



THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – April 2023

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

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The Chairman's Brood Box

Although as I write this it is pouring down with rain, hopefully by the time you read it Spring will be evidenced by your bees becoming more and more active from your hives. It is the official start of the beekeeper's season, the most exciting time of the year.

The 1st of April marks our first visit & possible inspection of our hives at the Branch Apiary at Knightshayes. We have a programme of visits on the 1st Saturday & 3rd Sunday from 2- 4 pm of each month all through the summer. Everyone is welcome from the beginners & novices to those that have been keeping bees slightly longer. If you have not been before then be aware that you will need to bring your own clean protective clothing.

We park in the volunteers car park which is located by the indoor tennis court. As you approach the Stables with the Walled Garden on your left turn right up a track, keep left and you come to a car park. (Leave a note in your car stating you are a beekeeper at the Apiary). To get to the Apiary walk back down the track and when you get to the road go straight across and you'll come to the old saw yard on your left, go in through the gate and follow the track, you'll soon spot us. Please note the nearest toilet is in the Stables. We will have refreshments at the Apiary.

In the unlikely event that we have to cancel we will send a message via WhatsApp & Facebook.

April sees our last event of the winter programme at Uplowman Village Hall. This will be a very practical talk by Alan Barrow, one of our most experienced beekeepers, telling and possibly showing us how to clean our wax and make it useable for candles etc. It is on the Wednesday 19th April at 7.30 pm.

I'm particularly looking forward to this as it's something I've never really mastered without getting myself in a sticky mess! Please come along and join us, as with the last two meetings, there will be plenty of tea, cake and bee gossip.

I'm pleased to tell you that, Vicky Morrish another of this year's beginners, has joined the committee and she will be sorting out our social media presence especially on Facebook. If you are on Facebook then look for our new page and follow us; any posts of comments & you own photos will be welcome.

The Devon County Show starts on the 18th May and our plans to defend the Stevenson Trophy are well under way with Sue Francombe ably leading a group of skilled volunteers to create this year's display. We recently had a Show evening where ideas were discussed about bees, the environment & pollination. Tracy Frankpitt was there as well and told us about her ideas for the Branch Marquee at the Mid Devon Show (July 22nd) which sound very exciting. It was a very encouraging evening (photos attached) with everyone contributing their ideas and suggestions. Our next step is to start making the various craft items that are needed for our displays. There is still time to join us if you want to lend a hand.

Finally we had a social evening with our beekeeping friends from Taunton Beekeepers which was very friendly. Although we honourably lost the skittles match, everyone who attended said how much they had enjoyed it. It got us thinking about social events and someone remembered that before Covid 19 we used to have an annual dinner which included partners and was very popular. Perhaps if you were interested you could let us know. if we have enough support then we can find someone to organise it. Happy beekeeping and enjoy your bees.

Tony Linsdell



Apiary News

The start day of Saturday April 1st is a chance for members to attend Knightshayes to see the improvements to the site that have taken place in the past few months and to get ideas on what is needed for the rest of the season.

One task on Saturday will be to remove, clean and replace all the colony floors and to make up spare frames, both brood and super, ready for the coming weeks and decide on what further equipment is needed.

The second session, weather permitting, should be general inspections, queen marking, and colony equalisation, and maybe supering.

I hope that these afternoons will be a chance for members, whether nervous or experienced to come along and enjoy working the colonies and learning from each other. This include those people on the current beginners course

Each session will be from 2.0pm to 4.0pm and we also will have now hot drinks and maybe some tit bits to eat. It should be a very relaxed atmosphere.

Crooky (Apiary Manager)



Land available for an “out apiary” in Thorverton

One of our members in Thorverton has been contacted by a local farmer offering a site for an out apiary. Our member is not in a position to take up his offer but said that she would share the details in case any members in the area who might be interested. The postcode for the apiary site is EX5 4LT, but it seems you would probably need a 4x4 to access it. If anyone is interested please contact me and we can start the ball rolling.

Jon Davies (secretary) via daviesj773@gmail.com



Improvers Course dates are on the following Wednesdays 7.30pm Uplowman Village Hall

April 5th, 12th and 26th

Next Committee meeting

Thursday May 11th Uplowman Village Hall 7.30pm

Apiary Teaching sessions for all members at Knightshayes

This includes beginners as part of their practical element of the beginners course.

