



Editorial; The bees are coming out! We have seen them enjoying this mild spell in the garden. So the beekeeping year is unfolding...the BBKA ADM (Annual Delegates meeting) starts off the year in January. There were some debates about Pesticides (Ivor Davis explains below) and some new members elected to the Executive. This time there are no members from the S.W. For over a decade there has been local input. Ivor was the last as President but Tom Salter and Ivor have an influence on some committees and Ivor arranges the Lecture Programme for the Stoneleigh Convention in April. Do think about coming to this biggest beekeeping one day show in the world! There are opportunities to buy equipment at bargain prices, listen to some of the best beekeeping scientists in the world and maybe get involved in some of the workshops—a really good weekend. At Branch level there are lots of study sessions going on this year -the Introductory Evening Course for beginners is going well; the Basic Course; practical workshops and the Module 3 study evenings are all well under way. What a lot of work for everyone involved...aren't we lucky that we have such generous skilled beekeepers to help us all? Thank you. Check your bees and wish for a lovely spring!



The BBKA's view on Pesticides

Ivor Davis

You may have heard a lot about concerns about a particular class of pesticides (neonicotinoids). These are synthetically produced chemicals based on nicotine and are generally systemic (they are taken up in the plant and expressed throughout the plant). There was an early day motion in parliament proposing the use of these chemicals should be suspended whilst more research is done on their impact on beneficial insects (including honey bees) and a number of groups have put pressure on the BBKA to support the ban of these chemicals. The BBKA has never endorsed these chemical pesticides and has recently agreed not to endorse any pesticides in the future. There is controversial information about the harm these neonicotinoids cause to honey bees. As can be expected any insecticide will harm bees but the issue is how much harm and is this harm worse than using other pesticides. If you accept that to feed the world's population there is a need to use pesticides—the important issue is that whatever is used will have minimal effect on beneficial insects and maximum harm to harmful insects.

The systemic nature of the neonicotinoids means that spraying is not so necessary and as long as the concentration is as per the manufacturers, the Government scientist have tested the toxicity to bees and only licence if the product is safe. Recent information suggests these chemicals can affect the memory of bees. You may also remember the massive loss of bees in Germany 2 years ago because of the misuse of this class of insecticides. The current situation is that these products are licensed in Germany and France (where there was an earlier ban).

With this background the BBKA has invested money in research to find more about the sub lethal effects of this class of chemicals on honey bees and decided that they would not call for a ban or suspension. They have concluded that there is not enough evidence of the relative harm these chemicals produce and are equally concerned about what other chemicals might be used by spray contractors instead of these products. It could be that alternative products are even more harmful. The BBKA is watching this area closely and pressing the regulation authority in the UK to review its criteria for licensing products to include factors that cover sub lethal effects such as memory loss.

Swarm Collection Jon Webber Swarm Liaison Officer

I should start by offering you all my congratulations on your management of your hive's last year. You've probably heard 2010 was a very meager year for swarm collection. It might've been that the 2009/10 winter was a bit more severe than previous ones, but we had less than ten actual, 'real' swarms to collect.

We did visit several more sites only to find they were not honeybees. I think that 90% of the calls to the Swarm Bee Line (07890 223934) were about Bumble Bees. I didn't diagnose the calls were about Bumbles rather than Honey Bees straight away – it was my first year as Swarm Liaison Officer – but by the middle of summer I was pretty good at it.

Swarms have been the traditional way for new Beekeepers to gain a colony, it's where mine came from two years ago. However, the Branch has recognized that passing a swarm direct to a new beekeeper has not always been a success. The queen was either too old, or not 'healthy'. Colonies would swarm a second time and new beekeepers were often more frustrated than contented. With many new Members coming through the Beginners' Courses and wanting bees, it was decided that the Branch should raise healthy colonies from collected swarms, by raising new queens, re-queening the swarm and testing them for health with sealed brood, before selling the colony to the new beekeeper.

As the 2011 Swarm 'season' approaches (the first swarm in our area was recorded on 18th April last year!) I'd like to ensure that we have an adequate number of experienced members who are prepared to collect swarms for the Branch from their area and give us a 'spread' across the whole district. If you can help please send me your contact details. The Branch pays expenses for using your own vehicle to collect the swarm and drop-off at the Beginners Apiary. If you would like to get the experience of collecting a swarm, please send me your details (flagged up as a 'Learner') and I'll try and match you up with a collector in your area.

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Chairman's Letter

I'm happy to say that my first meeting in this new role went off relatively well and it was a great pleasure to see so many of the newer members present. I also met some potential new members at the start of this year's Beginners' course which has the maximum 36 students.

In anticipation of some fine weather, David & I have had a mixed hedge planted between our garden and the field. Needless to say it is full of the kinds of plant that are bee-friendly but it is also there to give our bees some protection from the wind – and the cows some protection from the bees! On the subject of plants there was a short but interesting report in the February issue of *The Garden*, the RHS magazine. It deals with recent research from the University of Sussex on the importance of urban gardens for honeybees, and although it may say something that beekeepers know already, it's still good to have an article about bees reaching a wider public. My snowdrops and crocuses are out and the daffodils won't be far behind. Let's hope we'll soon be experiencing a sunny, warm and mild spring.

Members' Corner We welcome new members **Marie Glover, Helen Harris, Jane Ogden** & associate members **Jane Scrase, Andrew Robb** and **Garry Packer**. We wish you very good beekeeping with our Branch. Sadly **Graham & Karin Haverson** have retired from beekeeping because of ill health but offer an apiary site. They have been longstanding members of the Branch and have organised the Winscombe Show in latter years. Many thanks and we wish you well **Graham**. If you are interested in the site please contact David Welham, 01934 852361.

