

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Honey bee on grape hyacinth (muscaria neglectum)

Being a member of the lily family is about as close as the grape hyacinth comes to being a true hyacinth. It is actually a lot closer to asparagus, and its flowers and seeds are used in Mediterranean cuisine. I'd rather eat asparagus, but bees prefer these delicate little flowers.

What does the rest of the Spring hold? So far so good, but will it last? Dandelions are starting to bloom and there is oilseed rape popping up all over the place.

What will happen after May? That's something we'd all like to know

West Country Honey Farms Award



Joe King receiving his award from Somerton BKA Chairman Fred Clarke

Each year, the West Country Honey Farms Award is presented by Somerset BKA to the person judged to have given outstanding service to beekeeping in the West Country. This year it was awarded to our own Joe King, who has been a mainstay of beekeeping in Somerset for over 30 years.

Joe has helped more beekeepers than you could shake a hive tool at, served as chairman of Somerton BKA, and for many years was a steward in the Royal Bath & West Show, Bees and Honey Tent. He has served on the divisional committee of Somerton BKA for millennia and been instrumental in delivering the new beekeepers' theory and practical courses. He has kept the apiary shipshape since its inception, and is now also Head Keeper of the bees. There are many other major contributions which Joe has made to beekeeping. Without belittling previous winners at all, there was never a more deserving recipient, and if anything, it should have been made several years ago.

The beekeeping world could do with more Joes.



Swarm collectors needed

You will have gathered from the rather hurried email sent out on Wednesday 27th March, that it was assumed that the BBKA swarm collector's list had to be updated by the following Friday, just two days later. That unexpected twist was thrust upon Steve Horne and Alison Dykes who are doing their utmost to comprehend the workings of the new 'all singing, all dancing' BBKA registration system. It ultimately transpired that although that was the 'dead-line' set by BBKA, the list can be updated.

If you are new to beekeeping and would like to know more about the vagaries of swarm collecting, then we would not suggest going it alone at first. When the register is completed, it will be available online. Simply go to the swarm section of the BBKA website, and start the procedure for reporting a swarm. Enter your postcode and the name of your nearest registered swarm collector will appear, with contact details. They may not however, want an apprentice, but keep trying until you find one who does, and maybe you will have an initiation, and a swarm too.

It should be born in mind that swarms are a law unto themselves, and don't

Nucleus colonies

The previous item relates to swarms, but they aren't necessarily the best way for a new beekeeper to start. Most swarms contain queens which haven't been marked, so you will have no idea how old the queen is. They may also be carrying disease, and their temperament is anybody's guess, so what is the best way to start?



A nucleus colony has been specially created, and should contain a young and virulent queen, who has been properly mated and has created at least three frames of brood. Buying locally is ideal, because it will be less expensive for starters, and you will have someone local to deal with if anything goes wrong. Expect to pay in the region of £100 or more.

National companies charge well in excess of that, although one national has a very misleading advert. Look at www.iwantbees.co.uk and you may presume that they are selling nucleus colonies for between £90 and £155, but don't be fooled. **That is just the deposit.** At the bottom of the page in small print is the total price. £90 becomes **£240.00** for a 6 frame colony and £155 for a 6 frame colony with 6 frame extension, becomes **£305.00. Ouch!!!**

Other companies show the prices more clearly, but prices are all high, with Thornes charging **£280**. Also bear in mind that nearly all suppliers do so on a collection only basis. Paying £230 and having to drive to Sussex to pick up your bees, could prove costly, but they will nearly all include the box that they are in. That could be a cardboard travelling box, or a polystyrene nucleus hive.

Local nucleus colonies will probably cost you less than half that, and you will not have to travel any great distance to collect. You may have to return the box or hive though.

Stewart Gould

Swarm & Nucleus lists

Following on from the last item, I am compiling lists of those wanting swarms and/or nucleus colonies. If you will be producing nucs. Then let me know and I will put you in touch with somebody seeking to buy a strapping new, purpose made colony of bees.

Likewise, if you would like a swarm then let me know that too. Wanting one doesn't preclude you from being on the list for the other, **BUT** please remember that we will give preference to new beekeepers, starting out with a first colony.

Swarms are best kept in quarantine and assessed before passing on to a novice,

Everything is weather dependant. Last year was a poor year for swarms - **NOTHING CAN BE GUARANTEED.**

Stewart Gould

somertonbees@btintnrnet.com

01749 860755

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Bee-suit amnesty

The new season has started for those who have done their first inspections, and we will be launching our new beekeepers' practical sessions soon. For those sessions we will need a lot of suits in varying sizes, and because about 10 of our suits went missing a season or two ago, we have had to bite the bullet and buy new ones to replace them. Prices are now higher and these 6 new suits are costing £542.



We would dearly like the suits, that have gone missing to come back to us, so if you have a white bee-suit with the Somerton Beekeepers logo on the chest, please arrange for its return. We fully understand that it may have been taken home to launder, and forgotten, or there may be some equally good reason why it never made its way back to the apiary. As has been said before, those 10 suits cost you (as members) a lot of money.

Regardless of the reason, **no questions will be asked**. Just phone **Fred Clarke on 01278 722830** and he will sort something out.

Clare Densley's talk

Once more, Clare Densley (Buckfast Abbey bees) made absolute sense of her subject, with a talk that was accessible to new and experienced beekeepers alike. She was talking about swarming and how it can be beneficial to a colony for a large proportion of the bees to take off and set up a new home. She also warned that just letting your bees swarm can be detrimental to the local populations of bees and humans.

She made one point that has cropped up in all sorts of places this peculiar spring: charged queen cups. I have had some in my colonies, but they aren't signs of swarming. As Clare says, no colony is going to swarm if there are no drones around. In these days of emancipation, bees and humans still need males of their species to be able to breed and multiply.

There was a large crowd hanging on Clare's words, and the good news is that we have a visit to Buckfast arranged for Sunday 23rd June, with the possibility of some purpose made workshops at another time.

Beekeeping Scheme for Control And Management

Amidst all the hyperbole and confusion over our future within, or without Europe, the Government have managed to come up with a plan for the compulsory registration of all beekeepers. From April 1st, all beekeepers must register on the Government's website at <http://www.gov.uk/beereg>. Log on to this site and click on the blue sub heading 'beekeeping' as below. Then go to the Scheme for Control And Management. You will have to give your name, address, email address, the location and total number of all hives. This is totally separate from the NBU Beebase registration which is, of course, voluntary.

APHA (The Animal & Plant Health Agency) have finally realised that in order to restrict the incidence of EFB, AFB and the probable incursion of Asian hornets, and other such invasive species such as tropilaelaps and the small hive beetle, positive steps must be taken. Andrena Gravidia, spokesperson for APHA, said 'this hasn't come a moment too soon. Rogue beekeepers have been getting away with shoddy practice for years, spreading disease and swarms far and wide'.

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK homepage with a dark blue header and a lighter blue main area. The header features the GOV.UK logo. The main area has a large 'Welcome to GOV.UK' heading and a search bar containing the text 'Compulsory beekeeper registration'. To the right of the search bar is a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, a list of popular services is shown, including 'Prepare for EU Exit', 'Find a job', 'Renew vehicle tax', 'Book your theory test', and 'Personal tax account'. Below this, a grid of service tiles is displayed, each with a heading and a brief description. The tiles include: 'Beekeeping' (Registration process for hobby beekeepers, includes costs), 'Disabled people' (Includes deformed wing virus, Israeli bee paralysis and K wing), 'Honey and wax' (Includes Honey Regulations England 2015 and their implications), 'Births, deaths, marriages and care' (Egg laying workers, brood disorders, supersedure), 'Drones' (Legal aspects of drone congregation areas within 5 miles of an airport), 'Visas and immigration' (Importation of queens and package bees), 'Business and self-unemployed' (How to get more out of Social Services, working the system etc), 'Education and learning' (Elements of the waggle and circle dances), 'Child care and parenting' (Deserted brood syndrome, multiple eggs in cell, chilled brood), 'Employing people' (Rules relating to workers at all stages), 'Countryside management' (Getting farmers to clean up after themselves), and 'Environment and countryside' (Includes flooding, recycling and wildlife).

GOV.UK

Welcome to GOV.UK

The best place to find government services and information
Simpler, clearer, faster

Compulsory beekeeper registration

Popular on GOV.UK

- [Prepare for EU Exit](#)
- [Find a job](#)
- [Renew vehicle tax](#)
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Countryside management Getting farmers to clean up after themselves	Environment and countryside Includes flooding, recycling and wildlife	

Apiary Inspection Teams.

Many thanks to all those people, who have volunteered for the 2019 Apiary Inspection Teams. The process of completing the paper work is nearly done and you will be receiving the details of your teams shortly. Exactly when we will start is obviously dependant on the weather warming up, but I anticipate that we will start in early April.

