



# Newsletter December 2023

Committee members:

Pat Coleman (President), Ken Jeanes (Chair),  
Mat Philips (Treasurer), Anne Collyer (Secretary), Jane Jeanes (SBKA Delegate),  
Tony Johnstone (Programme Secretary), Jeremy Lee (Apiary Manager), Guy Clothier, Brian Magor,  
Dennis White and John Wood

Welcome to our December Newsletter. Thank you to all those who came to the Annual General Meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> November followed by an entertaining presentation from Stewart Gould.

Those of you who came to the meeting will know that after many, many, years Lionel Horler has stepped down from the committee. He has been a true inspiration to so many and we are indebted to him. Following the meeting he was presented with a garden gift voucher as a token of our appreciation. Although no longer on the committee, Lionel will continue to teach the Beginners' Course in January and remain as leader of the Asian Hornet Action Team – thank you Lionel!

We have also said goodbye to Tina Harley, President, and are delighted to welcome Pat Coleman to the committee. Pat has taken on the role of President and I am sure will be a worthy successor to Tina. Brian Magor was also elected to the committee bringing a wealth of experience with him.

The next newsletter will be in March but if there is any information that needs to be circulated to members in the meantime, we will email you all.

As ever, if anyone needs more information or has a question to ask, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will put you in touch with someone who can help.

Anne Collyer, Divisional Secretary SESBKA

[amcollyer838@gmail.com](mailto:amcollyer838@gmail.com) 07803 243643 Presscombe, Shepton Montague, Wincanton, BA9 8JG

## Ken Jeanes, Chair

Thank you for voting me in for a third time as chairman, not sure what I have done to deserve it. Each and every officer and member have a part to play in order for the division to be successful and continue to flourish. We have a wide ranging, varied programme which is being planned by Tony and an apiary which can give everyone hands on experience. Lionel is running a beginners' course again early next year and mentors will be needed once learners take their bees home. I still get calls from mentees I first helped years ago and we can all learn from each other, even if we have been keeping bees for decades.

Best wishes for a very happy Christmas from my family to yours and the hope that 2024 will see our bees increase, the nectar flow and the sun shine at the right time.

## Pat Coleman, President SESBKA

I kept bees for a few years in the eighties when living in Dorset. I bought my bees from Thornes and they arrived in a travelling box by train at Dorchester station. I didn't join a beekeeping group as the local beekeepers seemed to be old men and I thought I'd be better off with a modern book. More fool me! My gentle yellow bees soon mated with local black ones and became aggressive. When I moved into Dorchester, where my neighbours had children, I realised there would be trouble and I gave my bees away.

I met Lionel at the Bruton Packhorse Fair in 2016 and signed up to the beginners' course. I keep a couple of hives in my garden and, hopefully, am learning from my mistakes. Being clumsy and having bad eyesight doesn't help! I am very grateful for all the help I have had from Lionel who manages to advise without making you feel a complete idiot. I don't want to sell honey and am happy with enough for friends and family.

I hope to continue Tina's good work for SE Somerset.



## From Tina Harley *Farewell to the South East Division*



*I am sad to be leaving Somerset and the friendship of the South East Division. The progression of our Division over the last couple of years particularly, is impressive. With the acquisition of a site and setting-up the apiary, done with the 'can do' attitude of a number of members, is a great and lasting asset.*

*All of you who are new to beekeeping will find that the more you put into learning about bees by reading and crucially, attending as many of the events on the annual programme as you can as well as volunteering to help, the more you will get out of it. Even if you have not yet got your own colony of bees, help is welcomed at the apiary when Jeremy and others are inspecting the hives – it will save them time having a runner to fetch equipment from the shed and you will learn so much by watching experienced beekeepers handling frames and answering any questions you may have.*

*Good luck in 2024 and give support to your committee.*

*Tina Harley*

## Lionel's December Bee Notes

For further information please contact Lionel: email [lhorer934@talktalk.net](mailto:lhorer934@talktalk.net)

We are now in the winter months and the bees should be in their cluster and staying within the hive but unfortunately some bees are still flying on unseasonably warm days. This is not good news as they will be using up energy reserves and not being able to replace the stores they are depleting. Therefore it is more important than usual that I give them the top up of fondant this month. If they don't need it, it can stay there until the spring and then be wrapped in cling film and stored until next year.

As the queen has almost stopped laying you may like to take this opportunity to treat with oxalic acid which will kill most of the varroa on the bees but will not affect any already on the larvae in the capped cells. This treatment should be applied when the outside temperature is below 3°C, which is a rare occurrence of late.

I have been asked about hive insulation recently and in my experience I have found this is not necessary and indeed the important thing is ventilation. The bees are able to keep warm but not if they are damp. I know some beekeepers think just the opposite but that is beekeeping for you!!

