

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

JUNE 2015

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

This month, for a change, I hope you will be interested in this account about the demise of my allotment colony.

This colony had never been strong but came through the winter well and the queen had laid five/six frames of worker brood by early March. I was feeling confident until at the beginning of April when I noticed many well developed dead white larvae and 'brown stuff' in the cells. The following day I checked again with an experienced beekeeper. We looked through several books and the FERA publication 'Foul Brood and other Honey bee Diseases' which has clear

photographs, descriptions and advice. Nothing quite matched but we feared that the bees had foul brood.

The following day the Bee inspector came to call. He had said from my initial description that he did not think the bees had foul brood, however they did have an unusually severe case of sac brood. The inspector tested for foul brood and the bees were negative. The FERA publication states that 'sac brood rarely causes measurable harm'. Re-queening was advised. The inspector suggested a shook swarm to clear the virus as 'there is no specific treatment'.

I did not choose to find a new queen as the colony looked so badly infected. I

carried out a shook swarm and fed the colony with heavy syrup. Two weeks after the shook swarm the queen was laying well again. The bees were busy collecting pollen so I felt hopeful again, but the following week the colony was back to square one. The majority of the brood was diseased. Four weeks after the shook swarm the queen had gone and there were three unhealthy queen cells and a dwindling number of bees.

Now was the time to start again with an increased knowledge about bee diseases and an appreciation of the Bee Inspector's role.

Mave

Events 2015

6 & 7 June	Honey and Bees Weekend, St John's Garden Centre, Barnstaple
21 June	Dowland Fair
25 July	Mid Devon Show, Knightshayes
5 August	North Devon Show, Umberleigh
12 -13 September	Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple

Bee Quotes

*'But when was ever honey made with one
bee in a hive'*

Thomas Hood 'The Last Man'

Honey and Bees Weekend 6th & 7th June, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple

Our Branch is taking part in the Honey and Bees Weekend and will be promoting all things beekeeping, particularly information on plants to encourage bees and other insects to the garden.

St Johns restaurant are preparing some honey based food (including walnut and honey ice-cream) and we are encouraging the children with microscopes/slides, an observation hive and some bee colouring sheets.

It should be a lovely weekend, so bring your families along for a visit.

Flower of the Month



Rosa rugosa

June is the month of roses, an often underappreciated bee flower that can be a valuable source of pollen. As a nation we buy 35 million rose bushes every year but for a long time the preference has been for ever more double flowers, the densely packed heads of so many David Austin roses have proved a favourite gardeners choice with their extended flowering season and exquisite fragrances. But not of much use to a bee.

The older shrub roses, mainly single but limited to a single flowering season were very bee friendly and now the breeders have developed an amazing array of repeat flowerers in every form, bush, shrub, climbers, there's one for every garden. Best of all this is the **year of the single rose**, it's official the RHS says so!

Bees love rose pollen and the stamens are so beautiful and although there may be other forage in abundance at 'rose time' this isn't always so. A visit to the 'proper' rose garden at Rosemoor will show it to be alive with honeybees and other pollinators. By 'proper' I mean the garden with a good proportion of singles and semi-doubles, Clematis (pollen and possibly a little nectar) twining through them and underplanted with hardy geraniums, catmint, lavenders and hyssop, not the more formal, hybrid tea style Queen Mother's Rose garden next door

One of my favourite climbers is the semi double mauvy/blue fading to pinkish cluster flowered Veilchenblau. The beautiful pink Dog Rose that grows through our hedges is less abundant now with fewer hedgerows and more rigorous hacking back annually.



Rosa cider cup

Single flowered roses include *Rosa rugosa* that makes a dense prickly, burglar proof barrier and gives good hips for syrup, also a very old favourite *Rosa chinensis mutabilis* with flowers that change colour and continue throughout the summer. The choice is wonderful now and I shall be joining the fashionable gardeners this year and squeezing in a couple more singles.

Committee News

We have been discussing for several weeks, that our tenancy at Horestone is not guaranteed to continue and that our club house is deteriorating. We also have on-going considerable maintenance costs.

This discussion followed a notice from the Executive Committee stating that they were short of money and that the Branches may be asked to contribute out of their savings.

On behalf of Horestone committee, I have sent a letter to the EC Treasurer explaining our need for the savings which have been raised by the hard work of our members over many years.

We are hoping that some of our members, who have looked after bees for a year, will be taking the Basic Assessment during the summer.

Bee keeping issues are discussed at the committee meeting but these will be reported separately by the Apiary Managers.

Mave on behalf of the Committee

Horestone News

May seems to have come and gone at a terrific pace.

The Beginners course had their last session on the 10th May. Though the day started rather chilly, suddenly the sun came out and we opened the colonies and had a very interesting afternoon.

This has been the general course of our Tuesdays at Horestone so far – is it going to be warm enough to open the colonies? if we don't, what is going on inside? Will they swarm the next sunny day? So it has been a bit of a juggling act. So far we have done 4 artificial swarms – made up a couple of nucs – and tried to keep the other colonies building up with frame management and the odd bit of fondant if and when needed.

Each team has their own particular aspects they are working on. The Honey Team need strong colonies without being so strong they swarm. The Beginners need gentle, easy to handle bees, and the Improvers are working on improving their skills and knowledge. The bees are not always co-operative but it all becomes a learning curve. For example, even with an artificial swarm performed, the bees may still abscond with the old queen (as I found out from my home apiary).

The usual work behind the scenes goes on, grass and grounds taken care of, frames made up, equipment cleaned, electric fence put up in the field. If you would like to help with some of the work please arrive early, about 11 ish. We are trying to be

prompt with our colony management start time, with lunch and chat 12.30 and out to the colonies by 1pm.

Another project we are helping with is the CSI Pollen research* into the diversity of pollens collected by honey bees. We have attached pollen traps to 3 colonies and every 3 weeks collect a 24 hour sample - which is then sorted into different colours and the pellets counted. Kay is doing the sorting and counting – and hasn't resigned yet!

Sylvia and Peter

*CSI Pollen. A new research project by the International Bee Research Association. Full details of the project can be found at www.ibra.org.uk/articles/CSI-Pollen. This is research into the diversity of pollens collected by honey bees. So far 16 countries are taking part. Norman Carreck is the co-ordinator for England and Wales

North Devon Show Success

Congratulations to Allan Barrow who won prizes for his sections and honey in this year's North Devon Show.



Lost property: hidden away in Horestone library is a box of very attractive wax Christmas decorations that someone has obviously spent a lot of time and care making. Please can the owner contact me so that I can return them. Otherwise they are likely to get used at our Shows for demonstration purposes. Thank you. Sylvie

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jefforr@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