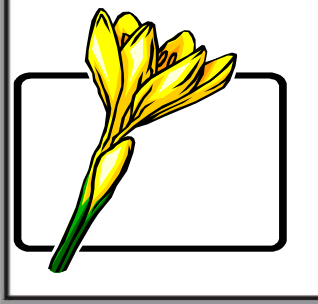


NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

MARCH 2009

www.northdevonbees.org



EDITORIAL

It is Lent, a time for giving up so lets see what bee keepers can give up like....give up thinking there is nothing to do ..give up thinking it is going to be another awful summer...give up thinking that you are a bad bee keeper when your hive goes down...give up thinking negative.

Otherwise you know what to do. So lets all get out there and do it. Keeping in mind that there is the Apiary to go to for support, people to email and all the day workshops for further learning.

Mel & Sylvie

Chair Chat.

It looks as though March will be a busy and interesting month for us all. We have a wax preparation day, beginners classes, preparations for the Nosema day, as well as looking after the bees and hopefully potting up spare plants for our plant day. But how good it feels to be doing something practical. I must confess that over the last few months, what with trying to keep up with emails, read all the beekeeping magazines, books, articles and paperwork, I have begun to feel that I am suffering from information overload. I didn't do that well in the Stress Test for beekeepers on Page 2! I hope you do better!

I would like to warmly welcome our new beekeeping students and hope that you enjoy the course. We look forward to meeting you at the apiary, it's a beautiful place especially when the spring flowers are in bloom, and the bees are busy foraging. We are so lucky to have it.

And finally, another plug I'm afraid. We still need a few more volunteers to help the microscopists and to help the Nosema day run smoothly. Please contact Flowa as soon as possible if you would like to be involved. AND PLEASE take advantage of this opportunity to have your bees tested for Nosema. Normally it costs—this is for **free** and a unique opportunity to be involved in a scientific survey and to take care of the health of your bees.

Sylvie

Apiary Managers Chat.

Have the days arrived when we can imagine that Spring is just around the corner? Well judging by the dry and sometimes warm days we've enjoyed recently, it seems to be on its way! The bees have been flying to collect yellow, cream and orange pollen: from the surrounding snowdrops and hazel catkins. The pond has provided the necessary water, and so far all the colonies have survived the chilly winter.

We have considered and implemented a non-soya based pollen-substitute protein feed, named 'Feed bee' which

the manufacturers claim: increases brood rearing, the colony population and the honey crop. One colony has been identified as a control, and we will report back on the results. (further information is available for anyone who is interested).

To raise the profile of honey bees foraging needs, a power point presentation has been prepared for any gardening society or W.I who are interested. If any member could forward interested contacts, we are happy to attend, and the 'expenses' will boost our Branch funds.

To increase awareness of the ideal pollen and nectar plants, we are planning a 'Seed day' on Sunday 24 May, and we will be inviting gardeners and members to share their knowledge and purchase useful bee-friendly plants. We would like to invite all members to sow borage, poached egg plant and phacelia seeds, with maybe a tray to spare, which can be offered to the branch for this sale. Please contact Julie Elkin for further details of seeds and plants you may choose to bring.

Twelve colonies have been identified for the IHP to return their complete loan, and we will keep members informed of this progress.

We now have a 'loan' system for Branch equipment, eg the honey extractor, presentation screen, the funds from which will go towards branch funds.(if you are reading between the lines of this chat, you'll have guessed that we would like to feed pennies into our piggy bank, or for the vegetarians, the lettuce leaf!)

Our plans to increase the number of colonies are still not finalized, however there is a possibility that a queen rearing programme may be implemented at a members apiary, so (given a fair wind and keen gig rowers!) some queens may be available to members. No nuclei will be created for members this year, but please leave your contact details and we will connect buyers and sellers.

Just a final reminder. The bees are not safely through the winter yet, and still require hefting/weighing to assess the need for feeding Please refer to the recent messenger e-mail which explains 'starvation isolation'.

