

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

September 2014

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

We had a very successful day at the North Devon Show at Umberleigh in August, thank you Chrissie – with lots of interest shown and a few more names for Cathy and Sundays Taster Day.

At Horestone we have been busy. The last of the honey has been removed and extracted, and we are halfway through treating the majority of the colonies with Apiguard. We now have to decide whether any further colonies need uniting and then start with feeding those that need it.

I've always enjoyed the removal and extraction of honey. To see all the filled jars lined up sparkling and to eventually get sticky honey off the kitchen floor. Hopefully you are all at this stage too, just in time to pick out your best jars for our Honey Show on the 13th & 14th September. I hope you have all looked through the Schedule and filled out your exhibitors entry form. Chrissie will be waiting to hear from you and has been tirelessly organizing it on our behalf. So please support the club by participating and joining in the fun.

Another way to support our Branch is to attend the AGM in November. A lot of work goes on each year – and without the committee and other helpers there would be no branch. Some of our Branch Officers have been actively involved for many years and would appreciate more of you stepping forward to offer your skills and abilities and share the work. If you would like to consider standing for election in some capacity, please contact me.

Thank you

Sylvie

Events 2014

13&14 Sep All Day

Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple

16 Nov

14:00-16:00

Branch AGM, Castle Centre, Barnstaple

17 Oct

19:30

Talk - 'Lets hear it for the boys', Castle Centre, Barnstaple

First Winter Talk

Friday Oct .17th at 7pm for 7.30pm Clare Densley from Buckfast Bees is giving a talk called 'Lets Hear It For The Boys', a fascinating look at the life of the often maligned drones, a good start to the winter season of talks and one to gladden to hearts of all down trodden males.

. . . and don't forget our
Branch Honey Show at St
John's Garden Centre

North Devon Show 2014

North Devon Show took place on the 6th August and we were in the Craft Tent as before – they keep us well away from the rest – live bees are a pretty good deterrent to overcrowding! The morning dawned a bit wet and by the time I arrived at North Devon Beekeepers' Stand it was getting very sticky outside, however, the sun came out at about 10.30 and stayed out, so everything started to dry up nicely.

We sold a goodly amount of members' honey, and over 30 lbs of Horestone honey – the apiary being extremely local, about 250 yards as the bee flies – it was easy to push this honey as being the most 'local' thing at the Show! We also sold over sixty 100g packets of 'member' made fudge which swelled the coffers. The observation hive was taken with 2 super frames of bees in it and it fascinated young and old alike. No bees escaped (they could easily have flown home from there) so nobody got stung!

A good day was had by all and to crown it we were judged 3rd in the Craft Marquee for the 'most attractive stall'!! Many, many thanks to all of those members who helped before, on and after the day.

Chrissie Preece

Topical Tips for September

- It is not essential to filter honey. You may use a 'ripeners'; this is a tank that is high and narrow. If extracted honey is stored in the tank at room temperature for about three days. The natural density of the honey allow the bits of wax etc. to rise to float on the surface leaving a clear honey ready for bottling. Fine filtering reduces the quality.
- How do you know that your honey jar is clean. Examine it over a bright white surface under a strong light and the unclean jar will be more easily spotted.
- Is there a pound of honey in a pound jar? A useful guide is to get the level of the honey above the lower rim of the lid. A more accurate method is to first take your scales to the local friendly shopkeeper . His scales will have been professionally checked. So compare your scales against the shopkeepers.
- When preparing a National colony for Winter I always leave a super full of honey as winter stores. I place the super below the brood box. In the Spring I always find that the super is empty and the queen is laying in the brood box.
- Because England is located between an ocean and a continent the climate is always unpredictable. If you chat to German or Swiss beekeepers, for example, they will tell you that they have four clear seasons over a 12 month period. So we must prepare for the worst winter. There is no excuse for a colony that is allowed to starve.
- If it is necessary to feed a colony I have used 'Ambrosia' syrup for the last few years. Although it is more expensive than sugar syrup it has several advantages. It has been 'inverted' and is therefore readily assimilated by the colony without the need to convert from sucrose. It will not granulate or ferment. The colony prefers it to sugar syrup. There is no need to mix up and dissolve sugar into a syrup. It is used by many well known beekeepers including the National Bee Unit.
- I do not provide any insulation under the roof. Honeybees are wild animals and well equipped to survive the cold weather. In fact I make sure that the hive has plenty of ventilation with the open mesh floor insert removed and a matchstick under each corner of the crown board to lift it to allow air to circulate. The one thing that a colony cannot tolerate is dampness.

