

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

January 2026



Chairman's Broodbox

Happy New year to all members and their families. Hope you have had a great festive season.

By now your bees will be all set up for the winter which will allow us to inspect and clean all our equipment and store it for next year. It will also allow us to make up sufficient frames for brood and supers. Hopefully you have taken advantage of our bulk buy opportunity for frames, foundation and fondant.

At our recent AGM our chairman Tony Lindsell stepped down from the position and I have stepped into the very large shoes he has left, I hope I can deliver just a fraction of his enthusiasm and hard work. I'm sure you agree that Tony has been fantastic for the club, his drive and knowledge will be sorely missed. He remains on the committee so we won't lose him altogether.

We had a good turn out for the Christmas social, always a date for the calendar, it would be nice to see even more people next year and make it better. Thanks to all those who helped organise such a great event.

Just a reminder about the members meetings with talks booked through to March and don't forget to get your bees checked for Nosema at the April meeting.

I hope you don't mind but I should like to thank our committee for all their hard work over the year, without whom the association VC would not function as well as it does. Congratulations to the team who put together the entry for the Stephenson trophy, another win and the entry was awarded the blue ribboned trophy for the best entry in the honey tent at the Devon show. A special thanks

to Malcolm and Alan for their work at the apiary and all their assistance to members and non members with bee issues along with Tony, and as mentioned at the social they have been superheroes.

Let's look forward to another great season and I hope to see you at the upcoming talks.

Ian Sorensen



**Tiverton Beekeepers are a branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association
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Masthead photo by Kat Smith: <https://www.pexels.com>

Thoughts on our retiring Chairman Tony Lindsay



For the past three years the highlight of the Christmas social is Tony standing up, summarising the beekeeping year and thanking members for their contributions with his well thought out awards of star baker aprons, chefs hat and bouquets of flowers. He goes out of his way to thank everyone for their contributions. I've often thought, *'it's a shame no one thanks Tony for all that he does.'*

With Tony's retirement from being Chairman, now is the perfect opportunity.

When I attended my first Annual General Meeting, Tony had just agreed to become chairman of Tiverton beekeepers. I thought *'this quiet, unassuming chap isn't your typical, likes the sound of his own voice Chairman type. I wonder if he'll be any good.'* We very quickly found that he was very good.

Tony also kept his job as Devon Beekeepers Liaison officer and later in the year also took on the role of membership secretary too. He attended every branch meeting, every apiary session, every country show, every beginners and improvers session and every committee meeting. The committee meetings he led were positive, constructive and really good fun.

We very quickly found our committee expanding. This was due to one of Tony's super powers. He's very good at getting people to join in and do jobs. Louise will tell you. He comes up to you, compliments your jumper and become branch secretary. Vicky found herself on the committee before she'd even agreed to it. Tony can spot talent and energy a mile off. He is also very good at developing his committee members. I offered to improve our show stand and

I came to the committee and said, *'these are my ideas and I'm going to make one of these buy some of those, and I'll get some of this'*. Tony said, *'you are not supposed to do it all yourself, we are a club, people want to be involved and feel they are helping. Ask people to do things and make them feel like they are part of a team.'* This sums up Tony's philosophy.

Tony takes full responsibility for everyone in the club. Last summer at the apiary, a beginner got stung on the lip. We all had calls from Tony the next day, frantically trying to find out her name so that he could give her a call and make sure she was ok.

When we did the improvers course led by Tony, Malcolm and Alan I realised how much time these three chaps spend running around Mid Devon supporting members who are

Should we have a plan?



having problems with their bees. There were twelve improvers and nearly all of us had asked for help and been rescued by Tony, Malcolm or Alan. They never boast about it but they are beekeeping heroes and really should be wearing capes. (I can get 3 red capes £6.31 each if you think it's a good idea.)

Since Tony has been Chairman, Tiverton Beekeepers has doubled in size we have over 150 members. We have a very high profile in the community thanks to Vicky (who Tony coerced into running our Facebook page) and the big band of jolly yellow t shirt wearing members who enthusiastically man our show stands. We have a committee of 16 very capable members.

Quite the act for Ian to follow. He has bravely taken on the Chairman role and we will all support him in every way we can.

Tracy Frankpitt

What is your plan for your honey bee colonies this year?

Do you need a plan? Keeping your bees alive is probably everyone's plan, but just keeping them alive is quite a challenge in recent years for the improved beekeeper, an even bigger task for any beginner. That is probably what we love about the craft. I find it very absorbing and there is always a problem to sort out and something new to learn.

I think if we can make a plan for the year rather than just keeping the bees alive, or react to a 'Fire Brigade' type of colony handling, it will make us better bee keepers and increase our enjoyment.

Every colony with a queen over one year old will need some kind of swarm management. What is the purpose of your colony? Is it honey production? Is it for the pollination of your veg and flower beds? Is it for other hive products?

Now is the time to make that decision as it may change the way you handle your swarm control. For best honey production or maybe rearing a couple of new queens, you will need strong colonies and therefore you face a greater risk of swarming.

A young queen or extra supers to give more room may help. Another option may be to remove three frames of brood

and the queen to produce a Nuc for yourself or even give or sell to someone else.

If you want to make an increase by making splits, where are the queens coming from? Have you enough spare equipment? Are you still fit and healthy or do you find lifting heavy supers hard work? Is it now the time to plan smaller hive types or may be leave more honey on the colonies for the bees to make your life easier? If lots of honey or hive products is wanted, have you enough jars or containers, wax candle moulds? Have you prepared enough items for your next local market or school event?

Are you going to monitor colonies for varroa? If so how? (Check BBKA advice for different ways.) Are you going to treat? Use chemical or organic methods? Have you got the equipment or the right items ready to use? Is IMP an option in your plan?

Winter is a great time to examine the contents of your garden. Now is a good time to order and plant new types of plants to provide your girls with the pollen and nectar they require at the right times of the year. I have found that having a plan to work to, makes my life with the bees easier but, more importantly, the bees are less stressed and are happier (and so am I).

Malcolm Crooke

Christmas Social



On the 6th December we held our annual Christmas social at Uplowman Village Hall. Thirty seven members and partners enjoyed a great evening with Elsie May's providing the catering, a choice of lasagne or curry, and three puddings all very delicious. The club provided the first drink with members bringing their own.

After the meal, a few speeches were made, the usual thanks to everyone for putting in all the hard work from myself and a Blue Peter badge to Rex,



Vicky and Sylvia for their frame making skills at the beekeeping course. I then handed the baton to Tony who spoke about our continued success in the Stephenson trophy and our Blue Ribbon success at the Devon show. Tony then awarded the British Beekeeping Association basic award certificates to Rex, Will and Tracy following their successful assessment.

I then handed over to Tracy for more awards. The first was a glass trophy, suitably protected



by masking tape, for Tony for all he has done for the club. The masking tape being necessary after Tony managed to break two club glass trophies in transit...

The next was a recognition of Tony, Malcolm and Alan's advice and help with other people's Beekeeping problems. Each receiving their own super hero capes. The evening drew to a close with everyone enjoying the evening. Let's make it a bigger and better social next year. **Ian Sorensen**

2026 Calendar

February 18th

Branch Meeting

Alexander Paines

Gardening for wildlife

March 18th

Branch Meeting

David Packham

It will be better this year!

Sunday 22nd

Taunton Beekeepers

Annual Spring Equipment

Auction

Ruiston Village Hall

TA3 5JD

Opens 10am

Auction at 2.00pm

Tea and cakes will be there as always!

The Buzzette

Last date for submission for the next issue is

20th February.

Send your news, views, comments, stories and photographs to

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