

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

February 2026



Chairman's Broodbox

February is a time when we get keen to start the new season. There is the occasional warmish sunny day and we are eager to see how everything is doing. It is a time when the queen will be starting to gear up for egg laying too, but don't be too impatient, cold snaps still catch us off guard and we want to keep the hive temperature up.

Check your hives have enough stores by hefting and if they are light let them have some fondant. If you have to look into the hive just lift the crown board for a sneaky peak but get the hive covered up soon as you can. Wait until the temperature is over ten degrees and it is sunny to minimise heat loss.

Now is a good time if you need to trim and tidy up the Apiary, to make sure you have all your frames ready both



super and brood. You need to plan the start of the season, do you have to change out old brood frames, make splits replace equipment etc?

Also think about your garden, do you need to replace any plants? Think about the pollinators when choosing

plants, if you have room a flowering shrub with vertical height and flowers will increase the food source above low level plants

The time will fly by and it will be time for first inspections before we know it that's if it stops raining. **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>

Hive Side Training for UK Beekeepers

Hive Side Training (HST)

This is something you will be hearing a lot about in the coming months. For some it will be important as it offers free training! It is a three-year training initiative funded by the government, managed by the Animal and Plant Health Agency and run by the Bee Farmers Association (BFA)

It was launched at the Bee Show on February 21st in Telford and aims to offer free training to any beekeeper (not just BFA members) who has kept bees for 3 to 5 years. The intention being that this will improve beekeeping skills and bee health across the country. There are reporting requirements that DEFRA insist on for record and funding purposes. Whilst these are not onerous you will have to check the web site for specific details (this article was written before the web site was launched). You can however self-certify as to how many years you have kept bees.

The Bee Farmers Association have selected a number of experienced members (eight in South of England) to undertake this training. The good news for TBKA is one of these venues is in Tiverton Devon at Allberry Farm. The training here will be by Malcolm Pearce and Bryan



Wright. Malcolm runs approximately 70 hives between Somerset and Devon and Bryan keeps approximately 150 hives in apiaries distributed around various mid Devon villages. Both are members of the Bee Farmers Association, and members of TBKA, they have an huge number of years' experience keeping bees.

The training at Allberry Farm is scheduled for May and June for a maximum of 10 people in each of three one day courses and will utilise 20 hives. It is envisaged that trainees will attend Allberry Farm around 9.30am for a 10 o'clock start. All equipment (hive tools, smoker and gloves) will be provided. All that is required of the trainee is that they attend with a freshly laundered clean bee suit. There will be demonstrations and practice in opening and inspecting



hives in the morning by both Malcolm and Bryan. This will be followed by a lunch break during which there will be a discussion about biosecurity and various NBU best practice guides will be available. In the afternoon the trainees will open and inspect the other 10 hives working individually and finishing around 3.30pm. Other venues and dates are available in other parts of the country but this will involve a greater degree of travel.

To register for this free training, you need to log onto the Hive Side Training web site and book onto a course. You will be asked to pay £20 but this will be refunded when you attend the training. There is more back ground data and detailed instructions for registering on the web page under "**Hive Side Training**".

Bryan Wright

Branch Meeting - talk by Alex Paines

At the February branch meeting we were pleased to welcome our guest speaker Alex Paines. He is a professional horticulturist and member of the staff at RHS Garden Rosemoor, specialising in sustainable gardening, biodiversity, and, specifically, the maintenance of the lakeside and underpass areas.

He is known for demonstrating traditional techniques like scything and giving educational talks on wildlife gardening.

As beekeepers we tend to be more aware of wildlife in the garden than most. Many of us try to maintain a balance between having an attractive, useable garden and also encouraging wildlife. Alex had some great suggestions for this.

Over the years he has had to convince his bosses at Rosemoor to adopt more sustainable methods while keeping the visiting public happy. We all know that leaving a pile of rotting cut logs in the garden is good for wildlife. Alex said that a neatly stacked pile of logs with its cut edges lined up facing the public looks great and becomes an architectural item of interest in the garden. Thereby, satisfying the wildlife and the visitors.

He stated the importance of ponds in gardens and

emphasised how crucial the placement of a pond can be. A pond in the middle of a lawn is less useful for wild life as small animals need cover. A pond at the edge of a garden near a border is far more wildlife friendly.

Alex talked about visitors thinking that the meadow at Rosemoor was just gardeners being lazy. To counteract this they have adopted Mullet Gardening, short at the front and long at the back. This way, visitors can see that the long grass has been left on purpose.

