

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

February 2014

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

A very Happy New Year to all our members and readers. We are all hoping that our bees are coping with the wet weather and will come through the winter. One of the fascinations and challenges of beekeeping is that no two years are the same. What works for you one year may not work so well the next year. Some years the colonies build up quickly – some years start slowly. Some years the bees seem determined to swarm despite young queens and plenty of space – other years are more peaceful and the bees seem to have read the same books. One of the advantages of belonging to our Association is that whatever problems arise – there is always someone more experienced to lend a hand or advise.

However it is important that we increase our knowledge as much as possible. We need to know what diseases/pests may affect our bees and the best way to prevent/tackle these problems. We have already started our year with a fascinating talk from Chris Utting on Bee Bits. We all enjoyed it. Our next talk on Thursday 13th February, is with Glyn Davis and will be on Nosema. I hope you will be able to make that. Your Committee must soon decide on if/when to hold a Nosema clinic in the spring. A lot of work goes into preparing for this and there is little point if members don't bring their bee samples to be tested. So please, come to Glyn's talk so that you understand Nosema better and we can make an informed choice.

Additional opportunities to improve our knowledge and enjoyment, are the Module 1 Study Group, contact Chris Utting about this. The Introduction to Bee Microscopy starts on 27th January, (contact Graham Kingham Hestia.kingham@waitrose.com).

Barbara Carlyle, our Apiary Co-ordinator, assisted by the Apiary Support Team have been visiting Horestone regularly to check that the colonies are weather tight and have plenty of stores. In this mild weather they continue to consume their stores quite rapidly.

Our first official day back, for those lucky enough to be able to make Tuesdays, is Tuesday 25th February. We will send out an email before then but this day will most likely be a Work Day for a general tidy up and preparations for the new season. The following Tuesday, March 4th, we hope to have a more social occasion with bee chat and a film. Please check your emails – firstly for times and information – but also if there is flooding and things get cancelled, it is the only way we can contact you. Parking is limited at the apiary and we will need to check the field to make sure it isn't too wet to use. And of course, if you can car share it will help to maintain good relations with our Horestone neighbours.

Once again apologies that communications via email may have been a bit erratic lately. Martin's computer hard disk crashed but he will be up and running soon.

Sylvie

Events 2014

13 Feb	19.30 - 21.00	Talk 'Nosema' by Glyn Davies; Castle Centre, Barnstable
10 Mar		Beginners Course starts; Castle Centre, Barnstable
13 Mar	19.30 - 21.00	Talk 'Predator Mites' by Richard Ball; Castle Centre, Barnstable
6 Aug	All day	North Devon Show
13/14 Sep	All Day	Branch Honey Show; St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstable

Next Evening Talk ...

... is 'Nosema' by Glyn Davies on 13 February at the Castle Centre. Nosema is a very common disease of honey bees that affects a large proportion of our colonies - known as the 'dwindling disease' as colonies fail to build up.

Glyn is a Past President of the BBKA. Past Chairman of the DBKA, a Master Beekeeper, a BBKA examiner and assessor and a teacher of beekeeping with about 30 years of experience. He gives talks all over the country and is in great demand.

Bee Quotes

'All we need is to be industrious not like a machine but like the honey bee.'

