

The Tivvy Buzzette

Tiverton Beekeepers Newsletter

April 2026



Chairman's Broodbox



In March we added an extra last session to this year's course. Extraction was the topic and an opportunity had arisen because one of the dead hives in the Apiary had a honey super available. We held the session at the Uplowman village hall for the first time. Malcolm delivered a brilliant, informative, amusing, and very very sticky session. Four frames were processed and spun out, with Malcolm's warning to make sure the valve is closed as honey flows silently .

All went to plan and the hall kitchen wasn't too sticky at the end. It was only as we packed up that the logistics of the venue presented a problem. How to get the extractor and settling tank home. A struggle to get it onto the front seat ensued and just when all looked good Malcolm's silent flow warning ironically came back to bite us. The valve had been knocked open and about 1.5 to 2 pound of honey filled my car sill. Rookie error! We managed to recover the



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

situation and after Vicky did a great job of cleaning the car and we got it home. Despite the loss I still managed to recover 1.4 litre of honey. In all the four frames produced approximately 2 litres of honey.

April is the start to our season proper with full inspections, artificial swarms, splits and supers going onto the hives. It also sees the start of the Apiary sessions, first Saturday and third Sunday of the month the planned days. Keep an eye-out for changes and announcements on the

website and the WhatsApp group messages. For those that have avoided any hive losses this winter enjoy your bees and have a good season.

Those that have had the misfortune of losing colonies get your bee fix by coming to the club Apiary or maybe offer to help out at other apiaries while you build your Apiary back up. Most of all enjoy the season and I hope your honey harvest produces the levels that we saw at the extraction session.

Ian Sorensen



Meet the Committee

Lesley Ayre Programme Secretary



If you're a fan of pooh bear, you will understand why I took up bee keeping. The one thing that I had to battle with was ... the sting! I have always had bad reactions to bites of any sort, so you might understand why the hesitation. After much research I decided that a bee suit was the answer, unless the veil splits!

I spent the summer of 2019 under the tutoring of a beekeeper who was retiring. His bees were not the best tempered, but I had my suit. I bought 1 hive and equipment at the end of that summer, after he'd taken honey off. But by the end of February the following year, I had dead bees!

That's when I decided to find a beekeeping course and learn what I should be doing. Been here ever since. Love it and the sense of community within the group. I went to an AGM meeting and put my name up for a role, as Tony said, 'it only takes a couple of hours'. After that I took on the microscopes role and did two courses with Dan Basterfield and his dad at Blackberry Honey Farm.

Previously to this life I was a Dental Nurse and practice administrator, and I have to say some days I think it was an easier Job. Currently I have got 1 strong hive and 1 - not sure what's going on. Only time will tell.

Keith Owers RIP

22.02.26

Tributes

'So sad I have a heavy heart today.'

Steve Willis

'Such a kind man and a true gent. He leaves us safe in the knowledge that through his expert dedication to beekeeping, the skills and knowledge imparted to everyone he has trained, the Beekeepers of the Tiverton branch have been left on an excellent foundation for the future. RIP Keith, you will be sorely missed!'

Clive Rowe pictured with Keith, right

Very sad news. Malcolm took me to see Keith's bees over towards Tiverton on our way back from the apiary a couple of weeks ago. They were the ones I was hiding in the hedge from as a decoy while Malcolm took a look at their supplies. Keith must have been a very patient and tolerant man to put up with that lot, goodness knows what they are like in the summer!

Rex Carson

I'm so sorry to hear that Keith has died. I was taught by him, too, and always found him really clear, helpful and reassuring.

And much later, his columns in the Buzette on what to do each month were so helpful, especially as he was talking about our very local weather conditions, landscape and vegetation, rather than the whole county or country. And he was not afraid to tell us when things had gone wrong, as well as when he, more often, had success.

Teresa Butchers



Keith's Story

What better way to tell you about Keith Owers than for him to do it in his own words. This was an article he wrote for the Buzzette.

"My interest in my uncle's bees started when I was about six or seven years old just after the war. I had been staying with my uncle who had two WBC hives in the garden. I spent a lot of time just watching the bees coming and going. I was hooked.



Photograph by Tracy Frankpitt

I have always been keen on insects, and would spend hours watching butterflies. I started my horticultural career in 1953 working on a local glasshouse nursery, and in 1954 started full time training at a horticultural college in Kent. Pests and diseases were an important part of my training. I had my two years national service and then went back to college before starting work in West Sussex.

From Sussex I moved to Suffolk before coming to work in Devon in 1970. On arriving in Cullompton I joined the Round Table (A similar organisation to the Rotary Club, but you had to leave at forty.)

I informed my wife that I would start beekeeping when I was forty.

In 1957 I started a ten week beekeeping class at Bicton College with Ken Stevens followed by hands on sections in 1958 when I joined The DBKA. I joined Exeter branch as I was told that Tiverton did not do much. Between Ken Stevens and Arthur Currnac, a club member but also a retired county beekeeping lecturer, I learned a lot in a short space of time and soon had three or four hives in a mix of WBC National and Smith hives, the mix of hives were soon all replaced with Langstroth hives which I still use today.

I was invited to join the committee of the Exeter Branch and became chairman for three years and the treasurer for five years.

By 1990 with eight or ten hives I was too busy at work to be involved with DBKA and Exeter until I retired in 2002. When I moved to Tiverton and joined Tiverton branch. I then increased my hives to thirty.

In 2001 joined the committee became vice Chairman in 2007 then Chairman in 2008 for three years. Instigated beginners classes, and a stand at The Mid Devon and Devon County Show.

I still enjoy helping with the shows and education but have decreased my stock of hives down to ten."

As you can see from the above Keith had a wealth of knowledge to impart and his lectures inspired and his advice was invaluable. I, for one, certainly appreciated it when I was on the course.

Many others have said the same, his generosity to impart his knowledge knew no bounds. His warm smile and humour will be sorely missed.

Ian Sorensen



Photograph by Ian Loram

I took this photo of part of my Apiary at my home on the outskirts of Witheridge in the winter sunshine. The majority of my hives are the traditional white WBC hives.

2026 Calendar

Club Apiary Visits NT Knightshayes

Have started - they are on the afternoon of the first Saturday and third Sunday monthly.

April 15th

Branch Meeting

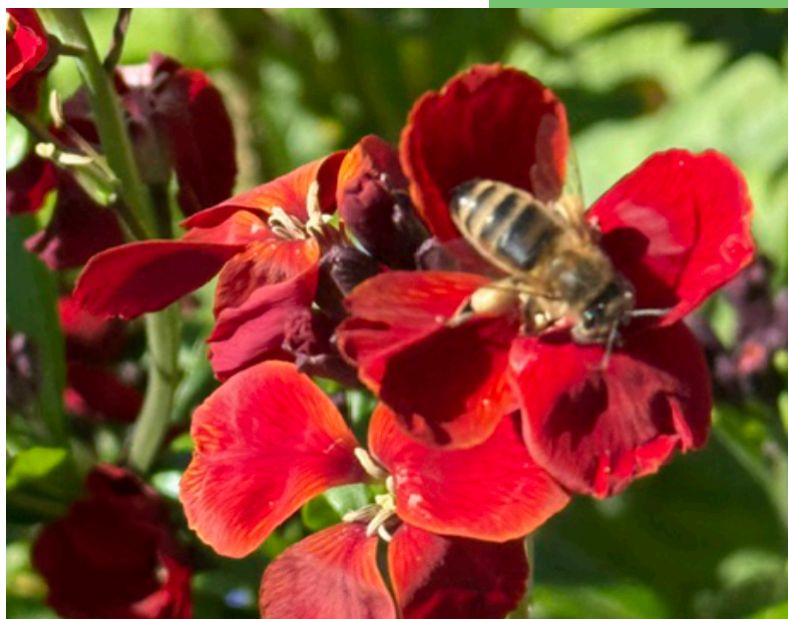
Nosema testing and Microscopy

6.30pm - 8.30pm

Nosema testing and Microscopy

This evening is for members to bring along a small matchbox of bees, caught from the front of your hives and humaly killed (freeze). The process is a bit brutal and time consuming but worth the effort. Findings can be seen on the big screen with the help of William, our wiz kid computer expert.

Pollen and other bits can be viewed too! Got varroa ... bring it along and see it under the microscope.



Photograph by Tracy Frankpitt

Branch Committee Meetings

Branch Committee Meeting are held at Uplowman 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 June

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

buzzette@tivertonbeekeepers.uk