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tauntonbuzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers





Welcome to issue 8 of Taunton Buzz

Reports of the Asian hornet being found in Somerset are circulating as this newsletter goes to press. It is to be hoped that by the time you read this column that the National Bee Unit has been successful in finding, destroying and removing any nests here, as elsewhere. Our own bee inspectors are involved in this challenging work and I wish them every success in their endeavours.

It is, of course, very important that we remain vigilant and monitor our apiaries and surrounding forage. Asian hornets may be spotted on ivy and preying on other foraging insects.

The NBU publishes the latest news online and has useful resources including a guide to making traps and explains how to report any sightings. Make sure you subscribe to BeeBase. If you subscribe to BeeBase and give details of the location of your apiary, not only do you get automatic updates by email on the Asian hornet situation, but on any disease outbreaks in your area.

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/register.cfm?>

Inside we have reproduced the NNSS's (GB non-native species secretariat) identification poster.

This appalling news comes at the end of a very difficult season for many of our beekeepers with honey harvest totals forecast to be significantly down on last year, and well below average. Member and bee farmer Chris Harries gives us his take on a season where some of his colonies filled an incredible eight supers while others stored all their honey in the brood box.

Meanwhile the public seem to be more knowledgeable about, and interested in, beekeeping than perhaps ever before. Our bees and honey marquee at Taunton Flower Show was visited by many thousands; our new-bees have worked hard this year and others enjoyed a taster session. Read on for reports of these and our other activities!

And, now that your bees are finally tucked up for the winter, why not come to your clubhouse where will be hosting a series of interesting talks and a study group.

Anne Pike, editor
anne@ashford-media.co.uk

Our cover photo was taken by Josh Beadon, the designer behind Buzz, of a forager tucking into a verge side flower.

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Report from the Chair

With the summer long gone, the beekeeping year is drawing to an end and hopefully your harvest is in although many in our division are reporting a poor crop. We would be interested if you could let us know your results.

The committee have almost finalised next year's programme which I hope you will continue to support and in an effort to improve the educational aspect of any future information/training courses an education working party is being set up to ensure that we are covering all aspects of beekeeping that the National Bee Unit and The British Beekeepers Association etc. might wish.

Next year we shall be hosting the annual "Disease and Husbandry Day" organised by our own Regional Bee Inspector Simon Jones on behalf of the Animal & Plant Health Agency. So look out for this invaluable training session which comes highly recommended and is a must for all who value the health of their bees.

Finally if any of you have experimented with alternative hives types this season we would be pleased to hear your experiences and thoughts.

Peter Maben - Chair
mail@maben.plus.com



Taunton Buzz – editorial committee

Barbara Drakeford
Chris Harries
Simon Jones
Peter Maben
Dave Parry
Anne Pike



Join the conversation with TBK on:



Public and Products Liability Insurance

You will all hopefully have heard about the BBKA's proposal to offer all risks insurance for hives, bees and beekeeping equipment, and thank you to all of you who emailed me with your questions and comments all of which has been fed back to them. The proposal is still under consideration and we will of course keep you informed of any developments; but a number of you asked about public liability insurance and whether any new scheme would offer this.

You will be reassured to know that as a full or partner member of the BBKA you are already covered because your membership fee automatically includes third party public and products liability insurance. This insures you against any financial loss caused by a successful claim against you by a third party for injury or other loss deemed to have been caused by you, or your bees, not only whilst undertaking beekeeping activities, but also through the normal use of your hive products e.g. the sale of honey, wax or propolis.

This insurance also covers you if you are called to collect a swarm, as long as swarm collection is part of your normal beekeeping activity. The limit of this cover is presently £10,000,000 with an excess of £250 for third party property damage claims only.

I'm not an expert on insurance, so if you would like more information, can I suggest that you take a look at the BBKA website which has a copy of the policy, as well as a useful FAQ sheet.

Finally, a reminder that the year is drawing to a close which means you will be receiving your annual reminder to renew your membership! If you could renew either before Christmas or as early in the New Year as possible, it would be most helpful – thank you!

Lyndsay Stone
Membership Secretary

Module 1 Study group

People have expressed an interest in being part of a study group this winter which will be based around the BBKA Module 1 examination - Honeybee Management, but which will also be suitable for those not intending to take any examinations. The idea is that the group will discuss different aspects of bees and beekeeping, and will learn a bit more about this fascinating hobby. Study in between sessions will help us prepare for each evening.

