

Bee Brief

Plym Branch News Letter
June 2014



Branch Meetings 2014

PLYMOUTH BEEKEEPERS APIARY PROGRAMME 2014

JUNE / JULY / AUGUST –
ALL ON A SUNDAY AT 10am

JUNE

1 st	General Apiary Meeting Talk: Summer Plans	All Members Kathy Lovegrove/Steve Arthur
8 th	Novice Meeting (7)	
15 th	Novice Meeting (8)	
22 nd	Improvers Meeting (4)	All Members
29 th	General Apiary Meeting	All Members

JULY

6 th	General Apiary Meeting	All Members
13 th	Novice Meeting (9)	
20 th	Novice Meeting (10)	
27 th	Improvers Meeting (5)	All Members

AUGUST (Bank Holiday: Mon 25th)

3 rd	Improvers Meeting (6)	All Members
10 th	Novice Meeting (11)	
17 th	Novice Meeting (12)	Film/End of Course
17 th	Improvers (7) & General Apiary Meeting	All Members
	Talk: Winter Plans	Kathy Lovegrove/Steve Arthur
31 st	General Apiary Maintenance	All Members

Chairman's Blog – June 2014



Well, the Met Office, in its infinite wisdom, has stated that we will have many more downpours during the summer. If their track record is anything to go by, we should have a very sunny summer! What the press do not understand is the relevance of GIGO – garbage in, garbage out. Forecasting long range weather patterns is extremely difficult and whilst the climate continues to change, as it always has done for millions of years, until the jet stream can be harnessed – impossible to do – we will continue to have fairly reliable short term forecasts, but unreliable long term ones.

So what's this got to do with bees? Well, they have been around in their current form for about 25 million years, so they have managed to adapt to a number of climate change events. The biggest problem our bees have now is the human race. Globalisation is responsible for the arrival of the varroa mite into Western Europe and now the Asian Hornet is waiting to cross the channel. Ironically, with our help, the bees stand a good chance of surviving these predators and it is right that this should be so. Any beekeeper who does not take action to control the varroa mite is a fool and makes life very hard for the rest of us. Some bees are better at dealing with mite infestation than others, but it will take many years for the bees to adapt, so that they will do the hard work for us.

A question I have been asked on more than one occasion is: "How many queen cells should I leave in a hive that has swarmed?" My answer is that it depends on the strength of the colony that remains. If the colony is fairly weak, leave one or two. If it is strong, leave one. I always choose a queen cell that is a few days old with plenty of food in it and destroy the rest. Check again a few days later and destroy any other QC's that have been built. Then leave the hive alone for at least two to three weeks. If you leave two in a strong colony, it is highly likely that they will swarm again. If you want to leave two in a nuc or weak colony, they should sort themselves out, especially if they are sealed and there are no other unsealed cells. Not all sealed QC's contain a queen!

I was in Mallorca for a short holiday in the second week of May. Dog roses and blackberries were in full flower! Their season starts in February with the almond blossom and continues until July with the sunflowers – how nice! They also have mountains, so some may get a different crop at altitude. Unfortunately, there were no beekeepers at the local market in Puerto Pollensa with whom I could chat.

Will there be a "June Gap" this year? So far, so good. I have noticed blackberries and clover starting to flower, so we may be lucky. If not, prepare to feed if necessary.

DAVID

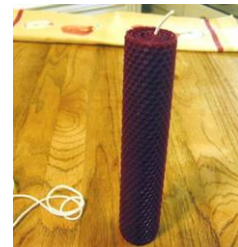


A wash out?

No way!

Heavy rain was forecast but that didn't stop us. We were stewarding at the Devon County Show and we had a job to do. Beverley and I had helped out on previous occasions so we knew it would be a tiring but enjoyable day. Whatever the weather, the visitors to the huge Bees and Honey tent would keep us busy.

Beverley was on the candle-rolling stall where people pay for a starter kit and are shown how to make their own candles. She is always amazed at how much you learn about human nature in such a role, especially from the mother who said to her daughter, "Let me show you how to do it ...I'll just help you with this bit ...Not like that, like this ..." and so on, until the candle was finished with the child hardly touching a bit of wax!



