

NORTHERN LIGHTS

OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

MAY 2012

www.northdevonbees.org



CHAIR CHAT

A month doesn't go past where I am amazed at the amount of work done by members on our behalf. This month Sylvia Barber, Chrissie Preece and I were treated to a short whizz round the complexities of the web site.

Ruth Blake looks after, updates each month and checks that the communication channels between the public and us are kept up to date, open and working. So on behalf of the committee and all our members, we say - Many Thanks to Ruth for doing such a good job.

The weather this month has been awful for bee keeping, but it hasn't stopped us being busy. Jeff Orr got this seasons events and shows off to a good start on 19th April with a visit to Rosemoor.

This year's beginner's course has finished. Jack Mummery and his team have again done a good job of setting new beekeepers on the right path. We wish them all good luck and hope they can join us over at Horestone.

Behind the scenes, the 'offin' is empty, so all our equipment has been cleaned and returned to Albert's shed ready to reuse. Frames are being made and set with foundation, ready for the teams to use. We even found time to roll some wax into candles ready to sell at the 'open day/ plant sale' on 1st July.

Once again we thank Alan Barrow - he recently replaced the cracked cistern, which was a great relief.

Julie is making sure we do our Bailey comb changes correctly; were feeding some hives and all the bees look good. Let's hope the April showers finish this week and that the sun shines in May.

Barbara

NBU Warning - Starvation Risk

With the on-going poor weather, there is a real risk of bee colonies starving. Please check for stores in the colony and if in any doubt feed your bees. You should feed with either fondant or a thin syrup. Further information on feeding bees can be found in Best Practice Guideline No 7 on the Advisory Leaflets Page of BeeBase.

From the Education Section

Beginner Beekeeping Course

Five beginners finished this year's beginner beekeeping course on Sunday 22 April. Luckily the previous week provided some sunshine so all the course members had an opportunity to look inside a colony of bees and handle frames of bees. The last week was very disappointing weather wise as it was too cold to examine any colonies.

My thanks go to the new learners who were a pleasure to support and to the other members of the team: Glenis Beardsley, Sue Madgwick, Kay Thomas and Julie Elkin, whose contribution and sustained support for teaching new beekeepers is invaluable.

Basic Assessment

Please let me know if you want to complete the Basic Beekeeping Practical Assessment this summer and I'll set in motion a date for the assessment. Please check the BBKA website for further details of the assessment.

Jack Mummery

DIARY DATES

5th - 12th May - Branch Information Exhibit - Barnstaple Library

DBKA County Honey Show 17 - 19th May

Sunday 27th May - Members open Day / Plant Sale - 1.30 - 4 pm. See back page.

17th June - Dowland Country Fair

Sunday 1st July - Beekeeping Taster Day

Wednesday 1st August - North Devon Show - Umberleigh

Saturday 11th August - North Devon Branch - Nosema Clinic

Our Branch Honey Show - 15th and 16th September at St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple.

CLEMATIS TANGUTICA

Over my garden fence marches this small flowered clematis, it belongs to my neighbours but like all of its kind wants to wander. Being behind the fence is perfect, feet In the shade head in the sun. The flowers appear in July and last until October. The bees in my garden find them very attractive pushing their way up between the petals gathering both nectar and pollen, their interest seems to tail off when the flowers open. When they die the silver seed heads dry, stay on until March and are a useful addition to the flower arrangers bouquet and with flowers and seed heads open at the same time they look good too.

This year I have several new plants, which will be available at our **Plant Sale**. It can grow into a large plant but if pruned in March can be kept to whatever size you wish, cut to 80 off the ground it is ideal for growing through other shrubs or small trees.

Kay Thomas



Watercolour of Clematis Tangutica
By Kay Thomas

Notes from Horestone

Well what can we say. The weather has been appalling and the roads around the apiary impassable.

So to prevent anyone getting drowned or their cars stuck in a flood, we sent round a notice saying only a small handful of us would brave the weather and feed any colonies that needed it. I thought we would be in and out in under half an hour.

