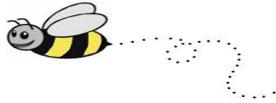


The Tivvy Buzzette



The newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers ~ December 2015



BRANCH MEETINGS at Uplowman Village Hall

Wednesday 16th December, 7pm for 7.30pm
Christmas meal at Tiverton Hotel – please return attached booking form and deposit ASAP.

2016 meetings continue on the 3rd Wednesday evening of the month and will include Nuc Box hives - David Charles, Honey showing and judging - Jack Mummery, Drone mating zones - Dan Basterfield, and Cosmetic making.

Please support your branch at our meetings. We look forward to seeing you.

**A Merry Christmas to all
our readers!!**

Beginners' meetings 2015/16 **7.30-9.30pm on Wednesdays in** **Uplowman Village Hall**

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|------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|
| 9 th | December | – The history & origins of bees & hives |
| 13 th | January | – Swarms, their causes & prevention |
| 27 th | January | – Queen rearing |
| 10 th | February | – Pests & diseases |
| 24 th | February | – Bee plants & hive products |
| 9 th | March | – Getting started |

November 2015 Monthly Meeting (AGM).

The AGM of the Tiverton Beekeepers was held on Wednesday November 18th at Uplowman Village Hall.

Chairman Malcolm Jenkins welcomed the 30 members present and announced the agenda for the evening. Both the Branch Secretary, Tony Lindsell & The Treasurer, William Lines made their annual reports both of which reflected a healthy club, which now has 108 members and a healthy bank balance. Tony reported that the new Branch Apiary was a success and urged members to take an active roll in its development towards the goal of making it a teaching apiary. The reports were unanimously adopted by the members present.

The committee were re-elected and Janie Cook was elected as a new member of the committee.

Congratulations to our members who were awarded their basic beekeeping certificates at the meeting.

After the AGM closed members were treated to tea & biscuits, followed by 3 short films of Beekeeping interest.

For full program of meetings or to find out more about Tiverton Beekeepers then please go to our website <http://tivertonbeekeepers.org.uk/>

A Winters Tail

A question I am frequently asked at this time of year is should I wrap my hives up to keep them warm for the winter, either by putting insulating material around the outside of the hive or a layer of carpet on top of the crown board? My usual answer is that I do not think it is necessary in this area.

In the far north of Scotland, Denmark and further north extra precautions will be needed. It is very unusual in Devon for the temperature to remain below freezing for twenty four hours. In a cold spell we frequently have frosty nights and bright days when the temperature mid day will climb to 5 or 6c. This gives the bees a chance to break cluster sufficiently to move to stored honey giving them the energy to activate their wing muscles and so generate heat to maintain the desired temperature in the cluster. A prolonged spell of cold weather with temperatures below freezing day and night, would eventually take its toll on our bees for they will die if their body temperature drops to 5c or lower.

I can only think of two winters when we had hard frosts day and night for a long period. The first time I was still in junior school in 1947. Snow in North West Kent was a rare occurrence, although east Kent frequently had snow. The snow and cold weather lasted for six weeks. We thought it was great, arriving at school to a play ground covered in snow and the entrances to the air raid shelters looking like igloos. The head master informing us with news that the school was closed as the toilets and the heating system was frozen but he hoped it would be fixed by the following Monday; with a great cheer we were gone. The school remained closed for the six weeks.

For my next bad winter I was working in east Suffolk in 1963. Heavy snow on Boxing Day was short lived but it did last just into the New Year, the real problem started with a heavy snow fall on the 23rd of February or there about. The three roads out from the village were all blocked and it was 48 hours before one of the roads was open. Although the snow remained in the hedges and banks for weeks the real problem was frost. With hard frosts day and night the ground frost crept deeper and deeper reaching almost half a meter. One by one the houses in the village lost their water supply. A local farmer even tried lifting carrots with the aid of a pneumatic drill to try and save his crop. The big freeze lasted for a good five weeks.

