



# Bee Brief



## Plymouth Branch Newsletter March 2017

### PLYMOUTH BEEKEEPERS' Apiary Programme 2017

#### MARCH

Thursday 9th	Branch Meeting ~ Elburton Village Hall. <b>Speaker:</b> Chris Boughton talking about his inventions when confronted with various bee keeping challenges	7.30pm
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup>	DBKA AGM at Isca Centre, Exeter	
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Novice Meeting	10am
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	General Meeting – <b>Grand Opening of the new Portacabin</b>	10am
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>	Novice Meeting	10am

#### APRIL (Easter Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> – NO MEETING)

Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Improvers Meeting	10am
Sunday 9th	Novice Meeting	10am
Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting ~ Scout Centre, Blindman's Wood	7pm
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	General Meeting ~ Queen Introduction	10am
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup>	Novice Meeting	10am

#### MAY (Bank Holidays: Mon 1st + Mon 29th)

Sunday 7th	Improvers Meeting	10 am
Sunday 14th	Novice Meeting	10 am
Sunday 21st	General Meeting	10 am
Sunday 28th	No Meeting (Bank Holiday Weekend)	

## JUNE

Sunday 4th	Improvers Meeting	10 am
Saturday 11th	Novice Meeting	10 am
Sunday 18th	General Meeting	10 am
Sunday 25th	Novice Meeting	10 am

## JULY

Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Improvers Meeting	10 am
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Novice Meeting	10 am
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup>	General Meeting	10 am
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Novice Meeting	10 am
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup>	Novice Meeting	10 am

**Meetings will be held at the Branch Apiary Site unless advised otherwise.**

### ***Directions to Branch Apiary at Lee Mill, Ivybridge:***

- Turn left off the A38 at Lee Mill and follow the signs for Tesco
- Drive past the Tesco entrance, take next right for Central Avenue on the industrial estate
- Drive down the hill of Central Avenue, looking for East Way on your right
- Drive along East Way, looking for Cadleigh Close on your left
- Drive into Cadleigh Close; the apiary site is behind the big iron gates of the tyre factory
- Park inside the gates, walk up the concrete path & the portacabin is on your right

## CHAIRMAN'S BLOG

Hello Plymouth (and district) beekeepers. We're now on the threshold of a new season and the long winter wait to reacquaint ourselves with our colonies will soon be over. Let's hope all of them have pulled through.

This month, I'm going to resume my regular theme of matters that divide beekeepers and I'm going to tackle one of the most divisive of all. Should we use imported queens for re-queening or should we rely on our existing stock to produce their own? This issue really does cause rifts among groups of beekeepers and as I'm about to put both points of view, I can almost hear the hate mail dropping into my mailbox!

Many beekeepers in our branch have been pleased every year to buy newly mated queens from such places as Malta, Italy and New Zealand. Their aim is to restock and (hopefully) strengthen their colonies by introducing favourable genetic traits such as gentleness, disease resistance, productivity of brood and honey, and a low tendency to swarm. Other beekeepers are passionately opposed to this importation and worry about, among other things, the risk of importing pests and diseases that our indigenous stock may not be able to deal with. I have even heard it said that the evidence suggests it was none other than Brother Adam who may have inadvertently introduced the varroa mite into this country through his importation of Asian queens. (Crikey, that thunderbolt only just missed me!!). The case against Brother Adam has never been proven, and probably never will be, but some believe that the evidence is quite persuasive.

Whichever side of the fence you are on in this debate, the plain fact is that, with only very rare exceptions, it is currently perfectly legal to import queens into the UK from some places in the world, provided that all the necessary health checks, inspections and certification requirements are satisfied. Many beekeepers regard regular re-queening with imported queens as essential to the health of their bees and the size of their honey crop. However, some may point to the fact that BBKA policy is against the importation of bees. Well that may be true but it has to be remembered that the BBKA is not a government body; it's an organisation comprising beekeepers, and its policies simply reflect the views of some of those beekeepers. The fact that "don't import" is currently BBKA policy simply means that those beekeepers on the "don't import" side of the fence won the debate within the BBKA. It does not bind other beekeepers, even those members of BBKA-affiliated associations (like us). But in terms of the legality of importing, what about those very rare exceptions I mentioned? Well you don't have to worry unless you are planning to move to the Inner Hebridean islands of Oronsay or Colonsay, because on those two islands it really is illegal to keep any bee except *apis mellifera mellifera* (the black bee). That law was passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2013 and came into force in 2014.

Those who oppose importation favour the locally adapted bee (LAB). This means that natural selection has created races (or strains) of bees that are adapted to the conditions where they live. Proponents of the LAB argue that they are preferable to bees from outside sources, especially those imported from other countries.

Outside sources might even include queens from parts of the British Isles with widely differing climactic conditions. The local media often have items about the Cornish Black Bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*); this bee is found in many parts of the UK and is widely regarded as likely to be the best-adapted bee for our area. I have heard the rather extreme view from those on the other side of the fence that the black bee doesn't exist and has never existed! (As I said, this is a hugely divisive issue). On this point alone I will show my hand and say that those who believe that the black bee doesn't exist have probably been listening to too many of Donald Trump's speeches! *Apis mellifera* itself remains a single species in the sense that all sub-species are genetically compatible and can inter-breed. As a result of past introductions of imported bees there is usually some degree of 'mongrelisation' otherwise known as genetic introgression in the LAB. This can persist over a number of generations implying that the genes involved present some advantages (they are adaptive). Proponents of LAB aim to produce a degree of genetic stability in our local bees, permitting natural selection to weed out non-adaptive genes. They hold the firm view that every time we introduce bees from outside sources it is like taking a step backwards in time. Drone dispersal and the emanation of swarms from non-local colonies create 'genetic ripples' that persist until they are again resolved by natural selection.

I hope that hasn't confused too many people, especially newer beekeepers. The important thing is to talk to other beekeepers; as many as you can. Try to get the views of both sides in this argument but don't regard anyone's opinion as 'gospel.' Weigh up the arguments carefully, preferably at home or in a quiet location, and well away from the influence of any other beekeepers who already hold firm views. Once you have decided which way you want to go, you can either order your imported queen, or manage your existing colonies' production of their own, thus setting you on the road to owning LABs.

To finish on a high note, I'm really pleased to report that at the end of David Packham's talk at our February winter meeting, we had a quick chat during which he told me that he had been delighted to come and talk to such a well-informed audience. To hear words like that from a seasonal bee inspector is a real feather in the cap for Plymouth branch, so well done the audience from that evening and well done to the education team.

