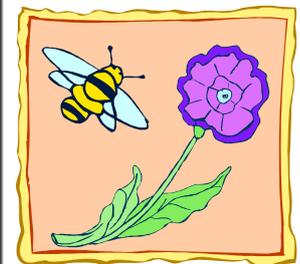


# NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

**OCTOBER 2010**

[www.northdevonbees.org](http://www.northdevonbees.org)



## Chairman's Chat

Well, now that the harvest is safely gathered in we have the Honey Show and the AGM to look forward to. I do hope you will support your Club at these two events and keep the flag flying (or the bees buzzing) for the North Devon Branch. There will be several vacancies on the Committee this year which we very much hope will be filled by new members - recent beekeepers with a fresh perspective. Believe me you will be welcomed with open arms and given every support.

Hope to see you at these important events in the Beekeeping Year.

Best wishes

*Chris Tozer*

## STOP PRESS

### North Devon Beekeepers Association Autumn Evening lectures 2010

Our theme this autumn is bees, other pollinating insects and plants and how they adapt to changing environmental conditions.

**Friday 15th October** at 7.30pm the speaker will be the **Rev. Nigel Dilkes (botanist)** who will be talking about:-

#### **HOW PLANTS ADAPT TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES.**

The talk will take place at the Castle Centre, Castle St, Barnstaple and we are pleased to welcome anyone interested in these talks to join us.

Charge of £1.50 per person, refreshments included.

*Please attend and support your Branch. It is amazing how much work is done in the back ground organizing these events, and when there is good attendance all the work seems worth while.*

## The Annual General Meeting

**of the North Devon Branch (of the Devon Beekeepers Association) will take place at the Castle Centre, 25 Castle Street, Barnstaple on Sunday 7th November, at 2pm.**

The meeting will be run according to the Rules that you will find printed in your DBKA 2010 Yearbook, using both the Branch Rules, and those of the DBKA, as parent organisation. You should note that only Registered and Partner Members are eligible to vote etc at the AGM. A Register of Attendance must be signed, and a list of eligible members will be available.

Agendas for the meeting will be available at the meeting. A Member wishing to propose any matter for discussion at the Branch AGM, shall notify the Branch Secretary in writing at least 14 days before the meeting in order that it may be placed on the agenda. I shall endeavour to circulate the Agenda to you by e-mail well before the AGM (though obviously not more than 14 days before!).

As at the previous AGM, the following Branch Committee positions shall be elected:

Chairman, Vice Chairman, Branch Secretary, Treasurer, Apiary Manager, Show & Social Events Coordinator, Education & Exam Secretary, 4 Committee Members.

\*\*\* Please note that I, Patrick Moore, will NOT be standing for re-election to the committee. I feel I have served as Secretary for long enough, and will not accept nomination even if no other nominations are forthcoming at the AGM! \*\*\*

*Patrick Moore, Secretary*

## October Notes from Horestone:

All of our colonies are well ahead with winter preparations. They have been treated with Apiguard and we have continued to monitor and record the varroa drop. They have all been hefted, assessed for stores and those that needed it have been fed with 2:1 sugar syrup. This Tuesday will see the removal of the feeders and the feeding completed. The bees have been enjoying the last of the warm days, and are still arriving at the hive entrance with pollen in various shades of yellow and orange. The hive entrances have been reduced to a minimum as there still seems to be wasp activity.

Last week during our Apiary discussion on whether to insulate colonies or not, we decided to do an experiment and put insulation on one colony in each of the 4 sections. Rather than use the polystyrene that we used last year we decided to use natural sheepswool insulation. Not everyone agrees that insulation is helpful, some convinced that cold is good, and damp is bad. We will of course monitor carefully for signs of damp colonies and put match sticks under the crown boards to allow the air to circulate. We hope to continue with our Tuesdays for most of the winter as we have various improvements and repairs that we hope to complete. It's also a good time to get to grips with the gardening. On rainy Tuesdays we will have discussions and plan to examine various pollens under the microscope.

## **NORTH DEVON HONEY SHOW**

Our Branch Honey Show is approaching and now is the time to start thinking about your exhibits and preparing some of them.

Look through the show schedule and tick the classes that interest you. You won't have to pay for each entry; the entry fee covers ALL your entries so enter as many as possible. Don't think you won't be good enough to enter because you are! Just prepare your entries carefully and have some fun entering the show and you never know you may win some prizes.