It's now that time of year to wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and an enjoyable beekeeping 2024.



## SESBKA Beginner's Course – Don't Forget!

Please pass this on to anyone you know who would be interested in this course with Lionel.

The theory course will start on Tuesday 9th January 2024 for 6 consecutive Tuesdays 7pm to 9pm at Ansford Academy, Maggs Lane, Castle Cary, BA7 7JJ. There will be further practical sessions in the spring/summer - dates will depend on the weather! The cost is £40 per person which includes a year's membership of South East Somerset Beekeepers Association, all classes and apiary visits and a Haynes Beekeeping Manual.

*(If you are already a member of SESBKA for 2024 then the cost is £30/person).*

# Research Survey into beekeepers' attitudes to varroa

I recently received this email from John Futcher. The survey does not take long to complete and he would be grateful for your help. The closing date for replies is 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023

*My name is John Futcher and I'm a PhD student at Kingston University, London looking into how computer vision can help beekeeping. I am currently conducting a survey into beekeepers' attitudes towards varroa*

*The survey is available at [https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_80vE6ONgUFZiljU](https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_80vE6ONgUFZiljU) it is non-judgemental and does not ask questions about losses, just about monitoring and treating techniques, and how open the beekeeper is to using computer technology e.g. a smartphone, to help monitor varroa levels. The survey is completed anonymously, and no personal identifying information is captured.*

*I would be extremely grateful if you could distribute the survey web address to your members asking them to complete it and pass on my thanks to those that do.*

*Many thanks, John Futcher*

## News from the Apiary

*Jeremy Lee, Apiary Manager*

The extreme wet weather of the last six weeks has prevented any meaningful trips to the apiary save from taking delivery of the donated kit from a kind member in Rimpton.

As the colonies were so light on stores at the end of August, a lot of syrup was consumed in September without any meaningful colony weight gain. Fearful that the extra feed was stimulating colony growth at a time that they should have been winding down, once they had some weight to them, I ceased. Brian and I popped up on a warm day in October to remove the treatment strips and of our brief glimpses (without taking the colonies completely apart), all had brood, eggs and some stores. I will go up early December and place fondant on all of them as a safeguard for the months ahead but I wouldn't be surprised if we see some losses this winter as fondant and syrup is no substitute for the real thing. I hasten to add that no honey was taken off after the end of May, a testament to the wet and cold July and August we experienced.

Tony is putting together the programme for next year and I hope people will make use of the summer, mid-week early evening sessions for some hands-on beekeeping. It is a magical place up there on a warm evening.

## On Line Membership Renewals

*Mat Phillips, Treasurer*

You should all shortly receive an email inviting you to renew your subscription. Please follow the instructions in the email and pay the subscriptions that are relevant to your membership. It should be self-explanatory, but this is new for us all so if anyone has any questions, please feel free to email me at [mat@neovoca.com](mailto:mat@neovoca.com). There will be people who for various reasons do not use a computer, and if this is the case then please let me know and I can help you do this manually. We have a small number who do not use email and they will be contacted separately.

There are several benefits to this approach, which brings us in line with most Divisions, not least of which is less administration for the treasurer! It also reduces annual Gift Aid paperwork, allows you to check your own membership details and helps with GDPR compliance. I will simply review the bank account for payment and once payment is received will change your status from 'awaiting renewal' to 'active', ensuring that you will not receive reminders.

*Editor's note: If you do not receive the email soon or for whatever reason do not want to renew on line then please contact Mat so that he can help.*

# 2024 Programme of Events

Tony Johnstone, Events Secretary [tmj67@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tmj67@hotmail.co.uk) Tel: 07973341557

Hello Everybody,

I am starting to put together our Programme for 2024. In view of possible bad weather again interfering there will not be a meeting in January 2024.

As usual I would appreciate any members who are willing to host an apiary visit to let me know please.

When visiting other members Apiaries, including our own, it is important to be mindful of Apiary Hygiene. **Please ensure your bee suit is clean and that you use new disposable gloves. If carrying tools make sure they are disinfected please.**

## **Hook Valley Apiary.**

*Thanks to the hard work by Jeremy Lee supported by Brian Magor, James Butt and many others we now have a fully functioning facility. This not only needs our support to develop it but it is also there for us to get hands-on beekeeping experience thus preventing swarming, disease and colony loss at our domestic apiaries.*

*During May, June & July, Jeremy plans to hold Members Evenings every Tuesday evening, weather permitting. Details will be posted on WhatsApp. Please let Anne (07803 243643) have your mobile number if you would like to be added to the WhatsApp group*

## **Thursday 22 February 2024 At the Market House Castle Cary @ 7.30pm**

A talk by Lynne Ingram on Honey Fraud and adulteration.

Lynne who is a member of the Taunton Division is a knowledgeable speaker who has visited us before.