Saturday April 1st 2-4pm

Sunday April 16th 2-4pm

Sunday 2nd April Annual Spring Equipment Auction. Arranged by Taunton Branch

Items to be brought in by 10am , auction starts at 2pm
Refreshments, Raffle, Free car parking
Ruishton Village Hall, Taunton TA3 5JD

Great Somerford Bee Auction on Monday 1st May 2023

See further details below



Reporting back on the latest Member's Meeting

At our general meeting on March 15th, a great attendance of 25 members had an excellent talk from Dan Basterfield on Simple Queen Rearing. Dan, who is a Master Beekeeper, works with his parents running Blackbury Honey Farm at Southleigh, near Colyton. They run all kinds of beekeeping courses and of course they have their honey farm, an apiary of some 120 colonies and tea room and shop which is a great place to visit.

Dan began by stressing the importance of selection from your best performing hive for queen rearing to ensure that you continue to proliferate your best genetics without dilution with lesser genes from other hives. He explained the importance of knowing the details of the various developmental stages of a queen, from egg laid to 3days. Larva (days 4-11 days) Pupa (days 12-15) to adult.

The developing queen cell is sealed on day 8/9 and emerges on day 16.

Dan then went through the various methods of queen rearing. He started with simple splits that many of us will be familiar with – removing a frame of brood (with eggs less than three days old with lots of bees and a frame of stores, to a Nuc, where the bees – being queenless, will create queen cells and develop their own virgin queen to do her mating flight and come back to lead this new colony and grow it into a full colony to be moved into a full hive.

Dan then moved on to run through the Demaree and the Miller methods of queen rearing which will produce six to twelve queens for use when the procedures are successful.

Lastly Dan ran through use and management of an Apidea which is effectively a very small colony of bees – little more than a cup full of hive bees producing queen cells and queens. Dan promoted his book on the subject of Using Apideas.

After tea and cake, Dan led a wide ranging discussion which covered the subject of queen rearing and many wider topics of beekeeping. It was great to have an evening led by such a knowledgeable and experienced beekeeper. In all, a thoroughly engaging evening was had by all.

One last thought..... Dan recounted going to Ireland where their teaching courses for beginners start with queen rearing on the basis that if you can easily rear queens, beekeeping and colony management becomes so much easier with a plentiful supply of queens to hand. Beginners Course maybee?

Charles Bradfield

I have been inviting one or two people on the committee member to write a little piece about how they were inspired to take up the craft of beekeeping. Last month is was supposed to be us and Keith's offering but we had a family member who was suddenly taken into hospital so we had to postpone ours until this month. So here is our story.

Hilary (Editor)

Our Adventure into beekeeping

My initial interest in bees and honey started quite simply, when my mother asked me to walk up to our next door neighbours farmhouse across the valley near Poughill , Mid Devon (Cornwall) and purchase a jar of honey. I was about 8 or 9 years old at the time I guess and I have never forgotten it. That one simple link between bees and food in the form of honey. I then of course realised that he, Sonny Bulled, kept bees. (He was also a world champion in ploughing)

Norm's interest was more hands on as his bachelor uncle, who lived next door to the family on the edge of Dartmoor kept bees and Norm was a useful pair of hands when it came to honey extraction each year to turn the handle of the centrifuge.

In recent years Norm, who worked for 25years at a large commercial grain store in Cullompton, once had a swarm of bees take residence in a part of the machinery high up on one of the cat walks. His boss thought they were wasps and was about to get the pest control police in to deal with it when Norm correctly identified them as honey bees and contacted Tiverton beekeepers. Along came Malcolm Crook aka Crooky (and possibly Tony and Tracy too because this happened on more then one occasion)

Norm was fascinated by the whole process of swarm collection and had no fear at all of being up close and personal to them and it was mentioned that he would make a good beekeeper. (although that might have been a degree of naivety as I am not sure he would be as brave now!)

This got us talking about taking up the hobby and we duly signed up for the beginners course at TBKA which we started in Autumn 2016

We got a second hand and ancient hive from a master beekeeper in Exmouth who was giving up and Crooky gave as a swarm in the July, 2017. We lovingly watched the bees but in truth the basic theory gained in the course over the previous year had not really resulted in much in the way of practical understanding and by the following spring they were dead. I suspect, looking back that we had not fed them enough to last over the winter. As the old saying goes;

"A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July is not worth a fly,

Which is apparently a proverbial bee-keepers' saying, mid 17th century; meaning that the later in the year it is, the less time there will be for bees to collect pollen from flowers in blossom."