Until next month,

All the best

*Terry*

# BRANCH WINTER MEETING – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2017

## Elburton Village Hall

Again, our Social Secretaries treated us to an interesting and thought provoking evening when they invited David Packham (Seasonal Bee Inspector for East Devon/Exeter/ Tiverton areas) along to talk to us about varroa and how this troublesome mite can be managed.

David's talk was very informative and below is a just section of the presentation for your interest. The remainder included biotechnical controls, artificial and shook swarms, drone brood culling, queen trapping, open mesh floors, treatments and European regulations.

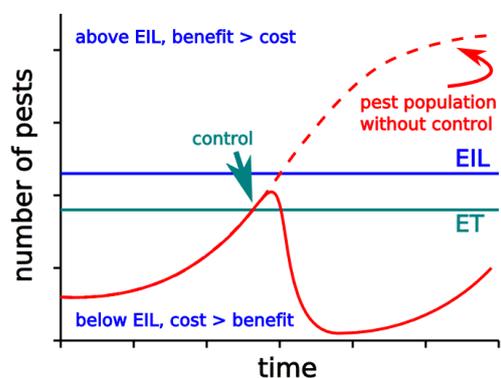
If you would like to receive a full copy of the presentation, please email me on

[JeanFrench1957@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:JeanFrench1957@yahoo.co.uk) .

### 1. What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that uses a variety of methods to suppress pest populations below the economic injury level. It does not try to eradicate the pest. IPM uses information on the life cycle of the pest and of the honey bee and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means and with the least

possible hazard to people, property and the environment. It relies on monitoring Varroa levels and then uses a variety of different actions to ensure that the levels do not exceed the economic injury level (EIL)



In addition, alternating different unrelated treatments, where available, helps avoid resistance because organisms resistant to one treatment may succumb to one which is different and acts differently.

When Varroa mites first invaded honey bee colonies in the UK, chemical control was relatively easy. Bayvarol and

Apistan both of which are based on fluvalinates were easy to use and highly effective; one treatment a year was sufficient to keep the mite under control. The situation changed when the Varroa mite became resistant to fluvalinates. As there are so few effective treatments available now, we have turned to IPM to protect colonies from the devastating effects of varroa.

Originally a parasite of the Asian honeybee, the varroa mite spread to *Apis mellifera*, the Western honeybee, which has no defences against it. Mites feed on the haemolymph of both larvae and adults, transmitting viruses and other pathogens and shortening the lifespan of the bees. Without intervention and control by the Beekeeper all colonies would die.

Before varroa arrived, beekeeping was a lot easier and it was mostly possible to keep bees without adding any chemical treatment to hives to keep them healthy. Viruses were known to exist but very few caused real problems.

Now bee colonies are threatened both directly and indirectly by the varroa mite. As well as weakening larvae and adults by feeding on the haemolymph, the mites transmit viruses and other pathogens.

Many of these viruses were unknown or obscure, but as mite populations expand and migrate across hives, there is an explosion of viruses being found amongst bees.

## 2. The Varroa mite

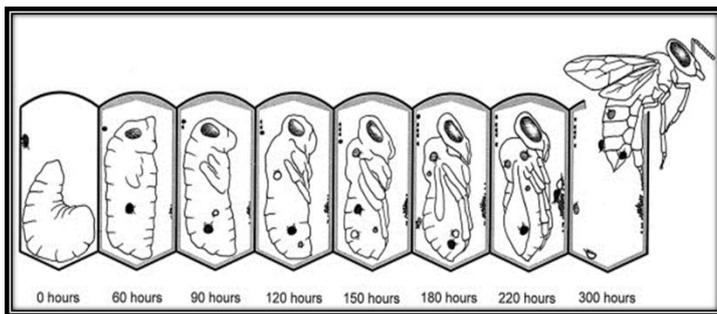
The Varroa mite is closely related to ticks and spiders and has 8 legs. The body is crab-like, with the head found in the centre of the long axis. Easily seen on pupa against the white body, the mite is very large in comparison with the size of its host. Imagine a tick the size of a dinner plate on your back!



The original host of the Varroa mite is the Asian honey bee *Apis cerana*, but as many colonies of the European honeybee, *Apis mellifera* have been moved about the world, and Varroa has spread to this species which has not evolved with it to develop natural defences.

Varroa mites feed on the haemolymph of adult bees as well as larvae which weakens them and reduces their life span, as we have seen with acarine. Foragers which die early do not bring in sufficient food and the honey crop is reduced, and winter bees, which have to live through 6 months or so of winter, dwindle in number to the point at which the colony is no longer viable. Collapsed colonies in spring are very common.

Furthermore, the mites spread viruses when they feed on the haemolymph. Before Varroa, a few viruses which attacked honeybees were known and understood, but there has been an explosion in obscure and new viruses post-varroa. Colonies die from viral infections even after levels of varroa mites have been brought down to below threshold levels.



The Varroa mite reproduces entirely within the hive. An adult female enters a cell containing a larva just before it is capped. She prefers drone brood, probably because she can detect the drone pheromone. The female hides under the larva in the brood food, breathing through special tubes rather like a snorkel. About 4 hours after the cell is capped, the mite

establishes a site on the larva at which she, and subsequently her offspring, feed. Some 60-70 hours later, she lays her first egg which is a male and at approximately every 30 hours lays 5 to 6 more eggs, which are females.

The newly-emerged mites pass through two development stages, the protonymph and the deutonymph, and the males are adults after 5-6 days, females taking 7-8 days. Twenty hours after the male has developed into an adult, the first female performs its final moult.

Mating takes place between the male and his sisters within the cell. The male cannot live outside the cell so mating has to take place before the bee emerges. Any females which are not mature also die, but the longer the cell is capped, the more female offspring are mature enough to mate. So infestation in drone cells favours the expansion of the varroa mite over that in worker or queen cells- the reproductive cycle depends on the development of the bee larva.

When the adult bee emerges from its cell, all the mature females leave too. The original mother may enter new cells as well as her daughters so reproduction is rapid. In worker cells the rate of reproduction is between 1.7 and 2.0, increasing to between 2.0 and 3.0 for drone cell occupation.

The life span of varroa mites varies according to the amount of brood present the bee colony. It can be as little as 27 days or as much as 5 months. In summer months when brood is present in the colony, the females may complete 3 to 4 reproductive cycles. In winter broodless periods, mites live on the bodies of adult bees until the colony begins brood rearing.

Population increase can be more than 15% per week, effectively doubling in four weeks. So even after using an effective anti-Varroa treatment, the mite population can be back up to its level of the previous year. Mites are highly mobile within the hive and are spread naturally between hives by robbing, drifting and swarming. This spread is very slow, but fast spreading is caused by beekeepers moving infested hives around for migratory beekeeping.