When you have put all the hard work into your entries, don't forget the County Show next May and save the entries you can to enter that show. There is always someone from the branch who attends and would stage your entries.

Here are a few tips for showing.

### **GENERAL TIPS FOR SHOWING**

- Carefully read the show schedule and observe all the rules and criteria; make sure entries are the correct size and in the correct containers.

#### **HONEY**

- Filter honey through a fine straining cloth or several layers of fine muslin
- Only use new matching honey jars of the squat pattern, warm them before pouring in your prepared honey
- Wipe around the inside top of the jar
- Make sure the external jar thread is clean
- Ensure there are not any particles of wax on the top of the honey
- Remove bubbles from the top of honey with a clean spoon or cling film
- Only use new matching lids
- Ensure that there is not a gap between the bottom of the lid and the surface of the honey when viewed from the side of the jar
- Shine a bright torch light through the honey to check there are not any foreign bodies in the honey
- Keep the prepared run honey in a warm place until the show to prevent crystals forming
- Make sure naturally granulated honey surface is free from any specs of propolis and check there aren't any specs on the bottom of the honey. Choose the jars with the least "frosting", ie where the granulated honey has shrunk away from the jar. Carefully clean the inside top of the jar WITHOUT disturbing the surface.

#### **FRAME FOR EXTRACTION**

- Try to clean the frame by carefully scraping the exposed surfaces to remove any propolis
- Aim to have the minimum number of unfilled/uncapped cells
- Choose a frame that has been well drawn and where the surfaces are as flat as possible, with the whitest cappings possible.
- Check by holding the frame to a light that there are not any cells of pollen and that the honey hasn't started to crystallise.

#### **CONTAINER OF CUT COMB**

- Cut the WIRELESS comb as close to half a pound or 227g as possible, drain it on a cake cooling wire before carefully putting it in a plastic container
- Make sure there are not any cells of pollen present and that the piece of comb is uniform thickness and has a flat surface of white cappings

#### **WAX AND CANDLE CLASSES**

- Only use wax cappings for wax classes and wash them in rain water
- Pick out as much discoloured wax, pollen and propolis from the cappings before melting them
- Filter wax through a coffee filter or similar before moulding for candles or blocks
- Polish moulds with a lint free cloth
- Work in a warm place and pour the melted wax carefully into the moulds. Allow them to cool slowly

- Polish the finished wax with a silk cloth
- For candles dip the wick in liquid wax prior to placing in the mould, and have the wick long enough to light; about a centimetre from the top of the candle.

**PHOTOGRAPHS** Make sure that the photo is of interest to beekeepers and take care to mount it on a piece of suitable card or thick paper. Add a caption that summarises the picture. Keep within the size criteria written in the schedule

If you haven't thought about showing before, have a go, it can be very rewarding and great fun and it supports your branch who will have put a lot of hard work into preparing for the show.

BEST OF LUCK!

*Jack Mummery*

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September, the first of our winter evening lectures.**

Members and visitors enjoyed a talk by David Charles, experienced beekeeper, past president of the BBKA, horticulturist and raconteur who informed, entertained and gave us plenty of food for thought. His theme was 'Bees – Great Survivors in Times of Change', sub title The Changing pattern of Flora. and he set out to dispel the myths and gloomy predictions abounding in the media in recent times. He reminded us of the saying 'Nothing is constant – only change'.

Honey bees are not the only pollinators although they are very important and their role in this field is more important than the amount of honey they give the beekeeper. David described other pollinators, the Red mason bee, the Leaf Cutter bee and bumble bees and how their life cycles differ from the honey bee.

Honey bees remain 'wild' and were in existence long before man, living in hollow trees and very able to fend for themselves before man's intervention. Man progressed from robbing wild colonies to collecting swarms and keeping the bees in skeps. In 1879 it was usual to cause them to cluster by 'Tanging' which also proclaimed ownership.

After the Rev.Langstroth discovered the importance of beespace in 1851 modern beekeeping in moveable frame hives developed.

Since then bees have suffered and survived several periods of great losses such as Isle of Wight disease, crop spraying pre 1985 and then the Varroa mite in the early 1990s. Some of the problems David attributed to greedy beekeepers taking too much from the hive.

Other problems have been losses of forage such as –

Loss of cornfield weeds (charlock, corncockle & corn marigold) due to the use of selective herbicides.

Loss of elms in the early 1970s which were a valuable source of early spring pollen.

