

The Newsletter



Volume no 25 Issue 3 April 2018

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



As seen on TV

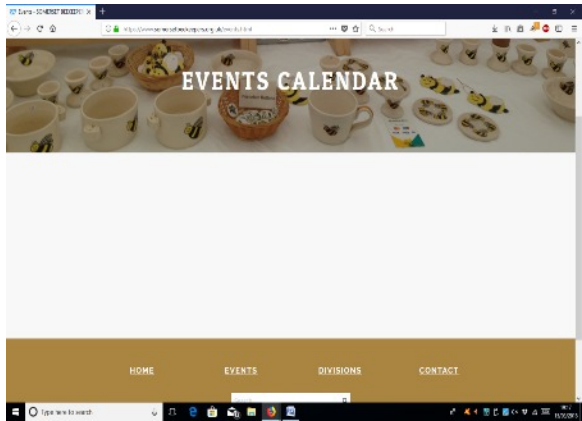
BBC2 Television viewing on the evening of Friday March 7th was enhanced by our own Joe King appearing on Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's 'Hugh's Wild West' programme. Among several other items, Joe was moving the 'slightly' black bees from the Glastonbury Festival site to Glastonbury Abbey Gardens, for the duration of the Festival.

If you missed it and would like to see it, it is available on the BBC iplayer for 29 days from the broadcast date.

I'm glad to see Joe washed his suit. Very impressive.

Somerset BKA website worries

Several people have reported that they can't see all of the content on the Somerton page of the Somerset BKA website. I use a laptop and a PC and I was getting all of the content when accessing the website on the laptop, but not the Events Calendars and certain other items when using my PC.



Neil Cook, who developed the new website, thought the problem had to be a fault in individual computers, but one of our members worked out that if you have internet privacy software installed, it will block certain elements of websites, and in the case of Somerset BKA's website, what tends to get blocked is the calendars, upcoming events details and maps.

If you are not able to see either Somerton or Somerset's Events calendar and you're not a tech. wizard, then refer to your local 'computer anorak' - a

Grand opening of Apiary

About half our members have responded to the invitation to the Grand Opening on April 21st, but some very notable members have not replied, as yet, and the day will not be complete without them.

It is very important that the caterers know the exact number turning up so that they can meet everybody's needs - vegetarian, vegan or carnivore.

Every member and their partner are invited. It is a day which will go down in Somerton BKA history. Come and see this wonderful resource which was gifted to us. There are no hidden charges. Like the NHS, it is free at the point of delivery, so come along, one and all.

It would be great to see as many members as possible, so please reply to: somertonbees@btinternet.com as soon as you can.

Mike's Bee Supplies

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Behind the scenes April 2018

Who is this? A quiet person with a calm, cheery disposition, always seen at association events, especially the Honey Show.

Our show has been described as the “best in the west” and it is largely due to the efforts this person makes to ensure it is so. Often seen early on the day of the show with his plan and directions, organising the trades people to set up their stalls in an assigned place. The evening before the show he busies himself helping arrange the hall, and throughout the year is involved in planning the event. At the end of a long day he is to be found clearing up and directing those who kindly stay to help him.

He runs his own graphic design business and creates and prints many of the signs that are used by the association. Who is he? What he does in his own quiet way helps greatly to enhance the status of our association. So thank you David Rose for your contribution to our success.



Fred Clarke,
Chairman



Bee of the month - Ashy Mining Bee (*andrena cineraria*)

At the end of March or early in April, provided it is warm enough, these solitary bees emerge from where their mothers laid the eggs last summer. This is the way that solitary bees survive. Last year's generation is dead and gone.

Slightly larger than honey bees these docile bees can be found in grassy banks or lawns, especially if south facing. Although solitary by name, they prefer the company of others and can be found occupying large areas of a bank. These large aggregations are sometimes reported as swarms, but of course, each individual occupies its own burrow. They may live in very close proximity to another bee, but do not live in family groups like bumble bees and honey bees.

