



Newsletter March 2024

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 first newsletter of 2024 with a special welcome to all those who have now completed the six-week theory course for beginners. We look forward to meeting you all at the various talks and visits organised by Tony (details later in the newsletter).

Hopefully, by the time you get this it will have stopped raining and the sun will be out encouraging the spring flowers and the trees and hedgerows to bloom. We have a new venue for the Annual Dinner this year – The George at Castle Cary. If you have not already done so, please look at the menu and let Tony know your choices.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this month's issue and we welcome any ideas for future issues. Please let me have articles, notices etc by the 25th of the month for inclusion in the next issue.

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

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Honey Fraud and Adulteration

Those of you who attended the excellent presentation by Lynne Ingram in February, will have been shocked by the scale of honey fraud that is blatantly being carried out across the globe and here in the UK. I strongly urge you to have a look at www.honeyap.org/ which gives details regarding the methods of adulteration and ways companies are getting around the various testing methods to avoid detection and the effects of cheap, fake 'honey' on beekeepers' livelihoods, the environment and global food production. Lynne is a SBKA committee member, Master Beekeeper, holds a National Diploma in Beekeeping and is a founder member of the Honey Authenticity Network.

REMINDER Somerset Beekeepers Association AGM on Saturday 9 March 2024 at Taunton & Pickeridge Golf Course, Corfe, Taunton, TA3 7BY

All members are invited to attend the AGM which is preceded by lunch and a talk. Parking and attendance for the talk and AGM is free; please arrive between 1.30 - 1.50pm for the 2pm lecture. No need to book if you are attending for the AGM and the fascinating talk but please turn up in plenty of time.

Lunch - Arrive 12:00 for 12:30pm

Talk - 2pm

Matthew Elmes, from the charity Pollenize <https://www.pollenize.org.uk/about-pollenize>, will talk about 'Combating Asian Hornets with Citizen Science and Artificial Intelligence'.

3pm - Tea and Biscuits

3:30 - AGM Agenda and minutes were circulated to all members by email 24/2 but please let me (Anne) know if you would like copies

Lionel's March Bee Notes

For further information please contact Lionel: email lhorer934@talktalk.net

The temperature is very warm for this time of the year and the bees seem to be flying well now. The hazel has been yielding pollen and today [14th Feb] I have seen Willow and Blackthorn in flower so I should think the bees will be bringing in some stores now but don't get tempted to open the hives just yet as I suspect there may be some cold weather to come. You just can't be sure what is round the corner! You can now take off the mouse guards and check the entrances are not blocked with dead bees. Those bees will be getting quite old now and will be coming to the end of a long life for a honey bee. If you think the hives are getting too light as the stores deplete, you can add some fondant and then later if they have not taken it, you can wrap it in cling film and save it for next year.

With this temperature rise any Asian Hornet queens could come out of hibernation so put out your traps as described in my note last week. You can always mix your own bait so here are a few recipes that have worked.

1) Dark beer mixed with 25ml strawberry desert sauce and 25ml orange liqueur.

2) 350ml sweet white wine [or white wine sweetened with sugar] plus 25ml mint syrup.

3) 1kg sugar, 2ltrs water, 50gms jam, 250ml cider vinegar and a pinch of baker's yeast.

Premix sugar, water and jam beforehand. Add ¼ tsp cider vinegar and pinch of bakes yeast per 10ml sugar mix in trap beforehand to prevent fermentation. Make thicker by mixing 1kg sugar and 1ltr water.

4) Or you could use your own recipe.

I joined the last zoom meeting of the SBKA Council as they were going to discuss the change to CIO status. These talks have been going on for several years now but we were warned that a decision was imminent so I thought it might be interesting. I am only a normal member now so I knew I would not be able to vote but was shocked to be told that all trustees must vote as directed by SBKA or BBKA with no input from local members of their division. This does not seem democratic to me so I decided to raise my worries with the chairman and was naturally put in a queue, but at 10pm I decided it was time for bed so I gave up. I don't know what time the meeting eventually ended.

Editor's note: Meeting ended at 22.25!

Draft minutes have been circulated to members but please contact me (Anne) directly if you would like me to forward a copy to you.

Lynne Ingrams' talk last night [22 Feb] was very enlightening. How can all this cheating be going on and the government not be doing anything about it? They are supposed to be protecting us from fraud. If you are as concerned as I am please ask your local candidates at the upcoming General election if they are going to do something about it? If we all shout, they may do something.

