

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

August 2025



Chairman's Broodbox



Well what a busy month August has been, everything seems to be happening early this year. I've been harvesting the honey, treating any bees that need help and started feeding them several weeks earlier than I'd usually be doing. The hot, sunny, dry weather has also meant that

there isn't a lot of food source's available for the bees so if you've taken your honey off make sure you start to feed them pretty quickly. So that's another beekeeping season almost at its end - or is this where the next season begins? Whichever way you look at it I hope you have looked after



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



your bees and have them prepared for winter.

Recently Malcolm Crook was asked by a local farmer to recover a ferrel nest of bees in an old oak tree that he was trying to cut down. The nest had been exposed but the tree surgeon didn't want to do anymore until the bees were removed. With the assistance of the farmer's tractor bucket (conforming to health and safety rules, of course) we were lifted up to see what we could do. As it turned out most of the nest was still contained within the trunk of the tree

with the bees' entrance some 4ft below the exposed section and on the other side of the tree. We did what we could but in the end left a brood box with frames perched on a branch of the tree near the entrance on the slim chance they might take a fancy to it.

We suspect the farmer is going to have to cut the tree down before we can really get at the nest.

Happy Beekeeping.
Tony

Beekeeping - a practical guide for considerate beekeepers

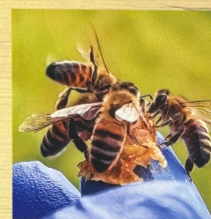
By Martin Hann and Clare Densley
Available 30.09.25 £18.99

Beekeeping is more than a hobby — it's a craft and passion shared by people from all walks of life. This book blends the first-hand knowledge of experienced beekeepers, Clare Densley and Martin Hann of Buckfast Abbey, with field-tested methods to help beekeepers better understand the complex nature of honey bee society and foster a more harmonious relationship with their colonies.

It delves into the complexities of swarming, unpredictable bee behaviour, and practical solutions when things go awry. Keeping bees is an opportunity for continual learning and acquiring new skills, and this book is designed to accompany beekeepers on their journey of discovery.

BEEKEEPING

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CONSIDERATE BEEKEEPERS



MARTIN HANN and CLARE DENSLEY



Keeping bees in Uganda *with* Amigos Worldwide

In March this year we spent a month at Kira Farm Development Centre, Gayaza, Uganda. This article is about our experience of their beekeeping.

The purpose of Amigos is much bigger than beekeeping and we encourage you to look at their website at <https://www.amigos.org.uk> to see the transformation that we observed, and that they make to the lives of the trainees and their communities. Beekeeping is one of many options trainees can learn about to take home and put into practice with their village at the end of their year on Kira Farm.

Lessons In a classroom in front of a blackboard Vincent teaches the trainees in much the same way that we would do a beginners' beekeeping course with our local association. The focus in the lesson we attended was on all possible ways of earning an income/running a business and the benefits to the community of keeping bees. The bees they keep are *Apis mellifera scutellata* (East African lowland honeybee) and *Apis mellifera adansonii* (Western African honeybee) with some *Apis mellifera mellifera* (European honeybee). We were constantly told that the bees were aggressive though our experience approaching hives or observing bees, without bee suits, to quietly observe them, did not result in any stings.

Top bar hives were the hive of choice. On Kira Farm these were on light weight bamboo stands, or in the community hung by wire from trees or posts made from branches.

Hive Products Before we arrived trainees had been making dipped candles in the open with an old coffee tin balanced over an open fire. Later in the year they were planning to show them how to make bees wax wraps. The purpose of both products being as much for tourist sale as for their own use, since both products have limited use in a village thatched hut.

Carpentry Carpentry classes involved learning to construct furniture, make joints, etc., but an additional task for the trainer and trainees was to construct 100 top bar hives for distribution to three of the Amigos community projects. William assisted carpenter Edward producing many of the parts for the construction of the top bar hives which included 2600 top bars. Trainees contributed to the construction when they had spare time.



