

Editorial:

Did you see Ivor and our bees on Breakfast time about a month ago? We were up at 4.30am—it was a beautiful morning and the sun was rising over the hills when the BBC came to do 3 live pieces about the bees (and slugs and snails with Pete Dawson). The weather was so nice (!) that Ivor was able to open up a hive to show live bees on the programme. It was a great experience but when they went at 9.30 am after two breakfasts and lots of coffee we felt we had done a days work!

A few days later we filmed with David Attenborough at our hives in the Walled Garden. David is doing a film about mole rats and they have a similar life style to honey bees so he wanted to open up a hive and talk about them. The weather was cold and cloudy and the bees were grumpy—David was stung a couple of times but he didn't mind and showed what a true professional he is. He had to do some scenes over and over again but came across as fresh as if it was the first time. He was lovely...even wore my fleece as it was cold- so that hasn't been washed yet! It was a real thrill to meet our hero....Ivor was his stand-in when handling the bees so you might see his back! The film will be shown on the Eden Channel (Sky/Virgin) later this year I think.

Please send me any articles/photos for the Newsletter. I am very grateful for all contributions. See you at the BBQ.



John McGuire, Pete Dawson, Ivor Davis and the BBC team getting ready for Breakfast Time in our garden. 18/5



Filming with David Attenborough at the Walled Garden, Wrington



Excitement at the apiary!

Ivor Davis

On Sunday 8 July I visited the Branch apiary to help with the mentoring. After this poor weather it was not surprising that so many colonies had decided to make swarm preparations.

In one of the colonies we quickly identified that the queen had departed and the bees had made a number of queen cells (all sealed). Looking through the colony we found a virgin queen running about a frame and piping. She would move for about 15 seconds and then grip the comb and press her body against the comb. In this squatting position she would then vibrate her wings to produce the characteristic piping sound.

Most beekeepers wait for many years before they hear this sound, let alone see the queen whilst she is piping. This was a great opportunity for our new beekeepers and we all enjoyed the spectacle. As we went through the colony there were many more sealed queen cells so, to prevent the colony from casting, we opened the cells and released another 11 virgin queens and found one queen cell with a diseased larva. The 12 virgins were left to fight each other to decide who will take over from their mother queen.

The joy of coming to the Branch apiary on a Sunday is that there are many colonies there and often there will be interesting situations that with a couple of colonies in your garden you may take many years to see.

Microscopy

Stephen Brain

Following the interest in the recent talk on Microscopy, we have started a Blagdon Microscopy Study group with the aim of taking the BBKA exam in Microscopy next year. To my knowledge a study group for this has never been done in our area so we are feeling our way somewhat.

We've called it a Study Group because we all learn together. It is not a teaching course because none of us feel qualified to act as tutors! However each month someone is in charge of facilitating the meeting and making sure it goes on track. Between sessions we all research and learn about the topic for the following meeting and do whatever practical work is required.

We've had two meetings and will meet monthly until the exam. We follow the BBKA syllabus and meetings have a high practical content. For the next couple of months for example we will be mounting pollen slides together and then we look at dissection.

Chair's Letter

What a disastrous bout of weather!

I guess that this will mean a reduced honey yield for many of us who just have a couple of hives. However we have been kept busy with shows, the last being at Churchill for the Jubilee Celebration. Unfortunately it poured with rain! However there was a great deal of interest in the observation hive and all the jars of honey that we had there was sold. We also had several donations - these will find their way into our teaching apiary fund - and plenty of enquiries from potential new beekeepers. We just need some sun . . . !

Members' Corner We welcome new members:- Rachel Glanville-Davey, Helen and Peter Burns, Dean and Mike Braham, Geoff Mogg, Hannah Woodrow, Ginny Gibbs, Steve Wilmott and Sarah Griffen. Associates, Stephen Parkinson, Christine Cooper. We have 171 members to date that includes all categories. Congratulations to **Andrew Archer** on passing BBKA Module 1 exam with credit. Many thanks to the members who have meetings at their houses and for their hospitality and lovely teas. Please do bring a small contribution along to meetings when the programme states 'shared tea'. It is good to meet and talk 'bees' over a cuppa and sandwich or cake.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2012

Sat 14 July **Branch Celebration President's BBQ**
Ffi please see the website www.northsomersetbeekeepers.org
At Bob & Pat's garden, Backwell

Sat/Sun 21 & 22 July **Portishead Show (see side panel)**

Sat 11 August 2.00pm **Tickenham Village Hall**
Honey Extraction *talk by David Maslen*
Please bring a little contribution towards the shared tea.