Experience suggests that the evenings should be enjoyable and should help our beekeeping to become better. And, if you want to, there is the opportunity of taking an examination after the course to see how much you have learnt!

The group will be facilitated by Lynne Ingram, Master Beekeeper – if you are interested please email lynneeci@hotmail.co.uk

Most expensive honey in the country?

Spotted in Fortnum & Mason's: an 8oz jar of Fortnum's home-produced honey for £20 and a honey comb priced at £95!

The premium prices might have something to do with exclusivity; the Piccadilly department store has four beehives on its roof which offers foraging opportunities at the best addresses in London including Buckingham Palace.

The hives are around 6ft tall, painted in eau de nil with copper pagoda roofs and each has its own façade in a different architectural style and the bees are Carniolan, renowned for their calm temperament.



Honey glazed duck breasts

Wondering what to cook up this autumn to showcase your own honey? Tuck into this tried and tested tasty recipe from Rosemary Burgess, who is a member of this Division.

What you will need:

2 tbs olive oil
6 tbs dark soy sauce
3 tbs honey
1 tbs dark muscovado sugar
1 crushed garlic clove
1 top grated ginger
4 duck breasts
Preheat oven to 200°C

1. Mix all ingredients except duck to make marinade. Pour over duck and leave in fridge for 2 hrs or overnight.
2. Remove duck from marinade fry skin side down until browned turn and cook other side briefly.
3. Place breasts in roasting pan and cook for 15 mins at 200°
4. Remove duck from pan and keep warm. Drain fat from pan then add marinade and heat on hob until bubbling.
5. Slice duck pour over sauce and serve.

President's Day

On July 16 we were entertained by Megan Seymour, ably introduced by our current president Jenny Gammon. Jenny advised that Megan is a master beekeeper who has been a bee inspector for 10 years and has 20-30 hives of her own.

Megan's subject was 'The Responsibilities of the New Age Beekeeper' She discussed various "natural" hive types which allegedly do not need inspection including the sun hive which has simplicity and can accommodate supers on top, the Warre hive which in theory only needs opening once a year at harvest time, the Stewarton hive a small complicated hexagonal enclosure and the more familiar top bar hive again not needing regular inspection.

Having taken us on this tour of hive types Megan was at pains to state that although the new age beekeeper leaves their bees alone and doesn't regularly inspect, such "natural" beekeeping doesn't avoid the problems of EFB, Nosema, varroa mite, wax moth etc. And went on to advise that in her opinion, the familiar framed hive with easy access for inspections is best for the bees and is sustainable.



Megan then talked about the small hive beetle with the preventative measures adopted in Italy and the spread of the Asian hornet across France since 2003. We were comforted that the Bee Unit has a monitoring strategy in place should it cross the Channel and how we can individually construct a trap for this pest.

Since this talk the Asian hornet has been spotted in Somerset and Gloucestershire.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-identified-in-gloucestershire>

Peter Maben

Visit to Buckfast Abbey

On the morning of the July 10 a group of us visited Clare Densley at Buckfast Abbey. Clare had invited us following her fascinating talk at Heatherton Park in April which covered the likelihood that bees were kept there from medieval times, continuing through the brother Adam era in the early 20th century and her more recent tenure.

In 2010 the emphasis of the Buckfast Bee Department switched to education, particularly on teaching beekeepers and running courses for those who wish to start beekeeping or learn about bees.

Two of her apiaries we visited both used beautifully painted Langstroth hives and kept in the same way with the emphasis on respectful and mindful management of

the bees. Each colony's queen is given a "girls name".... obviously! and honey production is no longer a priority (or for sale at the Abbey). Given this strategy, queen excluders are not used; the theory being that the brood area will expand and contract into the supers depending on the time of year but the uppermost supers will be brood free and cut comb can be harvested for the Benedictine community who live at the Abbey.

A "Zest" hive had been constructed at one site for trial purposes but, although not as yet in use, Clare was sceptical about its future usefulness.

Peter Mabben





Romanian migratory bee wagons

We always like receiving holiday photos from our members – beekeeping ones, that is!

