

The Tivvy Buzzette



The newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers ~ March 2019

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

Welcome to the March edition of the Buzzette.

Chairman's Notes

On Wednesday 20th. We had a very informative and interesting talk, on the position, regarding the Asian Hornet, given by our Regional Bee Inspector, Simon Jones.

He gave details of the lifestyle of the Hornet and the methods that have been employed in containing this pest. It is clear, that all of us as Beekeepers are probably going to be involved, in sighting these pests when they arrive. It would appear the queen makes a nest inside some sort of outbuilding and lays a small number of worker eggs, it takes fifty seven days for these workers to become active. For some, as yet unknown reason these queens prefer urban locations rather than rural. The emerging workers then set about making a secondary nest outside, usually high up in trees. Alarmingly, in the Autumn the queen produces somewhere between 200 and 500 queens whilst only approx 5% are likely to survive, it is easy to see how they expand.

Simon suggested that a very basic monitoring trap, be set up near our hives, which needs checking every day. Judging by his comments it would appear that the future looks bleak regarding these pests and it has moved on from if they come to when they come.

Simon recommended an available book, giving more details of this pest, Gary Dufton – our librarian, is looking into the possibility of obtaining some copies for our library.

We would like to thank Jackie Crook, for her time and effort, in getting this meeting organised, as there was some difficulties with the booking of the Hall.

We have been invited, to hold a Bee Health Day by the N.B.U on Saturday 13th July, which we have accepted. Simon Jones, along with other Seasonal Bee Inspectors, will be leading the event.

It is a wonderful opportunity to see actual combs that have E.F.B and A.F.B needless to say these will be under strict bio security at all times. There will also be various other hands on sessions.

We are in the early stages of planning at present, but as this develops, we will keep you updated.

Saturday. 9th. March there is a County Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT) meeting at Okehampton. The purpose is to establish teams in all the County Associations, where each branch will have the necessary information and in the event of any sightings, other branches can offer assistance. There probably will be demonstrations of methods and equipment, required, along with the benefit, of the people, who have assisted in Jersey - hopefully we can be better prepared.

There are limited places, available, due to the size of the venue, if anyone wishes to attend, please contact me, either by email or 01884 258 086.

As you are aware, the committee, is depleted in numbers, we are grateful to Barbara and Susan, in offering to join the committee. But, I would like to thank our secretary Jessica, who has taken on an enormous amount of extra work, for us to cover the shortfall. Also, our Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Kim who has been overwhelmed, with extra work, now that B.B.K.A have decided at short notice to change the membership,format. Both have taken on this extra work, without question and we must be most grateful, for their hard work. Malcolm.

Branch Programme.

Wednesday 20th March , 7.30 at Uplowman Village Hall. This month the Chairman of our Plymouth Branch, Terry McCauliffe, is coming to tell us about our bees & the law. He will be able to answer a lot of the questions we have about how liable we are for the behaviour of our bees and for products we sell which come from our hives. Did you know that there is a Bees Act, that bees can be considered a nuisance, what happens if we fall out with our neighbours? Terry has many interesting examples of cases that have been through the courts. We've not had a talk like this before so come along to learn more.

Nasty bee parasite that can cause a colony to fail to thrive in the spring

Oh no – how do I know if my bees have it?

Select a sample of approx 25-30 bees

Examine them under a microscope

Make sure your bees are healthy and ready for the new bee-keeping season

And put your mind at rest.

Do put the date in your diary **WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL**

At **Uplowman village hall – START 6-6:30 pm (please note earlier time)**

You will be most welcome – free refreshments included!

Please support your branch and come along – we had dwindling numbers last year and we would like to keep this event going as disease control is so important.

Our President, Keith has put together a cunning plan for capturing the required bees as it is important to try and capture the older flying bees to have a more accurate result – see below!

Workshops for 2019 – more information!

It was pointed out to me that we had forgotten to say where these workshops were taking place and how to book them – so sorry about that.

I have been informed that some of them are now fully booked but they are all organised at Buckfast abbey!

If you would like to book then this can be done online. Go to www.buckfast.org.uk then click on events on the top bar menu. A drop down box will appear. Click on bee events and then follow the links. There is a booking engine on there, which will take card payments.