The harmful effects on bees are serious. Adults have a shortened life expectancy which can cause colony collapse in early spring due to loss of winter bees before the colony has a chance to raise replacements. Adults are lighter in weight and often are born with deformities. Their resistance to disease is diminished and they are especially vulnerable to viruses and other pathogens transmitted by the mites via the haemolymph. Some brood dies, resulting in bees attempting to uncapped the cells, with the appearance of pierced cappings and "pepper pot" combs. Diagnosis of damage to a colony which is badly infested can be difficult. At first glance, the foul broods may be suspected as the brood pattern is patchy and "pepper pot", sealed cells partly uncapped, dead pupae and larvae visible.



A small number of mites have little effect on the colony as a whole but it does slow down the rate at which healthy bees are produced to replace normal losses. We have seen the rapid spread of viruses which can cause colony death also the colony as a whole loses its cohesion. Honey bees are social insects but this organisation falls apart and the duties of foraging, house cleaning, brood feeding and rearing and colony defence are no longer regulated as normal. Finally the colony dies or remaining bees abscond.

### **3. Monitoring mite populations**

An important part of IPM, which underpins the approach, is that the infestation level of pests is monitored, and treatments applied only when they are necessary. The level of infestation dictates the action that beekeepers should take so we must know how to monitor and perform it regularly. A light infestation does not require treatment, and the inevitable increase can be reduced by suitable techniques. A medium level may require some light control and a hive with a high level must be treated immediately with an effective varroacide.

The two main ways to monitor are to count how many mites die naturally each day, and to estimate how many drone cells are infested with mites. Both these activities give an idea of the total population of Varroa in the colony. Monitoring should be carried out at least 4 times a year, i.e. in early spring, at the end of the spring nectar flow, at honey harvest time and in late autumn.



Open mesh floors have been advocated for many years, and lend themselves well to adaptation for counting natural mite mortality. An insert which fits below the mesh is put in place during monitoring, and left for a number of days, say a week. It is then removed and the number of dead mites on the insert is counted. This number, divided by the number of days of collection gives average daily mite mortality, and is an indication of how many mites are in the colony and is a guide to the level of infestation:

	April	July	Aug	Oct
High infestation	>8	>10	>4	>8
Medium	>4 <8	>6 <10	>4	>8
Low	<2	<6	<4	<8

Any time the mite drop exceeds 15 mites per day, the colony must be treated immediately.



To estimate the number of infested drone cells, uncapping forks are used to remove pupating drones. The Varroa are more easily seen when the drones are at the stage when the eyes are beginning to colour up. Before that, they tend to disintegrate. Of course, the stage of development of the drone has a bearing on the number of mites - which depends on how many offspring the mother mite has been able to raise. The advice is to check 100 cells and count how many Varroa are seen. The following figures suggest the action to be taken:

	April	July	Aug
High infestation	>4%	>7%	>10
Medium	2% - 4%	3% -7%	>5% - 10%
Low	<2%	<3%	<5%

#### 4. IPM Programme

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Artificial swarm				■	■	■						
Shook swarm			■	■	■							
Drone brood removal				■	■							
Queen trapping							■					
Open mesh floor	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Formic Acid - authorised					■	■	■	■				
Thymol - authorised							■	■				
Oxalic Acid - authorised	■											■
Bayvarol				■				■	■			
Apistan				■				■	■			

## ***Here's feedback from some of our members who attended the meeting:***

"We found his talk very interesting; we have heard parts of it before but still very interesting and useful. Some other members at the meeting were busy making notes, and questions on different sections of his talk were asked by members and answered by David. He also found time to mingle with members over a cup of tea and cake with more questions answered on his topic of managing varroa without chemicals. A good talk and well supported by members, which makes the work with organising these talks rewarding. We hope the members find them useful and helpful with beekeeping and something to appeal to all abilities and interests".

**Jean & Steve Russell – Social Secretaries**

"I thought that he covered the subject very well. If beekeepers want to follow his guidance, then that will be a good thing, but should the mite drop not reduce significantly, then some form of treatment **must** be given. It has always been the case that we can only reduce the numbers and we have the mite for evermore".

**David Milford**

"David gave a lively and interesting talk on varroa control and avoided scientific jargon despite his position as an SBI; he spoke beekeepers' language (albeit with a Brummy accent). His slides were relevant to the subject matter and it was clear that he held the audience's attention throughout."

**Terry McAuliffe**

"Very thoughtful and will hopefully, limit the bees exposure to chemical treatments. I do think it could be quite difficult to correctly do all of the procedure but look forward to trying them".

**Patrick Mansfield**

"I found David's presentation most informative and very easy listening due to David's presentation skills. Personally, I feel that we should invite David back on a yearly basis to hone our beekeeping skills. I would be most grateful if you could email me David's notes as being so engrossed in his presentation I failed to take my own notes!"

**John Burchell**

Jean French

Branch Secretary

21.2.17

## View from Your Apiary

In this day and age when beekeepers are all so busy trying to fit things into their hectic lives, how often do they stop and just look around? The beekeeping season is always very busy. Apiary inspections have to be carried out during free time and of course our unpredictable British weather often interferes with plans. When we arrive at our apiary sites our thoughts tend to be on the bees, are the hives still in one piece? Are the bees flying? What have we got to do today and have we got all of the necessary equipment with us? These are just some of the thoughts going through our heads, so we don't tend to take time out to stop and look around at the scenery or think how our apiary site would appear to another beekeeper.

At the last meeting of the Committee of the Plymouth branch of the DBKA it was suggested that we run a regular monthly feature in the Bee Brief called "**View from your Apiary**". The title is self-explanatory. What we want is for you to take a moment out just to look around your apiary site and take a photograph of the view from your apiary and perhaps your apiary layout as well. We don't want any information about where the site is, just the photographs and your name, and the knowledge that as beekeepers we have stopped just for a moment to take a look around the world our bees inhabit.

Terry and I have started the ball rolling by submitting photographs of the site where Terry keeps his bees. So please take a few minutes out to look around and take those photos and then email them to Dawn at [oakwoman@gmail.com](mailto:oakwoman@gmail.com) and hopefully we can make this a regular monthly feature in the Bee Brief.

**It makes no difference if you keep your bees in your back garden, at your allotment or at another out apiary site, we still want your photos.**

**Valerie McAuliffe**

# View from Your Apiary



Terry & Valerie  
McAuliffe  
*March 2017*



## PLYMOUTH BEEKEEPERS LIBRARY



If you have never borrowed a book from our library I urge you to do so.

