

The Tivvy Buzzette

The newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers ~ October 2018

Tiverton Beekeepers are a branch of The Devon Beekeepers Association. Registered Charity No 270675.



Welcome to the October edition of the Buzzette.

Upcoming dates for your diary

Wednesday 17th October 7.30 at Uplowman Village Hall- our programme continues with the popular Will Steynor visiting us to talk about "Inventions for the practical beekeeper". I promise you an interesting evening with Will using everyday objects including the kitchen sink to turn them into cheap but very practical beekeeping equipment. Don't miss this one.

Wednesday 21st November 7.30 at Uplowman Village Hall - Tiverton Branch AGM. Your chance to have your say on what you'd like to see the Branch providing for its members & support the Officers & Committee who work hard on your behalf. Anyone interested in joining them would be more than welcome - speak with our chairman, Malcolm.

BRANCH CHRISTMAS DINNER

Wednesday 19th December at Mid Devon Indoor Bowls Centre, Amory Park, Tiverton.

A two Course carvery meal with tea, coffee & mince pies to follow all for only £15 - everyone who went last year was pleased with the meal so we are using the same caterer as last year.

We have to pay for the hire of the Bowls Centre separately so will be holding a Christmas Draw to cover the cost of the hire.

Please book by emailing me or letting me know at one of our meetings. Please also pay in advance either directly into Tiverton Beekeepers (reference Christmas Dinner) bank account or by cheque.

Notes from the apiary - October 2018

As the active season draws to a close, let me briefly summarise the year and then continue our ongoing discussion about varroa.

We emerged from a long winter season with high losses, and after three years of avoiding any chemical intervention it seemed we had to re-examine this issue - see the discussion below, to which you're invited to respond with thoughts and observations from your own experience.

Only three swarms were brought in to us this year - a disappointing figure (I personally did not catch a single swarm this summer.) By rearing a few queens in two separate attempts (in the second batch, we were a few hours late and the first queen emerged and killed the others, so we ended up with only one), and by artificially swarming one colony, we managed to expand sufficiently to make it possible to supply bees to the three beginners who requested them, but had to turn down requests from other members, which is regrettable. We go into winter with a dozen colonies.

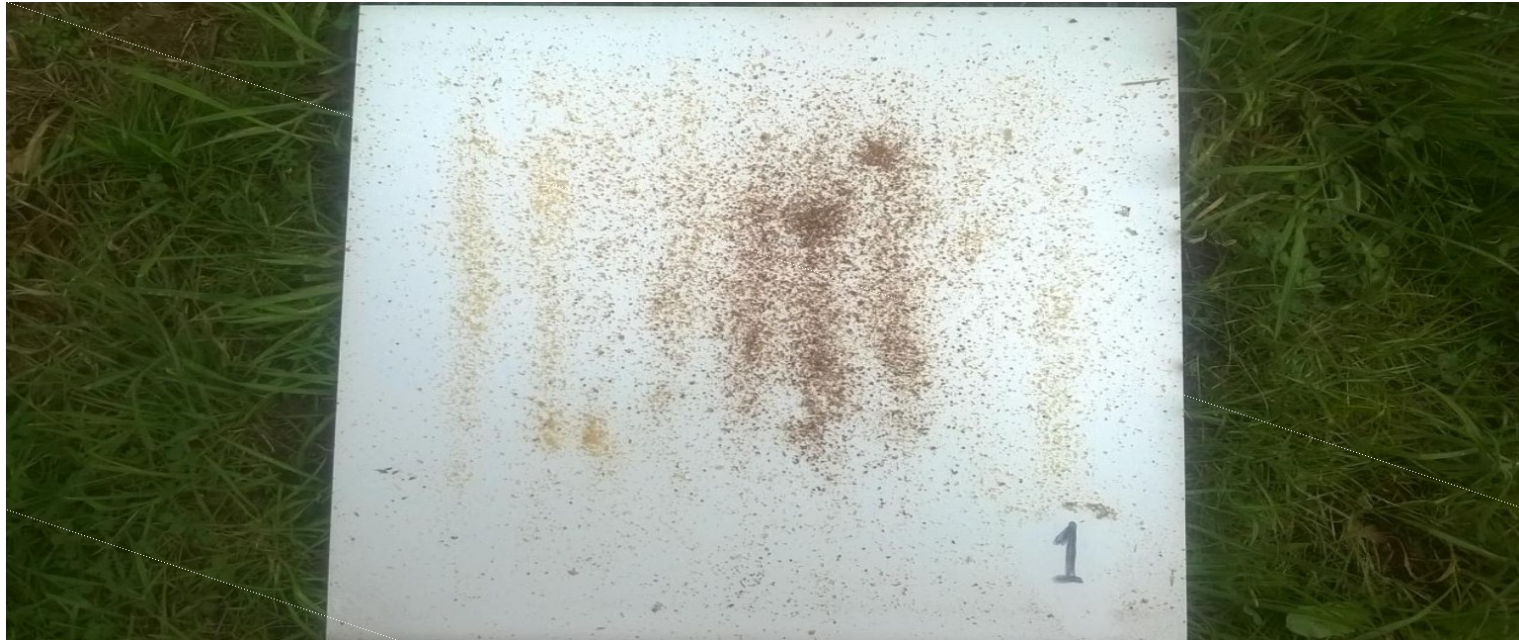
The apiary produced about 220 lbs of honey, most of it sold to the shop at Knightshayes. We applied a variation of the Rose method to three of the hives, and those developed strongly and produced all the honey. The strongest, no. 14 (brought to us as a swarm in May 2017 by William Lines), was also used twice to rear queens, and all three contributed bees to the nuclei created for those new queens. Two of the three, no. 6 and T2, were later arranged with a queen excluder for the Basic exam.