If you don't have internet access then please contact me and I will endeavour to find out how you can book a place on any of the courses you are interested in.

Many thanks

Jessica.

Notes from the apiary - 25 February 2019

On this sunny afternoon at 14°C all twelve hives have been bringing in pollen in varying quantities. When a great deal of pollen comes in we can be sure that the hive is developing well, but if it comes in at a slow rate, then it is possible that we have a drone layer inside, although it may also be a case of a weak but healthy hive that is developing from a small base with few foragers right at the start of the season - we are still in February after all.



The meadow between the Knightshayes vegetable garden and the apiary - a short commute for the bees.

Only one hive, no. 6, is really weak in this respect, and two others, 4 and 13, are bringing in pollen at a fair rate - the other nine look stronger, including the one nucleus we've overwintered. So, not having opened the hives yet to look inside for a proper assessment, I estimate that of the twelve, at least nine have come through in good form - let us hope more. If this weather continues we'll probably do a spring inspection by mid-March.

Four of the hives have been wrapped up in foiled bubble wrap, as we did last year. Unfortunately it seems that those are also the ones that have developed condensation, evidenced by a wet insert. We may not repeat this exercise next year, especially when the winters are so mild.

Last September, we treated four of the hives with MAQs pads (formic acid), and in January five of the remaining colonies were treated with oxalic acid vapour. Thus nine of the twelve have been treated once in the last six months.

The lifts and roofs of the WBC hives have been donated to us by the Knightshayes gardeners (after they had a taste of last summer's honey.) We repaired and painted them and made two bases by copying the design of a floor borrowed from a friend. A National hive fits inside the lifts, just about, and these two lucky colonies now have cavity wall accommodation which should keep them cosy and dry.



Two of the hives have been placed on a WBC base, with lifts and roof to match

The Association now has an alternative apiary at Hillersdon near Cullompton. This will serve as an isolation apiary where we plan to keep any swarms that come in later this season.

Baruch

Here We Go Again

January can be a dreary old month, Christmas and New Year have come and gone; I trust yours went well. Beekeeping in January tends to be meetings and cleaning equipment, not the most exciting of occupations. I have made my first trip round my hives, no problems so far one or two hives needing a top up with some Ambrosia past. Not surprising as they were nucs that had been transferred to full hives a bit late in the season.

The weather so far, I am writing this mid January, has been dry and mild mixed with a few frosts. Nothing much to moan about so far, don't mention what is happening in government it will give you nightmares. As I mentioned at the start January can be dreary. Looking on the bright side two things have cheered me up, one an article in the Mole Valley December News Letter on Sainfoin, and two what Devon Highways have been up to on the A361 between Tiverton and J27 on the M5. Traffic has been delayed for weeks while they have been resurfacing the road, mainly at night. What caught my eye the other day was a large chunk of the embankment close to Sampford Peveral had been stripped of its top soil. I am pretty sure it is going to be re seeded with wild flower seeds – well done Devon Highways

About five years ago while on holiday in France I came across a wonderful pink field, I had to stop to see what it was. It was a large field of grass and this very pretty pink flowers which I did not recognise, I collected a small sample to look up that evening back at our accommodation, as is my practice I take a flora on holiday with me for just such finds. Back to the field not only was it beautiful sight but was buzzing with bees of all sorts, several species of Bumblebees, solitary bees and Honey bees and for good measure a large range of butterflies both large and small, a most spectacular sight, this was Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*). Sainfoin grass leys can be grown on well drained soils providing the pH is 6 or above. The hay or silage has several advantages over grass and clover leys. I have asked some of my farmer friends about the crop and they tell me that 40 years ago it was grown in the *(continued over)*

Mid Devon area. In Kirk and Howes book Plants for Bees it is described as one of the top plants for bees. Look it up you will find it interesting.

The country side is desperately short of flowers, hedges are flailed and deprived of their flowering shrubs and autumn fruits. If road side verges could become more productive and if a few enlightened farmers tried alternative grass leys our honey bees could be more productive.

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Improver's course 2019 It is with regret there will not be an improvers course this year as I have only had one person respond.

Keith Owers

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.