

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

JANUARY 2017

www.northdevonbees.org



USEFUL LINKS

DEVON BEEKEEPERS'
ASSOCIATION

www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk

BRITISH BEEKEEPERS'
ASSOCIATION

www.bbka.org.uk

KAY THOMAS

By now members will know that Kay sadly passed away on 13th December at North Devon District hospital following a stroke. Older members will be well aware of Kay's contribution to the development of North Devon branch but newer members may not know Kay as well. So where do I start ?

I first met Kay on a September evening in 1982. I was signing up for the Beginners' Course at Braunton College I did not realise at the time that it was Kay's first formal course. A month later I found myself at the branch AGM and Kay was proposing me as a committee member. I protested that I did not know anything about beekeeping ! But Kay reassured me, and the meeting, that I could represent the beginners. Over 20 years later I was still on the committee. This experience came full circle at the last AGM when beginner Zara Svensson was elected to the committee.

But Kay was an active branch member long before 1982. She was there when the branch apiary consisting of a 9' x 6' shed at Instow was moved to the new site at Horestone Cottages when the ruins of the third cottage were demolished, flattened and the small car park was built. She was on the committee with Geof Ingold who had previously worked with Colin Butler, the scientist at Rothamsted who discovered the queen pheromone and with Brian Dennis who had worked with Richard Frow who discovered the first proved remedy for controlling the Acarine mite. Kay was part of the team that purchased our main meeting shed and converted it from a chicken shed. She is one of the last of a disappearing generation.

On a regular annual basis Kay's beginners' classes were benefitting the branch membership. She must have produced hundreds of new beekeepers over the years and in 1987 having passed many exams Kay joined the ranks of the esteemed Master Beekeeper. It was then that her training went on to higher levels and myself and other beekeepers including Beryl Smailes, Duncan Weaver and Fred Rice of Exeter were part of a group that Kay trained resulting in many successes. Kay was part of a small team that were training beekeepers from all over Devon to pass the General Husbandry exams and even running courses to train beekeepers to become trainers. By now Kay was a British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) examiner setting and marking national exam papers as well as taking many candidates for Basic and General Husbandry assessments.

Kay was very keen on competing at honey shows and had many successes at branch, county and national levels. She qualified as a BBKA Honey Judge and was in great demand at shows all around the south west. On one occasion she informed me that she was not going to bother to put in any entries for one branch show. I objected on the basis that she was the one that all the others were trying to beat. So she relented and entered and obtained several first place cards.

In 2002 Kay was very proud to be appointed the first (and only), lady President of the Devon Beekeepers' Association after working on the executive council for many years representing North Devon Branch. Only last year Kay was leading the Horestone Apiary team on a national research project involving pollen sampling and analysis. Her email address kay2qb@gmail.com – the qb stood for queen bee and if I could send her one last email it would be 'Well done Kay and on behalf of us beekeepers a big thank you'.



photo provided by Viv Thomas



A happy day when Kay's students were presented with exam certificates at a DBKA AGM

photo by Peter Auger

Chris Utting

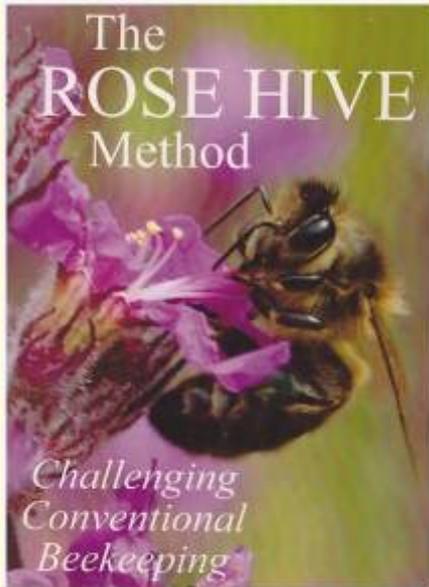
BRANCH EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY (note a change)

BY 31 DECEMBER 31 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE

WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY 7.30pm TALK JULIE ELKIN 'THE ROSE HIVE'