On behalf of everyone visiting the branch, including our 12 new students, we would like to thank our Clerk of Works Chris Tozer for repairing the toilet, the water system and his future plans for our drainage works. All hands on deck please to assist this vital 'behind the scenes' role, and if you've just a couple of generous hours to spare, we have a job that could fill them!! Looking forward to seeing some of you over the next few weeks!!

Flowa

Stress Test for Beekeepers.—I am not sure exactly how it works, but this stress test is amazingly accurate. Read the full description before attempting the test. The picture has 2 identical dolphins in it. It was used in a case study on stress levels at St Mary's Hospital. Look at both dolphins jumping out of the water. The dolphins are identical. A closely monitored, scientific study revealed that, in spite of the fact that the dolphins are identical; a person under stress would find differences. The more differences a person finds between the dolphins, the more stress that person is experiencing. Now look at the photograph on page 5 and if you find more than one or two differences you need a holiday. Stressful beekeepers make for stressed bees.

NOSEMA SURVEY—(DBKA/DARG/NBU)

SUNDAY 22 March at The Castle Centre, 25 Castle Street, Barnstaple, EX31 1DR (nearest car park, Tuly Street).

What to do

1. Take sample(s) as described below.
2. Download the Nosema Survey Form from Newton Abbot website: www.newtonabbotbees.org.uk. Also forms are available at Horestone.
3. Fill out form and bring it plus bees to The Castle Centre, Barnstaple between 10.30am - 1.30 pm. **Please include a SAE with your form and samples to enable the results to be posted to you.**

Technique for collecting the sample

1. Thirty (30) mature bees will be needed for the test.
2. Choose a day and time when the bees are flying actively.
3. Close the entrance for a while until returning bees are crowding the entrance.
4. Use a polythene bag and brush 30+ bees into it.
5. Seal the bag, label with the hive reference and place in a freezer immediately.
6. Remove the bees only on the day of the test to minimise decomposition.
7. Bees sent by post should be taken out of the polythene bag just before posting and placed in a suitable permeable container such as a matchbox and sent 1st class post to Glyn Davies or Adam Ververs.
8. Bees and details can be sent with a fellow member on the day.
9. Please complete the details requested on the front of this form as clearly as possible. Continue on a separate sheet if required.
10. Privacy and confidentiality will be respected and personal information will not be passed to NBU for BeeBase unless the relevant box is ticked.

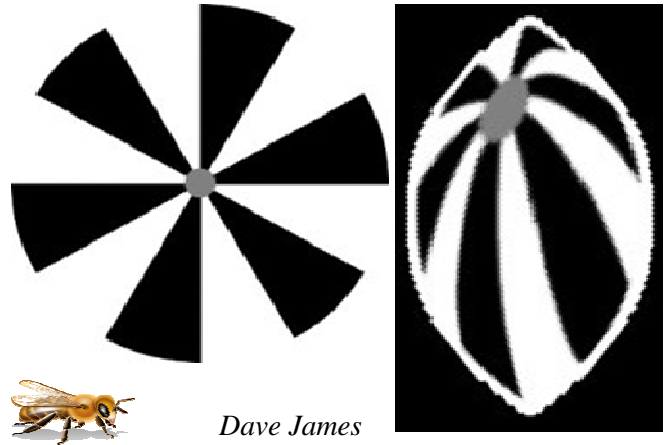
PLEASE let Flowa know how many samples you intend to bring or send and roughly what time those samples will arrive at Barnstaple (preferably by 12.30/1pm so that we don't run out of time.) Also we still need HELP to assist the microscopist and helpers for Margaret soup/lunch arrangements. (helpers and those who stay to assist by prior arrangement will have a soup lunch) mhouldsworth@hotmail.co.uk

BEE VISION

The pattern on the left is seen by the honeybee as that on the right. How so? See:

<http://andygiger.com/science/beye/beyegallery.html>

where you can download Andy Giger's demonstration program that mimics the effect of the bee optics. There are other examples. Nothing that new, but nicely done.



