



November 2009

**Meetings:** this month our branch has one big meeting on Sunday, November 22nd from 2.00pm in Bogan House, Totnes. Secretary Adrian has written about this on the next page. This will be an interesting, varied afternoon so your committee hope to see YOU there, (and attendance does not mean that you will dragged onto the committee). So do come along.

**Directions:** Bogan House is in Totnes High Street, opposite the Civic Square, you may know it better as the home of the costume museum.

**Beecourse2** meets on November 11 at 7.00pm to consider queen rearing.

**Next month:** is a quiet month while we celebrate Christmas.

### **HONEY SHOW/CHALLENGE 2009**

PLEASE support your honey show.

Entries over the past few years have declined to a level which puts into question the future viability of this event.

It is an opportunity for beekeepers both new and old to learn from the expertise and advice given by the judge, Peter Donovan.

This year the show is combined with the second part of Glyn Davies' talk on "Eggs" This will be an interesting and informative afternoon.

Refreshments will be provided.

### **Looking ahead**

On January 23 we have talk from a herbalist; put the date in your new diary now.

Adrian writes

## Meeting on November 22nd

Our Honey Show and AGM are being held together this year on 22nd November at Bogan House in Totnes starting with judging of the Honey Show at 2.0pm. Your Honey Show exhibits must be staged at least 5 minutes before judging starts, you should have received a show schedule with last month's Off the Comb [if you need another copy contact Adrian Kyte 01803 712 159 or preferably by Email [adrian.kyte@btinternet.com](mailto:adrian.kyte@btinternet.com)]. After the Honey show there will be part 2 of Glyn Davies' presentation on Bee Eggs, don't worry if you missed part 1 last year as both parts are largely self contained. There are currently no contentious issues scheduled for discussion at the AGM so it should be fairly brief. We will be looking for new blood to join the committee with 3 people standing down. We need nominations for Assistant Apiary Manager [this would be good opportunity for a new beekeeper to gain valuable experience with expert guidance on hand], Librarian and Secretary

## Humble Boy

From November 3 to 7th the Dartington Players will be performing this play in the Barn Theatre at Dartington.

There is a beekeeping connection, which is why it gets a mention here, Box Office 01803 847 070.

## The annual dinner

It has been our custom to have a dinner in February, and we expect to so again in 2010. Your committee would like suggestions as to where we should meet. It needs to have good food at reasonable prices and able to cope with about 25 people. And fairly accessible since some of our members travel quite a long way. Suggestions please to any of the committee.

## Southdevonbees.org

The web site has now been brought up to date so you will find the recent issues of this newsletter there. What else should there be on this site? What would you like to see there? Your committee are looking for suggestions from you.

## BEEKEEPING

The Devon magazine comes out 10 times each year, and November is one of the months when the Editor has a break. So no magazine this month.

## Off the Comb

Could you write something for this Newsletter?

## Feeders and feeding

I think that this year I have done more feeding than ever before, so it seems appropriate to look at this topic, even though for most stocks feeding is now finished for the time being.

### What to feed

The conventional wisdom has it that in the autumn we feed strong syrup, 2lb of sugar to 1 pint of water, i.e. about 62% sugar, this is for the bees to evaporate down to about 80% for storage and use later in the winter.

During the spring and summer we feed weaker syrup, about 1lb to a pint of water. This is for immediate consumption to encourage the stock to build up.

If it is necessary to help a colony during the winter months then feed fondant, either baker's fondant or home-made fondant.

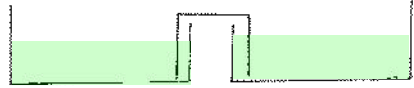
I almost always add thymol to the syrup because this stops the growth of black mould in the syrup if the bees are slow to take it down.

There is also a widespread belief that the thymol helps the bees to resist nosema, but there is no good evidence for this.

Since thymol does not dissolve readily in water the procedure is to make up a stock solution by dissolving 20g of thymol crystals in 100ml of surgical spirit. Then 2ml of this solution is added to every 4 litres of syrup.

Thymol can be bought from bee suppliers, or your local pharmacy.

For feeders we must be thankful for plastics, much cleaner and less prone to leakage than the old wooden ones. Most often I use Miller feeders these have an access for the bees from below through



either a hole or a slot. The bees have to climb up through the hole and down to get to the syrup.

When the bees are active they will take down a large volume of syrup very quickly, but if a cluster has formed then they will not leave it.

An alternative is the contact feeder which may be as simple as a honey jar with a few holes punched in the lid, but is usually a plastic tub with a piece of metal gauze in the lid.

These are filled with syrup and inverted so bringing the holes, or gauze, close to the bees. When inverting the feeder there is always some leakage so this should be done over a bucket or bowl.

Temperature changes can be a problem with this type of feeder since an increase may make the air above the syrup expand thus forcing syrup out through the holes onto the bees below.

Many of the winter losses are due to starvation, do make good use of syrup and feeders to ensure that your stocks have enough to see them through to the spring.

## For sale

Surplus equipment, due to downsizing:

National shallow frames (SN1) used but clean, per 10 frames £4.00

National shallow foundation, thin, not wired (Thornes Premier) per 10 sheets £3.00

Contact Brian Gant, details below.

---

## 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](http://southdevonbees.org)

Chairman: Jeremy Wells 01364 72180,  
[ena@jeremywells.entadsl.com](mailto:ena@jeremywells.entadsl.com)

Secretary: Adrian Kyte, 01803 712159, [adrian.kyte@btinternet.com](mailto:adrian.kyte@btinternet.com)

Treasurer: John Harler 01364 642517, [fire221@btinternet.com](mailto:fire221@btinternet.com)

Off the Comb, and Education: Brian Gant 01364 642233,  
[brian.gant@which.net](mailto:brian.gant@which.net)

Apiary Manager Rod Saffery, 01803 782190, [downtoearth30647@aol.com](mailto:downtoearth30647@aol.com)

## 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](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