

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

JUNE 2009

www.northdevonbees.org



Editorial - The word evangelical comes to mind, yes lets spread the word of the life of the bees and the flowers that they need. Lets spread the happy unity of bee keepers the support and strength we gain from each other. Lets follow the example of the bees, they just get on with it no matter what happens. *Mel*

Chair Chat

A couple of weeks ago I watched the BBC program "Who killed the Honey Bee" introduced by Martha Kearney, examining the declining bee population and how it will affect the worlds food supply. The program took us from beekeeping in East Anglia, to the mass transporting of bees around the almond orchards of California to the outback of Australia. I thought the program was very good and covered everything from viruses, varroa, pesticides, intensive farming and pollination. Since then we have received many enquiries as the general public begin to picture a world without bees and begin to wonder if they too could help support the bees in any way including considering become beekeepers. If we are to respond to this need we will need to work together to ensure that our taster days and our presence at the various shows, encourage and support this interest. If the "Bees and Gardens Day" are anything to go by, we can look forward to a happy and stimulating summer of bee activities. Thank you to everyone involved with the day – it was excellent. And please, do contact Margaret if you would like to help with some of the shows.

While searching the net for information on varroa recently, I discovered this fascinating web site. It is from the US Agricultural Research Service and has amazing photos showing varroa mite reproduction and honeybee metamorphosis. www.ars.usda.gov/services/docs.htm?docid=2744&page=14

I hope you are all enjoying this fantastic weather.
Happy beekeeping. *Sylvie*

Apiary Manager's Chat

'Don't cast a clout till May is out', has been the maxim of the month! Some days a cold wind has blown across the apiary on Tuesday mornings, then suddenly turned very warm for our afternoon inspections. All the colonies are building up beautifully, although 2 have decided to summer elsewhere, and joined the many swarms heading for holiday locations! Thankfully the resulting nuclei are in place, and the AST group with the team leaders will be discussing guidelines for our swarm control practices.

The icing sugar dusting continues, to increase the hygienic behaviour of the bees in the removal of the varroa mites, with interesting results, which we will produce soon.

We have many thanks to distribute this month, non more than to the entire team who worked so hard for the bees and garden day on May 24th. Margaret and her enthusiastic team of helpers achieved an amazing show, with Julie's garden team preparing an excellent site/sight for the visiting gardening groups. May I just mention those not able to come on the day, who have worked hard behind the scenes, Mike-the-brush-cutter, Kelvin-the-grass shredder and Chris-the-hacker-downer! The wonderful array of cakes, crafts, plants, books raffle prizes all ensured the entire day was a pleasure as well as an informative time for the visiting public. The observation hive was a great hit with the children, and has sparked ideas for inviting schools and parents to have their special day around August or September.

This coming year the Women's Institute have adopted the 'Plight of the Honey Bee' as their resolution, so we invited one of their County Advisors, Elma Blackmore, to a Tuesday meeting Elma enjoyed a fascinating time observing a colony inspection, and holding frames for a closer look at the bees' activities. Elma will now feedback her experiences to the N.DWI's and we hope to link with their groups during winter for talks and discussion to increase awareness of the difficulties we and the bees face.

Other days planned are aptly named 'Taster days' for those considering becoming beekeepers, and revision days for the previous years students. These will be arranged for a Sunday, so please contact me if you're interested. And on a completely different subject, we wondered whether members would like a visit to an organic farm near Witheridge, where red Devon cattle, sheep and chickens enjoy a free-range life-style amongst ancient farmland and meandering streams The cream tea is definitely 'death by cream cakes' experience!

Hoping your bees stay in their own colonies, and we beekeepers stay well rewarded for all our angst and anxiety during this swarmy season!
Flora

POACHED EGG PLANT: (*Limnanthes douglasii*)

Grow poached egg plant with tomatoes, they will attract hover flies and hover flies eat aphids. The poached egg plant likes the sun and a free draining soil—bees love it.

"Bees and Gardens"

Members of the Brendon Garden Club thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the North Devon Bee Association Apiary at Horestone on the occasion of their Open Day on June 21st.

We found the whole situation of the apiary to be idyllic; being approached by a lovely winding and narrow lane and then the first glimpse of the wooden house, the Apiary's base, sited in a sunny glade surrounded by trees and flowers.

We were made to feel very welcome and enjoyed home-made refreshments before settling down to a very informative powerpoint presentation given by Mary Holsworth which focussed on plants which are beneficial to bees and some of the reasons for the global problems affecting bees.

Later, other members of the team from Horestone accompanied us on a tour of the hives and an observation chamber set up specially so that we could view the bees' activities, whilst giving us more fascinating information and answering our many questions.

The afternoon finished with the some purchases for our gardens from the plant stall and a raffle.

Many thanks to Mel Browne of Brendon Garden Club and the North Devon Bee Association for organising the trip.
Angela Percival



Flora talking plants with Bees and Gardens guests.

The sun shone. The apiary was beautiful and no bees swarmed! Congratulations to all who contributed beforehand and by working so well together on the day.

P.S. I forgot to say anything about expenses but the Treasurer, Derek Hunter, says that all who purchased items for the day should forward any claims for reimbursement to him.
Margaret



Only came for the morning, and thought it could not have been better organised or run. Horestone looked idyllic in the sunshine. New or wannabee visitors I talked to were enchanted! Well done all of you;.
Judith Westcott

Kay talking bees with Brendon Garden Club

THE GARDEN AT HORESTONE

The sun shone and the garden looked it's best for the Bees and Garden Day on the 24th. Purple/blue phacelia and the poached egg flowers were particularly impressive.

