

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

**JANUARY 2009**

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



## Apiary Managers Update January 2009

Here's wishing all bees and their keepers/carers/observers a Magical 2009, with excellent foraging weather for all!! Throughout the early days of December, the bees have enjoyed the final few sunny days of 2008, and have subsequently battened down the hatches, lit their log fires, and snuggled up together, reading good books as the icy weather takes a grip. Some seemed to have been feeding greedily earlier on, however, a few colonies were distinctly slower. At the first spring inspection, it will be interesting to compare the records for those colonies who have survived strongly, in ratio to the fondant consumed. Next autumn we are considering weighing all colonies on a regular basis, to gauge weight loss in relation to current autumn feeding programmes.

Let me introduce our AST: Apiary Support team. I understand Tony Wright, our former apiary manager introduced this excellent idea, which is being continued. Our present members, in alphabetical order include: Sylvie Barber, Derek Hunter, Lesley Jones and Chris Tozer. We meet alternate Tuesday mornings and members are invited to join us for 1 meeting, by prior arrangement. The current topics under discussion are: preparing a Best Practice document. This has been in the pipeline for years, however, the final drafts to cover all bee management topics are: apiary hygiene, colony inspections and management, health and safety. These guidelines will be discussed in our regular Tuesday afternoon meetings, so everyone has an input. The Committee will approve the final copy, which will be available to all members and new-comers. The hygiene management document is to be laminated, and prepared as a reference document for all teams.

Talking of teams, the names for each section have now been re visited. The titles: honey, queen rearing, educational and experimental have been replaced, since assessments for the role of each colony cannot be decided or allocated until the springtime inspections. Our team leaders are: Sylvie Barber for the White team: Julie Elkin, for the Blue team: Derek Hunter for the Red team. (nothing patriotic I'm assured!) All the hives will be labelled in February to indicate clearly which colony belongs to which team, as will the origins of any nucleus. Plans for the queen rearing at are the embryo stage, and will be shared with everyone as soon as the ink dries on the drawing board!!

3 colonies have been returned to their 'lenders' the Instrumented Hive Project IHP team, in December, and the final 3 will be selected in January. A total of 12 colonies were 'on loan' from the summer of 2008, so it has been agreed by the Committee that the remaining 6 will converted to a purchase. The IHP team has extended an invitation to everyone to visit when they reach an interesting stage in their project, and of course will follow all the guidelines for the Best Practice policy.

Finally, yes there is a finally! before we snuggle down with our Christmas books!! I would like to ask for your consideration on an ethos for our apiary, along the lines:

*All members respect each other as individuals, enjoying our positive qualities, and accepting our differences with tolerance.*

*All members are considered equal, and valued as an inter-dependant team, working in a similar way to the bees' social network. No one person or role is more important than another.*

*All members work for the good of the bees, and in harmony with each other.*

So on that thoughtful note, which invites your comments, additions or changes, we'll away to fix the roof of the quarter-masters store, under the guiding hand of Chris Tozer!

I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and commitment during 2008, and if you'd like to join the Work Day teams (lovingly known as Decima days!), all are very welcome, since there are jobs available for all ages and sizes!! Patrick will circulate details via the messenger.

Looking forward to seeing you all after the festive frolickings!

*M Flowa Houldsworth*

## Chair Chat

A Happy New Year to everyone. I hope that you all had a lovely Christmas and were able to find some time to relax. During the break I have been reading "A World Without Bees" (DJ reviewed this in July edition of NL). The book has really brought it home to me the many different stresses our honey bees are having to try and cope with. While we have to be as informed as possible we also need to remain optimistic in order to be fully in touch with our bees. One of the many benefits of belonging to a beekeeping organization such as ours, is that there is always someone to turn to if we have problems or questions that need answers. Your committee are busy planning for 2009. If you would like a beekeeping subject covered, either theory or practical, please let one of us know as soon as possible so that we can organize a Branch talk/demonstration at Horestone. We would also like to have more questions and answers in our branch newsletter. You tell us what you would like and we will try to cover it. Finally, spring is only a few months away, so good luck with all your plans and may 2009 be all you wish it to be.