David Morris captured some images of Romanian migratory apiculture where beekeepers install their hives on the trailers, which they call the “lodge”.

Here he saw a brand new, specially adapted lorry capable of holding 88 hives, 44 on either side.



Extraction day

There was a great turn out of beginner beekeepers at this year’s extraction day held once again at David Pearce’s very well equipped premises.

Unfortunately enthusiasm alone couldn’t make up for the lack of honey – in total we have about 230lb in tubs waiting for bottling and that’s half last year’s harvest. And none of the combs were good enough for cut comb.

A few of the frames were either partially granulated or had a lot of pollen and had to be cut out.

David used a refractometer to check the water content of frames from the apiary. Unsealed frames came in at 21.5 per cent and the capped varied from 17.5 to 19.5 per cent. [Honey for sale must have a moisture content below 20 per cent].

Photos taken by beginner beekeeper Lyn Haskins, who successfully extracted her first harvest the next day



ASIAN HORNET

Vespa velutina

What is it?

An invasive non-native hornet originally from Asia. Suspected records should be reported immediately. A highly aggressive predator of native insects, posing a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators. Accidentally introduced to France in 2004 and spreading rapidly.



Where might I see it?

Most likely to be seen close to bee hives - bee keepers should be alert. Active from February to November in suburban areas in the south of England and Wales, or around major ports.

What does it look like?

Distinctive hornet, smaller than our native species. A key feature is the almost entirely dark abdomen, except for the 4th segment which is yellow.

- Slightly smaller than native hornet
- Dark abdomen, 4th segment yellow
- Bright yellow tips to legs (native hornet dark)
- Entirely brown or black thorax (native hornet more orange)

Asian Hornet abdomen

Native Hornet abdomen



- Makes very large nests



- 'Hawks' outside honey bee colonies killing bees as they attempt to defend their hive

DANGER!

This hornet stings. Do not disturb an active nest. Seek advice using the details below.

For more information or to report any sightings please email:

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



Chris Harries reflects on 2016's trials and tribulations

Throughout my 40 years of beekeeping I have been an avid reader of books and magazines on the subject, including the early works of William Herrod-Hempsall, R.O.B. Manley and Ted Hooper to name a few. All classics in my opinion that taught me a lot. But today we face unprecedented challenges in beekeeping that those revered experts could never have imagined.

The real basics of beekeeping have not changed. Prerequisites are still: a sound, weatherproof hive containing lots of healthy bees and a productive queen, on good comb with plentiful food supply, all sited in a sheltered, sunny spot. But much has changed over the years. Gone are the small black touchy bees – breeding and genetics have given us stronger, more prolific queens and better tempered bees [mostly!]. Environmental changes, including recent milder winters, are having an effect, as are changes in agricultural and horticultural crops and practices, with the potential for larger, earlier honey yields.

This past season has been another new experience for me. Let me explain:

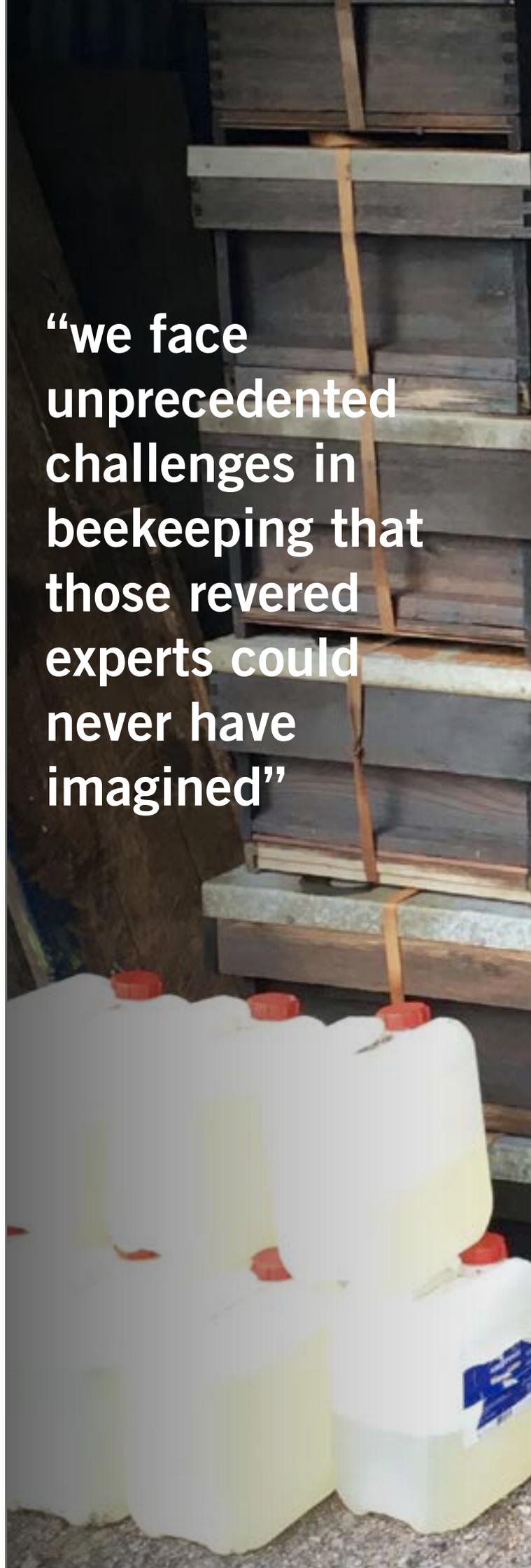
Due to the mild weather my queens continued laying throughout the winter. By spring, I had massive colonies with lots of brood which produced a huge spring crop of honey – mostly from hawthorn and fruit trees [no rape].