The books will be at every winter study meeting with recommendations from the speaker for follow-up reading. During the summer the books will be available at the Apiary Site where there are meetings most Sunday mornings.

A complete list of the books is now on the website, so please try and spare a few minutes to look at the available titles. The library also has a small quantity of DVDs. Books and DVDs can be borrowed for one calendar month, after which they should be returned or renewed. Renewal can be done by telephoning me, or by e-mailing me. Books can be returned either to the library directly, or to me or anyone on the education team (see website for details). Failure to return or renew results in a small fine.

If you have a request on a particular topic and would like help in choosing the right book then please contact me and I'll be happy to help, and particularly to advise you if the book is available or if it might be out on loan. **If you read one of the books and can particularly recommend it (or otherwise) then please let me have your feedback.**

Liz Wallis, Windlestraw, Penquit, Ivybridge PL21 0LU

01752 698384

windlestraw@btinternet.com

### Link to PBKA Library

<http://www.plymouthbeekeepers.btik.com/LibraryBooks>

## Library reviews given by members 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017

### **Beekeeping for Dummies**

*Very American but full of good advice given very basically*

### **An Introduction to Keeping Bees (DVD)**

*Great little DVD ideal for beginners, shows a real basic background to beekeeping*

### **Queen Rearing (DVD)** 1 hour 45 minutes

1988 Bibba DVD (improving local stock instead of importing)

#### ***This talks about:***

- *Colony inspection*
- *Queen rearing box*
- *Cell starter colony box*
- *Queen-right nurse colony for grafted larvae*
- *Making up mini-nuclei*
- *Queen introduction/markings*



Since Lorenzo Langstroth promoted the bee-space in 1852, almost 165 years ago, little has changed in beehive design.

Two years ago Cedar Anderson and his father Stuart from Queensland in Australia, launched a product that they had been developing for ten years. It took the beekeeping world by storm, because it is, arguably, the most innovative change in beekeeping since Langstroth.

The Flow system has been the cause of much debate since its launch, and it is now set to hit the British market.

Stuart Anderson is visiting the UK this Spring and, in collaboration with **Somerton Beekeepers' Association**, has agreed to tell the story of the Flow Hive and its development.

To hear the full story from the horse's mouth, join us:-

**Long Sutton Village Hall  
Martock Road, Long Sutton,  
Somerset TA10 9NT**

**Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm**

**Tickets £5**

**Contact Steve Horne by email:  
[steve.horne1@btinternet.com](mailto:steve.horne1@btinternet.com)**



Videos from the 2016 National Honey Show have been uploaded to their YouTube Channel.

You can access the full list dating back to the 2013 Show using the links on their website:

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/lecture-videos.php>



*Spring* 2017  
*Convention*

**Harper Adams University**  
Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 7 April - Members Day and Trade Show  
Saturday 8 April - Public Day & Trade Show  
Sunday 9 April - Education Day.

The 40th BBKA Spring Convention is here again with 25 lecturers by leading speakers and over 50 Workshops & Courses; lots of new topics and old favourites to tempt and stimulate.

Book tickets, accommodation etc on the BBKA website.

[http://www.bbka.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/spring\\_convention.php](http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php)

## Devon County Show 2017

The 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 will be the absolute cut-off date for exhibitors to enter the Bees & Honey competition at the Show. Entry forms and entry fees must be with Stephen Ide no later than that date; details will be in the Show Schedule.

There will be **NO LATE ENTRIES**, and there will be **NO EXCEPTIONS**.

### **DBKA County Honey Show - 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Wanted!!** Your Exhibits for the Show at Westpoint, Exeter;  
Classes for all aspects of beekeeping; something for everyone  
Mead, Photography, Candles, Beeswax, Honey, Cookery,  
Art & Craft, Cosmetics, and more

**Reward**, subject to judging - trophies, gift vouchers, certificates, cash!  
Details & Show Schedule will be available on-line at:

[www.devoncountyshow.co.uk/competitors](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk/competitors)

and also available from either:

**Stephen Ide**  
Entries Secretary  
2 Evran Drive  
Exmouth EX8 5RQ  
01395-270473  
[s.d.ide@talktalk.net](mailto:s.d.ide@talktalk.net)

**Ruth Neal**  
Show Chairman & Secretary  
Badgers Barn  
Withacott, Langtree  
Torrington EX38 8NL  
01805-601715  
[ruthmneal@aol.com](mailto:ruthmneal@aol.com)

**If you cannot get to the Show, but would like to enter your exhibits, please ask your Branch Secretary if he/she can co-ordinate a transport link with members who are able to attend**

The highly-rated Bees & Honey Marquee at the 2017 Devon County Show will include Candle Rolling, Honey Sales, Honey Tasting, and Equipment Sales stalls; Live Bee Handling and the Honey, Wax & other exhibits' Competition.

The DBKA Show Committee running the Marquee is always supported by an enthusiastic, large group of volunteer Stewards, without whom it would not be possible to present the outstanding profile of the DBKA properly to the public. We are always looking for new volunteers - particularly the younger ones of you out there and those new to the Branches across the County. The commitment ranges from a single half-day to a full 3 days of help - the choice is yours - and there are opportunities to help on a particular stall or section, or in a general role. An entry ticket to the Show is included, which means you can enjoy the show as well - for free - in return for your help. Parking at the Show is free.

Anyone interested in having a thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable day out, and joining a very friendly and enthusiastic team, please contact me on 01805-601715; 07789-435477;

or email: [tupnce@aol.com](mailto:tupnce@aol.com). I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible.

**Barry Neal**

Chief Steward

The '**Taste of Honey**' Stall traditionally offers honey from around the county so that people may taste and then, hopefully, buy from the Honey Sales Stall. We are asking for donations from all Branches, from those members selling honey at the show, and as many members as can spare a couple of jars. Please let Liz Westcott know if you are able to donate any type of honey to help us maintain our diversity of choice - [lizwestcott@me.com](mailto:lizwestcott@me.com); 01803-855420.

**Ruth Neal**

Show Chairman & Secretary



The Asian Hornet identification card to add to our Apiary Guide is available at £1.00 - or [online purchase £1.50](#).

John Williams' book "Starting Out with Bees" is on special offer at just £10.00! That's almost half price! Not going to Tradex? Then it can be bought at this price through our shop [here](#) until the end of March, so don't delay.

