

Editorial: What a wonderful start, weather-wise, to the summer for the bees but there have been a lot of swarms about too! I hope yours are ready for the main flow of bramble and white clover in our area.

The season for taking the practical assessments is under way and we must all wish good luck to those prepared to learn more - and test themselves about this wonderful craft. They are the future teachers for new beekeepers and without the experience and wisdom of members willing to pass on their knowledge we should all be poorer beekeepers.

Neonicotinoids are in the news again and beekeepers are divided over whether we should extend the 2 year ban...it seems that there will not be report on what has been found after the ban...so what was the use of that? Do we know what chemicals have been used instead? Do we now what this ban has meant to the farmers? Should we have a talk/debate about it at a meeting? The BBKA have stayed very much on the fence about this mostly due to the fact that the membership is divided....what should they do? I admit I know little of the science but it seems that we should have the debate. I have asked Ivor for his personal view (overleaf). Perhaps we will be divided as a Branch and perhaps that is healthy but.....what do you think?
Best wishes

Education co-ordinator, Rob Francis, writes:

Winter now seems a long way away. These are the months when we put into practice all those things we learnt and read up about during those long winter evenings.

Our queen-rearing group has had some 'highs' and 'lows', some successes and failures. We're meeting again at the end of the month to consider what to do next. Meanwhile we have set up a page on the website where those with queens to pass on can promote their wares.

No doubt you are aware there is the Bee Disease Education Day to be held at Winscombe Community Centre on the 28th June and by the time you read this it will have taken place. This is an important opportunity to learn how to recognize and guard against a range of bee diseases.

Annabel Lewis is hoping to work with a small group to tackle Module 2, the Honeybee Products and Forage Syllabus. This is likely to take place late summer or early autumn. If you are interested then you can contact Annabel directly or let me know.

I know that some members are often asked to go into schools or youth groups to talk to young people. There is a great deal of interest amongst children and schools and we need to do all we can to nurture and encourage the beekeepers of the future who might take beekeeping into the 22nd century. Next week it's National Bug Week and I have had a number of schools that have approached me to go in and give a talk. I have recently had a leaflet printed that is designed to introduce children to the world of bees and beekeeping. There is a pdf copy of this under the education section 'For Children, Youth groups and Schools' on the website. If you would like copies of this leaflet to take in before giving a talk to a group just let me know and I'll get some to you. There are also other materials and links on these pages. Last week I added a film I made when taking a swarm. I just happened to go down to my apiary as the queen was leaving the hive and so I was able to encompass the whole swarming story up to when they were hived in the evening - despite the fact they settled up high in a tree. It's called *A Hum in the Sky* and there's a link to it now on the website.

They are the ones who's low note induces sleep - *Bombus hypnorum*.

The Tree or White Tailed bumble bee, easily distinguished by its ginger upper section, black middle and white tail. This little creature is making money hand over fist for phone companies across the



country as people call en masse "I've got a swarm!" When the phone rings, I assume bumblebee, and invariably the caller has our little newcomers as lodgers. In fact other than honey bees, these are all that have been reported, no bumble bees, no wasps and just one instance of masonry bees.

Fortunately I've managed to persuade all but one to live with and enjoy their guests and sent Garry to collect a "swarm" of them by accident - apologies, I was duped!

They seem to have three annoying traits (as far as humans are concerned); They spill out of the nest to investigate any knocks or vibration, drones swarm in front of nests to hi-jack virgin queens, and they are noisy! People often complain about night-long buzzing from the ceiling.

Swarms have been fairly plentiful and large so far this year and several bee-keepers are now stocked. Those calling with bees in their roofs have been only too keen to allow them to lodge once they received a little guidance. We have only the wasps to come, and talking of which, I photographed this open-air nest just a few metres from where I work. Let's hope that it survived the rain. *Adrian Wells*