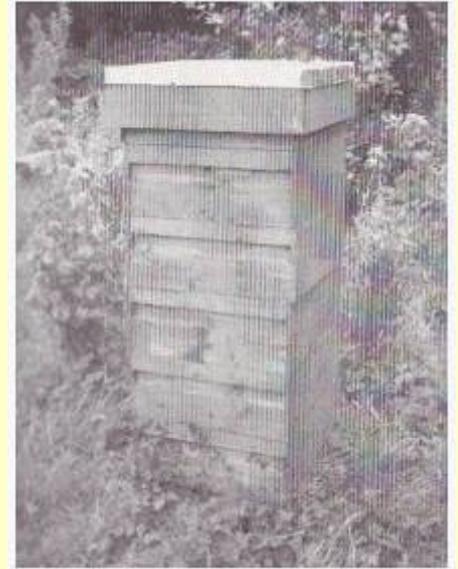
WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 7.30pm ASIAN HORNET QUEEN TRAP WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 7.30pm TALK DAVID PACKAHAM 'LIVING WITH VARROA'



Julie Elkin has been managing a Rose Hive for five years and she will be explaining the advantages and disadvantages of this alternative and unconventional method of beekeeping. At the Castle Centre, Barnstaple; doors open 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start .

£2.00 donation to apiary funds including light refreshments



EVENT CHANGE Phil Chandler is unable to give his talk on the Top Bar Hive in February. Because an Asian Hornet nest has been located last year in Tetbury (about 100 miles away from North Devon), the NBU is urging beekeepers to put out traps to capture any hornet queens that will be emerging in the Springtime. Hopefully this will reduce the spread of the colonies. So Chris Utting and Peter Auger will be holding a workshop where you will be able to learn how to make a trap. Several variations are already being advertised but the NBU is currently working on some modifications which we will incorporate into our design which will be constructed from a couple of two litre plastic water bottles. More details will be available next month.

Chris and Peter

Cathy Backway leading the quiz at the annual Mince Pie lunch at Horestone apiary in December

photo by Chris Utting



Chair Chat

I hope you all had a happy Christmas and that 2017 has begun peacefully. All we need now is seasonal weather and healthy bees.

The Branch committee did not meet in December but we are thinking ahead. Barbara has set the ball rolling with a 2017 plan for the intermediate team at Horestone. All the team leaders will be doing the same and we will be discussing the 'way ahead' at our meeting in January. The outcome of these discussions will be communicated to you so that everyone will know what the Branch hopes to achieve... with the co-operation of the bees?

Work is on hold at the apiary as the ground is very soggy. The huts need a coat of preservative and the work station, near Cliff's shed, needs to be improved. We hope to get these jobs done before the Beginners commence their classes at Horestone at the beginning of March. So far the lane has only been flooded once so the hives and site have been checked regularly on Tuesdays.

Many North Devon beekeepers will have known Kay Thomas who died just before Christmas. Kay was a great educator and ambassador for beekeeping. She will be greatly missed by our Branch and the County. Our Branch must continue to educate and involve new and established beekeepers, as Kay would have wished, so please note in your diary that Julie Elkins is giving a talk on Wednesday, January 25th, at 7.30 at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple. Her topic is The Rose Hive.

Happy beekeeping,

Mave

POLYSTYRENE HIVES – THE DOWNSIDE a response from Julie Elkin

David's article on the use of polystyrene hives was thorough and scholarly and he rightly says that bees seem perfectly happy to live in them. Beekeepers too like them, affordable, light to handle and hygienic if you follow David's advice for cleaning and disinfecting so why am I protesting? I can certainly empathise with ageing beekeepers and heavy boxes but, and it is a big but, polystyrene is an almost indestructible material that involves a lot of potentially polluting chemicals in its manufacture.