I have been living and working in Devon since 1970 and keeping bees since 1978 and have not experienced as severe weather as mentioned above. Yes we have had some short cold snaps but not prolonged severe frosts which would be damaging for our bees. You are probably thinking well why not wrap up the hives just in case? If possible I think it better to keep our bees in a manner as close to nature as possible. I do not mean leave them alone or not treat for disease. Plants, animals and insects all react to the seasons, even global warming. Bees prepare for winter as the day length decreases; storing all the honey they can as they have no advanced warning as to what the weather will do. By the end of August the idle drones have been thrown out and our bees are very defensive of their stores. September and October may see frantic activity if mild and there is honey and nectar to be found. Egg laying by the queen will be drastically reduced until the day length increases again and then only when the temperature increases. The rate at which egg laying increases is also dependent on the colony having sufficient bees to maintain the brood nest temperature to 35-36c which in turn means there must be stores to hand for the bees to consume to generate the heat required. This fine balance is a remarkable collective management on the part of our social insects. Extra insulation or sudden liquid feeding seriously interferes with this fine

Balance and should be avoided. Help can be given safely when the weather warms up naturally in March but then only if the weather is suitable.

Can we do anything to help our bees? Yes, a well fed colony, with a good roof, well ventilated and a little protection from driving rain. Damp is a greater killer of bees than the cold. With wire floors or a full entrance with a mouse guard all should be well. I have solid floors on my hives so for extra ventilation I will have match sticks under the crown board corners, and the feed hole closed. All that is required now is to keep checking the weight of the hives during the winter. This sounds difficult but if each time you look at the hives you gently lift the back of the hive you will soon notice the change in the weight which will probably not be until March. Candy or Ambrosia sugar paste placed on the feed hole in the crown board will help the bees if they are short of stores without causing a rapid rise in egg laying.

Having read this article you may not agree with me, I do not mind. So put another log on the fire and write to our Buzzette editor.

Keith Owers.

Subscription renewal forms (NOT relevant to beginners)

I'm very grateful to all those who have renewed their membership for 2016. For those yet to do so, please find attached the annual subscription renewal form. Note that, following the change to the DBKA Governing Document at September's EGM, the membership categories and costs have changed. The new categories are all explained in the attached form. Please either complete electronically or print and fill in page 4 and return it to me, with your payment.

Please note: The membership year starts on 1st January 2016 and DBKA is tightening up on the renewal date. Those who have not renewed **BY THAT DATE** will immediately cease to receive DBKA and BBKA magazines. Please help me, and yourselves, by completing your renewal forms as soon as you've read this. Many thanks

William Lines **Branch Treasurer and Membership Secretary**

Bulk Buying Advance Warning – Foundation

Remember the Queen at Christmas. She will appreciate lovely new foundation upon which to build a strong new colony every year!

I am planning to repeat last year's success and place a bulk order for foundation again in the New Year. Last year we saved 25% on the normal cost of foundation.

Watch this space and have a Happy Christmas!

Derek EVANS

Bulk Buying Coordinator

Friendly skittle match-22nd January



Tiverton bee keepers club have been challenged to a friendly skittle match by the members of the Taunton bee keepers club. Apparently this was a good social event many years ago and it would be nice to try and establish the event back into our yearly calendar.

No expertise is required and all members and their families would be able to attend and take part.

I have agreed with the manager of the Blue Ball pub, at Sampford Moor Wellington to the use of their skittle alley for the event. The Blue Ball is about mid way between the two clubs and is easy to get to.

The date for the challenge is Friday 22nd January 2016, with a 7:30 pm start. The skittle alley is free and if suitable numbers are attending then I can arrange for buffet type food to be served for about £8 a head.

I will collect the names of those attending on behalf of the Tiverton club.

Malcolm Crook

Thanks:-

A big thank you from TBK to Sarah who has been the editor of the Buzzette for the last few years, she has relinquished this position as of the AGM.

I have now taken over as editor from Sarah (a hard act to follow)!! So in future any articles/notices/images that you feel would be worthy of inclusion in the Buzzette should be emailed to me

jon.gubb@voddens.co.uk

Once again many thanks to Sarah for all her hard work over the last few years.

Jonathan Gubb.