

HONEYCRAFT

January 2022



Dorset County Beekeepers Association



Editor's note

And so 2021 has come to a close—not a disastrous year, but a disappointing one for many beekeepers as you will read in the branch notes. Those with honey to sell probably found that the price held up well, or they were even able to increase it, because of the generally reported shortages, which seem to have been attributable to the cold and wet spring. However, Dorchester & Weymouth have been peering into their archives and their findings show that wheels continue to go round and that 2021 was not an unprecedeted year!

This issue carries Lesley Gasson's final Chairwoman's Chatter—she has been an editor's dream as she has never needed chasing for copy and always has something interesting, and perhaps unexpected, to say. Liz Rescorla is also retiring; again I am grateful to her for her prompt and comprehensive notes on Dorset BKA council and other matters.

Elsewhere you will find Stephen Potts' notes on the South West Beekeepers Forum and importantly an introduction to John Geden, the newly appointed Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) for the Central Region—he covers an impressively wide geographical area, but we hope to see him before too long, although hopefully not dealing with an Asian hornet in Dorset! Meanwhile, if you wonder what our Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI), Kevin Pope, gets up to, some notes on the SBI role, compiled by Peter Davies, another RBI, and extracted from the beekeepingforum.co.uk, will provide an outline of his activities. Most readers have probably registered on [BeeBase](#) —if you haven't you should do so. It is full of useful information and advice, but more importantly it helps the Bee Inspectorate keep tracks on what we are doing where, as they work on the control of bee diseases.

2021 was a good year for ivy blossom, which as we know produces very solid honey when in the hive. I am grateful to Sarah More for her permission to reproduce her article from the West Dorset BKA newsletter on how to deal with this problem. She also offers some ideas on how to get your bees flying early if you like spring honey.

A happy and successful year to all

Tim Villiers

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Chairwoman's Chatter

This is the last chair's chatter you will get from me. The next edition of HoneyCraft comes out in April which is after the AGM and you will have a new chairperson. An individual can only stand as chair for three years and I have reached that limit; the appointment is always an interesting post to fill and I have been very lucky to work with a very competent group of officers .

Liz Rescorla is also retiring. She has been one of the best secretaries because she is so thoughtful and fair in her judgements. She thinks ahead and prepares for the coming meetings, while also knowing about associations outside Dorset.

Robert Camping retired as treasurer last year. Robert was a quietly efficient treasurer who has made sure we raise just enough money to cover our commitments but not over-tax the membership. He also has a lovely quiet sense of humour which enlivens meetings.

Another thing we have all had to deal with is meetings on Zoom which has advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is that we can hold a meeting instead of having to cancel it and attendees do not have to leave the comfort of their home to attend. The main disadvantage is that you do not get a chance to chat to people informally or understand the atmosphere of the meeting.

The best advantage of Zoom is illustrated by the lectures arranged by Somerset BKA. I recommend that we join them as subscribers and DBKA members have a chance to listen to their lectures as often as possible. They are interesting, well presented and a great asset to beekeepers.



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SouthWest Beekeepers Forum

meeting held on 30th November 2021 – by Zoom

Stephen Potts attended this meeting as the representative of Dorset BKA. These are his own notes with his own emphasis and interpretation—they are NOT the minutes of the meeting.

With the exception of Salisbury all 12 member associations were represented – 26 delegates in total.

The chair's opening remarks asked us to remember the beekeepers who were no longer with us.

The treasurer gave a brief report. All 2021 subs have been paid and the Forum had £540.46 in the account at 20 Nov 21. In the current circumstances this is sufficient, but the 2022 subs will be needed when the Forum goes back to meeting face to face rather than virtually.

The minutes of the previous meeting held in September were approved and we rapidly moved on to the forthcoming ADM.

There was some concern that access to the ADM documents via the BBKA website was not easy. The documents are actually held on [BBKA News](#) at bbkanews.com rather than on the BBKA normal website at bbka.org.uk. This is something that Stephen Potts (Website Manager) will be bringing up at the next review meeting of the BBKA website.

As to the propositions for consideration (see Appendix below):

Under Honey Adulteration our attention was drawn to the article in the Observer on 28th November entitled "Bee aware: do you know what is in that cheap jar of honey?" The link to it is [here](#) and it can also be found on a web search.

Our attention was also drawn to the Healthy Bee Plan 2030 to be found on Beebase. The link is [here](#).

