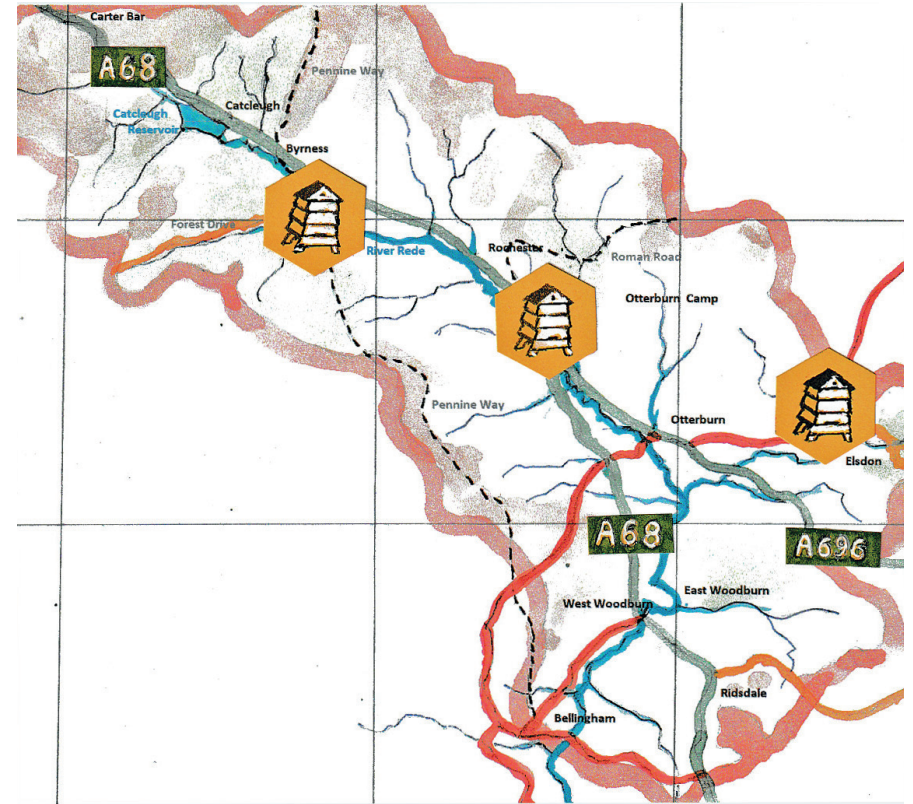


Their superlative honey was recognised by the Romans, as evidenced by an order discovered at Vindolanda for "duo lini mellari", two honey cloths.

In the late 1700's Thomas Bewick, illustrated straw bee skeps under rustic shelters. The inhabitants of Otterburn Tower used them in the 1890's and in the forecourt of

Connor's garage, West Woodburn, is a row of "bee boles" where skeps were placed in shelters built into a boundary wall.

The native honey bee is one of our most important wild-flower pollinators, but it is threatened particularly by the males of imported non-natives, that mate with native queens and contaminate their otherwise perfectly adapted genetics. It is unique in employing several resistance strategies against the deadly parasitic varroa mite which is destroying colonies world-wide.



Most of Britain's native honey bees have been killed by disease, displaced by imported non-natives, or destroyed by irresponsible breeding experiments.

But we, the beekeepers of Redesdale, with the support of the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership, are making a stand, establishing new conservation apiaries at Byrness, Rochester and Elsdon. We hope active conservation of these well adapted local bees here in Redesdale will ensure their survival well into the foreseeable future.

Redesdale is perfectly located to establish a 'Voluntary Protected Area' for the native bees but we need your help.



We are asking Landowners, Residents and Custodians of Redesdale to say “NO” to any requests to site hives of bees from outside Redesdale on your land, as these might carry disease and produce non-native drones that would destroy the very special genetics of our precious Northumberland Bees.

For further information and to voluntarily register your land as “local bees only” please contact Sue Chapman on 01830 520730, 07776 308192, or email schapman14@hotmail.co.uk.

Thank you.

Dorian Pritchard
Project Leader

