

North Somerset Beekeepers



October 2019

Welcome to the latest edition of our branch newsletter. As usual your feedback and contributions are very welcome. Please send items to the editor by 25th of the month.

Phil Clemente

We start with the sad news that we have recently heard that Phil Clemente passed away on 1st October. Condolences to Warren Holiday village, Colehouse Lane, Clevedon BS21 6TQ.



The following tribute has been written by Stephen Brain.

Whether it was his farming background or just natural talent, Phil Clemente had an amazing ability to understand bees. He could almost instinctively "read" a hive and this understanding and his own creativity enabled him to deal with all sorts of beekeeping situations which would faze many of us. Until recently he was a commercial beekeeper, running, I think, 50-60 colonies at his peak so he had a vast amount of experience. He was one of the best beekeepers I've met and it was a privilege to know him as a friend.

We worked together for a number of years, raising queens and breeding nucs for beginners as well as assisting each other in our own beekeeping. Many times I'd say to Phil, "What do you think of this", or "What would you do?" He was always generous with his advice and he was almost invariably correct. He knew how to manage bees. When he had colonies at the Branch apiary they usually brought in more honey than any others and Phil was quite willing to tell folk why that was and what they were doing wrong in no uncertain terms!

Phil had an overwhelming sense of humour. We were all subjected to it, no matter who we were. His puns were just awful. On the other hand his story telling was something not to be missed, especially his swarm collection stories. Few of us will forget his tale of the time he collected a

swarm from a couple of elderly ladies who were showing an unhealthy interest in the sex life of bees. When Phil reached to gather the swarm his belt broke and his trousers fell down! There was another story of the time he got stopped by the police because the owner of his apiary saw what she thought was a prowler wearing a hoodie. Of course, it was Phil in a bee suit!

Phil was very much a practical beekeeper. That made him a great asset at Branch training courses, and he was always willing to help out where his great experience was in demand. I must also of course pay tribute to the huge effort he put into the Avon stands at the Bath and West for a number of years. He was also at one time Apiary Manager for the Branch at the old Langford site.

I don't think he ever turned down a request to help. His truck was often in demand for moving bees and I lost count of the number of people he was mentoring or helping in some way or other. If there was a swarm that needed collecting he would be out if he possibly could. I've heard people say about Phil: "Always willing to help", "Everyone knew him", "He always had an answer".

Phil also had a background in engineering and some years ago he and I started what became known as Branch "Workshop Sessions". He would draw up plans for various items of beekeeping equipment that either were not readily available or were expensive. I machined kits of parts and we organised evening woodworking sessions where members purchased these kits and assembled them with some assistance. I remember one lady saying, "I haven't used a hammer in 35 years!" Phil's designs included feeders, nuc boxes, solar wax extractors and a special multi-purpose crown board we designed together.

Over the years Phil's health deteriorated and he got out less and less. This year he was planning on increasing his activities and was attending apiary sessions and other meetings and getting involved again. Sadly that has come to an abrupt end. His sudden death has made the world a duller place and we will miss his wisdom and (dare I say it) even his humour.

Stephen Brain

Branch talks and educational events – Rob Williams, Programme Manager

Keep your eyes on the events programme for up to date information. It can be found on our website here:

<http://northsomersetbeekeepers.org/activities/>

Wax workshop – 26th October

Want to know more about how you can reclaim and recycle used wax. We will be demonstrating a number of techniques at Churchill Memorial Hall between 2-5 including refreshments.

Practical beekeeping: Improvers' course (basic) – Rob Francis

For those of you who have been keeping bees for a year or so the Improvers Course is a great way of honing your skills and developing a further understanding of bees and beekeeping. The course itself is designed for 'apprentice beekeepers' and covers all you need to know to help gain confidence with bees and to make decisions about their care. What members of the course often find most useful is the sharing of experiences, the highs and lows, of their first steps in keeping bees. At the end of the course you can take the practical Basic Assessment (but this is not obligatory).

The cost of the course, which is subsidised by the branch, is £20 including the course booklet. Any members of Avon Beekeepers are welcome to join us.

Further details can be found at: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDM=F=0d1879b0-777b-4677-9751-9d036c3e7c51>

The course will begin at the start on Tuesday January 14th at St. Andrews Church Hall in Backwell. There are seven sessions every other week through to the start of April.

If you would like to find out further details or sign up then contact me at: robfrancishere@gmail.com or phone 01275462914.

The next WINTER CLUSTER – Rob Francis

Yes, it's that time of year again and anyone who is free to talk about bees and other things during an informal lunch is welcome to join us.