They are widespread in England, with a bias towards the south and west. A few are reported in Scotland, but they obviously prefer warmer temperature. They are predominantly blue/black but the thorax, forelegs and face are covered in ashy white/grey hairs, hence their English name.

They are on the wing from March to June with a few being recorded in July and August, but it is widely believed that these are the result of a second brood

County Matters

The AGM of Somerset Beekeepers' Association was held at The Isle of Wedmore Golf Club on Saturday 10th March.

The subject of the County Association becoming an incorporated charitable body was debate and after a prolonged intervention from the floor, relating to the employment of staff, it was pointed out that the main reasoning for changing the charitable status revolved around the ownership of property. The proposed new status would allow employment of staff, but it is not a requirement.

There were 30 people present in total, which for a membership of 850 across the county, is a pretty low number.

Election of Officers

Nominations for the elected posts are made well in advance of the AGM.

Anne Pike (Taunton) was elected as Chair

Stewart Gould (Somerton) was elected as Vice Chair

Liz Friend (Wedmore & Cheddar) was elected Secretary

Chrisi Kennedy (Central) was elected Treasure

The Executive committee is made up of named officers, so the above will form the basis of the new executive. With the help and support of Sharon and Malcolm Blake of Yeovil Division

West Country Honey Farms Award

Is awarded to the person considered to have contributed most to beekeeping in Somerset over the last year. This year's recipient is Bridget Knutson, who is famed for the extremely high standard of her exhibits in honey shows. Bridget has sat and passed all the BBKA modular exams and holds the General Husbandry certificate too.

She is also known throughout the county as a doer. She joins in a large amount of county activities and is a major supporter of the Bees and Honey Tent at the Bath & West Show.

When not doing any of the above, she is involved with teaching new beekeepers and in-vigilating the Basic Assessment. All that, of course, is fitted in around her full time job at the Kings of Wessex School in Cheddar, where she is the librarian.



Bob Smith

All those who tuned up to hear Bob Smith NDB talk about maximising the crop were certainly not disappointed. They may not agree with what he had to say, but have to admit that an average harvest of 139 lbs per hive last year, will take some beating. It was all to do with adding an extra brood box, and splitting the brood (Shock horror!)

Bob and his wife stayed with Joe and Christine King the night before his talk, and regardless of anything else, it's not often we receive a thank you note like this one, if at all.

Dear Joe,

many thanks for the warm welcome at Somerton last night, it was a pleasure for me to talk to such engaged beekeepers.

I was thinking on the way home about one of the questions raised, regarding the extraction of honey from brood comb - this isn't something that has been raised before (I've done that talk twice previously) and I don't think I gave a particularly satisfactory answer.

As I say, I was thinking about it and my response remains that I have no concerns in doing this - bees are incredibly clean and hygienic within their hive, the queen will only lay eggs in cells that have been scrupulously cleaned and polished by the workers and workers will not store their precious winter food supply in any other than a meticulously cleaned cell. In both cases a very thin coating of propolis is used to line the cell and this of course has bactericidal properties. So no, I have no issues with extracting honey from combs which have previously been used to raise brood. (and in flavour, aroma, colour terms, it is indistinguishable from super honey) If you get the opportunity, I'd be grateful if you could pass this on...?

Nightmare journey home! The A303 was closed and the diversions signs hard to follow on unlit narrow roads, we were soon hopelessly lost and the satnav just wanted to take us back to the closed A303. Eventually plotted a course through Gillingham, Shaftsbury, Wilton and back to join the A303 at Stonehenge. Then the M3 was closed J7 to J6 so we did the grand tour of Basingstoke; at least the diversion signs were easier to follow on lit streets. Overall, some 7 or 8 major road-work programmes going on taking us down to one lane - we did see a lot of cones last night!! Finally home at 02.40 and a wee bit dazed this morning!

*All good fun - regards to all in Somerton,
Bob*

Upcoming Events

Joe King has organized some good stuff, for the warmer weather, although dates aren't firmed up as yet. We are definitely going back to Buckfast Abbey to visit the apiaries set up by Brother Adam, and seen as many as being the home of some serious bee thinking. This is one for the experienced beekeepers who maintain that there isn't anything for them in the calendar. As they haven't been on the two previous occasions, this is their chance. Clear Densley who now runs the apiary and centre of learning, was a Bee Inspector before crossing over to the 'dark side'. Some of her views are a little unusual, but it's a very interesting day. New beekeepers could learn something from this visit as well.