The Garden Gang have been greatly helped by very willing and capable helpers in the last few weeks. We used to be the Garden Girls but some very welcome male muscle power has also come along and piles of earth have been flattened, craters filled in, paths levelled and edged and paving stones laid. Yes Fellas we do need and appreciate you all. Many thanks too to the willing helpers who do the really boring bits like mowing and strimming.

I'm not going to attempt to name all the helpers because I shall probably leave a name out but their help has meant the long planned lavender garden has been planted, also a bed of Gaultheria and winter flowering heathers. Our aim apart from a garden for the beekeepers to enjoy is still to concentrate on plants to provide pollen and nectar early and late in the year to help our bees when days are short and flying time limited.

The plant sale gave us some surplus plants to fill some gaps and we intend to continue with an ongoing plant bring and buy sale to help both the spread of good bee plants and gladden the treasurer's heart.

Julie

Beginners Course 2009 - Horestone Apiary

The beginners Course has now finished and I would like to say a big thank you to all involved in organising and implementing these great sessions. The course was hugely enjoyable and very informative with just the right mix of learning and laughter in a comfortable and friendly environment.

It is good to look back at the start of the course and reflect on our tentative beginnings and little knowledge, now that most of us are on the threshold of having our own colonies (or in some cases have colonies!). We have been taught well.

Many new friends and contacts have been made, which I'm sure will last for years to come, both within the course group and the apiary (and beyond). The continued support and offers of help, now the course has finished, is very useful to us all as we embark on our beekeeping future.

I would fully recommend this course to anyone looking to learn about bees and beekeeping.

Kelvin Irwin



Setting up the course was interesting and a bit chancy too, as it had not been tried that way before, but helped by lovely students, and great tutors.

Beryl

When I enrolled on a bee keeping evening class at North Devon College, a few years ago, a friend said to me '10 weeks? Whatever will you do all that time - there can't be that much to learn?' How wrong he was! And so it was with great trepidation that I agreed to join Beryl's team of tutors for this year's Beginners Course, not sure that I really had absorbed enough in my ten weeks from that vast body of knowledge with all its differing opinions, to be of use to beginners. Beryl had carefully crafted the course so that each tutor was responsible for delivering 2 sessions which gave me the opportunity to get my head around aspects of swarming. As I believe that learning happens best through activity, we were able to do some 'mock' swarm control with the use of the equipment at Horestone which was a real boon. I would like to thank all the tutors but especially Beryl for her organisation, and the great group of people that came on the course - many of whom are now taking delivery of their own bees.

Sue Madgwick

THE LIBRARY AT HORESTONE

As we have a number of new members this seems to be a good time to remind everyone that the library is open every Tuesday to borrow books and DVDs or use the reference library. I am aware that not all members can get to Horestone on a Tuesday so if you wish to reserve a book or arrange for someone else to either collect or return a book for you please contact me on, 01598 710986 or email jelkin@btinternet.com (please note the email address in the Year book is in correct0

General guidelines are a limit of 3 books out at any one time and please try to return books within a month, especially the most topical ones.

If you haven't yet borrowed , 'A World Without Bees' or 'A Spring Without Bees' both examining the problems currently besetting bees I definitely recommend them as a very interesting, if somewhat depressing read.

Julie



Hiving a swarm.
Sent in by
Albert.

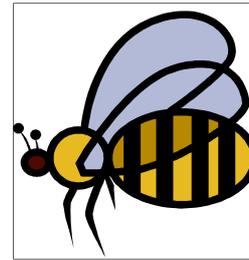
Finding and marking the Queen.

For many manipulations, especially swarm control, it is important to find the queen. It therefore helps considerably if you have already marked her (and clipped). Finding her is not always easy, so here are a few tips to help.

The best time to look is during a Spring inspection when there are fewer bees. It should be a warm and sunny day as the colony may be open for some time. Don't do any other manipulations, just think **QUEEN**. Unless you are going to pick her up directly have a press in cage and some tippex or a marker pen (test them out first). If using a double brood box move the top one to one side and cover with a crown board. Check through the bottom brood box first, then inspect the top one.

It helps to have the sun on your back. As you remove a comb quickly run your eyes across the face of the next comb in the box - you may see her run off the face of that comb as she heads for the shade.

Now scan the face of the comb you are holding, around the edges first as she may well be trying to disappear around the darker side of the comb. Then search in towards the centre. Some queens are slow and graceful and others fast movers that are more tricky to spot - it is always a thrill when you see her long abdomen. Look for a pattern - she moves differently and often has a circle of bees around her, a court. Turn the comb and search the other side. She is less likely to be found on a comb that contains only stores and more likely to be found on a comb containing brood. Once found either pick her up and mark her or use the press in cage.



Saturday 6th June

At Fremington Quay

11 am to 4 pm

Guided walks, advice by the experts, make a bee box, try and buy honey.

DIARY DATES

Saturday 6 June - Bee Awareness Day at Fremington Quay.

Saturday 18 July - Instow Show

Wednesday 5th August—North Devon Show

19th & 20th September - Chapelton Steam Fair.

10 October DBKA Buckfast Bee Day

17 & 19th October - Eggesford Apple Day

24th & 25th October—Branch Honey Show

Holworthy Branch stand in the DBKA tent at the Devon County Show - the children found this model fascinating especially the interior of its abdomen.



jeda2@talktalk.net

01237 475705

The Shop will be open on
Tuesdays 11 till 1pm

Edited by Mel Browne, The Cottage, Bridge Ball, Lynton, EX35 6LH (01598 752449)

Email m.browne@homecall.co.uk

and Sylvia Barber, Foxpark, Waddicombe, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9RX (01398 341624)

E.mail sylviaad.barber@dsl.pipex.com

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