



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – September 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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It has been four weeks of very highs and very lows this month.

I had the great pleasure of attending the Taster Afternoon at Knightshayes, where Derek had invited all the people interested in taking up our new beginners course later this year.

17 people of all ages turned up and were so excited it was a pleasure to be part of it.

Some had hardly noticed honey bees before, and some had obviously done quite a lot of research and had quite a bit of knowledge. They all enjoyed the experience, and the weather was good to us and it was a great event.

On the low side, I have had two beekeepers, both with a few years of keeping bees, contact me in recent days, and asked if I can find new owners for their colonies.

They both feel that after recent challenging times with the weather and the unusual habits of the bees these last couple of years, then unfortunately they want to give up the craft.

I think a lesson to us all maybe. Our hobby is not all sunshine, good times and lots of honey, and to overcome these times, maybe find a bit more time in the winter months for education and research to understand our fine craft more fully.

Please keep in touch with each other, just a friendly ear can spread the load sometimes.

Malcolm



Tiverton Beekeepers' Branch Members Meeting Programme .

Autumn 2021

Thursday September 9th via zoom

Tiverton Beekeepers' Reunion.

Wednesday September 15th at Uplowman Village Hall.

After 18 months of being unable to meet with each other we are getting together on the 15th but we will start a little earlier, 7 O'clock, so that, if the weather is fine, we can be outside for at least part of the evening.

As it's a special occasion why not bring a little bit of nibbly food and/or cake - we can provide the drink. No speaker , just a chance to socialise & find out how our bees have been doing.

Why not also bring a small jar sample of your bees' honey, it's always interesting to see the different colour & character of honeys from across Mid Devon. (Sorry but no sampling this year).

Depending on circumstances, it would be sensible to bring a face mask with you.

Hope to catch up with you at this reunion

Tony Lindsell

Next Meeting

Wednesday 20th October - speaker yet to be confirmed.

Looking after our Branch Members over the last 2 years has been a real challenge, but Malcolm with a small group of officers has made sure we have been as active as possible. You may have heard that, unfortunately, due to personal commitments Malcolm will be standing down as our Chairman in November. The future offers a lot of exciting opportunities for beekeepers including training of beginners & improvers, managing the Branch Apiary, organising a programme of speakers, producing a monthly newsletter & keeping members updated, promoting bees through our stand at shows and events plus simply keeping the branch ticking over to name just a few.

In order to do all this we need your help on our committee- it doesn't take a lot of time nor do you need to be an experienced beekeeper & it is often good fun. If you are interested in helping (& every little helps) then please have a chat with Malcolm or one of our committee members.

Planting for bees



I inherited this shrub along with the house some 19 years ago but I did not know its name until a friend came along one day with a plant ID app on her mobile phone and told me it was called *Photinia serratifolia*. This was, according to Granny Google a Chinese flowering shrub/tree also known as a Chinese Hawthorne. The photograph above was taken by me on the 22nd June this year when it was literally buzzing with honey bees as well as other bumble bees. A closer shot of it, below, reveals the Hawthorne like flowers which become berries in the autumn. I have let this one become rather large but some years I have given it a savage prune and it soon bounces back. If you have space I really recommend planting one for no other reason than the sound appeal when the bees find it.

One of the joys of beekeeping for me, is how it has extended my love of other insects and made me want to learn more about our other important pollinators.

The downside is the odd bee sting. In fact today, as I put this together but the upside was to find that the colony we were checking at the time and we thought was queenless was bringing in pollen.

Closer inspection revealed eggs and brood and, her majesty who ran too quickly for me to catch and evaded the crown of thorns. Looking back through my records revealed some possible mistakes we had made in June when we had not checked that the new queen, following on from a manipulation was laying well. We had proceeded to dispatch the old queen and perform a unite. We put on the supers and all seemed well.

In hindsight we should have wondered at the fact that the super was empty but thought this was due to the poor honey flow.

