

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

JULY 2015

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

Having written last month about the problem with my bees, we are receiving reports about outbreaks of EFB locally and in neighbouring areas. This is very worrying for all beekeepers and upsetting for those whose bees are infected. Swarming is thought to contribute to spreading the disease. If you have concerns about the appearance of your bees and/or brood, do contact a Bee Inspector whose details are in the Year Book.

Are you registered with Beebase? This website supports beekeeping and holds a huge amount of information. You may register with Beebase at no cost. Information about EFB is sent

out by Beebase to the registered keepers by postcode when an infection is identified within 3 km of the home postcode.

On a more cheerful note, Sylvie organised a very successful Bee and Honey event at St Johns Garden Centre at the beginning of June. All shows involve a huge amount of planning, setting-up, transporting heavy equipment and often an observation hive etc. These events inform the public about bees, forage, products and also are a great way to enrol budding beekeepers on our Beekeeping course. Thank you Sylvie, and her helpers, for all your hard work making the event possible.

Mave

Events 2015

25 July	Mid Devon Show, Knightshayes
5 August	North Devon Show, Umberleigh
12 -13 Sep- tember	Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden 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

Committee Summary June

There was much discussion about the EFB in our area. Those attending the apiary on Tuesdays are to be asked to ensure that their jackets have been washed before coming along, and we all should be very particular about hygiene around the apiary.

The number of people coming to Horestone on Tuesdays has declined. The poor weather earlier this spring meant that little beekeeping was possible but the maintenance needs remain high. Warm, wet weather has suited the vegetation! Thank you to those who are able to help.

Our finances are satisfactory. Alan Barrow has set out a Risk Assessment for the apiary and a copy is on the notice board. The colonies appear to be well although the weather has not been very good for them.

Do contact a Committee member whenever you have an issue for consideration.

Mave on behalf of the Committee

Flower of the Month - *Rosebay Willow Herb*



Epilobium (*Chamerion*) *angustifolium*, a stately plant with flower spires up to 6 feet tall giving great swathes of rosy pink/purple colour in July to August is a familiar sight. It rejoices in a huge number of common and local names including Fireweed, Bombweed and French Willow but the name I like best is its Swedish name of 'Herb of Heaven'. Originally considered a rare native and much sought after as a garden plant (most gardeners now regard it as a rampant weed apart from the white form!) it has seized the opportunities man has created to become widespread in town and country. Spread is by underground stem and its numerous seeds, 80,000 per plant, each with a parachute of downy hairs flying miles on the wind.

Since the mid-1800s it has followed man colonising the banks and verges of roads, canals, railways, industrial waste lands and more recently the bombed and burnt out areas of our cities.

F N Howes describes it as a major honey plant "one of the best wild bee plants of Britain". It has a long flowering season as the flowers open progressively from the base of the spike upwards, a device the plant uses to ensure that its pollinating visitors must crisscross from one spike to another.

In the USA "Fireweed Honey" can be obtained, described as very sweet but lacking any distinctive flavour, pale in colour and granulating finely and fairly quickly. The abundantly produced pollen is described by F N Howes as blue but shown by Kirk as green (the pollen my bees bring in is more green than blue). Rosebay Willow Herb together with Blackberry are important and welcome sources of income for my bees at this time of year.

Julie

My Experiences at the Devon County Show



Showing honey is a new experience for me, having showed honey at the North Devon honey show for the first time last year the judges remarks were that I should try for bigger shows. So Devon County Show it had to be. I could only enter three classes as it was all the honey I had left. Showing at the Devon County was great: the amount help & advice you get from everyone there is incredible. With a first, second & fourth I had a very good show.

To be a steward at the Devon County is also a very good way of gaining useful bits & ideas to help with bee keeping. I helped on the observation hive which was very good with plenty of young would-be beekeepers to give advice & help to.

So please North Devon Beekeepers let us see a few more of you next year; we must not let Holsworthy Beekeepers win ALL the big prizes next year.

Alan Barrow



St John's Honey and Bee Weekend 6/7th June



I am pleased to say that our Honey and Bee event went very well. Many thanks to the willing helpers that made it run so efficiently.

St Johns really looked after us with plenty of space to show off all our information boards. We concentrated our weekend on information about forage for pollinators. It is encouraging the increasing concern among the visitors to do everything they can in their own gardens to help all pollinators. Julie with her expert plant knowledge spent time explaining how everyone could help by growing a wide range of bee friendly plants, leaving areas of grass unmown during the summer and letting hedges flower.

We took the observation hive with us – it was like a magnet and was a source of fascination to all ages. The queen was not very co-operative and kept disappearing to the dark side – but I can't really blame her as it did get rather warm. We kept them as cool as we could by spraying water through the vents, but I think they were probably relieved when Derek took them back to Horestone.

The microscopes were popular, with much examining of bees, varroa and pollen – the children coloured in bee pictures and learned the names of the bee's anatomy. Many of them have studied insects at school and were already very knowledgeable.

Our honey tasting and sales went well – and we had many enquiries about the Taster Day and next year's Beginners Course.

St Johns have a wonderful selection of bee friendly plants and are very supportive of beekeepers and wildlife friendly gardens.



Sylvie

Why This Year?

On the 8th June my Cotoneaster x sueicus 'Coral Beauty' was covered with bees, they have never bothered with it before. This is an evergreen Cotoneaster with very pretty small white open 5 petalled flowers and orange berries, planted 9 years ago, flowering profusely for the last 7, it appears to offer everything a bee could want. The rest of this huge family secrete nectar copiously (some members are now classified as invasive weeds as their seeds are distributed so widely by the berry eating birds) and *C. horizontalis*, always better grown vertically, will be smothered by bees, Bumbles, wasps and hornets the minute those tiny pink half open flowers appear.

So why was Coral beauty suddenly so attractive this year? The obvious answer is that there was little else available but this is definitely not the case, the bees were so busy on *C horizontalis*, Poached egg flowers, Phacelia just in the garden. Can anyone offer any suggestions? Another odd fact: the birds normally don't eat the berries except occasionally when little else is left at the end of the winter; this last autumn they stripped it for the first time.

Julie

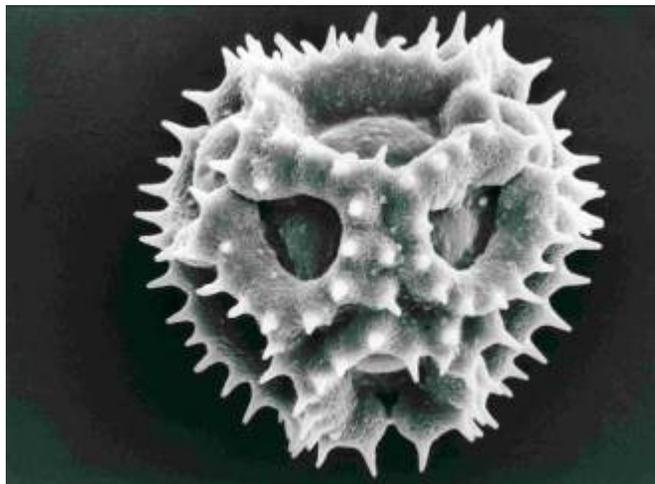


What the Microscopist Saw . . .

The image shown is from a yellow pollen load collected at Horestone apiary in late May 2015, the SEM image shows higher, almost 3D definition



Pollen from Dandelion x 400 showing two different views



Pollen from Dandelion using an electron scanning microscope, by kind permission of Dr Litchfield, for more excellent images please see his website. www.rowbo.info

Graham Kingham

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