Yippee! spring is nearly here!

Joe King

Tel 01749 890357

Somerton Beekeepers' Questionnaire

One of the aims of Somerton & District Beekeepers' Association has always been to support all our members in their beekeeping.

To ensure this, a small group under the leadership of Karen Cox, was set up to consider options to improve our service to members whatever their level of experience. Karen and her team concluded that we should seek the views, opinions and ideas of the membership via a questionnaire. Details will shortly, and you will be able to complete the questionnaire and return it online. No need for downloading and returning by SAE.

The reason for this article is to inform you in advance of its appearance and to ask everyone to complete it. Only with the members' views can we produce a Somerton Beekeepers' plan for our future needs. Therefore, when the questionnaire is available, please make an effort to complete it.

Fred Clarke

Chairman

Who is this?

With the agility of a cat she clings to the bank at our apiary, as the wind tries to deposit her in the field below. She says "I don't mind, I like being outdoors". The bank, once a pile of rubble, is now assuming the appearance of a rock garden. Stones have been removed or repositioned, soil has been dug and weeded and plants have been planted. Although not yet the complete article the bank is being transformed by the efforts of this lady.

Reader when you establish who I refer to please make an effort to thank her for all the unstinting work she has done so far.

Thank you for all the hard work - Penny Covington.

Fred Clarke
Chairman



Apiinvert. Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

1 - 4 boxes @ 16 Kg £23 each, 5 + boxes £22 each

Apifonda. If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £4.75, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £22, 2 + boxes £21 each

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood, 16 x 10 brood

Eddie Howe. email:- redrascal@tiscali.co.uk
738793 Telephone 01458 2721144

Mobile 07812



Asian hornet update

We should all have our free Asian hornet traps out now, complete with their free bait. My three have so far caught a lot of flies, but also 7 foundress queen wasps. Lynne Ingram, who is Somerset BKA's Asian Hornet Action Team co-ordinator, has kindly offered to come to our apiary on the afternoon of Sunday April 28th, to update us on the incursion of Asian hornets. See back page for details.

It is very easy to become complacent, as happened with varroa back in the 1990s. Beekeepers were warned, then as now, but chose to ignore the approaching danger, and we subsequently ended up with an endemic parasite.

Please, please take heed of what Lynne has to say, because these varmints will come - and we should be ready for them.

Lynne's talk will start at 2.30pm and will update on the situation in France and the Channel Islands (closer than you think) before availing us of the situation on mainland Britain.

We are attempting to contact as many gardening, allotment clubs as possible. If you know of one that would like an informative Asian hornet session, please contact Stewart Gould. Details on back page.

New beekeepers practical sessions

These are just two weeks away now, with the first sessions on Saturday April 13th and Sunday 14th. We are still desperate for demonstrators for these sessions, but just two extra helpers have come forward, plus the 'usual suspects' again. Your help will be greatly appreciated. You don't need to be super-experienced, just a couple of years of beekeeping is sufficient, and a gentle hand with the bees. Please contact Stewart Gould if you can help.

All new beekeepers need to register now if they want to be a part of the theory sessions. There are details in the email which accompanies this newsletter, but just for surety please arrange to make an advance payment of £25.00 to the Somerton BKA bank account. This will pay for all seven sessions in advance.



Directions to our apiary are also included in the email, so please read carefully.,

We have placed the order for bee suits (25 in total) and these **should** be on hand for the first session.

Scam email - BEWARE

There is an email circulating which purports to come from one of our members and refers to a talk being given by Meg Seymour (Seasonal Bee Inspector) - kick starting your colonies. It asks you to click on a green box within the email. Please don't do that. This is a link to an unknown source, which could compromise your security.

Meg is not giving any such talk, although North Somerset Beekeepers do have an upcoming talk with that title.

With regard to the article at the bottom of page 7, remember that tomorrow is April 1st

Dates for your diary

Asian hornet update

Sunday April 28th - 2.30 pm

At our apiary in Upton

With Lynne Ingram
Somerset AHAT co-ordinator

Meg's Bee Safari

Tuesday May 14th

With Megan Seymour SBI
Venues to be confirmed

Visit to Buckfast Abbey apiary

Sunday June 23rd - 10.00 am
Guided by Clare Densley

Skep making master class

Saturday July 20th - 10.00am

At our apiary

Overseen by Diana Robertson

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 21st

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

TA11 6EB

(New venue)

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