All colonies were inspected and supers back in place by the end of June. I didn't disturb or look in the brood chambers between July 1 and August 15 when the 'flow' was on, so a developing problem went unnoticed. My bees were superseding their exhausted queens two months earlier than usual. Thus an unexpected gap in brood coincided with the start of the main honey flow, allowing the bees to use the brood chamber for storage of honey. A lot of honey that should have been my main crop! The result being that I now have lots of nice, new queens with plentiful winter stores. Great! I also have thousands of litres of pre-ordered and unneeded syrup left over. A bit of 'a curate's egg' situation.

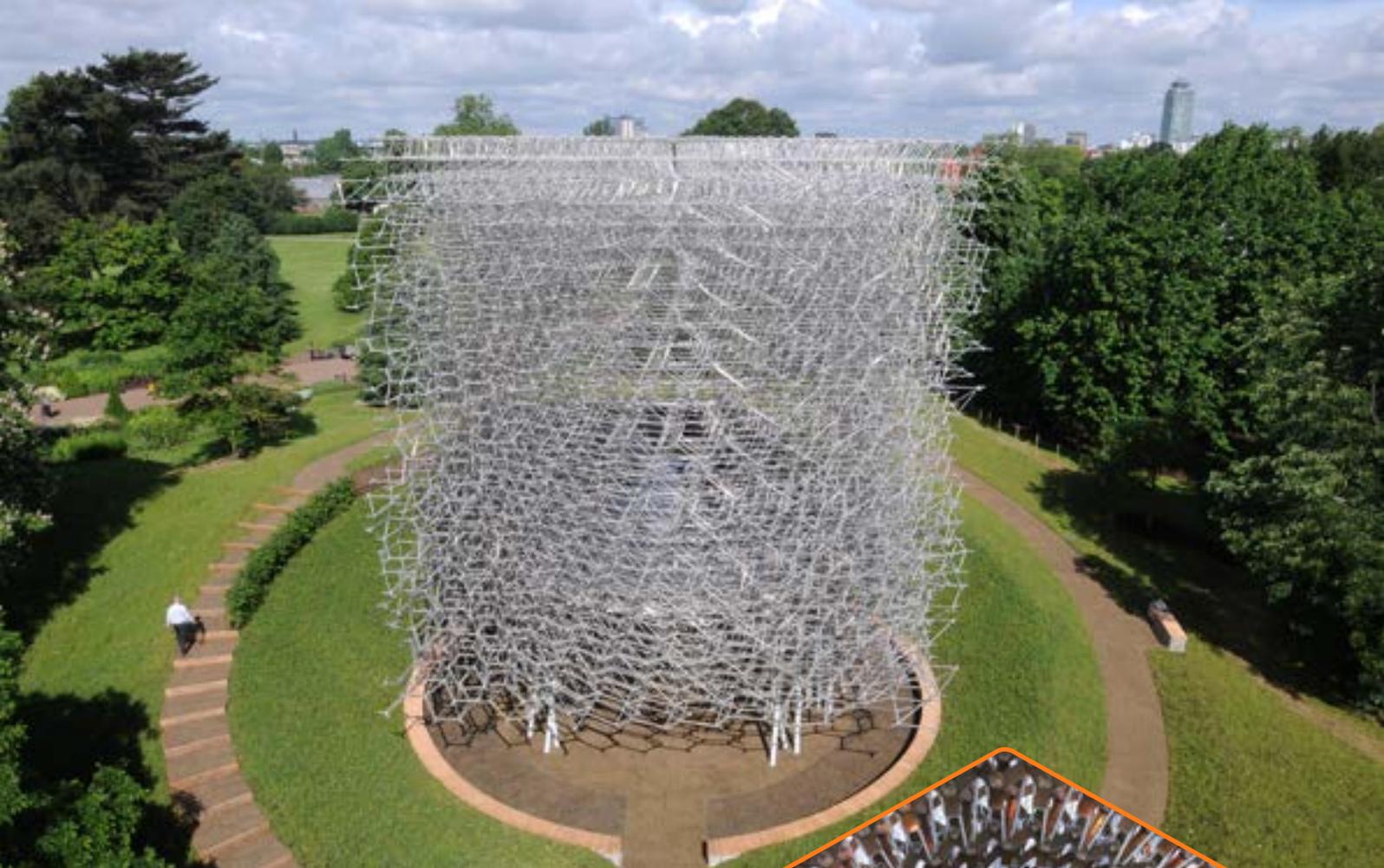
Chris is a member of Taunton Division and runs Sedgemoor Honey Farm



