

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Photo courtesy of Sue Mosedale

Honey on sale at the Royal Albert Hall

Mmmm! Only £20.00 for 12oz (340g). At least it looks like 12oz, but how can you tell, when there is no weight on the label? Oh! And bless me, there's no lot no., best before date or producer's address details either.

Other than that, it looks really good.

Asian Hornet Conference

After such a dramatic increase in the number of Asian hornet nest discoveries in 2023, Somerset BKA held an Asian hornet conference at the Canalside in Bridgwater, on Saturday 6th January, attended by around 180 people. It was an extremely informative event, with speakers from France, England and Spain. It is firmly believed that the Asian hornet has now established itself in Kent and parts of Hampshire. We had a further mind blasting talk from Lynne Ingram at the Edgar Hall on the evening of January 25th, attended by a good number of Somerton members.



The over-arching message from these events and the horrific increases of last year is that we should all be extremely vigilant - and make sure that others are too. The damage these insects will inflict will not be restricted to our bees, but to all insects, thus affecting the whole food chain.

Just to cap things off, whereas Asian hornet queens are not normally seen on the wing until March, **one was caught in Hastings, East Sussex on January 24th.**



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Trehalose

A few weeks ago I mentioned to beekeeping guru Clare Densley from Buckfast Abbey in Devon, that I was soon giving a talk on plant sugars. Her ears visibly 'pricked up' and she said, 'You'll be mentioning Trehalose then?' To be honest, I'd never heard of Trehalose and presumed it was a place in Cornwall. You can see that for the purposes of my talk I even created a graphic suggesting



that it might be just that, but in truth, it's a sugar. Most sugars have names that end in **ose** – sucrose, glucose, fructose and lactose etc.

Trehalose is in a World of its own when it comes to its properties. Many different life forms depend on trehalose to keep them going in one way or another. Have you ever wondered how some plants are able to have their leaves frozen, yet they spring back to life as soon as the thaw sets

in? Yet others can wither and die at the first sign of a frost, Well! The answer is trehalose. It can act as an anti-freeze for plants and some animals too. Some boney fish, and some amphibians benefit from trehalose preventing them from freezing to death in extreme conditions. Just think how cold your garden pond got in mid-January, then realize that frogs, which can breathe through their skins when they wish, are also spending the colder months in the depths of your freezing pond – all because of trehalose.

That's pretty cool stuff all on but trehalose has one other property. Go to the other heat spectrum from freezing, work out how your lawn back to life after a period of

its own, major end of the and try to comes extreme



drought, or how some plants can completely revive from a totally dried up, supposedly dead state. In the World's deserts, plants dry out completely and die back to a brown crisp, but with the first shower, the desert can turn green almost overnight. I've seen it in the Middle East and always wondered how any plant could survive that crippling heat, and the

transformation is astounding. To drive along a desert highway where last week there was nothing but sand and dust, and be confronted by greenery and large ponds with ducks swimming, is slightly disturbing. Once again, the answer is trehalose. This plant (sellingella) is collected by enthusiasts and mistreated so that it becomes a dried up ball, but give it a drink, and suddenly it will come back to life with the first brown leaves turning green overnight and a complete revival. This is how Sellingella gets its more common names of Rose of Jericho or the Resurrection Plant.



Insects use trehalose for various purposes. Trehalose is a disaccharide, made up of two glucose molecules, and is the major sugar found in insect haemolymph, which is the insect equivalent of blood. Trehalose provides energy for flight, and promotes growth, metamorphosis, stress recovery and the synthesis of chitin. Chitin is extremely important to insects, as it forms the external hard shell of most insects (exo-skeleton). After all, they don't have bones.

Honey bee queens have only one mating session in their lives. On reaching adulthood, the young queen will leave the hive and mate with about 17 drones and then return to the hive for a life of egg laying, but she has to store the fruits of her male cohorts for her entire life, and that could be up to five years. How is it kept fresh for that period of time? You guessed it. Trehalose makes sure that the sperm is viable until the last drop is used.

Thank you to Clare Densley for opening my eyes to this amazing sugar.

Stewart Gould

First Aid Course Re-run

We are thinking of holding another First Aid Course ahead of the new beekeeping season. There will be a cost to members, but it will be subsidised by the association.

