



August 2009

Meetings: on **Sunday, August 2** we are invited to visit three new beekeepers in Bridgetown, Totnes. All three took the winter course which finished in May of this year and now have their first bees. Do come along to help and encourage them, no doubt they will receive lots of advice.

Please note the directions below and the later **starting time of 2.30pm.**

Directions: from the middle of Totnes go across the Brutus Bridge and follow the A385 and signs to Paignton, near the top of Bridgetown Hill turn right into Blackpost Lane, at the end of the lane turn right into Weston Lane, after about 250m park at the road side near Weston House. If you get to Hope Close and the Community Centre then you have gone too far, park and walk back. There we will meet Mark and his bees. From there we return on the same route but at the bottom of Bridgetown Hill, just past the pelican crossing, turn right into Bourton Road which continues as Bourton Lane where we turn left into Carole's pink bungalow, the last one on the left before the road descends.

After looking at Carole's bees we walk back to Lilah's home and bees.

There will be a tea-break at some point too.

Bees at the heather: on **Saturday, August 29** we meet at **2.00pm** to see how the bees are doing at Pizwell Farm (SX 668 785). Heather honey is quite different from other floral honeys, if you wish to take your bees to the farm then contact Jeremy very soon. On previous visits we have also bought packs of local meat from the farm and probably some of us will give into the temptation of tea at Brimpts Farm on the return journey.

Directions: the easiest route is to take the road from Ashburton to Tavistock, just before Two Bridges turn right and go through Postbridge. On the far side of the town take a turning on the right which leads to Runnage farm and Widecombe, after 3/4mile turn right at Runnage bridge and park at Pizwell.

Last month

We met to see Phil's bees in their top-bar hives at Riverford farm with a great crowd of members and visitors who enjoyed the tea but not the weather. The collection for Cancer Research UK in memory of Jim Stevenson raised £30, thank you all. Phil was able to show us the construction of empty hives and attempted to open one when the weather seemed to clear, but the break did not last long enough to be useful. However, one incident did prompt the following note on apiary rules.

Apiary rules

Members had veils and almost all of the visitors had borrowed branch veils, the exception was one youngster and his family. When the hive roof was lifted one of the top-bars was dislodged and fell into the hive causing several rather cross bees to look for the cause of the disturbance; most unfairly they found the unprotected lad and set about him. He received many stings but has recovered from the shock and is not discouraged.

So the first rule is, "**Expect the unexpected**", bees are not always predictable and we are sometimes less than perfect, so be prepared as far as possible. The second rule is "**Always wear a veil**", then you can cope with the unexpected. Those are familiar, a new third rule is to ask you to, "**Look after other people**", especially visitors, who do not know these rules.

Next month

Apiary meeting on September 19, book the date now.

Buckfast Bee Day

In the centre of the August issue of BEEKEEPING is a pull-out with the programme and an application form for the meeting on October 10th. Do send in your application soon, we will not be organising any general meetings that month. Beginners who do not receive the magazine can get the programme etc from Brian Gant.

Courses

The regular winter course for beginners starts on September 24, this year we are meeting at St Luke's church in Buckfastleigh.

Recruitment is going well.

For members who wish to go into more depth there will be a meeting on Friday, September 11 followed by meetings on the first Wednesday of each month up to the end of the year. These will be discussions rather than lectures, more info next month, but note the date now.

Apiguard

Order from John Harler before 7 August and he will put in a bulk order to get a better price.

John also has plenty of jars in stock.

Take the Basic

If you have kept bees for a while then it is time you took the Basic assessment to prove your competence. September is a good time to do this so contact Brian now to find out what is involved.

Drones, queens and workers

In recent issues the notes on this page have been at Basic level, this month we will go a little deeper. When an egg is formed in one of the queen's ovaries it has the potential to develop into any one of the three types of bee. It is well-known that worker bees are formed if the queen releases some sperm as she lays the egg which then becomes fertilised if one sperm manages to find its way to the micropyle which gives it access to the inside of the egg. This gives the resulting worker two sets of chromosomes, one set from each of its parents, it is said to be "diploid".

It seems quite extraordinary that this same egg could also be transformed by suitable feeding into a queen bee which looks quite different from its worker sisters, behaves quite differently and lives very much longer, yet is genetically identical. That initial feeding sets different genes into action although the chromosomes are identical.

Drones develop if the egg is not fertilised, so simple theory says that they have only one set of chromosomes, they are "haploid". They have a mother but no father, though they do have a grandfather.

How well can the queen control the release of sperm? She is able to release several for each egg, not individual sperm. So the next egg laid may gain sperm intended for the previous one. This is not usually a problem since she lays batches of

worker eggs or drone eggs in adjacent cells. From time to time we see a nice patch of sealed worker brood with one or two or domed cappings, these show where the sperm has not been able to get into the egg, or the sperm was faulty in some way. Or the queen may be running out of sperm.

That is the simple story, but not the whole story since it is possible for drones to arise from fertilised eggs, we can have diploid drones.

This is determined by one particular gene in each set of chromosomes: if these two genes are different then the bee is a normal worker or queen. But if they are the same then the bee is a drone, a diploid drone.

These we never see because they are recognised by the workers at an early stage and not allowed to develop, though they can be reared artificially in the lab. What we do see is a pattern of brood with holes in it. This can arise if the queen has not laid in a good pattern, or has missed some cells because the reinforcing wire runs through the cell, Or it can be that diploid drones have been removed.

Diploid drones occur more often if the queen has mated with closely related drones, more likely to have the same gene at that particular place. This inbreeding is very undesirable since less brood is produced. Avoiding in-breeding is a reason for the queen mating with 10 to 20 drones on her mating flights, safety in numbers, not all can be closely related to her.

For Sale

Sherriff Bee Suit, white, two-piece, large size; little used £50 tel. 01822 855787

For sale from branch apiary to members: **WBC hive**, needs painting and some repair to legs. Includes National brood box, QX, 2 supers etc. £60.

Dartington Long Hive takes 22 14x12 frames, with 2QXs, 5 half supers etc £70.

One **National** and one **Commercial** colony, bees and frames (not hive) £50 each

Contact Rod on 01803 782190

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

or Seasonal Bee Inspector Clare Densley 01626 211684

Branch contacts:

Web site for news of meetings in south Devon, and many other matters
southdevonbees.org

Chairman: Jeremy Wells 01364 72180,
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HEMBURY BEE SUPPLIES

Your local agent for beekeeping equipment of all kinds, including varroa treatments, frames and foundation.

Phone John Harler on 01364 642517 or mobile 07769 878476
or e-mail to 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