There is also a useful Facebook site — Honey Authenticity Network in Facebook for Scientific Articles. (588674292271458). This site contains many more scientific articles.

Concern was expressed that alerting the public to the dire state of the honey market could deter them from purchasing honey but the experience of those present suggested that the market for genuine home-produced honey was sound.

The fact that some honey was expensive was no guarantee that it was genuine — look at manuka honey. It was mentioned that the testing process requires thorough evaluation, and full commitment.

The propositions regarding honey adulteration were discussed and supported (with the addition of some reference to the deliberate adulteration by some UK beekeepers). Similarly there was support for the other propositions, apart from that in proposition 12 regarding clause 14.4 of the BBKA constitution which refers to the appointment of trustees: the wording was discussed and amended so the first line of the proposition now reads, "Delegates will have a number of votes equal to the number of vacancies." instead of "Delegates will have a number of votes equal to the number of candidates."

The module study groups were then discussed and reference was made to the area association discussion forum on education which took place on November 8th by Zoom with Clare McGettigan hosting. The meeting on the 8th discussed courses for beginners and the following points were raised:

- Expertise of the BBKA lies in the branches and not in the BBKA office.
- Course in a Case (CiC) and Course on a Stick (CoS) are useful starting materials.
- Most tutors write their own teaching points because:

They are more up to date than CiC or CoS

Tutors prefer to teach their own material.

- A recommended beginners' syllabus is needed – otherwise we tend to go on a bit
- A handbook for tutors would be useful – how to deliver rather than what to deliver.

- Taster days before the course starts can be enough for some enquirers. They may come away from such a day knowing beekeeping is not for them.
- All courses should be put on to [Beekeeping.events](#)
- A list of useful resources could be added to the recommended reading list.
- Weekend or weekday courses?
 - ◊ Depends on geography – no one wants to drive across Yorkshire for a two-hour lecture!
 - ◊ Depends on availability of tutors.
 - ◊ Depends on availability of students.
- We must include provision for those with extra physical, emotional or mental health needs.
- Support for school apiaries needs to be more than just a beginners' course for the teacher.

Regarding the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 there was concern that it could be used as a back door to the compulsory registration of beekeepers.

The next meeting of the South West Beekeepers Forum will be after the BBKA ADM (16-1-2022) on February 8th 2022.

Stephen Potts

Appendix - Propositions for Consideration

	Nominating Association	Seconding Association	Brief Summary of Proposition
1	BBKA		Pre-meeting election of Honorary Member, President, Trustees and Examination Board Members to be ratified
2	Devon BKA	Somerset BKA	Honey adulteration - BBKA approach to Trading Standards
3	Devon BKA	Somerset BKA	Honey adulteration - BBKA approach to HM Government
4	Devon BKA	Somerset BKA	Honey Adulteration - Publicity
5	Bucks BKA	Reading BKA	BBKA to communicate earlier with Area Associations about national events
6	Hampshire BKA	West Sussex BKA	Complete ban on import of honey bees, including individual queens
7	Hampshire BKA	Surrey BKA	Programme to counter the spread of Asian hornet
8	BBKA		Amendment to clause 12.7 of BBKA Constitution
9	BBKA		Amendment to Section 16 of BBKA Constitution
10	BBKA		Amendment to clause 21.2 of BBKA Constitution
11	BBKA		Amendment to clause 12.3 of BBKA Constitution
12	BBKA		Amendment to clause 14.4 of BBKA Constitution

The Bee Inspectorate

Regional Bee Inspector

On 1 November 2021 John Geden took over the role as Regional Bee Inspector for Central Region, covering Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, Dorset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland

John lives in Hayling Island with his wife, their two grown-up daughters and two dogs.

He joined the British Army in 1983 and was commissioned into the Royal Military Police. He served in Berlin, Dortmund, Northern Ireland and Cyprus, retiring in 1992 when he married and, using his army resettlement grant, completed a beekeeping course at Sparsholt College under the tutorship of John Cosburn. He went on to complete a 22-year career in Hampshire Police and the National Crime Agency, retiring in 2014. It was then that he turned his passion for beekeeping into a business and for the next seven years built up a commercial bee-farming business, managing up to 200 colonies.



John enjoys travelling and his career has taken him across the world in a variety of operational roles and to many developing countries. He also enjoys learning, writing and reading both fiction and non-fiction and has a passion for rugby.

He has been a member of the BBKA since 1991 when he first started keeping bees and has maintained his BBKA membership throughout, including the seven years that he was a bee farmer, having a committee role with his local branch for several years.

