

Editorial: How are your bees? So far the summer has been a bit disappointing so I hope you have seen the warning from the National Bee Unit that our bees could be at risk of starving especially if you have taken some spring honey off from strong colonies. The weather has been cold and forage not too plentiful so the NBU is advising us to monitor our colonies. If you feel they are in need of feeding, apply liquid feed to the hive. This can be refined white sugar and water mixed to a 2:1 ratio.

We have beekeeping stands at three Flower Shows during the next few months. If you can spare an hour or so helping to set them up, take them down or staying at the stand talking to the public, the committee would be most grateful. You don't have to be Master Beekeepers to help on the stand. You will know more than most of the public and the observation hive is always a draw for children and their parents...and you won't be alone on the stand. It is fun!

Let's hope the summer improves for our bees....

My best wishes and hope to see you soon



Short notes from Education Coordinator Rob Francis

Well! We are now into the full swing of summer and putting into practice all we have learnt over the winter months and all we have learnt from one another.

A number of members have completed their Basic Assessment and by the end of July we hope that these will all have been completed by all 18 of the group.

At this point I'll put in a quick advertisement to all our new members who have started keeping bees this year. We hope that the Basic Course – we prefer to call it 'improvers' – will be offered again in January. The course is designed for those who have been keeping bees for one season; it covers all that you need to know to become a more confident and independent beekeeper. Though it covers much of what you learnt on the introductory course, this is different in that you come to it having had the experience, joys and anxieties of keeping a colony. Taking place over 7 sessions you are able to bring that experience to the course, share your successes and find out where you might have gone wrong. More details later in the year.

The queen-rearing group has been meeting on a regular basis this year. Again, this has been a good opportunity to exchange experiences and celebrate successes. The group has become more confident and there have been more successes than last year. We'll keep you in suspense until we report later in the season.

Not everyone has or wants access to *Facebook* but we do now have a lively *NORTH SOMERSET BEEKEEPERS* group where photographs, short movies and other useful links have been added. If you do use *Facebook* then come and join us. There are one or two intriguing links to some old archive films that members have dug up from the internet. Finally; a reminder that the Sunday sessions at the apiary are really useful, not just for beginners but for anyone who wishes to explore the delights and hazards of beekeeping. Come and see, for example, the new top bar hive (which seems to be thriving) and the new Zest hive that still awaits a swarm.

As I write this it is raining outside. I'm wondering what sort of July it is going to be. Not like last year, I hope. By the next newsletter we'll know. Come on you 'busie old foole, unruly sunne.'



Swarm time!



Chair's Letter

I hope everyone's hive are progressing well, May can be a busy time. For me it has involved collecting some swarms, the first went to the Apiary Bristol University is setting up at the vet school, the second was a call from another member who's bees had swarmed and he didn't want more hives. Then I had a request at work about a swarm in the centre of Bristol, I was able to get away for a few minutes and box it for another member to collect that evening.

The final one was from my daughter's friend who had a small colony in residence in his roof, that was a tricky one, fortunately the fascia came off easily. The bees had already started to build comb and the nest had brood & stores. That was trickier to remove as I couldn't get a box in easily.

Collecting swarms and educating the public on the importance of bees is something as beekeepers we have a duty to do, especially, if like me you keep your bees in the garden with houses all around. If you want to find out more about collecting swarms or join North Somerset Beekeepers swarm collectors list then contact Adrian Wells who does an excellent job coordinating all the volunteers and dealing with calls from the public.



Members' Corner

Welcome to Michelle Stagg and her husband, Mark Yates and Andrew Mathison. We hope your beekeeping will be good. We have lots of helpful beekeepers in the Branch who will be happy to answer any questions you may have...or know someone who can!

Congratulations to Paddy Brading, Annabel Lewis and Alyson Jones, who passed their Module 2 BBKA examinations.



Congratulations!

