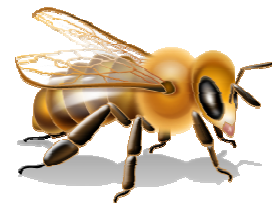


# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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



**FEBRUARY 2011** [www.northdevonbees.org](http://www.northdevonbees.org)

## Chairman's Chat

No doubt you have all heard about Dave Morris's sudden death which was such a shock to all of us.

He was a true friend of the Branch and worked tirelessly running Bitz 4 Bees which has been a massive help to so many of us. Nothing was too much trouble and I know that there are many of you out there who will miss him, and not just because of Bitz 4 Bees but because he was a good man whom we liked and respected. It was difficult not to like Dave - he was full of life, ready for a joke, affectionate, warm-hearted, dependable - a true gentleman. From the number of beekeepers who turned up to his funeral it was clear that he was held in huge affection by a great number of people.

We all extend our deepest sympathies to his wife of over fifty years, Jean. We are so very sorry for your loss.

Best wishes

Chris Tozer

## Apiary Notes

Following a severely cold December and January, February looms into view. At the apiary we are hoping that the weather will allow us access without having to use kayaks or sledges. (sorry Albert - I know you have yours at the ready).

We have managed to meet at Horestone twice so far this January and have checked the colonies are watertight and that the mouseguards still secure. We have assessed the floor inserts for varroa populations and treated with Oxalic Acid. All the colonies have been given fondant.

Last Tuesday we had our first Apiary Support Team meeting to outline our plans and hopes for 2011.

We have some rather heavy work to be completed over the next couple of weeks. Some of the hives and hive stands have sunk/moved and are no longer level. We have ordered some concrete slabs and weed suppressant so that we can combine getting the hives level and having larger paved areas as a preventative measure for SHB - if and when it arrives. Part of the lifecycle of SHB takes place in the soil. Mature larvae move out of the hive and then burrow into the soil close to the hive entrance in order to pupate. Hence the need for a paved area underneath rather than grass. It will also mean that we won't have to spend so much time weeding around the hives and the slabs can be washed down from time to time.

Other outside work includes finishing the pruning that

we started last November, repairing one or two of the steps that have been damaged and generally a tidy and making safe of the grounds. Our priorities for the garden this year are simply to keep it tidy and hazard free—we don't have the time or the man power to do much more.

Our aims with the colonies are to assess the quality of the queens and if necessary discuss ways to improve the stock and to keep the colonies strong and healthy.

We would like to do some queen rearing so that improver beekeepers gain the necessary skills and to create some nucs for new beekeepers who have attended the beginners course. The queen rearing team are drawing up a plan/notes on what needs to be done in the way of preparation.

The beginners course starts on 17th February. The first two sessions will be at the Castle Centre and after that at Horestone on Sunday mornings. We are looking forward to welcoming them to the apiary.

As no doubt we will have another busy year, we plan to do a risk assessment to identify hazards and minimise risks.

What we hope to achieve at our Branch apiary are well organized and lively Tuesday afternoons, promoting good beekeeping husbandry practice. You are very welcome to come and join us.

## SOCIAL EVENING/NEW YEAR 'BIT OF A DO'

Our social evening dinner has been arranged for

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March at The Hunters Inn,  
Newton Tracy, Barnstaple EX31 3PL**

Meeting in the bar at 7 o'clock for a 7.30pm meal.

They ask that all meals be pre ordered, from the set menu. Martin will send the set menu by email as soon as possible.

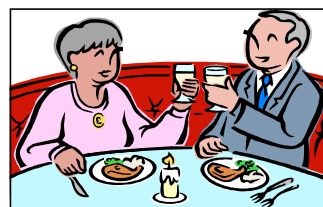
**Please contact Barbara on 01271882303**

**or email on [Baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk) to book your seat.**

Payment for the meal to Barbara please, cash or cheque (payable to B.Carlyle) - on the night, or anytime before.

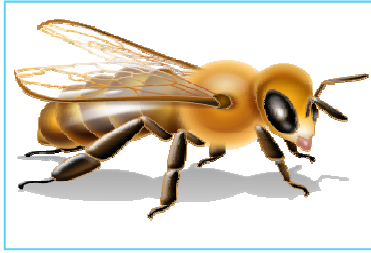
Last day for booking is 1<sup>st</sup> March.

See you all soon, Barbara.



# North Devon Beekeepers Association

## Winter into Spring lectures 2011



### February

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February**

**Dan Basterfield returns by popular request to talk about.  
The new Apiary & the life of a Commercial beekeeper**

### March

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March**

**Adam Vevers, Regional bee Inspector will be inspiring us to start:-  
Queen rearing**

All talks begin at 7.30pm and are held at the Castle Centre, Castle St, Barnstaple and we are pleased to welcome anyone interested in these talks to join us. Charge of £1.50 per person, refreshments included.

