

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

APRIL 2012

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



## CHAIR CHAT

It's been a very busy month, and we still have the Quince Honey Farm visit on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> and Pollen under the Microscope with Brian Marchant on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> to round it off.

There is nothing of vital importance to report from the AGM. The people that you have chosen to represent you are all doing a very good job. We were treated to a brilliant talk from Graham Royal; his talk alone would have made the journey to Exeter well worth the effort.

In this wonderful spring sunshine we started the spring clean on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> and isn't it good to get back looking in the hives!! We lost one colony over winter due to varroa, but with the addition of the Queen rearing section and the beginners hive, both up and running, we have our hands full.

Many people have said to me 'I can't make Tuesdays, why can't you hold a Sunday meeting?' So I was very disappointed when only nine people turned up on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> to our first workday. There were no 'extra' faces there just the usual Tuesday group that can always be depended on; so I say a big thank you to them.

We painted, cleaned, cleared, chopped wood and gardened and all the rubbish was taken down to the local recycling centre; the apiary is looking very tidy and well kept and well done all those who helped.

My good intentions of being ready, with all my hive parts and equipment clean and ready to use, didn't happen; it means I'm in for a busy weekend cleaning so that I can start my own spring clean. I hope you all are much more organised than me.

Enjoy the bees and the sunshine. If this year runs as last, this could be our summer, so make the most of it.

*Barbara*

## About your membership

As membership secretary I have found this year, membership renewals have been very slow in coming in and I thought it might be as well to explain how the system works.

1. Always read your newsletter as towards the end of the year the renewal form comes out in it. It can sometimes be a little delayed as subscription costs are decided at regional level and they sometimes take their time in deciding what is due.

2. Membership and insurance run from January to December, no matter when you join the branch. So joining in June gives you only 6 months cover but costs the

same as the full year. Insurance is valid from 45 days after payment has been received.

3. The Insurance certificates are not sent to you unless a small donation for postage is included, they are initially at the apiary at Horestone and then at the Bits for Bees Shop and can be collected there.

Please take note of your newsletter as it does have some really useful information in it as well as chat.

If you are not receiving your magazine, you need to get back to me and I will follow it up. Now the magazine is sent straight from the printers it is impossible to check that everyone is being sent a copy unless you inform someone on the committee that there is a problem.

*Denise Oldaker - Membership Secretary.*

*[deniseoldaker@aol.com](mailto:deniseoldaker@aol.com)*

## THE COUNTY SHOW

### Competitive Exhibition

It is not too late to enter your best samples of honey wax etc. in the **County Show at Westpoint on 17,18,19 May.**

Although the official last entry day has passed, the Show Secretary Steve Ide (Phone 01392 353781) will usually accept entries up to a few days before the show. Check the DBKA website for the schedule <http://www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk/>

**IF YOU ENTER AND STAGE ITEMS IN SIX CLASSES YOU WILL GAIN A FREE ENTRY TICKET TO THE COUNTY SHOW**

### Honey Sales

The honey sales stand at the County show is looking for honey and other hive products to sell on your behalf at the County Show. Last year we sold over 600 one pound jars of honey alone plus many more items of wax, preserves, cosmetics etc. so the county show is a good place to promote your products. See the DBKA website for price list and offer of sale form.

[http://www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk/news\\_dcs.html](http://www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk/news_dcs.html)

I will be going to the show on Wednesday 16 May so if you can't take your products there but can get them to me, I'll take them and bring back any unsold items for you. Contact Jack Mummery on 01598760209 or mail at [jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk)

*Jack Mummery*

**Devon County Show:** advanced ticket sales. Special offer for senior citizens: buy one, get one free. Offer available in advance only [www.devoncountyshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk)

## It's Springtime

Spring has sprung the flowers has riz  
I wonder how my little bees iz  
On the wing flying to and from  
They tell their mates where to go  
Flying on dayø when itø sunny  
To make that wonderful debø honey.



