

**Editorial:** What a lovely summer we have had - I expect lots of you have pots of lovely honey. Sadly, it is the first year in our beekeeping lives that Ivor and I have none but now we are both well and up to scratch (well nearly!) next year will have to be a good one.

Much work went on in the Branch during the summer so many thanks is due to all our members who helped with shows, study groups, mentoring, collecting swarms etc and of course getting the apiary up and running so well and facilitating the apiary sessions on Sunday mornings.

Do hope you can attend our Branch AGM on 23 Nov. The speaker this year is Norman Carreck who is the Science Director of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA) and a fellow at Sussex University. He is a great speaker and will talk about neonicotinoids and his work at IBRA. Please come and support the Branch. Best wishes

### Education

Rob Francis: Ed. Coordinator

When it comes to keeping bees everyday can be an education, everyday a new revelation. We can learn from books and Magazines, from YouTube (some really interesting pieces on keeping bees there) from carefully devised programmes of study, from branch meetings and from one another and especially at the apiary on Sunday mornings. So it's been a busy summer.

Firstly, well done to all those who have now passed their basic exam – and everyone who entered passed. Initially there were difficulties in arranging dates for practical assessment and matching dates with assessors. Neil Seymour did an excellent job with this and must have spent many frustrating hours arranging and rearranging appropriate dates and times. Thanks Neil. Next year we will try and make it a little less stressful. Despite the difficulties we now have a further 14 members in the branch who have their basic.

We've also had a fantastic response giving presentations in a number of local primary schools. Their work that resulted from our visit to Fairfield School in Backwell is on a separate sheet with one picture here. We are also in the early stages of engaging long-term with a secondary school at Chew Valley. At present Paddy Brading and I have a small group of students interested and are doing an assembly to about 200 Year 7 children in the hope of recruiting more. If things go to plan we'd like to set up a small apiary with students at the school over the next year or so.

### Then there's an important series of courses taking place over the winter and the spring.

Ivor Davis is currently running a Module 7 Study Group which will finish in time for the November BBKA examinations. He's also going to be running a General Husbandry preparation course, primarily intended for those wanting to take the qualification in 2015. Should there be people ready to take it in 2014 an accelerated course could be set up. This is part of the FERA initiative who will subsidize the cost of the course.

We are hoping to run the Novice programme again which should start in January. It is ideal for those who have kept bees for at least a year and would like to take the Basic assessment in the near future. This is principally for members of the Branch. This is an important course and is recommended to all members who have not yet got their Basic. Further details about this course will be available at a later date.

Phil Clemente also plans to run session that involves DIY and making equipment for your apiary. This course was run a few years ago and proved very popular. One of the projects this year is likely to be 'Make your own solar wax extractor'.

So there's plenty to keep you occupied on long winter nights here. The website will keep you up-to-date and I will circulate information via email as it arises.



### Honey extraction 'party'

Paddy Brading

Never having extracted honey, I was really pleased that Stephen offered to show Sandu and myself how this is done at The Limes one afternoon in August. That, and the promise of some tea half way through the proceedings sort of outweighed Stephen's criteria for attendance at the 'party', which included, I kid you not:

Maintain a cheerful disposition.....!!

Clean the kitchen at the end.....!!!!!!

Aim to work well into the night.....!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Goodness me, what could this possibly involve I thought. I'd never been invited to a party like that before, that's for sure.

However, it was all brilliant. Fortified by tea, coffee and biscuits and much hilarity, Stephen, Sandu (and Sandu's son Lenny) and I 'laboured' all one afternoon and into the evening to extract huge towers of supers stacked up in the conservatory. Hot knives, uncapping trays and electric extractors are now part of our vocabulary. Sandu and I never flagged for one moment. Honest truth! We did stop for a lovely tea in the garden as promised. We played with dear little Peppa (the dog) and Stephen was very pleased he got all his honey extracted.....while his helpers staggered home, after dark, leaving behind a very clean kitchen.

I think extraction parties are the way to go for our club. Seeing how it's done is a thousand times better than reading it in a book. Many thanks, Stephen, from Sandu, Lenny and myself for that truly memorable afternoon.

Ivor Davis's & Roger Cullum - Kenyon's book 'A Guide to Beekeeping' has won a bronze medal at Apimondia (the International Bee Convention) held in Ukraine last week. Well done!!

### Chair's Letter

As we are nearing the end of our beekeeping year I look back on a very busy time, both personally and in regards to beekeeping. For many of us it has been a disappointing year with lost colonies and little or no honey. But that's beekeeping for you! On the other hand we have seen an increase in both our membership numbers and the general interest and support of the public. With this in mind I can't help but feel optimistic about the future of the branch and our craft in particular. Let's hope for a cold winter, an early spring, a long, sunny summer and more 'liquid gold' than we can cope with in 2014.

