



August 2010

Meetings: Sunday, August 8 at 2.00pm. Buckfast Abbey Home Apiary with Clare Densley.

Brother Adam made the Abbey beekeeping department famous with his development of Buckfast queen bees. After he was retired Peter Donovan continued this work until he was retired leaving Dhafer Behnam with instructions to work for good honey crops. Dhafer left earlier this year and Clare was given a new set of instructions. Come along to see what is happening and which way the bee department is now going. Hope for fine weather and bring a veil, after the visit we will go to the Grange for tea and cake.

Directions: from the A38 at Dart Bridge follow the direction signs to Buckfast Abbey and park in the car park. Walk through the Abbey grounds and out through the northgate, close to the Grange restaurant. Continue along the lane to the entrance to the Conference Centre where we will gather before going on to the home apiary.

Bees at the heather, Sunday, August 22 at 2.30pm. at Pizwell Farm.

Please note that there is doubt about this meeting because of the condition of the heather. An alternative meeting will be held if we do not take bees onto the moor.

Please check your e-mails or the branch web site, these will be used to confirm which meeting will take place and to give directions.

Celebrate Start Bay: Grant Elliot and Sue will represent us and sell honey on August 21 at Slapton Field Study Centre and nearby, tel 01752 894094

Meet the Bees: this is an opportunity for members of the public to meet at the apiary and look inside a hive. contact Rod Saffery, see contact info on p.4

Last month

Lilah writes-

About 20 or so of us gathered in the lane outside Middle Well and Rod led us past the house to his apiary in the orchard. It was a very pleasant balmy Sunday afternoon and the members envied of the sheltered location. It is a beautiful setting for an apiary – plenty of space and nearby trees and flowers to provide ample forage. Rod started by showing us a nucleus that he had expanded by means of an extra box on top. In reply to a question, he said, “Yes, he made his own equipment,” and many of us looked admiringly at his hives, all complete with sturdy stands. He then moved on to explain how he proposed to use a Taranov board to carry out an artificial swarm. This is a method of splitting the colony without having to find the queen first – useful to some of us! Rod had made his own Taranov board from Correx and he explained the method. The board has a ramp on top which leads up to the hive, but it is placed so that there is a gap between the top of the board and the hive entrance. The colony is emptied out onto the base of the board. The flying bees walk up the board and fly over the gap back into the hive. However, the queen and the non-flying bees can’t fly over the gap and consequently they go over the lip and gather under the board in a swarm.

Rod had decided to extend the traditional method by placing a frame with foundation under the lip to see if the bees would gather on this frame. (Usually they hang under the lip, and the beekeeper knocks them down onto a sheet before gathering them up and placing them in a new hive.) Helped by Jeremy, wielding the smoker, Rod proceeded to shake the bees onto the base of the board. (note: if you are doing this for real and looking for queen cells to

start off a new colony, brush the bees off – don’t shake the frames.

The developing queen in her vertical cell may be damaged by shaking.) We all watched as the bees began to walk up the board. The queen with her red dot was soon spotted and seen to go over the lip, under the ramp.

While we waited for the bees to sort themselves them out, Rod showed us inside another of his hives. His bees seemed lovely and calm – no doubt his confident handling of the colonies helps.

We then returned to the original hive and sure enough there was a big clump of bees under the ramp. Rod firmly grasped the frame of foundation and pulled it out from under the board. But, here there was a snag. The gap between the Taranov board and the hive stand wasn’t wide enough to take the clustering bees and lots got knocked off! There was some consternation that the queen might have been among them.

Rod shook the bees that remained clinging to the frame back into the brood box. (If this had been a real artificial swarm, these bees would have been rehomed in a new hive.)

As the bees milled about on the top of the frames, Jeremy spotted the queen and she was seen to disappear down between the frames. Phew!

All in all, it had been a very educational experience, and everyone enjoyed watching the demonstration in such idyllic surroundings. But better was to come. We travelled in convoy back to Rod and Maggie’s home in Stoke Gabriel to relax in the garden and enjoy a sumptuous spread prepared by Maggie.

Apiary Report

We had no winter losses and Varroa destructor levels were low.

The season was slow to start being 5 weeks late. The bees however soon caught up in the hot sunny weather and their instincts soon turned to swarming. Several nucs and artificial swarms were made up. But colony sales are slow due to the Abbey selling off their bees. Only one nuc has been sold.

Ken Basterfield's visit: A packed apiary attended Ken's talk on reading brood combs and general beekeeping information. I learnt a few things myself.

Adam Vever's visit: Small hive beetle and the inspector calls. Again a packed interesting meeting finishing with Adam setting fire to the apiary hedge.

We have been selected as a monitoring station by FERA for SHB monitoring. I am pleased to say the first results are in and I can confirm we don't have SHB at Dartington.

Training: 13 new students attended 4 practical bee lessons given by Maggie and Rod. They will go on to attend the winter course from September.

Honey: Around 80 cut comb sections from the club bees are ready for the Totnes Show along with runny and creamed honey. Several other members are supplying honey for sale.

Talks: Maggie and Rod gave a talk to Stoke Gabriel School on Honey Bees and

pollination. The observation hive was of great interest to the little darlings.

Spends: 6 more jacket veils were purchased for students, bringing the total of club veils to 12.

Apiary team. We have a good team of helpers at the apiary and I thank them all for their hard work and company.

Members' apiary: I am pleased to see the members apiary being used this year. John Laidler is currently mating nucs.

Rod Saffery

The Totnes Show

This year, for the first time, the Show was held on a Sunday. Result : easy access by car and the weather helped too.

We had a stand, as now usual, in the Food Hall, with a bright display of different honeys and the observation hive looking good.

We sold more than last year and finished the day with a profit of just over £200. This is the second time we have made a profit although the main purposes are for public relations and to sell honey for members at £5 per lb.. Thanks and congratulations to all who helped.

Selected Queen Rearing

Regretfully we have had to abandon this course for this year. Due to a combination of weather, ill-health and lack of planning and preparation. We hope to do better in 2011.

We hope to run a short theory course on this topic later this year.

Off the Comb

Could you write something for this Newsletter?

Urgent

Treat for varroa. John Harlerr has a limited supply of Apiguard

For Sale

Bees for sale, National and Commercial nucs now available
contact Rod Saffery 01803 782190

Not for sale (yet) please keep back some honey for our stand at the Celebration of Start Bay on August 21. Contact Grant Elliot 01752 894094.

Needing help?

Our branch has two Master Beekeepers and Ken holds the highest UK bee-keeping qualification, the National Diploma in Beekeeping, so if you feel the need of some instant advice then you can telephone with a good chance of getting through to one of us. If you need help then phone one of:

Ken Basterfield NDB 01404 815885

Brian Gant 01364 642233

If you have a brood disease problem then phone our Regional Bee Inspector

Adam Vevers 01364 653325

or Seasonal Bee Inspector Clare Densley 01626 211684

Branch contacts:

Web site for branch news (still under development)

<http://www.britishbee.org.uk/local/totnes-kingsbridge>

Chairman: Jeremy Wells 01364 72180,
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Secretary: Mrs Lilah Killock, 01803 866 028, lillahkillock@hotmail.com

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HEMBURY BEE SUPPLIES

Your local agent for beekeeping equipment of all kinds, including varroa treatments, frames and foundation.

Phone John Harler on 01364 642517 or mobile 07769 878476
or e-mail to fire221@btinternet.com.

Collections from 12 Hembury Park, Buckfast TQ11 0ES

The Totnes & Kingsbridge Beekeepers' Association is a branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association which is a registered charity no. 270675