“we face unprecedented challenges in beekeeping that those revered experts could never have imagined”







A Visit to The Hive at Kew Gardens

Even though I had read about it, and seen pictures of the Hive I found myself feeling overawed by this amazing sculpture. From afar it looks almost like a swarm of bees swirling through the air. Close up its metallic structure of stretched and squeezed hexagons, catches the light and impresses with its huge size. Originally created as the centrepiece of the UK Pavilion at the 2015 Milan Expo, the Hive is the design of UK based artist Wolfgang Buttress.

Nestled in a hollow, surrounded by flowers overflowing with bees, the Hive stands on metal legs, so you can walk underneath and be bathed in the sounds of the hive. Sturdy hollow cylinders stand beneath the Hive, and by inserting one end of something like a lolly stick into a gap in a cylinder, the other end between your teeth, and then blocking your ears, you begin to hear the 'sounds' of the hive through the vibrations in your head. Trophallaxis, queens piping and quacking all become clear as you listen in. A useful commentary clarifies what you hear.

Looking up through the glass ceiling above your head, you can see into the body of this 17 metre high sculpture. Walking up a gently sloping path brings you right inside. Internally the hexagonal shapes are covered in a thousand LED lights that are linked electronically to a colony of bees some 300 metres away. The more the bees fly in and out of their hive, the more the lights respond, by glowing and fading. A soundscape in the key of C also responds to the activity in the hive. Standing within the body of the Hive was a truly wonderful experience, and people lingered inside absorbing the sounds around them.

To complement the Hive being at Kew there is a full programme of bee related activities. Local beekeepers are

on hand to explain the sculpture, and to give information on bees and beekeeping. Scientists from Kew are giving talks about their work with bees. There is also a constantly running programme of short films about bees and other pollinators, a pollination trail, and talks from horticulturalists on planting for pollinators. And of course there are the gardens themselves.

So if you would like an inspiring day out I'd strongly recommend a visit to the Hive at Kew – a delight for both beekeepers and non-beekeepers. It is in Kew until November 2017.

Lynne Ingram, Master Beekeeper



Bee hives as art

No, this isn't about Wolfgang Buttress's incredible structure at Kew Gardens highlighting the importance of the honeybee! It's a photo of an installation taken near Edinburgh which underlines the increasing visibility of the concept of bees – whether on homewares, in the media or in the heady realms of art.

In sculpture park Jupiter Artland there is an installation by Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) of six traditional WBC beehives bearing the inscription 'BEES; they lightly skim; and gently sip; the dimply river's brim; BOATS'.

