



The Quantock Quest

Issue 16
February 2018

A Division of Somerset Beekeepers Association



It's quite interesting to note that, when you read a book written prior to the late eighties, very few, if any, authors predicted the global explosion of the mobile phone. Some fiction did foresee the computer age and many films portrayed "boxes bristling with buttons". Star Trek almost got it with their Communicators, as did a number of sci-fi productions, but the written word rarely refers to anything other than home phones or telephone boxes!

Yet, morphing from a heavy black "brick" with limited range (and no texting here) to a highly expensive gismo that will take photos, guide you to your destination via satnav, allow you to order up the week's shopping, listen to music, watch videos, text friends, oh, and make telephone calls, now, whole dramas are centered around the mobile phone and our novels have finally caught up with technology. So, what next in another decade?

What's your prediction for 2028?

Jackie

Dates for your Diary



Sun 25 Feb —9.30am Microscopy (1) at the Apiary

Sat 03 Mar—How to prepare honey and wax for showing.

Sat 10 Mar —12.00noon SBKA Annual General Meeting at Wedmore Golf Club

Wed 14 Mar 7.00pm Drop In at the Apiary

Sat 17 Mar — 2.00pm Hive Building at the Apiary

Meet our new Chairman!

Barry Hulatt was elected Chairman of QBKA at our AGM in November 2017. We are delighted to welcome him to the "team" and know that we will benefit from Barry's extensive knowledge of beekeeping.

Here is Barry's own "biog"...

"Beekeeping can only get better this year, can't it? Keep the honey jar half full rather than half empty!

I kept my first nucleus on a coal shed roof when I was a student in 1970, training to teach. I was then, and remain today, much more interested in the bees and their biology than in the sticky stuff which we just have to deal with at the end of a (successful?) season. I came to Somerset in the 1970s, by way of West Africa (and if you think our bees swarm you should try the African ones). I joined the then Bridgewater Beekeepers at the same time as Ken Edwards, and we were both very much the youngsters in the club at that time. Hard to believe now! When I moved from the Spaxton area, first to Fordgate and then to Berhill near Ashcott, I expanded my beekeeping up to about 20 hives until the arrival of the dreaded varroa. Like many others I was totally depressed and devastated by the impact of the mite. At the time we didn't understand it, nor its ability to act as a vector of virus diseases. Despite all the 'home remedies' which were propounded at the time my bees died out, and it was only after some years – with the help of Ken and further research into varroa – that I was able to re-establish my apiary.

I now have about a dozen hives in my home orchard at Berhill. These are primarily there for pollination, though I generally get a reasonable honey crop too. I also look after the bees for an allotment association, and have an out apiary on the edge of the Shapwick Levels Nature Reserve. (Though wet, this has not yet flooded, but the water has got fairly close.) My home bees are in British National hives but the out apiaries are in a mix of Langstroths and Commercials. This is not to be recommended as the logistics require someone much more organised than me: 2018 Resolution: rationalise!

As you may know, our division acts as a Sentinel Apiary, monitoring the arrival of 'exotic pests' in the country. I manage this aspect of our work and fortunately, so far, our twice yearly samples have revealed nothing untoward. However, in the light of recent arrivals of the Asian Hornet in neighbouring counties and the apparently covered-up presence of small hive beetle in Italy, we must all be vigilant. I have travelled quite widely and, wherever I've visited, the local beekeepers have been great points of contact, eager to share their experiences and exchange ideas on the challenges facing us all. Recently I have commiserated with beekeepers in France, Spain and Portugal over their hornet problem. More difficult was talking to the mountain beekeeper in Turkey, though we did discover that *varroa* was a word common to both English and Turkish!

I wish you all a successful 2018, whether you measure it in terms of honey by the ton, making an increase (but not too much of one), passing an exam or simply gaining confidence and experience. Whatever the year holds in store, please help to keep Quantock

Quest going strong by sending Jackie your letters and articles: scientific, reminiscent, quirky or amusing. We are all beginners, though some may have begun a little earlier than others, and it is great to have a local focus enabling us to share what we have learnt.

Barry Hulatt





Exam Success

This year has seen more exam success for members of QBKA. Following our annual study group for the Basic Assessment, both Sarah Allen and Adrian Keirle successfully passed and earlier in the year Mike Sealey passed the Module 1 exam. All 3 were awarded their certificates at the AGM in November. Congratulations to all.



Sarah & Adrian with their

Certificates and suit badges



Mike with his Certificates

Our division has a particularly strong record of exam success with 100% of basic assessments being passed. Our success rate for microscopy is also high and we currently have four qualified bee microscopists among our members. We use a combination of self-study, group discussions and practical learning, arranged at times to suit everyone. If you would like to join us this year for the Basic Assessment, or would like to come along to the study group sessions to reinforce your beekeeping knowledge, then please contact Elaine Falkingham on 01278 741711 or study@eazy-it.co.uk.

Meet-ups will start in the spring. If you are interested in working towards microscopy or modules then please contact Ken Edwards on 01278 671544 or thebeesfly@outlook.com.

Join in!



We welcome your own contributions to "Quest" and would love to hear of your beekeeping experiences, ideas and suggestions. Maybe you have some bee-related items to sell, or are looking for something specific; let us know, we can spread the word to all our members.

Beekeeping equipment to sell?

Looking for something in particular? Let us know and we will place your bee-related ad in Quest—free of charge to members.

Flowers in November

A couple of fields have been sporting a most unusual crop—giving us a full field of flowers! First spotted in November, the fields, one alongside the A39 beside Greenway Garage, the other at the top of Wembdon Hill, the vista of a field of white flowers came as a bit of a shock in the winter months!



The jury is still out on identification, but it is almost certainly from the Brassica family, possibly Mustard, which will be ploughed back into the soil for fertilizer. We have taken pollen samples—**now there's one for our Microscopy class....**

But what a shame it was too cold for our bees to forage on this lovely crop!



It's not Spring yet but there are still jobs to be done in the Apiary—

At this time of year stores could be very low, you can determine this by hefting the hives on a regular basis (every couple of weeks), **don't forget to deduct the weight of the hive box. If it's not too chilly (12C is just acceptable) take a quick look inside the hive. Remember that the bees may have food, but not on any of the frames close to them, and they could still starve.**



We had an excellent Annual General Meeting at the end of last year, with a good attendance by our members. We are delighted to welcome Barry Hulatt as our new Chairman .

Eleanor Burgess, Bee Inspector, gave us a very interesting talk on the Asian Hornet, following the discovery of the hornet in an apiary in Woolacombe, Devon.



HONEY MONITORING SCHEME

A National Honey Monitoring Scheme is being set up by the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

The long term goal of the scheme is to collect honey samples from across the country and analyse them for pollen content and pesticide residues. Following the completion of a pilot project we would now like to extend this work to consider potential threats to honeybees caused by long term changes in floral resources, and exposure to existing and new diseases and pesticides.

As a member of the scheme you would be able to set up your own secure user account where you can input details of single or multiple apiaries, and view the results of your own honey analysis, order pre-labelled honey sampling kits in postage paid envelopes, access information on sampling protocols, view the overall anonymised results of the monitoring scheme and keep up to date with scheme news, including new research findings and projects.

To find out more, email honey@ceh.ac.uk.