It has to be said in fairness that those three hives were good candidates for the application of the Rose method because they were strong to begin with. However, one of the important advantages of this method is that it discourages or postpones the swarming instinct, and not one of the three ever made an attempt to prepare to go. In fact, only one colony raised queen cells, and was artificially swarmed (this was the colony that we removed from a roof in Lurley in the winter of 2016/17.)



A frame taken out of hive no. 14 in June. The frame next to it on the left is similar.

We counted the varroa mite drop carefully twice, and decided initially to treat hive no. 1 which showed an average drop of some 8 mite per day. We used MAQS pads, and the plate below shows the resulting drop a few days after the application:



The drop at no. 1 a few days after the application of the MAQS pads.

It is not easy to see, but there are dozens of mites on the board, showing the effect of the treatment. After removing the pads at the end of a week, the boards were wiped clean, and a week later we get this - a board nearly free of mites, suggesting the formic acid has had an effect:



Very few if any mites a week after the end of treatment

After a further week, we checked and found new eggs and brood, suggesting that the queen had recovered from the shock of the treatment and, we hope, hadn't suffered serious damage.

Following some controversy among members of 'the Committee', we decided, in the spirit of accommodation and compromise, to treat two more hives (some members argued that the hives all had to be treated, regardless of the extent of infestation, but this was voted down.) The two we selected were no. 6 and no. 14, both of which had shown a borderline drop of about 5 mites per day.



No. 14 a few days after the application of the pads

This massive drop from a hive that had previously produced a natural drop of just 5 or so per day does beg the question whether we should err on the side of treating rather than not. In my own mind, the jury is out on this. It is known that a colony can carry a load of thousands of mites without appreciable damage, and if we consider that what we see on this board is effectively the entire mite load from this hive, then this colony appears to be far from critical danger.

I have sympathy with those perfectionists who feel that even if the danger isn't critical, it is better to relieve the hive of these pests - this colony can only be better off having shed a few hundred mites. Perhaps where we differ is in our judgement of the damage caused by the chemical treatment itself. Still, I don't regret having treated this one, and let's keep an eye on it and see how it comes through the winter.

Bulk Purchasing Scheme - Up date

This year club members have made substantial savings on the cost of honey jars, syrup, frames and foundation.

A big thank you, to all of you, who have participated by promptly collecting the goods after their delivery. This has helped my garage breath again!

Advance warning! I will be making the order for Frames and Foundation a month earlier than normal as I am away in New Zealand from late January to the end of February visiting our daughter.

This will mean the order form for the frames (15% discount approx.) and foundation (25% discount off catalogue prices) will come out with the December Buzzette (rather than in the January Buzzette). This will allow me to make the club order by 6th January. I still have 3 boxes of 12oz honey jars at £25/box of 72 jars available.

Derek Evans Bulk Purchasing Co ordinator

If you have any interesting articles relating to Bees & Beekeeping, please do not hesitate to forward them to me jon.gubb@voddens.co.uk by the 27th of the month for inclusion in the next months edition of the Buzzette.