When I visited they were bee-less but the hives are ready for inhabitation and the intention is that they will be managed in future.

Showbiz buzz

The new director of Glynebourn opera, Sebastian F. Schwarz, is reported to be bringing his own bees from Vienna to East Sussex. He's quoted as saying: "It is amazing to sit next to a beehive in the morning when you first get up."

Apiary year 2016

The year started well with 12 full colonies and two nucs coming through the winter months. All the hives were good tempered until the nearby oil seed rape finished flowering. This coincided with many of the hives becoming aggressive, this remained on and off until the end of August.

April saw the beginners meet bees for the first time with 20 new beekeepers taking part. All seemed very keen and no one was stung on the day. The majority were still there at the end of the course.

In early August it was decided that four new mated queens from Jed Marshall should be purchased. One was introduced to a queenless hive, the other three were used to replace queens in aggressive hives.

After applying Varroa treatments, one of the new queens, we think, decided she did not like the smell of the treatment and tried to leave the hive. She was finally coaxed back with

Taster Day Report

We held a Taster day for beginners at our Apiary in September.

It was an introduction to beekeeping for members of the public who wish to take up beekeeping as a hobby.

The first part of the afternoon was spent in the class room with Lynne Ingram, who is a master beekeeper.

Lynne covered a variety of subjects basic anatomy of the bee, bee diseases, pests, and notifiable diseases giving general a comprehensive cover on all the subjects.

The remaining part of the afternoon was spent getting everyone dressed in bee suits prior to going out into the apiary for the really interesting part of the afternoon which was to open up a hive and see the bees in their own environment.

The potential new beekeepers were encouraged to handle a frame of bees and inspect it at close range under the guidance of an experienced beekeeper who explained what was on the frame.

The afternoon ended back in the club house with tea and cakes and a question and answer session.

Everyone enjoyed the session and from the comments and emails received are all looking forward to next year's beginners' course.

A big thank you to everyone who helped make the afternoon a huge success

Mike Dillon

Taster day Coordinator 2016



her entourage and once we discovered that her hive had been over treated and adjustments were made, she decided to stay! After closer inspection it was found that the colony had started to build comb on the outside of the hive as a way of getting away from the treatment smell, this was removed.

Extraction day at Dave Pearce's facility produced 230 pounds of honey, which by all accounts is not bad considering what type of year it's been.

2016 was also a better year as far as wasp robbing goes and was confined to just one hive. We go into the winter months with 14 complete hives and three nucs, hoping that all will come through the winter and provide passive bees and a good honey crop for the coming season.

Andrew Perry, Dave Parry
Apiary team

Show me the honey

This year's County and Taunton honey shows attracted a great number of entries – our entries secretary, and President, Jenny Gammon described it as modern record.

But those from other divisions were few and far between. In fact a new county divisional class attracted only one entry – ours.

And it's because members (and divisions) other than the host division have consistently failed to support the County honey show over many years that Somerset Beekeepers has decided to hold a moratorium.

But if a new way to engage support is put forward at a later date, and backed by delegates, then the county show can be revived.

However the shows, staged as part of Taunton Flower Show, once again proved a big hit with the public.

Our chairman Peter Maben commented: "There's so much interest in the health and welfare of bees and pollinators generally that our marquee was literally buzzing with people talking to us about honey bees."

Magnificent displays of honeys, wax and other products and an observation hive attracted plenty of attention while an outdoor netted demonstration area let us show visitors what we get up to when we suit up and head for the apiary.



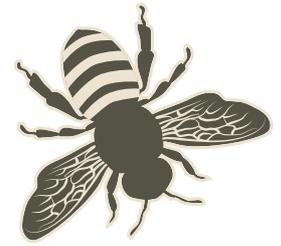
Dave Parry



Rosemary & Eleanor Burgess



The full list of results is published in the autumn edition of Somerset Beekeepers' newsletter and on the website, but the cups and trophies deserve an extra shout-out:



The Blue Ribbon for the best exhibit in Show

David Pearce

Taunton – trophies, cups & awards:

The Taunton Perpetual Challenge Trophy

Graham Welfare

The Priscott Perpetual Skep Plate

Graham Welfare

The Stoker Perpetual Trophy

Graham Welfare

The Pat Barter Trophy

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The W. Elmsall Perpetual Observation Hive Trophy