His key messages are all focused on maintaining healthy bees and are as follows:

- **Encourage beekeepers to register on BeeBase and engage with the NBU team.**
- **Ensure beekeepers can recognise notifiable diseases & report them appropriately.**
- **Encourage beekeepers to maintain simple & effective disease prevention.**
- **Ensure beekeepers can recognise exotic pests and non-native species & report them appropriately.**

John's contact details are:

John Geden MSc, PG Dip, GOS, CF.

Regional Bee Inspector, Central England

(Covering Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Dorset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire & Rutland)

National Bee Unit, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

Telephone: Mobile: 07501 275259

Email: john.geden@apha.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/apha | Twitter: [@APHAgovuk](https://twitter.com/APHAgovuk) | Facebook: [aphagov](https://www.facebook.com/aphagov)

Seasonal Bee Inspector

Meanwhile, if you are wondering about the life of bee inspectors, Peter Davies, Regional Bee Inspector for Eastern England wrote as follows on beekeepingforum.co.uk on 29 December 2021 in response to an ongoing discussion:

“Quite a lot of mixed views and misconceptions about the bee inspector role on here.

I started as an SBI six years ago; I am now an RBI. I don't have any qualifications except the BBKA basic and the NBU in house City & Guilds. You do need to be able to demonstrate a good background in apiculture — this is best measured with a hive tool and smoker in your hand looking through unfamiliar colonies whilst being asked multiple questions and having to demonstrate an understanding of different techniques and an understanding of good bee husbandry. I have done many interviews where people have read plenty of books and watched plenty of YouTube videos but can't manage a colony.

We do give help and advice when it's asked for or if it's a life or death situation for the bees; we give the advice which is readily available on BeeBase.

Hours wise, you can work 30-37 per week which includes all paperwork and kit cleaning etc. These hours are flexible to allow you to work longer or shorter days to suit you and of course take flexi time off along with holidays, bank holidays etc. We don't as a rule work weekends except to deliver Bee Health Days to associations two to three times a year. We get overtime if we have to work excessive hours on Asian hornet incursions.

We get HMRC vehicle rates; so 45p per mile which isn't too bad (it's the max you are allowed). All kit is supplied.

I did reduce the number of my colonies from 120 to 80 after a couple of years doing the job. I now run 50-60 and find that to be manageable. Many of my team run 30-50 colonies (one over 200) and certainly don't neglect them; it's about being organised.

All SBIs are now offered winter work so they can have 12 months' employment within the agency, some within the NBU and some in Animal or Plant Health.

I am happy to answer further questions and advise on applications peter.davies@apha.gov.uk 07900 292160.”

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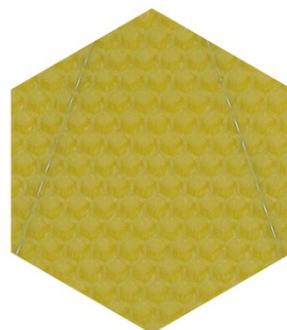
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Dorchester & Weymouth BKA



As with most organisations, our face-to-face events last year were severely curtailed. We only managed to meet up as a group on two occasions. We decided to have our AGM on 28th October by Zoom as the talk beforehand by Kevin Pope had to be cancelled.

Our last event of 2021 was a social on 8th December. This was meant to be a Christmas Social but Omicron had started to make itself felt, so there was only a small group of us but it was good to meet up and we had an enjoyable time.

The only other time we have met as a group this year was our social on 23rd September where over 25 members turned up.

I show the picture opposite. I think it shows how much we do value meeting up when we can.



On the positive side, we did manage to attend two events which were the Sunflower Trail and the Maumbury Rings event. At both events there was an ongoing demand for local honey. I think the message about adulterated honey may be getting through to the public.

Our beginners course kept being postponed and we finally started it at the end of July, continuing through to just before the August Bank Holiday.

We are still getting a lot of new members keen to learn about beekeeping so our 2022 beginners course is filling up and we have already started planning the sessions.



I think we will all be glad to close the door on 2021. It has been hugely frustrating to keep organising things only to cancel or postpone and, as things stand at the moment, that may be ongoing.

Apart from the uncertainties due to Covid, things haven't been brilliant with the bees. It has been a difficult year weather-wise to contend with again, leading to all sorts of problems with viruses, lack of stores at crucial times, less swarms and a poor honey harvest. Still, speaking personally, looking after your bees takes your mind off Covid and all the other problems going around at the moment.

