



# Off the Comb

## News from the Totnes & Kingsbridge Beekeepers

**February 2019**

This Saturday, 9th February, it's the Totnes & Kingsbridge Beekeepers **Annual Dinner** at The Old Inn, Halwell, TQ9 7JA, 7pm for 7.30pm start. Two courses £17.00, three courses £22.50. Contact Jeremy Wells 01364 72180, email [jeremy.ena@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.ena@gmail.com) to see if there are any spaces remaining.

Also coming up this month: Beginners class Thursday 14 February and Thursday 28 February. The class on Thursday 31 January was abandoned (remember the snow?) so the class on 14 February will be Session 2.

### **Last month**

Oxalic Acid Demonstration: Thanks are due to Kevin who organised the Oxalic Acid Demonstration held on 29 December. The turnout was lower than in previous years but plenty of members left with treatment for their own hives. One of the hives at the Branch has failed, probably as a result of wasp attack towards the end of October, leaving four hives looking strong.



The scones and cream didn't sell as well as expected in spite of Lilah's best efforts.

Honey Show: The South Devon Honey Show which took place on the first Saturday in January and was organised by Sue and Grant in conjunction with Liz Westcott of Torbay Beekeepers was a great success. The Methodist Church in Totnes Fore Street was a great location (although we had to take the mead class out of the schedule because no alcohol is allowed on the premises) and we had a steady stream of people coming in to look and buy honey etc.

There were 90 entries - a great improvement on our last Honey Show. If we can get 100 entries next time, we will be able to award the coveted BBKA Blue Ribbon for the Best in Show. The Branch is going to buy some cases for showing frames of honey to lend out for future shows, so if you find that perfect "frame of honey" you will now be able to put it in competitions without having to invest in your own showcase.

We had 12 people entering from T&K, 15 from Torbay, 1 from Newton Abbot, 1 from Plymouth & 1 from Tiverton. Several beekeepers who were starting on the new course in January popped in and made themselves known. We also picked up some more people

wanting information on the course.

Thank you to everyone who helped setting up, tidying up and managing sales, or who just popped in to offer their support.

Devon County Show is coming up in May and if you enter 7 or more classes in the Honey Show there, you get a ticket giving free entry to the Show when you bring your entries along to the marquee. It costs very little to enter the classes and there is prize money if you are successful.

The Branch has been asked to put a stand in the Marquee but we need volunteers to get together and organise a display. Stewarding on the stand would also get you a free day ticket to the show. If you have time and energy to spare and would be interested, please let Lilah know.

### ***Coming Up in March***

**Apiary Clear-up Days:** Saturday 2 March and Sunday 3 March 10 am to 2 pm

The Apiary Team are going to be getting the Apiary ready for the new season on the first weekend in March. Jobs to be done include tidying up the Apiary surroundings, cleaning the equipment and sorting out the Shed and Store. Come along for an hour or two and help if you can. We would be pleased to see you. If you have gardening tools, eg secateurs, trimmers, or equipment cleaning tools, eg scrapers, washing-up gloves, blowtorches, which might be useful, do please bring them with you.

If you can't come but would like to help, we need volunteers to wash and/or repair various items, eg feeders, beesuits, wooden items. Contact Lilah ([lilahkillock@btinternet.com](mailto:lilahkillock@btinternet.com)) for details.

### **Improvers Course in March**

The Education Team are delighted that Kathy Lovegrove has offered to do a short theory course over four Thursday evenings in March for those members who have progressed beyond the beginner stage and have asked for some more training.

Kathy has successfully been running an "improvers" course at Mount Edgcumbe Apiary for a couple of years. The sessions have been planned with the Basic Assessment in mind, but anyone who wants to reacquaint themselves with some of the theory of beekeeping is welcome. There won't be any pressure on you to take the Basic Assessment - although, of course, we will help and encourage those of you who'd like to do it.

We have hired St Luke's Hall (underneath the Church in Buckfastleigh) and there will be a small charge of £10 to cover the costs of running the course. If you are interested and want to put your name down (places are limited), email Lilah on [lilahkillock@btinternet.com](mailto:lilahkillock@btinternet.com) or telephone 01803 866028.

Full details are at the end of this newsletter.

### ***From April***

Bob Hogge from Jersey Beekeepers is staying in Devon the first week in April. We are planning to arrange an Asian hornet information evening with Bob and our Asian Hornet Action Team co-ordinators - watch this space.

## **Buckfast Abbey Beekeeping Workshops**

Clare Densley, Beekeeper at Buckfast Abbey is running workshops from April to July. See last page of this newsletter.

### **Hembury Bee Supplies**

Agents for the main manufacturers and can supply all your beekeeping needs. Contact John Harler, Outer Finches, Hembury Cock Hill, Buckfast, TQ11 0HN. Please phone or email before you visit. Tel: 01364 642517.  
Email: [fire221@btinternet.com](mailto:fire221@btinternet.com)

## **2018 Branch Committee**

President: Rod Saffery, 01803 762532, [rodsaffery@gmail.com](mailto:rodsaffery@gmail.com)

Chairman: Graham Brown, 01364 642787, [graham.brown@gmx.us](mailto:graham.brown@gmx.us)

Vice-Chairman: Jeremy Wells, 01364 72180, [jeremy.ena@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.ena@gmail.com)

Secretary & Trustee: Grant Elliott, 01752 894094, [bees.westlakedevon@gmail.com](mailto:bees.westlakedevon@gmail.com)

Treasurer: John Harler, 01364 642517, [fire221@btinternet.com](mailto:fire221@btinternet.com)

Other members: Annie Hill, John Hart, Lilah Killock, Joe McGuckin, Kevin Gillard, Tammy Skinner

### **Branch Website**

<http://beekeepingsouthdevon.uk/>

<http://www.totnesandkingsbridgebeekeepers.com/>

Need help? Ken Basterfield holds the highest UK bee-keeping qualification, the National Diploma in Beekeeping, and if you feel in need of some instant advice, you can telephone him on 01404 815885. Two of our most experienced beekeepers, John Harler in Buckfast (01364 642517) and Jeremy Wells in South Brent (01364 72180), are happy to be contacted at short notice by any member needing practical help and/or advice.

