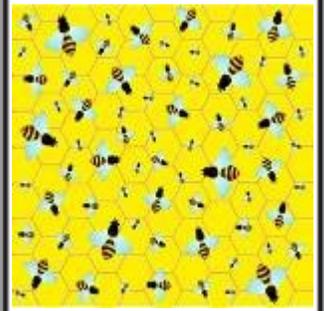


NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

NOVEMBER 2015 www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

For me autumn is a time for reflection, tidying and forward planning although the beekeeping year is said to begin at this time of year when the colonies at Horestone are 'tucked up' for the winter.

Committee members at the apiary have been amending the inventory as this is necessary for insurance purposes. The apiary managers have removed some of the old equipment from Albert's shed and new items have been bought. We have many fallen apples but no company able to offer a juicing service this year. It would be good to find a juicing service for next year so that the apples are not wasted.

Our programme of talks is ongoing through the winter months thanks to Chris Utting for finding speakers for us and for booking the Castle Centre.

The AGM is on Sunday, 15th November. This is the time to 'start again' for the coming year. Do read the Committee Summary as we have vacancies to fill. As a Pollen Project has been running at Horestone during the summer, there will be a display of information about this interesting study at the AGM.

Mave

Events 2015-16

15 November	13:30 for 14:00	North Devon Branch AGM, Castle Centre, Barnstaple
24 November	12:00-14:00	Mince Pie and Quiz Day, Horestone
29 January	19:00 for 19:30	Talk 'Judging Honey' by Jack Mummery. The Castle Centre, Barnstaple
26 February	19:00 for 19:30	Talk 'The Devon Honey Show' by Ruth Neal, DBKA Show Committee Chair. The Castle Centre, Barnstaple
29 March	19:00 for 19:30	Talk 'Nosema' by Glyn Davis. The Castle Centre, Barnstaple
17 April	09:30-12:00	Branch Nosema Clinic. The Castle Centre, Barnstaple

Bee Quotes

'My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.'

Proverbs : Verse 24.13

Horestone News

Well here we are nearing the end of our beekeeping season.

Last Tuesday the bees were very active enjoying some surprisingly warm autumn weather. Pollen was being taken in and the entire apiary had the distinctive smell of ivy being worked. All the hives were hefted, varroa counts done, and entrance blocks removed. We couldn't remove them last week as there were still wasps around. Most of our floors are David Pearce floors which don't need mouse guards.

We are happy that all the colonies are going into winter in a good condition – well all except one that was acting suspiciously, drones going in and out and very stropky bees. We looked through it - no queen, no brood - so despite

it being rather late in the season, we have united it with a strong nuc. Fingers crossed they will co-operate and settle down.

We are planning to have our **Mince Pie Tuesday on Tuesday 24th November**. This will be from 12 till about 2 – and will be our normal end of year mince pies and quiz (many thanks Cathy). We hope you will come and join us.

The Apiary will be closed after that for a couple of months as we hope to have finished the remaining tidying up by then, and travelling conditions will begin to deteriorate soon.

Sylvie

Plants for Bugs



This is the name of the study carried out over 4 years by RHS Science in conjunction with other bodies at RHS garden Wisley in Surrey. Studying a wide range of flower visiting insects, not just honeybees, but the findings are very relevant to gardening beekeepers. This has been (and is still ongoing) a field experiment to test whether the geographical origin, 'nativeness' of plants affect the abundance and diversity of the invertebrates that they support.

Most gardening beekeepers have always thought that the more nectar/pollen rich plants that you can pack in, native or not, was a good idea so it is very useful to have this confirmed and other very useful recommendations have come out of this study too.

The main messages can be summarised as:-

PLANT A MIXTURE. Diversity of plant origin in a garden attracts most pollinators (avoid the non- native plants that are invasive if they escape into the wild).

PLANT FOR A LONG SEASON. I have always tried to follow Mrs Fish's (East Lambrook Manor) aim of 'A FLOWER FOR EVERY DAY' and the best way to ensure this is to download the RHS's Perfect for Pollinators Plant List.

PACK THEM IN. I like this one as I can tell my husband when he says 'do you really need another plant' that I am just following RHS advice.

Go to: www.rhs.org.uk/plants4bugs

And for 'Enhancing Gardens as habitats for flower visiting aerial insects' published by the Journal of Applied Ecology go to: www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1365-2664-12499/full (it really is worth getting through this!)

If you prefer to concentrate on native plants look at Plantlife's website and The Wildflower Garden.