Loss or reduction of crops like wild white clover and sainfoin which fell from favour in place of higher yielding crops. Loss of gorse and heather lower down hillsides as the need for food production led to liming of this land. Also lost due to forestry planting

Loss of orchards in traditional orchard areas of Kent, Vale of Evesham & Somerset.

Loss of hedgerows with their valuable food sources of blackthorn and bramble.

David sees a welcome change in attitude both to tolerating bees in public places and in conservation now of hedgerows for their value to birds & mammals as well as insects. New orchards are being planted and farmers are sowing field margins with wild flower mixes.

Greater control over the use of sprays both herbicide & pesticide is welcome and David expressed some regret that not all members of the BBKA were happy with the liaison with the Agro Chemical companies as he felt that co operation was essential to establish a balance between the bees needs and human food production.

The forage gains for bees have been in the newer crops and plants being grown or spreading in wild areas. Of these Oil seed rape is the most widespread but increasing areas of borage, sunflowers and lavenders are grown.

Rose bay Willow herb and balsam have become widespread. There was an audible intake of breath among the audience when David admitted that 30 years ago he used to scatter seeds of this pretty pink flower, Balsam, but of course no one knew then what a monster it would turn out to be!

He wondered if the Blue Gum tree now growing more widely here could become an important food source of the future, the pattern is constantly changing.

The advent of the Varroa mite and it's role in aiding the spread of viruses is a major challenge but David is confident that it has made us become better beekeepers. He showed scenes of modern hygienic beekeeping practices with buckets of soda solution to disinfect tools between hives and emphasized how important it is to select and breed from bees displaying the hygienic behaviour that helps them control varroa numbers.

He urged us all to keep learning about our bees and raise the standards of beekeeping practice.

*Julie*

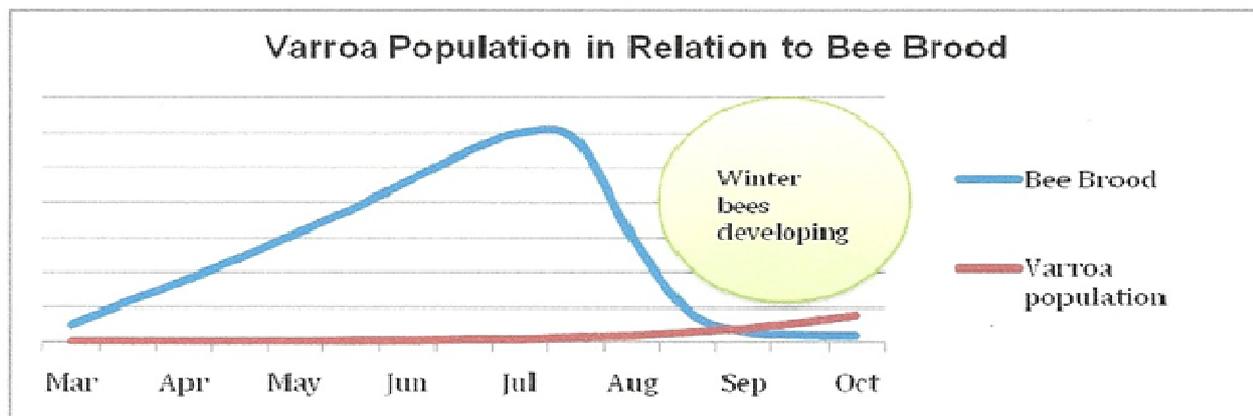
**The importance of preparing colonies to enter the winter in a healthy state, with an adequate supply of young healthy bees and stores, cannot be over-emphasised. The beekeeping year starts here, so a colony overwintered in good condition ensures that it is fit for purpose in the following spring. Recent winter colony loss investigations, both in the UK and across Europe, have clearly shown links between dead colonies and the viruses, particularly deformed wing virus, which are associated with varroa infestations. This highlights the importance of effective and timely varroa control. This sheet gives guidance to help beekeepers overwinter colonies successfully.**

### Timing.

Winter preparation is usually done after the removal of the last honey crop of the year, coinciding with any varroacide treatments that may be required. This date will vary with the apiary location, but is normally from early to mid-August. However, with late flows from crops such as Heather and Himalayan balsam it may be later, and if so particular care must be taken with respect to varroa levels and control. For instance, it may be necessary to apply a short term treatment to reduce the population of varroa prior to colonies working late flows.