Chair's Letter

What a lot has happened since I last wrote in the newsletter! The North Somerset show was a great success with members giving up a considerable amount of their time to organise our stand, answer questions and promote beekeeping. Thank-you to everyone who helped, especially Phil Clemente and Wendy Welham. Our pitch at the Bath & West is paid for by Hans Wilson which we are very grateful for. We combine with Avon for the Bath & West, again thanks to Phil and the volunteers who help. Next up is the Portishead show, we need more volunteers to help with that! If you are able to give some time please contact Paul Fitzsimons. Learning from the experience so far we will be putting together a list of helpers for next year to try and be better organised. If you can help with shows please let me know. I hope you've seen the photos of the Skep making on our website www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org, this was something I had to miss having just become a Grandfather for the first time. Skeps are a useful tool for collecting swarms, and there have been a number of them recently. I was called to someone positive they had honeybees in a nest box, they turned out to be Tree Bumble bees. Since the nest box was near a path and the owner was petrified by bees I relocated the whole nest box for them. When I checked a few days later the bees didn't seem any the worse for their enforced move. I have been wondering how to get the message out to site nest boxes away from paths and people just in case they become a tree bumble bee home, maybe a short note to the RSPB from the BBKA to raise awareness might help.

I have been having my own swarming challenges, it does seem to be an opportunity to meet my neighbours who had no idea I had bees in the garden. As a consequence I went from having 2 hives to all 4 hives plus a nuc full of bees, luckily I had the spare hives. Having followed the Pagden method when queen cells appeared I am at a loss as to what went wrong, except perhaps I missed a queen cell. Anyway, things seem to have settled down and I have at least one mated queen laying prolifically now. Next step is to start recombining but I will be doing that cautiously as I don't want to start the swarming cycle all over again. *Garry Packer*

Members' Corner

We welcome new members: **Andy Matthews** and his wife; **Avril Steel**; **Fred Ponsford**; **Amy Cox** and **Christopher Palgrave** to our Branch. We hope you will enjoy your beekeeping with us.

Please help the organisers of the Summer shows and volunteer to help on the Branch stand..it is great fun and you always learn something. If you are a beginner do not worry. There will be an experienced beekeeper on hand to answer questions. You can often sell your honey too with a small percentage going to the Branch.

Paul Fitzsimons, **Phil Clemente** and **Adrian Wells** would love to hear from you to help with the Portishead, Tickenham and Winscombe Shows as below. **Adrian** is taking over from **David Welham** who has been organising the Winscombe Show for 10 years. Thank you very much **David**.



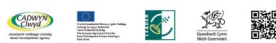
A Conference for all Beekeepers

- 26 - 28 September 2014
- The Pavilion, Llangollen, North Wales
- Practical and scientific topics
- Improve your bees and beekeeping techniques
- Bee breeding and queen rearing techniques
- Management systems for native and near-native bees
- Three lecture streams each day
- 40 UK, Irish and International speakers
- Local attractions for non-beekeepers
- Good access by road, rail, ferry and air

Hosted by South Chwyd Beekeepers Association

Programme: www.bibba.com/conference_2014.php

Book now: <http://goo.gl/uCBLf8>



From Jeremy Burbidge Northern Bee Books

Many of you will purchase bee books from the local bookshop or Amazon but you may be interested in the new site www.northernbeebooks.co.uk just launched by Northern Bee Books. It lists a very wide selections of titles.



Bath & West Show 2014



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2014

Sat 26/Sun 27 July Portishead Flower Show
(organiser: Paul Fitzsimons fitzsimons37@clara.co.uk)

Sat 16 August Tickenham Show
(organiser: Philip Clemente nerja51@gmail.com)

Sat 13 September Winscombe Show
(organiser: Adrian Wells adrianwells@live.co.uk)

Sat 11 October 2pm Recycling beeswax and its uses talk
Tom Salter, Tickenham Parish Hall

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

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

2014 Portishead Flower Show

Are any members interested in volunteering to help man the stand at Portishead Flower Show on

Saturday 26 & Sunday 27 July?

There will be three slots, morning, lunchtime and afternoon, each slot is approximately 2 ½ hours long.

The Show opening and closing times are:
Sat. 11.30am-6.30pm; Sun.10.00am-6.00pm
Please let me know the day and slot which is convenient for you and I will do my best to accommodate.