**Wendy and the *Bee Craft* team**

## Bee Folklore

**Bees** are the sources of many folk tales and much like bee mythology, these tales have many commonalities. Some of the primary folk tales regarding **bees** deal with **bees as symbols** of:

### *Communication*

- Bees' humming was considered a hymn sung to the divine
- **Bees** were thought to have foreknowledge of coming events, as such, they were kept in the loop regarding the beekeepers activities in hopes they would share their own knowledge
- If bees were not notified of the death of their keeper by sundown, they too would die.
- "**Tell it to the bees**" refers to the necessity of keeping the **bees** informed about all life events affecting their keeper. It was thought that **bees** thrive on communication and feeding them information assisted their productivity.

### *Luck*

- A **bee** entering the home indicates good luck and enjoyable visitors on the way so long as one doesn't kill the **bee**.
- If one kills a **bee** that enters the home, its death portends bad luck and one will be plagued by an obnoxious visitor.
- **Bees** landing on one's hand mean money on the way.
- **Bees** landing on one's head indicate a rise to greatness.
- A **bee** landing on a baby's lips imparts the gift of poetry and eloquence to the child.

### *Purity*

- **Bees** are so pure that they will sting a person who curses in their presence.
- **Bees** abhor adulterers and will attack them *en masse*.
- By contrast, a virgin or the pure-hearted have the ability to walk through a swarm unscathed.

Additionally, **bees** are associated with health-related folklore including the belief that bees' stings have the power not only to prevent rheumatism, but also to cure it.



## The Buzz – Honeybees & Beekeeping



February 14, 2017

### Honeybees let out a 'whoop' when they bump into each other

Whoop whoop! A vibrational pulse produced by honeybees, long thought to be a signal to other bees to stop what they are doing, might actually be an expression of surprise.

Read more on the New Scientist website:

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2121275-honeybees-let-out-a-whoop-when-they-bump-into-each-other/>

And a video recording can be viewed at this link:

<https://nottstv.com/listen-to-honeybees-whooping-when-they-are-startled-or-surprised/>

February 12, 2017

### Informational cascades in honeybee swarming behaviour

A recent study by Nicole S. Carver and Damian Kelty-Stephen, of Grinnell College, USA, to be published in *Physical Review E*, has analysed the highly co-ordinated behaviour in honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), interpreting their communication pattern as an informational cascade process.

Read more on the Hindu.com website:

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/Informational-cascades-in-honeybee-swarming-behaviour/article17288716.ece>

February 10, 2017

### Can a Drone Do the Work of Honeybees?

Ten years ago, Japanese chemist Eijiro Miyako was trying to invent a liquid that could work as an electrical conductor. The sticky gel he created failed, so he shoved it into a cabinet in an uncapped bottle and forgot about it. Recently, during a lab clean-up, it was rediscovered—with the viscous stuff unchanged. Motivated by concerns about climate change and the impact it was having on natural pollinators, especially bees and other insects, Miyako wondered whether the material he had made, still good after a decade, could pick up pollen.

Read more on the EcoWatch website:

<http://www.ecowatch.com/drone-pollinate-honeybees-2250755968.html>

# National Bee Unit- South West Region 2016 Annual Report

## The 2016 Season

The 2016 season has not been the best for honey production, with many beekeepers reporting a mediocre honey crop. The exception to this was those beekeepers who took their hives to the heather in August; some of them have reported exceptional crops.

The Bee Inspectors have had another busy year. The three new Seasonal Bee Inspectors who started in August of 2015 have been getting to know the beekeepers in their areas. Hazel Vallis is covering West Cornwall, Eric James East Cornwall and Leila Goss North Devon.

We have continued to deliver in partnership with the local Beekeeping Associations our

**‘Bee Health Days’**. This season the Devon Bee Health Day took place at the Bandvulc tyre factory on the Lee Mills Industrial estate near Ivybridge. Plymouth Branch has a teaching apiary on the site and with kind permission of the owner we were able to run our workshops in some of the rooms of the factory. We ran further days with Somerset Beekeepers at the Edgar Hall Somerton and with Cornwall Beekeepers at the Town Hall at Wadebridge.

The Inspectors also had a presence at the Somerset Lecture day in February, Avon’s ‘Spring Day School’ in April and Cornwall’s ‘Bit of a Do’ (BOAD) in September.

We have continued with our inspection program for European (EFB) and American (AFB) Foulbrood; although the incidence of disease has on the whole been lower than 2015 there has been a slight increase in the number of (AFB) cases in Cornwall (see the graphs below). To help beekeepers improve their knowledge of disease, the Inspectors have given demonstrations at club teaching apiaries and are getting increasingly involved with

‘Beekeeping Safaris’ organised by local groups. If you are interested in running one in 2017, please contact your local Bee Inspector; there is a ‘Fact Sheet’ on BeeBase describing Bee Safari’s.

We have again been carrying out Exotic Pest Inspections around risk points such as ports and airports to check for incursions of Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Tropilaelaps and Asian Hornet. In addition to this there are 18 Sentinel Apiaries around the region. This is where beekeepers that have an apiary near a risk point, assist the NBU by regularly monitoring their colonies for Exotic Pests and twice a year send in floor debris samples to be tested. They are an important part of the surveillance program and I would like to thank them for their continued support.

Part of our work each season is to monitor imports of queens and package bees from the European Union (EU) and Third Countries (Argentina, Australia and New Zealand). Again this year we saw a large number of packages imported from Italy, some of which were bought by beekeepers in the South West (SW) region. These were inspected for SHB as they were decanted into hives and fortunately nothing was found (SHB was found in Southern Italy in 2014).

Every year the National Bee Unit (NBU) carries out Contingency Exercises for Exotic Pests, this is used to practice the Contingency Plan that we have in place. Last season (August 2015) the SW team ran an exercise around Exeter airport. This year it was the turn of the Southern Region and it was sprung on them without notice to simulate an actual event. To make the exercise even more true to real life, one of three samples prepared by NBU office was secretly spiked with some pieces of Small Hive Beetle before it was submitted to the laboratories for testing. The Laboratory test procedures worked and when the pieces were found the field exercise was initiated. Due to the high number of beekeepers in that area all of the available Bee Inspectors from the South West team were drafted in to help.

In mid-September as we were preparing for the end of the season, which is usually the end of September, Asian Hornet was found in Gloucestershire. All of the available Inspectors from the SW were deployed to Tetbury to assist with this incursion (there is more information about this further down the report). Then in early October another find in North Somerset meant that we had to set up an additional Local Disease Command Centre (LDCC) to carry out further monitoring in that area. It is important to carry out exercises for this type of event, and we were pleased to have been so well prepared when it happened ; however there is no substitute for the ‘real thing’ and this winter we will be looking at the lessons identified from these two incursions.

