

# The Newsletter



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SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## Wasps in January

What a winter!! Or rather – What winter? To date we have had three nights with frost here in the 'Vale of Ditchheat' and even though everybody thought that January 14<sup>th</sup> was way too late to treat with Oxalic acid, the bees had been bringing pollen home all the while, which was a fairly good indication that they had brood.

On the morning of January 14<sup>th</sup>, about 30 members gathered at North Wootton Village Hall so that, the well braced, Joe King could tell all the new beekeepers what oxalic acid does and how to dispense it. Those who had come only to

collect oxalic then departed and Dan Govier, Andrew Pugh and Joe escorted those who needed instruction across the road to the apiary. On opening one hive they were extremely surprised to discover a good few worker wasps scoffing the stores, the bees apparently oblivious to the intruders.

This was not the only report of such vandalism. Pat Lehain had also found a similar number of worker wasps in the fondant tub in one of his hives. Worker wasps should have popped their clogs back in October or early November, leaving just the queens skulking somewhere. A further indication that this has been, yet another, strange winter was provided by Natural England who conducted a survey of flowering plants during January and found more than 100 species in bloom. On January 26<sup>th</sup> I heard a croaking noise in one of our ponds and spotted a couple of frogs in amplexis – Sheer madness.

*Stewart Gould - editor*

## Using and Making Pollen Patties

Good quality pollen substitutes called 'pollen patties' are used to feed bees protein in the spring before natural pollen is available, or any time that the bees need protein. They are beneficial at this time of the year - from January to March – to stimulate brood rearing, and are an important spring food supplement that will make a colony prosper. The ingredients need to be carefully selected for appropriate characteristics. Historically a wide range of strange ingredients have been

used, such as fresh or skimmed milk, egg yolk, pea flour, linseed, meat scraps, even dried blood, and many beekeepers have their own favourite recipe. These days the preferred ingredients are soy flour (de-fatted), brewer's yeast, sugar, syrup, pollen if available, and sometimes honey (if the source is known to be safe). Either a high sugar content (50%+), or a high pollen content (15%+), is necessary to ensure the bees will consume the mixture, and to minimise waste. A typical recipe to make two 1 lb (500 g) patties:

1. previously blended 67% sugar syrup - 12 parts / 48% / 480 g
2. pollen if available
3. brewer's yeast - 3 parts / 12% / 120 g
4. de-fatted soy flour (from equine suppliers) - 6 parts / 24% / 240 g
5. white granulated table sugar - 4 parts / 16% / 160 g

### Making the patties.

Use a good strong food mixer is the best way to mix the ingredients. Start by adding all the sugar syrup, and then add the powdered ingredients slowly - starting with the pollen, then the yeast, then the soy flour, and finally the sugar. Add the ingredients slowly until a soft dough is formed, this should take about ten minutes. When you get the right consistency, stop adding ingredients. It does not matter if the formula is exact. Add as much of the sugar as you can, but if the dough seems right before all the sugar is added, stop and make up the patties. Roll out and cut the patties on a table that is well covered

with soy flour and sprinkle lots of soy flour onto the patties as you roll them out with a rolling pin.

A one pound (500 g) large hamburger size patty is ideal to feed one hive. Although a really strong colony can eat a patty of this size in a week. The bees prefer the patty to be moist, so you can put the mixture in a zip lock bag before rolling out, which will reduce moisture loss, and then cut a 'vee-slot' in the underside of the bag when you put the patty in the hive, or wrap in cling film. The patty should be placed on top of the brood frames, using an eke if necessary. You can of course buy patties from the usual suppliers, but they are fun to make, if somewhat messy. Either way treat your bees, and watch them prosper at the start of the season.

*Reigate BKA – courtesy of Ebees*

### A President in a pear tree

About three weeks before Christmas, I remarked to Joe King that he still had pears on a tree overhanging his driveway. He explained in detail why this particular variety is left on the tree until the week before Christmas and then picked with the thought of devouring them over the festive season.

It didn't quite happen like that this year. Joe had borrowed an 'all singing, all dancing' ladder and set off to harvest the sweet flesh. It is not generally known how far he got into the ritual, but at some point the ladder unceremoniously ejected Joe, He landed on the driveway. It transpired that he had damaged two vertebrae and banged his head into the bargain.

