



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – May 2021

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

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



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Varroa

You may have heard that Varroa becomes notifiable pest under new animal health regulations coming into force in England and Wales on 21st April. This amendment will allow England to comply with the Animal Health Law which is necessary for future working relationships with the European Union. Similar arrangements are being made in Wales and Scotland.

The order states that "An owner or person in charge of a hive who knows that any species of the Varroa mite (Varroasis) is present within that hive must give notice of that fact to the Secretary of State as soon as it is practicable"

To make this simple, a tick box will be introduced to Bee base, the voluntary register for beekeepers managed by the National Bee Unit. This will allow beekeepers and inspectors to report the presence or absence of Varroa. This only needs to be reported once. Although Varroa is known to be widespread, it continues to be one of the most serious pests faced by beekeepers. Reporting Varroa will contribute to the overall pest and disease surveillance work of the National Bee Unit and we are grateful for your assistance with this new simple measure. There is no additional funding being made available to the National Bee Unit in respect to this new requirement.

It does pose the question "Is it easier to report colonies without Varroa?"

Do you wish to sell you honey?

There is provision for members to sell their honey products at the Devon County Show which as usual is being held at the Westpoint Showground, but due to restrictions, the dates for this year only will be 2nd to 4th July. Please see the DBKA website for prices and other information about contributing to honey sales.

The Mid Devon Show one day only event on Saturday 24th July

This will be another very important date to Tiverton Beekeepers
I am also applying for a stand at the Mid Devon Show, which is a traditional event each year for the Tiverton Branch and where we always attract a lot of public interest in our craft and also new members. The stand will be slightly smaller than previous years, (for this year only) but will still give us plenty of room to meet the public and also sell members honey.

As Government restrictions are slightly easing now, we will be able to arrange some meetings at the Knightshayes apiary soon. Watch this space. Your help will be needed, so please stay safe.

Malcolm

BBKA VOLUNTEERS WANTED

We have received the a message from the BBKA for volunteers.

“During the swarm season the BBKA office receives hundreds of phone calls from the public, often elderly people who don't have access to the internet, asking for help with swarms. Very often the bees in question are not honey bees so the caller just needs more information or reassurance. If it is a genuine swarm call, we give them the contact details for a local BBKA swarm collector.

The office team are seeking beekeepers to help us answer some of the calls by volunteering to have calls redirected to their own mobiles or land lines for an hour or so a week.

The caller would not be able to identify your mobile or land line number as they will have rung the BBKA swarm help line initially and then the call is diverted. The swarm line is open between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Fridays but busy times are late mornings onward.

It will be easy for volunteers to opt in and out of the system so this is not a forever commitment.

We will arrange a zoom meeting for potential volunteers to discuss how this will work in practice. If you want to consider joining the team and would like more information (without committing yourself) please email me: gen.manager@bbka.org.uk”



Tiverton Beekeepers' Branch Members Meeting Programme .

May

Thursday 13th May @ 7.30 pm . Branch Committee Meeting via Zoom

Wednesday 19th. Wednesday May 19th @ 7.30 pm - Members' Open Forum - a chance to meet on Zoom to discuss or share with others any beekeeping topics. In particular how this season is going for you & your bees. Hopefully this will be our last regular meeting by Zoom - in the summer we hope to be able to start meeting at the Knightshayes Apiary again.

Summer 2021

We are planning on getting visits to our Knightshayes Apiary or Safaris to members Apiaries during the summer but, as you will appreciate, it all depends....

Happy Beekeeping.



Due to the present circumstances the Bee Marquee at the show is reduced in size, to save money, and this means there will not be a Stevenson Trophy this Year. Due to our Clubs previous good record in this event at the show we have been invited to make a display for people who may wish to take up Beekeeping in Devon. Details to follow. I understand that most of the usual events will continue e.g. Honey Competition, Honey Tasting, Honey Sales, Candle Making, Observation Hive, etc. If you have any specific questions, please contact Liz Westcott the Bee Marquee organiser via email lizwestcott@me.com.

