

Editorial: What a wonderful lecture Prof Daniel Robert Professor of Bionanoscience, Bristol University gave us at our AGM on 22nd November. We learned that from his research bees, which pick up a positive charge, are attracted to plants which are less positive and that pollen jumps from the plant to the bee. I am sure we have all seen bees 'rolling' in flowers getting covered with pollen easily. The plants themselves have a 'cooling off' time before their positive attraction is ready again to draw bees to them to collect their pollen. This symbiotic relationship is a necessary way for the plants to reproduce.

There are lots of meetings and study groups going on throughout the winter so we should be ready to look after our bees with more understanding next year!

My very best wishes to you and yours for the holiday season and may 2015 be good for you and your bees.....



From Richard Ellis, Treasurer

Subscriptions for the year 1st November 2014 to 31st October 2015 are now due. Full details can be found on the Membership/Renewal form that can be downloaded from the web site

www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org

Payment can be sent to the Branch Treasurer - Richard Ellis or "on line".

Account: 01839153 Sort Code: 30-99-51

The Full Membership fee (minimum 1 to 3 hives) of £36.00 is made up of:

BBKA Membership	£18.00
ABKA Membership	£ 5.00
Bee Diseases Insurance	£ 2.00 plus extra on a sliding scale for more than 3 hives.
Branch Membership	£11.00

Anyone who has not renewed by the 31st January 2015 will be deemed as lapsed. They will no longer be a member of the BBKA so will not receive the monthly magazine. In addition, they will lose their Insurance cover. There is a £5 re-joining fee and the BD Insurance will take over 40 days to be reactivated.

At the 24th November 2014 - 71 members that have renewed. This includes one member who has changed from an Associate to a Full membership, three new Full members, one new Junior member and one new ABKA Associate member.

There are over 90 still to renew. If you do not want to renew your membership can you please inform the Secretary or Treasurer by e mail. It will save a lot of unnecessary time and effort.

Prof Daniel Robert



Hive of activity A beekeeper sets about the precarious task of checking his hives, which are on a cliff face at Shennongjia nature reserve in Hubei province, China.

The Times newspaper



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
ABKA Delegate	David Welham

Chair's Letter

It seems only yesterday I was using Oxalic acid on a warm day between Christmas and New Year. Time has flown by! It was great to see so many of you at the AGM and hear from Professor Robert about the way bees sense their environment. Also congratulations to everyone who passed BBKA modules this year, learning is an important part of what we do as a branch. I wanted to say thank you to everyone who has helped make the branch a success this year. Finally, I wish you and your families all a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Garry

Members' Corner

We welcome new members: **Charlie Armour, Keith Brand, Juliet Carbin, Jason Pitchers** and his son **Kes Pitcher** our first Junior member and **Jane Boss** Associate member. We hope you will enjoy your beekeeping with us.
At the AGM we sang Happy Birthday to **David Welham** and **Rob Francis**. It was **David's** 70th birthday and some of us were instructed to keep David as long as possible so that Wendy could prepare for a surprise party...but as Chairman didn't he whizz through the AGM quickly?!

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2015

Sat 10 January 2pm

Nicola Bradbear talk about 'Bees for Development'
Churchill Memorial Hall

Sat 7 February 2pm

Branch Honey Show
Tickenham Village Hall

Sat 14 March

ABKA AGM at Bath
details to follow

and

IPM 'Living with Varroa' David Packham
Tickenham Village Hall

*Ffi: please contact **John Banks** 01275 855685
Ja.banks1@btinternet.com*

*All information about meetings are on the website:
www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org*

Winter bees

Ivor Davis NDB

It is fascinating that an insect that normally lives for 6 weeks in the summer can exist for about 6 months in winter. This life extension is similar to saying that we live for 70 years but under winter conditions could live for about 300 years. We now know that in some ways it is the reverse; that is the normal lifespan for a bee is in excess of 6 months but in the summer they work themselves to death by flying and feeding young.

As with all animals, the longer they live the more likely they are to be subject to diseases and pathogens. Summer bees die so quickly from their lifestyle that other diseases (except for the really traumatic ones) do not have a chance to gain a hold and finish off the poor insect. When analysed, many workers will be found to have low level infections of viruses and bacteria. The levels are so low that during the natural life these pathogens don't develop to cause real harm. As you can imagine if the insect lives at least 4x longer, these pathogens have more time to build up and can cause debilitation or death.

