

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

April 2008

[www.northdevonbees.org](http://www.northdevonbees.org)



## Editorial

This is our sixth edition and we still have not been paid!! Seriously though - we hope you enjoy reading all the really useful information and are ready to give your attention to your hives. Good Luck *Mel & Sylvie*

## Chairman's Chat.

March, the darkest month of the bee year is behind us. A month of below average temperatures, a month that came in like a lion and went out like a lion. But all is not black, by now most of us know the worst; we know what bees have come through and those we will have to replace. April can only be better; the spring flowers so essential to the bees are beginning to appear, especially the dandelion. April the month that gives us the first real opportunity to have a good look in the hive, the month where if all things are as they should be, will see the dramatic explosion in the brood box. A month when those of us who are still feeling our way in the world of beekeeping might consult the odd book or two. April can be the month where lessons can be learnt the hard way, or in other ways it may be one of the most glorious of the year. April can bring the first sight of a beautiful frame, where the eggs, grubs, capped brood, honey and pollen could have been placed as if by an artist. April, the month we have all been waiting for!

In our garden, those that cannot get to our Apiary as often as they might like may not be fully aware of the transformation that is taking place. One of the developments is the planting of different types of fruit trees. With the kind permission of the Estate owners we have been permitted to plant some of the fruit trees on the adjoining small paddock, too. This necessitated the felling of the large willow tree (which on inspection turned out to be almost completely rotten) that dominated the paddock. The task of bringing the tree down fell to Tim, Chris and Adam. I am pleased to say that thanks to their great skill and professionalism the tree, despite its size, come down without problem or incident. Because of the very competent way that the felling took place it was almost an anticlimax, so much so that Mary, one of the gardening team who stayed to watch, missed the actual event because of a minor distraction. *Jim Slade*

## Apiary Managers Report

Today I called in at one of my out apiaries. The day (Easter Monday) started dull with light rain, later to improve to sunny but cold with a biting wind. The four hives were bathed in sunlight and luckily out of the wind. The bees were working like mad throwing themselves out of the entrance to forage and returning with good pollen loads, pollen of many colours from terracotta to white. Dare we hope that this awkward weather is at last passing, can we soon assess the damage done to many of our colonies, and make plans to get the losses restored? The Apiary Support Team has heard time and time again that quite a number of our colonies are diminishing, a change in the weather even for a week would make such a difference. Keep your fingers crossed!

Our Monday work team have caught up with a number of outstanding jobs, especially on the gardening front.

The Ilfracombe Hoteliers Association has donated all the plywood panels we need to reline the main meeting room; these will be transported to Horestone from Ilfracombe in the next couple of weeks.

Tim Potter and Chris Tozer felled the big willow tree to make way for the planting of the fruit trees, demonstrating once again that within our group of beekeepers we have members with the skills and knowledge to cover every problem put before us. *Tony Wright*

## 100s CLUB

The Horestone one hundred club has just about finished its first year, just one more draw to be made. I will be contacting members to hopefully renew their support.

The monies earned have augmented our regular funds making it possible for us to complete maintenance and be adventurous with new projects within the apiary.

Members who bought their tickets before May last year ticket no's 1---35 need to send in their £12.00 in April to be included in May's draw, later tickets will be brought into line so that where possible all tickets will eventually need renewing in April. If you are renewing your lottery you will of course keep your original number.. .

We are still a few members short of the one hundred needed so if you have non-beekeeping friends try to get them on board. *Wendy Dunlop Jenkins*

## **Every Action Counts - North Devon Beekeepers - 18th March 2008**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> March several members, the Committee and others indulged me in developing some strategies that could be used to make our Branch a little bit greener. This was using an approach under the 'Every Action Counts' initiative. It's been organised under the umbrella of DEFRA. However, lots of green/community organisations have also had a lot of input to the scheme.