Well done Tony, you must be thanked for inviting Lynne.

Asian Hornet



Please report sightings immediately with a photo:
with the iPhone and Android recording app: Asian Hornet Watch
or online at: nonnativespecies.org/asianhornet
or by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

News from the Apiary

Jeremy Lee, Apiary Manager

Wet, wet, wet and I'm not referring to Marti Pellow, lead singer of the 80's pop group. Below a piece from Carbonbrief.org.

The year of 2023 was relatively wet with 1,290mm of rainfall, equivalent to 111% of UK average rainfall and putting it just outside the top 10 as the 11th wettest year in a series going back to 1836. It was the sixth wettest March and July, seventh wettest October and ninth wettest December. In addition, 2023 is the only year that has four individual months within the top 10 wettest on record for the respective month.



Despite that, we three amigos (aka Magorbutlee) have just returned from a foray to the swamp lands of Hooke Valley to find all 11 colonies in rude health. They also appear to have an appetite for fondant matched only by James' appetite for a hot brew!! A few of the colonies were positively bouncing and we were all glad of the last minute decision to don bee suits to peek under the lids. Fondant topped up and all put back to bed, fingers crossed they should be good until the first nectar flow. It was quite a relief as, despite not harvesting any honey, they have had to be fed hard late summer and all winter and we were expecting a few empty boxes. Last year's hard work of breeding good stock seems to be paying dividends and we should have a divisional apiary to be proud of.

Prior to this, we popped down for a bit of a stock take and a catch up in early January. James suddenly decided to become "Mrs Doubtfire" and before we knew it had emptied and cleaned the shed before putting everything back in apple pie order!! So we now have a beautifully organised, clean hut all ready for the season. Operation 'double brood' has been green lit and all the new brood boxes and frames have arrived (ready to be assembled) and a plan for the coming months has been hatched.



I popped down to the Ansford Academy to hinder Lionel on one of the beginners' sessions and was quite taken back to find such a good turnout. I hope many of those will take the next step and start beekeeping. We certainly now have the resources to get them going into a magical pastime.

My favourite poem this month!

It rained and rained and rained
The average fall was well maintained
And when the tracks were simply bogs,
It started raining cats and dogs,
After a drought of half an hour,
We had the most refreshing shower.
And then most curious thing of all –
A gentle rain began to fall.
Next day but once was fairly dry
Save for one deluge from the sky,
Which wetted the party to the skin
And then at last the rain set in. *Anon*



2024 Programme of Events

Tony Johnstone, Events Secretary tmj67@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 07973341557

Hello Everybody,

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 7th March 2024 At the Market House Castle Cary Meet at 6.45 to start at 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. The subject of his talk will be "Managing your Queens: colony management"

Wednesday 13th March The SESBKA Annual Dinner. At the George Hotel Castle Cary- Meet at 6.00pm Sit-down at 6.30pm.

Please peruse the extensive menu attached and let me have your choices by Friday 8th March please.
tmj67@hotmail.co.uk

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

Further details to follow

In addition to the Apiary visit **Dianne Sleigh will be providing her click and collect service at the Apiary.** Please order all your apiary needs from her at her very competitive prices and she will bring them over. Her contact details are- sales@thebeedepot.com or 07879 811967. Purchases can be paid by card on the day.

Thursday 18th April 2024 At the Market House Castle Cary Meet at 6.45 to start at 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 Stephen's talk will be on "Drone Congregation Areas." Drones often get a bad press but they are an essential part of our colonies.

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.

Saturday 15th June An Apiary Visit to Brian Magor's Apiary in Lattiford.

Location and further details to follow

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.

Saturday 27th July Our Annual Safari. From 10am

This year our Safari will be facilitated by Eleanor Burgess a former Bee Inspector. You may remember that last March Eleanor gave us a really interesting presentation on preparing for the new season. The first visit will be to the apiary of John MacPherson in Buckhorn Weston followed by a visit to Pippa and Kevin Shillington's apiary near Cucklington, where we will be able to enjoy our picnic lunches, and finally to our chairman Ken Jeans' apiary in Templecombe. Locations and further details to follow

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

Thursday 18th September. At The Market House Castle Cary- Meet at 19.15 start at 19.30 hrs

A presentation by Ken Edwards of the Quantock branch.

Ken is going to give a presentation about his visit to East Africa where he was surprised by the ability of the African beekeepers.

