



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – December 2022

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

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The Chairman's Brood Box

Welcome to a new Tiverton Beekeepers year. A very big thank you to all our members who turned out on a dark, wet & windy evening to support the Branch at its Annual General Meeting. It's a long time



since I have seen so many members at this type of meeting.

For those who were unable to get there, I was pleased to be elected as Chairman for the next 12 months. I'm delighted to say that many of our newer members have put themselves forward for various roles on our committee and we are excited about the Branch future. You will find a list of all our Officers & Committee members later in this edition.

The evening finished with a delicious finger buffet provided on a bring and share basis which was an incredible sight to see it all laid out. One of the joys of my beekeeping life is the 'buzz'

that happens when beekeepers enjoy tea & cakes together when many beekeeping experiences are shared together making us realise that we are not alone. I can tell you the 'buzz' at the AGM was as loud and harmonious as I've heard it for a long time.

For those of you who don't know me, let me tell you about my beekeeping life. It started about 15 years ago when I woke up on my birthday morning to find a beehive in our bedroom (a WBC from David Pearce, of course.) - fortunately there were no bees in the hive. So Tracy, my wife, and I enrolled onto the Beginners' Course offered by Tiverton Beekeepers where we were taught the craft of beekeeping by none other than Keith Owers and Bob Ogden who has now, sadly, passed away. It inspired us to keep bees and get involved in the beekeeping community. Within a short time we had both joined the Branch Committee and I took on several different roles over time including vice-chair, secretary, programme secretary , keeper of the extractors , librarian etc. One of the roles I tried was to represent the Branch on the Devon Beekeepers' Association Executive Council which led me to get more active with the Association becoming vice-chair, then Chairman and, until 11th December, I am their current President. I undertook these roles as I wanted to support the Beekeepers of Devon and, at the time, no one else was keen to take them on.

I keep 11 hives with some at our home and some on land of friends. I have not taken any beekeeping exams but have obtained the BBKA Basic Assessment as a beekeeper - I would recommend that to all beekeepers.

I hope to persuade other Officers and committee members to tell us about their beekeeping life in future editions of the Buzzette.

Don't forget we have our Annual Social event on Friday 13th January at Upplowman Village Hall at 7pm the food will be a 'bring & share finger buffet' again but the Branch will supply some drink including a glass of wine or two. Look forward to seeing you there.

Finally Merry Christmas to you & your families, I hope all your presents are beekeeping equipment.

Tony Lindsell

Photograph above, courtesy of Ian Sorenson

Thank You Malcolm Crook.

Malcolm, or Crooky as he is affectionately known, has been Chairman of the Tiverton Branch for 4 years. He took on the role when the Branch was going through a difficult time but he was making a good job of pulling us together when we were hit by Covid. This, of course, meant we couldn't meet in person, not even at the Apiary. Malcolm managed to keep the Branch going organising meetings via Zoom and tending the Branch Apiary to ensure the bees were looked after. He showed his concern for members by ringing those who were struggling through Covid to ensure they had the help they needed.

Unfortunately with all he was doing for the Branch plus looking after all of his own hives and personal commitments, understandably he was unable to carry on. Fortunately he isn't leaving us but, from now on, will manage the Branch Apiary at Knightshayes with the help of a group of our members to support him. Thank you Crooky, we are indebted to you for the time and energy you have dedicated to the Branch and its members.

Honey Tasting Result

At this year's AGM we asked members to bring along a sample jar of their honey so we could compare colour, viscosity & taste. There was even a prize of a new Hive Tool for the one considered by members vote to be the best. There must have been 15 jars of honey on the table by the time the tasting started. It's always amazing what a difference in colour there is on honey produced by bees in just the local area of Mid Devon where you would think the flora was very similar. At the end of the evening the votes were counted and totalled. You won't be surprised to know that the most popular honey was produced by the bees of our President, Keith Owers. Keith says he thinks he has enough Hive Tools by now so will be donating it to one of this year's beginners.

I'm Vice Chair!

It was the great to see so many turn up for the AGM and to get so many join the committee particularly the new members. I even shocked myself by putting my name forward as Vice Chair.