The process took about two hours and involved playing a series of decision making 'games'. The games start by handing out about 70 cards each with a possible tip on how to be more sustainable. For example, change to using energy saving light bulbs (obvious) or do an audit of water usage by the Branch (less obvious). The tips fall under one of five categories – 'Save our resources', 'Shop ethically', 'Save energy', 'Travel wisely' and 'Care for your area'. Everyone looked a bit daunted as I handed around dozens of the coloured cards. However, the tried and tested decision making system employed by the games soon helped us discard the advice that was not relevant to the North Devon Beekeepers (such as fitting water saving taps) and then those which were not seen as a priority. Some actions are already being done by the club. For example, the group felt that no other action was necessary under the 'Care for your area' category as we are already enhancing the local environment with new orchard planting. At the end of the session we had decided on seven actions to take up and who is responsible for their implementation:

### **North Devon Beekeepers sustainability action plan**

#### **Action 1**

Use the newsletter to raise awareness about the need to recycle and reduce waste.

**When - Now**

**What needs to happen?** - Write an article on the Every Action Counts meeting.

Put regular eco-tips in the newsletter.

**Who is responsible? Tim**

#### **Action 2**

Switch to eco-friendly washing up liquid.

**When – Now**

**What needs to happen?** - Buy eco-friendly washing up liquid from Griffins yard.

**Who is responsible? Julie**

#### **Action 3**

Club to buy fair-trade tea, coffee and food.

**When – Now**

**What needs to happen?** - Buy fair-trade tea and coffee.

**Who is responsible? David**

**What needs to happen?**

Buy West Hill Milk rather than Evil Milk..

**Who is responsible? David and Jean**

#### **Action 4**

Appoint waste and recycling champion.

Draw up a waste and recycling action plan and get everyone involved.

**When – Now**

**What needs to happen?** - Do a waste and recycling plan and get everyone involved via the newsletter. Include information and advice in the newsletter eco-tips.

**Who is responsible? Tim**

#### **Action 5**

Set up a garden sharing scheme where those who want to grow use the gardens of those who never use them.

**When – Now**

**What needs to happen?** - See if there are any offers and takers through the newsletter.

**Who is responsible? Tim**

#### **Action 6**

Offset the carbon generated by members using cars to travel to and from meetings

**When - Now**

**What needs to happen?** - Find ways of planting more trees.

**Who is responsible? 'Flowa' (Mary)**

## **Action 7**

Make your own free electricity and hot water.

**When – Soon**

**What needs to happen?** - Decide whether this is feasible and practical.

**Who is responsible?** ‘Flowa’ and Jim

### **Tim’s thoughts on the chosen actions.**

Firstly, its worth saying that in many ways the club is pretty good already. As beekeepers we all help maintain populations of honeybees within the local ecosystem to pollinate both crops and wild flowers. Indeed if it wasn’t for us there wouldn’t be any bees in the face of all the disease problems. Also, we are producing local food with low food miles. So, well done us.

The worst thing we do is all the car journeys to the Apiary on a Tuesday. To be honest everyone in the group agreed that there was not much we could do; especially given how dire the public transport system is (Do we have one?). Personally, I combine my trip to the apiary with my weekly town shop and visit to the farming supplies store.

Looking at the actions decided by the group, most are pretty easy to do.

Buying fair-trade/organic/local/eco-friendly products just involves changing our shopping habits. They may (or may not) cost more. However, this typically means that we as consumers are picking up the tab that would otherwise fall on the environment or the hard working indigenous people of... (*insert name of your chosen impoverished developing nation here*). Dave, David and Jean have got the tea, coffee and milk covered. However, has anyone got any suggestions on making the tempting tea-time snacks greener (other than leaving them at the back of the fridge and forgetting about them)?

The next easy one refers to sharing gardens. So, has anyone got a garden that they don’t garden ? Does anyone not garden but would like to ? If your answer to either question is yes, then talk to me and I could get you together. Perhaps some of the produce of such a union could end up on our Tuesday tea-table. Growing your own food is good exercise, feels good and saves on the food miles again.

Looking at our car use, if we are going to drive to the club the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by driving can be offset by planting trees. This idea is most often applied to aircraft flights. Indeed you can usually pay someone to offset your emissions alongside your booking. However, these schemes are often suspect, being unregulated and even damaging to the environment. For example, a landowner may well welcome getting paid to plant fast growing monoculture of eucalypts on a bit of rough ground that is no good for crops but just happens to currently be a fantastic diverse wildlife habitat. So if we are going to plant trees my advice is to do it ourselves or at least have some form of direct involvement.

Looking at generating our own hot water or power, the group feeling was that the expense would outweigh any financial or environmental benefit. However, ‘Flowa’ and Jim are going to look into this.

