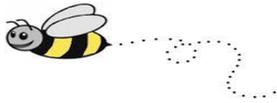


The Tivvy Buzzette

Newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers – May 2013

OUR NEXT BRANCH MEETINGS



16th – 18th May

Devon County Show (please come and support our stand and the Bee Marquee)

Saturday 25th May, 2.30pm

Branch apiary meeting
Bishops Farm, Kentisbeare with Keith Owers.
From Cullompton take the A373 for Honiton,
after approx 2 miles turn left at Post Cross,
signed for Kentisbeare (Apiary sign).
Take the first left signed for Willand (Apiary
sign).
Bishops Farm is on your left (Apiary sign).
You will find Keith in the farm yard.

Saturday 15th June

Branch Spring Inspection

Saturday 27th July

Mid Devon Show

Saturday 1st August

Honiton Show

Please come out and support your branch at the summer meetings. It is a great opportunity for some practical experience and advice.

For Sale

National Brood Box foundation
30 sheets for £20.64

Please phone Christine Mason

Jon Gubb reports on a very successful visit to his apiary –

I would like to thank all who attended the apiary meeting, and hope that it was both enjoyable and informative for everyone else as it was for me.

I must admit that I didn't know what to expect as I had delayed my first spring inspection purposefully so that the colonies would be as anyone would expect to find them after over wintering, warts and all!!

It was a great joy to open up the first hive and see that all was well within, with 5 frames of brood, plenty of workers, plenty stores and no apparent problems such as deformed wing, varroa etc.

As we progressed through the hives it became apparent that the first hive was not just a fluke, as each of the hives got better, and it was great to hear words of encouragement from far more experienced beekeepers than I, such as how placid the bees were and how healthy they looked made the past difficult year seem a lifetime ago!!

It was a pleasure to have so many fellow beekeepers around as I am usually there by myself trying to get it right but never really sure if I am getting it right, as was demonstrated by the extra frame that I had managed to cram in some of the brood chambers, these were removed and left out or used to replace some of the older frames in other hives where necessary.

It was nice that so many other keepers opened up the hives and carried out the inspection's and their advice to add at least another half brood box of frames to six of the eight hives inspected was carried out the day after.

We finished the inspection of 8 colonies after about 90 minutes and then retired for tea, biscuits and a chat, I hope everyone enjoyed the meeting, and I would like to say a special thanks to William, Sarah, Barbara, Jackie, Tony and Tracy for their help with the inspections and for their invaluable advice.

Editors note: Tracy took some lovely queen pictures for the County Show stand

My life with bees, and how it all started –

My father and his brothers were beekeepers and there were always bees at the bottom of the garden whilst I was growing up. About ten years ago, I started beekeeping when we decided there were none around to pollinate the fruit trees in our garden! I learnt from Simon Jones and David Pearce, amongst others, when I attended the Taunton apiary beginners meetings and then ordered a nucleus.

Unfortunately that proved to be infected with European Foul Brood and was without a queen. Not a good start with angry bees in the garden, but we did find out that Ian, my husband, is allergic to bee stings. So from then on my national hives have been kept in various out apiaries, now in one on the edge of Ash Thomas, where I have four colonies. Ian is my 'maintenance man', away from the bees!

I joined the Tiverton Branch of DBKA and enjoyed meeting with local beekeepers and eventually became a committee member. That meant I had a much better understanding of the organisation and more involvement with the Branch activities.

When I was teaching 'A' level biology, many years ago, I always enjoyed the microscopy and lately I have renewed my interest and learnt much at a course run for beekeepers. I have more to learn about pollen identification and the internal anatomy of bees besides bee behaviour, queen rearing and everything else!

Barbara Branham

DON'T SELL ALL YOUR HONEY YET!

Devon County Show, honey sales needs your honey and other hive products to sell at this years County Show.

Honey always sells well, but so do candles, and other hive products. So get making and use this opportunity to promote your products. Our customers usually purchase honey from the area where they come from, so take the opportunity to promote your honey by donating some jars for the Taste of Honey Stall; sampling your honey is the best way to sell it!

The County retains 20% of the selling price as commission.

This year we have increased the selling prices for products, for example one pound honey will sell for £6.00. giving you £4.80 after commission.

Please look at the DBKA website for a list of this year's prices, and offer form, **OR** contact Jack Mummery with your offers of produce by 5th May 2013.

Jack Mummery

(Devon County Show Honey Sales Coordinator),

Jabeda Barton, West Buckland, EX32 0SG; 01598-760209;

e-mail: jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk

Meetings for Beginners

Beginners apiary:

Saturday	4 th	May
	1 st	June
	6 th	July
	3 rd or 17 th	August (tbc)
	14 th	September

How are your bees?

At long last the weather has started to improve with day temperatures in double figures. The ideal weather for bee inspections would be 15c and above with the sun shining and very little wind. Unfortunately when we have the time to inspect our bees the weather is not as we would wish. Your first inspection of the year needs only to be a quick one. All you need to know is there enough food, and is the queen ok and how much brood and eggs is there?

