



# THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – April 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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What a spring we are having?. I look out onto an ornamental cherry tree in full bloom in my garden, and hardly a honey bee in sight. Too cold, what a waste of blossom!!

My thanks to Jon Davies for suggesting and setting up a "Whats App" system for us. I don't expect everyone to subscribe to it, but the majority of you are. It is yet another "modern" way of instantly communicating with members if any of us need help or a sudden event is happening with short notice. For those of us who can, lets try it and see please. Your comments as always always welcome. As first inspections may soon be on the cards, lets have some photos of your colonies and gardens to cheer us up.

Malcolm

The Devon County Show will be held at Westpoint Exeter on 30<sup>th</sup> June till 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

We will be entering the Stephenson Trophy competition at this years Devon County Show, so please make contact with me and lets get started on the winning entry.

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 20<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm at Uplowman village Hall. ( at last)

## Asian Hornet News

### On the Jersey frontline

To date (29 March 2022) there have been 10 Asian hornet queens captured after coming out of hibernation. Their locations, although more prevalent on the eastern side of the island, have spread to the centre and even one on the western side. The weather conditions seem to be playing a part in the dispersal of the hornet, a combination of sustained warm sunny days and a north easterly on shore wind. The wind could be responsible for blowing queens from the Cherbourg peninsula across the 17 km strait of sea. The evidence for this seems plausible in that the majority of sightings and capture have been on the east coast of the island. One was found at St Helier Harbour at 1.30pm this afternoon, it was on the top wall of the walkway overlooking the RNLI Office and described as looking "sluggish".



The hornet in the centre of the island was found on the tarmac of a driveway and was also described as being sluggish in her movements.

The emergence appears to have been in synchrony with the sustained sunshine and subsequent raising of the daily maximum and average temperature. The extent of this is that there have been a "hornet a day" positive sightings.

The sightings of the queens have relied upon the residents of Jersey being well informed, being the first "eyes on" and knowing who to call regarding the capture of these insects. It is still too early to determine whether these are queens who evaded capture in the autumn and have hibernated on the island over winter or new arrivals.

The map reference site of capture, behaviour at capture and topography where found, all suggest new arrivals. Previous hornets emerging from island hibernation have tended to be near to past nest sites and feeding on camellias or similar nectar rich flower sources. None of the seven captured hornets have been reported in such circumstances.

The sightings and captures indicate that Jersey's hornet situation is in the incursion and eradication phase of the hornet ecology. It is not yet at the stage as throughout Europe whereby it is embedded into the native population dynamic and is a severe threat to pollinator survival.

## **Asian Hornet Spring Monitoring – Devon and Branch Wide Response**

At the Devon wide AHAT coordinators meeting on 9 March 2022 the whole aspect of spring monitoring was debated. It was recognised that the appetite for monitoring by members in all branches throughout Devon had waned since the initial interest sparked by the sightings in North Devon as reported by Martyn Hocking 4 years ago (Sept 2017). The rationale for the monitoring was re-examined in the light of accumulated evidence and experience. The original response and rationale were based firmly on the Jersey model. This model was predicated on the data accrued from autumn sightings and secondary nest discoveries, the life cycle of the Asian hornet and spring queen nectar seeking behaviour. The trapping of emerging queens was seen as a prudent tool in the eradication protocol and a way of disrupting the hornet life cycle.

The NBU have designated that the UK phase of the Asian hornet ecology is at the lower end of the spectrum being at the containment phase. This is characterised as infrequent and sporadic incursions facilitated more by human interactions (freight travel, tourism) than by biological mechanisms. Once found, immediate steps are taken to identify, track, trace, find and destroy all invasive insects with complete disruption of any breeding life cycle.

The total number of UK incursions over the last 5 year period when viewed against the data for Jersey and for France/Spain would appear to be less than 1% by comparison. Hence UK queen sightings could be described as the negligible side of rare.

### **Other considerations**

Current research is continuing to show that insect populations are declining at an increasingly alarming rate. Most of these insect groups are members of the pollinators. Any action on these populations must take account of the effect of an intervention on the local ecology.

Hence monitoring using anything other than an observation attractant is liable to capture other beneficial pollinators as bycatch. Spring is the period when insect numbers start to increase from the low number winter holdover broods. A disruption to these numbers will have implications on the rate of population increase and insect availability for crop and fruit pollination. Therefore any method of monitoring or observation that has bycatch or lacks a design to substantially reduce bycatch to the point of zero flies in the face of sustaining biodiversity.

The much vaunted NBU “green bottle” trap that was touted four years ago as a suitable method for monitoring is not now viable. It was introduced with the best of intentions as a response to what was thought would be a massive wave of Asian hornet incursions. The notion was to catch and eradicate as many of the non-native invasive insects with bycatch being regarded as an acceptable level of collateral damage. This viewpoint is now unsustainable and is in opposition to most ecologists, entomologists and botanist’s views. It is regrettable that the NBU and Defra via their respective websites still promote the “green bottle” trap without any mitigations. This goes against the Devon AHAT forum policy as well as the UK AHAT teams.

## Action

The spring monitoring is to be suspended as a tool until the UK moves from the containment to incursion phase of Asian hornet population progression. It will only be re-introduced based on the best evidence available at that point in time.

Thus, branch members do **NOT** need to undertake an Asian Hornet spring monitoring.

Gavin Nuttall-Owen

AHAT Coordinator

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**Picture credits:** John De Carteret, Jersey Asian Hornet Group

## Around the apiary in April

By Keith Owers



Hurray we will soon be able to do some proper beekeeping. I am sure you are as keen as I am to start looking in the brood boxes, and saying hello to the queen and all the family

First things first, we have had some above average temperatures in March, and I hope your bees have made the most of the fine weather and have been out gathering nectar and pollen. Although we have had some good spring weather not all flowering spring flowering plants are ready for the bees. Looking around the hedge rows Primroses are doing well as are celandines but blackthorn and willows still have a week or to to go for full flower. Dandelions are to be found if sheep and young lambs do not get them first. I have only looked in one hive so far, the brood box was in need of some attention. What I found was good, six good sides of brood and eggs with the next frames well stocked with honey and pollen. That was what I wanted to see on a first inspection.

The weather forecast for the start of the month is for more cold weather, even wintry ! A sudden cold snap could see our bees running short of food, be prepared to feed. Small rapid feeders are ideal they hold about 2 liters of Ambrosia or sugar syrup, you do not want to over feed. Should the hive be short of space for storage you could be encouraging the bees to think about swarming.

If all goes to plan we should have some better warmer weather before the end of the month. There is no need for a mad rush for that first brood inspection. Some years it has been the end of the month before I have been able to have a good look. Pick a good warm day 15 16c and little wind then you can have a good look. Before you open the hive know what you are going to look for. Ted Hooper in his book Guide to Bees and Honey makes five good points.

1. Has the colony sufficient room?
2. Is the queen present and laying the expected quantity of eggs?
3. (early in season) Is the colony building up in size as fast as other colonies in the apiary?
4. Are there any signs of disease or abnormality?
5. Has the colony sufficient stores to last until the next inspection.

If you are unsure about what to look for ask a friend for advise or come along to a branch meeting at our apiary or contact Hilary Sanders your questions and I will answer them.

Keith Owers

*Apis Mellifera on Celandine (above) taken on 17<sup>th</sup> March at Rewe Parish Church which was a riot of yellow with these cheerful wild flowers. Taken on my mobile phone.*