I’m going to be responsible for providing you with some more eco-tips and even developing a waste and recycling plan. If you have some helpful tips or would like to add some input to the recycling plan then I’d welcome your ideas.

This months handy eco-tip – **Save a tree, kill a beaver.**



*Tim Potter*

## First Steps in Beekeeping



Lewis is probably the youngest member of our beekeeping family - at 3.75 years. He is seen here assisting his grandfather, Dave James, at St Michael's School, Tawstock. Lewis enjoyed this new experience so much that he continued to wear his bee suit for the entire weekend. It proved to be a very suitable garment for everything from being an astronaut to watching TV. Dining out was not a problem. Sleeping in it was slightly uncomfortable, but he showed it can be done. Come along to Horestone on a Tuesday afternoon and you will often find bee-suited workers sleeping by the pot-bellied stove.... Lewis has now adopted heavy tea drinking, too, after a fact-finding visit there on a Tuesday....



Thanks to DJ for the photos.

*Sylvie & Mel*

## This Month in the Garden.

It's time to sow the annuals the bees love and which also help bring the hoverflies into the garden to eat the aphids later on.

Top of the list is *Limnanthes douglasii*, the lovely little Poached Egg flower, if you didn't sow it in the autumn delay no longer. Surround your fruit trees and bushes with it and let it self seed.

Others to sow in quantity now are Buckwheat, Phacelia and Borage.

Buckwheat and Phacelia can be bought in large packets for 99p (St Johns) described as being for green manuring but it is a waste not to let them flower. The remains will make good compost.

In the vegetable patch why not add Field Beans to the broad and runner beans, with their extra floral nectaries field beans are a wonderful bee plant.

Hopefully all these will be flowering in abundance at Horestone this season.

*Julie*

## Community of Beekeepers - B4B



**New Hives for a New Season**, well constructed in Cedar  
Complete - £152.00 - all you need are the Bees.  
Empty - £122.00 - you will need Frames & Foundation and, yes, the bees

Nuc Boxes - 5 Frame

Overwintering Nuc Box - £50.00 - with Varroa floor.

Travelling Nuc Box - £39.00

All your other requirements at Best Prices.

Community of Beekeepers - B4B is run by Beekeepers for Beekeepers.

*Dave & Jean*

**The Garden Team** - In October 2007 the garden team applied for a Leader+ Orchard Grant which allowed us to plant 9 early blossoming fruit trees. There were 2 conditions for this grant being applied—the 1st being the coppicing of the hazel hedge and the 2nd the coppicing of the large dying willow tree near the car park. This was to allow more light and root growth into the new orchard. After discussion with the members, 9 trees were purchased from Thornhayes—a medlar, a mazzard cherry, a quince and 6 early to mid flowering cider apples. Tim, Adam & Chris applied their expert skills to the willow coppicing and the garden team have subsequently planted willow cuttings which will be easily manageable and an additional wild life habitat. All the trees are now planted as well as the many shrubs and flowers that have been so generously donated by 'friends of the garden'. The pond is beginning to mature and we are now planning a seating area where we can relax, enjoy the garden, and watch the bees at work.

## THE GEOFF INGOLD LIBRARY COLLECTION

Geoff worked as a honey bee researcher at Rothamstead (MAFF) for many years after WW2 assisting several famous research scientists. He wrote many of the MAFF leaflets that were published on bee diseases. What he didn't know about bee diseases was not worth knowing. He held the highest beekeeping qualification – the National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB) and was the BBKA General Secretary for a time. When he moved to North Devon he became a bee farmer at Torrington with about 80 colonies. He was a very active member of the Branch, served on the committee with C.B. Dennis (who helped develop Frow Mixture for Acarine treatment). Geoff was also the branch microscopist and taught many of the members his methods. His microscopes were donated to the branch.

Geoff Ingold died in 2005 when he was in his 90s. His library was donated to the North Devon Branch by his family and has been catalogued. There are over 170 items ranging from some rare and valuable books to research reports by some very famous people - Bailey, Butler, Free, Simpson etc. The list is available from Julie Elkin, the Branch Librarian.

