

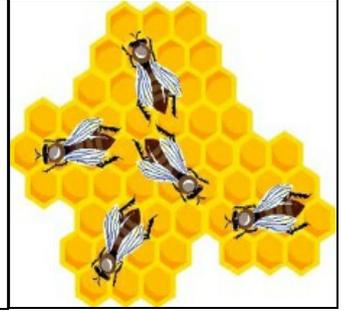
'BUZZ' for APRIL

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



FOR YOUR DIARY.

*All meetings are held in The Frances Norris Room,
St. Paul's Church, 19, Locarno Avenue, Preston.*

TQ3 2DH unless otherwise stated

Saturday, 7th April.

2.00pm Branch Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Apiary 'spring-clean' day. See the
Chairman's Chat for full details. Light refreshments will
be available.*

Monday, 9th April.

7-30 p.m. Introduction to Beekeeping Course.

Session 7.

Friday, April 13th.

7.30pm Branch Module One training (session 6)

Paignton Sainsbury's restaurant.

Friday, April 13th - Sunday 15th.

BBKA Spring Convention. Harper Adams University.

Tuesday, April 17th.

7-30 p.m. Branch Nosema Evening.

*Light refreshments will be available. See below for
full details.*

Saturday, 21st. April.

2.00pm The Branch Cockington Apiary.

*The first formal Branch apiary meeting. Light
refreshments will be available.*

Monday, 23rd. April.

7-30 p.m. Introduction to Beekeeping Course.

Session 8.

Saturday, 28th. April.

2-00 p.m. Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Commencing at. Light
refreshments will be available.*

Saturday, 5th. May. The Branch Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Light
refreshments will be available.*

Saturday, 12th. May.

2.00pm Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Light refreshments will be
available.*

Thursday, 17th. May.- Saturday 19th May

The Devon County Show. (See The Chairman's Chat)

Saturday, 19th. May.

2.00pm Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Light refreshments will be
available.*

Tuesday, 22nd. May.

*Study group for Basic Examination. See the 'Chairman's
Chat', below, for further details.*

Saturday, 26th. May.

2.00pm Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Light refreshments will be
available.*

Saturday, 2nd. June.

2.00pm Cockington Apiary.

*Branch apiary meeting. Light refreshments will be
available.*

THE CHAIRMAN'S CHAT.

The winter may be a quiet time for beekeepers but the Committee has certainly been busy.

The Torbay AHAT (Asian Hornet Action Team) initiative has gone from nothing to fully-fledged and recognised by the important bodies who matter. It is imperative that we all remain vigilant for the Asian hornet but it is equally important that, having identified an invasive species, there is the infrastructure in place to deal with it quickly and effectively. Thanks to the AHAT team we are now much better placed to deal with an unsuspecting Asian hornet arriving on our shores Very well done Colin Lodge et al!

The Apiary is already looking in good shape as Committee members have been identifying things that need attention and quietly getting them done. Saturday, 7th. April is the date for our Apiary clean-up when we do our spring-clean and start to get things in order for the coming season. We will start at 2-00 p.m. Please bring along strong secateurs, rake, trowel and garden gloves to lend a hand.

Last year was quite poor for honey production and so I am hoping to get some ideas of what caused this dip. Please take a moment to complete the survey that was e-mailed a few days ago and hopefully we may be able to identify obvious reasons for it. In any case, I am going to the Spring Conference at Harper Adams College and note that one of the lectures is entitled 'How to Maximise Your Honey Harvest' I will be taking notes and will

pass on any good tips to you. With both the survey and tips I am hoping we can support our members in producing healthy bees and in obtaining a good honey harvest.

Education is key to good bee keeping, so we need to try to interest both beginners and improver Beekeepers. We will be running a four-session course on the 22nd. May and 5th, 19th, and 26th June for those of you who have been keeping bees for 12 months or more and would like to get your Basic Certificate. It is an oral test about the most straightforward aspects of beekeeping plus a practical test on how to light a smoker, make up a frame of foundation and inspect a hive. All the things you do regularly as a beekeeper. However, passing the Basic Exam is the gateway to all other learning and then allows you to study the BBKA Modules which are so interesting. Please e-mail me (lizwestcott@me.com) if you would like to join our group to prepare for the Basic Exam.

