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tauntonbuzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers



Anne Pike - Editor

Welcome to issue 3 of tauntonbuzz

I hope you're having better luck with your bees than some beekeepers I've met recently.

Whether some colonies are weak – there appear to be more unmated queens than usual – or badgers have tucking in – veg boxes suppliers Riverford over the border in Devon have seen colonies in their poly tunnels vandalised by Brock and his friends - there is a lot which can get between the beekeeper, strong colonies and a honey crop.

Our resident apiary expert and commercial honey farmer Chris Harries gives his tips to help us become better and more informed beekeepers on pages
Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, Eleanor Burgess has been seeing at first-hand the joys of three harvests a year and no varroa mite! See her feature on pages
If you have seen beekeeping in very different circumstances from our own in Somerset, please share your observations with fellow members.
Just email me anne@ashford-media.co.uk

Anne Pike - Editor



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Word from the Chair

Many thanks to the 20 per cent of members who completed the questionnaire issued earlier in the year.

Whilst this must be considered a poor response I thank those of you who did respond and the committee will endeavour to fulfil your needs for 2016. I can only assume that 80 per cent of you whilst maintaining your membership have no requirements from our division?
If I am wrong please let me know.

The sale of Lin Uglow's beekeeping equipment was an enjoyable event with a good turnout of members looking for a bargain whilst remembering and respecting Lin. Almost £1,000 was raised on the day so a big thank you to all those who attended. All the proceeds are being sent to Lin's husband Robert who is very appreciative of your help.

We recently had a visit to Heatherton Park from Doug Brown the chairman of BBKA who toured the building and was suitably impressed with the teaching facilities of which he was envious (see his letter in July issue of BBKA News). He aspires to replicate such a building in his home area so we must all be very proud of what we have achieved and continue to support our facility.

Finally, our Honey Show at The Taunton Flower Show will be on us in early August and I make a plea for help required to make this event as successful as in previous years. Please contact Dave Parry on 01823 276655 or any committee member if you are able to help setting up or taking down after the show.

Peter Maben - Chair



Taunton Buzz – editorial committee

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



Join the conversation with TBK on:



July - A month to relax and watch your bees bringing in the nectar and pollen

Chris Harries



July, the so-called 'main flow' month, has arrived

⬡ A late, on/off spring saw numerous swarms emerging in some areas, none in others. There will be many colonies that may have swarmed but, for a number of reasons, been unable to re-queen themselves successfully. Careful inspection of bee colonies may reveal laying workers or drone-laying queens. If this is the case this year's honey harvest will obviously be affected as it is too late to take remedial action now.

But for most, hopefully all went well and you have at least four supers [yes four] on each colony! Always put on plenty of supers, just in case July 2015 is the one we've all been waiting for – the best ever! Incidentally, never put comb honey supers directly above the excluder – always higher up the pile to avoid pollen spoiling the comb.

This is the month to relax and watch your bees bringing in the nectar and pollen. It is a good year for white clover, but other forage will include lime, bramble, willow herb, water balsam and meadow sweet.

Can you identify, by their filled pollen sacks, from which sources your bees are collecting? If in doubt, have a look at some pollen colour charts to guide you. There may be some surprises in store.

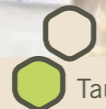
Don't be in too much of a hurry to take off your crop of honey - this year things are running a few weeks later than usual. The end of August would seem early enough to avoid missing out on late nectar flows and to ensure the honey is 'ripe'. Unsealed honey will ferment after extraction if the water content is too high [i.e. above 18%] – patience is a virtue!

Chris Harries

Taunton Member & commercial honey farmer
(Sedgemoor Honey Farm)





 Taunton honey show, picture credit: June Harries

Taunton Honey Show 2015

by Dave Parry

We're organising the Taunton and County Honey Shows this year, which will be part of the Taunton Flower. The venue will be Vivary Park and the dates to remember are August 7 and 8.

This year the show will also be the County Show so entries are expected from other divisions around Somerset.

During the weekend there will be a glass-fronted display hive (always a favourite) where you can see bees at work and try and spot the queen. If you are patient you may even see a young bee emerge for the first time. There will be displays of bee keeping, hives and other bee keeping equipment, candle making, frames of honey, bottles of mead, and of course lots honey.

Jars of honey and some cut comb will be available to purchase while stocks last.

Members will be on hand to chat about bees and answer any questions that visitors may have.

If you would like to be part of the show help is always very welcome. The tent will be erected for

us but we need help to set up display tables etc. on the Saturday afternoon before the show.

