

1906

Centenary Year

2006



SBKA Exmoor Division

January/February 2012 edition

Dates for your diary

21st January 7.30pm-Division Annual Dinner at The Rest and Be Thankful, Wheddon Cross

18th February -Somerset Lecture Day, Cheddar

2nd March -Beginners Course 1st lecture 7pm WSCC

9th March -Beginners Course 2nd lecture 7pm WSCC

10th March 12.30 -SBKA AGM hosted by Exmoor Division at Lysaght Club, Old Cleeve

11th March -Divisional Visit to Blackbury Honey Farm courtesy of K, D and M

Basterfield. Cost £4.00 per person

Apiary visit

We have the opportunity to visit Blackbury Honey Farm , near Honiton, Devon on March 11th (Sunday).

Those of us who came on the Improvers Course have met Ken and Dan Basterfield who, with Ken's wife Maureen run it.

Blackbury Farm is a new commercial honey farm and regional teaching centre for bee-keeping. This visit presents us with a chance to see their teaching apiary and overwintered apodeas as well as good commercial beekeeping complete with top of the range extracting and bottling facilities.

If you want to come please contact the secretary, Tricia Nelson. Car shares can then be arranged

Somerset AGM

This year it is our turn to host the AGM. The AGM is always preceded by lunch and a guest speaker. Please come if you can. It is an excellent opportunity to meet beekeepers from across the County over lunch, followed by an excellent talk and then tea before the AGM proper starts.

For further details and to book please contact Tricia Nelson, secretary, on meadowstream-house@hotmail.co.uk.

The Bees are Coming— by Mary Vidal

**Believed to have been provided by Friends of Glastonbury Rural Life Museum
and provided by Ivan Selman**

Over a period of several months in the winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 Ann Heeley recorded a large number of Somerset beekeepers in collaboration with the artist Kate Lynch, who painted them at their work for an exhibition which will be mounted at the Rural Life Museum in 2012. The quantity and variety of information collected was immense.

The beekeepers varied from those with just a few hives who wanted the honey for themselves, to a commercial operator who has 300 hives at a number of sites and who produces 10/12 tons of honey a year. Ann's starting point was to find out how these people had come into beekeeping. Some had become interested during their school days and started as soon as they could, others had taken up the craft later, and some only when they retired. But they were all completely fascinated by the bees and their intricate lifestyle and were happy to give up the large amount of time that is necessary, especially during the summer months, to maintain well ordered, healthy colonies.

Diseases, particularly the one brought about by the varroa mite, and colony collapse have been much in the news in recent years, and the plight of bees and their vital function in pollinating many plants has resulted in an upsurge of people wanting to become beekeepers. Courses that a few years ago attracted only a few students now have waiting lists, and it is estimated that there are now about 700 beekeepers in Somerset.

Much work is being done here by the national Bee Unit in York (which operates under the DEFRA umbrella) to try to combat varroa and other bee diseases. At present this is usually done by the introduction of chemicals into the hive, but in America they are trying to breed a varroa-sensitive bee that can deal with the mite naturally and avoid the need for chemical intervention.

The beekeeper who looks after the bees at the rural Life Museum started beekeeping in a London suburb. He was surprised when he moved to Somerset, bringing his bees with him, that initially they did not flourish as well as they had done in London. He thinks this is due to the many parks and amenity trees for them to forage on in the capital as well as the high concentration of private gardens.

Often the best honey is produced by bees that forage on unpopular plants such as dandelion and Himalayan balsam. Most beekeepers dislike the honey produced when their bees forage exclusively on oilseed rape, because it has the consistency and appearance of lard. Some take their hives quite long distances in the summer so that their colonies can forage on special plants. Exmoor is particularly favoured for its heather which produces a distinctive flavoured honey. Other beekeepers felt that the best kind comes from bees that forage on old-fashioned garden flowers.

An intriguing interview was with a lady who makes traditional bee skeps. She decided to make the first one for herself to reclaim swarming bees but now supplies them to others. They are attractive and can also be used to keep bees in rather than the usual hives. She uses local straw whereas years ago skeps were made from willow.

One beekeeper regretted the disappearance of the old British black bee which was very quiet and docile. He is worried in case aggressive bees from Africa, which have already found their way into America, should come here.

The Exhibition "The Beekeeper and the Bee" will be held at the Museum from 16th June 2012 to 28th July 2012.