Our longest serving member
Reg Stevens (95)
has been awarded the
Legion D'Honneur
for his role in the
D Day landings

A Query from a local beekeeper

I have a few hives where I live in Kenn and found this interesting visitor in one of my bait hive recently. Can anyone guess who the visitor was? Tiny grubs in pollen-filled cells made from soil. I've done a bit of googling and it is probably a red mason bee.



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2016

Sat 30-Sun 31 July Portishead Flower Show
Sat 20 August Tickenham Flower Show
Sat 10 September Winscombe Flower Show

If you can help set up, take down or man the above shows please contact John below.

Sat 8 Oct Talk on Bee Diseases by Ivor Davis
Tickenham Village Hall

Efi: please contact John Banks 01275 855685

Ja.banks1@btinternet.com www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org

National Honey Show Venue 2016: Sandown Park Racecourse

Thursday 27th, Friday 28th, Saturday 29th October 2016

Preparations are well underway for this year's show at the new venue with our usual excellent programme of lectures and workshops. It's over to you all now to plan your visit, your entries, give the stewarding and staging entry teams something to do, and make it the most spectacular display ever. As always, do please get in touch if you can spend any time helping with the stewarding please e-mail our chief steward steward@honeyshow.co.uk.



Bee Farmers- Friend or foe?

Often you hear amateur beekeepers complaining about bee farmers (those beekeepers with more than 40 colonies). I have heard jibes about their bad beekeeping practices, lack of concern about the bee, arrogance and a major source of disease. Like all professions I guess there are good and bad bee farmers but in my experience most are good and helpful to any beekeeper. Today (5th July) I had been expecting to give a talk to the All Party Parliamentary Group on bees about the value of bees and beekeeping together with a well-known bee farmer, Ged Marshall. As you could expect the meeting was postponed because of parties being in a bit of a turmoil after the referendum results and general lack of leadership. Preparing for the talk gave me a good opportunity to think about the two faces of beekeeping. It is rewarding to know that bee farmers appreciate the effort amateur beekeeping groups provide to train, engage, and enthuse new beekeepers. Not many move on to become bee farmers but those who do benefit from the education available to amateur beekeepers. Amateur beekeepers benefit in many ways. Bee farmers supply us with equipment, queens and nucleus colonies, without them we would probably have to buy much of our supplies from abroad. They are also very effective alongside us in encouraging the Government, the European Union (for the present!) and legislative bodies to recognise the value of honey bees and provide support to our favoured insect. They can teach us good and efficient practices (necessary when you look after 100+ colonies through the year) and run excellent courses. The Branch visit to see our member's bee farm at Blackberry Farm near Ottery St Mary in Devon was very enlightening and enjoyable. Ken Basterfield and his son Dan have excellent understanding of bees and run great courses – what is more they are very helpful to all beekeepers. Despite what you may have heard, bee farmers are a positive influence on our beekeeping and should always be well regarded.

Ivor Davis

In the Apiary

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Things are getting busy at our apiary in Brockley; we have an enthusiastic group of beginners this year, and more new hives on the site than for the past couple of years. At the last count we had over twenty hives in total, the interest in taking up beekeeping shows no sign of diminishing at the moment.

We are also experimenting with a couple of different hives this year, we have a top bar hive built by Jim the Beekeeper, supplier to Monty Don no less, and a ZEST hive constructed by Steve Willmott.

The top bar has a colony building up from a swarm taken by Rob Francis, the ZEST is currently awaiting tenants.

Nothing is ever straightforward in beekeeping, and this year several colonies appear to have become queenless for no apparent reason. When this happened to a couple of my own hives I put it down to the incompetence of the beekeeper but it has also happened at the apiary and to others. Although some people had an early crop of honey, it doesn't look as though it's going to be a bumper year, fingers crossed for a hot July.

The end of July sees the start of our show season, so remember to start preparing your entries. The first is at Portishead on 30th and 31st July; it would be good to see a strong honey section this year as entries have been down in the past couple of years. I am also looking for volunteers to help out on the stand so make a note in your diaries!