*Sylvie*

### HELP!!

The nhs mail service has decided to sort itself out (synonymous, I fear, with "mess things up" ) as a consequence of which I fear my most recent mailing list to all members has been dumped and an older less accurate one dragged back.

PLEASE, if you have an e-mail address, and have NOT received an e-mail from me entitled "testing" ... do let me know your current e-mail address by e-mailing me at "[pchmoore@googlemail.com](mailto:pchmoore@googlemail.com)"

*Patrick Moore*

### HOLSWORTHY BRANCH

SPRING CONVENTION

Saturday 28 February 2009

10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Chilsworthy Village Hall

Our usual varied programme together with our now famous Plough-man's Lunch.

For further information please visit the website

[www.holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk)

**FILM** - Dec 6 sees UK release of the new US film "The Secret Life of Bees". But the title can be misleading. It is the story of a 14 year old girl who moves to a bee farming family in S Carolina at the time of the Civil Rights Movement in '64. Way before varroa d, CCD etc.....

## Interesting web sites

### European debate

As most beekeepers are doubtless aware, there has been a decent debate in the European Parliament recently to consider "the situation in the beekeeping sector" (Nov 19th, Strasbourg). This is well worth studying carefully; see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20081119+ITEM-020+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>. Note that some speeches are not all in English here. In particular, proper reference was made to the excellent BEE SHOP, BRAVE and ALARM research programmes. In particular the next phase of BEE SHOP is now commencing (FP7), and in fact an excellent summary of the present FP6 programme was made at the EurBee3 conference I attended recently in Belfast (see <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/The3rdEuropeanConferenceofApidology/>)

The final anodyne European resolution can be found here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2004:081E:0107:0108:EN:PDF>. Following from this and the excellent work of the UK MEP's Neil Parish, the Eur. Parliament approved a new Resolution that urges members states to create "recovery zones" for bees, and although no mandatory quota as such was agreed a figure of 1 or 2% of the cultivated areas to be so designated is being promoted, along with promotion of the notion of cultivating more protein-rich flowers and moves away from crop mono-cultures. The recent ill-conceived but well-intentioned changes to agricultural practice in respect to bio-fuels production has been harmful, too. See <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1202/p04s01-wogn.html> for a reasonable summary. As is often the case, Brussels and Strasbourg can be far more proactive and intelligent about environmental and farming matters than is the case at Westminster. But our BBKA, BFA and the beekeeping/bee farming community generally, hardly help ourselves in my opinion, considering the nature of our messaging and public relations efforts and our collective coupling to experts and research entities...

*Dave James*

### Greetings all ... CURRENT members!!!

SOME OF YOU WILL NOT BE MEMBERS .... technically ..from the 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Membership renewal subs are due BY 1ST JANUARY ... and the Membership Secretary tells me that ONLY HALF of the 2008 members have renewed as of today! So - if you have not paid up yet:::: PLEASE ... rejoin PLEASE rejoin ... NOW!!

It costs the Branch, and all members, to chase you up if you are late paying!!!

*Patrick Moore*

### Honey Mint Chocolate Sauce

1½ cups honey, ¼ cup crème de menthe liqueur, 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder. Method: in a small saucepan, combine all the ingredients. Bring to boil stirring. Cool for 10 minutes. Serve warm or pour into clean glass jars; seal tightly. Store up to 1 month in refrigerator. If desired, reheat sauce before serving.

## NDBKA New Year Lunch

12.30 for 1.00pm **Sunday 18th January 2009**

Directions; The Royal and Fortescue Hotel is at the junction of the High Street with Boutport Street in Barnstaple.

We have booked for a meal in The Carvery.

Hotel Front Door Postcode: EX31 1HG

Hotel Car Park Postcode EX32 8NA

The Multimap website can provide directions.

Priority is given to hotel residents for car parking so there may not be space for all of us.

