

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

January 2025



Chairman's Broodbox

Happy New Year! We have had a great response to our Improvers Course with eight members registering their interest which is about the right number. The course will not be tutor led but its format is more conversational with a significant contribution coming from the members. In the past we have encouraged participants on the course to take the BBKA Basic Assessment, see the syllabus on the attachment.

I am excited about Jon Walters coming to talk to us on the 15th January. Several of our members and I were lucky enough to hear him at the President's Day event back in the summer at Crediton. It was the highlight of what was a very good day. If you can get to Uplowman Village Hall then you are in for a treat. To whet your appetite here is the link to his website. This is one not to miss. <https://johnwalters.co.uk/>

Our new committee meets for the first time this month. We hope to continue to organise all the branch events we have enjoyed over the last few years but have a few new challenges as well. The 'hut' at our Knightshayes Apiary has seen better days and we've started talking to the National Trust about what we are allowed to do to improve our facilities on their site. We have received a positive response but are awaiting the detail of what is possible. If you are

interested in helping, have skills or expertise that could be useful please contact me.

We are getting more request from groups and organisations for talks about bees but currently have only a few members who are willing or able to give those talks. We intend to put together some PowerPoint presentations suitable for various types of groups. This will then mean more of our beekeepers will be able to help with presentations. Talking about bees is an easy and rewarding thing to do.

The weather has been particularly unpleasant over the last few weeks which may not be a bad thing for our bees as they are now staying in their hives. When the weather improves the Queen will start laying this year's new brood so the hive will need to be kept warm. Please make sure your bees are well fed over this period - it is a critical time when colonies can fail.

Most members have renewed memberships which is great news. If you are intending to renew please do it by the end of the month as after that date you will no longer receive the Buzzette, Devon Magazine and BBKA News, nor have use of the WhatsApp group. It would help if you let me know if you aren't going to renew your membership.

Happy Beekeeping, Tony



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Masthead photo by Kat Smith: <https://www.pexels.com>

Some Highlights of 2024 *in pictures*



The Beehive Project at Mount Elgon



Mount Elgon is an extinct volcano on the border between Kenya and Uganda, East Africa. As a mountain it stretches for miles and remains forested and full of wildlife. The East African Wild-Life Society was established in 2017 to protect the few elephants remaining on the Kenyan side, as the Ugandan elephants had already been decimated by hunters and ivory seekers.

The mountain has numerous, historic caves and these are frequented by animals seeking salt from the rocks. Elephants are the largest animals to do this, and they venture deep into the dark tunnels to seek out the minerals they want. This is, in itself is an interesting story, and there is video footage online for those interested in learning more, but the conflict this causes with humans is the focus here.

For local farmers these elephants can cause problems as their pilgrimage takes them through agricultural land and they feed on crops on their way. Animals and humans have both been killed in this conflict and an organisation called MEEP (Mount Elgon Elephant Project) was set up to help resolve these clashes. There are several research projects looking at ways to deter the elephants from entering these fields.

One of the latest schemes involves hanging beehives on wires or ropes between fenceposts. Then when an elephant approaches and nudges a wire the bees become agitated and come out at the animals and this scares them off.



Beekeeping was a local activity and does offer farmers the extra income from the honey collected so it had many advantages.

Following an initial careful assessment, the project went through a pre-implementation data gathering period, prior to moving into a trial phase with the installation of 5 beehive fences as a pilot. That seems successful. This project is funded principally by the Elephant Crisis Fund. In May 24 they decided to put rain/sun covers over the hives.

<https://mountelgonfoundation.org.uk/community-and-forestry-projects/>



Christmas Social



On Saturday 7th December after storm Darragh had passed, around forty beekeepers and partners met at Uplowman village hall for our annual Christmas social. It was a great evening with lovely food and company.

After the success of last year, we again asked Elsie May's to cater for the event. They cooked some delicious hot

meals (first and second helpings were had) and the fantastic selection of desserts went down a treat!

