

Business & Beekeeping – Let’s Look Back on 2023!

EMMA THOMPSON WELCOMES IN 2024 BY LOOKING BACK AT ALL THE LESSONS SHE LEARNED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS.

Greetings, dear readers! Welcome to my first column of 2024. I’m Emma Thompson, also known as @missbeehaven123 on social media. I am the founder of Bee Haven Bodycare®, an ethical beekeeper and skincare entrepreneur. Join me on my social channels - Tiktok, Instagram, and Facebook - to stay connected.

For any skincare queries or advice, feel free to email me at info@thebeehavenbeekeepers.co.uk. I might even feature your question and my answer in next month’s column! You can explore our wide range of handmade skin and body care products on our website, www.beehavenbodycare.co.uk, or by visiting our shop in Ballygowan.

Let’s take a moment to reflect on the highs and lows of the past year. It was a year of growth, learning, and some setbacks.



HIGHLIGHTS:

1 A New Skill - Breeding Bees: In 2023, I taught myself the art of ‘Queen Rearing’. This skill has enabled me to breed my own bees, eliminating the need to rely on other beekeepers. Not only is it cost-effective, it also aligns with my ethical principles. With the help of YouTube and my determination, I successfully bred over 20 queens, with five of them successfully mating and starting their own colonies. (More on this in the lows section!)

2 Awards and Recognition: 2023 was a year of accolades for myself and Bee Haven Bodycare®. I had the honour of receiving my first award from Local Women Magazine in late 2022, and throughout 2023, I continued to be nominated for prestigious awards. I was fortunate to win a total of FOUR awards, but the one I am most proud of is the Local Women Magazine I Am Beauty Awards 2023 Columnist of the Year, chosen by editor-in-chief Lisa Smyth. As someone who has faced challenges due to dyslexia, I never imagined I would be asked to write a column, let alone receive an award for it. This achievement is close to my heart.



3 Unleashing My Creative Juices: 2023 was a year of inspiration and creativity. As the formulator and creator of over 230 skincare products, I find ‘product inspiration’ in the most unexpected places - a smell, a dream, or a random idea during a walk. Just like an artist I suppose, ideas flow through me randomly, and of course NEVER on demand! In 2023, we introduced multiple new best-selling products from conditioner to natural cleaning products. Available in-store or online.

LOWS:

1 Wet Wet Wet: The weather proved to be a challenge for our beekeeping endeavours in 2023. It was the wettest July on record, resulting in a 90% reduction in our main honey harvest. Additionally, one of our apiaries, located



on an island, became inaccessible and nearly submerged due to the storms Babet and Ciaran in October. We tragically lost one colony to flooding, which I had bred earlier in the year. These challenges humbled us and reminded us of the unpredictable nature of beekeeping and climate change.

2 Road Closure Woes: Our skincare shop, located in my hometown of Ballygowan, faced a significant setback when the main road leading to the village was closed for 10 weeks. This closure occurred during the busiest months of October, November, and part of December. The unexpected and complicated diversions disrupted our footfall, resulting in a 40% decline in customers and tens of thousands of pounds in lost revenue. As a relatively new retail business, this had a profound impact on our commercial buoyancy.

Luckily, we managed to ‘weather the storm’ (yes another storm, a financial one this time) however, it was a stressful period.

Fortunately, we are a family business, there are no ‘partners’ wanting a return, bank managers wondering where the loan payment is this month, or staff to make redundant. But this experience taught us valuable lessons:

- 1) A significant portion of our shop’s footfall is driven by non-local and impulse buyers.
- 2) Buying ingredients and packaging in smaller volumes is wise sometimes, even though my instinct is to buy bulk and stockpile.
- 3) In business, unexpected challenges can arise when you least expect them, therefore I am going to remain vigilant and expect the unexpected.

In conclusion, 2023 was a year of highs and lows for Bee Haven Bodycare® and my beekeeping journey. Despite the challenges, we persevered and emerged stronger, armed with knowledge and resilience. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported us in 2023, by following our socials, reading this column or shopping with us. Stay tuned for exciting updates and insights in the coming months.

Your discount code for this issue is NEW15 for 15% off our NEW IN range located on our website www.beehavenbodycare.co.uk. One code per customer, cannot be redeemed in-store or combined with another discount code. Expires 1st February 2024. Discount code box is located at ‘checkout’ page.