Thus inspired this is the time of year, November to February, for bare root plantings of trees, shrubs and fruit bushes to enhance your bee friendly garden. There's still just time to put in more bulbs for early forage. With the above aims in mind it is always better to plant en masse, the old maxim was always to plant 1, 3 or 5 so forget the 1 and go with the 3 or 5 or more for perennials. A flowering tree whether ornamental or fruiting can provide a wealth of forage for 2-3 weeks as do fruit bushes and shrubs. A native hedge is a much more attractive and insect friendly boundary than a leylandii hedge so how about planting a mixed one with hazel, willow, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and dog roses? It's also time to order seeds. Masses of the annuals the bees love can be sown as companion plants in the veg patch and if some unused veg plants can be left to flower this is useful forage too. Some of the seeds sold for green manuring such as Phacelia, Buckwheat and the trefoils and Clovers can be left to flower and still provide plenty of material for digging in. I know they tell you to dig them in before flowering but if you dig them in before they set seed you can get the best of both worlds.

A beekeepers work is never done but let's dream when the winter weather is at its worst of a long and floriferous season to come with happy bees and honey flowing freely

Julie

DARG Visits Horestone

Last month members of DARG (Devon Apicultural Research Group) joined members of our branch at Horestone apiary to hear Kay Thomas and Peter Auger explain a pollen research project that the apiary team have been working on all summer. The project is part of an international survey to investigate the diversity of the pollen available for honey bees in order to understand how colony losses can be prevented such as the CCD (colony collapse disorder) problems in the USA.

Three colonies were selected and pollen traps were supplied by the organisers COLOSS Honey Bee Research Association working in collaboration with IBRA (International Bee Research Association).

Peter demonstrated how the pollen traps were modified to fit

the hive entrances and how the traps collected pollen. Kay showed us how the pollen sample was sorted into colours and counted. The pollen was then stored in a freezer for future analysis. Pollen slides had been prepared from the samples by our member Graham Kingham and were viewed with a microscope.

There was also a display of pollen photographs prepared by Graham. Chris Utting then gave a short talk on the history and development of the apiary for the guests who were then shown around the apiary by Peter and entertained to tea and cakes prepared by the members.

The apiary was looking its best, the sun was shining and the bees were on their best behaviour.

Chris Utting



A Final View from York

After almost three years of editing Northern Lights from York, I have decided to pass the torch on . . . to a safe pair of hands – Chris Utting. My vision for the newsletter is that it should be full of articles from the members and not pieces taken from the general world of beekeeping – there are many other sources for these. I would therefore like to thank all the members who have contributed over the last few years and kept the newsletter going. I'm sure you will continue to support Chris for the next edition.

Jeff

Committee Summary for October

We have held our last committee meeting before the AGM when new officers will be elected and others will be retiring.

Our treasurer, Derek Hunter, is retiring after many years of keeping our accounts in good order. Please consider whether you could take on this role.

Our second resignation is from Charmain Woolley who has been our membership secretary for several years. Both Derek and Charmain are willing to help their successor to fill the appointments.

We also need new committee members. Details of the vacancies will be circulated before the AGM so do think about joining the North Devon team.

The management of the apiary and the role of the show-secretary are also under review. The running of the Branch needs to be spread between more people than has been the case this year. Do consider joining the committee which meets monthly except during the winter months.

Finally, our 'remote' Northern Lights editor, Jeff Orr, who has done a great job for many years is also retiring but thankfully Chris Utting has offered to step into Jeff's shoes!

On behalf of the committee I thank all the officers and members for their help during 2015.

The colonies are strong, the apiary in good order and we have drunk as lot of tea, eaten cakes and had fun at the shows so let us plan for a great beekeeping year in 2016

Mave on behalf of the Committee

Varroa Research Break Through Thanks to ND Branch

Ron Hoskins is a Swindon beekeeper and 20 years ago he noticed that one of his colonies had learnt to self-groom the Varroa mite as he was finding damaged mites on his hive floor. So using instrumental insemination he continued to breed from this colony and has produced a strain of bees that can survive with a few Varroa but do not suffer from the dreaded Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) that destroys so many colonies in the UK. Ron has not used hard chemicals to control Varroa for many years and they still survive and flourish.

Dr Declan Schroeder of Plymouth Marine Biological Association is a world authority on viruses in sea plankton and honey bees and for the last three years he has been working with Ron and has discovered that a non-lethal variation of DWV has developed and protects the bees from the lethal variation. Ron has worked

out a way to protect his bees and meanwhile Declan is taking the research further so that one day we will be able to obtain this improved strain of bee.

A BBC1 TV programme 'INSIDE OUT' on Monday 26 October at 6.30pm reported on this success and can be viewed on 'Catch Up' TV.

And what has got to do with North Devon branch?

Declan's research is funded by the C.B.DENNIS BRITISH BEEKEEPERS' RESEARCH TRUST. The Trustees include David Aston (President of BBKA) and Brenda Ball (late of Rothamstead Research).

Brian Dennis was a very active member of North Devon Branch and served on the branch committee for several years in the 1970s. His grave is in Weare Gifford church.

Chris Utting

Edited by Jeff Orr. 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 to the new editor, Chris Utting