

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

IT'S SHOW TIME



Get your entries ready

Come on Everybody. We've all got things we can enter. What about fudge, bread, beeswax, photographs, artwork, or even a jar of honey?



Somerton Beekeepers



present a spectacular

HONEY

SHOW

AND

ARTISAN MARKET



SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 16TH

NOON – 5PM

at

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

TA11 6ES

Come and see the bees!

Something for everyone:

Cider, Cheese, Cakes, Pastries, Pies,

Cards, Plants, Jams, Preserves,

Cosmetics, Candles, Gifts

and of course **HONEY!**



FREE
admission

What are honey Judges looking for?

I'll start by saying that I only intend discussing what Judges expect to see for liquid honey. To go through soft set, comb, a super frame of honey etc I would need to prepare a booklet.

Remember, the judges will only award 3 prizes in a class, so need to eliminate all the rest. They will be looking for any faults to make their job easier.

Somerton Beekeepers Honey Show schedule states that honey should be presented in 1 lb (454g) squat jars with a gold metal screw lid. Check jars carefully for air bubbles or other imperfections, as these should not be used. Ensure the gold screw top lids are not corroded and are free from imperfections (scratches, dents etc). The outside and inside of the jars should be polished, free from sticky honey and finger prints. Use a micro cloth and wear cotton gloves. Judges expect to see a perfectly clean polished jar containing bright clear honey. If your honey exhibit fails a cleanliness/visual test it maybe removed by the judge. Such a shame when the contents maybe 1st class.

If entering a class which requires more than one jar, make sure that they all have the same batch number on the bottom. A bit picky, but another reason why your entry could be discounted.



Liquid honey will vary greatly in colour, aroma, viscosity and flavour. It should be free from any sign of granulation (crystals forming) or foreign bodies, and must be bright, so that it almost sparkles when held up to the light.

Granulation can be dissolved gently by heating the honey/ Loosen the lid and place the jar in a warming cabinet or bain-Marie at around 45°C. This will dissolve any granulation but if there are foreign bodies these will need to be filtered out. Pass the warmed honey through a 200 micron cloth to filter, then gently pour the honey slowly down the side of the jar at an angle to reduce introducing air bubbles. The honey can be left in a warm place for 24 hrs to encourage the bubbles to rise. Or use a cocktail stick to ease them up. Any scum on the surface can be lifted by using a tea spoon.

Shine a strong light through the jar as this will show up particles that should not be there, strain again if necessary!

Ensure the top level of the honey in the jar is about 3mm above the lower rim of the lid when the lid is on.

This process should be done at least 4 days before exhibiting to allow the aroma to build again, then keep the jars upright to prevent honey touching the inside of the lid and do not open again before judging.

Regarding viscosity, the honey should not be so thin as to fall from the tasting rods, this is a sign of a high water content but should not be too dense that it forms a ball on the tongue, a sign of being over processed. It should form a pyramid when the judges tasting rods are drawn up and then the surface settles.

Flavour varies from light and delicate from some spring blossom, to a darker honey with a strong lasting experience, as with heather honey from the late summer harvest.

There is a vast array of colour from pale golden to dark brown. If you are unsure which class your honey should be in, light, medium or dark, please don't concern yourself as the judges will move your entry into the appropriate class if required.

Finally the Entries Secretary will supply you with adhesive labels with class number and your entry number to stick to each jar approximately 1-2cm from the base. A strip of cardboard about 15mm and long enough to make a ring to slip over the jar as guide to attach the labels on ALL your honey entries.

Remember, Cleanliness, Bright, Clear, Colour, Aroma and Flavour. The Judge does not want to see the odd bee leg or granulation in Liquid honey.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to seeing you at the Honey Show.

Alison Dykes - Show Committee

Please note this change in the schedule.

All exhibits must be received on Friday 15th September between 6.30pm – 8.00 pm (but left overnight at the owners risk) or on the day of the show, 16th September, between 8.15am – 9.00am. All exhibitors, except novices, must then leave the Show Hall. Judging will commence at 9.00am promptly.

