

## RE-ACTIVATION OF BROTHER ADAM'S MATING STATION ON DARTMOOR

The summer of 2012 will see the re-activation of Brother Adam's isolated mating station on Dartmoor. After something over 80 years, Buckfast Abbey had decided to cease using the mating station. The Dartmoor mating station played an important part in the development of the Buckfast bee, its isolation and distance from other apiaries being critical. It would have been a terrible shame to allow this site to remain out of use, and for no Buckfast bees to be bred in the United Kingdom, which is their country of origin. The heritage left to beekeepers by Brother Adam and the work started by him must be continued.

So, permission and access was sought from the farmer of the land where the mating station is located to re-activate the famous mating station for the original use. In addition to this, the Abbot of Buckfast Abbey has graciously permitted the use of the Buckfast name for our queen bees, bred according to the selection methods and breeding tools taught to us by Brother Adam.

In September 2011 Peter Little visited the mating station, finding it was becoming rundown and overgrown. Many of Brother Adam's hives had been left on site, some of them having intact combs unused for some time. These will remain in the mating station, although Peter plans to use different designs.

Here are a few photographs taken during that visit.



1. General view of Brother Adam's mating station on Dartmoor, with the trees he planted for shelter.



2. Entrance to the mating station.



3. The mating station is now overgrown and in need of much work to clear the bracken.



4. View of the deserted hives in the mating station.



5. More deserted hives in the undergrowth.



6. Close-up of the special Brother Adam type feeder on top of a deserted hive.



7. One of the double/four-way mating nucs with the central partition removed as was often done by Brother Adam for wintering.



8. Some of the hives even had intact combs but these had obviously not been used for years.



9. Peter Little and Anton Coaker, the farmer of the land where the mating station is located, discussing the re-activation procedure.

The re-activation of the Dartmoor mating station and the re-commencement of serious breeding of the Buckfast bee in the United Kingdom is a project that began under the initiative of Roger White (Cyprus) and Peter Little (UK). In addition to the Dartmoor station, two other mating stations will also be set-up at remote locations on Exmoor. The management of the breeding program will be under the direction of Roger White, whilst the actual day to day management of the mating stations and supervision of the breeding stock in the UK will be under the direction of Peter Little of Somerset.

As the production of the queens will involve a marriage between the existing Buckfast programs and the Cyprus based Superbee breeding program, it has been decided to use the name "Buckfast Superbee queen bees" to best describe the queens produced. Permission to use the name has been sort from and given by the holders of the "Buckfast Superbee" name.

The main aim of this co-operation is the breeding of a present day Buckfast type bee and the production of these queens for our own use and so that they will be available to UK and beekeepers in other European countries who wish to carry out their beekeeping with this type of bee. Emphasis is on a docile, highly productive bee with a low swarming index. Future selection will be to increase the resistance to *Varroa destructor* and to increase the hygienic behavior in general.

The project will be supported by the Buckfast breeding programs of Roger White's Superbee based in Cyprus and Crete, Greece using present instrumental insemination, isolated and island mating stations and Peter Little's breeding program in Somerset supported by instrumental insemination and isolated natural matings.

The first batch of queens will be available around the end of June 2012.

Further information may be obtained from: <http://www.superbee-cy.com/> or <http://www.exmoorbeesandbeehives.co.uk/>

A Buckfast beekeepers group for English speaking Buckfast beekeepers has been formed and their website is: <http://www.buckfastbeekeepersgroup.co.uk/> with a discussion forum: <http://bbgroup.forum-phpbb.co.uk/> membership is free and open to all.

Roger White, Ormidheia, Cyprus 11/01/2012