

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

July 2014

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

Last week was rather too typical of the beekeeping season so far. To prevent swarming my colony numbers have doubled – the bees this year seemed determined to swarm. I spent Tuesday at Horestone sweltering in my bee suit, then all day Wednesday at home checking bees – only to have my husband tell me that he had just seen a swarm of bees enter the far end of the woods. They can't be mine - I've just checked them all! My immediate thought was, whose chimney will they go down. I searched the woods till I heard the typical sound of a swarm and watched them pouring into a hole in a tree about 25 feet up. Last month I would have tried putting out a bait hive but I have used up all by equipment. So now I will just watch them and hope they stay there – and hope that the swarming season will soon be over.

I would just like to say here how important it is to try and prevent your bees from swarming. Having had endless phone calls from distressed people about bees in chimneys I have discovered how expensive it is to have someone dispose of the bees that won't be smoked out, at the same time as having to have the chimney capped – this apparently is the law – and not a lot of fun for the bees either.

June was a busy month. The weekend at St Johns Garden Centre went very well – with a lot of interest from the public. Chrissie had a successful day at Dowland Fair – and sold lots of honey fudge. And yesterday Cathy and her Team completed the first Taster Day. I am hoping that July will prove to be a little quieter and give us time to get on top of the work load at Horestone. We have supers to make up and equipment to clean – and a continual fight to keep the varroa numbers down! Many hands make light work – if you are free, some more help would be appreciated!

I will finish by wishing you all the best of luck with the season – a good honey flow and lots of honey.

Sylvie

Events 2014

26 Jul	All day	Mid Devon Show, Tiver
6 Aug	All day	North Devon Show, Umberleigh
13&14 Sep	All Day	Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple
16 Nov	14:00-16:00	Branch AGM, Castle Centre, Barnstaple

Bee Quotes

‘The men of experiment are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes the middle course, it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.’

Francis Bacon

Honiton Show

The standard of entries at our Branch Honey show in the Autumn must be amongst the highest from any branch in Devon. So members who still have some honey or good wax, why not consider putting some entries together to support the Honiton Show on 7 August. There are always over a hundred entries so a blue ribbon is usually awarded.

The show is usually judged by a National Honey Judge which further enhances entering the show. I will be going to the show so can take any entries on your behalf and bring them back. Please contact me on 01598760209 or mail: jackmummary@mypostoffice.co.uk. I will need your entries by Tuesday 5 August.

Jack Mummery

In The Library: *The Bee Manual*

This book is published by Haynes, best known for their workshop manuals for all types of motor vehicles. It is written by Clair and Adrian Waring, both of whom are extremely experienced in beekeeping, and have both been General Secretary of the British Beekeepers' Association. The forward is written by Bill Turnbull, (The Bad Beekeeper's Club), who is a good writer no matter what his skills as a beekeeper are. His comments are relevant and interesting.

The book is full of attractive photographs and useful diagrams and drawings, and many text panels with detailed information appear throughout the book.

The introduction briefly discusses the problems that currently face the honey bee and the hobby of keeping bees warning of the addictive nature of getting interested in the world of bees and beekeeping, mentioning many of the possible directions that can be taken by someone who has an interest in the subject.

The chapters are colour coded, with the top corner and the page number matching the colour shown in the contents page. Each chapter has a supplementary contents lead page, giving the subdivisions of the chapter.

Chapter one asks and partially answers the question "why keep bees?" and warns that not everyone is a potential beekeeper. It then introduces us to the colony and to the individual bees of each caste, with a brief mention of the other species within the

Apis genus. It finishes by describing several of the Apis mellifera races.

Chapter two is about the basic equipment needed, describing several different types of hive, through frames and foundation with frame assembly and foundation insertion described. There are some pages on the selection of an apiary site, followed by a description of protective clothing and smokers and hive tools.

Chapter three is on colony management. Starting with the acquisition of bees, and installing them in a hive, it goes on to discuss the method of examining the brood. Finding and marking the queen is covered, and methods of uniting and increasing colonies. The chapter finishes with an introduction to forage and supering.

Chapter four is about the golden liquid. Clearing supers, removing them and extracting honey are covered, as also is settling, clearing and bottling the product. Regulations for the labelling and sale of honey are dealt with next. Finally, there is a section on the uses of honey, beeswax and propolis.

Chapter five is the 'nasties' from brood diseases to the problems of adult bees, from parasites to pests (including the human variety) and from laying workers and drone laying queens to robbing all are covered.

