

# The Newsletter



Vol no 30 Issue 3 April 2023

SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



Katarzyna Kawka - via Wikimedia Commons

## Dandelions

Dandelions grow from seeds and do not spread asexually from runners (or stolons); they have a single tap root. We all knew that, however, they can and do reproduce asexually by seed. They are capable of producing viable seed without need of cross-fertilization, a process known as "apomixis". The resulting progeny, also capable of apomixis, are basically clones of the parent plant. Most of the seed production in Dandelions is due to this process. So, how many Dandelions does it take to cover your entire lawn? Only one, given a little time.

Dandelions also reproduce through the transfer of pollen from one flower (or floret) to another. By this method, the plant is not producing clones, but true offspring with mixed genes, and as we all know, dandelion pollen and nectar are attractive to our honeybees.

## Red Hill Agricultural & Horticultural Society Annual Show

Our Australian correspondent has excelled herself this month. She and her two daughters (heads featured above) visited the Red Hill Show on the Mornington Peninsula, outside Melbourne. The girls are seen examining the Honey section of the show. The complete overview (yes, complete) is shown below.



### 2023 RED HILL SHOW HONEY COMPETITION JUDGING OVERVIEW

Honey exhibits were entered across 7 categories, with each entry judged individually according to the following criteria: presentation - clean, filtered honey (free of legs, wax blobs and other debris) in a clean jar - honey colour and viscosity in accordance with class - honey flavour to be without noticeable fermentation, smoke or unnatural flavour/odour. Flavour preference is ultimately at the Judges discretion.

The honey entrants were generally of a high quality and are a wonderful representation of the diversity of flora on the Peninsula, and the passion of our local beekeepers.

Of the 48 exhibits this year, only 2 were deemed to be too thin/runny which indicates that the moisture level of the honey is too high (over 18%). In most cases, this is due to the beekeeper taking honey too early (before the bees have capped it), and before the excess moisture has evaporated. This honey often has a distinctive smell and is likely to ferment quickly.

All honey exhibited this year was sourced from hives across the Peninsula and most contained medium levels of tea tree which is typical of Peninsula honey. Some honey had more distinctive floral flavour, typical of 'garden' honey, where the bees have access to a diversity of flower and gardens which are consistently watered.

This year the honey was judged by John Winkle, a professional beekeeper for over 30 years who owns *(The end)*

Maybe Somerton's Show rules are too stringent - or maybe not.



**Click & Collect**  
[www.mikes-bee-supplies.com](http://www.mikes-bee-supplies.com)  
 E: [mikes-bees@outlook.com](mailto:mikes-bees@outlook.com)  
 T: 01278 445158

**Foundation**

**Hives**

**Suits**

**Jars**

**And more!**

**Bakers Fondant**  
**12.5kg**

We take  
 Cash or Card  
 (no cheques)



Find us at  
 72 Wembdon Hill  
 Wembdon  
 Bridgwater  
 Somerset.  
 TA6 7PZ

**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.

**13kg 1 - 4 boxes £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 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.

**1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each**

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.

**Foundation.** National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

**Eddie Howe email:- [redrascal444@gmail.com](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**

## **Visit to Buckfast Abbey Bees**

### **Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup>.**

For about eight years now we have arranged a visit to the bees at Buckfast Abbey. We receive a warm welcome from Clare Densley and Martin Hann, who between them have notched up an enormous wealth of knowledge relating to bees and beekeeping and they now offer advice on a monthly basis through the pages of Bee-Craft Magazine. They have a really down to earth approach to their beekeeping and are very willing to share their vast experience. You will learn quite a bit about the Buckfast bee. The most important point



being that Buckfast bees have not been bred at Buckfast for many years.

We can suggest a topic to Clare and Martin and they will tailor the occasion accordingly. They don't charge for the visit and do usually provide some nice cake and biscuits, but we put a contribution into their coffee fund. I would suggest that £10.00 is a seemly amount. Sharing cars is a good idea as it is about 80 miles for most people.

If you would like to be included on this outing, which is extremely popular, please let me know at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com). We have to limit numbers to 20, simply because you can only get so many people around the hives when only two people are demonstrating.

**Book early for this one.**

## **Taster Day 2023**

When COVID set in in early 2020 it curtailed a lot of the activities that we have been used to holding. One of those was a Taster Day for prospective Beekeepers or those who simply want to experience what it's like to handle bees and learn a bit more about them into the bargain.

It has been suggested that we have a Taster Day again this year and a tentative date of Saturday July 22<sup>nd</sup> has been penciled into the diary. The day normally follows the format of an introductory talk and tasting numerous different honeys in the morning, followed by a picnic lunch, and then on with bee-suits and out to introduce the participants to the bees in the afternoon. We finish off with tea and an interactive chat before we all go home - feeling enriched by the experience.

