

The Tivvy Buzzette



The newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers ~ January 2017

Tiverton Beekeepers are a branch of The Devon Beekeepers Association. Registered Charity No 270675.

Branch Meetings.

Wednesday 18th January 2017
“Members question time”
Uplowman Village Hall 7:30.

Beginners Meeting at Uplowman Village Hall.

Wednesday 11th January 2017.
- Swarms their causes & prevention.

Hi all, I hope that you have had lovely Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year!

Attached to this months email is a Bulk Buying Order Form for you to download and print if required. Full instructions for returning this form are in Derek Evans article further on in this edition. Unfortunately the online ordering from the website is not available yet, I apologise for this but this year due to personal circumstances I have not been able to put the time to updating it yet, there is however an order form on the website which can be downloaded and emailed if you wish.

Also included in this months Buzzette are the Christmas dinner report and photos, the skittles match report also with pictures and an article titled “How Many Hives Should I Keep” written by our Apiary Manager Baruch. Many thanks to all contributors, it makes my job so much easier!

Regards Jonathan.

Next Committee Meeting

Dear committee members - just a reminder that now the Christmas Festivities are over 2017 is looming and another exciting year of beekeeping. Our meetings are held on the first Tuesday of alternate months starting from January, although we do slip an extra one in at the end of October! We meet at 7.30 pm at the Redwoods Inn, Uplowman. Our first meeting is next Tuesday 3rd January.

I am attaching a draft agenda and the minutes from our last meeting in October. I will send to you separately a draft Swarm Collectors Policy. Looking forward to seeing you all. Happy New Year. Tony.

Christmas Dinner 2016.

35 Branch members turned out to the Annual Branch Christmas Dinner held at the Tiverton Hotel on the 14th December. A three course meal was followed by coffee and mince pies when quite a buzz of conversation also took place. Thanks to Gavin Scott who is his first year with the branch took on the challenge of organising the event. It appeared to be enjoyed by all attending.



How many hives should I keep, and what spare equipment may be needed

Some of us amateurs, while we like the idea of keeping bees, are wary of expanding so much that this hobby becomes a burden and starts taking over our lives (there is a rumour circulating that there is more to life than bees, although I'm unable personally to verify it...) So what is a sensible number of hives to keep? The question really is: what number should we aim to overwinter?

It is generally agreed that a single hive is a tenuous proposition, because bees do sometimes abscond or perish, even in the hands of the finest beekeeper. If I lose my only hive it is a total setback, and will likely require further investment to get going again. Two is half as risky, and that, I think, is the absolute minimum. With two I should be able to come through most winters with some bees, although once in a way I may well lose them both. Three hives going into winter is a more secure proposition; if I lose one, I start the next season with the 'minimum'; if I should be so unlucky as to lose two I'm still in the game, though in a precarious position*.

Let's assume that you agree that three colonies is a sensible, sustainable minimum base for going into winter. In the late summer and autumn, you will be consolidating by uniting failed or weak stocks that are unlikely to make it through the long cold season – the secret of low winter losses is in taking any such losses in August/September and only preparing for winter strong colonies that are in the pink of health. If after condemning some we want to be left with three, then it follows that we need during the active season to keep a couple more, at least as nuclei.

Suppose you acquire as many nuc boxes as you have hives, three say; then you'll find they come in handy in a number of ways. You can create a new nucleus by taking bees and a queen cell out of a colony that is preparing to swarm; or you may house a swarm you collect; you may even raise a few queens and divide a colony into several nucs. All these operations and others will result in new colonies with young queens which may well develop into vigorous stocks that come autumn can take the place of any declining ones.

The upshot of this discussion is that if you are to keep bees over the long term then during the active season you'll need some spare capacity, at least in the form of nucleus boxes. Obviously if you can afford the storage area and the cost, then a spare hive or two will often find good use. But I find that another bit of spare capacity is useful.

Spare brood boxes – 'deeps' in America – ideally one per hive you overwinter, three then in our case. If you start the season, mid March say, by providing additional space in the form of a 'deep' rather than the usual 'shallow', then this

may later open up some options. A strong colony with brood in two brood chambers can be easily divided (although at that point a spare floor and roof will be needed.)