Many will not know me, so hear is a potted history of my beekeeping.

My name is Ian Sorenson, I completed the course some 4 years ago with my wife but did not get a colony until 2021 due to my wife's Cancer. In 2021 Tony furnished me with two swarms. Both turned out to be Queenless but with Tony's patience and help we combined them introduced a new queen and got them through the winter. She was very productive , the colony was fantastically calm and all seemed good. An infestation of varroa meant an emergency treatment and the queen thought better of it and swarmed at the same time as I got my second colony.

I acquired a 3rd colony by picking up a swarm from a friend's property (She was not a nice queen but the brood pattern was perfect so I have decided to see what happens next year). So far this winter is going smoothly.

Not a long career in bees I grant you, but you'll agree it has been varied and a massive learning curve. I have had bees of all temperaments, undertaken a fair few manipulations and had some fabulous help from the longer serving members, particularly Tony, Malcolm and all those on the "what's app group" old and new.

I would like the members to feel free to contact me about anything and if I can't answer their query I am sure I know a member who can. I would also encourage members to use the What's app group chat, it is invaluable for help and advice, as well as reassurance.

Ian

Photograph of AGM showing honey table. Courtesy of William Lines





Beginners Course dates

Wednesday December 14th *Colony management year round.*

Wednesday January 11th *Reasons for swarms, causes and prevention. Control and collection.*

Wednesday January 25th *Pests and diseases and general hygiene.*

Wednesday February 8th *Bee products and plants for bees.*

Wednesday February 22nd *Getting started - setting up an apiary.*



New Year Branch Social Evening

Friday 13th January at Updown Village Hall -7pm

Bring & share finger buffet

The Branch will supply some drink including a glass of wine or two.

Tiverton Beekeepers' Branch Committee meeting .

Thursday 12th January 7.30pm
Updown Village Hall

Bulk Buying Scheme



It's now time to purchase your frames and foundation through the bulk buying scheme and if anyone is interested you have until Friday 16th December 2023, to place your orders. As you are aware the aim of the Bulk Buying Scheme is for 100% of the money saved to be passed on to the members, no money goes to club funds. For the foundation only, there are two prices shown on the order form, one with a 20% reduction and one without. If the orders reach over £200 then we qualify for this reduction. On completing the order form, I suggest you just provide quantities for the foundation, then once all orders have been received, I will confirm prices accordingly. Based on previous years, this is usually reached. The frame prices are as stated.

THE DEADLINE FOR ALL ORDERS WILL BE 16 DECEMBER 2023

HOW TO ORDER Frames and Foundation

Download the Order Form from this 'Tivvy Buzzette' and either email or post it to me.

Payments

I would be grateful if everyone could pay by BACS before the collection date and ensure they show their Surname as the reference. BACS is the preferred and safest method of payment and request this option is used where possible. Cheques however, will be accepted, where necessary, on collection.

Frames and Foundation

All details of the items are listed on the order form and cover the usual BS National, Langstroth and Hoffman. **Please note the foundation is sold in packs of 10 and the frames sold in packs of 25.**

Collections will be from the address shown on the order form but please let me know if you have any problems, my telephone number is 01884 849377.

Cath Davies
Bulk Purchasing Coordinator

Please refer to the separate email sent for Bulk Buy with the order form

Around the apiary in December

By Keith Owers



Companions! Apis mellifera and Red Admiral on Mahonia 25/11/22 Hilary Sanders

I would hope that most of you have nothing much planned for your bees at Christmas.

Late December is a good time to start regularly hefting your hives to see if they need feeding, and on no account go looking in the hive. Although November has been mild and wet the bees will be starting to cluster and the queen may well stop laying for a period. Your bees will cluster together around the queen keeping her warm. Providing the hive is well stocked with honey, all will be well. Any disturbance to the hive may result in the cluster splitting into smaller groups, only one with the queen. The smaller groups may not generate enough heat for the queen to function properly.

If you think the hive is a bit light place a small block of fondant over the feed hole in the crown board. Christmas should be a quiet time around the apiary. If the bees are well fed, their roofs are sound to keep them dry so all should be well.