After more than a week in Yeovil Hospital, where he devoured copious quantities of morphine and Tramadol, Joe was returned to the bosom of his family sporting a rather fetching steel and plastic body brace, which he will have to wear for some considerable time, being allowed out for an hour every other day, provided he has behaved himself.

Even though he has been in some considerable pain and discomfort, It seems that he was very fortunate not to have suffered even more serious injury. We all wish him a very speedy return to the very rudest of health and look forward to ribbing him on the subject for a long time to come. He claims that he has now heard all the puns relating to pears, trees and the festive season, but I'm sure there are more out there.

*Stewart Gould - editor*





## Philips' beehive - urban home for the 21st Century bee

The collapse of honey-bee colonies is *bad* news. Seventy-four out of 100 different crop types that account for 90 percent of the global food output are pollinated by bees, but the direct cause of the phenomenon called the Colony Collapse Disorder remains unknown. Efforts are being made to bring the bee population back to a healthy level with city councils around the world encouraging the 3000 year old practice of keeping bees in cities. While not proclaiming to solve large scale crop pollination problems, Electrical giant Philips has turned its know-how to the equation with this futuristic concept catering for the needs of the urban beekeeper.

The Urban Beehive concept is a part of the Microbial Home Project - Philips's effort at creating a domestic ecosystem of innovative design solutions to cleaning, energy, human waste, lighting and food preservation. The house is viewed as a biological machine capable of filtering, processing and recycling what we would normally think of as waste.

The bees enter the glass pane mounted beehive via an entry tunnel located just above a welcoming pollen-filled flowerpot. On the inside the bees encounter a set of honeycomb structures that they use to lay their larvae, as well as store honey and pollen. If you'd rather not meet the bees in person, you can simply watch them toil away safe in the knowledge that there is a gradient-tinted glass barrier between you and the laborious critters (only the orange wavelength of light which is invisible to bees gets through the glass). And if you feel adventurous enough to actually remove the glass cover and collect some honey, you can calm the bees down by releasing smoke into the hive at the pull of a cord.

Philips' idea has one big advantage over the existing urban beekeeping solutions. Jason Neufeld's ceramic [Bombus Shelters](#) or the [Beehouse](#) from Omlet UK may be equally stylish and foolproof, but they have the drawback of requiring a backyard.

*Courtesy of gizmag.com & Peter M Slocombe - Toronto*



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Opposite the Olive Mill Restaurant.**  
Please phone prior to visiting to avoid a wasted journey.

## Gerald Fisher

As we have not had a newsletter since the beginning of December, some things have slipped through the net. Gerald, who is known to most members of the division, was admitted to hospital in early November last year suffering from a detached retina. On examination, the medics decided that they would operate on both eyes. I am very pleased to report that he has made a remarkable recovery and is totally mobile again with both retinas firmly in place. He will be joining us for the final session of the Introductory Course, so that he can correct the wrong impressions that Chris Strong and I have given the potential new beekeepers.

*editor*





## **Dr Mark Greco - Thursday 9th February - Edgar Hall, Somerton**

We are extremely lucky to have Dr Mark Greco coming to give us a lecture on his scientific work on bees. Dr Greco an Australian researcher, formerly of the University of Western Sydney - Hawkesbury, is now working at Bath University. He is undertaking cutting edge research using "scanning" techniques, which we are familiar with when we have a trip to Hospital. Uniquely Mark is using this same technology to discover secrets of the hive that are not easily laid bare using any invasive method.

This should be an excellent evening and I hope that as many members as possible will attend. We offer varied and high quality lectures in the autumn and winter months. Our last lecture by Ged Marshall attracted an audience of over 60 beekeepers and I would suggest that you do come if you possibly can.

The venue for this talk is "The Edgar Hall" Somerton - an excellent modern facility on the edge of Somerton, which has been purchased by Somerton Town Council. Should you go to our usual venue at the Parish Rooms you may be perplexed to find that you are participating in the pantomime.