Derek EVANS, Display Organiser

ASIAN HORNET UPDATE

Asian Hornet Spring Monitoring 12 April to 26 April 2021



“The optimum conditions for monitoring are a maximum daily temperature above 15oC, sunny and bright, little cloud cover with little to no wind with the fruit trees blossoming well”.

The reality was somewhat different. The first week temperatures struggled to reach a maximum of 12oC, high degree of cloud cover (5/8 average), wind breezy with speeds reaching 10 mph on occasion. The night-time temperatures were at 0oC or below resulting in many overnight frosts. The blossom had started but some trees appeared delayed – flowering reports suggest at least 2 weeks behind the UK seasonal average.

In other words, a bit blooming cold for the time of year. So apart from a few hardy bumble bees making a tentative venture out on to dandelions and rosemary flowers the monitoring traps attracted nothing. Sunday 18 April saw a change in the weather with a 2-3 mph Southerly wind, no clouds, bright and sunny with a maximum temperature of 14oC. At 16:00 hours the saucer station was visited by 3 queen wasps! The sun kissed terracotta saucer had warmed the Sutura attractant sufficiently throughout the day to allow the volatiles in the liquid to produce a chemical signal strong enough for the insects to detect.

To increase the evaporation of volatiles from the saucer to enhance the chemical signal into a beacon of attractiveness, the terracotta saucer was lined with reflective aluminium foil on which was placed kitchen paper weighted down with large gravel and liberally sloshed with Suterra – basically a large, warmed attractant-soaked wick!

The weather during this second week was more in keeping with optimum monitoring conditions with daytime temperatures exceeding the magic 15°C on two days. The wind was mainly E / SSE with speeds of 10 to 11 mph. The night-time temperatures fell to 2 to 3°C with an occasional mild frost.

The end result being 15 queen wasps happily engaged in the late afternoon of Sunday 25 April on the saucer (figure 1). Two distinct wasp species were identified *Vespula vulgaris* and *Vespula germanica*. The wasps took up specific areas of the station and tended to keep away from each other although when they did bump into each other they both took flight without wanting to engage. Social distancing and avoidance already ingrained insect behaviour.



To date I have had no reports of Asian hornet sightings (*V. velutina*) on the UK mainland during this monitoring period. I would be interested to know if any members have seen the European hornet this spring.

This is of course good news on the invasive species front, but we must not be lulled into a sense of false security. The news from Jersey, CI, shows a different picture. By 24 April 2021, 15 queen Asian Hornets had been trapped and destroyed.



The distribution is shown in the graphic from John De Cateret across the island. A number of hornets have been trapped at separate times from the same trap at Fliquet right on the NE coast of the island so increasing the number to 19 by 27 April 2021.

The distribution pattern lends credence to the opinion that the hornets are being blown across on the wind from the Cherbourg peninsula where there are high concentrations of hornet – (The La Manche region 4000+ nests have been reported by Dec 2020).

Once the queens have successfully come out of hibernation, fuelled up on carbohydrate rich nectar, then nest building and egg laying progresses apace. This is captured in the photograph taken on 24 April 2021 on a barn door lintel approximately 2 to 2.5m above ground. Queen and nest destruction at this stage of the lifecycle is the most effective control as if the nest is allowed to grow to maturity it will produce an average of 400 new queens ready for mating in the Autumn.



24 April 2021 John De Cateret Early-stage primary nest showing queen wrapped around the petiole to keep the newly laid eggs warm – these are just visible in the cells.

We are fortunate, currently, that Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown has reduced the vehicle access (car, caravan, motorhome, yacht) to France and so broken the chain regarding the inadvertent importation of hornets as stowaways back into the UK. Once lockdown restrictions are lifted and foreign travel resumes then this period and aspect of biosecurity will cease.

The Autumn monitoring becomes more vital as people will have let their guard down and so honeybee colonies will be vulnerable to Asian hornet predation as they will be hungry for protein and carbohydrates after stowing away.