Sat 8 Sept **Winscombe Show** *Honey Schedule to follow*

Fri 28 Sept **Prof. Keith Dellaplane**
will give our 60th Anniversary Lecture at Shipham Village Hall

Sat 6 October **Bee friendly plants.** *Visit to Somerset*
Ffi: please contact Peter Carter 01934 820079

August - the messy month

Ivor Davis

August in this part of the country, is when most of us take off surplus honey for our use and start to make preparations to get the colony ready for winter. Quite a lot of rape was planted in the area this year and you may have to consider extracting this honey. Rape honey tends to granulate rapidly and once the temperature drops in the super the honey will crystallise very quickly. Those used to rape (Beekeepers in the east of England particularly) develop their own methods, either by spinning out the honey from uncapped cells before the honey has a chance to get cold or allowing the honey to crystallise in the comb and then cutting out the comb and honey and warming it so that the honey melts again and separates from the wax. The honey can then be filtered and stored until needed.

New beekeepers will probably have no supers with honey to extract as starting with a nucleus colony in June or July does not give the bees time to build up to produce spare honey. I am sure in these cases the bees will allow you to cut some honey out of a brood fame so that you can taste your very own honey.

Once your honey has been removed remember that more honey should come in for the bees in August but after that there will be little for them to store. The colony needs about 20 Kg for winter which is about 5 frames of sealed honey on Commercial or Deep National frames. Assess how much the bees have at the end of August and feed with thick syrup (sugar water mixture) to make up to this weight.

Between taking the honey off and feeding the bees you should remember to treat for varroa using Apiguard. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and do not forget to record the use of a medicine on your record card.

In the apiary...

Oh dear, the weather really seems to be causing a number of problems for bee keepers.

So far this year we have seen a similar problem to last year, with early swarming and then poor weather which has delayed virgin queen mating flights. Take heart and don't panic: remember the weather is causing a long delay in new queens laying.

We have seen more Sunday sessions cancelled due to bad weather (and flooding) than I can remember in my time keeping bees. I guess we have to take the opportunity to inspect when we can and keep a careful eye on the amount of stores available to our colonies and be ready to feed as necessary. Let's hope that the weather will improve for July & August so we have a chance of a honey crop.

Portishead Show & Country Fair

Saturday 21 July 1.30pm to 6.30pm & Sunday 22 July 10.00am to 6pm

This year an earlier W/E event due to the Olympics. The Branch will be running a stand in the flower show field close to Gordano School as part of our educational responsibilities incumbent on our charity status. Tom Salter's observation hive plays a big part. However, equally important are branch members to be involved with the following:-

- Volunteers to operate the stand. Experienced & new beekeepers will be paired up and only a 2/3 hour session is required. It is a good opportunity to meet the general public many of whom are our customers and put right the many misconceptions they hold about honey bees, other bees & wasps.
- You are very much encouraged to show honey and compete for the George Simms Cup for the most points in the honey classes. Some feedback will given. There is a change to the Schedule, the class for a bottle of mead has been replaced by one for 3 jars of honey labelled for sale. The remaining classes are 2 jars of runny honey, 2 jars of set honey, block of beeswax, comb for extraction, & container of cut comb. The schedule will be available at the Apiary and Branch meetings also on request to David Hounsell by Email or phone.
- This is a good chance to sell your honey products and the whole spirit of the event is that if you sell honey you should also put it on the Show Bench or judge it!

Please contact David H. at davidhounsell@talk21.com or phone 01275 844187

Blagdon Beekeeping Stand at Portbury Wharfe Avon Wildlife Nature Reserve.

David Hounsell

This Reserve is paid for by a mandatory annual payment from local residents and an annual Spring Wildlife Event is held each year.

As it is used by Branch beekeepers a small branch stand with observation hive was successfully operated on a very hot May 27th.

Some of us are shown here listening about the 'blessed bees' from the Portishead Vicar. Something went wrong as it has rained ever since. Thanks to all those involved in running the event.



Beekeeping with Grandpa

Starting them young.



On a recent visit from the States our 5 year old granddaughter wanted to help Grandpa (Ivor) with the bees and her brother wanted to get some of the action too. But he's not so sure about bugs, he says....

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