A new tradition sees members who provide cakes for various meetings and apiary sessions presented with an appreciation gift. Sylvia was given a bee apron for her lovely cake contributions and Steve was awarded a star baker hat for his

cherry cake that has come on leaps and bounds with a perfect bake each time and an even distribution of cherries!

We also learnt of my own mishap at the apiary where I dropped the whole box of cups and smashed the lot! The only thing to survive was the already cracked teapot.....'

Vicky

A little about one of the new Committee Members

Martin Stott **Hello Buzzmates!**

My first and main ambition was always to become a Veterinary Surgeon. Apart from my love of the TV series 'All Creatures Great and Small' and continuous reading of all the James Herriot books, I also had a crush on the local Vet's daughter and, even at the age of 14, figured that 'getting in the Old Man's Good Books' might enhance my chances! The relationship with the Vet's daughter never came to much

but I became Mr. Robinson's favourite little helper, qualifying as the youngest ever Registered Veterinary Nurse.

I would have to work hard though, to attain the A-Level grades required to get into 'Vet School Proper'...and... I didn't! On to 'plan B' then! I was forced at school, to serve a three week 'work experience' spell, in a vocation other than the Vets, and I chose to go to one of our local Dental practices. I must admit that I

enjoyed it...especially the short time I spent in the dental laboratory. Completely unbeknown to me, the dentist and technician I served my work experience with, had covertly applied for me to be enrolled on the next years' Dental Technology university course, three years split between Cardiff and Bristol and, more importantly to me, fully employed by the NHS!

So off to college I went, with a spring in my step but...

absolutely no inclination to do any studying! Three years later...I realised that I didn't like teeth very much...and having suffered what I believe to be the first of my mental health crisis's, I ran away.

I had always had a part-time job in pubs, so when teeth were over, I fell into pub work full time. And that was my vocation for most of the rest of my life and, I loved it!

Twenty eight years of doing that however, led to some unfortunate side effects for me...mental health issues.

So another change in career - after doing a three year spell in medical sterile services, I ended up retraining as a baker at Tesco's in Tiverton and, having worked in nearly every department over seven years, returned to the bakery in February last year and that's where I am now. Which, surprisingly, led me in to



beekeeping. At Tesco's in Tiverton we donate all our waste sugar (from split bags etc.) to local beekeeping clubs and, Mid Devon Bees, co-founded by Baruch, offered a free place on their beginners course to anyone from Tesco's who seemed interested. I was the only one, and was hooked instantly. I threw myself into the club, soon becoming Social Secretary and Publicity Spokesman, and remain one of the handful of custodians.

At the beginning of last year, Malcolm Crook invited me along to one of Tiverton's meetings and I felt instantly welcomed and highly impressed with the club and joined straight away.

Since then, I have accompanied Tony and others to last years Devon County Show, Plymtree Country Fair, and very much enjoyed our Christmas social at Uplowman.

I am very proud now, to have joined the committee and look forward to many years of involvement with the association! Kind regards and best wishes for a successful beekeeping year!

Martin

Extractor for sale

One of our members has a 4 frame manual extractor in excellent condition for sale at £20 contact Tony chairman@tivertonbeekeepers.uk

Diary Dates

Our meetings are the third Wednesday of the month and start at 7.30pm at Uplowman Village Hall.

Wednesday 15 January

John Walters

Talk on "life in the undergrowth"

Wednesday 19 February

Paddy Wallace

An insight into commercial beekeeping at Quince Honey Farm

Wednesday 19 March

Liz Westcott

Preparing honey for showing

Wednesday 16 April

Martin Hann and Clare Densley

How to keep calm and carry on when things don't go as planned (with your bees)!

Wednesday 21 May

Nosema testing

Bring 30 bees along(recently humanely killed) for testing.

The Buzzette - last date for submission for the next issue is 16th February.

Send your news and views to buzzette@tivertonbeekeepers.uk