Chris Utting

Member' Apiary: Cliff Davis at South Molton



I keep my bees at home in the bottom paddock I think if I had an out apiary I would spend all day travelling with a memory like mine!

I spent a year in the apiary at Horstone looking after bees where I took the beginners and basic courses and then in March six years ago I bought an over wintered Nuc which was on seven frames of brood in a brood box, I thought I would let them settle down and get used to their new surroundings but after a week they had other ideas and swarmed to the top of the horse chestnut tree, I managed to retrieve them by climbing the tree and with a pair of tree loppers cut the branch while the wife with a box tied on to two curtain poles caught them (she later informed me that this was not in the small print of the wedding contract).

After my rocky start things have settled down and I now have five colonies which produce a good crop of honey a year as the forage on average is good with blackthorn, field beans, rape, clover and sweet chestnut. I still have a lot to learn but with the help from my friends at Horestone have become a confident bee keeper.



Cliff

National Honey Show News-letter

This year the National Honey Show opens on Thursday morning, 30th October, for the first two lectures (9.30 and 11am), the Trade Hall opens at 12 noon and the Show Opening Ceremony is at 2pm. The show then continues with lectures and workshops in the afternoon.

We hope you're having a bumper honey harvest this summer and as you admire the hard work of your bees (and yourselves of course) do start to think about how you can further celebrate not just by eating it all. With stunning presentation walk away with prizes at both your local honey shows and also at the National Honey Show.

If you're new to all this, your local shows are a good place to start. Talk to all the other exhibitors, they are usually willing to share their tips for getting the last air bubbles out etc. etc. Offer to steward for the judges, and observe what they are looking for. The same goes for county shows and also the National Honey Show. We always welcome offers of help, so do contact us if you are interested in stewarding! It's a good way to learn. The best judges have a long history of exhibiting, stewarding and willingness to learn as much as possible, and have a lot to offer.

When all the judging is over by Thursday (sometimes late) lunchtime, we still have the rest of the show to enjoy with the full programme of lectures and workshops, and the golden opportunity to browse the wide range of show stands, as well as collect any pre-ordered goodies, saving the cost of carriage. The Schedule should land on your doormat any minute now if you are a National Honey Show member. It's not too late to join you can download a form (and/or the Schedule itself) from the website. Membership also includes entry to the Show itself and attendance at any of the lectures for all three days.

Workshops, by their nature, have limited capacity. Our on line booking system will open as usual on 1st September <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/booking> If you don't have access to the internet, ask at your local library, most libraries now have internet facilities.

Over the last two or three years, there have been some new entry classes. One of interest was the commercial honey beer class which has attracted quite a few entries and we hope, inspired the industry to continue celebrating honey in this way.

Another to try your hand at, introduced last year, is the microscopy class. The closing date is a little earlier for this class as we need time to prepare a larger exhibit for display. Were you inspired by the Quekett educational stand at last year's show?

57. ▲ One Microscope slide, 3" x 1", subject pollen or honey bee anatomy, labelled in accordance with instructions issued by entries secretary. Exhibits will be photographed by the National Honey Show for display purposes at the show. First: £10; Second: £7; Third: £5. (Sponsor: Bee Craft)

For 2014 we have two new classes: Class 6 for 2 jars of set honey; and Class 41 one bottle of sweet and one bottle of dry mead.

There are also many classes to tempt the artistic and inventive among us: label design, photography, needlecraft etc, and there is a wide selection of classes for juniors and schools: we'd love to see you there.

Time constraints prevent detailed judges' comments for every

entry but two of the Gift Classes: **Class 5:** Two jars of liquid honey and **Class 6:** Two jars of set honey will have judges' feedback for every entry. Many of the judges stay at the show during Thursday afternoon, some for Friday and/or Saturday, and would be happy to answer interested enquiries about the classes they have judged. Any exhibitor is free to approach any judges who are around after judging is complete.

Visitors to the Show will remember that the National Honey Show publishes a series of booklets on showing a range of honey products, pollen, judging, plus a short history of the National Honey Show. New editions of the complete range will be available during this year's show. We'd like to thank the many individuals (you all know who you are – thank you!!!) who have undertaken the task of bringing the various texts up to date, and BeeCraft magazine for their huge contribution in designing and laying out the revised booklets. The booklets will be on view for all three days in the Trade Hall so do come and browse.

Because we have such a full programme, many visitors are torn between which of the parallel lectures/workshops to attend. Eight of the 2013 lectures are available on the National Honey Show YouTube channel for you to revisit as often as you wish. We have been amazed and delighted at their popularity: they have had a total of over 98,000 views to date.

