

NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DEVON BRANCH
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

October 2006

www.northdevonbees.org



Editorial

Colour Comes to Northern Lights

No, it wasn't your new glasses, or the effect of opening 2 bottles of that delicious mead you laid down last year - our newsletter was indeed, last month, produced in colour for the first time.

I didn't mention it in the editorial, because I wasn't sure that Chris was going to sort it in time - but he did. All thanks go to him. It certainly spices up the pictures, so how about you lot sending me a few. Anything considered well, anything with a bee-keeping theme considered !!

The Cream of the Crop ?

Unlike last year, my current honey harvest has not included any set honey. This has left me in somewhat of an embarrassing position as I had already "promised" some set honey to several friends who prefer it to the runny version. Following on from last month's article therefore I have been prompted to experiment with seeding some of my runny honey to see if it can be successfully converted.

Further research on the "Dyce method" has put me off the more commercial approach - mainly because Dyce proposes heating the honey to high temperatures (albeit for a short period) to remove incipient granulation by the runny honey and to prevent possible fermentation by killing any yeasts present. I am not in favour of processing a natural product in this way. Furthermore, I would have difficulty controlling the temperature of the mix to the precise limits he has laid out.

So, I have acquired a small amount of excellent set honey from Ruth Neil, and mixed it thoroughly with about 2lbs of runny honey from my apiary. It is now sitting in a small plastic pail in my garage (the closest I can get to the ideal 15 Deg C) and, after about a week, has changed little. I await progress.

If anybody else has experience of this process, how about a little article for Northern Lights ?

Chairman's Chat

Winter Feeding/Nosema Treatment

There are two principal reasons for feeding sugar solution to bees in the winter - firstly to build up their stores so that they will survive the winter (and still have plenty of food for the spring build-up), and secondly to medicate for Nosema with Fumidil B.

To deal with Nosema first, the dosage is 8.3g in 14lbs of sugar dissolved in 7 pints of water or 4kg in 1.3litres. Fumidil B is available in 25g. packs to treat 3 colonies or 475g packs to treat 54 colonies. The precise amount of sugar and water is not critical but it is important that the medication is fed over three to four weeks to ensure that each bee gets treated. It is also important that the antibiotic is not

heated above 120degF (49degC) and I would suggest 100degF (39degC) would give a good safety margin. This is important as FumB becomes completely denatured at 125degF.

My method for mixing is to put the FumB in one pint of cold water and mix it with an egg whisk. Heat the remaining water with the sugar added to about 90degF(35C) and

stir until the sugar is dissolved. Check the temperature with a jam thermometer and if below 39degC then add the FumB solution. This is then fed to the bees via slow feeders - contact, top or frame feeders - not miller type feeders.

Feeding to boost winter stores uses the same solution but can be fed through fast feeders as speed is not critical. Thymol crystals can be added to the sugar solution at the rate of 5g to 2 gallons of syrup. This helps prevent fermentation and it is suggested by some beekeepers that it also helps in varroa control.

Feeding Baker's or Confectioner's Fondant is becoming popular as it can be placed on the crown board for the bees to help themselves. If you leave the plastic wrapper on and make small holes in it, the fondant will stay soft and the bees can easily access it.

DON'T FORGET !!
The Branch Honey
Show is fast approaching - get your entries in NOW !!
More info on page 3

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(Continued from page 1)

Sometimes the bees won't take the feed down before the weather becomes too cold. By removing stores and putting on an empty super they will be encouraged to take the feed down - you can put the honey stores back on later.

Two cautionary notes. Firstly do not feed the bees so much that there is no room for the queen to lay in the spring and, secondly, only use white sugar (cane or beet), as brown sugar contains impurities which can damage bees.

All the products named above can be obtained from Bitz4Bees.

Chris Tozer

Apiary Managers Report

The beekeeping year is now almost done, the crop gathered, all colonies now tested, re-united, re-queened, treated for Varroa and ready for medicated feeding for Nosema.