Chop and drop is something that Alex has campaigned for at Rosemoor. Instead of cutting back plants, putting the cuttings on a compost heap and then mulching later in the year, they are chopping back the plants and leaving the cuttings in place all winter. This is better cover for wildlife and

saves dragging everything backwards and forwards. I've only mentioned a tiny part of his talk. So many of his ideas were great ones and I for one will be adopting at least a couple of them. It was a lovely evening overall. We had tea and three types of homemade cake after the talk. We got to catch up with other beekeepers and found out whose bees made it through the winter.

Tracy Frankpitt

Below: an image of mullet gardening at RHS Rosemoor.



Photograph: © RHS Rosemoor



Photograph: © RHS Rosemoor

January Committee Meeting Report

Ten members attended the meeting and six sent their apologies.

Finance review - Our financial situation is sound and the members renewal subscriptions are coming in - to date there are 79 registered members of whom 10 are partners and 2 local.

Apiary - Malcolm met Jackie the NT Surveyor at Knightshayes on 8th December to discuss options for the renewal of our facilities there. The NT owns a cottage reasonably close to the apiary which they do not aim to rent out so there is a possibility the club might be able to use that. It has storage sheds and although it might be in poor repair Malcolm assured Jackie our members would probably be able to complete any work needed to sort it out. Jackie is referring to higher up the chain and will report. Generally the NT is very happy with us being on site.

We have lost 2 colonies over winter and will therefore start the new season with 6 colonies.

Visits: the initial visit to the club apiary, weather permitting, is on 14th March, thereafter, starting on 4th April, they will be on the afternoon of the first Saturday and third Sunday of each month.

Education - The beginners' course is ongoing - only one change to the programme, Tony Lindsell's session on 'Getting Started' will be covered by Malcolm Crook. As Laila is so busy, Charles suggested Steve Johns as an alternative to cover the topics Laila normally does. He has passed Steve's number over.

Equipment Sale - Taunton's used equipment auction will take place on Sunday 22nd March – details to be provided to the beginners and also its in the Buzzette.

Events - Speakers are booked for the rest of the year and we hope to book a club trip to Blackbury Farm in June.

Shows - The Mid Devon Show pitch is booked and paid for. The tent needs servicing before this year's shows - it needs a new back wall and we also aim to purchase a new 6m x 3m tent for the new season.

Social media and Press - We currently have 272 followers. But generally things are quiet on the press front.

Yellow-legged Hornet Update - The nearest sighting to us was Dorchester last year which is a little too close for comfort. Unfortunately the queens had flown before it could be destroyed. Charles will provide a general YLH update for the Buzzette.

Website - The website is up to date but the Beginners' course dates will be added.

Bulk Buying - There were twelve orders for frames and foundation; the invitation for jars and syrup will come in June or July.

Buzzette - more articles are required to be submitted by the 20th of each month please. Bee related articles can be supplied by any member and we always welcome photographs.

Club T-Shirts - Remaining stock to be offered to members at a cost of £15, Vicky to send a reminder to members who might be interested.

Correspondence - Hemyock Gardeners have 65 members and would like a presentation on beekeeping, various dates were offered and Louise will confirm for 9th September.

AOB - The club has committed £200 to the BDI project to research the impact of bee sting intolerance.

Three delicious cakes were kindly provided to go with our cup of tea at the meeting.

Next Committee meeting Tuesday 3rd March.

Education Report

Our 33 beginners are nearing the end of their theory course and they will be let loose on the hives at the apiary in just a few weeks time. We have 14 people attending the improvers' course in March.

Prospective beekeepers are already asking about next year's beginners' course. Educate a beekeeper, and you help heal the planet.



That overwhelming feeling of happiness when you realise that your bees made it through winter. TF



Beekeeping in Morocco

Beekeeping in Morocco is not just a hobby; it's a centuries-old tradition. We saw these bee hives in the mid Atlas Mountains. I asked the guide why there was a tent. He explained that the beekeeper had to stay with the bees for security. Honey is considered a very precious commodity in Morocco. Tracy Frankpitt

Exclusive Association Member Discount

Use your codes at **bbwear.co.uk**
Valid until 31st July 2026

15% off Classic Polycotton Range:
BEEASC15 (case sensitive)
10% off the award-winning Ultra range:
BEEASC10 (case sensitive)

Discount codes also apply to jackets, vests, trousers, gauntlets, replacement hoods and children's suits.

2026 Calendar

March 18th

Branch Meeting

David Packham

It will be better this year!

Ruiston Village Hall

TA3 5JD

Opens 10am

Auction at 2.00pm

Sunday 22nd

Taunton Beekeepers

Annual Spring Equipment

Auction

Tea and cakes will be there - as always!

The Buzzette

Last date for submission for the next issue is

20th March

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

buzzette@tivertonbeekeepers.uk