

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

MARCH 2016

www.northdevonbees.org



USEFUL LINKS

DEVON BEEKEEPERS'
ASSOCIATION
www.devonbeekeepers.org.uk

BRITISH BEEKEEPERS'
ASSOCIATION
www.bbka.org.uk



The Devon Honey Show – Winter talk by Ruth Neal

I have always admired the energy and organizing skills of Ruth, who has been Chair of the DBKA Show Committee since 2010. Ruth and her Show Committee run the Bees and Honey exhibition annually, over 3 days, and though tremendous fun, it involves a huge amount of work. The Marquee has won the Gold Medal for the most Attractive Showground Feature at least 5 times – which Ruth said, is due to the enormous effort of all those involved who make every stall and stand as informative and appealing as possible.

Originally the County Show was held at Whipton but moved to Westpoint in 1990. Ruth illustrated her talk with photographs and we saw how the size of the marquee has increased over the years, - the old woodchip floor covering has now been replaced with carpet – the first years being a vivid, electric, fluorescent, shocking pink. Ruth talked about the various stalls and exhibits including the DBKA Honey Competition (with classes for honey, cookery, mead, wax, polish, photo's, art and craft – and judged by 2 National Judges and a cookery judge). There is the 'Taste of Honey stall; Sales; Candle Rolling; an Information stall; Bee Handling Demonstrations; Skep Making; Observation Hive; the Bee Chamber, the various Branch exhibits competing for the Stevenson's Trophy, and this year hopefully a Microscopy Section. She encouraged us all to enter exhibits in the Honey Show – and suggested we read through the Schedule carefully.

Ruth had many amusing anecdotes on her time working at the Show. She said the most important thing was to provide a happy atmosphere in which to pass on information about bees to the public. Her husband Barry organizes the stewards list – and is always looking for new stewards to join their band of enthusiastic volunteers. Details of how to contact Barry are in the Feb/March Beekeeping Journal.

Mave concluded the evening by thanking Ruth for her lively, and most interesting talk.

Sylvie

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Bee Tradex Exhibition

Saturday 5 March 2016 9.00 to 4.30pm Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire
See www.beetradex.co.uk for more information

Horestone Apiary Re-opening

Tuesday 8 March from 10.00 am (see Chair Chat for details).

Devon Wildlife Trust meeting

Friday 11 March 2016 7.00 for 7.30pm

'The natural history of clouds'.

Dr Paul Madgett, a well known local geologist and naturalist, will give all the facts about clouds; their formation, development and relation to weather—with lots of images !

Everyone welcome. £3 at the door including light refreshments.

Beginners' Class

The 16 members of the Beginners' Class will be visiting Horestone Apiary 10.00 to 12.00 for the first time on Sunday 13 March 10.00 to 12.00 to be introduced to our bees.

DBKA AGM

At the Isis Centre, Exeter 19 March 9.30 for 10.00 am
Presentation from Dr Declan Schroeder 'The Latest on Varroa'
(see magazine 'BEEKEEPING' for details)

BBKA Exam Day

8 candidates will be starting at 10.00am at Buckfast Abbey Conference Centre on 19 March for a 90 minute session.

Taunton Equipment Auction

Sunday March 20 at Ruishton Village Hall
Items from 10.00am / starts 2.00pm
1 mile off M5 Junction 25
Refreshments—free parking—bargains galore

DARG Meeting

On Sunday 20 March at 12.00 at Yelverton with a discussion on black bees led by Lea Bayly.

Branch Meeting

Thursday 24 March 2016 7.00 for 7.30pm

PLEASE NOTE DATE CORRECTION

'Drone Laying Queens' – Castle Centre, Barnstaple
Glyn Davies is a Master Beekeeper and has been the BBKA President. He is in demand nationally as a speaker and is currently involved in a research project looking at DLQs.

£2.00 donation please to apiary funds and including light refreshments

HIDDEN EXTRAS

There is a continuous flow of information about the amazing and complex world of plants, just how incredibly clever, devious and manipulative they are in their relationships with other living organisms and how fragile that relationship can be. We, who trample over and into that world with our chemical potions to supposedly cure all ills have so much to learn from the balance that plants have achieved with their benefactors and potential enemies.