Saturday 28th September 2024 from 10.00am. At the Ansford Academy carpark, Castle Cary

Dianne Sleight will be offering her "Click & Collect" service to furnish your apiary needs. Sadly, she is unable to be at our Honey Show this year.

Her contact details are- sales@thebeedepot.com or 07879 811967.

Saturday 12th October (Set-up on Friday 11th) At The Market House Castle Cary.

The SESBKA Honey Show.

We are lucky to have Jack Mummery as our judge this year. Jack is a BBKA accredited honey judge.

Further details nearer the date.

Thursday 21st November At The Market House Castle Cary.

The SESBKA Annual General Meeting followed by an invited speaker.

SESBKA Annual Dinner At The George Hotel Castle Cary
Wednesday 13th March meet at 6.00pm Sit Down at 6.30pm

Please let me know your choices by Friday 8th March please.

2 Course – £25

3 Course - £30

Tomato and Basil Soup – crusty bread and butter.

Flaked Smoked Trout Salad served with salad and horseradish cream.

Smoked Chicken and Pancetta, brandy cream sauce, dressed leaves and crusty bread.

Wild Creamy Garlic Mushrooms with toasted croutons.

Slow Roasted Pork Belly served with apple and black pudding mash, seasonal veg and cider jus.

Pan Cooked Fillet of Seabass served with garlic roasted potatoes with seasonal vegetables and caper butter.

Pulled Beef Wellington served with crushed potato cake, seasonal vegetables with a mushroom red wine jus.

Mediterranean Roasted Vegetable Tart on an olive potato cake with a tomato and basil sauce

with seasonal vegetables.

Steak and Guinness Pie with chunky chips and peas.

Home Made Salted Caramel Cheesecake with berry compote and toffee ice cream.

White Chocolate, Raspberry Bread 'n Butter Pudding served with a Baileys custard.

Chocolate Brownie with clotted cream ice cream.

George 3 Cheese Board with chutney and biscuits.

Coffee and Tea supplement £2 per person.

Please let me know if you have any allergies or intolerances.

Tony Johnstone

Beekeping 'Down Under'

Jeremy Collyer

Anne and I were lucky enough to meet up with a beekeeper in Motueka, New Zealand (South Island)

Mary Dowie, secretary of Nelson Beekeeper Club, gave us a brief introduction to beekeping in NZ. She has been keeping bees for about 10 years and has 10 hives of her own, 2 in her urban garden and 8 away. All boxes were Langstroth dimensions but Mary uses 3/4 depth for brood and honey supers and rarely adds queen excluders. Each colony has a unique number to aid identification when inspected.

All beekepers are legally obliged to be registered and all hives are annually inspected by an inspector or senior keeper. They are primarily looking for American Foul Brood and, if found, the bees and frames are burned. This can lead to concerns in drought conditions and the 'no burn regulations' in many areas of the country. Boxes, lids and floors can be dipped in paraffin, but this is not risk free!

Varroa: A pest for at least the last 20 years. Heavy emphasis on treatment if any mites at all are found on a 300-bee alcohol wash. Treatments are similar to ours. We were interested in her method of Oxalic acid mixed with glycerine stitched into cardboard/fabric to allow slow release of acid. The picture shows a piece of fabric which the bees have chewed through and are pulling out of the hive.

There is a feeling that deformed wing virus was only seen after Carniolan semen was imported!!

Winter feeding: Probably unnecessary in NZ. The bees seldom form a winter cluster ball and are often seen out of hives in winter, but they have access to many flowering species and Mary regularly sees pollen taken in. Mary is very careful not to take too much honey off her hives reducing the need to feed.

Manuka Honey: She believes that there are health benefits to this honey but is sceptical as to the benefits of manuka honey added to cosmetics! This can be a difficult honey to extract from combs as it forms a gel that is very resistant to spinning. Heating can help. Commercially, an air bubble will be injected through the honey in each cell to release it from the base of the cell. She is concerned about the future for the marketing of manuka honey as it is well documented that more is sold than produced each year and feels that it needs to regain its credibility as quality honey

All honey for sale in NZ has to be extracted and processed at a registered premises. Hobby keepers can extract their own but ONLY for their own use. They are not supposed to even give it away to friends and family. This is partly to protect the consumer from Tutin toxin. A potent neurotoxin that can be stored in honey from bees collecting honeydew from Passion Vine Hopper insects. The main risk period is from January to April and can affect honey in most of North Island and the top third of South Island. All beekepers need to keep records to show how their honey complies with the tutin in honey food standard. This can be managed by several methods including laboratory testing, placing honey supers onto hives after 1st July and harvesting honey from those supers by 31st December.



