



**Editorial:** Did you go to the AGM? Norman Carreck, our speaker, enlightened us about IBRA (International Bee Research Association) and told us how research is disseminated worldwide and a little about the bee research which is happening all over the world.

Afterwards he presented lots of certificates to those present who had passed their Basic Assessment and BBKA Modules exams this year. The full list is published in the BBKA News this month...I noticed that Garry Packer was under Weston-Super-Mare Branch...he is ours and actually our Chairman now as you will see below! Many congratulations to you all. We must all thank John & Amanda Banks for serving the tea which followed and the washing up...a helping hand with the tea towel after such an event will not go amiss if you can.

Our 61st AGM was held with many Officers retiring or leaving for personal reasons. We thanked them all for their hard work throughout their term of office especially Wendy Welham who spearheaded the new and lovely Branch apiary. We give our new Committee all our support and help...it is not a sinecure. Below there is a little piece about our new Chairman Gerry Packer; Secretary Janet McCulloch; Swarm Liaison Co-ordinator Adrian Wells and David Welham our new President.

The year has ended with an excellent Christmas Meal organised by Phil Clemente at the Clevedon Golf Club.

My best wishes to you all for a very Happy Holiday Season and may your hives be healthy and full in 2014.



Our new Secretary, **Janet McCulloch** writes:

*I attended the introductory course in 2011 to find out more about beekeeping and before I knew it had ordered a hive and bees. I now have two hives in my garden and thankfully neighbours who are thrilled with them, even planting special flower beds for them. I joined the committee as one of the members without portfolio and recently took on the role of show coordinator and now as secretary. So please contact me if you need information about shows, club show resources or need to communicate with our members.*

*Beyond beekeeping I am a public health nurse, specialising in infectious diseases, and live in Portishead with my partner Bob and our dog Spike.*

#### Message from our new President David Welham

Having served on various BC&D committees and being past Chairman and President of the ABKA it gives me great pride and honour to serve as your President.



We have had a massive change in membership since I first joined the BC&D nearly fifteen years ago when we had only approximately thirty members. Thanks to the efforts of members of the committee we have acquired a superb teaching apiary and web site.

Our charity exists to promote and further the craft of beekeeping and to advance the education of the public in the importance of bees to the environment. With this aim in mind I will give my full support to the new committee in anyway I can.

Hello everyone, my name is Adrian Wells and I enclose a few word to introduce myself.

I'm based in Weston-s-Mare and have a background in electronics. I work in ICT for a company in Cheddar. I have a range of interests spanning playing with micro-controllers, photography, walking, extreme sports, cycling etc. and obviously bee keeping.



I've been keeping bees for quite a few years now, and still learning all the time. I like to keep hives in the garden and have an out apiary at Burrington. I must admit that I often spend far too long just watching bees coming and going.

I'd very much like to thank Phil Clemente for his long and hard work in the post and hope that he will mentor me and prod me if I do something daft.

I'm here to help wherever I can, and welcome any ideas or requests from you; you'll find contact details in the usual places. I'll be in touch with swarm collectors soon.

In the meantime I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and look forward to another productive year

Kindest regards *Adrian*

#### Chair's Letter

The AGM for this year is over and some of the committee have stood down.

Can I say a big thank you to them and especially Wendy who I take over from as Chair.

I am hoping she will be around for a few months to ensure a smooth transition and teach me the ropes. I am looking forward to working with the committee over the coming year.

As a novice beekeeper, the AGM also marks that time of the year when I can relax and leave the bees to hunker down. Although with the warm November I noticed them very active just last week. I will be checking soon to see if I need to feed fondant. Time flies and was it only 3 years ago I was making enquires about the beginners course? The branch does a fantastic job of encouraging new beekeepers and numbers for 2014 seem very solid so far. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I am hoping for an early spring that turns into a warm summer in the hope that I might be able to take off some honey in 2014.



## Members' Corner

Congratulations to all those members who have passed their BBKA Assessments and exams...there is a page of photos of those present at the AGM receiving their certificates from **Norman Carreck** at the AGM last month. Hopefully, there will be more next year as the study groups seem to be well filled.

Welcome to new members **Chris & Sally Harvey** and **Toby Mamabolo**. We hope you enjoy your beekeeping with us.

Thanks to **Phil Clemente** who organised a great Christmas Meal at the Clevedon Golf Club on Saturday 8 Dec. Photos of the evening are thanks to **Richard Ellis** and are on a separate page with this Newsletter.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2014

**Sat 11 January 2pm** : Mead making

at Churchill Memorial Hall

**Sat 8 February 2pm** **Branch Honey Show**

at Tickenham Village Hall *More information will follow*

**Sat 8 March 2pm** Assessing bees without entering the hive

at Tickenham Village Hall

**Sat 12 April 2pm** : Weights and Measures

at Churchill Memorial Hall

*Ffi: please contact **John Banks** 01275 855685*

***Ja.banks1@btinternet.com***

*All information about meetings in the coming year are on the website:  
[www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org](http://www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org)*

## Oxalic Acid

*Ivor Davis*

The warm and extended autumn will mean that our colonies have continued to raise brood long after the normal time when the colony slows down and prepares for winter. The honey stores will be very low and, because there is not much pollen about, the young bees will be undernourished.