Another one for all levels of beekeepers. Meg Seymour, who is a Regional Bee Inspector is organising another Bee Safari this season with two changes from last year. Firstly it will be on a Saturday, so that all can attend, and secondly, it will be toward the eastern end of the division, rather than the western end, as it was last year. This is a cut above an apiary visit, as it is not just one person's bees on show, but a series of around 6 apiaries, through the day. They are all different and Meg will show what is going on, make suggestions and carry out some procedures too.

As soon as dates are available you will know, and it will be on the website too.

One fixed date for you. On Thursday July 19th we will be holding another evening of ideas to help you with your entries for the honey show on Saturday September 22nd. This was very successful last year, but several people thought it was too close to the show, so it has been moved.

This will be a Thursday evening meeting starting at 7.30 pm at The Parish Rooms in Somerton.

Thinking of doing the Basic?

For the first time in a long while, there are members stepping up to take the Basic Assessment. No matter what is said, there seems to be 'fear and dread' about this very simple test. The BBKA are probably their own worst enemies regarding this, because they make a big song and dance about the syllabus, which is daunting. Have a look on the web, at www.bbka.org.uk/practical-assessments

The syllabus can be downloaded as a pdf file. That's an acrobat file for the 'non techies', but a copy of it is attached with this newsletter, so that you can peruse it. Having just looked at it, I can see why people are put off, but don't be. There s nothing in there that wasn't covered in the Beginners' course.

If you have kept bees for one whole season, or more, you are eligible to take the assessment. If you would like to do it but are put off by the syllabus, fear not. Suzy Perkins, who has enormous experience of beekeeping, has offered to run a tutorial session for anybody considering it. It really makes sense to take her up on it, as most of us haven't taken a test, or assessment in a very long time, and there re techniques to doing so.

If you are interested, contact Suzy at apicrepe.tengore@talktalk.net and she will set up a training session. No pressure!

Swarm Collection

The item on swarm collection a couple of months ago, opened up a hornet's nest, rather than placating members.

In a nutshell, the committee wanted to compile a list of members who are prepared to collect swarms. As this can, on occasions, be difficult, It was thought that setting a minimum requirement of the Basic Assessment, would assure that those collecting swarms, have some experience of doing so. What a mistake that was. It seems that many of our most experienced beekeepers haven't ever taken the Basic Assessment.

Any experienced beekeeper who would like to be on Somerton BKA's swarm list, should contact Fred Clarke at pauline.fred@btinternet.com . In the event of a swarm being notified in their are, they will be contacted.



Collecting a swarm, which has just arrived, from a tree branch, is not difficult. Collecting a swarm or colony which has been around for a few days, or in a roof space for months (or even years), is a totally different matter altogether, and it is not something for a beekeeper, with limited experience, to attempt.

Apart from anything else, there is the insurance aspect to consider. As a full member of Somerton Beekeepers you have Public Liability insurance and are insured for collecting swarms, but not in the fabric of buildings. If you are considering removing roof tiles, or slates, you had better have good personal insurance, because your BBKA cover will not suffice.

More importantly, swarms that have been around for a while tend to be very protective of their personal space.

If, as a new beekeeper, you hear of a swarm, or would like to have a swarm, contact Fred Clarke, and he will add your name to a list, or if you wish to be involved in collecting it, suggest an experienced beekeeper who could help you.

Remember that in most cases, nobody knows where the swarm came from. That being the case, they don't know how old the queen is, or the temperament of the bees, but even more importantly - how healthy they are. Swarms should be kept apart from all other bees until they have been seen to be healthy, and if they are bad tempered, a new queen is introduced.

If any offence was caused by the previous articles, then rest assured that they were issued with the best of intentions. You could always take the Basic though. Any beekeeper with a few years experience would have to work very hard to fail. The pass rate is 96% by the way.