On April 17th. 7-30 p.m. at St. Paul's Church, Preston, we shall be running a Nosema Evening. Please bring along a sample of thirty bees from each hive you would like tested. Ideally, you want flying bees. Catch them as they are leaving the hive - put a plastic bag across the entrance - and then put them in the freezer until you are ready to bring them along. Nosema tends to be a disease that bees get at the end of winter - hence testing in April. It is a sort of dysentery caused by a fungal infection in the gut which shortens the bees' life span. If the hive is moderately affected then it should clear up when the bees leave for cleansing flights. If it is a very bad infection then you can do a shook swarm into a clean brood box onto clean frames and foundation. Very often the old frames and front of the brood box will be stained with faeces which then passes on the infection. Please label your bags with your name, apiary, identification and hive number. We make no charge for this service as it is part of our support to members to help them ensure their bees are healthy. We look forward to seeing you there.

Mid-May is Devon County Show and Torbay will be entering a display for the Stevenson Trophy. We are short of stewards for the display for Thursday, (17th. May) afternoon and Saturday (19th. May) 1p.m. to 6 p.m. You will be given a free ticket to the Show so you will have half a day enjoying the day and half a day stewarding. As a Beekeeper, the Bees and Honey tent is very interesting, and there is also the Devon Honey Show so it is well worth a visit. If you would like to steward for the Torbay Stevenson's Trophy entry please e-mail me on: lizwestcott@me.com

However, if you - or anyone you know - would like to steward at the Show there is always the need for general stewards in the Bees and Honey tent and Barry Neal would be very pleased to hear from you. Just tell him when you are available and he will arrange for you to steward. The Show is on the 17th. to 19th. May. The morning shift is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the afternoon shift is 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. His e-mail address is: gen.sec@gmail.com

Now that winter has finally finished you may want to identify any colonies that need a boost or those that you want to strengthen for queen-rearing and give them a light feed of 1:1 sugar syrup. In order to get a honey harvest we need a large, healthy workforce and so anything you can do to support your bees at this time will pay dividends when you come to take the honey off.

The Apiary will be open for normal Branch activities on Saturday, 21st. April and weekly thereafter, 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. Let us hope for some dry, sunny weather.

Liz Westcott, Chairman.

TORBAY BRANCH NOSEMA TESTING, 2018.

On the evening of Tuesday, 17th. April we will be having our annual Nosema clinic. The idea is to bring along a sample of around 30 flying bees from each of your colonies and have them tested to discover if they have a Nosema infection. This will enable you to understand better each of your colonies and help you decide how urgently and by how much of your brood chamber frames need to be changed with fresh foundation. An ideal target is to change about a third of your combs each year anyway but a serious infection may require a complete change via a Shook Swarm or Bailey process. Even a light infection can reduce the ability of a colony to withstand other viruses and disease they may be exposed to. So it is important to understand the total health of each of your bee colonies.

The easiest way to collect your bees is to wait for a warm flying day in March or early April; block up the entrance and in a few minutes hundreds of bees will gather in the front of the hive trying to get in. Open a medium size polythene bag and brush in about thirty bees. Shake the bees down to the bottom of the bag quickly and seal it. Freezer zip-lock bags are ideal. Place the bag as soon as possible into a freezer. The bees will quickly become comatose and die. Make sure the bag is labelled with the colony identity. Leave the bees in the freezer until you take them to the clinic. They will thaw in about twenty

minutes. You can bring the samples yourself or send them with a friend on the day, provided they are clearly identified. The clinic will be held on Tuesday, 17th. April, 7-30 p.m. at St. Paul's Church, 19, Locarno Avenue, Preston TQ3 2DH.

Glyn Davies.

ASIAN HORNET INCURSION. BRANCH RESPONSE.

Following the recent very well-attended 'Asian Hornet' meeting at Harberton village hall, Torbay Branch members reacted positively to the meeting's conclusion that beekeepers throughout the UK will need to be in the forefront in the prompt identification of future Asian hornet incursions. Subsequently, a Branch team has been formed which, working in conjunction with similar teams in the Totnes / Kingsbridge and Newton Abbot Branches, will be able to respond rapidly and effectively to any reported sightings of Asian hornets - whether queens or workers. The teams' members will have the skills and equipment to make a positive identification of the sighting and - hopefully - obtain a sample insect for forwarding to the National Bee Unit. The following is the initial protocol developed by our Torbay team.

ASIAN HORNET INCURSION TORBAY BRANCH'S RESPONSE.

Proactively assist the Seasonal Bee Inspector and National Bee Unit to identify local Asian hornet incursions. This is in order to assist with speeding-up the reporting process and confirmation.