### **Imports into England, Scotland and Wales for 2016**

The 2015 figures are in brackets for comparison:

- 13,921 Queens imported from the EU (10,434)
- 1,924 Packages of Bees imported from the EU of which 1,354 were from Italy (2,393 of which 1,862 were from Italy)
- 23 Nucs imported from the EU (225)
- 0 Full colonies imported from the EU (16)
- 335 Queens from Third Countries –Argentina (520, also Argentina)

## Update on Asian hornet and Small Hive Beetle in Europe

A natural or assisted spread of the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, from mainland Europe into the UK had been anticipated and a Contingency Plan put in place to deal with any confirmed incursion. The map below illustrates the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe (updated November 2016), including the first incursion into the British Isles in the Crown dependencies of Alderney and Jersey and subsequent incursions in the UK in Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?msa=0&mid=1jRfoi4oF6GmiGRgbXuD71Qpbw8s&ll=46.60925415505642%2C2.689161067645273&z=6>

The recent Defra press release <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-outbreak-contained-in-gloucestershire-and-somerset> confirms the destruction of the nest found at Tetbury, Gloucestershire and no subsequent Asian hornet activity in this area or that of the two individual sightings in North Somerset (both dead specimens). Further details and pictures of the nest at Tetbury can be found on BeeBase 'recent news'. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#177>



## Photograph of the Tetbury Asian Hornet nest 55 feet above the ground



With the amount of traffic, both commercial and private, entering the UK from Europe, further incursions are highly likely and as experience has shown, could occur anywhere in the UK, not just in the higher risk areas along the South and South East coasts. The NBU will be assisting beekeepers in placing hornet traps in the affected areas early next year but all beekeepers are advised to put out monitoring traps with a sweet bait in apiaries in late winter. Experience in France has shown that these are highly attractive to queen hornets coming out of hibernation. These should be checked regularly, preferably daily so that non-target species can be released, and any suspect sightings reported to the Non-native Species Secretariat at [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. A fact sheet detailing a suitable home-made monitoring trap can be found on BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

An updated identification sheet for the Asian hornet and further information on the Asian

hornet can also be found on the dedicated pages on BeeBase at



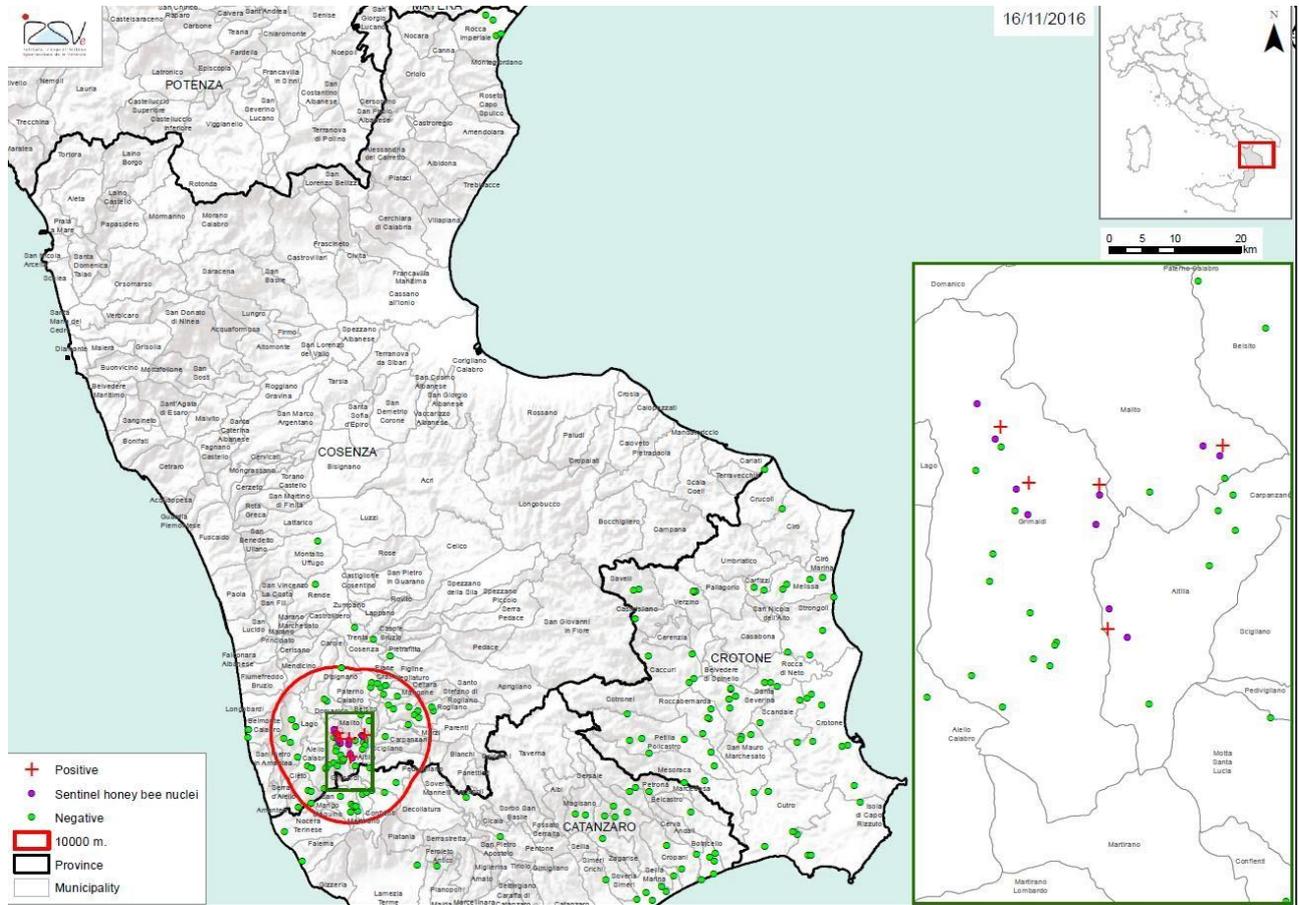
<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>

There are also some Asian Hornet videos available for viewing on the APHA YouTube channel which may be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLouExecY1KnfANGcLUd2D6KkLRHEn-T>