Oxford dictionary of phrase and fable

The following Bank holiday May 2018 which was a very hot day I was in the garden and heard a most unusual sound above my head, almost like an aeroplane. It was a swarm of bees and they came to rest on the overhanging bough of our neighbour's Ginkgo Boloba tree. It was magical. Having phoned Crooky for advise on capturing them and asking permission of our neighbour, we waited until later and duly got out a hosepipe, long ladder, a bucket and donned our suits in readiness, although I was due to go to work for a night duty so I felt a little under time pressure. The bees must have known because before we got anywhere near them, they gently took off as one and glided at about 12 feet off the ground taking the route up the garden path and into a yew tree in the churchyard opposite. We had no choice but to abandon thoughts of getting them as they settled down and I sped off to work at The RD and E.

Thankfully the next day they were still there. With permission sought from The Church warden Norm up a long ladder, and watched by onlookers at the pub we successfully captured them,(no water needed) once they had collected under the upturned tubby bucket, we covered them with a sheet, walked across the road and unceremoniously tipped them into the hive at the bottom of our garden. Another magical moment.

We still have the original daughters to that swarm but now keep them in "an out apiary" just outside of our village. The reason being that we were pretty rubbish at preventing and managing swarm control. Balancing shifts and full time jobs with long hours in the summer for Norm, we suddenly had 6 hives and I couldn't garden in peace for followers going for me when I was quietly weeding, plus our lovely neighbours were being stung. We also learnt that during summer, the hives were in full sun so the bees were probably not happy, so with the help of Crooky and Tony we moved them, late winter and they are now in a lovely quiet place facing south in a sheltered corner of a field with trees to give shade in the heat of summer. It's perfect. Driving up there on our visits is a little adventure. (We did this over two moves, the first being to a site over 3 miles where they spent a couple of weeks, and then back to where they are now)

So to wrap this up and not bore you all, this will be our 3rd season with them there and we have 4 hives which have all come through the winter (so far so good)

Having an out apiary is nicer then we thought and luckily is only about 1/3 mile away. It does mean we have to plan well before we leave in the Landy and we sometimes have to come home because we have forgotten something. As it is two of us, who may have different ideas, we have learnt to always discuss and agree in advance what we are going to do, down to how we plan to execute the task. It saves an argument and possible divorce.. and the bees know!

I always however write up the records. A lifetime career of nursing means this is second nature to me. I also do the hygiene/ organising side of things and Norm oversees equipment. It seems to work and we rarely fall out now and enjoy having a shared interest.

BOOK NOW!



Friday 21 - Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 April 2023

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 22nd

Speakers and Tutors include: Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St.John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, and to book from 30th January

Great Somerford Bee Auction on Monday 1st May 2023

Have you got a shed full of old kit? downsizing your operation? or looking for some bargains to help you expand or buy your first hive? On Monday 1st May 2023, our 1st Annual auction will take place at The Showground, Great Somerford, nr Chippenham, WILTSHIRE SN15 5JA Viewing from 11.30am with the Auction commencing at 1pm

Entries are invited for the auction : please email : somerfordbeeauction@gmail.com or contact via our Facebook page 'Somerford Bee Auction' or call 07767 838317 / 07841 291449 Lots to include Beekeeping accessories, Beehives, Extracting Equipment, Beeswax, Honey, Beekeeping Books, Antique Beekeeping Equipment and a Live bee (nucs and complete hive) auction at the end. A full catalogue of lots entered will be available from 24th April

The Showground, Great Somerford , Nr Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 5JA



Apis Mellifera on Skimmia Japonica taken 25/03/2023

Hilary Sanders

Will there be a chance to look in the brood chamber at our bees? April should be warmer than March but it will not be the first year that we have to wait until May for a good look.

You will do more harm than good by looking when conditions are not right. We need sunny weather 15/16c and not too much wind.

What are you looking for on that first inspection?

Food.

Do we need to feed?

Do we have eggs and brood?

Looking ahead do we need to think about frame changes? Do we need to think about replacing the queen? Always be on the look out for disease problems. Chalk brood can be common some years. It may look like mouldy pollen, it could be just that or it could be mould growing on young larva. Most years it tends to reduce as we move further into spring.

A good practice is to change the floor board every year or give it a good scrape and flame with your blow torch.

More about bee diseases next month or better still come along to the branch apiary on the first Saturday of the month or the third Sunday each month, 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

Skimmia Japonica

A little note about this lovely shrub. As you can see I photographed a honey bee on ours a few days ago loaded with orange pollen, when it was about 11-12 c. I have two shrubs a male and a female which you will need if you want to have berries (on the female) Every year at this time on a sunny day it will be buzzing with activity. In the winter you have some lovely glossy leaves and red berries to use for Christmas floral arrangements.

Hilary (Editor)