How wrong can you be. As Kay and I left South Molton, the sun came out. A nice surprise. By the time we got to Horestone it was very warm. As we drove into the car park a swarm left one of the blue colonies and the air was thick with bees. How lovely said Kay, I do love beekeeping! 3 hours later, we had found the clipped queen in the grass, found the ladder which had been hidden, collected the swarm from the apple tree, performed an artificial swarm and made up some apideas. Thank goodness Albert and John had been busy making up frames over the last couple of weeks. And well done to Jeff for making sure all the Apideas were made up and stocked with fondant. A very good mornings work.

But there was no cake for teas which was a bit of a shame.

Sylvie

POLLEN UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

10 members enjoyed an informative and fascinating afternoon preparing pollen slides with Brian Marchant who was a beekeeper and now is a National Recorder of Bumble bees and other species. Very many thanks to Brian for coming to share his expertise with us.

Pollen is the male 'sperm' produced by the stamens which provides the bees with protein and it's presence in honey can be used to identify the flowers visited and the region the honey comes from. We examined pollen collected directly from the plants.

Notes taken at the Pollen talk by Brian Marchant

Staining is necessary to differentiate between the pollens components and make them visible.

It is not a fast process. To dry and preserve the plant material a press can be made with plywood and kitchen roll. Pollen can also be preserved in alcohol. Take about 3 stamens and place in small phial of alcohol with stoppers.

Preparing slides.

Pollen grains are covered in a lipid, a film of oil which has to be removed to be able to view the pollen properly. To remove the film of oil the pollen is washed in alcohol after having removed as much of the plant debris as possible. We used Isopropanol alcohol. After adding the alcohol to the pollen grains, agitate (gold panning) the mixture till the pollen sediments ó using a pipette remove the surplus alcohol and repeat the washing process. Repeat until the fluid around the pollen is stain free.

We then used the dye Safraninó this is a red dye. The merest drop of dye, again swirling the watch-glass contents. It takes a while to stain ó don't stir it with a rod ó you can over stain it.

Remove most of the stain with a pipette and once again clean with alcohol. The pollen is now stained and ready to go on the slide. So far the procedure has been dewax, wash, stain, wash.

After the last wash use some tissue to remove the excess alcohol.

Mounting slides

The next step Brian uses a warming plate. He made the warming plate with some sheet metal warmed with a 40 watt light bulb. Everything needs to be warm. The mounting fluid is 50% glycerine jelly and 50% distilled water ó for use the jelly needs to be liquefied by warming. A small drop of the warmed jelly is dropped onto the pollen grains in the watch glass. On a warm slide put a bead of glycerine jelly ó pick up some of the stained pollen and touch it to the surface of the jelly. Cover with a warmed cover slip using tweezers and a needle. This needs to be done very carefully or air bubbles will get trapped on the slide.

To protect the pollen slide if it is to be permanent, nail varnish can be used to seal around the cover glass.

We were then shown how to use the compound microscope to examine our slides.



HOT AND TANGY

HOME-MADE HONEY MUSTARD

Serves 6 & 8

In a medium bowl, whisk together 100 ml Cider Vinegar with 40g Colman's Mustard Powder then whisk in 2 medium egg yolks and 3oz set Honey.

Transfer the mixture to a bowl set over a pan of simmering water and heat for 5 & 10 minutes, stirring frequently until the mustard is a little thicker than double cream.

Pass through a sieve into a bowl, cover with clingfilm and leave to cool.

Chill until required; the mustard will keep for a week.

Bring to room temperature for 30 minutes before serving. Great with cheese toasties, roast ham or cold chicken.



Branch exhibition at Rosemoor - during National Gardening Week.



Bitz4Bees
Tuesdays
10.30 & 12.30
Derek-hunter@lineone.net

Blossom

The blossom is out we know it's true
We have seen it the bees have to
Oh the fruits the trees will bear
Cherry, apple, plum & pear
What a fruitless place t'would be
Without our Busy ! Busy bee.
Alan Barrow



NORTH DEVON BRANCH

Sunday 27th May

13.30 - 16.00

At Horestone

Members Open Day

And

Plant Sale

A chance for members who can't get to Horestone on a Tuesday to come and meet other Branch members.

If you have any spare plants please donate them to our Plant Sale. Proceeds towards the upkeep of our beautiful Apiary.



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