**More information as it unfolds.**

### **K. Stewart Holden**

It is my sad duty to let you know that Stewart Holden, one of our longer serving members, has passed away. Beekeeping played a large role in Stewart's life, and there were several occasions when the Somerton Division held meetings in his large garden. There are few photos of Stewart available but he is second from right in this one with Gerald Fisher running the show.



He was a meticulous beekeeper in everything he did, and never shied away from trying something new. In his working life Stewart was a Vet. and he worked closely with the Carymoor Environmental Trust, promoting bees and beekeeping to the younger generation. I am sure there will be more than one young person who will take up the craft later in their life, due to the enthusiasm originally instilled by Stewart.

He will be greatly missed, and our thoughts go out to his wife Helen.

**Gerald Fisher**

## HONEY SHOW 2023

**SAT 16th SEPTEMBER, KEINTON MANDEVILLE VILLAGE HALL TA11 6ES**

The bees have hardly got going, so, you may think it's strange that we are already mentioning this year's Honey Show. But it's never too early to plan your exhibits. Some will take time to prepare, a good mead, a fine ale or an amazing wax candle. Throughout the season ahead keep a camera or phone handy to take that action shot of a bee in flight! Practice some of the recipes before the day, but above all else keep 16th September free and join us at Keinton Mandeville Village Hall and let's make our show the best once again!

We had a brilliant turn out of helpers last year and would love to see all of you and more get involved once again. Please let one of the show committee members know if you would be willing to help out in some way on the day.

Your Honey Show committee:

**David Rose: 01458 259442**

**Alison Dykes: 01458 850535**

**Fred Clarke: 01278 722830**





## Re-thinking the Buckfast model

For many years, Brother Adam's 'perfect' bee was seen as the pinnacle of breeding-in desired traits. This was achieved by isolating bees in a remote part of Dartmoor and thereby assuring that selected virgin queens only bred with drones from colonies with desired behavioural aspects: a bee with low swarming tendencies, high productivity and good nature, and he succeeded - to a degree.



The problems, however, are well known. First generation Buckfast bees are indeed good tempered, but the second generation are famed for their ability to become less than mild mannered, because of the complexities of the gene manipulation. Scientists at the University of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, an area better known for its black and white cows, have developed a new generation of honeybees. Professor Deiter Meintuin went right back to basics. What did he want from a bee? He wanted increased honey production, prolific colony build up in spring, while maintaining low swarming tendencies, mild temperament and perhaps increased pollination as an 'add on', and he claims to have managed it. With the aid of his PhD student Anya Noderting, he has produced a bee (*see photo above*) with larger wings to enable it to carry the extra burden of either pollen or nectar, larger flight muscles facilitated by a larger thorax - and a larger honey crop to carry the increased load. A significantly larger amount of pollen can also be carried as the rear legs and the *corbiculae* (pollen baskets) are larger than in normal bees.

Increasing the attributes and physical size of the worker has inevitably meant that the other two castes have increased in size as well. The cell size imprinted on to foundation sheets intended for workers is no longer large enough, and hives containing these bees can only use drone foundation sheets in the brood area. Inevitably, it has meant increasing the size of the apertures in queen excluders as well, to allow these behemoths (or should it be behebees) access to the supers.

The increased fecundity has been brought about by a queen with enlarged ovaries. This has inevitably meant a general increase in size, as with the workers.

Queens of this strain of *Apis mellifera*, which has been given the taxonomic name of *Apis mellifera meintuin*, are as much as 1.5 times the size of a standard queen. That's about the same size as a European hornet.



Single brood is not possible and bot frames and boxes may have to be bigger in future, especially with average harvests of 200 - 300kg.

Studies following the German initiative have been carried out at various seats of academia including the prestigious CAB labs at the Watts-Moore Institute in Nevada, USA. Leading researcher Dr Abdel Tudeseef and a research fellow, Toby Shore, seconded from University College, Dublin, also noted that all of the queens reared so far have been mono-colour, and predominantly 'blonde'.

A full and even more revealing insight is available by using this link: [https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=poisson+d%27avril+in+english&sxsrf=APwXEdfvuZ5EE\\_IgW2TRddEvfZG8rtwPcQ%3A1680260018352&source=hp&ei=s](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=poisson+d%27avril+in+english&sxsrf=APwXEdfvuZ5EE_IgW2TRddEvfZG8rtwPcQ%3A1680260018352&source=hp&ei=s)

## Help with The Basic Assessment

It's been mentioned several times before, but if you have kept bees for a whole season, then you ought to be thinking about taking the BBKA Basic Assessment. As its name implies, it is a practical assessment of your beekeeping skills. It is nothing to lose sleep over as all of the questions have been covered in the New Beekeepers' course which we run each year.

You don't have to be a newish beekeeper. A few years back it was thought that the committee should all take the assessment to show the way, and some very experienced beekeepers ended up being 'assessed' by more junior beekeepers. Oh, incidentally, everybody passed.

Suzy Perkins has, in the past, run sessions to guide newish beekeepers toward the assessment and this year Joe King and I will do the same for anybody who is interested. There will be no charge, and sessions will be held at the apiary. Once we have assessed the level of interest, we will set some dates. If you're interested contact Stewart at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com)



## Michael McIntyre's The Wheel

Anybody watching last Saturday's edition of the popular BBC programme will have been pleased to see that percussionist Bez from the group 'Happy Mondays' has become the show's resident expert on bees. Some might be surprised to hear that the 'expert' considered that the answer to this question was **liquified pollen**.



## Opportunities to sell some honey

As COVID slowly recedes into distant memory, for some, public events are opening up again and they are excellent opportunities to sell some honey while representing Somerton Beekeepers. What does that involve? Well, if you're representing Somerton Beekeepers, you are able to use the Division's gazebos, tables and observation hive. You'll have to supply the bees though.

In return to for drawing people's attention to beekeeping you will have a **free pitch** - not to be sniffed at in this day and age, and you'll be able to sell as much honey and other hive products as you wish.

Interested? Contact Stewart at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) for more details.

Pitches are available at Kingsbury May Fair and The Green Scythe Fair. See back page.

# BOOK NOW!



Friday 21 - Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 April 2023

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts

## **Bumper Trade Show Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Speakers and Tutors include:** Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St.John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, **and to book** from 30<sup>th</sup> January see the Spring Convention pages of [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)



## **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> - Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

Each year Somerset Beekeepers Association hosts a stand in the Bees and Honey Tent at the Royal Bath & West Show and this year is no exception. The tent is extremely popular with visitors to the Show and we attract quite a few new beekeepers. In order to 'man' the stand for three days, we need volunteers. This entails being on the stand for half a day (morning or afternoon) and the other half of the day is free for the volunteers to wander the show and take in the delights, while probably parting with hard earned cash.

Volunteers will be issued with a one day pass, so they can come in at the crack of dawn and join the stand at lunchtime, or spend the morning on the stand and wander during the afternoon.

If you enter the honey competition, you will also be able to sell your honey on the honey sales stand, which has an enormous variety of Somerset Honeys and has been known to sell out.

Interested, then contact Stewart at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com). We only have availability for 12 volunteers, and it will be opened up to the rest of Somerset BKA very soon, so if you would like a free ticket to the Bath & West Show (normally £25.00) - get in touch soon.

**Dates for your diary**

**Taunton Division**  
**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April - 2.00pm**  
**Auction of S/H Equipment**  
**Ruishton Village Hall**  
**Cheats Road, Rusishton TA3 5JW**

**BBKA Spring Convention**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> April**  
**Harper Adams University**  
**Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB**

**See Spring Convention pages at**  
**[www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)**

**Kingsbury May Festival**  
**Monday May 1<sup>st</sup>**  
A chance to represent Somerton Beekeepers and sell some honey

**The Green Scythe Fair**  
**Sunday June 11<sup>th</sup>**  
Thorney Lakes TA10 0DW  
Another chance to represent Somerton Beekeepers and sell some honey.

**Visit to Buckfast Abbey Bees**  
**Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup>**  
10.00am at Buckfast Abbey

**Somerton Beekeepers Honey Show**  
**Sat September 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**  
**TA11 6ES**

**President**

Jackie Mosedale  
01458 241146

**Chairman**

Jack Barr  
01458 252850  
[jrbarrxv@btinternet.com](mailto:jrbarrxv@btinternet.com)

**Vice Chairman**

Gillian Islip  
[gillianislip@gmail.com](mailto:gillianislip@gmail.com)  
01458 241562

**Secretary**

Alison Clewes  
[pansypots@icloud.com](mailto:pansypots@icloud.com)

**Treasurer**

Sarah Griffiths  
[s\\_e\\_lund@hotmail.com](mailto:s_e_lund@hotmail.com)

**Membership Secretary**

Alison Dykes

**Librarian**

Sarah Kent  
01749 670423

**Honey Show sub committee**

David Rose, Alison Dykes, Fred Clarke

**Newsletter Editor**

Stewart Gould  
01749 860755  
[somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com)

**Events Programme**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**County Delegate**

Keith Sturgess

**Deputy Delegates**

Suzy Perkins

**Apiary Manager**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**Extraction Equipment Loan**

John Speirs  
01458 241831