## Improving Basic Beekeeping Skills

(A refresher course, especially for those hoping to take the BBKA Basic Assessment in 2019)

Tutor: Kathy Lovegrove

Target Groups:

- (1) Beekeepers who are thinking of taking the BBKA Basic Assessment in 2019 (\*will be given priority if numbers are tight);
- (2) Beekeepers who feel confident in managing their own bees but would like to extend their beekeeping knowledge and skills;
- (3) Beekeepers who have completed a beginner's course and have kept their own bees for at least one season.

### **Details**

Dates: Thursdays 7, 14, 21 and 28 March

Time: 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm

Venue: St Luke's Church Hall, Buckfastleigh

Cost: £10

Programme

The sessions will be informal and interactive so come along prepared to participate and “learn by doing”. Follow up sessions in the Branch Apiary at Dartington with the Apiary Team in April/May will provide practice and individual advice for those intending to take the Basic Assessment. The idea of these sessions is to help relate the theory to practice, ready for the forthcoming active season.

Sessions

Thursday 7 March: *Bee Colony: The Next Generation*

Covers the natural history of the three castes and the importance of forage in the development of the colony over the beekeeping year.

Thursday 14 March: *So, what does the queen do all day?*

This looks at the mating of virgin queens and drones; how the queen holds the colony together as a 'super-organism'; and what happens when a colony becomes queenless.

Thursday 21 March: *Beekeepers as Apicultural Paramedics*

When something seems to be wrong with a colony, the inexperienced beekeeper can assume the worst and feel inadequate. This session will give guidelines on how to keep your bees healthy; what danger signs to look out for; what is a relatively minor problem and what to do when an emergency arises.

Thursday 28 March: *Doing an artificial swarm is not the same as queen rearing!*

This deals initially with the value of swarm prevention rather than swarm control. The principles behind methods of swarm control is explained and demonstrated. Using this knowledge we explore the next stage - how to harness the reproductive urge to carry out simple queen rearing.

**Buckfast Workshops for 2019:** To book go on the Buckfast website [www.buckfast.org.uk](http://www.buckfast.org.uk) and click on events on the top bar menu. Then follow the links to bee events. There is a booking engine which is easy to use!

### *Swarming*

Two separate afternoon sessions which explore the phenomena of honeybee swarming.

Saturday 27 April between 2pm and 4.30pm will deal with the whys, how's, and when's of swarming including how often you need to inspect in order prevent or control it. Cost £5

Saturday 4 May between 2pm and 4pm will focus in more detail with different methods of prevention and control which we think are the most effective to stop you losing your bees. Cost £5

### *Bee-gin again!*

Reboot your beekeeping skills. Sometimes turning the computer off and then on again will sort out how well it responds. We can easily become unfocussed and sloppy when looking at our bees. Going back to basics and relearning the fundamental procedures and perceptions which we use to manage our colonies will refresh, refine, and strengthen a framework for great working practices. Saturday 20 April 2pm till 4.30pm. Cost £5

### *Are your bees not doing as well as you would like?*

They could be stressed! The balance of your colony is essential for its well health, wellbeing and success. Learn how to read your colony and to recognize when they are out of kilter. You could steer them back onto the right track by using simple management techniques. Sometimes these could make the difference to your colony surviving and flourishing or dwindling and dying out! Saturday 8 June 2pm till 4.30pm. Cost £5

### *Healthy bees' day*

A detailed look at honey bee disease: diagnosis, treatment and avoidance. The day will teach you how to recognize healthy brood and how to detect when things are not as they should be. Plenty of hands on experience coupled with expert advice and tuition. Saturday 20 July from 11am till 4.00pm. Cost £10. Bring your own lunch or dine at the Grange restaurant on site.

### *Give your bees a flying start to the season!*

You can't build a great building on a weak foundation. You must have a solid foundation if you are going to have a superstructure. Gordon B Hinkley. This workshop will outline some of the ways which you can promote and strengthen the welfare and fitness of your colony in spring to pave the way for a productive season. Saturday 16 March, 2pm till 4.30pm. Cost £5

### *Making Increase*

It's always a good idea to have more than one colony just in case something goes wrong. Instead of buying in expensive nucleus colonies why don't you produce your own? Splitting your bees is the simplest form of queen rearing and we can show you some of the ways which have worked for us most successfully. Saturday 18 May from 2pm till 4.30pm. Cost £5

### *When to leave your bees alone*

Have you ever wondered how some of the larger professional beekeepers manage to look after so many colonies? Do they inspect them relentlessly every 8 or 9 days all through the season?

How good record keeping and a basic understanding of the natural lifecycle of a colony can lead to less manipulation, more meaningful inspections, and happier bees. There are times when your girls can do perfectly well (actually better) without you. Learn when and how to inspect your colonies and when you can give them a break for less stings and a more relaxed summer. Saturday 25 May between 2pm and 4.30pm. Cost £5

### *What the books don't tell you and why bees change their minds!*

Bee behaviour can be confusing and we often resort to the anthropomorphic and rather desperate statement "Oh well the bees don't read the books!" Actually there is an awful lot in the books which is misleading or only partially correct (depending on what books you read of course). This workshop aims to debunk some of the common myths and misconceptions about bees which are often quoted in literature and by word of mouth. Saturday 13 July from 2pm till 4.30 pm. Cost £5