Helpers needed for Honey Show

The Honey Show runs pretty smoothly but not without the help of a good few volunteers. Volunteering covers every aspect of the show and could entail marshalling car parking, helping with the market traders, or, the really interesting one which is acting as assistants to the judges. You'll learn an amazing amount about honey, showing it, and what the judges are looking for.

Help is always needed the day before the show to set up tables in the hall, and gazebos in the field. After the show, it all has to be returned to normal.

Your help will be really appreciated, and if you have the time, please contact David Rose on 01458 259442 or Alison Dykes on 01458 850535



Who needs rhomboids or Porter bee escapes when you can get a man with a van to do the dirty work for you.

EXTREMELY URGENT

Help required to form an Asian Hornet team for Somerton Division

As you will have seen throughout the media, the threat from the Asian Hornet is getting ever closer to Somerset with 2 confirmed sightings and nests destroyed in Portland Dorset. This is getting rather too close for comfort.

I am looking for people to join the Somerton Asian Hornet team, as at the moment there is only me.

With the onset of Autumn and Winter, it is imperative, that as a Division we are organised to track and trace any sightings, or suspected sightings of Asian Hornets. We need to put out traps which should be monitored daily. Potentially 200 new Queens could emerge from every nest **DURING SEPTEMBER**. These Queens will then hibernate and emerge in the spring to create new colonies.

To put into perspective the urgency of our current situation, in 2022 there was only one nest found and destroyed on the UK mainland in Essex, and one single Hornet captured in Suffolk. So far this year, up to 22.8.23 there have been 26 Asian Hornet nests found in 23 locations.

We really are on the front line of this invasion, so if you are able and interested, please contact me.

There is a training workshop being organised, to train volunteers in the theory and practical skills needed to be an Asian Hornet team member.

Please, contact me as a matter of urgency.

**Suzy Perkins - Asian
Hornet team leader
Somerton Division**

Email

apicrepe.tengore@gmail.com

07914069078

01458250095



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 £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 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.

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

Eddie Howe email:- redrascal444@gmail.com Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

News from the Apiary.

August marks a fundamental change for the hives in our Apiary. It may be warm and balmy, but the main flows are over and our thoughts turn to preparations for the winter. In the South west average colony losses over the winter are usually 15%-18% of colonies, in a bad year it may well be worse. In feral colonies it is suggested that losses are far higher.

The bees are now rearing “winter” bees, these workers have much larger fat bodies rich in minerals and a vital compound vitellogenin, which will enable them to survive the winter months and get the colony off to a rapid expansion in the spring. In the summer months the adult bees will probably live for six weeks: the winter bees must survive for nearer six months.

All of our colonies have had their mite count monitored by placing a varroa-board under the mesh floor for a week. Our mite counts have been encouragingly low, but we are still going to treat them with our remaining stock of Formicpro - an effective miticide. This will remain on the hives for seven days.

There is a limited supply of Formicpro at the apiary. It is priced competitively at £5.35 per treatment (per hive). Contact Eric on 07910 764069. First come, first served.

The modern wisdom is that a colony needs 40lb of stores to take it through winter. When I started beekeeping many years ago the wisdom was 30lb, but because of global warming winters are warmer, the queens are still laying through much of the winter, and therefore the bees have to maintain a brood temperature of 96 degrees Fahrenheit around the brood. They do this by shivering their wing muscles, generating heat, much as we work up a sweat at a work-out at the gym. This inevitably uses a great amount of energy and therefore uses up the stores. In a cold winter the queen stops laying, the bees hang in a cluster and use up very little stores, hence we were able to get away with lower levels of stores years ago. Our next task is to assess the amount of stores in each of our colonies, we will then start feeding with thick sugar syrup to make up the level of stores for each hive to 40lb.

