



DEVON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

www.britishbee.org.uk/local/exeter

January Newsletter

Volunteers Needed

We need someone with the space and the time available to take orders and **deliveries** for pallets of honey jars and ambrosia (and possibly other products) for the branch. Preferably someone not too far out of Exeter! Also a small group to produce a stunning **Branch display** for the Devon County Show. Please contact Sandra Lee if you can help.

Bad Back?

I shall have to look on my bee stings more favourably in future. It seems that bee venom is being used as a treatment for chronic back pain. In a small study, patients who had been hospitalised with lower back pain were given acupuncture or acupuncture plus bee venom; the venom treatment was more effective...

Editor

Training Classes start this month for Beginners and Improvers. See website for details and application forms.

Subscriptions Don't forget to renew by the end of the month. Details on website. The next newsletter will be at beginning of March.

Apiary Report

I am writing this between Christmas and New Year. The weather is still unusually warm - will we ever have seasonal weather again? Let us say initially that the more active the bees are, because of the warmer climate, the more stores they will consume so it is important that we keep a check on the weight of our hives. Don't forget to take the roofs off your hives before 'hefting' as some roofs are quite heavy. Either lift the complete hive, which is often not easy, or lift more than one side of the hive as the stores are not always evenly distributed within the hive. The warmer weather is also causing a problem with the Oxalic Acid Treatment as there is

still brood in most colonies and we are told not to use the acid in this case. However, the reason for not using the acid with brood present is that it is not effective on mites in brood cells, so the 'less' brood there is in a colony when treatment is applied the more effective it is in reducing the mite population.

So we will go ahead and treat our EBKA bees on January 7th: there will probably then be a prolonged cold snap - just our luck! Incidentally if Varroa trays were removed for winter, then it is a good idea to replace them before the Oxalic Acid is applied so 'before' and 'after' comparisons can be made.

The last honey from our Apiary has been bottled and we have totalled over 400 lbs which I think is a good return for our efforts. Some of the honey is a beautiful light green colour (lime trees?) but much of it has crystallised very quickly so the colour is not so obvious.

We have also harvested over 20lbs wax which I exchanged for 50+ sheets of foundation. The tea hut with its camping gaz stove is excellent for rendering wax as it saves our kitchens and cookers from being messed up and prevents any friction in the home!!

It is now time to think about what we ought to be doing this summer in the EBKA Apiary. We are well established at Clyst Honiton and have shown that it is a good site for an Apiary. There is no doubt that there was much more room at Lypstone for people to get a good view of any work taking place but I hope we can utilise the space at Clyst more effectively and probably get in at least five more hives if required. Another possibility is using the 'Bee Shed' again, even if only for Nucleii. There is room for 6 colonies in the shed so it would be worth trying one or two there initially.

Any ideas on running the Apiary will be very welcome.

Geoff Arney (Apiary Manager)

Beekeeping – My first decade?

I have been keeping bees for about 10 years and thought it might be time to jot down some of the challenges and milestones I have encountered along the way. However, the initial period of getting the bees has already taken up the space available so perhaps another instalment will come next year.

My interest in beekeeping almost certainly comes from my grandfather who was a beekeeper in a very different age. I recall several things from being a 5/6 year old observing him. The key memories are the smell of the beekeeping kit, the mixture of the hive smell – honey, wax, propolis and smoke. There was also the protective clothing: nothing like the bee suits we have today, just a veil tucked in around a heavy jacket. The bees tended to sting around the neck and to discourage this, a small scarf was kept in a container with carbolic acid which helped to repel the bees. I also recall being chased by the bees, of course!

A chance comment to a colleague resulted in beekeeping becoming more than just a thought. I was introduced to a beekeeper who was retiring from work, and after he had established that I was keen to keep bees he contacted me to say he had found a couple who were giving up beekeeping and were selling everything, was I interested? We went to inspect the bees and it was clear that I was in for a challenge. They had five colonies, and it was July so they were large and very active. At this point I thought that this was not the way to start but I was persuaded that it was not going to be too difficult and he would spend some time with me to get me started. So I agreed a price and the bees were mine – just not at home yet.

The collection day was a warm one and of course the bees were still flying late into the evening and it was after 10pm when we were loading the bees to transport them home. By the time we got them home it was dark but I had arranged a light by the apiary and we set too to unload and assemble hives that had been split into two stacks per hive to transport them, so quite a lot of not very happy bees were about. However all went well and I had my bees.

After a few days when they had settled we inspected them and I had my first experience of handling bees – lots of them! This was turning theory into practice and it was interesting to be translating from the books into the real world. The help of my mentor was fundamental to becoming confident with the bees. After just a few weeks the first challenge arose. Having been away for a few days it was exciting to go and check on the bees. The sight that greeted me was very alarming as at least one hive had been overturned and others moved. On inspection it was clear that badgers had attacked the hives

scratching at the front of them all and toppling one over and destroying most of the combs. I rescued what I could but the hive was lost and an investment in electric fencing was required to stop the badgers returning. The main job for me in that first year was the varroa treatment which was completed using the bayvoral strips which were easy to administer and were very effective. How times have changed over the last ten years.

Alan Binge (Treasurer)

Christmas Quiz

Thank you to last years winners, Marilyn & Tim Baker, for setting the well attended, convivial quiz and to Roger & Monica Lacey, winning team-mates from last year, for the anagram round. Congratulations to Sandra Lee's team for winning the quiz and to Geoff Arney for winning first prize in the Christmas Draw. And thanks to the baking elves!!





Dates for your Diary

Tuesday, January 17th Alicia Norman 'Wax Products from
The Hive' 7.30pm Sylvania

Community Hall, Mincinglake
Country Park, Off Stoke Hill, Exeter
EX4 7DR

Tuesday, February 21st David Packham, Seasonal Bee
Inspector 'Preparing for the Season'
7.30pm Sylvania Community Hall

Saturday, March 17th Devon Beekeepers Association AGM,
Isca Centre, Exeter. 9.30am for
10am.

See the link on the website for location of new venue.