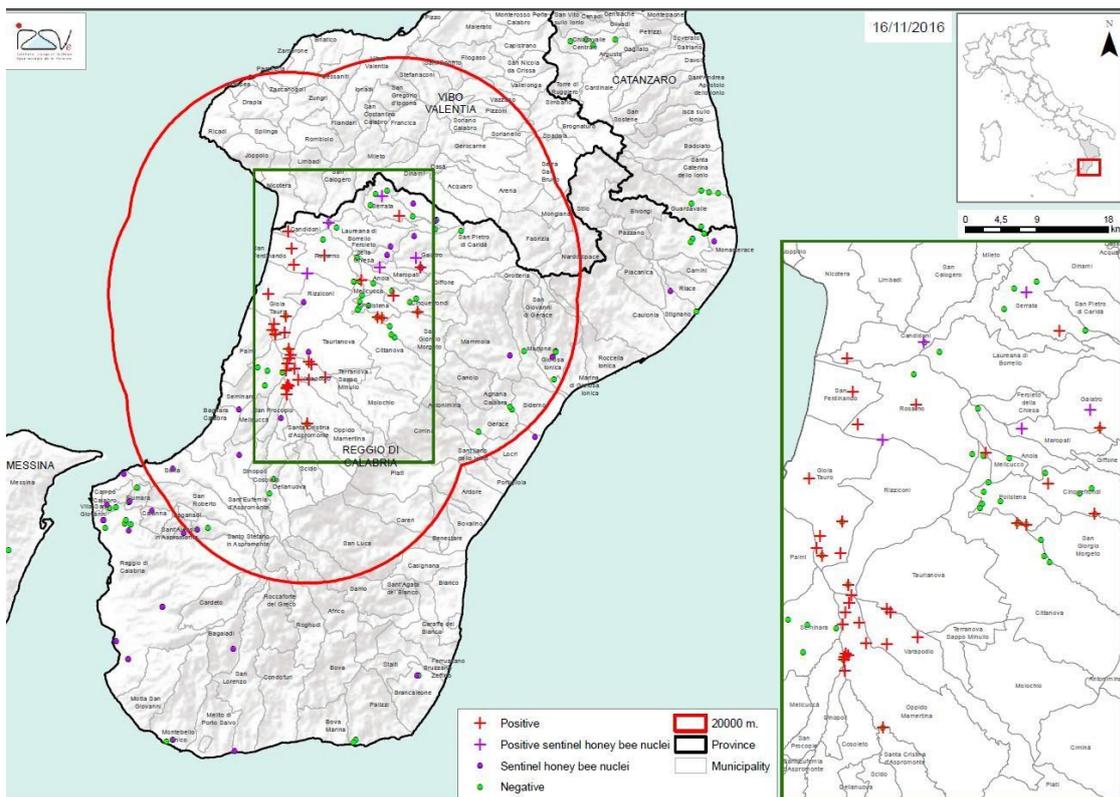
## **Small Hive Beetle**

In July this year we had the unwelcome news of a further outbreak of Small Hive Beetle about 100km north of the original finding near Gioia Tauro in Calabria, South West Italy. It is understood that this outbreak was found after the Italian authorities became aware of and traced an illegal movement of a significant number of colonies from the restricted area to several apiaries in the province of Cosenza, Calabria.

All the colonies were destroyed and inspections of surrounding apiaries commenced. A small number of adult beetles have since been found in one other apiary close by. Only time will tell whether the prompt action has eradicated SHB from this area as (so far) appears to be the case for Sicily where colonies were moved just before the first out-break was discovered.



A large number of sentinel apiaries have been set up in Calabria and Sicily, near apiary sites where SHB has been previously found and to monitor for any spread into other areas. Once again this year there was little found until late summer, apart from some adult beetles and one larva picked up in a small number of sentinel colonies in Calabria. However, since September and to date (16/11/16) another 34 apiaries within the original protection zone have been found to be infested with a significant cluster to the south of Gioia Tauro.



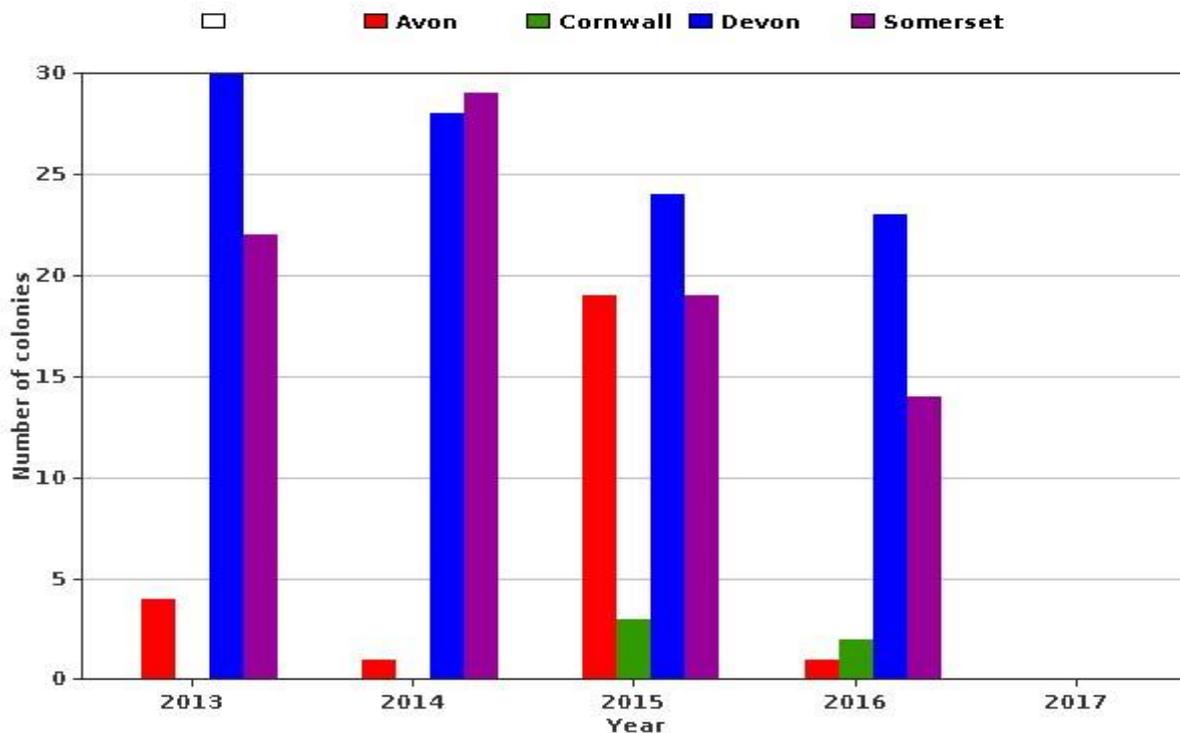
See <http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/>

Despite considerable effort it is apparent that the Italian authorities have not yet managed to eradicate SHB from southern Italy, demonstrating the absolute necessity for the earliest detection of an incursion for this to be possible. The NBU continues to step up monitoring for SHB under the exotic pest surveillance programme at apiaries within England and Wales near to identified risk points for incursion. I am thankful to those beekeepers who add to the surveillance effort by being part of the Sentinel Apiary programme but I would encourage all beekeepers to make themselves aware of the signs of SHB and monitoring techniques as described in the NBU leaflet, 'The Small Hive Beetle – a serious threat to European apiculture', available as a download from BeeBase at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) or as a hard copy.

