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- Tips for managing your apiary
- Preparing for the honey show
- The diary of a newbie
- Making dipped candles



Summer
2016

7

tauntonbuzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers





Welcome to issue 7 of Taunton Buzz

Undoubtedly this is a very busy time of year for us beekeepers! What with attempting to control swarming, responding to public requests to collect swarms that got away, processing the spring crop and getting our colonies in the best condition possible for the summer, there's certainly a lot to do. Thankfully help is at hand in our current issue.

Expert beekeeper Chris Harries takes time away from his many apiaries to advise us how to make the most of this critical time of the year. And our President Jenny Gammon gives swarms a positive spin – especially as she focuses on collecting rather than losing them!

In addition we welcome a new contributor to Buzz – Julie Whitmarsh - who promises to share the pleasure and the pain of becoming a beekeeper. Her diary charts those scary few months when, after thinking about taking up the craft for a while, completing a course and reading the books, she finally found herself responsible for bees at home.

And although we may all be rather busy, I urge you to follow the sentiment in Irving Berlin's classic song 'There's no business like show business like no business I know, Everything about it is appealing, everything that traffic will allow, Nowhere could you get that happy feeling when you are stealing that extra bow" and be inspired by our article about the forthcoming honey show and send off your entry form. Good luck!

Anne Pike, editor

anne@ashford-media.co.uk

Cover pic: Anne Halpin's stunning picture of bees foraging on mallow

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Report from the Chair

I have recently returned from walking in the Sierra Nevada mountain range in the region of Andalucia and provinces of Granada and Almeria and surprisingly I saw no beehives despite plenty of forage opportunities with orange, olive and almond groves. I guess I wasn't looking properly and you probably aren't interested in my activities in any case but getting to the point, the moral of this story is not to go abroad for several weeks in the swarming season as I returned to find the inevitable! I hope you have managed to carry out successful swarm prevention yourselves and all is well with your colonies.

We are currently planning operations at the forthcoming County Honey Show in Vivary Park and have decided to carry our certain revamps to the marquee and internal layout. I hope you can visit and make comment for future years. Setting up and taking down is always labour intensive and we would really appreciate your help in early August whether is be of a manual or cerebral nature.

Peter Maben - Chair
mail@maben.plus.com



Taunton Buzz – editorial committee

Barbara Drakeford
Chris Harries
Simon Jones
Peter Maben
Dave Parry
Anne Pike



Join the conversation with TBK on:





Youngsters at Hemyock Primary School make a bee line for this nature lesson,

Last month Malcolm and I were invited to go and talk about bees to seven and eight year olds at Hemyock Primary School as they were doing a project on pollinators.

We gathered up the virtual hive and the demonstration hive (with some of our own bees – including a marked queen!) amongst other visual aids and descended on the school.

Bee suits on and off we went! It was immediately clear just how much the children already knew from their investigations online. The questions that they put to us equalled what beginner beekeepers ask at the Autumn Improvers Course.

One highlight was the ‘visualiser’ - a small camera on the teacher’s desk which showed images on the large interactive whiteboard on the classroom wall - I could show

the queen cell on the frame from the virtual hive to the whole class without the slow process of handing it round.

Malcolm kept the demonstration hive bees under a cover until the latter part of our time there. As you can guess the children were enthralled. More sensible questions and lots of interest, including the two or three children with special educational needs having a chance to be involved – and shine.

It was a pleasure to be involved as the children were so engaged, with no loss of concentration or focus. We took it as a compliment that they didn’t want to leave the classroom at lunchtime.

[Barbara Drakeford](#)

Success at the Royal Bath & West Show

David Pearce flew the flag for our Division at the recent honey show at the Bath & West.

He scooped six first places for his honey and observation hive, one third and one fourth.

Vicky Bell

Vicky joined the Taunton Beekeepers in 1992 and throughout that time she was a regular attender at all the meetings. Until a few years ago, she always entered the Honey Show and her name was often seen on some of the prize cards. Vicky will be remembered by many of the members she met at the meetings as she was one of those individuals who was able to leave a lasting impression of genuine interest and concern. We have lost a valuable friend who loved her bees.