*Chris Utting*

## Holsworthy Branch Convention Day

Holsworthy Branch members held their third Convention Day on 23rd February this year, with a good attendance of visitors and an excellent programme. The buzz of interest, conversation, organization and momentum was apparent from the beginning. Generous coffees and teas were handed out by the Holsworthy ladies. Chris Smith, Chairman of the Branch, welcomed us all to the Convention Day, and away went the start with our backbone lecturer Richard Ball. Richard spoke of Colony Collapse Disorder. His advice seemed to be keep on top of Varroa with IPM, don't stress your bees, keep them strong clean and well fed.

After this a certain amount of sleight of hand happened. The hall and side room were turned into three workshops, with the attending beekeepers divided into three groups: a most interesting queen rearing corner with Adam Vevers and Dennis Scott, the side room devoted to Microscopy with Brian Marchant and Sue Hoult, and another corner all about polystyrene hives with John Laidler. After about twenty minutes, all moved one place on in the best of Wonderland tradition.

There was then time to look at the large number of prizes for the raffle, the skep making with Mick Male, the Bitz for Bees equipment from North Devon, and the Quiz questions set up around the walls by Richard Ball.

Meanwhile, another miracle of organization was taking place: large circular dining tables were laid out, and everyone enjoyed a ploughman's lunch.

Roger Lacey spoke briefly about the great benefit of study, the courses available in Devon, and the Correspondence Courses available throughout the country

The main lecture of the day was then presented by Roger Dewhurst. Roger has studied the behavior of some of his bees in dealing with the Varroa mites, and how the strain he is breeding from in Cornwall invariably bite and damage the carapace of many of the mites. Fascinating - dedicated observations, and very time-consuming for him.

I have to congratulate the members of Holsworthy Branch. It was a splendid Bee Day Out *Beryl Smailes*

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## Diary Dates

### 18-20 April BBKA Stoneleigh

The deadline for discounted tickets is April 5, contact Christine Hayward, 19 Kings Road, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4DA. Cheques payable to BBKA sae C5 with 48p stamp £12.50p for members £15 for others.

For programme information go to:-  
[www.britishbee.org.uk/spring-convention-2008.php](http://www.britishbee.org.uk/spring-convention-2008.php)

**\*27 April Sunday\*** (not the 20th April as in NL for March). **The monthly talk/meeting at Horestone** is from Johanna Westwood on wild flowers - to start at 2pm.

**15/16/17 May** Devon County Show, Westpoint, Exeter

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS** If you have a problem with paying your subscription contact Dave James on 01769 561 002.

## Branch talk on March 2nd

That Sunday afternoon - which coincided with Mothers' Day, it turned out (!) - saw about 40 at Horestone to listen to a fascinating talk by Dr Peter McGregor of Cornwall College on "Animal Communications Networks". He is an internationally acknowledged expert in this area, was a full prof. at Copenhagen Univ. for many years, still co-edits *Bioacoustics* journal and is active in bio-diversity issues. This talk was co-sponsored by the Instr. Hive Partnership (IHP). It saw an unusually high number of visitors from other Branches, and was the first more formal such talk to be held at Horestone in our dramatically upgraded Meeting Hall, which now houses our Branch library, features fresh potable water from our roof, new non-shedding ceiling, digital projector and so on..... !

Peter has kindly supplied a .pdf file afterwards that corresponds to his slide set used on the day. As this is fairly large (~19 Mb) I have not tried to e-mail this out, so please ask me if you'd like it sent you or want to copy *via* a USB flash memory. Of course this talk was rather different from our traditional, practical beekeeping type of talk. Many members have suggested that it might well be that part of our programme of talks in the future should include this sort of more 'technical' and/or 'general' topic; certainly the Committee would welcome feedback.

He reviewed the basic ways in which animals - inc. of course bees - communicate (signal) by various means and something of the manner in which experiments have been devised to better understand the mechanisms. Examples included insects, birds, fishes, fiddler crabs and so on. For the crabs, he explained how some of his own research work has revealed how great is the damage caused by lack of general knowledge of the importance of animal signalling, and how this may well lead to species extinction if drastic remedial action is not taken by man. One important aspect of this subject is the concept of eavesdropping, and he gave several wonderful examples of this, and also revealed his great love of cartoons to convey the message !