If you are interested in developing your knowledge of how to deal with potentially dangerous medical situations, please contact Jackie Mosedale by email at jackiemosedale@gmail.com

Beekeeping Course

We've had the first two sessions now, at Tor Rugby Club in Glastonbury, and we have a cohort of 33 people attending. The sessions have been lively and interactive, which is always reassuring, and we've attracted people from quite far away, as two branches restrict their numbers quite severely. I don't think the fact that we have an Italian lady, a French lady and a third lady from Australia are a part of that syndrome though. We are an eclectic bunch, that's for sure.

This will be the first newsletter which new members will receive, so we take this opportunity of welcoming them all to the slightly chaotic world of beekeeping.

We're missing out the session on February 14th, as it is St Valentine's Day, and the Rugby Club has been double booked for March 6th, and we have stepped aside to let the intended wedding party go ahead.

Summer Apiary visits

As has happened in the past, we are hoping to hold visits to several members' apiaries during the warmer months. If you think you could manage hosting about 20 beekeepers for a couple of hours, could you please contact Alison Clewes at pansypots@icloud.com

Change of Charity Status of Somerset BKA

For several years it has been apparent that the charitable status of Somerset BKA (and all its divisions) should be changed to fall in line with present day requirements of a charity, and also to mitigate the financial liability of its Officers and the divisional delegates - the trustees. Trustees of a charity are, under the existing constitution, jointly and severally liable for any judgement made against the charity, financial or otherwise. For these reasons it was considered wise to change the status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The process was started several years ago by the then Treasurer, Chrissie Kennedy and continued when that post was taken over by Peter Derbyshire, with the help of Lance Moir.

The change to a CIO is a major one and much consideration was given to the process by the Somerton Committee.

The new chairman of Somerset BKA (Simon Mills) picked up the baton on his election to the post, and it is fair to say, he ran with that baton. He has done a tremendous amount of work on the project, although there is some concern over the way in which it has been handled, especially from Taunton and Somerton Divisions. A transcript of the proposed new constitution was circulated, at very short notice, to all members and Somerton Division raised concerns regarding its position within the new charity and with some of the suggested procedures, statements and modus operandi. A copy of those concerns, as sent to the secretary of Somerset BKA, prior to the Council meeting held on January 3rd, is below.

Firstly, we recognise the enormous amount of work which has been put into the preparation of this proposed CIO template

*We also recognise the necessity for financial protection of trustees
We have serious concerns about the process of agreement to the acceptance of this document, as it represents a fundamental change to the whole association.*

As such we require a meaningful consultation period of 8 weeks between the presentation of any document of this gravity and a meeting where it is voted on, to allow all divisions to seek the acceptance, or otherwise of their membership and allow appropriate time for discussion.

Having held a committee meeting on January 3rd 2024 to discuss the first draft, we raise the following points.

The revised draft proposal must retain rule 4b in its original form and meaning, thus allowing the proper and truly proportional representation of all members of the association/charity.

Other suggestions which have been proposed are neither proportional or more practical. The suggestion of a general meeting, whether in person or by electronic means is not practical and will in no way provide a representative vote, because only a minority will involve themselves.

There are concerns regarding section 4 of the proposal which needs to be modified to take into account the assets of divisions, specifically in cases where it can be clearly demonstrated that they have been donated solely for the benefit of the local membership eg land for apiaries.

We suggest a separate inventory of those assets which are unquestionably intended for, and able to be used by the entire SBKA membership and should be subject to suggestions made for Section 4.

Section 6 (Trustees claimed expenses) Expense allowances and types of expenses, that have been previously agreed, should be made available.

Section 11. 5e needs revision. It basically states that after 15 minutes of the start of a previously adjourned meeting, any number is a quorum. Consequently 5f does not make sense.

Under this constitution, divisions/branches can only act as dictated to by their trustee and what is considered in the interest of SBKA (the trust). The considerations of the divisions or individual members are not taken into account. (this constitution should outline powers and rules which will be determined at Division/branch level)

Section 13 refers to one third of all trustees being required to step down at each AGM. If all start their term at the outset of this constitution,

The points were mentioned during the meeting, but it was pointed out in no uncertain terms that there is only one entity, and that is **Somerset BKA**. The Divisions, which will now be referred to as Branches, must operate on the basis that what they do revolves around the charitable values of the County Association (The Charitable Trust, or Charity).

