

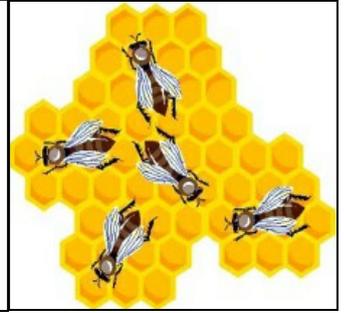
'BUZZ' for February 2018

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORBAY BRANCH,
DEVON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

Founded in 1875

Registered charity no. No. 270675

Torbay Branch web site: www.tbbk.co.uk



All meetings are held at St. Paul's Church, 19, Locarno Avenue, Preston. TQ3 2DH unless otherwise stated

Friday, February 2nd. 7.30pm

Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Branch Module One training (session 1) Monday,

12th. February. 7.30pm

Introduction to Beekeeping Course. Session 3.

Commencing at 7-30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 13th. 7.30pm

A talk presented by Mr. Gerry Stuart entitled 'Invasive Species and their Lifecycles'. See below for further details.

Friday, February 16th. 7.30pm

Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Branch Module One training (session 2) Saturday,

24th. February.

The Memorial Hall, Holsworthy, Devon. The Holsworthy Spring Convention. See below for further details.

Monday, 26th. February. 7.30pm

Introduction to Beekeeping Course. Session 4.

Friday, March 2nd. 7.30pm Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Branch Module One training (session 3)

Saturday, 3rd. March. Stoneleigh Park.

The Beetradox Show.

Saturday, 3rd. March. ISCA Centre Exeter.

Devon Beekeepers' Day. (See below for further details.)

Monday, 12th. March. 7.30pm

Introduction to Beekeeping Course. Session 5.

Tuesday, March 13th. 7.30pm

A Branch winter talk. Speaker to be confirmed.

Friday, March 16th. 7.30pm

Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Branch Module One training (session 4)

Monday, 26th. March. 7.30pm

Introduction to Beekeeping Course. Session 6.

Friday, March 30th. 7.30pm

Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Branch Module One training (session 5)

THE CHAIRMAN'S CHAT.

One thinks of January as being a quiet time in the beekeeper's calendar - I certainly don't feel that is true for this year. We started off at full speed with the South Devon Honey Show. For the first time we invited beekeepers from Newton Abbot and Totnes and Kingsbridge BKAs to join us officially in a honey show that encompassed the three South Devon associations. We were very pleased to see our colleagues from adjoining Clubs come to support us but I can't help thinking that the time of year - with cold, dark evenings - conspires against us and that perhaps we should have a better turn-out at a different time of year. However, it was a most enjoyable evening with Martin Hann (Seasonal Inspector) and Claire Densely (Buckfast Bees) being our pair of experts who took questions from the floor. The usual topics such as treatment for varroa and the Asian hornet were addressed.

For the second year, Maureen Davies won the Cookery Trophy and I won the Wax Trophy. Gerry Stuart won the Honey Trophy and Jane Schindler-Ord won the Novice Trophy after coming first in all three Novice classes. I hope you will consider entering the Devon County Honey Show - you have plenty of time to prepare your entries. I will take them up and stage them for you, just drop them over to me.

There was a very interesting meeting on 20th. January at Harberton on the Asian hornet. I debated whether I would go or not. But I am very glad I did as it was worth hearing the beekeeper from North Devon telling about his experiences. I am sure we will hear a lot more from other members of the TBKA who are working on forming an Action Team should an Asian hornet turn up on our patch.

The annual dinner was held at the Paignton Club last Friday and although we were a select few it was a really nice evening. The service and the food were excellent plus the bar is a comfortable place to have a drink and an after-dinner chat - which we happily did. The management and staff couldn't have been more helpful and ensured that everything ran smoothly and we all had a wonderful evening.

The Introduction to Beekeeping Course started on 15th. January and we had 21 potential beekeepers check in. We have still had people making enquiries and I think our next session may well count up to 25. This year the cost of the course also includes membership to the BBKA so we are hoping our retention rate will be better than in previous years. It seems that our beekeepers are full of enthusiasm but experience difficulty in either getting bees or finding a place to keep them. Perhaps our offer of putting a hive for their first year at the Cockington apiary might make things easier.

For our more experienced beekeepers we are starting a Study Group for Module One on Friday 2nd. February, 7-30 p.m. at the Sainsbury's restaurant at Roselands, Paignton. Module One looks at general beekeeping - like the Basic Exam - but in much greater detail. To take the Module exams you have to have passed the Basic exam and need to have kept bees for two years. You are very welcome to join us if you are interested in finding out more about bees.

