

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

March 2026



Chairman's Broodbox

This month starts with some very sombre and sad news. Keith Owers our president sadly passed away on the 22nd February. Keith was a wonderful inspiration for many and had been with Tiverton Beekeepers a long time, he was made a life member several years ago. For many he was the person who taught us about beekeeping. He also would be at the shows supporting the club's efforts and selling his wonderful honey.

Keith was a lovely man, a true gentleman. Always willing to help and support all beekeepers new and old, he will be greatly missed. We will bring you a more comprehensive history of Keith's achievements in April's Buzzette. At this point I need to mention Malcolm Crook who with his own apiary, and other club interests has made the time to regularly visit Keith when he was ill and also to take on board the management of Keith's Apiary. We are so lucky

to have such dedicated, generous beekeepers .

On a positive note - we have had a break in the rain and temperatures are rising, we may get to that magic 15degrees and be able to take a quick look in the hive to see how everything is going. From my own perspective my one hive is looking good with bees foraging and bringing in pollen. There are lots of them, evidenced by the number who came out for a friendly chat and offered their advice that I should put the roof on as there was still a bit of a breeze. Nonetheless a very welcome sign that the colony is growing. The fields around my colony are starting to provide forage, catkins are plentiful, as are dandelion, daisy, flowering currants, and celandines. Things appear to be a little earlier than last year so be prepared for potentially early swarm prevention and give them enough space. **Ian Sorensen**

Wednesday 18 March

7.30 - 9.30pm

Uplowman Village Hall

David Packham

It will be better this year!

David has kept bees for over forty years after a swarm landed in a tree in his garden.

Previously, a Seasonal Bee Inspector for the NBU for 17 years, inspecting over 500 colonies a year, he is now a BBKA Assessor and also runs the local bee associations beekeeping courses. He writes articles in the beekeeping journal and BBKA news magazines.

It is always a pleasure to be in his company as he shares the wealth of knowledge he has to hand, so please come along. You will not be disappointed!

There will be tea and cake!



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

Mating Mayhem

At the end of last summer, well probably nearly into autumn, I thought that I ought to sort out the mating hives, tidy them up and clean them for the winter. I knew that most were now empty of nurse bees but I still had three or four with bees in.

The plan was to open every mating hive, clear out the old wax and make a huge pile of polystyrene and plastic bits ready for a good day of cleaning up and storing them. Any with bees left in them, I would unite them over a normal colony with an eke and newspaper, simple.

The first few went very well, and then the mayhem surfaced. Not only did the mating hive have nurse bees in it, where did **she** come from? I had seen reports of bees overwintering in mating hives but she deserved a better chance. I needed to give the small colony room to expand but even a two frame nuc would be too large for the colony to keep warm.



Playing around with some spare mating hive frames, I noticed that three mating

frames would fit a national super frame. So I placed 6 mating box frames in 2 national super frames and 3 drawn empty frames (making five frame) into a 5 frame super. Food was placed over the crown board and they were left for the winter.

The colony kept a good weight through the winter and when I checked them mid February, they were expanding well, but will need more room.

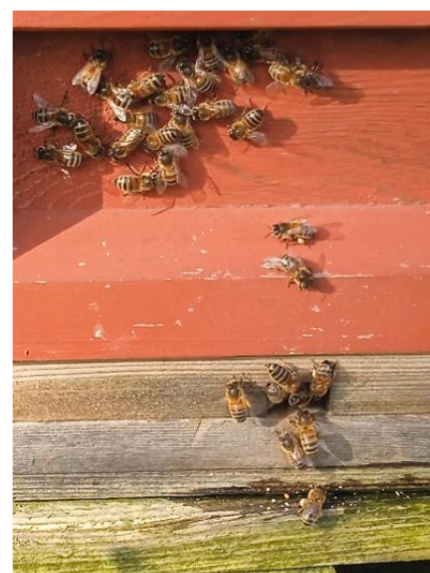


I used a five frame nuc box but as it was it was too much room for the small colony to keep warm, I used some insulation panels to take up over half of the area of the nuc and placed 3 frames of drawn foundation in the centre to capture the warmth from below. Fondant placed over the crown board again.

The result looks promising as in early March, many young bees were out on their orientation flights.

Don't be afraid, **try it!!**

Malcolm Crook



Meet the Committee

Ian Sorenson Chairman



I started my Beekeeping adventure in 2018, both my wife and I decided we would like to give it a go. We signed up for the course and started in September under the tutelage of Derek and Keith.

Unfortunately my wife developed Breast cancer, somewhat ironic as I had worked as a flycasting instructor with South West Fish For Life (a breast cancer Charity) for 10 years at that time. She had surgery later in the year missing a number of classes but we carried on. We both finished the course and undertook the practical elements only for my wife to develop a second cancer, this stopped everything apart from the odd apiary visit. My wife sadly lost her battle in 2020.

