

**Editorial;** The beginning of a new year means that the course for brand new beekeepers begins and 'old hands' start to study and attend workshops for further edification. Modules 1 & 5 will be taken on March 24. Basic Assessments will be arranged during the summer. Several of our members are taking a module examination so I would like to wish them Good Luck from all of us. I am attending Ivor's Module 5 study group and I was looking forward to it and thought it would be easy with a nursing background but oh my! It is not at all easy! Good fun though!

If you have read your BBKA News you can't have failed to see that the BBKA Spring Convention is at a new venue this year. Harper-Adams is an Agricultural University which offers wonderful facilities for the trade show and has great lectures halls, of course. Those of you who have been turned away from the very lecture you went to hear at Stoneleigh because the room was full, will be pleased. The speakers are again international scientists and will tell us about very latest research they are undertaking. Workshops and seminars are also available about all kinds of beekeeping topics. A good visit for one day if you can't make the three. Here's to a great beekeeping year!



### Avon Beekeepers' Association 38<sup>th</sup>

## AGM

hosted by **BLAGDON BRANCH**

**Saturday March 17<sup>th</sup> 2012**  
at 2.30 pm, Shipham Village Hall

**Lunch 12.30pm (pre-booked) at**  
**The Plough, Wrington**

Before the business meeting

**Dr Jane Memmott**

will speak on

**The Pollination Project**

Come and support our day!

To book lunch by 7<sup>th</sup> March  
& Ffi: **Wendy Welham 01934 852361**  
<http://www.avonbeekeepers.co.uk/>



### **BRANCH HONEY SHOW**

**11<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

Tickenham Village Hall

**Tutored Judging by**

**Tom Salter at 3pm**

Schedule already sent to members

Entries in by 2pm please

Shared tea

### How to tell if the bees are angry

Ivor Davis

Bees communicate with each other through touch, taste and smell. Their antennae are covered with many thousands of sensory cells and they even have taste cells on their legs. So, whenever you smoke into a hive and remove the roof and crown board you disrupt the balance in the colony. It is clear that a waft of acrid smoke will confuse the bees as will the rush of cold air through the entrance when you allow the warm air in the hive to escape through the roof.

The colony's immediate reaction is to feel under attack and get prepared to defend the colony. More bees will take up guard duties and rise from the colony to find the source of attack, namely you! If the bees are of a gentle disposition they will fly about you, possibly flying into you but cause you no problems. Should the bees be more lively or the current conditions (weather, flow of nectar etc.) mean the bees are on edge they might feel that buzzing you is not enough and will try to remove you by stinging. It is good to know how the bees communicate with each other to decide whether to buzz you or attack you and how you can recognise the difference (apart from waiting to be stung). There are pheromones that are used by the bees to coordinate a specific action and if your sense of smell is good you can detect these.

The first reaction of the bees is to defend the colony and this is communicated using the worker pheromone from the mandibular glands. This is a simple chemical 2-heptanome which smells of ripe bananas. If the bees wish to attack they will expose their sting mechanism and release another pheromone *iso-amyl acetate* which smells of pear drops. There are two lessons to be learnt. Firstly, do not eat bananas or pear drops or wear perfume before you go to the bees. You will induce the bees to be defensive or even attack you. The second lesson is learn to remember these smells and if you are working with your bees and start to smell pear drops it is probably a good idea to close the colony and move away. Come back at another time when the bees might be less aggressive. Of course it is helpful to have a good sense of smell!



### *Chair's Letter*

This is the start of a very significant year for the Branch – 2012 marks our 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and we are hosting the ABKA AGM at Shipham Hall! We shall need to commemorate this momentous birthday with some sort of grand celebration. Plans are afoot already for a very special cake to be made. Keep up with developments via the website! This has now been brought up-to-date with study, apiary and branch meeting dates, plus advice for those currently studying and a list of useful books for further reading.

Our February honey show schedule has been emailed to us with the recipes for cake, fudge & biscuits, so I've been practising making some of the new recipes. I hope our resident Judge will be inundated with entries!