Please contact Dave Parry on 01823 276655 if you can help on Saturday, August 1, or on the Sunday after the show (August 9) when everything will need to be dismantled. On show days – Friday and Saturday (August 7 and 8) - help is also required for the candle rolling; please ring Jenny Gammon on 01823 270465 if you would like to get involved.

Please consider competing in the honey show - it's a chance to see your jars of honey displayed alongside the best, or maybe yours will be judged to be the ultimate jar of honey! There are lots of classes to enter (not just honey!), just look at the schedule available at www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

It's all good fun. There is a lot to learn from entering and we would like as many entries as possible. A picture from the 2014 show which was a big success with lots of entries! Can 2015 beat that?

The buzz in the Club apiary

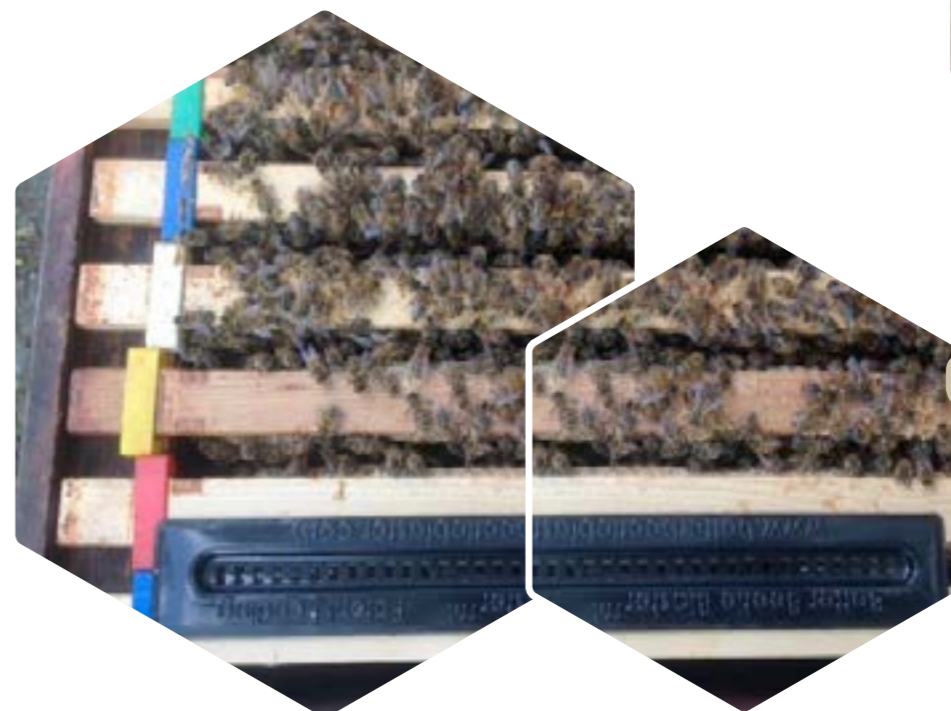
by Andrew Perry

At the start of the current beekeeping year, the number of colonies had increased to over 20. A collective decision was made to reduce the number of colonies to a more manageable 10.

Colonies and nucs were offered for sale; this offer was taken up by a number of buyers - the biggest order being five complete colonies from one individual buyer. The remaining colonies are progressing well and have had two or three supers added. At the beginning of the swarm season we made up three new nucs.

Most of the remaining colonies are manageable; however one hive has caused a few problems which plan to overcome by re queening via Simon Jones apiary queen rearing programme.

As a sentinel apiary we are supplied with the latest small hive beetle traps which luckily are to date still clear! (As shown in photo 3) the other 2 photos to use as needed.