Unfortunately, these difficult conditions for the bees will provide good times for the varroa mites. They will have continued to breed a long time after you treated the colonies with Apiguard way back in August. Control of varroa should be considered throughout the year and winter control will be essential if your colony is to be given a good chance to build up well in the spring.

Oxalic acid treatment is ideally suited to controlling mites in winter.

Oxalic acid will not kill mites that are breeding in sealed larval cells but is effective against mites on the adult bees (phoretic mites).

There are a number of pre-formulated solutions available and if you do not know how to obtain these talk to me or David Capon. Remember that anything you apply to the bees is considered to be a medicine and you should keep records of the batch numbers, date applied and method of application. If you have never used oxalic acid talk to your mentor or assistant beekeeper who, I am sure, will help you.

The best time to use is just after an extended period of very cold weather (the cold weather will stop the queen laying eggs and 3 weeks afterwards there will be no sealed brood for the mites to hide in). It should only be applied once in the winter as the acid is corrosive and will damage the adult bees if applied more than once. Be careful not to get the acid onto you; wear protective clothing and rubber gloves. Use a syringe and dribble the solution along the seams of bees using the correct dose.

Finally, remember that the oxalic acid solution is harmful and should be disposed after use. It cannot be stored for long periods as it will become toxic to the bees once exposed to light and kept at room temperature for any length of time.

## Class BEE

*From Rob Francis – education coordinator*

*Winter: comparative calm and quiet in the bee hive but a chance for beekeeper to brush up on their skills and extend their understanding. Here are just a few things that might keep your bee wisdom warm over winter.*

## THE WINTER CLUSTER

We are reviving the monthly winter-months get-together. This is very informal but gives the opportunity for meeting together and discussing spring preparations, the world of bees and anything else that crops up. The first get-together will take place at The Dew Drop, Flax Bourton (just as you enter Flax Bourton on A370 from Bristol) on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 12 noon. Everyone welcome. We hope to continue this through until March. Check the website for further details.

## SELF DIRECTED LEARNING GROUPS

to take BBKA Modules  
It is currently difficult to find tutors to deliver BBKA Modules. The demand far exceeds the BBKAs capacity to provide tutors. A good way round this is for members themselves to form their own groups for a specific module – setting up a **Self Directed Learning Group** – to meet together on a regular basis to support each other with the knowledge gained.

As the education coordinator I would like to provide the opportunity for groups to set up should there be the demand.

Currently there is a group meeting to tackle Module 1 (Honey bee Management) together. How the group is run, how often they meet and where, will depend on members of the group – of which we have 10 at the moment. Experienced members of the branch will be to hand to offer help and advice to support members of the group.

Should there be other branch members who are interested in tackling specific modules in this way then let me know

## NOVICE COURSE

working towards basic assessment  
This course will be running again beginning on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm, every other Tuesday, for 7 sessions in Kenn Village Hall. For those of you who have been keeping bees for just a year this is an excellent way of consolidation the experience of your first bee-keeping year. There is a practical assessment at the end of the course which many people take. However, if you are averse to tests, there is no compulsion to take the assessment at the end. Again if you would like to take this course just let me know.

## THE BEGINNERS COURSE

This course is now full and is aimed at those people thinking of taking up beekeeping. David Welham oversees this course and many of you will have had your first experience of beekeeping through this route. The fact that once again it is oversubscribed shows the real interest there is in beekeeping. The potential of our new apiary at Chelvey for expanding and sharing our knowledge is exciting.

New information about the life of bees is constantly reaching the press. These are exciting times to be a beekeeper.

*So remember – a sprig of holly on each hive and whisper to each colony A HAPPY CHRISTMAS – it won't be as effective as Apiguard but who knows! They say each colony buzzes at midnight on Christmas eve: believe it or not as you will – but it adds to the magic of Christmas.*

## Officers for Blagdon, Clevedon & District Branch

President	David Welham
Chairman	Garry Packer
Secretary	Janet McCulloch
Treasurer	Richard Ellis
Apiary Manager	David Capon
Programme Manager	John Banks
Education Officer	Rob Francis
Swarm Liaison Co-ordinator	Adrian Wells

## In the apiary .....In the Apiary....

At this time of year there is not a lot to report from the apiary; the hives are all fed and tucked up for winter, although the mild weather has meant that they have been flying more than usual at this time of year, I hope they are not using up too much of their winter stores!

A group of volunteers pruned back all the hedge plants at the apiary; this should help to produce a thicker and stronger hedge next year. Out of over 200 whips planted last spring we have only lost three or four plants, a good advertisement for Chew Valley Trees.

Those of you who were at the AGM will know that Steve Robinson and Annabel Lewis have taken on the role of joint assistant apiary managers; I am grateful to them for the help they will give. It was also good to see such a large number of people passing their basic assessments; anyone with this qualification is ideally suited to helping beginners in the apiary, and even without it a few years experience is all that is needed. I will be emailing members shortly asking for volunteers to help with the Sunday sessions next season, please don't hesitate to contact me if you are able to help.

All that remains is to wish you all a very happy Christmas and successful beekeeping in 2014.

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