

Amersham in Bloom – bug hotel investigations. July 2026

The bug hotel in the Memorial Gardens is a shallow panel, about 1.5 by 1.0 metres, mounted on the wall of the kiosk. It is made of different sizes of hollow canes and stems, providing a variety of potential homes for solitary bees and wasps and other insects.

Many of the tubes are blocked, fully or partially, which indicates that the tubes have been in use by nesting bees or wasps. The bee (or wasp) packs each chamber with a mixture of pollen and nectar as food, lay a single egg on top, and seals it off using mud, chewed leaves, or resin. Some tubes can contain a number of chambers in sequence, with one egg in each. The bees each develop into a chrysalis and then an adult and finally chew their way out of the tube. The one nearest the entrance is the first insect to leave and others follow in turn.

During the inspection, a number of small bees were observed landing on the hotel and entering the tubes. At times there were 6-8 individuals exploring the area and entering the narrow tubes. They were 4-6mm long, black with narrow white bands and heavily laden with pollen, to the extent that they appear to have yellow undersides. They have not yet been formally identified but likely belong to the carpenter, mason and resin bee family (Megachilidae). One possibility is the ridge saddled carpenter bee (*Heriades truncorum*). The extensive pollen seen on the bees and on the bug hotel attest to their importance as pollinators in the Memorial Gardens.

Several of the large tubes (8-10mm diameter) were sealed or had been broken open by insects emerging. No insects were observed but these larger tubes may have been used by solitary bees.

There were spider webs around the outside of the bee hotel and some spiders were seen but none were identified by species.





The underside of a captured bee showing its underside pollen brush holding much pollen.



Close up of the bee's head covered with pollen particles.



Pollen around the tube openings of the bug hotel.

The bug hotel in Pondwicks is an altogether more palatial home for invertebrates. Given the significant construction we did not want to dismantle the structure but removed one box for inspection. No living invertebrates were found in the box possibly because of the recent hot weather and the choice of a box from the top of the 'palace'. However, there was plenty of evidence that the box had been well used. Extensive spider webs of different forms were observed as well as empty egg sacs, blocked tubes (from bees), snail shells and discarded spider moults:

