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The Journal of the Devon Beekeepers' Association



Vol 90 No 7

September 2024



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Front Cover Picture:
Bees and Lime

Honey bees foraging on
lime tree flowers

Photograph by Robert Blackmore

Back Issues Previous editions of this magazine from 2018 onwards, are available to download in PDF format from the DBKA website. Older editions can be obtained on request from:
webmaster@devonbeekeepers.org.uk

The next issue will be October 2024

Deadline Items for the next edition of the magazine must be with the Editor by 10 September 2024.

Your Branch Secretary or Executive Committee Delegate can provide you with the log-in details for the restricted area of the **Devon Beekeepers' website**.

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The Buzz Word

Simon O'Sullivan - Chair DBKA

As I write this I am in the middle of extracting my honey crop, which after all the talk of a terrible beekeeping year is proving to be okay, certainly well down on previous years but the bees have managed to dodge the showers and lay down some stores, quite remarkable creatures!

I am hoping that by the time the magazine goes out, you will have completed Varroa checks and treated colonies that need to be treated. I tend to take action if the daily drop rises above four. My personal feeling is that we are not helping our bees if we treat without justifying the need to do so and constantly adding chemicals into a hive leads to weaker bees and stronger Varroa. With the pressure the mite puts on a colony reduced, the bees can make good strong healthy winter bees to see them through.



September is the time to check stores. If you consider the colony needs the equivalent of eight full brood frames of stores to get them through, which is around forty pounds or about nineteen kilos, feed if necessary.

We are now into hornet/wasp season, the time to think about protecting our hives from marauding wasps as they are on the lookout for a sweet fix and an easy meal, I reduce the entrances to my hives as soon as I have taken off my honey. This is the time of year when we are more likely to spot the Asian Yellow Legged Hornet as they hawk outside our bee hives. So far we have not seen the increase in sightings we were worried about after the massive increase in sightings last year. Certainly more sightings in the Kent area, but so far the National Bee Unit (NBU) seems to be keeping on top of the problem. There will be more sightings and pressure will build on resources available to the NBU. The time will come when they will step away from actively tracking and destroying nests, hopefully not just yet. If you haven't done so and would like to be more involved please talk to your branch AHAT co-ordinator about the verifiers role. The more we have signed-up, the less work for all.

In January the BBKA hold the Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM), which is basically the AGM for the organisation. New Trustees stand for election and are voted for by the representatives from the different associations from around the country.

This is also the time when proposals are put forward from the various Delegates which can change BBKA policy. It is the main way we have of affecting how the organisation runs. If you have an issue which you feel needs to be reviewed or changed, now is the time to act. Talk to your branch committee and ask them to put a proposal to the Devon Executive Committee (EC) which would, if approved, be taken to the ADM. January seems like a long way away but the ball needs to start rolling now. This is your BBKA, if you feel it needs to change in some way, then act!

An issue which I feel could be looked at and may form a proposal if the E.C approve to be considered by BBKA, is the affect of honey bee populations on wild pollinators. Last year at the 2023 Presidents Day the Chair of London BKA, showed real concern that the density of honey bees in London is having a detrimental affect on wild pollinators. I would propose that BBKA look at the available science and if it is shown that honey bees are out competing wild bees that we should change our education policy. Moving away from the '**Save the bees, keep honey bees**' approach, to encouraging new beekeepers to consider the number of hives in their area before taking up the craft and, most importantly, to encourage all to grow more bee friendly flowers, it is after all a



forage problem. I would be interested in any opinions on the issue from you the members.

We still need members to come forward to help with three roles. The first is to assist in upgrading the website. An up-to-date, efficient website is very important in today's 'online' world as an essential point of contact with our organisation, as well as being a useful resource for our membership. The other roles are to help with this magazine; to manage the advertising which contributes to the cost of production, and the editor is looking for help compiling the 'What's-on' guide. If you feel you could spare some time with any of these it would be much appreciated.

Simon O'Sullivan.



Editorial

Robert Blackmore

First, I'd like to thank Glyn Davies, a past editor of this journal, for his kind comments about this magazine. Glyn is the subject of Simon's interview in **Bee Talk** on page 15.

In the interview, Glyn says (and he is not alone in saying) that "there is no such thing as a weed", which is something I'd question. I think I understand where he is coming from. As a boy I was encouraged to garden by my parents and grandmother and was allowed to take over the back garden and turned it into a terraced rockery emulating a limestone landscape, geology being one of my hobbies. One day while playing in a thicket of blackthorn on some waste-ground I came across a celandine struggling to grow in the shade.

With its dark glossy green leaves and shining yellow flower glowing in the gloom I thought it would make an attractive addition to my garden, so I transplanted it (*which is something I have never, ever ... ever confessed to, so I hope my secret is safe with you*). Once my lonely celandine found itself out of the gloom and in rich cultivated soil it made itself very much at home and decided to start a family with lots of relations and many friends. Over the years it infiltrated every nook and cranny and became a real nuisance to me, my parents when I moved away and later, to me again when I moved back after my mother moved on (*whether to escape the invasion of the celandines or not she never said and I never asked*).



The editor weeding at the age of nearly ten

My dictionary defines a weed as: **A plant growing where it is not desired**. And that's it, a 'plant'; not a dandelion, a nettle, or even a wildflower growing in a cultivated border. It is the '**where not desired**' bit that is the real definition.

Incidentally, we could be talking about the word 'pest' instead of 'weed'. The dictionary defines 'pest' as "**a troublesome thing or person**", although I think it's fair to say we usually associate pests with being living things rather than 'things' in general. So you could say a pest is a creature living where it is not desired. Beekeepers call varroa mites a pest, others may argue that it is a living creature with a right to life; yellow legged hornets have existed for years without us bothering about it, but when it moves to an environment where it can thrive and become a nuisance to our interests we call it a pest. But I digress; weeds ...

As someone who has gardened in a wildlife friendly way since way before it became a



thing, I despair when I hear gardening 'experts' encourage people with small suburban gardens to allow nature to take its course and tolerate weeds. Don't. What you will eventually end up with is a monoculture of one plant or another. Been there, done it and got the T-shirt. There are far better ways to encourage wildlife to a small garden than attempting a mini re-wilding project. I am lucky enough to have a large rural garden that has many areas of native plants, some by design and some from neglect. It's hard work; involving an awful lot of weeding removing nettles, brambles, dog rose, violets, self-heal, dandelion, ivy, thistles, and yes, celandines. If you look around my garden, as well as a variety of cultivated plants and vegetables, you will still find lots of nettles, brambles, dog rose, violets, self-heal, dandelion, ivy, thistles, and celandines. My never ending war against the weeds will always be just that, 'never ending', but what I end up with is a diverse environment that is beneficial to wildlife all year round that would be lost if I just let nature take its course.

As a beekeeper I take a particular interest in potential forage. I will often plant or encourage anything that hopefully will keep my bees in stores. What I have noticed is that honey bees often ignore good forage plants in the garden unless there is a mass of flowers, for example a shrub covered in many flowers or a plant covering a large area. One of the weeds I tolerate to an extent as potential forage is knapweed. The clue is in the name, it is a plant we'd class as a wildflower but in a garden it can quickly become a weed, spreading by self-seeding. I've watched the knapweed and seen bumble bees, hoverflies and butterflies visit, never any honey bees; until this year. As I passed a clump of knapweed on the way to the potting shed the other day, there were my bees, foraging. The kitchen window looks out over part of the garden and sitting there we could see a constant stream of sunlit bees going up the garden and over the hedge like



Honey bee on common knapweed

little shooting stars. Not an unusual sight in the spring when the May or Hawthorn in the hedges are in flower, but not so common at this time of year; so what are they doing. On investigating I could see that the paddock next door which has been ungrazed and uncut for a few years, had extensive patches with a haze of blue on top. Closer inspection with the aid of binoculars revealed large swathes of knapweed. I presume that the abundance of a local supply had give my bees a taste and the ones on my modest patches were either fuelling up on the way out or topping up on the way home. Great for my

bees, but maybe a cautionary tale for anyone thinking growing a wildflower meadow means doing nothing and letting nature do its own thing.

If '**no such thing as a weed**' means no particular plant species or cultivar should be labelled as 'bad' (which is what I think Glyn means), then I'd agree. My problem with the phrase is that it gives the impression that intervention by removal of nuisance plants is something to be discouraged, especially if they happen to be native. If we are to compensate for the loss of habitat and forage due to our ever increasing urbanisation and industrial sprawl, we must manage what's left and our gardens for efficiency and diversity: and that means not being inhibited about controlling pests and weeds.

Happy weeding.

Your comments, criticisms and ideas are always welcome, whether for publication or not.

Robert Blackmore *Acting Editor*: editor@devonbeekeepers.org.uk



In the Apiary - September

by Martin Walters

Martin (Chip) Walters describes activities at Exeters Branch's apiary and gives advice on what to do in September

The BBKA inform us that during July *"The tide begins to turn on the beekeeping season and it is already time to start thinking about preparing for the late season and beyond."*

The apiary has spent it's July doing just that, undertaking action to get the best from our hives and conducting extra-curricular activities to get the best from our keepers and our facilities.

We continue to expand our hives commensurate with the season and the intermittent flow. Importantly we have ensured our hives do not become honey or pollen bound so that there is room for egg laying as well as stores. It is not too late for swarming if the bees decide there is not enough room. We have placed on additional supers or "double-brooded" our new Queens, who are thriving, and can use the double brood in lieu of a Super. Noteworthy, we went into the season with little drawn-comb from the previous season and used all we had for Queen Rearing so a little improvisation was required.

Towards the end of the month it was assessed Supers were about 75% capped and we inserted clearer boards, ready for honey extraction in August. Varroa boards were inserted to assess drop and plan appropriate treatments. The apiary had conducted a lot of splits which reduces varroa in the colony with the remaining Queen and flying bees on foundation, but transfers varroa attached to the brood into the new colony. There were often splits as part of Queen Rearing activity; however, the new Queens cannot be subsequently treated for varroa during the period of their mating and starting-off as laying Queens, despite the aforementioned risk of varroa transfer with the brood, as her pheromones may be affected. The mature Queens and flying bees can be treated by spraying with Apibioxal.



New sheds



Filling a nuc for sale

The Zest hive continued to provide consternation with no Queens or Eggs present during July. A frame of eggs, on national frames, was inserted into each of the two colonies from donor hives. Some of the eggs have since developed into Queen Cells and we await their hatching.

We have updated our facilities with the acquisition and siting of two new sheds. This involved installing bases and building the sheds by our volunteer in-house



maintenance and construction team. The sheds will provide extra storage capacity for Supers which were previously stored in the main shed/workshop and often had to be moved in order to access other equipment hiding behind them in a frustrating game of chicken, corn, fox. The second shed will provide a space for on-loan equipment awaiting collection by members, such as spinners, and will be an improvement on the previous arrangement. The apiary garden has expanded this summer with the inclusion of a pond, flower and herb troughs and the keeping of an ornamental memorial garden. This has been no mean-feat considering the heavy clay soil and the pestilent rabbits who enjoy flowers as much as the bees. As is usual, the apiary, sheds and equipment have been kept spick-and-span by the usual "Sisyphian" suspect who also keeps the grass and surrounds mown and tidy for visitors and exams.

Talking of which, the apiary hosted a BBKA Honey Bee Health Assessment. The exam, for beekeepers who have been awarded the BBKA Basic Certificate and kept or managed Bees for three years, assesses practical skills and knowledge of bee

management and hygiene, statutory requirements, brood disease inspection and practical tasks as described in the BBKA syllabus at: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=677e5bee-bd5d-45f7-8dbc-de8bb2903110>.

The apiary also hosted an open day, providing members an opportunity to view the activities of the apiary and inspect the bees so that they can see first-hand differing techniques, activities or hive types; provoking questions and facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experience. The day was rounded-off with a talk about how Bees are used to deter elephants, in a non-lethal manner, from accessing and damaging crops of African Farmers. A later open day was sadly postponed until August due to bad-tempered bees, likely due to the flow stopping and the changeable weather.

Jobs for August and September.

The main tasks for August include honey extraction, varroa treatment and preparing for winter. The first two tasks must be completed in sequence as nobody wants to eat varroa treatment tasting honey.

The Supers are ready for collection when around 75% of the frame is capped. Remember to leave some behind for the bees who may need as much as 20Kg of stores overwinter. Supers may be cleared by a variety of methods including Porter bee escapes, rhombus escapes, Canadian Cones or simply shaking and brushing. Once cleared, Supers are ready for decapping, extracting, filtering and separating. The wet Supers post-extraction may be returned to the colony it came from (think bee health and hygiene) for cleaning-up by the bees. Once cleaned, store the empty supers in a manner that prevents attack from wax moth. BBKA suggest sterilising stored Supers with 80% acetic (ethanoic) acid.

Once honey extraction is complete, Varroa treatment may commence. The first task is to understand the size of the problem through monitoring. Methods include inspection



Ornamental memorial garden with pond



boards, sugar shake or alcohol wash. BBKA recommend a board is kept in place for at least seven days, then count the varroa on the board and divide by the number of days in situ (in this case seven) for an average mite drop. Ten mites or more a day is the recommended treatment threshold. There are multiple varroa treatments and guidance on varroa management and treatment is available from the National Beekeeping unit at: <https://tinyurl.com/2p84ca6s>

The third task is to start to prepare for Winter. Colonies should be queenright with a large number of bees, healthy and have plenty of stores. You may consider uniting weaker or queenless colonies. Again, the National Beekeeping Unit has guidance at: <https://tinyurl.com/45w8w7zu>

Beyond the big-three August tasks you should: reduce entrances 2 to 3 bee spaces to reduce wasp attacks and robbing from other bees, continue to add Supers if needed and watch for signs of supersedure.

September

September sees the continuation and cessation of Varroa treatments; timing and method are dependent on the treatment employed. Remember to monitor varroa drop post-treatment to ensure it has worked. August's anti-robbing methods will continue to be required. Finally, you can consider which of your colonies will require feeding after the Supers were removed for extraction. If you are leaving a Super on for overwinter, some beekeepers suggest placing the Super under the brood box. Apparently, the Bees will not use the Super for brood but will use the stores overwinter so that the empty Super may be placed on top of the hive the following Spring.



Supers awaiting spinning stored in new shed



Hives before supers removed



Hives after supers removed



Ask a Beekeeper

Beekeeping Q&A

Kathy Lovegrove, DBKA Education Officer and also a volunteer and trustee at the Mt. Edgcumbe Native Honey Bee Reserve, answers a query from Jim Mehta.

Jim Mehta of Newton Abbot Branch writes:

A fellow beekeeper unfortunately lost a colony recently to Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus and asked me:

- 1. Does the virus have an inactive form (spores etc) and do these survive heat/cold?**
- 2. Do we need to sterilize brood boxes and how best to do this: heat gun, vinegar, bleach etc.**

I could find nothing in the literature and wondered if you might know.

Kathy Lovegrove replies:

Seeing a colony suffer from CBPV is quite distressing so it's wise to take precautions not to let it spread in the apiary. As you say, most of the information available explains symptoms and diagnosis, contagion and management. There is little guidance on prevention of infection apart from the usual sterilisation methods.

A virus does not form spores but it can remain inactive on surfaces for varying periods of time. You'll remember the warnings we had that Covid could be picked up by touching inanimate surfaces, although this danger did decrease with time. The Covid virus was transmitted by droplets released into the air that could settle on nearby items - it was not absorbed through the skin but by subsequent transfer of any pathogens to your mouth, perhaps via food.

Spores are reproductive cells produced by fungi, plants and bacteria. They have thick walls and are highly resistant to environmental changes like heat and humidity. That's why they can be so difficult to destroy.

Viruses, however, have a much simpler structure and are incapable of reproduction in this way; they need to be inside an organism using living cells to help them carry out what's called viral replication. They are not so robust and can be made ineffective using heat or chemical methods.

What to do next

The first step is to remove all hive equipment, including the stand. It is also advisable to clear up any dead bodies around the hive site.

Since viral infection reduces over time, it is feasible to just leave the equipment for a period of time and later reuse it - but this would not be best practice. Follow the advice given by the NBU using your preferred method of renewing comb and sterilising all wooden parts of the hive.

Recommended resources:

NBU Factsheet 10 (updated 2024), "Chronic bee paralysis: An information note for beekeepers": https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_10_Chronic_Bee_Paralysis_Virus.pdf

NBU Factsheet Hive Cleaning and Sterilisation (updated July 2024 as "Disinfecting a Hive After Disease"): https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Fact_Sheets/Fact_16_Hive_Cleaning_and_Sterilisation_english.pdf



Honiton Show 2024

by John Badley

The 133rd Honiton and District Agricultural Association Show was held on Thursday 1st August 2024 at the Stockers Farm site as usual. It's always good to have dry weather but this year was exceptionally warm. Visitors were taking shelter in the Bees and Honey marquee to get out of the sun, hopefully engaging in all our attractions and information displays.

At the entrance was the Honey Competition display. We have competition classes to cater for all ages and skill levels, from novices and school children to skilled honey producers, beeswax modelling and honey cake baking.

The judges thought the standard of entries was good. However, the number of entries was disappointing and not one entry made it to the Novice class. The National Honey Show Blue Ribbon award for the 'Best in Show' went to John Easton for his honey exhibit.



Honey competition – frame for extraction



*From Hive to Jar
East Devon Beekeepers' display*

Next was the East Devon Beekeepers display. This year's theme was 'From Hive to Jar', telling the story of how the bees produce honey and how this is turned into a delicious food product for us to enjoy. The display, by Mary Boulton, featured equipment for extracting, cleaning and bottling the honey to produce the high quality product expected by the public. Beautiful photographs with information panels left the observer in no doubt that a jar of beekeepers honey is a prime product to be celebrated.

This year we had the observation hive with free flying bees in operation. This is always a favourite, with children and adults, trying to spot the queen. Despite the heat, the colony was remarkably calm, coming and going with pollen loads on their back legs and honey stomachs full of nectar, just like they do in their normal hive. Thanks to John Easton for transporting his 'flying hive' from Exeter allowing the bees their freedom and us the chance to observe them up close.

The Photo Competition was well subscribed, with visitors being asked to vote for their favourite picture. We had over 400 voting slips from an admiring public! At the final count, the picture of 'bees above a Cardoon flower-head' was declared the winner. Congratulations to Alasdair Bruce.



Observation hive



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The Honey Sales display was beautifully laid out with dozens of different samples from around the region showing the variety of honey types available. Sales were brisk, with cut comb selling out quickly.

'Roll Your Own Candle' is a mainstay attraction, especially for children. Warm weather makes it so much easier to handle the wax. Essentially a workshop, participants get to learn how to assemble the parts and engage with the texture and smell of the beeswax. Football fans often choose the wax sheet colours of their favourite team! Result.... a great sense of satisfaction.



Roll Your Own Candle team



The Taste of Honey team

Another popular attraction is the 'Taste of Honey' stand. Who can resist a scone smothered with the honey of your choice? Our happy band of stewards kept the scones coming throughout the day. A great way to try different flavoured honey.

For those visitors not in a hurry we had a 'virtual hive'. The inside of the hive can be viewed in comfort, without danger of being stung, as the bees go about their normal activities. Queens, workers, drones, eggs and larvae were clearly visible.

A children's competition was running throughout the day which presented them with a challenge to find out a fact or piece of information from each stand. This engaged them (and the parents) and helped them to really 'look' at what was around them. Nearly 100 quizzes were enthusiastically completed.

Our final display was the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Information stand. This non-native species is not yet established in the UK, but beekeepers and public alike need to be aware of the dangers it poses. Free identification cards were available. The stand attracted many visitors and East Devon AH reps, Kevin and Milli, did a magnificent job manning the stand all day. We certainly fulfilled our remit of educating the public about this predator. The model, made by Anita Rossiter, cleverly displayed the essential defining characteristics of the insect.



Yellow Legged Hornet information stand

Presentation of the prizes this year was by Anne Swithinbank, the well-known TV broadcaster and gardening presenter.

Honiton Show may only be a one-day event but it takes a huge amount of organisation to stage successfully. The Bees and Honey Committee, made up from members of East Devon and Exeter branches, should be congratulated for their work over the preceding months to make the Show reflect the vibrancy and popularity of our craft.



The Honey Competition entries were judged by Peter Guthrie and Jack Mummery and the Cake Competition entries by Marian Guthrie. We are grateful to all the judges for their time and expertise.

Our thanks to the many stewards who helped on the stands and interacted with the public. The Show would not work without you!

Honiton Show Competition Results

Competition entries came from three Devon branches, East Devon, Exeter and Torbay.

Award Winners:

The Fred Barratt Shield for highest points in the honey classes – **David Shale** *East Devon*

The Evelyn Pelham Salver to the winner of Class 8 (6 jars labelled for sale) – **John Easton** *Exeter*

The Basil Salter Wax Challenge Cup for highest points in wax classes – **Chris Carr** *Exeter*

The Honiton Show Cup for highest points in all classes – **Chris Carr** *Exeter*

The Uplyme Cup for highest points in the cookery classes – **Keith Bone** *East Devon*

National Honey Show Blue Ribbon award for Best Exhibit in Show – **John Easton** *Exeter*

The Branch Cup for the Branch with the highest points – **East Devon**



The Blue Ribbon Award for John



The Fred Barratt Shield for David



Keith wins the Uplyme Cup



Clear honey first prize

More pictures on East Devon website at: www.eastdevonbk.co.uk/?page_id=412



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Bee Talk - Glyn Davies

by Simon O'Sullivan

Continuing our series talking to Beekeepers about their experiences keeping bees, this month the spotlight fall on Glyn Davies.

Simon. *Good morning, Glyn, and thank you for giving up your time to have a chat. You have had many roles within Beekeeping and looking at just some of the things you have been involved in is just fascinating, I suppose we should start at the beginning.*

Glyn. When I was about eight or nine, around 1946, just after the war - that ages me a bit - we had a lady who kept bees come into school to talk about what she did and I clearly remember being completely fascinated by her talk. It was not for many years that I was in a position to take up Beekeeping. I think it shows the importance of the connection with schools. I would encourage all the Branches to try and contact their local schools and encourage children from an early age.

When we moved to Ashburton, our own children were grown up and I decided now was the time. I joined Newton Abbot branch and so it began.

Simon. *How long was it before you became involved in the organisational side of Beekeeping?*

Glyn. You know what it's like, if you show an interest, you get pounced on to help out, so it was not long before I was on the committee. Soon I became Branch Secretary and my wife, Maureen, Treasurer. I became the Branch delegate to the Devon E.C. It was not just the Branch involvement that I found fascinating, but I got to meet some amazing, talented Beekeepers from around the County. I became Chair of Devon which I found to be a wonderful experience. However, those meetings could be a challenge. Over the years I have Chaired many, many meetings but none have been as difficult as those Devon EC meetings. We had a group of such talented people who had strong opinions and couldn't they make that known. Very passionate, clever, expert Devonshire beekeepers. I was lucky to have Chris Utting as General Secretary, he was a great help in getting through those meetings.

I became the delegate for Devon at the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting, which was held at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. It's really the BBKA AGM. It gave me the opportunity to meet Beekeepers from all around the Country. From there I stood for a position on the BBKA Executive. It was a move away from DBKA though, the focus being on the Country not just my part of it. You have to promote a national point of view. I was eight years at BBKA; became Chair and finally President for two years in 2004. We did have to deal with some very high-profile issues, G.M. crops and the use of pesticides caused me a lot of stress with very strong opinions on both sides. I feel we found a way through, but it was not easy, dealing with pressure groups, politicians, Government officials and the NBU.

Since my time the BBKA membership has increased 3 or 4-fold. It was growing then. It's amazing how popular Beekeeping has become.



*Glyn Davies
with BBKA chain of office 2004*



Simon. *Should we be worried about over populations of Honey bees and the effect of out-competing wild bees?*

Glyn. It is a worry and something that needs to be looked at. I do think it is a forage issue; we should always be encouraging growing more wildflowers; there is no such thing as a weed in my opinion.

Simon. *Newton Abbot Branch has amazing facilities how did all that come about?*

Glyn. I have been to many Branch Apiaries in my time, and I feel Newton -Abbot's must be one of the top ten nationally. We were using a parcel of land which is owned by the local clay producing company which they were not allowed to develop, so we asked them if we could have a more permanent base to which they agreed, it was good P.R for them. We were very lucky to receive an anonymous donation of cash towards the cost of a club hut. Money is a crucial part of a project like this. We also successfully applied for a grant via Land Fill taxes. We had some wonderful skilled members who were prepared to give their time, a carpenter and electrician among many others. We were going to be charged £20,000 to connect to the grid, not the sort of money we could afford. So, we installed Solar panels. It was a time when off-grid technology was in its infancy, groundbreaking stuff with the solar panels, an inverter and a battery bank. We were also given from a local tile company enough tiles to cover the floor. Excellent to control beekeeping mess!

Simon. *You must have seen some big changes in Beekeeping over the years. Varroa springs to mind?*

Glyn. Yes 1992 first UK varroa find in the Torquay apiary. It completely changed Beekeeping in UK which for the 100 or so years before that had been much the same. Many were immediately appalled at the idea of putting chemicals into bee hives, some Beekeepers gave up. We used to have Braula, which was in fact a type of wingless parasitic fly. Similar in size and colour but not shape, which used to live within the hive and feed on Royal jelly during part of its adult life cycle. Mostly you would find them on queens. On the whole they did no real harm, numbers were kept down through good hive hygiene and regular cleaning of floors. A fascinating, well adapted insect which has been wiped out with the use of miticides in the hive, that makes me bit sad. Apistan, a Fluvalinate synthetic pyrethroid, was the first chemical we used which led to a massive drop of mites, killing all but 1-2% but that small percentage led to a build-up of mite resistance in a few years. Since then, a whole host of different treatments have become available, I used to use Hive Clean until it was removed from sale, it had less of a harmful effect on the bees. I think the way forward is to adopt a whole variety of approaches.

Simon. *What are your thoughts on treatment free beekeeping?*

Glyn. When I was involved with BBKA I was fortunate to meet Ron Hoskins, a beekeeper from Swindon who was also on the BBKA Exec. He refused to use chemicals in his eighty or so hives and as a result lost all but around ten, but he meticulously bred from those ten and produced a strain of treatment free, varroa tolerant bees. I was fortunate to visit him in Swindon on a number of occasions. He used to spend hours counting and recording mite drop and sifting through floor debris looking at parts of removed bees and damaged Varroa. Going treatment free is a hard road to go down.



Queen rearing in Denbury apiary



Simon. *What are your thoughts for the future of Beekeeping?*

Glyn. Asian hornet worries me a lot, it's the next biggest challenge since Varroa and will cause a lot of problems to bees and Beekeeping. In some ways I am glad to be out of it.

Simon. *You were involved in the group that first started AHAT. (Asian Hornet Action Team)*

Glyn. I won't take any credit for that; Torbay had a small, dedicated group which got the ball rolling, I was happy to be involved. There are some really hard-working people now spreading the word and planning for the future. I took Dr Sarah Bunker for her Basic Assessment many years ago and she went on to write 'The Asian Hornet Handbook', it's a small world.

Simon. *Can you tell me about DARG (Devon Apicultural Research Group) were you involved at the beginning?*

Glyn. I think it had been running for around four years when I got involved, my term at BBKA had finished and I found I had the time.

Simon. *Didn't you win an award for your research into Drone laying queens.*

Glyn. We were looking to see if there was a correlation between drone laying queens and Deformed Wing Virus causing damage to the spermatheca. I was lucky through the friend of a friend to contact a veterinary pathology lab in Newton Abbot. An incredible set up hidden away up a wooden staircase in a building in the town, absolutely packed with the most up to date pathology equipment, I was gobsmacked when I went there. The person running the lab agreed to make up the slides needed from queens' spermathecae which we supplied and analysed. It was only a small study and failed to show any major connection with the virus. But it did win an award from Vita-Pharma for beekeeping research.



Supporting beekeepers in Oman in 2019

Simon. *You also had the job of Editor of Beekeeping Magazine for a number of years*

Glyn. I had a wonderful time running the magazine, I was lucky enough to have made several contacts over the years who I could call on for articles. I do like the look and feel of the magazine as it is now, I think the current Editor is doing a great job. I must say I do prefer the more traditional paper copy though!

Simon. *Thank you again Glyn for your time today and for all you have done for Bees and Beekeeping over the years. I am sorry we don't have more time or space to hear more.*

Glyn. It has been fifty totally absorbing years meeting wonderful people and working to promote bees and beekeeping.





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Hornets - Yellow Legged or European

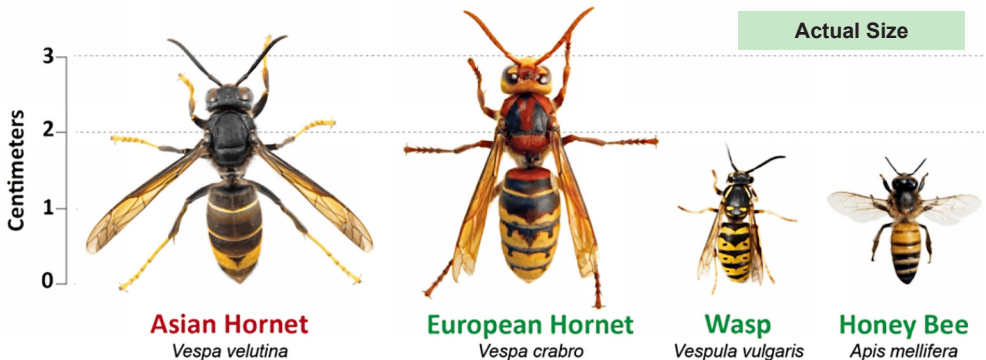
by Judith Norman

Most people have now heard or read that there is an invasive hornet in the UK. They are still unaware though that we have a native hornet, and they have no idea how to tell the difference between them. Here is a side by side comparison for showing to as many people as we can.



Images by John de Carteret and APHA

The invasive yellow legged Asian hornet is the one on the left. It is overall blacker, has yellow legs, and a single orange band at the tail end. Our native European hornet, by comparison, looks overall reddish brown with multiple yellow stripes. It's worth mentioning that if one sees even a single one of the invasive hornets, there is almost certainly a nest nearby, within a third of a mile, so they must be reported.



Tiverton Branch Success at Mid Devon Show

by Tony Lindsell

Just after lunch on Saturday 27th July in the Tiverton Beekeepers Marquee at Mid Devon Show a proud mum was taking a photo of her two sons, who had been learning about bees from the Branch volunteers. They were proudly holding up wax candles that they had rolled themselves and a pack of wildflower seeds, they had on their heads bee antennae that they had also made themselves. You will note from the photos that it wasn't only children wearing the bee antennae!



Tiverton Beekeepers' display at the Mid Devon Show

... only children wearing the bee antennae!



Make your own bee antennae ...

The aspiration of Tiverton Beekeepers is to advance the education of the public in the importance of the honey bee and, without any doubt, at this year's Mid Devon Show they met this ambition in some style.

On a fine sunny day there were big crowds keeping their volunteers busy all day. Honey sales (all sold), candle rolling (300), observation hive, making bee antennae (200), signing up prospective new beekeepers, an Asian



... and wear them with pride

Hornet running freely amongst the crowd, examples of hives, packs of wildflower seeds (150), the Stevenson Trophy display, celebrity beekeepers, plenty of bee chat and, of course, all sustained by sausage rolls and home made cakes. A great team of enthusiastic and knowledgeable Tiverton Branch members enriched the bee knowledge of all the visitors and, as it turned out, impressed the show judges as well.