As beekeepers it is the nectar production that interests us most and as gardeners and growers how they entice so many pollinators to them to produce our crops. Nectar, the drink of the Gods can be laced with poisons and many other substances (what a fascinating article on this subject in February's BBKA News) to lure or deter the insect populace. We all know the flowers which provide the most/best forage for our bees but in addition to floral nectar there are hidden extras provided by extrafloral nectaries, EFNs. First recognised in 1762 and seen to be unconnected with pollination they are still a source of ongoing research and although the majority occur on flowering plants some are found on non flowering plants eg ferns. They may be found on leaf blade, rachis, petiole, stem, bracts, stipules and cotyledons ie the vegetative parts of plants. Figures vary for the total number of plants with EFNs (a vast on line list is being constantly updated) but they are known to occur in at least 2000 species from more than 64 families worldwide with the families showing the most recorded occurrences being Fabaceae (beans & peas), Passifloraceae and Malvaceae. Others include Salix (willows) Poplar and Prunus (cherries plums peaches) all of great interest to beekeepers. EFNs producing a nectar of a more consistent and higher sugar content than floral nectaries attract not only our bees but predatory wasps, hoverflies, ladybirds and lacewings whose larvae are carnivorous and feed on the plant's pests such as aphids and caterpillars. Worldwide the most important visitors to EFNs are ants defending the plant against numerous herbivore pests. EFNs can be very useful sources of nectar for honey and other bees in and around our gardens. Many members of the cherry, peach and plum tree (Prunus sp) bear them, Laurel (Prunus laurocerasus) makes a wonderful bee hedge with flowers in April and EFNs later providing nectar during the June gap. It's close cousin the Bay (Laurus nobilis) does the same. Other useful shrubs are Guelder Rose (Viburnum opulus), the young stems and leaves of Elder (Sambucus nigra), Poplar and Willow. In the veg patch Broad beans from floral and EFNs provide a feast, the EFNs being easier for honeybees to work than the flowers although they use the holes the bumble bees make through the back of the flower. Enough pollinators must get in between the over lapping petals to pollinate the flowers as I always get a good crop. Paeonies, Passion flowers and common Vetch are others with EFNs. On uplands (and on the hillside opposite my garden) Bracken's (Pteridium aquilinum) EFNs are an abundant source of nectar when there may be little else available in early spring.

This bounty though holds hidden dangers. The assumption, by those gardeners who cannot bear to see the tiniest hole in a leaf without reaching for a toxic spray bottle, that if a plant has no flowers there won't be bees on it and any insects that are must be pests to be speedily despatched. If only we could persuade everyone to garden organically how it would help all our pollinators.

(Photos taken from 'The Honey Bee Around & About' by Celia Davis (2007) with her permission. A highly recommended addition to your library and a copy is available in the branch library.)



Cherry (Prunus spp.) EFNs are found on the leaf stalk (petiole)



Laurel (Laurus nobilis) has EFNs on the undersides of its leaves, either side of the midrib



Small black areas on the stipules of Broad Bean (Vicia faba) are extra floral nectaries

Chair Chat

Surely we will have some 'beekeeping' weather soon. The lane to Horestone has been flooded at times and the ground at the apiary is soggy and slippery, but all the colonies are still alive so far. The apiary is re-opening with a workday on Tuesday, 8th March to prepare for returning members and the Beginners Course which will be held in the hut from Sunday, 13

We need help with the following on the 8th March:

Kitchen (mouldy) and hut needs cleaning and tidying.

The grounds need to be cleared of leaves (we have 2 new rakes);

The slabs around the hives need cleaning and securing etc.

The electric fence needs to be checked;

Broken hive parts mended and others cleaned.

Folders and notes organised....

And anyone keen on bonfires? (wind permitting)

Do come in old clothes, with lunch and tools. I'm sure there will be cake.

At lunchtime, we will explain where the colonies are etc. and discuss their management, future record keeping etc. and topical beekeeping issues. There have been no Branch, nor any EC committee meetings in February....phew.

Best wishes, *Mave*

Bee Disease Insurance (BDI)

All members should be aware that BDI cover for up to 3 colonies is included in their membership benefits (additional colonies can be covered with extra payment). What members may not be aware of is that if membership renewal is delayed certain benefits (including BDI cover) can be affected.

If renewal is made:

*** Before 31 December 2015 -**

Continuation in BBKA membership

Continuation in receipt of Magazines/Newsletters

Continuation in BDI cover

*** 1 January - 31 March 2016 -**

BBKA membership is lapsed

Magazines/Newsletters may stop arriving

All restored on renewal

BDI cover continues

*** 1 April 2016 or later -**

BBKA membership is lapsed

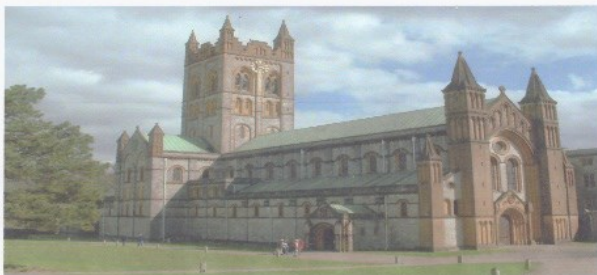
Magazines/Newsletters may stop arriving

All restored on renewal

BDI cover stops for 2 months before restarting

It is therefore in every members interest to ensure renewal is made promptly every year to ensure continuation of BDI cover (and BBKA membership).