What a totally different winter to the last two winters. The queens were laying right up to mid December, bees were hauling in pollen to mid January. On inspecting my hives on a warm day in early March, it was good to see the stores in the hives were nearly full. The bees have come through the winter very well.

Last year I trialled Nozevit as an alternative to Fumidil Bø the results then were very good. The bees were tested again this March to see how well nozvit controlled nosema after the winter. The results were very good with two hives very light and one clear. With Fumidil B about to be taken off the market it would appear to me that we might have another form of treatment to use.

Winter work this year, a new hive stand to take four bee hives.

*Alan Barrow*

## NOTES FROM HORESTONE

Our 2012 plans for the apiary are well under way. Our colonies have been tested for Nosema and all have had a first quick check to make sure the queens are laying and that they have enough stores. Hopefully with the early spring weather the colonies will build up rapidly - and once the weather is a bit warmer we will be able to do a proper Spring Inspection and replace the hive parts with clean woodwork. The colour for queen marking for 2012 is yellow.

We have a new section for beginners and beekeepers new to the apiary. This will be run by Julie and will give the opportunity to ask questions and learn good husbandry skills.

This can be a very busy time of the year and it is all hands on deck while we make sure that we keep on top of cleaning and repairing equipment and making sure that we have plenty of super and brood frames made up.

## GO FOR GOLD!

I only have two hives ø the Green and the Gold, named after the colour of the stain used on each. They have different characters too ø the Green is quiet and contemplative and the Gold is brash and busy. I'm expecting great things of the Gold, which in this Olympic year has led me to think of competitions and the rivalry of the September - Branch Honey Show. I know other Beekeeping Associations have super frame competitions at the end of the productive year and thought North Devon Beekeepers could probably outdo them all. So, if you think your bees will produce a proper 'andsome frame of honey, enter the competition (details below) and you and your bees could be our lucky (and talented) winners!

### 2012 Super Frame Competition

Each person entering will be given one (or more if required) super frames (unassembled) with a code number on it. Foundation will not be supplied but can be used. These can be collected from Horestone Apiary in April.

You must assemble the frame with or without foundation and place it in one of your colonies.

At the Honey Show in September the **same coded frame(s)** must be returned, whatever the condition, and we will give a prize for:

**The most attractive looking frame**

**The least attractive looking frame**

Each entry (frame) will cost £2 and you get to keep the frame afterwards.

I'm hoping my Gold hive will come up with goods ø will yours?

*Cathy Backway*

*To collect your coded frame please contact Cathy at [cathypete@btinternet.com](mailto:cathypete@btinternet.com) or phone 01271 858236*



**On Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> February I attended a lecture entitled: 'Bee Behaviour and Pollination Ecology in Agricultural Landscapes' at the North Wyke Research Institute near Okehampton.**

**The talk was given by Dr Juliet Osborne**



Dr Juliet Osborne leads the Bee and Pollination Ecology Group at Rothamsted Research in Hertfordshire. She did her first degree and PhD at the University of Cambridge. Her research team focus on studying honeybee and bumblebee behaviour and ecology, and the impacts on pollination in farmland. She is particularly interested in bee movement patterns across the landscape and one of her main achievements has been pioneering the use of harmonic radar to track individual flying bees over hundreds of metres. The overarching practical aims of the research are firstly to conserve and promote bee populations and secondly to protect and promote wild flower and crop pollination.

North Wyke is an amazing old manor house set in beautiful surroundings and is the home of grassland research. Their winter seminar programme can be accessed from:

[www.northwyke.bbsrc.ac.uk](http://www.northwyke.bbsrc.ac.uk) and this has links to Rothamsted Research.

The seminar gave us an insight as to how research was being carried out by Dr Juliet and her team of about 20 people at Rothamsted.

Research has been in progress on 20 observation hives of which ten contained healthy bees and ten of which had diseased bees. The healthy bees show a greater increase in numbers, but are no better at foraging and in fact the diseased bees do better in a dearth of forage because there are fewer mouths to feed!