Five Frame nucs of Bees.

Philip Clemente

Once again Steven Brain and I will be producing 5 frame nucs of bees during the coming year. These nucs will have been tested for diseases and headed by a 2011 queen, clipped and marked unless otherwise requested. They will be on new frames and foundations. The cost will be decided by the committee but should be between £130 and £150. If you are interested, let me know early they will be on a first come first served basis.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2011

Sat. 19 Feb. 2.00pm Churchill Memorial Hall, Churchill.

Branch Honey Show Shared Tea

Sat. 19 Feb. 2.00pm. Somerset Beekeepers 2011 Lecture Day

Sat 12 March 2.00pm Tickenham Village Hall, Tickenham

Beekeeping Year Discussion Shared Tea

Wed. 16 March 10.00am Tyntesfield Visit (National Trust Property). Ffi; Peter Carter 01934 820097

Sat. 26 March 2.00pm Avon BKA AGM

Hosted by Weston Branch Clive de Bruyn

Ffi; <http://www.avonbeekeepers.co.uk>

Sat. 2 April Spring Day School

Speakers all day. Ffi: avonbeekeepers.co.uk

Sun. 3 April 10am First of the Sunday morning Apiary sessions at Langford Apiary. Please be there at 10am.

Sat. 9 April 2.00pm @ Caroline Cherry's home in Clevedon.

Swarm Control by the Seasonal Bee Inspector

w/e. 14-17 April BBKA Spring Convention, Stoneleigh

Ffi or if you have suggestions for meetings or venues please contact Debbie Kolombos 01934 862088

Programme for 2011 - Outings *Debbie Kolombos 01934 862088*

I hope by now you have all studied this years program and have put the dates in your diary. Our meetings are designed not only to educate but also to give you a chance to meet other beekeepers and share your experience, socialize and enjoy yourself. This year the programme has three types of meeting. One, educational lectures and demonstrations, two, social events such as the BBQ and three, visits. There are three planned visits and to attend you will need to sign up for them so do it early to avoid disappointment as places are limited.

Visits

Wednesday 16th March 10.00am – Tyntesfield – A private tour of the house lead by our member Peter Carter. You will see the house “waking up”. A view behind the scenes of a National trust property.

Contact Peter 01934 820079 (please note the number is wrong in the programme)

Saturday 21st May 2.00pm – Shapwick Nature Reserve – A walk lead by Chris Sperring who is the Conservation Officer for the Hawk and Owl Trust to look at the habitat being developed for the carder bee. More information to follow. Contact Debbie Kolombos on 01934 862088 or deborah@kolombos.demon.co.uk

Saturday 25th June 2.00pm Bristol Botanic Gardens. A conducted tour of the gardens to study the plants and bee habitat. More information to follow. Contact Debbie as above.

I look forward to chatting to you at the meetings. Please give me your ideas for meetings for next year and feel free to comment on this year.

Practical Sessions.

Philip Clemente

The practical sessions started on Tues 25 Jan, 7 people attended and we started the evening making dummy boards, which everyone enjoyed as it was something new. Six of them went on to make up supers which were theirs to keep. On the 8 Feb we will be making Nuc Hives. At the moment Steve Brain and I are busy getting the components up together as there are 14 people due to attend. All the drawings needed have been completed and after a couple more days of cutting we should be ready to go. We have allowed two Tuesdays to make the Nuc hives, we then make Rhombus clearer boards and feeders and on the last Tuesday-22 March-we are making Open Mesh Floors, we still have vacancies for these last two sessions, if you are interested contact **Steve 01275 342235 or Philip 01275 879697**



Apologies! AGM 2010 change
Philip Clemente is now the Avon Delegate



Jane Moseley

The new General Secretary /Operational Manager of the BBKA. She is anxious to meet members -so look out for her at the Spring Convention.

Clipping Queens - Good or Bad

Ivor Davis

To clip or not to clip is a vexed question in beekeeping and seems to revolve about the issue of mutilating the queen and whether this is justified in order to possibly prevent the loss of a prime swarm. It is worth remembering what is done when a queen is clipped. Firstly it is preferable to only take about half of the fore wing on one side. The objective is to ensure that when the queen tries to fly she is unbalanced and spirals out of control (a bit like the process used with chicken to prevent them flying away). If both wings are clipped the queen can often fly albeit very weakly. A bee's wing has sensory organs along the veins that are used to detect touch and it is for this fact that some translate this sense into pain when the wing is clipped. There is no evidence that bees feel pain like humans and those that clip queens' wings will verify that the queen shows no sign of distress after this procedure.

The main advantage of clipping a queen's wing is that if a queen cell is missed by the beekeeper, the colony's attempt to swarm will be frustrated and will not try again until the first virgin offspring is able to leave with a swarm (at least 8 days later). This delay means that it is possible to inspect a colony once every 12 days rather than once every 5 days to be sure that a swarm is not lost. These timings can be extended to fortnightly and weekly with minimal risk. So the balance of stress on the colony used to determine whether clipping a queen is good or bad, must be the potential (but not evident stress) on the queen when clipped compared with the reduction of colony inspections to fortnightly for the swarming season. Be aware that inspecting a colony for queen cells does stress the colony. I have considered this and regularly clip our queens!!

Apiary Notes

Philip Clemente, Apiary Manager 01275 879697 nerja5@hotmail.com

I visited the Apiary at Langford on Monday 24th. Jan., and found a number of the hives active with cleansing flights showing that they had come this far. However, after hefting several hives I think some Candy is needed. So if you have a hive at Langford, get down there and put some Candy on, even if they are not light it will do no harm.

This time of the year our colonies are most vulnerable, so look after them or risk loosing them.