The first get-together will take place at The Star, Rhodyate Hill, Congresbury, Bristol BS49 5AJ on **Tuesday 15th October** at 12 noon. Everyone is welcome.

Branch Annual General Meeting – 16th November

All members are invited to our AGM which will be held at Churchill Memorial Hall between 2-4.

Prior to the AGM we are pleased that Dr Francis Ratnieks (Professor of Apiculture & Director of LASI (Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects)) School of Life Sciences University of Sussex will be giving a talk on *The Best Way to Manage Varroa*. This will be followed by refreshments and then the AGM at which we will receive reports from current officers and vote in new members of the committee.

No prior booking is needed. If you have any items for the AGM agenda, please forward them to: northsomersetbeekeepers@gmail.com by 1st November.

Christmas meal – date for diary

When: Sat 30th Nov 2019, 19:00-21:00

Where: The Greedy Goose, Gatcombe Farm, Long Ashton

What: Christmas Supper, (2 courses - £19.95; 3 courses - £25.00; traditional or vegetarian options)

Closing date: 11 November 2019

How: Sign up and prepay via our website: <http://northsomersetbeekeepers.org/>

Module 1: Honey Bee Management – Rob Francis

Would you like to learn more about honeybee management? Find out more in a meeting at The George, Backwell - on Wednesday 16th October 7.30pm

Several branch members are interested in getting together to study this module as a group. To find out more about this module you can go to: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDM=F=0e9a0b4d-d612-41cf-8736-a87a4435edd0>

You don't have to take an exam at the end, but you can gain a lot by studying together with others to further develop your knowledge about the art and science of beekeeping. And it's fun.

If you want to find out more you can contact me at: robfrancishere@gmail.com

Apiary update – Eric Sortwell

New site at Langford

The Club Apiary is now at our new site in the grounds of the Veterinary College. When entering the site go straight on to the mini roundabout, turn left and at the next mini roundabout turn right and you will see the car park. Walk from there. Leave by the exit and walk straight on, then turn left and you should be in the Apiary.



Gift Aid – Heather Pitch

Thank you to those members who were able to help the Branch with Gift Aid on their subscription. I am sure you will be pleased to know that the Branch has received a refund of £678.39 from HMRC which is an increase of nearly £300 on last year. The money will certainly contribute to the setting up our new apiary.

If your circumstances change over the year, please email our Membership Secretary at: heather@pitch.plus.com

Branded garments

The committee has agreed that we will continue to stock a small supply of T-shirts and sweatshirts in three sizes, plus baseball caps, which all carry our logo. They will be stored at the apiary. We will be buying these at discounted prices from Monmark. Individuals members can also buy direct from Monmark at reduced prices if you mention you are a member of North Somerset Beekeepers.

It isn't clear how long this discount will apply. View the Monmark online catalogue here:

<http://www.monmark.co.uk/catalogue/>

10% discount from BB Wear

We have been offered 10% discount and free carriage on orders if we can provide proof of BBKA membership. If you are interested, please contact our Membership Secretary at heather@pitch.plus.com to obtain confirmation of your membership before placing your order over the phone or by email.

You will need to provide your name, address, phone number and details of your order. Contact BB Wear phone on 01872 562731 or email shop@bbwear.co.uk See the website for further information: www.bbwear.co.uk

Request for local honey

S&R Burchills are a fruit and veg shop in Nailsea and often have local honey for sale. If you live in the Nailsea area and are interested in selling honey through the shop, please contact them via: sales@burchills.co.uk or 01275 854977 to discuss it further.

Basingstoke and district talk 18th October

We have been invited to join the associations evening meeting on Friday 18th October at Sherborne St. John Village Hall, RG24 9HR (opposite the Swan Pub) at 7pm for a 7:30 pm start, when Chris Park is coming to talk about Mead, Metheglin and Medicine.

Chris is a very entertaining and knowledgeable speaker on all things ancient concerning our relationship with the natural world. He is a skep beekeeper, a skilled practitioner and a teacher of many country arts and crafts, keeping our history alive through education. He also has a wealth of knowledge about ancient British bee-lore and mythology.

Chris is a regular trainer at the BBKA Spring Convention and will be at the National Honey Show later this month. Chris will be bringing his mead making kit, some books and, of course, samples of his own mead.

Tea, coffee, biscuits and freshly baked cakes will be available upon arrival and after the talk.

A donation of £2.00 towards Hall Hire/Refreshments is suggested.