And, yes, bees are fitted with transducers on their backs on exiting the hive and tracked by radar to observe their flight patterns! As we might have supposed, young bees start by making small circuits in different directions around their hive in order to gain orientation, but interestingly, the research has indicated that bees have a very powerful sense of smell for forage even for things which to us do not smell very strongly. Further research has confirmed the link between forage and the 'bee dance' in the hive.

An amazing amount of data has been collected as result of the on-going research - for instance bees are weighed as they go out and come back to the hive - and so it takes a while for the data to be collated and for final reports to be published. So it is greatly appreciated that Dr Juliet is prepared to come to Devon and give talks on her specialism.

*Glenis Beardsley*

## **SHOOK SWARM TALK BY CHRIS UTTING**

A good evening was had by all.

The twenty two people who attended Chris Utting's talk at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple were treated to a very good talk.

Chris Utting gave a very professional, easy to understand talk with good concise projected information sheets and a hands on demonstration with a hive. A very good clear idea of why, when and how; and the for and against the procedure.

For those who could not make it FERA have a very good information sheet for you to print off.

The general opinion was that for those of us new to beekeeping, seeing the process and having a chance to ask our questions was priceless.

Afterwards we all had plenty of time for tea, coffee, cake and a good chat.

Thanks to our Master Beekeeper, Chris Utting for his talk and to Chrissie for looking after us all so well.

*Barbara*

## QUINCE HONEY FARM VISIT

We had a most enjoyable visit to Quince Honey Farm ó about 30 of us in all. We were welcomed by Paddy Wallace, his wife Jean and son Ian. Paddy was born into beekeeping ó the farm was founded by his father in 1949 and has grown and developed into a major, family orientated, tourist attraction ó as well as producing honey and other quality honey/wax based products.

After being welcomed we were free to wander. We ascended to the first floor and could look down through the observation panels at the various work rooms ó from candle making, the frame making workshop, the uncapping machine and extractors, holding tank and bottling room. There was too much to tell you about really, you need to go and look for yourselves. It was fascinating - as were the many observation hives with both static and interactive displays ó and the wealth of information covering the walls explaining every aspect of the bees life. The colonies of bees were in many and varies homes, from a post box, a chimney, a skep and a roof. The whole Quince experience is a well balanced mixture of education and entertainment.

After we had explored we were invited into the café and enjoying tea and biscuits ó listened to Paddy talking about his experiences with his bees, and given the opportunity to ask questions.

This is a brief synopsis:

Paddy keeps 1500 colonies, kept in many apiaries spread across Devon. He farms extensively rather than intensively. Its important to enjoy your beekeeping however many colonies you have. There are many ways to keep bees ó no right or wrong ways, but the biggest crime in his eyes would be to allow bees to starve.

He keeps all these bees with 2 ½ people looking after them ó he is the ½.

Management: obviously a different approach as on such a large scale. They don't use Queen excluders and use shallower super frames than normal so that there is less heat loss. They don't use varroa floors but solid ones.

Observation is very important: with experience he can often tell if there is something wrong just by looking at the outside : if in doubt he can lift the crown board and immediately sense when something is not right.

He was asked what he did about swarming: colonies can have QC's all summer and not swarm. Some seasons can be swarmy others not so. Paddy's bees are not prone to swarming.

They have no formal queen rearing policy ó they decide on how many divisions to take depending on that years winter losses. Their losses have been about 10% which they are pleased about. 2008 they had a 30% loss. He thinks that some of the losses were from poorly mated queens: since varroa the queens are more inclined to be poorly mated. If they lose 10% they split 12% of the colonies. They pick the best and strongest from each apiary ó build them up onto 2 brood boxes ó then split them. They may reduce the QC's to 2 or 3, but then allow the bees to sort themselves out. When they split them they take one half to another apiary. When choosing the strongest colony in each apiary they often find that it has nothing to do with genes but the position of the hive in the apiary. The same position year after year can have the strongest colony ie front left in Apiary A always the strongest.

Its important to keep bees that are suited to the area you live in. They occasionally have colonies that suffer with chalk brood ó he thinks that underlying virus infections may prevent the colony getting on top of it.