At the winter meeting on Tuesday 13th. February Gerry Stuart will give us a talk entitled 'Invasive Species and Their Life Cycles'. With all our pests and diseases it is only through achieving a good understanding of their life cycles that we can hope to be able to thwart their attacks on our bees.

An interesting item on the BBKA website at the moment is that they are planning to monitor honey in a national survey and are asking beekeepers to send in a sample of their honey so it can be tested. The testing will be to identify plant DNA to see which plants your bees have been foraging on. Also, they will measure environmental contaminants - pesticide residues such as neonicotinoids. I have included details from the BBKA website below. If you are interested in what is in your honey you may like to contribute a sample.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED.

All amateur and professional beekeepers are asked to register their interest in taking part by e-mailing :

honey@ceh.ac.uk

The viability of the monitoring scheme will depend upon sufficient numbers of beekeepers expressing an interest in participating.

Spring Conference is taking place at Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire, 13th. - 15th. April. The lectures and workshops are excellent! I've already signed-up for : maximising honey production, uniting colonies, varroa management, poly vs. wood hives, soap artisan and a course on

making honey cosmetics. Yes, I already know how to do most of those things but the speakers usually have new ideas or expert advice and you can never know too much! We make it into a nice little mini-trip. I meet up with my cousin on the way up. My son and daughter-in-law join us for the Saturday/Sunday. My daughter-in-law is interested in making soap and she will join me for the soap-making and cosmetic-making workshops. You don't have to be a beekeeper to take part and enjoy the workshops and they are excellent value. Last year I did hedge-laying and chain-saws for beginners courses. This is also a Trade Fair where Thornes bring their second-quality hive parts which are perfectly good and much cheaper than first quality. Plus there is the advantage of seeing the quality and size before you buy , which, when buying bee suits or gloves, is very important to ensure a good fit.

I hope all is well with your bees. We are approaching the most dangerous time of the year and if there is a sudden drop in the temperature your bees risk dying of starvation. Even if there are stores in the hive, if the bees become isolated in one part of the brood box and the stores are too far away, they will not be able to reach them if the temperature is too low. Make sure there is fondant above the cluster of bees to ensure that this doesn't happen Some beekeepers provide a general water source in their apiary so the bees do not have to fly too far. However, if one colony develops nosema they could contaminate the water source and give it to all the other colonies. You can either buy little mice water feeders which fit inside the roof, fit a water feeder in the entrance or you can put a shallow dish of water on the crown board make sure you put twigs or pebbles in it so the bees can access the water without drowning.

I look forward to catching up with you at one of the forthcoming meetings this month.

Liz Westcott. Branch Chair.

THE 2018 ANNUAL DBKA SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Your 2017 annual DBKA subscription expired at the end of last December. It's tough, but as from 1st. February 2018 those who have failed to pay up are in danger of being cast out into an unfriendly, DBKA-less, world! So, if you have yet to complete your subs. form and 'cough up the dosh' please do so as soon as possible.

If you need advice in completing your subs form please contact our lovely Branch Treasurer, Lynette Taylor. Her address is Croy Lodge, 15a, Cleveland Rd., Paignton. E-mail address is:

taylorabode@btconnect.com

Please make this a priority as our treasurer's job is tough enough without having to 'chase up' forgetful members.

Doug Westaway

FEBRUARY WINTER TALK.

Gerry Stuart, will be presenting his talk entitled '*Invasive Species and their Lifecycles*' on Tuesday 13th. February. Gerry's talk will include the latest information on:

- a) current threats to our bees
- b) the non-native species within Torbay/Devon that a beekeeper may very well get a call to attend.
- c) An update on the action that Torbay Branch will be taking in relation to the threat of invasive species.

Kindly make every effort to attend what will be an interesting and important talk.

Doug Westaway.

THE HOLSWORTHY SPRING CONVENTION.

Holsworthy Branch has, over the past years, firmly established a first-class beekeeping event which always attracts beekeepers from across the South West.

Past conventions have featured nationally-acclaimed speakers plus teams of expert demonstrators who headed-up a variety of practical workshops. This year's is no exception with Professor Steve Martin featuring amongst the speakers! Our Chair, Liz Westcott, has attended several past conventions and enthuses over what always has always proven to be a first-class day out where much can be learnt on many aspects of bees and beekeeping.