Please contact Brian Sharp (Membership Secretary) at bjsharp@outlook.com or 07960 091698 if you require further details or a 2016 membership form.



Buckfast Abbey Day Out

Would you like to join us on June 26th June 2016 for a family day at Buckfast Abbey?

We will visit the Abbey and gardens, have lunch and check their bee hives. Family members and non-beekeepers are all welcome, come and visit the Abbey and grounds.

A coach will take us, picking up in Barnstaple and Bideford.

Cost:- Coach/petrol/driver - £20 p.p.

Day at the Abbey - £10 p.p.

You can take your packed lunch or buy lunch in their very good restaurant.

Places reserved only on payment and contact by 15th March to

Contact :-Mave on mavidowling@btinternet.com

Alan on anthony.barrowbtconnect.com



Under the lens by Graham Kingham

A 20 times magnification of the front leg of a worker showing the antenna cleaner with the fibula hanging down, when the leg is bent this forms a circular hole which she moves over her head and repeatedly wipes the antenna.

SEASONS COLOURS

SPRING

The colours of spring are Lime Green and Yellow
The world is ablaze with bright colours, all
nature bedecked and garish, none of it mellow.
On flat meadows the soil emerging from the
flood, is deeply ploughed and planted, seemingly
overnight it turns green with sprouting wheat
and barley.
Primrose and Daffodil, with fields of Buttercups
greeting this year's batch of prancing Heifers.
Rainbows abound as sunlit fields of rape are
drenched with April's showers and on reflection
We know its good to be alive. Lime Green and
Yellow.

SUMMER

The colours of summer are brown and blue,
deep blue the scorching sky, with brown
parched earth and ripening corn, the farmers
dread those flattening thunderstorms.
In June the first cut of Silage is taken and later
the Hay is cut and turned, stacked in brans it
waits the brown eyed cows who will dribble and
drool as they munch.
Our beaches are full of young people, with ice
creams, picnics and everyone laughing, far away
from those dark satanic mills.
The Test Match, the tennis, tea on the lawn, Oh
what a dream, we wish it would never end,
But,

AUTUMN

The colours of autumn are stunning, the earth
bears raiment of gold.
Combines weave through the fields spewing
wheat into trailers and rabbits caught in the
centre run for their lives making fine sport for
the boys
What a feast for the senses, yellow and red are
the windfalls, purple the Damsons, bright red
the Hawthorn.

On purple clad hills the marauding throng fills
up its crop that later I will steal and fill my crop
with spoons of glistening heather honey.
Smoke curls up from the bonfires outreaching
the mist-shrouded valleys.
Beneath which the earth is a myriad of colours,
outflanking King Henry's fine robes.
His entourage flew through the forest on
Stallions as black as night seeking the Red
Coated Deer so engrossed in their rutting they
fell to his arrows without flinching. They fell to
a carpet of gold.

WINTER

In winter the colours are stark, black boned
trees wear coats of white armour and we shiver
and moan by the fire.
"Sole, Lundy, Fastnet, storm force 10, imminent"
The wind screams in, 10 metres high are the
waves and salt laden water devours the coast.
Inch by inch the rivers rise, flooding the land on
either side, February Fillydike fulfilling its
promise,
Ice coated power lines collapse with the weight
and we're left with just candles for light.
The flood plane reflect the sky, usually grey but
sometimes turquoise with beautiful pink
sunsets.
On clear frosty nights the moon and stars paint
the earth ghostly silver and they tell us that
Christ was born around this time. So we
celebrate his coming with all the colours we can
find.

As the days begin to lengthen and we sit in
dimpsy light, suddenly, we hear it, the Blackbird
staking his territory with song and then we
know the Lime Green colours of spring are well
nigh.

Kay Thomas



Photos taken in the apiary of Chris Utting in the middle of February of one of the first Dandelions. When they open in profusion colonies are unlikely to starve as they provide vast quantities of pollen and nectar.

Spring is on its way !

Edited by Chris Utting e-mail chrisutting@btinternet.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