[David Morris](#)



Taunton member's high-rise bees

The Western Morning News recently featured the activities of Jason Wallis of WeeTree Nurseries near Wellington on the roof top of an Exeter city centre shopping precinct.

Jason manages the Princesshay's City Bee project and the newspaper story celebrated a 90 per cent success rate with its queen rearing programme.

He is quoted as saying: "The aim was to introduce new healthy queens to the current hives for the season ahead to ensure the hives were as productive as possible. We are really pleased with how the rearing programme is going so far. It really is a great result."

Princesshay, which has an apiary situated in a rooftop garden, launched a new observation hive this summer and offers visitors and school groups the opportunity to see the activity inside the hive through glass panels.

Since it started four years ago the city bee project has been visited by more than 750 school children, students and the public.

Honey harvested from the five colonies is sold locally with all proceeds donated to the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education.

Swarms!

Many years ago when we were still relatively new beekeepers, we noticed a swarm circling around a neighbour's chimney. Dreading the result, we put a small hive out on the roof of the garden shed.

The bees thought this was great and moved in, saving bad relations with our neighbours. I should point out we do not keep bees in the garden. NEIGHBOURS AND BEES!

Each year we put a catch hive in the garden and each year we are blessed with, usually a main swarm, followed by at least one cast if not two. That has happened to us again this May /June 2016. The bees house themselves and are then moved to an out apiary within 48 hours, isolated and monitored. Would love to know where they come from – if they are a beekeeper's or a feral colony. The queen does not come in marked.

It is a wonderful sight watching a swarm home in on their new home – if you imagine Heathrow with the planes circling – that is what the bees do, landing on the roof of the hive and fanning hard to attract the rest of the following. We stood by the hive yesterday watching them come in – not a veil in sight. Unfortunately we have yet to see the queen coming in and popping into the box.