Full details are published on the back cover of the December/ January issue of '*BEEKEEPING*'. This year's convention will be held at Holsworthy on Saturday, 24th. February. Try to go along and start off this year's beekeeping season on a 'high'.

Doug Westaway.

DEVON BEEKEEPERS' DAY, 2018.

Devon Beekeepers' Day is a new 'name' in our listing of beekeeping events in Devon. Following a great deal of thought and discussion within the DBKA's hierarchy it was decided to incorporate the long-established President's Day and DBKA Annual General Meeting within a Devon Beekeepers' Day aimed at celebrating the many achievements of the Devon Beekeepers' Association during 2017.

The 'Day' will be held in the Bridge Suite, The ISCA Centre, Summer Lane, Whipton, Exeter, EX4 8NT on Saturday, 3rd. March.

The meeting commences at 9-30 a.m. with refreshments followed by an 'Introduction' by our DBKA President, Christopher Smith, at 10.00 a.m. The AGM commences at 10-15 a.m. following which, at around 11-30 a.m., there will be a presentation by Mr. John De Carteret, Vice President, Jersey Beekeepers' Association, entitled 'Living with the Asian Hornet'. Jersey has, for the past several years, been plagued with regular incursions of Asian hornets from mainland France and John's views and advice to Devon beekeepers on how to control this most worrying of pests will be eagerly listened to. Supporting speakers will be Martyn Hocking who is the only Devon beekeeper to have experienced Asian hornets in his apiary at Woolacombe, N. Devon and Dr, Cathy Horsley of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Lunch is available on site following which is the presentation of awards to DBKA members, a beekeeping talk and finally a questions and answer session with the meeting closing at 15-30 p.m.

This year some of the DBKA Branches will be putting on displays to illustrate various aspects of their Branch activities; Torbay Branch will showing its own special presentation.

In the past, the President's Day/AGM has not been well-supported by Torbay Branch members but, this year, let us make a special effort and show the rest of the Devon beekeeping 'world' that Torbay Branch is alive and kicking.

Doug Westaway.

BEEKEEPING IN FEBRUARY.

With such an excellent publication as BBKA News falling monthly upon members' doorsteps it is difficult for your Branch editor to offer any additional meaningful advice. Again, Lynfa Davies on page 43 of the February issue of the BBKA News covers everything a beekeeper should be doing to prepare for the coming season. Please re-read this article again and apply its advice to your own beekeeping.

Visiting the very wet and soggy garden it is already possible to see numerous signs that Nature is preparing for the coming spring. Crocuses, heathers, the occasional daffodil and the witch-hazel are already in flower although there has yet to be seen any nectar and pollen gathering insects.

Within the hives, queens will now be increasing their egg-laying and the winter stores will be depleting. Continue to monitor the weight of your colonies by gently hefting the hives - either with a lift from the rear or lifting each side - to assess the stores situation. This is a beekeeping skill which is only learnt by practice. If a hive does feel light when

hefted, support the colony by placing fondant over the crown-board feed hole. If the colony is in need of food the fondant will be readily taken down. Continue feeding thereafter until the colony is able to support itself in the spring. If, however, the bees decide that they already have enough stores around their cluster and decline your offer of food, little is lost and you are re-assured.

A little-mentioned aspect of beekeeping is the need to maintain the structure of the hives. Generally, hives are still made of wood and this material does need a helping hand to combat our moist weather conditions. Even hives made of cedar wood benefit from a regular coating of preservative. For the honey supers and spare equipment - brood boxes, roofs, etc. - attention is made easy as they will be stored away from the apiary and at home in the garden shed, garage, etc. Scrape clean, and then scorch the interiors as advised by Lynfa in her article. Then treat the exteriors with a coating of a good-quality preservative. To allow moisture generated -, particularly within single-walled hives - to pass out through the wood any preservative used must be of the micro-porous type. Cuprinol 5-Star is advised but specialist treatments are available from the usual bee appliance supplies.

Your hives out in the apiary present a somewhat greater problem. Jack Berry treated his working hives annually in the depth of winter when the hot-tailed inhabitants were quiescent. Jack chose a spell of cold, dry, weather and then treated the sides and rear of his hives. The fronts of the hives were left untreated until the spring inspections when it was then convenient to turn the brood-boxes around so allowing him to then finish the paint job off.

Beekeeping equipment is expensive to purchase and deserves a little tender, loving care! Also keep a careful eye on timber hive stands. Treat these also and do ensure that they are completely rot-free. In the height of a good beekeeping summer the stands have to support a considerable weight. A failure at the height of the summer honey-flow is a disaster best avoided!

Doug Westaway.