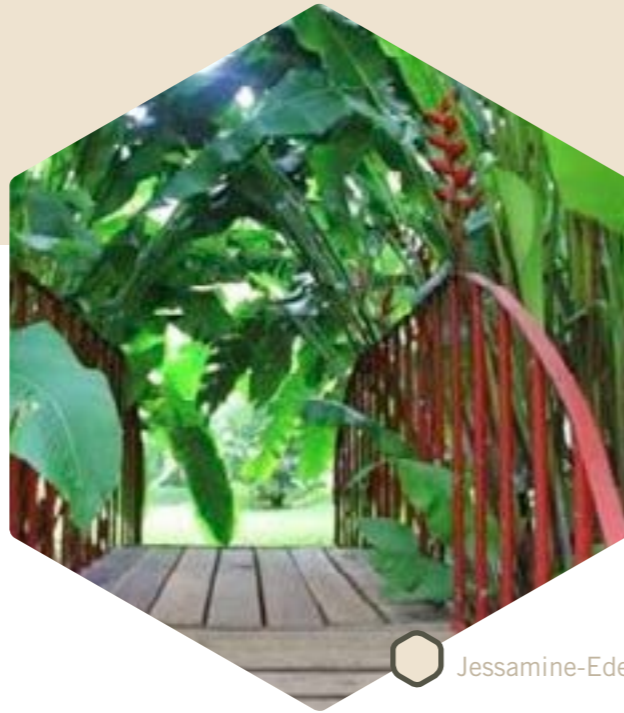


 Apiary 2 –The small hive beetle traps are reassuringly clear!



Beekeeping in paradise

by Eleanor Burgess



Jessamine-Eden

When opportunities arise they must be taken. So when my boaty other half suggested an out-of-beekeeping season Caribbean sailing trip there was no hesitation.

Especially when, lurking in the back of my mind, was an image of a prize-winning display of Grenadian honey at the National Honey Show a few years ago. Caribbean Honey = yummy honey.

On the taxi ride from airport to boat my bee keeper's eyes were already assessing the local forage, heat, humidity and lots and lots of flowers, from the forest canopy scattered with trees, pink and white with blooms, to palm trees, hibiscus bushes and allotments filled with yellow flowered Caribbean pigeon peas and squash plants.

Our first island, Carriacou, offered some tantalising clues to the local bee keepers. The little general stores had some local honey for sale, and Charles, the owner, was able to tell us that it was genuinely from the island, and insisted that we try before we bought some, so we could admire it. It tasted great...but according to Charles, the best honey in the Caribbean was from a beekeeper at the botanic garden in Grenada.

I didn't get the opportunity to get too involved in my hunt for local bees again till we arrived at Bayrue, there I found a stall selling homemade jams, sweets and honey. The enthusiastic stallholder was selling items made by local women, one of whom was a bee keeper. Beekeeping, it seemed, was not a popular activity on the islands, but there were a dedicated few who belonged to a co-operative. They would come together for extracting days, and using modern extracting equipment, would make short work of everyone's crop, some of which was sold under a group name to the island's supermarkets.

Sadly, once we reached Grenada, both boat and skipper came down with ailments, giving me a whole week to explore the island, and track down 'the best honey in the Caribbean'.

This involved a couple of hours at a marina bar, several virgin pina-coladas, and the marina's free Wi-Fi.

Jessamine Eden. Grenville Vale Tropical Botanic Gardens: Their website proudly displaying that it was their honey that had won the National Honey Show's silver award for honey. I had hit the jackpot. My enthusiasm quickly dispelled when I found that they weren't open to the public.

I called Jerry Edwin, the co-owner of the enterprise, who, after realising I was a beekeeper abroad, invited me round to see his bees. It is a welcoming tribe we belong to!

Jessamine Eden is in the centre of the island, nestled in a valley, and so protected from the worst of the storms, even managing to protect the trees from hurricanes, so some of the trees are enormous and old. Jerry and his partner Velma bought the land after many years of working in America when they wanted to return to their homeland and create something incredible.

They bought the land of a large, decaying estate, fought back the jungle, and began to turn it into productive land, partly filled with groves of cash crops including nutmeg trees, French cashew (a type of fruit that looks like an apple), coconuts, mango, banana, cinnamon, allspice, coco, coffee and, of course, sugar cane. Another large part of the land is set over to allotment plots, with payment from the men who work them being a cut of the produce. The area around their house has been turned into the botanic garden stocked with medicinal herbs and plants including vanilla orchids that they had carefully nurtured which had just started to flower.



Jerry and Velma's back garden

Dotted all around the farm were apiaries of around 20 Langstroth hives

Jerry took us to see the apiary closest to his house. This was his breeding apiary, filled with nucs, with a glass observation hive sheltered beneath a banana leaf canopy. The observation hive was queenless, swarming being the only problem Jerry had had with the bees.

Jerry and Velma explained a little about the history of bees in the Caribbean.

Honey bees were first brought to the Caribbean by Christian priests to pollinate the imported crop planted on the plantations. Due to the lack of a winter period, and vast amounts of forage, they swarm often, and due to this, few subsequent stocks were introduced. There are bans on importing honey and hive products to the islands... and so there are very few pathogens, and no varroa, on the island at all.