Gavin Nuttall-Owen
AHAT Coordinator
ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk

A note from The Editor.
Brief Encounters with The Bee Inspector.

I'm not going to lie. The reason for this little addition of mine is because I am stuck to fill this gap. Since taking on this role last autumn it has definitely challenged some of my IT skills much as the bees challenge our knowledge of beekeeping. Try as I might, cutting, pasting, clicking and dragging and occasionally, having bits of an article disappear altogether "ahhhggg" I cannot fit everything on without this infernal gap. So like a busy bee I thought I would add some of my own literary brace comb as I always like to end with Keith's lovely monthly contribution, preferably placed on one page and not cut in two.

So please feel free to now have a snooze. Zzzzz

Those of us who were able to attend last month's zoom meeting when David Packham, our regional bee inspector was speaking were treated to a very interesting talk. Norm and I had in fact had reason to call upon him for advice after we went to perform our first inspection and noticed what we could only describe as an "odd looking" area of brood on a comb, which I photographed on my phone. I take my mobile phone with us, manly for safety reasons, every time we go to see the bees, as we now have them in an out apiary, having moved them early on in the year, something that I would not have done when we had them at the bottom of the garden and this proved to be wise as I was able to take a good shot of the comb and email it to him.

As David said in his talk, as amateur beekeepers, we may well not know **what** is wrong, but knowing that something isn't right is just as important and being able to send a photograph to an expert proved very helpful. A day later when we looked again the bees seemed to have sorted whatever it was out themselves and a week later everything was perfect.

After finding David's email address on Granny Google and uploading the photograph he had contacted us within 24hrs, by phoning and chatting to us about it. I confess I breathed a sigh of relief when he asked me about records and I was able to give an exact date on which we treated for Verroa as well as the product type. Probably the nurse in me although Norm was surprised I could actually read my own writing.

As David said in his talk, the job title Bee inspector does perhaps conjure up images of an authoritarian figure and make one quiver a little, but our experience was quite to the contrary as he could not have been more positive and helpful and quickly dispelled any preconceptions one might have had.

Hilary Sanders



Around the apiary in May

By Keith Owers

Apis Mellifera on Crab Apple .

Hilary Sanders

As usual I start with a weather report. Fine and dry but cold sums up the last months weather. The bees have been working well when it has warmed up around mid day but by late afternoon they are all back in doors. Pollen has been collected from an increasing range of plants and trees. Blackthorne and wild cherry have been a real picture and with increasing amounts of dandelion flowering, and hawthorn is about to start. Any time now would not be too soon to put the first super on, if possible with drawn comb. The hive can soon become overcrowded if the weather turns warm and we have a short honey flow. If your supers need to be drawn this may cause congestion in the brood box if the bees are reluctant to draw foundation. This may trigger early swarming. Just one or two frames of drawn comb in the super can help. For the bees to start producing wax they must have plenty of honey or sugar syrup available and there must be plenty of bees and be nice and warm.

May and early June is a good time to replace old comb in the brood box. With a fresh generation of bees produced every 21 days it must be time to change the sheets (foundation). If the frames are looking very dark why not take the plunge and do a shook swarm. This method of changing all the frames in the brood box is now standard treatment for Nosema, chalk brood and helping with varroa control and most important of all in the control of European foulbrood. A shook swarm requires the hive brood box to be replaced with a clean brood box and a set of new frames and foundation. The bees are all shaken into the clean brood box which is on the original site. Care must be taken to see that the queen is also transferred. The crown board is replaced and a feeder put on top, you will need to see that the feeder is kept topped up until the new frames have all been drawn out. The old frames should then be destroyed by burning. This sounds a bit tough for the bees but they build up very quickly and do well. I have used this method several times and it has works well and other people tell me how well the bees make up for lost time. Give it a trial I am sure you will be pleased with the result.

Be prepared for swarming, we all get caught out at time but think ahead how you are going to deal with situation.

Good luck Keith Owers