**From the Education Section** We will be starting our new Beginner beekeeping course on the 17 of February with a batch of enthusiastic beginners. I am sure you will all want to join me in wishing them happy and fruitful beekeeping "careers".

**Basic Assessment** Now is the time start thinking about completing the basic assessment. I will organise a session at the association apiary probably during July or August for that to take place. You just need to have been keeping bees for a year. It is quite straight forward and will set you on the path to becoming a better beekeeper.

*Jack Mummery    Branch Education Officer*

***Bee scientists to force killer mites to self destruct.***    *This is part of a DEFRA news report published on Wednesday 22 December 2010*

Scientists may be able to halt global honey bee losses by forcing the deadly Varroa mite, lethal in the freezing weather, to self destruct.

The blood-sucking Varroa is the biggest killer of honey bees world-wide, having developed resistance to beekeepers' medication. It is particularly destructive in winter as depleted colonies do not have enough bees huddling together to keep warm. Now researchers from the Government's National Bee Unit and Aberdeen University have worked out how to 'silence' natural functions in the mites' genes to make them self destruct.

Dr. Alan Bowman from the University of Aberdeen said:

"Introducing harmless genetic material encourages the mites' own immune response to prevent their genes from expressing natural functions. This could make them self destruct.

"The beauty of this approach is that it is really specific and targets the mites without harming the bees or, indeed, any other animal."

Dr Giles Budge from National Bee Unit, part of the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), said:

"This cutting edge treatment is environmentally-friendly and poses no threat to the bees. With appropriate support from industry and a rigorous approval process, chemical-free medicines could be available in five to ten years."

Environment Minister Lord Henley said:

"Bees are essential to putting food on our table and worth £200m to Britain every year through pollinating our crops. This excellent work by UK scientists will keep our hives healthy and bees buzzing."

The process uses the Nobel Prize-winning theory 'RNA interference', which controls the flow of genetic information. So far the 'silencing' has worked with a neutral Varroa gene, which has no significant effect on the mite.

Scientists now need to target a gene with the specific characteristics that are perfect to force the Varroa to self destruct.

Tests by other scientists have shown the treatment can be added to hives in bee feed. The bees move it into food for their young, where the Varroa hides.

## BEEKEEPING FROM TURKEY TO TRINIDAD

On Friday we enjoyed a fascinating evening delving into the hives and lives of beekeepers in these 2 very different places with Chris's brilliant photography and commentary.

To Chris beekeeping holidays will always beat lounging on the beach and this trip was organised through Bees for Development a UK charity that offers advice and training in beekeeping in needy countries.

Turkey is a big & diverse country with a population that is 98% Muslim with a clash of cultures ancient & modern. From sophisticated cities to high tech Queen insemination programmes to rural areas of high unemployment and traditional farming methods using hand scythes Chris and friends were met and shown around with the utmost friendliness.

There are 5,000,000 colonies of bees kept by 40,000 beekeepers compared to 250,000 colonies in the UK.

TEMA a Turkish (non government ) Foundation has been set up to preserve habitats and does a lot of work to support beekeepers and help villagers earn an income from their bees.

Around Ballio in the NE mountainous regions 7,000ft above sea level hives crowded the hillsides at a density quite unbelievable to us. A look inside some of these hives revealed this beekeeping paradise to be badly affected by disease ( foulbrood, pepper potty combs) with weak colonies although they seemed to get a honey crop.

Lower down in the Camilli sub tropical valley again a huge number of hives everywhere you looked including roof tops & around the farmland and extensive forest areas.

A mixture of modern & traditional log hives all with an arched sun shield roof of tin. Because of the predators there, bears and wolves a lot of hives were suspended high in the trees & scarers were heard popping off in all directions to keep these intruders at bay.

Amid the log hives there was a very shiny new & interesting 3 way entrance which took Chris's fancy although he couldn't track one down to buy.

There are no swarm or disease checks out in these log hives.

This was a great contrast to the TEMA HQ Bee School near Artvin ( not far from the Georgian border where the Russians were busy invading ) where a huge bee breeding & Queen insemination programme is taking place

Double mini Queen mating nucs are used producing huge numbers of the gentle, quiet Caucasian queens for sale locally and for export .Caucasian bees have a longer tongue than other types of bee.

In the Kars area ,still in the NE, Organic Honey can be produced in the pesticide free countryside, this is tested regularly for contaminants & at Erzurium a Honey Bazaar sold every product of the hive imaginable. Honey selling at £15 / kg.

A trip into Bulgaria showed beekeepers keeping Carniolan bees in traditional skeps.