Here comes the crunch. If the bees that live through winter are not in top health they could be ill or dying at the very time that the colony needs them to work hard, collecting food and feeding the young larvae. The risk is that they do not survive long enough to get the next brood off to a good start and the colony withers and dies in early spring.

Ensuring your bees are in top health in late autumn is important and reducing the varroa count in the colony all helps to keep these bees in the best of health. Ensuring that the inside of the hive remains well ventilated and dry will help to stop the bees being attacked by fungal diseases as well.

Spring Day School 2015

Next year the Spring Day School will be held on the 25th April 2015 at a new venue of Shipham Village Hall. The change of venue is due to comments provided to the ABKA committee earlier this year concerning access; parking etc. It is hoped that the new venue will address all the issues; you can view the new venue at

<http://www.shiphamhall.co.uk/>.

From Education co-ordinator, Rob Francis rob-francis@virgin.net

You think that once winter is here there will be a respite for the beekeeper. It's not so his year: we're recruiting well for the Basic course which starts at Kenn Village Hall on Tuesday 20th January; there's a group starting out on Module 1; the introductory course is full to bursting; I have a long list of people interested in taking a microscopy course at some point in the future (probably next autumn); and finally, the woodworking workshops are at full capacity.

This level of activity has the feel of a fully working colony of honeybees in midsummer. There's also the opportunity of starting up your own group. I have recently been approached by a member of the association who wishes to take Module 3 (Poisons, Pests and Diseases) and he is wondering whether there is anyone else out there who would like to join him. Let me know if you are interested. This is an excellent way of building your knowledge and of getting to link up with the experience of other beekeepers.

These days so much of our knowledge can be foraged from the internet and though some of the advice can be a little suspect there are also excellent sources of information; I think particularly of the Dave Cushman website (www.dave-cushman.net) which has a real wealth of sound and helpful ideas. Which brings me to considering the future of the branch library. In the last few years it has been used less and less and the committee have been debating about the future of this resource. If you were at the AGM you will know that there were three possible options discussed. They were:

To maintain a few up-to-date reference books and to sell the rest.

To disband the library completely and sell or auction books to members.

To keep the library as it is but find some permanent and accessible place for it.

There are of course possible combinations of the above. There is no easy solution and, as it was pointed out at the AGM, some of the books were specifically donated to the branch. We would like to hear your thoughts about this. Let me know if you have any ideas of how the library might be managed in future. There are at present 4 hefty boxes of books, some up-to-date and many of historical interest; these boxes are rather cumbersome and not so easy to move about. Any thoughts?

Meanwhile, I hope you and your bees keep warm and safe over the winter. For my birthday I was given a copy of *The Bad Beekeepers Club* by **Bill Turnbull**, which is a great book for someone who has recently started out in beekeeping; it reassures any new beekeeper that there are always mistakes to be made in beekeeping. So why does he do it? "It's like they are my path to redemption" he writes. What better reason for keeping bees. I'd certainly recommend this book. Alternatively you could join up on the Basic Course this January.

A happy Christmas.

In the Apiary.....

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

I hear on the news that we are heading for what may turn out to be the hottest year on record. It seems to have been a good year for honey with the BBKA reporting an increase in honey yield this year; this has certainly been the case with my own hives.

The worry is that with the bees continuing to fly and be active they will be using up all their winter stores. It is a good idea to keep a check on the weight of your hives over the winter period, with experience you can simply 'heft', or lift them at the back and have a good idea of their weight.

I fix a screw in either side of the floor and gently lift each side with a set of luggage scales so that I can keep a check on their weight. The weight of both my own and the branch hives is holding up well at the moment so it would seem they are finding some forage. If the weight drops too much over winter then a block of fondant over the feed hole should supply sustenance, or if they are very short of stores lay the fondant directly on top of the frames.

Those of you who have ordered oxalic acid from John's bulk purchase scheme will be hoping for a cold snap so there is a broodless period. Usually oxalic can be applied soon after Christmas, speaking of which.....

All that remains is to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and successful beekeeping in 2015.

BCD 62nd agm

22 NOVEMBER 2014



Christmas Meal 6 December 2014



.....and Bob Kirkwood
tells us a joke...an annual treat!