## Members' Corner

Welcome to new members **Michael Reardon** and **J. Hummel**. We hope your beekeeping will be interesting and enjoyable.

We have had great meetings this year. Thanks to all those who hosted us and spoke to us. And to our programme Manager **John Banks** for organising our meetings. Please do come and support our Branch meetings. We are lucky to have highly qualified members in our Branch who always give their time and knowledge to our members.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2013

Sat 23 November 2 pm

### Blagdon, Clevedon & District AGM

International Lecturer Norman Carreck, is our guest speaker.  
Churchill Memorial Hall

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*A future beekeeper?*

## Website update Steve Robinson

Worldwide visitors

The website has had over 5500 hits since it was refreshed last December.

A new feature (the spinning globe on the website) shows where in the world our visitors are coming from. We have had visits from UK, USA, Canada, Italy, France, Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, Russian Federation, Turkey and Australia!

Our UK visitors come from far and wide - 25% from Bristol, 22% from North Somerset with the rest spread all over the UK.

What do you want from the website?

The website is there for club members - if you want any new features, or sections adding please let me know. Maybe some recipes? Maybe more members photos? Send in your suggestions!

## Club extractor hire

A busy season for the club extractor, going out 12 times in total. The new on line booking calendar made life easy for all, and £60 was raised to go towards club funds. Thank you.

## Why bees die in winter

*Ivor Davis NDB*

Winter is not only a time of stress for us but also for honey bees. Unlike virtually every other insect in this country, honey bees do not go into hibernation (or stasis) when there is no food available in the environment and temperatures drop. Instead, they have evolved to keep active so that they can take full advantage of forage as soon as it becomes available.

To achieve this remarkable change in living patterns when the temperatures drop, honeybees gather together and generate heat by vibrating their flight muscles to keep the cluster temperature above 7 Celsius. Above this limit honeybees are able to remain active and will not die. This requires energy which comes from their honey stores and also requires a change in their metabolism so that they can stay alive for many months (as opposed to a few weeks in summer).

Long life brings other problems. The longer bees live the more likely they are to succumb to diseases or physical damage. As long as bees have sufficient food and good shelter they can survive the winter but to do so they must be in tip top health. Varroa, nosema, and viruses can sap the health of the colony and individual bees die too early. The result is that as spring arrives the colony is too weak to regenerate and just fades away.

This is why we must all ensure that our bees are in the best of health throughout the year by minimising the numbers of varroa mites in the colony thus ensuring the virus loads in the bees do not rise too high. Feeding is important but please do not forget the winter bees must be very healthy to survive through to spring.

## Helen Fordham, Branch secretary writes :

A reminder to come and support our guest speaker Norman Carreck at the Branch AGM on 23 Nov **and** vote for your 2014 committee!

## Portishead Show

Held on the 27th and 28th July, this year's show attracted fewer entries than in previous years; probably a reflection of the poor honey crop in 2012.

Winner of the George Simms Cup was Malcolm King with 14 points; Clive Howell was runner up with 7 points.

Now is the time to remember to put aside some jars for entry into next year's shows. Our local shows will only survive if there are exhibits to judge.

## Apiary Visitor

On Sunday 25th of August Maria Mason came along to visit the apiary at Brockley to understand a little more about the world of honey bees. Maria is the owner of the very successful Beauty Time salon in nearby Cleve which provides holistic beauty treatments and in her spare time she is a very keen amateur photographer. Maria took these photographs during her visit.



**In the apiary** ..... Well it doesn't seem five minutes since our first session at Brockley, but another season has drawn to a close, the Sunday apiary meetings ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep.

Altogether 42 people have attended these sessions, including 10 new members and 11 visitors; my thanks to all those members who have turned up to help. The apiary has certainly matured and looks vastly different from the site we took over less than a year ago.

It has been a much better year for the bees than last year, which wouldn't be difficult! My own bees have produced a decent crop of honey, and we have taken nearly 40lbs off the branch apiary. Considering the weak state of some of these colonies at the start of the year and the very cold spring they have done well.

We paid our rent to Solarsense with honey taken off the apiary, and each member of their staff received an 8oz jar.

Over the past few weeks we have treated the club hives with apiguard, even though varroa levels seem to be very low this year. Some people have been using the new MAQS to treat their hives; it will be interesting to see how the two treatments compare.

We have also been feeding ambrosia syrup and by the time you read this they should be up to weight and put away for winter. I take the varroa trays out over winter, put insulation on top of the crown board and strap down or put a block on the roof.

Now it's time to make a list of what to buy in the winter sales, remember what bits of extra kit I need to make up, so I'm not short next season..... oh and start Christmas shopping for the grandchildren!

**David Capon (Apiary Manager)** [dicapon@gmail.com](mailto:dicapon@gmail.com) 07551994848

Pictures by the pupils of Fairfield School following the talk to them by Rob Francis and Richard Ellis.

