



Editorial: First of all I would like to apologise for this Newsletter being a couple of weeks late. I know you will be forgiving but I had intended to get it issued in time. As most of you know our year so far has been eventful starting with my operation in February and Ivor's open heart operation 10 days ago. However, he is home and doing well and we would both like to say thank you very much for your good wishes, flowers, chocolates and many offers of help. We may have to take up some of the offers of help with beekeeping as Ivor is anxious about looking after the bees... but this year we don't have so many hives as normal.

Sadly, there are signs that we have lost a few hives in March which is what we are hearing has happened throughout the country...all OK in February but dwindled in March due to no new brood and old worn out winter bees not being able to keep going. Quick estimates at the moment state that perhaps there have been 50% losses countrywide.

The BBKA Spring Convention went ahead last weekend and apparently it was a great success. If you went I hope you enjoyed it. It is the biggest event of its kind in Europe and well worth a visit at least once in your beekeeping life. The lecturers are world class and the trade show is one where you can spend and spend and spend!

As I write the weather seems to have cheered up and it is gloriously sunny with bees flying in the garden....Great!
We look forward to seeing you all soon at our Branch meetings.

Branch Honey Show

Tom Salter Snr Honey Judge

Thirteen members exhibited 33 exhibits in the Branch Honey Show held on Saturday 9th February in Tickenham Village Hall. There were entries on all nine classes which gave me, as judge an opportunity to explain what was required of the exhibits and how they are judged.

This was an excellent learning experience for those members who had not taken part in a honey show before and it was obvious from the high standard of some exhibits that some members had put past instruction into practice.

David Capon won the Jubilee Cup for most points with a total of 30 points. David had entered 7 of the 9 classes receiving prize cards in each class, 3 of them firsts.

Belinda Kumpel was runner up with 16 points and 2 first prize cards. The Novice Shield winner was Ben Cuckson with 11 points, a first and a second.

Well done to all who participated.



Winter Courses

There were several courses for study this year since January. Thanks to all those members who have given up their time to teach and prepare for the courses:- the Introductory Course for new beekeepers; BBKA Basic Assessment; Mod 2 & Mod 8. Also the Microscopy course (started last autumn and ongoing through the summer) which has been a huge commitment for Stephen Brain who is running it and for those attending.



Chair's Letter

With the promise of spring I have inspected our own two-year-old hedge and it's looking healthy with plenty of buds, so the soil is definitely warming up. Hopefully the newly-planted hedge at the teaching apiary is showing similar signs of life! We shall soon have a new shed in place as well.

As the latest beginners' course has now ended it will be very good to have a warm season and some thriving colonies to show the new beekeepers.



Members' Corner

Welcome to new members **Mike Aikens, Ian Cooper, Juliet Coe, Hans Wilson and John Molesworth** - we wish you many enjoyable beekeeping years with us.

David Welham, Andrew Archer, Bob Kirkwood and Peter Butcher took BBKA module 2 last month. Fingers crossed for their good results!

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2013

Sat 11 May. 2 pm Long hives/Warry hives talk by
Jo Taylor & Kaye Crowe
Tickenham Hall Please bring something for shared tea

Sat 1 June 2 pm Apiguard
Churchill Memorial Hall
Please bring something for shared tea

Sat 6 July . 2 pm **Branch BBQ**
Helen Fordham's garden. Details to be given nearer the time.

Sat. 27 April /Sun. 28 July
Portishead Show

*Ft: please contact **John Banks 01275 855685**
Ja.banks1@btinternet.com or the website
www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org*



At Stephen Brain's garden meeting looking at plastic hives.

Post Winter Management

Ivor Davis

We have had a long winter and I hope that now the weather has improved, we will enjoy a belated spring. Last year was fairly bad for the bees and this long winter will not have helped. Hopefully you have kept your colonies going by ensuring they have enough food by feeding candy.

Most colonies will be weakened by the effects of the last few months and bee numbers will be fewer than normal. Now is the time to help the bees build up their strength ready for summer. Once the weather is warm enough (afternoon temperature above 17 Celsius, calm and sunny) you need to conduct a full inspection to ensure the colony is healthy and able to build. If you are not sure how to conduct this first major inspection ask one of our senior beekeepers to help or read about this in Ted Hooper's Book 'Guide to Bees and Honey' or my book 'BBKA Guide to Beekeeping.'