Had she failed or had we killed her by mistake? We will never know, but 2 weeks ago there were almost not eggs left to hatch and today we were amazed to see eggs, larvae and, bingo the Queen!

What we think may have happened was a supersedure (there were signs of an open single Queen cell on one frame) followed by a few weeks delay until she mated and started to lay. So we made mistakes but the patience to wait and do nothing has also paid off.

So what now? It is a small colony with a new queen who is only just laying. We will either pop them into a nuc to overwinter or use celetex to reduce the overall size of the hive and keep them where they are. We had put in one verroa strip two weeks ago (rather than the two as it was too small a colony and we thought it might die out anyway) We will now need to feed of course and wait and see if it overwinters and how strong it is so watch this space.

Onwards and upwards.



Photinia serratifolia. Taken on 22nd June 2021 with *Apis mellifera*, showing the small and rather insignificant white flowers which the bees and bumbles love. Hilary (Editor)

Asian Hornet Autumn 2021 Monitoring

6 -12 September 2021 UK wide



September is the key month of the Asian Hornet breeding cycle when the sexuals start to appear and virgin queens are mated prior to the winter hibernation. This is also the time when the population of the secondary nest starts to decline as the incumbent queen stops laying and the final larval stages complete their lifecycle. As hornets, similar to wasps, obtain their food (amino acid and sugar mix from the larvae by trophallaxis), as the larvae decline in number, so the hornets start to starve. Starvation causes an increase in their predation behaviour to feed themselves and the declining larvae. Hence hawking outside beehives and attempting to get at the honey stores.

Monitoring allows us to observe, track and trace Asian hornets to their nest. The nest can then be destroyed so removing the incumbent queen and the virgins thus disrupting the reproductive cycle. As travel to Europe has begun to open up the possibility of people bringing back a stowaway in their caravan, motorhome, trailer or camping gear becomes greater. Hence why engaging members of the public as spotters is so important – the more eyes the greater the chance of discovery.

A film crew has been on Jersey recently filming the work of the Island's AHAT team. The report will be broadcast on the BBC1 One Show to coincide with monitoring week. Hopefully this will enthuse people to be more aware and to take part in the week. I expect our alert service via the Tiverton beekeepers website to be more active than usual – verification teams get ready to be tested on knowing your bees from your hoverflies, wasps and European hornets!

Alongside this our branch has emailed a press release complete with spotting and action guide to every (60+) parish council clerk in Mid Devon for publication in their paper or on-line newsletter. This has also been followed up with a release to the local newspapers asking them to publish during the Action week. A copy of the press release will be published on our website or email me, and I will be happy to provide an electronic copy by return. Please use these materials to help educate and alert people to the potential impact that this non native invasive insect will have on all our pollinators, the impact on pollination of food plants and wild plants including trees, the impact on insect population decline and therefore reducing biodiversity and the threat to human health.

Recent research (Xesus Freaan and Sandra Rojas March 2021) has begun to look at the data on how the invasion of the Asian hornet in Galicia, North Western Spain has impacted on interactions with human populations and the affect on human health.



The tentative conclusions are that as the hornet is now settled in urban and semi urban environments the risk of detrimental interactions (i.e. blundering into nests) has greatly increased. Increasing interactions have increased the number of stinging attacks and therefore increased the number of hospitalisations. The venom of the Asian hornet is now being considered as being more toxic than that of a bee or wasp and so increases the risk of a victim suffering anaphylaxis. Unfortunately, with greater numbers of attacks and higher risk there has been a congruent rise in fatalities. The data suggests that the most at risk are males over the age of 65 – the data seems to indicate that the fatalities were more likely to be people with immunocompromised systems. Suffice to say that more research is needed with more focused reporting in terms of cause and effect from hospitals.

