



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – March 2022

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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I firstly have to make an apology about the social I promised you last month, for March. Due to the high usage of our local village halls and rooms, our committee members have been unable to find a large enough room to use with in order that people feel comfortable with regard to the continued risk of the spread of Covid. It is great news that the halls and rooms are being used but no help to us. We will try for a new date in April.

The Devon County Show will be held at Westpoint Exeter on 30th June till 2nd July this year, and the bees and honey tent will be in full swing. The Stevenson's Trophy will take place, but its format has changed somewhat. Each association is invited to submit a display (1 meter squared) depicting "Beekeeping in our area". It is a clubs, not an individual entry, so anyone interested in helping please make contact with me. The days of the large displays seem to have gone and it may encourage more participants to enter.

I would like to commence some Queen rearing days at the end of May beginning of June this year, but I will need help. It is not the rearing of Queen cells which is the problem, it is the number of mating hives and bees needed at that time. So if you are interested and have some spare equipment to rear some new Queens, then please contact me. In the mean time, please research the different types of Queen rearing/ mating hive ways to be prepared for when they are needed.

Malcolm



Tiverton Beekeepers committee meeting

Tuesday 15th March 7.30pm via zoom (*please note this is a change of date*)

Tiverton beekeepers members meeting

April to be announced subject to finding a suitable venue .

Worker bees needed ...

The committee still has vacancies for the position of Vice Chair, Queen rearing, Finance, maintenance etc.

If you wish to discuss this please contact:

Malcolm Crook (Chair)
01884 821927

Tony Lindsell
01884 841257

Hilary Sanders (Editor)
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BBKA Spring Convention. This will once more be held at Harper Adams in Shropshire, 8-10 April 2022. This is a unique opportunity to bring the national beekeeping community together again, after two years of lock downs, cancellations and virtual events. Choose from more than 20 lectures and 40+ workshops, together with the Trade Show and the usual opportunities to meet old (and make new) friends from around the country.

BOOK NOW!



Spring 2022 Convention

Friday 8 - Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 April 2022

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts. Bumper Trade Show Saturday 9th

Speakers and Tutors include; Marin Anastasov, Mark Barnett, Shirley and Richard Bond, Norman Carreck, Lars Chittka, Celia Davis, Joyce Nisbet, Juliet Osborne, Julian Parker, Sara Robb, Nigel Semmence, Jo Widdicombe, Geraldine Wright, and more...

For further information, **and to book** from 31st January
see the Spring Convention pages at www.bbka.org.uk

February is almost over, not too bad a month for our bees. Providing your hives were protected or strapped down, the gales will have caused no trouble. Hefting my own hives, there has been no big demand on food stores but be prepared for that situation to change, March can see big changes in the hive as the queen increases her egg laying, providing it is warm enough and she has enough workers to feed and look after the brood. Keep hefting the hives especially towards the end of the month, this is a critical time when our bees can starve.

Do not be in a hurry to look in the brood box. Before we can have a proper look at our bees we need the temperature to be 16c or more and little or no wind. Brood is easily chilled and will die. When hefting the hives, should you find them to be light, feed with fondant above the crown board. By the end of the month you could change to a liquid fondant feed. In our area of Devon we do not see much oil seed rape grown. Should you be in a rape growing area you will need to have your first supers on if possible with drawn comb. If the weather turns mild towards the end of the month then we should all be ready with our first supers. Bees can be reluctant to work the first supers especially if they are filled with foundation. Should you have a mix of frames place three or four drawn frames in the middle of the super. This is the warmest part of the hive to get the bees started. Some beekeepers leave the queen excluder off for a start. I find it makes little difference. The queen laying in a super is a nuisance unless you want to work on a brood and a half.

Watch the hedgerows to tell you how spring is developing. I do not expect to see much happening until Willows and Dandelion is in full flower, we will have other flowers out in our gardens and hedgerows but not enough to give a honey flow, but none the less important for the development of the colony.

Last month I mentioned it would be a good idea to read up on foul brood diseases as the problem had increased in Devon and Somerset.

I had only been keeping bees for four or five years, having attended beginners classes much the same as most of you have. I had five hives all doing well, or so I thought. Imagine my concern on a nice sunny June Saturday afternoon when I opened my last hive. Having lifted off the super of a quite strong hive to be met with a funny smell. On inspecting the brood frames I could see that things were not right. The thing that caught my eye first was the nice creamy white brood was not all the same colour and the larvae that should be in C shape were all looking HUMPTY. In other words not in a tidy C but all over the place, heads up, tails up, some changing colour to brown and all looking floppy, not plump and well fed. I returned the super and crown board walked home, I made a very thorough job of washing my gloves and hive tool, then looking up my notes on EFB. On the Monday morning I phoned the bee inspector. The same day I think the inspector came and had a look. To my surprise he did not think it was EFB. But he did not tell me what he thought it was. In those days a whole frame had to be sent off for analysis. I left my bees in peace till the following Saturday. I checked my four good hives first before checking the suspect hive, which still looked the same. I phoned again and this time spoke to the regional inspector who came with another inspector. It only took them a quick look to confirm that I had a bad case of European Foul Brood, (EFB). A sample was taken for analysis and confirmed. My first inspector retired and the regional inspector remained good friends. In spite of my first encounter with bee inspectors I have always found them very helpful and have taught me a lot. The key point I would like to get across is know what the brood should look like, EFB does not always have a smell.