Directions to Edgar Hall (TA11 6SB) :-

From Somerton take the Langport road (B3153). Leaving town, there are houses on the right and a playing field on the left. Immediately after the houses there is a road to the right. This is one mile from the centre of Somerton. Turn right into Cartway Lane (sign posted Somerton Business Park & Somerton Town Council Edgar Hall. Go to the end of Cartway Lane (0.3 mile). At the mini roundabout, turn right into Brancombe Road and after 100 metres, left into Somerton Business Park. Yes! Somerton Business Park.

From here on the directions take on a U2 theme, as the streets have no names. Go to the end of this road and take a left turn at Somerton Windows. Follow the road round to the right and go to the end. When you reach the end, Edgar Hall is ahead and slightly to your left. That is approximately. 400 metres from the entrance to Somerton Business Park. There is a brown and white sign on the wire fence stating Somerton Town Council Edgar Hall.

From Langport take the B3153 to Somerton – As you approach Somerton, immediately before the start of houses on the left hand side, there is a sign (on the right) to Somerton Business park pointing left into Cartway Lane. Turn into Cartway Lane and follow the instructions from that point, as above.

***Joe King - President***



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### Sad lightning fatality at a bee-show

Just before going to press we learn from the London morning papers that a terrible fatality occurred at a Flower and Bee Show being held at Lacy Green, High Wycombe, Bucks, on the afternoon of the 27th inst. and while the Rev. Mr. Wallace, of Bromley, Kent, was delivering a lecture on "Bee-keeping" in a tent near a tree.

A man named Richardson was driving the bees from a skep, nine men being gathered under the tree watching the operation, when a thunder storm commenced. A flash of lightning was seen to strike the tree, and the people around were horrified to see all the men lying huddled together. It was found that three were dead; three, including the Rev. Mr. Wallace, badly injured; and the three others very much dazed by the shock, though they afterwards recovered.

*The British Bee Journal of 30th July, 1891*



## Introductory Course

We were expecting similar numbers to last year as there had been a good level of interest during the summer, at the various events we attended, but come the first session, we had 21 waiting with bated breath to hear Chris Strong eulogise on the merits of beekeeping. There were 45 at the first session last year. He obviously created quite an impression though, because there were 5 more

the following week for my presentation, but numbers keep increasing and at the third session, there were 27.

We are not alone in attracting smaller numbers this year. Burnham on Sea Division have reported that they have about 50% less this year. Maybe the beekeeping bubble has finally burst and we are left with those who will have an even greater commitment. There has been concern in recent years with the large number of people taking up beekeeping for only one or two years.

*Stewart Gould*

## Counterfeit Rice Fructose

Chin Shih Chou, 48, of Taiwan, Qiao Chu, 25, of China, and Wei Tang Lo, 48, of Hacienda Heights California, were named in the indictment. The trio is charged with falsely labelling the honey as rice fructose to avoid paying more than \$1 million in duties to the U.S. According to court documents, the men re labelled the containers of honey after they passed through U.S. Customs. They then sold the honey in the USA.

*Apinews – from the internet*

*Makes a change from counterfeit honey - editor.*

## Bee Venom Face Pack

Holland & Barrett are selling 50ml (10 teaspoons) of the above product for £49.99. When I queried it, I was told that it works for Victoria Beckham.

*editor*

## Chairman's Ramblings mid January

A Happy New Year to you all and I hope you all have a good bee-keeping year to come. Earlier this week I treated my eight hives with oxalic acid. Fortunately all the colonies were viable although a couple seemed a bit light. The cluster sizes ranged from 5 seams to eight. I have given them all some candy and hope that this will be enough to help them through to the spring. I looked into one hive that has a glass crown board, today - 6 days later and the candy has already gone. It has been such a warm autumn and mild winter so far that it seems inevitable that they will be short of stores.

Interestingly, just one of the hives had a lot of condensation inside. It was a hive with a solid floor and I tried to create some extra ventilation before closing it up again. I understand that damp is a greater enemy than cold.

Now the rush of Christmas and the New Year is over, it is time for me to check my equipment for the coming season. I tried to clean everything as it was removed at the end of last season but there are one or two repairs to be carried out. I must also make up some new frames to be ready for some frame changing.

We have our first talk of the New Year on 9<sup>th</sup> February – details are on page 6. I hope to see many of you there on that night.