This makes us very much want to continue sharing our prestigious lectures with the rest of the world, but leaves us with a rather large funding problem. For 2013 we were fortunate in receiving a grant from the National Lottery. We are currently applying for grant funding for 2014, but these are one-off contributions. We would love the support of continuing sponsorship so do spread the word for this fantastic opportunity for 98,000 sponsorship acknowledgements. Anyone interested is most welcome to get in touch.

In the meantime we are dedicating the proceeds from the National Honey Show raffle to the video enterprise. To this end, we very much appreciate all support. If you have a local meeting, county show or other event before the end of October, please e-mail nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com and let us know how many raffle ticket booklets you would like, and the address to send them to. The draw is held at the show on Saturday afternoon, but ticket stubs can be returned to Christa (at the address on the tickets) beforehand.

Back to the Show itself. It's a great event and good to see everyone from far and wide catching up on the year's news.

We've a great series of lectures on the latest topics of international interest (full details in the Schedule and on the website) as well as the Saturday lectures for those new to beekeeping, and/or just interested in Yearly Beekeeping Activities, Swarms, Diseases, and Products of the Hive for Showing.

As ever, the National Honey Show relies on a large team of volunteers, and all offers of help are most welcome. Do contact us, - you can e-mail the Show Secretary at showsec@zbee.com and he will pass your offer to the right person – if you can spare some time at the Show to help.

We have a unique collection of displays, lectures and networking opportunities at the National Honey Show, and look forward to seeing you at the Show this autumn: Thursday 30th October to Saturday 1st November 2014 once more at St Georges College, Weybridge.

The Organising Committee

In The Library: *The Beekeeper's Study Guide* by David Cramp

This book is written by David Cramp, who is the author of three other books on beekeeping and also the editor of APiS UK, a magazine on bee science written in relatively simple terms for the ordinary beekeeper. The aim of the book is to provide a useful guide that can be carried in the beekeeper's workbox or tray. It is bound with a wire comb (described as spiral binding) with a flat folding cardboard cover. It is printed on a semi-filled paper (not full gloss which might have caused problems on a sunny day with reflections obscuring the text and illustrations). It will probably get stained with propolis after some use in the field, but this may be counted as an acceptable risk for a useful item in the work box.

The book provides procedures, check lists and tables for the beekeeper to use while planning his or her beekeeping year or a visit to the apiary or to be used while working with the bees. The introduction describes the various parts of the book, which are colour coded to match the contents page.

Part A is a set of check lists on setting up an apiary, from finding suitable sites in both rural and urban areas, though obtaining and placing bees, to the prevention of drifting. A final section is on the siting of organic apiaries. Part B gives tables for forage with the period when they are in flower and the type and degree of forage they provide. It is not an exhaustive list, more a guide of what one should look for when setting up an apiary to ensure the success of the operation.

Part C is a troubleshooting guide, starting with a table for problems seen at the hive entrance. In most cases the reader is referred to another section for advice on dealing with the problem. Then there is a checklist for hive inspection and for interpreting brood pattern problems. This is followed by a table for queen and brood nest problems, and a checklist of indications of laying workers, followed by some methods of dealing with them. There are checklists for and methods of dealing with robbing, aggressive colonies, uniting colonies, moving bees and spray damage.

Part D is about swarming. In it there are checklists and procedures for a variety of methods of swarm prevention and control, and a procedure for setting up bait hives.

Part E is about the Queen, starting with three methods of rearing queens, followed by a queen-cell troubleshooting guide and a guide for re-queening and assessing queens and queen cells. It finishes with methods for marking the queen, and a method for inducing supersedure.

Then on to the harvest in Part F starting with methods of maximising the harvest. This is followed by checklists for equipment for harvesting honey and for testing the harvested honey. This is followed by a section on propolis and pollen, and finally one on harvesting wax.

Part G is on Hive Checks, giving a monthly planner (based on Northern Hemisphere seasons), and a checklist for preparing for overwintering.

Part H is the part on Pests and Diseases, giving identification on all common and many of the less usually found problems and methods of dealing with them. Part I is a ready reckoner for various aspects of beekeeping, and part J is a glossary and short bibliography.

This book is a useful guide for use in the field, I intend to purchase a copy and keeping it with my tool tray. The current RRP is £16.99 which I feel is a bit much, however, The Book Depository lists it at £10.19 (<http://www.bookdepository.com>).

Angus Basil

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.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.