Tailoring The trainees in Tailoring classes learn, from their teacher Lydia, to make made to measure clothing, measuring clients, drawing patterns, cutting fabric and making the clothes. They mostly use treadle sewing machines, so they don't need to rely on electricity supplies. Learning how to repair their machines is just as important as the use of them.



By the end of March the main tailor, Isaiah, needed to have made 30 bee suits and gauntlets for the same distribution as the hives. Having identified the make of Sarah's electric home machine Isaiah produced a late 1960's version which, after a bit of oiling, worked perfectly, he set her up on the 'banda' at the front of the workshop where she was able to enjoy the breeze while talking to trainees as she sewed, intermittently changing tasks to manage the variable electricity supply. Trainees helped out when they had finished their day's tasks.



Hives in action Top bar hives were situated in wooded areas both on Kira farm and the community project we visited in Masindi district. The 2023 graduated trainees we visited in Masindi district had set up a village apiary of 90 hives. The apiary worked as a co-operative with each of the members responsible for four+ hives. The apiary was constructed in May 2024 and about a third of the hives were occupied, the members had to ensure that unoccupied hives were clean, with lemon grass used as a hive attractant.

Hives became occupied naturally as bees swarmed and the hope was the rest would be occupied over the next few months. The hives were deliberately situated on a route that elephants used to access the crops of the village. Elephants eating and destroying crops are a great cause of antagonism between wildlife and the communities and by using bees to solve the problem a greater harmony with nature is achieved. The hives around the

outside of the apiary were joined together with a strong wire. When the elephants knocked the wire or the hives the bees come out and sting the elephants around their eyes. By the time we visited the elephants were no longer a problem. Initially baboons caused problems with the apiary, they would sit on the hives jumping up and down scaring away the bee colonies and taking the honey. The vigilance and persistence of the apiarists and increasing numbers of hives occupied by bees eventually resolved the problem.

Forage Cassava is an important crop the trainees learn to grow in their farming as all parts of the plant are eaten or used in the home, it is pollinated by bees along with the beans that make up a main part of the Ugandan diet. Many fruits grow naturally whether farmed or not and we saw many bees on banana flowers. Other bee pollinated plants were avocados, guavas, jackfruit and countless unidentified buzzing flowering trees. Outside our lodging was a flowering agave, in the evenings it was covered in honeybees and with a delicious fragrance.



This charity's development of beekeeping and how it fits with in the learning of their trainees and needs of the communities is encouraging. We enjoyed their enthusiasm and increasing knowledge for this and the many other aspects of work, which most of all gives the youngsters belief in themselves and their abilities to help and support those around them.

Sarah and William Lines



I am writing this having just returned from **Plymtree Country Fayre** where, as you will know, we have had a stand promoting Tiverton Beekeepers and the importance of honey bees in the environment.

We had many visitors of all ages fascinated by the bees in our observation hive, making beanie antennae, talking about Asian hornets, buying honey and hive products and rolling candles. It was another great day for our branch.

It would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, help and valuable time generously given by Ian, William and Sarah, Louise, Sue, Martin and Irene, Sylvia, Alan, Steve and Dee and Jon all under the guidance of Tracy. We are very lucky to have them as members and friends of the branch.

Tony



Buckfast Abbey Apiary visit



On a beautifully warm and sunny day at the beginning of August about twenty members of our branch enjoyed a day trip to visit Buckfast Abbey Apiary. We meet with Martin Hanns and Clare Densley who showed us around the apiary and workshop and kindly shared their knowledge and practices with us. A very enjoyable day out. *All photographs FS.*

Doing the Basic Assessment

A new opportunity

Back in March, fourteen members of the Tiverton Beekeepers did an improvers course. At the end of the course Tony and Malcolm said that they felt we'd all be able to pass the Basic Assessment. The club would pay the £30 fee for the assessment as they feel it's a good thing for beekeepers to do. It's a practical exam in basic beekeeping. Three of us decided to do it.