If you suspect that the brood and brood pattern looks abnormal then consider asking a more experienced beekeeper for a second opinion. You can then discuss how to treat the bees to get them back into a healthy state. Do not forget to monitor the mite drop and if varroa numbers are too high you can treat the colony with icing sugar.

There is a new treatment for varroa available now called MAQS. This comprises strips impregnated with formic acid. I have not used them yet but will be trying them this year. Formic acid is dangerous but has the advantage that the fumes can penetrate the brood capping and kills varroa in the cells. If this new product is efficacious and safe it could be a great help to controlling varroa.

This is a good time to remove any old damaged or frames clogged with old pollen and solid honey and replace them with new clean foundation of, if you have them, drawn brood comb. Remember if you put foundation into the brood chamber it is a good idea to remove the supers and feed the colony with liquid feed. This will help the bees to draw out the comb quickly and should they store some of the sugar solution, it will only be in brood frames.

In this area it is normally not necessary to feed pollen supplement or substitute as there is usually enough available in the local flora.

Getting the colony in good shape after this first major inspection will mean that in the coming months you can concentrate on helping the bees to build up their strength and manage their instinct to swarm.

STOP PRESS

Notes from the Committee

Helen Fordham BCD Sec.

Membership stands at 144. Lapsed 31 and New members 2
If you change your contact details please remember to inform me - 01934 834097 fordhamhm@hotmail.co.uk

I would also like to remind you that Steve Robinson (the webmaster) is doing a sterling job with the website and keeps it bang up to date - please can you check it regularly for any new information or changes to the programme.

"At last the weather has been just about warm enough for us to start our Sunday apiary sessions. Phil Clemente, Stephen Brain, Rob Francis and David Capon have guided our beginners through the hives.

All the members of the introductory course have experienced a practical session and have had the opportunity to lift a frame out of the hive.

Like most of your colonies I imagine, the club hives are well behind where we would expect them to be by the middle of April, but we were able to spot pollen coming in, and frames with eggs, larvae and sealed brood.

We can only hope that it starts to warm up a bit more, although the immediate prospects don't seem that promising."

David Capon 21 April 2013

In the apiary

David Capon (Apiary Manager) djcapon@gmail.com 07551994848

As the weather is still not settled it is important to make sure your hives have adequate stores, the bees are stirring and using up supplies at a faster rate than in the depths of winter. The Langford hives have had a top up of ambrosia fondant.

Meanwhile at our new site at Solarsense in Brockley Lane developments continue apace. Things took a bit of a backward step last month when the plans for the Solarsense ground source heat pump had to be modified and that resulted in more of our site being dug up than was originally planned. However, the ground has been levelled and working parties have erected a fence around the site and planted hedging along the fence line.

We are planning a formal opening for the apiary later in the summer by which time we hope it will be a fully functioning demonstration and teaching apiary. There is still an awful lot of work to do on the site and I am reliant on the help of other members to get it all done; it would be nice to see a few new faces at the working parties rather than relying on the faithful few all the time.

Postscript Sun 7th April

Today should have been the first apiary session of the season, but I postponed it because of the continuing cold weather. However, yesterday afternoon (6 April), standing in the club apiary in the sunshine, watching the bees flying, it felt for the first time like an apiary. With the help of some sterling efforts by a group of members over the space of about six weeks we have gone from a muddy corner of a field to a site which has:

Ten hive stands on slab bases, each stand with space for three hives

A post and rail fence around it

A hedge of mainly hawthorn, mixed with other bee friendly plants planted inside the fence

Mesh screening erected around the top part of the apiary

Grass seed sown and awaiting warmer weather.

We have five hives now on site, three which have been moved across from Langford, and two which we have purchased from Ivor Davis. As I said earlier it now looks and feels like an apiary; we have a large shed on order which will stand adjacent to the apiary. The next tasks will be to level the base for the shed and erect it. Hopefully, the 14th will see our first Sunday session in our new apiary.