This will be achieved by:

- 1) Enhancing local public awareness and professional bodies; via talks, visits and presentations.*
- 2) Forming an 'Action Team' of dedicated beekeepers to deal with local reports of sightings.*
- 3) Investigate and record reports.*
- 4) Gather evidence to confirm incursions by way of photographs or the capture of the hornet.*
- 5) Where possible, locate the nest for 'Health and Safety' assessment and the eventual destruction arranged through the Nation Bee Unit's protocol.*

Torbay has formed its Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT) comprising four experienced members. Colin Lodge is the contact point. Further details of the Asian hornet and Colin's contact details can be found on our Branch web site - www.tbbk.co.uk

The Action Team has also set up its own comprehensive web site at - www.ahat.org.uk which provides full details of the team's objectives and procedures. Branch members are urged to visit this site.

As detailed in the March 'BUZZ', founder Asian hornets queens are likely to be 'out and about' as soon as our weather finally decides to change from Russian winter to English spring. All members are urged to keep a careful watch on the early spring flowers just in case an over-wintering Asian hornet queen is present amongst the usual bumblebee queens, queen wasps and worker honey bees.

No one expected an Asian hornet nest at Woolacombe. The next surprise could be in Torbay!

Doug Westaway.

COUNTY SHOWS.

Our Chairman in her 'Chairman's Chat' has given us a good lead-in to our own Devon County Show in mid-May. (May 17th, 18th and 19th.) The Devon County Show is the first of the many county shows which will be held throughout the UK this coming summer. Following-on from our County show is the Royal Bath and West Show being held from 30th. May to 2nd. June on its permanent showground at Shepton Mallett, Somerset. A week later from June 7th to 9th there is the Royal Cornwall Show at Wadebridge, Cornwall. Both of these 'foreign' Shows are worth travelling to in their own rights but they also both host honey tents and honey shows staged by the two counties enthusiastic beekeepers. Give yourself a couple of days out and visit these Shows and meet-up with our beekeeping colleagues in our neighbouring counties..

Doug Westaway.

The dates are 22nd. May and 5th, 19th, and 26th June.

TOPICAL TIPS.

Again, Lynfa Davies, writing on page 111 of the April BBKA News, has covered all of the items which the beekeeper must take into consideration as we move from winter into spring. Currently, the Easter weather is disappointingly cold and wet and certainly not suitable for inspecting colonies. This, however, will change, and finally we shall be able to open the hives and carry-out the first inspection. In the meantime it is essential to 'heft' the hives and assess the amount of stores still remaining for the expanding brood. Any doubts? Feed with a 'thin' sugar syrup comprising 1lb. of sugar to a pint of water or, in modern parlance, 1kg of sugar to 1.25l of water.

When you can finally open the brood chamber run through Lynfa's check-points to ensure that you have a healthy start to the new season. Additionally, this is an opportunity to examine the condition of

your brood frames. In the wild, our enemy the Greater Wax Moth ensures that the old, well-used areas of brood nest are destroyed, making room for the bees to build new, fresh comb. Within the artificial environments of our hives, however, the responsibility to ensure that old, comb is regularly replaced with new foundation rests with the beekeeper. So, at your first inspection, take a careful look at the condition of the brood frames and identify those blackened with several years of use and those containing large numbers of drone cells and mark the frames. These can then be replaced with new foundation later in the spring when temperatures are higher and the bees more inclined to quickly draw out the new foundation. Old brood is a repository for a variety of bee diseases and it pays to ensure that brood comb over three years old is replaced on a regular, structured basis. This can easily be achieved by using a felt-tip pen to date the top bars of the frames of new foundation prior to insertion into the hive.

With the April BBKA News came the impressive catalogue for National Beekeepers over at Okehampton. There are, of course, several competitors which can be accessed on line but this catalogue does give the opportunity to carefully browse and decide what additional equipment you are going to need to fulfil your coming season's plans. Enough wax foundation to replace that old brood comb? Order now! Sufficient hive parts to control swarming by undertaking a split? Again, order now before you are confronted with those queen cells within one of your hives and find yourself in a difficult-to-control situation.

Doug Westaway.

Whilst on the subject of supplies, the branch is now creating a 'shop' where a variety of foundation and frames will be stocked. Through the auspices of Glyn Davies we have been able to purchase these items from Maisemore Apiaries at a huge discount plus free postage and packing. We will be passing on this benefit to our members. The shop will be open at every Saturday branch meeting. A price list will be emailed to you shortly.

FREE SUGAR

Another benefit that you receive from becoming a member of the Torbay Branch is access to FREE SUGAR for feeding bees. As mentioned previously in this News Letter, it is now time to consider feeding sugar syrup. At the Cockington apiary there is a plentiful supply of free sugar. Bring a container and take advantage of this facility that your committee has been able to provide.

Mike Ticehurst