Then S to Dalaran in temperatures of 40C where the honeydew collected from the pine forests is the local speciality.

Finally to Trinidad, an island about the size of Devon with 600 beekeepers. The capital Port of Spain is on the edge of tropical jungle with 15 species of humming birds although less attractive was the sight of the Police surveillance airship hanging over the city to pinpoint the troubled areas.

Stingless bees ,but they can nip, of the Mellipona species are kept in twin chambered hives where they draw out comb horizontally .Honey is harvested from this messy comb by using a syringe

Top bar hives which are cheap to make are very popular and combs are broken up to extract, the honey being drawn a vacuum assisted filter.

Varroa is controlled using Bayvarol alone.

This was Chris's first encounter with the Africanised Honeybees imported into Brazil in 1976 to improve the vigour of the local bees! The response time of these AHBs is 0.3 secs 30 times faster than ours. They swarm 5 times a year and by 1998 were in the USA thanks to a beekeeper removing the Queen excluder from under the brood chamber. They continue to move northwards and adapt to the temperature. They have killed c 800 people in 40 years & beekeepers wear very heavy bee suits and carry enormous smokers. Ants are a major pest and hives legs stand in containers of waste engine oil to prevent them climbing up. Hive sections had an untidy look with gaps as ventilation is more important than the risk of robbing.

At this point our intrepid travellers had to make a hasty departure but we look forward to seeing & hearing about Chris's next trip.

Many thanks Chris for an excellent evening.



You will all have heard of the untimely passing of David Morris. His love of Bee Keeping and his enthusiasm for Bits 4 Bees is an example to us all. I am therefore following in his footsteps and running Bits 4 Bees as he did. The Shop will reopen on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February and be open each week from 10:30 to 12:30. Also in order to help those unable to call on Tuesdays it will be open the first Sunday in April and May at the same times. Should you have any queries or require further information please contact me on 01769 561033

*Derek*

## Membership Renewal

We are now into February and there are still a number of members who we have not received renewal forms from. Regrettably all benefits of D.B.K.A. cease on the 1<sup>st</sup> March if your renewal is not received by then. So please don't delay post it today and ensure you are covered for another year.

*Derek Hunter*

*Hon treasurer*

PS A subscription/renewal and gift aid form for 2011 was enclosed in December/January edition of Northern Lights.

## DIARY DATES

**Thursday 17th February** - Beginner beekeepers course

**Friday 18th February: Talk by Dan Basterfield** - the New Apiary and the life of a Commercial beekeeper.

7.30 Castle Centre, Barnstaple.

**Friday 25th March: Talk by Adam Vevers**, Regional bee Inspector: Queen Rearing.

7.30 Castle Centre, Barnstaple.

**Somerset Beekeepers Annual Lecture Day** - Saturday 19th February.

**DIARY DATES** cont....

**Spring Convention, Stoneleigh**

15th - 17th April (workshops, courses and seminars).

**National Honey Show - Weybridge**

**27th October – 29th October 2011**

International classes and beekeepers' lecture convention

## EAT ONE, FREEZE ONE

It doesn't actually have any honey in it, but it appears regularly at our apiary afternoon teas and has proved very popular. A quick and easy recipe.

### Devon Lemon Cake

5 oz Self Raising Flour

4 oz caster sugar

4 oz butter or margarine

2 heaped tablespoons of best quality lemon curd

Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

2 eggs.

Using a fork, mix the top 5 ingredients together. Beat in the eggs a little at a time.

Spoon the mixture into a 1lb loaf tin lined with baking paper.

Bake at 180C for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Test with a skewer.

### Lemon Drizzle Topping

1 lemon - grated rind and juice

2 tablespoons granulated sugar.

Mix well together.

When the cake has been removed from the oven, spoon the syrup on top. Leave to cool in the tin.

## Reach for the Honey Jar

Without the side effects or the cost associated with expensive pharmaceuticals, a simple recipe for soothing jangled nerves includes honey. Added to a glass of warm milk with cinnamon is a home remedy sure to provide needed relaxation. Give yourself a little TLC with this drink following a relaxing bath.

Another stress-relieving ingredient, ginger, teams up with honey to reverse the damage caused by stress. To prepare this tea, combine eight cups of water with ¼ cup of ginger root, thinly sliced. Boil in a non-reactive pot for 15-20 minutes. Strain and add honey to taste.

*From Food for Thought, Beatrice Brown*

*Jan 20, 2011*

Sylvia Barber, Foxpark, Waddicombe, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9RX (01398 341624)

E.mail [sylviad.barber@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:sylviad.barber@dsl.pipex.com)

All contributions welcome, copy by 23rd of month for publication in following month's newsletter.

**Articles in this newsletter remain the property of the author and may not be reproduced in part or in full without express permission.**