Those Members interested in following up on this topic could seek a copy of the book "*Animal Communications Networks*" which he has edited (Cambridge); this is very expensive, so perhaps seek a library loan copy. An excellent introductory book is that by Harper and Maynard Smith, *Animal Signals* (Oxford UP). And there is a nice little introduction in the free Wikipedia site on-line, too (under 'animal communication'). What is perhaps surprising is to see how rapid has been the progress made in recent decades on this topic, how all this informs the study of evolutionary biology, how much there is still to explore and try to understand - and just how complicated some of these systems are, man being the most complex of all, of course.

*Dave J*

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## Out-Apiary sought for member.....

In the Westleigh, Bideford area, contact Dave James on 01769 561 002 or telephone directly 01271 860 638

## THE HISTORY of HORESTONE APIARY

Way back in 1976, Bernard Pritchard retired to North Devon from Twickenham. Prior to his retirement, Bernard held the position of Thames Valley Foul Brood Officer, and once he'd settled in Devon, he decided to open an apiary. A piece of ground was located near Pottery Lane in Instow, which proved to be a very cold, windswept site. Very few members joined initially, however one keen bee-keeper, Cyril Gould, and accountant to Major Chichester, discovered a different area that could be more beneficial. He learned, through the game-keeper at Lodge house, that an empty cottage existed at Horestone, and obtained permission to place an apiary in these grounds.

The original team, Bernard, Cyril and Kay moved the 4-5 colonies here, and hence began our chequered history! Bob Marsh, also a Foul Brood Officer, can remember the lady who lived in the cottage here, and had preceded the apiary as its first bee-keeper. She also grew apples, which she sold at Barnstaple pannier market, along with her honey sections. There used to be a stone shed where the wildlife pond now enjoys the sunshine, and the stones lie buried beneath our spades, and which started life as a pigsty!

Branch meetings were held monthly on a Sunday afternoon.

Kay began the first bee-keeping class in 1982, also taking over the position of Branch Secretary from the Trews, who had held treasurer and secretary for the previous 14 years.

1984 saw the grand arrival of the Chicken Shed! This was purchased from a farm in Wrafton, for the princely sum of £450! Stanley Pitt, from Landkey fitted the cupboards, still in use today. We have a photograph of Kay demonstrating the fine craft of 'wax-making'. Apparently wax was poured between two plastic moulds, and mangled through rollers to impress, before adding the wiring. So the next time we request foundation from Jean and Dave, we'll realize how hard they work to produce our Bitz for Bees goods!

Every year the members would plan a visit to a members' garden, as shown in a photograph taken on a sunny afternoon in Jack and Barbara Trew's garden at Lovacott. Bar Trew eventually became County Show secretary and County Chairperson, even thought it was her husband, not she, who was the bee-keeper of the family!

Another annual event was a visit to the apiary by a different branch, which gave demonstrations of various bee-keeping activities.

We have a fascinating photograph of Brother Adam's

90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations at Buckfast Abbey, standing in front of a tree he'd planted for the occasion.

All these photographs, and many more, will be displayed at the apiary for members to reminisce over whilst sipping a cuppa and adding their own memories of the apiary to this brief outline of our history.

*The history of Horestone as told to 'Flowa' by Kay Thomas, who had the foresight to accumulate numerous photographs for our invaluable archive.*

## Certificates and Trophy Winners

There are a few Basic Assessment certificates still to be collected that have been left in the library at Horestone for safe keeping.

ALSO trophies from the Honey Show 2007 have been engraved and ready for your collection from the library as above.

## Baked Carrots and Leeks with Honey and Mustard.

1 lb carrots

2 medium leeks

2 tablespoons water

2 tablespoons oil

2 tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon made mustard, try a whole grain one

Pepper & salt

A few sesame seeds for decorating (optional)

Scrub carrots and chop into small sticks.

Wash leeks and thinly slice.

Arrange carrots and leeks in a shallow oven proof dish.

Mix water, oil, honey and mustard. Pour over the vegetables and sprinkle with pepper and a very little salt.

Cover dish with foil and bake in a moderately hot oven, Gas 5, 375F or 190C for 50 - 60 minutes until tender.

Serve with a sprinkling of sesame seeds.

*Serves 4*

*This is delicious with baked salmon or pork chops. A little of the honey mixture can be spooned onto them before baking for delicious flavour.*

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A married man should forget his mistakes.

There's no use in two people remembering the same thing.

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