Chapter six is a beekeeper's calendar and chapter seven contains a bibliography, contacts list and glossary.

This is a well written book by two very experienced beekeepers. I can recommend borrowing it from the library, or possibly purchasing it for your own bookshelf.

Angus Basil

St John's Honey and Bees Weekend

The Branch was asked to provide a stand at St John's Honey and bees weekend on the 7th and 8th June and the following is the report that was sent to the North Devon Journal.

People poured into the Garden Centre over the weekend to be greeted by a magnificent, colourful and fragrant array of flowers all designed to encourage the bees, honey bees, bumblebees and solitary bees in to do their important work of pollination.

North Devon Beekeepers were on hand to show all aspects of beekeeping from the live bees to honey extracting and of course tasting a range of honeys from all over the area. Although beekeepers are noted for their ability to talk endlessly about their favourite creatures most of us were quite hoarse by Sunday afternoon answering so many questions. It was wonderful to meet so many gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts who are so concerned about the plight of all our bees and wanting and trying to do their best to help them. A few more bee friendly plants in every garden. however small, all add up to important corridors of food for foraging bees. A lot of people this year have bumble bees in bird nest boxes, a perfect home for a Bumblebee nest and happily now most people are willing to leave them in peace to complete their life cycle. It was encouraging too, to talk to so many children about bees, they have all been studying them at school recently and are very knowledgeable, naming all the parts of the bee's anatomy with confidence. The children particularly enjoyed looking at the Varroa mites under the microscope, these mites continual to be a major cause of damage to the bee population.

Hopefully a lot of people will come and join us on a Taster day to help them decide if beekeeping is for them, it is very unwise to embark on beekeeping without doing a beginners course and having an experienced mentor on hand to guide you through your first exciting season as a beekeeper. An encouraging weekend for gardeners, beekeepers and the future of all our bees.

Julie

Topical Tips for July

- queenlessness is usually caused by the beekeeper doing something wrong
- after a colony swarms the virgin queen does not emerge for about 7 days; it then takes another 5/6 days for her to become sexually mature and there is about a further 21 days opportunity for her to get mated before she is too old and starts to lay only drone eggs; so after mating she may not start to lay for another 3/4 days; at first the number of eggs will be few and not easy to find; therefore it can be up to five weeks before you can see evidence of your new queen; many new beekeepers will quickly assume that the colony is queenless so the tip is to give the colony sufficient time before re-queening
- in June we had a long period of high temperatures and no rain and there was a lot of White Clover available; however the amount of nectar was restricted because clover is shallow rooted and could not find sufficient water; this did not apply to the blackberry which is deep rooted and continued to produce a supply of nectar
- Look at the White Clover flower heads - they contain many florets; after pollination the florets turn brown and droop; this usually starts from the base of the flower head
- If you are running short of supers why not select the sealed frames and start your extracting early; there is still time to put the wet supers back on the colony and they may fill them up again
- Put wet supers on at dusk after the bees have stopped flying; the information from the round dance does not include 'there is a food supply upstairs!' but informs that there is a supply within close proximity up to 15m away; a wet super on during the flying period will cause lots of bees to come out and start robbing the hive next door
- The apiary at Westward Ho! is about 6m (20 ft) above sea level; Exmoor goes up to 519m (1704 feet) at Dunkery Beacon so be aware that the flowering seasons for our members' bees can vary by several weeks

Chris Utting

Tasty Times at Horestone

It rained on Sunday morning and I thought "oh no - why now?" because we had a Taster Day booked and a handful of interested people coming to see what beekeeping was all about. By the time I arrived at Horestone, the sun was out and Barbara was carefully plating the cakes and boiling the kettle.

In order to catch the weather, we zipped our visitors into beesuits as soon as they arrived and walked down to the Beginners' section. The hive was opened and the bees buzzed quietly, going about their business. Lots of "oohs" and "aahs" from our guests followed by dozens of questions. We forget, or do we take for granted, the wonder of opening a hive and understanding (to a greater or lesser extent) what we're looking at.

None of our visitors had ever seen anything like it - in fact some were still confused about the differences between bumble bees and honey bees. It's a short time to try and explain everything but if we can send them away a little wiser and keen to learn more, we've done a good job. We finished the afternoon with mead (thank you Barbara) tea and cake - and some local honey tasting. We explained why they should be buying local honey and why it's more expensive and better for you than supermarket cheapies. Much appreciative lip smacking and several jars of honey sold - and possibly some new beekeepers in the making.

Cathy Backway

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.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.