I'll end with one final quote from the 2008 "*These added problems of managing bees that have occurred over the past few years simply mean that we have to become even better and more knowledgeable beekeepers. If we did not enjoy a challenge, we would not be beekeepers.*"

Sally Leslie

From the Dorchester & Weymouth archives

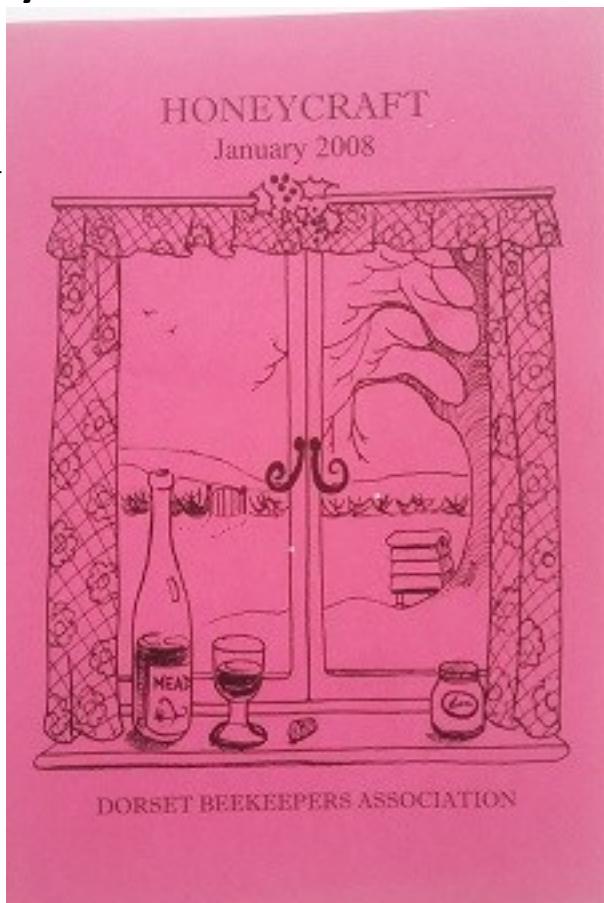
On the right is one of Mervyn Bown's frontispieces for Honeycraft 14 years ago. Mervyn also wrote the D&W piece for this edition and opined:

"Many beekeepers will look back on 2007 with disappointment because they do not have as much honey to sell as they were expecting." Sounds familiar?

HoneyCraft editor at the time , Richard Norman, wrote his 'Hive Notes' in this issue and included the view:

"No two years can ever be the same but 2007 will probably stand out for a while. The outstanding spring flow was soon balanced out by the poor weather during the summer months. Mild weather through the autumn gave the bees a chance to bring in some stores for the winter. This also gave a useful boost to the brood rearing although the ever present varroa took full advantage to keep their numbers up. The drastic option of using oxalic acid is still in the early stages and is best used as an emergency treatment.

January is always the time to look forward to the New Year but with varroa causing more problems than ten years ago, small hive beetle creeping ever closer and several other pests with names not on my spell checker, beekeepers need to have an optimistic outlook to keep going."



Looking back through this HoneyCraft 2008 edition, it is quite interesting to see what the issues of the day were.

- Treating varroa with oxalic acid in the winter seemed to be a relatively new approach. Traditionally the winter management advice was "Do not disturb". In this issue the Bee Inspector demonstrated the trickling method. Sublimation or the vapourising method didn't appear until several years later.
- deciding how much to charge for honey, with prices ranging from £2.50 to £4.00.
- Bournemouth & District BKA merged with Dorset South BKA to become Bournemouth & Dorset South BKA (BADS)
- inconsistencies with the weather. It seems they had an exceptional start with a good spring but deteriorated during the summer with the Bee Inspector's reporting *"then came the summer — nearly two months of perpetual chill weather with frequent rain which kept ground temperatures low and limited the nectar flow. In consequence many beekeepers who had taken an early crop found that they were having to feed their bees within weeks of extracting the spring crop. Reports suggest that crops are only about a third to a half that of normal, so honey prices will be rising."*

Some of it all sounds very familiar!



The photo on the left has come from an ex-member's collection. So I imagine it must refer to somewhere in Dorset. No protective equipment other than hats so the date is probably before protective clothing came in. Could it be an auction ?

Thanks to Sally Leslie and Richard Norman for these glimpses into the past.

