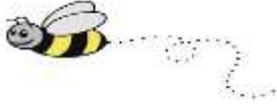


The Tivvy Buzzette

Newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers – January 2013

Wishing you all a Happy Beekeeping Year
in 2013



OUR NEXT BRANCH MEETINGS

Wednesday 16th January

Keith Owers : DIY beekeeping equipment

Wednesday 20th February

Bob Ogden : Beekeeping folklore

Wednesday 20th March

David Packham : Preparing for the new season

Please come out and support your branch at the winter meetings.

Membership Subscriptions

I'm very grateful to those who have renewed their membership subscription for 2013 already, and would like to remind others that it is now due. The subscription form is attached to the Buzzette, whether received by e-mail or through the post. Please return to me, with payment, asap. If you know that you will not renew your membership in 2013, then it helps me greatly to know.

Best wishes for 2013

William Lines

Membership Secretary & Treasurer

Report from one of our branch members Nicholas Ames

"I am a complete amateur, done a one day beginners course and then learnt by doing over the last 5 years. I am based in Stockleigh Pomeroy, near Crediton and have apparatus for 3 colonies but try to keep it to 2 if possible.

My current blood line of bees was acquired from a commercial beekeeper in Exmouth who was trying to reduce his colonies. I have only ever found them easy to handle on a bright sunny day when they have a laying queen (which I can never find) and all is well. At all other times, I find them very aggressive and HUGELY prone to swarming.

It is this heavy swarming instinct that has been a nightmare to manage in previous years, since no sooner do you think you have dealt with it that they swarm again and if they are without a laying queen they are very reluctant to let you in the hive to manipulate.

Strangely the weather this year seems to have helped. Needless to say they swarmed at the end of March and again when the rain stopped later in April, but since then, they have been good as gold. I did feed one hive once when the BBKA recommended it, but otherwise have left them fairly well alone.

When I came to harvest this year, I was expecting very little action but was delighted to see that I had as much as in any previous year (30-40lb across the 3 hives) which I recognise is below the national average but given my bees tendency to swarm, it is the best I have achieved! I conclude that the early good weather lead to early build up and swarming and the first sign of a decent day and they were off. Having swarmed, they were unable to build up the strength again and were forced to stay put simply gathering on the odd day of sunshine that came about. This worked all the way to the end of the season.

I am trying to requeen since I am fed up with the poor behaviour and swarming, but it has been comforting to know that in freak conditions my bees seem to perform but not in any other conditions!!"

What's happening in the Apiary in December and January?

You might think that not a lot is happening around the apiary at this time of year. No doubt you are not looking too often, being nice and warm indoors and what with it being Christmas and New Year as well. I am of course assuming that your hives are all sorted and well fed, protected from mice; dear little things eating their Christmas pudding and nuts. Spare a thought for any surviving lonely turkeys but do watch out for green Woodpeckers they can do a lot of damage in a very short space of time. Wrapping your hives in wire netting or flapping strips of plastic seems to do the trick. You have removed your queen excluders haven't you? If these are left on your bees may forsake their queen by going above the excluder to feed and neglecting the queen to starve. Should you find the need for a stroll around your hives, just for the exercise of course or a little peace and quiet, you may see a little activity around the hive entrance. Any little warm spell even if only for an hour or two your bees may well take the chance of a quick cleansing flight. The bees will not go far unless the temperature goes well above 10°C; bees will quickly become chilled and not make it back to the hive. It is also quite likely that you may see undertaker bees dragging the deceased out, so what is going on inside the hive?

During the cold winter months our hard working queen should be taking a well earned rest, and may be just laying a few eggs just to keep the midwives on their toes so to speak. If you really think it necessary now is the time to treat with Oxalic Acid for Varroa. To date I have not found it necessary and would rather leave my bees in peace. I am assuming that you have treated your bees in good time back in August. Inside the hive there will be a lot of pushing and shoving going on; all very good humoured being the festive season. The reason being that in the cold weather the bees cluster closer and closer the colder it becomes, all very friendly you might think unless you happen to be on the outside. In this case, this is where the pushing and shoving comes in; you will be getting cold and need to move nearer the centre of the cluster to warm up. Unfortunately the older bees will find it difficult to wiggle in to the middle to warm up and will become comatose and will die, this happens when their temperature drops below 5°C; they do in fact die from hypothermia. I can hear some of you saying we must wrap our bees up to keep them warmer: not a good idea. I have heard of beekeepers putting small heaters under their hives or moving hives to a warmer building. So long as your hives are dry and given a little protection from the most severe weather you bees will be alright with the sort of average temperatures we experience. It would be a little different if we had long spells of temperatures below -10°C. Keeping our bees warmer would encourage our queen to start laying which in turn would mean the nurse bees raising the brood area to 34°C. The need for warmer conditions will mean eating in to their stores at a time of year when they are unable to replace them. By leaving nature to take its course your bees will start the New Year cycle when conditions are right for them; they know best.

Happy New Year, Keith

It was lovely to see so many of you at the Christmas meal and many thanks to Jess for organising it and William for sorting out the bill.

a few cracker jokes ...

Who hid in the bakery at Christmas? *A minced spy*

How do snowmen travel around? *By icicle*

Why is milk so fast? *Because its pasturised before you see it*

Committee News

The Branch Committee meets for its first meeting of the New Year on the 8th January and it promises to be another busy year. Training remains high on our programme with an Improver's Course soon to be released (details below). Nosema Testing, bulk buying, show stands, talks programme, surveys and apiary visits all remain on our yearly calendar. We are excited about the possibilities of moving further forward with a bee nursery/apiary project where we can gather bee colonies to assist our new members and those who need new colonies during the year. All these projects need our committee members' time and energy to put in place, we still have two spaces on our committee and I would ask you to seriously consider volunteering to join us. It is often great fun as well.

Tony Lindsell

TIME TO UPDATE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Starting on the 29th of January we will be running an Improvers Course at Uplowman village hall. The course will be spread over four sessions, each session will be headed by Bob Ogden or myself with assistance from three of our committee members. Bob and I will not be delivering a formal lecture but will be leading the discussion on a wide range of topics. The idea is that you will be demonstrating your knowledge of the subject and we will be filling in with all the points you have forgotten or do not know. This format will enable us to update the group without going over all the areas that you are conversant with. The areas of tuition to be covered will range from manipulation of the colony, what can you learn from observing the entrance of the hive? Does the capping look right? The natural history of the honeybee and where does it fit in today's landscape. Practical beekeeping and are we managing swarming the best way, and of course we will be dealing with pests and diseases.

The village hall has been booked for the following Tuesdays 7.30 to 9.30pm. :-

29th January

12th February

26th “

12th March

The cost of the short course will be £20 payable at the first meeting. Should you wish to proceed to taking the BBKA Basic Assessment; the £15 fee will be paid by the branch. Several members of the branch have now taken the assessment, which has given them an added sense of achievement and confidence in their beekeeping.

Depending on the response from members it may well be that it will become an ongoing educational training course in future years, in the same way as the beginners' classes. To help with planning we would like to know as soon as possible if you would like to join. Please phone or e-mail me, Keith Owers, by the 22nd of January.

We have received further information on the Neonicotinoid Debate and there is ongoing discussion in the "Environment Audit Committee - Insects and Insecticides" at the House of Commons.

If you would to see this information please see the article on our branch website:

[BBKA info on Neonicotinoid Debate](#)

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