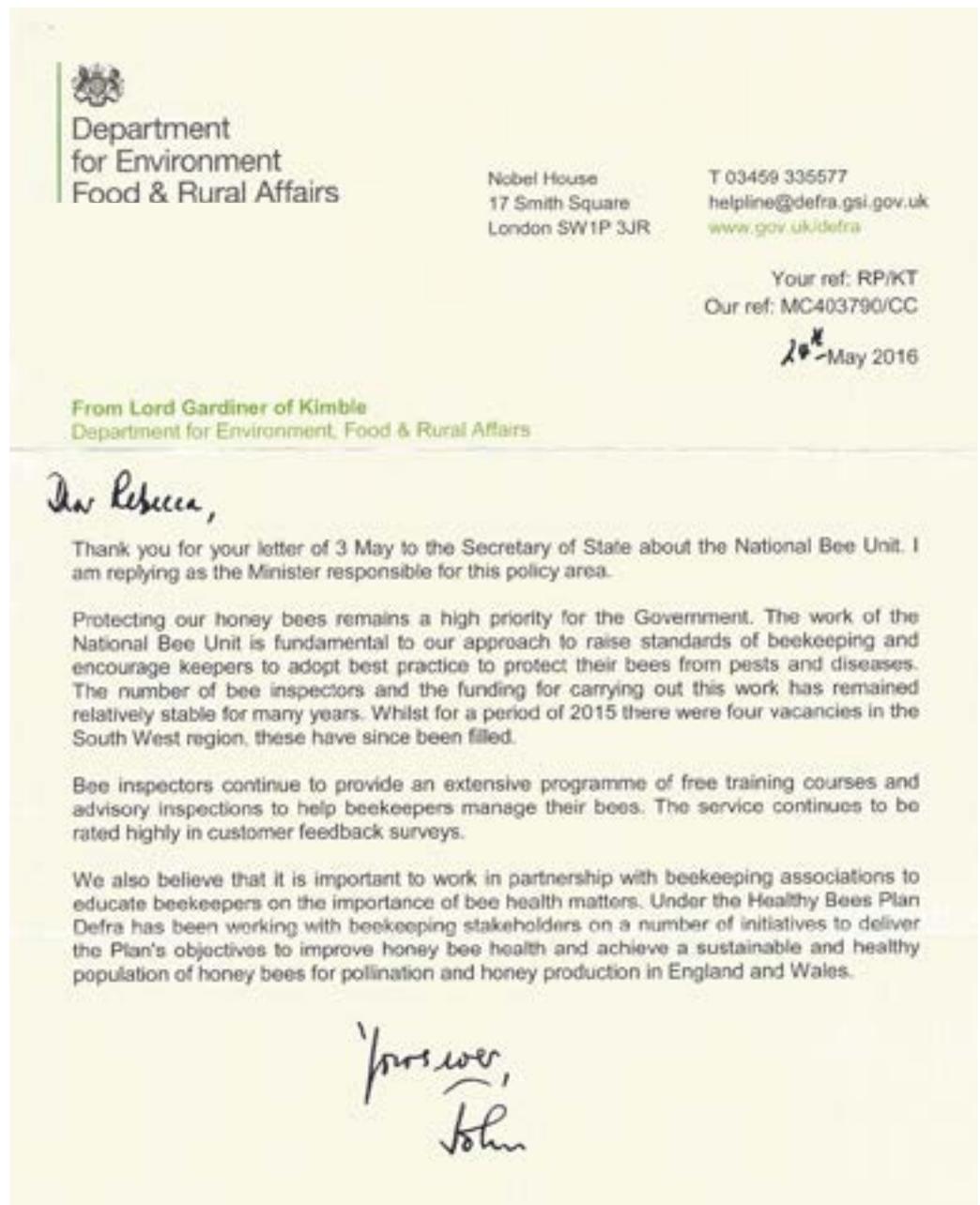
When Mother was still with us she did not care for bees around her. One lunch-time on a Sunday, it always seemed to be a Sunday, we saw the bees coming into a Nuc box on our patio. I got her to step outside by the small hive and warned her to stay still and not flap about. She was then in her 80s. After that experience she was not afraid of bees and that was a good thing as we used her car port to house our extra supers and there were always bees having a sniff around.

Jenny Gammon

News from Westminster...

In the Spring our MP, Rebecca Pow, visited the apiary and listened to concerns from members about some of the threats to honeybees and beekeeping.

Subsequently she followed up fears about the retention of the bee inspectorate in its current form with DEFRA and sent us a copy of her reply.



Meanwhile, recently I had a very brief opportunity to ask Liz Truss, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, a couple of questions which are uppermost for many of us:

Q. Will the Government uphold and continue the ban on neonicotinoids?

A. We have an independent committee, the Experts Pesticides Committee, which essentially takes a view on applications for exceptional use of neonicotinoids. As you know, neonics are restricted at a European level and what I do is follow the advice of that committee....My view is that I should always follow the best scientific advice and that as a politician I am not necessarily the best placed person to make those judgements and that's why I follow the advice of scientists.

Q. Will you protect the bee inspectorate in its current form (in the South West there is one regional bee inspector and seven seasonal inspectors)?

A. I don't have any plans to the contrary.



Get ready and show off your good work!

Yes, this is the time of year when you should to set aside a few hours to get your entries ready for this year's honey show.

Once again, we're hosting the County Show along with our own on August 5 and 6 as part of the Taunton Flower Show.

The schedule is available now and entries close on **Wednesday, July 27.**

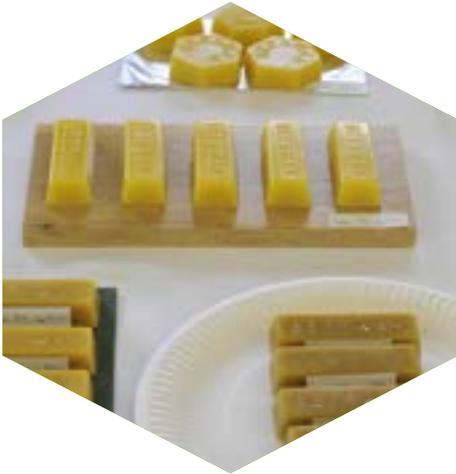
Download from www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

or contact Jenny Gammon, the entries secretary on **01823 270465.**

Taunton members are eligible to enter 43 classes and there really is something for everyone. Classes span honey, comb, wax, arts and crafts, observation hives, candles, polish and cookery.