East Dorset BKA

Having had to cancel last year's Honey Show, we were really pleased to be able to hold one this year at a new venue – West Moors Memorial Hall – in November. It was a triumphant return with 84 entries, judged by John Bunting, who commented that the standard overall was good. During the judging John provided comments to exhibitors (via notes under the exhibit) to help them



understand how they can improve in future shows. As well as members attending to see



the exhibits after the judging we had some interested members of the public dropping in and tea and cakes were available to all. Special thanks go to Margaret Hutchings, our honey show secretary, supported by Jenny Wellman and Clive Hutchings. The success of this show is indicative of the spirit and enthusiasm of our members which has remained undaunted during the Covid epidemic.

As was the case last year, we held our AGM on Zoom in October. Although numbers were down on last year we had some constructive discussions, which will be helpful in taking the association forward over the next year. In particular we talked about how best we can support our new beekeepers and continue to provide ongoing education. Our programme of winter meetings is designed to develop our beekeepers, picking up in further detail some of the skills that can really add value to our hobby.

New subscription rates were agreed following discussion and noting that the new rates are consistent with those charged by other local associations, and to accommodate the price rise by the BBKA.



We were delighted to appoint long-term member Oliver Newman as a Vice-President in recognition and appreciation of his support and dedication to the association.

Due to the current level of uncertainty with Covid restrictions we are planning to hold our winter meetings by Zoom although we may venture back to our indoor venue in March. Our focus will be helping us all to expand our beekeeping "toolbox".

Ivor Kemp

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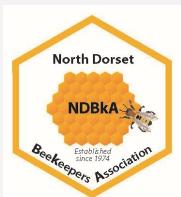
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North Dorset BKA

Winter is not the best time to discuss bees and beekeeping because we all have to guess at what is going on in the hives. Hopefully the bees have not been consuming too much of their stores because the weather has been fairly mild and we look forward to a better spring than we had last year.



Winter is a time for planning and preparing. We have finally received planning permission for our new apiary which means our chairman, Geoff Buckland, has to get down to the serious business of detailed work on all the aspects of the new building: foundations, electricity, plumbing, woodwork, solar panels and so on to conform with building regulations. Tim Villiers will be planning on how to raise money for the enterprise and hopefully all our members are thinking about how they are going to help. At present the estimated cost is £100,000 so there will be plenty to do.

Terry Payne ,Sue Billington and I will be running three different BBKA modular courses in January, February and March in the Shillingstone Church Centre. Sue is doing Module 1, Terry Is doing Module 3 and I am doing Module 6. There are six sessions of two hours from 7.00 to 9.00pm. We hope that Covid regulations will allow us to carry on, as the first meeting is on 11th January. It is hard to tell what we will be allowed to do at this stage but we hope that with social distancing and everyone having had a booster jab it will be possible to run face-to-face courses.

Happy New Year

Lesley Gasson

AFTERNOTE. The Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show (Wednesday 17th August 2022) has agreed to re-instate a dedicated "bees and honey" marquee. North Dorset BKA will be running a full honey show, as well as providing entertainment and information on bees, honey and pollination. Those who enter the show will be able to sell their honey! The show schedule will be available in the spring.



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Sherborne BKA

Sherborne beekeepers have had a good summer; at the apiary we started well with three hives surviving the winter. There was a flurry of swarms in May and June, but the bees did not produce very much honey over the summer. We managed a few apiary meetings with social distancing in place, but these were difficult to arrange. We finished the season also with three hives going into the winter.

We have had one evening meeting at the Mitre Inn on December 6th, when Lesley Gasson gave us a wonderfully informative talk about processing beeswax. On February 7th Mario Carretta is going to talk to us about the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance, and on March 7th Kevin Pope will talk to us about the “the effects of temperature inside the beehive”. On January 28th we propose to have our seasonal dinner, also at the Mitre Inn.

We are looking forward to a great summer this year, providing Covid allows.

Richard Baker



Taking a swarm in the rain, with the help of an umbrella!



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West Dorset BKA



Well, this is nearly a repeat performance of last year's December article. Covid is still around, with two variants dominating our lives.