Remove the crown board as quietly as possible, ease the corners with the hive tool but do not lever it up, but give it a twist. A gentle puff of smoke over the bees, then remove an outside frame. Next note which frames most of the bees are on, probably about the fourth frame in. Gently ease the frames forward but do not remove them, so that the first frame with a good number of bees on can be lifted out to check for eggs and brood. Don't bother to go looking for the queen, when you find the first frame with eggs and brood you know that you have a queen and that she is ok. A quick check to see how many frames have brood on them, it may only be one or two frames then close the frames up close and return the frame you removed and replace the crown board. Record the number of frames with brood. This first inspection should be completed in about ten minutes.

What have you learnt from this first inspection? With few bees in the hive and being as gentle as possible you should have been able to carry out the inspection without the need to use much smoke, in moving the frames you should have been able to assess food stores; if in doubt I would give a small syrup feed. On lifting out the first frame you should have spotted fresh stored pollen and the next side or frame would have had eggs and brood. You may have expected to see big slabs of brood just like the pictures in the text books but more likely found small patches only 10 to 15cm across. From my own observations most of my hives are a good month behind so it will be three weeks or more before we see good slabs of brood.

I fear many colonies will have been lost this winter, most being lost in the last three or four weeks. What has happened with the prolonged cold weather, and lack of fresh pollen and dwindling winter stores, most of the winter bees have now died and have not been replaced with sufficient new bees. The low number of bees means that the remaining bees are hard pushed to keep up the brood temperature (35/36c) plus collecting pollen and nectar and water if the remaining winter stores have crystallised or are very thick. It is still likely that some colonies will die if food supplies are poor.

It is not uncommon for colonies to have died but still have sealed honey in the hive. The problem is when the colony is small and the weather very cold, the bees cannot move far to reach the stores before becoming too cold themselves. On a quick inspection I have observed patches of untouched sealed stores; a quick scratch with the hive tool has revealed white crystallised honey, no good for instant feeding, most likely Ivy honey. You may also have noticed patches of very white cells possible with white threads creeping around them. This is most certainly a fungus which if conditions are right, cold and damp, will invade stored pollen and spread over the comb.

The next time you inspect your hives, if the weather is warmer you will be able to take a little longer over your inspection without the risk of chilling the brood.

Keith Owers

Mid Devon Natural History Society, Friday 17th May 7.30pm

Invitation to hear Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas talking on Pollen in Forensic Science at St. George's Hall Beck's Square Tiverton. (Parking in the square behind Boots).

If you have not heard this speaker this is one not to be missed. You will learn a lot about pollen that you will never have believed. His talk covers types of pollen and how it is distributed, pollen in archaeology and police forensic evidence, as well of course what pollen is in honey; is it English? There will be a small admission charge of £3.00. It would be helpful if you let me know if you are coming but not essential.

Look forward to seeing you there. Keith Owers.

MARRIED TO A BEEKEEPER or 'A BEEKEEPER'S WIDOW'

I thought it would be simple – being the wife of an aspiring beekeeper. Many, many years ago, as a child I remember my Dad keeping bees and enjoying the lovely honey but, like the long hot summers then (I'm sure it never rained during July and August) it was all a bit of a fantasy.

It seemed to be going so well. We had second-hand hives, husband went to all the evening classes, read all the right books and started to settle in his first nucleus of bees. He even managed to retrieve a swarm from somebody's hedge so we now had two working hives.

Fine! No problems during our first winter and, although he worried about the bees freezing to death, they came through.

The spring of 2012 came and everything changed. I won't go in to detail only to say we lost bees, we found bees, we lost them again. Finding the queens proved to be very tricky and we believe she managed to persuade her acolytes to remove the carefully placed markings but we can't prove it. Also one hive of bees decided to get bad tempered. Thankfully they were the swarm that decided they didn't like living with us and disappeared – never to be seen again.

I don't think we need to talk about the 'summer of 2012' again! Let's just forget it!!

We are now moving in to the spring of 2013 with renewed hope and vigour and a few pots of delicious honey still left. We appear to have four hives now and they seem to have survived to fight another day. My husband is spending hours in his workshop getting ready to supply the bees with their every need. He does keep coming to me to show me what he's doing and although I nod and smile and, I think, say the right things, I'm not sure I really understand the workings of the beehives and their inmates.

Even so, I am happy that he is happy and that he's keeping the bees happy.

Please don't ask me to put on the white boiler suit (not a good look for the overweight) and the funny hat – although I have been known to wear one when planting peas as the little dears can be quite menacing when they think I'm intruding in to their space. But I will help when it comes to collecting the honey and putting it in to jars as I love the end result but I do appreciate the pleasure beekeepers get from tending their swarms.

I can see that bees are amazing creatures as long as they stay away from me and I am only too happy to be a 'beekeepers widow'.

Many thanks to Malcom Crook for sharing Roslyns message with us!

Committee News

Committee meetings:

Tuesday 7th May

 9th July

Note from your Buzzette Editor

Many thanks for your contributions. Please keep sending them in to:

Post Galleons Lap,
 Plymtree,
 Cullompton,
 EX15 2LQ

Or pass on a note at the meetings.
Sarah Lines

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/tiverton/>