



Blagdon, Clevedon and District Branch

of Avon Beekeepers Association, Charity No. 271717

Branch Website: www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org

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Editorial: Another season is nearly over and our hopes for a good summer with another bumper honey yield have been dashed. Reports from all over the country sat that it is a bad year for the honey crop. Ivor and I have had the worst year in over 30 years. Honey prices will be sky high! We noticed a wholefood chain was selling Manuka honey for more than £40.00 a jar but know it sells for much more online and in 'posh' shops. (While it has some healing properties as a topical application once in the stomach there is no difference to any honey.) I don't think our customers will pay that sort of price but we should store and display our honey in the best possible way whatever the price we receive, so that the reputation of local beekeepers is upheld. There is such a good feeling about beekeeping within the public domain; we must maintain that to ensure honey bees continue to enjoy public support.

The National Honey Show in London held at the end of October has trade Shows and lectures and is worth a visit. And of course, coming up is our own AGM. Please come and support it. My best wishes

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

Now that the autumn mists come rolling in it is time for the beekeeper to take stock. There is honey to extract and bottle; there is wax to melt down; hives to feed, treat and put to bed for the winter; and, of course, time to think about extending knowledge and understanding about our honey bees.

This autumn we already have a group studying Module 2 (Products of the Hive) and the Queen Rearing group will be letting you know of its successes during the next few months. We are also considering putting on a microscopy course next year run by Stephen Brain and others. However in order to make it viable there must be a commitment to complete the course from a sufficient number of people. Stephen explains:

'At the moment we are looking at commencing early 2016 and meeting approximately every 2 weeks until October or the BBKA Microscopy exam date. (We are looking at 15 – 20 sessions in total). There will be homework between sessions which will be both practical and theoretical in nature. Students will have to purchase/obtain their own equipment so there are costs involved in addition to the course running expenses.'

If you would like to consider joining the course or would like to find out more then we are running an information evening at Kenn Village Hall (Kenn Street BS21 6TN) on Tuesday 6th October starting 7.30pm. This will explain in more detail what is involved and will assess the potential interest from members in the BBKA Avon association. Details about the BBKA microscopy syllabus can be found at:

http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments/microscopy

After Christmas it is also intended to run the Basic Course over seven sessions. The word 'basic' is a little misleading and it might be better to call it The Improvers Course as it's designed for those people who have been keeping bees for a year. It covers all the basics but it is particularly valuable because members on the course have the hands on experience of beekeeping and are able to share these experiences. There is a practical assessment after the course but you do not have to take it though the basic qualification encourages people to move on to some of the modules. Further details about this will be on the website in November.

We are also starting up the Winter Cluster again. These meetings are informal gatherings for members and friends over the winter season. We usually meet at noon on the third Tuesday of the month at a local hostelry. This year it sets off at The Star in Congresbury on Tuesday 20th October. Dates of further cluster meeting will be posted on the website.

Finally we had a very successful day at The Countryside day at the start of July. Run at the North Somerset Agricultural Ground it enables over 2000 children from local primary schools to actively learn about the countryside. Thanks to Paddy Brading and Keith Brand for engaging so many youngsters who were fascinated by the observation hive and the opportunity to spot the queen. The only downside of the day is that it seems the new Blagdon and Clevedon Beekeepers Banner went missing. If anyone has any information leading to its returns we'd be very grateful.

Blagdon, Clevedon & District Beekeepers'

63rd AGM

at 2pm

Churchill Memorial Hall

*The History of Beekeeping.*by
Ruth Homer

Message from our Chairman Garry Packer:

There has been a suggestion that the branch should change its name to 'North Somerset Beekeepers' the rationale is that this more accurately reflects the branch's geographic distribution. The committee would like to hear your views at the AGM.

Countryside Day



National Honey Show

29th October - 31st October

St George's College, Weybridge Road, Addlestone,
Surrey, KT15 2QSnationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com

Chair's Letter

It's been a busy summer, lots of flower and produce shows which the branch supports to raise awareness of beekeeping, and of course, sell some honey. These wouldn't be so successful without lots of help and in particular the lead for each event. Thank you to everyone who helps to make these a success. Also if your entry has been commended well done! We need support in the form of entries to keep these events alive.

My bees have produced about half the honey yield this year, I think the late spring had an impact on early build up and then later in the year the queens seemed to struggle to start laying. On the plus side I didn't have to go and retrieve them from next door. This has been my fourth year and probably most difficult in understanding what was going on and I am now being plagued by wasps, on the plus side lots of lessons learned.

I look forward to meeting you at all the AGM in November.

Garry

Members' Corner

Jane Boss is now a full member.

The AGM is a good time to pay your subs. Please pay in good time!

Ruth Homer will talk to us at the AGM in November. She has kept bees for many years and is a BBKA Executive member.

Congratulations to everyone who helped at the Portishead Show. They won the cup for 'The Best Stand in the Show'.

Swarm Liaison Officer:

Adrian Wells

Don't forget that the post becomes vacant this year, so if anyone is interested in taking up the post remember to come to the AGM. Feel free to email me to find out what is entailed.