Each Branch will have a trustee with one vote at a meeting of the Trust (Council) meeting, regardless of the number of members in that Branch.

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer will now also have a vote on Trust matters. In theory this could mean that a small Branch to which the Chairman belongs could have two votes, and if the secretary and/or treasurer also belongs to that Branch, it could have four votes - whereas a very large branch like Somerton or Taunton, would only have one. This was also mentioned during the meeting, but the chairman stated that he was struggling to understand the problem, as all trustees will be voting in the interests of the Charity (The Charitable Trust)

Concerns over property and donations given to Branches were dismissed as all property is the property of the charity (Somerset BKA). Should any branch choose to leave the County Association (Charitable Trust) they would not be able to take assets, property or financial holdings with them.

It was believed before the meeting that these matters would be discussed during that meeting, but 3 hours and 10 minutes into the meeting, the chairman declared that he had received an email during the day, which confirmed that Somerset BKA's proposed constitution and proposal to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, had been accepted by the Charities Commission.

After some disquiet from Somerton Division (Branch) and Taunton Division (Branch), a vote was taken, **but Somerton's delegate was not permitted to vote as she had not signed papers confirming her acceptance of the position of trustee under the existing constitution.** The validity of the decision to bar her from the vote has been questioned. The vote to go forward was carried by all 10 trustees present, although one had left the meeting after three hours and Somerton could not vote.

It is now clear that Somerset Beekeepers' Association will become a CIO with almost immediate effect. Somerton Committee are not opposed to the change of status, but have serious concerns over the methods employed and some of the elements of the proposed constitution.

We have now heard that the transition is underway.

Supplies available from the apiary

There is a stock of frames, foundation and jars at the apiary which are available for purchase every Tuesday morning and on Saturdays when there is a New Beekeepers' practical session. The stock of jars is rapidly decreasing and won't be topped up until late July. Check with Eric McLaughlin if you wish to visit.

All frames and foundation are for National hives

DN4 - Deep National Hoffman frames - £1.35 each

10 frames - £13.50

11 frames - £14.85

Standard brood foundation - £1.30 per sheet

SN1 Shallow National frames - £1.00 each

10 frames - £10.00

11 frames - £11.00

Super foundation - 80p per sheet

SN1 frames are straight sided and will need plastic/metal spacers

Apiinvert. Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

13kg 1 - 4 boxes £26 each, 5 + boxes £25 each

Apifonda. If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter.

National Foundation Available at excellent prices.

Deep wired, Shallow wired, Shallow unwired and cut comb.

For any of the above please ring :- 07812738793, 01458 272114 (leave a message)
email redrascal444@gmail.com

Beekeeping books for sale

Jeff Brewer, who has been keeping bees for about 15 years, has decided it's time to hang up his smoker and has the following books which are free for collection from Street. There are some worthy titles in there.

Bee Books for Sale	Author/Publisher
Haynes Bee Manual	Haynes
Complete Guide to Beekeeping	Jeremy Evans
Practical Beekeeping	Clive du Bruyn
Collins Beekeepers Bible	Collins
BBKA Guide to Beekeeping	Ivor Davis & ano
The Honey Bee inside & Out	Celia Davis
The Honey Bee around & About	Celia Davis
Beekeeping for Dummies	
Queen Bee - biology, rearing & breeding	David Woodward
Beekeeping Study Notes - General Husbandry	Yates
Beekeeping Study Notes - Modules 1, 2, 3	Yates
Queen Rearing simplified	Vince Cook
Guide to Bees & Honey	4th Edition - Ted Hooper
Bee Books v4	

If you are interested give Jeff a ring on 07970 881779

A statement from Patrick Murfet of Beekeeping Equipment

Well, at last....it has been a long while since I said it was about time I handed the Bee-Equipment baton to someone else. With the help of my excellent staff and customers, we have achieved a lot in the beekeeping world - some of it is popular, like new products and lower pricing, and some are less popular, depending on your view. ***(Patrick Murfet allegedly imported bees from Italy to Ireland before moving them on again - to the UK. If true, this is a very questionable practice, as importing bees from Italy to the UK is illegal)***

I'd like to announce that Bee-Equipment has a new owner, and you will see some changes over the next couple of months. As of today, Bee Equipment will still be one of the market leaders in its field, but will be under new ownership, but don't worry; Bee Equipment's excellent team will not be changing.