Luckily, the BBKA News had a section all about the Basic in each of its 2025 editions from March through to June. This was an excellent revision resource and clearly explained what you were expected to do and the type of questions you would be asked. Just about all of the questions are covered in our beginners' course.

How the assessment was set up

Tony contacted the Devon Education officer and she allocated us an examiner. He set a day when we'd all be available. Tony, Malcolm and Alan met us at the apiary the day before and went through what to expect. We also each chose the hive we'd open up during the assessment.

The assessment takes approximately 1 hour and each of us was allocated a time with a 2 hour gap between. Alan had done an amazing job providing us with frame parts, hammer, knife and foundation. He also showed us where the soda solution was for tool washing. So all we had to take with us was our own tool and smoker.

At the assessment

Tony and Malcolm were at the apiary staying out of earshot, making tea and cutting cake for our examiner's breaks. Our examiner was a lovely kind chap with a great deal of knowledge. First of all he produced a small box and had me identify all the items in the box. This was quite easy as there was a queen cage, a queen marking cage, apiguard varroa treatment and some other bits and bobs.

We went up to the hives and he asked me to open up the hive and look for signs of disease. I thought I knew what I was doing but as soon as I started to lift the first frame he said, "A better way of doing that is like this", this unnerved me quite a bit as I felt he thought I was doing it wrong and if he said it once he said it about 10 times. There was a better way of doing just about everything I did. I also let my smoker go out and then, big mistake relit it wearing my gloves and veil. I'd read in the BBKA News that this really something you shouldn't do.

Eventually he said that we had seen enough of the colony and we went to the port-a-cabin where he asked me questions while I made up a frame. This went very well as I'd done a couple of hours revision using the BBKA News articles. He said "This frame is very good" in quite a surprised voice.

I came away having spent a pleasant hour with a very nice, informative man but feeling that I'd probably failed as there are four sections to the assessment, the practical being one of them. You have to get 50% or more in each section.

Results

When our results emails arrived a week or so later, we found that we had all been awarded credits. This means that we had achieved scores of over 75%

Conclusion

The assessment was an enjoyable hour and I learned some new (probably better) ways of doing things from the examiner but I think the best part of doing the basic is sitting down and really studying the basics of bee keeping. Knowing and remembering in detail how to spot diseases, how to split a colony, how many days the bee lifecycle takes and various other facts and figures really makes you feel confident in your beekeeping.

I thoroughly recommend doing the basic as I almost feel like a real beekeeper now.

Tracy Frankpitt

2025 Calendar

September

Thur 4th	Committee Meeting
Sat 6th	Apiary meeting
Wed 17th	Branch meeting
Sun 21st	Apiary meeting

October

Wed 15th	Branch meeting
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November

Wed 19th	Branch AGM
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Meetings - 7.30pm Upplowman Village Hall.
Apiary Meetings - Knightshayes.



The Buzzette

Last date for submission for the next issue is **20th September**.

Send your news and views to
buzzette@tivertonbeekeepers.uk

Receipe of the Month



Honey Butter Shortbread Biscuits

- 85g unsalted butter, soften before use
- 65g honey
- 25g caster sugar
- 130g plain flour
- 20g cornflour

1. Combine the butter honey and sugar in a large mixing bowl and beat well with a wooden spoon for a few minutes. You're looking for the mixture to be light and fluffy.

2. Add the plain flour and cornflour to the mixture and beat to a thick, stiff dough. Wrap it well and chill for at least 30 minutes.

3. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 190°C, gas mark 5. Line a large baking tray with baking parchment. Roll out the cookie dough until it's about 0.5cm thick, then use a sharp knife or cutter to cut hexagon shapes out of the dough (see tip below). Arrange on the baking tray, then use a chopstick or round ended implement to make small indentations, to make them look like honeycomb.

4. Bake for 12-14 minutes. The cookies should be golden brown around the edges when ready. They might feel soft in the middle but will harden as they cool. Allow to cool for 10 minutes on the tray, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. These will keep for 3-4 days in an airtight container.