Questions have been asked about crown boards and open or closed Varroa floors?

Looking back in time a hundred years ago the question would have been, is it time to put the bees in the cellar?

It was common practice to bring hives in under cover to a cellar or a barn for the coldest part of the year, some hives may have been covered with straw and soil like a potato clamp.

The intention was to keep the hives warm. We know this is not necessary unless you are going to have very low temperatures. In Canada I understand hives are stored in big barns and kept at zero or just above but remember they are talking about months of very cold weather.

Bees are very good at maintaining the temperature of the cluster between 10C to 35C if they have brood. What the bees cannot cope with is damp conditions. Hence our priority is to see the bees well fed and dry. A well fed hive will have honey and pollen packed around the brood nest, nice and handy when it gets cold.

The hive roof must be water proof and can be insulated to prevent warm air condensing on the under side of a metal roof. Deep sides on a roof also help, they reduce the risk of a roof coming off in high winds.

Crown boards are often made of thin ply wood which is fine. An old practice which I still use is to place a match stick under the 4 corners, this allows warm moist air from the bees to be released from the hive. Glass crown boards are more of a problem for condensing water vapour, that may drip on the cluster.

Floors: I have solid floors with a full width entrance with a mouse guard. If you have a Varroa floor I would have it closed, providing you have a protected entrance. I know some beekeepers keep the wire floors in place and do not have any problems over wintering their bees.

Happy Christmas

Keith

I'm sure many of you will know these gems of information but I had the challenge of this page to fill! I won't bore you with my IT challenge this morning but suffice to say, it needed filling so I reverted to these interesting facts which are straight from The BBKA so they should be true.

Hilary (Editor)

Bee facts

Do bees sleep?

It is often asked how – or if – bees are awake or asleep. Bees do not sleep – but they do remain motionless to preserve vital energy for the next day of foraging. During the day, and out on their travels, bees eyes can detect a wide array of colour. Their eyes are sensitive more to the blue end of the spectrum and into ultra violet. Flowers reflect large amounts of ultra violet light and to a bee will be very bright. Curiously, when it comes to red, bees are totally blind.

How does a honey bee navigate?

It is amazing to see how colonies of bees stick together, despite the vast distances each worker must travel in order to serve the hive. It is now known that bees use the position of the sun to help them know where they are and where they need to go back to; there is now some evidence sensitivity to the earth's magnetic field too. It is worth saying too that bees' eyes are sensitive to polarized light which penetrates through even thick cloud so they are able to 'see' the sun, even when the weather is poor. As well as two compound eyes on either side of its head the bee has three 'ocelli' on top of its head. The ocelli (collective noun for all 3 eyes) can detect the transition from darkness to light. If the horizon moves up it means the bee is flying down so it can rotate the angle of its wings to compensate. In this way the bee can make sure it's flying along a flat plain to achieve a greater distance over a shorter space of time.

How fast can honey bees fly?

The normal top speed of a worker would be about 15-20 mph (21-28 km/h), when flying to a food source, and about 12 mph (17 km/h), when returning laden down with nectar, pollen, propolis or water.

What is Melissopalynology?

Melissopalynology is the study of pollen in honey. It originates from the Greek Melissofor honey and Palynology for study of small particles. Palynology is a very established science, allowing the vegetative landscape over millions of years to be analysed through the pollen extracted from soil samples. However, it is not just limited to analysis of historical landscapes, it is equally applied to our modern-day environment, for example in solving criminal cases or predicting hay fever levels (Leitch and Salvage, BBKA News 2018).

Why is pollen so important ?

Honey bees mix plant pollen with water to form a type of bread that is fed to the growing larvae. It provides a rich source of protein and fat whilst honey provides energy (carbohydrate). Bees collect about 20kg of pollen every year - that's 1 million pollen loads at 20mg per trip!

Can bees see in colour?

Yes, bees' eyes are sensitive more to the blue end of the light spectrum and into ultraviolet. Flowers reflect large amounts of ultraviolet light and will appear very bright to a bee. Bees are totally red blind.

Tiverton Beekeepers' Association 2023 Committee

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