### Check each colony to ensure

- **Queen-right.** It is better to overwinter colonies with young healthy queens, as they are less likely to die or become drone layers. Also, the brood nest of a young healthy queen is likely to be bigger later in the season than that of an old queen, thus helping to ensure an adequate replacement of the older worker bees. This is particularly important as those older bees may have shorter lives because of the pathogens associated with varroa infestations and other bee problems. Colonies that go into winter with too few young bees are likely to dwindle rapidly in the spring. To remain productive, honey-producing colonies should be headed by queens no more than two years old. Queens with desirable traits can be kept to a greater age for breeding purposes, and many beekeepers maintain these in nucleus colonies.
- **Disease free.** Check each colony for signs of brood and adult bee diseases. Remedial action or culling should be undertaken as appropriate. If the disease found or suspected is statutorily notifiable, i.e. European or American Foul Brood, you must inform your local Bee Inspector or the National Bee Unit. Beekeepers should know the signs of these diseases and inspect colonies for foul brood and other bee diseases throughout the season, as a minimum specifically once in the spring and once in the autumn. If colonies are small, find out why. If they are pest and disease free they can be united and re-queened. If diseased, remedial action can be taken, but culling may be a better option. Further information about brood diseases can be found in the NBU leaflet 'Foul Brood Disease of Honey Bees and other common brood disorders'.
- **Pest free.** Check each colony for the exotic pests Small Hive Beetle and *Tropilaelaps*. If you suspect they are present you must inform your local Bee Inspector or the NBU. Further information can be found in the NBU Leaflets 'The Small Hive Beetle' and 'Tropilaelaps: parasitic mites of honeybees'.
- **Varroa numbers are below the treatment or damage threshold of 1,000 mites.** Varroa must be kept below the damage threshold. If beekeepers are not monitoring varroa mite levels it is important that varroacides are used during mid-August rather than delaying treatments until September or October. This is because the bee brood population in a colony reduces significantly during July and August, whilst the varroa population is doubling every 3 to 4 weeks. As winter bees are developing in late August and early September, it is important that the virus infections associated with varroa are not triggered or transmitted to them. This population principal is illustrated in the graph below. If your bees forage on late crops you should monitor infestation levels and use bio-technical control methods in early summer, such as comb trapping. With proper varroa management in early summer mite populations will be below the damage threshold during these late flows. Further details can be found in the NBU Leaflet 'Managing Varroa'.



- **Sufficient stores.** The amount of stores required by a colony varies with the strain of bee. It is generally considered that a honey bee colony requires about 18 – 22 kg of honey to safely feed it through the winter. Larger hives headed by prolific queens may require more. When full a BS brood frame contains about 2.2 kg of honey, so assess the existing colony stores and feed the required balance using winter strength sugar syrup, i.e. 1 kg. of white granulated sugar to 500 ml of water. Sugar syrup can be fed to supplement honey stores or as a substitute for them. Watch out for robbing bees, this can be a problem in late summer. Colonies also require ample pollen to overwinter successfully, especially to rear brood. Ensure that your overwintering bees have access to good quality pollen crops both at the end of the season and early in the following season.
- **Hive in sound condition, waterproof and well ventilated.** Apiary sites need choosing carefully to ensure that they have good access in all weather, firm but well drained ground, sunny, not in a frost pocket, good air circulation, etc. Damp rather than cold kills bees so check hives, especially roofs, to ensure rain is shed away. It is best to ensure that your hives are off the ground on suitable stands. If your apiary site is not vulnerable to windy conditions, and you are using open mesh floors, they can be left with the floor inserts out. If not, or your hives are on solid floors, then you can lift the crown board on two-millimetre laths. Used matchsticks are excellent for this purpose.
- **Protected from vermin.** Fit mouse guards to prevent access by small rodents, which often nest in hives during the winter. In some areas green woodpeckers can damage hives, so if this is a known problem in, or near, your apiary, place a simple cage of chicken wire around and over the hive, at least 300 mm from the hive walls to prevent damage whilst permitting bees to fly.