Nearest Public car parks: Meadow Road, & Queen Street

Free Parking for 3 hours available at Ladies Mile beside Rock Park (access only from Taw Vale) .

Vegetarian Options

The Chef is happy to serve these dishes in the Carvery but would like notice so that they can be ready in time.

Filo Pastry filled with cream cheese, asparagus, Sweet and sour sauce

Or Sautéed Wild Mushrooms, stilton cream in a vol au vent

Or Home made nut cutlets with panache of leaves and a wild berry jus.

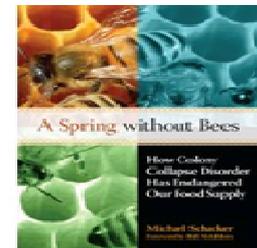
**IF YOU PREFER A VEGETARIAN MEAL PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHICH ONE YOU WOULD LIKE BY FRIDAY 16TH JANUARY**

I shall be at Horestone Apiary on 6th and 13th January - cheques to: "Margaret Kay" can be sent to: Higher Week Farm, High Bickington, Umberleigh, Devon EX37 9BW (01769 560749) *Margaret Kay*



### Book review: *A Spring Without Bees etc.*

This recent hardback is of US origin, entitled "**A Spring Without Bees: How Colony Collapse Disorder Has Endangered Our Food Supply**" by Schacker (Lyons Press, 304 pp).



Incidentally a paperback edition is imminent, although the hardback edition here is not unreasonable at around £12-13 typically. I reviewed the related and rather similarly entitled book "A World Without Bees" recently here in *NL*. Like the authors of that book, Schacker is no entomologist; he is in fact an investigative journalist, writer on populist science themes and the founder of The New Earth Institute.

This is not as well researched or indeed written as *World w/o Bees*, but is nevertheless worth consideration. It is a far more partisan view, with pretensions by its author to be a sort of latter day Rachel Carson (It is now 100 years since her birth, we are reminded). It is US biased, but Schacker does rely heavily on French studies and the work of French beekeeping lobbyists to support the contention that CCD may well be due to imidacloprid (IMD), a now widely used insecticide (also fipronil, PennCap-M etc). He covers reasonably well some of the political and economic aspects, nicely spots a conspiracy - or at least undue interference or lobbying - in several areas inc. the EPA and US academic institutions, and makes a decent plea for a fresh approach to a more sustainable agricultural approach to food production. Likewise he proposes action be taken by legislators and local agencies to ban or better control potential toxins, get USDA to institute a complete sea change in the USA to support more natural methods of pest control and to encourage more organic methods of farming etc. It is indeed sobering to recall the disgraceful way that certain chemical industry players resisted Carson's call for banning DDT at the time and for a decade after (a "biocide" she termed it). Bayer is understandably targeted hard in this new book.

This book came out after much of the first tranche of preliminary research output was reported arising from the recent USDA-coordinated US effort to study CCD, and this book does cover this, but not that well in my opinion. In all, although I don't think he mentions it, 'organic' beekeeping as described by Ross Conrad in *Natural Beekeeping* and as also reviewed some months in *Northern Lights*, fits the bill as far as Schacker is concerned - along with the political measures mentioned above. A decent book, but it would doubtless have been better if he had teamed up with someone more expert to make the arguments more coherent and the overall presentation more reasoned. Then it would be taken more seriously - as for *World w/o Bees* - and more would take fright from the notion of potential "Civilization Collapse Disorder". .....

On a rather different vein, serious students of social insects might be interested in a superb new paperback edited by d'Ettorre and Hughes; "**Sociobiology of Communication**". This grew out of a short PhD course on the same subject that I participated in last year at Copenhagen UP, and the authors for the 16 chapters are all world experts, covering everything from humans (mate selection - face, odour, body motion etc) to insects - even communication in bacteria. Topics include language and teaching; social networks and signaling; communication between insect hosts and social parasites; chemical communication and social interaction in insects; superorganisms and badges of status or signaling such as the waggle dance and so on. This is a superb book and expensive at around £37, but one can sometimes get such titles cheaper direct from the publisher...

*Dave James*