Dave James

DIARY DATES

***** Saturday 7 March— wax handling— rendering, cleaning, preparing etc with Chris Tozer at Horestone Apiary. 10—3pm. Bring lunch to share.*******



Saturday 14th March. If you have never been to a DBKA President's Day before you are in for a beekeeper's treat. See Beekeeping Magazine for details. As well as Tim Lovett's talk, there is an auction of beekeeping stuff, so bring something to sell if you can, and choose something to bid for anyway. A great day out

Sunday 22 March— A rare and valuable day for North Devon Branch members to take part in a scientific survey about a honeybee disease. Don't miss this on any account. If you can't bring your samples of bees in yourself, ask a friend, or explain your situation to Secretary Patrick or Apiary Manager Flowa.

Sunday 29th March. Auction of second hand beekeeping equipment, Ruishton Village Hall, near Taunton. 2pm

Stoneleigh Spring Convention 17—19 April

April 21, Devon & Cornwall Beekeepers SW Regional Lecture. Tuesday 7.30 at Kelly College, Tavistock.

Speaker: Prof. Jamie Ellis

Sunday 24 May - Plant sale at Horestone



BITZ 4 BEES

Hotfoot from a very successful Spring Convention in Chilsworthy, we are planning for our 2009 season. The Shop will now be open from Tuesday 17th March on a regular basis between 12 and 1pm. we will be at the Apiary for the rest of the day. We are starting a Gift Voucher scheme whereby you will be able to purchase £5 and £10 vouchers to be spent in the B4B Shop. A Happy Beeez Season. Dave & Jean

The Wet Stuff

During the recent very cold weather I was intrigued to see a few foragers dart out of their hive entrance. They work the flowering heathers (*Erica carnea* & *darleyensis*) mahonia and snowdrops. Pollen collection at this time is a welcome sign – the colonies have brood and are therefore queenright. At this time of the year, when the queen is starting to lay and there is little nectar, bees will often be seen gathering water. Brood food has a high water content, which is normally supplied from the incoming nectar. If there is insufficient nectar, the water has to be brought in. In addition, adult bees need to consume sugar, and the stored honey has to be diluted to about 50% water for the bees to digest it. This need for water can occur at any time of the year when a spell of bad weather prevents flying.

In hot summer weather, the brood nest has to be kept at the correct temperature, 33-36C. This is achieved initially by fanning, but in severe cases the workers spread water over the combs and in open cells to give cooling by evaporation. Foraging for water has therefore to be initiated in response to either dehydration or overheating of the colony.

Which bees collect water? Foraging bees are the older workers in the colony, over three weeks old in the summer period. They have spent the first part of their short lives in the hive, performing tasks appropriate to their glandular development. They then spend their last few weeks gathering the four essentials for colony survival – nectar, pollen, water, and propolis. Foragers tend to specialise in collecting one of these items and to collect it for the whole of their working life. However, a small fraction of them do switch, for example from nectar to water and back, and some will collect mixed loads of nectar and pollen. There is no clear evidence about what decides which commodity any particular bee will collect. There may well be a genetic predisposition, or it may be decided by which recruitment dances a novice dancer happens to follow.

The numbers of bees collecting water can change rapidly, especially on a hot day. How is this foraging controlled? There is a fundamental difference between the collecting of nectar for the hive, and the collection of water. Nectar foraging is supply driven. Water collection is demand driven. The demand for nectar by the colony changes only slowly. It depends on the adult bee population, and the amount of brood, neither of which fluctuates rapidly. On the other hand the supply of nectar varies greatly from day to day, even from hour to hour. As a result it makes sense for nectar foraging to be controlled by the foragers who are aware of these fluctuations. Conversely, water supply is virtually unlimited, except in very unusual circumstances. But demand for water in the hive can vary rapidly, for example as a result of temperature changes. It makes sense, therefore for water foraging to be controlled by the bees in the hive who are aware of the changes in demand.