There are three seasons after which extracting takes place, each resulting in a crop that any British bee keeper would be proud of for a full year! The only season that honey isn't taken off is in the rainy season, not because there isn't the forage, but because heavy rain can mean the bees can be trapped in for many days and it can lead to starvation if you leave them with little stores. Also the roads are treacherous and there are risks of landslides if extreme care is not taken. There seems to be no harm to the bees being non-native to the islands, bumble bees have also been introduced and have become well established. With much of the islands' botanic life being introduced for the colonial plantations there is plenty of their natural forage to be found.

After a fabulous day ambling around the estate, Jerry and Velma made us a lovely hibiscus tea and let us taste the honey as we watched hummingbirds and bees buzz around their garden. The honeys they had collected from each season were remarkably different. The first season light and floral, the second darker and almost tangy, the third season a deep amber

drying cocoa



colour and strong taste, almost like chestnut honey.

As a parting gift Jerry gave us a bag of pollen grains to take home with us for our ailing skipper.

We returned a few days later to a cold and wet Somerset. Our holiday souvenirs being mostly jars of honey which are being savoured still.

On the first warm day I went to look at my own bees, busy in their duties and heavily laden with early spring pollen. I think of what Jerry said as he gave us our parting gift.

"They give everything a man needs for a healthy life" Very true!

The bee shed





Waxy Corner



Making candles with silicone moulds

By Jenny Gammon

Silicone moulds are not cheap but handled with care can last a long time. Some silicone moulds are split right through to the hole where the wick is placed. Other silicone moulds are split part way – do **NOT** split these up to the top.

To make these candles you will need:

Rubber bands
Cocktail sticks
Wicking needle
Wick
and a bottle to rest the mould onto to let the wax set.

- Using the moulds that are split all the way up > select your wick size –see the last Waxy corner to see the sizes of wick – measure the diameter of the mould and use the wick needed. E.g. 1" diameter = 1" wick. 1 ½" diameter = 1 ½" wick etc.
- Using the moulds that are not split all the way up > Measure and select your wick size . Put the cocktail stick through the end of the wick. Thread a wicking needle (or a very long darning needle) and pass the needle through the hole at the top.
- For both types of moulds> Take your rubber bands and put around the mould so that the wax when poured cannot escape. Especially tighten the rubber band on the mould that is split all the way up.

Cut the wick slightly longer than the length of the mould. Put the cocktail stick through the end of the wick > the cocktail stick goes across the open end of the mould. Run the wick through the mould and out through the hole at the top.

- It is a good idea before pouring your wax that you place the mould into your freezer for a couple of minutes. This gives the wax a lovely shine when you take the candle from the mould.
- Place the mould onto an empty jar which should be standing on a flat surface and safely away from being jarred.
- Pour your wax into the mould – (see previous waxy corner to see clearing of wax – do not have the wax boiling) if the wax starts seeping out the other end into the bottle you have not tightened the rubber bands enough. Sometimes just squeezing the mould at that end allows the wax to harden.

- When the wax has partially set – gently pull the wick through from the top end until the wick does not show on the bottom end of the candle. Allow the candle to set completely.
- Remove the rubber bands and very gently remove the candle from the mould. With the moulds that are part way split –make sure the wax is completely set before trying to remove the candle. Otherwise you may find that you leave the wick behind.

- Trim off the wick at the top of the candle to make it look good. If you have forgotten to pull / could not pull the wick through before it is set –you will need to trim off the wick on the bottom of the candle – then use an old type flat iron to smooth the wax.

Jenny Gammon - Taunton President, winner of numerous honey show cups for her wax and tutor

Next time moulded candles using rubber moulds.



Care of your Beekeeping Veil

by Jenny Gammon

Have you suddenly found bees buzzing around your face when you are in the middle of opening a hive??

1. When you put on your veil have you been catching the fabric just where the net and the cloth join. Remember that there is just machine stitching holding the two fabrics together and a good pull could part it enough for bees to get in.
2. Do you look into your smoker when lighting it. A lash of smoke also holds heat or flame and once again you do not notice till you have that hive open and they are in. You have scorched the veiling and have a hole. Not only do inexperienced beekeepers have this problem. Hold your smoker away when lighting it.
3. Make sure you have cut those brambles back in your apiary – you can catch the net on the top of your veil when you bend over your hive. If not the veiling, the banding. If you get caught on the brambles do not just pull away. Detach yourself carefully.
4. When washing your veil it is not a good idea to put it into the washing machine with the suit. They both need different temperatures. In fact do not put your veil into the washing machine – remember that veiling is nylon. **Nylon** is affected by heat.