The acquisition of my company Bee Equipment, does not affect my other interests, I love this industry and would hope to see you all in 2025 at The British Beekeeping Show, formerly BeeTradex. Please look out for the confirmation date in early 2024. I am also hoping to resurrect the Bees & Other Pollinators (BQ) magazine, that had proved so popular amongst readers.



Bookings open Noon 29 Jan!



Spring 2024
Convention

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 12 – Sunday 14 April 2024

Lectures, Workshops & Seminars

Bumper Trade Show Sat 13 April

Ticket prices held: Trade Show only - £6

For latest information including full programme, visit

www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention

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January in the Divisional Apiary

Older beekeepers are used to January being an inactive month for the bees with low temperatures keeping them in a tight cluster and the queens going off the lay. This has great significance because when there are larvae present the workers have to maintain a brood temperature of 96 degrees Fahrenheit around the brood and this is achieved by them shivering their flight muscles to create heat. This uses up a great deal of winter stores meaning that in warmer winters the bees now need more stores than in cold winters. This is all counter intuitive, and these days we need to make sure that they go into the winter with 40lb of stores or risk starvation. Now is the time of year when regular checking for the weight of the hive is important. The traditional way, hefting, is just lifting the back of the hive and judging if the hive is light. This is fine for old timers, but less easy for newer beekeepers. If in doubt it is possible to supplement their stores by placing fondant over the feed hole in the crown board.

We are meeting at the apiary every other Tuesday at the moment as there are few jobs to be done. At each visit we heft the hives, stroke our beards and decide whether they are getting too light (the hives, not the beards). We have fondant ready to put on if necessary. If you are hesitant about your hefting skills then always feel that you can come along on a Tuesday morning and join in. Give me a ring if you are not sure whether we will be there on a particular Tuesday. Soon we will be going back to every Tuesday as the winter comes to an end. You will have a warm welcome with coffee and kitkats galore!

Recently it has been pointed out that Lytes Cary is one of the last strongholds of the rare shrill carder bee and the less rare woolly carder bee, and the apiary is not a million miles from Lytes Cary. They are facing extinction in the U.K. We thought that it might be nice to plant some of their favoured forage plants in the bee meadow to see if we could do something to help them along. We will be taking the advice of the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust.

Joe King
01749 890357

From the Chair

A delivery of 24 tins of dog food arrived the other day, whilst I was out. My designated safe place was ignored and the delivery driver, probably deadened to any awareness other than that of impossible timescales, threw the tins with their excess packaging over a low picket fence. Delivery completed! The tins were fine but a hellebore that was just about to come into bloom on the other side of the fence was completely flattened. Lifting the package to see the sad sight of broken stems, I gave the hellebore a limited chance of survival.

However a week later the miracle of nature had won through. The hellebore was upright again and pink flowers were emerging. A lovely sight!

This one plant was one of many that I have planted in the past few years as I try to make my garden more pollinator/bee friendly throughout each season. Increasingly the joy of the garden comes from not just plants but the insects, birds, mammals and pond creatures that inhabit it. Any planning is about attracting as many living forms that I can, and yes, doing what I can to provide forage for bees.

The great thing about planting is that one plant usually leads to many, if left. Many thrive on neglect and lack of interference. At our beginners course, Stewart advised us to go out and buy a packet of borage seeds. I did so and ever since, borage comes up every year. That one packet has provided numerous plants. I love it and so do the bees.

So what to do this year?

For me, now is the time when garden planning starts for the year ahead. What to plant, what to leave, which seeds to order? The BBKA advises the top 10 flowers for bees as Hellebore species and hybrids, Salvia species, Echinacea, Rudbeckia lacinata, Lavender species, Common Snowdrop, Crocus species, Cosmos, Sedum species, Verbena species. There are further details on the BBKA website and leaflets which cover Trees for Bees and Shrubs for Bees. There is also a Planting for Bees blog which covers all four seasons, which you may find useful.

If you find you buy a packet of seeds which will inevitably contain more than you need, why not bring them along to our next talk on February 22nd at Edgar Hall and we can then do a bit of seed swapping or donating?

One packet of seeds planted this year, can bring years of bee forage and as well as gardening pleasure. The challenge for all of us in 2024 is to be a nature rebuilder, and not (like the delivery driver) a nature destructor!