All sections have had a goodish year considering the late spring weather and some missed queen cells. Despite this, the honey yield was good almost three hundred pounds and the taste excellent. What we missed in honey was more than made up for by the number of nuclei produced by all three sections, about 23 in all, including the swarms Chris Utting requeened, medicated and then sold on to both new and old members.

The new honey extractor has proved its worth already as has our new honey processing room/sweat box. When we fit an air conditioning fan and a screen door, Ruth might be able to work during the heat of the day. At the height of the season we had in excess of forty colonies. We have bought a great deal of new equipment and tools for the three teams.

As I reported last month, the EFB scare put us all on the back foot but fortunately it came to nothing. The good thing was that we had to be inspected by Peter Auger, who gave us a clean bill of health. After inspecting the whole site, he declared that he was proud to be a member of North Devon Branch.

I am in the process of drawing up plans for our winter programme of maintenance which of course will cost us some of our hard earned cash. This will be "make-do and mend" until we know whether any of our loan applications are successful.

Again this year we had a generous gift of honey from Mr Johns (see article on next page), the sale of which will raise further funds for the Apiary.

In conclusion, it has been a good year for all who came every week to work as team members, attendance averaged well over twenty beekeepers.

Next year, I predict an even better year.

Tony

Beekeepers Quarterly (BKQ): significant discount available

Interested in taking the well-respected Beekeepers Quarterly ? If so, you can take advantage of a welcome large discount available through the Branch. BKQ is a large format (A4 size), full colour magazine published by Northern Bee Books (NBB), normally costing individual subscribers £ 24 annually.

Under the negotiated new arrangement, you can subscribe for only £ 14 annually by simply informing me by telephone or e-mail as below. And if you are already subscribing, you will get a corresponding cash return whilst securing this large discount for future years !

Please note that there is absolutely no mark-up involved here; this is simply

a free service negotiated for the benefit of Branch members. BKQ is typically some 56 pages each issue, and to see a specimen consult :-

<http://www.beedata.com/bbq.htm>

Dave James

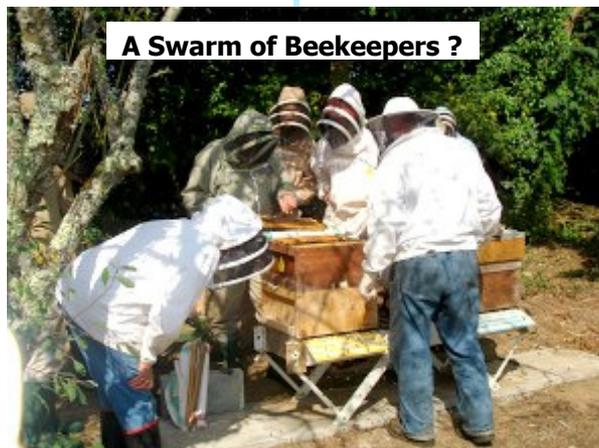
dave@greenover.net

01769 561 002

Missing - One Lonely Extractor

Our manual 9 frame plastic bodied honey extractor has gone missing - last seen in the apiary shed before the partitioning wall was removed.

If anyone has borrowed it, taken it away for cleaning or repair, or is aware of its location, please let anyone in the Apiary team know and they will attach its collar and lead and walk it safely home again !



Frank Johns (and his Generosity)

One of our most experienced members, Frank Johns of Ilfracombe, has for some time now been explaining to the neighbouring young Tony Wright, how his successful beekeeping techniques are still fundamentally similar to those of his beloved Cornish grandfather.

He is one of our eldest members, but he is very sprightly and clearly reads every issue of Northern Lights and so on to keep up to date with beekeeping affairs. Unlike his grandfather, however, Frank normally wears a different hat for his beekeeping than the bowler hat favoured by Cornish beekeepers years ago - as revealed in the picture below.



But he has many other surprises in his management techniques. For example, he uses specially selected, tailored carpets rather than crown boards. He has many other well-established and effective approaches that might bemuse many of us, and he's happy to explain these to visitors to his picturesque apiary at Slade.

He spends much of the day there throughout the summer, it seems. And for the colder periods, the bees enjoy the warmth derived from some of his wife's discarded skirts, curtains etc. that he uses as extra insulation under the hive roofs.