*If we take Clive & Shân Hudson's stats as a guide (BBKA News Dec '16), then, assuming you treat for varroa, your winter losses may average at 19%, or approximately 1 in 5 colonies (if you don't treat, then it's 1 in 8). This means that if you keep a single hive you can expect to lose it once in 5 years on average (8 if not treating – INT for short). If you keep two, you can expect to lose both once every 25 years (or every 64 INT). Probability also suggests that with two hives you can expect to come through winter with just one buzzing lot once every third year roughly (every fifth INT – roughly again). These are averages, of course; our own individual success will depend on our environment, our skill, the prevalence of disease, etc. Overwintering with three hives, the respective chances of losing them all over winter are once in 125 years (or about once in 500 years INT) – which ought to keep you going through many generations.

Baruch

Useful BBKA Recommended Reading For Those Taking the Beginners Course.

Dear association secretaries,

With many associations already planning their Introduction to Beekeeping courses for the New Year, we thought we should draw your attention to some publications which might be useful to you.

By popular demand, BBKA News has just published '**In the Apiary: A Month-by-Month Guide**'. This is a compilation of articles from previous editions of BBKA News written by Dr Ivor Davis (past President of BBKA). It is intended for beginner beekeepers but of course makes a great monthly reminder for novice to experienced beekeepers.

BBKA News' '**Honey Bee Anatomy**' by Ian Stell (Master Beekeeper) is also available. This collection of articles was first published in BBKA News and because many people have asked, Ian has kindly agreed to allow them to be reproduced in this booklet.

Both these editions are being sold at £4 each or for quantities of 10 or more they are £3 each (post free)

We also have stocks of '**The BBKA Guide to Beekeeping**' second edition by Dr I Davis & Roger Cullum-Kenyon. These are £15 each or for 10 and more £12 each, both plus post and packaging.

Finally as we are keen for everyone to be vigilant for the Asian Hornet we also have traps available which are priced at

1 x twin pack = £5.95 inc p&p

5 x twin packs = £22.50 inc p&p

If your Area Association is sending a delegate to the ADM 14th January 2017, you could save on the post and packing by placing an order before the ADM and we can hand the parcel over to your delegate on the day.

Regards. Leigh Sidaway, General Manager, BBKA.

Editors note: The above are recommended by the BBKA and are included in this months edition at the request of the BBKA, it is only a recommendation and not compulsory reading. Beginners are advised to chat with Keith before purchasing.

Bulk Buying Scheme

It is time to save money on Foundation and Frames again, and more!

New for 2017

We are extending the scheme to larger items e.g. hives, supers, brood boxes, feeders, etc from the Maisemore Apiaries catalogue at: www.bees-online.co.uk These will have to be ordered at the same time as the foundation/frames order as they will be piggy-backed on the same order to save postage and delivery charges.

There are three ways of placing your order:

1. Use the online [Bulk Purchasing Form](#)
2. Download the order form attached to this Buzzette, complete and email/post it to me. Both addresses are on the order form
3. Fill in the order form at the next Branch meeting

Deadline for items from Maisemore Apiaries catalogue Friday 3rd February

Deadline for Foundation and Frames 10pm Sunday 5th February

The main aim of the Tiverton Bulk Buying Scheme is that 100% of the money saved is passed on to our members; the club does not make any money.

Derek EVANS

Bulk Buying Coordinator

jender008@gmail.com



Skittles Match v Taunton Beekeepers

The skittles re-match between Tiverton Beekeepers and Taunton Beekeepers took place at the Blue Ball Inn, Sampford Moor on the evening of Friday 2nd December. The first match had taken place earlier in the year when Tiverton were the winners but this time Taunton got their revenge and ran out narrow winners. The evenings have been good fun bringing the members from both branches closer to each other. Thanks go to Malcolm Crook for organising both matches.

Happy New Year !!

If you have any interesting articles relating to Bees & Beekeeping, please do not hesitate to forward them to me by email to jon.gubb@voddens.co.uk by the 27th of the month for inclusion in the next months edition of the Buzzette.