They may consider using plastic foundation ó the advantages would be the durable plastic foundation, unlike beeswax foundation, can easily be cleaned of old comb and re-used: they have found that if they roll a layer of wax on top of the plastic the bees pull it out much faster. Many of the beekeepers in Australia moved to plastic foundation but have now moved back to wax. They keep an open mind on new innervations.

Ian, like his father, is in favour of mechanisation as much as possible. They remove most of the honey from the colonies so need to intensively feed in the autumn. They use a 60% solution of Tate and Lyle, made up in a 250 gallon tank, which is delivered to the feeders via a hose pipe! They may consider using Ambrosia but it would mean modifying the pump. They have been using Fumidil B and are not happy that it is to be taken of the market. They occasionally use pollen substitute ó particularly if it has been a bad year on the Heather.

Taking the bees to the Heather: the first lot of honey is taken of in July (the main crop is often white clover) always leaving some for the bees ó Ling Heather not bell heather. Every colony is moved to the moor during the first 2 weeks of August ó at night ó they are always left open for transportation (this prevents lots of dead bees next morning) they are transported on pallets with nets thrown over. The honey is taken of after the flow and then they are transported back to the apiaries towards the end of September. The last few years have not been good for Heather honey.

They will always try different things, and methods, but they always keep things simple.

Martin Pollock, who organized our trip, thanked Paddy and his family for their hospitality and for generously sharing their wealth of experience with us. Chris Utting gave Paddy a surprise present for his Museum of an original Manley queen introduction cage.

A collection was made on behalf of CLIC and raised £119.



## From the Education Section

Now is the time to start thinking of taking the BBKA Basic Assessment. This is a practical assessment of competence and involves a colony inspection with an assessor and usually takes place at the branch apiary using a branch colony. See the BBKA website for syllabus.

[http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations\\_assessments/basic\\_assessment](http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments/basic_assessment)

**If you intend taking the assessment, please contact me as soon as possible and I will organise the assessment day.**  
**Jack Mumery 01598760209 [jackmumery@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:jackmumery@mypostoffice.co.uk)**

The Education Section is looking for experienced members, preferably teachers to join the teaching team. Please contact Jack if you can contribute to the learning of beginner and existing beekeepers

**"Nucs for Sale** - orders are being taken for 5 frame National nucs for June - queens will be daughters of Buckfast Queens from Jed Marshall - marked and clipped - three frames of brood and two frames of food - checked by the Seasonal Bee Inspector - will replace free of charge if any problems until end of August - will comply with the recent FERA 'Guidance for the sale of honey bee nuclei' will deliver and install in North Devon £120 - contact Chris Utting 01237 474 500."

**Unwanted Beeswax:** If you have any unwanted beeswax in the form of cappings, scrapings, old comb etc, then please do not throw it away. Get it to Horestone apiary, as a donation, where we can render it down by using our solar wax extractor (or members steam extractors when the sun is not shining). We can then exchange it for foundation etc. for the branch apiary. Please ensure that it is wrapped in a bee-proof rubbish sack so that there is no risk of transferring any bee diseases.

### DIARY DATES

**BBKA Spring Convention 2012** - April 20, 21, 22 - Shropshire

**5th—12th May** - Branch Information Exhibit - Barnstaple Library

**DBKA County Honey Show** 17<sup>th</sup> 19th May

**Sunday 27th May** - Members open Day /and Plant Sale

**17th June** - Dowland Country Fair

**Sunday 1st July** - Beekeeping Taster Day

**Wednesday 1st August** - North Devon Show - Umberleigh

**Saturday 11th August** - North Devon Branch - Nosema Clinic

**Our Branch Honey Show** - 15th & 16th September - St Johns Garden Centre

Don't forget that Biz4Bees is open on Tuesdays from 10:30-12:30 for all your Bee Keeping requirements, including Nozivit to help control nosema and Hive Clean for the treatment of varroa.

for further information or special orders please contact Derek's e-mail [derek-hunter@lineone.net](mailto:derek-hunter@lineone.net)



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