He uses Nationals, and many of his hives are decades old - in some cases from before the First World War.

Most generously, through Tony, he arranged, for the second year now, for much of his fine honey crop to be donated to the Branch and Tony and the current Mrs Wright have been busy helping with the whole extraction and bottling process.

In addition, Frank very kindly donated a double nucleus colony (see picture below) to the Branch for "a young beekeeping beginner", and it was immediately decided that Harry Hill should be the proud new recipient.



Tony and Dave J took special pleasure in installing this at Harry's home apiary, aided by mum Liz, ready for its brand new home. His mum? Ah, you see, Harry is our youngest member at 12, so unfortunately he was at school that day.

On behalf of the Branch, we extend our sincerest thanks to Frank for his extreme generosity - both for the honey and for the fine colony to help get Harry off to a great beekeeping start. And we wish him many, many more pleasurable years working with the bees he so loves

North Devon Branch Honey Show

Just a few last minute additions to the information and schedule you should all have received with last month's newsletter :-

- 1 **OOPS !!!** The Show Schedule has the wrong date advertised. The North Devon Branch Honey Show will take place on **Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th October**, and not the 26th and 27th.
- 2 Could all award holders return their trophies as soon as possible - please bring them along to any meeting.
- 3 For those entering the photography classes, please mount your photos on card so that the staging manager can fix the display to a cloth background with velcro.

Please note that if you have lost the schedule or require another entry form, a copy of the former is viewable on our website www.northdevonbees.org, and the entry form can be downloaded and printed for submission.

No excuses for not entering now !!

The Instrumented Hive Partnership, and the green shed

To recall the old song, what's behind the green door at our Branch Apiary ? Or rather, inside the green shed that was installed in spring ?

Well, it and its contents are the first study site belonging to the independent Instrumented Hive Partnership (IHP), formed around the start of the year by four beekeeping members interested in more detailed studies of bee colonies than is possible within the constraints of a local branch. The current Partners are Michael Duncan, Dave James, Kevin Stach and Tony Wright.

The IHP has a formal partnership agreement, a fledgling web presence and an agreement with the Branch over the shed and its use. Importantly, there is no cost to the Branch, either initially or on-going. The IHP's own funds, gifts in kind and time spent to date all add up to a very considerable investment. The new shed, termed IHP's site #3, has mains wiring, lighting, seating, desk and storage etc. The IHP has built and installed within this shed the first of three observation hives of innovative design, and gathered good experience in running a colony in it.

The team has procured suitable monitoring and data logging equipment for initial studies, covering acoustic, temperature and still and motion photography. The first of two computers has been set up, together with the start of an intranet arrangement incorporating networked hard disk storage and video monitoring, and appropriate internet access, also sound digitising and software analysis items. More equipment is to be set up, and the first two of three other sites is also now ready (not at Horestone), the first of these complete with modest seating, water, microscope, broadband, cooking, lighting etc facilities - oh, and mini sink !

What are the IHP's areas of interest ? These include sounds, temperature, mass, auto- and allo-grooming in relation to mite control. Special non-invasive, portable, professional quality sound recording kit separately enables non-invasive recording of hives anywhere within driving range, and next year the IHP will be enlisting more beekeepers willing to allow access to their apiaries for this recording work. Other studies started include some connected with Housel positioning and feral comb production.

The IHP is extending its own library to assist studies, and has started through correspondence and its conference-call facilities to develop relationships with experts here and overseas. Generally such experts are quite willing to accommodate the IHPs' non-professional status on account of its sheer enthusiasm ! Detailed planning is underway now for a very busy 2007 season.

The IHP has made a decent start this year, and could provide NL readers with information on some of its progress in future.

Dave J

Apiary Open Day Sunday 17th Sept.

The last open day of the season attracted 6 or 7 newcomers and at least 2 dozen members.

Chris Utting welcomed visitors and members and gave a brief history of the Association; Devon claims to be the largest and oldest Beekeeping group in the country; and also of the Apiary begun in 1982 at Horestone, the boundary stone between the parishes of Bishop's Tawton and Umberleigh, in case you were in any doubt as to the significance of the name!