AH on the loose

The Branch never enter the show trying to win prizes but last year they were lucky enough to win the Best Educational Stand so this year were delighted when, around lunchtime, they were told they had won the David Bates Challenge Cup for the best trade stand of 7 metres frontage or more. Imagine their surprise when the judges' steward returned about 2.30 in the afternoon to tell them that they needed to be in the main ring after the grand parade as they were to receive



Honey Sales



the championship award for the best overall stand in the whole show directly from the Show President. Whilst this is a great accolade for the Branch it directly reflects the time, effort, energy and imagination the whole team put into their show stand.

Don't take my word for how good it was, let me finish with the citation from the head judge which was read out to the crowd around the main ring when the award was presented.

'A fun, vibrant & attractive trade stand which brings to life a massive local, national & international issue of the importance of pollination. An excellent range of interactive learning opportunities for all ages which highlight the issues in a simple way. The external display is brilliant. A worthy winner'.



The Tiverton team with David Bates Challenge Cup



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Devon President's Day 2024

by Liz Wescott

On Saturday, 13th July, at The St Boniface Centre in Crediton, the second Devon President's Day was held. This is an occasion when we aim to bring together speakers and beekeepers to enjoy hearing and learning about the latest developments in the science of beekeeping, to disseminate knowledge and understanding on how to keep bees and to simply regale in the wonders of nature.

Our first President's Day in 2023 was a huge success and we were anxious to build on this to encourage beekeepers out of hiding. Speakers were invited from across the country, some chosen from particularly engaging speakers that we had seen at the BBKA Spring Conference in April. Within our limitations of time and accommodation, we try to ensure that you, the beekeeper, have a choice of attending either a lecture on the art/science of beekeeping or a workshop on producing products of the hive. Interestingly, the numbers are fairly equally split between the two.

The day began with registration, coffee and cake and opened with Meg Seymour explaining to us why so many bees died this last winter. I was particularly interested in this as my winter losses were the worst in all my twenty years of beekeeping. Meg explained



Meg Seymour



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about starvation, failed queens but the real danger to our bees are varroa levels. Meg was an engaging speaker who brought real substance to her talk – points that you could take away and apply to your beekeeping that you knew would make a difference.

After coffee and cake, the room split into two with a partition and people attended their chosen workshop. Martin Hann and Clare Densley are former Seasonal Bee Inspectors who now run the apiary at Buckfast Abbey. Their talk was entitled 'How to Keep Calm and Carry On When Things Don't Go As Planned'. Their talk covered a range of scenarios including how to analyse the situation, when to intervene or leave alone and how it is important to be flexible in your expectations and management. I know, as a beginner beekeeper - before the age of the internet when you could look up everything on Google or You Tube – I had a list of phone numbers of the experienced old boys in our Branch and would phone them from my apiary on my Nokia to describe what was going on in a colony and await their expert advice. A couple of people commented to me after the talk of how reassuring it is to hear how the experts can make mistakes and better still to understand how they deal with them.



Martin Hann and Clare Densley



Angie Kirk

Meanwhile, on the other side of the partition, Angela Kirk, who had come all the way from North Wales, intrigued us with how to make beautiful pots from beeswax. I had wanted to do her workshop at the BBKA Spring Conference in April but all the places filled immediately and I lost out. My friend, a beekeeper from Northamptonshire, managed to secure a place and was really enthusiastic about how brilliantly simple it is to make these pots so we were fortunate enough to secure Angela for our Presidents Day. Conveniently, she grew up just outside Crediton and was delighted to be invited. She stayed the weekend with her mum which was perfect! Apparently, it is possible to buy moulds online

to make resin pots and these are suitable for making pots from beeswax. I haven't had time to try it yet but I certainly intend to. Possibly a new class for Devon County Show?

Lunch was the usual Chunk pasties which are always well received, fruit and, of course, cake. The afternoon began with Clare and Martin describing the endocrine system of the honey bee and explaining the part the honey bee hormones play in determining and controlling the various aspects of the bees' lives – including larval development, the quality of the queens and the ability to forage. Once again, a hugely



Pots made of beeswax



useful talk, delivered by experts who put everything into simple language that can be accessed by all beekeepers. This is exactly why it is so beneficial for hobby beekeepers to attend these days because it gives an insight into what is happening in the hive. A beekeeper who understands how bees work can facilitate this to happen and work with the bees instead of someone who just keeps bees in a box and takes the honey off at the end of the summer.

The alternative lecture for the afternoon was Debbie Smith, a National Judge and BBKA Honey Judge Assessor, explaining the intricacies of Making Mead. Debbie was also at Spring Conference and travelled to us from Shropshire. I have tried several times to make mead but – albeit that I had won several first prizes at Honey Shows – was not happy with how it tasted – always too dry for my taste. I wanted to know how to make mead that I actually enjoyed drinking. Debbie



Debbie Smith



John Walters

explained the brewing process and how to make melomels and methoglines – meads that are flavoured with fruit, spices and herbs. We were also lucky enough to have the pleasure of tasting a couple of meads that Debbie had made and these certainly were to my taste! She explained how to sweeten mead once it had been brewed which is probably what I will do with some of the meads I have already made but find unpalatable. She also gave some very useful tips on how to clear mead as, no matter how many times you filter it, sediment will always insist on reappearing on home made mead! She left us with a useful sheet of instructions, including some excellent recipes, one of which was for elderflower mead. At the time, the elderflower tree in my garden was in full blossom so I took advantage and made a couple of gallons of elderflower mead which promises to be a much more enjoyable drink to the previous meads I have made!