Rose Cake with Honey and Raisins

(a New Zealand treat!)

For the dough:

500gm strong flour
butter
10gm dry yeast
A drop of vanilla essence
100gm sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
100gm unsalted butter
130-140ml whole milk – slightly warm

For the filling:

100gm unsalted
50gm icing sugar
80gm Manuka Honey
½ cup raisins
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

*Recipe
Corner*



For the cake dough: Put all the ingredients for the dough into the kitchen mixer to form a dough. Put the dough into a floured bowl, cover with plastic wrap and set aside in a warm environment to rise until doubled in size.

For the filling: Put the butter, sugar, honey and cinnamon into a food processor and mix to a cream. Set aside.

When the dough is ready, roll it out to a 5mm thickness on a lightly floured surface. Spread the filling onto the dough, cut into slices 5cm wide and roll each slice up to form a 'rose' or bun.

Put the 'roses' into an oven dish that will fit them all snugly. Let rise again for about 1 hour. Cook at 180°C for about 30 minutes.

When golden, place on a cooling rack and glaze with honey while still warm. Serve immediately.

BBKA News

Leigh Sidaway, BBKA General Manager

The Education & Husbandry Committee has arranged the following courses to be held at the BBKA office and apiary, Stoneleigh:

Honey Bee Health: Train the Trainer Course – Saturday 10th August 2024

The Honey Bee Health Certificate is a practical qualification which makes a major contribution to improving beekeeper practice.

This one-day course is for BBKA members who are experienced beekeepers wishing to run a Honey Bee Health course locally. Participants should have passed the Honey Bee Health certificate themselves. The emphasis in the session will be on recent and relevant content and how to meet the needs of a variety of beekeepers you encounter locally.

Participants will leave with the resources necessary to run a Honey Bee Health course which can be adapted to their own situation. Participants who deliver a HBH training in their own association during 2025 will have their course fee refunded. Cost: £35

Queen Rearing – Saturday 15th June 2024

This one-day course is for BBKA members who are improver or experienced beekeepers. The course is suitable for those who have learnt the basics of colony management and want to learn more about queen rearing. The course will seek to equip the beekeeper with the knowledge and skills to raise sufficient queens for their own colonies and potentially improve their own stock, possibly having surplus queens to share with others in a small breeding group.

The course will cover queen marking, queen cell selection, selecting breeding material, setting up cell raising colonies and the set up and management of nuclei and mini-nucs for mating queens. It will also cover queen introduction and different simple methods of producing your own good queens.

Cost £75

For more information and to book places, please visit the shop on the BBKA website: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/department/training-courses>

BBKA News – ASIAN HORNET

Insurance

We have arranged with Aviva, the current insurer for the BBKA's £10million public & product liability policy for members, to extend the description of activities for which members are covered by insurance to include more detail on Asian hornet. The description now reads:

The Business

Registered charity (CIO) and member association (including members activities), representing bee-keeping in the UK. Provision of publications, education and assessment programmes, telephone support and research on bee-keeping and related issues. Promotion of bee-keeping and education of the public about bee-keeping and the importance of bees in the environment (at events, online and by members) and ordinary bee-keeping activities, manufacture & supply of primary hive products, including bee health advice. They are also involved as the authority on honey bees, and accordingly are called upon to work in a wide variety of places, from schools to prisons, advise the public, move swarms and any other activities as required, including advising DEFRA and trapping, freezing and identification of Asian hornets. BBKA will be present when the NBU are involved in destroying nests.

Please note that there is no cover for releasing Asian hornets as it is illegal at present to do this, unless you have a licence. Members can read and download a copy of the policy and schedule on the bbkanews.com website. We will be modifying the Insurance FAQs to incorporate these changes which we will circulate, once they have been submitted to and approved by insurers

Conference

The BBKA held its Asian Hornet Conference on Saturday 17th of February.

Nigel Simmons from the National Bee Unit gave an update and highlighted areas of concern for this year.

Another top speaker was Alastair Christie from Jersey who explained how Jersey has kept the Asian hornet at bay for a number of years.

The final speaker was Jackie Aucott from Dover & District. Jackie shared information about Dover's front line fight last year and details of what was involved.

The Asian Hornet Conference is available to watch it on YouTube. The link is below:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/dUMk2tzaw1E?si=CXzQZtZNWfLGv7SF>