Despite rather uncertain weather the visitors set off with Chris and Flower who had been persuaded to talk them round the apiary with tales of the joys of becoming a beekeeper. This obviously went down very well and the weather smiled on them, so suits were donned and Chris opened up a hive. One visitor was thrilled to find he could actually hold a frame of bees without gloves on.

Meanwhile indoors Kay expertly led a discussion session for 'old hands' on "Preparations for the start of the Beekeeping Year ie. NOW"

Timely and useful reminders for all covered checking the health of colonies, not forgetting the Foul Broods, Nosema and Acarine as well as Varroa and treating as necessary. Checking stores, aim for between 35-50 lbs, and practise hefting, and don't forget to store drawn supers with protection from mice and the dreaded wax moth. Inevitably the eternal question of whether to keep your bees warm or cold for good wintering rounded off the discussion and the general conclusion that the bees will always have the last word.

Dave and Jean were busy with the Bitz4Bees trade and the afternoon finished with the usual excellent tea.

Julie Elkin

A Collection of Beekeepers

Well, I certainly started something with this ! Here are some more offerings from members.

A Drone of Beekeepers

A Bothering of Beekeepers

An Eccentricity of Beekeepers

A Bumbling of Beekeepers

An Extraction of Beekeepers

An Abomination of Beekeepers

A Dabbling of Beekeepers

A Brood of Beekeepers

A Consensus of Beekeepers

(Oh yeah - in your dreams !!!)

I think I'll call a halt at this point ! *Editor*

Website of the Month - Tennessee Beekeepers

<http://www.tnbeekeepers.org/learning.htm>

Having spent several very enjoyable holidays in Tennessee, I must confess that I have a certain fondness for this state. However, the reason I have chosen this website this month is not to extol the virtues of this part of the US, but to highlight the prolific scribblings of one George Imirie, a master beekeeper of some standing (he, paradoxically, does not hail from Tennessee, but from Maryland).

Getting away from last month's picture related info, this "learning" part of the Tennessee Beekeepers Association's website contains a large number of written essays and articles expressing George's views and observations on beekeeping and, whilst you may not agree with all his statements, it all makes for an interesting and informative read. What amazed me is the sheer amount of information here - granted a lot of it is aimed at US beekeepers, but a lot of the detail applies on this side of the Atlantic as well. All valuable reading material for those long Winter nights !

All the articles are readable on line or downloadable in PDF (portable document file) format if you have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed (free from Adobe's website).

As before, if you are lazy (or a poor typist !), follow the link from our own website, shown on the "For Members" page, or the "Newsletter" page.

Social Scribblings

October: Where are the songs of spring? When you have finished dreaming of mists and mellow fruitfulness, spare some thought for this October's action.

There's a lot of it about. The Branch seems to gain momentum now and many more people are wanting to join us. A big welcome to all of those especially, who came to the September Open Day. We need whatever skills you can contribute, but most importantly, we need fresh ideas, fresh enthusiasm and innovation. However, with one eye on the future, it is rewarding to look in the rear view mirror, and remind ourselves of beekeeping's astonishing past.

The National Honey Show takes place this month 19th-21st, at the RAF Museum at Hendon. One of our new members is exhibiting, so we wish Ruth

Neal every success. Well done Ruth.

Eggesford Garden Centre will stage their Apple Weekend 21st and 22nd, and our usual stall is gratifyingly very close to the cider barrels. Come on folks, let me have your hive products and your selling skills.

On Wednesday 25th, Glyn Davies will give a Talk in the Castle Centre, 7.30pm We will have the usual shared supper and raffle. It is a good chance to meet beekeepers who cannot attend daytime meetings. Glyn's Talk is entitled "Hives and Humans in History". Think about it. The honeybee is the most studied, most written-about creature on the planet, except of course man. Oh yes.

Woman. Beekeeping has evolved over many thousands of years as you know, and clever people with clever inventions have helped the progress all along the way. Glyn is a most interesting speaker, catch his enthusiasm. Please come along.

