



May 2009

**Meeting:** Our Chairman, Jeremy Wells, has taken his bees for a spring holiday at the oil seed rape fields, where they should be working hard for him. We have an opportunity to see how well they are doing on the afternoon of **Sunday, May 10**, starting at 2.00pm.

If the present fine weather continues then we should see supers piled high, and perhaps also some of the problems which can occur when bees are placed close to the bright yellow fields with their high density of nectar-yielding flowers.

**Directions:** the bees are at Halsworthy Farm, near Landscope, map reference SX758 684. If you can find your way there through the lanes there is room to park some cars on a wide verge near the farm, then walk a short distance down a track shown on the map, towards Parkfield Cross.

Alternatively, and easier, park on the roadside near the Dartmoor Lodge near Peartree Cross (SX749 692) by 1.45pm when we will transfer to a smaller number of cars and travel in convoy to the farm, but don't be late. Ask Jeremy or Brian if you need more help.

**On June 6** we will be back at the branch apiary for an update by our Regional Bee Inspector on the Small Hive Beetle.

**On July 5** we will be at Riverford Farm to see Phil's bees in their top-bar hives.

Those are the main items in our summer programme, alongside those the members of the beginners' classes will be practicing their beekeeping skills, and some members will be preparing to take off their "L-plates" by passing the BBKA Basic assessment. We are also starting a new beginners course and they will be using the apiary too.

We have room for some extra general meetings, do contact Brian if you would like to welcome members to see how you keep your bees.

## Winter losses survey

For a number of year's DBKA have carried out a survey of the colony losses that members found over the winter. This year they have extended the survey to cover losses over the whole year as well as the winter.

Some of you, approximately 25% of branch members, will have received an Email or phone call from me requesting the information, thank you for responding. I may not have made it clear in my request that all the information gathered is reported anonymously, even I don't know whose results are whose as the Email replies were deleted as soon as I had recorded the figures and most of the phone replies were messages left on my answer phone. You may recognise your own results in the table below.

	Number of Colonies													
May 2008	2	0	4	8	2	0	1	0	4	2	1	4	1	4
Sept 2008	1	1	6	10	2	3	1	2	7	2	0	6	1	4
April 2009	1	1	6	9	2	2	0	1	6	2	0	3	1	1
% Loss May-Apr	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0
% Loss Sep-Apr	0	0	0	10	0	33	100	50	14	0	-	50	0	75

Six out of the sample of fourteen members reported no winter losses though one of these did suffer a loss between May and September. Six of the remaining eight members, despite the high percentage figures, only lost 1 colony but two were very unlucky and lost 3 colonies each. The 2 losses between May and September were both attributed to starvation probably caused by last year's warm Spring followed by a very cool and extremely wet Summer, let's hope that this won't be repeated this year.

Once again thank you to those who responded to my questions, hopefully the random selection process will leave you in peace next Spring but I can't give any guarantees. I believe that the results for the whole of Devon will be reported in the July edition of Beekeeping.

Adrian Kyte, Branch Secretary

Results for all of Devon are still being gathered, our overall rate of loss is 19% which is similar to the figure for the rest of the county, so far.

## Don't sell all your honey yet

Please keep some back for the branch stall at the Totnes Show on July 30.

We need to sell some to help to pay for the stand, and you get a better price from the branch than from the County Show.

## Do you have bees to spare?

There are several new members wanting to start beekeeping, please help them if you can, perhaps with a swarm or a surplus nuc.

Brian has the details.

## **Jim Stevenson**

Many of us will remember Jim who was a very long-serving member of our branch and always willing to help anyone with a beekeeping problem.

Next month Jim's son Paul is intending to cycle by himself from Lands End to John o' Groats and is seeking sponsorship in favour of Cancer Research UK.

If you would like to contribute, and so encourage Paul, who is doing this in memory of Jim, then you can send a cheque payable to "Cancer Research UK" to Pam Stevenson at

6 Gardens Close

Stithians

TRURO TR3 7BG

Or give cash to Brian who will send it on to Pam.

## **Branch apiary**

Thanks to Stuart who has repaired our super solar wax extractor.

One hive had quite suddenly shown a big increase in the number of varroa falling onto the tray; presumably they have robbed another hive somewhere and acquired the pests from them, they may also have brought back many workers from this hive too since the stock seemed very strong. They have been given a treatment with lactic acid followed with formic acid, now we shall see if these have been effective. By convenient coincidence this developed just after the beginners' class had a lecture on varroa treatments.

The bees in the poly hive seemed agitated early last month and one

queen cell was cut out since there were eggs present, at the next inspection there were no eggs and several queen cells. Fortunately there were also a number of drones so we hope that the new queen will mate well. At the last check the bees seemed more contented but no eggs were seen so they were given a test frame of young brood from Brian's Langstroth colony.

## **The catenary hive**

Rod writes

This year we will try a Catenary hive at the branch apiary. The bees make their own comb from top bars which are made from cut down Hoffman frames, therefore self (bee) spacing (with starter strips of bees wax for the bees to start their combs). The bees will make the comb to follow the curve of natural combs. The base of the brood box is made into a curve using varroa mesh flooring so the natural drop of the mites can be monitored on a slide in tray. In theory the bees do not stick their combs to the hive sides or base to maintain the bees space (6-8mm) All we need is a swarm to start the colony off, with the good start to spring, swarms should soon be amongst us. It will be interesting to see the colony's progress.

## **John Harler**

John now has formic acid in stock, notes on its use are available from Brian if you missed the March talk. John also has Thorne's second quality hive parts available.

## FOR SALE

Bee keeping, overalls, hat and veil,  
2 pairs of gloves, little used.

£40 ONO

Mr G Gould

01884 38105

## Apiary Sites

Brian has information on two available sites, one near Buckfastleigh and one near Newton Abbot.

## Beekeepers Quarterly

For the March and May issues you can view this for free at [www.bkq.org.uk](http://www.bkq.org.uk)

We also have a group subscription for this magazine.

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## Needing help?

Our branch has two Master Beekeepers and Ken holds the highest UK bee-keeping qualification, the National Diploma in Beekeeping, so if you feel the need of some instant advice then you can telephone with a good chance of getting through to one of us. If you need help then phone one of:

Ken Basterfield NDB 01404 815885

Brian Gant 01364 642233

If you have a brood disease problem then phone our Regional Bee Inspector

Adam Vevers 01364 653325

### Branch contacts:

Web site for news of meetings in south Devon, and many other matters  
[southdevonbees.org](http://southdevonbees.org)

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or e-mail to [fire221@btinternet.com](mailto:fire221@btinternet.com).

Collections from 12 Hembury Park, Buckfast TQ11 0ES

The Totnes & Kingsbridge Beekeepers' Association is a branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association which is a registered charity no. 270675