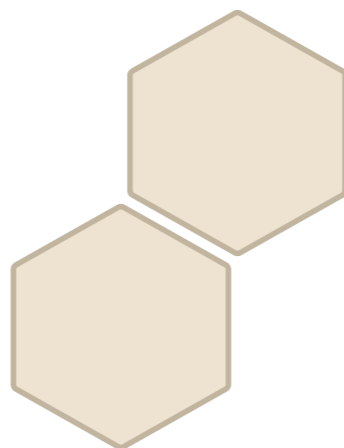
Your veil needs soaking in hand warm soapy water. Rinse in the same temperature hand warm water.

Do not put it into the drier to dry – it's **far too hot**.

Do not put it out to dry unless you have the veiling out of the direct sun – **far too hot**.

Looked after and washed correctly your veil should last you for a long time. If not you can always contact me for a repair job!

Jenny Gammon 01823 270465



News in brief

Lin Uglow and Ian Preece

We attended the funerals of Lin and Ian – we will miss them.

Still looking for an out apiary?

Fiona Edwards of Middle Green Farm, Middle Green, Wellington is offering 25 acres of hay meadows, wildflower meadow and vegetables as well as a large Victorian walled gardens with a flower garden, vegetables and herbs. If you're interested, give her a call on 07725 564202.

Did you see us at the Taunton Sustainability Show?

We flew the flag for Taunton Beekeepers at the fifth Sustainability Show and Taunton Food Fair held at Queen's College.

Members of the committee ran a popular stand featuring many aspects of beekeeping including an inspection hive and we sold honey from our apiary.

Just before the event, our chairman Peter took to the local airwaves with BBC Somerset along with a couple of the organisers and the head chef of the Castle Hotel.

Exmoor Beekeeper Honey Show

If you've enjoy our Taunton and Somerset Honey Shows, you may want to enter the Exmoor Beekeepers' Honey Show on October 3.

It will be held at Porlock Methodist Hall and the key speaker is Celia Davis with a talk called 'Nuc It!' and demonstration by our very own Eleanor Burgess. Entry is free. For more information Lance Moir: lancemoir@gmail.com

Honeybee pests and diseases talk

The Dorset BKA Convention will take place at Stratton Village Hall, Stratton, Dorchester, DT2 9WG on October 18.

The key note speaker will be Prof Stephen Martin, Chair in Animal Ecology at the University of Salford and an international authority on honeybee pests and diseases. In addition there will be a full supporting programme.

For further information or to apply for tickets contact Doug Whyte: douglas.whyte53@gmail.com

Please note that Prof Martin will be a speaker at the Somerset Beekeepers' Association lecture day in February.

Members update

We have 135 full members, 9 partner members and 49 associate members.



Dates for the diary

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 & SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 TAUNTON HONEY SHOW AND THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW

Vivary Park, Taunton

Our bees and honey marquee is one of the most popular at Taunton Flower Show. We'll have an observation hive, an outdoor demonstration area, roll-a-candle crafts and honey from our own apiary to sell etc + lots of competitions - we're hosting this year's Somerset Honey Show in addition to our own Honey Show. If you would like to get involved, please contact Dave Parry on 01823 276655

The programme, schedule and entry form is available to download from the SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Note: Admission to Taunton Flower Show is by ticket only: tauntonfs.co.uk

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

6pm

CLEARING & FEEDING

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16

6pm

REMOVING SUPERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

2pm

FIRST VARROA TREATMENT

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

6pm

EXTRACTION DAY BRIEF THEORY

Tutor: David Pearce

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

6pm

SECOND VARROA TREATMENT

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

10 am

EXTRACTION DAY

With David Pearce at his home:

Haddeo, Bathealton near

Wiveliscombe TA4 2AG

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

7.30pm

CHEESE AND WINE SOCIAL TASTER EVENING

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

6pm

FIRST FEED

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

6pm

SECOND FEED

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

10am

CLEAN UP & STOW ALL EQUIPMENT

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

7.30pm

BEEKEEPERS' QUESTION TIME

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

2pm

OUR AGM

Speaker: Chris Park talking about skep

beekeeping Heatherton Teaching Apiary

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

7.30pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS – FOR ALL MEMBERS

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

2pm

LATE VARROA TREATMENT

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2016

1pm

ANNUAL LUNCH

Venue to be confirmed





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

**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.**

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.