Ever since I first heard of the Great Pacific Gyre, discovered in 1997, a mile deep and the size of Texas across (now there are 5 known ones, all expanding) I have been concerned about our increasing use and disposal of plastics and polystyrene. A 'gyre' is created where ocean currents come together and is a soupy collection of plastic waste broken into tiny bits called microplastics that do not decompose for hundreds of years. Plastic and polystyrene particles now pollute every part of the earth, in and on everything, our shorelines have a high water rim of tiny polystyrene granules, our rivers and soils are contaminated and wildlife are ingesting them. So are we as they enter our food chain.

Manufactured from hydrocarbons with numerous other chemicals involved they pose health risks to fish, animals, birds and humans. Begin trawling the internet for ongoing research into their effects on health and the arguments for and against the hazards they may or may not pose and you will be there for hours and it is depressing reading. In the USA many states have banned the use of polystyrene food containers because of the mountains of non degradable waste that were created. Polystyrene can be incinerated at very high temperatures but this is very costly and most goes into landfill. However great our personal efforts are to apply the 3 R's to plastics and polystyrene the effects in the face of world manufacture and usage are negligible. A few of us avoiding polystyrene hives sadly isn't going to change the world. So what is the answer to cure our polluted world? I cannot bring myself to buy any fruit or veg from the village shop as it is all packed on polystyrene trays, what an insignificant effort but maybe every little helps.

A comment from David Julie is absolutely correct that polystyrene debris is the major constituent of the plastic pollution in our oceans; this mainly comes from discarded packaging and polystyrene coffee cups. The way forward is to improve recycling facilities and to apply sanctions to polluters. Polystyrene will burn in high temperature combustion chambers releasing only water and carbon dioxide but the heat produced can be used for power generation. Specialist companies can collect used polystyrene grind it up and reconstitute it for packaging, others can convert it into synthetic hardwood which can be used to make garden furniture or park benches. Let us hope that beekeepers are non-polluters!

And again from Julie I agree recycling polystyrene is now possible but having been trawling the internet while writing the reply it really is a long way off from being in general usage. What are the health implications for the workers handling it during the recycling processes David?

How to make Beeswax Hand Cream by Leslie Palmer

After many attempts to make hand cream, I discovered the magic ingredient- emulsifying wax. This ensures that the oils and water really do mix without too much stirring. It is available in quite small quantities on EBay. I use a small amount of Wheatgerm oil for its vitamin E content as this acts as a preservative. It should last several months.

Ingredients

320ml water
64g Almond Oil
16g Wheatgerm Oil
32g Emulsify Wax (Cetearyl Alcohol/Ceteareth 20) plant based
32g cleaned Beeswax
Lavender essential oil (optional) 40 drops approximately

This amount makes about 12 mini honey jars of hand cream.

Method

In a slow cooker or Bain Marie on the stove top, melt the oils and waxes in one container and heat the water in another. When both are at approximately 70°C mix the water to oil and stir until it thickens. Add the lavender oil when the mixture cools to about 30°C.

Wash and dry the containers and fill them with the cream. Make sure the cream is completely cooled before putting on the lids so no condensation forms.

It's easy to make and I'm sure would work with different base oils.



I buy oils from www.naturallythinking.com or www.naturallybalmy.co.uk

Melissa Harrison Nature Notebook

The uses of ivy

The ivy has finished flowering, even the huge, late-blooming clump muffling a nearby gatepost which remained abuzz with insects into late November. Every time I passed, it announced itself by its fragrance: sweet, with overtones that to me suggest the animal fat odour of butchers' shops.

Ivy isn't a parasite and only uses trees or other structures for support; but while it doesn't take nutrients

from trees a really large burden can make them more vulnerable in winter to gales, the evergreen ivy acting like a sail. Only mature ivies bear flowers and berries; this secondary, "arboreal" stage is also marked by the loss of the lobes in their leaves, which become heart-shaped or oval instead.

As well as supplying vital late-season food for birds, bees and other insects, ivy makes good cattle fodder and creates frost-free cover for birds and bats on winter nights.



THE MOUSEGUARD

photo by Zara Svensson

from THE TIMES December

Edited by Chris Utting e-mail chrisutting@btinternet.com The views expressed in the articles are the author's and not necessarily those of the North Devon Branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association.

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