Gillian Islip

Chair

Somerton Branch - SBKA Charity



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New Beekeepers and the New Leaf Award

As this newsletter is being circulated to perspective new beekeepers as well as our existing members I thought I would include details of the New Leaf Award. For the last two years, New Leaf Workplace Wellbeing, headed by Becky Wright, have donated a proportion of their fees to Somerset Beekeepers Association. This donation is to be used as a grant to a new beekeeper, who would, otherwise, find it difficult to fund the start up costs of getting into beekeeping. This can amount to a significant sum of money.

The New Leaf Award provides the successful nominee with a new National beehive, a colony of bees, a new bee-suit, a smoker and a hive tool. All that you will need to get started. Oh, and a mentor for the first year as well.

There are conditions, of course. The recipient must attend a Beginners' course in their area, arranged by a division of Somerset Beekeepers Association, and they must continue beekeeping for a period of five years, or return all equipment and bees to Somerset Beekeepers Association. Well, that's only fair, isn't it?

If you know of anybody who might fit the bill, then let Stewart Gould know by emailing a nomination to somertonbees@btinternet.com, giving details of the proposed recipient, and reasons why they are a suitable candidate for the award. Nominations should be received by February 29th.

Somebody has to win it!

SOMERSET BEEKEEPERS

ANNUAL LECTURE DAY - 10 FEB 2024



We hope to see you at our 2024 Lecture Day on Saturday, 10 February in Bridgwater, when there will be a packed programme of speakers, workshops and a trade hall.

Book your tickets now - JUST £10 EACH!

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/somerset-bka-lecture-day-2024-tickets-737983086277>

Snacks and meals available at venue

Speakers:

Gerry Collins NDB: Catch it if you can and Beekeeping techniques for the better beekeeper

Professor Juliet Osborne: Bees and how we care for them

Professor Stephen Martin: Understanding the evolution of natural Varroa-tolerance mechanisms in various beekeeping populations

Workshops & seminars:

Beekeeping & climate change: **Geoff Blay MB**

Beekeeping with Asian hornets: **Richard Noel, Brittany beekeeper** (morning only)

Asian hornets monitoring traps: **Colin Lodge** (afternoon only)

Integrated Pest Management **Megan Seymour**, SW Bee Inspector & team (morning only)

What is most likely to kill my bees apart from Asian Hornets? **Megan Seymour**, SW Bee Inspector & team (afternoon only)

The Canalside, Marsh Lane, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 6LQ

Diana Robertson on BBC's Countryfile



It's not every day you see bee-keepers on the TV, but Sunday 28th January was an exception. First we had Bob Maurer (microscopist extraordinaire) from Reigate, on BBC 2's Flog It, then at 6.00pm came Countryfile on BBC 1. I'd been warned by Diana that she would be appearing, and she was very much concerned that she had been asked if she is a

professional skep maker, To which she replied 'No. Certainly not'. So, what did they do? They referred to her as one of only 6 professional skep makers left.

It was a lovely piece though, which also featured Somerset artist Kate Lynch.

Mystery Object

Well, not too much of a mystery really but it requires a bit of a double take. This is a fascinating little trinket which Joe King wanted to share.



It is, of course, an exposure as used by photographers to assess the exposure they should set for their camera. Back in the good old days of plate cameras, and even into the hi-tec days of roll film, an exposure, or light, meter was an absolute necessity.

Quite why it should be described as a 'Bee Meter', nobody is quite sure.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 10th February

**Somerset BKA
Annual Lecture Day**
Canalside
Marsh Lane
Bridgwater
TA6 6LQ

Thursday 22nd February

Talk by Leila Goss
(Seasonal Bee Inspector)
Edgar Hall, Somerton, TA11 6SB
7.30pm

First Beginners' practical session

Saturday 6th April
At our apiary

Auction of Second hand equipment

Ruishton Village Hall
Sunday 7th April
Cheats Road, Ruishton, TA3 5JD
Viewing from midday
Sale starts at 2.00pm

Somerton Honey Show
Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

Saturday 21st September
Chistles Lane, TA11 6ES

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01458 241146

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01749 670423

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David Rose, Alison Dykes

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01749 860755
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Events Programme

Position vacant

County Delegate

Suzy Perkins

Deputy Delegates

David Rose

Apiary Manager

Joe King
01749 890357

Extraction Equipment Loan

John Speirs
01458 241831