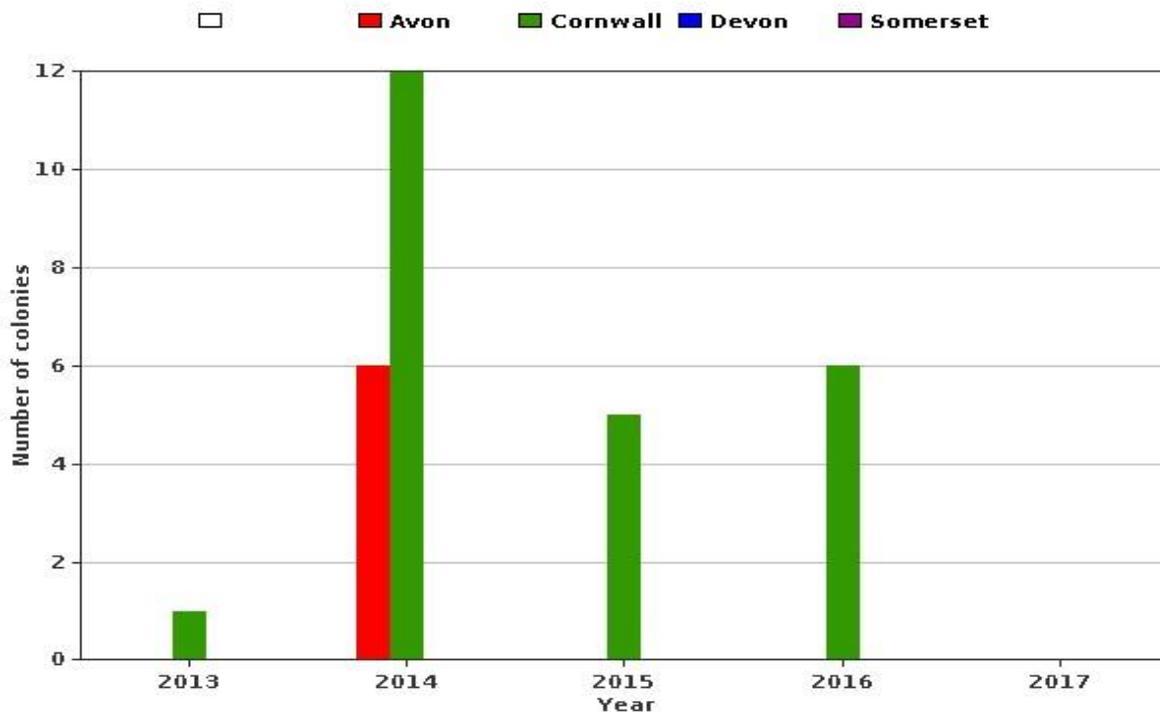
I make no apology for mentioning once again how essential it is that all apiaries are registered on BeeBase (as well as beekeeper contact details) so that we can identify apiaries at risk in the event of an incursion of SHB into the UK and target control measures effectively. Self-registration is free via the link at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com), or you can register by contacting the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. It is also essential that all beekeepers abide by UK regulations for the import of bees from Europe and elsewhere, including submitting an Importer Notification Form, either on-line or to the NBU office so that we are able to follow up on imports. It is of course illegal to import bees, queens or any bee-related products from within the 100km zone around the affected areas. Further details can be found on the Imports/Exports pages of BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=47>

## Foulbrood Disease for 2016 in the SW Region

### Regional trends of EFB



## Regional trends of AFB



Further details and mapping can be found on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com). It is recommended that these are checked regularly to see if there is any foulbrood disease close by.

All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with an email address will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. If you are self-registered, please ensure that you keep your apiary records up to date or contact me if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it also gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors who make up the SW team for all their hard work during the past year.

**The new season will start on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and from that date their contact details will be as follows:**

Hazel Vallis – **Cornwall** - 07775119457- [hazel.vallis@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hazel.vallis@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Eric James- **Cornwall**- 07979119369- [eric.james@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eric.james@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Martin Hann- **Devon**- 07979119377- [martin.hann@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:martin.hann@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

David Packham- **Devon**- 07775119463- [david.packham@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.packham@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Leila Goss- **Devon**- 07775119453- [leila.goss@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:leila.goss@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Eleanor Burgess- **Somerset**- 07775119465- [Eleanor.burgess@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Eleanor.burgess@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

Megan Seymour-**Somerset and Avon**- 07775119475- [megan.seymour@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:megan.seymour@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

**If you have any concerns prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April then please contact me:**

Simon Jones, Regional Bee Inspector, South West England  
(*Avon, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Scilly Isles*)

Telephone: 01823 442228 | Mobile: 07775 119459 | Email: [simon.jones@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:simon.jones@apha.gsi.gov.uk)

**National Bee Unit-Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)**

Website: [www.gov.uk/apha](http://www.gov.uk/apha) | Twitter: [@APHAgovuk](https://twitter.com/APHAgovuk) | Facebook: [aphagov](https://www.facebook.com/aphagov)

National Bee Unit Website (BeeBase): [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)

Address: National Bee Unit, Sand Hutton, York, YO41 1LZ - Tel: 0300 303 0094

## Contact Details – Plymouth Branch

<b>Chairman</b>	Terry McAuliffe	219573	<a href="mailto:tjm1952@hotmail.com">tjm1952@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Claude Pool	787212	<a href="mailto:dodi77uk@me.com">dodi77uk@me.com</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Jean French	338279	<a href="mailto:jeanfrench1957@yahoo.co.uk">jeanfrench1957@yahoo.co.uk</a>
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<b>Apiary Manager</b>	Patrick Mansfield	07887 997764	<a href="mailto:patrick11@btinternet.com">patrick11@btinternet.com</a>

**DBKA Website - Members Area Password:**

**If you have forgotten the password, contact Terry McAuliffe or Jean French.**

## Notice

Gary and Steve would like to inform all new and existing customers that we **no longer** trade under the name of "Cornwall Honey" and have no affiliation to the website or other social media tools related to [Cornwallhoney.co.uk](http://Cornwallhoney.co.uk)



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The website which is under development is:  
[www.thehoneycompany.co.uk](http://www.thehoneycompany.co.uk)

We look forward to seeing you all in the future.

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