



Newsletter

November 2024

Committee members:

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

Welcome to our November newsletter. Thank you to everyone who helped at the honey show in whatever way. On behalf of all SESBKA members a huge thank you goes to Tony Johnstone for his excellent, unflappable organisation of this wonderful event. A full list of class and trophy winners is attached to the covering email. Trophies and vouchers will be presented to the winners at the AGM.



The next important date in the diary is the AGM on Thursday 21st November. All members are invited to attend and if you wish to raise any points for discussion, then in accordance with the constitution, Branch Members may bring forward items for discussion with 14 days' notice to the Branch Secretary in order for it to be included on the agenda (i.e. by 7th November at the latest). All motions will require a proposer and seconder at the meeting before a vote is taken. The agenda for the AGM will be circulated by 13th November.

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, Branch Secretary SESBKA

Email: sesbkasecretary@gmail.com 07803 243643 Presscombe, Shepton Montague, Wincanton, BA9 8JG

Ken Jeanes - Chair

Our beekeeping season is winding down after the ups and downs of the spring and summer. 2024 may possibly be the most difficult season we have had for some years but it could be that we are going to have to expect challenging conditions from now on. The bees will adapt as they have done and we will have too as well. We all know the bees don't read the books and will do the best for the colony so that everyone thrives.

We can help this by sharing good practise and attending the evening meetings which Tony organises. We have had some amazing speakers this year and it would be good to see more people attend. Thank you to all those who have invited members to apiaries, it's always good to see how others do things. Thank you to everyone who made the Honey show such a good event and to those who helped at the Bath and West and other events. Thank you to Lionel for running the Beginners' Course and to Anne for keeping track of all the messages that come from above and sending them onto everyone and for putting together the newsletter.

One of our charitable aims is education of members and the public and this branch has certainly done this well this year. Thank you to all the officers who have carried out their roles so well. Some will be carrying on and some will hand over the reins. The county are gradually getting to grips with the change in charitable status and to a change in personnel. Jane is hoping for shorter zoom meetings next year as 3 hours each time is too long!

I look forward to seeing as many as possible on 21st for the AGM and to 2025 being a season with early spring flowers, mild, still afternoons, Queens which mate properly, swarms which land on low branches and stay in their new hive and less wasps in the autumn.

Lionel's November Bee Notes

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

We had our Honey Show in October and I think it was probably the best we have ever had and I have been attending these for twenty years. So let's send a big thank you to Tony for all the work he has put in to organising and improving it year on year to get it to this stage. Of course, other people are involved so we must thank all those helpers as well. It just shows what can be done when we all pull together. I do wish we had more volunteers when we ask for help with other jobs, for instance we need some ideas as to how to present Somerset at the Bath and West show next year.

The Asian hornet situation looks a lot better this year due perhaps to the cold weather but another nest has been found in East Sussex on 16 th October and has been identified as a tertiary nest connected to one destroyed on 24 th September. The NBU continues to monitor the area. This brings the total nests destroyed this year to twenty, which is much lower than the seventy odd at the same time last year. All nests that are destroyed are removed and sent for analysis.

I am still offering fondant to my bees and most are taking it, it just shows that although the weather is sometimes allowing the bees to fly, they cannot be finding much to bring in but of course just flying around uses energy that must be replaced by using their stores. I have just read a report in the BBKA news that bees that do not get supplementary feed during the winter are likely to get losses of up to 31% more than bees that are provided with feed.

I believe some beekeepers have collected a good harvest of honey this year but I think they are in the minority. My yields have certainly been below the average this year.

Beginners' Course 2025

Lionel will once again be leading the Beginners' Course starting Tuesday 14th January at Ansford Academy, Castle Cary, 7pm. We have prepared a handout for anyone who is interested in the course and I have attached it to the covering email – please feel free to print it and give to anyone you think would be interested in learning more about bees and beekeeping. It is open to all beginners and also to those who may have done the course in the past but would like a refresher.

Membership Renewals

Renewal emails will be sent out shortly – you should all have received them by mid November. There is a small increase of £1.50 per member for 2025. Full details regarding payment will be in the email. If you have any queries or do not receive the email then please contact Mat for help. Email mat@neovoca.com

Geoff Blay BeeCraft November 2024

BeeCraft have very kindly allowed me to share with you the latest article by Geoff Blay as published in the November issue regarding preparation of the perfect soft set honey. A chance to read up and gain some valuable knowledge before next year's honey crop!

Just click on the link attached to the covering email to read the rest of the article and how Geoff avoids the common pitfalls in soft set honey production.



Don't forget – Geoff is the guest speaker after the AGM on Thursday 21st November at The Market House, Castle Cary

SESBKA Honey Show 2024

Thanks to Tony Johnstone and Nicky Bolton for the photos!