What physical stimulus could be used by hive bees to recognise need for water? Experiments indicate that the sugar concentration of the contents of the honey crop acts as a trigger. Watch your bees taking water from a water-soaked cloth at the hive entrance in hot weather. Concentration of crop contents is a good stimulus because it will operate to initiate water collection, not only in cases of dehydration when nectar intake is restricted, but also when hive temperatures rise. In the latter case, workers will start evaporative cooling using their crop contents, the concentration of which will therefore rise. In addition, all hive bees will experience the same stimulus, because by trophylaxis, their crop contents will be very similar. On returning to the hive, the water foragers can recruit more foragers by dancing, and so the collecting force can rapidly increase. How do they know when to stop? The message appears to be contained in the time it takes for the returning water forager to unload its cropful of water. When it is taken quickly and eagerly there is clearly need for more. If on the other hand it takes a long time to find a hive bee to unload the water, the demand is at an end and the forager will stop collecting.

Most water foragers were previously not employed. Both water foragers and water receivers are in general specialists. When the water receivers stop work, the foragers get the message and stop work too. This should come as no surprise. At any particular time only about one third of the workers are actually employed. Two thirds are either resting or patrolling, presumably available for emergency.

Read: Seeley *The Wisdom of the Hive*

Dadant (ed) *The Hive and the Honeybee*

Beryl Smailes

Greetings all members!

Calling all Speakers - or Would-be-Speakers!! Please let me know if you would like to be included in a list of "Speakers" to be used for any enquirers ... such as WIs, Gardening Clubs etc .

I would propose e-mailing you - and other speakers - with any enquiries ... they do come in quite regularly!

It would be helpful if you could indicate to me any particular aspect that you prefer to address [bee plants, hive products usage, general beekeeping etc etc]

*** ReBuild time!! - I shall regard my previous "Speaker List" as historic only, so PLEASE let me know if you are "still a speaker" ***

Patrick Moore

Membership Secretary - a couple of members have said that they have not received the document, certificate of insurance, when they paid their subscriptions. The procedure that we use is to send the certificate in the envelope containing the *Beekeeping Magazine*. If you have recently paid your subscription - please check your envelope to make sure that it isn't accidentally thrown out.

Denise Oldacre.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SHOWS

This year the Branch will organise stalls at 4 local shows and run the Honey Show. As well as giving information about bees, beekeeping and the apiary we aim to sell as wide a range of goods as possible (including bee-friendly plants). Please think about selling produce through these Stalls. (20% commission will support Branch Funds.)

Volunteers needed for planning, setting up, stall-minding and PR.

DISPLAY/S

There will be a display about Bees at Barnstaple Public library in July – suggestions for other sites welcome. Volunteers for planning and design very welcome.

SOCIAL / FUND RAISING

Bring and Buy Plant Sale at the Apiary in May – see Beryl's entry in this Northern Lights – many volunteers and participants needed on the day.

DATES

EVENT	DATE
Plant Sale	Sunday 24 th May
Library Display	Saturday 18 th July to Saturday 1 st August
Instow Show	Saturday 18 th July
North Devon Show	Wednesday 5 th August
Chapelton Steam Fair	Weekend of 19 th & 20 th September
Eggesford Apple Day	Weekend of 17 th & 18 th October
Branch Honey Show	Weekend of 24 th & 25 th October

OTHER SHOWS

Members planning to run stalls at other shows are very welcome to arrange to loan displays, leaflets etc (contact Margaret Kay) and to advertise for volunteers through Northern Lights. One date so far : Mel Browne will be organising a stall at Brendon Show on Sunday 9th August.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU ARE WILLING TO PUT YOUR NAME DOWN TO HELP WITH ANY OR ALL OF THE ABOVE.

Margaret

Email: mkay761@googlemail.com

Into Focus: Funraising Fundraising

The ambition: To help build up the Branch Funds, a special day is being planned which will mean big co-operation efforts from many volunteers. Your Branch needs you! The date is Sunday 24th May, at Horestone Apiary.

The idea: To hold a Plants and Gardens Bring & Buy, with plants, seeds, cuttings, clumps for division - bee friendly but not necessarily so. Any gardening books, bric-a-brac with garden motif, garden paintings and photographs, pottery, tiles etc. Just about anything interesting to do with plants and gardens

Who will come? All your friends and relations, some Gardening Club members, some WI, some friends from other Branches, some from discrete advertising.