*Trevor Adams - Chairman*

## Honey more profitable than heroin

Afghanis are being encouraged to take up beekeeping by the British Army in Helmand province. The resource that would not be harvested and sold by insurgents appealed to coalition forces and local government and a lecture programme tried last year has proved to be a success. Attendees received lectures by Afghan bee farmers from other provinces. These farmers had received training on bee farming from the US Department of Agriculture, British Army and Danish Army. "The farmers wanted to have bee hives to be able to generate income," said Don Welty, a senior agriculture advisor with the USDA. "They know about the impact that bees and honey can make as it is mentioned in the Quran. The goal is to have every farmer own five hives and generate up to \$1,000 per year. This would make much more money than heroin poppy. Once the farmers have alternatives then it is possible for them to move away from poppy."

The course covered several topics related to beekeeping, including hive preparation, pollination benefits, swarm capturing and queen management. The session ended with a hands-on practical application for attendees. At the end of the seminar attendees were given a starter hive, basic equipment and a set of beekeeping clothes.

*From Ebees – courtesy of The Scottish BKA*

## **Somerset BKA - Development Group**

It is felt that there is a need for a Development Group in Somerset aimed at the more experienced bee-keepers in the Somerset Beekeepers' Association.

### **AIMS**

The aims of such a group would be those of the BBKA and SBKA; to promote and further the craft of bee-keeping. It would not replace the Lecture Day or Special Lecture but would be purely to further the education and knowledge of both those less experienced members and the more advanced bee-keepers who wish to expand their knowledge but not to take exams. It should also be possible to plan and set up a project and work with it from the beginning through to its conclusion over several sessions. Such a group would be part of SBKA but run by a sub-committee of highly knowledgeable and experienced members in conjunction with the SBKA.

### **MEETINGS**

These would take place four or five times a year in a hall or apiary centrally situated allowing relatively easy access for all members of the SBKA. The format of the meetings could be morning seminars, lunch and practical sessions in the afternoon. They could include visits to apiaries, possibly with demonstrations.

It is hoped that the content for discussion, both in theory and practical, would come from Divisional members as members of all Divisions would be asked to put forward the items that they wish to be discussed. It would be expected that the day's meeting would start at 9.15am Reception with the Seminar starting at 9.30am with a possible finishing time of 4.30pm, depending on the content of the day.

It is intended that the expenses of the day (the hire of a hall, speakers' fees, etc.) will be funded by the members attending. There may be occasions when SBKA will be asked for funding for a particular event. These requests will be presented to SBKA council with a budget for approval on an ad hoc basis. Lunches would be provided but members would be expected to pay for these individually.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

With the current upsurge of interest in bee-keeping and the increase in membership (845 at the end of 2011) there is clearly a thirst for knowledge and some Divisions are better than others at setting up courses, not only for those wishing to take exams but also those requiring only to progress their knowledge. This Development Group could assist in closing this gap. The County is fortunate in having a number of highly qualified and very experienced bee-keepers and it is hoped to draw the tutors from this group.

*We will bring you more information when available - editor*

## Subscription Renewals

Don't forget that if you do not renew your subscription by the end of this month, you will be removed from the membership list and your insurances will become void. Once lapsed, it takes 40 days from payment for them to be reinstated and you may not be covered for such things as swarm collection.

*editor*



Navy



Forest



Maroon



Sport



Cardinal



Carolina



Royal



Ash



Black

## Division Sweat & Polos

These excellent quality sweat shirts and polo shirts are available at £17.50 & £13.50 respectively. A heavier weight sweat shirt is available for £20.00. S-34/36 M-38/40 L-42/44. XL-46/48 & XXL -50/52. T shirts in similar colours are £8.50. Contact me if you would like one. The Division has paid for the set up costs, so these prices represent very good value indeed. Chris Strong's logo does look very good. Shame about the model.

*editor*

**Dates for your diary**

**Radio entomology Research of Bees**

Dr. Mark Greco  
Thurs. 9th February  
**The Edgar Hall, Somerton**

**Introductory Course**

Sessions 4,5 & 6  
United Reformed Church Rooms  
Somerton  
Thurs. February 9th, 16th & 23rd  
7.30pm

**Food Hygiene Course**

Edgar Hall, Somerton TA11 6SB  
Saturday 25th February  
9.00 am

**Deadline for March edition  
February 14th**

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