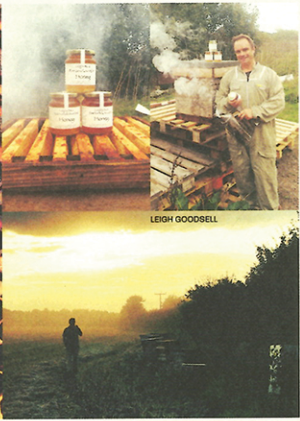




## PROUDLY NORFOLK

- COLUMN -



www.leighsbees.co.uk

# THE KEEPER



**LEIGH GOODSSELL, WHO IS BEHIND LEIGH'S BEES - PRODUCERS OF NATURAL NORFOLK HONEY - TELLS US WHY THE BUSINESS GIVES HIM A BUZZ**

**Who are you and what do you do?** I'm Leigh Goodsell and I'm a bee farmer. I help my bees produce wonderful unadulterated honey.

#### How did you get started?

When I was about 11 or 12 I blew all my savings (a massive £40) on a hive of bees from a 'kindly' old gentleman. This chap may well be roasting on the fires of Hades now, as these were the most vicious bees I've had anything to do with over the last 40 years.

#### Is it a family run business?

I run the business on my own. This has meant a few 120 hour weeks recently, so occasional help is high on my wish list.

#### What did you do beforehand?

For most of my adult life I've been a photographer, but have also variously been a horseman, inshore fisherman, and tree feller.

#### Did you need much training?

I've learned by trial and error and fully expect to find new surprises every season. I've never undertaken formal training, but there are plenty of books which can be read.

#### What do you produce?

I (or my bees) produce honey. I bottle as much of it as I can at the time of extraction (spinning), so apart from going through a coarse sieve, nothing else is done to it. I label this as Raw Honey. None of my honey is blended - I have a feeling the bees know what they are doing, so each batch will vary in flavour, colour, and texture according to which flowers they have been working. A panel on the label will describe where and what the bees have been working. Sometimes it isn't possible to know this, so it will be labelled 'honey' rather than 'sea lavender honey', or 'woodland honey'.

The bees are based in Norfolk and overwinter close to home - they will work oilseed rape and beans until around June here, and then will move out to summer sites. In North Norfolk some will go up to coastal sites to work sea lavender; some will go to Essex to work borage (I'm hoping to convince some Norfolk landowners to grow borage), and some to Lincs/Leics. In early August, hives will go up to the Peak District to work heather. After that, they all come back to Norfolk where (if we have a mild autumn) they can work ivy. Once that is done, winter is pretty much here and preparation for the following season begins.

#### Where can we buy your produce?

Most of the delis between Old Hunstanton and Cley stock it, as well as a few further inland. Shops further afield are stocking it now (Swaffham, Horning) and I'm looking for new stockists. I am also a regular at Creake Abbey Farmers' Market which is on the first Saturday of every month. I can also sell direct if customers contact me to make sure I'm around.

#### What's the best bit about your job?

That is a tricky question. It is an exhausting occupation at times, but I think the most satisfying moments are often the intoxicating aroma that envelops me when taking the top off a happy and productive hive. The hum of 80,000 contented bees going about their business is a very relaxing music, and seeing a super (the name for a box of honey frames) full of honey just helps me relax a bit, knowing that it will all help keep me occupied and fed for a little longer.

#### We hear you run 'educational's?

I do provide 'beekeeping experience sessions'. These give people a chance to have an insight into the life of bee and beekeeper alike.

#### How do you like to eat your honey - simply on toast or on cereal?

Personally, I eat it off the spoon, in porridge, on toast and in warm drinks - I love it!



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