National Bee Unit The Food and Environment Research Agency

Sand Hutton, York. YO41 1LZ Telephone: 01904 462510 e-mail: [nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk) website:

[www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

August 2010

Crown copyright. This sheet, excluding the logo, may be reproduced free of charge providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading way. The material must be acknowledged

### National Bee Unit

The National Bee Unit (NBU) is responsible for delivering a bee health programme on behalf of DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly Government. It is based at Sand Hutton, just outside York. The NBU's website has a wealth of information on pests and diseases, publications, current research areas and legislation. It includes interactive maps, advisory leaflets and key contacts. The NBU employs a team of Bee Inspectors who support beekeepers by monitoring hives for the presence of notifiable diseases. The Inspectors are backed up by laboratory staff who can confirm the presence of disease and who also carry out a certain amount of research. The NBU manages a database of beekeepers in England and Wales called Beebase. Beekeepers registered on Beebase can request a free apiary inspection from their local Bee Inspector and receive information and advice on disease recognition and control.

The National Bee Unit is producing useful Bee Keeping guidance sheets (such as the latest one above) throughout the year. These sheets will be emailed to beekeepers registered on Beebase. If you would like to register with Beebase either email Adam Vevers, Regional Bee Inspector South West (Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly) Tel: 01364 653474 email: [adam.vevers@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adam.vevers@fera.gsi.gov.uk) or The Food & Environment Research Agency- National Bee Unit FERA website: <http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk> National Bee Unit website: [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

When beekeepers register on Beebase and supply their email addresses they will be informed if there is a Notifiable disease outbreak (AFB, EFB, SHB or Tropilaelaps), within 5 km of their apiary. They will be informed by email only once. If they prefer they can unsubscribe to this service.

The National Bee Unit is there to help beekeepers, so don't be put off by the title 'Inspectors'. If you've got a problem with your bees that you think may be disease related, give them a ring.



Community of Beekeepers –  
Bitz4Bees

## WINTER SCHEDULE

The B4B Shop at Umberleigh will be **CLOSED from the 13th October 2010 and will be RE-OPENING on the 11th February 2011.** We will however open between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm Tuesdays on request. Please ring before 9.30 am on Tuesdays with your order.  
Contact Dave & Jean 01237 475705  
or Derek 01769 561033

### URGENTLY WANTED WAX, WAX AND MORE WAX

From anyone, anywhere, colour of wax not important - best rates paid.

Please contact Chris Tozer on 01237 471928 or email [info@thebeeteam.co.uk](mailto:info@thebeeteam.co.uk)

## ANNUAL HONEY SHOW

You should by now have received your Honey Show Schedule (if you have **not** can you let Barbara or myself know).

Please fill out your entries form and give or post or email it to Barbara Carlyle as soon as possible. This gives us time to plan the exhibits and to prepare the labels for Show.

On Friday 29th October we should have the stands up and ready by 4pm— you can bring your entries in between 4 and 6.30 pm. Judging will take place a little earlier this year so all exhibits will need to be ready and staged by 9 am on Saturday 30th October. St Johns will be open very early Saturday morning for those that didn't manage to get in the evening before, BUT it would make our job easier if most of the exhibits are in place the evening before. All entries must remain on show until the Show closes at 4 pm on Sunday 31st October.

More hands on help would be appreciated - just let Barbara or myself know which days or times you can make.

*Sylvie*

## DIARY DATES

**Friday 15th October - 7.30 at the Castle Centre.** The Rev Nigel Dilkes, vicar of Pilton and a botanist before joining the church, will be talking about 'How Plants Adapt to Environmental Changes'.

*See front page STOP PRESS*

**Sunday 17th October** - wax handling - rendering, cleaning, preparing—with Chris Tozer—Horestone Apiary 10am—3pm.

**Saturday/Sunday 30th & 31st October** - Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple.

**Sunday 7th November, North Devon Branch (of the Devon Beekeepers Association) - Annual General Meeting—2 pm at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple.**

*Beginners Course at Horestone starts in January 2011.*

## WORKING WITH WAX

Wax handling

Rendering

Cleaning and preparing

**Sunday 17th October**

**With Chris Tozer**

**Horestone Apiary**

**10am - 3pm**

The more the merrier, please bring a packed lunch.

## APIARY HYGIENE

As part of our Apiary Hygiene measures we would like to put our extracted super frames in a freezer for a couple of days. The cold will kill wax moths in any developmental stage.

Does anyone have an old chest freezer that they no longer require?

Please contact Sylvie or Julie if you know of one going spare.

Sylvia Barber, Foxpark, Waddicombe, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9RX (01398 341624)

E.mail [sylviad.barber@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:sylviad.barber@dsl.pipex.com)

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

**Articles in this newsletter remain the property of the author and may not be reproduced in part or in full without express permission.**