## Members' Corner

We welcome **Verna Armstrong** and **Hayley Smith** as members also **Helen Fordham** and **Barbara Mathieson** as associate members. We wish you happy beekeeping with us.  
**John Dixon, Caroline & Martin Callow** have not renewed for personal reasons.  
**Grahame Haverson** has not renewed due to ill health but wishes to hear our news through the Newsletter. We send you our very best wishes, **Grahame**.  
**David Welham** says that we have had a good renewal uptake to the Branch but those members wishing to renew had until the end of January to do so. They are deemed as lapsed members now and will have to pay the renewal fee of £5 if they re-join. We have 133 members now.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2012

Sat 11 Feb 2.00pm **Branch Honey Show**

**Tom Salter**

*Tickenham Village Hall Shared Tea*

Sat 17 March 2.30pm **ABKA AGM hosted by Blagdon Branch**

**Shipham Village Hall**

See page 1

Sat 7 April 2.00pm **Swarm Prevention and Control**

**Phil Clemente & Ivor Davis**

*Churchill Memorial Hall Shared Tea*

*Ffi: please contact Peter Carter 01934 820079*

*David Welham tells me " We had a good meeting on Saturday 14th Jan. with 38 members turning up for this our first meeting. We had to have a last minute change as our expected speaker Johannes Paul called in sick. Meg Seymour stepped in at the last minute and gave a good talk on her experiences, she even mentioned plastic hives (but was not very complimentary). "*

## Module 5 study group

*Ivor Davis*

This is part of the education programme we are running in the Branch to help beekeepers learn a bit more about our bees and beekeeping. Module 5 is all about the anatomy of the bee and larva. The study group meets once a fortnight at Shipham Village Hall. We have about 15 people who come along from Blagdon, Bristol, Bath and Wedmore branches. Only 4 or 5 will be taking the examination in March but most just want to learn and have a good time talking about bees. This is the third year that I have run one of these groups and we have developed a good community in the group. We learn by reading a question paper prior to the meeting and trying to decide on the answers. When we meet we discuss the answers and between us, come to the correct answer. As the tutor I listen and learn from the others and just help a bit to get the right answers. We will have completed 10 hours of study at the end of the course and hope that those who take the exam will have been helped to pass.



Tynesfield -- Planned visit on 14th March 2012  
Ffi: Peter Carter 01934 820079

## Module 1 study group.

*Tom Salter*

Two sessions have taken place and the number of students has settled at 18. The study questions for each of the sessions have been sent out well in advance and these lead the students into all parts of the syllabus which are then discussed as a group. The entry qualifications for those taking the Module 1 examination are to have passed the Basic assessment and two years beekeeping experience, some students do not yet have their Basic. However, the BBKA Examinations Board have planned two examination days in 2012, 24 March and 10 November so this will give some of the students the opportunity to take their Basic Assessment in the Summer, gain another season of practical beekeeping, and take the Module 1 examination in November. This is the first time the Red Cross Hut at Backwell has been used by the Branch, it has been an excellent choice for the number on the study group and with the large numbers of heaters available we are able to get the room warm very quickly.

## Novice Course

*Stephen Brain*

It is heartening to see so much interest in the Novice course and we now have 22 people registered on it, of which a large proportion have indicated they are planning on taking the Basic Assessment. Clearly this has huge implications for finding Assessors outside of the Branch and Avon have been forewarned!

I have been greatly assisted by Bob, Rob and Phil, and feedback from course members has, (so far!) been positive.

We will plan practical hands on sessions for April nearer the time.

This course is well and truly fully booked but if anyone is interested in a future course and haven't told me, do let me know.

## Apiary Notes *Ashley Grist 07590 332347*

As normal in the UK the weather is not doing what we thought it would!

It has been a mild winter so far and as a result the bees seem to be consuming their stores quite quickly. I have subsequently added candy to most hives just in case and suggest you keep a careful watch on your own hives.

In late December both club hives and student hives were treated with Oxalic acid, this should help to knock back the Varroa population ready for 2012.

During December and early January the anti-bee fence at the Langford apiary was blown down twice by strong winds. A temporary fix should ensure its survival until March when I will make a more permanent repair. Just to remind those who have hives at Langford that I will be on standby at the field on both the 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> February at about 18:30 to assist you in moving your hives out of the apiary, as you can imagine with 26 new students this year there is plenty to do to ready the apiary for the upcoming season.

Finally I would like to welcome Gerry Bissett to the role of Assistant Apiary Manager, together we will do our best to ensure the smooth operation of both club apiary sites.