Our hive entrances are already reduced to a small entrance and this is particularly important at this time of year for two reasons. Wasps become a thorough

nuisance to the hives, plundering stores and generally demoralising the colonies, and feeding can trigger larger colonies to rob the smaller colonies. Smaller colonies can be wiped out by either scenario. As well as narrow entrances we have wasp traps on top of each of the hives. This is a jam jar with a teaspoon of jam in each jar and an inch or two of water in it. A small hole is made in the lid, the wasps can't resist going in, then can't get out and die. Wasp traps are unpleasant things but the alternative, the death of our colonies, is far worse.

Good luck with preparing your colonies for winter. It may seem very early but it is the time to get started.

Joe King

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A Potted History of the Somerton BKA Honey Show

Lots of interest is shown in the Somerton and District Honey Show as evidenced by the yearly increase in the number of entries and attendees. I therefore, thought you might like to know a little about its history. Evidence for the early years of the show has been very difficult to find. Most of those who knew it have passed away. However, below is what I have discovered. It might not be without errors, nor is it comprehensive.

Our Association was formed in 1939, hence our first honey show probably happened around then – early 1940s? Concrete evidence for our show is found in a programme of 1991. However verbal evidence from Gerald Fisher and Suzette Perkins suggests an earlier date, 1973-1976 when the show was held in Montecliffe School, Somerton. Gerald and Suzette are both senior and well-respected members of our Association. Gerald tells me he remembers the show well, but not the date, because it is the show in which he won first prize for his honey! Others contributing to the event then, and probably before, who some senior members might recall were Sam Langford, Laurel Morris, Joyce Bromley and Amanda Chuter. These individuals could be considered the Godparents of our modern Honey Show.

In 1991 the show moved to Huish Episcopi Comprehensive School and here it stayed until 2001. Since then the venue has changed. Long Sutton Village Hall was next, where it stayed for a long time (2006-2018) and now at Keinton Mandeville Village Hall from 2019 to present. During its time at Long Sutton the show underwent a “quantum change” developing into the event that it is today. The driving force here was Stuart Dennis, ably supported by Eddie Howe who organised the market.

You might like to know that pre 2009 an entry fee of 20p for each exhibit was levied, also an entry charge for the show itself.

Of course without volunteers to help run the show it would never take place. In the early years the individuals already mentioned had their contributions remembered by the trophies named after them. As the show developed more and more individuals were needed to organise it. The show secretaries were perhaps the hub of this organisation. Some who I know filled this role were:

1991: Stella Fisher
2000: Annette Gage
2005/6: Diana Robertson
2007/8: Elaine Cully
2009/10: Suzette Perkins
2015: Joe King

By 2016 the task of organising the show had become too onerous for one person, so a formal honey show committee was formed. Since 2016 it has comprised of Alison Dykes, David Rose and Fred Clarke. Each has a general and specific role – Alison: Food and Trophies; David: Publicity, Farmers and Craft Market; Fred: Entries secretary. Sally Lye has recently joined the team to organise the Artisan market.

It's impossible to mention all the people who have helped make the show a success over the years. To say one has contributed more than another would be silly in the extreme. It has always been a big team effort and those who set up and dismantle the show, man the car parks and steward for the judges, all make a valuable contribution to a successful show.

What will happen in the future? Will the show continue to be the “best in the west”?

Let's make it so.

Editor's note

The exponential increase in the number of Asian hornet nests and sightings this year shouldn't be dismissed. We have all become complacent because we have waited years since we were first told to be on our guard - and very little happened. Well, now it has. There have been more sightings and nests reported this year than in all the previous years together. 26 incidents in 23 locations - and rising daily.

New queen hornets will be dispersing this month, and as they are capable of establishing new nests up to 38 miles from their original home, we should be extremely wary. The nests on Portland are 37 miles from Somerton Beekeepers' apiary.

Dates for your diary

New Beekeepers 7th practical session

Saturday September 9th

At the apiary - 10.00am

Somerton Beekeepers Honey Show

Sat September 16th

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

TA11 6ES

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