**Exmoor beekeepers update
following
our own AGM 2011**

President– John Newcombe

Vice President– Gail Johnson

Chairman– Ivan Selman

Treasurer -Maureen Free guard

Secretary– Tricia Nelson

Somerset representative– Alan Nelson

Membership secretary– Mike Yuill

Events secretary– Sue Hosegood

Education lead– Pat Watts Mabbott

Librarian– Liza Garratt

Apiary Manager- Dave Colley

Swarm Contact– Peter Curtis

School liaison– Laurie McNeill

Newsletter– Tricia Nelson

-We are once more running a beginners course, and as Ivan's article highlights there are an increasingly large number of people who want to learn about beekeeping. The more of us who are willing to help demonstrate hives the merrier, so please help where you can.

-We need input from everyone to ensure we arrange talks and demonstrations relevant to you, not only beginners.

-our librarian is working hard to identify books we would like in the library, suggestions are welcome.

-This year we are hoping to have an "events group" to plan where to go and what to do at shows, including the sale of members honey

Integrated pest management or how to live with varroa without always using medication

Alan and I have just attended an NDB short course about this and hope to share the information learned with you.

The days have gone when one could "get rid of varroa", or assume your bees do not have a varroa problem. Nowadays it's about assuming that if you don't see varroa today then you will probably see them tomorrow and focusing on managing their numbers at an acceptable level. Because our honey bees are not the natural host of this mite, ie, they have no system for working in harmony with them, the varroa numbers will proliferate if not controlled. They will overwhelm and weaken the colony. They will rapidly spread viruses. In short, without management, the bees are likely to die. Poorly managed colonies are also likely to spread problems to other colonies living up to 3 mile away. It is also no longer enough to simply treat colonies with medication once a year, not least because varroa develop resistance to synthetic medication, but also because other pests are expected in the UK soon. Fortunately there are other useful tools available to try which will be described in future Newsletters.

The key principals of Integrated Pest Management are:

Monitor varroa levels regularly

Do everything you can to avoid drifting and robbing in your apiary

- site hives with entrances facing opposite ways,
- site hives at least 6 foot apart

Do not treat a colony unless there is a need

Consider whether it is possible to resolve the problem by a particular manipulation without the use of any treatments

Identify the best treatment /manipulation to use dependant on the time of year/ nectar flow, the condition of your bees and the mite drop

Keep good records- including use of medications

NB. We are intending to practise Integrated Pest Management at the Out Apiary this year routinely and to demonstrate some of the manipulations and techniques as opportunities arise during the year.– Tricia Nelson

Please send articles/ photos/ discussion points to Tricia nelson. For publication in future newsletters

Annual Dinner at Rest and Be Thankful 21st January 2012.

Following last years revelries, when we all felt rather squashed in our seats, particularly towards the end of the meal , we will be eating in the Skittle Alley allowing us not only to enjoy the R & Bs excellent food together in considerably more comfort and all in the same room but also allowing us to have an after dinner speaker!

MENU

Homemade Cream of Butternut squash & Sweet potato Soup, served with a crusty bread roll-
Prawn Cocktail Prawns on a bed of lettuce with homemade Marie-rose sauce, bread & butter

Homemade pate chicken liver and brandy & madeira pate with warm toast

Grilled goat's cheese with red onion & port relish & salad garnish

Traditional Roast Turkey Prime Crown of class A turkey from our local traditional butcher with homemade stuffing, cranberry sauce, and local sausages wrapped in streaky bacon

Whole Roasted Topside of Beef Prime cut of Topside of Beef from our local traditional butcher with Yorkshire pudding

Terry's homemade Nut Roast with vegetables, roast potatoes and gravy

Roasted fillet of local Trout with a Prawn & brandy Sauce with potatoes and vegetables

-All served with a selection of vegetables and roast potatoes

Christmas pudding with brandy custard

White chocolate & Vanilla Cheesecake with raspberry coulis

Lemon Meringue Roulade

Orange & Cointreau Syllabub

All our desserts are homemade and served with either clotted cream, double cream or ice-cream

Trio of ice-creams

Coffee and homemade Mince Pies

Name(s) _____

Address _____

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Please return this completed form **indicating your choices together with a cheque made payable to EBKA** to: Tricia Nelson, Meadowstream House, Bilbrook, Minehead, Somerset TA24 6HE by **January 12th 2012 at the latest.**