In 2021 I decided to get some bees and carry on our plans, Tony found me two swarms and with his support and mentoring managed to eventually get my Apiary up to 3 colonies. As are the trials and tribulations of beekeeping this year I am down to one and need to build the colonies back up this summer

In my short career as a beekeeper it is evident that you never stop learning and our Apiary sessions will be very relevant this spring to my particular situation.

The Apiary on a friend's farm is a source of joy and escape. It is also a strong connection with my wife as the farm is owned by one of her friends and now I am introducing more of her friends into the world of bees and of course - cake....

Jon Davies Minutes Secretary



We moved to Devon from Hampshire in 2013 after I retired early from working in London. I got into beekeeping through our friend and neighbour Tony Lindsell. One day in January a few

years ago he asked if we would be happy to host a couple of colonies of bees from a member who was giving up beekeeping. We have a nice south facing paddock with some tree cover so they were moved in and Tony showed me the ropes.

I learned the basics and as well as managing our own hives I helped Tony with his bees too to get some more experience. As this was during the pandemic we also had calls from beekeepers who were struggling to manage their bees so Tony and I would go and try and help them, again gathering vital experience and meeting some lovely people en route!

After a while I was 'invited' to put my name forward as branch secretary, a role I fulfilled until the AGM last year when I stepped down but took up the role of minutes secretary, which, unsurprisingly, entails taking the minutes from the committee meetings and sharing them with fellow members before they are posted to the club's website.

Sadly, at the moment I have no bees, having lost my two colonies at the end of last summer through wasp attack. I'm having a year off this year as we will be away at crucial points in the annual colony cycle but may be back in the fray again next year.

March Committee Meeting Report

Eleven members attended the meeting and five sent their apologies.

Keith Owers RIP

Ian read a letter from Angela Owers detailing the sad news that our life President Keith had passed away on 22nd February. Keith has played a massive part in beekeeping in Devon, passing on his knowledge and experience to so many members of the club, past and present. He will be greatly missed and a more complete obituary will be in the April Buzzette.

Finance review - Our financial situation is sound.

Membership update - Vicky Morrish has now assumed responsibility for the role of membership secretary with support from William. There are 149 members in total - 126 registered, 20 partners and 3 local members.

Apiary - Sadly we have only three viable colonies left at the apiary. Malcolm has some supers of honey which he will use to do a honey extraction training session in the kitchen at Uplowman Village Hall for the beginners. We are short of 12oz jars and labels so these will need re-ordering.

Charles will be seeing the guys at North Devon Queens and he will see if they have any overwintered nucs available for us.

Malcolm has chased the NT re the potential use of the cottage by the apiary as a clubhouse and storage space.

Education - The beginners' course is ongoing, 31 students with one theory session left before the practical sessions start at the apiary. The improvers course started on 2nd March and was well attended. There are 3 enquiries for the next beginners' course. Malcolm Crook has spoken to Simon The Beekeeper seeking a discount code for our beginners.

Events - Lesley to contact Dan Basterfield re a site visit in June. Lesley is perplexed by the lack

of interest shown by the members in the speakers she books for meetings. There was a general discussion about how we improve attendance so the meetings will be highlighted in the Buzzette with perhaps a brief biography of the speaker and new beginners will be encouraged to come as these sessions provide a wealth of information.

Shows - Tracy has been having lengthy discussions with Alan Barrow re our stand. So as not to block next door's stand we have been asked not to have a back wall on the protruding leg of our stand. Tracy will visit the Honiton supplier re a new 6m x 3m tent, a service for the existing one and a new back wall.

Social media and Press - We currently have 273 followers.

Yellow-legged Hornet Update - Charles has sent out the summary update. The Devon AHATs met recently and there will be a stand at the Devon County show. Charles detailed a smart trap that takes a picture of whatever insect has visited it then sends it to a mobile phone. Charles will order one – cost £30.

Website - The website is up to date.

Buzzette - New submission date is the 10th of each month. Each committee member will write a short piece detailing their role on the committee, how they got into beekeeping and provide a photo.

Frances will include a rolling advert re guest speakers to try and encourage higher attendance.

Correspondence - Tiverton Macular Support Group have approached us requesting a presentation – Tracy volunteered to do it and Louise will email them to discuss arrangements.

AOB - Next committee meeting dates Thursday 7th May, 2nd July, 3rd September, 29th October.



2026 Calendar

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!

Club Apiary Visits

NT Knightshayes

Starting on **April 4th**,
they will be on the
afternoon of the first
Saturday and third
Sunday of each
month.

April 15th

Branch Meeting
**Nosema testing
and Microscopy**
7pm - 9pm

Branch Committee Meetings

Branch Committee Meeting are held
at Upplowman Village Hall
7.30-9pm

May 7th

July 2nd

September 3rd

November 5th

The Buzzette

Last date for submission for the next
issue is

10th April

Send your news, views, comments,
stories and photographs to
buzzette@tivertonbeekeepers.uk