Paul Fitzsimons. Mobile: 07884 431 277
email: fitzsimons37@clara.co.uk



Bee Disease Day

Neonicotinoids – A personal view

Ivor Davis NDB July 2014

There has been a lot of controversy about the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and their effect on beneficial insects in recent months. I was on the BBKA executive when this class of insecticide was being introduced into this country and had the opportunity to talk to both government scientists and the researchers in the agrochemical companies. This class of chemical is used as a systemic insecticide (it is applied to the seed coating before planting) and is absorbed into the plant to express itself throughout the plant. Therefore, there is no need to spray crops at a later stage to remove harmful insects.

There is no doubt that the chemical is highly toxic to all insects (it is an insecticide) so whether it kills or disorients bees when foraging on nectar or pollen from the treated plants depends on the original concentration. In laboratory trials, bees have been shown to become disoriented (through losing their short term memory) at very low doses and these doses seem to be near that expected in plants treated in the field. However, there have not been any field trials (peer reviewed) that have shown the same effect when the dressing is used as prescribed. There appears to be something wrong in the assumptions in moving from laboratory to field.

There is currently a 2 year ban on these products throughout the EU but little experiment to show if these chemicals are indeed harmful to beneficial insects when used properly. It is interesting to know what will happen after 2 years!! Some will say the neonicotinoids remain in the soil for up to 5 years so the ban needs to be extended. In the meantime most EU countries are asking for derogations to allow the use of these chemicals on certain crops where no other insecticide is effective to protect the crop – this is allowed within the ban.

What we need is more research conducted on field trials to resolve whether this class of chemicals is damaging beneficial insects. The older chemicals (such as the pyrethroids) also harmed beneficial insects when used incorrectly and at the wrong time of the day. Cooperation between farmers, spray contractors (pyrethroids were sprayed on the crops) and beekeepers reduced the impact to a minimum. But these chemicals become less effective as time goes on and the risk to our bees increases. I believe the ban will be inconclusive and just waste time. We have to accept that to feed the world we need chemical control of harmful insects and must rely on Government and the agrochemical companies working together. It is in no-one's interest to kill our pollinators so let's keep the pressure on by supporting beekeeping lobby groups campaigning for more research.

In the Apiary.....

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

2014 may well be remembered as a swarmy year. The early spring and continued warm weather has meant that those involved in collecting swarms have been kept busy.

Despite the best efforts of our new beekeepers to spot queen cells and take appropriate action we have lost a couple from the branch hives. In fact last week we were greeted on arrival at our Sunday session with a small swarm clustered on the grass in the middle of the apiary.

Those of you who attended Stephen Brain's talk on swarm control in May will know that Stephen has an interesting alternative to the Pagden method of artificial swarming. Ever one to experiment I tried this method on one of the apiary hives that had produced queen cells; I'm pleased to report it seems to have been successful, so I may well try it on my own hives the next time the need arises, although I'm hoping that the peak swarm season may be over.

My own hives seem to have quite a bit of weight in the supers, although not enough sealed to extract any yet. The long hot spell seems to be at an end, but hopefully a bit more warm weather with the bramble just coming into flower will produce a good harvest.

The branch apiary is looking really good at the moment, we have increased the stock of our own hives, and several new beekeepers now have colonies on the site. The hedge that we planted just over a year ago is really starting to grow and virtually every plant is flourishing; if you are looking for hedging plants then I can certainly recommend Chew Valley Trees.

We have had a visit to the branch apiary from our local bee inspector, Meg Seymour. I'm pleased to report our stock is all healthy.

David

North Somerset Agricultural Show at Wraxall Bank Holiday Monday

What a grand day out!

There were 21 of us in all, working in shifts throughout the day and most of us finished up with slightly sore throats, not to mention achy feet. The response from the public was great with the observation hive being the most popular exhibit on the stand. Thanks to member Hans Wilson we had a double-sized marquee this year so there was plenty of room. Special thanks to Richard & Lynn Ellis who provided the use of their motorhome so we also had somewhere really comfortable to take a break, have a drink and generally rest up before the next round. With pre-show ticket sales of about 19,000 we were kept busy but we all managed to get out & see some of the other stands, do some shopping and watch some of the demonstrations.

My thanks to all of the helpers - to those who came on Sunday & very early on Monday to set up, to those manning the stand who very nearly lost their voices explaining the hive activity and managing the candle-rolling and to those who kindly stayed on to clear up. Judging by the interest shown, I think we can rate the day as a great success. *Wendy Welham*