In line with this research the Devon AHAT have suggested, while not pandering to the gutter press diatribe of 'murder' hornets and a good insect is a killed insect, that the Asian hornet should be thought of as dangerous and sometimes deadly. Therefore, the public and branch members ought to be cautious in their dealings if sighted and alert the branch AHAT team so that precautionary procedures can be enacted.

Your help during the Action week by placing a monitoring station near your hives (saucer or wick style – details published in the Spring monitoring guide) to talking to neighbours about the affect of the Asian hornet on our native flora and fauna would be appreciated.

Gavin Nuttall-Owen

AHAT Coordinator

ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk



Stay alert and stand by your monitoring stations!



As you may have seen from the current BBKA magazine the UK Asian Hornet Autumn Action week is at the start of September. It would be appreciated if as many of our branch members could take part in the week by sighting a monitoring station near to their hives for some part of this week. The best time for observation tends to be between 10:00 through to 14:00 weather dependent. Once the attractant from the station has warmed and the chemical signal is wafting on the breeze an observation should take no more than 30 minutes.

If you are intending to place a monitoring station (wick or saucer) near your hives during this period, please email me the position (post code or What3words code or GPS code) so that the branch can start to build up a database and monitoring map.

If you would like a 50 ml sample of the attractant Suterra / Trappit, it will be available on Friday 3 September 2021 between 17:00 and 18:00 at Uplowman Village hall car-park.

To ensure that we are Covid 19 compliant and minimising the risks to each other please:

Email me: ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk

- A preferred time to meet between 17:00 and 18:00
- Postcode or What3words or GPS position of monitoring station

I will send you an email confirmation of your time slot (I will try my best to accommodate preferences) so that there is not a log jam of people.

§ Please bring a clean sealable container that will hold 50ml

§ Please wear a mask during the transaction – I will be masked and

§ I will discuss with you any guidance that you need in being able to conduct the monitoring

Many thanks for your help

Gavin Nuttall-Owen AHAT Coordinator



Around the apiary in September

By Keith Owers

Apis Mellifera on Echinacea s. Taken today on a cloudy, chilly afternoon. 31/08/21

Hilary Sanders

I expect you have now removed your honey harvest. A poor crop I expect so it is time to see we make a good start on next year. If you are treating your bees for Varroa as soon as the treatment time is completed it will be time to start feeding. Bees will overwinter on sugar syrup as well as on honey. I know some beekeepers like to leave a super on the hive for the bees but it is not necessary. A good hive will need about 20 kg. of stores to see them through the winter. Books will tell you how to estimate how much honey you have in the hive but I find it much easier to feed with 10 litres of sugar then go round lifting the back of the hives and feed a little more to any hives that seems to be light. It is not an exact science but it works. Ideally, feeding should be completed by the end of September. You can never be sure what the weather will do in October but it will most likely to be getting colder and harder for our bees to store their syrup. If I still have a little feeding to do I change to Ambrosia, it's easier for the bees to store and will not ferment if the bees are unable to seal the cells. You can use Ambrosia for all your feeding but it costs almost twice the price of sugar. I am often asked what strength should the winter feed be? My reply is always the same I don't bother. I fill a bucket two thirds full with granulated sugar and fill with water about a centimetre above the sugar. You can use warm water, warm water will save you a little time. Stir the mixture till all of the sugar has dissolved, you can speed up the operation by using a plasterers paddle in an electric drill to do the mixing.

A small or weak colony is unlikely to survive the winter. A queenless colony has no hope.

A weak colony may be due to disease and should not be united with another. A late swarm collected could be united with another colony using the newspaper method. A colony you think may be queen less is more difficult. In late August queens some times do go off lay for a period. Looking for a queen in a brood less colony is difficult. Points to watch for on a good day, can you see pollen going in, if yes, then you may be queen right. If the colony is not taking food down when others are, you may be queen less. By late August hives will have thrown out all the wasters or should I say drones but again if drones are still hanging around in hope it indicates your colony is most likely queen less.

Over the years I have found that a small colony will over winter if placed in a nuc box rather than a full hive.