Not-only-but-also department: Our Branch Honey Show, oldest, biggest, best, is due at St John's Garden Centre on 28th and 29th. Your Chairman Chris Tozer is in training for this Olympiad as of now, you have your schedules, you have the talent. Go ahead North Devon.

Beryl

Bitz4Bees

B4B Have in stock the following items

Feeders - Frame, Rapid, 1 Gallon Bucket and Ashforth.

Glass Quilts,

Gabled Roof (National),

Apiguard, Fumidil B(25ml), Certan.

Frames - Standard National, Hoffman, Manley.

Foundation - Standard - Super. Wired, Thin, and DroneBrood. Wired and Drone.

Tidy Tray, FMGO Fogger and Light Liquid Paraffin.

and many more items at very competitive prices.

Many people are confused with the different types of Frames and Foundation. Next month we will produce a crib sheet to help ease this problem.

Order your Christmas Gifts NOW.

Regards Jean & Dave M
e-mail : jeda@onetel.com

Beeswax Handling Course

A beeswax handling course was attended by 9 members on 16th September at the lovely home of Jenny Buckle at Ashburton. We were first taught how to clean the wax by straining liquid wax, previously heated in a tin in water, through a J-cloth. The molten wax was then poured into a prepared silicone mould of choice, which had been prepared by putting elastic bands at intervals around it. After about an hour a waxen menagerie was revealed to the delighted participants showing a range of yellow coloured beeswax.



Jenny provided a wonderful ploughman's lunch which was eaten in her beautiful garden in the sunshine with donations going to the Devon Air Ambulance Trust. Her homemade apple and apricot chutney was particularly good (recipe opposite).

We were taught that different thicknesses of candle required different sized wicks which had to be first



dipped in wax and maintained within the centre of the mould prior to securing with elastic bands and filling with wax. It wasn't as easy as it looked! Some of the moulds leaked and sometimes the elastic bands were too tight leaving bulges in the candle.

After all this hard work Jenny produced a delicious cream tea followed by the un moulding of yet more small animal candles and Christmas decorations.

Liz Wilson

IT Facilities at Horestone

Thanks to a cost-sharing agreement between the Branch and a small, separate team comprising four of its members (the Instrumented Hive Partnership, IHP), the IT facilities at Horestone have been upgraded from nothing towell, something decent! Broadband internet connectivity is now available 24/7 at Horestone. For most users, the most obvious indication of this is the PC at the end of the main shed, together with a black box in the adjacent mains socket. Members can use this facility at any time, for any beekeeping related purposes and without charge. There is no ongoing annual cost to the Branch now either.

The speed is still not quite as high as it is expected to be soon, but if you are fed up with dial-up speeds you will certainly appreciate the more than ten times acceleration! It can be a really useful tool for your beekeeping studies and on-site discussions. If you have a laptop, you can plug it into the nearby Ethernet port, too. And if it has a wireless ("wi-fi") capability, just select the "IHP3" network SSID and ask me for the security code settings.

The PC uses standard Windows XP. E-mail and most common software applications are installed already. You can use Skype for free or lowest cost conference calls with your beekeeping colleagues around the world, for example, or you can search the web for that elusive reference you cannot locate or or information you need.

The e-mail address of the Apiary is:
horestone@tiscali.co.uk

Dave James

Apple & Apricot Chutney

900g cooking apples – chopped
2 medium onions
juice ½ lemon
400ml vinegar
1 dessertspoon ground ginger
285g soft brown sugar
1 dessertspoon mustard seeds
1 clove garlic
225g chopped dried apricots
1 tsp salt
170g honey

Put apples, onions, garlic, lemon juice, mustard and 300 ml vinegar in a pan and boil, then simmer for 1 hour. Add apricots, ginger, salt, sugar, honey and extra vinegar and simmer until thick. This makes 3 ½ lbs of chutney.

Thanks to Jenny Buckle for this recipe.

Edited by Kevin Tricker, Fox's Orchard, Black Torrington, Devon EX21 5QB.

Phone: (01409) 231149 Email: newsletter@northdevonbees.org.

All contributions welcome, copy by 19th of month for publication in following month's newsletter.

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