WHEN DO BEES SWARM?

“Swarm season is usually expected during late Spring, this is between April and May. This is the time of the year when bees reproduce and discover new places to build their hives. “

Rewind to December 11th 2021, when I get a telephone call from Barbara,

“ My friends in Tiverton have a swarm of bees in their hedge, can you help ?”

“Don’t be silly, its wasps or hornets I expect.” I replied

Imagine my surprise when I had to admit, they were honey bees. They were about 15’ up in a hedge with 6 fully formed and used combs attached to about a 1 ¼ inch branch. They were on the lee side out of the wind, but didn’t catch much sun.

The house owner had recently noticed them after they kept coming down to a bird bath for water. He thinks that they may have been in the hedge since July.

The only way to get at them was to place a ladder on the very small branch that they were attached to. Gently we made our way up hoping not to dislodge them to the ground. A good spray of water to tighten them and the branch was cut. Still they clung on and gently to the ground they came.

The combs were so established that they had to be finally housed in a 14 x 12 brood box, and they were placed inside, complete with branch still attached. I have kept them like that for the winter. They are still going strong and currently on their 3rd portion of fondant and eating me out of house and home. They look strong enough to make it through and with a tough queen like that I will try and breed from her.

Bees clearly do not read Books!!

Malcolm





Asian Hornet News

It was a usual Monday morning at 07:50 with the family playing first past the post for the bathroom, the question 'why should a shower not take longer than 3 minutes' going unanswered and not acted upon when my mobile phone squawked into life. The conversation started along the lines of "Is that Gavin? What are you doing about Debora Meaden's Asian hornet sighting?"

No tea had been drunk so it took a few seconds for my brain to register the words, try and think who Deborah Meaden was amongst our members, frantically scroll the email trail to see if our website had been pinged plus who the ***** was on the end of the phone at this time in the morning?

I found out that I was talking to Anne Rowberry, President of the BBKA.

It transpired that one of Anne's PR team had been trawling her social media and had come across a posting about a nest. The account she was following was Deborah Meaden of Dragon's Den fame. Hence celebrity posting causing action stations. The site of the nest was a space above the office in Deborah's textile mill which according to the BBKA was near Tiverton. On being texted the postcode of the factory, and the request to get a bee inspector out on the case pronto still ringing in my ears, the location was in fact the Tonedale Mill in WELLINGTON.

It seems that Tiverton and Wellington are extremely close and in Devon according to the BBKA map.

After discussing with Tony Lindsell and then Simon O'Sullivan (DBKA AHAT Chair) we decided that since the alleged sighting was in Somerset then this was one for them. Tony had managed to contact Leila Goss, Bee Inspector who had given the recent Varroa talk to the branch, who kindly offered to go out and remove the nest for onward analysis by the NBU.

As can be seen from the accompanying image from Deborah Meaden's Twitter account there were no flying or live insects just this big nest. Looking at the picture my guess is that it is more likely to be a wasp nest now abandoned at the end of the yearly cycle with the queen hiding away in hibernation, probably in a warm nook or cranny within the rafters or else it might be a European hornet's nest, abandoned with hibernating queen having gone somewhere warm and dry. The perspective and clarity of the shot makes it difficult to make any further observations.

We now await the nest dissection by the NBU and their report.

So, what have I learnt from this slightly surreal start to a week:

1. Our branch help is just a phone call away
2. Tony has many contacts
3. Certain types of journalism have now created a public narrative that wasp-like nests are in fact the home of the 'murder hornet' and are alive all year round.
4. Social media can be informative or an amplifier of dubious knowledge and opinion
5. There is a Dragon's Den in Wellington

With all this in mind the Spring Asian hornet monitoring event will likely be taking place over Easter period. 17th April (precise dates to follow)

Our strategy this year is rather than have all members taking part due to the low likelihood of sightings, sentinel monitoring will be undertaken in 5 parts of our region.

Therefore, are there any members who would be able to give 1 hour of their time over the Easter period to help in this activity? It would be good to have somebody from the North i.e., Bampton way, East – Payhembury (?), South – towards Crediton and West – South Molton. I will be doing the Central area just outside Tiverton.

Please email me if you think you can help.

Gavin Nuttall-Owen

AHAT Coordinator

ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk



Finally, a few thoughts from the Editor

The last two years have been difficult for us all during the pandemic and it is hard to remember what normal felt like. We have all in different ways become used to varying degrees of social isolation. Our bees however are social insects, just like us in fact. They need each other to survive. As we emerge from winter into spring, perhaps we, like our bees need to look to our honey bees, and to their example of survival as we venture back into socialisation, in order that our club survives.

With that thought in mind please do not feel that if you are new to beekeeping you need to wait until you have more experience and are “fully developed to forage ” because that time will never come. New brood is essential to the colony’s survival.

Myself and Norm (aka Hubcap) often felt (and still feel) woefully ill equipped to deal with what I assume are basic beekeeping decisions and management and we want to learn more.

In terms of the life of the Tiverton beekeepers club or indeed colony, it is not a requirement that you have to be an expert before being involved.

So, all you new brood from last years course; its time to fly and forage, join us with zoom meetings and hopefully we can all meet up at the apiary soon. Lets not suffer colony collapse.

Hilary