

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

AUGUST 2013

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

Summer has come at last; the bees are busy and the supers are on. What a difference a lot of sunshine makes!!!

We are busy with the Tiverton and the North Devon Shows. These shows are hard work, but they are fun. If you wish to have a good day out contact Chrissie and add your name to the 'help list'.

Our Horestone Honey Show at St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple will soon be here, so get the wax cleaned and the photos taken. Does anyone have any honey ready to show?

The answer we found for our car parking problem is working. The farmer has allowed us to fence off a section of his field so that the cars are no longer attacked by the cows. All large cars now park in the field. Us, cars and neighbours are at last living in peace.

Nobody came back to me with any suggestions for changes at the club. Luckily we have a few new members, who are very active and bring a fresh outlook to the club, which is very pleasing to see.

We will continue to teach and train all those who come on Tuesdays; and help beekeepers where and if we can. Enjoy the sunshine, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that it lasts for another month.

Barbara

Events 2013-14

Wednesday 7 August	All Day	North Devon Show, Fishleigh Rock, Umberleigh
Sun 8 September	pm	Taster Day. Horestone
Sat 14 - Sun 15 Sept	All Day	Our Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple
Thurs 3 October	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Bees and Flowers' by Leila Goss, Castle Centre, Barnstable
Thurs 16 January	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Bee Bits' by Chris Utting, Castle Centre, Barnstable
Thurs 13 February	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Nosema' by Glyn Davis, Castle Centre, Barnstable
Thurs 13 March	19.00 - 21.00	Talk 'Predator Mites' by Richard Ball, Castle Centre, Barnstable

Horestone Taster Day

Sunday June 30th loomed large on my calendar. The first Taster Day of 2013 and the first I had been involved with. Emails had flown back and forth and phone calls had flurried in the last few days beforehand. Would anyone turn up? Would I have to eat all the cake myself?

It was a fine day - slightly overcast and a bit cool, but the temperature was sufficient to open a hive - we tested it by sitting outside in our shirtsleeves. Seven people turned up to see bees and sample honey. We put them into beesuits, we lit smokers and we opened hives. It's always an exciting moment to take the roof off and the crown board and peer inside - especially when it's your first time.

Back inside the hut we drank tea, spoke about beekeeping in general (in answer to so many questions), ate cake and sampled honey. It's a great opportunity to tell people of the benefits of buying local honey rather than the cheaper "non-EU" alternatives from multi-national supermarkets. We finished the day by talking about wax production in the hive and rolling candles (no, we rolled candles from wax, apparently bees don't). A souvenir to take home.

Great feedback, at least two candidates for the Beginners Course next Spring and I didn't have to eat *all* the cake. Many thanks to Barbara, Sue M and Glenys B for delivering expert advice and smoothing the path of the day.

Cathy

PS Don't forget the next Taster Day is on 8 September at Horestone.

Hot Sticky Fun



At Hornstone we are surrounded by oil seed rape; but we are lucky in that Chrissie donated her old freezer to us. As the bees sealed the supers we froze the frames so that we could do all the extracting and bottling in one go.

Today Mave , Su, Rob and David did a wonderful job of helping me get it all done. We started at 9.15am, not too warm, but it was 30 degrees at 2.15 when we finished.

It was hot and sticky, but the sight of 130 bottles of honey ready to sell gave us all a great feeling of satisfaction of a job well done.

Thanks to you all for your help.

Barbara

Bee Quotes

‘Concerning the generation of animals akin to them, as hornets and wasps, the facts in all cases are similar to a certain extent, but are devoid of the extraordinary features which characterize bees; this we should expect, for they have nothing divine about them as the bees have.’

Aristotle

Horestone Tuesday meeting . . . thanks to Martin Hadrill for the photo. Also thanks to Julie Elkin for the masthead picture of the poppy. Any other photos for next NL are very welcome.