Apple and Honey Scones

A National Trust Recipe



Ingredients

675g self-raising flour
175g butter or margarine
100g honey
125g grated cooking apple
1 egg
150ml milk

Method

Preheat your oven to 180°C (160°C fan/gas mark 4).

Place the flour and butter or margarine into a large bowl and rub together with your fingertips until the mix resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Make a well in the centre of this mixture and add 75g of the honey and all the grated apple.

Add the egg and two thirds of the milk. Using your fingers, bring the ingredients together until you have a soft, pliable dough. Add additional milk if the dough feels too dry.

Liberalily sprinkle flour over your worktop and place the dough on top. Use a rolling pin to roll out the dough to around 3cm thick then use a 7cm cutter to cut out your scones. Gather up the trimmings and repeat until you have 12 scones.

Place the scones on a lined tray and brush the tops with the remaining milk. Place into the oven for 10–15 minutes, or until risen and golden.

Remove from the oven and while the scones are still hot, brush with the remaining 25g of honey. Leave to cool.

Enjoy with butter and/or clotted cream

If you have a favourite honey recipe that you would like to share with the group then I would love to hear from you. Please send it to me at sesbkasecretary@gmail.com

Thank you

BBKA News

BBKA November Zoom Talk: 'Varroa'

The next in the BBKA series of Zoom talks will be "Varroa" with Kirsty Stainton on Tuesday 19th November at 7pm. A recording of this talk will be available on YouTube for those unable to watch live.

Kirsty Stainton works as the Technical Manager for the National Bee Unit. She worked at Fera Science from 2016 to 2020 where she performed research for the NBU that included molecular detection of the invasive pests, *Vespa velutina* nigrithorax (Asian hornet) and *Aethina tumida* (Small hive beetle), molecular analysis of the Asian hornet diet and research into the use of antivirals to treat honey bees. She then spent 2 years working on honey bee virus research before moving into science communication. She wrote the monthly beginner's series for BeeCraft in 2023 and wrote the book - 'A practical guide to Varroa management'.

In this talk, Kirsty will describe the biology of the parasitic mite, Varroa destructor, why Varroa mites are bad for honey bee colonies and how to recognise symptoms of infestation. She will then provide an explanation of the various ways for Varroa monitoring and a comprehensive overview of the treatment options available in the UK, including husbandry techniques that can be used to reduce mite loads without chemical intervention. This will be a jargon-free presentation designed to help you choose the right treatment for you and your bees.

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86822829123?pwd=tpZCfstxaABYXlbzslOZqCmg5BuStF.1>

Meeting ID: 868 2282 9123 Passcode: 737424

Dates for the Diary - Future Talks:

21st January 2025: Giles Budge, Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus

18th February 2025: Keith Bartlem, 'A Bee Inspector Calls'

18th March 2025: Jenny Morgan, Preparing for Exams

Further details for each talk will be available nearer the time. Kind regards, Diane Drinkwater

Basic Assessment

As part of the charitable aims the BBKA work to raise the standards of beekeeping practices through a series of training courses and exams.

There is a long and well-established exam framework which is constantly being developed to keep up with new research in the field of beekeeping. This starts with a Basic Assessment covering basic skills and knowledge of the craft all the way up to becoming a Master Beekeeper. This is a practical/oral assessment testing basic beekeeping knowledge.

To take the Basic Assessment you should have managed at least one colony of bees for a minimum of 12 months

The syllabus looks a little daunting at first but don't worry, keep reading and you will see that it merely lists the basic things which all beekeepers should know. Maybe the dark winter evenings are an ideal opportunity to start thinking about this and possibly other modules for those who want to move on to the next stage. Just click on the link for more information.

[Basic Syllabus 2024](#)

To apply for the assessment, please contact me, Anne Collyer, sesbkasecretary@gmail.com and I can then email details to you.

Passing the Basic Assessment opens up the pathway to additional study modules for those who wish to pursue their interests further in a range of subjects including management, honey bee products, microscopy, health, breeding and behaviour. There is lots of information regarding the various course all the way up to 'Master Beekeeper' on the BBKA website www.bbka.org.uk/Pages/Site/beekeepers/Category/examinations

Winter Bees by Joyce Sidman

We are an ancient tribe,
a hardy scrum.
Born with eyelash legs
and tinsel wings,
we are nothing on our own.
Together, we are One.
We scaled a million blooms
to reap the summer's glow.
Now, in the merciless cold
we share each morsel of heat,
each honeyed crumb.
We cram to a sizzling ball
to warm our queen, our heart, our home.
Alone, we would falter and drop,
a dot on the canvas of snow.
Together, we boil, we teem, we hum.
Deep in the winter hive,
we burn like a golden sun.