Mahatma Gandhi

Topical Tips for February

- Check that the mouse guards are still in position, that your hives have not been blown over and the bricks are still in place on the roof.
- The winter so far has been mild with no long frosty spells; the colony will therefore be more active and consume more stores so heft the hive and be ready to feed fondant (not syrup as this will over stimulate the colony and start premature brood development).
- As a result of applying Oxalic acid I have been able to destroy thousands of Varroa but some colonies have a nil or minimal drop. So don't be complacent about the low natural drop that we found last summer when the late build up has been attributed to the very late spring. There is still time to apply the acid.
- If needed, obtain a 2.5 kg block of fondant in a sealed plastic bag to stop the fondant getting too dry; cut access holes and place the bag over the feed hole; do not use 500g margarine boxes as the fondant will get too warm, flow down into the colony and beyond, dry out too quickly and need refilling too often. There are two types of fondant available; bakers fondant consisting of sucrose and Ambrosia fondant that is inverted glucose and considered to be more bee friendly. As the *Bitz4Bees* shop has recently closed, the nearest supplier of bakers fondant is *Modern Beekeeping* of Westacott Road, Barnstaple 0844 888 0573 12.5 kg for £23 but they are currently they are out of stock. So see if your local baker will order a box; e.g. Venner's Bakery of Westward Ho charges £12.00 for a 12.5 kg single block of fondant. The nearest supplier of Ambrosia fondant is National Bee Supplies of Okehampton 12.5 kg for £26.95.
- Trim back the hedges/shrubs before the birds start nesting; as bees dislike strimmers etc block entrances with foam; foraging bees are not guard bees so will not bother you.
- Do not move a colony when the outside temperature is below 10°C. Disturbance of bees on the outside of the cluster will cause them to drop off at 8°C and die.
- Scrape, brush and scorch hive timber ready for use; unfortunately I am not aware of any suitable treatment against wood rot; I have spoken with the Cuprinol Technical Adviser and none of their products are recommended (please let me know if you find a suitable product).
- Now is the time to repair the damaged veils; small holes can be held together by some skilled stitching or just by applying Sellotape to both sides; a damaged Sherriff veil can be renewed by Mrs Jenny Gammon of 500 Cheddon Road, Taunton TA2 7QX - phone first 01823 270 465 – a cost of £26.00 plus postage

Chris Utting

Horestone Garden News

We are busy clearing mildewed Michaelmas daisies from behind the honey shed so we can plant shrubs to provide autumn to early winter and then late winter into spring forage close to hand. If you have any favourite bee friendly shrubs in your gardens please take some cuttings for Horestone as we would like to plant a lot more shrubs. Other on-going work is clearing and tidying up ready for the new season, hazel catkins, snowdrops and hellebores are coming out, daffodil buds are swelling and Horestone will soon look its beautiful spring best. We look forward to the meadow areas being full of flowers this summer as a lot of plug plants have been put in including purple loosestrife this last autumn.

If anyone has any spare garden tools, trowels, forks rakes etc we would be grateful for any donations, it makes life so much easier not to have to haul our tools back and forth. Anyone who can spare an hour or two is very welcome to join us from 11 am on Tuesdays, we enjoy our gardening and there is always so much to do. If you are thinking of coming please e mail Barbara the evening before to check roads are open.

The Garden Gang

Member's Apiary: Glenis Breardsley at Bradiford



I originally attended one of Kay's Beginners' Beekeeping classes in Braunton in 2005/6 and it was Kay who encouraged me to knock on the door of an old 'Gentlemen's Residence' on the edge of Bradiford, just north of Barnstaple and ask if they had any bees that needed looking after! The answer was 'yes' and so, as they say, the rest is history. Despite its proximity to the River Taw, this is a remarkably sheltered site and lies in a sunny position, backing on to agricultural grazing land. Within a bee's reach there are many different trees and a wealth of year round forage. To the east of the hives is an old Victorian walled garden containing vines and apple trees and if that wasn't enough, the bees have the use of a nearby stream and all the gardens of Bradiford, Pilton and Barnstaple. Since the death of the owner of the property a couple of years ago, the area of garden where the bees are

kept has not been mown, but this in turn has led to an abundance of wild flowers. I actually don't think these bees go very far at all for forage (except that is to the Himalayan balsam down on the estuary!)

All my beekeeping years have been different and all the hives have had different personalities, but this year has been particularly extraordinary as the bees have given us a most encouraging crop of prize winning honey sealed much earlier in the season too.

I enjoy beekeeping because there is always more to learn. In fact yesterday I made my first batch of honey fudge, but I really do need someone to help me eat it!!



Glenis

Honey Lime Cheesecake

For the pastry case:

8oz plain flour
2 tbsp run honey
6 oz butter.

For the filling:

5 tbsp run honey
2 eggs separated
Zest and rind of 1 lemon
1 tbsp lime cordial
2 tbsp SR flour
8 oz cream cheese
1/4 tsp cinnamon

For the pastry; rub butter into the flour and make the dough by adding the honey. Line a flan dish and bake blind for 15 min at 180 deg C.

For the filling; beat the cream cheese and egg yolks, stir in the honey, lime juice, lemon zest and juice. Stir in the flour and cinnamon. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg white.

Pour filling into the pastry case and bake for 40-45 minutes at 180 deg C. Serve cold with cream.

The Skittles Evening



The Winners!

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.com. The views expressed are those of the author 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 .
I especially need any contributions for the Members' Apiary articles and bee quotes for this
year - please e mail me if you can help.***