A View from York



Tropical July

I thought that some members may be interested to see the progress on my allotment in York since the last photo in February. As you can see, the bee-friendly annuals have come on a treat after an extremely slow and patchy start. Many types of bees are attracted to them including a few honey bees but the vast majority are bumbles of various types.

The seed mix used was just described as ‘wild flowers’ on the packet with no indication of the actual species. I’m no expert in identifying wild flowers so would be grateful if anyone else could. Please send me an e mail; jeffjorr@aol.com.

Freezing Feb



Jeff

Member's Apiary: Barbara Carlyle at Combe Martin



Combe Martin is a seaside village, with hundreds of busy gardeners, surrounded by hills filled with horses and sheep.

I took a beginners course at Horestone at the start of 2009; a very good in-depth start to my new hobby. On 2nd July 2009 I became a beekeeper. The bees were delivered to my door and safely housed in my brand new National hive by Chris Utting and Beryl Smailes. Chris sold me the bees, Beryl was my first teacher and Mary Houldsworth helped me do my first home inspection. Three wonderful people, I could not have had a better start and I will always be eternally grateful for all their help and support.

From 2009 to 2013 we have had the worst weather records ever – too hot, too dry, too cold and too wet. Nothing my bees are doing relates to what I was taught or to what the books say. My bees and I go on stubbornly year to year getting more frustrated as time goes by; when will it get better?

I soon learnt that it is useless to have only one of everything. The family purchased my second hive for Christmas; my want list seemed never ending. Ian, my husband and carpenter, got busy making me two more hives, two nuc boxes and stands. I took over the garden shed; moved the mower out and my bee things in. Ian fixed a work bench to the side of the shed, so I can make all my frames there. The apiary is at the top of the garden, which is 55 feet up, as high as the church tower, and 170 yards from the house; I soon learnt not to forget the things I needed.



Being a beekeeper is fun, it's the very best hobby I could have chosen. If the weather is good I sit and have my coffee or lunch on the bench by my bees. I sit and watch my bees fly in and out; I sit and watch the wild life and my garden grow.

What a wonderful way to spend my retirement.

Barbara

HONEY SHOW

St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple

14th and 15th September 2013

Our Honey Show will soon be here. Please make a note in your diaries and look through the Show Schedule as soon as it arrives. Hopefully you will receive it with this copy of Northern Lights, but if not it will be emailed to you within the next couple of days.

There are classes for everyone – so don't hold back – have fun and enter all you can.

Chrissie Preece, Show Secretary

cpandbmh296@btinternet.com

National Honey Show

The National Honey Show is getting closer - the 'gold standard' honey show – the equivalent of Wimbledon for tennis players. The 82nd N.H.S. will be held in Weybridge, Surrey at the end of October. There are almost 250 classes and beekeepers come from all over the world to enter so it is truly an international show. Why not book a ticket now to see the best of the best.

Walking around the displays is an education in itself. A full programme of workshops and lectures will run during the show and there will be a wide selection of trade stands with lots of equipment and books to buy.

By now some of you will have extracted your honey and hopefully will have kept back an exhibition standard frame or two. Have a look at the schedule and see what you could enter. Don't forget that entry forms must be in by 1st October. It's also worth remembering that classes 54-62 (photograph, microscopy slides and essay classes) require you to deliver your finished entry by 9th September; so do check.

This year, as well as the very full programme of lectures and workshops there is a new class for microscopy enthusiasts:

57. ▲One Microscope slide, 3" x 1", subject pollen or honey bee anatomy, labelled in accordance with instructions issued by entries secretary. Exhibits will be photographed by the National Honey Show for display purposes at the show. First: £10; Second: £7; Third: £5. (Sponsor: Bee Craft)

A new session of lectures for beginners and those new to beekeeping has been added to the programme on Saturday morning. The trade and educational exhibitors so far include Bee Bay, Bees Abroad, BBKA, Bees for Development, Bee Craft, Brunel Microscopes, JBC online, Freeman Harding, IBRA, London Beekeepers Association, National Bee Unit, Ninemaidens Mead, Northern Bee Books, Omlet, The Quekett Microscopical Club, BJ Sheriff, EH Thorne, The Zest Hive and there are still more to come!