This year I was on Honey Sales where the tables were groaning with a rich variety of produce. Cosmetics, polishes, candles, beautiful photo cards and mugs, fudge and honey fudge sauce, marmalades and, of course, honey. What a range of jars, colours, textures and labels from beekeepers throughout Devon! Each stall has its team leader who keeps things running smoothly and you certainly needed a good team on this one.



Why volunteer?

The County Show is the biggest event on the DBKA calendar. Beverley and I both like meeting beekeepers from the other branches and hearing about people's successes, hopes, problems and plans. Plymouth is a very active branch but we are only one part of a county organisation of over a thousand members. Why not benefit from this opportunity?

When you volunteer, you receive free entry to the show. We tend to help out in the morning (8.30am – 1.30pm) which gives us the afternoon free to wander around the grounds. You can do the 1.30 – 6.30pm stint if you prefer, or both if you have been so often to the show that the novelty has worn off. There is always plenty to do.

The Bees and Honey exhibition is one of the largest and best, and it can only maintain its reputation with the support of branch members. New people are always welcome and there is so much to learn from the more experienced 'old hands'. When you realise that many of the stalwarts of the show are in their 70s, it is obvious that they need younger blood to carry the traditions on.



Several of the branches run their own display on particular topics and compete for the Stephenson trophy. This is awarded to the exhibition that best fulfils criteria such as being informative, creative and entertaining. It must be very rewarding to take part in a project like this; maybe Plymouth will be represented in the future.

We would encourage all members, **especially novices**, to volunteer their time at the DCS. As a newcomer you are generally given a lovely simple job on the Honey Tasting stall which everyone can do! There is lots to learn about from the stalls and displays; friendly people to be with; and the event is something that all Devon beekeepers can be proud of.

And the rain? It cleared up by the afternoon, leaving warm sunshine. And the bonus was, we didn't need one of the tractors to pull our car out of the waterlogged field!

Kathy Lovegrove & Beverley Bailey

Insect ID

I thought this insect maybe of interest to our members. I usually see one or two each year flying around my hives, this one landed on the roof of a hive supporting a nuc box. I was able to capture and take the attached photos. Unless corrected I believe it to be a woodland wasp, it's about two inches long and has four yellow bands on it's tail. I have not seen them attempt to enter a hive or attack bees.

With the current publicity it could be confused with the the Asian Hornet, which is exactly what a beekeeping friend of mine did last year.

Roger Round



VARROA CONTROL USING PREDATORY MITES (STRATIOLAELAPS)

Further to my article in last month's Bee Brief I can now report a positive development for those who wish to try using mites to control varroa. Those who read the article may recall that I said the Bee Vet was not supplying mites this year because they are still awaiting the full results of their field trials at Buckfast Apiary. Well, that situation has changed. Due, they say, to overwhelming demand from beekeepers who used the mites last year, the Bee Vet has found a way to supply them.

Although they were too late to arrange for the mites to be dispensed in sachets (two sachets was a single hive dose) they are now supplying the mites in small cylindrical plastic bottles (100ml). Each bottle contains 5,000 mites and the Bee Vet recommends that this will treat two established colonies.

So Valerie and I have decided to give this treatment another go this year. It will be interesting to see how our varroa populations respond.

If anyone is interested (and for those who read Bee Brief electronically) here's the link to the details:

[Predatory mites from the Bee Vet](#)

IMPORTANT: If you do decide to use the mites **do not** use Hive Clean in conjunction with them as the Bee Vet has advised me that Hive Clean will probably kill the predatory mites.

And no, I'm not on commission!

Terry McAuliffe

NEW MEMBERS

The Committee and the membership would like to welcome the following new members:

David Alarcon	(Milehouse)
Imogen Montague + George Bond	(Lower Compton)
Carolyn Salter	(Derriford)
Rosemary Stevens	(Ford Park)

Member Adverts

Free to Members

A good quantity of sacking suitable for smoker fuel, free to anyone who needs it.

CONTACT

Roger Round

roger.round@hotmail.co.uk

7, Buena Vista Close, Glenholt, Plymouth PL6 7JH

Telephone: (01752) 701945

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Contact Details

Chairman	David Milford	839751	m14drm@aol.com
Secretary	Jean French	338279	Jean French1957@yahoo.co.uk
Treasurer	Bernie Talling	709470	Bernie868@hotmail.com
Editor	Dawn Clarke	309483	oakwoman@gmail.com



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