Taunton Beekeepers

The Andy Coles Memorial Trophy for Mead

Graham Welfare

The Tom Tucker Trophy for Cookery

Rosemary & Eleanor Burgess

The Downes Perpetual Cup

Rosemary & Eleanor Burgess

The Gammon Perpetual Trophy (novice)

Dave Parry

The Taunton Honey Show Plate

David Pearce

The Taunton Honey Show Perpetual Trophy

David Pearce

The John Spiller Mascot

David Pearce

Somerset County Cups:

Jubilee Cup

shared by David Pearce and Graham Welfare

Miss M.D Bindley Cup

Bridget Knutson

Terry Arnold Perpetual Challenge Trophy

Rosemary and Eleanor Burgess

The Duffin Challenge Trophy

Rosemary and Eleanor Burgess

The Clifford Langford Award for Mead

Graham Welfare



● Graham Welfare



● Mike Dillon



● David Pearce



Get the wax factor

by Jenny Gammon, Taunton Division President

Salvage wax from discarded brood /super frames:

You really need a solar extractor to do the job properly.

A wooden box with a stainless steel insert – go on the internet to see designs on a beekeeping site eg Thornes / National Bee Supplies etc.

Have some foil cooking containers to catch the wax- not expensive.

Put your old wax into discarded tights / stocking before putting them into the solar extractor. These will save you having to steam clean the solar extractor or use a lot of elbow grease to clean it.

You may have to melt down the wax you have taken off to clean it again if it is for something special.



If you decide that you really want to do it indoors:

You need two different size saucepans – one to fit inside the other. Most people have some old ones lying around. Make sure you have water in the lower saucepan before putting it on the heat – enough water to come up the side of the saucepan dropping into it. A little water in the above saucepan preferably distilled. Break up the wax in the upper pan. Wait for the old wax to melt. When melted allow to cool. The wax will float to the surface and you can throw away the dross below.

To get really good wax for special things use cappings after you have extracted your honey. Wash the cappings in distilled water to remove the honey – then melt down the wax as above in saucepans. Remember the longer you heat wax the darker it becomes.

Distilled water: you can buy bottles of this or try using the water from your dryer/humidifier.

Remember not to leave the wax cooking – hot wax can cause a fire if it over flows (just like lighting a candle – it burns.) Don't have children/animals around you at the time/don't answer the phone and forget what you are doing – accidents can happen especially if you are making candles and the mould tips over when you balance it and the wax is all over the floor/and kitchen worktops.

Put down paper before you begin anyway.

When you want to clear your wax and keep it for later - try lint attached to an ice cream container and pour into that. Put your old lint into the solar extractor next year and get the surplus wax out of them.

Remember that wax is MONEY – don't throw it away. You can make candles /wax flowers/ exchange for equipment or new foundation when you visit your beekeeping supplier.





Dates for the diary

THURSDAY-SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27-29

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW

Lecture programme (including beginners series on the Saturday), workshops, trade show, and the show itself)

www.honeyshow.co.uk

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 2

7.30 pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS SESSIONS

Swarms, swarming and making increase with Lynne Ingram, Master Beekeeper

Everyone welcome!

The Apiary



WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 9

7.30 pm

AUTUMN IMPROVERS SESSIONS

Harvesting and preparing hive products with Rosemary Burgess

Everyone welcome!

The Apiary

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19

2.30pm

OUR AGM!

Speaker: David Charles

'In praise of the Nucleus'

The Apiary

SATURDAY DECEMBER 10

2.30pm

LATE VARROA TREATMENT

Everyone welcome!

The Apiary



A close-up photograph of two bees on a honeycomb. The bees are positioned vertically, one above the other, facing each other. The honeycomb cells are a vibrant yellow color, and the bees have their characteristic black and yellow stripes. The background is a soft-focus honeycomb pattern.

**Beekeeping veil and suit repairs:
Ring Jenny on 07788407497
or 01823 270465**

Classified adverts

If you want to buy or sell beekeeping equipment, you can do it here! We're offering free classified ads for Members and their families.

Email your advert to:
anne@ashford-media.co.uk

Remember caveat emptor – it's your responsibility to check out the goods/buyer! Plus, clean any beekeeping equipment thoroughly if you're selling or buying to prevent the spread of disease.