How are you going to get your entries to the show? Exhibitors delivering personally to the show must bring their entries on Wednesday 23rd October between 2.30pm and 6pm. You hand them over to a steward who will stage them for you. Show entries can be sent by a courier or post, or delivered via Northern Bee Books or any (English) branch of Thornes. In this case your entry must arrive at St Georges College after Wednesday 16th October and before noon on Wednesday 23rd October. Why not persuade one member of your association to bring all the entries from your association to the show? You could split the fuel costs. Don't forget someone will also need to collect them on Saturday 26th October after the show closes.

The 2013 schedule of classes and entry application is now available on the website www.honeyshow.co.uk, where you can also find lots of interesting information about the show, or if you need any more information you can e-mail nationahoneyshow@gmail.com. Existing members will be sent their show schedule by post in August.

The show is at St Georges College, Woburn Hill, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2QS (follow the A317 from junction 11 of the M25) on Thursday 24th (9.00am – 1pm for lectures only as judging is still in progress, then the show opens 1.45pm to 6pm), Friday 25th (9.00am to 6pm) and Saturday 26th October (9.00am to 4.30pm).

Admission for non-members is £15 but you can become a member of the National Honey Show for £12 and then entry for all three days is free. Accompanied children of 16 years and under are free. You can join at the door or visit the website

The Organising Committee

Julie's Jottings

"Things have Changed" as my favourite singer/songwriter says and certainly every year brings new and different beekeeping challenges and that all too frequently heard cry of 'why don't my bees read the same books as me'. Just when you think you've got things sorted it's all change again. My husband decided to change the car for an even more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly one (he is kindly disposed to the environment if not to my bees) and I discovered it didn't have a spare wheel. No spare wheel! How will I cope? It seems as though one of life's comforting little props has been snatched away. We had to learn to change a wheel when first driving (no, I never managed to cultivate the helpless female look that had strong men queuing up to change other people's wheels) as punctures were a very frequent occurrence.

I think a similar sense of bewilderment and loss of familiar props has been experienced by many beekeepers, new and old, who have lost too many colonies for no obvious reason, had queens that just disappeared or became drone layers and colonies that just couldn't seem to 'get going'. Fortunately nature does have a way of compensating and the unexpected proper summer weather has certainly enabled the bees to really build up and I still have the feeling that however painful it is for us when we lose colonies a year of a good clear out and the survival of the fittest is not a bad thing.

Some things never change and I was dismayed recently to hear the enthusiasm with which sugar feeding for the winter was being discussed. Yes, it's good to plan and prepare so our bees go into the winter fit, healthy and well provisioned but in the middle of a flow like this could we not consider a year when we don't feed? Perhaps it's time to remember the old adage 'the first super is for the bees' and keep the sugar for preserving this summer's bountiful soft fruits crops.

Another thing that doesn't seem to change despite all the publicity about bees of all sorts and their problems is that the public often still don't know the difference between a honeybee and a bumble bee. So many calls out lately to deals with 'swarms' that turn out to be beautiful nests of white tailed bumble bees. Now, later than usual, the wasps are appearing and I must go and see if I can remove a nest from shed for a neighbour, not my favourite job but a timely reminder to set up the wasp traps to protect the bees.

And another thing to re-learn, to get this amazing fuel economy I have to stop using the gears like brakes (after 50 years!) and only change gear when this bossy little car tells me to.

Enjoy extracting your honey; it might be another few years before we get a good flow again.

Julie

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.com. The views expressed are the authors' and not necessarily those of the North Devon Branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association.

Member's contributions are very welcome: by 23rd of the month prior to publication please.