This is a particularly topical and controversial subject which is of interest to us all.

## **Thursday 7th March 2024 At the Market House Castle Cary @ 7.00pm**

A talk by Marin Anastasov

In addition to being a beekeeper Marin is an academic specialising in sustainable food production and welfare of bees. Google his name for further information about him.

The subject of the talk will be announced nearer the date.

## **On a Date in March and location to be announced The SESBKA Annual Dinner.**

## **Saturday 13th April 2024 @ 2.00pm A visit to our Hook Vally Apiary**

Further details to follow

## **Thursday 18th April 2024 At the Market House Castle Cary @ 7.00pm**

A Talk by Stephen Fleming co-editor of BeeCraft Magazine.

His co-editor Richard Rickett spoke to us last year. The subject of Richard's talk will be on Drone Congregation Areas.

## **Saturday 11th May 2024 @ 2.00pm A Visit to Anne & Jeremy Collyer's Apiary in Shepton Montague**

Location and further details to follow.

## **Thursday 30th May – Saturday 1st June Bath & West Show**

This year much of the responsibility for the Honey Tent rests on our Division's shoulders.

Lionel will be seeking volunteers so please respond.

## **On a Date in June An Apiary Visit to Brian Magor's Apiary in Lattiford.**

Brian has so much to see that we ran out of time during the Safari in July. Brian would like to include Queen Rearing in the afternoon's programme.

**On a Date in July Our Annual Safari.** Details to follow.

**On a Date in August.** An Apiary Visit. Location to be announced.

**On A Date in September.** A pre- honey show refresher session. Details to follow.

**Saturday 12th October** (Set-up on Friday 11th) At the Market House Castle Cary. The SESBKA Honey Show

**Thursday 14th November.** At The Market House Castle Cary. The SESBKA Annual General Meeting.



## Honey Gingerbread Men- A perfect recipe for Christmas treats!

This recipe will make around 12-16 large gingerbread men, or 20 gingerbread cookies and they can be kept for a week or so in an airtight container once cooled

Time to make and bake: approximately 1 hour (including 30min chill time)

### Ingredients:

4 tbsp of Honey	1 tsp of baking powder
125g unsalted butter	2 tsp of ground ginger
350g plain flour	175g soft light brown sugar
1 large egg	

### Method

1. Add the flour, baking powder and ground ginger into the mixing bowl.
2. rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
3. Add the soft light brown sugar and stir.
4. Beat the honey together with the egg, then stir into the flour mixture to make a dough  
Wrap the dough in cling film and place it in the fridge and chill for around 30 mins
6. Preheat it to gas mark 5 or 190c (170c for a fan assisted oven).
7. Take a piece of your gingerbread dough and roll out until it's around 5mm thick.  
Cut out gingerbread shapes using a cutter of your choice, circles for simple cookies, a gingerbread man, hearts, stars or whatever cutters you have.  
Transfer the gingerbread to your prepared baking sheets, they will spread a little so leave a couple of centimetres between them.
8. Bake in the centre of the oven for 12 mins, they should be a lovely golden brown.  
Once baked, leave aside to cool slightly before transferring the gingerbread to wire racks to cool completely.
9. Decorate with icing, sprinkles, whatever takes your fancy!

*Based on a Just Bee Recipe*

# **BBKA News**

*Leigh Sidaway, BBKA General Manager*

## Insurance FAQs

BBKA have updated the Insurance FAQs 4-10-23 to 3-10-24 The difference between this and version 2, is the inclusion of the definition of a hobby beekeeper: 'In respect of this document the definition of a hobby beekeeper is someone with 39 hives or less.'

As with all insurance, these FAQs should be taken as indicative answers only – the final wording is that contained in the policy and the interpretation rests with the insurance company. You can find policy and confirmation of cover documents at [www.bbkanews.com](http://www.bbkanews.com)

## Microscopy Training

The following courses which will take place at the BBKA offices, Stoneleigh are available for members to book:

One-day Microscopy Beginners Course, cost £75 - Saturday 3rd February or Sunday 4th February 2024.

Two-day Intermediate Microscopy, cost £150 - Saturday & Sunday 10th-11th February 2024.

For more details and to book a place please go to the BBKA

website: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/department/training-courses>

For any other questions please contact: [sharon.brooks@bbka.org.uk](mailto:sharon.brooks@bbka.org.uk)

## Your talks about Beekeeping to the Wider Community

The Education & Husbandry Committee would like to hear from members who give talks about beekeeping. E&H are seeking to develop and share resources that might be useful to anyone giving talks to the public. To help them understand what resources would be useful, please answer a few questions in the

survey: <https://forms.gle/Qsk6nptmE3H3nrQa7>

All welcome



And Finally...

I wish you and your bees a very happy, healthy Christmas and a successful New Year!

Anne