



A Division of Somerset Beekeepers Association

The Quantock Quest

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Is it just me, or does it feel as though Spring has been a long time coming this year?

Even by the middle of March, it wasn't easy to spot new tree or hedge growth, apart from the catkins drooping cheerily from the hazel bushes. No sign of any Magnolia flowers, although a profusion of blossom in all shades of white and pink. A few daisies on the lawn, but no sign of those long-awaited dandelions—one of the first ports of call for our bees! The heather, though, seems to have beaten the rest of the garden to full flowering, and it's lovely to see the bees diving from flower to flower, collecting up the precious nectar to take back to the hive.

Not long now before beekeeping begins in earnest, and many of us ladies once again become interested bystanders to totally absorbed menfolk as they shrug into that white suit!

Jackie

Dates for your Diary

Wed 25 Apr —3.00pm

Apiary Management

Wed 25 Apr—evening—**Lecture at Somerton**

Sat/Sun 05/06 May—**Fyne Court**



Exam success

We are very pleased to announce Graham Gould's success in passing the Microscopy exam. Microscopy is a fascinating and very useful facet of our work with bees and will be of great interest to Graham himself and also to others in the association

whom he may now be able to help and advise. It is worth a reminder that we have very good facilities in this area and are able to host the training programme. Anyone interested should contact the committee.

The dreaded Swarms!



It won't be long now before the bees decide to up sticks and head for a new home—and you find yourself with an empty hive—or a new colony!

Do you have a swarm story? Tell us about your experiences of loss or gain—and what's the best way to try and prevent it happening in the first place?

Share your stories and knowledge with our readers!



2018 Beginners Course

10 new beekeepers are now doing the Rent a Hive programme, after joining us at Brymore School for theory sessions. Tutors were Barry Hulatt, Tony Richards and Ken Edwards. Another new group of beekeepers attend our monthly Apiary Management course held on Wednesday afternoons, where they come along to the Apiary, and practice on our bees. This helps to build up confidence to work on their own bees. All equipment is supplied.

Our aim is for all of our beekeepers to feel confident and enjoy the bees in a friendly setting.

News from the Apiary

We have now installed 290 metres of water pipe to provide mains water at the Barn, this has now been connected so we no longer have to rely on rainwater for our supply!



The Inert Landfill site has been decommissioned and four acres that are adjacent to the Apiary are seeded with butterfly friendly (and bees of course) plants. This is a joint project between John Irish (our Landlord) Quantock AONB, and ourselves. Eventually this will provide a wonderful habitat for wildlife and it could not have been achieved without the very committed support of John Irish and so many of our members' voluntary work.

Our Apiary wildlife pond is already host to 11 clumps of frog spawn, hordes of newts, water boatmen and a myriad of underwater species!

Pollen Facts—or Fiction?

Hay Fever affects one in five people.



It is believed that high pollen levels can affect anxiety levels in people with recurrent mood disorders, such as bipolar.



Pets can get hay fever, just like us!



The pollen season can start in January and go on until November.



Spiderlings eat pollen.

Although usually carnivorous, spiders feed pollen to their young, despite the fact that the pollen grains would be too large for a spiderling's mouth!



Modern day forensic methods can now use pollen to discover where a person or object has been. It's even been suggested that pollen could be added to bullets to enable them to be tracked.

It's not just pollen that causes a reaction—beer, wine and other spirits contain histamine—the chemical that sets off allergy symptoms in the body.



Pollen has been detected in rocks over 120 million years old.



Rain can be bad news for hay fever sufferers—it helps the grass grow and if followed by dry weather will increase pollen levels.



Sunday Microscopy Sessions

Our Microscopy sessions are going very well, with keen students and experienced tutors.



Our members are learning how to use a microscope, how to make a slide, dissect a bee and identify pollen, among other things.

We are privileged to own a good selection of microscopes and equipment, so if you are keen to learn all about beelife in miniature, make sure you sign up for the next sessions!

The Quantock Quiz Night

We started the year in February with an enjoyable social evening in the form of a beekeeping related quiz. Three teams of five or six took part, with me as question master and Ken Edwards as adjudicator. Each team included both experienced and relatively new beekeepers, and it was a close run race!



Rounds of questions include basic entomology, trees and flowers, pests and diseases, and types of beehives. More challenging, perhaps, were the History section (whose body was preserved in a vat of honey?) and the music round (when did the Beatles first perform 'A Taste of Honey?').

In the interval we enjoyed some warming cider and honey punch and apple/honey cake. (Thanks to the providers!)

The overall decider was to be a performance of one of the music clues (eg. 'Kiss me honey, honey, kiss me' or 'The Flight of the Bumblebee') on the kazoo, with humming accompaniment. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, this decider was not needed and one team won by a very short head. Modesty requires that they remain nameless, though each member was able to claim a small prize in the form of a beekeeping book or item of equipment.

We look forward to future social events, and anyone willing to help run one should please contact either me or Ken.

Barry Hulatt (Chair)



Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make, is taking a stroll down his local high street. As he passes by the vinyl record shop, a sign catches his eye. "Just Released - New LP - Wasps of the World & the sounds that they make - available now"

Unable to resist the temptation, Brian goes into the shop. "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make. I'd very much like to listen to the new LP you have advertised in the window."

"Certainly, Sir," says the young man behind the counter. "If you'd like to step into the booth and put on the headphones, I'll put the LP on for you."

Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps, goes into the booth and puts on the earphones.

Ten minutes later, he comes out of the booth and announces, "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make and yet I recognized none of those."

"Tin soory Sir," says the young assistant. "If you'd care to step into the booth, I can let you hear another 10 minutes."

Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds they make, steps back into the booth and replaces the headphones. Ten minutes later, he comes out of the booth shaking his head. "I don't understand it," he says. "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make, and yet I still can't recognise any of those!"

"I really am terribly soory," says the young assistant. "I've just realised I was playing you the bee side!"