We all came together for the final talk by John Walters. We thought after a day of taking in so much information it would be good to sit back and enjoy the work of a renowned artist, film maker and ecologist such as John who delves into the world of insects, looking at what goes on in the undergrowth. Golly, we were not disappointed! If you thought the world of bees was fascinating, you should take a look at the world of slugs! The photography and video footage was mesmerizingly fantastic. To say his talk was engaging was an understatement, and, although John's talk had nothing to do with bees, all of us who studied our one form of insect – the bee – could empathise and appreciate the



A worm being eaten by a slug



skill in bringing to us the amazing detail of the life of the slug.

Of course, in between all these wonderful talks – and whilst we were not eating cake and drinking tea or coffee – there were several interesting stands outside the hall which were much appreciated. Northern Bee Books sent a variety of books on making mead, processing wax and keeping bees, ranging from beginner level up to the sophisticated science of beekeeping. John Walters brought along his artwork and cards for attendees to buy. The Regional Bee Inspectors had a stand that was fielding questions on whatever aspect of beekeeping you wished to discuss with them. AHAT also had their stand and used the day as a central point of collection to get the Asian Hornet Verifiers kits out to members in the various Branches.

Of course, the day would not be possible without a lot of work to stage it. My thanks to Simon O'Sullivan, Viv Thorn and Paul Greening for all their work and support in planning, organising and carrying out the many tasks in securing the venue, ticketing, finding speakers and feeding everyone. Also thanks to everyone who helped on the day with catering, parking, furniture and IT issues. A tremendous thank you to all those who baked the most impressive array of the tastiest cakes to be seen anywhere in the county! We asked for cake and you didn't disappoint! Thank you, too, to you, the beekeepers, who came and supported us. Without our audience the whole thing is pointless.

We have received some really positive feedback from attendees to the President's Day together with suggestions for next year's event which we are already planning for Saturday, 12th July.

I hope you will put it in your diary and look forward to seeing you there.



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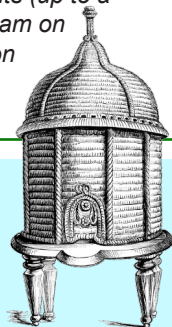
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**To Advertise in this magazine contact
Mike Ticehurst at: ads@devonbeekeepers.org.uk**

Events

Asian Hornet Week 2nd - 8th September

National Honey Show 24th - 26th October <https://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>

Useful Addresses

Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT)	ahat.org.uk
Yellow Legged Asian Hornet reporting - Use the app (<i>preferred</i>) or email:	alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk
British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)	bbka.org.uk
BBKA Find a Local Swarm Collector	bbka.org.uk/find-a-local-swarm-collector
National Bee Unit (NBU)	nationalbeeunit.com
Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG)	www.dargbees.org
Dave Cushman's Website (Beekeeping)	www.dave-cushman.net

**Devon Beekeepers' Association
Facebook Group**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/882323142418671>

Branch Contacts and Websites

<i>Click to email Secretary</i>	<i>Click to go to website</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
East Devon	eastdevonbk.co.uk	
Exeter	exeterbeekeepers.org.uk	01392 832956
Holsworthy	holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk	01237 440165
Newton Abbot	newton-abbot-beekeepers.co.uk	
North Devon	northdevonbees.org	
Okehampton	okehamptonbee.co.uk	01837 840733
Plymouth	Plymouthbeekeepers.org.uk	07772 656279
South Hams	shbk.org.uk	01803 866028
Tavistock	tavistock-beekeepers.org.uk	07709 977646
Tiverton	Tivertonbeekeepers.uk	01884 849377
Torbay	tbbk.co.uk	07881 467393

Diary Dates

Members may attend meetings of any Branch, but it is advisable to check the details with the Branch Secretary first. Contact details are above.

September			
Sun 1st	11:00	Exeter	Apiary Meeting
Sun 1st	14:00	Okehampton	A visit to Simon O'Sullivan's Apiary at Granny's Meadow, Colebrooke
Sun 1st	10:00	Plymouth	Bee Clinic - Plymouth Branch Apiary
Sat 7th	14:30	East Devon	Hunthay apiary, Axminster. Preparing for Winter.
Sat 7th	14:00	Torbay	Cockington Apiary open to experienced beekeepers
Sat 7th	All Day	South Hams	All DayStand at Kingsbridge Show (Borough Farm, TQ9 7QP)
Sat 14th	14:00	South Hams	Opening of Branch Apiary with tree planting ceremony at 3pm (Higher Coarsewell Farm, PL21 0HP)
Sat 14th	13:00	Torbay	End of summer barbecue (Branch Apiary Cockington)
Wed 18th	19:30	Tiverton	Asian Hornets - Judith Norman. Uplowman Vlliage Hall
Sat 21st	14:30	East Devon	Cleaning and storing equipment. Branch apiary. Axminster
Sat 21st	14:00	Torbay	Cockington Apiary open to new and experienced beekeepers
Sat 28th	14:00	Torbay	Cockington Apiary open to new and experienced beekeepers
October			
Wed 16th	19:30	Tiverton	Looking after your bees - Dan Basterfield. Uplowman Village Hall
November			
Wed 20th	19:30	Tiverton	Annual General Meeting & Honey Sampling. Uplowman Village Hall
December			
Sat 7th	19:00	Tiverton	Annual Social Evening. Uplowman Village Hall.



END OF SEASON

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Starts 2nd September

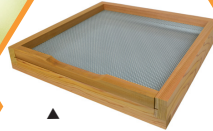
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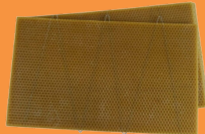
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