There are trophies, prize money and honour up for grabs – don't miss out!

I entered for the first time last year and was amazed and delighted to win a novice class and a first for a pair of candles; the novice cup has a bit of bling and certainly impressed my family, who up until that point had been rather sceptical about my beekeeping!



Somerset Beekeepers' Association
(Taunton & District Division)



TAUNTON

HONEY SHOW AND THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW

Vivary Park, Taunton
Friday and Saturday
5th & 6th August 2016

JUDGES

Mrs M. Davies	-	Bournemouth
Mrs S. Perkins	-	Langport
Mrs C. Brown	-	Bladon Hill

Show Secretary: Mr D. Parry
73 Somerset Ave., Taunton. TA1 5HU 01823 276655

Entries Secretary: Mrs J. Gammon
500 Cheddon Road, Taunton TA2 7QX. Tel: 01823 270465

Total prize money exceeds £100

Entries close Wednesday 27 July 2016
NO ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE



Honey and Banana Tea bread

This issue's recipe is taken from the County Honey Show schedule:

Ingredients

225g / 8 oz self-raising flour	100g / 4 oz butter / margarine
225g / 8 oz peeled and mashed bananas	6 tablespoons of HONEY
¼ level teaspoon (2g) freshly grated nutmeg	100g / 4 oz caster sugar
100g / 4 oz sultanas	2 eggs
	Grated rind of one lemon

Method

Pre-heat oven to 160 C / 325F Gas mark 3.

Grease a 2 lb loaf tin and line the base.

Place the flour, nutmeg and butter into a large bowl and rub together to form bread-like crumbs.

Add the mashed banana, sugar, lemon rind eggs and honey into the flour mixture and beat until well combined.

Stir in the sultanas.

Place into the prepared tin and level the surface. Bake in pre-heated oven for 1¼ hours.

July in the apiary

According to the calendar, the main honey flow month is getting under way, but this year 'Mother Nature' still seems to be a few weeks behind.

There are colonies yet that are hell-bent on swarming, and lots of colonies that needed feeding recently. Did you remove your spring honey and extract it before it crystallized? The sticky supers should have been put back on by now, for the bees to clean. Keep an eye out for wasps – there have been quite a few around my yard. If they become a problem it may help to reduce the hive entrance, and /or put out traps. A nearly empty jar of jam, half filled with water, and a hole made in the lid, will remove an amazing number of troublemakers.

The potential for a good main honey flow is all there: most colonies are very strong, lots of soil moisture and as for flowers – loads of blackberry buds are opening, balsam is starting and there seems to be masses of white clover in this area. All good bee forage, though it's worth remembering that a temperature of at least 72F is needed for clover to yield.

All we need now is some hot, humid weather for about five weeks. So with all the supers on, I've got my fingers crossed. Good luck!

Chris Harries

Taunton Member & commercial honey farmer
(Sedgemoor Honey Farm)



Club visit to an out apiary

I was lucky enough to be able to take Chris Harries of Sedgemoor Honey up on his kind offer of a members' afternoon out at one of his apiaries in an orchard.

The sun shone, we looked at bees and chatted about beekeeping, and then enjoyed a delicious tea made by June in amongst the apple trees.





Newbie beekeeper tells all!



I have been asked to keep a diary of my trials and tribulations as a newbie beekeeper. Hopefully, it will prove useful to other beginners and maybe remind those experienced beekeepers of the days when they were as puzzled and befuddled as me.

I completed my beginner's course last year. I wanted to complete the whole course prior to taking on bees. This worked well for me as it gave me confidence that I could handle bees through all stages of the year before taking on my own commitment.

