



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – June 2022

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

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR!



Well at last the weather is beginning to be kind to us and we can finally enjoy being with our colonies.

Numbers attending our apiary are increasing, which is brilliant, and its good to hear laughing and joking there again.

Committee wise, I had to deliver the sad news of the death of Bob Ogden, a long-standing member of the Branch. He was for many years our Treasurer, served as Chair of the DBKA and was a member of DARG. The Club was represented at his funeral.

Hopefully you will have seen that members attending the apiary can no longer park in the wood yard due to the concern of the N/T over the state of the buildings. As an alternative it was agreed our members could use the same car park as NT Volunteers without charge until November when it will be

reviewed. The buildings are to be renovated and offered for community use so there may be some long term benefit for the Branch.

We have now been accepted into the Stephenson's Trophy at this years Devon County Show (June 30th – July 2nd) and we need helpers to assist Sue in completing our entry. Stewards are needed on the show days and volunteers are needed to set up on Sunday 26th June please.

We have also been accepted to take part in this years Mid Devon Show (23rd July) and we have reverted back to our 7 meter size stand again, so plenty of room to sell your honey and hive products. Set up on Friday 22nd evening please.

Clive Rowe has taken on the baton for organising this years beginners course and my thanks goes to him. After much discussion about improvers courses, it was agreed that there is a real need for this, and the improvers course will definitely go ahead. We will need mentors and possibly run a bee surgery, with Qs & As in a village Hall.

So lots planned, but as usual, I need helpers please.

Malcolm



As mentioned by Malcolm the club has entered The Stevenson's Trophy competition for this years Devon County Show. This year the format has changed and each association is invited to submit a display (1 meter squared) depicting "Beekeeping in our area".

The task we have been given is:

"The theme can be interpreted in any way that the branch sees fit but should aim to interest and educate visitors to the Bees and Honey Feature and showcase the branch's home area or situation; for instance one or more benefits, features or challenges of beekeeping in the home area may be represented"

It is the club's, not an individual entry and the organisers aim is to get people working together rather than it being just one individual's effort.

A reminder to you all that Sue Francombe is working on the art work and the design but we need some more photos of where you keep your bees to reflect the theme. Please can you email any to me or send via Whatsapp. We are working along the lines of the different benefits/challenges that we might have in the place where we keep our hives, bearing in mind the type of topography, crops, etc in our club area. I could also come along with my camera if needed.

Hilary (Editor)

email to sandershils1@yahoo.co.uk



June meetings

Sat June 4th 2-4pm Uplowman Fair.

An exhibition Hive being taken there and run by Malcolm and Lesley

Sat June 11th Making increase. (increasing your colonies)

Sat June 18th Beginners practical training sessions 13:00hr-14:00 and 14:30-15:30

Devon County show

Thurs June 30th, Friday July 1st and Saturday July 2nd

Help needed to set up on the Sunday prior 26th June, just turn up at the site

Honey can be sold for £8 per pound with 20% going towards the show funds

July meetings

July 9th Beginners practical training sessions 13:00hr-14:00 and 14:30-15:30

Mid Devon Show

23rd July help needed on 22nd to set up the tent and stand.

Committee meeting

July 14th 7.30pm at Uplowman village hall

Extreme Beekeeping!

Late last summer I received an email from a lady who was concerned for her elderly friend and neighbour who was a beekeeper but had been struck down by Covid, an illness that sadly became long Covid, preventing her from tending her bees. I arranged for Tony Lindsell to visit and assess the situation. There were two colonies, one big and healthy the other dead and mouse infested, and the owner and Tony decided that the best course of action was to call back the following spring to tidy up and re-set the active colony.

Tony and I visited on Tuesday 28th April to start the process. The location is lovely, with the owner very keen on wildlife, with masonry bees buzzing happily around the cob walls where they were nesting, otters and kingfishers on the nearby mill stream and a wealth of insect and other wildlife clearly in abundance owing to the owner's refusal to use any chemicals on her land.