Swarms this year were, erm, interesting! I had one swarm with four queens, and four very aggressive swarms, and yet gentle enough when hived. I also had several swarms on the ground. Swarming was also erratic with them emerging early in the day, during rain and on days that you just wouldn't expect swarms, and none on days when you would! Numbers were greatly reduced from last years bumper numbers and the season much shorter; the last swarm reported to me about three weeks ago. I would estimate that the size of swarms was down, and with a smaller range of sizes.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2015

Sat 17 October 14.00



Overwintering your bees
Ivor Davis (changed date)
Tickenham Village Hall



Sat 21 November 14.00

BCD AGM and speaker Ruth Homer
Churchill Memorial Hall

Sat 5 December 19.00

Branch Christmas Meal
Clevedon Golf Course

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

Ja.banks1@btinternet.com

www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org

Winscombe Michaelmas Fair

Adrian Wells

Although numbers were down due to the rain earlier in the day, as usual our stand drew a great deal of interest with potential bee keepers taking away details of courses. The new posters were a great improvement and of course the observation hive, candle rolling and badge making all helped to garner interest. Unfortunately show entries were a bit thin on the ground this year, and only one person brought honey to sell, a reflection of the harvest.

I'd like to give thanks to the volunteers who once again did a sterling job, and a special mention to David Capon for setting up the observation hive and giving up his morning to judge the entries.

Congratulations to the prize winners!

What a buzz:

Adrian Wells

At the end of July, I was approached by a company that provides sound-clips to those making wildlife documentaries; You've all seen film with enhanced sounds, like beetles stomping along a log, the shutter sound of elytra opening and the roar of wings as they fly away. They wanted to record the sounds of swarming bees and wasps. After bursting their bubble about swarms, they decided that they wanted to record in and around a hive. Their current sound archive for bees consisted of recordings made by vibrating Mylar sheets against a speaker and overlaying to build up the sound! Not bad, but it would never fool a bee keeper. I've not heard the final results yet, but two hours of recording is expected to yield about 30 seconds of sound. At one point they inserted two mini microphones into the hive entrance and gave me the phones. Wow! I can't do justice to both the sound and the disorientation of having bees attacking microphones in your ears. The three guys were a joy to work with, completely beguiled by the bees and left wanting more. The image shows the sound recordist in a loaned veil getting stuck in. They were at ease with the bees and all three filmed and recorded images.



Potted bees:

Adrian Wells

Bees can give a great deal of pleasure to people. Having removed a colony from a chimney pot earlier in the year, it is now thriving in the back garden of an elderly couple who originally set up the chimney-pot jardinière that the bees had taken up residence in. They are both in poor health, yet they spend hours watching the bees from their lounge, and quiz me when I visit about every aspect of the colony. They save up questions about behaviour that they have seen and get quite excited about "their bees" and what they have been up to. For me, apart from the joy of spreading the word, I get to manage an otherwise feral colony of gentle bees on my patch. We will split any honey, but this year, hearing that I wouldn't be extracting from my own hives, they decided that they too would leave the small crop to the bees.



Oxalic acid treatment

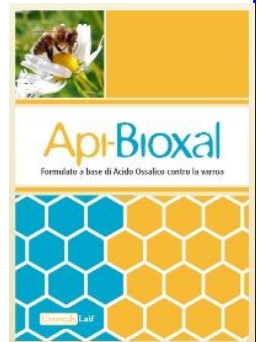
Ivor Davis NDB

At Last! There is now an approved veterinary medicine for bees based on Oxalic acid. An Italian company Chemicals Laif have marketing approval in the UK for ApiBioxal. A formulation based on Oxalic acid for treating bee colonies. Approval was given in September.

The good news is that you can use this legally now and possibly the bad news is that it is definitely illegal to use any other oxalic acid treatment on your bees. ApiBioxal is supplied as a powder (oxalic acid) which is mixed with a sugar solution so that it can be administered using the trickling method. Alternatively the powder can be used with an evaporator in the hive (*I would not advise this approach as it can be dangerous and its efficacy is no better than the trickling method*).

For the last 10 years the Veterinary Medicines Directorate [VMD] (who regulate the use of animal medicines) have turned a blind eye to us using unapproved oxalic acid products because they know it is very effective and there were no licensed products. From now on suppliers will be breaking the law selling other products and they should disappear from the shelves.

Try to use the approved product and help the VMD encourage other manufacturers to formally license their medicines for bees.



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

It's been a funny old year, a cold spring saw a slow build up, and some of the hives at the branch apiary have never really caught up. The constantly changing weather through the summer means there has never been a good flow, and it seems yields generally will be down this year.

At Brockley we have not taken any honey off our hives, but one of our beginners, Jo Swift, had a super full from a colony that started as a nuc in May.

The apiary sessions are now drawing to a close; we have had a smaller cohort of regular attendees, but plenty of people dropping in for occasional sessions. Thanks to all the experienced members who have helped in any way at the apiary this summer. Six new members have had colonies in the apiary, fingers crossed that these will all survive the winter and flourish in their new homes next year.

The apiary site continues to mature, the hedge has now grown to a height where it provides an effective screen around the bees. We will be planting a large number of crocus bulbs in the apiary this autumn, and hopefully the bees will be able to find pollen on their doorstep next spring.

David thought you may like to see this photo of how well the hedge has grown. Congratulations to the planters! It looks great.



Portishead Flower Show



Clevedon Flower Show



Winscombe Flower Show



Thanks to Phil Clemente, Rob Francis , Adrian Wells , David Capon for the photographs in this edition of the newsletter.