I am using a National hive with Hoffman frames in the brood box and standard frames with plastic spacers in the supers, metal runners and individual hive stand.

I knew my nuc was due to arrive and so frantically built up the additional Hoffman frames to fill the brood box. One word to the wise – when nailing on the bottom bars - don't hold the side bars, as when the nail goes wonky as it will occasionally do, you nail it straight into your thumb. However, I don't think the bees have noticed the small blood stain on one of the frames!

Arrival and transfer 22 & 23 April 2016

When my nuc arrived the weather was poor, so I needed to get it transferred to the brood box quickly. It was also congested and I didn't want them swarming off before I'd even started. So I ensured the queen was there and moved them all over. I placed four of the nuc frames to the centre of my brood box. The two outer frames of the nuc were mainly stores, so I put a frame of foundation between each of these and the brood and then the additional frames either side. I put a super on top of the brood box and inverted a couple of contact feeders (made from old jam jars) on the top bars and then put on the crown board and roof. I then found out that the crown board should have been under the feeders, so a quick switch was made!

The feeling of achievement and sheer relief at completing my first lone task as a beekeeper was immense. Even better was going out the next day to see my contented bees nipping in and out of their new home as if they'd always lived there. There is something relaxing about watching a hive, I find myself regularly stood to one side watching the comings and goings and it engenders a feeling of peace.

Interim action 3 May 2016

I discovered that I should have a super on by now as there is oil seed rape in the area. So I hurriedly made up my super frames and I nipped out and put this on. I then put the feeders back on top in another super to help them draw out the comb.

Colony Inspection 5 May 2016

The weather was not conducive to having the hive open long and so a quick cursory inspection was needed. I checked the queen was there and checked for queen cells, saw some eggs, larvae and lots of sealed brood. I removed the empty feeders and I also noted that they had started to draw out the super frames.

Colony Inspection 12 May 2016

I found this inspection really enjoyable. My super was heavy as I lifted it off and I found my queen with her entourage on the second frame, which always makes you relax. I then went through shaking off bees and checking frames. I found lots of eggs, larvae and sealed brood. I found three chalk brood mummies but I believe a small amount is fine. I found 5 queen cups on the bottom of frames but none appeared to contain an egg, phew! I have one super frame for drone brood and I cut this off and put it for the birds, I pulled out some drones and could not see evidence of varroa.

I put in the entrance block and took out the drawer, I found no evidence of varroa on the drawer. I had the queen excluder on the wrong way up and so I cleaned this up and put it back on. Hopefully with it the right way round they won't seal it to the top bars quite so much. I also noted that there were lots of stores in the outside brood frames of both pollen and honey. My bees have found the most wonderful pillar box red pollen. When I replaced the super I was pleased to see that they had begun drawing out all the frames and some were relatively full. I moved the middle frames to the outside and interspersed less drawn out frames with fully drawn out ones. I then added a second super.

Colony Inspection 20 May

Saw Queen, eggs, larvae and sealed brood. More queen cups but still no sign of eggs in these. Took time to enjoy watching the bees.

Colony Inspections 26 May and 3 June

I was expecting to have to carry out swarming prevention but still cannot see any eggs in the queen cups. I am finding the bees quite a wonderful antidote to the stresses and strains of life, I can go down to the hive feeling quite stressed out and by the time I finish my inspection the bees have worked their magic and I feel really relaxed.

Julie Whitmarsh, one of our 'beginner' beekeepers



Dipped Candles by Jenny Gammon, Taunton Division President

There are not the easiest candles to make!

You will need:

A dipping bath - I have known this to be a couple of baked bean tins with the bottom of one cut out and both soldered together. Also something to put the dipping bath into that will heat the water to heat the wax in the dipping bath. The water should come at least half way up the dipping bath. Put a couple of piece of wood under the bath so it is surrounded by water.

You will need a lot of wax in your dipping bath and also you will need to have extra wax warming on the side to top up the bath. Every dip you do takes away some of the wax from the bath. The wax in the dipping bath will take an hour plus to melt –unless you have put in melted wax.