The colony is sited at the top of a steep rise facing south and we found a brood box with three supers and a very active colony. We decided to open up the hive and see what needed doing. Hmm easier said than done! We struggled to remove the lid as the bees had got above the crown board and filled it with bracing comb which was filled with honey. We cleaned this off and again faced a struggle to remove the crown board. Underneath we found a super which, because it had no frames in, was just filled with comb and honey – see the photo below. We tried to remove this top super but the comb reached down into the next super, connecting the two - see the second photo below. This next super had some frames in it but what was missing was made up for by the bees! The final super had frames and was in reasonable shape. Now all this was a necessary but pretty intrusive approach to take however, the bees had a wonderful temperament and were calm throughout.



Next we got to the queen excluder which was cemented in place by comb and propolis and removing it was all the more difficult because the wooden frame was rotting away. Eventually it came away and we could access the brood box, where a thriving colony of super placid bees was in evidence – no sign of the queen but lots of brood, drone brood, drones, pollen stores and stores where they could cram them in!! The hive hadn't been touched for two years but the bees seemed none the worse for it, in fact they were thriving.

We then had to consider what to do. We decided to raise the base, as it was very low to the ground, and put an empty brood box in place so that future activities are less back breaking! We then carefully switched the brood frames in to this fresh brood box, breaking off great lumps of bracing comb and the biggest lumps of propolis I've ever seen, and taking great care to transfer as many bees over as possible, ever aware of the danger of dropping the queen. We then put a new queen excluder in place, and the super with frames in on top with two more with fresh foundation to top the lot. The cleaned-up crown board went on followed by a clean lid. The old lid and brood box were propped up in front of the hive to encourage the bees to return to base. The two full supers posed a slight problem but after a discussion, the owner decided that she would manually squeeze the honey from the comb and use it. As a result we had to chase off as many bees as possible with smoke and a bee brush, then place it in an outhouse with a cloth wrap on it, open at one corner to let the bees return home, hoping that the majority would literally see the light and move on!

All this took a couple of hours but it was good to help a beekeeper in trouble and she was most appreciative of our efforts. We plan to return in a couple of weeks' time to check that all is well and who knows perhaps we will spot an otter or a kingfisher as well whilst enjoying the beekeepers' obligatory cup of tea with the owner! We will keep you posted.

Jon Davies and Tony Lindsell

Around the apiary in March

By Keith Owers

The weather in May has been much better than last year, yes we have had quite a few wet days but it has not been too cold and we have also had some nice sunny days for our bees. June can be a poor month for bees, you have probably heard about the June gap. In some parts of the country you can have a spell when there is very little in flower but that does not seem to happen too often in Devon. Looking around, the hawthorne is over but the banks are covered in buttercups, greater and lesser stitchwort and many other small flowers. Lime will be in flower before the end of the month. Like many plants they all flower each year but they do not necessarily produce nectar for our bees. Beekeepers who have hives near Lime trees can produce a very nice slightly green light honey but not every year. There are two native species of Lime both are very good plus lots of hybrids that are also good. The temperatures have to be right and the soil moisture. The trees produce nectar early in the morning but it dries up as the day progresses. I have only seen this in France when I have been camping on holiday in late May.

Keep checking your bees for swarming, I try to check every 14 days or 7 days if the weather is good. You can spend a lot of time checking bees and not doing the bees a lot of good. You may find they get cross with you looking, so what do I do?

At this time of year I am on the look out for swarming preparation, food and space for nectar, if short of space that may trigger swarming. Use a little smoke to keep the bees down if they are bit touchy. Take out the second frame in, the outside frame will tell you if they are short of space but if it is full of honey and covered in drones that is fine, but if it is covered in sealed larvae and eggs your hive is short of space. I do not often find this with my bigger Langstroth hives, this is why I changed from Nationals. Having checked the second frame I place it next to the hive, to give me space. I now work through the next five frames. If I have not found swarm cells and I will put the second frame back where it came from and move on to the next hive. As I scan the frames I look out for the queen and record it if I see her just for practice. I do not waste time looking for her. Checking in this way I can check a hive in about ten minutes or less. It is quite possible that I could have missed queen cells on the remaining frames but I think it worth the risk.

If you have made up nucs or spare hives with a queen cell, do not be in a hurry to go looking to see if you have a laying new queen, better to leave them alone for three weeks. Watching for pollen going in can often be a good indicator that all is well. New queens do not know their area well like your resident worker bees and can soon get themselves lost. Its all good fun when it works.

Keith Owers