We were able to carry out the student visits to our teaching apiary this year, which proved successful for the few that came along. Several beginners now have their own bees, which is great. The apiary management committee arranged regular visits during the year and members and students had the opportunity to attend. We had a good turn-out of students for Kevin Pope's visit on 26th June, which everyone enjoyed. Thanks again to Kevin. It was a shame more did not come along to other sessions but with Covid around we can appreciate the reluctance. Hopefully next year the apiary will be better attended. We completed our varroa treatment using Api-Bioxal on 19th December on all the colonies. We did check the brood situation first — there was very little indeed, which we exposed with an uncapping fork so that the mites would be killed off by the treatment. Varroa counts sadly were quite high on several hives. This appears to be the case around the Beaminster area. We gave two colonies a kilo of fondant to keep them going.

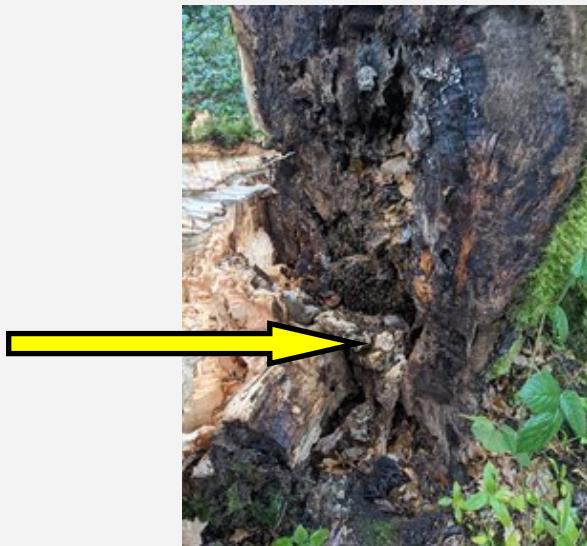
Our AGM in November was held again via Zoom. We had a good attendance and an excellent discussion afterwards. Thanks again go to Peter Crabbe and Steve Potts for setting up the Zoom meeting. There are no changes in our committee for the coming year. I would like to thank all the contributors to the monthly newsletter and to everyone who has worked hard during another difficult year to keep our association going for all the students and members. Honey production was down this year from last year as in most apiaries in the west. No trouble in selling this premium product.

We are hopeful that the beginners course will go ahead next year as planned — fingers crossed.

During the high winds at the beginning of December, a tree split near Corscombe exposing a wild colony of bees. Chris and Deborah Childs went to the rescue and managed to hive them. Time will tell in the spring if all is well. I will provide an update next year.

Happy New Year from West Dorset

Carole Browne



Helpful Hints

Ivy Honey

How time flies! Soon we'll be opening our colonies again. In the meantime, do make sure they aren't starving. Many of the colonies are very heavy with stores, even "nailed down". Do beware: the stores may be neat ivy honey. The ivy nectar flow was good and there may not have been other nectar or even syrup to dilute it when the bees were gathering it. If you opened your colonies for varroa treatment you may have split brace comb with a solid, creamy-white, dense, hard honey in it or you may have seen capped, cream-coloured stores or uncapped, looking like white icing sugar. That is ivy honey that the bees find very difficult to mobilize for using over the winter. So give them a pack of fondant that they will eat if they need to. In the spring we can help the bees mobilize the ivy honey. It will involve shaking all the bees off two or three frames from just outside the brood nest and dunking them into a bucket of warm water and replacing them. After a few days you go back in and repeat the process. Then wait again, repeat and maybe if they have cleared a frame, do the others and another new one. Go on repeating the process until all the frames are clear of the hard white powdery ivy honey.



Getting going

What I also do is feed 1:1 syrup as soon as the bees get under way (mid-Feb last year) to help them get going as I like spring honey. I only give it in small quantities to begin with. Maybe a jar feeder and then a two pint contact. One year I diluted it down gently to just rain water in a jar feeder. I think that this warm syrup or water (I insulate it too) helps them get going and helps them dilute stores more easily (no need for them to get chilled sucking up cold water outside from a puddle or drinker).

Last year or maybe the previous year I read that London beekeepers were losing colonies that had white powder left in the frames and they were attributing it to stored fondant! Didn't tell them that the ivy honey that was a Devon problem many years ago had spread up via Dorset, Hampshire etc. I heard about how to manage it from a Devon beekeeper many years ago.

Finally

If you have not done so already, now is the time to finish any cleaning, also gathering up clean propolis and wax to sell. The next job is to check all your stored equipment and do any repairs or painting/preserving. No peace for the wicked!

A very happy prosperous New Year to all

Sarah More

Who's Who in the Dorset County Beekeepers' Association

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Vice-President: Chris Slade

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