Volunteers still needed

At the Grand Opening, we will have limited car parking in the apiary itself. Our invited VIPs and disabled blue badge holders will be able to park there, but others will have to park on adjacent land. As a result, we need three noble volunteers to man the adjacent parking space, main entrance and parking at the apiary.

This shouldn't be too arduous, and would only be necessary for arrivals, as people will leave at different times. You will get to wear a tabard with a bee on it, and be given a radio to use. You can also shout, at the top of your voice, 'Oi! Cloth Ears. You can't park there' or alternatively 'I fought a war for people like you' - POWER.

Please confirm your desire to rule the world, by email to somertonbees@btinternet.com

Digital and hard copies of newsletter

The change from all hard copy newsletters to digital took place about four years ago. Up to that point, around 165 copies were printed each month by a professional printer, and the newsletter editor had to collect them, print out 165 envelopes, stuff 165 newsletters into them, then go to the post office and stick 165 stamps onto envelopes.

Changing to mostly digital copies reduced the number from 165 to 11 at that point. This represented an enormous cost saving, releasing approximately £120 each month, to be spent on other things for the membership.

The number of those without internet connection reduced slowly, as people got to grips with downloading pdf files, and the number is now 5. The committee decided, about a year ago, to withdraw those last 5 hard copies, and an insert was placed in the last ones to go out, saying that if anybody wanted to continue with a hard copy, they should drop a line, or make a phone call - and it would be done. No replies were received.

It is a delicate line to tread. Every member should receive all available information, but members money should be spent wisely.

As the 5 are now going to receive a hard copy, an article was put in the newsletter asking if they really needed it, or if they could access a copy on the internet?. Before the 5 hard copies were sent out, and just one hour after the digital copy was sent out, one of the 5 called to say that there was a mistake in the latest edition. No other replies have been received, but the very thoughtful member is still sending them a hard copy.



Queen Rearing Course

I am delighted to say that Roy White has agreed to run another of his very popular queen rearing courses for us in 2018.

Joe King

The dates will be:-

Sat 26th May 2.00pm

Sun 27th May 10.00am

Then Wed 6th June evening. - To collect your new queen.

Roy asks that all participants have three years of beekeeping experience. If you would like a place please book with Joe King on 01749 890357. This is an excellent and popular course so please book as soon as you can, or phone Joe for more details.

No more than 6 people can be catered for, so get in early.

There is no greater pleasure than going through a colony, finding the queen, and telling yourself 'I made that'.

Dates for your diary

**Beginners' Practical Course
First Session**

**Saturday April 14th - 10.00 am
Divisional Apiary**

Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane,

Grand Opening of Apiary

Downslade Lane

Upton, Long Sutton
TA10 9NW

Saturday April 21st

12.30 pm

Queen Rearing Course

Conducted by Roy White

Sat. May 26th & Sun. May 27th

Contact Joe King for details on

01749 890357

Preparing entries for the Honey Show

Somerton Parish Rooms

TA11 7NB

Thursday July 19th

7.30 pm

Somerton Divisional Honey Show

Long Sutton Village Hall

Martock Road

Long Sutton

TA10 9NT

President

Jackie Mosedale

01458 241146

Chairman

Fred Clarke

01278 722830

Vice Chairman

Eric McLaughlin

jandemclaughlin@gmail.com

01823 698204

Secretary

Jackie Mosedsale

01458 241146

jackiemosedale@gmail.com

Treasurer

Steve Horne

01278 662335

Librarian

Sarah Kent

01749 670423

Honey Show sub committee

David Rose, Alison Dykes,

Fred Clarke

Newsletter Editor

Stewart Gould

01749 860755

somertonbees@btinternet.com

Events Programme

Joe King

01749 890357

County Delegate

Andy Bonney

Deputy Delegates

Stewart Gould

Sally Lye

Sarah North

Keith Sturgess

Apiary Manager

Catherine Fraser

01935 824711

Extraction Equipment Loan

John Speirs

01458 241831