I have a dipping “hold” that can do eight candles at once and as, there is tension on the wick, I have found that I can even make the candles outside. I will explain later.

You attach wick to the “hold” to the width of the candle you wish to make - you can make up to 1” wide candles. When you get to this size and need wider candles - remove the candles and then dip them further by hand to make them wider. Remember that on the first dip you must leave the “hold” in the wax to allow the air to escape from the wick. (See photo)

You have to use a rhythm when dipping. If you stop at the bottom to think about things the heat of the wax will remove what has already adhered to the wick. I use a “going down” one-two-three-four and then “start-up” with a one-two-three-four all in one sequence. If you don't have a rhythm you will get wax running down the side and not get a smooth candle.

Then hang the “hold” out to dry for a few minutes. Doing the hovering in-between is a way of giving wax time to dry. Too quick between dips and you are going to get a candle wide at the top and narrow at the bottom where it has melted away.

Once you have got to your candle thickness allow to dry and when almost cold remove from the hold.

You could try to make your own “hold” for two candles. Use dowel and wire/old wire hanger. That would cut the cost to about £1. (See photo)



Second way

You can make dipped candles in pairs with just holding the wick – dipping and then hanging them up, using clothes pegs to secure. Again you have to allow the air to rise out of the wick as above. Remember to pull the candle straight after each dip till you have a fair bit of wax on the wick.

Then you have to leave the candles in-between to dry off – after a few dips you need to judge if the wax is the right temperature – get two sheets of glass – place the candle between the two sheets of glass and roll them straight. You will probably have to do this a few times while making the candles.

Problems I have found:

When hanging the candles up to dry you need a place that is draft free. Someone usually makes this impossible by walking through. The candles then decide that they are going to bend slightly.

When you go to roll them between glass – I could never judge the right temperature and ended up with more wax on the glass than on the candles - with regret I gave up on that method.



Dates for the diary



SATURDAY JULY 30

1pm

TAUNTON FLOWER SHOW

Help's need to get us ready!
The Apiary

FRIDAY & SATURDAY AUGUST 5 & 6

all day

TAUNTON FLOWER SHOW

Our bees and honey marquee is one of the most popular at Taunton Flower Show. We stage the Somerset Honey Show in addition to our own Honey Show. Help is required!
Vivary Park, Taunton

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10

6pm

CLEARING & FEEDING

Everyone welcome and help required!
The Apiary

FRIDAY, AUGUST 12

6pm

REMOVING SUPERS

Everyone welcome!
The Apiary

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13

2.30pm

FIRST VARROA TREATMENT

Everyone welcome!
The Apiary

Saturday, August 27

2.30pm

SECOND VARROA TREATMENT

Everyone welcome!
The Apiary

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31

7.30pm

EXTRACTION DAY – BRIEF THEORY SESSION

Tutor: David Pearce
The Apiary

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

from 10am

EXTRACTION DAY

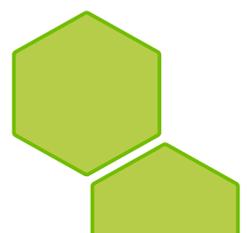
Hosted by David Pearce in his well-equipped extracting room at his home
T 01984 623851

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

The afternoon

TASTER DAY

More information from Social Secretary Mike Dillon
mikedillonbees@gmail.com
The Apiary





**Beekeeping veil and suit repairs:
Ring Jenny on 07788407497
or 01823 270465**

For sale
*Slide projector in carrying box.
Slides of honey bees and bumble bees included.
£120 o.n.o.
Contact: Jenny
T 01823 270465*

Classified adverts

If you want to buy or sell beekeeping equipment, you can do it here! We're offering free classified ads for Members and their families.

Email your advert to:
anne@ashford-media.co.uk

Remember caveat emptor – it's your responsibility to check out the goods/buyer! Plus, clean any beekeeping equipment thoroughly if you're selling or buying to prevent the spread of disease.