What else: Taste of Honey? Beekeepers' Teas available at reasonable price, with honey home cooking (some of yours!)

What to do NOW: Plan what you are going to do to help for this day. Maybe you have some plants you can pot up, pictures you want to paint, pottery and books you can collect, honeypots and soft- toy honeybees. Use your 'nitiative, and put your ideas and offers to Beryl /Julie/Flowa/Margaret. More details as time goes along.

The Report of the National Audit Office into the Health of Livestock & Honeybees is available to download from the Newton Abbot Website www.newtonabbotbees.org.uk

There is very important information in this document. It is a pity that bees are mixed in with sheep & cows but it does indicate that NAO considers bees to be just as important.

Whiskey, Honey & Cardamom Pudding

Serves 4

3tbsp whole milk	5tbsp honey
1/4 cup salted butter, plus extra for greasing.	2 eggs
1 cup SR flour	4 tbsp whiskey
1tsp ground cinnamon	1 cup double cream
4 pods cardamom seeds	Syrup
4 glove heads, small round part attached to stalk.	2tbsp whiskey
1/2 cup light brown sugar	2tbsp honey

Heat oven to 350F

Warm the milk in a small saucepan, then melt the butter in it, allow to cool.

Sift the flour with the cinnamon into a bowl. Crush the cardamom pods & cloves using a mortar & pestle & sprinkle onto the sifted flour.

In a separate bowl, mix the brown sugar. 4 tbsp of the honey & the eggs until smooth, then stir in the whiskey, milk & butter mixture.

Make a well in the centre of the flour with a spoon & gradually pour in the whiskey & honey mixture, about 6 tbsp at a time & whipping slowly with a fork gently incorporate the flour. When all the flour is incorporated, the mixture should have the consistency of a smooth, thick batter.

Pour the mixture into 4 greased 1/2 cup molds or pans, do not fill to the brim as the mixture will rise during baking. Place in the oven & bake for 20-25 minutes; the cakes are cooked through when a skewer comes out clean. Remove from the oven & allow to cool.

Trim the puffed up tops slightly so that they will sit evenly & unmold them into a casserole or baking dish, trimmed side down.

Mix the syrup ingredients together & spoon over the cakes until they are saturated & leave them to soak through for 1-2hours.

When ready to serve, warm the cakes gently in a low oven for 8-10 min or place in a microwave on high for 1 min, covered.

To serve, drizzle a tsp of honey in a swirl or zigzag pattern on each plate. Place a cake on one side of each plate & a serving of cream on the other.

STRESS TEST FOR BEEKEEPERS



Educationeducationeducation

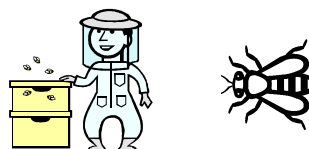
What's Cooking?

Well, the first of our Branch Courses for Beginners made a happy start on 22nd February, with twelve students coming along from most points of our region. We hope this will be the first of many courses for beekeepers to be held at intervals on an annual basis

We will not be holding large classes, 12 is about the most comfortable number for individual attention. Horestone Apiary has always been a teaching apiary, and education has been our Branch's big objective. Just as our Apiary Manager is striving for excellence in her management, our Show Secretary is busy organising some classic shows as well as updating and improvising others, and our Committee is promising to be the best for many years (we go back a long way), so the Education department will seek to meet the needs of learning beekeeping at every level. It is all fun and fascinating, great companionship and give & take. But it will take time, commitment, and continuing application of high standards. No relaxing of any part of it.

So watch this space for educational courses, we have plans for new beginners' courses from September onwards through next winter, with Improvers classes, Basic Assessment Classes, Revision classes. Any member who would like to assist, learn to be a Tutor, or just help look after the students, please apply to me,

Beryl Smailes



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All contributions welcome, copy by 23rd of month for publication in following month's newsletter.

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